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Great Power Competition in the Atlantic

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His researches have been widely featured in numerous important institutions, such as the NATO Defense College Foundation (2021), the Academic journal (n°38) of the Atlantic Centre for Defense Capacity Building (Portugal, 2020), and the Brazilian REPATS Journal of Studies and Advanced Researches on Third Sector (2019). He is additionally a regular contributor to Policy Center for the New South research, producing numerous papers on defense, armed forces, security and conflicts. In 2022-2023, he has become a member of the Committee of African experts in charge of revising the strategy of the African Union «post conflict reconstruction and development 2006». Pr. El Houdaïgui is also the Representative of Morocco in the Bord Committee of the Euro-Maghreb Centre for Research and Strategic Studies (CEMRES) as part of the 5 +5 Defense Initiative. Institutional think-tank of defense ministers of the 5 +5, Tunis (Tunisia)

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SUMMARY

PREFACE

The return of great power competition to the Atlantic Ocean has triggered a new focus on geopolitics. From NATO's enlargement in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine to the emergence of new forums in the South Atlantic; from the growth of traditional and hybrid threats to the increase in military presence in the region, the Atlantic has become a new focus of geopolitical competition. Moreover, climate change has exacerbated the contest over natural resources and the opening of new shipping routes to the north, in addition to the growing need to safeguard energy, information, and other relevant infrastructures. All these issues are clearly reflected in recent strategic documents produced by transatlantic states and key international organizations, while also underlying the work of multinational initiatives such as the Portuguese-led Atlantic Centre.

This initiative is one of Portugal's most important investments in Atlantic security and multilateral cooperation in recent years. Currently with 22 signatory states, the Atlantic Centre is entrusted with promoting political dialogue as well as capacity building and training activities to the benefit of all the Atlantic. In particular, it is noteworthy its commitment to the exchange of knowledge between universities, research centres, and the armed forces of the different participating states. This rich and multifaceted report echoes such purpose, owing greatly to the collective effort of authors stemming from research institutions of different corners of the Atlantic.

The challenging dynamics underpinning the mounting geopolitical competition within this space and the need to address security – and maritime security in particular – as a complex, expanding, and cross-cutting concept also receive considerable focus. Indeed, while centring on the role of non-Atlantic powers in the Atlantic space, the report is imbued with the double purpose of mapping out diverse security perspectives and concerns from different Atlantic actors.

Much like the Atlantic Centre itself, this policy-oriented research-based report is also grounded on a whole-of-Atlantic approach. It provides an overarching view of different perspectives on great power competition in the Atlantic that contribute to fostering a more profound understanding of the multifaceted security challenges this vast space faces, whilst promoting a greater level of cooperation benefiting all countries bordering the Atlantic. Ultimately, it contributes to the important goal of promoting a greater reflection on security and defence issues in the Atlantic, by bringing our societies closer to the different challenges and opportunities that we face in this space and by improving the quality and legitimacy of political decision-making processes in these areas.

Helena Carreiras

Minister of National Defence

INTRODUCTION

Francisco Proença Garcia, and Rita Costa

The Atlantic has long been an ocean of relative peace. Once at the centerstage of global affairs, it has been perceived as losing importance as increased focus is given to the Indo-Pacific region. However, great power competition and recent developments in the Atlantic have brought renewed attention to this ocean.

This 'return of geopolitics' as it has been deemed in the Western world, signals a change of rhetoric by Western states, which now perceive these great powers as strategic competitors and a threat to their own interests and security. This is clear in recent strategic documents, such as NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept, which portrays Russia as "the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area" (NATO 2022, 4) and China as a source of "systemic challenges … to Euro-Atlantic security" (NATO 2022, 5) whose "stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values" (NATO 2022, 5). A similar discourse can also be observed in the EU's Strategic Compass (2022), which considers Russia's actions as a severe and direct threat to European security (EEAS 2022, 17) and depicts China as a "partner for cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival" (EEAS 2022, 18). It is essential to note the different approaches towards Russia and China in both documents. In the case of China, although perceived as a "systemic challenge", both organisations consider cooperation and engagement with the state as a way of safeguarding their interests and security. By contrast, the documents do not signal any openness to dialogue or engagement with Russia, as a result of its ongoing invasion of Ukraine.

In this context, the Atlantic space stands as a prime regional scenario where dynamics of geostrategic competition have been increasingly fostered. These dynamics are manifest in several ways. One of these manifestations is an increased competition for political influence and changing alliances and partnerships. Recent examples of this include the establishment of new forums and reinforcement of older ones, such as the Summit for Democracy, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Forum. More significantly, the willingness of Finland and Sweden to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), serve as significant indicators of alliances being reinforced within this evolving context. Besides the enlargement of NATO, Russia's war on Ukraine and its influence in global politics is also evident in the United Nations General Assembly resolutions condemning Russia's war on Ukraine[1]. The voting patterns, namely the countries that voted against and abstained, reveal a clear pattern of nations with strong political, military and/or economic relations with Russia. For instance, the abstention of India, which imports 70 percent of its military equipment from Russia (Amighini and García-Herrero 2023) or of countries with significant defence cooperation agreements with Russia, including the presence of Russian forces or private military companies

[1] Namely Resolutions ES-11/1, 11/2 and 11/4.

(PMC) in their territory, such as Nicaragua (Al Jazeera 2022; Berg and Brands 2021) or the Central African Republic (Fasanotti 2022).

Another significant aspect of geopolitical competition in the Atlantic is the intensifying competition for resources and economic opportunities. This is visible, for instance, in China's Belt and Road Initiative, which includes several investments in the Atlantic region (Berg and Brands 2021; Faleg and Palleschi 2020). Moreover, China has been increasingly investing in resource-rich African countries, often facilitated through commodity-backed loans, as the oil-backed loans in Angola (Gil 2015), which led to the use of the expression 'Angola-model' to describe this type of agreements. Additionally, the EU has made efforts to reinforce its oil and gas imports from African-producing states since the outbreak of the Ukraine War (Pinto 2023). Furthermore, even the international seabed has become a subject of contention, as states race to secure access to seabed resources.

The escalation of great power competition is also evident in the increased military activity and presence within the Atlantic Ocean and its coastal states. This trend is visible across all actors. Notable developments include the establishment of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2007 and reestablishment of the US 4th Fleet in 2008, and the growing number of EU countries with naval missions in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) and the pilot project of Coordinated Maritime Presences launched in the region. Russia, as previously mentioned, has also increased its military and paramilitary presence in the continent, extending its influence across multiple states (Faleg and Palleschi 2020). Also noteworthy is the considerable increase in China's contribution to UN peacekeeping missions, positioning it as the 10th country with more troops (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2023), and reports of its ambition to establish a naval base in the Atlantic (Lin et al. 2021).

Finally, in an ever more technology-driven world, increased hybrid threats are also a concern, with a particular emphasis on the critical infrastructures and the informational and cyber domain. This reality was starkly demonstrated by the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines in September 2022 (Plucinska, 2022), highlighting the vulnerabilities of such critical energy infrastructure. Additionally, concerns have been growing regarding the security of undersea data cables – as reflected in the inclusion of the issue on the update to the EU's maritime security strategy (European Commission 2023) – and over disinformation and informational operations, especially since Russia's informational tactics in some African states like the Central African Republic and Mali have increased its influence while undermining other actors, such as France (Schipani, Pilling, and Adeoye 2023).

The Atlantic is also facing a myriad of threats, risks and challenges such as piracy and armed robbery at sea, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, illicit trafficking of drugs, arms and persons, terrorism, pollution and environmental damage. Climate change, as 'threat multiplier', is expected to scale up the challenges in the Atlantic Ocean, as its multiple effects are predicted to bring about considerable changes in marine ecosystems and weather patterns and rising sea levels (IPCC 2019). More distinctively, the decline of Arctic sea ice is expected to open new shipping routes with major strategic implications and the potential to change the balance of power among different actors in the North Atlantic (Gramer 2016).

Additionally, the transition towards a green economy has accelerated a race to the bottom of the oceans as states and companies seek to assure access to the resources found in the seabed, which are essential for supporting the green economy.

The cruciality of maritime security in the Atlantic is reflected in several regional and interregional initiatives and institutional commitments that were either created specifically with the aim of ensuring maritime security or include a strong maritime component. Most notably, in the GoG region, there have been numerous initiatives and regional institutional commitments to tackle piracy and armed robbery at sea, IUU fishing, and other maritime security challenges in support of the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and the institutional development of the Maritime Security Architecture in the GoG, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are also several multilateral agreements and initiatives that include a maritime security component out of which we highlight the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS) and the Organization of American States. Finally, it is essential to mention the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOCAPAS) as an interregional South-South cooperation initiative with maritime security at its core. These initiatives are in addition to the EU's and NATO's strategies and interests in the Atlantic Basin.

More recently, innovative initiatives have brought together countries from the South, North, West and East Atlantic, reflecting a shift towards the recognition of the need to address Atlantic security as a whole. Cases in point include the United States-led "Joint Statement on Atlantic Cooperation" and the Atlantic Centre, a multinational initiative led by the Portuguese Ministry of National Defence, within whose framework this report was organised.

The context described above motivated the commissioning of this report by the Atlantic Centre. This collaborative report revisits the research on the changing geopolitical context in the Atlantic and addresses the dynamics and consequences of enhanced great power competition in the region through various perspectives. It does so with a focus on, but not limited to, the presence of non-Atlantic powers in the Atlantic as the core object of the study.

As security in the Atlantic has different meanings for different Atlantic regions and states and security priorities vary considerably across them, it is essential to understand how the different Atlantic nations view external involvement and presence inland and at sea and which impacts that has on their security. As such, this Atlantic Centre report compiles different – and at times diverging – perspectives on the impact of renewed great power competition for Atlantic countries. This was made possible by the international and collaborative character of this report, composed of contributions from authors of the following institutions: the Research Centre of the Institute for Political Studies of Universidade Católica Portuguesa; the Núcleo de Estudos Prospectivos do Centro de Estudos Estratégicos do Exército of Brazil; the Instituto Universitario General Gutiérrez Mellado; the Universidad Pablo de Olavide ; the Fridtjof Nansen Institute & the High North Center; the Africa Center for Strategic Studies; the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute;

the Policy Center for the New South; and the Faculty of Economics and Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra.

At its core, the objective of this report is to provide Atlantic states with an informed and detailed background for decision-making that considers the many perspectives driving this state of affairs with a view to facilitating the design of cooperative strategies that respond to all the needs identified. This report is also an opportunity to identify shared security concerns between the south and north Atlantic, thus contributing to erasing division lines.

Underpinning this report is a broad concept of security, as adopted by the Atlantic Centre. Security[2] was once understood fundamentally from a political-military perspective, with the defence of state sovereignty as the primary objective (Brandão 2004, 40). This perspective was consolidated by the realist school of International Relations and the Cold War. However, with the end of the Cold War and globalisation, security has become an increasingly broad concept that includes a variety of risks and threats, many of which are not military in nature, neither a threat to the sovereignty of the state.

With the end of the Cold War and the emergence of new actors and risks and threats on the international scene, the old conception of security became inadequate to face the increasing complexity of international relations. Scientific and technological developments have created the material conditions for globalisation, allowing threats to spread more quickly and widely than before. Borders were called into question, new transnational and global threats emerged, and unpredictability increased, creating conditions for conflict to erupt. It became evident that security was not limited to state and military issues, and that new dimensions were necessary to deal with the growing complexity.

Even though the concept of security remains contested and ambiguous, with strong political and ideological implications[3], nowadays security can be understood to include several dimensions, including political, economic, environmental, energetic, health, cultural, scientific and technological aspects. New security approaches have emerged, such as societal security[4] and human security. In particular, the concept of human security[5], proposed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (UNDP 1994), emphasises the importance of individual security and the general well-being of people over a state-centred security. Even though this concept is of difficult operationalisation, it nevertheless serves as a reminder that the raison d'être of states or other political communities resides in the individuals it serves; and that the essence of the concept revolves around the human individual, as an actor and the primary focus of security, rather than around specific sectors such as military or non-military domains. (Brandão 2004, 51; Garcia 2011).

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[2] The following section on the evolution of the concept of security was based on the authors' previous work (Garcia, 2011).

[3] For a complete overview of the political and ideological implications of the concept of security see Buchan and Mackintosh (1973); Buzan (1991) and Thomas (1992).

[4] The concept of "societal security" was initially proposed by Barry Buzan. It was later developed by a research group at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Research, that differentiated between state security, associated with sovereignty, and societal security, linked to identity.

[5] The foundation of this novel approach rests on several key assumptions: the central importance of the human being; the presence of risks that are universal, transnational, and diverse in nature; and the recognition of the interdependence among the various components of security (UNDP 1994).

The new conceptions of security also reflect the growing awareness of the severity of global problems, as well as the inability of the state to address them alone. While states continue to be at the forefront of facing security threats, international cooperation is essential to address increasingly complex global challenges. An effective system of collective or cooperative security must be credible, coherent, efficient and transparent, and only then can states overcome their vulnerabilities and ensure the security of their citizens in a constantly changing world (Garcia 2011).

Within the realm of security, maritime security[6] possesses unique characteristics. Bueger and Edmunds (2017) identify four distinct features of maritime security: interconnectedness; liminality; transnationality and; cross-jurisdictionality. Firstly, maritime security issues are marked by their interconnectivity, and to some extent, interdependency. One example of this is the correlation found between IUU fishing and piracy in West Africa, which suggests a relation between both issues (Denton and Harris 2021). Another notable aspect is liminality, which refers to the connection between maritime security challenges and inland issues. For instance, the root causes of most maritime security issues originate inland, and critical infrastructures such as ports play a vital role in mitigating these threats. Consequently, maritime security cannot be addressed in isolation, being essential that inland security be approached in conjunction. Regarding transnationality, it pertains to the lack of physical borders at sea, as maritime security issues often extend beyond national sovereignty or responsibility areas and encompass the broader maritime domain. Therefore, ensuring maritime security inherently requires cooperative efforts. Lastly, maritime security is also characterised by cross-jurisdictionality, which implies that addressing maritime security issues requires the involvement of various national (and international) jurisdictions, encompassing a wide range of agencies and departments with distinct functions such as: navies, coast guards, law enforcement and environmental agencies.

Considering all the aforementioned points, this report adopts a comprehensive approach to maritime security, comprising its national security, environmental, economic, and human security dimensions (Bueger and Edmunds 2017). Consequently, it acknowledges the intrinsic connection of maritime security with inland and political factors in the context of ongoing global great power competition.

This report consists of seven chapters, each presenting a different perspective on great power competition in the Atlantic. The first chapter, authored by Sónia Ribeiro and Aldino Campos, examines the processes of maritime claiming areas and the demand for minerals and raw materials as vectors of geopolitical challenges in the Atlantic basin. Writing from a Portuguese perspective, Ribeiro and Campos reflect on the potential risks and challenges to Europe and Portugal emerging from regional instability and the social and security domains.

In chapter two, Enio Moreira Azzi, analyses the implications of great power competition in the Atlantic for Brazil's security and defence. The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of how Brazil is

[6] For a detailed account of the evolution of maritime security thinking see Bueger and Edmunds (2017) and Boşilcă, Susana Ferreira and Ryan (2022).

positioning itself in this evolving global landscape and responding to the ensuing challenges and opportunities.

Chapter three, by Rafael García Perez, explores the geopolitical and security dimensions of the fiber-optic submarine cables network in the Atlantic, examining how power relations are reflected in these critical infrastructures. By analysing the cables network distribution and density in the North and South Atlantic, García Perez sheds light on the fragmentation of the Atlantic space and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that characterise geopolitical competition between great powers.

In chapter four, Andreas Østhagen examines the political dynamics of state and military security in the Arctic and how they have evolved since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The study leans on a conceptual separation between so-called levels of analysis in international affairs, as well as Norway as a case study when examining the 'national' level, to further develop the way Arctic security and geopolitics are conceived moving forward. Furthermore, his work highlights how concerns about Arctic security extend beyond the region to a wider Euro-Atlantic maritime domain.

Chapter five, authored by Luka Kuol, examines the maritime security of the coastal countries of Atlantic Sub-Saharan Africa. The chapter provides an overview of the opportunities and challenges present in the Atlantic Africa maritime domain and offers valuable insights from the Atlantic Sub-Saharan Africa region's experience in addressing maritime security threats. Drawing on this experience, the chapter offers relevant lessons that can be applied in creating an Atlantic inter-continental maritime security partnership.

In chapter six, Kofi Duodo, Stephanie Schandorf and Alberta Sagoe, from the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute, analyse the implications of great power competition for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea region through the lens of maritime security interventionism. They argue that maritime security interventionism has shaped the region as an arena of great power competition, with increased military presence and prioritisation of international maritime concerns over regional ones.

Rachid El Houdaigui, in chapter seven, explores the dynamics of the geopolitical power game taking place in Atlantic Africa and analyses its relevant variables, its real dimensions and the challenges to be faced. El Houdaigui completes his analysis with a sound proposal for an informal 2+2 dialogue between Europe and the US, and Africa and Latin America.

On a final note, it is important to refer that this report was finalised in April 2023, while the submission of chapters occurred until March 2023. Given the rapidly changing international landscape, some developments may have occurred since its publication. Nevertheless, the report offers a general overview, highlighting prevailing tendencies in the Atlantic space. It is our goal that this report provides a comprehensive view of Great Power Competition in the Atlantic region, incorporating diverse perspectives from all parts of this ocean. Hopefully, by understanding each other's motivations and concerns, cooperation will be further fostered to ensure the Atlantic space remains a zone of relative peace.

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THE CHALLENGING GEOPOLITICAL FRAMEWORK IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN. A PORTUGUESE PERSPECTIVE

Sónia Ribeiro and Aldino Campos [7]

ABSTRACT

The Atlantic Ocean is a distinctive expanse within the global hydrosphere, encompassing an approximate area of 106,500,000 km², which accounts for nearly 20% of the Earth's surface. In the realm of international relations, it serves as the operational theatre for 65 sovereign states. Additionally, through its six principal maritime gateways, it accommodates non-Atlantic countries pursuing resources and other interests, further fuelled by the growing demand for minerals and raw materials driven by the energy transition.

The paper delves into the geopolitical challenges that the Atlantic basin encounters in two critical dimensions: the ongoing processes linked to maritime boundary claims and the escalating demand for minerals and raw materials. It assesses the prospective long-term risks to Europe, emanating from both social and security concerns, along with the potential for regional instability. Furthermore, it contemplates the imminent challenges that Portugal will face within this evolving geopolitical framework in the Atlantic.

Keywords: Marine resources, Marine Spatial Analysis, Seabed Authority, Continental Shelf

1. SETTING THE SCENE -THE GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE ATLANTIC

The Atlantic Ocean holds a distinct position within the global hydrosphere, bearing the historical significance and weight of events that unfolded during the 20th century. While the nature of threats and challenges has evolved, their contemporary significance remains paramount. Adopting the internationally recognised limits[8], based on the publication IHO-S23 (IHO 1953; Flanders Marine Institute 2018), this

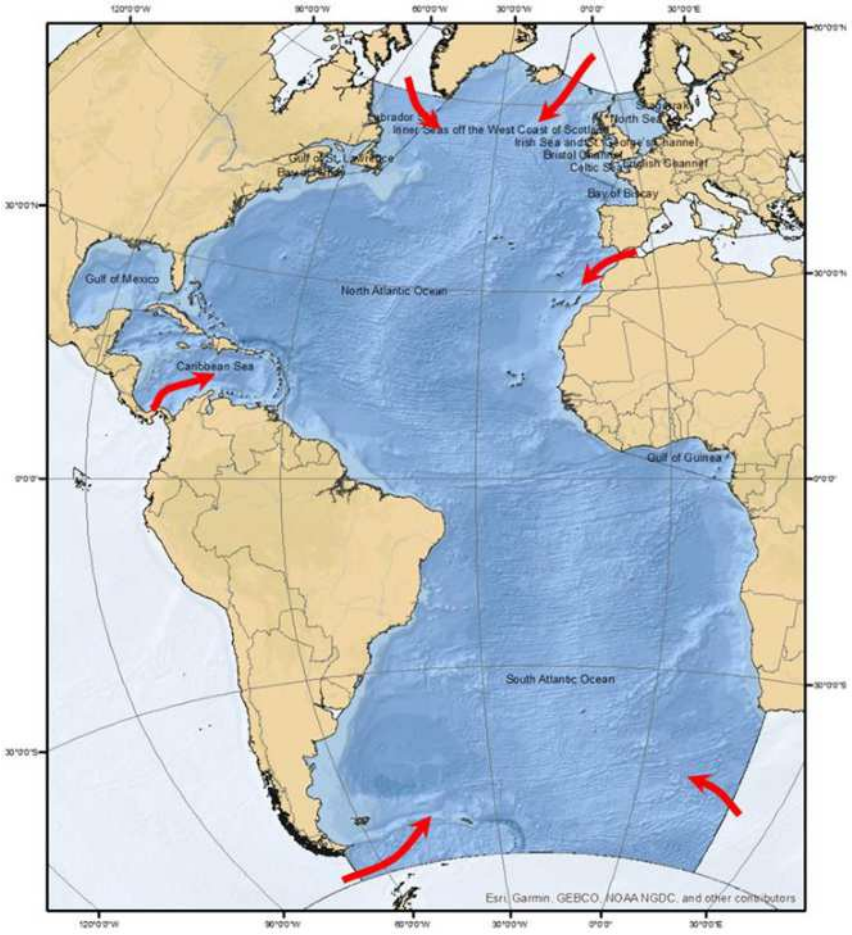
[7] CIEP/UCP

[8] **On the North**: A line joining position 60°00'N – 64°10'W, on the coast of Labrador in Canada eastward, along the parallel of 60°N, to the southwestern coast of Greenland at position 60°00'N – 44°50'W; thence from this position northeastward, along the southern and eastern coasts of Greenland, to Cape Edward Holm (67°51'N – 32°11'W), on the southeastern coast of Greenland; thence a line joining Kap Edward Holm southeastward to Bjargtangar (65°30'N - 24°32'W), the western extremity of Iceland; thence from Bjargtangar southeastward, along the western and southern coasts of Iceland, to Stokksnes (64°14'N - 14°58'W), on the eastern coast of Iceland; thence a line joining Stokksnes southeastward to the north most extremity of Fuglöy (62°21'N - 6°15'W), in the Faeroe Islands; thence a line joining the north most extremity of Fuglöy to Muckle Flugga (60°51'N – 0°53'W), the northern most point in the Shetland Islands; and thence from Muckle Flugga eastward, along the parallel of 60°51'N, to the southwestern coast of Norway at position 60°51'N – 4°40'E.

On the East: From position 60°51'N – 4°40'E, on the southwestern coast of Norway southward, along the coasts of Norway and Sweden, to position 57°45'N – 11°45'E, on the southwestern coast of Sweden; thence a line joining this position westward, along the parallel of 57°45'N, to Skagen Lighthouse W (57°45'N - 10°36'E), the northern extremity of Jylland, in Denmark; thence from Skagen Lighthouse W southward, along the coasts of Europe, to Cape Trafalgar (36°11'N - 6°02'W), on the southern coast of Spain; thence a line joining Cabo Trafalgar southward to Cape Espartel (35°48'N - 5°55'W), in Morocco; and thence from Cape

expansive hydrographic basin encompasses an approximate area of 106,500,000 km², representing nearly 20% of the Earth's surface (Figure 1).

Figure 1- Geographic domain of the Atlantic Ocean, according to the International Hydrographic Organization.



In the realm of international relations, this hydrographic basin serves as the operational arena for 65 sovereign states. These states not only engage directly with the Atlantic but also interact with each other through its vast expanse. Additionally, there exist six primary maritime entry points (illustrated in Figure 1 with red arrows) that enable non-Atlantic countries to pursue resources and other interests within this expansive region. These entry points include two in the northern region (the GIUK[9] gap located to the

Espartel southward, along the western coast of Africa, to Cape Agulhas (34°50'S - 20°00'E), the southern extremity of Africa; and thence from Cape Agulhas southward, along the meridian of 20°E, to the parallel of 60°00'S.

On the West: From position 60°00'S - 67°16'W northward, along the meridian of 67°16'W, to Cape Horn (55°59'S - 67°16'W), the southern extremity of Cape Horn, the southern island of Tierra del Fuego; thence from Cape Horn northward, along the southern and eastern coasts of Tierra del Fuego, to Cape Espirito Santo (52°39'S - 68°37'W); thence a line joining Cape Espirito Santo northeastward, across the eastern entrance of Strait Magallanes, to Point Dungeness (52°24'S - 68°26'W); thence from Point Dungeness northward, along the eastern coast of South America, to Punta Rasa del Cabo San Antonio (36°17'S – 56°47'W), in Argentina; thence from Punta Rasa del Cabo San Antonio, a line northeastward to Punta del Este (34°58'S – 54°57'W), in Uruguay; thence from Punta del Este northeastward, along the coast of South America, to the Equator, on the northern coast of Brazil, northward, along the eastern coasts of the American continents, to position 60°00'N – 64°10'W, on the coast of Labrador in Canada.

On the South: From the meridian of 20°E westward, along the parallel of 60°00'S, to the meridian of 67°16'W.

[9] Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom Gap.

northeast and the Labrador Sea located to the northwest), one from the Mediterranean Sea, one from the Panama Canal, and two in the southern region (one to the west between Cape Horn and Antarctica and the other to the east

The Atlantic is flanked by two of the world's most intricate regions. To the north lies the Arctic Ocean, which presents a myriad of geopolitical challenges, primarily driven by climate change and the pursuit of resources (Guy and Lasserre 2016). In the south, we find Antarctica, often regarded as the Earth's final frontier, where the preservation of this continent is currently another pressing challenge (Joyner 2011, 97–101).

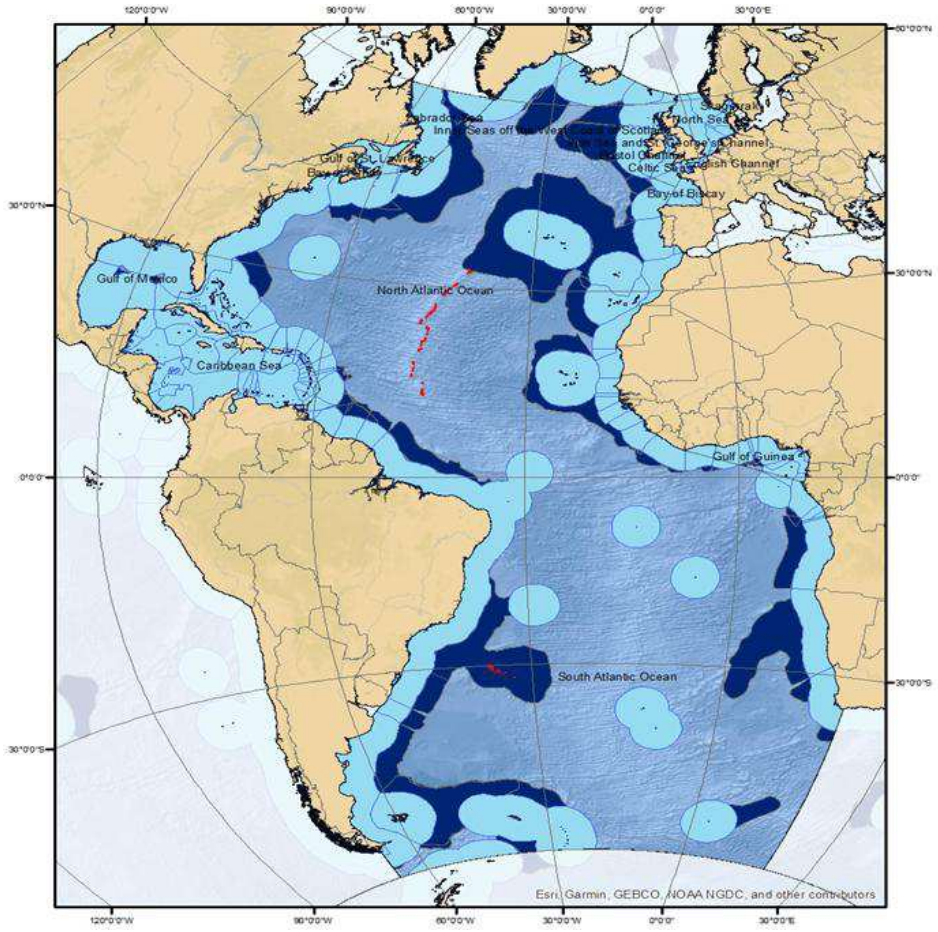
The regional actors in the Atlantic are categorised into three regional groups, as defined by the United Nations[10] (Rivlin 1992). These groups tend to form their own arrangements to pursue regional political objectives, not only at the UN level but also in more closely aligned arrangements that serve their interests, particularly in the realms of commerce and trade (Mahon and Fanning 2019; Van der Donckt 1999). Nevertheless, the Atlantic Ocean is also a theatre for a wide range of geopolitical instabilities, with specific cases spanning from the southernmost to the northernmost latitudes .

Among the various agendas that can be brought forward for discussion, including security, environmental protection, fisheries management, migration, and resources, it is often challenging to identify common ground when it comes to existing national policies. Unless a region is united by a shared political principle, differences in national policies concerning marine pollution or fisheries within the same region or ocean basin can result in heightened vulnerability for the marine environment. Simultaneously, it may entail a greater internal political cost for states that uphold more stringent standards. While not always straightforward to attain, striving for regional consensus on critical issues like these is imperative (Sissenwine and Symes 2007).

To sum up this introductory section, it's crucial to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various maritime geopolitical risks within this oceanic basin, with particular focus on potential territorial claims, either by regional coastal states or external non-Atlantic powers seeking access to resources in the area. As per the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), all maritime zones except the continental shelf can be established by coastal states. These zones primarily include the territorial sea (12 nautical miles), the contiguous zone (24 nautical miles), and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ - 200 nautical miles). The Continental Shelf, extending from the 200 nautical miles mark measured from the baselines, is subject to consideration by the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf[11] (CLCS) as described in detail in the following section. Beyond the outer limits of all continental shelves, whether extended or not[12], lies the Area, also known as a common heritage of humankind. Figure 2 shows the Atlantic Ocean and the corresponding maritime domains as per UNCLOS, where the Area is represented as a hill shaded region.

[10] Western Europe and North America (WEOG), Africa (AG), and South America and the Caribbean (GRULAC).
[11] United Nations body established under the UNCLOS.
[12] Only up to 200 Nautical Miles.

Figure 2 – Maritime domains in the Atlantic based on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Light blue represents EEZ, dark blue represents extended continental shelves and red polygons represent the areas assigned by the International Seabed Authority in the Atlantic. Maritime zone data from Marine Regions (Flanders Marine Institute 2019)



2. THE PURSUIT OF ATLANTIC RESOURCES

a. The Extended Continental Shelves in the Atlantic

As of today, 34 Atlantic coastal states have submitted their national claims to the CLCS to delineate the outer limit of their continental shelf beyond the 200 nautical mile mark. In total, there are 36 submissions[13] with some states presenting multiple submissions (referred to as partial submissions) and several states jointly submitting a single claim (known as joint submission). Among these submissions, 12 have received recommendations, encompassing 11 distinct submissions (Figure 3 in green), 25 states still await consideration of their 21 submissions, or await the establishment of their respective subcommissions (Figure 3 in dark blue). This prolonged process has persisted for over two decades, beginning with the Russian Federation's initial project submission in the Arctic region in 2001. On a global scale, a total of 93 projects have been submitted to the CLCS, with no particular regional prioritisation evident in the

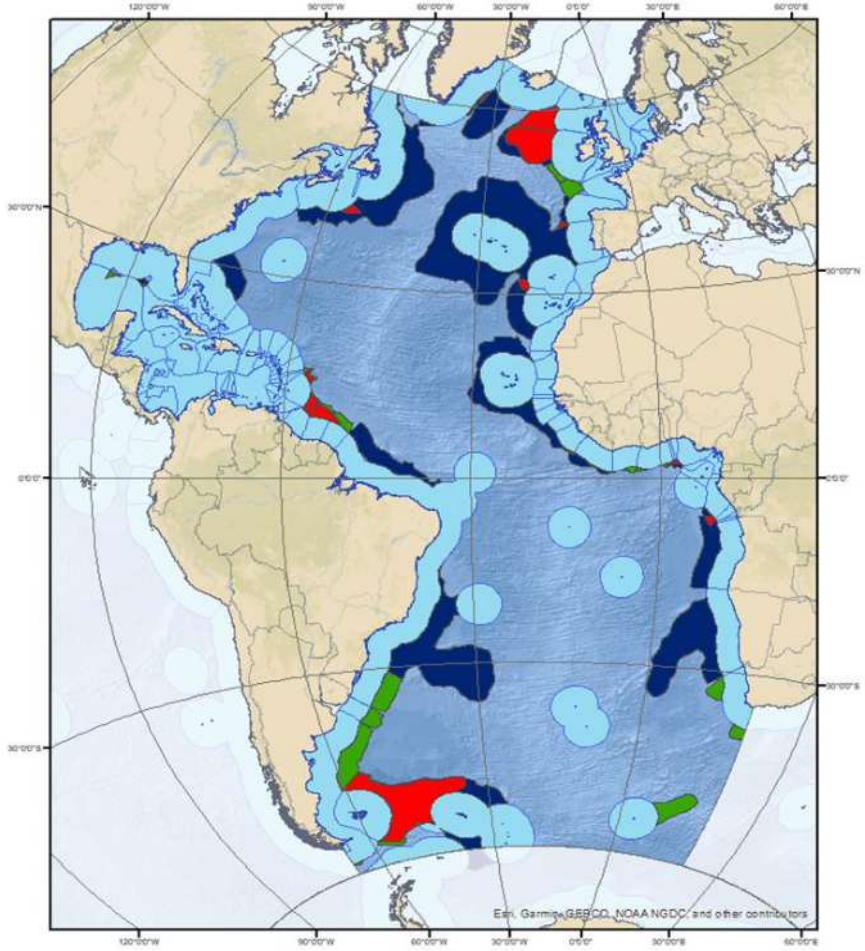
[13] https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/commission_submissions.htm

processing of these submissions. This implies that for Atlantic-related claims, coastal states will need to adhere to the sequence in which they were originally submitted to the commission, meaning that it may still take several decades for the entire process to reach completion.

b. Potential Disputes and Overlaps

During the preparation of their submissions, coastal states maximise their claims in all potential areas without regard to potential overlaps with adjacent or opposite countries. Ultimately, the Commission only provides recommendations for the outer limits of these submissions, as outlined in Article 76 of the UNCLOS. Any overlapping claims, unless considered disputes under the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Commission[14], must be resolved by the coastal states that are affected (Kunoy 2012). Currently, there are 20 coastal states in the Atlantic whose submissions overlap (Figure 3 in red). Some of these submissions are pending consideration as their respective subcommissions are established, while other face objections from neighbouring states regarding their consideration.

Figure 3 – Submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. In green are those for which recommendations have been already issued, in red those that overlap with each other, and in dark blue those that are still under consideration or waiting for their turn for consideration.



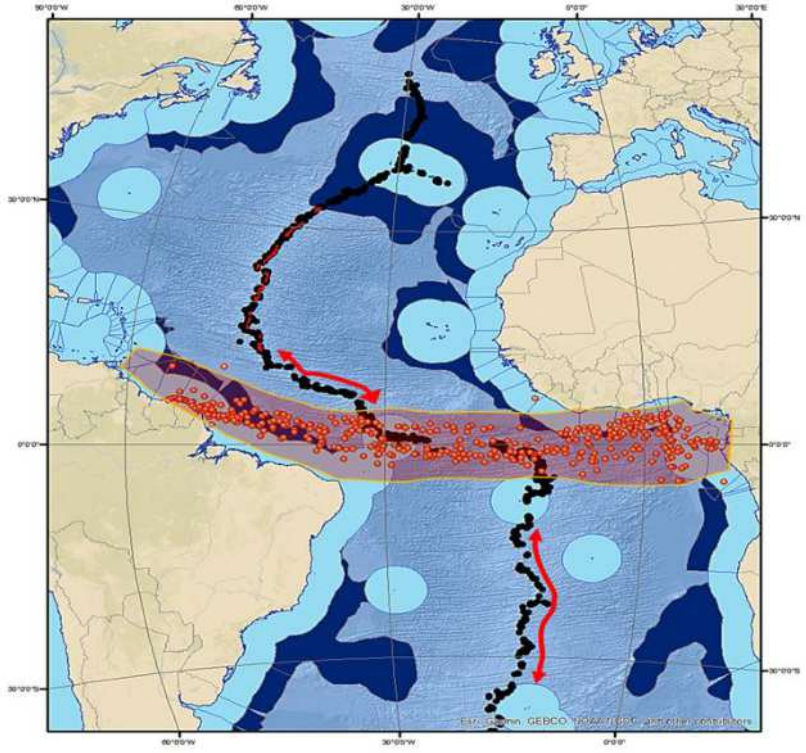
[14] https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/309/23/PDF/N0830923.pdf?OpenElement

c. The Emergence of Potential New Non-Atlantic Actors and the Strengthening of Great Powers in the Region

The primary challenge in the potential pursuit of seabed resources lies within the region known as "the Area". This region (represented in hill shading in Figure 3) is accessible to any State worldwide, whether they belong to the Atlantic domain or not, and whether they are coastal, shelf or landlocked. Engaging in such activities is contingent upon the International Seabed Authority (ISA), and therefore, it is crucial to identify potential areas of interest in advance. By compiling all the polygons granted for exploration by the ISA[15] (Figure 4 in red, along the Middle Atlantic Ridge in the southern extension of the continental shelf of Portugal-Azores), the resulting area, while still substantial, will progressively decrease if we designate the middle Atlantic ridge (marked in Figure 4 as black dots, corresponding to significant seismic activity along the Atlantic ridge) as the most promising location for deep-sea mining (Zalik 2021; 2018).

Moreover, if we elevate, in accordance with Article 149 of the UNCLOS, the humanistic aspect concerning the remembrance of the Middle Passage, which pertains to the enslaved African people who endured transatlantic journeys (Turner et al. 2020), we may encounter an increasing demand for specific areas of significance (Figure 4 represented as shaded polygons and burial site markers along the equator line).

Figure 4 - Portion of the Atlantic basin, showing areas marked as both EEZ and Extended Continental Shelves (highlighted in light and dark blue, respectively) and the areas designated for exploration by the ISA (indicated in red, spanning from the southern Azores to the latitude of Cape Verde). The shaded band represents the Middle Passage of the transatlantic slave trades, with dots marking the locations of burial sites along the route of this journey across the Atlantic).

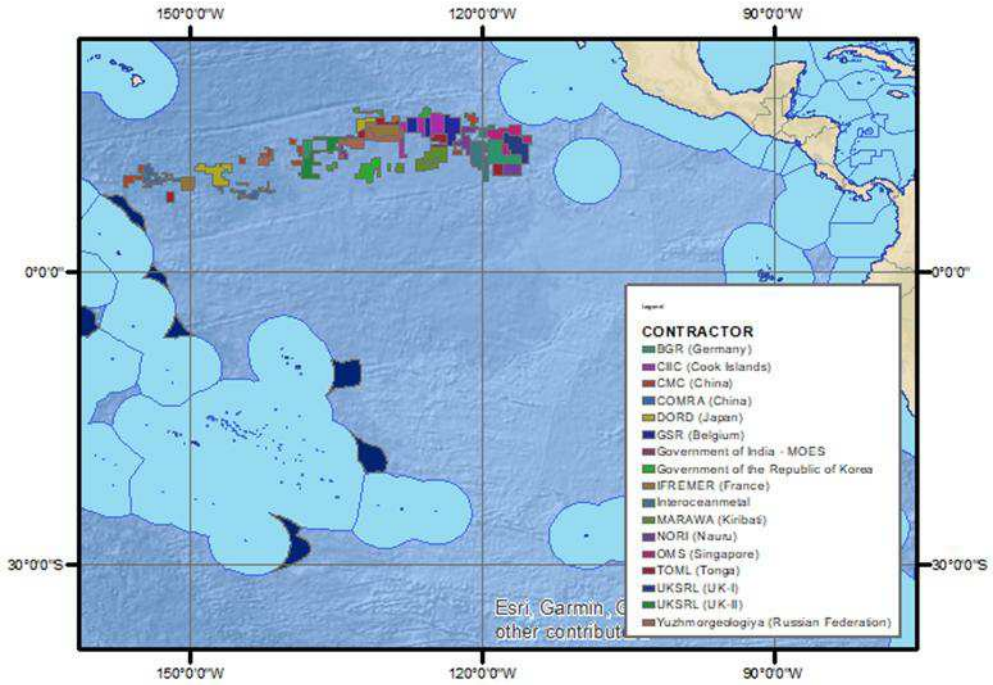


[15] https://www.isa.org.jm/exploration-contracts

Another factor to consider is the practical impact arising from the adoption of the "High Sea Treaty", often referred to as BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction). This treaty[16] (United Nations General Assembly 2017) is expected to exert a substantial influence on the deep-sea mining process, assuming that the provisions of the treaty, particularly those related to the seabed, will extend to the established sections of the special regime of marine protected areas (MPAs).

Looking at the current demand for research in the Pacific Ocean (Farran 2022, 177), and extrapolating it to the Atlantic reality, it becomes evident that the potential for states beyond the Atlantic region will like grow in the future. The high demand for new minerals, driven by the urgent shift towards a green economy, will require increased access to raw materials to support exponential growth, particularly in the automobile industry (Antrim 2005).

Figure 5 - Map of the exploration areas allocated within the Clarion Clipperton Zone for the extraction of Polymetallic Nodules



d. The Current Status in the Atlantic and the Challenges it Faces

Currently, only 3 states have made requests to the ISA to explore areas beyond national jurisdiction in the Atlantic (Figure 4). These are Poland[17] , France[18], and the Russian Federation[19].

The current configuration in the Atlantic presents several challenges. The first pertains to the evolving geopolitical landscape that is emerging in the region. We are witnessing the involvement of new, non-

[16] Today, this can only be addressed through an Intergovernmental Conference for the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, focusing on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

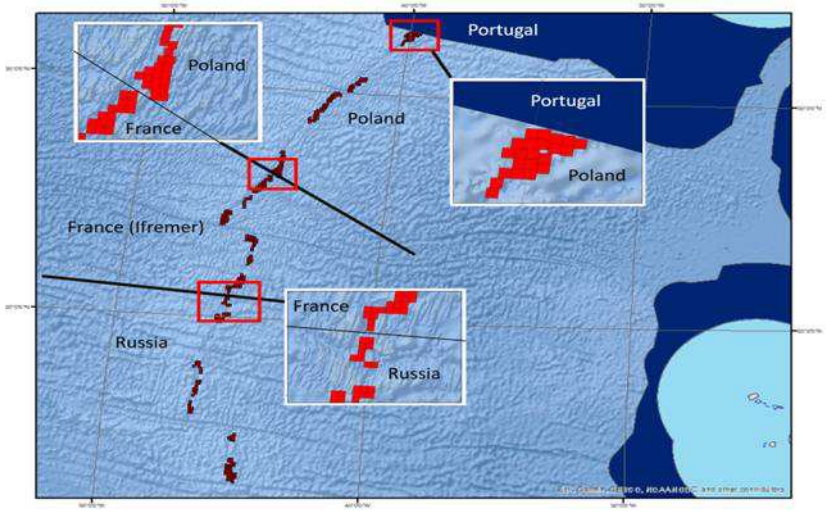
[17] At a distance of 235 metres from the southern boundary of the Portuguese extended continental shelf (Azores)

[18] IFREMER (Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer)

[19] At the latitude of Cape Verde

traditional actors in this part of the world, with countries like Poland, a traditional continental State, now playing a major role in seabed mineral activities. Furthermore, the proximity of these exploration areas to various jurisdictions (235 meters north of Portugal and 5 kilometres south of France's concession) poses a practical challenge in terms of effective monitoring by neighbouring states (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – Present-day areas assigned by the International Seabed Authority for exploration in the Atlantic. Three states can be identified in the northern hemisphere: Poland, France, and Russia.



The second challenge lies in the logistical requirements of these distant players who need a certain level of proximity to shore in order to engage in these activities. For example, the Russian Federation's concessions in the Atlantic (Figure 6) are located more than 8,000 km away from their territory, requiring the search for logistical support in the region, which could potentially be sought in areas northeast of Latin America or western Africa.

A third challenge involves the diminishing available areas for exploration, particularly in the middle Atlantic region. As can be observed from Figure 4, there are two major areas of potential interest for mineral activities (red arrows). Special attention should be directed towards the southernmost area, as it would entail closer proximity closer to the surrounding coastal states for logistical support. This could require a significant financial/diplomatic investment, which in turn may bring about a shift in the political balance in the region.

Another challenge worth noting is the heightened mineral demand driven by the energy transition. In this context, it is highly anticipated that non-traditional Atlantic players may enter this endeavour. Upon closer examination of all global players submitting requests to the ISA, it becomes evident that remote states are potential candidates for such activity. Among these, in addition to those already engaged in Atlantic activities, are the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, India, and Germany.

