

# CAPE VERDE: GEOPOLITICS AND PROJECTION OF A SMALL ISLAND STATE IN WEST AFRICA

João Paulo Madeira<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

A group of analysts seek to comprehend the geopolitics of Cape Verde at the international context, particularly on the West African region. Duarte (2004), Tolentino (2007), Fernandes (2008), Rocha (2008), Gomes (2009) e Costa (2011) highlight the importance of Cape Verde as a small island state and deepen the relation of this country with other West African states, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. These authors write on the mechanisms and processes of regional integration of Cape Verde in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The territorial (4033km<sup>2</sup>) and demographic (500.000 inhabitants) characteristics of the archipelago, its features and its relevance on global decision-making process puts Cape Verde into the categories of small states and small islands states at the same time (Shlapentokh 2012). Since its independence in 1975, the country, besides being an insular and peripheric state, faces enormous challenges on the regional and international context. The signing of the Constitutive Treaty for the integration of Cape Verde into the ECOWAS took place in 1977, only two years after its independence (Reis 2008). The archipelago finds itself inserted in a region with about 262 million people and it has the smallest territorial dimension compared to the continental mass of the ECOWAS (Rocha 2008).

Cape Verde's integration to the ECOWAS has been questioned re-

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1 PhD in Social Sciences (School of Political Studies of the Universidade de Lisboa (ISC-SP-UL). Auxiliar Professor at the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities (DCSH) – Universidade de Cabo Verde (Uni-CV). Researcher at the Centre for Public Administration & Public Policies (CAPP-ISCSP-UL) and at the Social Science Research Lab (LPCS-Uni-CV). E-mail: joao.madeira@docente.unicv.edu.cv

garding the benefits and challenges that this process could bring to the archipelago. These debates center essentially on political and economic matters, and on the deepening of peace and security in the region. Such discussions were brought back in May 2015 due to Cape Verde's campaign to preside the African Development Bank (AFDB) with Cristina Duarte, Minister of Finances. Despite her defeat, she managed to raise significant support by non-continental voters, when compared to her direct competitors. Nevertheless, it is commonly pointed out that one of the fundamental factors for the defeat was the weak participation of Cape Verde in the African context. In that sense, we depart from the assumption that Cape Verde needs to focus in West Africa's geopolitical scenario, in order to make its socioeconomic interests be fulfilled. It is equally important, for both its regional and international projection, that, despite its reduced territorial expression, the country manages to affirm itself as a role-model for other African states since it values the principles of democracy and good governance.

Geopolitics as a method for the interpretation of the dynamics of political phenomenon based on its spatial reality (Castro 1961; Gallois 1990) allows small insular states, such as Cape Verde, to effectively bet on view of development that prioritizes, above all, the security, peace and defense of the national territory. Cape Verde, given its geographic reality, needs to promote itself in the West African context and, given its geostrategic reality, search for a special statute, as it has been doing for the past years. Some investigators like Taglioni (2003), Bouchard (2004) and Baldacchino (2007) point out and affirm that there are significant economic impacts that result from the insular character of small states.

Cape Verde must gather the benefits of this trend and reaffirm a geopolitical prominence in West Africa, reversing the fragilities that come from its territorial dimensions smaller than 5,000 km, and from its demographic dimensions that do not exceed 0.5 million. There is a big effort coming from policymakers and partners in order to leverage and project the archipelago in the international system, looking for means to gain each time more relevance and notoriety on a region shaken by phenomenon like terrorism, threats to peace, security and stability and the menace posed by the Islamic State.

In this article, we seek to consider some central questions, such as: if Cape Verde should, given its geostrategic position in the Atlantic, and in spite of the international financial crisis, bet on the continent and its respective emerging economies, aiming to boost its socioeconomic development; if the archipelago should bet in new sectors, transforming them in service and specialized labour platforms, in order to reinforce its regional integration process. If so, which aspects should prevail to intensify the small state geopo-

litical importance for the continent?

