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## Contesting perspectives on South Atlantic maritime security governance: Brazil and South Africa

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### ABSTRACT

Faced with significant changes to the economic and strategic scenario in the South Atlantic over the past decade, the region's two major powers – Brazil and South Africa – have taken divergent approaches to policymaking for the maritime sphere. Whereas Brazil has, in essence, transferred its terrestrial security policy to the oceans and maintains a state-based deterrent approach, South Africa has invested heavily in governance-based approaches at the national, regional and international levels. While results have been limited on both sides due to the South Atlantic's subordinate status, this contribution argues that South Africa's approach has been significantly more successful in attaining both national (and regional) goals and providing policy solutions for the South Atlantic Ocean as a whole.

### KEYWORDS

Oceans governance; maritime policy; maritime security; blue economy; South Atlantic; South Africa; Brazil

## Introduction

Far-reaching economic and political processes have recently brought significant developments to the world's oceans and their governance. These changes have had telling impacts in the South Atlantic Ocean as well, where major littoral states have sought to confront these changes in divergent ways. This article analyses the very different approaches followed by Brazil and South Africa in their formulation of responses to phenomena such as the 'blue economy', the rise in commercial use of the ocean, and the resurgence of spaces of lawlessness and state absence. Key to understanding the divergence between the approaches favoured by the two most policy-capable states in the region are the roles played by the sovereign state as the executor of policy formulation. While Brazil has maintained an approach to the oceans based on the extension of sovereign state policy into the maritime sphere, with an emphasis on the military side of implementation, South Africa has adopted a policy based on the governance of the oceans as global commons, reaching well beyond the military sphere. These divergent policies have had significantly different results both for the two states and for the stewardship of the oceans themselves.

Over at least the last 15 years, the Brazilian and South African foreign and defence ministries have both advanced South-South cooperation on multiple levels and topics. Among

these are advanced new sets of bilateral and multilateral agreements and initiatives on maritime security.<sup>1</sup> However, although these initiatives possess high potential for complementarity and convergence towards a system of governance in the South Atlantic, currently they are following two parallel, but distinct, paths and are still converging too little.

Consequently, the South Atlantic Ocean is largely devoid of forces and institutions to provide maritime security, as it lacks norms and notions to foster governance and maritime cooperation. In a situation where major global players, such as the United States and Europe, consider other oceans and agendas more relevant to their respective security and economic interests, Brazil and South Africa have failed to develop both the intent and the capabilities to advance a more sophisticated and feasible normative background for regional governance and maritime cooperation.

Brazil has traditionally defended an agenda for South Atlantic governance that is a patchy derivative of its terrestrial border policy. The country has recently significantly increased its presence in the South Atlantic, both in material terms with the purchase of new warships and weapons systems, and through the creation of the notion of the 'Blue Amazon', in allusion to the importance of the Amazon rainforest to its land-based security. The country's primary interest has been in fomenting cooperation for regional governance of the South Atlantic that excludes 'extraterritorial' Northern powers. This reflects Brazil's focus under the Lula and Rousseff governments on global ambitions to the detriment of regional and continental issues.<sup>2</sup>

The analytical perspectives that underpin South Africa's political initiatives, on the other hand, are more sophisticated and inclusive, embracing the South Atlantic and Indian oceans in convergent projects that set Southern Africa as the hub of the 'blue economy' potential of both oceans.<sup>3</sup> These efforts face three main sets of challenges. First is the complexity of Southern African politics, where South Africa's former apartheid foreign policy still impacts negatively. The second factor is trans-regional power politics, in which external powers compete for economic opportunities and political influence throughout the African continent. Lastly, South African elites face an imbalance between regional threats and opportunities, such as in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, and the subordinate status of maritime issues – and the South African Navy – in the post-apartheid era.

Given these considerations, any thorough analysis of governance and security in the South Atlantic Ocean cannot proceed without closer attention to these two countries' policy perspectives on maritime control.<sup>4</sup> This article proceeds as follows. A first section will provide conceptual background considerations on the current challenges with which policies in the region must be designed to deal. This is followed by a presentation of the approaches to maritime control that these states variously employ: security-based and governance-based. Finally, the text presents in detail the Brazilian and South African policy frameworks for the ocean. The article closes by proposing a Brazilian-South African partnership – with both normative and material resource-based components – as the most promising solution for maritime governance on the South Atlantic rim.

## **Oceans governance, maritime security and the South Atlantic region**

Aptly for its application to oceans, which are by custom taken to be common goods not under the fixed control of any single jurisdiction, one of the earliest attempts to define

'governance', generally, was the management of an arena where 'government' was not possible:<sup>5</sup>

[S]ince the international system notoriously lacks hierarchy and government, the fuzzier word governance is used instead. ... Global governance, thus, is any purposeful activity intended to 'control' or 'influence' someone else that either occurs in the arena occupied by nations or, occurring at other levels, projects influence into that arena'.

