A case of unmet expectations: Portugal and the South Atlantic

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Abstract:

Due to an extensive historical-maritime tradition, Portugal has long considered the South Atlantic as an ocean of possibilities for the projection of its envisioned influence in the near abroad. This article, however, seeks to analyse how such claims fit new security developments in the South Atlantic. It begins by briefly assessing the current main threats in the South Atlantic, followed by a review of Portugal's strategic guidelines and perceptions towards this same area. The preferred venues for the fulfilment of the country´s Atlantic expectations are then addressed by means of Portuguese technical-military co-operation with Lusophone African countries and Portuguese attempts to make NATO look southwards. The country's overall goals are contrasted with the unique positioning of Brazil towards the South Atlantic, as a token of existing perspectives not entirely coincident with Portugal's own aims. Some final remarks are then drawn regarding the sustainability of these expectations and the need to calibrate them in light of an evolving security context in South Atlantic waters.

Introductions

Long considered a rather peaceful area in hard-security terms, the Atlantic Ocean has slowly but steadily begun to receive attention for the security hazards that lie within as well as for the potentially disruptive effect on international interactions that pass through it. More specifically, attention has shifted towards the South Atlantic as growing threats, often with an epicentre on African shores, present new challenges to overall international maritime security.

In this context, a growing number of countries with considerable interest in the stability of the wider Atlantic have scrambled to grasp and respond to such evolving dynamics. Among a plethora of actors, Portugal plays a seemingly minor part in comparison with other regional heavyweights, whether established or potential. However, due to an extensive historical-maritime tradition, Portugal has long claimed to consider the South Atlantic an ocean of possibilities for the projection of its envisioned influence in the near abroad, and has therefore always looked upon this maritime area and developments within with added interest. Given the

sustained illicit trafficking flows, in particular drug trafficking, as well as the growth of piracy along African shores, some questions are bound to arise: how does Portugal perceive itself amidst such scenarios? What tools or approaches have been used or followed with a view to increasing its regional involvement? And more importantly, how does such willingness fit in with other actors' interests in the South Atlantic?

With such queries in mind, this article argues that there is a considerable gap between the country's expectations for a meaningful and active role in the South Atlantic and the likelihood of influencing positive outcomes in terms of Portuguese policy-making. It begins by briefly assessing the current main security threats in the South Atlantic, followed by a review of Portugal's strategic guidelines and perceptions in this same area and on these issues. The preferred venues for the fulfilment of the country's Atlantic expectations are then addressed through two concrete examples: Portuguese technical-military cooperation with Lusophone African countries and Portuguese attempts to make the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) look southwards. Next, the country's overall goals are contrasted with the unique positioning of Brazil in the South Atlantic, as a token of existing perspectives not entirely coincident with Portugal's own aims. Some final remarks are then drawn over the sustainability of these expectations and the need to calibrate them in light of an evolving security context in South Atlantic waters.

The South Atlantic and Africa: Growing Threats

Over the years, the South Atlantic as a maritime region broadly encompassing Africa's Western shores below the thirtieth parallel has persistently failed to attract much international concern in terms of customary regional perils, such as drug trafficking flows and acts of piracy. That trend, however, is gradually changing as such security threats begin to gain added traction as a result of their intensity and increasing risk in Atlantic waters, which makes it worthy of greater external concern.[1]

The issue of piracy, for example, is quickly climbing the agenda as it becomes more violent and organized, with a particular emphasis on the 'new danger zone' around the Gulf of Guinea (International Crisis Group 2012). According to data collected by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the number of piracy incidents reported in this region rose from 45 in 2010 to 64 in 2011 and then fell to 58 in the following year. Moreover, in the first half of 2013, 31 piracy incidents (including four hijackings) had already taken place (International Maritime Bureau 2013). Countries like Nigeria, Benin and Togo have become the main targets of these attacks, with local pirates deriving more of their income from oil theft than from ransoming captured crew members, in a stark contrast to their Somali counterparts. Taking advantage of poor maritime surveillance and still-incipient regional co-operation, pirates have thus blossomed in this part of Africa, often becoming associated with criminal activities while encouraging corruption as well as maritime border disputes between neighbouring countries.

As expected, the toll of this piracy surge on local African economies has been substantial. For instances, the macro-economic cost to Nigeria in 2010, in terms of regional trade and reduced foreign investment, was estimated to be in the order of $42 million (Bowden 2010: 25). Additionally, a United Nations (UN) assessment mission has estimated an annual loss of revenue of nearly $2 billion to West African economies due to piracy activities alone (United Nations

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[1] For a more detailed analysis of the security context in this area, see Seabra (2013).

