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*Cape Verde in West Africa region:
towards a new paradigm for
regional integration*

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CAPE VERDE IN WEST AFRICA REGION: TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION

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Abstract: The West African region has immeasurable natural resources and a market of more than 300 million consumers, contributing directly to the dynamics of the global economy. This article aims to identify the importance of this region in the development of Cape Verde, an economically dependent country that has given primacy to its foreign policy to bet on political and economic diplomacy. This investigation was a literature review, complemented through an interpretative analysis, in which the results obtained may allow to consider that the archipelago of Cape Verde needs to delineate a new paradigm of regional integration, vying for the West African geo-economics' space and using as a platform to provide services to other ECOWAS countries, so that the gains may also revert to the strengthening of cooperation with the African continent.

Keywords: *Cape Verde; West Africa; ECOWAS; Regional Integration; Development.*

CABO VERDE NA REGIÃO DA ÁFRICA OCIDENTAL: EM BUSCA DE UM NOVO PARADIGMA PARA A INTEGRAÇÃO REGIONAL

Resumo: A região da África Ocidental dispõe de inúmeros recursos naturais e conta com um mercado de mais de 300 milhões de consumidores, contribuindo directamente na dinâmica da economia global. O presente artigo visa identificar a importância exercida por esta região no desenvolvimento de Cabo Verde, país economicamente dependente que tem priorizado na sua política externa a aposta na diplomacia política e económica. Nesta investigação procedeu-se a uma revisão de literatura que é complementada por uma análise interpretativa, na qual os resultados obtidos permitem considerar que o arquipélago de Cabo Verde precisa delinear um novo paradigma de integração regional, disputando o espaço geoeconómico da África Ocidental e servindo-se como plataforma de prestação de serviços aos demais países da CEDEAO, de modo a que os ganhos possam reverter também para o reforço de cooperação com o continente africano.

Palavras-chave: *Cabo Verde; África Ocidental; CEDEAO; Integração Regional; Desenvolvimento.*

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Introduction

West Africa is a strategic region in the development of the continent, since it offers numerous natural resources and a large coastal area, where the Gulf of Guinea is located, which holds one of the largest reserves of oil and natural gas offshore. The investments, both of the private and the public sector, especially in mining and exploration of these important natural resources, gave special visibility to the region of Western Africa, which became one of the most coveted investment destinations and that arouses the attention of major economies such as that of the European Union, China, the USA, Brazil, Russia and India.

Consisting of a set of sixteen countries, West Africa has sought a strategic insertion into the world economy, betting heavily on regional integration and the structuring of its market. However, this process has been slow, prolonged and complicated, since there are structural differences between the region's countries, either geographic and demographic, or economic, political, cultural and in their identity.

Among the countries of West Africa, Cape Verde is the smallest in terms of territory and population, as well as being insular and peripheral. The geostrategic position in the *throat* of the Atlantic allowed the boost of the archipelago's economy (Madeira, 2016a). The country, after independence (1975), sought to bring together the conditions, in an attempt to assert itself on the international stage, choosing the best alternatives to national development (Reis, 2010). Strategic partnerships such as the European Union, the United States and China have provided particular visibility to the archipelago, especially from the late 90s, when the process of political and economic openness began (Madeira, 2015). In this context, there have been various debates that have divided opinions among researchers dealing with the action of the Cape Verdean foreign policy. Despite having recognized that Cape Verde should make efforts to continue to motivate the interest of major world economies, they admit that it should bet in a conception of a four-party foreign policy, with Europe, China, the US and Africa, giving priority to a better integration of the African continent in the Western region.

In view of these arguments, we formulate the following initial question: given the importance, in a geostrategic and geopolitical perspective, of the position of Cape Verde between the Ecuador and the Tropic of Cancer, to what extent the search for a new paradigm of integration in the West Africa region can contribute to its political and economic integration in a globalized world? To answer this question, we used the qualitative method, doing the review of literature which is enriched with an interpretative analysis, where the results allow us to note that Cape Verde has not given a priority attention to the African

continent because it lacks, on the one hand, the political will of the Cape Verdean and political leaders and, on the other hand, an appropriate policy of sub-regional integration (Brito, 2015).