A significant challenge that must be considered, and one with a substantial impact on Europe in the coming decades, stems from the analysis mentioned above. The ongoing decarbonisation of the global economy, as part of the efforts to attain the primary objectives outlined in the Paris Agreement – COP21 (Christoff 2016), could potentially disrupt economies heavily reliant on oil production. Unless effective

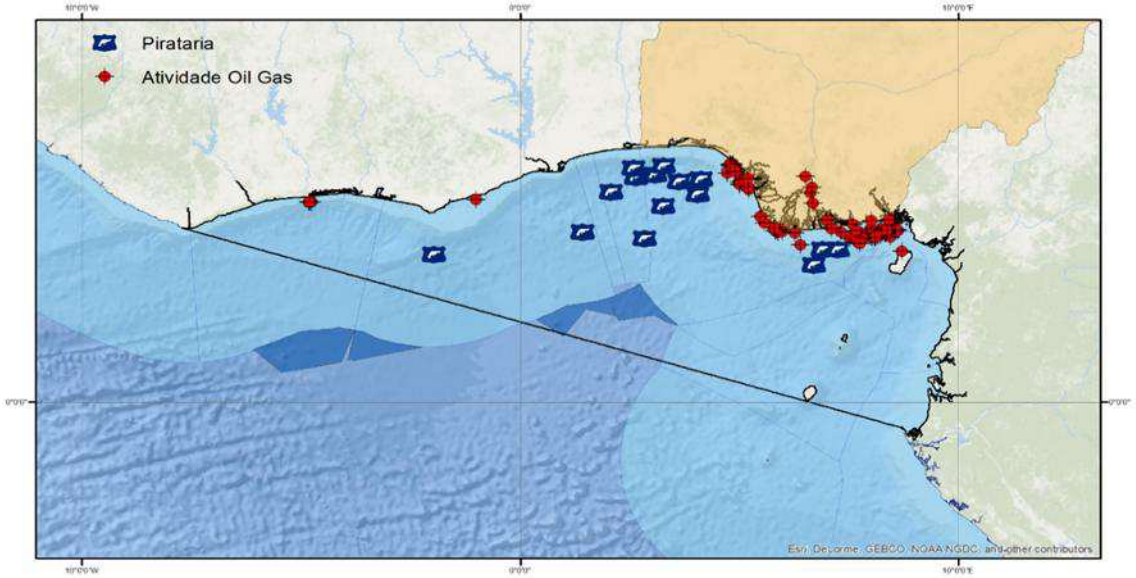
measures are implemented, as we will explore in the following section, the long-term consequences could be dire, particularly in terms of increased migration to the European region.

3. Migration Pressure Arising from the Decarbonisation of the Economy

This challenge, which has the potential to affect Portugal in the years ahead, pertains to the adaptation of the economic model as a consequence of the energy transition, which could render oil and gas resources as assets of diminishing value. The implications stemming from this issue may give rise to concerns in both the social and security sectors. To illustrate this analysis, the Gulf of Guinea region will be employed as a reference benchmark since it serves as an intriguing case study due to its multifaceted nature (Figure 7).

Using Nigeria as an example for the regional case study, several key points can be highlighted to frame the study: Nigeria is situated in the Gulf of Guinea and shares its borders with Benin to the west and Cameroon to the east. Along its 850-km-long coastline, one can discern one of the extensive oil operations in the region (see red markers in Figure 7).

Figure 7 – Gulf of Guinea region with Nigeria highlighted (orange). The locations of oil exploration activities in the region and instances reported as maritime piracy within the area are also highlighted.



This activity, primarily driven by oil exports, accounts for approximately 40% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provides the Nigerian government with roughly 80% of its revenue. Nigeria is also noteworthy in terms of population growth. With a current population of 200 million, it holds the world's highest fertility rate, currently standing at 5.4, projecting a population of 400 million inhabitants by

2050, which will position Nigeria as the third most populous country globally, trailing only behind India and China[20].

In the waters surrounding Nigeria, there exists an illicit maritime activity - maritime piracy – which imposes constraints on the economic development of this already fragile region. When we consider the combination of several factors, including (1) exponential population growth, (2) heavy reliance on oil exports, and (3) instability in regional maritime security, there is a legitimate concern that the national GDP will experience a significant decline due to the growing decrease in oil demand, which could lead to a considerably lower per capita value due to the population increase. When all these factors are taken into account, it raises the potential for regional instability, which may manifest as an upsurge in piracy or increased migration flows to Europe on a larger scale.

4. CLOSING REMARKS

The Atlantic Ocean serves as the backdrop for a wide array of geopolitical instabilities and risks spanning from the southernmost to the northernmost latitudes, which are being amplified by various factors, including ongoing maritime boundary disputes and the pursuit of mineral and other essential raw materials required for the energy transition.

The first stems from the ongoing competition over potential maritime claiming areas in the Atlantic, involving both regional coastal states and external non-Atlantic powers vying for access to the region's resources. The process of defining the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond the 200 nautical miles mark in the Atlantic is expected to span several decades due to the involvement of 34 Atlantic coastal states that have submitted their national claims to the CLCS. This situation introduces a risk of heightened tensions in the Atlantic, as 20 coastal states in the region have overlapping submissions that are awaiting analysis and consideration. Additionally, some submissions have faced objection from neighbouring states, further complicating the matter.

The Area, accessible to any state worldwide, whether within or outside the Atlantic domain, be it coastal, shelf, or landlocked states, remains a significant challenge in the Atlantic geopolitical landscape. While currently only three states (Poland, France, and the Russian Federation) have made requests to the ISA for exploration in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the Atlantic, this situation already signifies the emergence of a complex and challenging geopolitical framework in the Atlantic region. This trend is expected to gain strength as the available areas for exploration diminish, particularly along the Middle Atlantic Ridge in the southern extension of the continental shelf near Portugal-Azores. Furthermore, if we elevate the humanistic aspect of memorising the Middle Passage concerning the enslaved African people who crossed the Atlantic, this area will become even more restricted. Another factor to be taken into account is the potential practical impact arising from the adoption of the BBNJ treaty, which could

[20] https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/MostUsed/

significantly affect the deep-sea mining process, especially if the provisions related to the seabed under the established sections of the special regime of marine protected areas (MPA) also extend to the seafloor.

Non-traditional actors in the Atlantic are now assuming significant roles in seabed mineral activities, positioning themselves in proximity to various areas of jurisdiction, reshaping economic relations and introducing new safety and environmental challenges. The evolution of these dynamics within a context of geopolitical volatility raises new questions and adds an element of unpredictability to an already unstable system. Moreover, these long-distance participants require logistical support onshore to facilitate their engagement in such activities, implying the search for logistical support in the region, potentially in the northeastern regions of Latin America or western Africa, which also carries the potential to shift regional power balances by introducing new political and economic players and forging new alliances.

The second primary exerting pressure on the geopolitical equilibrium in the Atlantic is the energy transition. As the demand for minerals, driven by the energy transition, continues to grow, there is a strong likelihood that non-traditional Atlantic players, namely remote states (e.g. Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, India, and Germany) may enter this arena.

A significant challenge that must be considered, and one with substantial implications for Europe in the coming decades, stems from the fact that the energy transition may disrupt economies heavily reliant on oil production, triggering social unrest and political instability, particularly in African countries that depend on oil revenues, with long-term consequences that could be catastrophic for the European region.

This process of adapting the economic model during the energy transition has the potential to generate unrest in both social and security domains, particularly in regions like the Gulf of Guinea, where the convergence of three factors – exponential population growth, heavy reliance on oil exports, and instability in regional maritime security – could culminate in pronounced regional instability, which might manifest through heightened piracy activities or increased migration flows to Europe on a larger scale.

As one of the prominent maritime nations in the Atlantic, and with strengthened economic, political, and social ties to countries on both the northern and southern shores of the Atlantic, Portugal is poised to play a significant role in shaping the future geopolitical balance of the Atlantic. Despite its resource and capability limitations, Portugal should proactively explore alternative and innovative solutions to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability in the Atlantic basin in the coming decades.

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COMPETITION AMONG MAJOR ECONOMIC POWERS IN THE ATLANTIC: A BRAZILIAN PERSPECTIVE ON DEFENCE

Enio Moreira Azzi[21]

INTRODUCTION

In the fundamental sense of power distribution, and despite its complex configuration, the contemporary geopolitical scenario seems to indicate that we are experiencing elements of a transition to multipolarity, notwithstanding the apparent resurgence of a hegemonic rivalry between the two major global powers: the United States of America (USA) and China. The effects of this context are reflected in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), making the region exposed not only to the consequences of hegemonic competition, but also to the incursions of other powers, which have generated diverse political, ideological, and economic effects.

The current international security scenario, marked by growing geopolitical disputes between the major powers and the fatigue of the multilateral collective security system, has become more tense with the war in Ukraine, aggravating events such as: the escalation of territorial disputes, the undermining of the regime of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms races driven by the security dilemma[22], and the acceleration of technological advances applied to warfare systems. The progressive erosion of the rules-based world order and the emptying of global governance arrangements, questioned by emerging powers and challenged by unilateral actions of force and coercion, indicate an instability in the international system, mitigated only by economic interdependence.

China's rise and global prominence, driven by economic and technological development, are making it a political and military competitor that could unbalance the international chessboard. The declared aim of President Xi Jinping, re-elected for an unprecedented third term at the end of 2022, is to "make China great again". In addition, Chinese foreign and defence policy is committed to the reunification of the country, internal pacification, and the resolution of disputes over territorial sovereignty and maritime demarcation[23]. China's growth has been fuelled by a series of measures adopted by Beijing, which took off in 2013 with the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the basis for access to multiple markets, consolidated into

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[22] According to John Herz (Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma, World Politics, 1950), one state's efforts to increase its security leads to greater insecurity for its neighbour. In this regard, the security dilemma portrays the situation in which states concerned about their own survival constantly seek to acquire the means to guarantee it by increasing their capabilities. This, however, increases the sense of insecurity among the others, who fear that the additional increases of others will be used offensively, and try to increase their own capacities to counter the potential threat.

[23] State Council of the People's Republic of China. 2019. *China's National Defense in the New Era* (SCPRC 2019).

a commercial and financial network that has become global in scope. This trajectory has been accompanied in particular by the strengthening of China's maritime power, considered vital for supporting its strategic arrangements in the economic, political, and military fields. As a result, China has become a powerful actor on the world stage, demonstrating its goal of remodelling the international system and governance, particularly financial institutions and the global security architecture. During the 14th BRICS Summit, President Xi Jinping declared his intention to work with the forum's partners to operationalise the Global Security Initiative (GSI), a proposal that advocates a new vision of common security, which he said would be more comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable.[24]

On the other hand, the US, the hegemonic power and creator of the international order established after the Second World War, mobilised for two decades in the so-called War on Terror and shaken by the 2008 financial crisis, has been losing its ability to exert global influence through world forums, generating greater conflict and less room for cooperation in international relations. In its latest national security strategies[25], Washington, perceiving China as a potential adversary, began to identify it as a threat capable of challenging American power, while Russia, due to its aggressive attitude, became a more immediate threat to be dealt with. Thus, the US, while maintaining intense economic relations with China, has been structuring its foreign policy around competition between great powers, prioritising the hegemonic dispute in the Indo-Pacific Asia region. As a result, in order to contain the Chinese expansion and the Russian momentum, the White House has been improving its military capacity and furthering its strategic alliances and partnerships, as well as making intense use of economic pressure.

Thus, the formation of a hegemonic geopolitical dispute between the US and China tends to mark international relations in the 21st century. This competition, with its epicentre in Asia, has spilled over into every region of the globe, conditioning and re-configuring the alignments and strategic partnerships between the two power hubs. Beyond East Asia, the competition directly involves Russia and the countries of Western Europe, extending to Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean, which have become areas of contention for influence and power projection.

Since taking office, President Vladimir Putin has sought to restructure Russian power and re-establish its influence, particularly in the former Soviet Union, even using force as an instrument of foreign policy to impose his interests and achieve his geopolitical goals. His most surprising and destabilising move on the current global geopolitical chessboard was the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which shook up the multilateral collective security structures set up by the United Nations and bringing the spiral of violence back to Europe. Furthermore, in addition to prioritising foreign countries nearby, Moscow, albeit to a limited extent, has sought to expand its influence over peripheral regions such as the Middle East, Africa,

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[24] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC). 2022. "*Fostering High-quality partnership and embarking on a new journey of BRICS cooperation*". Remarks by Xi Jinping, President of the PRC, at the 14th BRICS Summit. June 23, 2022. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/202206/t20220623_10708957.html.

[25] White House. *"U.S. National Security Strategy." October 12, 2022*. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf. and U.S. Department of Defense. *"U.S. National Defense Strategy."* October 27, 2022.https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF.

Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.[26] Thus, strategically drawing closer to China, Russia, backed by its veto power and its concentration of military power, particularly nuclear power, has re-emerged in the world system, disrupting the international legal order by waging a war to conquer a neighbouring sovereign country, shaking up the basic principles of relations between states.

On the other hand, the war in Ukraine directly affected Europe's security architecture, based around the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), causing the Atlantic Alliance to revive and reaffirm its purpose of collective defence, once again repositioning itself in the face of global geopolitical transformations. According to the Alliance's recent Strategic Concept[27], Russia is once again considered the main threat to Euro-Atlantic security, while China has become a systemic challenge. Although the Biden administration has reaffirmed its commitment to the Atlantic Alliance, Washington's focus shift to Indo-Pacific Asia reinforces the idea that NATO countries should seek greater strategic autonomy and self-reliance in order to be able to act on their own and further develop their roles in regional security.

Thus, the emergence of alternative power hubs leads us to a multipolar environment, which brings with it the resumption of geopolitical competition, notably between the United States, China, and Russia. In view of this, the ongoing dispute between the major powers is helping to reorganise Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as a space for geostrategic action in the global political and economic power struggle between Washington, Beijing, and Moscow (Teixeira Júnior 2020, 7-26).

The LAC region, far from these main centres of power and areas of conflict, has a relatively short history of interstate wars. However, it has worrisome indicators of violence, due to high levels of crime, including transnational crime. On the other hand, the LAC has physiographic and economic potential that gives it importance and representativeness on the regional and international stage, especially if we consider global trends in the demand for water, food, energy, and strategic mineral resources. As a result, the hegemonic dispute is being projected into Latin America, with the US seeking to maintain its historic hemispheric influence, while China and Russia have intensified their presence in the region through productive investments, as well as through the promotion of cooperation initiatives at a strategic level, particularly in the areas of defence, telecommunications, and outer space exploration (Rocha 2022, 45-70).

The perception of experts is that, in the theoretical sense of international relations, the world has become more Hobbesian, more realistic. In addition to the increase in geopolitical tensions, with the outbreak of a high-intensity war and the resurgence of persistent and latent conflicts, which led to a new arms race, we are faced with challenges of other kinds, such as the worsening of food and energy security, migration, terrorism, pandemics, and the acceleration of climate change, whose solutions require measures shared by all states.

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[26] Bugayova, Nataliya. 2020. "Putin's Offset: The Kremlin's geopolitical adaptations since 2014." *Military learning and the future of war series,* Institute for the Study of War, September 2020. https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Putin%27s%20Offset%20The%20Kremlin%27s%20Geopolitical%20Adaptations%20Since%202014.pdf.

[27] NATO. *"Strategic Concept"*. June 29, 2022. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the repercussions for Brazil, in the field of security and defence, of the current global strategic dispute in the Atlantic space. To this end, the first section looks at the structure of hemispheric security and Brazil's defence policy, and analyses initiatives and possibilities for integration. The second section presents the interactions of the major powers with Brazil and its regional environment, in the context of strategic competition between powers. The third section will analyse the security of the South Atlantic from the Brazilian perspective in the context of the hegemonic geopolitical dispute, identifying opportunities and challenges for the Atlantic community. The conclusion will present the relevant aspects found in the research that imply maintaining the Atlantic as a space of peace and cooperation.

1. THE WESTERN HEMISPHERIC SECURITY STRUCTURE AND BRAZILIAN DEFENCE POLICY

The issue of security and defence in Latin America and the hemisphere has been approached from a geopolitical and security perspective. From a geopolitical perspective, related to territorial integrity and state sovereignty, it can be seen that, in general, the perception of mutual threats between neighbours is low; at the current juncture, this makes the possibility of an interstate conflict in the region remote. Similarly, there is no classic external threat against this subcontinent. The last conflict of this category was the Falklands Conflict in the South Atlantic, in 1982. On the other hand, the security dimension, which involves combating illicit activities of all kinds and domestic security, has mobilised LAC states to curb them, preventing their proliferation and cross-border expansion. In the latter case, the growth of violence caused by armed groups and transnational organised crime, combined with state weaknesses, can put domestic sovereignty and public security at risk (Medeiros Filho 2020, 77-97).

Originally, the concept of *hemispheric security* was introduced into the Americas by the US and was later institutionalised, constituting an inter-American system of collective security, based on multilateral agreements and mechanisms to prevent conflicts, promote the peaceful resolution of disputes, and collectively confront common threats, especially in the case of extra-regional aggression. At the beginning of the 21st century, in view of the lack of danger of external aggression against any state in the Americas or the perception of threats of other kinds, this concept was reframed, adopting a multidimensional approach[28], so that its focus went beyond the dimension of security and defence to encompass social-developmental and security aspects, particularly in relation to the transnational illicit activities that permeate the region.

The Organisation of American States (OAS)[29]- the most relevant regional body as a forum for discussing hemispheric security - has, since 2003, given the issue of security a multidimensional character,

[28] Organization of American States (OAS). *"Declaration on Security in the Americas."* October 28, 2003. https://www.oas.org/sap/peacefund/VirtualLibrary/DeclarationSecurityAmericas/DeclarationSecurityintheAmericas.pdf.

[29] The Organisation of American States (OAS) was founded in 1948 with the signing of the OAS Charter in Bogotá, Colombia. It is the main political, legal, and social governmental forum in the hemisphere. Its main pillars are democracy, human rights, security, and development. Its aim is to achieve an order of peace and justice, to promote solidarity and intensify collaboration, so

which includes traditional threats and "new threats" (terrorism; transnational organised crime; drug, arms, and human trafficking; natural disasters; cyber-attacks; extreme poverty and social exclusion), with defence-related aspects being dealt with basically within the framework of the Inter-American Defence Board (IADB)[30] and high-level meetings such as the Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas (CMDA).

In addition, and in accordance with the OAS Charter, collective security within the Organisation of American States is regulated by the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty)[31], which was adopted in 1947 and currently has twenty-two signatory states. The Treaty responds to the concept of continental solidarity to adopt measures of self-defence or other collective measures for the common defence and the maintenance of peace and security. The agreement sets forth the measures for a collective response when a signatory state suffers an armed attack or an aggression that is not an armed attack, in accordance with the exercise of the inherent right to individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the UN Charter. The Rio Treaty also regulates the functioning of a Consultation Body and the binding nature of the measures adopted, with the exception of the use of armed force, which requires the express consent of each member state. Although there are doubts about the effectiveness of the Rio Treaty today, because it has become an unimpressive and discredited security instrument, it is still in force, and it can remain "dormant", be reformed or, at any time, be revitalised.

Although in recent years there has been a downturn in the South American integration process, leaving the subcontinent more vulnerable to interference from extra-regional actors and to the effects of the global hegemonic dispute, in regional terms, it is worth highlighting three collective arrangement initiatives that have been created to address specific areas, seeking to strengthen their own identity and reduce asymmetries. The South American Defence Council (SADC) within the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), created in 2008, was an unprecedented initiative to help maintain the stability of Brazil's strategic surroundings and establish a regional space for dialogue on security, including defence industry projects, in a context of growing global struggles for power and natural resources (Vaz 2018, 5-15). Although this mechanism has been weakened in recent years by political inaction, it has enormous potential to become a vector for promoting regional integration and security. Another important collective arrangement is the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation (ACTO), created in 1998 and ratified by the eight countries that share the Amazon region.[32] The ACTO has gained relevance mainly because of the inclusion of the environmental issue and climate change in the international agenda, since it deals with the preservation and rational use of the resources of the largest tropical forest on the planet, with the aim of

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that its member states can defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. The OAS brings together the 35 independent states of the Americas, and grants Observer status to 70 states and the European Union. OAS: https://www.oas.org/pt/.

[30] The Inter-American Defence Board (IADB), created in 1942, has been an entity of the OAS since 2006, with the aim of providing services and technical advice, a consultative and educational forum on issues related to military and defence matters in the hemisphere. Inter-American Defense Board: https://www.jid.org/en/.

[31] OAS. *"Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance* (*Rio Treaty*)". https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/b-29.html. The Rio Treaty was invoked: in 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis; in 1982, during the Falklands War; in 2001, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11; and in 2019, during the crisis in Venezuela.

[32] Currently OTCA (founded in 1995) includes 8 member states: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela. OTCA: http://otca.org/en/.

creating an environment of sustainable development and security in that region. The third initiative is the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Area (ZOPACAS), a forum for cooperation and interaction with countries of the West African coast, created in 1986, which has twenty-four member states[33] and is an important instrument for contributing to maritime stability and security. The ZOPACAS, as it relates directly to the Atlantic area, will be dealt with in more detail in the third section of this paper.

Even though the inter-American system has moved away from the focus on collective security, broadening its scope of threats, in the military field, there is continued interaction between a large part of the armed forces of Latin American countries and US defence instruments. An example of this is the combined multinational exercises that continue to be carried out in the region. In 2022, in addition to bilateral exercises, Operations PANAMAX and UNITAS are noteworthy. Operation PANAMAX is a biannual multilateral exercise organised by the US, with the participation of two dozen countries. It begins with the simulation of a security crisis in the Americas, in which, based on a fictitious United Nations resolution, a Multinational Force is formed in response to the challenges presented. The exercise has been held frequently for two decades and its main focus is the use of military forces - naval, land, and air - to maintain free maritime flow through the Panama Canal.[34] Operation UNITAS has been a joint multinational naval exercise since 1960, bringing together the navies of countries in America, Africa, Europe, and Asia. The training covers a wide range of maritime operations, allowing for the exchange of combat experience while developing interoperability between the forces. In addition to these two exercises, it is worth noting that, until recently, Operation Felino was regularly held (the last edition was in 2017, in Brazil), providing joint training to the armed forces of the nine countries of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP)[35]. In the exercise, which had been carried out since 2000 and whose continuation is desirable, a Joint and Combined Task Force was set up within the CPLP to act in peace and humanitarian assistance missions, usually involving the South American subcontinent and the west coast of Africa.

Western hemispheric security, based on the principle of collective defence, has had a broader focus since 2003, with the inclusion of security issues in line with regional reality. However, institutional mechanisms, centred around the OAS, have yet to produce more effective responses to security threats on the continent, including the conventional ones that continue to exist, as the security of the hemisphere can be affected by threats to global peace and security. It can also be seen that, despite the political dissonance,

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[33] ZOPACAS is made up of the following member states: Angola, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, and Uruguay.

[34] The Panama Canal is one of the eight main maritime choke points, along with the Suez Canal, the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Malacca, Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb, Gibraltar and the Turks. Choke points, therefore, are strategic, narrow passageways that connect two larger areas to each other. When it comes to maritime trade, these are usually straits or canals that receive large volumes of traffic due to their location. The Panama Canal provides a shortcut for ships travelling between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Ships sailing between the east and west coasts of the USA save more than 8,000 nautical miles by using the canal, which shortens the journey by approximately 21 days. In 2019, 252 million tonnes of goods were shipped through the Panama Canal, generating more than US$2.6 billion in tolls.

[35] CPLP: a multilateral forum created in 1996 to further mutual friendship and cooperation in every sphere among Portuguese-speaking countries. Formed by Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, East Timor, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe. CPLP: https://www.cplp.org.

the US, albeit with less intensity and scope, continues to play an active role in collective and bilateral arrangements in matters of security and defence on the continent, particularly in the military field.

Brazil does not nurture conflictive relations with any country. Nor are Brazil's foreign relations constrained by formal alliances, or even by the commitments made in the Rio Treaty. In this regard, Brazilian diplomacy follows a tradition that stems from the principle of rejecting automatic alignments in favour of a broad, open, pragmatic international relationship aimed at the peaceful resolution of disputes (Nasser 2017, 27-62). On the other hand, it is inevitable that the effects of the global competitive scenario and the ongoing transition of the world order will affect Brazil, particularly creating challenges in the diplomatic and military-strategic fields, requiring the country to respond to these dynamics in a manner compatible with its stature.

Brazil's foreign policy, guided by the protection of national interests and the constitutional principles[36] of self-determination of peoples, non-intervention, the defence of peace, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, seeks to further Brazil's integration into the international system, engaging in intense and wide-ranging efforts to cooperate and promote peace, which gives it a universalist sense and opens up possibilities for the most diverse forms of arrangements and convergences. In addition to bilateral interactions, Brazilian diplomacy favours expanding the space for dialogue in strategic rapprochements with its neighbours and in multilateral arrangements. The adoption of universalism as a guiding principle for external action implies a wide and indiscriminate diversification of its interactions with other global players. This way, Brazil seeks to reduce the asymmetries that characterise the global environment and increase its degree of autonomy in international relations and participation in global governance mechanisms. As a result, the country, as a global player, is getting involved in issues beyond its immediate geographical surroundings, overcoming the role of balance and integration adopted in South America to increasingly promote its international integration. Thus, the tensions between universalism and regionalism shape a central strand of Brazilian foreign policy (Nasser 2017, 27-62).

Since 2005, in line with the Federal Constitution and Brazilian foreign policy, the National Defence Policy (NDP) has prioritised military action at the international level in the space known as the strategic surroundings[37], demonstrating that Brazil's diplomatic action aimed at building an environment of interaction and cooperation has geography as its central reference. The NDP considers that ensuring national security involves integrated and coordinated action in the spheres of development, diplomacy, and defence. In this regard, the efforts of Brazilian diplomacy and defence in the international arena are aimed at creating an environment of integration, cooperation, mutual trust, and security with its neighbours. Furthermore, as the South Atlantic maritime space is considered an area of geostrategic interest for Brazil, this co-operative effort was also extended to the countries of the West African coast.

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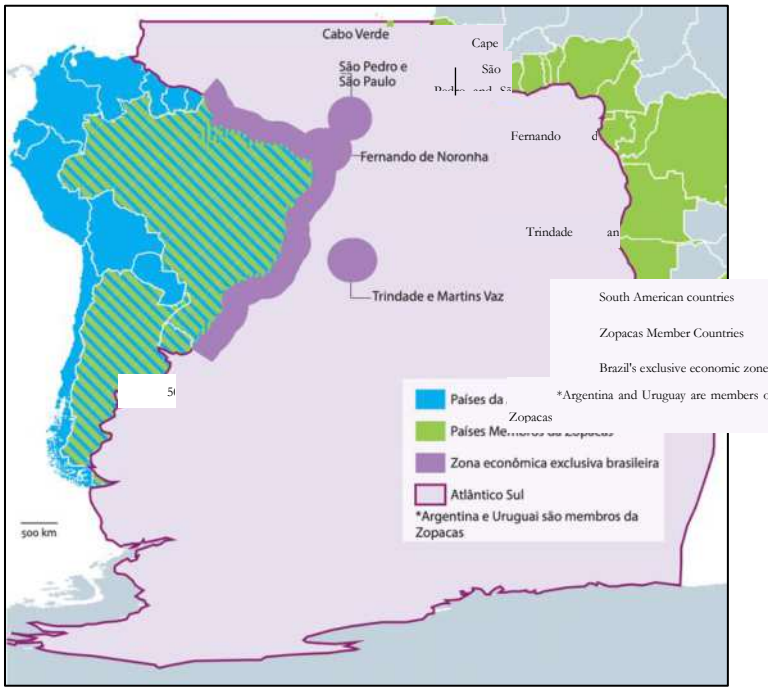
[36] Senado Federal. *"Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil"*, artigo 4º. 5 de outubro de 1988. https://www2.senado.leg.br/bdsf/bitstream/handle/id/508200/CF88_EC85.pdf.

[37] Entorno Estratégico brasileiro: área de interesse prioritário para o Brasil, que inclui a América do Sul, o Atlântico Sul, os países da costa ocidental africana e a Antártica. Ministério da Defesa. *"Política Nacional de Defesa PND e Estratégia Nacional de Defesa END."* 2016. https://www.gov.br/defesa/pt-br/arquivos/estado_e_defesa/copy_of_pnd_e_end_2016.pdf.

The update of the NDP and the Brazilian National Defence Strategy (NDS)[38], whose current versions are from 2016, is being considered by the National Congress, but does not bring any significant changes. The NDP establishes Brazil's strategic surroundings, which includes the South Atlantic, as a priority area of interest. It also considers that Brazil has a natural maritime vocation, backed by its extensive coastline, the magnitude of its maritime trade, and the undeniable strategic importance of the South Atlantic, which is home to Brazil's territorial sea and exclusive economic zone (EEZ), incorporating significant reserves of natural resources, including the country's largest oil and gas fields. In terms of security in the South Atlantic, there has been an increase in transnational crime, predatory fishing, environmental crime, and the presence of countries that are not part of the region but which nevertheless have interests in it, which could lead to threats in the field of defence and compromise the maintenance of this maritime space as a zone of peace and cooperation.

Figure 1 - Brazil's Strategic Surroundings and ZOPACAS



Source: Lima, Maria Regina S. de, Carlos R. S. Milani, Rubens de S. Duarte, Marianna R. A. de Albuquerque, Igor D. P. Acácio, Tássia C. Carvalho, Josué Medeiros et. al. 2017. *Atlas da política brasileira de defesa*. Buenos Aires: CLASCO; Rio de Janeiro: Latitude Sul, p. 52. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv253f67d.

In order to achieve these political goals, Brazil's strategic conception indicates that the strengthening of ZOPACAS and regional integration contribute to the security of the South Atlantic and the countries bordering it, minimising the possibility of military interference from extra-regional powers. It also states that the South Atlantic is an area of geostrategic interest for Brazil and that the protection of natural resources in the waters, seabed, and subsoil under Brazilian jurisdiction is, therefore, a national priority.

[38] Ministério da Defesa. "Política Nacional de Defesa PND e Estratégia Nacional de Defesa END." 2020. https://www.gov.br/defesa/pt-br/assuntos/copy_of_estado-e-defesa/pnd_end_congresso_1.pdf.

The protection of biodiversity, mineral wealth, and energy potential, as well as the sustainable use of natural resources and maritime communication lines in the South Atlantic, will continue to be vital for Brazil's development, requiring the intensification of capabilities to provide Maritime Security, which implies the expansion of an environment of cooperation with countries bordering the South Atlantic.

2. The Effects of Hegemonic Competition on Brazil and on Latin America and the Caribbean

The accelerated growth of the Chinese economy called for basic inputs, energy and food, which also led it to LAC, which, in turn, led it to be gradually and quietly inserted into the subcontinent, while conquering new markets and expanding its global projection. China's presence in LAC has grown significantly since 2001, essentially driven by the furthering of trade relations, combined with political and diplomatic action, consolidated by bilateral agreements, including comprehensive strategic partnerships with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela (Lopes Filho *et al.* 2022, 19). Chinese activities in LAC reflect a strategy of global engagement, which, to some extent, reduces US influence in the region. China's diplomatic activities include being an observer at the OAS, a member of the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank, a participant in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), an important interlocutor organisation for Beijing's interactions with LAC countries. China's aggressive cooperation strategy in LAC is comprehensive, involving multiple areas, including defence, with military exchanges and cooperation.[39] With a view to strengthening this integration, more than twenty LAC countries have joined the Belt and Road Initiative, a Chinese project that focuses on supporting infrastructure development around the world. China's economic goals in LAC include: guaranteeing access to raw materials and agricultural products; establishing new markets for Chinese products; and partnerships with Latin American companies to jointly access and develop technology (Sullivan and Lum 2022; Wintgens 2022) .

In this process, China has become the main trading partner of Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay[40] and the second largest trading partner of many other countries, in addition to maintaining free trade agreements with Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru (Sullivan and Lum 2022; Wintgens 2022). It also became one of the biggest investors and financiers in the region, providing loans through its own banks, under more favourable conditions and with fewer strings attached than international and regional financial institutions (Lopes Filho, 2022, 37-45). Some analysts say that China's main interests and influence in the region are still largely

[39] State Council PRC. *"China's Policy paper on Latin America and the Caribbean*." November 24, 2016. http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2016/11/24/content_281475499069158.htm.

[40] Brazil stands out on the regional stage as a major exporter, having sent US$67.8 billion in goods to China in 2020, with a surplus of US$31.1 billion. In 2022, the Asian country absorbed 32.4% of Brazil's exports (concentrated in soybean, iron ore, and crude oils or oils obtained from bituminous minerals). As a result, China remains the main source of Brazilian imports (22.1 per cent). Chile and Peru also have China as their main trading partner. Both countries have free trade agreements with China and are responsible for supplying the Asian country with copper, refined copper, and other minerals (iron, zinc, molybdenum, etc.). As a result, Brazil, Chile, and Peru are part of a small group of countries that enjoy a trade surplus with China (Lopes Filho *et al.* 2022, 16-19).

economic and diplomatic, and that the possibility of it creating a military sphere of influence in LAC remains small. In view of this, China's involvement in LAC was initially perceived positively by the US. However, since President Trump's administration, this involvement has begun to be viewed with more suspicion (Sullivan and Lum 2022) .

US political scientist Robert Ellis (2023) warns that Chinese commercial and military interactions and projects with Latin American partners in critical sectors could represent a strategic advantage for China, should an undesirable conflict over the incorporation of Taiwan reach global proportions. In this context, it is of geopolitical interest to consider how military interactions with the People's Liberation Army (PLA), as well as commercial projects with companies based in China by Latin American governments and partners, in strategic sectors such as ports, space, and the digital domain, can indirectly contribute to how the Chinese can exploit the opportunities created by such projects in the event of a conflict of global scope. From this perspective, the U.S. National Security Strategy 2022[41] describes China as a strategic competitor and states that, because the Western Hemisphere affects the United States more than any other region, the administration will continue to further partnerships in LAC to promote economic resilience, democratic stability, and citizen security (Sullivan and Lum 2022).

China's declared policy for LAC states that, despite the distance, the Chinese government's goal in relation to the region is to take the comprehensive and co-operative partnership to a new level; in other words, the idea is to further interaction even more, not only in trade, investment, and finance, but also in the political, cultural, technological, and security fields, among others. Although the Chinese government reiterates that it respects the right of Latin American and Caribbean countries to choose their own development paths, Beijing makes the establishment of relations with other states contingent on them recognising the principle of "one China", affirming its core cause of reunifying the country (SCPRC 2016). In this process, China's bilateral approaches have been reinforced and supplemented at the multilateral level through the China-CELAC Forum, a mechanism for dialogue and political consultation that combines the same goals that involve bipartite relations with the countries of the subcontinent for each area of cooperation.[42]

Thus, although China's involvement with LAC is mainly economic, shaped by the expansion of its trade relations with the region, it is also strategic, with multidimensional characteristics, including in the field of defence. Although engagement in military activities is still modest, it is relevant and expanding, involving increasingly sophisticated arms sales, training, education, visits, and exchanges (Ellis 2019, 142-159; SCPRC 2019). At the end of 2022, the 5th China-LAC Defence Forum was held, with the participation of 24 countries from the region, with the aim of promoting mutual cooperation in defence and security, which indicates Beijing's willingness to include this issue in relations with Latin America.[43]

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[41] White House, "U.S. National Security Strategy."

[42] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) PRC. 2021. *"China-CELAC Joint Action Plan for Cooperation in key areas (2022-2024)."* December 9, 2021. http://www.chinacelacforum.org/eng/zywj_3/202112/t20211209_10465116.htm.

[43] Ministry of National Defense PRC. "Chinese defense minister delivers keynote speech at fifth defense forum between China, LAC countries," *China Military*, December 13, 2022. http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2022-12/13/content_10205508.htm.

On the other hand, according to analysts, the expansion of the Chinese presence in the region corresponds to the loss of US influence to promote its agenda in LAC. Although the US has long been the most influential international actor in LAC, the low priority given to the region by recent governments has cleared a path for China and other actors to further their relationships with the countries that make up this part of the Americas. In view of this, the White House has been endeavouring, albeit moderately, to reverse this situation, trying to recover its prestige and influence, so as to prevent the Chinese and Russian presence in the region from growing; this is part of the recently launched US strategy of *integrated deterrence*[44], which envisages furthering global alliances and partnerships as an instrument for addressing threats. However, the results have still been scarce, as noted at the IX Summit of the Americas[45], held in Los Angeles, and at the XV Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas (CDMA), held in Brasilia. At both events it became clear that, on the one hand, the US agenda was linked to its concerns about China's ambitions in the Americas and, on the other, the absences and dissonances resulting from the reorientation of Latin American countries' foreign policies were seen as no longer having a predominant view on global issues in the region, and suggesting that US hegemony on the continent has waned over the last few decades.

In the context of the hegemonic dispute that has been shaping the international chessboard, polarising China and Russia on one side, and the US and its European and Asian allies on the other, Brazil has been following the projection of this geopolitical competition onto Latin America, acting diplomatically in multilateral collective security forums and bilaterally in the field of military cooperation, in accordance with the principles described in the previous section, in order to avoid unpredictable developments in its geographical surroundings. The limitations of Brazil and other relevant regional players in attracting their neighbours to further collective cooperative arrangements have meant that they are no longer an alternative to global powers such as the US and China, increasingly leading LAC countries to negotiate with extra-regional powers, eroding regionalist strategies, already weakened by political polarisation and state weaknesses (Malamud 2019, 109-129).

According to the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE), the US is Brazil's oldest and most traditional partner, and in the long term, there is a mutual interest in maintaining productive and close relations. Furthermore, political, economic, and cultural interactions have always been intense and convergent, resulting in the conclusion of more than thirty bilateral cooperation mechanisms. In this regard, Brazil-US defence relations are a historical legacy for both countries. Today, despite recent advances and setbacks in their political relationship, military cooperation has remained intense to some extent, through trade in military equipment, exchanges, and combined training. On the other hand, based on an understanding of the dimension of the asymmetries that surround relations with the US, whose external

[44] "Integrated deterrence means using every tool at the Department's disposal, in close collaboration with our counterparts across the U.S. Government and with Allies and partners, to ensure that potential foes understand the folly of aggression." Lloyd J. Austin III, U.S. Secretary of Defense. DoD, "National Defense Strategy," 8-11.

[45] "The Summit of the Americas, a triennial gathering of member states of the Organization of American States, which the US hosted in June 2022, did not produce any significant outcomes due to poor planning and its boycotts and exclusions. This reflected the low priority assigned by the US to the region as well as America's waning importance and influence in the eyes of many Latin American countries, which are increasingly looking east for support and opportunities." International Institute of Strategic Studies IISS, "Latin America," in Strategic Survey, ed. IISS (London: IISS, 2022), 368.

activities cover the entire hemisphere, Brazil seeks to maintain pragmatism and autonomy, particularly through cooperative arrangements with the countries in its regional neighbourhood (Vaz 2018, 5-15).

Since 2010, the US and Brazil are signatories to a Defence Cooperation Agreement. In 2019, the US designated Brazil as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA), granting it benefits and privileges in security and defence cooperation, with the possibility of access to the US defence industry, as well as enhanced opportunities for joint military exchanges, exercises, and training. In 2021, the two armies began implementing a five-year plan for combined training, making it possible to increase readiness and interoperability. In an emerging era of competition between major powers and in the face of growing ties with China, it is clear that the United States is seeking closer ties with Brazil in order to mitigate Beijing's influence and restore the balance of power in Latin America (Berg *et al.* 2022).

Diplomatic relations between Brazil and China were established more than four and a half decades ago and have been characterised by remarkable dynamism. In 1993, the bilateral relationship was elevated to the status of a strategic partnership which, in 2004, had the Sino-Brazilian High-Level Concertation and Cooperation Commission (COSBAN) as its main decision-making body for joint action and cooperation plans[46]. Since 2009, China has become Brazil's largest trading partner and one of the main sources of direct investment. Furthermore, in 2012, the Brazil-China Global Strategic Dialogue was established as a mechanism for exchanging opinions on relevant issues in the international context (MRE 2022). Bilateral relations, highly structured in the commercial field, have intensified and overflowed into a multidimensional partnership, with emphasis on space cooperation, with the Sino-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite programme (CBERS).[47].

The progressive economic ties between Brazil and China have also been accompanied by a broader political dialogue and cooperation, albeit modest, in the defence sector. Bilateral military relations gained momentum in the early 2000s, when Brazil's foreign policy goals were geared towards South-South cooperation[48] and the strategic partnership with China was revitalised. The Sino-Brazilian military relationship is marked by the creation of the Joint Commission for Exchange and Cooperation (JCEC) in 2004 (effectively established in 2009) and the signing of the Framework Agreement on Defence Cooperation in 2011, in which most of the activities were concentrated in the area of education and training of personnel, with an emphasis on sharing doctrines and mutual knowledge in order to survey the

[46] China has relied on a bilateral engagement with Latin American countries to promote a range of goals, including free trade agreements, memoranda of understanding, and long-standing cooperation mechanisms such as the China-Brazil High-Level Co-ordination and Cooperation Commission (COSBAN). On the other hand, for China, regional institutions such as the OAS and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) are windows into Latin American politics and diplomatic predispositions, as well as valuable platforms for communicating its political priorities for the region. MYERS, Margaret. "*China's regional engagement goals in Latin America*." Carnegie-Tsinghua. Center for Global Policy. May, 2020.

[47] For more information on CBERS see: http://www.cbers.inpe.br/sobre/index.php.

[48] South-South cooperation implies the notion that developing countries identify certain common interests and problems and work together to solve them. In order to mitigate the asymmetrical distribution of power and guarantee greater economic well-being and political control on a stand-alone basis, these groups opt to co-operate with each other. By joining together, these countries have a better chance of successfully meeting their self-interested demands. In this context, the countries of the North are seen as partners and not as obstacles to the development of the countries of the South, and it is up to them to supplement the efforts of the latter (Leite 2011, 76-77).

possibilities for cooperation and needs in the area of defence. Cooperation has extended to the field of cyber security, nuclear technology, and the monitoring, remote sensing, and surveillance of the Amazon region and the Brazilian maritime exclusive economic zone (Marcondes and Barbosa 2018, 140-166). In short, while the growing disparity in power between the two nations has made the interaction between them more delicate, acting together has proved to be a pragmatic instrument for achieving the interests of both parties (Carneiro, Ribeiro, and Peres 2021, 159).

In the case of Russia, despite prioritising neighbouring foreign countries, Moscow has also sought to preserve its global projection with a presence in peripheral areas, including the Latin American and Caribbean region, where it maintains ties particularly with Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, militarily centred on procurement, technical advice, and personnel training (Ellis 2022; Alonso-Trabanco 2022). Brasilia's diplomatic relations with Moscow have reached the level of a strategic partnership and are guided by a joint action plan. Brazil has been urged to speak out and take a stand, including in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), on Moscow's belligerent attitude towards Ukraine. On these occasions, Brazilian diplomacy has acted with due caution, guided by the traditional defence of the basic principles of the United Nations Charter, which govern relations between states, the strict observance of international law, and the preference for the peaceful resolution of disputes. On the other hand, it seeks to preserve basic ties with Russia in order to safeguard trade and economic relations between the two countries, particularly the import of fertilisers, essential for Brazilian agribusiness (MRE 2021, 14-33). Although the defence and military-technical cooperation agreements signed by both countries and Brazil's history of occasional procurement of Russian defence products, for various reasons, military relations are quite recent and incipient compared to other players[49].

In addition to the bilateral relations established with the countries of Western Europe, Brazil maintains diplomatic ties with the European Union at a strategic level, since economic and trade relations are of great importance to both sides. Brazil's defence relationship with NATO, on the other hand, has been conducted politically with caution and militarily with interest. Although the relationship is asymmetrical, military interaction with NATO has historically been restricted to technical cooperation, which Brazil seeks to maintain in order to enable the technological and commercial exchange of military systems and equipment (SMEM), the updating of doctrine, and the training of human resources. On the other hand, bilateral defence ties with the main Western European countries have been consolidated over time, with growing military interaction through exchanges, visits, training, and the acquisition of defence products (Rocha 2022, 45-70). Thus, in line with José Francisco Pavia's assertion, as Brazil develops and a transformed NATO endures, shared concerns and values speak to the logic of more, not less, engagement between them.[50]

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[49] Dall'Agnol, Augusto César, Zabolotsky, Boris P., and Mielniczuk, Fabiano, "O retorno do urso? O engajamento militar russo na América Latina: o caso do Brasil," *Military Review* 74, no. 1 (1º Trimestre 2019): 51-62, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/Portuguese/Primeiro-Trimestre-2019-completo-Jan-March.pdf.

[50] Pavia, José Francisco. 2015. "Brazil-NATO: new global security partners?", in: *Enduring NATO, Rising Brazil. Managing international security in a recalibrating global order*, ed. Brooke A. Smith-Windsor (NATO Defense College, 2015), 253-268.

Thus, in an environment of competition between powers in the international system, this brief analysis of LAC and Brazil's relations with the main global players shows that both the US and China play a vital role in political, economic, and military interactions with most of the countries in the region. For Brazil, although its relations with China have surpassed those with the US and the European Union (EU) in economic terms, without the latter ceasing to be important, at the military level, due to historical ties and geographical proximity, defence cooperation with the US and its European allies is much more significant than with the Chinese and Russians (Kalout 2021)[51]. While the US has a direct and immediate interest in maintaining "control" and influence in its regional neighbourhood in order to preserve its territorial security, China's strategic interest in expanding military relations with Brazil and LAC as a whole is long-term.