Much of the early work on governance is based on the seminal work of James Rosenau. In his inaugural article in the eponymous journal, Rosenau<sup>6</sup> establishes what is perhaps the definitive early conceptualisation of (global) governance as

conceived to include systems of rule at all levels of human activity – from the family to the international organization – in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational repercussions.

Rosenau's definition contains four basic components of interest to the functioning of governance arrangements: systems of rule, human activity at various levels, the pursuit of goals, and transnational repercussions. Systems of rule 'exist where some mechanisms are in place that relate to each other and that regulate or have an impact on the norms, expectations, and behavior of the relevant actors within the regulated area'; these can exist in the absence of formal legal or political authority.<sup>7</sup> These systems operate at almost all levels of human activity, provided the behaviour involved is intentional, that is, conducted in pursuit of specific goals. Finally, Rosenau establishes the restrictive condition that the outcomes of these behaviours must have what are termed transnational repercussions.<sup>8</sup> Later analysts criticised this definition for its imprecisions,<sup>9</sup> but its purpose at inception was to facilitate discussion of attempts at collective management of spaces in which formal government does not occur. Dingwerth and Pattberg point out the utility of the concept as a complement to traditional international relations theory:<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to most theorizing about international relations, the notion of global governance attaches equal importance to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), transnational corporations (TNCs), and scientific actors. [...] Next to civil society and business, science has its role, too. [...] Besides these rather well-documented forces of world politics, more actors populate the universe of global governance. Among them are supranational actors [...]; judicial actors [...]; intergovernmental organizations, [...]; hybrid and private organizations [...]; and, finally, a number of other institutions [...] or the mass media, which are less easily subsumed under one of the above categories. In essence, global governance implies a multi-actor perspective on world politics.

Also, governance research draws a logical inference from this plethora of actors, opening one further major difference from mainstream international relations approaches:<sup>11</sup>

Second, while the term international relations suggests that international interaction can be analyzed separately from interaction at other levels of social interaction, the term global governance conceives of world politics as a multilevel system in which local, national, regional, and global political processes are inseparably linked. Global governance research is therefore particularly interested in the interlinkages between the different policy levels.

The phenomenon of governance and its later refinements is thus uniquely suited to a discussion of the use of common goods and neutral geographic spaces such as the world's oceans. This is particularly true in that governance approaches – as opposed to a focus on

formal legal regimes – are focused on accounting for the role of non-state actors as well. While international legal provisions do play a key role in how ocean spaces are managed and integrated into policy solutions, governance approaches to the world's oceans have focussed on three main issues.<sup>12</sup>

The main issues on the oceans governance agenda today revolve around three key categories: environmental stewardship, the economic potential of the seas, and security issues in the absence of territorial jurisdiction. Driving cooperation on these issues is the first category, environmental issues. These include, among others, safeguarding biodiversity, sustainable stewardship of fishing stocks, and limiting pollution from land and from seagoing vessels. On the economic front, fishing itself is the major component, along with deep-sea mining and other commercialisable resources. On the security side of the equation, piracy and the effective monitoring of the other two categories as a form of exercising sovereignty are the paramount issues.

Though policy responses to these issues formally occur under the auspices of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982, the maritime space has generated a textbook example of governance as described above. Numerous fora have emerged across the world's regions involving horizontal partnerships between governments, the private sector, NGOs, academics and scientists, as well as vertical integration between the various relevant levels of government. This type of response is a clear concession to the fact that oceans governance as conceived of today goes well beyond a problem whose solution can be achieved by policies developed for implementation by one state and by only one segment of its state apparatus.

The primary legal provisions for ocean spaces are UNCLOS and the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of 1992. UNCLOS has made possible the extension of states' exclusive economic zones ever further from their shores; this has both incorporated vast swathes of territory previously held as commons into areas under state control and created a number of disputes over the demarcation of boundaries on the previously open seas. One prominent such case is the Falkland Islands, the demarcation of whose continental shelf has become a further item of contention between Argentina and the United Kingdom in the South Atlantic.