To answer such questions, we anchor our work on the qualitative method, namely on the interpretative approach and on bibliographical revision. We believe that there is the urgent need to analyze and interpret to further explain and understand the geopolitical configuration of Cape Verde in the West African context, based on the current international conjuncture shaken by the economic and financial crisis. From the originality of the problematic of Cape Verde's insertion on the West African context, we consider that the present study has a great value to add in this field of study. In a context where there is an urgent need to develop deep studies on Cape Verde geopolitics on West Africa, it is indispensable to analyze an array of social, geographic, political and economic factors. Given its insularity, Cape Verde needs to bet on a geopolitical orientation that confers stability and protection in order to face its vulnerabilities. The archipelago's security must be a national priority due to the current instability of the sub-region it is located. Cape Verde must take advantage of its image of an economic, political and socially stable country so that it can effectively materialize the projection it seeks.

## Geopolitics and Small States

Geopolitics asserted itself as a scientific field that combines both geographic factors and political phenomenon. The term 'Geopolitics' was first used by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén, that found support on the work *Politische Geographie* (Political Geography) (1897) by Friedrich Ratzel, to defend an organic vision of geography, in which the state resembles a biological organism in constant expansion, that is, states follow "the categorical imperative of space expansion, through colonization, amalgamation or conquer" (Costa 2008, 57). Even though geopolitics aim to show that processes and political guidelines have no meaning out of their respective geographical frames, like territory, location, natural resources and populational contingent, what is certain is that it ends up characterizing as a method that interprets political phenomenon in its spatial reality (Castro 1961). The process of assertion of geopolitics as science do not show itself as an easy task, considering that some facts and justifications pointed out were summoned by the nazi expansion campaigns between 1933-1945, culminating in real tragedies for mankind. In that sense, geopolitics transformed itself in a very criticized science, given the works of Karl Haushofer, from the *Geopolitics School of Munich* and the journal *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, created in 1924 (Mello 1999). Today, geopolitics is gaining notoriety between specialists of different study areas, from politics, investigators, journalists and, above all, international politics

analysts, that frequently use the term, mainly because of three factors: firstly, because the geopolitical discourse constantly deals with matters of power and conflict in the international arena, making it attractive to the public opinion; secondly, because of the fact that geopolitics coherently seem to explain the most complex international phenomenon, creating schemes of analysis and interpretation, that give consistency to explanations on how an event may influence or be influenced by a much larger process in global scale; third, it almost seems to have a prophetic discourse, since it foresees and points towards a given direction of global evolution (Ó Tuathail 2006).

Geopolitics characterizes itself for being an autonomous field of study that seeks to comprehend the way in which geography interferes in the political behavior of states and societies, differing from political geography in the extent that it seeks to present a synchronic vision of reality, while geopolitics tries to present a diachronic vision, providing simultaneously signification, sense and perspective (Nogueira 2011). It is not just about a compression of political geography, but a vision of the power disputes in the international scenario. It is important here to perceive the concept of power in order to comprehend the conception of geopolitics, in the extent that states (possessing vital spaces) seek, through material and political instruments available, to impose their hegemony at international level. Geopolitics “covers the conflict, transformation, evolution, revolution, attack, defense and dynamic of terrestrial spaces, and the political forces that fight over those to survive” (Weigert 1943, 24).

From the infinity of theoretical and conceptual schools of thought, above all from the *English Geopolitical School*, established by Halford Mackinder, the *German School*, by Friedrich Ratzel, the *French School of Geopolitics*, by Vidal de La Blanche, and the *North-American Geopolitics School*, by Alfred Mahan, it becomes necessary to highlight two chains of thought that are fundamental to the comprehension of geopolitics as a concept. The first one refers to the ‘theory of the organic state’, that emerges from the social darwinism and has among its proponents Friedrich Ratzel and Rudolf Kjellen; the second one, denominated ‘geostrategy’, is based mostly on geographical and political facts, having proponents such as Alfred Mahan and Halford Mackinder (Céleriér 1969; Glassner 1993).