3. BRAZIL AND THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

In the 15th century, Portugal and Spain took the lead in inaugurating and transforming the Atlantic into a maritime route, linking the Old Continent to America, the west coast of Africa, and Asia. Later, the construction of the Suez Canal caused the South Atlantic system to "disappear" for a few decades, but at the dawn of this century, the Atlantic regained significance and importance once again (Alencastro 2019, 13-28). The South Atlantic has gradually become a space in which strategic and economic interests are projected, associated with the intensification of trade flows, the discovery of important deposits of energy inputs along continental shelves, mineral reserves and, particularly, in the so-called *Area*, a span of international waters considered a World Heritage Site and under the jurisdiction of the UN International Seabed Authority[52]. At the same time, it represents a space in which divergences engendered in the geopolitical field in other regions and led by major powers begin to resonate (Vaz 2011, 63-68). On the other hand, the peripheral nature of the South Atlantic, in terms of the global dimension of maritime transport, has been mitigated, mainly in relation to its role in providing natural resources as a means of movement, and by the renewed dispute between the great powers to conquer markets and influence, as well as to gain the support of the region's countries in various fields (Silva 2021a, 51-56).

From a geostrategic perspective, Brazil maintains a compartmentalised view of the space that comprises the Atlantic Basin, as it considers that the northern and southern portions have their own distinct characteristics and nature. Furthermore, despite the recurring hemispheric projects, North and South America have different security dynamics and connections are highly asymmetrical. On the other hand, the US has institutionalised its position in Europe and South America through distinct suprarregional projects such as Atlanticism and Pan-Americanism, based on proposals for economic integration and defence and

[51] According to Hussein Kalout (2021), within the Brazilian Armed Forces, the tradition of defence cooperation with the Western Axis and the complementarities between Brazil and the US, in terms of the Brazilian defence industry, are a vital component of its military doctrine and its strategy for the country's international insertion. Despite the diversification of partnerships in recent decades, the US Armed Forces and defence industry continue to be the preferred partners for Brazilian military cooperation and the training of military officers.

[52] *The United Nations International Seabed Authority (ISA)* is a stand-alone institution under the mandate of the *UN Convention on the Law of the Sea* designed to organise, regulate, and control all mineral-related activities in the international seabed area. (ISA: https://isa.org.jm)

security arrangements (Buzan and Waever 2003). However, one cannot disregard the broad perspective held by the US and the European Union, which envisages greater inter-regional co-operative interaction for the governance of maritime security in the Atlantic, as tackling threats such as piracy and the illegal trafficking of drugs, arms, and people requires the combination of multinational measures due to their trans-regional nature.

In recent decades, relations between the US and the main European countries, brought together in the European Union and NATO, have remained vital in the political, economic, and military fields, capable of shaping the post-war international order and establishing their own dynamics in the North Atlantic. Meanwhile, South American countries endeavoured to create an outline of regional integration and develop partnerships with the countries of the West African coast. This dichotomy has not prevented countries like Brazil from forging strong ties with the US and Western European countries. The Atlantic Basin has thus become a heterogeneous region, made up of countries with significantly different levels of development. The world's most developed economies, such as the US, Canada and the EU, are in the North, while in the South, Latin American and African countries, many of them low- and middle-income, are looking for ways to advance their development.

In terms of security and defence, while the North Atlantic, with its national interests more involved in the international arena, focuses on the problems of terrorism, inter-state conflicts, and renewed competition between powers, the South Atlantic is hugely concerned with domestic security, be it in South America or the west coast of Africa. Furthermore, in the South Atlantic, key states retain well-established foreign policy traditions, which has led countries like Brazil to favour South-South cooperation as a way of reducing asymmetries in power relations and increasing the degree of autonomy in international relations.

For Buzan and Waever (2003), South America constitutes a traditional and exclusive regional security complex, separate from the complex formed by the northern part of the continent, centred around the US presence. This distinction is characterised, among other things, by differences in the flow of maritime traffic, the degree of development, and perceptions of threats, which generate their own collective security arrangements. Although the South American subcontinent is marked by domestic social tensions, political instability, and regional rivalries, in recent decades, the strengthening of interstate dynamics has contributed towards forming a more robust security regime, whose securitisation pattern is guided by cooperation. Although regional security integration projects have not yet achieved the desired results, the establishment of mechanisms such as the Treaty of Tlatelolco[53], which bans nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the ZOPACAS, which integrates the neighbouring countries of Africa and South America, shows the collective effort to preserve these regions as areas of peace and stability.

In view of these asymmetries and other differences, including geographical ones, closer North-South collaboration in the Atlantic area based on common values and interests is not a simple proposition,

[53] OPANAL. 2015. *"Tratado para a proscrição de armas nucleares na América Latina e no Caribe."* Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL). Accessed February 23, 2023. https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Tratado-Tlatelolco_port.pdf.

although there are opportunities for convergence. From this perspective, it can be seen that the need for closer coordination between North and South in the strategies to ensure surveillance, maritime security, and development, in order to tackle the challenges facing the Atlantic basin, points to an emerging area of cooperation. However, capturing the full potential for development and security in the Atlantic will depend on the extent and quality of cooperation between the states, institutions, companies, and individuals that share this space (Lesser and El Aynaoui 2014).

Brazil's interest in the stability of the Atlantic is obvious, since maritime transport is vital for international and domestic trade, besides the fact that this area contains strategic resources and requires environmental protection measures to preserve its biodiversity. In this regard, based on a shared vision of maritime security, which implies the need for inter-regional coordination, Brazil has participated in Euro-African efforts to combat threats in the Atlantic, mainly related to the recurrence of maritime illicit activities, climate change, and environmental degradation. Initiatives such as the Joint Statement for Atlantic Cooperation[54], driven by the comprehensive meaning of the Atlantic Basin, could represent the path towards building a more dynamic community of Atlantic countries (Hamilton 2022), based on the formulation of a positive multilateral agenda, complementary to the geostrategic directions that Brazil assigns to the southern portion.

In geopolitical terms, the South Atlantic enjoys relative stability, but in an environment of cooperation and competition, multiple interests merge in relation to its potential, revealing different perceptions of threats. Thus, threats affecting sovereignty over natural resources and territorial disputes are vital elements of the regional and global security agenda, involving the countries that belong to and share the Atlantic space, external actors and international organisations that promote the legal framework regulating maritime issues between nations. Brazil, committed to the important role of multilateralism in the international order, believes that the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)[55] and the 1994 Agreement on the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention, which deals with resources located on or below the seabed, constitute the main political and legal framework for regulating the use of the oceans.

On the other hand, piracy, armed robbery at sea, and the kidnapping of seafarers constitute another type of threat to security in the oceans, with a greater incidence on the African coast, particularly the Gulf of Guinea[56], on the western side, affecting energy security and the trade routes that pass through there. The limitations of coastal countries in tackling the issue have mobilised extra-regional actors in the effort to

[54] U.S. Department of State. 2022. "*Joint Statement on Atlantic Cooperation*." September 20, 2022. https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-atlantic-cooperation/.

[55] The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) regulates the regime of the law of the sea, including from an environmental preservation standpoint, under the principle of the peaceful use of the seas and oceans as an important factor in the sustainability of these spaces. United Nations. *UNCLOS,* December 10, 1982, https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

[56] The Gulf of Guinea is a region that stretches from Senegal to Angola, covering approximately 6,000 kilometres of coastline. It is an important shipping area for the transport of oil and gas, as well as goods to and from Central and Southern Africa. Every day, around 1,500 fishing vessels, oil tankers, and cargo ships sail through its waters. Piracy, armed robbery at sea, kidnapping of seafarers, illegal fishing, smuggling and trafficking, and transnational organised crime represent a major threat to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and, ultimately, to the economic development of the entire region (EEAS 2021).

reduce piracy, whose coordinated response is still fragmented. An example of this effort has been undertaken by the European Union, which, since 2014, has adopted a security strategy for the Gulf of Guinea in support of the "Yaoundé Architecture", an intra-regional commitment to combat maritime crime. Although occurrences have fallen for the second year running[57], the threat persists and maritime traffic is still considered to be at risk, making it necessary to maintain ongoing efforts to guarantee security in the region. Furthermore, to a lesser extent and despite a notable reduction in the number of incidents reported in Central and South American waters, ports in Brazil, Guyana, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico, and Haiti continue to be affected by the crime of armed robbery (ICC-IMB 2023).

Since 2014, the Brazilian Navy has taken part in multinational training exercises to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea region (Operation Obangame Express, organised by the US Africa Command; Grand African NEMO, promoted by the French Navy; and the most recent Guinex operations). The Brazilian Naval Force is also taking part in combined operations in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia (Operations Mare Liberum), conducted by Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151), subordinate to *Combined Maritime Forces* (CMF), an organisation that brings together 38 countries to prevent the illegal use of the sea by non-state actors. These operations promote the exchange of information, improve interoperability, and intensify the presence of naval and air assets in critical regions to guarantee free navigation and the maintenance of maritime trade flows.

Although the coastal states of the South Atlantic contribute with a relatively small share to the world's fish production[58], illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing), sometimes combined with other illegal activities, continues to be one of the biggest threats to the marine environment. This practice has caused economic, environmental and social damages to neighbouring countries, affecting food security and the sustainability of global fisheries in national jurisdictions and on the high seas. The lack of adequate legislation and limitations in the ability to monitor and patrol jurisdictional waters contribute to aggravating the issue (ECA 2022, 26). On the northeast coast of Brazil, one of the main tuna catching areas, fishing disputes in international waters are growing, with reports of attacks on fishing boats, particularly by Chinese fishing vessels (Antunes 2021). On Argentina's Atlantic coast, there are reports that more than 500 illegal foreign vessels (Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Taiwanese) operate at the outer limit of the marine zone.[59] This illegal activity also takes place in the exclusive economic zones of countries on the west coast of Africa.

These threats are compounded by illegal smuggling, trafficking, transnational organised crime, and terrorism. While in South America terrorism is a secondary phenomenon, in West Africa it manifests itself

[57] According to the International Maritime Bureau, in 2021, there was a reduction in the number of reported incidents in the Gulf of Guinea region, indicating a decline in this illicit activity, which decreased from 81 reported incidents in 2020 to 34 in 2021. (ICC-IMB 2022, 27). In 2023, a further reduction was recorded, attributed to a general decrease in pirate activity in the waters of the Gulf of Guinea, from 35 incidents in 2021 to 19 in 2022. While the regional decrease is welcome, the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre warns that the threat to seafarers persists [...] (ICC-IMB 2023, 26).

[58] FAO. 2022. "The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022." Towards Blue Transformation. Rome, FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0461en.

[59] "El reclamo de una ley que mitigue la pesca ilegal," Informe Marítimo, Diciembre 19, 2022, http://www.informemaritimo.com/el-reclamo-de-una-ley-que-mitigue-la-pesca-ilegal/.

through the actions of terrorist organisations coordinating with insurgent groups, constituting a factor of regional instability. Illicit drugs, arms, and human trafficking, on the other hand, represents the most important link between the instability and pattern of conflict observed in South America and those present in the neighbouring countries of West Africa (Vaz 2021). Thus, the recognition of these threats has led to a growing process of securitisation of the South Atlantic oceanic region.

In this context, we note that maritime security issues often transcend the clear boundaries of government responsibility or state competence, particularly on the high seas, which is a transnational environment whose governance is shared multilaterally. In view of this, the management of maritime insecurity must, in addition to the coastal states involved, incorporate a series of different actors and agendas into international efforts to combat the illicit activities that take place in this environment, which necessarily involve policing and inspection actions by the navies or coastguards of individual states, cooperation and regional regulation of various kinds, the incorporation of technologies applied to security systems, as well as involvement with the activities and practices of private actors or companies (Santana and Regina 2021).

The relative geopolitical stability of the Atlantic Basin and the balance in the composition of military forces in this region, guaranteed above all by the supremacy of the US naval power, could be jeopardised by the growing presence of extra-regional powers in this maritime space. The greater attention paid by the major powers to this area can be seen in the recreation of the Fourth Fleet by the United States in 2008, Russia's occasional presence on the Venezuelan coast, the United Kingdom's repeated willingness to protect its possessions in the southern part of the Atlantic basin (Vaz 2021), as well as the recent trilateral naval exercises carried out by the navies of South Africa, China, and Russia off the coast of this African country, in maritime waters that control the route that passes through the Cape of Good Hope.[60]

In its distribution of forces, the US divides its area of responsibility in the Atlantic among three fleets. The 4th Fleet is dedicated to South America and the Caribbean and its main focus is the Panama Canal, an important bottleneck linking the maritime routes that connect the Atlantic with the Pacific. The 6th Fleet is responsible, among other areas, for the African coast, with particular attention to the Gulf of Guinea. The 2nd Fleet covers the east coast of the US. In addition to this US military omnipresence in the Atlantic, NATO also includes a corridor of oceanic islands belonging to the United Kingdom as part of its overseas territories[61] (St. Helena, Ascension, Tristan da Cunha, Falkland/Malvinas, South Georgia, and South Sandwich islands)[62] and to Norway (Bouvet Island). Despite these strong presences, analysts attribute the vacuum being occupied by extra-regional powers in the context of the globalisation of world trade and the

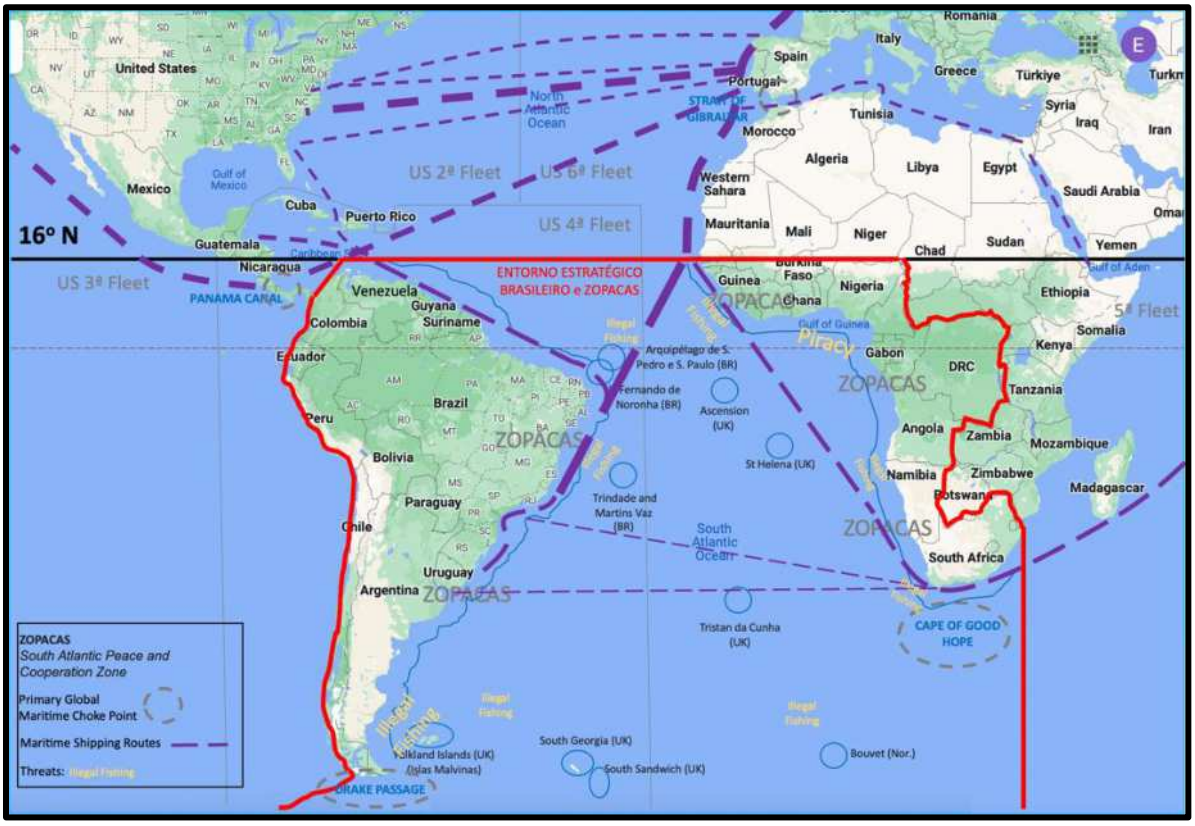
[60] At the end of February 2023, the navies of China, Russia, and South Africa held a joint maritime exercise in South Africa's eastern waters and airspace, called Mosi-2, for the second time (the first was in 2019). According to official sources, the trilateral training was aimed at increasing the ability to safeguard the safety of shipping and maritime economic activities. 2023. "China, Russia, South Africa to hold 2nd joint maritime exercise." February 19, 2023. http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/MilitaryServices/News_213106/16202593.html and Africanews. "South Africa hosts joint maritime exercises involving China and Russia." Last updated February 21, 2023. https://www.africanews.com/2023/02/21/south-africa-hosts-joint-maritime-exercises-involving-china-and-russia/.

[61] Loft, Philip. *"The UK overseas territories and their governors*," House of Commons, June 30, 2022, https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9583/CBP-9583.pdf.

[62] The ownership of these last three islands is contested by Argentina.

growing search for natural resources to the lack of governance and the persistent lack of priority given to the region by the US and the main Western European countries (Ferreira-Pereira and Duarte, 2023).

Figure 2 - Multi-theme map of the South Atlantic



Source: Map drawn up by the author using the Google Maps platform.

China's economic insertion in Africa and Latin America has been accompanied by a greater maritime presence in these regions, most evidently in transport and fishing activities. China has been gaining ground in the Panama Canal region, where it has signed several cooperation agreements. In Brazil, China has made investments in sectors related to maritime power, such as offshore oil exploration, port facilities, and associated logistics projects. In Argentina, which recently joined the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing has made investments to guarantee the flow of products and expanded the partnership with treaties in the space sector, indicating a greater rapprochement between the two countries, despite issues related to illegal fishing off the Argentine coast by Chinese-flagged vessels (Silva 2021a, 51-56). The Chinese stance towards the Latin American and African coasts and the South Atlantic is centred around the search for energy, natural resources, and new markets, which can lead to actions aimed at protecting maritime supply lines, free access to choke points, the fight against piracy, and the subsequent projection of power at sea. Studies argue that, despite Beijing's geographical distance, the South Atlantic has emerged as an opportune strategic extension of China's maritime assertiveness in its surrounding waters (Ferreira-Pereira and Duarte 2023, 705-722). It seems that the inclusion of a large part of LAC countries into BRI makes the South Atlantic the final complement to extending the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, giving it a global dimension, which may

give rise to the need for China to make its navy a permanent presence in the region. All of this indicates that China is stepping up its strategic approach in LAC, including through the maritime component, which tends to be accompanied by measures to increase its ability to act in the region in defence of its political and economic interests.

While China's projection in LAC and the South Atlantic is of a predominantly economic nature and with a modest military dimension, in Russia's case it is strategic, and military cooperation is the main instrument for dealing with the region. In its new maritime doctrine, approved in July 2022, Russia not only set maritime political goals for the Atlantic area, but also rearranged its regional priorities compared to the previous version of the document, issued in 2015, with the Atlantic moving from first to third priority, behind the Arctic and the Pacific.[63] Even so, Moscow maintains, in a limited and episodic way, political and military ties with countries in the region, particularly Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba, which enable its military access to the Western Hemisphere. Mainly with these three countries, but not exclusively, Russia maintains military cooperation agreements, involving the sale of equipment, technical assistance, exchanges, education, and joint exercises. In economic terms, Russia is important as a supplier of nitrate fertilisers to South American countries, including Argentina and Brazil, and as a buyer of their agricultural products. Although Russia's reach in Latin America is limited, it was enough for several countries to take a cautious stance in the United Nations General Assembly vote of March 2022, condemning the Russian invasion (Ellis 2022).

Thus, the presence of powers in strategic competition in LAC and the South Atlantic can represent a factor of instability, by promoting a greater militarisation of the region, as it becomes an area of growing dispute. Furthermore, the increasingly proactive actions of these powers, seeking to secure alliances and partnerships on the basis of more attractive conditions than those offered by emerging medium-sized players in the subcontinent, inhibit regionalism and increase asymmetries and the strength of domestic collective arrangements.

Brazil's vocation for the sea is underpinned by its extensive coastline bathed by the Atlantic, which extends to the west coast of Africa. The South Atlantic is vital for Brazil for various reasons. Approximately 95 per cent of foreign trade and 90 per cent of oil and gas production grant a significant importance to this area. It is estimated that around 40% of the population lives in coastal municipalities, distributed along 7,367 km of coastline (Penna Filho 2015, 149-151). In addition to the extensive Atlantic coastline, Brazil has 4.5 million square kilometres of jurisdictional waters known as the Blue Amazon[64], most notably

[63] Russia's Maritime Doctrine is a strategic planning document that supplements the country's 2021 National Security Strategy, setting out goals, roles, and priority areas of civilian and military maritime policy. It emphasises the global nature of Russia's interests as a major maritime power and its extent across all the oceans. In this latest edition, it establishes the following priority areas: "*The main regional directions of the national maritime policy are the Arctic, Pacific, Atlantic (Baltic, Azov-Black Sea and Mediterranean basins), Caspian, Indian Ocean and Antarctic regional areas*." Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation. July 31, 2022. Russia Maritime Studies Institute. 2022.

https://dnnlgwick.blob.core.windows.net/portals/0/NWCDepartments/Russia%20Maritime%20Studies%20Institute/20220731_ENG_RUS_Maritime_Doctrine_FINALtxt.pdf?sv=2017-04-17&sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=2zUFSaTUSPcOpQDBk%2FuCtVnb%2FDoy06Cbh0EI5tGpl2Y%3D.

[64] The term "Blue Amazon" is a political-strategic concept of the maritime region on the western side of the South Atlantic, comparable in size to the Amazon, where Brazil has sovereignty rights in accordance with the Third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III).

comprising important natural resources and the Maritime Communication Lines (LCM) that pass through it, making commercial trade possible (Brazilian Navy 2020).

Since the strategic defence review carried out in 2008, Brazil has objectively established its "strategic surroundings" as a priority area: South America, especially the neighbours with which it shares more than 16,000 kilometres of borders; the Amazon; Antarctica; and the South Atlantic, including the African countries that share this maritime space. Military cooperative interactions also extend to the other parts of America and Europe, and then omnidirectionally to the other continents of the globe. In this regard, Brazil's current Defence Policy and Strategy recognise the South Atlantic as a priority for national defence and security cooperation, seeking to maintain it as an area of peace and free of nuclear weapons, preserving it from rivalry between major powers. In addition to safeguarding jurisdictional waters, Atlantic security concerns are integral and comprehensive, including international waters and consultation with neighbours on the South American coast and the coasts of African neighbours, thus converging with the interests of multilateral international and regional bodies, as well as the powers that are increasingly interested and present in this scenario (Vaz 2011, 63-68).

The increase in the country's trade flows, the intensification of gas and oil exploration on the continental shelf, and the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves in Brazil's pre-salt layer have, as already mentioned, led the national defence structure to prioritise its strategic surroundings, which include the South Atlantic, including a rapprochement with its neighbours. In view of this, the naval defence component has established a strategic plan (Marinha do Brasil 2020) for the security and defence of this region, from its jurisdictional waters, with the ability to act in an integrated and cooperative manner in Africa's South Atlantic maritime area, mainly guaranteeing the free navigation of lines of communication by sea. This effective action for maritime security in the South Atlantic is supplemented by the naval force's sporadic participation in multinational combined exercises in the North Atlantic, most frequently in the Gulf of Guinea and Panama Canal regions.

The growing geo-economic and geopolitical importance of the South Atlantic has sparked Brazil's immediate interest in multilateral initiatives that include maritime security on their agendas, such as the ZOPACAS, the CPLP, and the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA). The United Nations Resolution[65] which created the ZOPACAS in the context of the Cold War, called on the major powers not to extend their rivalries and conflicts into the South Atlantic and to reduce or eventually eliminate their military presence therein, and avoid introducing nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction into the region. However, the resurgence of the dispute between the US and China has renewed the ZOPACAS' challenge to remain a zone of peace and cooperation (Silva 2021b, 250-301). The ZOPACAS is, therefore, the project that aligns most effectively with Brazil's strategy of creating a secure and co-operative environment in its maritime geographical surroundings. These approaches also favour the Portuguese-

[65] United Nations. "UN Resolution 41/11. Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic," October 27, 1986, https://undocs.org/en/a/res/41/11.

speaking countries on the Atlantic coast that are part of the CPLP, while also promoting bi-regional integration between IBSA member states, aimed at maritime safety and security in the high-traffic area that connects the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. All of this justifies the intention and the proactive stance of Brazilian diplomacy and defence in directing efforts to reinvigorate the ZOPACAS, in order to reverse its current stagnation, starting with its directive, formative, and representative institutionalisation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the context of the ongoing reconfiguration of the international chessboard brought about by the political, economic, technological, and military emergence of China and the resurgence of Russia, with the potential to transform the world order established by the US and its European allies after the Second World War, this chapter has sought to present a vision of the hegemonic competition that is being shaped as a result of this scenario, from Brazil's perspective, with a focus on the Atlantic space and an emphasis on security and defence aspects. Given that Brazil's foreign affairs and defence policy makes a clear distinction between the northern and southern parts of this ocean basin, we made a geographical cut-out in the object of our research, dealing more specifically with the geopolitical issues surrounding the South Atlantic.

The analysis showed that, despite remaining a peripheral area, the South Atlantic is currently experiencing a geostrategic renaissance, which is regaining importance due to the increase in commercial activities whose products pass through this maritime space, the search for natural resources, and the dispute between the US, China, and Russia. In this context, there has been a rapid Chinese commercial and financial engagement in the economies of most of the countries bordering the South Atlantic, both on the American coast, particularly Brazil and Argentina, and on the African coast, especially South Africa and Namibia, supported by the extension to LAC of the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road project. Russia's presence in the region has a strategic dimension and is based on military cooperation, most intensely with Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. These extra-regional presences in LAC are partly due to the lower geopolitical priority given to the region by the US and Europe, reflected in a governance vacuum, occupied mainly by China, which has offered attractive conditions for bilateral cooperation. Thus, while China is showing its intention to further strengthen its ties with the countries on the African and South American Atlantic coasts, the US, whose hemispheric importance is still recognised, is trying, albeit moderately, to contain the presence of extra-regional powers on the subcontinent with a number of investments and by strengthening its partnerships.

The US, which has the largest military force in the Atlantic Basin, has taken the lead in confronting the threats perceived in this scenario, with the support of European countries and most of the other neighbours in this maritime space. The joint measures coordinated and developed to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea are beginning to bear fruit, as there has been a significant drop in the number of reported occurrences of this type of offence (ICC-IMB 2022 and 2023). Drugs, arms, and human trafficking continues to be a major challenge for states in the Americas, Europe, and Africa. Similarly, illegal fishing, fuelled by food insecurity and the lack of more appropriate legislation, still requires more concerted efforts

to monitor, prevent, and repress it. Finally, the search for natural resources in the marine environment is set to grow, which will require the establishment of more effective shared measures so that they can be sustainably exploited, and the environment, which is already being affected by climate change, can be preserved.

The governance of maritime security in the Atlantic depends on the mutual involvement of neighbouring states. To this end, it is essential to promote dialogue and improve coordination among the coastal countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean, integrating actions with existing regional cooperative bodies, associations, and security systems, especially those that are inter-regional in nature, such as the ZOPACAS, in order to align the maritime approach, reach political consensus on common goals, and formulate shared strategies for the preservation, security, and stability of the Atlantic.

If Brazil is to expand its role in this changing world order, it must face up to the consequences of the rivalry between the US and China, establishing a geopolitical strategy in the regional and global context in order to maximise national interests in relations with the two powers. Over the last two decades, Brazil and China have become important trading partners, increasing their significance in the world economy. To a certain extent, Brazilian foreign policy has focused on promoting South-South cooperation, both bilaterally and in international forums such as the BRICS, the G20, and the United Nations, positioning itself in defence of multilateralism, a multipolar world, and more participatory global governance. In the field of defence, Brazil maintains solid and historical cooperative ties with the US, and prioritises interaction in the so-called "strategic surroundings," which promotes security and stability in the South Atlantic, including seeking to further ties with countries on the west coast of Africa, in particular those that are part of the ZOPACAS. Its Naval Force, in addition to being responsible for the defence of Brazil's jurisdictional waters, which make up the maritime space known as "*Amazônia Azul*" (Blue Amazon), has contributed to collective efforts to combat illegal activities in the Atlantic, in particular piracy, drug trafficking, and illegal fishing, in order to protect natural resources, free navigation, and the flow of communications via submarine cables, maintaining the South Atlantic as a zone of peace, stability, and free from nuclear weapons.

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SUBMARINE CABLES ACROSS THE ATLANTIC: GEOPOLITICS AND SECURITY OF A CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

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ABSTRACT

The study of the fibre-optic submarine cable network (SMCN) across the Atlantic allows its understanding as a geographical space broken down into sub-regional areas that seeks to be integrated from the North in order to create a security community. The SMCN reflects a power relationship, in geopolitical-territorial terms. It exemplifies the dynamics of inclusion-exclusion that characterise the current geopolitical competition between great powers seeking to fragment globalisation into regional areas. And it reflects the regional hegemony of the United States, exercised through its large technology companies.

1. APPROACH

Geopolitical competition between the great powers is a key trait of today's international system, which will only intensify in the near future, with manifestations in all areas, both material and spatial, including in the *Atlantic hemisphere*. The North Atlantic coastal states, all of which are part of NATO, fear that their systemic rivals, mainly China but also Russia, could increase their presence in the North Atlantic, thus multiplying the opportunities for a security breach. They also fear that these rival powers might establish permanent naval support facilities in one of the Atlantic coastal states[66] (Nyabiage 2021). The formula for containing these potential threats is to strengthen the diplomatic, trade, and security ties that bind all Atlantic coastal states. The goal would be to create an ocean-wide security community (Deutsch 1957) based on shared identities and values, direct interactions among its members, and reciprocal long-term interests (Adler & Barnett 1998, 40). The recent diplomatic initiative promoted by the United States in the form of the Joint Statement on Atlantic Cooperation (White House 2022) is part of the pursuit of these goals.

> *"In order to bring together Atlantic countries to accomplish our shared goals, we will explore opportunities, as appropriate, to partner on a set of common challenges in the Atlantic Ocean region and to explore the development of a wider dialogue on strengthening cooperation in the region. (…) We aim to enhance regional cooperation, to develop a shared approach to Atlantic Ocean issues, and to build shared capacity to solve the challenges we face in the Atlantic."*

But the Atlantic hemisphere is far from constituting such a security community. On the contrary, it is a non-integrated geographical space, broken down into sub-regional spaces and profoundly diverse, albeit

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[66] China's reform of the deep-water port of Bata (Equatorial Guinea) has aroused fears in the West.

with growing interconnections. While liberal principles in politics and economics are widely shared among the coastal states, they coexist with very different social structures and political traditions, and intra-regional inequalities are enormous. Though the influence of North Atlantic states remains predominant, cooperation among, and autonomy of, South Atlantic states has grown in recent decades, partly due to a willingness to build alternatives to the traditional standards of assistance and cooperation (sometimes intervention and dependence) employed by Northern powers (Grevi 2016, 102).

This breakdown of the Atlantic hemisphere into two well-defined sub-regions, North and South, provides an opportunity for extra-regional powers to gain presence and influence in the region, especially in those areas that are less integrated with the rest, such as the South Atlantic. It also gives rise to different security requirements in the two Atlantic sub-regions.

With regard to the South Atlantic, the 2022 Joint Statement calls for developing closer cooperation by leveraging a number of existing institutions whose activities converge with the goals outlined in the Declaration. The list included in the document is indicative of the low level of integration, including in terms of institutional cooperation, observed in the Southern sub-region: Atlantic Centre[67], All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA)[68], South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS)[69], the Yaoundé Architecture[70], and the Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (G7 ++ FoGG)[71].

This very heterogeneous pre-existing institutional basis cannot constitute a solid basis for action to achieve the security goals pursued by the North Atlantic countries, especially given that some of these organisations, such as the ZOPACAS, have pursued a strategic purpose that diverges from these goals from the outset. It is worth recalling that the declaration on the denuclearisation of the South Atlantic region, promoted by Brazil through the ZOPACAS, was approved by the General Assembly in 1994 with the opposition of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. In this century, Brazil continues to strive to develop its own security agenda, acting as a regional power, autonomously[72] (Kotsopoulos 2014).

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[67] Officially launched in 2021, it was conceived as a platform for policy dialogue, a space for analysis and reflection, and a centre for training and learning. It involves 21 states from three continents: Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Colombia, Denmark, France, Gambia, Germany, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Spain, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, and Equatorial Guinea (https://www.defesa.gov.pt/pt/pdefesa/ac/about)

[68] An example of so-called *science diplomacy*, it was formed on the basis of a number of previous agreements. It aims to improve marine research and innovation cooperation between the Atlantic countries (https://allatlanticocean.org).

[69] The ZOPACAS was created in 1986 by UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/41/11, at the initiative of Brazil, with the aim of promoting cooperation, as well as peacekeeping and maintaining security in the South Atlantic. Twenty-four states belong to this platform: Angola; Argentina; Benin; Brazil; Cape Verde; Cameroon; Congo; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Equatorial Guinea; Gabon; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Guinea Bissau; Ivory Coast; Liberia; Namibia; Nigeria; São Tomé and Príncipe; Senegal; Sierra Leone; South Africa; Togo, and Uruguay (http://www.abc.gov.br/zopacas/default_en.aspx).

[70] Regional Strategy for the Prevention and Suppression of Illicit Activities in the Gulf of Guinea. It was created in 2013 as a collaboration between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) (https://icc-gog.org/?page).).

[71] Created in 2013 during the British presidency of the G7. Its purpose is to back Yaoundé's maritime security architecture (https://www.gogin.eu/en/maritime-domain-news/maritime-cooperation/g7-group-of-friends-of-the-gulf-of-guinea-meets-in-brussels/).

[72] The initiatives deployed by Brazil are numerous: ATLASUR naval exercises (Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, and Uruguay); defence cooperation agreements with eight Atlantic African countries; capacity-building of the Namibian and Nigerian navies; security sector reform in Guinea-Bissau, etc.

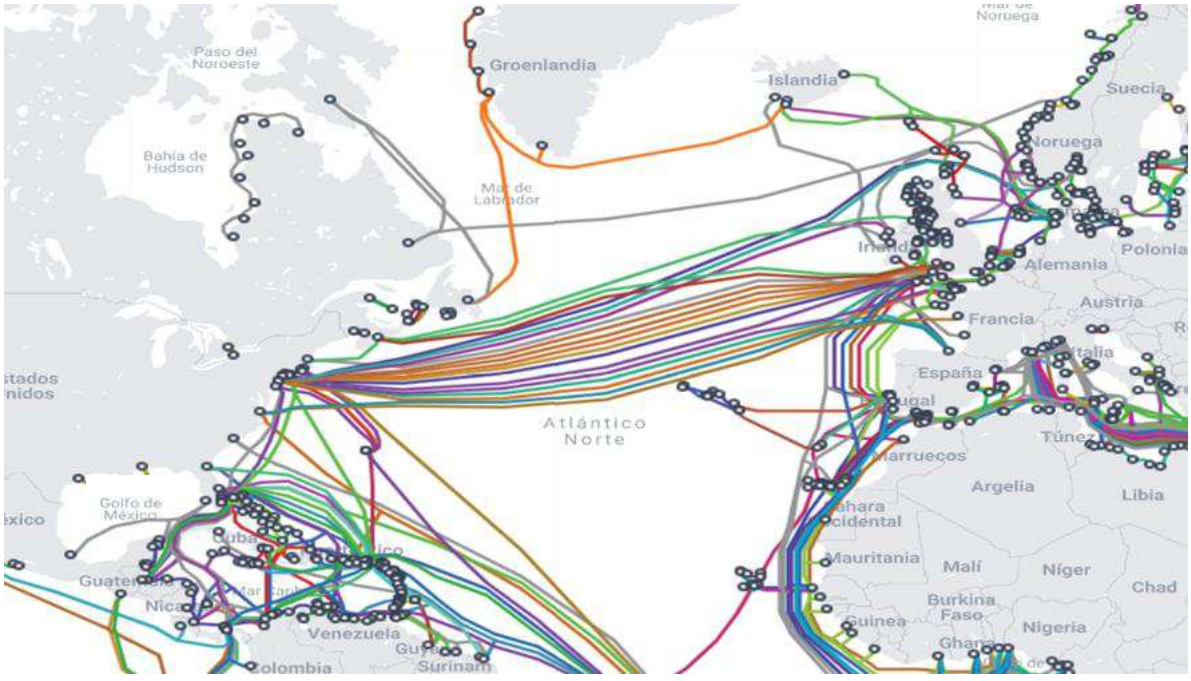
NATO member states may feel the need to integrate the countries of the South Atlantic into a shared security regime; however, to achieve this, they will have to make a considerable effort, not only a diplomatic one, given the existing background (disconnection and decoupling of flows between the North and South regions), and the very definition of the security interests of South Atlantic states, which, since the experience of the Cold War, have sought to preserve their strategic autonomy by avoiding alignment within a bloc policy.

The study of the fibre-optic submarine cable network (SMCN) that crosses the Atlantic Ocean serves as a tool to verify this thesis: the Atlantic as a geographical space broken down into sub-regional areas that seeks to be integrated from the North in order to create this so-called security community. The SMCN also reflects a power relationship, in geopolitical-territorial terms. And it exemplifies the dynamics of inclusion-exclusion, in this case of global networks, that characterises the current geopolitical competition between great powers trying to break down globalisation into regional areas.

Meanwhile, the configuration of the SMCN in the Atlantic Ocean offers a differentiated risk structure between the northern and southern regional scenarios. The difference lies in the degree of danger posed by the latent threats in each case, without it being inferred that the risks presented do not affect the network as a whole.

In the North Atlantic (Fig. 1), there is a particularly dense SMCN structure connecting two critical areas of the world economy: the United States of America (USA) and Europe. Both regions comprise the pillars of the Atlantic security community built around NATO. In this northern sub-region, the main threats relate to the vulnerability of the networks to attacks or sabotage by rival powers, so far masked as accidents, which have been proven since 2017 (David 2022).

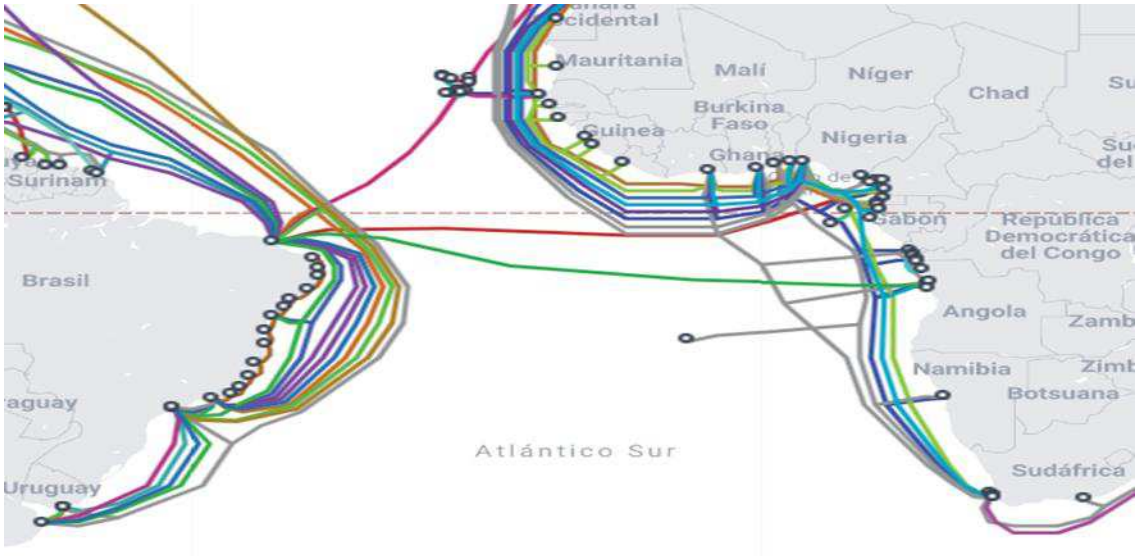
Figure 1.- Map of the submarine cable network in the North Atlantic (2023)



Source: TeleGeography 2023

In the South Atlantic (fig. 2), the main risk element for the SMCN is also the possibility of sabotage or information extraction, but also the presence of extra-regional companies, mainly Chinese (Sherman 2021, 16), which, in partnership with local actors, are trying to create their own networks in an area that, until recently, had no fibre-optic connections.

Figure 2.- Map of the submarine cable network in the South Atlantic (2023)



Source: TeleGeography 2023

The lack of connectivity between the two sides of the South Atlantic, in stark contrast to the situation in the North, and the fact that some of the cables laid in the South transatlantic connection included the presence of Chinese companies, in partnership with Brazil and Angola, was perceived as a source of risk by Washington. It was feared that the absence of Western investment - US investment, to be precise -, would offer China an opportunity to gain a strategic presence in the Atlantic space. In recent years, an extraordinary investment and technological effort by the United States and its large technology companies has neutralised this possibility.

2. THESIS

Although the epicentre of today's geopolitical competition is in the Indo-Pacific region, with the Strait of Malacca (NATO 2022) as its centre of gravity, the Atlantic will not be a marginal arena, let alone an irrelevant one. Geopolitical competition in the Atlantic region may manifest itself in military and arms terms preferably in the Northern sub-region, as long as a regional conflict does not break out in Africa. In the Southern sub-region, this competition will manifest itself primarily in economic terms, especially in areas such as trade, investment, and infrastructure.

The gap between the North and South sub-regions of this ocean suggests the existence of four sub-continents with very different realities, perceptions, and political agendas. The South's limited connection

to global flows, coupled with a history of subordination to the North, creates an opportunity for extra-regional actors such as China to fill the gaps in investment, infrastructure, and connectivity in these countries, attracted by the wealth of resources, demographic vitality, and raw materials that these markets represent.

Analysis of the transatlantic SMCN allows us to verify this thesis in several respects. Firstly, the SMCN illustrates the absence of a communication structure that would reflect the existence of a community linking the four Atlantic sub-continents. Secondly, the South's connectivity deficiencies are being overcome by large US technology companies in order to reinforce their control over the region, thus eliminating the opportunity for extra-regional powers to meet these needs through investment and infrastructure creation. Thirdly, the development of these activities, and the collaborative dynamics they generate, seeks to foster the creation of a security community across the Atlantic region, while keeping the countries of the South in a subordinate position that will undoubtedly go against their legitimate national aspirations.

Let us look at these elements, starting with the geopolitical dimension of submarine cable networks.

3. GEOPOLITICAL DIMENSION OF SUBMARINE CABLE NETWORKS

"*Territorial power is enacted and contested through technical infrastructures*" (Munn 2020). The thesis put forward by Luke Munn is suggestive: technological capacity generates spaces of power, "technical territories" that shape a particular geographical area, generating their own jurisdictions and projecting their influence far beyond them. Technological capacity generates influence that is projected in its spatial dimension. The new geography of power is made up of new technological territories: big data tools, 5G networks (Tekir 2020), but also the neuralgic network of submarine cables through which 99% of digital information transits.

Geopolitical competition goes beyond the control of these technological territories and affects the generation of content and the protection of information transmitted over these networks. For great powers, it is imperative that they protect themselves from undue influence while providing their economic actors with the necessary instruments to be able to compete on a global scale (Werthner 2022). It is within these new technological territories that digital sovereignty, technological sovereignty, and data sovereignty (Bueger & Liebetrau 2021b) are established.

The governments of the great powers are reshaping the physical design of the Internet, through companies that control the network's technical infrastructure in order to route data in a way that is more favourable to their interests and increase control over the network's nerve centres, the chokepoints. Achieving this dominant position will not only influence traffic, but also provide an effective platform for the illicit collection of information on a large scale.

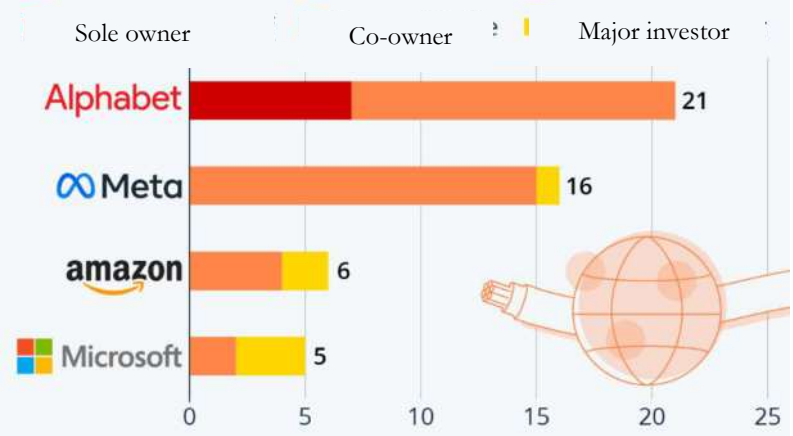
Companies building and operating submarine cables are using network management systems to centralise control over their components (such as reconfigurable optical add/drop multiplexers -ROADMs- and robotic patch bays in remote network operations centres) (Sherman 2021). The construction of new submarine cables is, therefore, a key action for outlining the network's physical topology at the global level and for establishing territorial areas of inclusion/exclusion vis-à-vis allies and rivals.

a. The Role of Large Technology Companies

Over the last decade, and especially since 2016, there has been a significant transformation in the mix of companies responsible for installing submarine cables. While initially these were international consortia with clear state participation through the national telecommunications companies, in a short time the leading role has been taken over by large private technology companies, mainly from the United States. This significant change forces us to reflect on the relationship between states and technology companies.