Allied to this problem there is a lack of studies on the benefits and risks of the integration of Cape Verde in this region and also the lack of confidence in Africa and in its potential opportunities (Tolentino, 2007). We believe that Cape Verde as insular and peripheral State needs to invest in the strengthening of its integration and inclusion in its geographic region, so as to benefit from the political, economic, security and defense mechanisms in a concerted framework of international cooperation between States.

Regional integration in the context of economic development in Africa

The issue of regional integration or, more broadly, of regionalism runs through most African countries and the subject of intense academic debate that pervades different research agendas in the field of political science and international relations. Regional integration has its historical roots in federalism and is conceptualized as a political process that allows the creation of national institutions and the voluntary transfer of sovereignty that would apply to the regional scale (Malamud, 2010).

As a result of the Second World War (1939-1945), another theoretical current arises, called functionalism, which has as its main precursor the political scientist and British historian David Mitrany, who sought to analyse the issue of regionalism, as something coated with functional pragmatism that tends to lead to the construction of peace among Nations (Mattli, 2012). In objection to federalism, functionalism considers that regionalism would not simply have a political motivation, but that it would be able to create a framework for cooperation distributed and coated with pragmatism in the economic and social dimensions, promoting, thus, a functional development (Mattli, 2012).

The German-American political scientist, Ernet Hass, develops functionalism, inaugurating the neo-functional theory. In the works *The Uniting of Europe* (2004 [1958]) and *Beyond the Nation-State* (1964), Hass (2004) believes that regional integration is a process by which the political actors, in different national environments, exchange their loyalty, expectations and political activities for a new center, whose institutions have or require jurisdiction over the pre-existing national States. The neo-functionalist theory converges to a continuous dichotomy, on the one hand, between the supranational and the national and, on the other, between the political and the economic (Haas, 2004).

From 1978, the inter-governmentalism theory arises opposed to neo-functionalism. Regional integration, according to the inter-governmentalism, is a bargaining process between the Government leaders who seek, through the game theory, the balance between national interest and the common objectives of the partners (Mattli, 2012). This theory seeks to indirectly mix the realistic notion of power resources with effect in national politics, on the one hand, where there are matters of common interest that are taken to an area of inter-State bargaining, and on the other hand, to the issues of interest to States in which it is power that ultimately determines the final result, because, usually, the small States are compensated by larger powers (Moravcsik, 1991).

In turn, it still stands out in the field of political science, the theory of supranational institutionalism which envisages that the economic and social relations within a particular region are determined or restricted by the increasing of cross-border transactions between the partners. This increase requires, somehow, the intensification of information requirements and, in this sense, there will be, logically, a requirement from transnational agents in order to create transnational organizations (Malamud, 2010).

In an economic perspective, Jacob Viner (1951), a Canadian economist, considered the precursor of studies concerning regional integration processes, analyzes in particular the case of customs unions and their effects on the well-being of the people, where the result of a union would be assessed from the balance between the benefits of the creation and the costs of commercial relations. Viner's perspective was widely criticized, in the sense of at what point in the creation of regional integration areas would be the issue of the equalization of factor prices as a result of regional integration (Robson, 2002; Mundell, 2008). In this way, the diversion of trade would deteriorate the exchange terms, while the creation of trade could improve them if the integrated region was large enough to change relative prices that could affect the exchange terms (Balassa, 2009). The authors referenced above proposed the Heckscher-Ohlin model to highlight the problem of Viner's theoretical paradigm, considering that what determines the participation of countries in international trade are the production factors that are of the utmost importance, that is, capital and labor.

The problem of regional integration runs through the African continent where they seek to insert the economies in the global space through multilateralism. Nevertheless, the process of regional integration in Africa, started about two decades ago, has been disappointing, despite some occasional modest progress (Torres, 1993). The inadequacy of the dimensions of local markets and the political and social factors, considered in an

international perspective, caused African national Governments to mobilize for the creation of a regional integration project. An example of this is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that directly, looks for the restructuring of the economies in this region. Diversified industrial investments and the advancement of technology have logically increased the minimum dimensions of production units. Thus, “it is natural that they have thought about circumventing that obstacle by means of various forms of integration of national economies” (Furtado, 2000: 327).

