

THE SOUTH ATLANTIC, SOUTHERN AFRICA AND SOUTH AMERICA: COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

The South Atlantic is responsible for linking South America to Africa, but it is, first, also a strategic space for political, technical and commercial exchanges between both continents. Historically considered a commercial region involving Europe, Latin America and Africa, the Atlantic Ocean resumes its geo-economic and geopolitical importance due to its great natural resources, as well as to the turnaround of geopolitics towards South. Though it has huge importance since the colonial era, it is since the 1970s' Oil Crisis that this ocean had its prominence re-dimensioned, boosting the debate on limited maritime borders, but mainly on the exploration of its natural resources. Moreover, the incapacity of the two current interoceanic waterways – Suez and Panama – in responding demands and receiving more important ships increased the pressures on the area. Besides the oil reserves and the ecosystems located in the Atlantic, there is a diversity of other resources that might benefit the economic development of the countries lying on both margins.

For Brazil, and mainly for its relations with the African continent, South Atlantic introduces itself as an extremely important axis. Some critics, in

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a superficial analysis, define the Brazilian strategy as paradoxical as far as the country supposedly is fomenting diplomatic efforts towards poorest countries, with little influence over the global geopolitical context and even lighter weight in the Brazilian commercial balance. However, it is necessary to evaluate some political and economic tendencies fastened by the deepening and enlargement of globalization. The fact that Brazil became a capital and technology exporter, besides being a traditional (and now competitive) exporter of primary products, services and manufactures, must be mentioned. Africa, in this sense, is one of the most adequate regions to attract the Brazilian investment, once it is one of the few natural frontiers still to be opened for the expansion of enterprises in sectors like the petroleum, gas and mining industries. On the other hand, the continent is the center of a global dispute over the access to increasingly scarce raw materials demanded by the traditional powers.

In this sense, and from the Brazilian point of view, the utilization of the South Atlantic does not only mean to make Africa (especially South Africa) a solid connection to Asia through the Indian Ocean. Besides the fact that the south of the African continent is becoming a logistic base, the South Atlantic (and also the Indian Ocean) emerges as a zone full of energy resources, with gas and oil deposits, like the pre-salt layer. Hence, the two margins of the Atlantic have been the stage of new discoveries and also important parts of the Indian Ocean. The reaffirmation of the sovereignty over the territorial waters, the maintenance of the oceanic security required for navigation and the blockade of any initiative of militarization of these maritime spaces through the action of extra regional powers are, therefore, needed.

In this perspective, as the economic importance of the South Atlantic increases, the international pressure on the region does proportionally the same. It is relevant to highlight that the enlargement of the British military investiture (with the support of the United States), on the occasion of the quarrel with Argentina over the Malvinas/Falklands Islands. In this sense, the guarantee of economic rights comes, for the countries of both margins, along with the counterparts of duties and responsibilities related to political, environmental and public safety issues, so that the effective control and the maintenance of the state sovereignty can be possible. Likewise, the projection of maritime regional power becomes necessary, both in terms of defense and promoting an engagement between the countries of the region facing the great

challenges and processes that make part of the South Atlantic strategic context. And still there is the urgency of controlling the maritime routes, but also the illegal activities of the Ocean, as well as the exploration of resources in international waters (Flemes and Costa Vaz 2011).

Thus, in order to evaluate the resumption of the importance of the South Atlantic in the 21st Century, it is necessary to assess the geo-economic, geopolitical and geostrategic dimensions.

In relation to the geo-economic importance

The South Atlantic, other than being a trade route and an important geo-economic space, is also a development pole. In this context, it is worth reminding that the South American projection, and especially the Brazilian, towards Africa and Asia are followed by the Chinese and Indian ones towards Africa and South America. South Atlantic emerges then as a platform to the creation of strategic partnerships between the countries lying on its coast and between these countries and the Asian States, proving to be decisive to the development of South-South Cooperation policies. Inside the dynamics of these political routes, the African continent is perceived as a converging point of the Southern coalitions.

It is worth to note that the South Atlantic comprehends four large archipelagos and islands of different importance and sizes, as well as different nationalities, with a wide coastal region that covers part of the American, African and Antarctic continents. The African coast extends from Guinea-Bissau to the Cape, with more than 7,800km, of which 1,200km set the Angolan and Namibian Deserts. This coast is compounded by sixteen countries, including six Mediterranean. Few are the natural harbor, and among them can be highlighted Freetown, in Sierra Leone; Boma, in the Republic of Congo; Libreville, in Gabon; Douala, in Cameroon; Luanda, in Angola; Walvis Bay, in Namibia; and Cape Town, in South Africa.