Large US technology companies (known under the acronym GAFAM[73]) are responsible for the largest investment and construction deployment of submarine cables installed in recent years. Alphabet, Google's parent company, leads the industry as the only company with dedicated cables (6), including two transatlantic cables: Dunant, which connects the east coast of the United States to France, and Equiano, which connects Europe to South Africa. It is followed by Meta (formerly Facebook), Microsoft, and Amazon (fig. 3) .

Figure 3.- Submarine cables owned by US technology companies (2022)



Source: Gaudiaut 2023

The players in the geopolitical competition for control over the new technological territories are not only the great powers - the two rival poles are undoubtedly the US and China, the only states with the resources and means to sustain this competition. Geopolitical competition also involves large technology companies. This fact forces a pertinent disciplinary reflection on whether these companies' actions should be understood as an instrument for projecting their own state's power or whether, by contrast, they constitute stand-alone actors that act according to their own interests (Gjesvik 2022). This study takes on the view that it is the states, the great powers, that are ultimately the dominant actors, and that these technological companies are part of their instruments for projecting and generating international power.

Let us look at how GAFAMs have emerged in the submarine cable sector.

[73] GAFAM: Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft.

In this industry's business ecosystem, companies of a different nature, specialised in a specific business field, traditionally coexisted: manufacturers (of the cable, repeaters, terminals), shipowners (responsible for laying the lines and for their maintenance and repair), and operators (generally the large telecommunications companies, many of them state-owned, plus a few independent operators).

This traditional structure of participating companies followed a business model whereby the cable owners - usually international consortia dominated by a major telecommunications company, in collaboration with local partners - leased the use of the line, mainly to content-generating companies that are primarily responsible for most of the information traffic transiting the network.

This business model has changed radically in recent years. Content providers, until recently the main customers of the infrastructure, have become the owners of the newly constructed submarine cables, using state-of-the-art technology allowing for higher transit speeds and much higher transmission capacity. This leaves conventional telecommunications companies in a marginal position in the submarine cable market.

The new players are the GAFAMs, which have accounted for most of the global investment in submarine cable networks in recent years, through very small business consortia (club-cables) comprising one or two of these companies and, occasionally, a local telecom acting as a landing-partner at the point of connection with the coast. The choice of these local partners is determined by the specific circumstances of each case and, as will be seen, they will tend to disappear (Morel 2020, 84).

Neither in terms of the volume of investment deployed, nor the technology applied, can conventional telecommunications companies compete with GAFAMs, which are taking over the operators' share of the cable business. For the time being, these changes do not affect shipowners, who continue to provide their services in cable laying, although it is foreseeable that, in the repair and maintenance business, there will eventually be a concentration of their activities on the cables of the biggest customers for these services - once again, GAFAMs - which will eventually have an impact on the efficiency and performance of the oldest cable lines in the medium term (Morel 2020, 87).

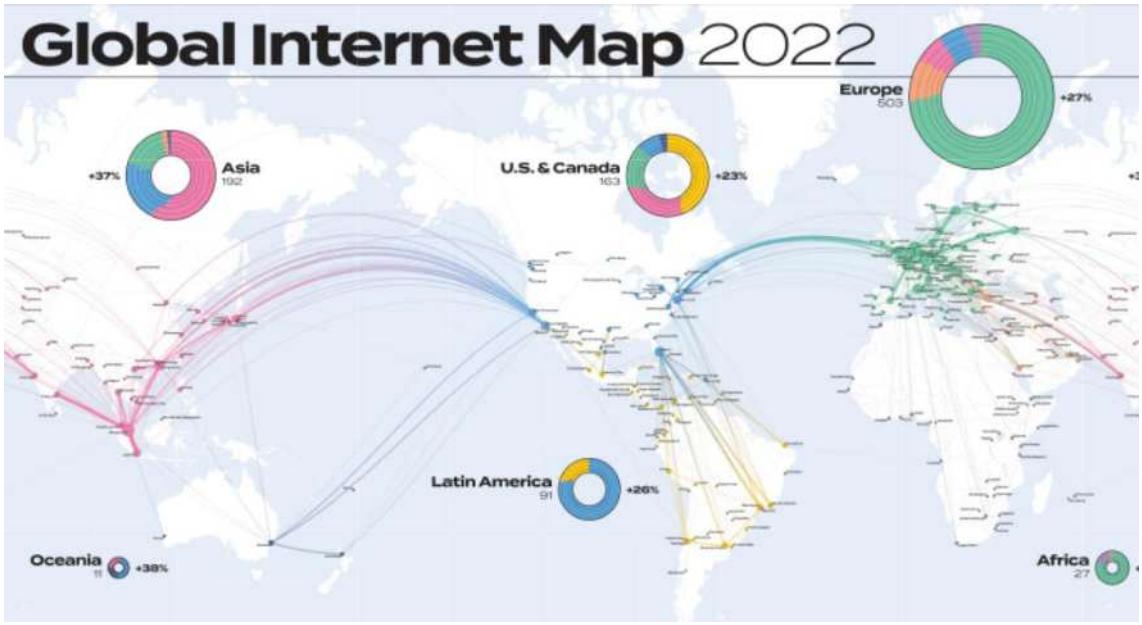
In technological terms, the impact of these companies is also affecting equipment manufacturers. Until recently, it was common practice for construction companies to contract the cable under the "key in hand" formula. GAFAMs, on the other hand, are applying the "open cable" formula, which allows for separately contracting technical teams. The implications of this change in approach are far-reaching. Not only because it makes the supply of components cheaper and makes it possible to incorporate new technology developed after the date of contracting the cable laying. The basic change is that this formula allows submarine terminals to be moved inland, making coastal terminal stations superfluous. This way, the connection can be made directly between the big data centres, which are generally located in the vicinity of large population centres and are also owned by these large companies.

The new technology enables the integrated management of maritime and terrestrial elements, making large data centres the network's main interconnection points, its strategic nodes. Thus, in the near future, it will be possible to eliminate the coastal terminal station, which entails economic costs (local network access charges) but, above all, it enables dispensing with the local operators who have acted as

intermediaries up to now. This eliminates two network security vulnerabilities: the coastal terminal station itself, highly exposed to acts of sabotage; and the presence of an external partner, susceptible to accessing the flow of information circulating through the network (Morel 2020, 90).

As can be seen, the impact of GAFAMs on the submarine cable sector is truly revolutionary: it tends to eliminate conventional operators, integrates maritime and terrestrial cable management, and restructures the network through the main interconnection points (Global Internet eXchange - GIX), which are also in its possession.

Figure 4 - Global Internet Map - Global Internet eXchange (2022)



Source: TeleGeography 2022

The global network's current structure determines that global connectivity, the access of each region to global flows, is not equal (Gigazine 2021)[74]. For example, the North American (US/Canada) bandwidth is 130,703 Gbps, of which only 9% connects the US and Canada, the rest being dedicated to connecting to other regions such as Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania[75]. In the case of Latin America, the bandwidth is 69,358 Gbps, with 20% of network capacity dedicated to intra-regional connectivity. The remainder provides a connection to the outside world, most predominantly to North America, especially through Florida.

Europe has a bandwidth of 400,000,216 Gbps. 75% is dedicated to intra-European connections, with the remaining 25% dedicated to North America, Africa, and the Middle East.

Africa's bandwidth is 17,729 Gbps and the proportion of intra-regional connections is 16%. Most routes connect to Europe and the Middle East.

[74] The data, from mid-2021, are based on information from international ISPs and, therefore, do not include routes owned by private networks.

[75] In comparative terms, international Internet connection bandwidth in Asia is 148,214 Gbps. 56% are connections within Asia, 44% connect to other regions.

Let us now look at how the dynamics of inclusion-exclusion operate through the structure of the SMCN network.

b. Inclusion/Exclusion Dynamics in the Submarine Cable Network Structure

Information flows within the network constitute one of the new technological territories mentioned above. These territories are digital and essentially non-physical. For this reason, they cannot be controlled, in the traditional sense of the term, but they can be influenced. This influence lies in the ability to strengthen or weaken these flows. In order to exert this influence, it is necessary to control the parts of the network that are connected to the physical space, which, in the case of the SMCN, are the cables themselves and their nodes, the GIXs.

Nodes are physical spaces where the information that flows through the network is concentrated and redistributed. That is, they are the centres that receive and forward the content that flows through the network. One of the consequences of this type of networks articulated in nodes is that the physical territory where these nodes are located gains geopolitical relevance. In contrast, other territories that do not have nodes lack this relevance (Verbovszky 2018).

States with the technological and financial capacity to build and lay submarine cables have the power to select where to establish a node in the network, thereby creating and maintaining political dependencies through the provision of information flows, projecting their influence not only on the initial recipient where the node is installed, but also on the final recipients to whom the node is distributed.

In addition, the condition of preferential linking of nodes to each other, a principle established by László Barabási (Barabási 2003), must be taken into consideration. Barabási has discovered that the websites that make up the network have certain mathematical properties: permanent expansion, preferential linkage, and rate of attraction (competitive suitability). Let us focus on the second of these.

Let's start from the fact that not all websites are connected to each other. Starting from any page, we can only access about 24% of all pages, the rest are invisible. Through a URL, we can only travel in one direction. Although we may have the impression that we are surfing the net in multiple directions, this is not the case. The World Wide Web is distributed from several identifiable "continents". The nodes on the (IN continent) are arranged so that connections are made between them. All pages of the (OUT continent) can be reached from the inside, but there is no way back. If you try to connect from the outside to the IN continent, you will not be able to access it.

Based on this image created by Barabási, the IN continent constitutes the system's central core and contains only a quarter of all existing web pages. This space is easily navigable and is where most of the connections are made, but it is a space that is closed to information hosted on other continents because we are unaware of its existence as we only browse what the central core offers. This way, it is difficult to get from one page to the information contained in other continents.

Inclusion or exclusion in the SMCN, through the choice of where these nodes are physically established, and where the cables are routed, is a basic means of exercising power by the most powerful companies, and the states that protect them.

Marginalisation from network connectivity, exclusion through sanctions (as is already the case with Iran and Russia), or increased dependence through connectivity (which increases the potential cost of exclusion) are the ways usually used to exert influence over network flows. Controlling digital infrastructures also allows channelling and blocking information flows, and challenging any competitors (Goede & Westermeier 2022). Control over the network also allows illegitimate access to information circulating through it, as was revealed in the testimonies given by Edward Snowden in 2013. The SMCN is a key infrastructure underpinning today's global surveillance and espionage systems (Farrell & Newman 2019), which reinforces its strategic relevance.

The effect of geopolitical rivalries on the SMCN lies in the competition between the major powers to further expand the network by outlining the routes taken by the cables and the location of the GIXs. The discriminatory manner in which the location of nodes is decided allows them to increase their influence over a given region, while reinforcing its dependence. An actor's ability to channel these information flows according to its interests becomes an objective indicator of its political influence (Dong & Firestone 2015).

Submarine cables as a technological space, their network structure as a geopolitical design, the exploitation and surveillance of information flows through them as a source of privileged information and an instrument of global power. It is understandable why the SMCN has recently become a focus of attention in security studies (Bueger & Liebetrau 2021a, Bueger et al. 2022, Medeiros & Pinto 2022).

c. Topography of the Transatlantic Submarine Cable Network

The Atlantic Ocean floor holds a large number of undersea fibre optic cables. In all, there are approximately 114. It should be noted that these figures are not exact. In early 2023, an estimated 552 cables were in operation worldwide, with a total length of 1.4 million km. The total number of active cables is constantly changing, as new cables come into service and older ones are retired. The average lifetime of these cables is about 25 years (TeleGeography 2023). There are also the "redundant" or "dark" cables, whose route is secret for security reasons, whose number was estimated to be 12 in 2017 (Stavridis 2017, 244). That number has, no doubt, increased since then.

Of the 114 cables laid at the bottom of the Atlantic, 25 are transoceanic (22 in the North Atlantic and 3 in the South Atlantic). The rest run along the ocean on coastal routes. Some 50 connect the east coast of North America and the Caribbean, and 13 reach the coast of South America, with four more currently under construction. On the other side of the ocean, some 16 cables run along the west coast of Europe and some 13 along the west coast of Africa, 5 of them connecting the coast south of the Gulf of Guinea.

Traditionally, cables were owned by telecommunications operators (telecoms). Large consortia used to be formed to implement each project, involving all parties interested in the use of that cable. At the turn of

the century, numerous entrepreneurial initiatives were responsible for most of the private cables that still exist today. Their business model consisted of selling the cable's transmission capacity to users, mainly content providers on the network.

As mentioned above, in recent years, both the business structure and the business model that existed up to now have changed. Large content providers such as Alphabet, Meta, Amazon or Microsoft have become the most important investors in the laying of next-generation cables. The volume of the fibre-optic transmission capacity deployed by these new private network operators has far outstripped that of the conventional network operators.

With the prospect of continued massive bandwidth growth, ownership of the new submarine cables makes economic sense for these companies. Following a logic of vertical integration, they integrate large data transport networks in order to strategically ensure the transmission of their own data and, if necessary, to prevent the transmission of their competitors' data. Transmission cables in networked structures are a vulnerable link in their logistics chain and, because of their cost and size, tend to behave as natural monopolies - with decreasing costs at larger scales. This vertical integration ensures these companies not only access to and control of transportation but also lower operating costs (Tworek & John 2019). However, as we have seen, their interest in controlling the network goes beyond economic interests and also serves strategic reasons.

One of the world's largest data traffic flows occurs between North America and Europe. This explains the density of cables in this neuralgic area of the SMCN. No major security conclusions can be drawn from its analysis, except the obvious ones, which have to do with the integrity of the infrastructure and the protection of data in transit. Of greater interest, however, is the analysis of the network of submarine cables connecting the other sub-regions of the Atlantic Ocean.[76].

d. Connection between the East Coast of the United States and Central and South America

The connections between these two Atlantic sub-regions follow the general parameters already described (fig. 5). Upon looking at the chronology of the cables, it is clear that the first stage is characterised by a business structure dominated by conventional telecoms, combined with local operators, which emerged at the beginning of the 21st century. And a second stage, from 2017 onwards, it is heavily marked by the entry of GAFAMs into the business.

Because the cables at the top of Fig. 5 (installed between 2000 and 2001) are close to obsolescence, we shall focus on the most recent cables, commissioned in the last five years or still under construction. Short-route cables across the Caribbean are not taken into account.

[76] The information on the corporate structure of submarine cables provided in the following sections comes from a variety of sources, mainly Submarinenetworks.com and TeleGeography, but also from the companies' own websites, as well as from the business press. Specific references to sources have been omitted so as not to clutter the presentation with references.

Figure 5.- Cables connecting West Coast of North to South America

Cables connecting West Coast of North to South America					
Name	Year	kms	Owners	Landing Points	
South American Crossing -SAC (Atlantic Coast)	2000	20,000	Level 3 - Communications Telecom Italia	St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands	Las Toninas (Argentina)
Americas-II	2000	8,373	AT&T + partners	Hollywood (Florida)	Fortaleza (Brazil)
Maya-1	2000	4,400	AT&T + partners	Hollywood (Florida)	Tolú (Colombia)
Arcos-1	2001	8,700	Columbus Networks Telecomunicaciones Ultramarinas de Puerto Rico	North Miami Beach (Florida)	Punto Fijo (Venezuela)
Sam-1	2001	22,000	Telefónica TE Connectivity.	Boca Raton (Florida)	Las Toninas (Argentina)
Globonet	2001	23,500	BTG Pactual Infrastructure Fund II	Tuckerton, New Jersey	Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)
AMX-1	2013	17,500	America Movil (Mexico)	Jacksonville (Florida)	Sao Paulo (Brazil)
Seabras-1	2017	10,500	Microsoft Tata Communications	New Jersey	Praia Grande (Brazil)
MONET	2017	10,556	Google Algar Telecom Brazil Antel Uruguay Angola Cables	Boca Raton (Florida)	Fortaleza (Brazil)
BRUSA	2018	11,000	Telxius (Telefónica)	Virginia Beach (USA)	Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)
Junior	2018	390	Google	Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)	Santos (Brazil)
Tannat	2020	2,000	Antel Uruguay Google	Las Toninas (Argentina)	Santos (Brazil)

Malbec	2021	2,500	GlobeNet Facebook	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)
Caribbean Express	2024 (work in progress)	4.500	Commenda Inc. (Atlanta)	West Palm Beach (Florida)	Balboa (Panama)
Firmina	2024 (work in progress)	14,500	Google	Myrtle Beach (South Carolina)	Las Toninas (Argentina)
Deep Blue One	2024 (work in progress)	1,600	Digicel Orange	Trinidad and Tobago	French Guiana
ARBR (prolongs Seabras-1)	(work in progress)	2,700	Seabras The Werthein Group (Argentina)	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	Sao Paulo (Brazil)

Source: Submarinenetworks.com and TeleGeography, 2023

Among the latest generation of cables, let us start by looking at projects that are independent of GAFAMs. Deep Blue One, for example, is a cable owned by a consortium of conventional telecom companies that connects French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, and will essentially serve offshore oil and gas platforms.

Another unique case is ARBR, which is owned by Seaborn and The Werthein Group. It is the first and only transoceanic cable in Argentina that is not controlled by a large established company. This new connection between Buenos Aires and São Paulo is, in fact, an extension of Seabras-1 and provides an almost direct route between Argentina and the USA.

As can be seen, both projects, outside the control of GAFAMs, fulfil a complementary function of extending and expanding the network.

Other projects not owned by big tech companies are Caribbean Express (CX), owned by the US company Ocean Networks; and BRUSA, owned by Telefónica (Spain), through its investee Telxius.

The CX cable will connect West Palm Beach (Florida) and Balboa (Panama) with branch distribution connections in Mexico and Colombia. Future connections are planned to Cuba, Grand Cayman, Guatemala, Jamaica, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. It will be the only cable in the Caribbean region with the technological capacity to offer full fibre optic pairs to the market.

BRUSA is a new high-capacity submarine cable connecting Rio de Janeiro and Fortaleza (Brazil) with San Juan (Puerto Rico) and Virginia Beach (USA). The MAREA cable from Bilbao (Spain), built in the same year jointly by Facebook and Microsoft and operated by Telxius, also connects to this terminus.

Both projects, of high strategic value, have a GAFAM presence, although they are not directly under GAFAM control. The rest of the new cables all belong to these large tech companies. They show the new

business structure formed by very small business consortia (club-cables) made up of one (Junior and Firmina) or two (Seabras-1) of these companies and, occasionally, with a local telecom acting as a landing-partner at the point of connection with the coast (MONET, Malbec, and Tannat).

Seabras-1 and Firmina constitute, together with BRUSA, the major highways connecting the United States and South America, making Brazil the most important regional hub. Junior, on the other hand, is a minor but significant project. Connecting Rio de Janeiro to Santos, it is Google's first privately owned submarine cable acting as a domestic submarine cable in Brazil.

The Seabras-1 submarine cable is the first submarine cable system directly connecting the financial centres of the US and Brazil, namely New York and São Paulo. The feeder terminals are located at Avon-by-the-Sea beach, New Jersey (operated by Tata Communications), and Praia Grande, with a direct underground connection to São Paulo. Several extensions are planned to allow it to connect with Argentina (ARBR) and South Africa (SAEx-1). This extension, if implemented, would provide a direct link between the United States and South Africa via Brazil.

The Firmina submarine cable consists of a main trunk, connecting the east coast of the United States (Myrtle Beach, South Carolina) to Las Toninas, Argentina, with two additional landings (in Praia Grande, Brazil, and Punta del Este, Uruguay) and two branches (one to Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic and the other to Fortaleza, Brazil). Firmina is the first direct link between Uruguay and the US, and one of the few cable links connecting Uruguay to Argentina.

Firmina is owned by Google through its subsidiary GU Holdings Inc, with DC BLOX, Telxius, ANTEL, and Lumen as landing service providers.

e. Connection Between Europe and the East African Coast

The African continent is connected to the global submarine cable network through two main regions: Europe - in the Mediterranean area - and Asia - on the eastern coast of the continent, in the Red Sea region. Africa is the continent with the lowest number of connections to the global network, with only a quarter of its 1.3 billion people having access to the Internet.

In this part of the Atlantic Ocean, the density of networks is much lower than in other regions, with a low number of cables installed (Fig. 6). In fact, in the first two decades of the century, communications were carried out through a handful of cables, in the hands of companies with a traditional business structure (SAT-3, MainOne, GLO-1, and WACS), headed by local consortia. Only in the current decade has there been a multiplication of networks, thanks to GAFAM initiatives.

Figure 6.- Cables connecting West Coast of Africa to Europe

Cables connecting West Coast of Africa to Europe					
Name	**Year**	**kms**	**Owners**	**Landing Points**	
SAT-3/WASC	2001	13,000	TCI (AT&T) France Telecom VSNL (India)	Sesimbra (Portugal)	Melkbosstrand (South Africa)
MainOne	2010	7,000	Equinix (USA) since 2022	Seixal (Portugal)	Melkbosstrand (South Africa)
GLO-1	2010	9,800	Globacom Limited Nigeria	Bude (UK)	Lagos (Nigeria)
WACS (West Africa Cable System)	2012	14,530	Consortium of local companies	Yzerfontein (South Africa)	Highbridge (UK)
ACE (Africa Coast to Europe)	2012	17,000	France Telecom Orange	Penmarch (France)	Duyne-fountain (South Africa)
Equiano	2023 (work in progress)	15,000	Google	Sesimbra (Portugal)	Melkbosstrand (South Africa)
2Africa (formerly known as Facebook's Simba)	2023 (work in progress)	45,000	Meta + partners	Bude (UK)	Barcelona (Spain)
HARP	(work in progress)		Telecom Egypt	Cairo (Egypt)	

Source: Submarinenetworks.com and TeleGeography, 2023.

The cables installed at the beginning of the 21st century are the following:

SAT-3/WASC (South Atlantic 3/West Africa Submarine Cable), operational since 2001, is a submarine communications cable linking Western Europe (with ports in the UK, Portugal, and Spain) to the West African coast, as far as South Africa, with numerous connections to several African countries along the route. This replaces previous versions of the same cable: SAT-1 (1960s) and SAT-2 (1990s). It is part of a cable system combined with SAFE (at Melkbosstrand landing station), which connects South Africa with Asia, thus creating an alternative route between Asia and Europe to the more common route via the Red Sea (established by the SEA-ME-WE 3 and FLAG cables).

The SAT-3/WASC consortium (together with SAFE) comprises 36 telecommunications operators. The three largest investors are AT&T subsidiary TCI, France Telecom, and VSNL (India-Singapore), along with 11 African and 11 other Asian shareholders.

Main One Cable (2010) stretches from Portugal to South Africa with landings along the route in several West African countries. In its initial phase, it developed northwards between Nigeria and Portugal, and in its second phase, it was extended as far as South Africa. It has 11 connection points to coastal countries, including the Canary Islands. Originally built by a Nigerian-owned consortium, in 2022, it was acquired by Equinix, a California-based company and global market leader in data centres, with 240 centres in 27 countries.

GLO-1 (2010) is owned by the Nigerian telecommunications operator Globacom. It runs along the west coast of Africa between Nigeria and the UK, with links to Ghana, Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, and Spain.

WACS (2012) was at the time, together with SAT-3, the most important international submarine cable system on the west coast of Africa. WACS departs from London (where it has a terminus) and lands at Yzerfontein (west of Cape Town). It has 14 landing sites, 12 along the west coast of Africa (including Cape Verde and the Canary Islands) and 2 in Europe (UK and Portugal). The cable is owned by a group of South African companies: MTN Group, Neotel, Telkom South Africa, Vodacom, Gateway Communications, and Broadband Infraco are the main shareholders.

Africa Coast to Europe (ACE), built in 2012, is an initiative of France Telecom, which leads a consortium involving its regional subsidiaries with other local partners (20 companies in total). The ACE connects 24 countries, three European (France, Portugal, and the Canary Islands), and the rest African, from Mauritania to South Africa. For seven of them, it is the first direct connection to a submarine cable (Gambia, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Mauritania, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Sierra Leone). It also reaches two landlocked states: Mali and Niger.

As can be seen, all these submarine cable systems meet the characteristics identified for the companies owning the first-generation cables: large local consortia controlled by telecom companies. With the notable new feature of the acquisition of Main One by Equinix in 2022.

Many of these characteristics are shared by the regional submarine cable network created in the Gulf of Guinea over the last decade (fig. 7), except that these are initiatives driven by state agencies.

Figure 7.- Regional cables in West Coast of Africa

Regional cables in West Coast of Africa					
Name	**Year**	**kms**	**Owners**	**Landing Points**	
NCSCS	2015	1,100	Camerum Telecom	Kribi (Cameroon)	Lagos (Nigeria)
Ceiba-2	2017	400	Telecommunication Infrastructure Manager - GITGE (Equatorial Guinea)	Malabo (Equatorial Guinea)	Bata (Equatorial Guinea)
SHARE	2022	720	State Information Technology Agency (Senegal)	Dakar (Senegal)	Praia (Cape Verde)

Source: Submarinenetworks.com and TeleGeography, 2023.

New developments in this region of the globe have been brought about by the cables currently under construction by the companies Google and Meta (fig. 6).

The Equiano cable system is the third international cable wholly owned by Google, and the fourteenth submarine cable in which the company is involved. Equiano connects Portugal and South Africa, along the West African coast, with possible ramifications underway to extend connectivity to other coastal countries. The first planned connection will be in Nigeria. It is a state-of-the-art cable, with a network capacity twenty times higher than the last cable built to serve this region.

2Africa is the world's longest submarine cable project owned by a consortium led by Meta. Starting from the UK, it will connect the entire African coastline, including the continent's Atlantic and Indian coasts, crossing the Red Sea, and linking up in the Mediterranean to Barcelona (Spain). It will have 46 landing stations in 33 countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe, with a total length of 45,000 km. The original project (2020) connected 23 countries, with 21 landings in 16 African countries. In 2021, 2Africa added four new branches reaching the Seychelles, the Comoros Islands, and Angola (and a new landing in south-eastern Nigeria). An extension to the Persian Gulf (2Africa-Pearls), with connections to Pakistan and India, was announced later that year. The project aims to serve 1.2 billion people, 3 billion if the latter two countries are included. It is also a state-of-the-art system that will triple the total network capacity of all submarine cables currently serving Africa.

HARP is a recent project, still in the development phase, and its distinctive feature is that it is an ambitious African initiative to link the entire continent. The Hybrid African Ring Path (HARP) is a submarine cable project that will also encircle the entire coastline of the African continent, driven by Telecom Egypt. It will connect coastal African countries, but also landlocked ones, to Europe through a submarine and land infrastructure, via the Sinai, to link the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, with two landing stations: Port Said CLS and Ras Ghareb CLS. Although its first stage of development is taking place on the

continent's north-east coast, the promoters' intention is to extend it as far as South Africa and continue northwards along the west coast. The initially planned landing sites are in Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria. In Europe, the network will link to Spain at the eastern end and Portugal at the western end.

Telecom Egypt is an African company that is particularly active in the cable sector. In addition to this ambitious own initiative, it has been involved in the construction of both Google's Equiano and Meta's 2Africa Consortium, the two continent-wide submarine cable macro-projects. It remains to be seen how this huge project will materialise, given the challenges and competition it faces.

f. Connection Between South America and the East Coast of Africa

In contrast to major established routes, which run parallel to the continental coasts, only two cables make a cross-connection in the South Atlantic and two others link African countries on their way to Europe (fig. 8). Built mainly in recent years, these cables have in common that none of them are owned by the big US companies, being instead promoted by local players, mainly from Angola, Brazil, and Cameroon.

Figure 8.- Cables connecting West Coast of Africa to South America

Cables connecting West Coast of Africa to South America						
Name	**Year**	**Tb/s**	**kms**	**Owners**	**Landing Points**	
Atlantis-2	2000	40	12,000	Embratel (Brazil)	Las Toninas (Argentina)	Lisbon (Portugal)
South Atlantic Cable System (SACS)	2018	40	6,165	Cables Angola	Sangano (Angola)	Fortaleza (Brazil)
South Atlantic Inter Link (SAIL)	2020	32	5,800	Cameroon Telecom China Unicom	Fortaleza (Brazil)	Kribi (Cameroon)
Ella Link	2021		6,200	IslaLink (Spain) Telebras (until 2019) EU Commission	Fortaleza, (Brazil)	Praia (Cape Verde) Funchal (Madeira) Sines (Portugal)
SAEx 1	(work in progress)		13,300	International consortium	Cape Town, South Africa	Virginia Beach (USA)

Source: Submarinenetworks.com and TeleGeography, 2023.

ATLANTIS-2 (2000) is a transatlantic fibre optic telecommunications cable connecting Argentina, Brazil, Senegal, Cape Verde, the Canary Islands (Spain), and Portugal. It was the first submarine cable to link South America with Europe, passing through Africa. It belongs to a consortium of 25 international operators (including Deutsche Telekom, Telecom Italia, Telefónica, Orange, and BT). The project is technically and financially led by Empresa Brasileira de Telecomunicações SA (Embratel). It is a low-capacity cable that cannot transmit data and is only used for telephone connections.

The South Atlantic Cable System (SACS), in service since 2018, is a submarine cable system connecting Sangano (Angola) and Fortaleza (Brazil). It was the first submarine cable system to cross the South Atlantic, with a capacity of only 40 terabits per second (Tb/s). SACS is owned and controlled by Angola Cables, a consortium of five Angolan operators led by Angola Telecom.

The South Atlantic Inter Link (SAIL), built in 2020, is a submarine cable connecting Cameroon to Brazil, with a branch to Equatorial Guinea. The cable lands at the Telxius (Telefónica) company station in Fortaleza, establishing a connection with the BRUSA and Sam-1 cables to the USA. The company is owned by Cameroon Telecom and China Unicom, with Huawei Marine as system provider.

EllaLink (2021) is a submarine fibre optic cable that is the only direct link between Latin America and Europe. It was commissioned in 2021. Its terminals are located in Fortaleza (Brazil) and Sines (Portugal) with landing points in Cape Verde and Madeira Islands (Portugal). This is a strategic project promoted by Brazil to ensure a direct data traffic route to Europe, a service that Atlantis-2, installed two decades earlier, could not provide.

The project was announced in 2013 by Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, following the revelations made by Edward Snowden about the National Security Agency's (NSA) spying on the communications of governments, companies, and users (El País 2014). The company has experienced financial difficulties that have delayed its start-up. Originally led by Telebras, it withdrew from the consortium in 2019. Its Spanish partner, IslaLink, remains in the partnership, although the company was acquired in 2014 by the Nordic investment fund EQT. The project has been financially supported by the European Commission through the Building Europe Link to Latin America (BELLA) programme.

The South Atlantic Express (SAEx1) is a submarine cable system that will connect South Africa (Cape Town) directly to the USA (Virginia Beach), via Fortaleza (Brazil), with links in Namibia and St. Helena, over a distance of 13,300 km (14,700 km including branches). The same company plans to build the South Asia Express cable (SAEx2), which will connect Cape Town to Singapore, with landings in Mauritius, India, and Malaysia's northern peninsula, some 13,900 km long (fig. 9).

Figure 9.- South Atlantic Express (SAEx1) and South Asia Express (SAEx2) - project

Source: saex.net

The company's plan is that the system will initially be built between Cape Town and Fortaleza (Brazil), where it will interconnect with an associated system that will provide downstream access to the cable that is to reach the east coast of the US, once authorisation has been obtained from US authorities. Once completed, it will be the first direct connection between New York and Cape Town, providing ultra-wideband service across the South Atlantic. In its second phase, SAEx-2 will be built in the Indian Ocean.

Once the project is completed, a digital superhighway with a global dimension will be available, providing a single connecting route from Asia to the Americas. This will provide an alternative link in the global SMCN, avoiding network bottlenecks at the points of greatest saturation: Mediterranean-Red Sea and Pacific Ring of Fire.

The construction company for these cables is SAEx International Ltd, based in Mauritius, and its subsidiary, SAEx SA (Pty) Ltd, based in South Africa. The project was announced in 2011. A few months later, the Bank of China expressed its readiness to provide 60% of the funds needed for the project. Since 2014, the project has been funded by numerous public and private financial institutions.

More than a decade after its launch, the project is still in the development phase, weighed down by many difficulties. The initial plan was to connect South Africa to Brazil, but the promoters steadily expanded it, thus multiplying the political and financial difficulties, as the connection in St Helena showed. But the biggest obstacle has been political in nature, and has to do with "the political complexities between the United States and China" (Rao 2022).[77].

Huawei builds much of the digital infrastructure in Africa, including in South Africa, where Johannesburg is a major centre of the company's activities. Huawei faces US sanctions, as well as pressure on other companies, US or otherwise, to refrain from operating using its infrastructure.

[77] Interview with John Tibbles, SAEx consultant.

In view of the difficulties that have accumulated, the construction of SAEx-1 is uncertain, at present. Perhaps the project's Indian Ocean section could come upon more possibilities, but this is still at a preliminary stage.

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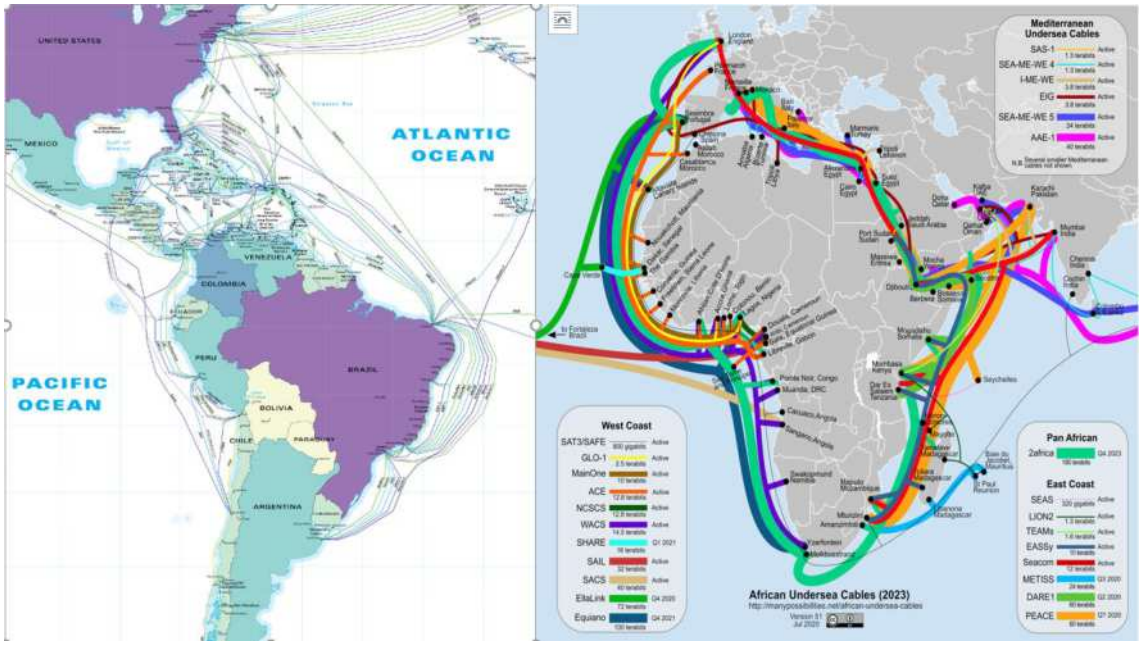
Given the description of the topography of the SMCN in the Atlantic Ocean, connectivity inequalities between the South Atlantic and the North Atlantic are obvious (Fig. 10). Both South America and Africa are mere extensions of the global submarine cable network and not a natural, strategic component of it.

Figure 10: South American and African Undersea Cables (2023)



Source: Telegeography and Submarinenetworks.com, 2023.

The connections to the South Atlantic are a mere extension of the existing network, which seeks to perpetuate the links of dependency of both regions (Africa and Latin America) with respect to the North, limiting transatlantic interconnectivity and interfering with their autonomous connection with respect to other regions of the world.

The network layout's pattern is similar in both cases. The laying of the cables follows a coastal route in a north-south direction. This means that, in order to access the main Internet hubs from Africa or Latin America, network traffic must necessarily pass through the United States, Europe or the Middle East. This route generally reinforces southern countries' historical patterns of dependence on the North and concentrates the bulk of the network's traffic in a few bottlenecks, making it more vulnerable to disruption, whether due to political, military or accidental causes.

The state-of-the-art cables deployed in the Atlantic in recent years by GAFAMs reinforce this structure of dependency and subordination. There is no doubt that both regions' overall connectivity has improved dramatically thanks to the state-of-the-art cables installed, even if their capacity is not equivalent to that of

the cables connecting the North Atlantic: Equiano has a capacity of 150 Tb/s, while Google's Durant, which links the USA with France, has a capacity of 250 Tb/s. The capacity of Meta's 2Africa is 180 Tb/s. The fact that the new high-capacity cables are owned by large US technology companies strengthens the GAFAMs' influence over network content and traffic, reinforcing existing routes. This structure also serves to drive their natural competitors - conventional telecoms and local players - out of the market and prevents territorial access to extra-regional companies and agencies.

In contrast to this dominant north-south structure, only a few cables allow cross-connections in the South Atlantic, linking Angola and Cameroon with Brazil. South America has no direct connection to Asia via the Pacific, and Africa has only one direct cable connection to India and Malaysia via the Indian Ocean, albeit two decades old.

In view of this network structure, it can be concluded that US technology companies have a strategic plan for using and operating the SMCN in the Atlantic area, with the aim of gaining control of the network, disseminating content circulating on it and, in all likelihood, the possibility of gaining illegitimate access to information traffic.

CONCLUSIONS

The United States, through its large technology companies, is waging a strategic battle for control of the undersea cable network. Over time, pressures have been mounting on companies in the sector to make certain cable connections, or to avoid others and, in any case, to refrain from working with Chinese suppliers. At the same time, stand-alone, locally driven projects that seek to improve connectivity in their own countries, in most cases involving Chinese suppliers or capital, are hindered.

A representative example of this approach has been the Pacific Light Cable Network project, driven by Meta and Alphabet, which was to connect the west coast of the US with Guam, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The US authorities - Team Telecom[78]- opposed the project on the grounds that the link to Hong Kong would expose US information flows to Chinese data espionage (Department of Justice 2020). In August 2020, Alphabet and Meta presented a revised plan to bring the cable only as far as Taiwan, but not to Hong Kong (BBC 2020). A month later, Meta, Amazon, and China Mobile withdrew their proposal to connect San Francisco to Hong Kong via the Bay to Bay Express cable (Shepardson 2021).

China follows a similar pattern in the regions of the world where it wields the most influence. Huawei Marine Networks (HMN), recently acquired by China's state-owned Hengtong, is currently building the main network cables in the Indian Ocean (the Maldives-Sri Lanka, Pakistan-East Africa link) and in the South Pacific Islands. HMN engages in commercial dumping techniques by offering its services 20% below market prices. At the same time, the US government warns small states in this Pacific region of the

[78] Team Telecom is an agency involving the US Departments of Justice, Defence and Homeland Security. It is charged with assessing national security risks associated with foreign ownership for entities with applications pending before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

consequences of contracting with Chinese suppliers (Barrett 2020). Competition between the two superpowers is ever increasing and engulfs the less powerful countries in an atmosphere of combined pressures from which it is very difficult to escape.

The *big game* is underway for control of the SMCN and, at least in the Atlantic region, US dominance is assured. It remains to be seen whether Washington will use this powerful instrument to create a security community that might not accommodate the needs of the emerging powers of the South (Angola, Brazil, Nigeria or South Africa).

It is clear that both the design of the structure of the SMCN and the distribution of its main nodes (the GIXs) is being strategically managed by large US companies in the Atlantic space, with obvious economic, strategic, and security implications. Most data centres are located in Europe and North America. Companies such as Meta have refused to establish data centres in certain regions, citing security reasons or the need to meet certain requirements for the location of such infrastructure (Suri 2022, 225). To the extent that these data have value, both in economic and strategic terms, African and Latin American countries may perceive that they are handing over control of a very important resource that affects their security, independence, and development possibilities, without receiving satisfactory compensation in return. From their perspective, the promise of belonging to an Atlantic security community may not be payment enough.

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THE ARCTIC AND THE NORTH ATLANTIC: FROM COOPERATION TO CONFLICT?

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ABSTRACT:

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 marked a turning point in relations between the West and Russia, with potential implications for the Arctic. However, there is still hope that Arctic security relations can remain relatively unaffected by the conflict in Ukraine, despite increasing tensions in the region. These tensions have been fuelled by Russia's aggressive statements, Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO, and concerns about hybrid operations in the North. This chapter takes a look at the different political dynamics when it comes to state and military security in the Arctic, and how they have evolved since the beginning of 2022. It relies on a conceptual separation of the so-called levels of analysis in international affairs, and uses Norway as a case study to explore the 'national' level, to provide a deeper understanding of Arctic security and geopolitics going forward. Finally, it highlights that these concerns extend beyond the Arctic and have implications for the broader Euro-Atlantic maritime domain.

Keywords:

Russia; Arctic; Norway; Levels of Analysis; Regional Security

INTRODUCTION

For several decades now, the Arctic has been on the geopolitical agenda. This applies not only to the eight Arctic countries but also to those nations bordering the Arctic and affected by activities in the region. This is particularly visible in the European parts of the Arctic, which function as an extension of the broader North Atlantic region. In this region, tensions and geopolitical rivalries among states are not driven by unrealistic notions of a "race for Arctic resources" or the impacts of climate change. Instead, it is the Arctic's strategic importance as a passage and location for both strategic and conventional military forces that plays a central role. This region represents one of the few areas where the United States and European NATO members are in direct geographic proximity to Russia. Moreover, in the North Pacific/Bering Sea region on the opposite side of the Arctic, China has emerged as another significant regional actor.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 represents another significant turning point in relations between the West and Russia, including in the Arctic. Cooperation was suspended, and additional sanctions were imposed on Russia. However, politicians in Arctic countries continue to emphasise that the Arctic is a region characterised by cooperation, and there is hope that, despite the invasion of Ukraine,

some forms of low-level collaboration with Russia can still be maintained. In other words, there are various political dynamics at play in the realm of security and geopolitics in the Arctic.

One way to approach the study of these dynamics is categorizing them into different 'levels of analysis', a fundamental concept in security policy studies, as formulated, for example, by David Singer. Singer (1961, 80–82) divided these levels into the 'international system' and 'nation state' in order to better differentiate events in international politics that may occur at one level but not the other. In this context, I distinguish between three levels: *the international* (the system level), *the regional* (the Arctic level), and *the national.*

The system level corresponds to neorealism, as outlined by Kenneth Waltz (1959, 1979), where all states are considered equal entities in their pursuit of relative power. Focusing on the nation state involves understanding the foreign policy decisions of individual states and their specific security strategies. Graham Allison's study (1969) of the US handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 is a notable example of this type of analysis. In recent decades, there has been an increasing number of regional studies on security policy. Geographical proximity is the defining factor in such studies: states that are geographically close to each other tend to have more intense interactions, both positive and negative, than those located on different continents (Kelly 2007). Regional security dynamics in regions such as the Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and the Arctic have attracted growing academic attention (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998; Hoogensen 2005).

By categorizing these dynamics into three levels – using Norway as an example at the national level – this approach helps bring light to the diverse dynamics of the Arctic region. It provides an insight into why notions of conflict persist and why this does not necessarily contradict the concepts of regional cooperation and stability. Furthermore, this stratification allows for a discussion of how the different Arctic states perceive security policy challenges in their northern regions and how these perceptions have evolved (or not) since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. It also enables us to connect specific aspects of the Arctic's security dynamics to the broader North Atlantic region, acknowledging that not all parts of the Arctic are characterised by the same security dynamics and concerns.

1. INTERNATIONAL LEVEL: POWER BALANCE AND SPILLOVER

During the Cold War, the Arctic played a prominent role in the political and military competition between two superpowers. The region was important not due to conflicts of interest within the Arctic itself but because of its strategic role in the systemic competition between the US/NATO and the USSR at the international level (Åtland 2008). Norway was one of only two NATO countries (the other being Turkey) that shared a border with the Soviet Union. Alaska—although separated by the Bering Strait—was in close proximity to the northeast of the USSR. Greenland and Iceland were strategically located in the North Atlantic, and the Kola Peninsula was, and still remains, key in terms of Soviet and Russian military planning, as it provides Russin strategic nuclear submarines with access to the Atlantic Ocean (Huebert 2013).

When the Cold War ended, the Arctic transitioned from being a region of geopolitical rivalry to one where Russia could participate in various cooperative arrangements with its former opponents. In the 1990s, several regional organisations (such as the Arctic Council, the Barents Council, and the Northern Dimension) emerged to address issues such as environmental concerns, regional and local development, and cross-border cooperation. This shift in focus relates to *regional* relations, as discussed in the next section (Young 2009). While interactions between Arctic states and Arctic peoples increased during this period, the region gradually faded from the geopolitical spotlight and lost some of its *systemic* or global significance.