Before the creation of ECOWAS, the first reference to regionalism is the very creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), proposed in Addis Ababa in 1963, currently the African Union (AU). One of the main reasons for its creation was the desire of African countries to free themselves of the former colonial powers. It is only from late 60s that the idea of economic integration, market and sub-regional blocs gains, in fact, in importance in the regional context. When conceiving the idea of common market, the debate regarding the emergence of free-trade areas at sub-regional scale was developed (Ferreira, 2005). ECOWAS, for example, was established on 28 May 1975, through the Treaty of Lagos and this is now a regional group of 15 States, whose aim is to establish a customs union and a common market. The community, in a broader way, seeks to promote regional trade, cooperation and development among its member countries.

Cape Verde has been a member of ECOWAS since 1977, and has defined, since national independence, given the fragility of the economy and precariousness of natural resources, to establish priorities in what regards the socio-economic development, linking to geographical regions, allowing itself, in this way, some macroeconomic stability, even if it has been the subject of intense discussion within the academy and politics. However, in the face of overwhelming international phenomena, such as the financial crisis, especially visible from October 2008, this has particularly affected the strategic partners of the archipelago such as the European Union and the United States of America. We believe that it would be advantageous for the country to re-center its policy within the framework of regional integration in Africa, taking advantage of the continent as a new frontier of development.

Cape Verde in West Africa: a look back on the issue of integration

Cape Verde is an island and peripheral archipelago situated 500 km west of the African continent and 2 000 km east of the current “rift” of the Mid-Atlantic Rift between parallels 14° 35’ 45’’ N; 25° 40’ 40’ W and 17° 32’ 30’’ N; 22° 15’ 50’ W (Bebiano, 1932). With a territorial extension of 4 033 km², the archipelago is composed of ten islands and thirteen islets that are grouped into two groups, according to the position against the wind: the Leeward side which includes the islands of Brava, Fogo, Santiago and Maio; and the islets of Santa Maria, Grande, Luís Carneiro and Cima; and the Windward group which includes the islands of Santo Antão, São Vicente, Santa Luzia, São Nicolau and Boavista; and the islets, Boi, Pássaros, Branco and Raso, Rabo de Junco, Curral de Dado, Fragata, Chano and Baluarte.



Figure 1: The geographic location of the archipelago of Cape Verde

Source: SCIENCE FOR A CHANGING WORLD, 2016.

As it has an arid and semi-arid climate, the archipelago of Cape Verde has sought to eradicate, since its settlement (1461), a set of vicissitudes among which we highlight: the lack of basic natural resources such as water, soil, biodiversity and minerals; insularity; the reduced territorial load capacity and excessive external dependence in terms of the economy. Situated between the North Atlantic and the South Atlantic, Cape Verde is one of the smallest countries in West Africa, whose geostrategic location, has been the “economic maintenance” of the country, given that this has aroused the interest of the main world economies (Madeira, 2016b). Being a privileged area on the maritime trade, the archipelago became, from the

project of European expansion (15th century), strategic in the relationship between Europe, Africa, Asia and America (Semedo, 2007).

Because of its recognized importance in the Atlantic, the country sought to link to sub-regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP); the regional organization such as the African Union (AU) and the international organizations, in particular the Organization of the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). This occurred in order to maximize its potential and overcome its limitations, like the insularity, the vulnerability of the territory, the lack of natural resources and economic dependence.

The enhancement of the Atlantic, in a world in constant and rapid process of change, may be an opportunity for the archipelago to establish important partnerships and ways of cooperation in a context of globalization. However, this will only be possible if the country meets a pressing need to “integrate a ‘Large Region’, either of cultural, territorial or economic scope” (Semedo, 2007: 15). Cape Verde, with the status of micro State, presents serious limitations in relation to its aspirations of regional assertion and on claims for space on the international stage (Monteiro, 2016). However, the archipelago has consistently sought to adapt its policy of regional integration to the new contexts.

