



# THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF A NATIONAL MARITIME SECURITY STRATEGY GIVEN THE "HYBRIDIZATION" OF THE MARITIME DOMAIN

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Maritime strategies have always been part of the solution to strengthen maritime security. In the currently changing geopolitical environment, they apparently need to be readapted to threats that are completely different from the ones in the past: the hybrid ones. In order to cope with this mutant threat comprising all the elements making up the hybrid phenomenon, there is an acute need for revised and even innovative strategic response options. The aim of the paper is to prove that the only way of offering decision-makers a coherent and fully integrated vision, meant to ensure the security of maritime traffic and infrastructure, is the implementation of an adequate maritime strategy. Although it may not be a universal and fully guaranteed solution in this regard, the conclusion of the article shows that it is the only viable and decent answer to the ongoing maritime hybridity.

**Keywords:** maritime domain; hybridity; maritime strategy.

Throughout history, maritime security strategies came up as capstone strategic documents for addressing the issue of maritime security. For decades, maritime strategies and their implementing plans have been some of the main strategic response options and primary tools and, implicitly, a significant part of the solution for assuring, maintaining and consolidating the *overarching security of the maritime domain*. The idea has been promoted by different experts. For example, one of them, a professor of maritime history, makes a credible case for the maritime strategies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century emphasizing their importance for the power and influence of a country at peacetime, as well as its possibilities of defence during a conflict (Hattendorf 2013, 1-4).

Yet, in the current security context, when the world is facing elements pertaining to hybrid warfare, riparian states need to understand that, one way or another, the same strategies must cope with that type of threat. The so-called hybridity of nowadays confrontational environment is not a land-centric security issue anymore as it has been continuously extended and expanded offshore, reaching the maritime domain. Actually, hybrid warfare differs from all the others as "it potentially includes and/or combines all domains of warfare"

(Najzer 2020, 147). Therefore, taking into consideration that the maritime domain has been transformed into another hybrid environment, the maritime strategies have to continue to represent that sustainable part of the solution for the inclusive maritime security. As shown at the level of military academic community, "a strategy should define ends, identify ways and develop means for reaching the ends" (Scipanov 2020, 85). In this regard, in the same framework, maritime strategies can be perceived as appropriate and suitable strategic options and tools used for rebalancing and rebuilding the stability and safeguarding the prosperity assured by economic sectors directly associated with the maritime domain. Moreover, this security concern should be on the agenda of every individual maritime nation, of every multinational organizational framework as a cluster of nations sharing the same values, security or economic interests and objectives, nations that together are enjoying and exploiting the benefits and opportunities of the maritime domain.

As shown in the title of this article, its main objective is to bring to attention the issue of the hybridity directly affecting and undermining the maritime security, hereinafter called maritime hybridity. That is in fact our initial and basic assumption that we are going to check: the fact that the maritime domain has already been targeted by hybrid dynamics. Using qualitative research

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methods and analytical procedures we are going to refer to a set of defining aspects from relevant publications dedicated to hybrid warfare in the attempt to raise awareness upon the necessity of shifting the threat perception in the maritime field from the conventional or traditional approach to the one incurred by the combination of unconventional and conventional threats currently manifested. The second research hypothesis would be that, as a normal reaction to the situation, all the strategic tools meant to assure and consolidate the maritime security must be readdressed and reshaped. Arguments regarding this necessity will be brought starting from some existing maritime strategies that acknowledge maritime hybridity and are able to mitigate its undermining goals and effects.

Equally important to mention, this endeavor is conducted in a purely personal note, strictly based on ideas and opinions belonging to the author, which do not represent or reflect, in any way, the official position or policy adopted by the Romanian authorities in the field.