In the past two decades, the Arctic region has witnessed a resurgence in its strategic importance. Similar to the Cold War era, this heightened strategic significance is primarily driven by Russia's efforts to enhance its global military and political standing. Russia considers the Arctic crucial for its nuclear deterrence strategy concerning NATO, particularly due to the presence of the Russian Northern Fleet, which houses the country's strategic nuclear submarines. Moreover, as the region undergoes transformations, such as melting ice, Russia has prioritised the establishment of new military or semi-military structures along its entire Arctic coastline, with aim of enhancing domain awareness, assert sovereignty, and improve emergency response capabilities. Russia's increased military focus on the Arctic thus stems both from the melting ice leading to increased shipping and activity, and from the importance of the Arctic to Putin's broader strategic plans and ambitions (Sergunin and Konyshev 2017; Todorov 2020; Hønneland 2016). However, it's important to note that this emphasis is not evenly distributed across the vast Russian Arctic territory: it primarily centres around the Northwest. where the majority of the Russian Arctic population resides, and where the Northern Fleet – as one of Russia's four strategic fleets – is based.

Consequently, both before and especially since the Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia's revitalisation and modernisation of its military presence in the Arctic have prompted NATO countries to shift their attention northward. They have responded by increasing their military presence through exercises or maritime security operations in the Barents Sea (Depledge 2020). Norway, in particular, has played a leading role in this response, as discussed in more detail in the next section. The security environment in the Arctic became even more tense following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Hopes of restarting security dialogues in the North to mitigate tension that had arisen around 2019-2020 have been dashed. Sanctions against Russia have been imposed, and communication with the country has been halted. Finland's and Sweden's subsequent decisions to join NATO in 2022— which means that seven out of eight Arctic countries are now NATO members—have further solidified divisions and increased tensions in the region.

In contrast to the Cold War, China has emerged as a significant player in the Arctic region (Koivurova and Kopra 2020). China's presence and interactions are integral to its expansion of power. This involvement includes scientific research initiatives and investments in Russia's fossil fuel industries (Guo and Wilson 2020; Edstrøm, Stensdal, and Heggelund 2020). China describes itself as a 'near-Arctic state', a description that not only implies its right to engage in Arctic affairs but also suggests a sense of duty to do so (The Guardian 2019).

However, China's entry into Arctic policy has triggered reactions, particularly from the United States. This has made the Arctic region relevant in the broader global power competition between China and the United States. US Secretary of State Pompeo's warning in 2019 regarding Beijing's Arctic interests, underscores the United States' view that the Arctic has become another arena for the intensifying systemic competition between the two countries (US Department of State 2019). This is not solely driven by Chinese activities *in* the region; it is more about the United States aiming to curtail China's global expansion in as many areas as possible (Østhagen 2021). Furthermore, concerns about Chinese–Russian cooperation in the Arctic and its implications for regional tensions have gained prominence, particularly following the sanctions imposed on Russia in both 2014 and 2022.

The point to consider here is that when we examine the Arctic's role in global politics, it becomes evident that tensions originating from issues in other parts of the world (e.g., Ukraine) or *global* power struggles (e.g., US and China) have a spill-over effect in the Arctic, manifested in both rhetoric, with bellicose statements, and operations, with increased military presence and exercises conducted by NATO members and Russia. The Arctic will remain a prominent topic on the global political agenda due to its significance in Russia's strategic considerations and the growing interest from China, which, in turn, fosters rivalry with the US.

2. REGIONAL LEVEL: SHARED INTERESTS IN STABILITY

There is a significant distinction between overarching strategic considerations and specific security issues *in* the Arctic region. As previously mentioned, following the end of the systemic competition of the Cold War, regional interaction and cooperation thrived in the North during the 1990s. When global attention returned to the Arctic region, concerns about 'a lack of governance' in the Arctic prompted the five Arctic coastal states to convene in Greenland in 2008 and declare the Arctic as a region characterised by cooperation (Arctic Ocean Conference 2008). They affirmed their commitment to working within established international frameworks and agreements, with particular emphasis on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea – highlighting a specific *regional* approach and cohesion among the Arctic states (Stephen and Knecht 2017).

Following this meeting, the Arctic states have consistently emphasised the theme of cooperation, as articulated in relatively concise Arctic policy and/or strategy papers (Rottem 2010; Heininen et al. 2020). Even the deterioration in the relationship between Russia and the other Arctic states in 2014 did not fundamentally alter this stance (Østhagen 2016; Byers 2017). In 2018, all Arctic states reconvened in Greenland and reiterated their commitments to cooperation and the protection of the Law of the Sea (Jacobsen, 2018), which, after all, grants the Arctic states sovereign rights over significant parts of the Arctic Ocean.

In fact, it has been argued that cooperation at the low (regional) levels contributes to maintaining a low level of tension in the North (Keskitalo 2007; Graczyk and Rottem 2020; Stokke 2006). The Arctic Council, despite (or because of) its avoidance of security policy discussions, has become a pivotal forum for addressing regional matters in the Arctic (Graczyk and Rottem 2020). An increasing number of non-Arctic actors have sought observer status within the Council, a development that primarily benefits the Arctic countries by ensuring that Arctic issues remain under the purview of the Arctic states themselves (Rottem 2017). The effective cooperation mechanisms within the region can also help counterbalance the conflict-oriented discourse surrounding Arctic developments. Moreover, the Arctic Council has the potential to restrain any competing regimes in the area (Stokke 2014).

In other words, the Arctic states have primarily favoured a stable political environment in which they can maintain their dominance in the region. This preference is not only driven by regional cooperation but also by economic interests, which benefit from a stable political climate. As a consequence of the melting ice and rising raw material prices in the early 21st century, the Arctic states have increasingly turned their attention northward, both in terms of investment and opportunities related to shipping, fishing, and oil and gas extraction. Russia's aspirations for the Northeast Passage and industrial activities on the Yamal Peninsula, in particular, require a presence in the North, but also stability (Claes and Moe 2018; Jørgensen and Østhagen 2020). Consequently, there is a shared interest among the Arctic states. This is particularly visible at the regional level, where mutual dependence and common objectives contribute to the absence of conflicts. In this context, cooperation serves the interests of the Arctic states as it fosters interdependence among them, thereby raising the threshold for exiting the cooperation (Young 1986).

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 led to the suspension of cooperation with Russia in various forums, such as the Arctic Council and Barents Cooperation. Despite these negative developments, the Arctic countries have still stated a desire to shield the region from conflicts in other parts of the world and cooperate in so-called 'soft' policy areas. However, political cooperation or dialogue with Russia is not possible as of the time of writing and will probably be very limited in the near future.

The question is how much the events of 2022 will affect the enduring shared interests among the Arctic states. The Arctic is unlikely to become less significant in Russia's economic development plans, but this could be offset by its heightened strategic importance in relation to NATO. Whether the Arctic Council will ever return to 'normal' remains uncertain, and it largely hinges on the actions of the Putin regime in Moscow.

3. THE NATIONAL LEVEL: HOW IMPORTANT IS RUSSIA?

Finally, to comprehensively understand the security policy dynamics in the North, it's crucial to incorporate a national perspective regarding the challenges and opportunities in the Arctic. This entails considering the role of the region in each country's defence and security considerations, as there is significant variability in what each nation chooses to prioritise in its northern regions concerning national security and defence.

For Russia, as mentioned earlier, the Arctic is an integral part of its national defence considerations – although not all regions within the Russian Arctic hold the same level of significance in its security strategies. While Russia's military expansions in the North are influenced to some extent by global developments, investments in military infrastructure in the Arctic also have a direct impact on the Arctic's neighbouring countries, primarily Finland, Norway, and Sweden. These developments also affect countries in the wider North-Atlantic area and the United States, particularly across the Bering Sea/Strait. Consequently, the Arctic is intricately intertwined with the national defense policies of the Nordic countries, precisely because Russia—as a major power—is investing in its military capacity, which creates security concerns for these smaller neighbouring states (Saxi 2019; Depledge and Østhagen 2021).

In North America, the Arctic assumes a somewhat distinct role in national security considerations (Østhagen, Sharp, and Hilde 2018; Depledge and Lackenbauer 2021). While it has historically served as an important buffer in relation to the USSR and later Russia, some argue that security concerns in the Canadian Arctic are somewhat limited today. Instead, the immediate challenges confronting the Canadian Arctic predominantly revolve around social and healthcare conditions in northern communities (Greaves and Lackenbauer 2016; Lackenbauer 2021). This perspective doesn't diminish the importance of Canada maintaining an active presence in its Arctic region and possessing Arctic capabilities. However, it differs from the prominent role that Russia's land border plays in the security concerns of Finland and Norway. Nonetheless, in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, there has been renewed debate about whether Canada has invested sufficiently in Arctic security capabilities to effectively deter Russian activities in the north (Blake 2022).

In contrast, the United States finds itself in a different position. For Alaska, security relations are indeed influenced by its proximity to Russia (and even East-Asia). Alaska plays a somewhat important role in the US defence policy, given its border with the Russian region of Chukotka across the Bering Strait. However, this role is not comparable to the significance of Russia's border in the security policy concerns of Norway, and by extension, NATO, due to the presence of Russia's strategic nuclear weapons (submarines and ballistic missiles) (Padrtova 2019; Hilde 2013). Despite these considerations, the attention of decision-makers in Washington, D.C. has been somewhat limited. The United States has been hesitant to make substantial investments in capabilities and infrastructure in the North (Conley et al. 2020), although the rhetoric surrounding the Arctic hardened under the Trump administration, and decisions were made to invest in new icebreakers for the US Coast Guard (Herrmann and Hussong 2021).

The limited involvement of the US in its own 'northern regions' underscores the differences in the nuanced distinction between the international (system) level and national considerations. At the system level, the United States can and will involve itself in regions like the Arctic when it aligns with American interests. Examples of such involvement include the activity of the US Sixth Fleet in the Barents Sea in May and September 2020, the reactivation of the US Second Fleet in Norfolk in 2018 with responsibility for the

North Atlantic (i.e. High North[79]), and increased US participation in military exercises in Norway since 2014. These exercises include the biannual Norway-led *Cold Response* exercises and NATO-led *Trident Juncture 2018*, which demonstrate the United States' ability and willingness to engage in security policy in parts of the Arctic as required, to both reassure its Nordic NATO allies and closely monitor Russian strategic capabilities on the Kola Peninsula (Østhagen 2021).

In addition, it's important to note that while Alaska has served as a base for US missile defence and forces, there is no immediate concern over Russian threatening actions across the Bering Strait. This stands in stark contrast to what the northern border with Russia means for Norwegian defence and security policy. Moreover, since 2014, the increased bilateral cooperation between Russia and China, including in military matters, has to some extent included an Arctic component. The signals sent by Russian and Chinese naval vessels exercising together off the coast of Alaska have prompted decision-makers in the US capital to become more involved in Arctic security issues.

Still, from a security dynamics perspective, the Bering Sea / North Pacific region differs significantly from the Barents Sea / North Atlantic. It is in this latter Arctic, and sub-Arctic, region that security dynamics have been relatively intense over the past few , with immediate concerns about Russian expansionism following the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In the North Atlantic / Barents Sea region, Norway is the defining actor, alongside Russia. While Iceland and Greenland are important, their small populations and limited military assets mean they have less regional influence in relation to Russia. Finland and Sweden, especially after their decision to join the NATO alliance in 2022, have assumed a different role. Historically, Norway has been the only northern NATO member bordering the USSR, with an extensive coastline exposed to the Barents Sea and the Arctic, and it's safe to say that Norway plays a particularly interesting role in the security dynamics of this sub-region.

4. NORWAY'S DELICATE BALANCING ACT

The relationships between states are more complex than simple binary descriptions, particularly in the realm of security. A prime example of this complexity can be observed in Norway's relationship with Russia in the Arctic. In terms of security policy, the frequently employed concept of 'deterrence and reassurance' remains relevant in summarising Norway's approach to its eastern neighbour (Holst 1966; Søreide 2017; Hilde 2019). Norway actively strives to 'deter' Russia by upholding its own defence capabilities and involving allied nations in addressing challenges in the North.

At the same time, as part of Norway's "reassurance" policy (Søreide 2017; Hilde 2019; Rottem 2007), the country decided to prohibit nuclear weapons on its territory, restrict military aircraft flying east of the 24th meridian east, and stop permitting foreign countries to establish military bases on Norwegian soil.

[79] Please note that the terms "Arctic" and "High North" are not used interchangeably. The Arctic refers to the entire circumpolar area, often defined as everything above the Arctic Circle (although some countries, like Canada, the US, and Denmark/Greenland often includes parts below the Arctic Circle in their national definitions of the Arctic). On the other hand, the High North specifically refers to the European Arctic – the area that includes the Barents Sea, North Norway, Svalbard, and the northwestern parts of Russia.

Furthermore, as a part of the "reassurance" strategy, Norway has fostered cooperative relations, both military and civilian, across its border with Russia. The objective has been to reduce mutual distrust (at least prior to 2022) and prevent crises.

However, it is crucial to highlight that the shift in defence and security posture began as early as 2007-2008 when Russia resumed military activities reminiscent of the Cold War on the Kola Peninsula in 2007 and was involved in the conflict in Georgia in 2008. Concerns related to Russia never completely disappeared after the Cold War but were considered less pressing in the early 2000s. Traditional security concerns were almost absent from the High North policy debates before the policy gained prominence on the political agenda in 2005, and this continued to a large extent from 2005 to 2007. While cooperation remained a key aspect in Norwegian foreign policy, there was a clear shift in Norwegian security and defense policy in 2007 and 2008.

With the renewal of the Russian Northern Fleet, Norway once again found itself in a more challenging security policy situation in the north. During the Stoltenberg 2 government's tenure (2005-2013), there was continued emphasis on maintaining good neighbourly relations with Russia. This government also made the decision to modernise the Norwegian military (Pedersen 2009), particularly in the context of Norway's efforts to draw NATO's and its allies' attention to Norwegian concerns in the north. Norway initiated the "Core Area initiative" within NATO in 2008 (Haraldstad 2014; Rowe and Hønneland 2010; Østhagen, Sharp, and Hilde 2018), with the goal of refocusing NATO on North Atlantic security issues, following a decade dominated by out-of-area operations.

In Norway, a new "blue-blue" coalition government had only recently taken office in 2013 when external events forced a further recalibration of the High North policy. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in the spring 2014 and the subsequent fall in the price of oil and natural gas later that year brought about significant changes in both economic and security policy calculations in the north. The Norwegian authorities began openly acknowledging Russia as a possible threat that needed to be deterred, marking a return to a certain "normalcy" in Norway-Russia relations (Rowe 2018).

Traditional security policy concerns related to geography and Russia's activities in the North became more pronounced during this period, while joint exercises with Russia in the North and forums for discussing Arctic security policy challenges were cancelled. At the same time, NATO gradually shifted its focus from promoting NATO's involvement in the "Arctic" to emphasizing collective defence at home starting in 2014(Hilde 2013). Norway began placing greater importance on maritime security issues in the North Atlantic/Barents Sea (Olsen 2017). As a result of these developments after 2014, Norwegian security and defence policy gradually diverged from Norwegian Arctic policy. The High North initiative primarily consisted of foreign policy efforts to maintain cooperation in the North in areas such as environmental collaboration and fisheries management, particularly within the framework of the Barents Cooperation and the Arctic Council.

Russia's annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014-15 were clear catalysts for the "new" policy aimed at garnering increased interest in Norwegian northern areas from its allies. This

shift in rhetoric and political focus began in 2014, following the events and tensions arising from the conflict in Ukraine. During this same period, the consequences of Norway's efforts to draw attention to its northern regions became evident. Allies showed increased operational interest in the Arctic and the North Atlantic, which was reflected in their heightened presence. In addition to the rotational forces, the US underscored its commitment to defending NATO's "northern flank" through various exercises and military operations. In 2018, Norway hosted the largest military exercise conducted in the country since the end of the Cold War, known as *Trident Juncture*, which was led by NATO. In 2020, American interest in the High North reached a peak, with the US Navy conducting so-called "maritime security operations" in the Barents Sea alongside the British Navy (in May) and with the British, Norwegian, and Danish Navies (in September). This heightened attention to the Norwegian Arctic sparked discussions about whether it was receiving too much focus (Sveen 2021; Påsche 2021). In 2020 and 2021, American Seawolf-class nuclear-powered submarines made their presence known outside Tromsø, American B-1 bombers operated in the Nordic region from Ørland air station in 2021. This eventually prompted debates about local interests related to the use of Tønsnes harbour for submarine landings and Norway's role in a potential conflict in the north.

During the period from 2019 to 2021, the relationship between Norway and Russia appeared to be entering a new phase or a new "normal state", characterised by both political and military tension alongside efforts to resume cooperation and dialogue in certain areas. In 2019, Prime Minister Solberg met with Russian President Putin for the first time since 2014, during the Arctic Forum conference held in St. Petersburg. Six months later, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov visited Kirkenes along with Norwegian Foreign Minister Søreide, Prime Minister Solberg, and King Harald, to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Eastern Finnmark. During the same period, Norway and Russia engaged in negotiations to amend the Incidents at Sea Agreement (INCSEA), established in 1990 to prevent dangerous incidents at sea (Bjur, Hilde, and Eggen 2020).

Simultaneously, Norway's relationship with Russia became increasingly strained before 2022. Norway had to contend with the particularly challenging case of Frode Berg, a retired Norwegian border inspector who was arrested in Moscow in December 2017 on charges of espionage. It took nearly two years before Berg was repatriated to Norway in 2019. Shortly after the Berg case had settled, the Norwegian MFA faced another challenge in February 2020, when Russia reignited tensions over Svalbard. This resurgence of an old conflict revolved around territorial rights in the sea areas surrounding the archipelago, coinciding with the centenary of the Svalbard Treaty. Russia also extended an invitation to Norway for a bilateral dialogue on Svalbard (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2020), fully aware that this move would directly contradict Norwegian Svalbard policy (Jensen 2020; Moe and Jensen 2020).

Given these developments, it is evident that the Russian invasion in 2022 does not represent a watershed moment in Norway's security posture in the Arctic or its concerns about a potential Russian aggression in the North Atlantic. Instead, the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 amplifies preexisting concerns and provides justification for increased investments in defense and security with a focus on the northern

region. It has also become an even higher priority to secure engagement from allies (e.g., NATO and particularly the US) in addressing Norwegian security concerns, as well as those of Finland and Sweden.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February, any prospects of collaboration or cooperation with Russia have been put on hold. Norway now maintains only bilateral mechanisms for addressing shared issues such as co-management of fish stocks in the Barents Sea, emergency preparedness and response in the border region at sea, the presence of 400-500 Russians living on Svalbard as allowed by the 1920 Svalbard Treaty, and nuclear safety in the north. Concurrently, there has been continued engagement by allied nations in the North through military exercises, with the *Cold Response* exercise in March 2022 being a notable example, in addition to statements about the importance of the Arctic (or, the High North – e.g., the North Atlantic part of the Arctic).

5. LINKING THE ARCTIC AND NORTH ATLANTIC

In summary, the Arctic region cannot be simplistically characterised as either a place of conflict or complete harmony, even after February 2022. While there is limited incentive for the Arctic states to engage in direct regional conflict over resources or territory across the entire Arctic region, sub-regional or national security concerns still exist, such as the dynamics between Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia. These are influenced by each country's defence posture and broader connections between the Arctic region and other domains like the Baltic Sea.

Nevertheless, the war in Ukraine has brought about notable consequences for the Arctic security dynamics in various ways. It has significantly altered perceptions of possible Russian behaviour, reinforcing the security policy arguments discussed earlier. While the primary drivers of increased tension between NATO / the "West" and Russia do not originate in the High North or the Arctic in general, we are already witnessing the early signs of repercussions across multiple dimensions.

Firstly, the European High North is poised to take on an even more pivotal role in operational defence and security policy considerations, not only in Norway but also within NATO as a whole. This shift would have occurred even in the absence of Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO. As tension escalates between NATO and Russia, the significance of the High North increases in terms of deterrence, surveillance, and the capability to prevent Russian access to the North Atlantic and the Atlantic in general. The Finnish and Swedish NATO memberships further accentuate these trends, effectively encircling the Baltic Sea with NATO member countries, leading to some describing it as a "NATO lake" (Georgia Today 2022).

There is an expectation that Russia may feel increasingly "insecure" in the north, prompting a greater emphasis on deterring potential threats from both land and sea in the Barents region and the broader North Atlantic (Diesen 2022). When considering the combined force structure of Finland, Norway, and Sweden, it becomes quite formidable. While some have suggested a potential division of responsibilities among these countries, with Finland focusing on land, Norway on sea, and Sweden on air, this scenario appears highly improbable given the extensive land, maritime, and airspace responsibilities each country already has and

will continue to maintain (Diesen 2022). Furthermore, despite increased integration and cooperation, the Nordic countries still exhibit significant differences along various dimensions, including security issues, their relationships with Europe, the US, or overall economic development.

It's important to note that the entry of Finland and Sweden into NATO represents a significant shift for both countries and has notable implications for the Nordic region and the immediate security environment in the High North and European Arctic. These Nordic countries have a history of cooperation, including joint training, information sharing, collaborative procurement efforts, and attempts at closer military and political integration that span several decades (Saxi 2011, 2019). The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO) is a prime example of such cooperation. However, the NORDEFCO has historically faced a major obstacle related to differing security and political alliances (NATO vs. EU) (Archer 2010; Forsberg 2013; Bailes, Herolf, and Sundelius 2006; Saxi 2019). With this barrier now removed, there is potential for even closer integration among the Nordic countries in the years ahead.

Secondly, the emerging great power rivalry in the Arctic is expected to intensify as the United States, Great Britain, France, the EU, and China all increase their focus on the region for strategic and symbolic reasons, as the region is becoming more accessible and is gaining relevance in global power dynamics. It's important to note that the Arctic's importance is not diminishing, simply because the United States and Russia are already in the region, and China is increasingly demonstrating its (strategic) interests in the North. As the relationships among these major powers deteriorate on the global stage, tensions in the Arctic are likely to rise as well. This can manifest in challenging statements, the imposition of sanctions, and occasional military displays. The events of 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, demonstrated how such tensions can spill over into the Arctic. These tensions in the Arctic are less related to regional issues within the Arctic, such as ice melting and economic opportunities, and more connected to the strategic position that the Arctic occupies in the broader global geopolitical landscape.

China's rise as a global power has contributed to the emergence of a bipolar world order, or, perhaps more accurately, a multipolar one. In this evolving global landscape, the Arctic has become one of the regions where China seeks to assert its influence and expand its power, be it through scientific research or investments in Russia's fossil fuel industries (Guo and Wilson 2020; Edstrøm, Stensdal, and Heggelund 2020). Initially, China's interest in the Arctic was primarily driven by economic considerations and the effect of climate change, particularly the potential economic benefits of Arctic shipping routes like the Northern Sea Route (Jakobson 2010). In the early stages of this process, China recognised the importance of polar research and became increasingly aware of the impacts of climate change, both in the Arctic and along its own coastal areas, which played a role in shaping China's Arctic interests (Stensdal 2014). China also applied for observer status in the Arctic Council, and China became an observer alongside other countries like Italy, Japan, India, South Korea, and Singapore during the Kiruna Ministerial Meeting in 2013.

The deterioration in relations between the West and Russia after March 2014 further heightened concerns about increased bilateral cooperation between Russia and China and the possibility that Russia may allow China to play a larger role in the Arctic through these relations (Bertelsen and Gallucci 2016).

However, as many have highlighted, Russia has also been cautious about granting China too much influence in this strategically and economically sensitive region (Røseth 2014; Moe 2021). China, on its part, released its first and, to date, only Arctic policy in January 2018 (State Council of the People's Republic of China 2018).

When examining the impact of China's interest in the Arctic on North American security, Stephanie Pezard et al. (2022) conclude that while the actions and related effects of Chinese actors have been relatively limited, China is increasingly attempting to establish a foothold and exert influence in various parts of the Arctic, as well as across different sectors of Arctic economic activity. From a US perspective, they recommend several approaches for dealing with China, including cooperation with Russia, enhanced engagement with Greenland, and raising local awareness of the sensitivities associated with Chinese investments and involvement (Pezard et al. 2022).

It seems clear that by 2023, China's role in the Arctic has become far more intricate than what was suggested in Pompeo's 2019 speech. The effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 are likely to also have an impact on China-Russia cooperation in the Arctic, as well as on their broader relations (Hsiung 2022). This influence extends both to the circumpolar Arctic region and to the sub-regional North Pacific area. China's interests in the Arctic do not necessarily align with those of Western Arctic states, although in the context of specific economic projects in the Arctic, Chinese investments and capital may still be sought after (Gåsemyr and Sverdrup-Thygeson 2017).

However, China's interests and expansion in the Arctic must be viewed within the context of its global expansion as a 'new superpower' (Edstrøm, Stensdal, and Heggelund 2023), with all the challenges this presents not only for the 'old' superpower, the US, but also for various European countries. NATO, for instance, has increasingly raised concerns about China as a competitor and rival to the West, including within the Arctic region. In early 2023, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg issued warnings about both the growing economic dependence on China and the increasing military cooperation between Russia and China (NATO 2023).

The points made here regarding China and the US highlight the fundamental difference between a *regional* analysis of security relations when discussing security cooperation and dialogue with Russia, and considering the security impact of *global* affairs *on* the Arctic. In the Arctic, there is no doubt that Russia holds a dominant position across various parameters (population, territorial size, miliary investments, icebreakers). However, on a global scale, China is viewed as the primary competitor – or adversary – that the US and the West perceive as posing a more significant challenge.

Therefore, there is a distinction between the roles of China and Russia. Russia has a more direct impact on North Atlantic security relations. While the root causes of conflict may not originate in the Arctic, the North Atlantic region is undoubtedly important in Russian military doctrines and, consequently, in a broader deterrence perspective as seen from NATO's standpoint in Brussels and Mons. Additionally, there is as a question regarding how Russia balances its economic and security interests in the north. Forums for cooperation in the Arctic has been suspended, and the idea of a security policy dialogue with Russia in the

North has been put on hold. The goal of reducing tension and fostering dialogue with Russia in the North (Norwegian Government 2021, 80) has been replaced by a suspension of cooperation in certain areas and an increased emphasis on deterring Russia in the High North.

In other words, the ramifications of the events in Ukraine in 2022 and beyond are not pan-Arctic in nature, nor are they equally felt across the circumpolar region. Instead, as described throughout this article, the North regions of the Arctic, where military activities and political developments are closely linked, are experiencing heightened tension and concerns. In this context, minor disputes over sovereign rights at sea, the legal status of maritime passages or zones, or (un)intentional incidents during military exercises and operations could potentially escalate beyond immediate control. Such escalation could draw the North Atlantic, or parts of it, into a direct conflict between Russia and NATO member states. This is arguably one of the most concerning aspects of the current political situation in the North, highlighting the importance of transnational dialogue and multilateral cooperation to alleviate these pressures.

From a Norwegian perspective, the primary challenge and concern revolve around deterring Russia from aggressive behaviour in the North while maintaining low tension in the same region, specifically the North Atlantic. Norway requires allied support, but it also seeks to avoid uncoordinated allied actions that could escalate tensions in the Barents Sea (Hilde 2019). This challenge involves both the need for coordination and knowledge-sharing among NATO allies and the development of mechanisms to manage unintended (or even intentional) escalation in the North. Examples of such mechanisms include the so-called "hotline" between the Norwegian Armed Forces HQ and the Northern Fleet, as well as the INCSEA agreement with Russia amended in 2021.

In the context of Nordic-NATO cooperation, the US plays a central role due to its security posture. It's important to note that the US presence in the High North also serves the purpose of monitoring the movements of Russia's strategic assets departing from the Kola Peninsula, particularly submarines equipped with ballistic missiles, which could potentially pose a threat not only to Norway but to the entire North Atlantic seaboard. With the addition of Finland and Sweden to NATO, there is likely to be an increase rather than a decrease in allied, including US, interest and engagement in security concerns in the north. This is inherently beneficial for Norway, Finland, and Sweden as long as there is an emphasis on controlling tension and avoiding escalation in the region.

It's also important to emphasise that despite the deterioration of relations after 2022, Russia and its Nordic neighbours have pragmatic and functional relationships, which are crucial for addressing practical issues that span from environmental protection to nuclear safety and resource co-management. As a result, the notions of conflict and cooperation are not necessarily mutually exclusive but are part of a more intricate picture of the North and the Arctic. However, the continuation of the "cooperative Arctic spirit" will depend on the duration and scale of the conflict in Ukraine and whether the tension between Russia and the West escalates further, either in the Arctic or in other areas.

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ATLANTIC AFRICA'S MARITIME SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

Lessons for Forging a Strategic Atlantic Maritime Security Partnership

Luka Kuol, PhD [80]

ABSTRACT: The enormous economic potential of the blue/ocean economy has rendered the maritime domain increasingly susceptible to transnational organized crime and a theatre for great power competition. Maritime security threats are more prevalent in the African maritime domain than on other continents. These threats are becoming progressively more damaging to African security, safety, and human security, particularly in the coastal countries of Atlantic Africa. Despite being more susceptible to maritime security threats, including the presence of non-Atlantic great powers, than other maritime domains in Africa, the coastal countries of Atlantic Sub-Saharan Africa have managed to forge strategic inter-regional maritime security partnerships that enhance maritime security and safety in the region. This chapter assesses the economic potential, susceptibility to maritime security threats, and level of response to maritime security threats by the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA with the aim of identifying lessons that could be relevant for forging an Atlantic intercontinental maritime security partnership. Some of these lessons include establishing a genuine partnership based on sovereign equality and interdependence, a code of conduct, a framework for cooperation and coordination, and a shared common value system of democratic governance.

INTRODUCTION:

The Atlantic Basin is richly endowed with vast natural resources and biodiversity, while also serving as a crucial trade route that provides essential livelihoods to the people of the coastal Atlantic states. These states possess significant untapped potential within their maritime industries, often referred to as the "blue economy," encompassing fisheries, minerals, hydrocarbons, tourism, and trade. Moreover, the Atlantic Basin also plays a strategic role in the climate system and the entire circulation of heat from the southern to the northern hemisphere. These economic potentials also render the Basin susceptible to transnational organized crime, leading to increased criminal activities, and it becomes a theatre for great power competition, including the presence of the non-Atlantic great powers.

The coastal countries of Atlantic African, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), are becoming increasingly susceptible to a web of growing maritime security threats and challenges - including drug trafficking, piracy; the smuggling of people, drugs, and weapons; illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing; and environmental degradation. Given the transnational character of these maritime security threats

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and challenges, it is imperative to establish intercontinental cooperation, coordination, and partnerships between and among the Atlantic coastal nations, a need that is not only pressing but also strategically essential.

The Atlantic SSA region, particularly Western and Central Africa, provides valuable examples and insights into establishing robust maritime governance systems that enhance and reinforce intra-continental and inter-regional coordination mechanisms. However, there have been limited initiatives to advance and advocate for inter-continental partnerships and coordination in addressing the common maritime security threats faced by Atlantic coastal countries in Africa and other continents. There are noteworthy and pertinent lessons to be learned from the experience of the Atlantic SSA when it comes to forging strategic maritime security partnerships among all coastal Atlantic countries.

There is a growing interest in establishing a multilateral partnership forum among coastal Atlantic states to collectively respond and address shared maritime security threats, while also advancing economic and environmental interests across the entire Atlantic maritime domain. Recently, coastal Atlantic countries such as Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Ireland, Mauritania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States issued a joint statement emphasizing the need for Atlantic cooperation and partnership among all coastal countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean (The White House 2022). While this call for partnership is timely and enticing, the process of forging such a partnership remains elusive, challenging, and complex (Schear 2016), particularly among partners with unequal power dynamics and different value systems.

While this report from the Atlantic Centre primarily focuses on non-Atlantic great power competition in the Atlantic maritime domain, it's essential to recognize that such geostrategic competition is not a binary issue for Africa. The increasing presence of non-Atlantic great powers in the Atlantic basin raises significant maritime security concerns for Africa, and these must be addressed within the context of national, regional, and continental maritime security and safety interests, as well as maritime security visions, policies, and strategies. This chapter aims at assessing the experience of the Atlantic SSA region in collectively addressing and responding to the maritime security threats faced by its coastal countries, identifying implications and lessons learned that can inform efforts to advance and forge inter-continental partnerships in the Atlantic maritime domain. This will contribute to enrich the ongoing debate on how to establish effective maritime security partnerships among all coastal Atlantic countries while enhancing African agency in leveraging strategic partnership in the Atlantic's maritime security domain.

This chapter is structured into four sections, with this introduction being the first. Section Two delves into the African perspectives regarding the opportunities and challenges posed by the increasing illegal presence of non-Atlantic great powers in the Atlantic maritime domain. Section Three explores the experience of the Atlantic SSA in forging intra-continental and inter-regional partnership and frameworks for collectively enhancing maritime security and safety in the Atlantic maritime domain. Section Four

summarizes the lessons learned from the experience of the Atlantic SSA and discusses their implications for the forging of strategic inter-continental maritime security partnership in the Atlantic maritime domain.

1. Atlantic Africa: A Maritime Domain for Opportunities and Challenges

The African maritime zones, including territorial seas and the continental shelf under its jurisdiction, cover an estimated area of about 13 million square kilometres (UNECA 2016). This maritime expanse represents approximately 43 percent of the African land area (30.37 million kilometres) with almost half of the continent extending into the sea. The coastal countries of Atlantic Africa (24 countries) make up roughly 62% of all African coastal countries (39 countries). While the Atlantic Ocean is the world's second largest among the five oceans, its maritime domain within Africa is the most extensive in comparison to other African oceanic zones (see Map 1). Consequently, the Atlantic Ocean stands as the most important maritime zone for African maritime security, safety, and livelihoods.

Map 1: Africa's Coastal Countries

a. The African Blue Economy: The Potentials

The Blue Economy[81] has not only the potential to generate 400 percent of the global current energy demand from renewable energy sources but also the capacity for its maritime-related activities to annually generate 2.5 trillion euros (UNECA 2016, x). The African maritime industry, which includes fisheries, minerals, hydrocarbons, tourism, and trade, is estimated to be worth trillions of US dollars per year (Okafor-Yarwood 2020). The facts about the enormous potentials of the African blue economy are stunning, as summarized in Table 1. The size of the African blue economy is estimated to be nearly three times of its landmass, with 90 percent of Africa's exports and imports being transported by water.

The economic value generated from maritime-related activities is projected to increase by 37 percent in 2030 and could nearly double with a 94 percent increase by 2063. A similar trend is observed in terms of job creation within the African blue economy, with an expected surge of 16 percent by 2020 and a substantial 60 percent increase by 2063, respectively. For instance, the African fisheries and aquaculture sector currently employs around 12.3 million people, providing a vital source of protein essential for addressing food security issues for nearly 200 million Africans (Hassan 2021). Almost a quarter of African jobs depend on fisheries, with fish consumption accounting for more animal protein intake than any other source in countries such as the Gambia, Ghana, and Sierra Leone (FAO 2020). The economic potential of coastal tourism in Africa is immense and may generate about USD 100 billion by 2030. In West Africa, coastal cities, ports, agriculture, industries, and fisheries account for 57 percent of the regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Stable Seas 2019).

Table 1: The African Blue Economy Facts

Facts	Estimates
Size of African Blue Economy	3 times the size of Africa's landmass
Number of Costal Countries	38 (70% of African Countries)
Maritime Zone Area	13 million square kilometres (43% of African land area of 30.37 million square kilometres).
Economic Value Potentials	• USD 296 Billion in 2018 • USD 405 Billion in 2030 • USD 576 Billion in 2063
Jobs Opportunities	• USD 49 Million in 2018 • USD 57 Million in 2030 • USD 78 Million in 2063
Volume of Imports & Exports via sea	90%

[81] **"Blue/Ocean Economy"** refers to the sustainable economic development of oceans, encompassing a range of techniques such as regional development that integrates the use of seas and oceans, coasts, lakes, rivers, and underground water for various economic purposes, including, among others, fisheries, mining, energy production, aquaculture, and maritime transport, while protecting the sea to improve social wellbeing (AU 2016).

Coastal Tourism Economic Potential	USD 100 Billion by 2030
Coastal cities, ports, agriculture, industries, and fisheries account for	56% of West Africa's GDP*

Source: AU Blue Economy Strategy 2019, (*) Stable Seas 2019.

Recognizing the pivotal role that the blue economy can play in advancing its Agenda 2063, the African Union has prioritized the blue economy within its first aspiration for a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development (AU 2015, 3), which states:

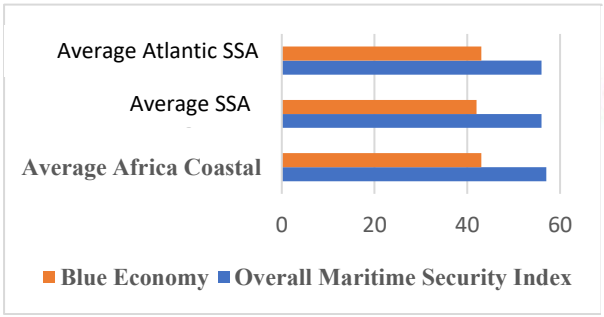
> *"Africa's Blue/ocean economy, which is three times the size of its landmass, shall be a major contributor to continental transformation and growth, through knowledge on marine and aquatic biotechnology, the growth of an Africa-wide shipping industry, the development of sea, river and lake transport and fishing; and exploitation and beneficiation of deep-sea mineral and other resources."*

The vast potential of the African blue economy not only represents a "new frontier of the African renaissance" (Hassan 2021) but also offers the much-needed resources for Africa to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals and its aspirations for 2063.

b. Atlantic Africa: The Status of Maritime Security and the Blue Economy

The economic potential of the African blue economy remains largely untapped, primarily due to maritime security threats and weak governance in maritime security that serve as barriers against these threats. The Maritime Security Index scores[82] for coastal countries in Africa, Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA), and Atlantic SSA averaged 57, 56, and 56, respectively, out of a total score of 100, with individual countries' scores ranging from 35 to 73 (see Figure 1). In 2021, the average maritime security index score (56) for Sub-Saharan Africa showed a slight increase from the average score of 54 in 2018, with individual countries scoring between 34 and 71 (Glaser 2018). Despite this modest improvement, these statistics indicate that the governance of maritime security in Africa remains weak, particularly in countries facing fragility, conflict, and poor governance. These conditions are even worse than those experienced by coastal countries in other parts of the world.

Figure 1: Africa's Maritime Security and Blue Economy.



Source: Data from Stable Seas 2021

Map 2: SSA Blue Economy Score

Source: Glaser 2018

[82] This index is known as the Stable Seas Maritime Security Index and is being developed by One Earth Future, with a score of 0 reflecting worse conditions, and aa score of 100 representing better conditions (Stable Seas 2020).

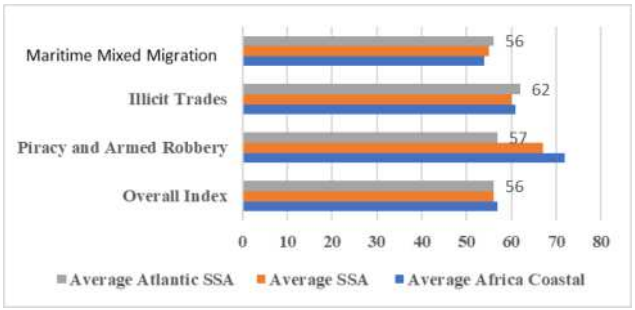
The fragile state of maritime security in Africa becomes even more evident when considering the conditions of its blue economy[83]. Coastal countries in Africa, SSA, and Atlantic SSA having an average score of 43, 42, and 43, respectively (see Figure 1 and Map 2), and the average scores for individual countries range from 24 to 60. These scores are significantly low, representing less than half of the total aggregate score of 100. The conditions of the blue economy are slightly better for coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA compared to those of coastal countries of the SSA. The conditions of the blue economy for coastal countries of the SSA (42) have slightly worsened compared to the score of 44 in 2018 (Glaser 2018). These conditions are particularly dire in fragile and conflict-affected countries such as Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, and Somalia.

c. The Atlantic SSA: Maritime Security Threats

The vast economic potential of the African maritime domain has made it susceptible to a complex network of maritime security threats and challenges and turned it into a stage for various criminal activities and competition among great powers. These criminal activities include illegal, unreported, and unregulated Fishing (IUU), theft of other natural resources, piracy, and armed robbery at sea (Okafor-Yarwood 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has also worsened the security threats in the African maritime domain, particularly by disrupting supply chains and increasing the risk of criminal activities targeting ports.

Stable Seas (2020) categorizes maritime security threats into three main groups: (i) piracy and armed robbery, (ii) illicit trades involving arms, cannabis, coca, opiates, synthetic narcotics, and wildlife products, and (iii) maritime mixed migration, which includes migration, trafficking, and human smuggling. In Africa, the security threats posed by maritime mixed migration are more challenging than those related to illicit trades and piracy and robbery, as shown by the low average maritime security index score of 54, which is lower than the overall average index (see Figure 2). Conflict-prone and fragile countries, such as Somalia and Libya, have the lowest maritime security index score, which stands at 27, nearly half of the average score for coastal countries in Africa. When it comes to piracy and armed robbery, Africa fares better, with North African coastal countries having the highest score of 100, while some coastal countries in Atlantic SSA have the lowest scores, namely Nigeria (0), Cameroon (4), Equatoria Guinea (8), and Benin (14).

Figure 2: Maritime Security Threats in Africa



Source: Data from Stable Seas 2019

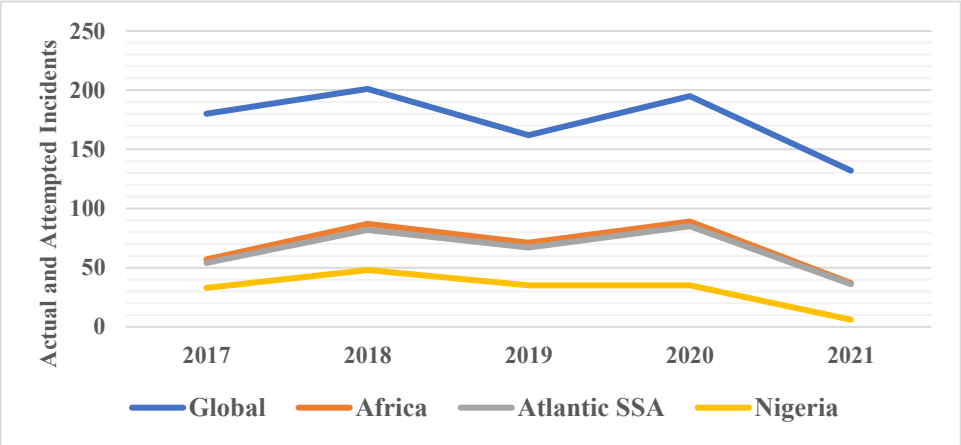
[83] The conditions of the African blue economy are assessed on issues related to fisheries, offshore oil and gas, coastal tourism, maritime transportation, adjusted net savings, and climate vulnerability (Stable Seas 2020).

The conditions of maritime security threats related to maritime mixed migration and illicit trades in the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA are better than in other regions. The average maritime mixed migration score for the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA is 56, while North Africa has the lowest score (49), followed by Africa (54), and SSA. Namibia stands out with the best score for mixed migration (75), and it ranks second, after Mauritania, in terms of illicit trades (80). These improved conditions of maritime security threats in Namibia reflect the government's concerted efforts, in partnership with regional and international actors, to collectively contain and mitigate the impacts of these threats. Some coastal countries in Atlantic SSA that face challenging socio-political conditions, such as Cameroon (44), the DRC (45) and Mauritania (47), as well as some North African coastal countries, such as Libya (27), have received low scores in the maritime mixed migration category. These scores indicate the presence of weak maritime governance conditions that facilitate illegal migration, smuggling, and human trafficking.

Illicit trade is the most damaging maritime crime in Africa in terms of economic cost, health implications, and its detrimental impact on lives, livelihoods, sustainable development, peace, and stability (Stable Seas 2019). The conditions related to illicit trades are relatively better in the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA (62), when compared to SSA (60) and African coastal countries (61) (see figure 2). Some coastal countries within Atlantic SSA, such as Sao Tome and Principe (91), Mauritania (84), and Namibia (82) have achieved very high scores, indicating better conditions related to illicit trades. In contrast, Nigeria (24) has the lowest score. In Nigeria, it is estimated that the economic cost associated with crude oil theft in both 2016 and 2017 exceeded the resources allocated to both health and education in the 2018 federal budget (Stable Seas 2019). Illicit drug trade and the transshipment of cocaine are prominent maritime crimes that both coastal countries of Atlantic SSA and South America grapple with (UNODC 2021, Stable Seas 2019, 12).

Piracy and armed robbery conditions in Africa are relatively better when compared to other maritime security threats (see Figure 2). However, the Atlantic SSA remains the region with the highest prevalence of criminal activities related to piracy and armed robbery. Countries with poor governance quality scored the lowest in terms of piracy and armed robbery, such as Nigeria (0), Cameroon (4), Equatorial Guinea (8), and Benin (14), while countries like Namibia (100), South Africa (100), and Cape Verde (98) achieved the highest scores. Despite the high incidence of piracy and armed robbery, actual and attempted incidents against ships have been on the decline since 2017 (see Figure 3). These incidents in the coastal countries of Africa, Atlantic SSA, and Nigeria constituted an average of 39 percent, 37 percent, and 18 percent, respectively, of the overall total of incidents. Incidents in Atlantic SSA and Nigeria represented an average of 95 percent and 46 percent, respectively, of all incidents in African coastal countries.

