


Transatlantic relations and the centrality of the Azores: between past and future

Relações transatlânticas e a centralidade de Açores: entre o passado e o futuro

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Abstract

The Azores Archipelago has from very early on played an essential role in transatlantic relations and, in particular, in the bilateral relationship of Portugal with the United States and of Europe with North America. Our research, through a qualitative and hermeneutic analysis, aims to take stock of the most important stages, the difficulties, the solutions found and the challenges faced in transatlantic relations, exploring the centrality of the Azores, mainly at the scientific and geopolitical level.

Resumo

O Arquipélago dos Açores tem desempenhado desde muito cedo um papel essencial nas relações transatlânticas e, em particular, nas relações bilaterais de Portugal com os Estados Unidos e da Europa com a América do Norte. A nossa investigação, através de uma análise qualitativa e hermenêutica, visa fazer um balanço das etapas mais importantes, das dificuldades, das soluções encontradas e dos desafios enfrentados nas relações transatlânticas, explorando a centralidade dos Açores, principalmente a nível científico e geopolítico.

Keywords: Azores; United States; Europe; transatlantic relations.

Palavras-chave: Açores; Estados Unidos da América; Europa; relações transatlânticas.

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Introduction

The beginning of the long relationship between the two shores that make up the Atlantic Ocean is unknown. It is known, however, that the Azores archipelago has played a fundamental role in supporting and developing transatlantic relations, mainly between Europe and North America.

Families from both sides, cultures and economies have grown together over the last three centuries. These ties have founded joint prosperity and security in a relationship that has grown stronger over time. In societies formed on both sides, the majority of Portuguese-Americans are of Azorean origin, and there are estimated to be more than one million in the United States of America (USA). Projecting into the future, the Azores continue to play a very important role in bridging the Atlantic. On both sides investments are made and more American tourists and exchange students emerge. Today, it is no longer only Azoreans who emigrate, many North Americans have taken up residence in the Azores, seeking the security and quality of life that the archipelago provides. Diplomatic relations and military bases were established early on, and their geostrategic importance is now renewed in the face of the new challenges of Atlantic security.

Our main objective is to make an analysis, albeit in a limited way, of the most important phases, the difficulties, the solutions found and the challenges faced in transatlantic relations, exploring the centrality of the Azores, particularly at the social, economic, scientific and political levels.

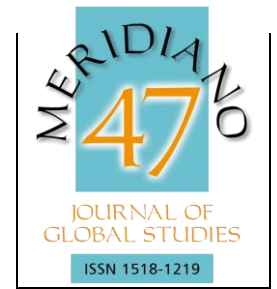
To that end, we will begin by focusing our analysis on the long relationship between the United States and the Azorean archipelago, from the beginning of the American nation in the 18th century to the present day, highlighting the intense transatlantic exchange of people, communications, values and goods; in order to then consider the new challenges of transatlantic relations, which provide potential new opportunities, where the Azores wish to assert themselves, playing a new central role, assume themselves as an Atlantic platform and interface for scientific research in the areas of the deep ocean, climate change, renewable energies and space, along with the renewed geostrategic centrality that the Azores can play in the new configurations of security and defence in the Atlantic.

Our research uses the qualitative method in its documental analysis strand. The methodology used to analyse different documents is based on a critical hermeneutics. It is essentially an analysis of a formal, analytical and conceptual nature. Thereafter, the theories and categories of the various authors are presented from an interpretation and critically evaluated.

1. The Americans and the Azores

The relationship between the United States of America and the Azores archipelago dates back to the formation of the North American nation at the end of the 18th century.

In 1777, a year after Thomas Jefferson, the main author of the famous Declaration of Independence, proclaimed in Philadelphia on 4 July 1776 that "*all men are created equal*", the Azores supported the young nation's corvettes heading for France in diplomatic initiatives that sought to



secure a political and military alliance with the French kingdom, which would prove decisive for the success of the American Revolution.

In 1795, after the end of the American War of Independence, during the period of validity of the Federal Constitution, marked by the prominence of James Madison and ratified in 1788, and during the second mandate of President George Washington, the United States of America established its first consulate in the Azores archipelago.

Since its installation, the Consulate of the United States of America in the Azores operated in the city of Horta for 122 years until its transfer to Ponta Delgada in 1917. John Street was the first consul in Horta, having appointed the first vice-consul, Thomas Hickling, on July 7, 1795, to Ponta Delgada.

