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THE ATLANTIC SPACE. MAIN CHALLENGES TO SECURITY

O ESPAÇO DO ATLÂNTICO E OS PRINCIPAIS DESAFIOS À SEGURANÇA

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Abstract

This paper aims to demonstrate that the centrality of the Atlantic remains a reality, owing mainly to the continued geoeconomic importance of the European Community and the revitalized transatlantic link, but above all to the interest shown by the South Atlantic's emerging and re-emerging powers. This space is inhabited by several threats and challenges to international security, which this paper briefly analyses along with the responses of international organisations with consistent policies and practices for the region.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Atlantic, threats and challenges, international organisations.

Resumo

Neste artigo procura-se mostrar que a centralidade do Atlântico continua a ser uma realidade, sobretudo pela manutenção da importância geoeconómica da Europa comunitária, pelo novo dinamismo do link transatlântico, mas sobretudo pelo interesse mostrado pelos poderes emergentes e re-emergentes no Atlântico Sul. Neste Espaço manifestam-se diversas ameaças e desafios à segurança internacional que são aqui brevemente analisadas, bem como a resposta possível dada pelas organizações internacionais com políticas e práticas consequentes para a região.

Palavras-chave: *Geopolítica, Atlântico, ameaças e desafios; organizações internacionais.*

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Introduction

Although today's International Relations and Geopolitics discourse maintains that there has been a power shift from the political and economic centrality of the Euro-Atlantic area to the Asia-Pacific region (Nye, 2014, Biscop, 2015), we will attempt to demonstrate in this paper that, on the contrary, there has been a reaffirmation of the Atlantic — not only because of the geoeconomic importance of the European Community and the still dynamic transatlantic link, but also because emerging and re-emerging powers have shown interest in the South Atlantic.

In this vast space that, for decades, seemed relatively peaceful in military terms, there are now several threats to transnational security, posing a number of challenges both to its sovereign countries and to the international organisations whose interests and policies have an impact on the Atlantic, which we will analyse in this paper.

1. The Atlantic Space

In terms of its geography, the Atlantic is 86 million and 560 thousand km2 in size, covering about 24% of the earth's surface and spreading across 65 countries (30 countries in America, 11 in Europe, and 24 in Africa) (Correia, 2010), all of them very different in political, economic, military, social, and cultural terms.

This massive body of water that extends from the North Pole to the Antarctic includes the Gulf of Mexico, the North Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Caribbean Sea, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea, and has six possible points of access: two to the north (north-east and north-west), two to the centre (the Panama Canal and the Strait of Gibraltar), and two to the south (the Drake passage and the Cape of Good Hope), and its narrowest part is located between Natal (Brazil) and Freetown (Sierra Leone).

The vast space of the Atlantic Basin is characterised by considerable socio-political heterogeneity and at the same time by increasing interdependence. This space is inhabited by a community of shared values, such as democracy and free trade, which coexist with the different political, economic, social, and cultural traditions of its various regions and countries (Grevi, 2016). Countries within the Atlantic space have different levels of economic development, institutional stability and security, different ideologies, religious cleavages, family organisation, and different interpretations of values such as human rights.

As for its political regimes and systems, most Atlantic countries are democracies, more precisely: 62 democracies, 12 hybrid regimes, and 7 authoritarian regimes (Gratius, 2015); most European countries are democracies (88%), but in America the percentage is smaller (only 2/3 of countries), and, in Atlantic Africa, only 20% of countries are considered democracies, 43% are autocracies, and 37% are hybrid regimes (Gratius, 2015)[1].

[1] For further information on these statistical data, see: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016

From a geopolitical perspective, the North Atlantic is more homogeneous than the Middle and South Atlantic, and the area corresponds to what we know as the West, a shared community of common values.

In this vast space, the Macaronesia archipelagos (Azores, Canary Islands, Cape Verde, and Madeira) play an integrating role between North and South due to the functional power granted to them by their geography, which is at the origin of the different territories they belong to, and are crossed by multiple links connecting various organisations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP).

The two largest economies in the world, the European Union and the United States, are located in the Atlantic space, lending the area geoeconomic and geopolitical importance in the international system.

Economic and investment interdependence has been increasing in the Atlantic basin since the beginning of the current century. The intensity of this effect is variable because of the many diverse economies in this space. Trade accounts for 40% of all cargo crossing the Atlantic between North America and Europe, followed by EU-Africa trade (21%), and trade between North and South and Central America (18%) (Grevi, 2016).

Figure 1 shows the vessel traffic in the various maritime lines of communication, which is more intense between the two development poles in the North Atlantic, the US and Europe, reflecting the commercial dynamics between the two margins, but there is also a significant amount of traffic in the south-north sea route, as we can see in the figure, which depicts the shipping density between Brazil and the rest of the world.

