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The waters of the South Atlantic along the coasts of Brazil, of its neighboring countries and the African republics, besides representing an important shipping route to global trade, also keep a wealth of natural resources, especially oil and fishing resources. Throughout the 20th century the importance of the South Atlantic, despite its declining commercial relevance after the construction of the Suez Canal (1885) and the Panama Canal (1906), has been proved in the historical context of World War II (1939-45) and the Cold War (1945-91), when security of raw materials and oil transportation became a geostrategic challenge to Europe and the United States.

With the intensification of rivalry among major powers in the early decades of the 21st century, the fluidity of international relations threatened the maintenance of the principles of peace and cooperation in the South Atlantic. The creation of the African Command (AFRICOM) in 2007 and the reactivation of the fourth Fleet by the US, a year later, on the pretext of ensuring security and fighting terrorism, raised suspicions in South American and African Governments regarding the interventionist pretenses of these military instruments, ready to inhibit regional integration processes.

This thematic edition aimed to reflect on initiatives both diplomatic and from the armed forces on the part of Brazil and its South Atlantic neighbors regarding the development of common policies for the protection of their natural resources. The ties of growing dependency towards international institutions and countries, usually from the North, constitute a systematic embarrassment to the sovereignty of the nations in possession of these resources.

In order to stimulate the academic debate about the urgency of having the countries in this region thinking strategically over defense, we invited researchers to write articles, suggesting three different approaches: concepts of national defense, international

security and regional cooperation; narratives or specific cases about conflicts of various kinds in South Atlantic countries, seeking to understand their strategic and geopolitical dimensions; comparative studies, that examine similarities and differences in the way the subject is treated, theoretically or empirically.

We started focusing on the conference that opened the meeting of the team responsible for the project The defense of the South Atlantic, held under the coordination of the Nationalities Observatory in June 2015, at the State University of Ceará (Universidade do Estado do Ceará - UECE) in Fortaleza and the University of the Luso-Afro-Brazilian International Integration (Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira - UNILAB) in Redenção. In his speech, Manuel Domingos examined critically the dominant ideas in international relations and defense studies. He emphasized the need to consider the terms colonialism and imperialism to discuss defense policies for the South Atlantic in the 21st century. The conceptual discussion continued with the work of María Eugenia Cardinale on international security in the face of a global scenario of uncertainties. The author presented the theoretical fields in dispute and questioned the traditional perspective on international relations studies.

Regarding regional cooperation, Camila Cristina Luis highlighted the efforts of Brazil, Angola and Nigeria to approve, in 1986, at the UN, the creation of a Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic (ZPCAS), converting it into a region to be free of weapons, including nuclear ones. This fact is a milestone in the institutionalization of South Atlantic defense and security, operating as a legal code for the 24 countries. Tuned to the same theme, Cauê Pimentel underscored the role of Angola in the reactivation of (ZPCAS), in 2007. For him, the Angolan proposal came months after the country joined OPEC and became a relevant actor in offshore oil exploration in the Gulf of Guinea, which concentrates between 15% to 20% of global oil production.

Eli Penha remarked that Angola, one of Africa's richest areas in natural resources, has adopted a proactive stance so far in the continental and the maritime fronts, due to its economic dynamism after decades of civil war. Technological and military difficulties

have made the country vulnerable to the threats represented by piracy and the advances of the major powers, hence its commitment to strengthen multilateral organizations such as (ZPCAS) and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea.

In the Gulf of Guinea, object of study of Henry Kam Kah, from Cameroun, piracy, organized crime, and terrorism are a source of concern to the surrounding countries. They face logistical problems preventing them to guarantee maritime security on their own. The relevance of African oil production to the planet's energy stock has increasingly attracted the interest of the United States, France, the United Kingdom and China, intensifying rivalries in the region.

Next, we present four articles, with different approaches, that address Brazil's willingness to participate more actively in cooperation processes with South Atlantic countries. Alana Camoça de Oliveira and Gabriela Figueiredo Netto investigate Brazilian desire in expanding its maritime space and its rapprochement with Africa considering the findings of strategic resources in the South Atlantic. The authors analyze the importance of the region in the international scenario and the defense agreements signed between Brazil and Africa, particularly during the governments of President Lula and President Dilma.

In turn, Bruno Guimarães explored the strategies of Brazil for international insertion and its relations with multilateral organizations, the major powers, South American and sub-Saharan African neighbors. He believes that Brazilian leadership in the South Atlantic, although discontinuous in the light of government policies, has been consistent with its performance as a regional actor. According to Murilo Gomes da Costa, Brazilian projection in this region demands cohesion between diplomatic and defense policies, besides initiatives apart from the legacies of the colonial pact. The young researcher explored the Brazilian Navy projects for the South Atlantic, the presence of extra regional forces in the Brazilian strategic environment and the performance of the country in Antarctica.

Closing this issue, Gustavo Guerreiro investigated documents, speeches and newspaper reports related to the purposes of South Atlantic integration. In order to consolidate Brazil's regional

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leadership, argued the author, military and technical cooperation linked to investment programs are essential. The question is whether, in the current Brazilian situation, foreign policy guidelines for Africa will persist as an essential part of the agenda for South-South cooperation.

The Editors