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Brazil's Maritime Strategy in the South Atlantic: The Nexus between Security and Resources

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Although the South Atlantic has long been of strategic importance to states within and outside its perimeter, including Brazil, over the past half decade this geopolitical space has gained importance in Brazilian defense thinking. For Brazil, the state with the longest coastline along the South Atlantic, the discovery of significant deposits of oil and gas in the continental shelf's pre-salt layers has generated new interests and triggered new concerns. The prospect of tapping into these and other marine resources at a commercial scale, combined with the rapidly changing ecology of players in the area (including a growing presence by other emerging powers from outside the immediate vicinity), has prompted a reframing of the South Atlantic within Brazil's new national defense strategy. The growing assertiveness towards the South Atlantic is reflected not only in recently issued military doctrine documents, such as the 2008 National Defense Strategy and the Defense White Paper (made public in 2012), but also in the concrete initiatives launched by the Brazilian government both at home and abroad.

First, Brazil has begun modernizing and expanding its military capacity with special attention to naval power in the South Atlantic, where priority is placed on enhancing patrolling capacity as part of the country's power of dissuasion. This strategy has entailed a significant upsurge in arms acquisition and development, including not just vessel acquisitions but also ongoing cooperation with France for the development of a nuclear-powered attack submarine. Domestically, this modernization project has been accompanied by a campaign entitled the "Blue Amazon," aimed at mobilizing popular support to the idea that Brazil has both vital resources and

new security responsibilities in the South Atlantic. The new threats to national interests exploited in this campaign, which center on the notion that these resources give rise to greed by others, also help to structure key military exercises organized over the past few years. These include joint exercises such as IBSAMAR, the last one held with South Africa and India off the South African coast, as well as initiatives that include South American partners (e.g. ATLASUR, UNITAS). A number of the naval exercises simulate attacks targeting Brazilian offshore oil platforms in the South Atlantic.

Second, Brazil has filed a proposal with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) regime to expand its national waters based on the redefinition of its continental shelf. While at the time of this writing UNCLOS had not issued a final decision on the proposal, in the meantime Brazil has been investing heavily in scientific research programs, which allow it not only to plot its continental shelf with greater precision, but also to plot marine resources and maintain teams of researchers on its Atlantic islands—thereby boosting Brazil’s presence in and its claim to this part of the South Atlantic.

Finally, Brazil has been investing heavily in international cooperation aimed at creating a common South Atlantic identity—one that allows Brazil to actively pursue its own interests within the region. On the one hand, Brazil has diversified its bilateral defense cooperation with countries along the west coast of Africa. Most of these programs involve training of military staff, cooperation in continental shelf surveys, and—in a growing number of cases—provision of defense equipment and increased exports of Brazilian-made weapons. At the same time, Brazil works to boost multilateral organizations, for instance helping to revive the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS). Through these platforms, Brazil emphasizes the need to create a zone of peace and prosperity, while also stressing that the responsibility over the area belongs to the coastal countries along the South Atlantic.

Brazil’s growing attention to the South Atlantic represents an opportunity for it to assume a role of trans-regional leadership on matters of defense and security, precisely at a time when NATO’s role in the South Atlantic is increasingly questioned by the Brazilian government. In a recent speech at the UN Security Council, for instance, Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota stated that

*“We are still concerned that NATO may be seeking to establish partnerships outside of its defensive zone, far beyond the North Atlantic, including in regions of peace, democracy, and social inclusion that do not accept the existence within that space of weapons of mass destruction.”*¹

At the same time, Brazil’s naval buildup and South Atlantic strategy is sometimes perceived as being at odds with the country’s historic discourse of peace and stability. If Brazil’s approach comes to be viewed as excessively assertive, these strategies may also eventually trigger new competitive dynamics in the South Atlantic.

¹ Translated by the authors. Speech by Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio de Aguiar Patriota at the UN Security Council on August 6, 2013. Available (in Portuguese) online at: <http://diplomaciapublica.itamaraty.gov.br/11-onu/35-organiza-coes-regionais-e-a-onu-trabalhando-pela-paz-e-pela-seguranca-internacionais> Date of last access: August 16, 2013.