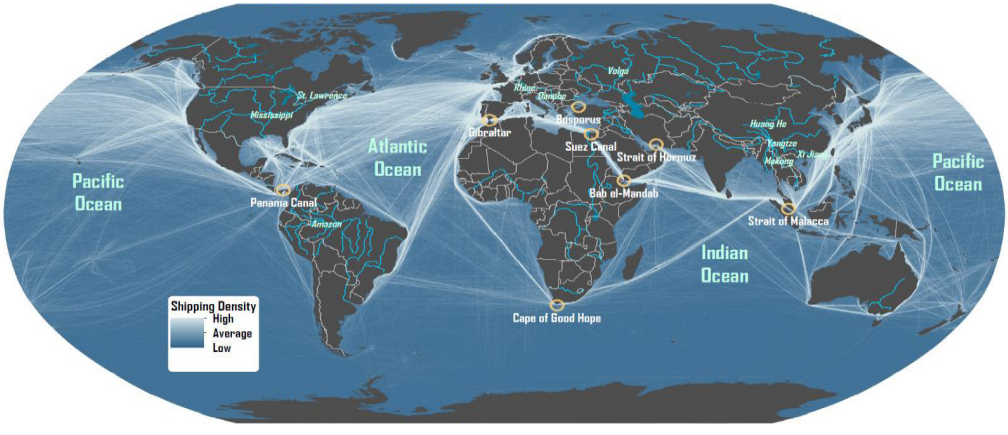

Figure 1 – Domains of maritime circulation

Source: Retrieved from: <http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/maritime_security/docs/maritime-security-information-toolkit_en.pdf>.

On average, 359 merchant ships use the lines of communications of the Brazilian coast every day (NM/d), moving more than 350 billion dollars every year (Guerra, 2011).

Despite these significant figures, the South Atlantic is still considered a transit ocean (Correia, 2010), and the main routes are located along the American and African coasts. It should be noted, however, that the main south-north routes cross the geopolitical equator and run near the archipelagos of Macaronesia, which adds to their importance.

The Atlantic space holds a large part of the world's unexplored fossil reserves in what can be referred to as its energy system, including 40% of all oil, 20% of all natural gas, and 40% of all coal (BP, 2015), and it also holds 67% of technically recoverable shale gas reserves, 77% of installed solar power capacity, 64% of installed wind power capacity, and 59% of geothermal energy capacity (Kraemer and Stefes, 2016).

The largest proven oil reserves are concentrated in America, specifically in Venezuela and Canada, which currently hold the first and third largest proven oil reserves, estimated at 1297 and 167 billion barrels, respectively (Lété, 2015, p.5). Brazil's oil reserves, for example, are estimated at about 46 billion barrels and could reach up to between 70 and 100 billion barrels, in addition to holding a large volume of gas (Hanson, 2008).

In Atlantic Africa, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea region, oil production accounts for about 16% of world production. Nigeria is in the lead with 40 billion barrels of proven reserves, followed by two countries of the CPLP, Angola and Equatorial Guinea with about 13 billion barrels and 1.7 billion barrels of proven reserves respectively (Lété, 2015, p.5). In this unstable region, almost all the oil fields are located offshore, which keeps them relatively safe from the instability that has plagued the continental area (Guedes, 2012). The region also includes the Congo Basin (the second largest hydraulic and rain forest complex in the world after the Amazon), with nearly two million square kilometres.

There have also been recent discoveries of oil and shale gas reserves. Five of the ten largest shale oil reserves are located in the Atlantic basin (Argentina, Canada, USA, Mexico, and Venezuela), and the largest shale gas reserves are mainly located in the US, with 24,405 billion m3, followed by Argentina with 21,914 billion m3, and Mexico with 19,281 billion m3 of proven reserves (*US Energy Information Administration*).

Based on the above data, the Atlantic Space has all the conditions to become the leading producer and exporter of energy, shifting the traditional correlations of power. This status quo can become an "objective way of exerting geopolitical influence, as unique as it is potentially decisive, in what can be considered as the silent rise of the Atlantic in international politics" (Lima, 2016).

2. Security Threats

The Atlantic space is also inhabited by several threats to transnational security, and in this paper we will address the following[2]:

- failed states;
- the convergence between Transnational Criminal Organizations (CTOs), various illicit trafficking, and terrorism;
- maritime piracy;
- maritime border disputes.

These threats should not be interpreted in isolation, as in our opinion they are interdependent and intrinsically correlated, the boundary between one type and the other is rather thin, and they are often interrelated.

2.1. Failed states

Of the threats listed above, the most serious, it seems to us, is that of weakened states, which can and should be linked to the other threats, since states that are unable to assert their sovereignty in all areas of their territory are permeable to the creation and proliferation of other threats to transnational security (Garcia and Ferro, 2013).

In the Atlantic Basin, there are multiple political units in situations of fragility (weak, failed, or collapsed states). According to the Fund For Peace index for 2016, there are 12 political units in this situation, 11 in Africa and one, Haiti, in the Caribbean.

The fragility of a state is strongly linked to regional conflict. A large number of conflicts plague the Atlantic space, such as (to mention only the most relevant): in the Middle East — the persistent Israeli-Palestinian problem, the civil war in Syria and Iraq, the subversive phenomenon on a global scale that is Daesh; in Europe — the persistent problems with Russia due to the situation in Ukraine and Georgia; in Turkey — the recurring Cypriot and Kurdish issues, in addition to internal convulsions.

Over the last half century, the African continent has seen constant structural violence, and in 2015, according to the Conflict Barometer published by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, about half of all highly violent conflicts in the world took place there[3]. Atlantic Africa must also deal with the disputed status of Western Sahara, the internal conflicts in Libya and Mali, and the manifestations of instability and insecurity in the Sahel; there are also conflicts in Nigeria, both over the Niger Delta and with Boko Haram, and

[2] Bruno Lété (2015) considers that there are only three emerging threats in the Atlantic space: "The convergence between trafficking, organised crime and terrorism spurs instability; piracy endangers the Atlantic's expanding maritime transportation network; the vulnerability of the critical energy infrastructure jeopardises regional security." On the other hand, in her work *Maritime Territorial Delimitation and Maritime Security in the Atlantic* (2014), Inês Sousa mainly addresses piracy and issues related to boundary delimitation.