Beyond these, informal governance mechanisms have become particularly important for attempts to manage maritime environmental issues, such as controlling pollution and maintaining biodiversity. Beyond work driven by explaining policy phenomena, this has been an area of interesting conceptual work, including the notion that the current global conception of the seas is predominantly Western and through its view of the seas as non-populated, privileges a view of oceans as spaces to be exploited rather than protected.<sup>13</sup>

Besides featuring these economic and environmental issues, the oceans also play host to the strategic concerns of littoral states. The move to strategic issues entails two decisive analytical points. Dingwerth and Pattberg identify two types of scholarship on global governance: some scholars look at global governance as a set of policies reflecting a 'normative perspective on how political institutions should react to the reduced steering capacity of national political systems'; other scholars offer a critique of global governance as a hegemonic discourse, as in the case of Campbell et al.<sup>14</sup> The literature on maritime strategy tends to follow the second possibility; in doing so, it retains the state-centric focus of much of the security studies literature in international relations, following what ultimately can be described as a logic of 'policy transfer'.<sup>15</sup> Policy transfer scholarship covers a wide

range of elements by which the policy of one entity is transposed beyond its original jurisdiction. This type of transfer is characteristic of maritime security policies, which have, as is the case in Brazil, been adapted from land-based conceptions of defence without adequate deference to the specificities of the maritime environment.

In fact, many states' maritime security policies follow a logic of policy transfer. In doing so they conform much more closely to the logic of threats and capabilities – characteristic of defence policy – than to approaches concerned with the governance of the commons.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, Natalie Klein defines maritime security as 'the protection of a state's land and maritime territory, infrastructure, economy, environment and society from certain harmful acts occurring at sea.'<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, based on UN practice,<sup>18</sup> Klein identifies as key maritime threats: piracy and armed robbery; terrorism; trafficking in weapons of mass destruction; drug trafficking; people trafficking; illegal fishing; environmental damage; and emerging threats.<sup>19</sup>

Christian Bueger criticises this type of 'laundry list' approach, as it does not offer any prioritisation of issues, linkage between them, or logic for the inclusion of specific threats. Neither the negative 'absence of threat' conception nor the positive 'stable order through governance' models, he argues, are satisfactory regarding either security theory or, ultimately, ocean governance in the security realm itself.<sup>20</sup> In a brief but conceptually dense contribution, Bueger links the concept of maritime security to more advanced security theories such as securitisation, practice theory and security communities, and also to the 'blue economy'.

A brief look at the nexus of governance and security aspects of maritime policy allows better comparison of the approaches of the South Atlantic's two largest naval powers to security and to the role of the region.<sup>21</sup> Succinctly put, while both South Africa and Brazil have integrated the South Atlantic region into their economic blueprints, Pretoria has invested in conceiving of the region as a commons, liable to be handled collectively, while Brasília has been more inclined to deal with the region through a sometimes-anachronistic adaptation of its terrestrial security policy.

## Threats and processes in the maritime sphere

Beginning in January 2014, the *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)* popularised the term 'blue economy' as the 'economic and trade activities that integrate the conservation and sustainable use and management of biodiversity, including maritime ecosystems, and genetic resources'.<sup>22</sup> The South Atlantic's 'blue economy' has flourished. On the one hand, non-state activities expanded with Asian demand for South American and African commodities, as well as through the rapid growth of hydrocarbon drilling. Concomitantly, a 'web of maritime criminality'<sup>23</sup> also expanded across the South Atlantic, following new directions in the global black market. On the other hand, new diplomatic dialogues and security arrangements flourished as well, particularly between Northern and Southern Atlantic countries, but also among Global South countries themselves. The breadth of environmental and infrastructural dimensions that sustain the 'blue economy' means that any threat emerging from the sea will produce a diversity of impacts. These threats demand responses at the national, regional and even global levels, going beyond military measures 'to be dealt with by the full spectrum of social stakeholders'.<sup>24</sup>

South Atlantic states have faced difficulties in responding to these phenomena, due to a lack of resources and policy capacity; South Africa, Brazil and Argentina are the exceptions. Along the South Atlantic littoral, most states either cannot or will not take their legal commitments seriously and enforce compliance over flag states, maritime industries, and ports. The result is 'failed borders' and 'stateless coastal areas',<sup>25</sup> while the maritime industry operates under less regulation than called for by accepted international standards. Among the various sectors of the maritime industry, shipping remains the most loosely controlled, as a legacy of the age-old idea of freedom of the seas, as well as the enormous scale and complexity of the 'container revolution'. In the South Atlantic, the abovementioned political conditions favoured black markets and very versatile and specialised crime syndicates' ability to take a share of the local maritime industry hostage. Here, trafficking, piracy and insurgencies operate in trans-regional networks, resulting in social instability, corruption in government and the degradation of critical energy infrastructures.<sup>26</sup>

While piracy and drug trafficking are the two most critical threats in the South Atlantic region, neither originates entirely from the sea.<sup>27</sup> Both activities derive from the land-based contexts inshore of societal poverty and fragmentation, state inefficiency and the existence of black markets in governance gaps. They also share the common cycles of geographical location concentration and, if left unchecked, of increasing levels of complexity and violence.<sup>28</sup>