As to the American coast, it starts at the São Roque Cape, in Northeastern Brazil, and extends to the Tierra del Fuego Cape. Its extension is of 9,000km, of which 4,179km belong to Brazil, 330km to Uruguay and 4,500km to Argentina. The American coast has plenty of natural harbors, like Recife, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, Paranaguá, Santos, Porto Alegre and Rio

Grande. Finally, the Antarctic Coast extends from the Antarctic Peninsula to the Maud Land (or Queen Maud's Land), opposite to Cape Town. This is one of the coastal regions with more difficult access to in the world, particularly in the Mar Weddell section. Due to the geostrategic separation between the Southern region of the Ocean and the Antarctica in two different subsystems, the latitude of 60°S was defined as the limit of the South Atlantic region. This way, the Ocean can be accessed through three ways – through the North Atlantic, the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean. This interconnectivity is one of the greatest factors that make the security cooperation and the maintenance of the area necessary as a pacific zone, which can be utilized as a development space.

However, it is essential to go beyond, once dealing with the resumption of the strategic importance of the South Atlantic and the Brazil-Africa relations makes to consider the meaning of the economic alliances as a fundamental component to the development of both margins of the ocean also import, as well as the meaning of Antarctica.

The fishing activity is of great importance for the coastal communities, being the practice that more lacks vigilance and control. The combat of predatory fishing, practiced by foreign ships with high technology and disrespectful to the environmental law, is necessary and, for now, ineffective, resulting in economic and social damages. According to the Brazilian Navy, though, the Brazilian Continental Shelf, and possibly the African too, detain huge amount of important minerals in the shape of polymetallic nodules (found in abundance in the Peruvian Basin), which contain metals of great economic value, besides monazitic sand, with significant uranium concentration.

Still, other than the new pre-salt Brazilian reserves, there are also reserves on the Argentinean Continental Shelf, as well as expressive offshore reserves of petroleum in the Gulf of Guinea, mainly in Nigeria, Angola, Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe. Still in the African Western Coast, Namibia possess vast deposits of gas, while South Africa of coal.

With the discovery and exploration of the pre-salt layer, the region gained even more economic importance and the need to regulate this activity, and also the other aforementioned ones, becomes a crucial measure for countries of both margins. Another factor that increments the geo-economic relevance of the ocean is the fact that it bathes the Antarctica, region considered a new

frontier for exploration. Certainly this area will be subject to further heavier international pressure in the near future.

In relation to the geopolitical importance

When thinking about the South Atlantic, one cannot set aside the highlight of the Brazilian position. Brazil possesses the longest coast and the biggest maritime shelf of the region. Therefore, the strategic interest in the region is evident. When evaluating the driving force that concretely influence the formulation of foreign policy and its impact on the International Relations, one cannot set aside the consideration of the geopolitical perspective. In this sense, the relations between Brazil and the African continent constitute one of the main axes and can be divided in five different periods, with different durations (Relatório Banco Mundial 2012). The first period comprehends the colonial domination phase, from the 16th Century until the beginning of the 19th Century. The exchanges between Brazil and Africa increased throughout the period. Not only slaves were traded through this route, but also goods, besides the interchange of ideas and abilities. In this regard, the social and economic exchanges marked the intercontinental relations. The second period, which started in 1822 with the Independence of Brazil, was marked by the marginalization of this relation. With the end of the slave trade and the increase of the European expansion into the African continent, Brazil started to prioritize its relations with South America, the United States and Europe, a pattern practiced until the 1950s. It is interesting to note that in 1822 the Brazilian population was of roughly 4 million people, half of them slaves born in the country or in Africa. The third period was characterized by the African decolonization processes, with emphasis on the 1960s – being 1960 the “African year” –, a phase marked by a new scenario also in Brazil. Despite the creation of new independent states in Africa, Brazil what was noticed was the distance of Brazil from these events (especially during the Kubitschek administration, 1956-61) due to its close ties with Portugal.