[3] For further details on the analysis carried out in this report, see: Conflict Barometer 2015. *Disputes, non-violent crisis, violent crisis, limited wars, wars*. N. 24. Heildelberg.

we cannot fail to mention the humanitarian disaster in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where violence is endemic.

2.2. The convergence between Transnational Criminal Organisations (TCO), various types of illicit trafficking, and terrorism

Transnational Criminal Organisations (TCO) use the funds they generate to acquire a level of power that competes with that of the states of the region. They enforce that power by creating various forms of instability in the countries where they operate. This instability spans all dimensions, from the social to the economic, from the political to the psychological. At the same time, TCO seek to gain political power indirectly through the corruption of sovereign bodies and officials, aiming to intimidate the established power, ensuring that they have total freedom of action for their criminal activities. This situation further undermines already weak state structures.

According to the United Nations Office on Crime and Drugs, the cost of transnational organised crime is estimated at about 3.6% of the global economy, and money laundering alone costs at least 2% of the global gross domestic product every year[4].

On the West Atlantic margin, the most relevant phenomena are the criminal violence of drug cartels and the thousands of deaths caused by their actions[5]. Countries like Guatemala, Honduras, or Mexico struggle to contain the high levels of violent crime that threaten the State's authority (Grevi, 2016).

One of the main forms of trafficking TCO are involved in is the traffic of cocaine produced in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, which is mainly smuggled into the US and Europe, however, consumption in South America, particularly in Brazil, is also increasing[6].

In West Africa, most countries are among the world's poorest and cocaine trafficking is estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars[7]. Drug trafficking networks often take advantage of the structural weaknesses of countries such as Guinea-Bissau and, with the approval of local elites, have turned the region into an important transit centre for the drug distribution route into Europe[8].

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[4] For further information on the topic see the 2011 UNODC report, *Estimating illicit financial flows resulting from drug trafficking and other transnational organized crimes Research Report*.

[5] According to the 2015 Global Burden of Armed Violence report published by the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and South Africa have the highest violent death rates.

[6] The five volumes of the World Drug Report 2017 feature various statistical data on production, trafficking, policy implications, supply, use, and health consequences of drugs, on the cultivation, production, and consumption of cocaine, opiates, and cannabis, and includes a detailed analysis of the world market for synthetic drugs. The fifth volume is exclusively devoted to the nexus between the drug problem, organised crime, illicit financial flows, corruption, and terrorism. Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org/wdr2017/index.htmlDE.

[7] World Drug Report 2017.

[8] For further information on the topic see the 2014 report issued by the West Africa Commission on Drugs, analysing the transformation of Guinea Bissau into a major drug centre in West Africa.

The 2014 report of the West Africa Commission on Drugs features data for 2010 which show that, in that year, most of the cocaine flow from Latin America to West Africa crossed the Cape Verde archipelago, one of the major transit points between Latin America and the African continent; from there it was smuggled to the Atlantic coast of the region (Santos, 2014).

But TCO are not the only ones involved in this type of trafficking, which also affects the porous region of the Sahara-Sahel. Trends show that extremist groups and terrorist networks are also involved, either independently or in cooperation with organised crime groups. This region's various subversive groups have economic and symbiotic relationships with the Tuareg and Berber tribes, collaborating with them in the traffic of several products and especially in collecting taxes on these trafficked goods, engaging, for example, in the movement of undocumented workers, especially from Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Ghana (Harmon, 2015), and, in the case of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQUIM) or further south of the Boko Haram, they are also reported to be involved with drug trafficking or at least provide protection to traffickers[9], mainly to finance their operations or to smuggle terrorists or terrorist materials to a target country.

Another extremely important form of trafficking controlled by organised criminal organisations is small arms trafficking, which, according to the Council on Foreign Relations (2013), is estimated to represent a global market of one billion dollars per year. These weapons will then be used in criminal activities and in the various chaotic wars taking place all over the planet, with consequences for stability and international security, but above all for human security.

It is an interesting fact that the TCO operating, for example, in Atlantic Africa, in an attempt to win over the populations, assume some social responsibility roles, replacing the state in building roads, schools, and hospitals.

In Africa, this is compounded by heightened economic disparities and exponential population growth. The melting pot on the West African coast creates problems that ultimately encourage irregular immigration, forcing populations to move in search of security and well-being.

The phenomenon of migration (as a generator of tension and some instability), which flows predominantly into the countries of the west, where the new communities are almost never integrated into the local societies, increases the number of disenchanted persons and potential affiliates and combatants for the alternatives presented by global subversion groups.

Irregular immigration, which TCO use to their advantage, leads to the exploitation of human misery. One need but look at the dramatic situation of those who come in search of a European Eldorado only to find not gold, but misery. The *pateras* that set sail to the north

[9] For further information on these data, see the *World Drug Report* of 2017. For equally interesting data see *U.S. Agency for International Development (2013) – The development response to drug trafficking in Africa: a programming guide*. Washington.

margin of the Mediterranean or to the Canaries transport people from all over the African continent. They come mainly from West Africa, but also from Sudan, Chad, the Horn of Africa, and even from Southern Africa. In their search for security and well-being, these immigrants put their lives at great risk. Many of those who are not able to cross remain in the transit countries, which become their destination. They sometimes remain there for years and even divide their "jump operation" into phases, which also allows them to have several informal jobs during the journey to pay for the next stage (IOM, 2005).