### **Brazil's dilemma: The tension between collaborative action and territorial defence**

Brazil's interest in stability in the South Atlantic is clear: the country has more resources and interests in the surrounding ocean than any other adjoining state.<sup>29</sup> Most of Brazil's threats and economic expectations developed during the 2003–2013 'Atlantic energy renaissance'.<sup>30</sup> The Brazilian government had expected the offshore pre-salt deposits to increase the country's oil reserves from 14 to almost 38 billion barrels, with daily production reaching 3,8 million barrels by 2020.<sup>31</sup> Brazil's political leadership considered these assets a golden goose for the country's economic, technological and social development.<sup>32</sup> These expectations were unrealistic. Beyond the global energy crisis, Brazil has shown signs of 'Dutch disease' and the 'oil curse'. Nevertheless, in July of 2017, national oil giant Petrobras reached the mark of 2.2 million barrels/day, half of it from pre-salt deposits.<sup>33</sup> Considering the production cost per barrel of \$8 and the stabilisation of the international price of oil per barrel at around \$45–\$50, oil is still a significant sector of the Brazilian economy.

Brazil is faced with two structural shortcomings. It lacks governance arrangements for the pre-salt deposits, such as an institutionalised decision-making system that articulates public and private actors' concerns. Without this, the country will continue to fail in promoting development and innovation to lay the foundations for an internationally competitive and sustainable maritime industrial sector.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, its maritime security objective is to protect the South Atlantic from extra-regional powers. As a consequence, Brazil has tended to resist both sharing ocean governance with neighbouring nations, and innovations to the maritime security framework.

The second shortcoming is the result of a strongly entrenched normative viewpoint within Brazilian security institutions. The nature of Brazil's border and maritime policies stems from the fact that the country has nothing equivalent to an interior/home ministry, much less effective independent border and coast guards. Consequently, the management of Brazil's land, sea and air borders is the responsibility of isolated, overstretched and understaffed subunits of the armed forces, federal police, federal revenue office, and others. Until very recently, there was virtually no centralised oversight, and extensive responsibility was assigned to the armed forces due to their relative advantage in capabilities. Furthermore, Brazil's traditional approach towards borders was developed based on its military presence in the Amazon rainforest, resulting in a maritime perspective grounded on a deny-deter approach.<sup>35</sup> The policy of reactive closure of borders has been conducted in the last years as a superficial response to public claims regarding public insecurity. That is a military formula of low performance given the dimensions of Brazilian territory and limited qualification and jurisdiction of its armed forces to the task. Moreover, this formula entails a unilateral approach, lacking in cooperation with neighbouring countries which could provide the possibility of anticipation and proactivity against such menaces. As a consequence, in the maritime domain, Brazil has tended to resist policies that include shared security with neighbouring nations and innovations in the security framework.<sup>36</sup>

### ***The terrestrial roots of Brazil's geopolitical thought***

Brazilian geopolitical thought has always been laid out fundamentally in terrestrial terms, focusing on the protection of the Amazon as an analogue to the Eurasian heartland.<sup>37</sup> Due to Brazil's Cold War alignment with Western nations – and their sea power – the maritime domain was never viewed as a barrier or potential peril to extra-regional power projection to counter or contest Brazil's land power project.<sup>38</sup> One of the consequences of that formulation was that Brazil never developed a maritime vocation, much less a consistent maritime policy. The South Atlantic played a secondary role in Brazilian geopolitical thought. Brazilian geopolitical thought had three main exponents: Golbery do Couto e Silva, Carlos de Meira Mattos and Therezinha de Castro. The former two were military officers and the latter was a civilian professor.

Colonel Golbery was the intellectual father of the strategic thinking that dominates Brazilian security policy formulation to this day. He pointed out that the South Atlantic would have been an important component in the containment of a supposed Socialist menace, particularly through Africa.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, that ocean was more essential to Brazil's role in the Cold War than to a foreign policy strictly based on the country's own needs. General Meira Mattos saw the importance of an alliance in the South Atlantic of those aligned with the US – Brazil, Argentina, and South Africa – for the defence of the South Atlantic against the Soviet Navy. Therefore, he was one of the first to conceive of a South Atlantic Treaty Organisation (SATO), in which Brazil would have performed a leading role.<sup>40</sup>

Professor Castro was the only trained geographer among the three, and therefore had a more consistent and diverse perspective that went beyond Cold War realities. For her, the South Atlantic had global economic relevance as a main maritime supply line, and Brazil's geographical location made it the pivot of this ocean, as with India in the Indian Ocean, the US in the North Atlantic, and China in the North Pacific. According to her 'ocean politics'