### **Hibridity in the maritime domain – a new reality?**

As shown in one of the most significant current works regarding the maritime domain "the reasons for the importance of the sea can be connected to four broad attributes, stemming from the sea itself: the sea is a source of resources, a medium of transportation, a medium of information and a medium for domination" (Till 2013, 6). It is only natural therefore that the modern approach to sea power cover in large measure "the geostrategic and economic realms" (Najzer 2020, 149). One of the most conspicuous and impactful alert message concerning the imminence of the hybridity rolling out in maritime domain was that raised by Admiral (ret.) J. Stavridis. This prominent figure of both US military and NATO command structure is the author of an article in which hybridity is presented as "spreading into the maritime sphere" (Stavridis 2016, 366) generating a high degree of concern. The fact that a naval flag officer was evidently preoccupied with the evolution of this phenomenon, assessing that hybridity was going to register another level of novelty by pivoting to the maritime domain is notable for many reasons.

Firstly, because that imaginary, but still scary, scenario described by Stavridis talked of

a mechanism focused on gradually eroding and directly affecting the maritime infrastructure, luring, influencing and winning the minds of the targeted audiences in the benefit of the hybrid aggressor. At that specific moment in time, that stuff could have been perceived as just simple food for thought. Currently, it could easily be assessed as an accurate, confident and gloomy prediction. At that specific moment, in 2016, the only inadvertence was the time horizon expected and anticipated for the manifestation of the hybrid threats in the maritime domain. Stavridis initially predicted a decade, which in reality was definitely just half of it, if not less.

Secondly, from another angle, the picture depicted by Stavridis can be simultaneously seen as a subtle metaphor, translating the famous 2014 *little green men* showing up in Crimean Peninsula into *little blue men* emerging in the maritime domain. Moreover, regarding its predictive character, that red flag gave us a strong flavor of the possible role played by the instruments of power involved in maritime hybridity, respectively the military, diplomatic, and informational ones. The specific tactics used in that imaginary maritime hybrid aggression described by Stavridis consisted in a combination of hard and soft power, an overlapping of paramilitary and military-style highly kinetic actions, conducted by maritime platforms, completed by cyber-attacks, influencing propaganda and diplomatic interference. Deductively, all those instruments of power are supposed to be used in support of the economic one, due to the tendency of extending control over any disputed zones and territories in the maritime domain and implicitly the access to offshore maritime resources. Shortly, these could be seen as the quintessence and the real stake of maritime hybridity, as "maritime hybrid warfare is based on a series of small individual steps or stages, each of which does not upend the maritime balance of power on its own" (Najzer 2020, 152), but together may have an extremely significant effect.

Because we have already used the 2014 Crimean Peninsula annexation as a well-known reference of the hybrid phenomenon recognition, according to some experts, even that episode had "many maritime elements" (Murphy, Hoffman and Schaub 2016, 4). The list of tactics used included different hostile and aggressive actions such



as chasing, bumping, disabling and damaging, boarding, seizing and confiscating the naval ships of the Ukrainian fleet. In fact, according to the same source, that was possible because the Ukrainian naval forces were literally trapped and unable to go to sea after the scuttling and sinking of a Russian warship in the middle of Sevastopol harbour entrance, almost totally choked by that voluntarily wrecked naval platform.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the majority if not all of the same tactics associated with hybridity in the maritime domain were used in the 2018 Kerch Strait incident for denying and blocking the free passage through that natural bottleneck and transiting point between Black Sea and Azov Sea. That perception is supported by the detailed description of the incident within the framework of an elaborated analysis belonging to a multinational group of specialists (Ducaru and Hodges 2018, 3), also including two representatives of the New Generation Warfare Center, an organizational entity totally focused on the study of this type of threat. Even though in this specific case that violent escalation of force was considered the end of hybridity (Ducaru and Hodges 2018, 4-8), we believe that it actually did not happen, given the further developments, dynamics and evolutions of the regional security situation and of the maritime security of the Black Sea.