The loosening of these ties with Portugal guaranteed the beginning of a new phase of re-approximation to Africa, defining the fourth period, which extends from January, 1961 until half of the 1980s. This period, except for the first years that followed the 1964 coup d'état, watched the narrowing of

political and economic relations with the African continent. The end of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s were marked by the intense flux of goods and capital through the Atlantic, making this space an object to political definitions and commercial development. In this moment the inflexion point happened after 1975, when Brazil, during the Geisel government, recognized the MPLA's (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, initials in Portuguese) revolutionary government.

During the fifth period, which extends until the 21st Century, Africa became a priority in the Brazilian international agenda, with special attention given to the Lusophone countries, with which Brazil share historical ties, but not restricted to them. The African continent passed through quick changes after de democratization and resolution of conflicts processes, and Brazil has been demonstrating increasing interest in supporting and being part of the development of Africa. Lula administration reactivated the Brazilian interest in Africa and utilizes it as a base to broaden the global influence of the continent. From the creation of the IBSA Forum and the rapprochement mechanisms of BRICS, the established relations until now gained new dimension. And inside this context, the "new" global Brazil ends up matching the "new" reborn Africa. Through the cultural and historical approach to the continent, besides the language affinity with the Lusophone countries, Brazil establishes its relation with Africa adding an aspect that neither China nor India has in common with the African countries.

In relation to the geostrategic importance

Brazil has improved policies concerning the exchanges of military techniques with the African countries and India, creating a complex network of securitization that interconnects the three continents. Given the increasing geo-economic importance of the South Atlantic, the military exchanges between the two margins assume a relevant role in the relations between the three countries (Flemes and Costa Vaz 2011). It is worth underlining the joint exercise of Brazilian, Indian and South African troops in 2008, the IBSAMAR. This important multilateral event was almost unnoticed by the peoples of the involved countries. India and Brazil have strong Navies, with more than 50,000 ships. In comparison to the South African Navy, with smaller numbers, the other two countries can play the role of coordination in the future. South

Africa, on its part, has a long coastal area (it is a bioceanic country) and a limited naval capacity to monitor and protect it. This fact creates an opportunity for all the three navies to act in these areas. Moreover, the Good Hope Cape tends to be increasingly used as a trade route (it is worth reminding that the action of the Somali pirates transformed the Suez route into a very serious problem).

Concerning IBSA, the relation between India, Brazil and South Africa is very well consolidated, and this new reality, along with regional neighbors predisposed to multilateralism, can constitute a new distribution of power, representing – according to Kornegay (2011) – the “geopolitical and geo-economic reunification of Gondwana” (former mega-continent that united South America, Africa, India and Australia). From the trilateral perspective, the geostrategic logic of IBSA is clear – the objective is to create a maritime liaison between South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. The fact that three countries had gotten together at IBSAMAR sets out this proposal. What each country pretends from this logic depends on its individual and joint political will to form the geopolitical and strategic terms of the 21st Century (Kornegay 2011). The last IBSAMAR happened on September 13-27, 2010 and counted on the participation of eleven ships, besides helicopters from the three countries.

In spite of some limitations in terms of regional security – especially in the Indian and South African cases –, the relation between the IBSA members seems to strengthen the regional objectives of its parties. Furthermore, the three countries occupy a relevant international position, and the acronym might fortify this position, besides being a way to promote a new political orientation. IBSA emerges in a new crossroads of the world history in which there is a leadership vacuum in terms of global legitimacy and in the middle of an increasing energy and resources scarcity geopolitics. Therefore, IBSA could assume a role that would promote a new orientation for the geopolitics of energy favoring a new responsibility (ethical and pro-conservation) as the limestone of global governance.

The South Atlantic has particular importance for Brazil, especially due to recent (and increasing) interest of states like the United Kingdom, United States, Germany, France, Russia, China and Japan. The proximity to Antarctica (its privileged position between three oceans is regarded as of great

importance for the Brazilian navigation), besides its climatic effects over the territory, are fundamental aspects in the formulation of the Brazilian policy for the region. Once great part of the Brazilian foreign trade is made through the ocean, besides the strong fishing activities and the oil exploration in the South American continental shelf, the Brazilian Navy was induced to develop its navigation capacities in deep waters. The Brazilian need to boost the security in the region must be seen as one of the main objectives of the national security.