This was a period when freedom of navigation, whaling, emigration and submarine cables were central factors in the relationship between the US and the Azores.

From 1750 to around 1920 American whaling ships were driven to the Azores by the prevailing winds and the Gulf Stream while being attracted by the presence of large numbers of sperm whales around the so-called *Western Islands* (Azores). Besides the opportunity that a stopover on land gave them to replenish their water supply and fresh provisions, they could recruit new elements to complete their crews. For a century and a half, these were the main reasons why American whalers called at the port of Horta and other Azorean ports, more than anywhere else abroad (Vermette 1995, 291)

This bridge that the whaling ships established between the Azores and New Bedford had a decisive influence on the growth of the whaling industry and even on the city itself. Azoreans were present on American whaling ships from the beginning of the nineteenth century. They were part of this heroic adventure when the whaling industry and activities reached their apogee, at the end of the 1850's, generally as simple deck seamen and as locksmiths. By the end of the whaling era they had become the dominant force in American whaling, holding positions as captains, officers, and even, shipowners (Vermette 1995, 291).

It is clear that this bridge established by the whaling ships was the first phase of Portuguese emigration to the United States. For many reasons, such as the escape from military conscription, the escape from the oppressive conditions of hereditary and inevitable poverty imposed by an excess of population in a territory too small to support it, a certain paralysing isolation, or even certain political problems, many Azoreans began to infiltrate the United States, in the form of inexperienced and cheap labour in whaling activities (Riley 2015; Vermette 1995, 292).

This young American nation, if on the one hand it needed labour for its colonisation and industrialisation process, on the other hand it also needed safe means of transport, both for the supply of raw materials and for the export of products and world trade. This desire, coupled with its relative insularity from a geopolitical point of view, implied control of the surrounding oceans such as the Pacific and the Atlantic, so from early on the foreign policy of the young American nation was projected towards the sea. For authors such as Alfred Thayer Mahan (1892), naval power was more important than continental power in the struggle for international domination, while it was less threatening to



world stability. Mahan also understood, unlike Halford J. Mackinder (2001), that the geographical pivot of history was not in the *Heartland* but in the oceans. The control of the seas was essential for a state to play a relevant role in International Relations, as it would allow a maritime nation to project its power around the Eurasian *Rimland*, according to the concept proposed by Nicholas John Spykman (2007 [1942]), thus contributing to affect the political developments within it (Andrade 207, 28-29).

1.1 The Dabneys: three generations that made their mark on Faial Island

The American strategy was based on diplomatic means to set up an American consular network on the islands. The Dabney family made a decisive contribution to this plan; over three generations - John Bass Dabney, Charles William Dabney, and Samuel Dabney - from 1806 to 1891 they served as diplomatic representatives in the city of Horta, thus marking an era on the "canal islands" (Faial and Pico) that researcher Ricardo Manuel Madruga da Costa (2009) calls "the Dabney century."

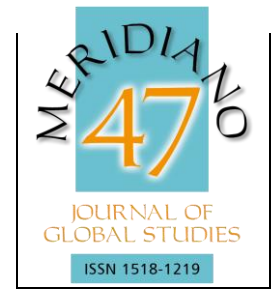
The Dabney family maintained a large commercial and maritime business in Horta and its surroundings on the island of Faial, where their houses were huge, well-furnished, and surrounded by magnificent gardens. They maintained the prestige of the American Government through generous hospitality to distinguished persons. It is understandable that the salary of an American consul would not have been enough to maintain such an elegant lifestyle. Therefore, it was deemed essential that a consul in Faial should have personal wealth (Doty 2006, 51).

At the time, there was great prosperity in that part of the Azores, involving the export of oranges to England, wine from Pico, whale oil, and ambergris to the United States, and large-scale emigration of Azoreans to America. In all these aspects, commercial and transportation, Consul Charles W. Dabney and his son Samuel W. Dabney played a major role (Doty 2006, 57).

2. Transatlantic Relations from the 20th Century to the present day

In the early 20th century, a series of economic and geostrategic changes took place and the island of Faial lost strategic importance, also due to the greater strength and concentration of population on the island of São Miguel. The United States decided to move its Consulate and on May 1, 1899 the American Consulate in Ponta Delgada officially opened. The Horta office was reduced to the category of consular agency in late April 1899, when Consul Pickerell transferred the Consulate to São Miguel.