Regional integration has been currently an integral part of the global economic order, gaining dynamism, since there has been a proliferation of global integration agreements, since, of course, no continent is spared from this phenomenon (Essien, 2014). Therefore, they try to work so as to strengthen the mechanisms and the architecture of the integration, in order to become more effective in achieving the desired objectives. Aware of this reality and of the urgent need to promote and accelerate social and economic development, the adjacent States of West Africa seek to promote an integration that could represent a viable option for self-sufficiency, which would eventually be achieved on 28 May 1975, at the signing of the Treaty for the creation of the ECOWAS.

The historic mission of West Africa is, therefore, to a large extent, to promote and facilitate, without delay, for the fate of history, the installation of a powerful federal organization (Diop, 2000). However, for cultural, historical, geographical, linguistic and governance reasons, the “West African Nations still deal poorly with the RI (Regional Integration), which they accept more as infeasibility or fate than as a project assuming good quality information and a democratically constructed will” (Tolentino, 2013: 619).

Although the process of integration in the West African region has been marked by some constraints, such as the poverty that remains at high levels, the armed conflict and the vulnerability of the region vis-à-vis natural hazards or pandemics, West Africa reveals potential, such as the abundant natural resources and the fact that some countries have adopted resilient democracies, with young populations that have a good level of literacy (Akoutou *et al.*, 2014).

Cape Verde signed in 1977 the Constitutive Treaty for integration in West Africa, in particular in ECOWAS. This fact resulted in major challenges for the archipelago. To overcome the limitations and minimize the negative impacts of this integration, it should be enhanced along with the exploration of other international mechanisms, especially partnerships and cooperations with other States and communities, increasing the set of opportunities that the country needs in the international arena (Semedo, 2007). In fact, there is no reason to think the issue of integration apart from other forms of relationship with other international spaces.

Cape Verde in ECOWAS: a new paradigm of regional integration

The non-permission for the installation of military bases by the capitalist and socialist bloc in the Cold War period (1945 to 1989), which fits in the policy of non-alignment has adopted by the archipelago of Cape Verde since national independence, allowed this to conquer the credibility and international respect (Graça, 2014). This historic landmark, of vital importance for the destiny of the archipelago, had influence in the image it has been presenting in the context of international relations, which is that of a stable and viable State seeking to preserve peace and international dialogue.

This position allowed Cape Verde to link itself to international organizations with the aim of developing socially, politically and economically. In fact “the natural insertion in ECOWAS and in the African Union, as well as the assumption of multiple allegiances to the African region, to the Atlantic insular axis (Iceland-Maldives) and to the American continent will give greater meaning and weight to Cape Verde” (Tolentino, 2007: 124).

The idea of conceiving West Africa as territorially organized space is modern (Adedeji, 2004). After the first experiences from 1960 to the creation of ECOWAS, this is officially established by the Treaty of Lagos, signed in May 1975 by 15 West African States, including Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Nigeria, which hosted

this event and was the precursor of this project, sought to establish as objectives of the community, the economic cooperation and integration among the States of the region and regional security, as the area was constantly beset by a number of intra-State conflicts. Nigeria, for example, lived a long historical period of political and governmental instability. This phenomenon associated with other problems, like the constant coups d'état and corruption, caused this hegemon in West African region to lack moral legitimacy to lead its counterparts through ECOWAS (Adedeji, 2004).

Over the years, some members have joined the Community and others moved away. Cape Verde joined in 1977, and Mauritania left in 2002. Although ECOWAS has been founded to stimulate the development of West Africa and strengthen its negotiating position vis-à-vis other external actors such as the European Union (EU), it was also important because it tried to overcome the artificial division between anglophone, francophone and lusophone countries (Akoutou *et al.*, 2014). The Community currently has 15 Member States, in which Cape Verde offers the smallest territorial size and population.