(*oceanopolítica*), these geographical positions went a long way towards explaining why these countries became 'world powers'.<sup>41</sup> She also expressed Brazil's more dissident relationship with the US in the 1970s. According to this view, the US was not a reliable ally with a strategy to defend the South Atlantic, and Brazil should fulfil its geographic vocation and take a leading role for the sake of South America, Africa and Antarctica.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Post-Cold War shifts and the rise of strategic views of the South Atlantic***

Castro's ambitious perspective was not dominant, and the end of the Cold War also terminated any justification for extensive Brazilian military thinking on the South Atlantic. The South Atlantic was for the first time pointed out as a strategic region – in a manner very similar to Castro's proposals – in Brazil's 2005 National Defence Policy; this shift was successively reinforced in the 2008 and 2012 National Defence Strategies and the 2012 Defence White Paper.

Unsurprisingly, Brazil's first-ever dedicated maritime policy replicates or extrapolates its secular land border policy.<sup>43</sup> The draft of the 2016 Defence White Paper states that the presence of militarily relevant countries from other regions 'should be reduced and, hereafter, eliminated', pointing to the Zone of Peace and Cooperation for the South Atlantic (ZPCSA), and a Brazilian nuclear-propelled attack submarine, as the main relevant instruments of maritime policy.<sup>44</sup>

In 2007, the ZPCSA had been reactivated, however without the emphasis of earlier years on the Cold War. It had earlier evolved as a reaction to the Falklands War and against the perceived expansion of NATO's area of operations in the South Atlantic.<sup>45</sup> As it is today, the primary goal of the ZPCSA is to exclude extra-regional power politics from the South Atlantic and, for Brazil, to allow the country to expand its relations and influence towards Africa. Therefore, it has virtually no orientation towards ocean governance or maritime economic development in the region. It is important to realise that the 2007 ZPCSA meeting took place in Luanda, expressing Brazil's intent to have Angola as its main African partner. This made sense in view of the longstanding economic ties between these two Lusophone states, Brazilian participation in the United Nations peace missions in Angola, and Angola's intended regional role, after ending its civil war. However, Angola did not find a supportive audience in Argentina and Uruguay for this proposed partnership and Luanda decided to rather focus on supporting the creation of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, a change in orientation that was not followed by Brazil.<sup>46</sup>

Brazil's motivation to revitalise the ZPCSA was its own new maritime economic development, as well as proposals from West African countries, especially Nigeria. In 2013, the ZPCSA's Montevideo Declaration proposed regional governance measures for the South Atlantic, highlighting the creation of a maritime economic community.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, the ZPCSA maintained its exclusivity, constraining membership by extra-regional partners – in this case not only European but also Asian states. The Brazilian position stood clearly along the North–South dividing line, reacting against the notion of a pan-Atlantic approach.

The ZPCSA seemed to be the perfect marriage of Brazil's foreign policies for South America and Africa for the 2000s. In fact, it marked the expansion of the very successful but transitory results of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) to embrace and coordinate various Brazilian efforts in Africa. Brazil initially aimed UNASUR at fostering

infrastructure cooperation among its neighbours, but it evolved beyond expectations as US influence in South America declined during the years of the G W Bush administrations.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, Brazilian policymakers outlined a more detailed notion of the 'Brazilian strategic milieu', which included West and Southern Africa, and sought a leadership role for the country throughout the South Atlantic region. However, the renewed ZPCSA agenda after 2013 was launched at a time when Brazil's South American agenda and leadership were already showing signs of strain.

The ZPCSA also reflects the limits of Brazil's multilateral strategy for the South Atlantic. Although Brazil advanced bilateral agreements on defence cooperation and joint hydrocarbon operations with Namibia, Angola, Cape Verde and Ghana, the country's policy for African regional organisations remained underdeveloped, despite the opportunities presented by the leadership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the security agendas of West and Southern Africa, respectively.<sup>49</sup>

Brazil had in fact taken initiative in establishing stronger relations with ECOWAS and SADC, prior to and unrelated to the 2013 relaunch of ZPCSA. For example, a Brazil-SADC Partnership Cooperation Agreement was signed in 2010 and the Brazilian Ambassador to Botswana was accredited as Brazil's Special Representative to SADC in 2012. Similarly, a Brazil-ECOWAS bilateral summit was organised in Cape Verde in July 2010. Additionally, Brazil and ECOWAS member states discussed the security situation in Guinea-Bissau on different occasions.