Mr. Moyses Benarus who had been vice-consul in Horta became a consular agent until January 24, 1918, when these offices and the one in Terceira were definitively closed and all consular services in the Azores were carried out in S. Miguel, due to the war. The other American consular agencies located respectively on Flores and S. Jorge, which had been under the jurisdiction of the American Consulate in Horta and in 1899 under the jurisdiction of the consulate on S. Miguel, had been definitively closed prior to the closure of the Horta and Terceira consular agencies (Doty 2006, 63-64).



The American consuls in São Miguel mainly dealt with the situation of naturalised American citizens who had been born in the Azores and their children, involving investigations into fraudulent naturalisation, deportation, exemption from military service, military taxes, and matters relating to emigration from the Azores to the United States of America (Doty 2006, 64).

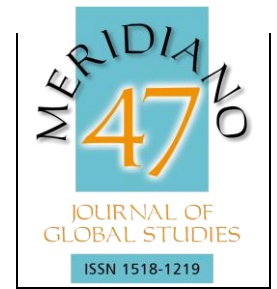
Other events also took place at the highest level of diplomatic relations, such as the first visit of former President Theodore Roosevelt to Ponta Delgada, on March 30, 1909, where he stopped for a few hours on his journey to Africa. During his stay, Consul Creevey took him to a hill, Alto da Mãe de Deus, where today the Theodore Roosevelt Promenade is located and there is a stone along the promenade marking the fact (Doty 2006, 64).

After 1917, following the entry of the US into World War I, relations between the North Americans and the Azoreans deepened, with the North American naval forces giving up support points on our islands and a *US Navy* being set up in the city of Ponta Delgada in November 1917 (Andrade 1993).

The American naval base in the Central Atlantic was established in Ponta delgada during the Great War to protect American transports carrying troops to France and for other strategic purposes. Admiral Dunn and his successor, Admiral Jackson, maintained a squadron of destroyers that were supported by seaplanes. On the morning of July 4, 1917 a German submarine fired some grenades from outside the jetty towards Ponta Delgada, one of which killed a 16 year old girl on the outskirts, in Fajã de Cima. The coal boat "Orion" in the bay of Ponta Delgada, near the jetty, quickly fired some grenades and the submarine submerged and quickly disappeared (Doty 2006, 64-65).

On 16 July 1918, Roosevelt's new visit to the Azores included the port of Horta on the island of Faial and the port of Ponta Delgada, which were both used by allied ships for logistical support during the First World War. At the time, in statements given to the Micaelan newspaper, *República*, Roosevelt stated that it was due to the geostrategic importance of the Azores that they had made a very special contribution in terms of transporting troops from the New to the Old Continent, thus making it possible for the outcome of the war not to be prolonged. Roosevelt awakened the world to the importance of the Azores' geostrategic position (Andrade 2008, 126).

Later, during the Second World War, the Azores maintained its importance at a strategic and geopolitical level. In this period of the Second World War, although Portugal formally declared its neutrality at the beginning of the conflict, it maintained this status until military facilities were granted to the Allies, firstly to the United Kingdom, in August 1943. At the time, the Azores were so coveted that the danger of a foreign invasion was imminent, both by the Germans and the Allies, which forced the Government of Portugal to review its position (Andrade 2017, 43). In this context, Oliveira Salazar postponed as long as possible this surrender as he feared a German retaliation. His political and diplomatic skill was evident. Portugal also had diplomats of great category, as is the case, for example, Armindo Monteiro, ambassador in London. However, the granting of facilities of a military nature to Britain resulted from great pressure from the Allies, and these resorted to threatening to invade the Azores if Salazar did not grant them, which in itself is indicative of the importance of the archipelago,



especially with regard to U.S. support to Europe as well as to counter the German submarine threat in that part of the Atlantic (Andrade 1993).