Security Council 2 January 2012: 11). The full impact of piracy, however, transcends the strictly regional context as it also implies disruptions of international trade routes that affect the global economy.

Meanwhile, cross-regional drug trafficking is perceived as another worrying issue that is on the rise, and which not only affects the international community but also takes a toll on African economies and societies. By taking advantage of local weaknesses in African countries, such as ineffective controls at ports, poor inspection equipment, porous land and sea borders and endemic corruption within security and customs departments, South American drug cartels have come to target these waters as preferred transit routes for their European markets. Major trafficking flows have been amply documented between producing countries like Bolivia, Colombia or Peru and intermediary destinations like Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau or Nigeria, on their way to the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain or the United Kingdom.

West Africa, in particular, has become the epicentre of this phenomenon. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), between 2001 and 2007, annual cocaine seizures in West Africa increased from approximately 2.73 tons to roughly 47 tons. In the following years, the numbers decreased, with estimates for 2009 suggesting that 35 tons of cocaine left South America for Africa, with only 21 tons actually arriving in Europe. However, this is believed to reflect changes in the cartels' tactics in response to law enforcement efforts, combined with the potential of new markets (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2011b: 40, 113). Indeed, while most of the drugs smuggled into West Africa were once transported on large freight 'mother ships', which unloaded the drugs onto smaller vessels off the West African coast, there are some indications that drug traffickers now favour using container shipping to smuggle cocaine into West Africa (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2011a: 28). Usage of modified commercial aircraft for crossing the Atlantic is another method used (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2013: 13).

Despite most cocaine seizures in West and Central Europe having been sea related (77 per cent of all seizures between 2008 and 2010), drugs travel from West Africa to Europe preferentially by air transport. In fact, 58 per cent of all cocaine seized in the last decade was caught on commercial air flights between West Africa and Western Europe. However, the number of detections has declined in recent years, suggesting, yet again, that traffickers have adapted their methods (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2011a: 33). An alternative route consists in smuggling drug shipments by land, across the Sahara desert into North Africa, before reaching European shores.

Drug trafficking also comprises one of the main activities of organized crime groups, frequently financing the arms trade, human trafficking, civil wars or even regional terrorist activities, often with dangerous transnational linkages to other criminal organizations around the world. An obvious example concerns the activities of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQUIM) and other Islamic-inspired groups like Ansar Dine, or the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) which, by exerting financial tolls on regional illicit operations, have come to significantly expand their reach and control over the trans-Sahel drug business.

The spread of these movements' activities also leads to increased state instability in the African continent. The case of Guinea-Bissau, for example, has become near chronic as it is faced with a row of destabilizing coups while struggling to provide a sense of stability in light of structural political debilities and military unrest, itself incited by considerable exposure to drug trafficking routes (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2007; Madeira, Laurent and Roque

2011; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2013: 16). However, regional powerhouse Nigeria is also dealing with increased challenges to its national integrity as it faces a violent campaign by the Boko Haram militias. In this case, when coupled with the persistent strife in the Niger Delta, the potential disruption of oil flows can have a bigger impact than acts of piracy and can destabilize the wider region and neighbouring countries.

All things considered, while reflecting a growing trend in the escalation of security risks in Atlantic waters and nearby African shores, it is clear that these issues also demonstrate clear linkages to developments or structural fragilities present in the state apparatuses of many African countries in this area. Hence, the connections between onshore and offshore risks are inevitable. But it is also possible to make connections between risks in the South Atlantic and the fallout consequences in the surrounding continents. Indeed, in the case of Portugal, its gateway position on the European continent comes with its fair share of disadvantages, especially in terms of international illicit goods. Likewise, concerns for the stability of Lusophone African countries in this region often prove too acute to ignore. When in April 2012, Guinea-Bissau experienced another coup led by a historically unlawful military apparatus, with evident ties to transatlantic drug circles and which was keen on disrupting constitutional order, Portugal immediately dispatched a rapid reaction naval force as a precautionary measure and to try and leverage its influence and presence while adopting a hard-security stance in Atlantic waters. A closer look at its regional aims and overall Atlantic profile is therefore justified.