Historically, the proposal of a South Atlantic security organization was put on the agenda (again) in 1977 by the commander of the Uruguayan Navy. The organization that should be known as South Atlantic Treaty Organization (OTAS, initials in Portuguese) would follow the NATO model (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). The Brazilian government in that occasion refused the Uruguayan proposal, asserting that OTAS would lead to an arms race in the region, and the government also advocated that the Southern countries would not have the required capacity to face a possible “Soviet threat” without the North American support. The Brazilian retraction brought South Africa and Argentina closer, an alliance that would soon be dismantled due to the dispute over the Malvinas/Falkland Islands in 1982. South Africa started to foment a rapprochement with Bolivia, Paraguay and Chile so that the OTAS proposal could be put in practice. Through a huge irrigation project, along with the United Kingdom, Chile drew near South Africa. However, the idea of implementing the organization was gradually put aside because there were no conditions to its functioning according to the initial plan.

Nevertheless, Brazil would feel the need to guarantee the security of the region, and the revision of the original idea of OTAS was necessary. This new vision was more evident as long as the South Atlantic threats were kept in the context of the end of the Cold War. The problematic then has become to focus on how that mechanism could be implemented and what composition would it have. At the end of the 1980s, Brazil proposed the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS, initials in Portuguese) as the counterpart to OTAS. Due to its regional importance, Brazil was able to obtain the support of the coastal countries. However, South Africa and Namibia did not support the proposal because South Africa was isolated and Namibia was still ruled by the South Africans. The change of position came after the 50th United Nations General Assembly in 1986, when the Resolution A/RES/41/11 defined the South

Atlantic as a peace and cooperation zone (Khanyile 2003). The 2nd and 3rd articles of the resolution demanded the countries of the regional to unite in order to maintain peace through the demilitarization of the area, the non-introduction of weapons of mass destruction and the non-nuclearization. It is interesting to point out that, when voted, the resolution received 124 votes in favor, eight abstentions (all from industrialized countries) and one vote against – from the U.S. The idea of South Atlantic demilitarization and denuclearization did not flatter the developed countries, which have clear interests on the natural resources of the region.

The 5th article of the resolution was of great relevance for South Africa as it fixed the end of the *apartheid* regime, besides the self-determination and the autonomy of Namibia. Moreover, it determined the cease of all aggressions among the States of the region and of the support to any resolution pro colonialism, racism and their consequences. Therefore, the resolution covered four problematic themes of the region – environment, socioeconomic development, peace and security, and the emancipation of South Africa and its neighbors.

The first ZOPACAS meeting happened in Rio de Janeiro, in 1988, later in Abuja, Nigeria, in 1990, and the third in Brasilia, 1994. However, it should be stressed that the meeting in South Africa, in 1996, is considered unique for many reasons. With the “Bridging the South Atlantic” theme, the gathering emphasized the importance of the region for both margins. Many organizations supported the ZOPACAS activities, like, for example, the International Maritime Organization. Since 1994, Brazil is the biggest South African partner in South America, and one of the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere. In 1995, roughly 50% of the South African exports were directed to Brazil, same year that South Africa had a foreign trade surplus with Brazil. In this very year, the first career diplomat was indicated to be the ambassador in the African country, being Otto Maia the chosen one.

Another important moment happened when Nelson Mandela visited Brazil in 1998 and signed the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Consultations on Issues of Common Interest. Other agreements concerning technical cooperation, double taxation, promotion and security of investments would follow. Mandela’s successor, Thabo Mbeki, visited Brazil in 2000, when

he also met leaders of Mercosur. Until the constitution of IBSA and the later realization of the joint military exercises of IBSAMAR, South Africa and Brazil had already been part of three exercises under the North American influence – the ATLASUR (that involved Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and South Africa, biannual event performed for the first time in 1993), UNITAS (that involved all the countries that took part in ATLASUR plus Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela and the United States) and the TRANSOCEANIC (Khanyile 2003). Unlike the others, TRANSOCEANIC is a transport control exercise, not involving ships. Yet, not only exercises sponsored by the U.S. were practiced. Bilateral initiatives, like the Brazilian Task Group, between South Africa and Brazil; an exercise between Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina; and another one between South Africa and Chile are also inserted in this context.