Brazil, however, lacks commitment towards the South Atlantic as a maritime economic community; the Montevideo Declaration has remained an orphan initiative without any further formulation or an actual agenda. Worse than that, the ZPCSA failed to keep extra-regional powers out of the South Atlantic; for instance, the United Kingdom has expanded hydrocarbon drilling in the Falklands, France has remained active in Western Africa and China has advanced its economic relationships as well as its naval cooperation with Namibia and Angola.<sup>50</sup>

South American maritime economic cooperation, in any case, depends decisively on cooperation among Argentina, Venezuela, and Brazil.<sup>51</sup> However, Brazilian bilateral relationships with these neighbours have become dysfunctional.<sup>52</sup> While Venezuela was at one point very active in promoting arrangements to integrate the South American oil sector,<sup>53</sup> it is not a ZPCSA member and has entered a period of economic and political volatility in the aftermath of the national elections in early 2019.

In short, Brazil's maritime approach is deficient due to the lack of a clear agenda for its regional foreign policy. More important, it has provided unclear leadership, achieving little. It is clear that the smaller South American countries do not share or second Brazil's maritime agenda. In fact, they often diverge far enough as to appear to be pursuing entirely divergent agendas. Finally, the leadership vacuum has allowed extra-regional influence to expand for better or worse in terms of the governance of the South Atlantic.

## **South Africa and the Southern African maritime security perspective**

Due to the continent's political and economic history, an Africa-wide maritime sector and perspective started to develop only in the 1980s with the widespread containerisation of cargoes. Consequently, the vast majority of African scholarship and policymaking on

maritime issues is relatively new.<sup>54</sup> Besides the lack of institutional and material resources, only five African littoral states, of 33, have maritime forces structured for a coast guard role.<sup>55</sup>

South Africa has sub-Saharan Africa's most capable navy; Pretoria's maritime strategy and posture traditionally were designed to guard the Cape Sea Route, a mission which emerged during the Cold War. Consequently, the South African Navy is a counter-Navy force, composed of stealth frigates and armed with surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles and diesel submarines. It has a very limited inshore/offshore patrol capability.<sup>56</sup> Despite that force structure, the South African Navy has been relatively inactive during the post-Cold War period, replicating a wider African pattern of preoccupation with inland security issues. The current South African maritime approach is part of a Southern African multilateral agenda and has demonstrated a focus on economic as well as security aspects since its origins in the 2000s.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is the main driving force for the development of a genuine maritime community in the Southern African region. It has a broad agenda, with the ability to craft legally binding agreements, and has shaped regional cooperation on economic development, infrastructure, agriculture, politics and security. On the last topic, SADC's achievements are remarkable: it operates the Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre, a Standby Force, and the SADC Brigade.<sup>57</sup> SADC's deliberations set the agenda for South African and other African initiatives in the maritime domain.

The event that is credited with crystallising SADC's maritime approach was the hijacking of the fishing vessel *Vega 5* by Somali pirates in the Mozambique Channel in December 2010. A short eight months later, SADC had developed its own Maritime Security Strategy. It had as its priority the eradication of Somali piracy from Southern Africa, and, as a second issue, to secure the Western (Atlantic) Coast of Southern Africa. Third comes the protection of the region's rivers and lakes from armed robbery.<sup>58</sup>

Although the strategy's implementation suffers from intelligence and material shortcomings and an overdependence on the South African Navy, the timing of its publication was fortuitous; it was published during the preparatory meetings for the 'Rio + 20' United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). The concentration of this conference on a 'Green Economy' agenda prompted a group of small island developing states (SIDS), including SADC's Mauritius and the Seychelles, to introduce the 'blue economy' concept. At the same time, the African Union published its 2050 Integrated Maritime Strategy, which embraced the blue economy concept and envisioned a combined exclusive maritime zone.<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, South Africa's maritime approach has subsequently taken on national, regional and international dimensions.

Beginning in 2014, President Jacob Zuma launched the ambitious Operation Phakisa – Oceans Economy, by which South Africa's government articulated plans to draw private and public stakeholders into short, medium and long-term programmes.<sup>60</sup> It includes detailed plans to foster aquaculture, sea shipping lanes, naval manufacturing, offshore oil and gas exploration, marine protection, and ocean governance in South Africa's national waters and in declared exclusive economic zones (EEZ).<sup>61</sup>

Supporting that regional context and consensus, South Africa also embraces the blue economy as the next frontier of regional economic growth. Accordingly, South Africa's leadership role has a much more collaborative character than that of Brazil, with Pretoria preferring an all-embracing economic maritime region to an exclusive maritime security bloc.