Portuguese Perceptions and the Atlantic

Since its return to democratic rule, Portuguese foreign policy has been marked by its continuous reliance on a geopolitical triad: transatlantic relations with the US, European integration and relations with Lusophone countries (Moreira 2005). As such, wider considerations regarding security issues in Atlantic waters or at African shores always ended up, one way or the other, organically subdued to the abovementioned foreign policy categories, thus earning little if any official focus on their own. However, the picture changes slightly when it comes to Portuguese defence policy. Indeed, for all purposes, 'Portugal's defence always had the Atlantic as a reference and as a sustaining basis, throughout its history. Not just the North Atlantic or the South Atlantic, but the "entire" Atlantic Ocean' (Santos 2009: 123).

Hence, the literature seeking to stress Portugal's potential as a possible triangular platform between the two sides of the Atlantic has been considerable. For example, in 1992, Pezarat Correia had already spoken about an 'Iberian bridge' that was not being fully used for the purpose of promoting greater transatlantic relations (Correia 1992: 113). Nearly twenty years later, Loureiro dos Santos picked up the same theme by highlighting the Lisbon–Brasilia and Lisbon–Washington axes, which could eventually support a new security architecture in the Atlantic basin (Santos 2011: 26–27), a design equally defended by Marques Guedes, albeit if through a less optimistic lens (Marques Guedes 2011: 23; 2012: 30–31).

External contributions aside, an analysis of the different versions of the Strategic Concept of National Defence (SCND) provides additional clues over the official perception concerning developments within the Atlantic Ocean.[2] Starting with the 2003 edition, it is possible to identify a clear post-9/11 influence, with a strong emphasis on the geopolitical

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[2] For the purposes of this article, only the two latest versions of CEDN will be analysed in greater depth. For more on the CEDN's early conceptions and design process, see Vaz (1993).

consequences of globalization and a focus on terrorism as a common concern within the international community. The highlight of terrorist activities and weapons of mass destruction amidst the listing of threats demonstrates just that. But despite this deep contextual signature, the underlying stages for Portuguese influence remained unaltered with the Euro-Atlantic space (including Europe, the wider Atlantic Ocean and relations with the US), the South Atlantic (including ties with Brazil) and Lusophone Africa comprising the areas of greater relevance. For:

> […] in a world in accelerated change, our geography remains. Portugal was, is and always will be a Euro-Atlantic country. This national condition allows us to harmoniously operate multiple 'frontiers.' Our political and economic geography is European. Our security and defence geography is Atlantic and European. Our geographic identity goes decisively through our relationship with countries that speak Portuguese. Portugal's place in the world is all this. (*Diário da República* 23 January 2003: 283)

Amid such a wide geographic range, two topics in particular covered by this document are worthy of mention. On the one hand, the continuing emphasis on NATO and the concern for the 'Alliance's southern flank, as current as the scenario of new threats reinforces its importance', appears to imply an indirect reference to the South Atlantic (*Diário da República* 23 January 2003: 285). In this case, though, 'the southern flank' at the time concerned primarily the Mediterranean, and as such the pretence of wider Atlantic concerns specifically enshrined in Portuguese defence priorities remained merely illusory.[3] On the other hand, the same could be said of such initiatives as Cooperação Técnico-Militar (CTM – Technical-Military Assistance) within the Lusophone context, given that the 'capability to conduct multilateral and bilateral agreements in the defence area and develop military and technical-military cooperation actions' is strongly reaffirmed in these guidelines, but without any particular highlight of a singular Atlantic country (*Diário da República* 23 January 2003: 286).

With these vectors comprising the bulk of Portugal's supposed Atlantic reach, it would be hard to substantiate the notion of the South Atlantic as Portugal's 'third defensive circle' (Santos 2009: 128), with the first and second being NATO and the EU, respectively. Rather, it is possible to ascertain that, in 2003, both the priority remained unequivocally on the North Atlantic through ties with NATO and only residually towards more southern waters, by means of defence co-operation projects with Lusophone African countries in this region, and that the Atlantic space by itself, and even less the South Atlantic, did not merit any comprehensive approach or specific emphasis as a strategic concern.

The most recent version of CEDN, however, approved in May 2013, provides a more complete view of the subject and breaks with previous structures of analysis. Indeed, for the first time, the Atlantic *per se* is acknowledged on its own and, more importantly, as a whole – independent of transatlantic relations with the US or historical ties with Lusophone African countries.