Figure 3: Actual and Attempted Piracy and Armed Robbery Incidents, Jan-Dec 2021



Source: Data from ICC IMB 2022.

Despite the general decline in piracy and armed robbery incidents, Nigeria experienced a significant reduction of nearly 82 percent in such incidents between 2017 and 2021. Its share of the overall total of incidents decreased from 18 percent in 2017 to less than 5 percent in 2021. This progress can largely be attributed to the passage of the Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Bill in 2019, which incorporates the provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (Stable Seas 2019, 20). Despite criticisms of the Bill for its inability to effectively address piracy and armed robbery threats (Emen 2021), it appears that the Nigerian government has been successful in implementing the legislation, as reflected in the substantial drop in piracy and armed robbery incidents from 35 incidents in 2019 to only 6 incidents in 2021.

d. Atlantic SSA: Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

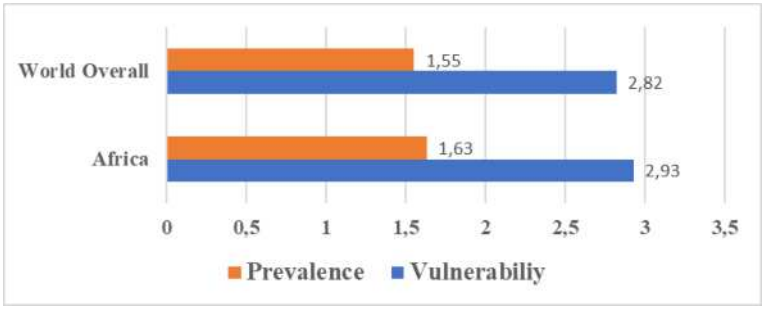
In addition to these maritime security threats, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing poses an extreme challenge to fisheries in the coastal countries of SSA and Atlantic SSA in particular. IUU fishing plays a leading role in overfishing and accounts for 20 percent of the global fish stocks. Coastal regions, such as Atlantic SSA, that heavily rely on artisanal fishing for protein are experiencing a rapid depletion of their fish stocks (Daniels et al 2022). The issue of overfishing is further compounded by climate change, which is expected to have profound negative impact on fish stocks in coastal communities of the global South, such as Atlantic SSA, as rising ocean temperatures are anticipated to force fish populations to migrate away from the tropics (Daniels et al 2022, 5).

IUU fishing is considered the third most profitable global natural resources crime, following timber and mining (Reid et al 2021), with an estimated annual illicit trade value ranging from USD 10 billion to USD 23.5 billion (Agnew et al 2009). Africa is particularly affected by the prevalence of IUU fishing, resulting in an economic loss from illicit financial flows estimated at approximately USD 11.49 billion

(Daniels et al 2022, 6). The scores[84] related to vulnerability[85] to the risk of IUU fishing and prevalence[86] of IUU fishing incidents in Africa show that coastal countries in Africa are more vulnerable to the risk of IUU fishing and experience more IUU fishing incidents than the rest of the world (see Figure 4). However, the level of vulnerability to the risk of IUU fishing in Africa is nearly twice that of the prevalence of IUU fishing incidents.

In 2021, Africa was ranked 4th in terms of vulnerability in relation to other regions, with no change in its ranking compared to 2019. However, its ranking in terms of prevalence dropped to 3rd in 2021 from 2nd in 2019 (Macfadyen and Hosch 2021, 36). Among the best-performing countries, Morocco ranked 2nd and Djibouti ranked 7th in terms of vulnerability. In 2019, only Morocco ranked 1st as the best-performing country. No African country managed to be among the 10 best-performing countries in either 2021 or 2019.

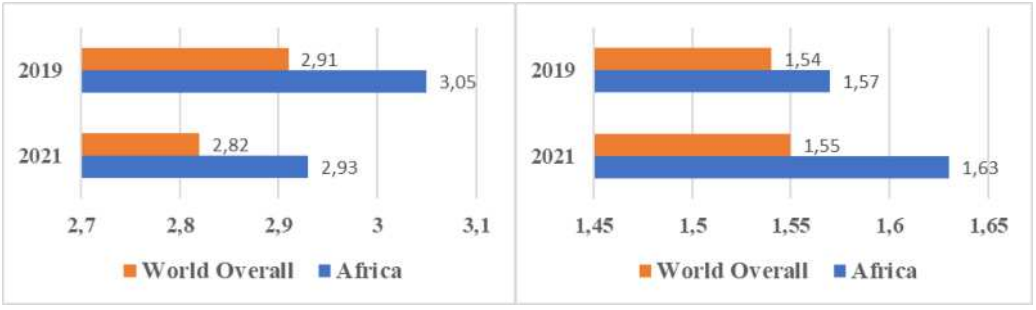
Figure 4: Vulnerability and Prevalence of IUU Fishing in Africa, 2021



Source: Data from Macfadyen and Hosch 2021.

The level of susceptibility of African coastal countries to the risk of IUU fishing improved in 2021 compared to the level in 2019, but it remains higher than the world's overall level of vulnerability (see Figure 5). However, the prevalence of IUU fishing incidents increased in 2021 both globally and among African coastal countries when compared to the incidents in 2019 (see Figure 5). This upward trend in IUU fishing incidents in Africa is concerning, particularly in the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA.

Figure 5: Vulnerability and Prevalence of IUU Fishing in Africa, 2021 and 2019



Source: Data from Macfadyen and Hosch 2021.

[84] The Maritime Security Index assigns a score to each country, ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = good/strong; 5 = bad/weak) determined based on weighted indicators from various 'indicator groups' (Global Initiative 2021, 11).

[85] Vulnerability refers to indicators related to the risk that IUU fishing may occur (Global Initiative 2021, 11).

[86] Prevalence refers to indicators related to known/suspected IUU incidents (Global Initiative 2021, 11).

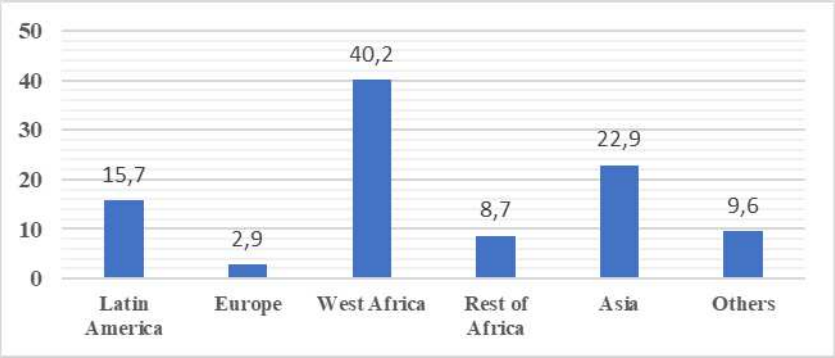
e. Atlantic SSA: Increasing Illegal Presence of Non-Atlantic Third Parties

The scramble for influence among great powers in Africa is not a new phenomenon but has evolved with new approaches and dynamics, particularly in the post-colonial and Cold War periods. Alongside the pursuit and maintenance of power and influence, access to vast resources and economic opportunities is increasingly shaping the competition among great powers on the African continent. This competition is increasingly shifting from land to the sea, particularly in the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA, which have significant resources and economic potential within the blue economy. Recent studies have shown the growing influence of China and Russia in the Atlantic SSA region, surpassing the historically dominant roles of France and the USA in Western and Central Africa (Gooch et al 2022, 7). France's longstanding influence in Western and Central Africa, dating back to the colonial era and persisting after decolonization, has been eroded with the emergence of Russian influence, particularly in the security sector. The upsurge of violent extremism, terrorism, and coup d'états in some coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA has provided an opportunity for the Russian Wagner Group, a shadowy mercenary organization, to deepen its influence and gradually assume the traditional and strategic military and security partnerships that France had held with Western African countries, particularly in Mali and Burkina Faso.

On the other hand, China's Belt and Road Initiative, which focuses on investments in ports, railways, manufacturing, mining, telecommunications, and agriculture (Krukowska 2018), has enabled it to replace the United States as the primary trade partner for many African countries (Gooch et al 2022). In West and Central Africa, China has identified these regions as key areas for long-term investment, with a particular focus on Nigeria, the largest economy in the region, as a strategic country for projecting its soft power across Africa (Gooch et al 2022, 7). Alongside its growing economic investments in West and Central Africa, China has been deploying additional military forces in UN peacekeeping missions within these regions and making substantial contributions of military aid to the African Union (Albert 2017). Despite this increasing influence of China and Russia, the United States maintains significant economic and military power in the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA (Gooch et al 2022).

The competition among great powers is becoming increasingly evident and intense at sea, particularly in the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA. This maritime competition is increasingly taking the form of transnational maritime crime, particularly involving IUU fishing and illegal presence at sea and within the Atlantic Africa maritime domain. Coastal countries of Africa, particularly those in the Atlantic SSA region, have emerged as hotspots for IUU fishing and a growing illegal presence of non-Atlantic third parties. While almost 50 percent of global vessels engaged in IUU fishing occurred in African waters, West Africa reported about 40.2 percent of all IUU fishing incidents, accounting for approximately 82 percent of all such incidents in Africa. Most of these IUU fishing vessels have been detected in the coastal states of Atlantic SSA, with countries like Sierra Leone, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, The Gambia, and Senegal ranking among the top 10 locations for detected IUU vessels. This IUU fishing is causing an estimated USD 9.4 billion in Illicit Financial Flows, which is equivalent to up to 20 percent of the total tax revenues generated by West African countries (Daniels et al 2022).

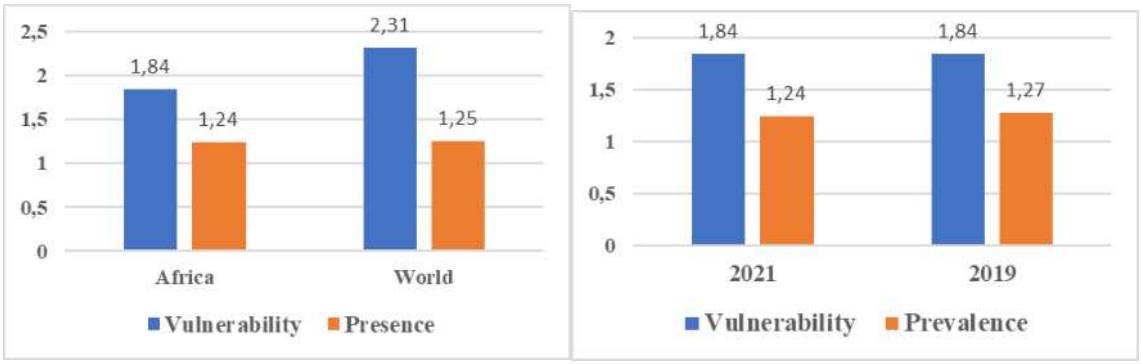
Figure 6: Location Offences (%) of Vessels Involved in IUU, 2010-2022



Source: Data from Daniels et al 2022.

This increasing illegal presence of third parties in African seas can be assessed using indicators related to IUU fishing incidents involving vessels flagged by states or listed on their vessel registers. Despite the growing number of offences associated with vessels engaged in IUU, Africa's vulnerability to IUU vessels and the presence of vessels flagged by states in IUU fishing activities is currently lower compared to the global trend (see Figure 7). However, the level of vulnerability remains higher than the presence of the IUU fishing vessels flagged by states. In 2021, both the level of vulnerability and the presence of IUU fishing vessels flagged by states has remained unchanged and improved, respectively, compared to the situation in 2019 (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: IUU Vessels Flagged by States Scores in Africa, 2021 and 2019



Source: Data from Daniels et al 2022.

Angola has been the best-performing country in terms of vulnerability to flag state responsibility in IUU fishing, while China has shown poor performance in both vulnerability and the presence of its vessels involved in IUU fishing (Macfadyen and Hosch 2021). In addition, 33 percent of all IUU vessels were flagged to China, followed by Ghana with 5 percent. Furthermore, China owned 84 percent of the top 10 companies that collectively own 23.7 percent of all vessels reported to be engaged in IUU fishing (Daniels et al 2022, 24-25). This growing active involvement of China as a flag state and the engagement of its companies in IUU fishing are attributed to its non-compliance with and disregard for international conventions, agreements, and regulations related to global maritime security governance (Daniels et al 2022,

22). Even Ghana's ranking as the second-largest flag state for vessels involved in IUU fishing activities is largely due to its vessels being operated by Chinese firms (Daniels et al 2022, 23). These statistics clearly show that China is the most active non-Atlantic country, with its vessels increasingly engaged in IUU fishing in the Atlantic African maritime security domain. It is argued that China's Belt and Road Initiative may exacerbate illicit trade and transnational organized crime, both on land and at sea (Comolli and Rose 2021).

2. THE ATLANTIC SSA: A COLLECTIVE REGIONAL MARITIME SECURITY RESPONSE

The Atlantic SSA regions appears to be relative less susceptible to maritime security threats compared to other African regions. This may be attributed to the quality of governance within the maritime security sector, including adherence to international conventions, obligations, and regulations related to maritime security governance, as well as the presence of strategic regional partnership for collectively responding to shared maritime security threats.

f. Maritime Security Governance: Responses to Maritime Security Threats

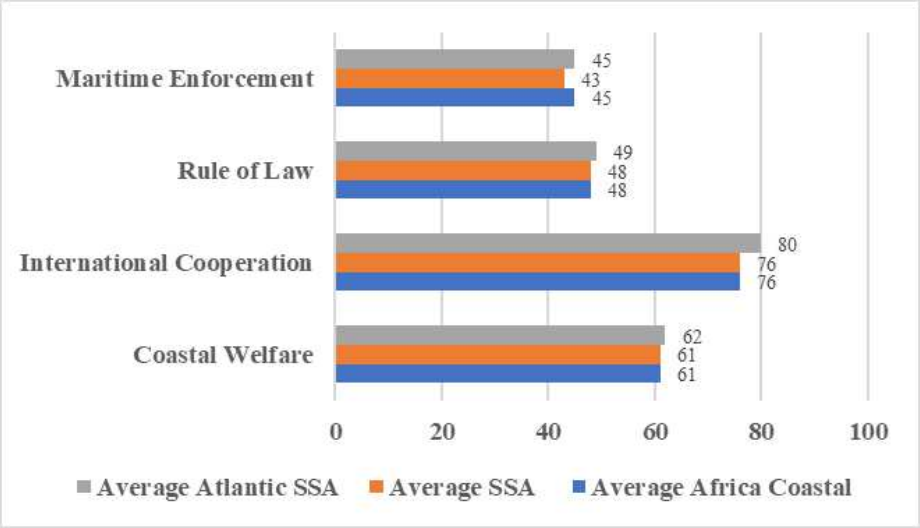
Poorly governed coastlines can create a conducive and enabling environment for transitional maritime criminal networks, especially when onshore violent criminal non-state actors turn to maritime spaces to engage in illicit trade, IUU fishing, piracy, and armed robbery at sea. Coastal governance or **coastal welfare** is assessed in terms of physical and economic security, with a score calculated based on four equally weighted components: Coastal Physical Security, Coastal Economic Security, Countrywide Physical Security, and Countrywide Economic Security (Bell and Glaser 2020,12). In comparison to other sub-regions, Atlantic SSA performs relatively better in this regard (see Figure 8).

Relatively well-governed small island nations such as Cape Verde (81) and Sao Tome and Principe (80) achieved the highest coastal welfare scores, while weakly governed and conflict-affected countries such as Nigeria (26), Cameroon (40) and the DRC (44) scored the lowest in the Atlantic SSA region. Cabo Verde's exceptional coastal governance performance can be to its adoption of the National Integrated Maritime Security Program and its adherence to international maritime agreements. Conversely, Nigeria's poor performance may be linked to high levels of corruption among port users, operators, and government officials, which undermine coastal welfare and facilitate illicit activities (Stable Seas 2019, 27, 37).

Linked to the coastal welfare and governance is **maritime enforcement**, which measures the scores related to each country's capacity to effectively patrol its territorial waters and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) for the purposes of investigating illicit activity and enforcing maritime law (Bell and Glaser 2020, 8). The average score for maritime enforcement is generally low in the African coastal countries (45), particularly in the countries of the Atlantic Africa region (43). The average score for the Atlantic SSA region (45) is the same as the average score for all African coastal countries but better than that of Atlantic Africa. Despite its poor coastal physical and economic security, Nigeria (80) has the highest maritime enforcement

score in the Atlantic SSA region because of its effective navy, while Liberia has the lowest score (19) in the Atlantic SSA region because of its inadequate coast guard capacity, which undermines its maritime security (Stable Seas 2019, 36).

Figure 8: Maritime Security Governance, 2019



Source: Data from Stable Seas 2019

Breaking the cycle of maritime insecurity requires effective legal structures and instruments capable of addressing threats to the rule of law and enhancing the state's capacity to provide good maritime governance. The score for the Rule of Law is measured using five equally weighted components: Corruption, Government Efficacy, Government Efficiency, Judicial Integrity, and Inclusion (Bell and Glaser 2020, 5). Generally, the average score for the rule of law in Africa is very low, falling below half of the aggregate score (see Figure 8). This reflects the increasing threats to the rule of law, including corruption, bribery, discrimination, and ineffective political institutions.

Despite the weak rule of law in the African maritime domain, the Atlantic SSA region shows a better level of rule of law compared to other regions (see Figure 8). The small island country of Cape Verde (79) achieved the highest rule of law score, while the conflict-prone DRC (20) received the lowest score. Cape Verde's high rule of law score is attributed to its effective governance characterized by the presence of legal structures and instruments capable of implementing and enforcing maritime security policies, conventions, and agreements. Additionally, Cape Verde remains one of the most democratic states in Africa with a stable democracy, competitive elections, and periodic transfers of power between rival parties (Freedom House 2022).

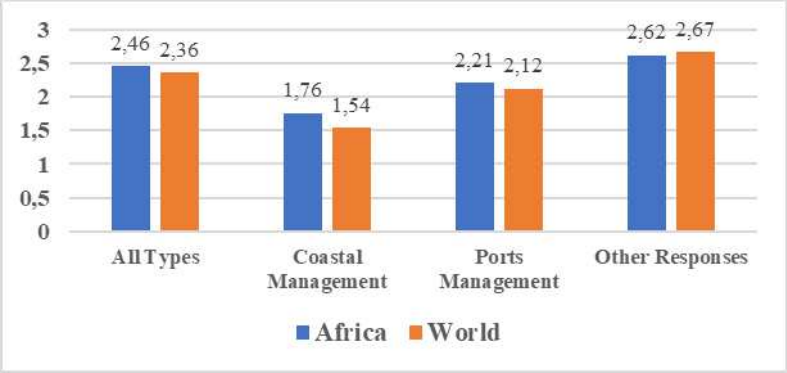
g. Maritime Security Governance: Responses to the IUU Fishing

IUU fishing is one of the major maritime security threats faced by coastal African countries and its management serves as a significant measure of the quality of maritime security governance. The Global

Initiative provides indicators for measuring states' responses to IUU fishing, focused on the management of their exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and the management of their ports (Macfadyen and Hosch 2021,11). In general, the level of Africa's responses to IUU fishing is weaker than the level of the world's responses (see Figure 9). However, African countries tend to perform better in terms of managing their EEZs with regard to IUU fishing compared to other responses such as management of their ports.

While a democratically stable Ghana (1.36) has recorded the best response score to IUU fishing, the conflict-prone and fragile DRC (3.48) has the lowest response score. Ghana's high IUU fishing response score is attributed to its emergence as a model of democracy and good governance in Africa, as well as its recent investments in vessel availability and naval capacity, the construction of a forward operating base, and the acquisition of new patrol boats (Stable Seas 2019, 33). In addition to these impressive good governance measures, Ghana has developed a national maritime security policy with the vision of ensuring, by 2040, a safe and secure maritime space with a thriving blue economy that benefits every Ghanaian (Van Dyck and Vrey 2022).

Figure 9: IUU Fishing Responses[87]



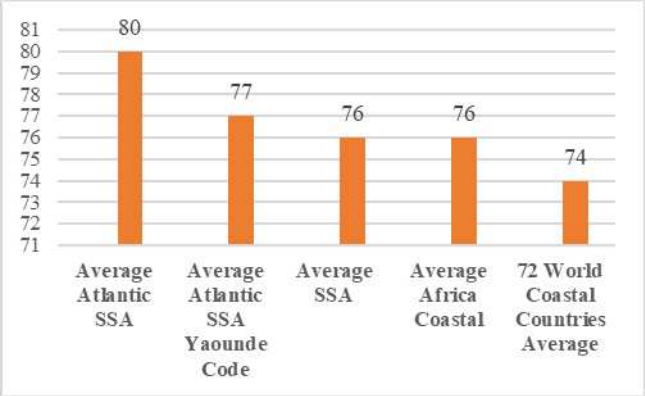
Source: Data from Macfadyen and Hosch 2021, 11.

3. MARITIME SECURITY PARTNERSHIP: THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

The nature of maritime security threats necessitates not only collective responses but also effective collaboration, cooperation, and coordination between and among countries facing common maritime security challenges. Security is increasingly recognized as a multi-disciplinary phenomenon, and it has been shown that inter-agency and inter-state coordination, cooperation, and collaboration not only enhance the performance of security networks but also improve the governance of the security sector (Whelan 2017). The effectiveness of international cooperation in facilitating maritime security and governance is measured by the level of participation in and commitment to multilateral efforts, as well as incidents of violations and disputes (Bell and Glaser 2020, 12).

[87] These are indicators related to actions aimed at reducing IUU fishing (Macfadyen and Hosch 2021, 11).

Figure 10: Regional and International Maritime Security Cooperation



Source: Data from Stable Seas 2019.

In general, the level of international efforts to address maritime security threats is relatively high (74), but it is even higher in Atlantic SSA (80) and the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA (77) that have signed the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCOC). Almost all of the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA and Atlantic SSA that signed the Yaoundé Code have also signed, ratified, or acceded to legal frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the United Nations Conventions on Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention), the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Vienna Convention), and the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) (Stable Seas 2019, 13). The YCOC, signed in 2013 by most countries of the Atlantic SSA, provides a regional cooperative framework to confront the transborder dimensions of maritime crimes faced by the region. All the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA that signed YCOC have achieved international cooperation scores of more than 50, with the exception of the conflict-prone DRC (47). In particular, Ghana (100) and Senegal (100), as signatories of most of the international agreements and the YCOC, achieved the highest scores of international cooperation.

The primary objective of this Code of Conduct is to enhance cooperation among its signatories in the fight against transnational organized crime in the maritime domain, interdict ships and aircraft involved in illicit activity, investigate and prosecute individuals suspected of carrying out illegal activities at sea, and provide adequate care for seafarers, fishers, and others who are victims of violent maritime crimes (YCOC 2013, 5). The Code provides some guiding principles for its implementation, including the commitment of its signatories: (i) to carry out measures taken pursuant to the Code through law enforcement officials or other authorized officials, (ii) to liaise, cooperate, and coordinate with the relevant multiple States and other stakeholders to facilitate the rescue, interdiction, investigation, and prosecution, and (iii) to conduct and support the conduct of investigations in cases related to transnational organized crime in the maritime domain (YCOC 2013, 6).

In addition to these guiding principles, the signatories of the Code commit themselves at the national level to individually develop and implement national maritime policies, necessary national legislations, regulations, and procedures to ensure effective protection of the maritime environment. They are also

encouraged to establish national inter-agencies maritime security coordination committees and adopt a national maritime security plan for harmonizing and coordinating the implementation of national maritime security measures taken pursuant to this Code (YCOC 2013, 6-7). Furthermore, the Code provides detailed protection measures to be taken by signatories for ships, including measures for repressing piracy, armed robbery against ships, and IUU fishing, as well as mechanisms for asset seizure and forfeiture, coordination and information sharing, incident reporting, indictment, prosecution, and dispute settlement (YCOC 2013, 7-11).

The Code establishes a comprehensive Maritime Security Architecture framework known as Yaoundé Architecture (YA) for its implementation in Western and Central Africa. This strategy operates from the strategic to the tactical level, each with a different role in preventing illegal maritime activity in the region (see Map 3). At the strategic level, the key partners identified for the implementation of the Code include two Regional Economic Communities (RECs): the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC). The African Union (AU) is also identified as a strategic contributor to the implementation of the Code (YCOC 2013, 1). Additionally, the Code establishes the Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC), which is tasked with coordinating and sharing information among the Regional Maritime Security Centre for West Africa (CRESMAO), and the Regional Maritime Security Centre for Central Africa (CRESMAC).

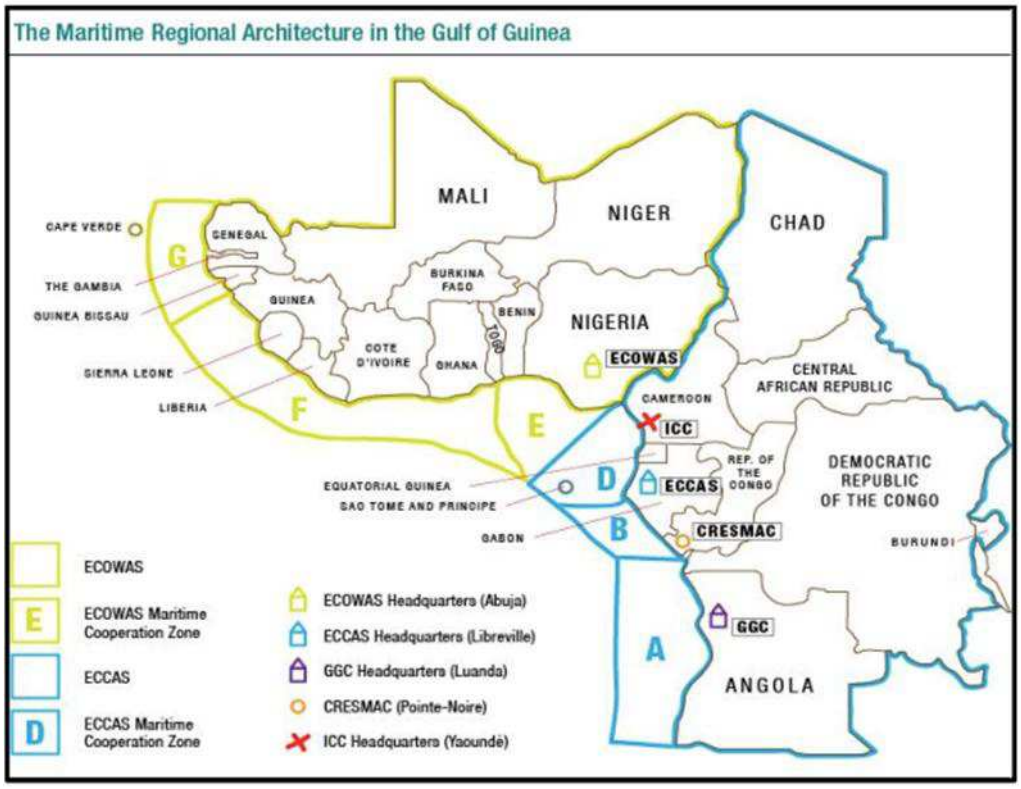
The ICC serves as a multifunctional institution responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Code by the two RECs and coordinating interregional efforts against threats and illegal activities in the maritime domain, with a focus on activities of cooperation, coordination, pooling of resources, and interoperability, by implementing the regional strategy on maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea and Central and Western Africa (Arthur 2021). At a tactical level, the regional maritime domain is divided into five operational zones (see Map 3), each with a designated Maritime Multinational Coordination Center (MMCC). Additionally, at the state level, Maritime Operational Centers (MOCs) are established to bring togethr various stakeholders responsible for state maritime activities at sea (Mboob 2022, 3).

Recent evaluations of the progress in implementing the YA since its establishment, focusing on its core mandates such as information sharing, coordination of efforts, and the enhancement of regulations to comprehensively address maritime security challenges in the region, show that the YA has made significant advancements, resulting in successful interventions against maritime crime in the region (Mboob 2022, 4). The decline in maritime crime levels, particularly maritime pirate and armed robbery incidents, can be attributed to the ongoing efforts and cooperation among regional authorities and their international partners (ICC 2022, 18). The report highlights that the YA, as an information-sharing tool has effectively connected all layers of the security framework, enabling consistent cooperation, surveillance, expeditious information exchange, and uniformity of operation within the framework.

Drawing on two cases involving the M/T MAXIMUS and the M/T ANUKET AMBER vessels, Rably (2019) illustrates the effectiveness of the cooperative architecture of the YA in terms of enhanced naval

capacity and capability, a heightened emphasis on legal comprehension to bolster naval resilience, and the implementation of new laws and improved inter-regional operations. Building on this success of the YA, Rably (2019, 5) identifies areas that could benefit from further enhancement, such as ensuring seamless command and control, fostering smooth cooperation, and establishing stronger cooperative mechanisms during the legal concluding phase of an operation.

Map 3: The Maritime Regional Architecture zones in the Gulf of Guinea



Source: Kuppen 2016

The achievements of the YA have not only underscored its pivotal role in enhancing regional maritime security governance and upholding maritime law and order, but have also proven its value as a tool for facilitating international collaboration on maritime security (Ifesinachi & Maisie 2020, 78). This success has been further bolstered by the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Collaboration Forum and Shared Awareness and De-confliction (GoG-MCF/SHADE), which promote communication and information sharing among both regional and international stakeholders (Mboob 2022, 4). Despite its success, the YA is not without shortcomings, some of which include role overlapping and duplication and a lack of "political will" necessary to elevate the YA to a legally binding agreement (Mboob 2022).

This success of the YA is significantly influenced and guided by the maritime policy direction set by the African Union (AU). To address the escalating maritime security threats within the African Maritime Domain (AMD), the AU adopted the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy) in

2014. This strategy serves as a comprehensive framework for harnessing wealth from the African blue economy by establishing effective governance for maritime security to protect and sustainably utilize the AMD. Its overarching vision is "to foster increased wealth creation from Africa's oceans and seas by developing a sustainable, thriving blue economy in a secure and environmentally sustainable manner" (AU 2012, 11).

One of its objectives is to serve as a unified framework for the AU, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Member States, guiding maritime security governance. Among its strategic goals are (i) the establishment of a Combined Exclusive Maritime Zone of Africa (CEMZA), (ii) the enhancement of awareness regarding maritime issues, (iii) the promotion of political commitment at all levels, and (iv) ensuring the security and safety of the AMD. Although the 2050 AIM Strategy has not undergone a formal evaluation, Lekunze (2022, 2852) has attempted to review it from both theoretical and practical perspectives. He concludes that the AIM Strategy resembles a wish list lacking realistic or practical steps for its realization. Nevertheless, the success of the YA in improving maritime security governance in Western and Central Africa shows that the 2050 AIM Strategy has made significant progress in achieving some of its strategic objectives.

Since the 2050 AIM Strategy and YCOC are not legally binding agreements, in 2016 the AU adopted the Lomé Charter to formalize the African maritime security agenda into a legally binding maritime security and safety charter (Brits and Nel 2018). The Charter is aimed at advancing good governance within the African maritime security domain by highlighting the interconnectedness of security, safety, stability, and development, all within the broader framework of human security (AU 2016, 13). In addition to providing detailed definitions of key terms such as "blue/ocean economy", the Charter lays out a set of objectives including the prevention and suppression of both national and transnational crime within the AMD, the promotion of inter-agency and transnational coordination and cooperation, and the establishment of appropriate institutions and the effective implementation of relevant policies aimed at enhancing safety and security at sea. Significantly, the Charter introduces measures to prevent and combat crimes at sea, including the creation of national coordination structures, the harmonization of national legislation, and the establishment of mechanisms to enhance maritime governance in terms of improved information sharing, effective communication, efficient coordination, and the development of the blue/ocean economy.

Although the examination of the implementation of the Charter shows that some states have made progress to secure their maritime territories, some challenges have been identified including non-prioritization of maritime security related interests, lack of political will, corruption of government officials and weak harmonization of regional actions in the AMD (Uppiah 2021, 186). Also, the Charter has been signed by only 35 African states out of 55 states, with only three states ratifiying it, while most of the Atlantic SSA coastal countries have signed (17) the Charter with two states, Togo and Benin, having ratified it (AU 2022). This makes the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA distinctively different from other African regions in adhering to international, continental and regional maritime security agreements, covenants and treaties.

The assessment of the Charter's implementation reveals that while some states have made progress in securing their maritime territories, several challenges have come to light, including the lack of prioritization of maritime security-related interests, a deficit in political will, corruption of government officials, and a weak harmonization of regional actions within the AMD (Uppiah 2021, 186). Furthermore, it's important to note that the Charter has only been signed by 35 out of the 55 African states, with only three of them having ratified it, while most of the Atlantic SSA coastal countries (17) have signed it. Notably, Togo and Benin are the only two states from the Atlantic SSA region that have ratified the Charter (AU 2022), setting this region apart from other African regions in terms of adherence to international, continental, and regional maritime security agreements, covenants, and treaties.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE AFRICAN MARITIME SECURITY GOVERNANCE

The recent proposal by the Atlantic coastal countries to establish a multilateral partnership forum for collectively addressing shared maritime security threats in the Atlantic Maritime Domain calls for a well-thought-out and strategic approach to bring this idea to fruition. There are valuable lessons to be drawn from the success of the YA that can guide the establishment of an effective Atlantic multilateral partnership forum. One of these lessons is the need of building a ***genuine and lasting partnership***. The YA's strength lies in its strong foundation of equality rather than patronage. In particular, the YA is informed and guided by the AU's principles of sovereign equality, inter-dependence among its member states, the traditional African value of equal burden-sharing, mutual assistance, and the idea that the security of one African country is inseparably connected to the security of others and the continent as a whole (AU 2004, 6-7). In the context of the YA, any maritime security threat affecting one member state is considered a threat to all member states, as well as their two RECs of ECCAS, and ECOWAS. Given that the envisioned Atlantic Maritime Security Forum will comprise diverse member states with varying national security interests, asymmetric power structures, and colonial legacies, adopting the founding principles of the YA may lay a solid foundation for fostering a genuine partnership within the forum.

In addition to the principles of a genuine partnership, the YA operates under the YCOC, which is informed and guided by the broader continental strategy, the 2050 AIM Strategy. Although this Code is not a legally binding agreement, it serves as ***the necessary covenant*** to foster and strengthen the much-needed political will, while guiding the behaviours, performance, and conduct of its member states in their collective efforts to address shared maritime security threats. The evaluation of the YA has shown that the YCOC has encouraged many of its signatories to develop and implement national maritime security policies and enact the necessary legislation, regulations, and procedures that contribute to improving maritime security governance and have led to a significant reduction in maritime security threats and crime in Western and Central Africa. Importantly, the Lomé Charter has elevated the African maritime security agenda from a non-binding framework to a legally binding one. For the anticipated Atlantic multilateral forum, having a simple code of conduct can prove highly effective, prompting its member states to adopt policies, strategies,

and legislation essential for advancing and sustaining maritime security, safety, and good governance, in addition to limiting the undue influence of non-Atlantic actors and their presence in the Atlantic maritime domain.

Another lesson that might be relevant to the Atlantic multilateral forum is the ***implementation and coordination framework*** adopted in the YA at the strategic, tactical and operational levels. The YA's success is attributed to its integration with all the regional economic communities in Atlantic Sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of the Southern Africa Development Communities (SADC). This has contributed to the creation of a model of community maritime security coordination that extends across national and sub-regional institutions, encouraging the adoption of essential maritime security policies, strategies, and legislation, all crucial components of an effective maritime co-operative and coordination system. Furthermore, the experiences of South Atlantic arrangements including the Coordination for the South Atlantic Maritime Area (CAMAS), offer valuable insights into multilateral and intercontinental maritime security cooperation frameworks (Medeiros and Moreira 2017).

Shared values and a common understanding of ***security*** play a critical role in establishing effective multilateral maritime security governance. The traditional military and state-centric approach to security has often hindered the adoption and implementation of relevant and people-centred national security policies aimed at ensuring the security and safety of citizens. The AU (2004) recognizes the concept of human security, and the 2016 Lomé Charter underscores the vital connections between maritime security and safety within the broader framework of human security. This perspective calls for addressing maritime security and safety through inclusive, participatory, and people-centred processes that involve all stakeholders, including civil society and media. Furthermore, governance plays a pivotal role in addressing maritime security and safety, as democratic coastal countries in the Atlantic SSA region tend to outperform autocratic and fragile coastal nations when it comes to delivering maritime security and safety. Embracing and promoting a commonly shared value system of ***democratic governance***, characterized by participation, transparency, accountability, and capacity to respond to the needs of citizens, is critical for establishing and sustaining a strategic Atlantic multilateral maritime security partnership.

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GREAT POWER COMPETITION IN THE ATLANTIC IMPLICATIONS FOR MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA REGION

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INTRODUCTION

Great Power Competition (GPC) is re-emerging as the driving force of international relations (Kassab, 2020; Farhadi & Masys, 2021). In Europe and the North Atlantic, Russia is reasserting itself as a revisionist power, challenging the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) in Eastern Europe expansion. Simultaneously, the United States of America (US) has been asserting its freedom of navigation rights in the South China Sea, where China is pursuing an ambitious nationalistic agenda by laying claim to disputed islands and waters far from its coast (Burgess, 2020). Recent US public national security documents focus on countering China's influence in the economic, political, and military areas as it seeks to challenge US hegemony and influence in the liberal international order and the emerging multipolar world. Many believe that the increasing competition between these two major powers could lead to a Thucydides trap, and events in the transatlantic region suggest a gradual shift in the nature of competition in the region as a result.

The Gulf of Guinea (GoG), situated within the South Atlantic basin, holds significant geostrategic importance in the emerging new world order, serving as a theatre for GPC. The region shares borders with NATO to the South and serves as a major shipping route between the north and the south, and home to a wealth of fish, oil, and gas, as well as other rare raw materials of great interest to these great powers. The United Kingdom (UK), France, and Portugal, due to their colonial heritage, maintain strong historical, cultural, and economic ties with the African continent as a whole, and the GoG region in particular (Ali, 2014). Other European players such as Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands have varying interests ranging from the ownership of numerous ships that traverse the region daily to investments in the economies of the region. It is thus not surprising that these European states perceive the activities of non-Atlantic states, particularly China, Russia, and South Korea as potential threats to their interests in the area.

Interestingly, all these players are confronted with the challenge of insecurity, both on land and in the maritime domain. The decline in terrorism in the Sahel region and the emergence of various maritime

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threats from the south, along with numerous transnational organised crimes, have prompted all these powers to become more involved in the region to protect their interests. The geopolitical tensions between France and its former colonies have also notably resulted in the increasing presence of Russia in the region, as these countries have sought to outsource their security to reduce their reliance on France, whose influence in the region is gradually waning. The Gulf of Guinea therefore finds itself at the centre of great power competition within the Atlantic.

In the Gulf of Guinea, much like in the Indian Ocean, maritime security interventionism has played a pivotal role in facilitating GPC (Jernberg, 2022). Great powers have asserted their dominance in the region through joint naval exercises, extensive maritime security projects, the establishment of multilateral fora, and the advancement of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) tools and technology. Unfortunately, there have been very few attempts to explore the implications of such interventionism in shaping interactions, actor relations, and responses across the broad range of stakeholders in the Gulf of Guinea.

Unfortunately, there has been a lack of comprehensive exploration into the consequences of such interventionism in shaping interactions, actor relations, and responses among the diverse array of stakeholders in the Gulf of Guinea.

This study aims to address the existing gap in research on GPC in the GoG region, by focusing on the relatively unexplored dimension of maritime security interventionism in the region. The overarching objective is to shed light on viable pathways for harmonising efforts towards advancing shared goals, while keeping the south Atlantic area as a uncontested and peaceful environment. The research will highlight the range of ongoing maritime security initiatives undertaken by great powers in the region, their positions, and their geoeconomic interests. Furthermore, it will delve into the perceptions of developing Atlantic states in the region regarding both Atlantic and non-Atlantic great powers, based on the actor relations that emerge as a result of maritime security interventionism in the Gulf of Guinea.

This research also explores other areas, such as the existing multilateral tools available to reduce complexities or promote coordination among existing initiatives, interventions, or frameworks, and the prospects for harmonizing the intricate array of efforts in the region with the dual objectives of accommodating diverse interests and enhancing maritime security.

The analysis presented in this report is based on qualitative data obtained from a comprehensive desktop research, the study of strategy/policy documents, and interviews with relevant regional and international stakeholders. The information gathered was examined through various theoretical perspectives on GPC, in order to deepen the analytical scope of the report and substantiate the recommendations made. The first section of the chapter explores the nature of maritime security concerns in the Gulf of Guinea and lays the foundation for exploring interventionism in the region with the aim of addressing maritime security threats. In the second section, the report highlights the extensive range of interests of held by both Atlantic and non-Atlantic powers in the region, offering useful examples of how these interests have manifested over time. The next section of the report synthesizes these elements to construct a theoretical understanding of GPC in the region. The report then concludes with several concrete

findings and recommendations regarding the implications of GPC in the Gulf of Guinea for maritime security outcomes in the Atlantic.

1. Nature of Transatlantic Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea

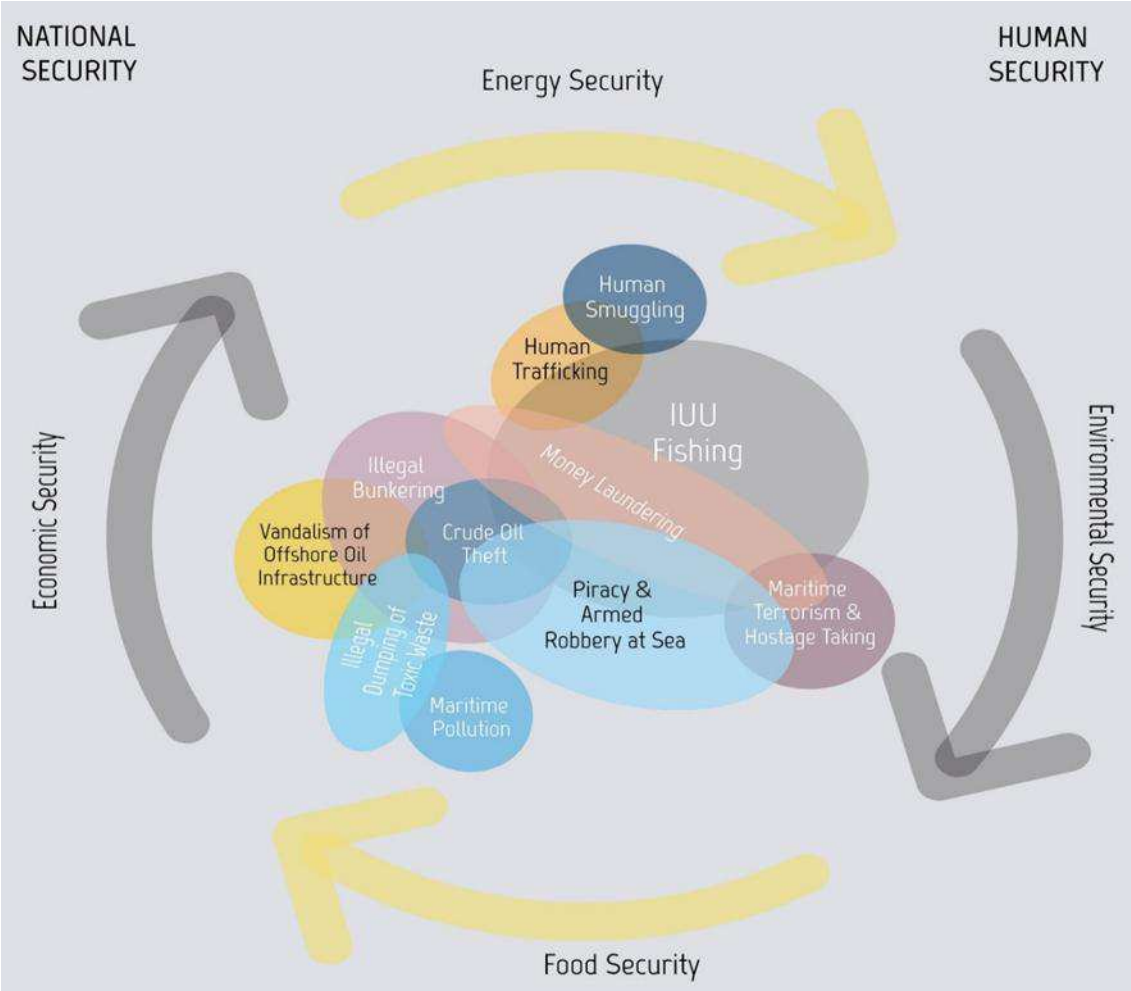
The security dynamics influenced by illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, illicit drug trafficking, the risk of piracy and armed robbery against ships and the dangers to seafarers, threats to maritime routes, the impacts of climate change, and concerns regarding the long-term sustainability of maritime security strategies have sparked bilateral and multilateral debates on the governance of maritime security governance in the region, which is shared among Atlantic and non-Atlantic nations. Furthermore, these threats and challenges are progressively being used as a yardstick to evaluate the effectiveness or shortcomings of the region's maritime security interventions (Çetin & Köseoğlu, 2020).