Brazil and the South Atlantic

The South Atlantic has been important to Brazil during different historical periods, not only contributing to defense thinking but also helping to shape Brazilian cultures. Prior to colonization, the Tupi and Tapuia indigenous groups fought for control of the coastal areas. The South Atlantic served not only as the route for Portuguese colonization and slave trade from Africa, but also for French and Dutch incursions. During World War II, Brazil suffered more casualties in the South Atlantic than in any other war theater, as a result of German U-boats torpedoing Brazilian merchant ships operating from Brazil to Europe (McCann 1995). The Cold War converted the South Atlantic into a space where NATO and the Soviet Union vied for influence, and the 1980s brought renewed tensions with the Malvinas/Falklands War of 1982. Towards the end of the Cold War, the South Atlantic was also the focus of regional efforts. These multilateral platforms include the ZOPACAS, launched at Brazil's initiative and approved by the UNO in 1986. ZOPACAS, which brought together South American and African states along the South Atlantic, aimed to keep the area free of nuclear weapons and to minimize (and eventually eliminate) the military presence of countries from outside the region.

However, for the Brazilian government and Armed Forces, the South Atlantic was not among defense priorities. Rather, the major perceived threats to Brazilian sovereignty lay elsewhere: namely, in the Amazon, whose densely forested terrain makes its borders porous and difficult to patrol, and the river Plate region, where historic rivalry with Argentina included a brief nuclear arms race during the 1970s and 80s. During the Malvinas/Falklands War, Brazil voiced support for Argentina but largely kept out of the dispute. In the early 1990s, with the transition from military back to civilian government, Brazil became one of the countries with lowest levels of military expenditure (in relation to GDP). By the 1990s, Brazilian Navy officers complained of the deteriorating condition of Brazil's warships and other equipment, the low capacity of the country's fleet, and the inadequate lack of funding for training and exercises (Martins Filho and Zirker 2000). This took place against the backdrop of the debate on the role the Armed Forces should play within a democratized Brazil (Hunter 1994). Although the Armed Forces had assumed a greater role in civilian tasks since the political transition, including tasks related to disaster relief and infrastructure construction, it had not yet reinvented itself within the post-Cold War context.

Brazilian defense thinking on the South Atlantic began to change under the administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The government worked to diversify Brazil's political partnerships with African countries, not only to boost transatlantic trade but also to garner support for Brazil's bid for a permanent seat in the UN's Security Council. The South Atlantic also gained economic importance for two key reasons. First, with the commodities boom of the 2000s, Brazil's foreign trade became a more important driver of its economic growth, and these exchanges are overwhelmingly marine: nearly 95% of Brazil's foreign trade uses through South Atlantic sea routes. Second, the country's oil reserves are located offshore in the South Atlantic. In 2007, the discovery of large oil reserves in the pre-salt layers of the South Atlantic were announced, with Petrobras estimating reserves at over 50 billion barrels of oil-- a volume four times

greater than the current national reserves (approximately 14 billion barrels). In addition to vastly expanding the country's resources, the discovery has the potential of raising Brazil's profile within the international community.

From the defense outlook, the government considered these reserves as warranting greater dissuasion capacity. In addition, the Brazilian government also began paying greater attention to the so-called non-traditional security threats emerging in the South Atlantic. The transatlantic drug trade had grown dramatically, with some west African countries having become key transshipment points for distribution of drugs from Latin America to Europe and beyond. Finally, cases of piracy, once confined to the Somalian coast, have occurred in the Gulf of Guinea, which has become of global strategic importance due to oil exploration and shipping lanes (Anyimadu 2013, Barrios 2013). The Brazilian government began to express concern that instability in the region could jeopardize Brazilian interests in the South Atlantic², and that piracy could eventually spread across the South Atlantic.