2.3. Maritime piracy

Maritime piracy is not a new phenomenon. Its origins date back thousands of years, and it has spread to all parts of the planet since the fifteenth century, when maritime trade was established between the newly discovered territories and the major cities and between the east and the west.

The phenomenon resurfaced with new vigour in the current century, especially in the Strait of Malacca, and, between 2008 and 2011, in the Horn of Africa. Currently, the area of interest to this paper where it manifests with more intensity is the region of the Gulf of Guinea[10]. A second hotspot for piracy in the Atlantic basin, albeit a less significant one, is the coast of South America and the Caribbean Sea. But events reported on the margins of Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela, or around offshore oil fields in South America are mostly classified as counter-ship armed robberies rather than piracy[11].

For Bruno Lété (2015), maritime piracy "is the biggest threat against open and secure maritime transportation routes in the Atlantic Ocean". In the area of the Gulf of Guinea, piracy is a clear example of a threat to western economic and energy security, since this persistent criminal activity hinders the free movement of goods in the sea lines of communication.

Six-hundred piracy attacks were recorded in the Gulf of Guinea between 2002 and 2012, severely affecting the local economy and port activities (Grevi, 2016). In 2012, the Nigerian government estimated that 400,000 barrels were stolen every day (Chatam House, 2013).

In 2016, there was a considerable increase in violence at sea in the region, in contrast to the global figures for piracy and armed robbery against ships, which declined significantly. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reported 55 attacks or attempted attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, where more than half of the kidnappings and rescue operations occurred this year, with 34 seafarers seized from a total of 62 worldwide. The Niger Delta is the area with the most attacks (26%). This increase follows a period in which the phenomenon seemed to be decreasing in the region due to a gradual decline in attacks on vessels in the area between 2013 and 2015[12].

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[10] For further on the topic see: Levin, John-Clark; Pitney, John (2014) – *Private Anti-Piracy Navies: How Warships for hire are Changing Maritime Security*. Lexington Books. Maryland; and in Portuguese, by Guedes, Henrique (2015) – *A Pirataria Marítima Contemporânea* – as duas últimas décadas. Revista de Marinha. Lisbon.

[11] In their books, Sousa (2014) and Guedes (2014) explain the legal differences between the two.

[12] According to IMB figures, attacks in the region dropped from 52 incidents in 2013 to 41 incidents the following year, or 21%, and 31 incidents in 2015, or a further 24%. For updated statistical data, see: https://www.safety4sea.com/imb-reports-decline-in-piracy-numbers-in-first-half-of-2017/

The way pirates operate in West Africa is vastly different from the way they operate in the Horn of Africa, where pirates, with the support of local informal institutions, essentially capture ships and crew and demand a ransom. In the Gulf of Guinea, they work with the support of various institutions and their employees to obtain the location of the ships, schedules, type of cargo, and to ensure that, at the decisive moment, they "avert their eyes" and leave the ship and crew to their fate. There, cargo ships are usually stolen and transferred to other vessels, and are subsequently stored and sold on the international market, which reveals the complexity of the operation as well as the support and corruption of local institutions and authorities (Hastings and Phillips, 2015)[13].

Traditionally, piracy is seen as being caused by economic and political disorder and institutional weakness, or by illegal and unregulated fishing, so the decision to engage in piracy acts stems largely from poverty, and the reach of formal power is very limited (Hastings and Phillips, 2015)[14]. Hasan and Hassan (2016) state that the following underlying causes are at the root of the piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: legal and jurisdictional weakness; favourable geography; poor funding for the training of security forces and services; conflict and disorder; the promise of material rewards; a permissive political and legal environment; cultural acceptance; illegal fishing; the degradation of the environment; and easy access to firearms[15].

The acts of violence in the Gulf of Guinea constitute a heavy political, security, and economic burden at local, regional, and even global scales. The economic toll they take is extremely high, since in addition to ransoms or losses by theft we must account for, among other things, rising insurance premiums, the cost of new safety equipment, indirect costs with impact on local economies, and the commitment of naval forces, which, according to the One Earth Future Foundation 2014 report, are estimated at about one billion dollars per year[16].

There have also been violent attacks on critical energy infrastructures. In the region under analysis, they are mainly carried out by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). The region has recorded the most attacks against offshore platforms worldwide (Lété, 2015), suffering billions of dollars in damages. These attacks cause oil spills, which lead to environmental damage, and destabilise energy prices, resulting in multinational divestment.

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[13] Justin Hastings and Sarah Phillips (2015) conducted a relevant study, *Maritime Piracy business networks ad institutions in Africa*, where they make a comparative analysis between piracy in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, focusing on institutional, formal, and informal support and detailing the pirates' modus operandi.

[14] According to data provided by Timothy Walker (2013), illegal fishing is estimated at 37% of total catches in the Gulf of Guinea.

[15] For more on these topics, see: Hasan, Sayed; Hassan, Daud (2016) – *Current arrangements to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea Region: an evaluation. Journal of Maritime Law & Commerce*, Vol. 47, N. 2, April., pp. 171 – 217.

[16] The 2014 One Earth Future Foundation report, *The State of Maritime Piracy Report*, illustrates these economic and human costs by region. We must, however, be aware that the various existing studies differ in their methodologies and approaches, and cannot be compared directly, nor do they constitute a definitive assessment of piracy-related costs.