While maritime security discourse in the GoG have predominantly focused on piracy and armed robbery at sea over the last decade, the region's actual situation is characterised by a complex and far-reaching maritime security threat landscape, with several interconnections among various criminal activities (Ali, 2014). This complex blend of maritime criminal activities is best exemplified by the intended scope of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCOC), which was adopted in 2013 to provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the maritime security threats in the region. The Code includes a list of twelve transnational organised maritime crimes in the Gulf of Guinea and provides the foundation for foreign interventionism and support in the region.

The figure below illustrates the interconnections of maritime crimes identified in the YCOC. It also underscores their links to various dimensions of security in the sub-region. For example, significant connections have been established between IUU fishing and several forms of transnational organised crime (Mackay, Hardesty, & Wilcox, 2020). The deterioration in socio-economic conditions resulting from the rapid depletion of fish stocks could also serve as a catalyst for piracy and armed robbery at sea, especially when coastal communities with extensive knowledge of navigating the ocean lack alternative livelihoods. Furthermore, according to Telesetsky (2014), "A growing amount of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is the result of expansion into new business ventures by transnational organized criminal groups…".

Either way, the impact of maritime criminality on various dimension of security that contribute to human and national security cannot be underestimated. These broader security implications extend well beyond the confines of the Gulf of Guinea. Therefore, it is crucial to contextualise the interests of both Atlantic and non-Atlantic powers in the region and examine how these interests are asserted in the context of GPC in the Gulf.

Figure 8: Maritime Crimes in the Gulf of Guinea: Linkages



Source: Authors

a. The Assertion of Interests: Atlantic and Non-Atlantic Powers

The paragraphs below examine how selected Atlantic powers (the EU, US, and Brazil) and non-Atlantic powers (Russia and China) assert their interests in the Gulf of Guinea, in an attempt to shed light on the evolving dynamics of GPC in this area.

b. The European Union

The European Union imports approximately 13% of its oil consumption from the Gulf of Guinea (Barrios, 2013). Furthermore, as early as 2013, about 40% of Europe's annual oil imports had to pass through the region (Anyimadu, 2013). Unsurprisingly, the potential transition of the EU from crude oil to natural gas as part of efforts to address growing climate change concerns means that it would still be dependent on the GoG, as 11.3% of its natural gas imports originate from Algeria (Cabral, 2021).

Furthermore, the strategic location of the GoG between Latin America – considered a hub for the production of illicit drugs – and the lucrative markets in Western Europe (Pigeon & Benson, 2011), implies that lax maritime regulation and enforcement in the Gulf could significantly facilitate the illicit drug trade

within the EU. In addition to drugs that transit the region from Latin America to Europe, synthetic substances like Methamphetamine are increasingly being produced in GoG countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, and Cote d'Ivoire and trafficked, often by sea, to meet the growing demand in Europe, Asia, and Oceania (Pigeon & Benson, 2011).

Furthermore, the prevalence of IUU in the GoG is a matter of concern for the EU not only because of its linkages with other forms of transnational organised crime that could easily spread beyond the Gulf and into the EU's maritime domain, but also because of the growing migration pressures on EU states resulting from socioeconomic decline within coastal communities in West and Central African.

For these reasons, the EU has long positioned itself as a critical maritime security provider for the Gulf of Guinea. In 2014, the EU Council adopted the EU Strategy on the Gulf of Guinea to guide EU efforts towards addressing security concerns in the region. One of the primary goals of this strategy was to enable the EU to effectively support the implementation of the YCOC. Following the adoption of the strategy, the EU launched its Gulf of Guinea Action Plan (The Diplomatic Service of the European Union, 2021), which outlined the EU's intentions to:

- Create a holistic understanding of maritime threats faced by the region
- Provide support to national and regional organisations working to address these threats and challenges
- Facilitate cooperation and coordination of efforts across the broad range of actors and stakeholders present in the region
- Enhance the resilience of coastal communities.

Since then, EU investments in maritime security projects and programs in the region have amounted to over €92 million. In January 2021, the EU launched its Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) concept in the region – a tool that facilitates the coordination of existing air and naval assets from member states in the region to contribute to maritime security in the GoG. On 21st February, 2022, the EU Council extended the implementation of the CMP concept in the region for an additional two years (Council of the EU, 2022).

BOX 1: EU CMP

The CMP relies on coordination of the existing EU member states naval and air assets deployed on a voluntary basis in specific maritime areas that are of interest to the European Union (EU) to increase the EU's capacity to act as a reliable partner and maritime security provider. Currently, there are 5 EU member states contributing to the CMP - Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, and Portugal.

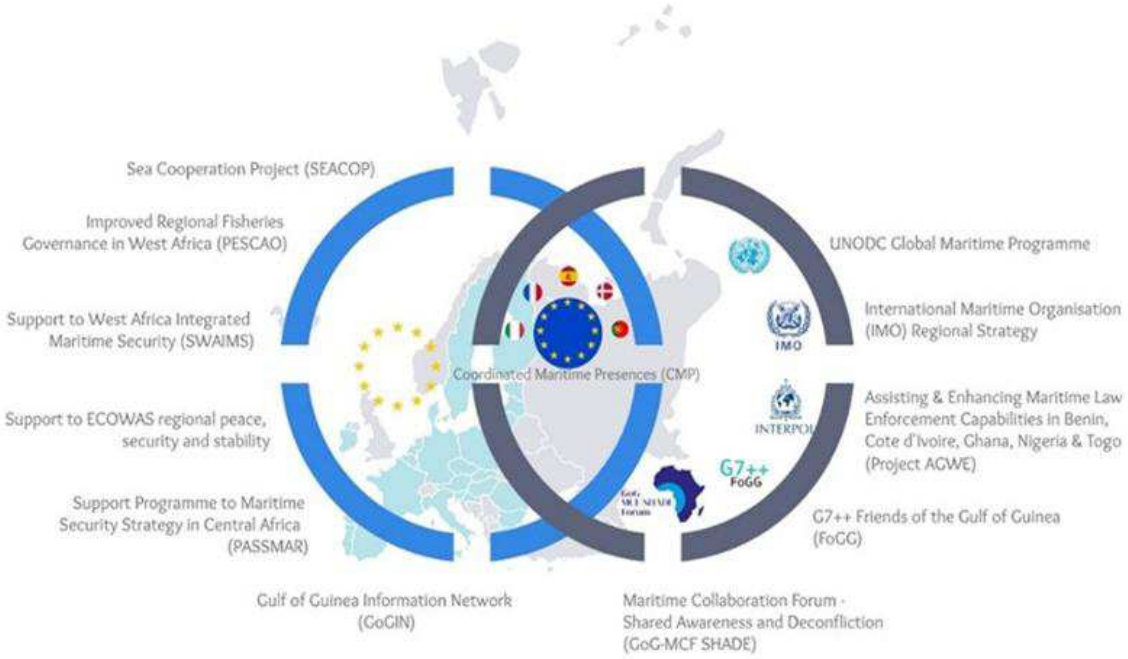
In addition to the EU's engagement as a bloc, individual EU member states like Denmark, France, and Italy have also taken concrete measures to protect their interests in the region. Denmark's substantial

interest in the Gulf stems from a multiplicity of factors. Firstly, as the state with the world's fifth largest fleet, Denmark has up to 40 vessels operating daily within the Gulf of Guinea (Larsen, 2022). Consequently, Danish maritime companies have made significant investments in several of the region's major ports, rendering them highly vulnerable to insecurities in the region.

Denmark has therefore played a significant role in enhancing maritime security in the region, both within and beyond the framework of EU involvement. In 2015, Denmark intensified its efforts during the first phase (2016-2018) of the maritime security program funded by its Peace and Stabilisation Fund (PSF) , allocating DKK 15 million (over US$2 million) to support the operationalisation of the Yaoundé Architecture and the US-led Obangame EXPRESS exercise, as mentioned later in this chapter (Larsen, 2022). The second phase (2019-2021) witnessed a larger disbursement of DKK 46 million (over US$6.6 million) to address counter-piracy in the region, with a focus on Ghana and Nigeria (Larsen, 2022). In the third phase (2022-2026), an allocation of DKK 175 million (over US$ 25 million) was made to cover five GoG states (Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire) over a period of five years, demonstrating Denmark's deepening commitment to playing a key role as a maritime security provider in the region.

To complement EU efforts, Denmark also co-financed the Gulf of Guinea Inter-Regional Network (GoGIN), which was launched in 2016, with a contribution of €1.8 million. The country has also actively participated in the EU's CMP concept by deploying a Danish frigate to contribute to counter-piracy in the region since 2021.

Figure 9: Overview of EU Interventionism in the Gulf of Guinea



Source: Adapted from (Schandorf, forthcoming)[91]

[91] See the Bibliography for full citation. Stephanie Schandorf serves as Associate Director of the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute.

BOX 2: GRAND AFRICAN NEMO

Since the Yaoundé summit in 2013, the French Navy has led and organized three to four times a year the joint patrols known as African NEMO, along with a major annual exercise called Grand African NEMO. This exercise brings together a large number of units and operational centres, involving 17 out of the 19 countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea (Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and others), as well as 8 partner nations (Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, France, Italy, Morocco, Spain, and the United States of America). The exercise covers a vast area stretching from Senegal to Angola. The fourth edition, which took place from Oct 11-16 2022, focused on sharing know-how and improving the operational level of participants in the fight against illegal fishing, piracy, maritime pollution, illegal trafficking, and sea rescue. This particular exercise benefited from the support of the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission, the Fisheries Committee of the West and Central Africa, the UNODC, and also the European programs GoGIN, PESCAO, and the European Union West and Central Africa Port Security (WeCAPS) project.

BOX 3: G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (G7++FoGG)

Established in 2013 during the UK presidency of the G7, the G7++Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (G7++FoGG) is a multilateral maritime security group aimed at supporting the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct to enhance maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. Now, several plenaries down the line, the G7++FoGG initiative has gained ground as a crucial forum for harnessing multilateral strategic-level efforts towards enhancing the efficacy of the Architecture. The 2022 plenaries were held under the co-chairmanship of Cote d'Ivoire and Germany. International partners within the G7++FoGG include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, India, Norway, Netherlands, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, and Switzerland, as well as international organisations such as the EU, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

France's influence in the region is equally noteworthy. France has maintained a presence in the region for over 25 years through its Operation Corymbe[92], a mission that has involved the deployment of up to two ships in the region since 1990 to enhance maritime security. France has also taken a proactive role in leading the Grand African NEMO exercise, aimed at improving operational responses to combat illegal fishing, piracy, maritime pollution, illegal trafficking, and sea rescue. The figure below highlights some of

[92] For more details on Operation Corymbe, visit: https://www-defense-gouv-fr.translate.goog/operations/operations/operation-corymbe?_x_tr_sl=fr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc

the major EU interventions in the region, as well as a number of multilateral initiatives in which the EU plays a prominent role

c. The United States of America

In 2004, a series of congressional hearings were convened by the US sub-committee on International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion (part of the Committee on Foreign Relations) to address the topic of The Gulf of Guinea and US Strategic Energy Policy (US Government, 2004). These hearings emphasised the growing significance of West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea to US energy security interests and highlighted the region's strategic advantages to the US in terms of "geography, market access, conditions, and the quality of its crude oil" (US Government, 2004). The GoG was later declared by the US as an area of "strategic national interest", which "could require military intervention to protect its resources" (Paterson, 2007, 28). At the time, the US imported 12-15% of its oil from West and Central Africa. However, currently, over 30% of US imports of petroleum products transit through the Gulf of Guinea each year.

More recently, the 2022 US Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa has outlined the United States' objective to support African-led MDA, highlighting the importance of regions like the GoG to US strategic interests. Furthermore, the US National 5-Year Strategy for Combating IUU Fishing (2022-2026) establishes the US's commitment to continue to leverage the YCOC in addressing concerns related to fisheries governance, through the replication of existing training programs, exercises, legal interoperability studies, and more (US Interagency Working Group on IUU Fishing, 2022-2026). The strategy document identifies the Gulf of Guinea as a Tier One region, indicating that there are ample opportunities for US partnerships and activities to combat IUU fishing in this region.

Like other Atlantic powers in the region, the US also leads the Obangame EXPRESS – a multinational maritime exercise aimed at enhancing cooperation to address maritime security concerns in the Gulf of Guinea, by giving regional navies the opportunity to respond in real-time to threat/incident scenarios, often using information-sharing tools within the YCOC framework.

In a broader context, and also noteworthy, is the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), which enables the US, in collaboration with its partners, to play an active role in countering transnational threats and responding to security incidents that are central to US national interests and to foster regional stability. In the Gulf of Guinea, the USS Hershel "Woody" Williams is a warship that has been permanently assigned to the US AFRICOM's area of operation (US Africa Command Public Affairs, 2021).

On September 20th 2022, the US brought together 18 different countries, five of which were Gulf of Guinea states, to sign a joint agreement in which they pledged as members of the Atlantic to partner on common challenges affecting the Atlantic Ocean. The outcome was the Joint Statement on Atlantic Cooperation , which represents a notable partnership of Atlantic states and also introduces the possibility of further geopolitical relations between the US and the Gulf of Guinea states.

BOX 4: OBANGAME EXPRESS

The Obangame Express exercise is a United States led maritime counter-security exercise in Africa, covering a wide area from Morocco to Angola. The purpose of the exercise is to improve regional cooperation and information sharing among participating nations to combat illicit maritime activities at sea and to strengthen safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. Hosted by the United States of America through the Us Naval Forces Africa, the exercise promotes maritime security by enhancing interoperability among African, European, Atlantic, and U.S. militaries and agencies.

d. Brazil

A number of Atlantic states not typically categorized as "great powers" play an equally critical role as maritime security providers in the region. Brazil serves as a prominent example. For states like Brazil, their maritime security interests in the Gulf of Guinea go far beyond the region's geostrategic importance and are rooted in the country's pre-colonial history with Africa (Perna, 2022). Furthermore, Brazil's Blue Amazon Concept provides a strong motivation for asserting its influence across the Atlantic (Thompson & Muggah, 2015). Brazil has therefore been actively engaged in capacity building efforts in the Gulf of Guinea region, establishing naval outposts in both Cabo Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe. Brazil's Operation Guinex I & II, conducted for nearly three months each in 2021 and 2022, brings together navies and coast guards in the region to engage in exercises such as vessel boarding and inspection, navigating under asymmetric threats, and a range of other operational tactics (Oliveira, 2022).

e. Russia

Unlike the US and the EU, which have publicly available strategy documents aimed at guiding their efforts to address security concerns in the Gulf of Guinea or Sub-Saharan Africa, Russian priorities in the region are far less explicit. What remains clear though is that Gulf of Guinea states such as Cameroon, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Equatorial Guinea depend on key Russian oil companies such as Lukoil and Tatneft, which are present in the region (Ashby & Mutah, 2022).

The implications of this dependence are both intricate and definite. Following Russia's war in Ukraine and the subsequent imposition of increased sanctions on the Kremlin, Russian companies such as Lukoil could face disruptions or delays in their developmental projects in states like Cameroon and Ghana. At the same time, Russia has continued to pursue an asymmetric strategy to expand its influence in Africa (Siegle, 2021). Consequently, several Gulf of Guinea states may occasionally find incentives to align with Russia, believing it to be crucial to their own interests. This "African dilemma" was clearly evidenced in the continent's voting patterns during the United Nations (UN) General Assembly resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Despite widespread support for the resolution among UN member states worldwide, African countries remained relatively divided in their voting. As a matter of fact, only about 51% of African states voted in favour of the Resolution (White & Holtz, 2022). Furthermore, out of the 17 African countries that chose to abstain or vote against the Resolution, 47% were states associated with the Gulf of Guinea. This highlights the geostrategic significance of great power relations with Gulf of Guinea countries, often expressed through maritime diplomacy and interventionism in the region.

In October 2021, Russian Navy warships conducted anti-piracy exercises in the Gulf of Guinea, involving the deployment of a Russian Northern fleet taskforce (Russian News Agency, 2021). Considering Russia's crucial role in conducting successful naval patrols off the Gulf of Aden during the peak of Somali piracy (Anyimadu, 2013), it is highly likely that Russia may increase its engagement in addressing security challenges in the Gulf of Guinea in the future.

f. China

Similar to the Atlantic powers, China's interests in the Gulf of Guinea are driven by both offshore energy resources and fisheries. China has identified the GoG as a critical source of crude, bauxite, timber, aluminium ore, and other natural resources, raising China's interests in militarily securing the region's SLOC (Executive Research Associates (Pty) Ltd, 2009).

According to a report by Executive Research Associates (Pty) Ltd (2009), as early as 2004, China was importing nearly 30% of its oil needs from Africa. At the same time, the continent including, in particular the Gulf of Guinea, saw a surge in the presence of Chinese oil companies. The report also indicates that China entered into several naval defence cooperation agreements with GoG states, including Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, and Cameroon.

Between 2014 and 2019 alone, China conducted nearly 40 military exchanges with partners in the Gulf of Guinea – a series of comprehensive engagements which included the deployment of Chinese naval vessels for counter-piracy operations in the region (Joint Operations Centre, 2022). Furthermore, in May of the previous year, naval representatives from China and GoG states attended a virtual symposium to discuss new prospects for maritime security cooperation between China and the Gulf (Weichao, 2022).

What sets Chinese interventionism in the region apart is its comprehensive approach, extending beyond military operations (or projects) aimed at tackling maritime criminal activities in the region, as it is strengthening economic ties with Gulf of Guinea states. As an example, China has offered millions of dollars in credit backed by oil to several Gulf of Guinea states, including Angola, which received a total of US$2 billion between 2003 and 2004 alone (Brautigam & Hwang, 2016).

g. Emerging Non-Atlantic Powers

Over the past few decades, several emerging non-Atlantic powers have begun to assert their interests in the Gulf of Guinea. This trend was evidenced during the December 2022 plenary of the G7++FoGG,

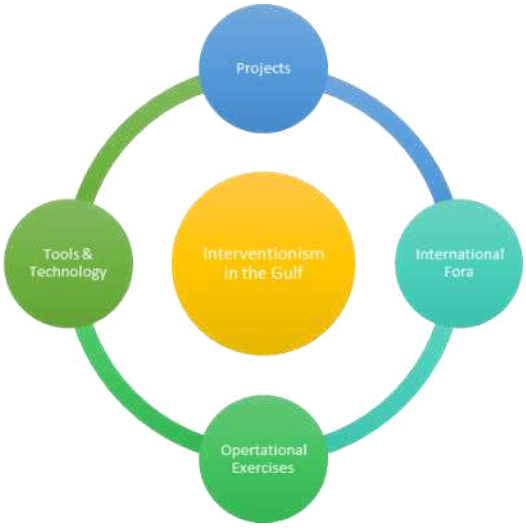
where states like Japan and India made assertive statements regarding their roles as critical maritime security providers in the region (Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute, 2022).

For instance, in 2014, Japan made a substantial donation of funds to the IMO West and Central Africa Maritime Security Trust Fund, surpassing China's contribution of US$100,000 and the United Kingdom's donation of £100,000 (International Maritime Organization, 2014). Japan's contribution allowed the state to gain ground as a prominent power in the Gulf of Guinea's geopolitical landscape. Since then, Japan has participated in several capacity-building initiatives in the region, including financing a course on Maritime Criminality conducted by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping and Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Accra, Ghana, in 2020 , and leading a three-week course on the Core Principles and Practice of Combatting Piracy in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2022 (Ogbaje, 2022). In 2021, Japan also committed an amount of $260,000 to support anti-piracy efforts in the region. Later in 2022, Japan entered into an agreement with Nigeria to provide high-speed boats to the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) (News Agency of Nigeria, 2012).

Being the largest importer of Nigeria's petroleum products, India also maintains strong connections with the Gulf of Guinea. In this context, in September 2022, the Indian Navy deployed a warship to the region for a 41-day mission to support counter-piracy efforts. The vessel, INS Tarkash, conducted a joint maritime exercise with Nigerian Navy patrol ships during its deployment, providing a unique opportunity to enhance interoperability between the two partner states . The INS Tarkash was the first Indian warship to undertake patrol duties in the Gulf of Guinea.

Appendix 1 of this report highlights significant maritime security interventions in the region, organized based on the nature of the intervention and providing a more comprehensive view of various approaches to intervention in the region. The Appendix underscores that interventionism encompasses projects/programs, participation in international fora, operational exercises, and the introduction of various tools and technologies related to MDA and information sharing.

Figure 10: Elements of Interventionism in the Gulf of Guinea



2. CONTEXTUALISING GPC IN THE GULF

h. A Theoretical Understanding

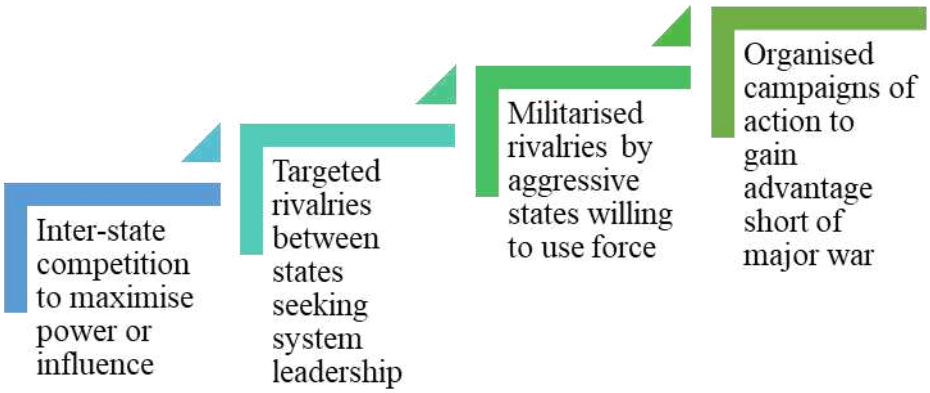
To gain a deeper understanding of geopolitical dynamics in the Gulf of Guinea, it is important to frame the context of GPC in the region. While there isn't a universally acceptable definition of GPC in international relations theory, several factors influence the perception of competitiveness in the actions undertaken by global powers. For instance, despite various global powers, such as the US, the EU, Russia, and China, collaborating in joint efforts to combat Somali piracy, their respective national security policies and strategy documents often contain implicit elements of countering rival powers.[93]

A useful starting point is therefore to identify the key elements that can serve as indicators of GPC. For Mazarr, et al. (2018), the fundamental components that characterise the presence of GPC are:

- The presence of measurable or perceived contention
- An intention by actors to enhance their power relative to other actors in the sphere
- A motive for the power-struggle (e.g., a limited resource).

In addition to these, at least four levels of competition have been identified in relevant International Relations literature (Mazarr, 2022). These are illustrated below:

Figure 11: Four Levels of Competition



Within the context of the Gulf of Guinea, and considering the fundamental components indicated above, maritime insecurities give rise to significant contentions, although these contentions largely precede geopolitical dynamics rather than being their primary cause. Furthermore, there is a clear implicit intention among global actors to enhance their power in relative to other actors in the region. In former US president Barack Obama's 2014 State of the Union address, he stated: "In a world of complex threats, our security and leadership depends on all elements of our power – including strong and principled diplomacy" (The White House, 2014). This quote highlights the synchronicities between leadership and power in the global

[93] The US National Security Strategy, for example, explicitly highlights an agenda of "out-competing China and constraining Russia" (The White House, 2022).

order and suggests that states may view these elements as essential in addressing intricate security challenges, such as those posed by maritime criminality in the Gulf of Guinea. Finally, due to the significant reliance of international actors on the region for economic and energy security, there exists a strong motive for a power struggle.

Certainly, given the interconnected nature of maritime space and the complexity of security concerns in the Gulf of Guinea, international actors have more to gain from robust maritime security cooperation than from escalating militarised rivalries. As a result, what we observe in the region is a delicate balance between multilateralism, serving as a means to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, and unilateralism, serving as a means to project power, leadership, and dominance in the region.

Clear examples of multilateralism can be found in the cooperative efforts of international partners, such as the UNODC Global Maritime Programme, the G7++FoGG, GoG-MCF SHADE, as well as state-led exercises like Obangame EXPRESS and Grand African NEMO. However, in addition to these multilateral efforts, individual states have also sought to take a lead role in shaping maritime regulation and enforcement in the region.

BOX 5: GoG-MCF SHADE

The Gulf of Guinea Maritime Collaboration Forum on Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (GoG-MCF SHADE) initiative emerged in response to the prevalent incidents of piracy and kidnapping of seafarers in the Gulf of Guinea region. The forum seeks to create a viable platform where navies, industry partners, and other relevant stakeholders from across the Gulf of Guinea and beyond can harmonize counter-piracy efforts and communication in the region under the existing information-sharing architecture provided by both the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCOC) and the Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security off the Coast of West Africa (BMP-WA). Nigeria, in partnership with the Interregional Coordination Centre developed the GoG-MCF/SHADE through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Although regional leadership played a key role in establishing the forum, the UK holds a special advisory role in assisting the co-chairs of the forum.

The GoG-MCF/SHADE primarily operates through plenary sessions, with each session intended to generate dialogue and produce concrete action steps aimed at fostering operational coordination between regional navies and stakeholders within the maritime industry of the Gulf of Guinea. During the first plenary session, the initiative established 3 Working Groups to operate across the following thematic areas:

- Cooperation at Sea
- Reporting and Information Sharing
- Air Deconfliction.

i. Implications for Maritime Security Governance in the Gulf of Guinea

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy implications of GPC for maritime security governance in the Gulf of Guinea is the shift in how the region's most critical maritime security are framed in line with international priorities. While the GoG faces a multitude of threats, piracy has emerged as one of the most significant and immediate concerns for the international community, due to its impact on the lives of seafarers and international shipping. According to a report by Stable Seas, ransom payments to pirate groups in the Gulf of Guinea (largely sourced from international actors) exceeded $5 million annually, with trade implications extending to well over $1 billion per year (Bell, 2021). Piracy has therefore dominated global discussions regarding maritime security issues in the region.

This dominance was evident as far back as 2011, when the UN Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 2018 (United Nations Security Council, 2011), which condemned threats of piracy and armed robbery within the Gulf of Guinea and called for the strengthening of regional cooperation. In February 2012, UNSC Resolution 2039 (United Nations Security Council, 2012) was also passed, stressing the need for coordinating regional efforts to address the issue of piracy and armed robbery at sea. These two Resolutions laid the foundation for the establishment of the YCOC, which has since been shaping regional approaches to countering piracy. More recently, in May 2022, the UNSC passed Resolution 2634 (United Nations Security Council, 2022) regarding the GoG. While this Resolution did recognise the broad spectrum of maritime criminalities and transnational organised crimes in the region, its primary focus remained on the issue of piracy and armed robbery at sea.

In this context, GPC has the potential to shift the focus away from regional priorities towards international ones. For a region grappling with a multitude of land-centric concerns, maritime insecurities, and an increasingly interconnected relationship between the two, such misalignment of priorities can have adverse implications for human security. As an example, despite the extensive links between IUU and other transnational organised crimes, which cost West African economies well over US$3 billion annually (Haddad, 2022), there is currently no UNSC Resolution specifically targeting IUU in the sub-region. Consequently, there has been a lack of comprehensive, coordinated efforts at both regional and global levels to combat this issue, as witnessed following the adoption of UN Resolutions 2018 and 2039. Despite IUU being recognized as one of the major maritime security threats to be addressed by the YCOC, its supporting framework and information-sharing mechanisms are rarely directed toward combating addressing IUU.

On all fronts, the relegation of other criminal activities such as IUU to the background has proven to be detrimental to the interests of Gulf of Guinea states. Beyond its direct impact on marine life, the rapid depletion of fish stocks due to IUU destabilises coastal communities in particularly, and coastal African states in general, which heavily rely on fish as a source of both protein and livelihoods. For fisherfolk used to relying solely on the ocean for their livelihoods, there is the strong tendency to divert their skill sets into exploitative activities and maritime criminalities, such as piracy and armed robbery at sea. While no clear causal link has been established between IUU and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, research has shown a

correlation between these two criminal factors (Pesperson, 2022). What this means is that failing to address IUU could further aggravate incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the region. In addition to its correlation with piracy, IUU fishing contributes to other profound insecurities in coastal regions. Competition for limited fisheries resources may lead to intra and inter-state conflicts, further exacerbating socio-economic challenges in coastal communities (Ali, 2014). Naturally, given their close proximity to the ocean, insecurities in coastal communities have the potential to spill over into the maritime domain.

Another visible implication of GPC is the increasing reliance on naval operations to counter regional threats such as piracy. While several great powers already had some military presence in the region, these forces were largely inactive and rarely for direct counter-threat/counter-piracy operations, except during annual exercises like Grand African NEMO and Obangame EXPRESS. However, in 2021, countries like Italy, Denmark, and Brazil begun deploying naval warships to contribute to counter-piracy efforts in the region. While these forms of interventionism were driven by national strategic interests related to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, they have the potential to elevate the region's position on the spectrum of the competition levels mentioned above. More specifically, the projection of military power resulting from the deployment of military assets to the region (or the systematic and frequent use of existing assets) could make a transition to militarised rivalries much easier than it should be.

j. Charting the Way Forward: Recommendations for Gulf of Guinea States

For Gulf of Guinea states, great power competition has been a significant factor in shaping maritime security governance for decades. Whether or not this has been beneficial to Gulf of Guinea states remains a subject of debate. While GPC has led to a massive proliferation of interventions across the region, it has also created opportunities for heightened geopolitical tensions and mistrust between regional actors and international partners. It is therefore imperative that GoG states develop effective approaches for navigating the complexities and competing interests of actors in the region. The following recommendations are therefore suggested:

- Gulf of Guinea states should define their strategic priorities for addressing maritime concerns in the region and allocate resources accordingly to address these priorities. A clear prioritisation of interests would likely yield dual benefits: regional actors would have a blueprint to guide resource allocation decisions, ensuring the effectiveness of existing regional structures. Additionally, GoG states would be better positioned to align foreign intervention efforts with the region's needs. Just as international partners rely on national strategies and policy documents to guide their interactions with African sub-regions, GoG states should also adopt a blueprint that emphasizes their interests in dealings with foreign powers in the region.
- Again, regional ownership and political leadership are crucial, not only for ensuring the effectiveness of existing regional structures aimed at addressing maritime security concerns but also for maintaining foreign intervention efforts within the framework accepted by regional actors. As a regional architecture, the framework provided by the YCOC holds the potential to

promote stronger and more participatory regional ownership of maritime security outcomes in the region. However, without the full commitment of GoG states, the framework could become a channel primarily for safeguarding foreign interests in the region through interventionism. After all, the majority of maritime security interventions in the region operate within the framework established by the YCOC, or in line with the objective of the Yaoundé Architecture. Closely linked to the issue of regional ownership is the need for GoG states to work towards building their own maritime security capabilities. While foreign interventionism may offer certain advantages to the region, prioritising the strengthening of structural and institutional capacities to address the Gulf's complex security concerns could lessen the ripple effects of GPC in the region.

- An essential component of achieving regional ownership is the use of multilateral tools, like consultation and inclusion, to foster more profound dialogues within the region. These constructive discussions serve as a critical initial step in creating a common understanding of shared regional priorities and the pathways to achieving the regional goals associated with these priorities. It also provides regional actors with an opportunity to critically assess foreign interventionism to identify initiatives that align with shared priorities and to make concerted efforts towards supporting those initiatives. As regional dialogues evolve into more engaging interactions with international partners, it becomes easier to ensure the harmonisation of initiatives and avoid redundant efforts.
- Effective engagement for all stakeholders in the region should prioritize elements such as clarity, transparency, and regular diplomatic interactions. If maritime security interventions are to be beneficial to both regional and international partners, there is the need to build relationships grounded in trust and reciprocity. Maritime geopolitics in the region should be characterised by experienced maritime diplomacy between and among diverse actors.

CONCLUSION

This paper has elucidated the complex nature of maritime insecurities in the Gulf of Guinea, the implications of these complexities for the international community, and the rise of interventionism in the region in response to these concerns. While maritime security interventionism may have evolved to combat maritime criminality in the region, it has also transformed the Gulf into a geopolitical arena for great power competition involving both Atlantic and non-Atlantic states. Such competition has resulted in unintended consequences for maritime governance in the Gulf of Guinea, and could influence approaches to addressing maritime criminality, ultimately harming the interests of GoG states. By recognising these dynamics, GoG states can position themselves to leverage GPC in the region to their advantage rather than detriment.

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APPENDIX ONE: Notable Maritime Security Interventions in the Gulf of Guinea

Lead Actor(s)	International Fora	Projects		Operational Exercises	Tools & Technology
		Project Name	*Focal Area*		
EU		Critical Maritime Routes Monitoring, Support & Evaluation Mechanism (CRIMSON)	Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC)	France: GRAND African NEMO	Yaoundé Architecture Regional Information Sharing (YARIS) Platform
		Gulf of Guinea Inter-Regional Network	Capacity Building	France: Operation Corymbe	
		Support to West Africa Integrated Maritime Security	General Maritime Security & Safety	Italy: Project Gabinia	
		Support Programme to the Maritime Security Strategy in Central Africa (PASSMAR)	Cross-border Maritime Cooperation	EU: Coordinated Maritime Presences	

		Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in Western Africa (PESCAO)	Fisheries Governance		
		Improvement of Ports' Customs and Operations Efficiency in African Ports (IPCOEA)	Port Security		
		Seaport Cooperation Project (SEACOP)	Illicit Trafficking		
		Strengthening Criminal Investigation and Criminal Justice Cooperation along Drug Trafficking Routes (CRIMJUST)	Drug Trafficking		
US		US-GH Security Governance Initiative (Maritime Component)	Maritime Security Governance	Obangame EXPRESS	SEAVISION
UK	SHADE[94]				Solarta

[94] See Box 2.

Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, India, Norway, Netherlands, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, and Switzerland, EU, UNODC, IMO, and INTERPOL	G7++FoGG[95]				

[95] See Box 1.

ATLANTIC AFRICA: UNITED STATES, EUROPE, CHINA, RUSSIA

Influences with Variable Geometry - A View from the South

Pr. Rachid EL Houdaigui [96]

ABSTRACT

The Atlantic area and its Afro-Atlantic seaboard are suffering the consequences of the global situation. We are witnessing a complex geopolitical game involving different strategies that have various processes, tactics, and objectives. The current situation reveals a paradoxical dynamic, which involves the Euro-Atlantic powers, extra-regional powers (China and Russia), and all the Afro-Atlantic countries. How is the power game organized in the Atlantic area? How does Africa's Atlantic seaboard experience it? What are the scenarios for the evolution of this power game in light of African challenges?

This article aims to draw up the dynamics of the power game in the Atlantic area and to analyze its relevant variables, its actual dimensions, and the challenges that lie ahead.

Keywords: Afro-Atlantic – Powers –Euro-Atlantic – China – Russia- United States, Europe

"We must be part of solutions and not just a subject, a topic of discussion". This statement by the Chairman of the African Union (AU), Macky Sall, reflects the African vision for a new international order[97]. This is the lens through which Northern and Southern Africans look at their relationship with the world today. The academic and political history at both national and continental levels highlights this strong desire for diplomatic self-assertion.

Africa is more present than ever in an evolutionary global context driven by the continuous reconfiguration of geostrategic balances, and resulting reshuffling of power dynamics. African states grapple with a series of major issues. Firstly, the geo-economic pressure to keep pace with globalization. Secondly, factors of insecurity that continue to challenge the prospects of development for African populations. The war in Ukraine and the Chinese-American tension leave Africa exposed to a struggle for influence, the results of which remain uncertain.

Africa's Atlantic seaboard is one of the key pieces of this complex geopolitical game, both in terms of the nature and number of actors, and the ambiguity of their preferences. Each actor has many possible strategies, and thus the costs and benefits of the different scenarios are uncertain. The current situation reveals a paradoxical dynamic, which brings into interaction the Euro-Atlantic powers, extra-regional powers (China and Russia), and all the Afro-Atlantic countries.

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[96] Policy Center For the New South

[97]Interview with *The New York Times*, December13, 2022.

How is this great power game being experienced by Africa's Atlantic countries? What are the scenarios for the evolution of the power game, in the context of African issues?

Far from claiming to be able to answer these questions exhaustively, this study reconstructs the processes that shape this power game. These processes are independent from one another and interact to create the current geopolitical situation: an eclectic power game against a backdrop of strategic competition (section 1), which coincides with the emergence of a new African stance (section 2), making it necessary to review the Atlanticist approach (section 3).

1. An Eclectic Power Game Against a Backdrop of Strategic Competition

The current geopolitical situation raises significant concerns about the future of the European and Euro-Atlantic security landscape. The West and the Russians no longer trust each other, while China is perceived as a systemic threat.

In Africa, the geopolitical *status quo* that favored the Europeans and the United States has evolved in favour of a new emerging dynamic in which China and Russia challenge the strategic pre-eminence of both Europeans and Americans. Meanwhile, the Atlantic African coast suffers from this conflict at both the military-security and diplomatic levels. For the time being, the balance remains tipped in favour of Western superiority, but the West is ironically on the defensive, facing especially the rising power of China.

a. The Great Powers of the Atlantic on the Defensive

The strategy of the great Western powers is defensive because the accommodation effort is based on the consolidation of transatlantic solidarity facing the 'strategic threat, which is Russia', on one hand, and the 'systemic threat, China' on the other. The measures taken in the Afro-Atlantic area should be seen in this context of competition for dominance.

Refocusing transatlantic solidarity

Understanding the emergent security order remains a challenge. However, evidence arising from facts and debates[98] confirms the significance of the territorial collective defense of the Euro-Atlantic area, which structures and organizes the other strategic and security components.

The first key to refocusing transatlantic solidarity is the restoration of naval power as a central element of strategic thinking. Revealing facts illustrate this strong tendency. We can cite the presence in the Euro-Atlantic area of five Western aircraft carriers[99] in the first weeks following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. The other revealing example is the transit, during January 2023, of the Russian frigate Admiral Gorshkov, loaded with hypersonic missiles, through the North Sea to the South Atlantic. Shortly after, the arrival of this frigate in Cape

[98] With reference NATO's new Strategic Concept (June 2022) and the Strategic Compass (March 2022).
[99] From the United States, United Kingdom, Italy, and France.

Town, South Africa, on February 13, 2023, to participate in tripartite maneuvers (South Africa, China, Russia), leads us to confirm that the Atlantic Ocean could become a battleground for great powers. However, it is unlikely in practice that the number of combat fleets in the Afro-Atlantic zone will ever match those present in the western Mediterranean. Either way, NATO members seem to be committed to strengthening their interoperable system in favor of more joint naval maneuvers against their potential competitors.

Subsequently, we noticed the expansion of the maritime factor to non-military issues to encompass other power aspects, such as the protection of energy supplies (exploitation and transportation), the protection of maritime infrastructures, the establishment of a competitive maritime economy, and the security of trade routes. These geo-economic issues are on the agenda of all the world's great powers, which are mobilizing the necessary means to control maritime spaces and to take advantage of them.

Finally, there is the consolidation of the Euro-Atlantic area as a powerful area in relation to the Latin American and Afro-Atlantic subgroups, due to its strategic influence (NATO) and its role as an economic supporter. This influence is exercised by the United States, European countries, and the European Union (EU), within the framework of their foreign and defense policies, with agendas that are both cooperative and competitive.

DEFENSIVE STANCE ON THE AFRO-ATLANTIC FRONT

The defensive stance of the West is demonstrated by the maintenance of a sustained and reinforced presence in the region, to prevent China and Russia from threatening the West's vital interests and/or affecting their capacity to act.

We are somehow entering a phase of security realism in which security issues, with all their hard and soft elements, are simultaneously areas of cooperation and solidarity, while becoming areas of rivalry and competition. In view of the Chinese and Russian offensive in the region, Europe and the United States seem to be on the defensive, alternating between technical cooperation and geopolitical influence. The war in Ukraine could also prevent them from strengthening their positions in different African regions. Will they take action to prioritize countries and regions, including the Atlantic coast of Africa?

A profound analysis of the actions of Western partners along the Afro-Atlantic coast reveals a kind of mutualization of the United States' and Europe's efforts when it comes to pursuing common interests, such as the fight against terrorism and organized crime. However, they pursue distinct strategic and operational approaches in the Gulf of Guinea and the Western Maghreb (Morocco, Mauritania). The European Union has its strategy for the Gulf of Guinea, adopted in 2014, and several programs and projects[100]. The United States, on the other hand, relies on several programs[101], instruments[102], and exercises[103]. A comparison of the two strategies reveals a clear advantage for the United States in terms of qualitative presence and direct influence. Its integrated approach, carried out by U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), African Lion, and SOCFWD[104]-West Africa, makes it possible

[100]Coordinated Maritime Presences (2020-22/2022-24); CMR Monitoring, Support and Evaluation Mechanism (CRIMSON 2011-23); Gulf of Guinea Inter-regional Network (GoGIN 2023); Support to West Africa Integrated Maritime Security (SWAIMS). As for Morocco and Mauritania, they are subject to the Euro-Mediterranean mechanisms and regional cooperation (5+5 Dialogue).

[101]Africa Partnership Station (APS), African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership (AMLEP), Tactical Law Enforcement Team (TACLET); Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP).

[102]United States Africa Command (AFRICOM); SOCFWD–West Africa.

[103]African Lion (North and sub-Saharan Africa), Flintlock, Exercise Obangame Express, Phoenix Express (Maghreb and Europe).

[104]Special Operations Command Forward- North and West Africa.

to define a large area of interest including North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa: AFRICOM's largest annual exercise, African Lion, involved more than 7,500 troops from several African and European countries in June 2022. On the other side, the European commitment is quantitatively larger, more technical, and diversified (EU + European powers), yet geopolitically segmented. Separating North Africa, notably Morocco and Mauritania, from West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, ignores three factors that unify the Afro-Atlantic coast: 1. the transnational nature of insecurity; 2. the same requirements in terms of capacity building; 3. the existence of regional cooperation mechanisms and instruments. Moreover, the inconsistency between the strategies of certain European powers and the EU's strategy makes it difficult to understand the political intentions behind the actions carried out in the region.

Americans and Europeans are concerned about the growing influence of China and Russia in the Afro-Atlantic region. The scenario of a Chinese naval base in Equatorial Guinea[105] fuels these fears and has the potential to increase tensions further. General Stephen J. Townsend, the head of AFRICOM, during his speech to the Armed Services Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, on March 15, 2022, stressed that a permanent Chinese naval presence in the region "*would almost certainly require the Department to consider shifts to U.S. naval force posture and pose an increased risk to freedom of navigation and U.S. ability to act*"[106]. The United States is aware that any decline of its influence in the region will be exploited by its major competitor, China. In this battle for influence, the Chinese presence is not the only problem for the West. Russia is considered a "strategic rival" on the sidelines of the war in Ukraine, according to General Stephen J. Townsend[107], while White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre had expressed in January the "United States' concern" [108] about the joint naval exercise (Mosi II) expected to be conducted off the coast of Durban by South Africa, China, and Russia on February 22, 2023. The door is thus open for the maritimization of power relationships in the region. This remains in favor of the United States and the Europeans, who have the means and strategic resources to cover a large part of Africa's Atlantic coastline.

b. China and Russia: Towards a Useful Stance

During the Cold War, China and Russia maintained strong influential relationships with Africa. Today, their African policies are based on a few achievements, such as the symbolic heritage of their relationship during the Cold War, or their membership of the BRICS group. There is also the desire to break the Western monopoly by proposing themselves as an economic, political, and security alternative. However, their respective actions in Africa, and particularly in the Afro-Atlantic region, have different dynamics in terms of both intensity and strength. While China continues on its upward trajectory in the long term, Russia grapples with its own paradoxes: diplomatic agility while facing limitations in terms of economic and conventional military capabilities, particularly in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine.

[105]Beijing and Malabo appear to have exchanged views on a potential naval base.

[106]See https://www.armed services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/AFRICOM.pdf

[107] Idem

[108] https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2023/01/23/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-and-secretary-of-energy-jennifer-granholm-2/

CHINA'S RISE TO POWER IS A LONG-TERM PROCESS

China's presence in West Africa is entering the engagement period; it is the third level of Chinese policy, which began its rise in Africa after the independence of the countries in question before the establishment of actual relationships throughout the 2000s[109].

In a short period of time, China has been able to strengthen its diplomatic influence by organizing the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Dakar, from November 28 to 30, 2021, and by securing the membership of all the countries along the Atlantic coast in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These countries need infrastructure and the funds necessary for economic modernization[110], presenting a good opportunity for the BRI to capitalize on. China also shares some African agendas for integration, including Agenda 2063 and the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). "*The coherence of the Belt and Road and the PIDA lay the foundation for a great adventure of Sino-African development*"[111], said the Chairman of the African Union Commission.

Trade between China and Africa reached a record amount of $282 billion in 2022, 11% more than in 2021[112], led by South Africa as China's first African trade partner, with a bilateral trade of $56.74 billion in 2022, followed by Nigeria ($26 billion in 2022), which is considered the main destination of Chinese investment in Africa. China has, for instance, financed with $1.5 billion the deep-water port of Lekki, which opened on January 23, 2023. China's other main trading partners on the continent are Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In the north of the Atlantic coast, China seems well placed to invest in the industrial sector in Morocco - for example, the Dakhla Atlantic port and high-speed rail expansion projects. It is thus clear that China is different from other international partners in Africa due to the diversity of its commercial and financial offers and its financing of major socio-economic projects, including road infrastructure, hospitals, schools, and bridges.