> The Atlantic constitutes a vast geographic area of important strategic interest. The majority of Portuguese-speaking countries are concentrated in this space […] Hence, it is in Portugal's interest to underline the strategic unity of the Atlantic and contribute to the security and

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[3] The association between NATO's southern flank and the Mediterranean Sea is made in other passages of the document (*Diário da República* 23 January 2003: 281).

promote the international importance of this region. The Atlantic changed itself with the democratization of Latin America and the emergence of new powers. In this new context, came into existence conditions for a democratic convergence in the Atlantic space and for the construction of a new identity for the Atlantic, with a unique homogeneity and stability. The Atlantic's unity foreshadows the need for a new transatlantic community in order to assure the security of not only maritime communication lines, but also of energetic reserves and raw materials, whose importance will be consolidated with the future development of the new economy of the sea. (*Diário da República* 5 April 2013: 1984)

This notion of Atlantic wholeness and unity marks a significant break with previous official conceptualizations as it seeks to bridge the northern and southern regions, both in terms of reinforcing its international prominence and of managing security threats with potential ramifications throughout the area.[4] Above all, the goal is to capitalize on Portugal's professed bridge-building traits between the two sub-oceans, while presenting the country as an indispensable partner in such process. Moreover, cross-regional dialogues are also proposed as a way of connecting the Atlantic's different shores and overcoming past differences and rivalries, with the purpose of providing a safer maritime space in between for every involved country. That purpose is particularly highlighted when it comes to the potential role of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP – Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa) in such an area:

Portugal should commit itself to enhancing security and military cooperation programmes in the framework of the CPLP and establish strategic security partnerships to create cooperation frameworks for the defence of common interests, namely in the domain of maritime communication lines and crisis management […] These initiatives are a way of demonstrating Portugal's commitment to the defence of Atlantic unity, the consolidation of which is crucial for strengthening the ties between CPLP members. Inter-regional relations between Western Europe, North America, South America and southern Africa justify the creation of security dialogues, namely between the EU, NATO, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUL) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). (*Diário da República* 5 April 2013: 1987)

Such dispositions clearly demonstrate the development of new expectations with respect to a potential Portuguese role in the South Atlantic, albeit one founded on the same instruments previously available. Given the country's limited resources and material capabilities, it comes as no surprise to discover that the authorities have consistently emphasized the need for a co-operative view of the subject, as José Aguiar Branco, Portugal's defence minister stated:

Threats should be contained together through cooperation instruments, given that it is the interest of all Atlantic states, directly or indirectly threatened, to actively contribute to the stability and assertion of its strategic interests. (Branco 11 July 2013)

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[4] Such kinds of proposals, however, were not entirely new in form. In 1968, in the context of greater Portuguese involvement in its colonial war, the foreign minister Franco Nogueira said 'NATO should not be indifferent to the preservation for the West of vital strategic positions. We have never understood, for example, how one can separate the North Atlantic from the South Atlantic or how one can ensure the security of one without taking into account the security of the other.' Cited by Geoffrey Ripon in Coker (1985: 54).

More interestingly, legitimate out-of-area interest in the resolution of security problems off the African coast is also increasingly acknowledged, with energy concerns unsurprisingly at the top of the list. For example, when mentioning 'the specificity of the Gulf of Guinea coast, the resources of which supply both the Asian economies as well as ones in the North Atlantic', Aguiar Branco admits it might lead to 'extra-regional states, which depend on the Gulf's energy resources and whose safety is threatened by acts of piracy and/or organized crime, to adopt proactive measures in defence of their own interests' (Branco 11 July 2013). In other words, security problems in African waters might just require outside assistance and support, hypothetically including Portuguese involvement.

Having presented Portugal's official guidelines and perceptions on these issues, it is important to assess how such formal ambitions and priorities can be effectively pursued on the ground. To that end, the following sections will try to evaluate Portuguese efforts under the two most important vectors of action already identified: technical-military cooperation with Lusophone countries and institutional reliance on NATO.

Building upon Lusophone Ties

CTM initiatives in Lusophone countries have long remained instrumental in Portugal's relations with its former colonies. However, even though the first experiences of such co-operation can be traced back to 1978, the first formal CTM agreements were not signed until 1988: first with Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe and Mozambique, followed by Guinea-Bissau a year later. Angola, for its part, remained a unique case due to its civil war, which delayed the signing of a general agreement until 1996.

Structured around multiannual plans, CTM efforts have been consistently renewed throughout the years, showing the interest that they retain amongst the targeted countries' authorities. Two wider goals guide these actions. On one hand, ensuring the internal stabilization and consolidation of the countries receiving this assistance is of the essence; on the other hand, such processes must also be compatible with the principles of democracy, good governance, transparency and the rule of law, thereby facilitating local development (Instituto Português de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento 2006: 20). This linkage between security and development was also emphasized by the National Security and Development Strategy, approved in 2009, which aimed for a greater efficiency and coherence in Portugal's engagement in fragile situations with partner countries, especially with Lusophone countries. The mechanisms at its disposal are multiple, ranging from assistance in the definition of defence policies or adoption of codes of conduct designed to ensure respect for international law, human rights and international humanitarian law, re-organization of the armed forces, military training and instruction and support for each partner countries' own regional insertion in multilateral organizations (Instituto Português de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento 2006: 26).