Attacks on critical energy infrastructures have occurred across the Atlantic Basin; in Colombia, there were 213 attacks by subversive groups in 2013 alone; and in Mexico, six pipelines were attacked in 2007, affecting supplies for the capital and nine other countries in the region (Lété, 2015).

2.4. Maritime border disputes

In the Atlantic basin, maritime border disputes (20 in total) can potentially escalate into crisis and conflict situations, with implications for security in the region and across the Atlantic space. These tensions or disputes over maritime borders have many historical roots and distinct political, social, economic, and security contexts and, as a rule, affect ownership and sovereignty over a given geographic area, involving a complex network of legal, scientific, and political issues[17].

We need only remember the war between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the archipelago of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands in the 1980s. Although a military conflict is not likely to occur, tensions could escalate due to the border dispute that resulted from the negotiations on the extension of the continental shelf, which is extremely rich in natural resources.

The 20 disputes identified can be categorised according to three different types of causes: 10 concern the definition of maritime borders; 6 stem from overlapping territorial claims, and 4 from situations of disputed sovereignty (Sousa, 2014).

These disputes will tend to increase, since many refer to boundary disputes that result from the extension of the continental shelf, and, until July 2014, the Commission on the Limits for the Extension of the Continental Shelf (CLPC) received 74 submissions[18].

Managing these situations would be much simpler if all Atlantic Basin countries were Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) because, should negotiations fail, this would enable the activation of peaceful settlement mechanisms, either bilateral, or through recourse to international or even arbitration courts. The challenge is compounded by the fact that neither the United States (the world's largest navy) nor Venezuela are States Parties to the Convention, and although Colombia signed the deal it did not ratify it (Sousa, 2014).

The process to extend the continental shelf and the jurisdictional expansion it entails changes the territoriality of states, which becomes dominated by the marine environment, and is also leading to changes in the geopolitical space. States potentially have access to more resources and their international responsibilities increase. On the other hand,

[17] The following disputes have been identified: Greece/Turkey; Gibraltar; Latvia/Lithuania; the Bahamas/USA; Ivory Coast/Ghana; Equatorial Guinea/Gabon; Equatorial Guinea/Cameroon; Guyana/Suriname; Barbados/Trinidad and Tobago; Colombia/Nicaragua; Guyana/Barbados/Trinidad and Tobago/Venezuela; Argentina/Chile; Argentina/UK; Guatemala/Belize; the UK and Iceland dispute Denmark's claim that the Faroe Islands' continental shelf extends beyond 200 nm; El Salvador/Honduras; Canada/Denmark. In; Sousa, Inês, op. cit.

[18] Under Article 76, paragraph 8, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

increasing the number of national and international borders (high seas and air) increases the potential for territorial disputes.

From a more strictly geopolitical perspective, the correlation of forces between states also changes substantially. In the case of Portugal, a country with a significant presence in the North Atlantic (Vivero and Mateos, 2014), if its claims are recognised, its sovereign soil will be increased by 2.15 million km2, a total of about 4 million km2 (Silva, 2014). Figure 2 shows a comparison between the territorial dimension claimed by Portugal and the size of Germany. At the same time, the implementation of the Convention will result in the European Union becoming the political organisation with the largest territory, with all the implications that entails for the global geopolitical balance.

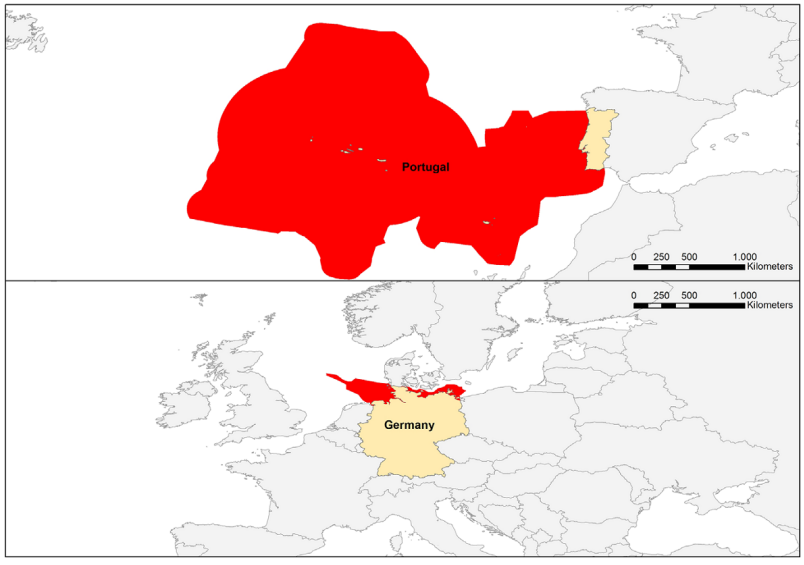

Figure 2 – Territorial size – Portugal/Germany

Source: Vivero and Mateos (2014).

3. International Organisations and possible responses

Facing the many challenges and threats in the Atlantic space requires a collective response from the various states of the area, but above all from the international organisations with policies and practices that are relevant to the security of the Atlantic.

The Atlantic basin is one of the world's most politically and economically integrated areas, encompassing multiple international, regional, and subregional organisations of various types, with different legal structures and objectives. To name only a few: the European Union, the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States, the Community of Portuguese Language Countries, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the South Atlantic Peace

and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS). These organisations formed a network of platforms connecting the Atlantic countries and at the same time "contributed to the diversification of foreign relations for many countries of the global South" (Ridout and Goerg, 2016).