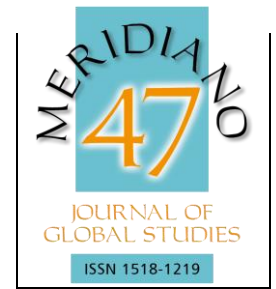
The granting of facilities, initially of a civilian nature and later military, to the United States on the island of Santa Maria, in the Azores, was not preceded by any agreement or alliance, unlike the one that already existed with Great Britain. The *quid pro quo* at the origin of that understanding was the need to free the province of Timor from Japanese occupation, with military help from the USA. Thus, in 1944, in the final phase of the Second World War, a North American air base was installed on the Island of Santa Maria, which was transferred to the Lajes Base on the Island of Terceira three years later. Relations were institutionalised in September 1951, through an agreement between both states that granted the Americans facilities of a military nature on Terceira Island in the Azores (Andrade 2017, 43).

Following the Second World War, the Allies led by the United States of America founded the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - NATO in 1949, in order to counter the Soviet expansionist threat. The creation of NATO expressed, in effect, the desire of Western nations to create more credible guarantees than those offered by the newly created United Nations (UN). For, in fact, the members of that organisation feared a deadlock within the UN Security Council in the event of a Soviet attack, consequently implementing the concept of collective security (Andrade 2017, 47).

In this context, it should be noted that Portugal, not being a democratic country at the time, was invited, unlike Spain, to join the founding members of this organisation. It was essentially due to the geostrategic relevance of the Azores archipelago and, consequently, to its bases, both air and naval, that the US *Joint Chiefs of Staff* stated several times that they wanted Portugal to be a founding member of NATO (Andrade 2017, 48)

Throughout the remaining period of the 20th century, the Azores proved to be fundamental to the conduct of American geopolitics, especially since the First World War, in order to maintain, on the one hand, the freedom of movement of the seas and, on the other, to serve as logistical support to the projection of that country's forces towards Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, as well as the southern flank of the Atlantic Alliance. The examples that substantiate this fact are many, from the Berlin blockade to the two Gulf Wars (Andrade 2017, 38).

Between 27 September 1957 and 24 October 1958, a series of violent eruptions and earthquakes caused a natural calamity, destroyed the economic infrastructure on Faial Island and impacted all nine islands of the Azores archipelago. Most of the 25,000 people on Faial Island lost their livelihoods amidst constant smoke, lava and earthquakes, and had no choice but to flee to other islands in the Azores, leaving many people homeless. Several appeals to the United States Government gave rise to the *Azorean Refugee Acts of 1958 and 1960*, the name by which the official legislation, *Public Law 85-892*, approved by the Congress of the United States of America, facilitating the emigration of Azoreans to that country following the eruption of the Capelinhos volcano, became known. The legislation resulted from a joint proposal by the Democratic Party federal senators John O. Pastore (from Rhode Island) and John F. Kennedy (from Massachusetts), hence the designation *Pastore-Kennedy Act of 1958* by which the law also came to be known (Pereira 1985).



Following a suggestion made in East Providence (Rhode Island) by State Representative Joseph Perry Jr, the son of a Faial and Pico native, the initial proposal was presented in Congress on June 4, 1958 by Senator John Orlando Pastore, a Democrat of Italian-American origin from Rhode Island, a state where he had been Governor. Three weeks later the proposal had the public support of Senator John F. Kennedy, who by then was already preparing the start that would lead him to the 1960 presidential candidacy, which was followed by several other members of Congress, particularly those representing areas where the Azorean presence was already significant (Pereira 1985).

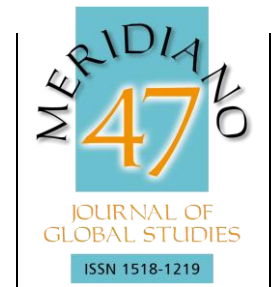
The diploma allowed for the granting of 1,500 visas for heads of family from the island of Faial who emigrated up to 30 June 1960, but an amendment introduced later extended the number of visas to 2000, extending the deadline to June 1962. As a direct result of the diploma, between 1958 and 1965 almost 2 500 families immigrated from Faial and Pico, totalling about 12 000 people, of whom 4 811 directly under the norm. Due to the family reunification mechanism, the call letters, this initial emigration had a gigantic multiplying effect, extending emigration to all the islands and leading to more than 175,000 Azoreans (more than 30% of the population) leaving for the United States in the following decades (Pereira 1985).

According to the 1951 UN Convention, the 1967 UN Protocol, the Organization of African Unity Convention or even the 1980 US Refugee Act, Azoreans cannot be called *de jure* refugees by definition. However, by humanitarian recognition and due to natural causes, they were *de facto refugees* (Anacleto 2019).