The 'Blue Economy Concept Paper for SADC' was important not only in its impact on efforts to bring about a new perspective at the abovementioned UNCTAD Conference, but it has also generated SADC's blue economy development strategy as a core component of the regional Industrialisation Strategy Roadmap since 2015.<sup>62</sup>

In that regard, it is important to stress that the South African perspective on maritime development and security is fundamentally distinct from Brazil's. South Africa sees the South Atlantic and Indian oceans as conjoined, rather than as two different complexes. Therefore, it considers the geopolitics of both regions and advances initiatives embracing partners and results in both oceans. This is explicit in the wider dimension of South Africa's effort on ocean governance, such as its participation in the Indian Ocean Regional Association (IORA) Blue Economy Core Group, through which South Africa may encourage international networking and partnerships. This has been South Africa's main forum to foster multilateral dialogues with the United States, Germany and China. Lastly, South Africa has articulated its intentions to utilise its Department for International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and the IORA to foster other multilateral arrangements with Brazil and the South Atlantic.<sup>63</sup>

Parallel to those developments, the Southern African region is subject to international geopolitical trends less present in Brazil and South America. The reconfiguration of Western powers' presence on the continent with the creation of the US African Command (AFRICOM) and the operation of European military joint forces in West Africa and the Horn of Africa have had a limited impact on the South Atlantic and Southern Africa.<sup>64</sup> The most influential international trend consists of the direct impact of Chinese maritime power projects, and the indirect impact of exercises occasioned by the Indian presence.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, the South African maritime approach does have flaws and weak points. First, the South African Extended Continental Shelf Claim Project, submitted in 2009 and amended on November 2013, includes overlapping claims with Namibia and Mozambique, which jointly submitted claims in contestation of South Africa's in 2010. Additionally, the abovementioned Operation Phakisa proposes programmes in these maritime areas under dispute.<sup>66</sup> The case of South Africa's submission is controversial enough to make the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf unable to approve any recommendation on the matter,<sup>67</sup> and as an ultimate consequence, it could jeopardise SADC's Operation Copper combined operations against piracy.<sup>68</sup>

To grasp that potential change of perception between Southern African countries and South Africa, one may not forget the recent past of South Africa's interventions (and tutelage in the case of Namibia). The implications of the apartheid era went far beyond its domestic institutions and policies. The white minority regime performed a central role in the peripheral theatres of operations in Africa and the Middle East during the First and Second World Wars and remained instrumental for British colonial and interventionist policies afterwards. Prior to the early 1990s, South Africa fought against left-wing revolutionary and independence movements in most of the countries of Southern Africa. As a consequence, the Frontline States coalition for containment of South Africa comprised Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe and operated until Nelson Mandela became president in 1994.

Second, South Africa has moved to redress SADC's limited patrol capabilities by implementing Project Biro.<sup>69</sup> One promising element of this project is the joint development by

SADC's members of an Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) capability. However, doubts about the feasibility and affordability of the project push Southern African countries, on both eastern and western oceanic shores, to opt for the cheapest and fastest response to threats in the form of private maritime security companies, contracted to protect ships and platforms and to monitor fishing. Remembering the ungoverned and unregulated origins of Africa's web of maritime criminal activities, the privatisation of security may not be more than a palliative response; it certainly does not replace a sound strategy by African states to provide legally-sponsored maritime governance.<sup>70</sup>

Third and last, South Africa faces challenges in gathering the necessary domestic support for its regional security role, even a maritime one. One may remember the central role of military services for apartheid-era domestic and foreign policies. Consequently, South Africa's armed forces went through deep reforms and some punitive budget constraints. From 1990 to 2016, the South African defence budget was reduced both in relative GDP terms and absolutely, from 3.9% or \$4,364,00 down to 1.2% or \$3,424,000, respectively.<sup>71</sup> The South African Navy is the smallest and weakest branch of the South African National Defence Force; it is also the one that suffered the deepest cuts over the last twenty years. While the corruption scandals that led to President Zuma's resignation in early 2018 involved to a significant extent the armed services and arms deals of the 'Strategic Defence Package',<sup>72</sup> the post-apartheid political transition and debates around South Africa's militarised past are still sensitive areas for South Africans.

## Conclusion

The argument of this article is that the emerging consensus on ocean governance suits the South Atlantic reality. First, it favours a regionally-oriented approach that compensates for national shortcomings and lack of capacity to provide maritime security, therefore enhancing regionalism. Second, it links security to socio-economic development, promising more than just a sustainable approach for maritime security, but expanding the social resilience of communities and local economies of coastal areas. Finally, the ultimate aim is to overcome the environment of suspicion and rivalry among regional powers and second-tier powers by offering alternatives to extra-regional dependency and conditionality.

