

KAS ADELA / SALMA Dialogue for Peace & Security

“For a more Efficient Maritime Security in the Central and South Atlantic II”

May 6th to 9th, 2023
Panama City

REPORT

KAS ADELA / SALMA Dialogue for Peace and Security 2023

Maritime security in the South and Central Atlantic Ocean is a matter of growing importance. The regions face multiple challenges, including piracy, illegal fishing, illicit trafficking, and human trafficking. These threats not only undermine the safety and stability of maritime activities but also have broader implications for the economies and security of the countries involved. Collaborative efforts and coordinated actions among nations in these regions are crucial to effectively address these challenges, protect vital resources, and ensure the safety and well-being of maritime communities.

In this context, **The KAS ADELA/SALMA Dialogue for Peace & Security Conference, "For a more Efficient Maritime Security in the Central and South Atlantic II,"** took place from May 6th to 9th, 2023, in Panama City. This event brought together around 30 international experts of various political, military and private institutions from *Germany, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the United States, Morocco, Panama, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Senegal, and Tunisia*. In addition, organizations such as the **African Centre for Strategic Studies, the Center for Maritime Strategy and Security at the Kiel Institute, embassies represented in Panama, NATO, UNODC**, among others, participated in the event. The conference aimed to foster discussions on enhancing maritime security in the Central and South Atlantic region through the implementations of a *South South strategic cooperation* by implementing an innovative and forward-looking format on global maritime security issues by gathering experts from various countries and organizations. The event sought to exchange knowledge, experiences, and strategies to address common challenges in maritime security. The participation of diverse stakeholders highlighted the importance of collaboration and cooperation in promoting peace and security in the maritime domain. Among the topics to consider are those associated with international cooperation, moving away from the traditional *North-South cooperation* and implementing new responses based on transparency and information exchange. As a common denominator of the conference, it can be inferred that each of the speakers emphasized the need for cooperation and collaboration among the regions of Africa, Europe, and Latin America in the fight against organized transnational crime and security in the Central and Southern Atlantic sector. Of particular importance within these presentations is the initiative to discuss and problematize the security situation in the Atlantic Ocean, which is experiencing increasing criminal activity detrimental to the rule of law in different countries. The role of the military, academia, private sector, and international cooperation in seeking proposals and solutions to insecurity in the region was also highlighted by the participants throughout this conference.

Navigating Shared Challenges and Opportunities in the Maritime Security Ecosystem: Promoting Collaboration in a Changing Global Order

The conference began with an opening speech to provide context for the reality of the regions in question and the emergence of extra-regional actors such as China and Russia, which have military and economic interests and may, to some extent, to many of the participants represent a risk to the regional security and state sovereignty.

Deputy Secretary-General and Head of the Division of European and International Cooperation of KAS, **Dr. Gerhard Wahlers** stated the following *“Everybody will agree, and this is nothing new, is that we are witnessing the rise of China specifically in Africa and now, South America, and we have noticed a demise on the rules based in international order”*, this pointing out the interests of the actors involved in the maritime security ecosystem which are aligned with increasing their relative power, influence, and authority. Various factors mentioned, such as China and Russia, have challenged a new international order towards multipolarity, undermining the principles of the rule of law by violating the use of force and the United Nations Charter, this taken as an example brought upon by the experts. Regarding the international context in the central and southern Atlantic and the political interests and strategic challenges, discussions were held on matters related to the deterrence stance adopted by several European countries due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. This issue has presented challenges to the national security of European Union countries, ranging from migration issues to food security and resources, to which various experts in the conference had outlined in their presentations.