Unsurprisingly, military training and education is the area with more visible gains and with more direct connections to current security issues in the South Atlantic. As Table 1 shows, more than 700 military personnel from Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe were trained in Portuguese institutions between 2003 and 2010.

	Angola	Cape Verde	Guinea-Bissau	São Tomé and Príncipe	Total
2003	36	20	13	11	80
2004	36	33	9	16	94
2005	30	38	7	20	95
2006	40	23	5	16	84
2007	35	27	7	21	90
2008	70	20	6	16	112
2009	28	28	7	17	80
2010	36	29	9	17	91
Total	311	218	63	134	726

Table 1: Number of military from Lusophone South Atlantic trained in Portugal 2003–10
Source: Ministério da Defesa Nacional (2003-2010)

On the other hand during the same period, Portuguese advisors provided specialized training to nearly 28,000 military personnel in those same countries, as shown in Table 2. The absence of Guinea-Bissau from this list over a number of years serves to demonstrate the strong linkages between the maintenance of the rule of law and CTM initiatives, as Portugal frequently saw fit to suspend training on the ground due to recurring lack of appropriate conditions and constitutional order.

	Angola	Cape Verde	Guinea-Bissau	São Tomé and Príncipe	Total
2003	1947	84	698	47	2776
2004	1605	170	1193	126	3094
2005	4275	1034	-	334	5643
2006	1876	1159	-	553	3588
2007	2969	511	-	398	3878
2008	1673	288	-	507	2468
2009	2324	526	-	688	3538
2010	1829	495	-	531	2855
Total	18,498	4267	1891	3184	27,840

Table 2: Number of military trained in Lusophone South Atlantic countries by Portugal 2003–10
Source: Ministério da Defesa Nacional (2003-2010)

Resources are also constantly allocated to nurturing the development of these countries' own security education institutions, like Angola's War College in Grafanil or Cape Verde's Joint Military Instruction Centre in Morro Branco, while providing assistance in organizing, rationalizing and, in most cases, building from scratch, elite structures and branches of military command. São Tomé and Príncipe's own coastguard, Angola's special forces and the overall support to the general staffs of all the armed forces in these countries, among many other examples, have been the focus of Portugal's cooperation efforts throughout the years.

But more importantly, the rationale behind CTM is never dissociated from a wider agenda of foreign insertion and strategic interests. Indeed, it is not uncommon for such activities to carry with them an added layer of influence when taking place in these regional contexts, and Portugal's endeavours are no exception. As expressed in the landmark guidelines for Portuguese co-operation in 2006, these partnerships can 'become important to enhance the visibility of Portugal and affirm its role in the world' (Instituto Português de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento 2006: 21).

However, and as expected due to the financial contingencies in Portugal, efforts in this regard have been streamlined towards sub-areas of more direct concern or where joint gains are presumably more easily achievable. In association with CEDN dispositions, maritime security in Atlantic waters has come to attract more and more attention. To that end, 'Portugal seeks to answer positively, within its possibilities, to the requests of friendly countries, thus contributing to their security and seeking, whenever possible, to promote solidarity among CPLP countries. Maritime security therefore presents viable opportunities for the development of cooperation initiatives, both on a bilateral and multilateral level' (Branco 11 July 2013). Portugal's participation in the EU-backed Critical Maritime Routes in the Gulf of Guinea (CRIMGO) project, and involvement in the formulation of the 2014 EU Regional Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea, for example, are two cases in point, presented as a means of highlighting Portuguese credentials with Lusophone African countries.[5]

But the refocus of CTM projects towards maritime surveillance and security also exemplifies the shift of priorities in light of a changing regional context. A good example is Portuguese relations with Cape Verde. In 2009, a treaty for the joint inspection of maritime territory under Cape Verdean jurisdiction, signed three years earlier by both countries, finally came into force and included the possible participation of Portuguese vessels in actions against illegal migration, drug trafficking, piracy and other illicit activities. Reinforcing this thematic adjustment, a separate agreement for search and rescue operations in Cape Verdean waters, as well as a new general defence co-operation agreement were also signed on December 2012, replacing the one in force since 1988. A similar path was followed in relation to São Tomé and Príncipe, with which Portugal signed a maritime inspection agreement in June 2013, thus replicating the focus on maritime security while directly citing security concerns in the Gulf of Guinea as the reasons for such a mechanism.