3.1. European Union

The sea has a significant impact in the European economy, and maritime regions account for more than 40% of Europe's GDP; the EU holds 40% of the world's shipping fleet, and 90% of its foreign trade and 40% of its domestic trade is conducted by sea (Rodrigues, 2014). The EU is also dependent on oil (88.4%) and gas (65.3%) imports from the Middle East and Eurasia for its energy (Eurostat 2015), but it has been diversifying its supply sources, including the ones in the Atlantic, with imports from Africa increasing from 18% to 23% between 2006 and 2014; in 2014 alone Europe accounted for 45% of Nigeria's exports and 20% of Angola's (Grevi, 2016). These data show the vital importance of the Atlantic in the security and well-being of the EU, making it imperative to ensure freedom of movement at sea and security of supply.

Another clear example of the sea's importance to the EU is the number of agencies that deal with maritime affairs (Frontex, EDA, EMSA, EEA, ESA) (Correia, 2010) and its myriad scattered sea-related policies such as the Blue Book (an integrated maritime policy for the European Union), the Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Area and its respective Action Plan, and the Maritime Security Strategy.

The Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Area defined by the European Commission in 2011 covers the five Atlantic member-states (France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom), includes measures to enhance maritime security, and its implementation requires a strong commitment both from EU institutions and member-states, and even from private organizations (COM, 2011). The Action Plan of the Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Area, which is to be implemented by 2020, sets out research, investment, and skills upgrading priorities that the five member-states can draw on to develop the "blue economy" in the Atlantic coastal areas in a sustainable and inclusive way (COM, 2013).

The Maritime Security Strategy adopted in 2014 has a geopolitical dimension (Germond, 2015). It covers the internal and external aspects of maritime security of the Union and aims to defend Europe's interests in its neighbouring maritime areas (the spaces under the jurisdiction of the member-states and adjacent high sea areas) as well as its distant maritime interests (the security of vital navigation routes that may come under threat) (Rodrigues, 2014).

The Maritime Security Strategy also aims to provide a coherent framework that can facilitate stability and security at sea and that is consistent with other relevant EU sea-related policies, especially the EU Integrated Maritime Policy. The three general objectives of the strategy are: to identify and articulate the EU's main maritime strategic interests; to identify and articulate maritime threats, challenges, and dangers to the EU's strategic interests; to organise an appropriate response (Council of the European Union, 2014a).

This strategy calls for the Union to act both autonomously and in partnership, promoting a regional approach to maritime security that encompasses five major areas: external action; maritime awareness, surveillance, and information sharing; capacity building; risk management, protection of critical marine infrastructure, and crisis response; and maritime security research and innovation, education, and training (Council of the European Union, 2014a).

In 2007, the EU adopted a joint strategy with the African Union (AU)[19] at the Lisbon Summit, based on the principles of ownership and joint responsibility, while at the same time developing several mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation with African subregional organisations. Particularly in the West African and Sahel region[20], a number of security-related initiatives involving ECOWAS have been launched to curb illicit trafficking, piracy, and terrorism, and the strategy has also played a key role in supporting the definition of an African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) by deploying military forces under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) to support the reform of the security and defence sector in Niger and Mali.

It was also in 2007 that the EU was able to use a rapid funding mechanism, the Instrument for Stability (IfS), for conflict prevention, crisis management, and peacebuilding initiatives when other sources of Union funding are not available.

Because it promotes a regional approach, the maritime security strategy is directly linked to the EU Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea, which covers a 6,000-km coastline from Senegal to Angola. The strategy seeks comprehensive action in coordination with local and international partners to tackle the threats identified above. It focuses on four major objectives[21], notably helping local institutions build capabilities to ensure maritime security and the rule of law (Council of the European Union, 2014b).

In addition to this strategy, the Gulf of Guinea Inter-Regional Network (GoGin) was created in December 2016, comprising 19 countries in the region. The network was built on the Critical Maritime Routes Program (CRIMGO) funded by the IfS to support the implementation of the Yaoundé processes and code of conduct[22], and aims to improve maritime security in the Gulf through efficient information sharing.

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[19] For further information on EU-Africa relations and their history, as well as all related documentation see: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-africa/

[20] Their specific action plans are: the EU Gulf of Guinea Action Plan 2015-2020 and the Sahel Action Plan 2015-2020.

[21] Those objectives are: "1. Building a common understanding of the scale of the threat in the Gulf of Guinea and the need to address it among the countries in the region and the international community; 2. Helping governments of the region build robust institutions, maritime administrations and multiagency capabilities to ensure maritime awareness, security and the rule of law along the coast; 3. Supporting prosperous economies in this region in line with national and regional development strategies, to create employment and assist vulnerable communities to build resilience and resist criminal or violent activities; 4. Strengthening cooperation structures between the countries of the region and the regional organisations to take the necessary actions to mitigate the threats at sea and on land" (Council of the European Union, 2014b).

[22] The GoGin website describes the network's activities in the area of coordination, institutional capacity-building, development, and information sharing among its members.

The EU's current methods of tackling piracy in the Gulf of Guinea show that it has taken into account the lessons learned in the Horn of Africa, where concerted action by the international community with an initial military intervention was followed by more comprehensive action, also combating the phenomenon on land, addressing in particular its deep roots and causes. The document that underpins the EU's strategic response to the challenges of the Gulf of Guinea states that this experience also "... suggests that early preventive action, in close coordination with the countries of the region and African regional bodies, is much more cost-effective than a later cure" and that it demonstrated the value of "(...) integrating all aspects for greater cumulative effect; political, good-governance/anti-corruption, security, institutional, economic, and development" (Council of the European Union, 2014b).