Table 1: Geographic and demographic indicators of ECOWAS Member countries

| ECOWAS MEMBER STATES | TERRITORIAL DIMENSION (KM²) | POPULATION SIZE (ESTIMATED IN 2012) |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| TOGO | 56.790 | 6.961.049 |
| BENIN | 114.763 | 9.598.787 |
| BURKINA FASO | 274.000 | 17.275.115 |
| GAMBIA | 11.295 | 1.840.454 |
| IVORY COAST | 322.463 | 21.952.093 |
| GUINEA-BISSAU | 36.125 | 1.628.454 |
| GUINEA | 245.875 | 10.884.958 |
| LIBERIA | 111.369 | 3.887.886 |
| GHANA | 238.533 | 24.652.402 |
| CAPE VERDE | 4.033 | 523.568 |
| SIERRA LEONE | 71.740 | 5.485.998 |
| NIGERIA | 923.368 | 170 123 740 |
| SENEGAL | 196.722 | 12.969.606 |
| MALI | 1.240.192 | 15.494.466 |
| NIGER | 1.267.000 | 16.344.687 |
| TOTAL | 3.284.586.9 | 319.623.412 |

Source: CPLP UNION of EXPORTERS, 2016 (Table adapted by the authors).

In retrospect, the relationship of Cape Verde with the African continent was much closer, presumably due to the historical and ideological ties that united them. First, the archipelago of Cape Verde, after its discovery, kept a historical connection to the Rivers of Guinea, where it developed and structured the slave trade; in addition, we verified in the archipelago a significant presence of contingents from countries like Senegal and Guinea-

Bissau, in the settlement period; secondly, in the context of the struggle for national independence, Cape Verde had a strong relationship with Guinea-Bissau, since they shared a common project of struggle, which resulted in the creation of the African Party for the independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC). However, this connection came to an end in the 80s following the coup d'état perpetrated in Guinea-Bissau. Cape Verde strongly condemned this coup and proceeded immediately (1981) with the constitutional revisions, which put an end to the unity project; thirdly, Cape Verde played an important role in peacemaking between Angola and South Africa which got involved in a conflict that took place between 1966 and 1989 in southern Africa. Nevertheless, it is still curious that the country, in spite of presenting a neutral and political stability towards the many conflicts that plagued the continent, was rarely chosen as intermediary in the dialogue of conflicts in neighboring countries from the African coast (Semedo, 2007). Although Cape Verde is a case of African regionalism, it tends to be so less and less (Silveira, 2005).

This relationship less achieved in Africa is literally deteriorating from the 90s, although the archipelago has not ceased to cooperate with the mainland within the framework of sub-regional, regional and international organizations. In fact, the Constitution of the Republic of Cape Verde (CRCV) is absolutely peremptory in this matter, to consider that the Cape Verdean State should commit to the reinforcement of unity and integration in Africa, in the framework of the strengthening of cooperation actions for development (CRCV, 2010, art. 11, n° 7).

Although the CRCV excels in terms of these principles, which are detailed in the successive government programs, we notice that these do not correspond, in fact, to political and diplomatic practice, for several reasons: firstly, “the establishment or adherence to institutions like ECOWAS was done in a more pro-active way, more for Africanist mythical belief than as a result of a realistic assessment supported by objective feasibility data” (Reis, 2008: 84); secondly, the instability that affected several countries in the West African region, at the end of the 20th century, put “the archipelago in a situation of ‘lone ranger’ attracting, thus, a contingent of migrants to which it wasn’t ready, neither for their cultural absorption, nor on the market, nor on their reissue to other destinations” (Semedo, 2008: 49); thirdly, “ECOWAS, while economic space, has bumped, so far, into almost insurmountable difficulties, for exactly the reasons underlying its own foundation” (Gomes, 2014: 86).

With the candidacy in early 2015 of the Minister of Finance and Planning, Cristina Duarte, for the Presidency of the African Development Bank (ADB), this debate developed.

The Minister argued that one of the main reasons for her defeat was intrinsically related to the ineffectiveness of the geopolitics of Cape Verde in Africa. Therefore, her direct competitor from Nigeria, Akinwumi Adesina, won the elections, accumulating more than 59% of the votes. Cristina Duarte's director of the campaign, Jorge Brito, considers that there was the lack, on the one hand, of the political will of the Cape Verdean political leaders to know, deeply, the African continent, and on the other hand, of a proper policy of sub-regional integration. In his opinion, these factors eventually affected, in some way, the performance of the former Cape Verdean Minister of Finance and Planning (Brito, 2015).