The first theoretical chain, the ‘theory of the organic state’ has as its main forerunner Friedrich Ratzel, being strongly influenced by the discoveries of Charles Darwin and, therefore, by the ‘social darwinism theory’. The German Friedrich Ratzel, geography professor at Leipzig and a graduate in biology and chemistry, on its work *Political Geography* (1896) used metaphors from the biological study to comprehend the state as a living organism. In that

sense, Ratzel looks into the fundamentals that govern the relations between geographical space (the land) and states, considering that all state and social activities should be seen from the perspective of their real fundamentals, that are found in the land and the soil on which they live (Weigert 1943). Rudolf Kjellen, disciple of Ratzel, follows up from the perspective of his master, considering in its work *State as a Manifestation of Life* (1916) that “geopolitics is the study of state as a geographical organism, that being, the phenomena located on a certain point of Earth, or as a country, territory, region and a political domain” (Santos 1993, 7). Kjellen highlights the growing need to guarantee political spaces that are vital to the survival of each state, causing a growing competition between them, and having the bigger and stronger a greater probability to survive, since they extend their domains over smaller ones. The central idea on Kjellen is that only the most powerful states would survive (Glassner 1993). States, to guarantee their own existence, need space in a growing extent in order to expand their borders, being sometimes necessary in the process, to resort to war with other states.

The second chain, ‘geostrategy’, privileges the analysis of a system of states, seeking to find models of behavior that fit this system with the goal to formulate the best strategies for state actions. Alfred Mahan, north-american Admiral and one of the most important proponents of this chain, developed the *Maritime Power Theory*, supplying strong recommendations for his country’s foreign policy. Mahan considered that the United States should draw as its strategy of survival, the hegemony and the control over its continent, in order to prevent Japan’s expansion in the Far East, and focus, on the middle run, on maritime affairs (Glassner 1993). In that sense, *Maritime Power Theory* turned out to be the “bible of the supporters of United States manifest destiny and the advocates of North-American power expansion based on naval power” (Mello 1999, 15). Halford Mackinder, geographer and another important proponent of this chain, developed the theory of land power, warning the importance of the “pivot region” between Germany and Russia, referred as *Heartland*, that represented the vital center of Eurasia (the continental mass that embraces Europe and Asia). For Mackinder, “whoever rules East Europe, rules the *Heartland*; who rules the *Heartland*, rules the World Island, and who rules the World Island, rules the World” (Glassner 1993, 26), that is, whoever dominates the *Heartland* will consequently control the World, since it is a region with no accessibility to the sea and is, therefore, protected from eventual maritime attacks of naval powers.

Taking into consideration such perspectives, it is possible to highlight that geopolitics is intrinsically related to the geographical power configuration between states in the international arena. We believe that, the bigger the

geographical domains of a state, equipped with material conditions (such as military and economic power), the bigger is its influence in the international context. We also believe that states need to afford such material and political capacities to create maritime and territorial strategies with the goal of sustaining their power at a local, regional or world level. Here, we can also add the following question: how can these dimensions apply to small states and, namely, those that are insular? Small states have been the object of study of different areas of knowledge, as they have been evolving on international relations in the last decades (Keohane 1969; Alouche 1994; Nye 2004; Neumann e Gstöhl 2006; Carlsnaes 2007; Gaspar 2007; Nunes 2007). Nevertheless, there is no consensus regarding the definition of small states (Henrikson 2001; Maass 2009). There is substantial disagreement about which criteria, quantitative or qualitative, are more adequate and capable of characterizing small states (Maass 2009). Can material, military, scientific, spatial, demographic, institutional, political and moral factors be treated the same way? Measuring the last three factors constitutes a very complex task. For example, the Soviet Union was a great power, but entered a decay period in the 1990's, while Switzerland, a small state, demonstrated to be a strong country on central Europe, by its diplomatic and political position (Gaspar 2007). In this framework, "the difference between great powers and small states should be, above all, made according to the geographical and human resources available" (Gaspar 2007, 114). The definition of small state varies basing on the criteria the entity uses, which can be qualitative (physical and geographic characteristics) or quantitative (territorial, demographic and economic) (Tolentino 2007). However, considering the heterogeneity of small states, applying a precise and rigorous definition could create numerous exceptions (Hey 2003).