In comparing the Brazilian and South African cases, it is possible to conclude that South Africa has been more successful in fostering regional ideational affinities towards ocean governance. That implies the establishment of notions and patterns of relationships that facilitate coalition-building and alignment to its maritime approach. Surely, in the post-apartheid era, South Africa had to position itself with a new role in Southern Africa, embracing and promoting regional solidarity. It has been very effective in supporting a convergent constellation of notions and aims, which resulted in fewer constraints in the allocation of resources to the regional organisation of an agenda of maritime governance.<sup>73</sup>

Brazil has been much less successful. The country was never able to claim to represent the collective will of its region without opposition from Argentina. However, the main reason for Brazil's ineffectiveness in presenting a South American maritime perspective, much less a South Atlantic one, is the lack of consensus among the key players of its foreign and defence policymaking establishment about the scope and content of a regional agenda. While South Africa invested its foreign policy capital primarily in the

African Union and SADC, Brazil divided its resources and engagements between the United Nations, the BRICS and the G20, and reserved very limited scope for engagement with UNASUR and the ZPCSA.<sup>74</sup> The disconnect between the international and regional dimensions of Brazil's engagements has undermined the region-building process and minimised its capacity to act effectively and consistently in the South Atlantic.<sup>75</sup>

Beyond the regional efforts of Brazil and South Africa, there is some consensus that the overall success of South Atlantic maritime security governance depends heavily on their mutual engagement. Without it, the scenarios are twofold. The first entails the continuity of the current pragmatic approaches by most South Atlantic countries to their external relations and the maritime domain, mainly driven by economic considerations. In a second scenario, transnational (from the web of maritime criminality) and external (from extra-regional powers) pressures will cast the region into multiple crises, hampering regional autonomy, security and development.

Conversely, the potentially positive outcomes of a successful Brazil-South Africa partnership would be, at least, threefold.

First, it would foster South Africa's engagement with the South Atlantic. In the past this has been hampered by the larger revenues from foreign trade with the Indian Ocean, which have attracted Pretoria's pragmatic foreign policy attention since the years of the Mandela administration; its overall trade balance with South America is not substantive. South Africa has also had to work to redress the political interventions and struggles with Southern African countries during apartheid, which produced troubled relations particularly with Angola and Namibia.

Second, along with Nigeria and Argentina, Brazil and South Africa are the main focus of transnational criminal organisation operations around the South Atlantic. The expansion of local cartels, the franchising or joint-venturing of foreign mafias and the increasing flows of several kinds of smuggling and trafficking through their cities and ports challenge these countries to avoid becoming centres for international criminal brokerage.<sup>76</sup> In the current climate, almost all initiatives to counter transnational crime in the region originate with the European Union and are hampered by limited duration and effectiveness. One of the more politically sensitive factors is the very limited number of programmes to improve local populations' resilience against criminal activities by offering economic and security alternatives. The concept of the blue economy as designed by South Africa and SADC can be a response for the development of those communities in the coastal and border areas of those countries and their respective neighbours.

Third, the South Atlantic has had few controversies over the demarcation of EEZ boundaries in comparison to other oceans. Brazil was one of the first and most successful claimants before the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and was able to develop all the related legal and technical expertise endogenously. Brazil has already shared this know-how in supporting Angola's claim against South Africa. However, the potential of a more general collaboration under the guise of stewardship of a public good is tremendous; this would not only avoid unnecessary divergences and crises among South Atlantic countries, but would strengthen the regional ocean governance against extra-regional illegal fishing and predatory exploration of seabed deposits, a rising threat. For instance, on 21 February 2018, five Chinese fishing boats were ordered to halt their illegal fishing and pursued by Argentina's coast guard.<sup>77</sup> Given the possibility that the conduct of this case may set the Southern American precedent for a problem that

plagued Senegal, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau in 2017 the local authorities are very cautious in dealing with it.

Therefore, a Brazilian-South African partnership – with both normative and material resource-based components – is the most promising solution for maritime governance on the South Atlantic rim. In normative terms, South Africa has a more sophisticated and successful maritime approach, which Brazil should recognise and engage. Brazil has the interests, resources and soft power to contribute and benefit mainly from SADC's maritime agenda. In material terms, Brazil and South Africa already possess a growing record of joint development of weapons systems, and both have an urgent need to strengthen their shipyard industries and their regional coastal patrolling capabilities.<sup>78</sup> Partnership initiatives could also attend to coastal African countries' demand (and market) for improvement of their navies' capacities for surveillance, training, planning and operational procedures.

By beginning with a more focused and consistent cooperation between Brazil and South Africa, on the basis of a strengthened SADC maritime security agenda, both countries may develop common notions of the specific perils they face in the oceans, as well as for particular agendas for the South Atlantic. This more advanced stage should proceed without imposing a standardised approach; by presenting positive results and a reservoir of lessons-learned, Brazil and South Africa may rather engender shared notions that will be effective in the maritime security governance of the South Atlantic.<sup>79</sup>

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## Notes

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