In 2008, the US Government, through White House Resolution 1401, commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Azorean Refugee Act of 1958 and celebrated the extensive contributions of Portuguese-American communities to the United States.

In fact, Resolution 1401 itself describes and recognises the remarkable contribution of the wave of Portuguese immigration, mostly Azorean, to the building of the American nation:

whereas the main communities of Portuguese-Americans of Azorean descent can be found in southeastern New England; the areas around San Francisco, San Diego, and the San Joaquin Valley, California; Hawaii; and the New Jersey/New York metropolitan area; Whereas these recent immigrants have built on the work begun earlier by and, through their remarkable work ethic, have, among other activities, excelled in farming and fishing; whereas in the 1970s approximately half of all dairy farms in the San Joaquin Valley the San Joaquin Valley were owned and operated by Portuguese Americans and contributed to make California the number one dairy producing state in the Nation; whereas the Portuguese on the American east coast dominated fishing and contributed to making New Bedford, Massachusetts, one of the largest industries in the world and the largest seaports in our nation; Whereas Portuguese immigrants and their descendants have contributed to the American workforce, leadership and culture, and have produced successful doctors, lawyers, and university professors; whereas in the public sector, Portuguese-Americans have become legislators in local, state and federal attorneys general, judges, and successful attorneys, and are members of school boards and school commissions, as



well as city councils municipalities; Whereas, as Governor of California, Ronald Reagan proclaimed the 2nd week of March as Portuguese Immigrant Week in 1969; and whereas President John F. Kennedy recognized that immigrants from the Azores had made outstanding contributions to our Nation as citizens: Now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the House of Representatives (1) commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Azorean, Refugee Law of 1958; (2) celebrates the Azorean Refugee Act of 1958 as worthy and admirable legislation which represented the finest America, reaching out to people in need; and (3) recognizes the important contributions of Portuguese immigrants and their descendants to the United States, which have so enriched our Nation. (Resolution 1401).

Although immigration to the United States is decreasing considerably, both sides maintain intense trade, tourism and leisure, military collaboration and diplomatic relations, where there are Consulates and consular representations both from Portugal and the United States at various points in the territories, and the USA maintains the Lajes Base as a fundamental platform for the projection of military forces in the Atlantic.

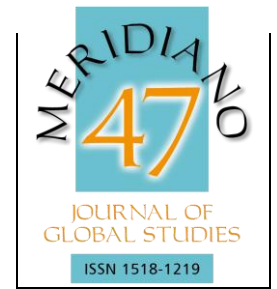
The role of the North American Consulate is especially noteworthy in the 1960s and 1970s, when it played a major role in supporting the waves of emigration from the Azores to the United States, a role it would continue to play in the following decades, although in a more attenuated form due to new circumstances, both in the Region and in the United States.

Currently, the mission of the US Consulate in the Azores is developed in three main areas: 1) maintaining the historical ties of partnership and friendship with the people and government of the Autonomous Region of the Azores and Portugal; 2) providing high-quality services to US citizens in the Azores, safeguarding their safety and well-being, a function of increasing importance in view of the large increase in tourist flows from the US to the Azores; and 3) increasing educational, commercial and cultural exchanges between the United States and the Azores, especially in the areas of renewable energy, green technologies, business and tourism.

The US Consulate in the Azores is the oldest US diplomatic post of its kind in the world. In the year 2022, it will have been in operation for two hundred and twenty-seven years, consolidating a relationship of friendship, cooperation and mutual respect that has contributed greatly to the achievement of common interests that have benefited both parties over more than two centuries of history and shared destiny.

3. Challenges of transatlantic relations and the centrality of the Azores

Since the 25th of April 1974 and the consequent decolonization, Portuguese foreign policy has been characterized by being Euro-Atlantic. In other words, regardless of being part of the European Union, it values its Atlantic dimension. In this sense, it is our Atlantic archipelagos - the Azores and Madeira - that still give Portugal some power of international negotiation (Moreira, 1979). Geographically, it is an archipelagic country, based on the "national strategic triangle" mainland-



Açores-Madeira (Palmeira 2016, 119). This characteristic gives it one of the largest exclusive economic zones (EEZ) in Europe and the world, a fact of paramount importance when analysing the maritime potential, both economically and politically. Due to its position, the "Portuguese sea" is both a frontier and a bridge between the European, American and African continents, which gives it particular geopolitical relevance. It follows that Portugal's functional power, in terms of International Relations, derives from its Atlantic relationship. And not only from the North Atlantic. The South Atlantic cannot and should not be forgotten, to the extent that this geopolitical space is of special relevance for Portugal, since, among many other aspects, the Portuguese language is spoken in its two shores (Andrade 2017, 87-88).