These discussions reflect the needs of the regions since, although to a lesser extent, they share similarities and require immediate and similar impactful actions. These characteristics necessitate government intervention and collaboration for the development of joint technical cooperation and the strengthening of strategic partnerships. In the face of this growing concern, priority topics have been identified to take action, highlighting the crisis facing the international system due to the threat of authoritarianism. It is recognized that democratic principles and values must prevail. It is also acknowledged that both Latin America and Africa are under the dominion of threats such as piracy, illegal fishing, illicit trafficking, and human trafficking, requiring joint, simultaneous, and similar actions to address them. This is where Brazil, as a special case in the region, comes into play, given its significant military capacity. Brazil can serve as a bridge for possible South-South cooperation. The country possesses significant naval capabilities and is seen as a transitional system with evolving acquired platforms, accompanied by varying degrees of industrial capacities for the future. In West Africa, the preconditions are different, as they have acquired weapons but have trained their forces internationally. Both regions are of interest, with strong ties between the African and Latin American regions and Europe in terms of arms purchases and training for crew members. In the European case, these challenges are shared with the other mentioned regions. Thanks to Brazil's presence as a regional power, certain countries in the Latin American and African regions are seeking to create alternative models to the hegemonic system, recognizing the role of the BRICS (Brazil and South Africa are present in both regions). However, it is understood that the rules and negotiation methods have changed. Following this line, there is a search to consolidate the development of self-capabilities to maintain maritime security through their own means, by imitating the ZOPACAS format in South America, as well as the South American Integration Project. In a polarized regional context, it was mentioned by the participants that this initiative will return with greater intensity, along with **UNASUR** and the **South American Defense Council**. Connectivity in infrastructure for the integration of the two oceans through roads and railways is part of the integration agenda. The return of South American integration will be seen shortly with various initiatives. The challenge of trilateral cooperation is to identify visions regarding the evolution of the international system from the perspective of promoting regional development.

Enhancing Security and Collaboration: NATO's Role in Maritime Strategy and Crime Prevention in the South and Central Atlantic

Within the conference, the topic of the maritime strategy of the alliance in the South Atlantic and Central Atlantic was also discussed: the role and responsibilities of **NATO**. NATO's perspective on the Central and South Atlantic aims to ensure funding for countries' needs, considering it as a bridge between Europe and North America.

Member of Parliament of the German Bundestag, **Peter Beyer (MdB)**, mentioned **“Security Alliances like NATO is necessity and is attractiveness”** and from this perspective, alliances in the public domain are essential for the peacekeeping efforts of various international organizations and raises the awareness for the importance of **security alliances** as a guarantor for our way of living which includes the *rule of law, democracy* and *all the values that its shared within that club of security and defense* but still, with the enlargement of NATO, we face a reality which is that the majority of nations on earth do not share the same perspective on values with regards to democratic structures and rule of law, and this difference brings a pressure and a threat if nothing is done with regards to building and forging new alliances and cooperating much closer together at an international level, which will eventually promote the necessity and attractiveness of alliances (e.g. NATO), this was also pointed out by Mr. Peter Beyer during his closing remark in the discussion of this panel. Collaboration with strategic actors is crucial through consultation and cooperation for knowledge exchange.

Currently, NATO works with Morocco, for example, as a partner in dialogue with North Africa, in crisis management capabilities development. With Latin America, it has worked with Colombia as the only global partner in the region, on issues of cooperation in cybersecurity, peace efforts, and maritime security. The importance of this partnership is highlighted as it allows for the exchange of information and best practices, while also developing joint military and intelligence exercises that can be replicated with other actors in the region. Its link with Colombia and Morocco envisages the possibility of joint efforts for the development of a South-South military alliance, addressing lines of action with the international community for operations against piracy, drug trafficking, terrorism, and human trafficking in the Central and Southern Atlantic.

Subsequently, the central theme of improving and coordinating regional cooperation against maritime crime was discussed, including crimes with a greater presence in the maritime domain such as piracy, drug trafficking, smuggling, and illegal fishing, among others. In this regard, the importance of operations such as ORION, KRAKEN, and MARTILLO was emphasized in combating organized transnational crime, which can be replicated by other regions. In relation to the previous topic, there are new trends in countering maritime cyber risks and strategies for effective cybersecurity management. Cyberterrorism has been one of the new challenges, for example, and everything has changed over the years, particularly deepened during the war with Russia and Ukraine; security is an important issue to be discussed in parliament. It is public knowledge that this particular forum takes security from a global perspective and various territories into account. Cooperation has become more complex, no longer just north-south or south-south in nature. Experts agreed that vessels are filled with sensitive information that can potentially be threatened by cybercrime, especially when crew members are unaware of proper treatment. Risk mitigation, including adopting an attitude of distrust and implementing two-step authentication, should be employed to prevent incidents from occurring. After attacks, recovery and protection from new threats are crucial as they continue to happen. The American model, used by many countries worldwide, focuses on cyber risks: identifying internal and external threats, identifying vulnerabilities, identifying risks, developing protection, and establishing long-term plans.