In the security market, regarded as a competitive field, China has also made numerous notable achievements. It maintains the image of a country that has never made any military attempts in the Afro-Atlantic area and stands out for its contribution to peacekeeping in Africa. Secondly, Afro-Atlantic countries are open to diverse strategic partnerships in terms of military cooperation agreements. Thirdly, China provides the targeted countries with significant funds for reforms in the security sector. The DRC, for example, received $27 million in January 2023[113]. Meanwhile, African armies are increasingly acquiring Chinese weapons, raising significantly China's market share in this regard. And, finally, the new Global Security Initiative (GSI) is anticipating plans to include security agreements within the framework of the peace-security-development nexus[114].

In addition to its economic, security, and diplomatic involvement, China has yet to establish a strategic foothold in Atlantic Africa, despite its close relationships with the coastal states. Equatorial Guinea is said to have quietly expressed its interest, but this was done without taking into account the strong opposition from the United States. It is therefore certain that any naval base project in Equatorial Guinea could encourage other powers to

[109] Eleonora Ardemagni, Rachid el houdaigui and others, China's engagement in Africa and the Middle East, NSD-S HUB, June 2021. https://thesouthernhub.org/topics/socio-economic/china-engagement-africa-middle-east.

[110]The annual infrastructure deficit exceeds $170 billion per year by 2025, according to the African Development Bank. See https://www.jeuneafrique.com, February 18, 2022.

[111]Statement by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, at the joint press conference with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang on January 11, 2023.

[112]Data published by the General Administration of Chinese Customs,https://www.chine-magazine.com/les-echanges-commerciaux-chine-afrique-ont-atteint-un-montant-record-en-2022

[113] https://www.chine-magazine.com/la-chine-met-27-millions-de-dollars-pour-assurer-la-securite-en-rdc/

[114]Proposed at the annual conference of the Bo'ao Forum for Asia on April 21, 2022.

follow suit, hastening the transformation of Atlantic Africa into a battleground for external competition. To avert this risk, the African Union is taking a firm stance against foreign bases, as evidenced by the decisions of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council in 2016 and 2019, warning countries about foreign military presences and advising them to be cautious when authorizing new bases[115].

RUSSIA'S PRESENCE

Russia is developing a comeback policy for the African continent, having started an accelerated phase after the "Russia-Africa" summit in Sochi, in October 2019. Is this an actual long-term commitment or just ambitious rhetoric without any significant substance? What are the impacts of Russia's presence in the Afro-Atlantic region? In fact, Russia's relationship with Africa is based on the principle of non-interference. Like China, Russia does not hinge its partnerships on specific political conditions; it has the ability to match its diplomatic and military apparatus with other informal means such as digital lobbying (social networks) and private security companies. Furthermore, its influence strategy is strengthened by diplomatic visibility, achieved through visits of high officials. In other words, Russia uses all the available means and plays its best cards to defend its interests on the continent just as other powers do. In addition, African countries cannot afford to lose their economic, technical, or diplomatic relations with any country.

However, Russia's presence as a structuring power in Africa is correlated with the complex reality of the Russian position on the international and African stages. The country, which has a GDP equivalent to that of Brazil or Spain, is not a big provider of development aid, and its trade with Africa is relatively little, around $14 billion[116], far behind the EU ($295 billion)[117], China ($282 billion)[118], and the United States ($83 billion)[119]. It has nevertheless managed to be the main supplier of arms to Africa[120]. On the other hand, international sanctions reduce its resources and limit its financial room for manoeuvre, essential to any ambitions on the continent. This dilemma raises the question of the future of the Russian presence in Africa. It is within this context that relations between Russia and the Atlantic coast of Africa should be placed.

For the time being, Russia's strategic visibility in the region is materialized by agreements on civil nuclear cooperation (Morocco, Nigeria, Congo), military cooperation (Senegal, Gambia, Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Congo, Angola, Namibia, DRC), and participation in the MOSI II joint naval exercise in partnership with South Africa and China. More than being effective and/or having substance, these agreements and operations are a matter of strategic communication. The fact that this Russian normative push started more or less at the same time as the first Ukrainian crisis in 2014, before taking an institutional form in 2019 during the Sochi summit, suggests the hypothesis that Russia is trying to break free from its isolation, showing the West that it still has partners.

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[115] PSC/PR/ COMM Communiqué (DCI), 601st meeting, May 30, 2016; PSC/PR/ COMM Communiqué (DCI), 868th meeting, August 14, 2019. See https://www.peaceau.org/fr.

[116] https://africacenter.org/fr/spotlight/decoder-les-engagements-economiques-de-la-russie-en-afrique/

[117] Idem.

[118] https://www.agenceecofin.com/actualites/2701-104908-chine-afrique-les-echanges-commerciaux-ont-atteint-un-montant-record-en-2022-a-282-de-milliards

[119] https://www.state.gov/translations/french/partenariat-entre-les-etats-unis-et-lafrique-pour-la-promotion-du-commerce-et-des-investissements-bilateraux-en-afrique/

[120] https://www.sipri.org/publications/2022/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-international-arms-transfers-2021.

2. A NEW AFRICAN STANCE

How do African countries on the Atlantic coast engage with the power game prevailing in their territories? What room for manoeuvre do they have?

Presently, we can observe that the stance of these countries is guided by three processes, distinct in some ways, but which intersect and mutually reinforce one another according to national, regional, and international political and geopolitical developments. The three processes are: the quest for collective autonomy; the pragmatism of foreign policies; and the need to establish an Atlanticist partnership. The desire of collective entities (AU, Regional Economic Communities, and Regional Mechanisms) to produce a common discourse regarding the choice of international partners coexists with the paramount importance of national interests, followed by regional interests.

c. A Commitment to Collective Autonomy

Scientific and political debates on Africa's actions and its international role are increasingly addressing its autonomy in a changing world. Since 2000, the entire continent has embarked on an attempt to take control of its economic, political, and strategic fate. This appropriation process is based on three building blocks: 1) strategic resilience by strengthening the institutionalization of the African space, through the AU and subregional organizations, on the one hand, and the establishment of a continental free trade area, on the other hand; 2) the priority given to South-South and triangular cooperation; 3) the institutionalization of partnerships with great international powers, in the sense that partnership and dialogue with these powers[121] are gradually becoming part of the AU's common diplomatic agenda. This institutional dynamic is important because it draws its strength from the weight of the number of states, which are 54. It is the world's largest regional voting bloc, which carries a lot of weight in multilateral decision-making (e.g., resolutions condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine).It is also active in the global debate on climate change, maritime security, digitization, and the reform of multilateral institutions.

In parallel to this institutionalization effort, Africa (AU and African countries) is developing, not without some difficulty, a new storyline that has been consolidated by international events, including the 2008 financial crisis, the 2011 Arab Spring, COVID-19, the Chinese-American rivalry, and the war in Ukraine. This acceleration of history has fundamentally altered the manner in which Africa interacts with the rest of the world.

- On the strategic level, African leaders consider that the global strategic competition is very favourable, since the involvement of foreign powers allows them to multiply and diversify international partnerships[122]. They insist on autonomous decision-making in clear terms such as, Africa *"cannot be the*

[121]AU–EU Partnership;Africa–South America Cooperation Forum (ASACOF); African Union Commission–United States of America High-Level Dialogue; China–Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC); Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD); Africa–India Partnership; Africa–Turkey Partnership; Africa–Korea.

[122]Fonteh Akum and Denis M. Tull, Strategic Competition and Cooperation in Africa: Perceptions, Implications, and Ways Forward, Policy Brief 13 FEB 2023, Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

preserve of one against the other"[123], or *"we must put Africa's interests first, regardless of the country with which we cooperate"*[124]. Africa has thus entered an era of alternatives. A significant number of emerging or consolidated actors, including China, India, Brazil, the Gulf States, and Turkey, are offering new opportunities. Simultaneously, although Western are still important, they are no longer Africa's primary economic partners. The main evidence of this is a relative decrease in the EU's share of Africa's foreign trade[125]. Similarly, aid funds are likely to decline further, since Europe has begun to redirect its efforts to Ukraine.

- On the economic level, we are witnessing a new discourse on economic sovereignty. Reducing reliance on traditional partners and seeking alternative avenues for development are at the heart of national agendas. Donor interference under the guise of conditional policies is no longer well-received by concerned countries. In response to the pressing financial needs of African states, China offers unparalleled investment opportunities[126], regardless of the risks of debt.

- On the diplomatic level, the pressure of the war in Ukraine on both the political and economic levels is prompting Africa to adopt a neo-non-alignment strategy: in March and October 2022, nearly half of the continent's countries chose abstention or empty chair votes in the UN vote denouncing the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The vote on a resolution calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops on February 23, 2023, showed a similar pattern.

- On the military level, the AU has expressed strong reservations about foreign bases, saying they undermine Africa's sovereignty and the AU's Non-Aggression and Common Defense Pact. This stance has been framed by two decisions issued by the Peace and Security Council in 2016 and 2019.

However, the path toward collective autonomy faces endogenous and exogenous blocking factors, which have specific dimensions in the current context. Indeed, an analysis of the current situation shows that the desire for collective autonomy is not necessarily translated into common positions on all issues.

d. Pragmatic foreign policies

Due to the political diversity among the 54 states, pragmatism and national, and to some extent regional, interests continue to guide the decisions regarding international partners. The challenges faced by these states, regardless of their weight, are related to their status and rank within the international system: what position should they hold in the global geostrategic and geoeconomic landscape? How can they maintain a comfortable position

[123] Speech by Macky Sall, current Chairperson of the Union, at the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU, February 5, 2022.

[124]Statement by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, at the joint press conference with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang on January 11, 2023.

[125] https://fr.statista.com/infographie/26663/partenaire-commercial-premier-pays-source-des-importations-des-pays-africains-chine-france-afrique/

[126] It was $130.4 billion in 2010, $346.9 billion in 2015 and $473.5 billion in 2020, Young Africa, February 27, 2022.

or how can they conquer or reconquer it? These questions are very important because the volatility of the geostrategic situation cannot fail to affect African foreign policies.

Furthermore, the path towards a diversified positioning should be based on a national logic, because the fundamental issue is how to find the best balance between a practical management of the interference with the West inherited from the colonial era, on the one hand, and the adhesion to a community of geoeconomic interests, which is the Global South, in the other. African countries have no choice but to build and/or consolidate their own connections and alignments within the North-South scheme and the Latin America-Africa cooperation axis.

To illustrate this complexity, we can cite Morocco, South Africa, and Equatorial Guinea as examples:

- Morocco's geopolitical stance in the context of the war in Ukraine and the Chinese-American rivalry follows three lines of conduct: its self-assertion and the assertion of its sovereignty, strategic affiliation with the United States, and the relevance of its economic partnerships with China and the EU.

- South Africa's neutrality regarding the war in Ukraine and the South African navy's participation in the joint military exercise with China and Russia (February 22, 2023) draw a fine line between the hope of establishing a new world order and maintaining strong economic relations with the EU and the U.S.

- The informal proposal of a potential Chinese naval base in Equatorial Guinea has reshaped the country's position in the geopolitical landscape of the Gulf of Guinea region. Equatorial Guinea is exploring opportunities amid the diplomatic competition between China and the United States, aiming to leverage it to its advantage.

All things considered, the prevailing value system in the decision-making processes of states hinges on the pursuit of the optimal solution. From Rabat to Pretoria, from Dakar to Addis Ababa, from Cairo to Nairobi, as everywhere else in Africa, the logic adopted is that of choosing the option that offers the least costs and the greatest benefits in terms of national interest. Dualistic stances (South Africa), so-called strategic signalling activities (Equatorial Guinea), and the pursuit of influence (Morocco) are the direct outcomes of this tendency, which is likely to be reinforced by the current dynamic in global affairs.

3. TOWARDS AN INFORMAL 2+2 DIALOGUE: EUROPE-U.S./AFRICA-LATIN AMERICA

The concept of multilateral Atlanticist cooperation should be based on a geopolitical and technical way of thinking, rather than a functional approach. It is time to break free from the essentialist functionalist mindset. This regards each country, or the whole of the Southern shore, especially in the current context, as an instrument, failing to consider that these countries have their own histories, geographies, political systems, and social norms. The most important effort of accommodation is to adopt a new vision that takes into account the structural limits of the Atlantic area and the alternative opportunities that cooperation can offer. The conditions are favourable for opening a new geopolitical perspective, that of an informal 2+2 dialogue: Europe-U.S./Africa-Latin America

This should be based on two processes:

e. Need for a Strategic Consensus

The stability and prosperity of the Euro-Atlantic area are certainly linked to the balance of power with Russia and systemic competition with China. However, they have also become dependent on the stability and prosperity of the Afro-Atlantic area. In general, any modification or reversal of alliances in this area could have a direct impact on the configuration of the power dynamics at play. This is what emerges from the American analysis of the scenario of a Chinese naval base in the Gulf of Guinea, for instance. General Stephen Townsend, the head of AFRICOM, said that, in nautical miles, *"a base on the North Atlantic coast of Africa could be much closer to the United States than the military installation in China are to the West Coast of America"*[127]. The possibility of a growing threat from China that could come not only from the Pacific but also from the Atlantic seems to be gaining momentum in Washington.

Western countries should therefore, from a strategic perspective, understand the significance of the Afro-Atlantic coast, from the Strait of Gibraltar to the Cape of Good Hope, which embodies the primary strength of the African continent. The 23 countries on the Atlantic coast represent 46% of the African population, 55% of African GDP, carry out 57% of the continental trade, and harbour enormous natural resources (including 24 billion barrels of oil[128]). However, these countries face common challenges: the crisis of the human development model; the resolution of territorial and maritime conflicts; the rise of asymmetric threats (piracy, terrorism, banditry); the appropriation of the maritime space through a structuring maritime policy.

The combination of these issues with the actions of the region's states seems to lay the foundations for an 'Afro-Atlantic' strategic identity, which is yet to be established: a common vision of the issues and the institutionalization of the area through informal structures. In this context, there is a gradual shift towards individual states taking ownership of maritime issues, as opposed to relying solely on the AU and the Regional Economic Communities, integrating and considering all the socioeconomic, geopolitical, and environmental parameters. The first category of issues that emerges is the exploration of marine mineral resources (hydrocarbons, highly concentrated metallic ores, and rare earth elements), fishery resources, and natural energy resources (wind power, ocean thermal energy). The second category is that of free movement on the African seas, which must be defended and protected in the same way as resources. The third and final category of issues is related to the implementation of the blue economy and the protection of the marine environment.

f. An Extended Cooperation Framework

The Afro-Atlantic coast has all the assets and potential to cooperate with Western partners. The question is how to align this potential with the sectoral requirements of national economies, and above all to identify the framework within which future integrated cooperation with the EU and the United States should be developed. One of the institutional solutions would be to support regional initiatives such as the African Atlantic Initiative (AII), which was launched in Rabat in October 2012 by the member countries of the Ministerial Conference of African Atlantic States. Similarly, it is necessary to interact with the three major maritime initiatives adopted by the

[127] https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-china-business-government-and-politics-24f774a952eaabcb38d2b25380b61a62

[128] Rachid EL Houdaigui, La Façade atlantique de l'Afrique : un espace géopolitique en construction, Policy Center For the New South edition, Rabat, 2016, 183p. The cited data are the result of the author's combined research and calculations

AU: the African Integrated Strategy for the Seas and Oceans Horizon-2050 (AIM Strategy); the blue economy within the framework of the AU Agenda 2063; and the African Charter on Maritime Safety, Security and Development. On the other hand, the Morocco-Nigeria gas pipeline project, which would traverse 14 countries to connect Nigeria to Morocco, could contribute to both economic and political integration. It would transport Nigerian gas resources to West African countries and eventually extend to Morocco, with the possibility of serving Europe in the future.

However, this dynamic cooperation should not ignore the advantages of South-South relations. The links with the Latin American-Atlantic region constitute an important way in which the Afro-Atlantic countries can accelerate their integration into global value chains. Countries including Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina have been able to successfully stand out and become part of the competitive niches of the global economy. Their economic models differ from those of traditional and emerging major powers, making them potential intermediaries for African foreign policies in two key ways: 1) strengthening the established community of interest; 2) contributing to the processes of cooperation and integration between Africa and South America, which have yet to achieve the levels of integration and increased intra-regional trade. Regarding the latter point, tripartite cooperation involving the EU can propose and advance the project of exploring new interactions in light of the changes introduced by the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA).

CONCLUSION

This article has outlined the dynamics of the power game in the Atlantic space, and analysed the relevant parameters, established dimensions, and the challenges that lie ahead.

The current geopolitical configurations open up new perspectives full of uncertainties and opportunities for the Atlantic area. It is therefore imperative to reformulate agendas, redefine priorities, and establish new geopolitical and geoeconomic paradigms. There are two issues that should be at the forefront of the regional diplomatic agenda: strengthening resilience in view of the repercussions of the Russia-Ukraine war, and seizing the opportunities provided by the 2+2 trajectory involving the United States, Europe, Africa, and Latin America.

The Atlantic coastline in Africa poses both a security challenge and an inescapable strategic perspective for Atlanticist nations. The future of multilateral cooperation hinges on the alignment of actual intentions between the EU and the United States, the levels of commitment and responsibility demonstrated by African countries, and the actions of extra-Atlantic powers. Today, we must reflect collectively on the convergences and complementarities necessary for the Atlantic region to overcome the obstacles that have often divided it.

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CONCLUSIONS – A PROSPECTIVE LOOK ON ATLANTIC POLITICS

Licínia Simão [129]

INTRODUCTION

Great power competition is increasingly becoming a significant feature of international relations, with regional ramifications, including in the Atlantic, which require our attention. This report set out to revisit the debates on the interests, policies, and ultimately the strategic thinking driving the presence of powerful countries in Atlantic politics, and to identify the major changes that this new competitive context is producing.

This new global strategic context needs to be assessed against the backdrop of the history of Atlantic relations, with its fractures, its inflection points, and its narratives. One of the first ideas that people working on Atlantic politics will point out is that this is a divided ocean. This generalised perspective persists, despite the Atlantic being one of the most crucial commercial arteries of the world, of having one of the highest levels of intraregional trade (Hamilton, 2015), dense social relations built on centuries-long migration and diaspora politics, coupled with investment flows and cultural and diplomatic relations (Bacaria and Tarragona, 2016). To understand this apparent contradiction, between a divided and densely connected ocean, it can be argued that, upon closer look, division lines emerge in all these areas to explain the uneven patterns of integration that the Atlantic basin continues to experience. This situation creates many challenges in governance and in the stable development of relations among Atlantic nations and communities.

Politically, it is a region where interests tend to be crystallised, seen through the prism of colonisation, slavery, and imperialism and their aftermaths, both in southern and northern Atlantic societies. Economic relations confirm this division and this crystallisation. As one author remarked in this regard: "Although the economic diversity of the South has increased and its collective economic power has risen, relative income rankings remain unaltered, and the states of the Global South are as dissatisfied as they were four decades ago" (Lees, 2021). North-South relations remain fraught with suspicion, short-term interests, and instrumentalization. Militarily, the divisions are also profound. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) remains an inherited division line from the Cold War period, which has nevertheless been regularly eroding as NATO's engagement with the southern flank is evolving (Pereira e de Melo, 2019). Bilateral cooperation in matters of security and defence between former colonial powers and global powers alike and their African counterparts is still a significant element in South Atlantic politics. South-South cooperative defence initiatives also exist, being led both by sub-regional powers, like Brazil, and by sub-regional African organisations dealing with peace and security issues, both in land and at sea. Broadly speaking, there is still a fragmented understanding of Atlantic security threats, which shapes the divided nature of responses.

At the social and cultural level, divisions persist despite the dense web of relations linking Atlantic communities. Historically, migration from the South to the North, both in the Americas and from Africa to Europe, is one of the most divisive issues in north-south relations. The militarisation of borders by the North reflects a view of migration as a security issue, rather than a socio-economic and cultural phenomenon. On the

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other hand, the complicit acts of many African nations against African migrants are made more violent by the limited checks and balances across African political systems. The result is the persistence of racism, xenophobia, and other human rights violations, in the South as much as in liberal democracies, at a time when great power competition is acquiring also an ideological dimension, based on a division between democracies and autocracies; a division between liberalism and illiberalism. However, the implementation of this worldview encounters many difficulties within Atlantic relations. Overall, Atlantic states remain suspicious of each other, interests are often circumstantial or rhetoric, without sustained impacts that can change this situation. The nature of some regimes across the Atlantic questions the utility of the ideological divide. President Biden's gathering of a Summit for Democracy, in November 2021 and with a second edition planned for March 2023, is a good illustration of the difficulties in choosing which countries fit into the "democratic" label.[130] Moreover, narrow financial interests and corruption, which tend to profit from the fragility of national institutions, need to be brought into the equation.

The arrival of China and the pragmatic interests of Russia in the South Atlantic have made regional politics more dynamic for the largest part of the two initial decades of the 21st century. As we enter a new level of global power competition between the United States and China, as the consequences of the war in Ukraine persist, as the world grapples with climate change, the challenges of energy transition, food insecurity, war, the devastating links between transnational organised crime and extremist ideologies and radicalisation, among many other challenges, the Atlantic is in dire need of reassessing how prepared it is to manage these challenges in a competitive environment. Today, the political management of Atlantic relations is undeniably necessary.

The specifics of the Atlantic region need to be considered at a time when the centrality of ocean regions in the political, scientific or popular imagination continues to increase: oceans are central to manage climate change; between 80 to 90% of global trade uses ocean waterways; energy is exploited offshore and carried across the globe; mineral resources for technological applications and alternative energy production are driving a race to the bottom of the oceans (De Almeida Silva, 2020). This is the case in the Atlantic, and it will tend to be even more so, as the competition between powers is being driven by technological innovation in the battlefield and in the economic and social-political field (Jones, 2021).

Considering this scenario, Atlantic states have been stimulated to cooperate at the regional and transregional level, in search of instruments that can enhance human security, increase economic wellbeing, and mitigate the effects of armed violence and criminality. Protection from armed violence is often a precondition for human security and therefore remains a priority for many states. The fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea has served as a catalyst for security and defence cooperation between many Atlantic countries, both in the North and in the South. Although the overall outcomes are open to debate, there are clear gains in cooperative efforts of regional organisations around the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and the institutional development of the Maritime Security Architecture in the Gulf of Guinea – topics that this report covers in detail. South-South security cooperation has also contributed significantly to increase the means and capabilities available to fight insecurity at sea and exert the responsibilities of sovereignty. Brazil's bilateral ties with African nations and its activism in the ZOPACAS or the IBSA forum, to name just two, have been major driving forces behind cooperation. Defence capacity building is also the driving logic behind Portugal's Atlantic Centre initiative, while

[130] The list of invitations issued for the summit in 2021 can be found here https://www.state.gov/participant-list-the-summit-for-democracy/ [15 March 2023].

establishing a political framework where pressing security needs in the Atlantic can be managed (Pires et al, 2020). Morocco is also leading an African Atlantic dialogue focusing on security issues and economic cooperation, whereas the United States announced in September 2022 an Atlantic cooperation initiative (Lesser, 2022; Hamilton, 2022). All these projects evidence a desire to address power gaps that are currently feeding insecurity, but if they are to reinforce cooperation, they will need to be steered in that direction, building synergies and platforms for dialogue, managing power competition.

This concluding chapter offers a perspective on Atlantic politics that acknowledges these historical divisions, deep-rooted suspicions, and the instrumental nature of North-South relations, as well as the new competitive environment fuelled by great powers. This perspective focuses on four key dynamics, which require additional attention if they are to result in a more stable, secure and prosperous Atlantic: regionalism, insecurity, interventionism, and geopolitics.

1. REGIONALISM

The Atlantic is a vast space that brings together communities from the Arctic and the High North, to Antarctica and the Deep South, across three continents. Varying levels of regional integration exist across this region and distinct meanings are attributed to regional interactions. The North Atlantic is home to some of the densest institutional settings in the world, but the levels of regionalism it displays vary considerably, with one set of authors mentioning the "North Atlantic bicontinental regionalism" (Alcaro and Reilly, 2017). Despite the significant levels of cooperation and interdependence between the European and the North American societies, which are not replicated in relations between the North and the South Atlantic, differences also persist between the role regional integration plays in Europe, with a partly supranational European Union (EU), and the role attributed to multilateralism and regional organisations by the North American nations. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) remains the only regional initiative in this space, but one which has not evolved beyond the Free Trade Area currently established. Whereas European integration has led to a significant level of regime convergence, with most European national regimes becoming liberal capitalist democracies, in the North Americas there are still significant political differences between the US, Mexico, and Canada. Considering these distinctions, inter-regionalism between North Atlantic states, meaning either the establishment of regional institutions spanning several regions or the coordination between regional frameworks across regions, remains limited to NATO and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The denser relations between the EU and its North American counterparts can be seen as a step in the direction of deepening interdependence and consultation, but still under limited institutional expression.

Despite these limitations, we can speak of a community of values in the North Atlantic. Authors like Karl Deustch (1957) have referred to it as a security community, which the bipolar opposition of the Cold War forged into existence. The enduring nature of this community is explained both by the permanent alignment of interests for internal and external purposes, including the global projection of power, and the strategic alignment of positions in view of competition. As competition for global hegemony increases in these early decades of the 21st century, the importance of keeping the North-Atlantic security community cohesive becomes more evident. The war in Ukraine, following Russia's invasion in February 2022, and the subsequent measures taken to sanction

Russia and rally western support to Ukraine, have furthered crystallised the boundaries of this community around membership to the EU and NATO, as shown by the Swedish and Finnish applications to join NATO (Alberque and Schreer, 2022). Moreover, as competition is increasingly framed as a clash between democracies and autocracies, the North-Atlantic security community consolidates its identity around a vague notion of democracy that disregards the pressing internal issues pending over the US and European democracies, from radicalism to populism and the rise of extremist movements, all undemocratic by nature. In doing so, the North also creates further hurdles in relations with the South Atlantic countries, whose democratic processes are facing pressures.

Regionalism remains a powerful tool to shape our imagination of geographical spaces, to structure political, economic, social or security relations, and to develop a narrative of common interests around which resources can be mobilised. Regionalism in the South Atlantic has been used as a tool to mobilise pan-African, non-aligned narratives, and south-south cooperation; as a tool to organise sub-regional interests, and to densify economic and human relations. Regionalism in Africa is significant, with several pan-African and sub-regional organisations providing African states and other subnational actors with a platform to continue promoting their interests and mobilising a common narrative of sub-regional identification (Odén, 1996). Although often marked by a significant top-down, state-centric exercise of power, namely in the sectors considered more critical to sovereignty, as is the case of security and defence, regionalism and multilateral cooperation tend to mobilise other stakeholders in society with an interest in aligning norms and regulations, in creating predictability, and in investing in more dynamic regional markets (see Sakyi and Osei Opoku, 2014 for an insightful account of African economic regionalism).

It is worth mentioning the expected impact of the full implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA), initiated in 2012, as the flagship initiative of the "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want", the African Union's long-term development strategy for the continent. Achieving the goals of economic integration on a continental scale offers actual prospects of sustaining African economic development through its internal market and of having a more competitive voice in inter-regional trade. 2022 proved to be a very troublesome year for African societies and economies, due to the sharp rise in food and energy prices, with many African states being both unable to support their citizens with social programmes and to benefit from the sharp rise in the commodity prices of Africa's exports (Bassou, 2022). The recently approved Draft agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Treaty) is a key element in ensuring that the many economic activities increasingly being planned for the oceans will meet the required standards for "conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, for the present and in the long term, through effective implementation of the relevant provisions of the Convention and further international cooperation and coordination" (United Nations, 2023). Both in land and at sea, the South Atlantic region remains of high interest for economic development, technological innovation, scientific exploitation, and extractive industries.

Governance regimes have been designed to serve the common interest, namely in the regulation of the use of the global commons - "the shared ecosystems and natural processes that stabilize life on Earth and underpin well-being [and] fall outside national jurisdictions" (Nakicenovic et al 2016, cited in Global Commons Alliance, 2020). However, as we enter a new geological age of the planet – the Anthropocene – our relations with the global commons, including the High Seas, Antarctica, and the Arctic, all key to Atlantic dynamics, must be framed by governance regimes that safeguard the Global Commons in the Anthropocene. All the four mega trends identified

as having the most significant impacts on the health of the Planet in the Anthropocene - energy, food, water, and urbanization (Nakicenovic et al 2016) – are critical for Atlantic communities and societies and require our attention. The political management of these trends in a cooperative way will be critical to avoid conflict around the Atlantic, especially in a context of competition between great powers.

Over the last decades, the so-called South-South cooperation widened the economic and financial landscape of developing regions. Either bilaterally or through the establishment of new financial institutions, as is the case of the New Development Bank (NDB) set up by the so-called BRICS, South-South cooperation impacts the nature of regionalism and regional interactions. As Risse (2012: 3) has argued, the construction of a perception of shared interests, interdependencies, and a common identity has facilitated these regional interactions. But relations among nations from the South are also fraught with their own challenges, including some forms of neo-colonialism (Destradi and Gurol, 2022).

2. INSECURITY

Insecurity is a key concept in our analysis of global dynamics and a key driver of political action. National security concerns explain state investments in defence; economic activities require a certain level of predictability and security to develop; the security of individuals – human security – drives social policies by states, coupled with efforts to curb domestic criminality and external threats. Sovereignty encompasses this desire of a specific community, politically organised in a state to exist secure from fear and from want (UNDP 2022). But insecurity is also a perception. Individuals can perceive specific situations as threatful, infusing institutions with this view. The security dilemma is a key example of how insecurity is never an objective reality. The arms race of the Cold War, much like the one we are currently experiencing, was justified to increase security. However, this reinforces a sense of insecurity in adversaries and neighbours, feeding the arms race and leading in turn to more insecurity. NATO's expansion can be used as another illustration of how important perceptions are. The fact that Sweden and Finland are currently seeking NATO membership is perceived by these countries as a step to ensure their security, while Russia perceives it as an increase in its own insecurity.

The first question to be asked is thus "whose security" does a specific action increase? The Atlantic context, with its divisions and its limited regional integration, is prone to understandings of security which are exclusive and, at times, competitive. Over the course of the 21st century, NATO and its member countries have sought to address what they perceived as threats coming from the global South. The image of the South as a source of threats to the North is often evoked in NATO, EU, and national narratives to justify the militarisation of relations and the increase in surveillance and information gathering. The establishment of NATO's Hub for the South, its cooperation agreements with the African Union on peacekeeping and counter-terrorism activities, and the

expansion of bilateral agreements with countries like Mauritania[131], Tunisia[132] or Cape Verde[133] are expressions of the anxieties that violent and radical extremism in the Sahel is creating in Europe and the US. It is also driven by the need to control piracy and other illegal activities at sea, due to their negative impact on global economic activities and in the social-economic development of societies in the South Atlantic.

African coastal states understand these negative impacts and are aware of them but have limited material means to fight these threats and limited means to address the root causes of insecurity. In fact, piracy became a hot topic mobilising financial means from European and North American states only when it represented a threat to the commercial interests of the North. The effects of piracy on regional societies in the Gulf of Guinea have been well-known for over a decade, but no major mobilisation in the North took place. There was bilateral cooperation with France and the US, but the EU itself only approved the Coordinated Maritime Presences for the Gulf of Guinea in 2021.[134] Support to the Yaoundé Architecture, the political and operational structure that supports regional in combatting threats at sea while exercising sovereignty in a responsible way (Côrte-Real, 2022), remains underfunded and politically under supported by external and regional actors alike (Mboob, 2022). Thus, how much of a threat is piracy? To whom are these activities a threat?

But insecurities can also remain latent in areas which are never securitised, meaning that they are never voiced by a relevant actor as an existential risk to the state or its communities, thus preventing consequent actions. The securitization schools (Buzan et al, 1998; Balzacq, 2005, 2011) remind us of the importance of "speaking" insecurity, of the role of "authoritative figures" in naming insecurity, and of the resulting "decisions" that accompany these processes. There is also room to explore how certain threats are kept below a certain threshold and, as a result, are not acted upon. An illustration of this comes from the difficulties that those addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing have experienced in mobilising support to fight this practice at sea. The economic, social, and environmental impacts of these practices are well documented, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals' indicator 14.6.1., related to SDG 14 'Life Below Water', is dedicated to measuring achievements made towards the ambitious target of eliminating IUU fishing by 2020. Nevertheless, IUU fishing has encountered many difficulties in becoming a mobilising priority for countries in the North Atlantic. As numbers show a decrease in piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, an argument has been made in several forums for naval assets from the North Atlantic, which are deployed in the region, to have their missions adapted to support regional states in fighting IUU fishing.[135] The European Union has also been reluctant to push IUU fishing to the top of its priorities in the Gulf of Guinea. The ongoing process of revising the EU's strategy for the Gulf of Guinea has kept IUU fishing and environmental degradation at a lower priority,

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131 Mauritania has been a NATO partner since 1995, when it joined the Mediterranean Dialogue, a cooperation forum created in 1994 that also includes Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Information available at https://atalayar.com/en/content/nato-strengthens-cooperation-mauritania-limit-rapprochement-russia

132 Tunisia's relations with NATO remain tense, but increasing pressure has been put on Tunis to cooperate more closely with NATO. Information available at https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2018/04/tunisia-reluctant-partnership-nato and https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/guerre-en-ukraine-la-tunisie-embarquee-malgre-elle-par-l-otan

133 in 2006, NATO's Steadfast Jaguar Exercise took place in Cape Verde and Cape Verdean authorities have ventured the idea of accession to NATO. Information available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_22264.htm?selectedLocale=en and https://24.sapo.pt/atualidade/artigos/primeiro-ministro-de-cabo-verde-admite-adesao-a-nato.

134 Information available at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/coordinated-maritime-presences_en

135 These arguments were clearly articulated in the workshop organised by the Atlantic Centre on the side-lines of the G7++FoGG meeting in Abidjan, in 2022, which the author attended.

although relevant reports indicate that these two issues have the most significant impacts on the lives of these communities.

The ongoing efforts by North Atlantic countries to discredit China's activities in the Atlantic are pushing these issues higher on their agenda. In fact, China is one of the key perpetrators of IUU fishing in the South Atlantic (Daniels, et al., 2022; EJF, 2018), and the United States has moved to sanction Chinese individuals and companies engaged in these illegal practices. Pressure is also mounting on the EU to follow suit, after a European Parliament commissioned study confirmed what is widely known to be happening (Pauly, D., 2022). The fact that the voices and complaints of African partners failed to push more forceful action on the part of the North Atlantic countries on the sources of insecurity to their communities is another illustration of the unbalanced relations existing in the Atlantic. A partnership between African, European, and American communities needs to respond to the insecurities experienced by all partners. It is also noteworthy that leaders in Africa, as well as in Latin America, where IUU fishing is also posing serious threats to ecosystems, are reluctant to denounce these abuses, as they perceive themselves to be largely dependent on Chinese assistance. On the other hand, European companies are also engaged in these practices, which makes alliances between southern and northern countries less likely. The strengthening of existing regimes to protect the oceans will be key to support state action on these matters. On the other hand, the establishment of common narratives on insecurity is key for action to ensue.

The link between organised crime, radicalisation and terrorism has also been listed as a major security concern impacting the Atlantic communities. The crime-terror nexus has been well-known to scholars and practitioners (Carrapiço, et al., 2016; Bassou and Ouassif, 2019; Duarte et al., 2019), but new dimensions have emerged in this nexus: technology, the infiltration of these networks in the global North, and the extent to which these networks have been able to control states and territories, namely across the Sahel, or how climate change is increasing fragility and pushing individuals and communities to the brink of survival (Nett and Rüttinger, 2016). Many other examples could be listed as actual and potential sources of insecurity in the Atlantic. As activities at sea increase in number and complexity, the risks are higher. As global geoeconomic and geopolitical competition increases, the risk that insecurity will be perceived differently across this vast space becomes more real. Overall, the combination of willingness and capacity is still key for actions that protects individuals, communities, and the environment. Without frameworks to govern and mediate decisions, without the transparency and the participation of societies in these responses, the results will serve only a part of those interested in curbing insecurity in the Atlantic.

3. INTERVENTIONISM

This report approaches the issue of security interventions in the South, and how post-intervention relations develop, namely as regards the issue of maritime security. How external powers chose to intervene and how local elites and communities engage with these initiatives is key to understand the evolving context of the Atlantic Ocean. Intervention can take many forms. Economic relations constitute a primordial area of interventionism in the South, which for the past decades has been open to interests from European and Asian economies, most

notably from China, but also India, Japan, and Korea, to name only the most prominent. The new geopolitical competition that the United States and China have embarked on, with its trade, financial, energy, and resources management impacts, represents a challenge to all regions around the Atlantic basin, as it does elsewhere on the planet.

For many countries, thinking about the Atlantic Ocean in 2023 is a necessity, as poor economic performances continue to pressure advanced economies to trade more, to produce more, and to innovate more. The war in Ukraine added urgency to produce policies that ensure energy security and produce technological innovation that can feed the global US-China/Russia competition. Energy transition is coupled with climate change goals and Sustainable Development Goals that are shaping investment agendas. Enhanced economic performance is also a necessity for the struggling economies in many Southern Atlantic countries, with ever more states looking to their Economic Exclusive Zones and to the extension of their continental shelves for investment, in the hope that the sea will provide another source of much-needed prosperity and integration into the global markets. Thus, competition is often a trait of these processes, as competing claims and competing capabilities for the actual use of sovereign resources may trigger breaches of international law.

Interventions in the field of peace and security remain a key feature of African security. Although the African Union (AU) has gone a long way to reinforce its peace and security mandate, establishing the AU's African Peace and Security Architecture as of 2002, external military presence is a common feature across the continent. Many pressures exist on the AU-UN partnership, both at the technical and operational levels, but also at the political level. Important steps have been taken to improve the political dimension of the partnership, but hurdles remain, namely the "lack of permanent African representation in the UN Security Council (UNSC), despite 70% of UNSC agenda topics relating to Africa, as well as the challenges of securing funding for African peace support operations (PSOs)" (Shiferaw. 2021). China is the largest troop-contributing country among UN Security Council permanent members and the second largest contributor to the UN's regular budget and peacekeeping assessment (Pingjian, 2022). China's interest in African security has reflected the perceived threats that conflicts and violence on the continent represent to China's economic interests, as well as to its citizens living in the continent. It is also perceived as an opportunity for China to take on a role as a global security provider. This engagement has taken many forms, including through bilateral relations with African states, through military cooperation with their armed forces, by promoting a global China-Africa arms trade, engaging in relations with African regional organisations, actively participating in international cooperation, taking on a role in peacekeeping and peacebuilding and economic engagements on the continent (Saferworld, 2011).

China's military presence in Africa has raised a great deal of concerns in the North Atlantic. News of China's efforts to establish a permanent military base in Equatorial Guinea (Phillips, 2021) has led to a flurry of diplomatic action by the US across the Atlantic, including among the Atlantic Portuguese-speaking countries, with whom Malabo shares a presence in the Community of Portuguese Speaking countries (CPLP from the Portuguese acronym).[136] In fact, the number of foreign military bases in Africa has increased over the last years, as insecurity in the continent continues to increase (Amani Africa, 2022), raising significant doubts about the ability of African

[136] The most recent US initiative for the Atlantic had three Portuguese-speaking countries among the six leading nations in the consultation stage (Portugal, Brasil, Angola). Information on the official statement here https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-atlantic-cooperation/ [16 March 2023].

regional organisations to design coherent approaches to the insecurity in the continent. Despite the AU's Peace and Security Council reserves (AU PSC, 2016), many African governments regard the presence of foreign military bases as a means to fill security gaps. Other objectives are also considered by African governments in these decisions, including immediate economic gains, the existing bilateral military agreements signed after independence, and the role foreign troops also play in securing friendly regimes (Atta-Asamoah, 2019). The US and France rank first in the list of foreign military forces in Africa, with a total of 13 foreign powers having a substantial military presence on the continent (Neethling, 2020). Newcomers, such as India, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, add complexity to a context fraught with insecurity and competition.

The European Union is itself a part of the increasing military presence in the continent, concerned with radical Islamic terrorism spreading across the Sahel (Taylor, 2021), but also increasingly concerned with the impact of Russia's private military groups in this region and West Africa. The impacts of the war in Ukraine are reverberating in Africa, not only in a scramble for political support in the ongoing conflict and the application of sanctions on Russia, but also in an attempt to diversify commodity markets, including gold and hydrocarbons. The Russian strategy to court certain African governments to evade sanctions and ensure access to gold, as well as to keep a military footprint in Africa that can reduce the leeway of the US and European powers, such as the UK and France, in the African continent has been exposed in several intelligence and academic reports (Harding and Burke, 2019; Stanyard et al, 2023). The Sahel countries have been particularly hit by an explosive mix of poverty, climate-related deprivation, terrorism, organised crime, and geopolitical competition between Western powers, Russia and even emerging players in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf (Sandnes and Carrozza, 2023). As a response, and following France's decision to withdraw operation Barkhane from Mali, due to deteriorating relations with the Malian authorities, the EU is assessing its military presence in the region (Rettman, 2022). The string of military coups taking place across West Africa and the Sahel are said to be supported by Russian forces with a clear anti-western agenda, deepening regional instability (Fofana and Janes-Lucas, 2023).

Intervention is not, however, exclusive to Africa. Although South American governments have been less keen to embark on military agreements with northern powers, the US has a series of military bases in Central and South America, and the UK has a permanent presence in the Falkland Islands, in the Southern Ocean. The ZOPACAS, the nuclear-free zone declared in the South Atlantic, is a key element in limiting the militarisation of this region, despite the intense military interactions among South Atlantic states, particularly between Brazil and African states. The growing interest and the fast changes in polar politics, make the Artic and Antarctica also open to an increasing number of interventions, potentially destabilising the existing regimes and power balances.

4. GEOPOLITICS

Atlantic geopolitics refers to the political meaning and use attributed to this geographical area (or parts of it), its resources, and its populations. Geopolitics sees geography as key element in defining political action and explaining politics, building deterministic laws of interest that explain state behaviour. Such laws and explanations would dictate, for instance, that Portugal has a permanent interest in the Atlantic, due to its geographical positioning in the western-most end of the Eurasian continent. Although this might be virtually true for any

Atlantic coastal state, the fact is that such a deterministic view of geography is limited in its ability to explain variations in the meaning geographical conditions acquire.

The geopolitical interests of global powers, on the other hand, are global by definition. The Global Ocean, being the great connector, plays a fundamental role in power projection, be it economic, through trade, military or human and cultural. The Atlantic's geopolitical landscape has become increasingly dynamic, as great powers contend for control of this vital oceanic highway, its resources, and its political alignment. However, as analysed in the first sections of this chapter, historical factors persist as structuring elements in Atlantic geopolitics. The North-South divisions also tell a story of cultural, human, and political affinity. South-South cooperation has been established around an imaginary of non-alignment and resistance that continues to provide leverage in relations with the North.

China's incursion into African and Latin American politics has benefited from this ideational background of non-alignment, as expressed in the BRICS format. However, as China's global rise is denounced by the US as a challenge to existing global arrangements, also in the context of Russia's isolation as a pariah state due to its military intervention in Ukraine, countries in the South Atlantic are facing the effects of great power competition once more. Traditional partners of African and Latin American states in Europe have not presented an alternative to this divided global spectrum. Europe has chosen to align with the US in the current geopolitical reshaping of world politics, meaning that it will weight its influence in the South Atlantic to support the interests of the West.

Technology is perhaps the greatest challenge to the traditional understanding of geopolitics. As in the past, technological innovations have changed the way we understand geography. Cyber and Artificial Intelligence, digital communications, and space technology are already shifting the exercise of power over territories. Technology, however, provides an advantage to those who master it, increasing the gap between haves and have nots. Understanding threats and interests as being shared can close this gap, and transparency in the cooperative efforts being developed can also reduce the security dilemma and ensure that capabilities are being used in an even and effective way for all. Access to technology is also relevant in the balance between the exercise of sovereignty in a territory by states and the exercise of power by non-state actors, including those linked to organised crime, terrorism, and subversion. Finally, technology is increasingly relevant to monitor climate change, anticipate its effects, and prevent human suffering. In the Atlantic, all these issues are relevant and need to be examined closely if we are to understand the trajectory we are charting for our shared ocean.

5. THE VIEW OF THE WHOLE OF ATLANTIC SECURITY

The Atlantic Centre has emerged as a focal point for ideas rooted in a central concept – "whole of Atlantic security". Making this idea the basis of analysis and action is the Centre's most challenging prospect and potentially its most significant contribution to Atlantic security. This view aims to acknowledge the existing division lines in the Atlantic in order to overcome them through practical cooperation on security and defence. This is an area that is highly politicised, but as we have seen, one where transparency, ownership, and democratic scrutiny are key elements. Multilateralism has the advantage of levelling the playing field and has proved to be one of the most emancipatory practices of the post-Cold War period. The undermining of multilateralism and its institutions has

represented a significant blow to the aspirations of more equalitarian international politics (Fernandes and Simão, 2019). This is true in trade, as it is security and defence.

In the age of global challenges – migration, climate change, food security, preservation of biodiversity, denuclearisation – only strong multilateral frameworks can provide responses that are just and equitable. Responses that are designed by global powers alone will be tainted by competition and bound to be challenged by opposing powers. They will also result in the reproduction of existing inequalities, as there will be no incentive for the voices of the margins to be included in the design of the solutions.

There is no easy way to ensure that a more equitable development in the Atlantic region. Only by achieving it can we contribute to bring this vision to fruition. This report provides a contribution to an updated understanding of the current dynamics in this important area of global politics.

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