Through a more classic approach, a small state usually holds a narrow territory, a relatively small number of inhabitants and few resources (Aron 1970). The matter of size is taken as a central criteria to define a small state, even though it is not a consensus determinant. For example, Foz (2006) considers that criteria such as dimension are not measurable. Indeed, the author centered his analysis on the diplomatic aspect. Therefore, we believe that, in order to characterize a state looking for its dimension, we must take into consideration both quantitative and qualitative aspects (Gaspar 2007; Tolentino 2007; Maas 2009). In that sense, we must apply a definition that avoid those stiff and excludent specifications, to find a broader one (Vital 1971). The United Nations, for example, utilizes some criteria such as population inferior to 2,5 million inhabitants, political sovereignty and area below 5.000 km<sup>2</sup> to characterize the dimensions of such small states (Tolentino 2007). That way, a small state, from the United Nations perspective, is a state with extremely

small identities on what refers to area, population, human and economic resources - based on a comparative and not absolute scale (Rapoport, Muteba and Theratill 1971).

Small states, and in this case the insular ones, according to the United Nations, present different criteria: population below 1,5 million inhabitants, political sovereignty or autonomy recognized by the UN and area below 5.000 km<sup>2</sup> (Tolentino 2007). Allied to this aspects are other factors: isolation, vulnerability to natural disasters, natural resource scarcity, excessive dependency in international trade, lack of economy scale and high infrastructural, transport and administration costs (Tolentino 2007). Cape Verde, the focus of our study, fits in this category, presenting a lack of natural resources, narrow territory and extreme dependency on international affairs and strategic cooperation partnerships. Facing such reality, Cape Verde needs to create alternatives to confront its smallness and insularity. These alternatives, necessarily demand the reinforcement of regional and sub-regional integration that can sustain in the medium and long run stability and economic sustainability. But that will only be possible if it is given primary attention to geopolitics, at least in the West African context, whereas considering the prospects of an international projection.

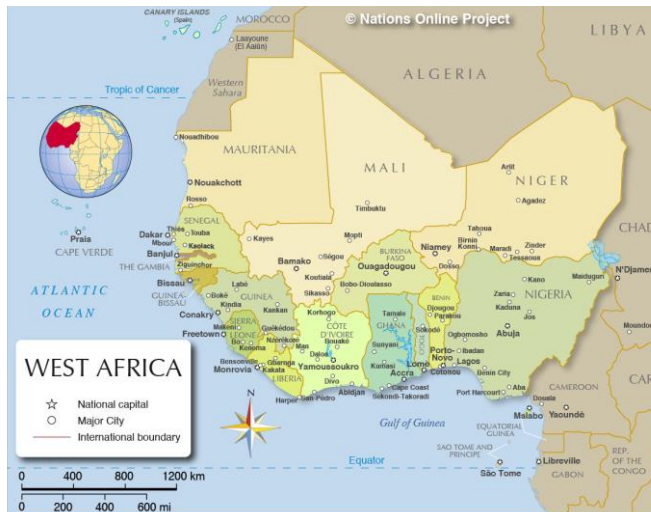
## **West Africa: The ECOWAS**

According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs - from the Division of Statistics of the United Nations - the West Africa, where the countries of the ECOWAS are located, is formed by a group of sixteen countries, eight francophones (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea Konakri, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo), one arabic (Mauritania), five anglophones (Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) and two lusophone (Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau) (Boahen 2010; Uzoigwe 2010).

As shown in Figure 1 on the next page, this region of the African continent is divided in two subregions: Sahel, that extends from Mauritania to Niger, including Cape Verde, Senegal and Gambia; and the Coastal, that includes countries from Guinea-Bissau to Nigeria. West Africa, a stage of the European colonization, is one of the most important regions of Subsaharan Africa, formed by many countries with diverse culture and characteristics. Several African empires, with great weight in transaharian trade, emerged in this region (Ghana, Mali, Songai) (Adetula 2004). After the Scramble for Africa (1884-1885) the west territory served as a key region on the process of African decolonization (Diop 1987; Visentini 2007), producing important leaders and intellectuals that firmly opposed the colonial regime (Suret-Canale

and Boahen 2010).