In that sense, efforts by Portuguese authorities in making good use of the preferential relations in this domain with Lusophone African countries have become fairly evident, even if the resources available remain meagre in relation to the geographic scope and the number of threats faced. Their effectiveness, however, remains tied to medium- and long-term projections of influence on local security and military apparatuses while encouraging national democratic consolidation, rather than resorting to more direct intervening means.

NATO and the South

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[5] CRIMGO was created on January 2013 and seeks to promote the training and formation of coast guards from countries in the Gulf of Guinea (Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, São Tomé and Principe, and Togo), while establishing a network of regional information over acts of piracy and other illicit acts.

The second part of Portugal's Atlantic projection involves a more co-operative framework. Indeed, as demonstrated in official documents, Portugal's dependence on NATO's security guarantees assumes an uncontested prominence within the country's defence priorities. Hence, Portugal's active involvement in the review and updating of the organization's strategic concept, a process that coincided with a summit in Lisbon in November 2010, came as no surprise. Under former-US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's guidance, a group of experts was convened with the purpose of laying out the ground for the guidelines which would lead NATO into the 21st century.

Viewing this occasion as an opportunity to influence NATO's readjusted focus, Portugal made consistent efforts, both publicly and privately, to open up a debate that reflected Portugal's own interests for a wider Atlantic framework. As such, in early 2009, the then foreign minister, Luís Amado, was the first to defend 'refocusing NATO's strategy on the Atlantic'. The reasoning was simple: even as the international spotlight shifted towards the Pacific, the consolidation of the Atlantic axis in its North–South dimension remained crucial, and more so given Portugal's 'privileged relations with the African continent, the Mediterranean and in particular, Brazil' (Amado 2009: 22–23). The next year, the defence minister, Augusto Santos Silva, conveyed exactly the same idea when stating Portugal had the 'capacity to help NATO look south' (Lusa 2010a; 2010b).

Portugal's position on this matter was perfectly clear: reinforcing co-operation on an equal basis with both Africa and South America in order to tackle common security risks – such as illegal immigration, drugs, arms, human trafficking and terrorism – would be mutually beneficial and would allow for a better understanding of the perils and gains that could spring from this particular region. A connection with CPLP's activities could equally be considered. That would be achievable by resorting to an 'indirect approach, through a prior focus on Sub-Saharan Africa' while 'searching for allies to that effect, namely the US, and, simultaneously, encouraging Brazil to become more involved with the Atlantic's security problems' (Serronha 2010: 61).

The Albright report chose to follow a different path and opted instead to stress the potential expansion of NATO's 'out-of-area' activities, taking into consideration the mission in Afghanistan and the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Aden.[6] Accordingly, one of NATO's missions should be to 'deploy and sustain expeditionary capabilities for military operations beyond the treaty area when required to prevent an attack on the treaty area or to protect the legal rights and other vital interests of Alliance member' (NATO 2010a: 39; 2010b: 39). References to other potential Atlantic concerns, or even to the South Atlantic, were nowhere to be seen.

The impact was immediately felt in Lisbon, which did not 'understand how the group of experts did not notice the vital interest of the South Atlantic, between the countries of West Africa and South America, for the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic region, the freedom and security of which are NATO's central goals' (Santos 2010: 42). Acknowledging the country's input was not being fully considered, Portugal expressed its disagreement. Santos Silva pointed out the existence of a 'gap' in the report, which did 'not pay as much attention to the south as

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[6] The discussion between a 'global NATO' and a 'regional NATO' has been recurrent throughout the organization's identity-searching process; see, for example, the widely cited article by Daalder and Goldgeier (2006). For an opposing Portuguese view to an excessive dispersion of NATO's focus, see Gaspar (2010).

it should'. Countries like Portugal, he said, 'add to the transatlantic debate, the potential of knowing how to engage in dialogue with the south and to look to the south', and should therefore be considered in the big picture (Lusa 2010b). General Valença Pinto, chief of Portugal's armed forces' general staff (CEMGFA), while recognizing that 'it is an issue of practical evidence to ascertain that sensitivity towards the south in general is neither exuberant nor abundant in NATO', added that this 'does not mean that it is not our duty and in our interest to continue to call everyone's attention to the south's security problems. Specially because there are unfortunate but sustained reasons to think that in there will reside, and perhaps in a growing numbers, considerable serious concerns for the alliance' (Pinto 2010).