The Brazilian government's growing interests in the South Atlantic also broadened within a stage featured by a rapidly changing cast of actors. Besides the coastal states, many of which have announced plans for, or are currently undertaking their own seabed surveys in search of marine resources, some countries from outside the area have a noticeable presence in (or quick access to) the South Atlantic. The United Kingdom has a string of island territories stretching from the English Channel almost down to Antarctica, including not only the Malvinas/Falklands but also Mid-Atlantic Ridge islands such as Ascension and Saint Helena, which provide it with a military presence in the region. In 2008, the United States—which has access to the British string of islands through NATO-- announced that it was reactivating its Fourth Fleet (which had been demobilized in 1950). Brazil's then Minister of Defense called the expansion of NATO forces in the South Atlantic "inappropriate," and the Rousseff administration continues to reject a broader role within the region by the alliance. The United States' ongoing "pivot" toward Asia and growing concern with China's rise and North Korean instability, however, suggest that its naval attention will be more focused on the Pacific).

In addition, there are growing commercial investment interests in the South Atlantic by other players, some focusing on oil and involving a complex mix of state and non-state actors. Russia has been expanding its ties with Latin America (with dozens of billions of dollars in investments in Venezuela alone), and China has extensive ties throughout the region that combine economic, political and military cooperation. These countries (and others) have also been carrying out seabed research within the South Atlantic in search of minerals and other marine resources (Moraes, 2013). While these players are not viewed by the Brazilian government as direct threats in the South Atlantic space—it is worth noting that, in addition to China being Brazil's top trading partner, Sinopec has invested in pre-salt exploration off the Brazilian coast-- Brazil's defense strategy centers on the assumption that players from outside the region will covet Brazilian marine resources (Alves 2012).

² Interview with Brazilian Defense Minister Celso Amorim in Brasília, August 6, 2013.

Over the past decade, all of these factors have contributed to significant changes-- both quantitative and qualitative-- in Brazil's defense strategy and its relationship with the South Atlantic in particular. These changes can be summed up along three key elements: security buildup, international legal strategies, and South-South military cooperation.

Security Buildup

Until recently, Brazil spent relatively little with its Armed Forces as compared to its GDP³, which—within the Navy—translated into limitations on equipment and maintenance. Brazil's current fleet (encompassing around 100 commissioned ships) includes a mix of British-built frigates, Brazilian-built corvettes, diesel-electric submarines and a number of smaller vessels responsible for patrolling an extensive coastline (7,491 km) and a vast marine territory (3,660,955 km², including waters surrounding Brazilian archipelagos). Despite the 2000 acquisition of an aircraft carrier (the *São Paulo*, first commissioned in 1963 by the French Navy and bought by Brazil to replace the World War II-era *Minas Gerais*) and a group of fixed wing aircraft, the Navy sustained that the Brazilian fleet otherwise remained rather limited in proportion to Brazil's growing interests in the South Atlantic. Moreover, despite the long Brazilian coastline, the fleet has been historically geographically concentrated in Rio de Janeiro, posing a strategic vulnerability that the new defense strategy aims to reduce.

The Navy's ability to secure resources and equipment began to change as Brazil experienced economic growth and as the South Atlantic assumed greater importance within Brazilian strategic thinking. According to the Brazilian government, the discovery of large oil and gas reserves demands renewed capacity to patrol the South Atlantic and dissuade potential enemies. Internally, the pre-salt oil findings also provided a political justification for increased spending even beyond simply upgrading or improving maintenance. This shift is reflected in the two key Brazilian defense documents. The National Defense Strategy, published in 2008, establishes (among other priorities) increases in military spending, with a renewed focus on protecting natural resources within the South Atlantic. The Defense White Paper, made public in 2012, lays out these plans in more specific detail, also stressing the need to geographically diversify Brazil's naval capacity—a task that may be accomplished by establishing a Second Fleet, probably in the state of Pará, on the mouth of the Amazon river (thus allowing Brazil to relate protection of the South Atlantic with that of the Amazon region).