Figure 1- West Africa Illustrative Map



Source: <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/west-africa-map.htm>

The Scramble for Africa, that happened during the Berlin Conference, organized by the former German chancellor Otto Von Bismarck, between November 19th of 1884, and February 26th of 1885 and that praised the race towards Africa of the European great powers, represented for the continent, and above all for the West Africa, an era of new geographical and territorial configurations (Uzoigwe 2010; Visentini 2011). Such process led to territorial conflicts and civil wars across the region (Diop 2000; Ki-Zerbo 2010; Visentini 2007) that arose from the rivalries of the European great powers (Ribeiro 2007), which were fighting for territorial, natural and mostly African labor. Thus, Visentini (2007, 115) considers that:

Rivalries between distinct groups were stimulated by the colonizers as a means of domination, leaving behind a tragic heritage, expressed on the ‘minorities’ and ‘tribalism’ issues, besides the antagonism between those that embraced the European culture, and those who didn’t. Many of the future civil wars would result mainly from the distortion of traditional African structure by the colonizers. That is, they were outcomes not of a ‘traditional tribalism’, but of its appropriation by European modernity.



Nevertheless, given the complexity of such process, countries of the African region created many regional organizations and institutions aiming to project socioeconomic development, which was not an easy task. For instance, in May 28th of 1975, through the Lagos Treaty, the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) was established, representing a group of regional states, whose central goal is to create a custom union and a common market. The Community, in a broader way, seeks the promotion of regional trade, cooperation and development amongst countries such as: Benin, Burkina-Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

Given the complexity of the African continent, and specially of the West African region, the creation of the ECOWAS was determined by two fundamental ideas, being them: [i] the creation, through the cooperation among small states of the region, of a common front to fight against the oppression of international forces; [ii] the establishment of a robust and viable economy, with the main goal of eradicating poverty, that emerged from the small dimension of national markets, and the failure of development plans from the United Nations for Africa during the 1960's and 1970's (Fernandes 2011). The goals of the ECOWAS aim for: the promotion, cooperation and integration of all economic aspects, in order to raise the life quality of their inhabitants; the maintenance and eventual growth of economic stability; the reinforcement of relations between member states; the contribution to the general development of the continent; the harmonization and coordination of national politics; the creation of a common market, that points do the liberalization of economic trade; the establishment of common trade policy and fares; the elimination of obstacles for the free circulation of people, goods, services; and the creation of an African Union (UEMOA, 2006; Fernandes 2007; Gomes 2009). Even though the biggest concern of the ECOWAS refers to the economic arena, other aspects have become part of the community priorities, such as politics, peace and security in the region. As examples, we have the meetings of Chiefs of State that ended up resulting in the approval of the 1978 Non-Agression Protocol and, in 1981 of the Joint Defense and Assistance Protocol (De La Veja 2007). The foundation of the ECOWAS was pushed by the persistence of Nigeria, which wanted to overcome the conflicts of the region, namely the Coup d'Etat in Togo (January of 1963 and January of 1967), Congo-Brazaville (August of 1963 and September of 1968) Dahomey (October of 1963, December of 1965 and December of 1969), Gabon (February of 1964), Central African Republic (January of 1965), Upper Volta, nowadays Burkina Faso (January of 1965), Algeria (June of 1965), Congo-Kinshasa (November of 1965), Ghana (February of 1966), Nigeria (January of 1966),

Burundi (November of 1966), Togo (January of 1967), Sierra Leone (March of 1967 and April of 1968), Mali (November of 1968), Sudan (May of 1969), Libya (September of 1969), Somalia (October of 1969) and Lesotho (January of 1970). These coups d'Etat influenced Nigeria to convince its neighbour states and regional partners of the need to create a common regional entity.