Innocuous as Portugal's intentions might have been constructed, they failed to gain any traction. Indeed, the new strategic concept did not incorporate any direct or indirect mention of the South Atlantic, not even in the 'partnerships' section of the document (NATO 2010a: 26–32).[7] The fact that the scope of such potential partnerships remained vague was positively acknowledged by Amado, given that it theoretically encompassed the core of Portugal's goals.[8] Looking back, though, he also admitted there was 'a blockage in the aspects related with the hard issues of security and defence' and as such, some NATO initiatives had been 'poorly accepted and misguided' (Amado and Sousa 2012: 176). Santos Silva recalls that 'it was an issue for which there was great sensitivity in Portugal, and in particular within the Portuguese government and military, but it was not an issue for which NATO as whole was very sensitive'. The important thing, however, is 'that the idea remained and that there was some debate, with a view to future revisions' of the concept.[9] Nevertheless, at the end of the day, the only option available to the Portuguese authorities was to make use of these discussions and apply them to the update of the CEDN, which, as noted above, was to be approved three years later.

Brazil Steps Forward

With a mixed record surrounding the use of the tools available for the prosecution of its goals for Atlantic security and stability, an unexpected issue holds the potential to cause some degree of uncertainty within Portuguese planning. Specifically, the possibility that other interested regional players will not immediately fall into line with such grand designs for this region and are therefore reluctant to back them in any official fashion. Brazil is a case in point, as the entire process of negotiations towards NATO's strategic concept rightly noted.

Indeed, as Portugal further publicized its objectives, Brasília began to raise its fair share of concerns (Seabra 2013: 2–3). The then defence minister, Nelson Jobim, was particularly vocal when taking the opportunity of a conference in Lisbon on 10 September to express his country's position. After a detailed analysis of NATO's failure in coming to terms with its subordination to US interests since the end of the Cold War, Jobim focused on the organization's mandate to operate worldwide and the risks to international security, arguing NATO was no substitute for

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[7] Strategic proposals aside, assuring the maintenance of NATO's Joint Force Command Lisbon (JFCL) Headquarters in Oeiras, or some kind of 'NATO flag' in Portugal, was the main practical outcome Portugal hoped to achieve at the Lisbon summit (Martins 2010: 5). Under the reorganization of NATO's command structure, JFCL was moved to Italy, with Portugal securing the presence of Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO) and NATO Communications and Information Systems School (NCISS).

[8] Interview with Luis Amado, Portuguese foreign minister, 2006–11, Lisbon, 21 October 2013.

[9] Interview with Augusto Santos Silva, Portuguese defence minister, 2009–11, Lisbon, 10 September 2013.

the UN. He then went on to note that it would be 'inappropriate' to associate the North Atlantic with the South Atlantic – 'a strategic area of vital interest for Brazil' – and that 'the security issues of both oceans were notoriously distinct [...] Such issues deserve differentiated responses, as more efficient and legitimate as they less involve organizations or states outside of the region.' The same could be said of an alleged 'Central Atlantic' area (Jobim 2010).

Soon afterwards, Jobim delivered the same message while on a five-day visit to the US in October and then again in Rio de Janeiro on 3 November, when he criticized the US and the alleged proposal for 'shared sovereignty over the Atlantic', claiming that 'neither Brazil nor South America could accept the Americans or NATO claiming any right to intervene in any theatre of operations, under the most varied pretexts' (Antunes 2010).

At the heart of these declarations lay far more intricate geopolitical reasons, ranging from Brazil's own rise on the international stage to suspicions over the US agenda for the surrounding region. Opposition to the treatment of the Atlantic as a whole came across loud and clear and especially so given that it came at the moment Brazil started to reconnect with the South Atlantic on multiple levels – political, economic and strategic.[10] Hence, outside proposals, coincidental to Portuguese objectives for NATO's strategic concept that emphasized the development of an Atlantic Basin or an Atlantic Rim, were easily interpreted as being associated with the concerted drive behind NATO's alleged expansion plans (Hamilton and Burwell 2009; Hamilton, Barry, Binnendijk et al. 2009; Lesser 2010). By appearing to contribute to the notion of solutions that were made in the north and imposed in the south without its involvement, and by reaffirming the non-inclusion of the South Atlantic's leading organizations in any kind of solution, whether regional-political or security-related, such proposals only added insult to injury from a Brazilian point of view. As the defence minister Celso Amorim said, 'we want to evolve in the South Atlantic [...] but without transforming it in an appendix of the North Atlantic' (Fellet 2013).