As a result of these enhanced resources and changing defense priorities, over the past few years the Navy has embarked on a significant modernization, development, and acquisition program (with both nationally built and foreign-made vessels). For instance, Brazil has been acquiring several classes of vessels and expanding its submarine program, including a recent purchase of *Scorpène* submarines from France. Indeed, military spending, although beginning from a low base, has until recently

³ According to SIPRI, in 2012, Brazil's military expenditure was only 1.5% of its GDP; however, Brazil remains Latin America's top military spender and one of the top 15 military spenders in 2011-2012, in spite of budget reductions, occupying 11th position in 2011 and 10th in 2012. See: SIPRI Fact Sheet 2013 "Trends in world military expenditure 2012" Available at: <http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1304.pdf> Date of last access: August 16, 2013.

risen significantly (among the armed forces, the Navy has increased spending the most)⁴. As the Minister of Defense recently wrote regarding militarization efforts, “Brazil’s soft power needs to be hardened.”⁵

The centerpiece of this expansion program is the development of a nuclear-energy attack submarine. The Brazilian government had considered the possibility of acquiring or developing a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines since the late 1970s, yet the project’s high costs made it economically unfeasible (Martins Filho, 2011). With the transition back to civilian rule, and especially during the Fernando Collor de Mello administration (1900-1992), the federal government reduced the nuclear submarine program’s budget (Martins Filho 2011). In March 2008, however, Brazil acquired the hull for a nuclear-energy attack submarine, which it is currently developing in cooperation with France. The Brazilian company Odebrecht is the leading local partner in a joint venture with French shipbuilder DCNS, and President Dilma Rousseff recently inaugurated a new shipbuilding facility in Itaguaí, Rio de Janeiro, intended to expedite the project (the first submarine is due to be commissioned in 2023).

In justifying the expenditures, the government points to the nuclear submarine’s speed and ability to patrol long distances without having to surface frequently, as well as the potential for technology and knowledge transfer. Some critics, including military officers, have questioned the wisdom of investing so heavily in this particular component for the dissuasion strategy, potentially at the expense of other needs (Vidigal cited in Martins Filho 2011). Some have also suggested that by joining the select member of countries that possess nuclear submarines (currently five states), Brazil could generate discomfort among neighbors and create a troublesome power imbalance within the South Atlantic⁶. Brazil’s commitment to the project is reflected in the fact that, even as the defense budget for 2013 is undergoing cuts due to the recent economic slowdown, the government has guaranteed continued financing for the nuclear submarine project and other strategic projects developed by the Defense Ministry⁷.

In addition, Brazil has been working to develop a new satellite and radar-based surveillance system, the Blue Amazon Management System (Sistema de Gerenciamento da Amazônia Azul, or SisGAAz). In addition to helping in sea rescues, the system is meant to enhance surveillance capability for the pre-salt oil area in the South Atlantic. The system will integrate several different technologies and platforms, including software-defined radios, satellite communications, and long-range radar, as well as a submarine

⁴ According to Nascimento, the sum allocated to the program responsible for reequipping the Brazilian Navy has grown from 0.9% of the Defense Ministry’s budget in 2007 to 6% of the budget in 2010 (Nascimento 2011, p. 48-52).

⁵ Amorim, Celso (2013) “Brazil’s soft power needs to be hardened” Project Syndicate, July 16, 2013. Available online at: <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-more-robust-defense-policy-for-brazil-by-celso-amorim> Date of last access: August 16, 2013.

⁶ BBC (2011) “Submarino nuclear pode desequilibrar região e gerar sentimento anti-Brasil” Maurício Moraes, July 19, 2011 http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2011/07/110718_submarino_brasil_america_do_sul_mm.shtml Date of last access: August 16, 2013.

⁷ Marta Beck and Cristiane Jungblut “Passam de R\$ 4 bi cortes no orçamento da Defesa” O Globo, July 30, 2013. Available at: <http://oglobo.globo.com/pais/passam-de-4-bi-cortes-no-orcamento-da-defesa-9278334> Date of last access: August 16, 2013.

acoustic sensing system. The new vessels and other equipment are being used in military exercises that reflect the rise of new threats related to marine natural resources, for instance through simulations that involve a foreign-flag merchant ship hijacked by terrorists intent on attacking Brazilian oil platforms in the Campos basin, which contains major oil fields off the coast of Rio de Janeiro state.