Nigeria, with the support of other countries, specially Togo, Ghana and Niger, embraced the task of promoting regional integration, and in 1975 convinced the countries of the region, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo to take part on the creation of the ECOWAS, signing its Constitutive Treaty. This particularity made Nigeria acquire notoriety as a hegemonic power in the region and, strategically, conduct the geopolitics of Africa. Besides this country, there are others which have been object of scientific investigation in this geographical space, like Cape Verde, given its specificity of land and territory, and its presumable importance in the region, at a context where peace, security and development have been constant worries of African countries, considering the negative impacts of globalization such as drug trafficking and terrorism.

## Cape Verde at the ECOWAS: projection of a small insular State

Cape Verde is a small insular state located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, between Africa, Europe and the Americas. Composed by about 500.000 resident inhabitants, the archipelago is formed by ten islands and several islanders:



## Figure 2- Cape Verde Geographical Position

Source: <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/cape-verde-map2.htm>

According to Figure 2, shown above, the ten islands of volcanic origin are divided in two regions: the Leeward, formed by the islands of Maio (269 km<sup>2</sup>), Santiago (991 km<sup>2</sup>), Fogo (476 km<sup>2</sup>) and Brava (64 km<sup>2</sup>); and the islanders of Santa Maria, Grande, Luis Carneiro and Cima; and the Windward region, composed by the islands of Santo Antão (779 km<sup>2</sup>), São Vicente (227 km<sup>2</sup>), Santa Luzia (35 km<sup>2</sup>, inhabited), São Nicolau (343 km<sup>2</sup>), Sal (216 km<sup>2</sup>) and Boa Vista (620 km<sup>2</sup>); and the islanders of Boi, Pássaros, Branco e Raso, Rabo de Junco, Curral de Dado, Fragata, Chano and Baluarte (Gomes 2008). With a total surface of about 4033 km<sup>2</sup>, Cape Verde is located at around 500 km off the African West coast, sided by Senegal, between the parallels 17° 12' and 14° 48' latitude North and the meridians 22° 41' and 25° 22' of longitude West of Greenwich (Teixeira and Barbosa 1958).

Its independence was acquired in the 5th of July, 1975, and symbolized a new age of internal and external conquests for the archipelago, recognized by international institutions and organizations. The recently created state of Cape Verde gains the statute of a full member of the international community and acquires several compromises in order to promote its economic and social development, as well as to defend its territorial integrity. Given the international organizations of which Cape Verde is a member, we highlight: the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Group of 77 (G-77) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Cape Verde becomes a member of the ECOWAS at March 16, 1977, two years after its independence. This community is formed by countries with different territorial and geographic dimensions that depend on the development of the region as an instrument for its international projection. Cape Verde is the only insular state among those of the continental mass that is a member of the ECOWAS and, for that reason, seeks, backed by Article 68 of the Abuja Treaty, for a special statute inside the community. In this context, Cape Verde is trying to obtain benefits, since its independence, from the assistance and help that can derive from such multilateral spaces.

The particular case of Cape Verde goes on the opposite way of Tora's (2003) idea, of an attempt among small states to take profit of their positions inside international organizations, to make viable the expression of a new international identity, marked specially by the idea that superpowers would stand in the same level as small states. The archipelago, knowing its

geographical dimension and its lack of natural resources, both economic and military, survives, not side by side with world powers, but with the perspective of having a geopolitical use for the world, that even though prioritizes the expansion of its Continental Shelf (to 350 nautical miles), seeks to maintain its national unity and have impacts on the promotion of dialogues and peace in the international level.

Given its geostrategic position, Cape Verde is being inserted in the debates and concerns regarding international security and in the fight against drug trafficking networks and international terrorism, particularly considering the imminent threat of the Islamic State. Moreover, the archipelago can play an important role on the bonding of the ECOWAS with the world, particularly with the European Union, China, United States and Brazil. In our vision, Cape Verde holds, in the Special Partnership with the European Union, signed in November 2007, the safeguard of its status as the bridge between both continents, having, therefore, important advantages. It is also added the importance of such geostrategic position to European Union as a whole, in the sense that the country should be more integrated regionally in the African continent. However, several controversies have emerged from this process. Some defend a 'no integration' option, given the problems Africa has been facing, while others defend there should be more integration. The ECOWAS "despite the political will of its member states leaders, has become an organization with little articulation, and incapable - financially and politically - of answering to the demands detailed on its founding program" (Rosa 2007, 8). Costa (2011) considers that the ECOWAS project of regional integration is doomed to fail, for the simple fact that the community lacks institutionalization.