With the ascension of Lula, but already in the end of the Mbeki government, Brazil and South Africa increased their diplomatic and military interaction in the IBSA frame. Embedded in the positive perception concerning South-South Cooperation as a way to reach bigger political autonomy and international prominence, the politics of both countries converged, finding in BRICS and IBSA the path to intensify and improve the relations. With different emphasis, the two international mechanisms cover different objectives, but equally important for the foreign policy of both countries. While BRICS gives more importance to the reform of global governance and the financial system, IBSA, besides the idea of contributing for the construction of a new international architecture, also seeks to deep the mutual knowledge in specific areas, namely: Public Administration and Governance; Tributary and Customs Administration; Agriculture; Human Camps; Science and Technology; Commerce and Investments; Culture; Defense; Social Development; Education; Energy; Environment and Climatic Changes; Health; Informational Society; Transportation; Tourism; among others.

Through the IBSA Fund and the action of work groups, the three countries are improving the savoir-faire and the technical cooperation in a myriad of areas. It is also important to stress the work of IBSA Ocean. IBSA Ocean is a joint research group in the Antarctic continent. Already in its second meeting, four main acting areas and a goal plan were defined. The areas are: variability and climate changes (the construction of a joint database and the IBSA Earth System Model are planned); effects derived from climate changes

on ecosystems, carbon fluxes and biogeochemistry (including ecosystems lied on open seas and the coastline); effects of the global changes on life beings, biodiversity and management planning (from the proliferation of dangerous algae to fishing); and, at last, regional systems of oceanic observation. Though it lacks military involvement, it is of great relevance for the comprehension of the security space that the three countries are developing.

Final Considerations

It is important to underscore that, for Brazil, Africa is not only a connection to Asia. The South Atlantic has been operating as a place of discoveries of a myriad of natural resources, like the Brazilian pre-salt or the new oil deposits of the Angolan coast, in which Brazil is already investing and cooperating with the supply of technical resources for exploration. The affirmation of the sovereignty over territorial waters, the maintenance of security in the oceans for navigation and the blockade of any militarization initiative in these spaces by extra-regional powers are, thus, urgent. Still, it is essential to consider the North American need to control safer and cheaper oil deposits than the ones from Venezuela or the Middle East, besides the close military relation of the U.S. with South Africa – country that could be utilized for the entry in the African continent and, then, in the South Atlantic.

Despite the critiques, the development of the military capacities by the countries of the region is indispensable, at the same time that the emphasis on the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS) must be stressed, especially facing the attempts to militarize the region, exemplified by the Malvinas case (Great Britain), the recreation of the Fourth Fleet (United States) and the AFRICOM (North American Africa Command), besides the North American insertion in South America through bases in the Colombian territory.

The great potential to transform South Atlantic into a security and energy supplier community as an option to the Euro-North American North Atlantic system is perceived by the Brazilian foreign policy. Brazil seeks leadership in the pursuit for this project, something that seems to be obtained through the Brazilian assertive policy of international projection. In this sense, South Africa possesses a central position in between the Indian and Atlantic

oceans, which, together with its strong economy, makes the oblivion of the country almost impossible when seeking the engagement with the continent.

It is interesting to highlight that the resolution of the African regional conflicts (for example, Angola and South Africa) boosted an “African Turn of the Tide”, allowing Brazil to act in the rapprochement with and between these countries. The expansion of this relation is important to increase the options inside SADC, which may generate a joint maritime security plan that will bring the region closer to Brazil and, thus, strengthen IBSA. While the South Atlantic does not have an institutionalized organization, like the case of IOR-ARC (Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation), the International Relations of the region must conduct to a new transatlantic maritime security architecture (Kornegay 2011). In this direction, the creation of the South American Defense Council, led by Brazil, must be taken into account.

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ABSTRACT

The South Atlantic is becoming a strategic space in terms of development. The maritime usage on both shores of the ocean allows the exploration and the use, as well as the conservation and the management, of the natural resources of the seabed and the subsoil. The guarantee of economic rights, with the counterpart of duties and responsibilities of political nature, environmental and of public security, reflects the possibility of control over an area rich in natural resources and that, at the same time, becomes vulnerable to international pressures of all kinds. The research objectives are: a) analyze the geo-economic importance of the ocean due to the increasing exploration of this space; b) analyze the new geopolitical reality, because the South Atlantic was converted into a strategic route of passage and development pole; and, c) analyze its geostrategic relevance by establishing a connection with Asia via Indian Ocean, highlighting the role of South Africa and IBSA.

KEYWORDS

South Atlantic; Geopolitics; Geoeconomics; Geostrategy.

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