In these conditions, unfortunately, the above mentioned warning raised by Stavridis has gradually become a reality or a *new reality*. A supportive argument for that is the content of an important strategic document belonging to one of the most powerful maritime nations, the United States (US), that has revealed exactly the same thing. Here we are talking about the latest 2020 US Tri-Service Maritime Strategy that acknowledges that this type of *maritime hybridity* is present in the maritime domain. Thus, in its preamble (Navy 2020, 1-6), two state actors, People's Republic of China and Russian Federation, are indicated as excelling in the current competition continuum by employing their own instruments of power for undermining and remodelling the international order and governance to their own benefit, by promoting and pursuing unilaterally their interests. By doing that, both perpetrators are trying to "exert control over natural marine resources and restrict access to the oceans" (Navy 2020, 2).

This combination of getting control over maritime domain resources, of imposing restrictions and impeding in any way on the legally granted rights to access and use sounds illegitimate or even illegal. In real life, in daily routine activities specific to all economic sectors related to the maritime domain, that sort of limitation or interdiction equals implicitly a denial of the freedom of navigation and maneuver. Those denials and interdictions in the maritime domain are far from inducing the idea of a safe and secure environment. This level of unsafety and insecurity affects regionally or even globally the supply chain, a disturbing factor which can generate, in a cascading way, both security implications and repercussions for international community. And that for the simple reason – if we keep in mind the last number - 90 – from the "70, 80, 90 rule" (Garcia 2014, 2), that defining formula for the maritime domain – that 90 percent of the worldwide commerce is assured by maritime transportation. That domino effect will create economic and social security disturbances and imbalances with a high toll on medium and long terms. Actually, it has been already acknowledged that "non-kinetic hybrid warfare has become the preferred way of engaging in coercion and geo-strategic competition" (Najžer 2020, 170).

If we corroborate that piece of information with the assumption presented by the Hybrid Center of Excellence in its dedicated handbook on maritime hybridity, respectively that the sea lines of communication represent a "potential instrument in Hybrid Conflicts" due to the "disturbances in shipping" (Savolainen and Gill 2019, 11) we think that our initial assumption starts to be increasingly concrete and justified.

Even though throughout the earlier invoked new US maritime strategy there are no direct references to any of those well-known concepts directly associated to hybridity, like *hybrid warfare* or *hybrid threats*, *hybrid tactics*, the way of approaching and defining this new reality in the strategy's "Problem Statement" itself tells us tacitly a different story. The invoked vulnerability of the maritime domain to that sort of "malign behavior below the threshold of war" (Savolainen and Gill 2019, 6) does represent an essential hint in terms of hybridity. And here we have in mind the description provided in the content of the first product of Multinational Capability Development Campaign project,



namely Countering Hybrid Warfare (MCDC/CHW), dedicated to facilitating the understanding of the hybridity, and named accordingly in a self-explanatory way – *Understanding Hybrid Warfare*. As part of the conclusions, hybrid warfare is depicted as operating and remaining below those "thresholds of detection and response" (Cullen 2017, 26) which, in our opinion, is basically the same modality of describing the phenomenon in other words.

Anyway, in terms of acknowledging this new hybrid reality, this 2020 US maritime strategy does represent a big step forward. At least, if we compare it with the previous 2015 version (U.S. Navy 2015), which presented the conventional and traditional threats, but did not mention anything about the hybrid threats nor give any clue about maritime hybridity. After a brief analysis, we can state that the same situation is to be found in the case of other relevant maritime strategies belonging to two different security constructs with multiregional ambitions in the maritime domain, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU). Neither *Alliance Maritime Strategy* (NATO 2011), nor *EU Maritime Security Strategy* (Commission 2020), mentions anything about maritime hybridity, both of them covering strictly the more traditional and more conventional threats affecting maritime security. In both cases, most probably there could be an explanation and, why not, an excuse for this, respectively their specific years of being designed, developed and launched: 2014 for NATO maritime strategy and 2015 for EU maritime at least when we use as a timeline reference the 2014 Crimean episode.