The adherence of Cape Verde to institutions "in the nature of ECOWAS was made voluntarily, sustained more on a mythical africanist belief than as a result of a realist assessment, based on data regarding the viability of goals" (Reis 2008, 84). For those that defend the ECOWAS integration, the central argument is that Cape Verde would manage to achieve significant benefits from it, since, between 2005 and 2007, there were reforms inside the community, that gave it more credibility and efficiency (Rocha 2010). Fernandes (2008) believes that, on relation to the free-circulation of people in the region, it allows for a more global conscience on the need of workforce and, consequently, on the reinforcement of the humanization of political agendas and of greater intervention on humanitarian issues and the protection of human beings. The free circulation "can work as an ideal, for overthrowing the prospect of the globalization of a common workforce" (Fernandes 2008, 64). Duarte (2004, 119) recognizes that the regional integration process can be

profitable for the Cape Verdian economy, alerting that due to the territorial dimensions of the archipelago:

The Cape Verdian economy will have to introduce itself in a vast regional market, allowing the country to successfully face latent and permanent conflicts between the smallness of its regional market and the optimal dimensions of production with its economic dimension, to leverage its geostrategic position as a twisting board of international trade.

The debate over regional integration gained renewed attention once again in May 2015, with the candidacy of the Cape Verdian Minister of Finances and Planning, Cristina Duarte, for the presidency of the African Development Bank (AFDB) which, facing the context of West Africa, gathered a weak support, gaining only 10,27% of the votes. However, her direct contestant Akinwumi Adesina, from Nigeria, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development won the elections with more than 59% of the votes. One of the factors that were presented to explain the defeat of the Minister is related to variables of geopolitical nature that favored the Nigerian candidate. This question provoked a wave of critics in Cape Verde, against the integration of the archipelago, believing that the country has not been able to enjoy a satisfactory relation with the continent, and that it is necessary to adopt a geopolitical agenda that take that into account. The geopolitics of Cape Verde should be centered specially in its strategic position on the Atlantic, with attention for its defense and security, given the threats of drug trafficking and terrorism.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MIREX) of Cape Verde has been looking for, alongside its strategic partners, to develop an intense activity towards Africa. We noted, for instance, that Cape Verde has few diplomatic representations (embassies) in Africa (Senegal, Ethiopia and Angola) in countries that could be strategic for its development. Moreover, one should question the lack of effective diplomatic representations in the African Union and the ECOWAS. Brito (2015), director of Cristina Duarte's campaign, considers that there is a lack of political will and a lack of understanding of the African continent reality, that is, Cape Verde did not have a policy of integration in Africa. The author is not in favor of creating embassies but argues in favor of a closer connection between the economic and diplomatic systems of Cape Verde, through Chambers of Commerce, or Cape Verde Investments.

We believe, corroborating other reflections on the issue, that the geopolitics of Cape Verde in West Africa and, in a wider manner, in the continent, has been really modest, and we can see a disconnection between governmental practice and the rhetoric of political leaders. In order to achieve a bigger

opening for the African continent, we believe that Cape Verde should invest in a geopolitical agenda based on six pillars: [i] its geostrategic position in the Atlantic, that has helped on its international projection [ii] its potential as a buffer zone to combat terrorism and drug trafficking, attracting international resources for the country's development; [iii] continue to fight for the extension of its Continental Shelf, making use of the acquired geographical space to increase the dynamics of the national economy; [iv] Bet on sectors such as technology, communications and electronic governance, transforming itself into a platform of services and specialized workforce in the ECOWAS, searching for the deepening of its regional integration; [v] The internationalization of enterprises with significant investments, by creating, for instance, joint ventures that would be able to compete with other companies that are installed in the region; and [vi] Make use of its image as a model of good governance and democracy in Africa in order to mobilize resources for Cape Verde development and, at the same time, act as a "consultant" for other countries in the region.