The fact that the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS – Zona de Paz e Cooperação do Atlântico Sul), Brazil's pet-project for the region, was treated with outright indifference in the north did not help the case either. For instance, when the time came to highlight a potential partnering organization in this region, the Albright Report chose to mention the Organization of the American States (OAS) instead (NATO 2010b: 30), in total disregard of the considerable investment Brazil was putting into the revitalization of ZOPACAS as it sought to turn it into the preferential forum in the region for security-related matters. That alone raised sufficient questions over the validity of the analysis of the regional context being made in Western capitals.

Still, the number one problem for greater co-operation and dialogue in this region remains focused on one particular actor, with direct ramifications for Portugal. Indeed, amidst these discourse disputes, Portugal's NATO credentials inevitably end up being highlighted. Celso Amorim himself expresses this contradictory statue: 'I would even say that Portugal has a certain poetic licence to be in the South Atlantic, thanks to CPLP. But evidently, the fact Portugal belongs to NATO remains a limitation to the type of [defence] cooperation that you can have.'[11]

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[10] The skepticism towards such a concept had already been expressed, albeit if in a less strident way, at the Lanzarote Summit in June 2009, when Spain convened the countries of the South Atlantic, including Portugal and Brazil, to discuss the region's problems. The initiative was not taken up.

[11] Interview with Celso Amorim, Brazil's defence minister, Brasília, 15 May 2013.

The same idea exists when Brazilian authorities are asked about the possible participation of Portugal as an observer of ZOPACAS activities: despite being a 'friendly and brotherly partner', the fact is, 'Portugal belongs to NATO'.[12] Again, that condition alone ends up neutralizing most of Portugal's intentions for this region, for it carries with it association with an agenda of which the south is mistrustful and suspicious in respect of its true intentions and overall geographic reach in the context of its amply debated out-of-reach operations. Incidentally, it is not a question of Brazil not recognizing mutual security concerns or potential common threats to both Brazilian and Western interests, but rather of Brazil not being able to accept poorly-constructed initiatives, both at a bilateral and multilateral level, in an area it deems to be of strategic interest in terms of its own security.

Portugal's aim to play an active part in this region is consequently met with 'a frontal clash with Brazil's sovereign position in relation to its projection of power, or what Brazil imagines to be its power projection capacity in the Atlantic'.[13] Any aspirations Portugal may have to include Brazil in any kind of multilateral solution in the South Atlantic remain hampered for the time being.

Conclusion

Amidst Portugal's self-professed Atlantic vocation, its engagement with Guinea-Bissau remains a paradigmatic case, as the 2012 coup proved. As far as security conundrums with direct linkages to Portuguese interests goes, this was an unavoidable scenario. However, after a clear show of force Portuguese ships were recalled without using force within a month, and without achieving any palpable change on the ground. The limits of such material responses to regional threats were clear for all to see.

Still, examples such as Guinea-Bissau and the official acknowledgment of greater awareness for the security risks in Atlantic waters demonstrate that Portugal remains wary of this developing context, and more so when it affects its areas of direct interest. The shift of focus in Lusophone CTM co-operation towards maritime security helps substantiate this notion. Likewise, the formalization of the country's Atlantic concerns in the CEDN's new version reflects an intention to overcome the non-inclusion of such dispositions in NATO's strategic concept. However, the effectiveness of relying on such mechanisms is diminished if Portuguese authorities do not heed the warnings from the same regions and partners they seek to attract for the kind of common Atlantic solution currently envisioned. And herein lies the main problem of this approach, for without the active involvement, or at least the tacit acquiescence of these potential partners regarding any concerted response to the security problems in the region, their effective resolution will remain lacking.

Rather than denying the merits of Portugal's maritime ties or even the validity of the Atlantic wholeness proposal, this article evaluated the tools available to Portugal while highlighting the difficulties of reconciling these goals with the designs of other emerging regional powers that have clear interests of their own regarding what the South Atlantic's security and stability should entail and, more importantly, who it should include. At the end of this road, due

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[12] Interview with Glivânia Oliveira, director of the Department for International Organizations, Brazilian foreign ministry, Brasília, 17 June 2013.

[13] Interview with João Gomes Cravinho, Portuguese foreign secretary, 2005–11, Lisbon, 14 September 2013.

to structural and material contingencies, Portuguese ambitions will inevitably be constrained by an agenda set outside Lisbon. Hence, the toning down of larger aspirations and acknowledging that wide-ranging expectations alone do not shape the future resolution of the problems arising from this region is certain to be a more realistic route for Portuguese engagement with the South Atlantic in the near future.

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