Therefore, despite the fact that the real potential and the possible existence of the hybrid threats in the maritime domain did not get enough attention, as we have illustrated earlier, this new reality of maritime hybridity has become more and more visible, harder and harder to be ignored. We will thus consider maritime hybrid warfare as "the hybrid warfare which takes place at or from the sea" (Najžer 2020, 152). Next, we will try to identify and explain the possibly best strategic options and solutions for countering this insidious threat.

#### **Maritime strategies – strategic options and instruments for countering maritime hybridity**

Based on this new reality, actively tailored by maritime hybridity, we will try to identify and

emphasize the strategic solution and sustainable option for a successful formula of dealing with this serious maritime security issue. Definitely, the simple fact that you are totally aware of the existence of a specific threat, no matter its conventional or unconventional character, is an incontestable advantage; yet, just by being aware of the existence of the hybrid threats in the maritime domain, we cannot say that the issue is solved. As shown by Lawrence Freedman, "the conflicts of the 2000 have demonstrated the need for an approach that combines general understanding of strategic behaviour with the specifics of a set of conflicts which are individually complicated" (Freedman 2016, 419).

Regarding strategic tools and solutions for coping with this new reality and for avoiding its turning into a *new normality* or a *new routine*, besides some ad-hoc responsive reactions and neat solutions providing temporary and fragmented problem-solving options to some particular situations, the strategic response option, that integrating solution providing the big security framework, must be a comprehensive one, covering the maritime domain complexity in its entirety and particularly addressing to its specificity. For getting the real sense of the bigger picture of maritime security affected by hybridity, this type of threats and actions can be prevented and countered only by a complete understanding of a series of patterning characteristics and defining factors associated with hybrid warfare, which are fully applicable in this specific case of maritime domain. Among them, we can mention the hybrid aggressor's modality of gradually involving and using its instruments of power. In other words, that is the same orchestrated horizontal and vertical "escalation" of hybridity, graphically depicted in MCDC/CHW project (NATO 2011, 9), or the equivalent of the gradual behavioral changes of the hybrid aggressor. That equivalence can go further and be seen as the variation, intensification and synchronization of its continuously adopted and adapted hybrid actions, tactics and methods for targeting the maritime domain-related "critical functions and vulnerabilities" (NATO 2011, 9) of the targeted part that is under hybrid aggression.

For a better and easier modality of portraying the challenge presented by the maritime hybridity and its specific threats and actions, all the above





factors can be reflected via some simple, but still basic questions that decision-makers should consider. The first question would be: *What exactly is currently going on in the maritime domain, at which scale and with what amplitude?* Or in a simplified version, that would be the big concern regarding the ongoing posture, plans and actions of the hybrid aggressor, and the orchestration of its instruments of power exploited covertly and overtly for hybrid purposes. Probably for answering that you have to look closely at the aggressor's way of doing things and to try to understand and interpret what is happening in reality, beyond any deceptions and blurred perceptions. Additionally, you have to get the real scale of those actions, to see who and what is really behind those actions and to understand their overt or covert character.

The second question would be connected to the first one and related to the possible evolution of that kind of hybrid behavior along a time scale. That could be simply expressed as: *What are the short, medium and long-term intentions and benefits of the hybrid aggressor intrinsically interrelated to the maritime hybridity?* By that we could anticipate the next moves and actions of the same hybrid actor in the same domain and already to crystalize the motivation and the trigger of this hybrid behavior. For that, for understanding the fueling and the combustion of its determination, you have to try to put yourself in the aggressor's shoes, to try to look at the maritime domain in the same way as the hybrid aggressor does and, if possible, with the same virtual lens.

Based on those two previous questions and deep concerns, there is another important question to clarify. The third basic question would be related to the so-called end-state of this maritime hybridity, or *What are the real objectives and desired effects of the hybrid aggression in the maritime domain?* By that it would be easier go deeper into the matter so as to get a more intimate sense of the cumulative gains and benefits of the maritime hybridity planned and committed by the perpetrator. Generally speaking, in this competition continuum, that would not be so difficult for the maritime domain since, as we stated in the previous section of the paper and in accordance with the similar explanation offered in the US maritime strategy, the major motivator looks to be that race for free access and exploitation of maritime resources. That, of course, is naturally

corroborated with controlling and exerting influence in more numerous and more extended maritime areas.