One of the top defense priorities outlined in the New Security Strategy is the promotion of Brazil's defense industry, including through subsidies for arms production and incentives for exports, with the goal of achieving greater military technological independence. Moreover, key projects, including a nuclear submarine fleet, are due for completion only within a decade at best; others, including plans to substitute the São Paulo for one or two aircraft carriers, may not be implemented any time soon, especially in the light of recent budgetary pressures. Some of the main efforts to acquire and develop military technology (including the nuclear submarine) include a significant component of technological transfer. Despite its anti-NATO discourse, the Brazilian government still depends on partnerships with the United States and European countries for key cutting-edge military technologies. The agreements signed over the past few years, including that with Great Britain, illustrate the combination of cooperation and distancing that have come to characterize Brazil's relations with NATO countries as regards the South Atlantic.

Legal and Institutional Strategies

In addition to increased naval spending, Brazil has either launched new or stepped up older institutional strategies aimed at reinforcing its claims in the South Atlantic. Domestically, the Navy launched in the mid-2000s the "Blue Amazon" campaign. The effort, which draws its name from an analogy with the resource-rich Amazon region, is geared at fostering a "marine mentality": promoting the idea that South Atlantic resources are of vital interest to all Brazilians, and hence demanding new defense investments. Parts of the initiative target specifically Brazilian youth, with didactic and public information materials such as textbooks, comic strips and exhibits highlighting the strategic importance of the sea (Martins 2010). These materials-- produced by an inter-ministerial committee and disseminated through the Ministry of Education-- stress that Brazil's South Atlantic natural resources, particularly the oil reserves, demand a stronger defense force.

The Blue Amazon project also seeks to explain, and mobilize support for, Brazil's ongoing attempt to extend its national waters by 900 thousand km². The initial proposal was filed in June 2004 with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which allows coastal states to claim sovereign rights over living and non-living resources of the sea and seabed in an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) extending up to 200 nautical miles from their coastal baselines, or from their continental shelves. Where the physical continental margin extends beyond 200 nautical miles, states have rights over seabed resources to the continental shelf's outer limit (subject to certain constraints defined in Article 76 of UNCLOS). Although the Brazilian government has scaled back its original proposal by roughly 20%, it has continued efforts to refine the

definition of the continental shelf. In this endeavor, Brazil has the advantage of having clearly defined maritime boundaries with its neighbors (in contrast for instance to Argentina, which has overlapping claims with the United Kingdom in the vicinity of the Malvinas/Falklands).

In the meantime, Brazil continues a broad gamut of research programs for the South Atlantic. Some of these, conducted through the Navy's Brazilian Continental Shelf Survey Plan (Plano de Levantamento da Plataforma Continental Brasileira - LEPLAC), are high-tech surveys of the continental shelf, whose geographic definition serves as the basis for the extension proposal. Other efforts aim to foster knowledge of biodiversity within the maritime territory and coastal areas. Some of these programs require researchers to continually occupy (albeit in rotation) Brazilian islands within the South Atlantic, such as the São Pedro and São Paulo archipelago, which otherwise would be uninhabited-- another way to strengthen Brazilian presence in the South Atlantic. A similar approach is seen in the drive to make some of these islands, such as Trindade, into World Heritage Sites (Zanirato 2012). In addition to boosting environmental conservation in those areas, the move uses international law and norms to further consolidate Brazilian sovereignty claims, as well as its de facto presence, in the South Atlantic.