The EU has also developed a number of interregional cooperation instruments with Latin America to combat organised crime, including the Cooperation Program on Drug Policy (COPOLAD).

3.2. NATO

From its inception, NATO has sought to secure its interests by using its military instrument to contribute to maritime security, at least in the North Atlantic.

In the current maritime security environment, threats have become more complex, hybrid, and dynamic, thus, in 2011 the Alliance adopted a Maritime Strategy that allows it to contribute to Defence and Security and to promote its values. This strategy is reflected in naval operations that encompass four areas: deterrence and collective defence; crisis management; cooperative security; and maritime security (NATO, 2011).

With regard to maritime security, and always in accordance with the law, NATO is able to conduct surveillance and patrolling in any area defined by the North Atlantic Council and can also contribute to energy security, which includes protection of critical infrastructures and sea lines of communication (NATO, 2011).

The Alliance's naval forces have helped create a safer maritime environment, notably through Operation Active Endeavor, an operation under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, launched shortly after 11 September 2001, which was replaced at the 2016 Warsaw summit by Operation Sea Guardian, a non-Article 5 operation able perform a broad range of maritime security tasks, acting jointly and in coordination with the EU's Operation Sophia.

Through its maritime operations, the Alliance demonstrates its ability to achieve strategic objectives defined in a variety of contexts, including operations Allied Provider and Allied Protector, which were set up at the UN's request to help the international efforts to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden; or, from August 2009 to December 2016, through Operation Ocean Shield, which continued to deter piracy attacks while protecting vessels, and increasing the general level of security in the region[23]. The Alliance worked closely with

[23] Further data on Alliance's operations against piracy can be found on the NATO official website.

other actors in the Horn of Africa region, including EU Operation Atalanta and the US-led Combined Task Force 151.

NATO remains actively involved in maritime security through Operation Sea Guardian, ensuring that its knowledge of the maritime situation is up-to-date, and that it maintains close links with other international actors such as the EU by supporting Frontex's operations Triton and Poseidon as well as the Greek and Turkish authorities in their efforts to tackle the flow of refugees into the Aegean Sea (Dibenedetto, 2016).

3.3. ZOPACAS

An important organisation for South Atlantic security, ZOPACAS was created in 1986 at the UN General Assembly on Brazil's initiative and has 24 member-countries. The organisation is "more of a forum to discuss the management of the South Atlantic space than a military or political entity" (Ridout, 2016) and its main objective is to promote regional cooperation and maintain peace and security in the South Atlantic region.

In addition to cooperation initiatives, it has also launched political and diplomatic initiatives, mainly related to environmental protection, to the prevention of nuclear proliferation, and to the search for a peaceful solution to the conflicts between its members.

ZOPACAS is not a regional integration organisation, and is better described as a structure that brings together all the countries of the region, fostering cooperation and interaction agreements in the South Atlantic, than a space for joint action (Guerra, 2011). It is also an important instrument for Brazil to project its power in the South Atlantic (Rucks, 2014). In Africa, ZOPACAS performs the role of a multilateral forum "(...) that allows member-countries to align more with the South than with the North on some issues (...)" (Gonzalez, 2014).

The organisation was revitalised in 2013 after the 7th Ministerial Meeting in Montevideo, at a time when Brazil had already discovered its oil deposits in the pre-Salt layer of the coast of São Paulo; when the United States had resurrected the Fourth Fleet almost 60 years after dissolving it in 1950; and when China had already become a growing influence in South America.

The 8th Ministerial Meeting of ZOPACAS was held in Mindelo, Cape Verde, from 20 to 21 May 2015, where participants discussed issues related to cooperation in the area of maritime security, oceanographic research, maritime transport, university education, and information and communication technologies (Panapress, 2015).

In this complex context, Brazil, looking to assert its presence in the South Atlantic space, has focused on South-South cooperation, and ZOPACAS has taken a progressively more central role, as have other fora such as IBAS (India, Brazil and South Africa). Maritime cooperation between the navies of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and South Africa is now a reality and naval exercises such as ATLASUR, but also IBASMAR, which provided joint training to the naval forces of the IBAS Forum in 2008 and 2010, are conducted regularly

(Pereira, 2013). Despite these cooperation activities, at this time there are no institutional links between the two margins of the Atlantic, where the most diverse threats circulate.

In the South Atlantic space, growing concerns about security in Africa led the US to create AfriCom in 2008 and, in order to help the country address its fading hegemony in the entire South Atlantic region, the Fourth Fleet was reactivated, as mentioned above. The reactivation of the Fourth Fleet without prior consultation with the regional partners raised concerns from several South Atlantic states. Brazil believes it presents a threat to its deep water oil reserves (Bandeira, 2008).

The South Atlantic space is also the area of the Lusophone Commonwealth, and the CPLP holds meetings between maritime affairs ministers, as well as frequent meetings between its ministers of defence and military chiefs, playing an important role in the definition of development and cooperation policies, but also in the definition of a stable security architecture.

4. Regional and subregional African Organisations

Measures taken individually by states have failed to permanently eliminate the maritime threats in the region, proving insufficient to curtail the increase in incidents in the Gulf of Guinea (Biziouras, 2013). Most countries have limited naval capacities and lack infrastructures, equipment, and an adequate legal framework (Hasan and Hassan, 2016).