If the first three basic questions can be easily seen as predominantly aggressor-centric for the sake of trying to clarify the dynamics of its hybrid aggression, the following ones should be seen as a self-centric radiography of the part targeted by the hybrid aggression that must react and counteract to protect and defend itself.

Therefore, the fourth question should be focused on one's own vulnerabilities and would sound like this: *Which of own maritime domain's activity sectors are the most vulnerable in a hybrid context?* This question is valid just because threats and vulnerabilities work hand in hand, and the probability of increasing the level of the threats rises exponentially with the vulnerabilities.

The next one comes naturally and can be easily phrased as: *What must be done to reduce or even eliminate your specific maritime-related vulnerabilities?* In this case, the message is very clear, and the action is not so hard to predict. All specific vulnerabilities must be identified via an internal mechanism, by involving all the maritime community, no matter if that is done nationally or at multinational level, in a purely individual or regional approach.

The last but not least basic question should be the one hitting directly the core of the issue: *Which are the most appropriate tools and response options against maritime hybridity?* This one is getting us to the core of our present scientific endeavor.

All that construct is supported and somehow validated by the general framework of countering hybridity (Cullen 2017, 17-23). In this specific framework, the first aspect emphasized is *making it clear what the threat is and what to do specifically towards its countering after being discovered and identified*. Regarding this, the countering framework includes the need of setting some decisive and ultimate goals correlated with the level of ambition assumed for that. In addition to *setting strategic goals*, there is a need for *setting thresholds* or establishing those *red lines* that are not acceptable to be crossed.

At this point we have to come back to the problem itself and remind one of the maritime hybridity patterns, the synchronized exploitation of the instruments of power. That brings invariably



in discussion the concept of strategy or more precisely of the grand strategy. According to W. Martel, one of the functions, and we humbly would add the roles, of a grand strategy is "to coordinate, balance, and integrate all types of national means" (Martel 2015, 24). Martel includes on its list of means only the "diplomatic, economic, technological, and military power" (Martel 2015, 25), but in the specific case of maritime domain, due to its complexity and unicity, we would also add the legal, informational, intelligence means in order to "achieve the articulated ends" (Martel 2015, 28). Even though the instruments of power are not invoked directly by Martel, we can easily associate them with those power levers, the *means*, a distinctive part of that inseparable triad composed by *means-ways-ends*. Also, if we translate that in the hybrid aggressor way of thinking and doing things, if we are joining all the existing and deductive dots, this can be easily deciphered as a real and palpable framework and pattern applicable to a grand strategy, focused on hybridity. This assumption is a decent and sustainable one, since according to J. Schmidt, one of the Hybrid COE experts, in case of hybridity, everything is about a strategy, a "hybrid, grand strategy" (Schmid 2019, 5). Definitely, the hybridity manifested in the maritime domain, like in any other domain, is not the result of a chaotic and ad-hoc thinking and acting to do erratic things. Most probably, it is implemented and put into practice in accordance with an elaborated strategy, a hybrid strategy.

For that reason, in these circumstances, we do believe that the strategic option, the desired solution, is right in front of our eyes. All we have to do is to put together all the relevant factors, to answer that set of those basic questions and, on a case by case basis, to establish the legal thresholds additionally to the other relevant ones. Establishing, prioritizing and reviewing, if necessary, the maritime security objectives, corroborated with the maritime security interests, could constitute the working framework for materializing this big solution. That heterogeneous conglomerate could be both the backbone and the starting point for creating and building up a coherent strategy or, why not, for updating an existing one. The same argument can be found in the above mentioned MCDC/CHW work, as one of its key points, in fact a necessity in terms of designing and implementing "a strategy to

counter hybrid warfare" (Schmid 2019, 9). Based on this fundament, we have to fully accept and agree that in this specific case of maritime hybridity the most suitable and applicable strategic option and solution would be *a maritime strategy*.