These are some of the aspects that have contributed, directly or indirectly, to a less efficient relationship between the archipelago and the sub-regional organizations, especially ECOWAS. In view of this context, it is urgent that the archipelago reinforces its integration in the Community, because according to Duarte (2004), the Cape Verdean economy will have to enter a wide regional market, allowing the country to face successfully the latent and permanent conflicts between the smallness of the domestic market and the production optimum size and, between these and the economic distance, to enhance its geostrategic position of the international trade hub.

It is clear therefore that, despite the evident problems, the West African region can certainly be, from the geopolitical point of view, a geostrategic platform to achieve the ambitions of Cape Verde, especially that of projecting itself on the international stage. Are there any differences between the countries in the region? Of course there are; but it lies with Cape Verde to open itself, extending its borders, so that it is possible to explore ways to intensify trade, political and cultural exchanges which can result in major gains, likely to contribute to a better perception of the West African region (Fernandes, 2008). Furthermore, Cape Verde, being a *pivotal* State between the continents, may play an important role in the consolidation of the African regional integration while platform for dialogue and as a bridge between the Atlantic shores (Semedo, 2007).

With regard to donations, loans and investments achieved to date, it is natural that Cape Verde gives priority to the relationship with the superpowers like the U.S., the European Union and China. However, the fact remains that it has to "give up" the African continent; on the contrary, this relationship should be strengthened, given its particular importance. In fact, the geographical insertion of Cape Verde in this African region is one of the main ingredients that have been the basis for the establishment of the Special Partnership with the European Union.

The search for a new paradigm of integration of Cape Verde into ECOWAS, rather than a requirement, should be above all a development and security strategy in the short and medium term. Security, to the extent that no State alone, either small or big, meets all the conditions to face the threats that may jeopardize global security. It is clear that within the framework of the strengthening of the integration in West Africa, both Cape Verde and the region would gain. If Cape Verde had substantial economic gains in terms of the economy and security, the West African space, logically aware of the geopolitical and geostrategic peculiarities of Cape Verde, believes that this can be a functional State in terms of security and development in the subregion.

Conclusions

As they intensify relations between States, it is urgent to think on the sub-regional organizations as relevant actors in international relations. West Africa is a strategic region in global geopolitics and has given qualitative leaps, since Member States have been looking for more efficient and effective modalities to incorporate the best approaches of regional integration, whose purpose is to promote the socio-economic development.

In this context, Cape Verde should not act in isolation, because it needs to bet on different forms of sub-regional integration in order to benefit from the mechanisms, both of the region, and of international organizations. This option would be an added value to the archipelago if it repositioned itself in this region, however, with high strategic sensitivity, a factor that could induce investment by international organizations and multinational companies. This would be a distinguishing characteristic that stems largely from the awareness of risks and from the need to mitigate them in order to obtain advantages in the global system and, thus, to value each other, that is, Cape Verde and its community, so as to enhance their joint aspirations.

Aware that there are differences of opinions regarding the integration of Cape Verde into ECOWAS, in that for some the future of Cape Verde depends effectively on betting on the African continent and in the adoption of strategic options regarding the advantages and potential for its development and, for others, the necessary conditions for an effective regional integration are not created yet, because there are more disadvantages than benefits for a full insertion. We admit that international relations of Cape Verde must be quadripartite, where on the one hand, the archipelago should strengthen cooperation with the African region and on

the other it should continue to pay special attention to strategic partners such as: Europe, the USA and China.

Regional integration should be carried out taking into account the geostrategic position of Cape Verde, and this should try to serve as a platform to provide services in various sectors, especially in the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and in the renewable energy sector. If the African continent has been growing economically at a considerable pace, it is evident that Cape Verde should take advantage of this fact and enhance its integration in West Africa, in order to be able to attract the foreign direct investment (FDI) and internationalize companies through international consortia, taking into account the interests, in particular, of the ECOWAS market and, in general, of the world market.

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