In response to the growing threats, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) developed an integrated maritime security strategy in 2008, and in 2009 it activated the Regional Centre for African Maritime Security (CRESMAC), which coordinates three multinational centres, one for each zone of the Central African seas. In 2010 the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) also established its maritime strategy and, in 2014, ECOWAS, inspired by the ECCAS model, approved an integrated maritime strategy, establishing a regional maritime security coordination centre for West Africa, encompassing three zones (Osinowo, 2015).

In June 2013 the UN declared its support to the regional initiative launched with the Yaoundé Declaration[24], which brought together the Gulf countries, as well as ECOWAS, ECCAS, and the GGC.

These efforts for the continent were supplemented in 2012, with the adoption by the AU of Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy "(...) as a tool to address Africa's maritime challenges for sustainable development and competitiveness (...)" (African Union, 2012). The strategy's global vision aims to "(...) foster more wealth creation from Africa's oceans, seas and inland water ways by developing a thriving maritime economy and realizing the full potential of sea-based activities in an environmentally sustainable manner" (African Union, 2012), providing

[24] A code of conduct for the prevention and suppression of acts of piracy, armed robbery against ships, and other illegal activities at sea in West and Central Africa was adopted in Yaoundé. A Memorandum of Understanding was also approved between ECCAS, ECOWAS, and the GGC regarding security in the maritime area of West and Central Africa.

a broad framework for the protection and sustainable exploitation of the African maritime domain and for the creation of wealth.

The strategic objectives include, inter alia, the creation of the Combined Exclusive Maritime Zone of Africa (CEMZA) and the security and protection of maritime transport systems. The strategic actions to implement the strategy include the promotion of inter-agency/transnational cooperation and coordination on maritime defence and security, and the creation of Regional Maritime Operational Centres (African Union, 2012).

In October 2016, at the AU Extraordinary Summit held in Lomé, Togo, 32 countries signed what became known as the Lomé Charter. This binding document, which will be incorporated into Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy, proposes coordination measures between African countries to combat piracy and trafficking in drugs, weapons, and persons.

But combating piracy and other threats in the region will continue to be a protracted effort. The emergence of a regional collective security system is hampered by political rivalries between countries. There is mistrust over ongoing border disputes (Ghana/Ivory Coast, Angola/Congo, Gabon/Equatorial Guinea) (Hasan and Hassan, 2016), and there have been difficulties in reaching an understanding of how to share the financial burden.

Nevertheless, the initiatives and activities that have been developed and the multiple instruments created by both States and various international organisations point to the emergence of a complex maritime security system in Africa (Buerger, 2013).

5. Possible conclusions

in the Atlantic basin, a space characterised by profound differences but also by increasing economic and security interdependence, challenges are complex, multidimensional, and take place at a global scale. Due to the economic and commercial dynamics of this vast space of transit for people and goods, and all the energy potential that it holds, it again plays a central role in today's International Relations.

This vast space is inhabited by several threats to international security, failed states being the most serious, since, without power, political units are permeable to the creation and proliferation of other threats to transnational security, such as more diverse forms of terrorism and organised crime, whose many activities erode formal authority and further undermine already weak state structures, as in the case of the porous Sahara-Sahel region, including the resurgence, with renewed vigour, of the gravest threat to shipping routes, piracy, which endangers the West's economic and energy security. Acts of violence at sea and attacks on critical energy infrastructures, especially in the Gulf of Guinea region, constitute a heavy political, security, economic and human burden at local, regional, and even global scales. Finally, today there are also multiple maritime border disputes, which are increasing due to the processes of extension of continental shelves and the subsequent changes to geopolitical spaces, and which can potentially escalate into situations of crisis

and conflict, with all the implications that would have for regional security and for the security of the entire Atlantic space.

The threats have been clearly identified and the measures to deal with them have been thoroughly analysed, but tackling them will require strengthening state authority and institutional capacity building. In our analysis we have identified multiple international cooperation and coordination instruments that mainly involve international organisations with policies and practices in the area of security, which seek to guarantee safety and freedom of movement at sea in this vast geopolitical space.

The EU and NATO believe the Atlantic ocean is of vital importance for the security and well-being of its populations, and to that end both organisations have developed a number of policy instruments, which have one fundamental difference: while NATO's policies are put into practice through naval operations, the EU has a more comprehensive approach to defending the maritime interests that Europe wishes to safeguard, promoting a regional approach to maritime security, and has even adopted a joint strategy with the AU, while at the same time developing several dialogue, cooperation, and coordination mechanisms and initiatives with African subregional organisations, as well as various instruments of interregional cooperation with Latin America.

In the South Atlantic space, ZOPACAS stands out as an important instrument for the projection of Brazilian power, constituting the country's most important mechanism of South-South cooperation. On the other hand, the US has reactivated its Fourth Fleet to ensure its presence across the South Atlantic, and the country's growing concerns about security in Africa have led it to create AfriCom.

Most African countries have limited naval capacities and lack infrastructures, equipment, and an adequate legal framework, and thus are unable to contain or permanently reduce maritime threats, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea region. However, the regional policies and practices already in place point to the emergence of a complex maritime security system in Africa, a good example of which is Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy, which proposed coordination measures between African countries to combat piracy and trafficking in drugs, weapons, and persons.

Despite all the initiatives and activities that have been developed, and the multiple instruments that have been created by both States and various international organisations, there is still a lack of effective coordination and information sharing, making it difficult to build an effective Maritime Security System that encompasses the entire Atlantic space.

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