Generally speaking, "we can say that where we can find evidence, or infer, that state leaders have defined large-scale objectives (...) and allocated resources (...) we are dealing with strategy" (Heuser 2020, 20). In this context, we could say that a maritime strategy makes the connection between the political and the military domains, dealing with "the principles governing a war in which the sea is a substantial factor" (Corbett 2915, 8). Therefore, the idea is to come up with a new or to update an existing one so as to decrease the level and degree of maritime insecurity and instability. At the same time, that would be the appropriate tool to restore, maintain and rebuild the maritime security affected by a hybrid strategy. In these conditions, in terms of maritime security, that maritime strategy would be quite the opposite of the hybrid strategy.

#### **Benefits of the strategic response options to maritime hybridity**

As we have shown above, "the maritime battle space is complex and multi-dimensional, and success in naval warfare will require navies to overcome a wide variety of threats across different but interconnected environments" (Speller 2014, 173). The maritime strategy can provide a coherent and fully integrated vision for safeguarding the maritime traffic and infrastructure. Maybe this is not a universal and fully guaranteed solution, a one-size fits-all formula, but could be accepted as a compelling, viable and decent enough answer to the ongoing, continuously amplifying maritime hybridity. That way of approaching and revealing things, similarly to what has been done in the specific case of the earlier exemplified 2020 US Maritime Strategy, is a strong point. The simple fact that a completely relevant maritime strategy admits the existence of this kind of hybrid challenge in the maritime domain is a step forward, a real and visible progress, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, when it comes to increasing awareness, through that open way of admitting and revealing the existence of these kind of threats directly affecting the maritime domain, we can assess this approach as being the appropriate one. If you want to face an

issue, to handle it properly and to provide adequate solutions, you have to fully understand that issue, to admit that there is an issue and to strive to manage it. Rejecting or ignoring that specific issue could be an approach, but a temporary one just aggravating and deepening the seriousness and the haziness of the issue itself. On long term we can predict that could be simply a strategic gaffe.

Secondly, that would be a red flag for the end-user community of any maritime strategies. Here we are referring to the maritime community but also to different types of leaders from politico-diplomatic, and politico-military level, CEOs, naval flag officers and commanders accompanied by a multitude of advisors, subject matter experts, any other kind specialists covering different areas of expertise, both practitioners and exponents of different domains as security and defence, economy, technology, law, maritime infrastructure, no matter their institutional affiliation. As a matter of fact, strategy itself, at general level, is the one "making the connection between the military power and the political decision of a state" (Gray 2010, 28). This approach would create a solid ground for increasing the level of awareness and alertness about the hybrid interference in the maritime domain. Since maritime strategy itself is a vehicle of strategic communication, its existence can assure a real wake-up call for those not so or yet aware of the hybridity dynamics in the maritime environment.

Thirdly, these strategic options, the maritime strategies, are also important for improving the maritime security culture, for altering and even changing mentalities, modifying the more conventional mindset regarding the threat perception at least among maritime community members.

Regarding the pragmatic side, taking into consideration and starting from those three meanings of a strategy smartly portrayed by N. Silove (Silove 2018, 27-57) we can assume that all of them would be useful for preserving and consolidating maritime security. On one hand, those "grand plans" could be helpful for implementing the maritime strategies. On the other hand, that "grand posture" and that "grand behavior" in maritime domain could assure both a credible deterrence and a robust response. Finally, the grand plans, posture and behavior on a general level could also be derived from these maritime strategies, constituting collateral benefits of this specific strategies. Therefore, the solution

for countering maritime hybridity would be elaborating a maritime strategy capable of covering the following aspects:

- acknowledging the existence of hybrid phenomenon in the maritime domain and offering details regarding hybrid threats and attacks;
- establishing and implementing a framework for countering maritime hybridity;
- identifying concrete solutions, pro-active, pre-emptive and reactive measures, capable to ensure the timely detection, deterrence, and countering of the entire spectrum of hybrid threats.