Such initiatives should be put in practice in a framework of cooperation amongst Cape Verde and other states, recognizing its limitations as a small insular state with few resources, and that prioritizes the mobilization of assistance for development purposes, defense of peace and international security. To face off against African powers (with more economic and military resources), is not a viable solution for Cape Verde geopolitics in the continent. However it is necessary to bet on an international and regional projection that may bring advantages for the archipelago in its plan for aid and cooperation. We believe that Cape Verde's geopolitics should not focus on the material acquisition of geographical space in the framework of ECOWAS, but mostly, and above all, we believe that it should search for immaterial achievements such as being recognized by a model country that could offer advantages for countries in the region.

## Final Notes and Geostrategic Recommendations

The geopolitics of Cape Verde in the West African region should be based on its possibilities, and mainly on its boldness to create and produce dynamics of development that enhances its credibility in the region. The whole trajectory of the archipelago's history, since its independence, has been accompanied by challenges for development, in a perspective of conciliating its geostrategic position in the Atlantic with the image of model for the African continent. The deepening of the Cape Verdian geopolitics in the West African region necessarily demands a deeper knowledge of the reality of this region,

without losing sight of its condition as a small insular state.

Whereas considering the relative hierarchical position of states in the world is complex and is hard to identify the resources of states from some characteristics, mainly the non measurable ones. However, due to the identified and analyzed components, we consider Cape Verde as a small insular state that need, by considering these characteristics, to create mechanisms to join the geographic regions of its insertion in order to fight against phenomenon that put into danger the safety of the archipelago. It is not a coincidence that Cape Verde is deepening its relations with powers such as the United States, the European Union, China and Brazil. Nevertheless, the archipelago's credibility may also reside in a broader regional integration and in the benefits gained from the mechanisms provided by the region of its geographic insertion, that could be reached through a geopolitical agenda that stresses diplomatic efforts and the image of a united country that is sustained in the principles of peace and collective security.

We consider that the geopolitical strategy of Cape Verde does not involve isolationism, but rather the insertion in a region that may help to achieve stability and protection against the vulnerabilities of its own territory. The security context of the archipelago needs to be allied to its historical, geographical, political and economic references, allowing it to combine both internal and external factors. The current system, shaken by changes that derive from the globalization allows, somehow, for the widening of the scope of action of small states, mainly those whose territory seems vulnerable to phenomenon such as terrorism and drug trafficking. This field of action is supported on the contribution of small states to peace and is, indeed, "today, like during most of its history, their most dominant characteristic and function" (Almeida 2012, 425). We can surely affirm that this is what is happening in Cape Verde, supported by big regional blocs, in order to contribute in the fight against these phenomenon and that is somewhat being a means to prevent some conflicts in in West Africa. As long as it follows like that, Cape Verde needs to take advantage of its image to project itself regionally, based on a geopolitical agenda that emphasizes peace and good governance. In fact, the contribution of the archipelago should not limit itself to a selfish concentration of efforts to defend its national interest, but as an "active participation in the definition of global ethics" (Políbio 2012, 425). We shall say, then, that more than global ethics, Cape Verde should prioritize regional ethics. This field needs deep and scientific thinking. It would be important, here, to encourage other investigators to explore other prospects and potentialities, mainly on what refers to Cape Verdian geopolitics, not excluding the works developed so far. However, we alert to the weak scientific production in Cape Verde, particularly in the

area of African geopolitics. Facing this reality, we sought, in this investigation, to ally scientific literature to an array of other researches from foreign investigators that lean over this reality.

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The article seeks to understand the geopolitics of Cape Verde in the context of West Africa, and its projection as a small island State. The central argument is that Cape Verde needs to make pragmatic use of the Western African coast region for its regional projection. The article focus on a qualitative methodological analysis, based on an interpretative approach and a bibliographical revision in order to address the international phenomena that configure the Cape Verdean geopolitics in West Africa.

#### **KEYWORDS**

Cape Verde; Geopolitics; Small State; Small Island State; West Africa.

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