The Brazilian government has also worked to maintain its Antarctic research program, which is run by the Navy and which the government deems vital for Brazil's participation in the Antarctic Treaty (to which Brazil acceded in 1975), especially through the meetings of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR). After a fire in 2012 destroyed most of the Brazilian Antarctic base, the *Estação Comandante Almirante Ferraz*, the government immediately launched an effort to build a new improved base, reflecting the importance being accorded to Antarctica⁸. These efforts are relevant to Brazil's maritime strategy because recent defense documents, and particularly the Defense White Paper of 2008, place the continent within the South Atlantic zone of strategic importance to Brazil⁹.

Defense Cooperation

The third element in Brazilian strategy for the South Atlantic involves stepped up defense cooperation, not only with South American neighbors (particularly those along the South Atlantic, from the Guyana Shield states to the Patagonian countries) but also with the countries along the west coast of Africa—many of which are concerned that mining countries will lay exclusive claims to South Atlantic resources, perhaps forcing merchant ships to sail through costly roundabout routes. This diversification of ties entails redoubled efforts in bilateral as well as multilateral cooperation, both accompanied by a strong stress on South-South ties.

⁸ Interview with Brazilian Defense Minister Celso Amorim in Brasília, August 6, 2013.

⁹ Brazil's interests in Antarctica appear within a context of both cooperation and competition. Argentina and Chile helped Brazil to continue its Antarctic research program after the fire in 2012 at the Brazilian base. At the same time, several emerging powers have recently taken significant steps in strengthening their Antarctic programs, including China and India, and Brazil is interested in supporting a common South American position on the region.

Through bilateral cooperation, the Brazilian government has worked to construct a “Goodwill Belt”¹⁰ stretching all around the South Atlantic. The diversification of such ties reaches far beyond the countries prioritized by Brazil’s South-South cooperation for development, which tends to focus on CPLP countries. In contrast, military cooperation agreements undersigned by Brazil over the past ten years with states within the region encompass a far wider variety of countries, including many states without Portuguese as one of their official languages. One of Brazil’s key defense partners, for instance, is Namibia. Brazil first undersigned an agreement with Namibia in 1994, but over the past decade it has greatly expanded cooperation efforts aimed at building the Namibian Navy through officer and cadet training, vessel provision, and logistics support. The agreements signed with Namibia have served as a model of sorts for more recent ties with other African countries along the South Atlantic. Brazil has also intensified military cooperation with strategic partners such as South Africa, with which it is developing (through IBSA) the A-DARTER, an infrared-guided short range air-to-air missile. More recently, the two countries have also discussed cooperating in a surveillance system for the South Atlantic¹¹.

Brazil has also deepened defense cooperation with Angola and Nigeria. Both countries are increasingly important economic and political partners for Brazil and are also important purchasers of Brazilian defense equipment. EMBRAER, the domestic aviation company, recently sold SuperTucano jets to Angola, in addition to Burkina Faso and Mauritania. Nigeria recently undersigned new military cooperation agreements with Brazil, expressing interest in acquiring vessels produced by Brazilian Navy contractor Engenpron. Deepening ties with the Nigerian Navy will also include cooperation in prospecting minerals in the South Atlantic. In addition to these large coastal states, Brazil has started or intensified defense cooperation with nearly all countries along the west coast of Africa. These programs focus heavily on naval issues and typically cover officer training, which is often carried out in Portuguese even in non-CPLP countries. Training can take place either in the partner country or in Brazil, and many South Atlantic countries on both the South American and African coasts, including Suriname, Senegal, and Angola have begun sending soldiers to the Jungle Warfare Instruction Center, commonly called CIGS, in the Brazilian Amazon. Other cooperation components include equipment donations, including patrol vessels, and logistical support. Finally, Brazil helps many of these countries to conduct surveys of the African side of the Atlantic continental shelf, disseminating its model of research as well as its discourse of national sovereignty over marine resources.

On the multilateral side, Brazil has stepped up efforts to revive ZOPACAS, as part of its broader effort to construct a South Atlantic identity. Although the initiative dates to the late 1980s, when coastal countries in the region were concerned with proliferation, in the post-Cold War context there is more of a focus on joint responsibility regarding

¹⁰ This is a translation of the expression “Cinturão de Boa Vontade” mentioned by Brazilian Defense Minister Celso Amorim in a speech at the Brazilian War College (ESG) in March 2012. The speech is available at: http://www.defesa.gov.br/arquivos/2012/mes03/esg_marco_2012.pdf Date of last access: August 16, 2013.