This triple combination is also the essence of the second product of the MCDC/CHW project dedicated to countering hybridity (Cullen 2017). In this product, *detect, deter and respond* are some interdependent and basic components creating a sort of cycle for countering hybridity. Implicitly, they also represent some viable tools and options in the framework of countering hybrid warfare. That triad is the combination of measures meant to assure an adequate level of situational awareness, enough dissuading, discouraging and preventing measures of any further hybrid aggression or the legitimate reaction in case of crossing the red lines. In our maritime-focused analysis, we can exploit in a creative way our imagination and translate this cycle into something more palpable and fitted for any countering endeavor. Here we refer to a *trident*, resembling the one used as a weapon and scepter by the God of the Sea, Poseidon, whose three little spears or prongs can be associated with those three essential components of hybridity countering strategy. The suggestive image of this reinvented, contemporary trident is depicted below.

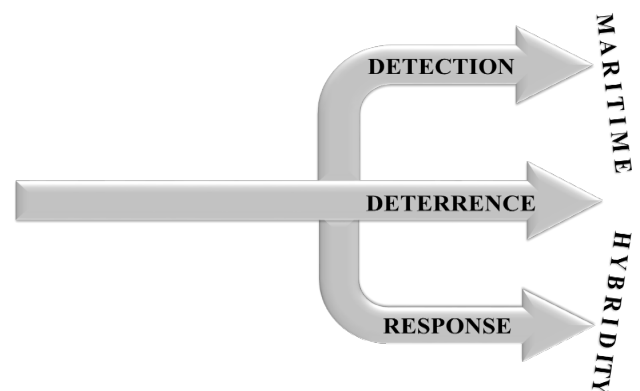


Figure 1 Countering maritime hybridity "trident"  
Source: author





## Conclusions

Maybe initially maritime hybridity was as invisible, insidious, and surprising as the torpedo-related tactics in their early days and those were the specific reasons for its lack of conspicuousness. But apparently, more recently, it has been more obvious, more intuitive and not so ambiguous as it used to be. To acknowledge this fact was one of the specific aim of this endeavor.

So, we can affirm that hybridity in the maritime domain has become gradually an incontestable fact and there is no more room for ignoring this new reality, for diminishing or making it to look less important and significant than it is. No matter how new or old it is, the presence of the hybrid phenomenon in the maritime domain is a reality that must be handled in a proper way. The article constitutes a pseudo-manifest pleading for the need of acknowledging this new reality and for countering it in order to avoid letting it become a new normality. The main focus was on providing a doable and feasible a strategic response option for managing this type of complex threats manifested in the maritime domain. The identified one was the maritime strategy. In this context, a maritime strategy is not only a strategic response option to do that, but also both a tool and a solution for countering maritime hybridity.

Also, we were able to validate and confirm our initial assumptions, respectively that there has been hybridity in the maritime domain, that the maritime strategies could be a strategic solution for countering this maritime hybridity. The latter is a fact validated inclusively through their specific benefits of those strategic response options.

As a strong recommendation, *all the relevant maritime strategies should be updated and readjusted* in order to be aligned with a type of approach similar to the one comprised in the new US Maritime Strategy, and likewise *the countries that do not have such a strategy should try to elaborate and implement such a document as soon as possible*. By that we mean *admitting and emphasizing this new reality, the infiltration and existence of the hybridity in maritime domain*. Among those relevant strategic capstones, we can recall at least two multiregional and multinational-focused maritime strategies, respectively the NATO and EU maritime strategies. Once aligned and synchronized in countering the maritime hybridity,

altogether those strategies could make a difference at maritime community level. For, as Geoffrey Till was saying, "...if the seas are not safe, then nothing else can be safe" (Till, Geoffrey 2012, 179).

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