Regarding crimes committed in the ocean, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's Global Program against Maritime Crime has described the routes of maritime crime navigated by sailboats, merchant ships, and fishing vessels. This program strengthens the capacities of member states to address crimes at sea, such as drug trafficking, arms and human trafficking, crimes against the environment, and diversity. Through the programs implemented in Latin America and Africa, lessons have been learned about the threats and how they have been addressed along the way in both continents. Mentoring programs and information flow are extremely important as they contribute to strengthening the installed capacities of countries, especially regarding the flow of crime from the south to Africa (particularly from Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay to that area).

Enhancing Port Security: Mitigation Strategies, Guidelines, and Best Practices for Logistics and Supply Chain

The final panel of the conference focused on risk mitigation in port operations, its guidelines, and best practices in logistics and supply chain security, with a specific focus on the local scope of Panama. Coordinator of Security Projects and Programs assigned to the Presidency of the Republic of Panama, **Severino Mejia**, statement that ***"It is important to consider that illicit activity in ports will continue to increase and the technical forms of concealment will mutate and evolve exponentially"*** which put in great relevance the role of port agents in investigating and profiling criminals and is highlighted as one of the key stages in establishing profiles of organized crime, thus identifying major criminals involved in illicit trafficking or money laundering. The Manzanillo terminal has made efforts in operational guidelines based on IMO, international laws, and security standards. They are part of international alliances that allow for international audits in the supply chain. Transactional public-private partnerships are desirable to properly handle sensitive information in accordance with authorities' requests. Only customs authorities have the authority to control and inspect cargo seals (which may have been cloned), and scanners are also operated by customs workers. All of the above supports and legally protects individuals with protective roles and critical infrastructure.

To conclude the conference, a group work process was carried out in which participants discussed the working axes on which maritime security cooperation between the three regions should continue. By involving participants from multiple continents, the perspectives of these regions were represented and made understandable.

Results and Conclusions

At the end of the conference, it became clear between the participants that security policies should be implemented from a comprehensive perspective, which can lead to a path of inclusive and sustainable military and political growth and development. The interaction among experts during the conference resulted in a series of lessons learned that should be applied in the implementation of security policies focused on critical infrastructure, vessels, and the territorial integrity of the involved states. Therefore, with the collective participation between the experts during the conference and the workshop, it was agreed upon that:

- **Building Multilateral Governance Structures:** Coordinating common goals and policies through multilateral governance structures is essential. Policies should be formulated by states as long-term commitments rather than short-term government initiatives.
- **Regional Cooperation as a Priority:** Prioritizing cooperation among countries within the region before seeking collaboration with external regions. Fostering regional unity and synergy in addressing shared challenges.
- **Engaging in Political Dialogue and Institutionalized International Mechanisms:** Actively seeking spaces for political consensus and utilizing established international mechanisms to facilitate cooperation and coordination.
- **Standardized Minimum Requirements:** Establishing standardized minimum requirements for monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up mechanisms. Ensuring effective monitoring and assessment of progress in achieving shared objectives.
- **Advancing Marine Protection:** Fulfill the mandate of 30% protection of marine areas in national waters, with the aim of expanding it to offshore areas.
- **Strengthening Environmental Cooperation:** Develop environmental protection agreements, ensuring dialogue with the Caribbean and the West African coast, both on a bilateral and multinational level.
- **Securing Funding for Sustainable Initiatives:** Exploring Financing Mechanisms
- **Mapping Strategic Marine Resources:** Inventory and Assessment within the UN Framework
- **Leveraging African Expertise:** Enhancing Cooperation in Latin America
- **Pragmatic Proposals for Collaborative Progress:** Develop proposals that are pragmatic, evidence-based, and objective in terms of their goals, with a focus on evaluation, monitoring, and follow-up.
- **Establishing Maritime Operations Centers:** Divide the region into maritime operations centers for the exchange of information.

Through concrete case examples, the participants gained insight into geopolitical interconnections and why international and multilateral cooperation and coordination through regional organizations are necessary and effective. SALMA Dialogue and KAS face an important challenge ahead, which they take on with full responsibility, in the sense that they can utilize the knowledge of their expert partners to serve the processes of public policy formulation. The connection bridge they can establish is of utmost priority, as they have been internationally institutionalized as key agents who prioritize cooperation to promote maritime security.

Continuous training and information exchange become an urgent necessity, as it has been evident that there is no single way to tackle problems or risks; on the contrary, the landscape requires the active participation of multiple actors against crimes and organized crime. The commitment and political will of the authorities go beyond the scope of action within this dialogue space; however, it is recognized that the individuals present in the conference are willing to effectively communicate the information to their respective authorities.