¹¹ Brazil is holding talks with South Africa to develop an oceanographic satellite with an exclusive focus on the South Atlantic. For further information see: http://thebricspost.com/brazil-sa-to-jointly-develop-satellite-for-south-atlantic/#.UhLH59L2_ZV Date of last access: August 16, 2013.

problems within the common maritime area so as to avoid interventions by outside powers. The ZOPACAS meeting held in Montevideo in January 2013, which included the presence of defense ministers, placed strong emphasis on sharing Brazil's knowledge in search and rescue operations, maritime surveillance, and continental shelf surveys (a separate statement mentioning the situations of instability in Guinea-Bissau and the Democratic Republic of the Congo was also issued during the meeting).

Aside from ZOPACAS, Brazil is part of other multilateral initiatives relevant to the South Atlantic, including the South America-Africa Summit and IBSA. Through the latter, Brazil has been participating in the IBSAMAR trilateral naval military exercises, so far held off the South African coast. Within the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), an organization developed in the mid-1990s to initially promote cultural ties, Brazil has also supported defense cooperation and military exercises as well as strengthening state institutions in Guinea-Bissau. Although the BRICS grouping does not yet have a concrete cooperation program in the area of defense and security, there are security discussions underway that might hold relevance to the South Atlantic. For example, in a January 2013 meeting of high-level security representatives from the BRICS, discussions covered topics in non-traditional security, such as terrorism, piracy, and cybersecurity¹². All of these efforts may signal the growing geostrategic importance of the South Atlantic within regional, trans-regional, and other multilateral platforms.

Conclusion

Brazil's growing interest in the South Atlantic is reflected not only in the government's official discourse, which highlights the need to protect Brazilian marine resources, but also in its practices, particularly when it comes to domestic efforts to promote a "maritime mentality," its international legal and institutional strategies, and its rapidly expanding defense cooperation along the South Atlantic's perimeter. In all these initiatives, there is a concerted effort not only to ascertain Brazilian sovereignty over a portion of the South Atlantic and disseminate the idea that its marine resources are a new locus of potential threats, but also to promote this perspective throughout the region in a bid to keep out those states considered to be from outside the region.

These efforts are novel in at least three respects. First, they are trans-regional, involving a clear focus not only on South America, where Brazil has a long history of military ties, but also western Africa, where its involvement was until recently far more episodic. Second, Brazil's initiatives in the South Atlantic highlight not only currently exploited and known natural resources, but also (perhaps, even more so) the area's potential resources, particularly those of the marine subsoil. More specifically, the perception of an imminent technological turn that will permit exploration of the pre-salt oil in a commercial scale, and the assumption that this exploration will generate substantial revenues for the Brazilian government, have prompted Brazil to adopt a more precautionary stance. And third, although those efforts reflect a new degree of intensity in Brazil's

¹² Ministry of External Affairs of India (2013) "BRICS". New Delhi, April 2013. Available online at: http://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/BRICS_for_XP_April_2013.pdf Date of last access: August 16, 2013.

defense relations in the South Atlantic, those ties are not entirely new, in that they include reviving the historic links between South America and Africa, as well as the South Atlantic and Antarctica (which, until its emergence within Brazilian maritime strategy, was never cited among Brazil's security priorities).

These multiple strategies have so far allowed Brazil to proceed with its naval modernization program and to greatly expand its defense cooperation programs with partners along the South Atlantic perimeter. At some point though, a renewed nationalism suggested by its approach in the South Atlantic might generate tensions, particularly if states that have previously contested Brazilian leadership in Latin America come to view Brazil's approach with suspicion. Even with recent budget cuts imposed on the Armed Forces, key components of Brazil's South Atlantic strategy are likely to move forward, and they will no doubt alter, if not radically transform, power dynamics within the region.

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