In contemporary times, the strategic position of the Azores Archipelago gains renewed relevance, when we realise that all geopolitics is approaching the sea and the governance models from the sea correspond to an evolution of geopolitical trends (Marques Guedes 2018).

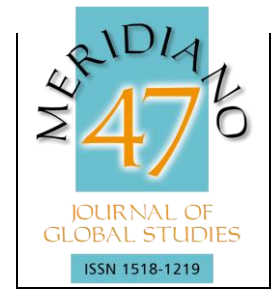
The oceans are receiving more and more attention, both in the economy, where around 95% of world trade is concentrated near the sea, and where the European Union is showing a growing commitment to developing the blue economy, and in science, as we realise that we still know very little about the oceans and that the resources and potential are enormous for the development of human life on the planet. In addition to these potentialities, we have great challenges regarding the way, often unsustainable, in which we exploit marine resources: water, marine species and minerals. The problems arising from pollution and overfishing, but also from international drug trafficking, piracy and security, among others, require a major effort of coordination in the governance of the oceans. All these problems, together with the growing unpredictability of international relations in a rapidly changing international environment, require new geostrategic configurations at various levels.

At the scientific level, with predictable social and economic impacts, Portugal has initiated a bold project called the International Atlantic Research Centre - *AIR Center*, based in the Azores, but including partners from across the Atlantic basin. It is a structure of international collaboration to address global challenges and local priorities in the Atlantic Ocean. It promotes an integrative approach to space, climate, ocean and energy in the Atlantic, supported by emerging technological innovations and advances in data science, and through South-North and North-South cooperation.

According to institutional data, the *AIR Center* (2022) is the result of a long process of science diplomacy called *Atlantic Interactions*, which is an ongoing intergovernmental initiative to unlock the full potential of the Atlantic Ocean for society. These diplomatic discussions have resulted in an international collaborative scientific agenda for space, climate, energy and ocean sciences in the Atlantic, which began in 2012.

The 1st *Atlantic Interactions* International Workshop, held in New York, United States of America, in June 2016, was led by the Portuguese Government and initiated a systematic process of science diplomacy. It was followed by five High Level Workshops on industry, science, governance, dialogues and other scientific and political workshops.

The formal establishment of the *AIR Center* was achieved as a conclusion of the 2nd High Level Dialogue on Atlantic Interactions, held in Florianopolis, Brazil, in November 2017. It was recognised



that the *AIR Center* would become a multilateral network organisation in an association with national and international scientific and research infrastructures.

The *AIR Center* Development Association was legally established in April 2018 as a non-profit association with headquarters on Terceira Island, Azores, and premises in Lisbon, Portugal. An Implementation Team was appointed to support the transition to a permanent team. In the process, *AIR Center's* first Executive Director, Joaquim Brito, was appointed in late 2018. A mission-oriented approach for *AIR Center* in the 2020-2030 decade was recommended in August 2019, in the context of the establishment of two *AIR Center* offices in Brazil.

The main challenges for transatlantic relations are related to the specificity of the Atlantic basin, but also to global challenges, such as climate change and the role that science and technology may play in safeguarding habitats, including human ones, as well as in terms of security and defence, where NATO plays a key role for the stability and progress of the Atlantic basin communities.

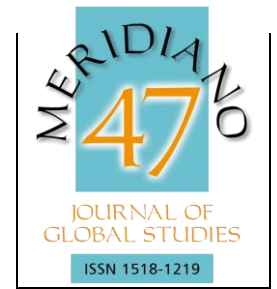
Although the geopolitical and geostrategic environment has changed radically since the end of the Cold War, in November 1989, until today, new threats have emerged that must be taken into account by the International Community. This context includes, for example, transnational terrorism that has been causing, over the last few years, very complex problems with dramatic consequences all over the world.

After having highlighted the centrality of the Azores Archipelago in terms of Atlantic routes and exchanges, where the future is built on scientific collaboration, it is also important to think about this centrality in terms of security and defence, where the Lajes Base on Terceira Island is of particular importance.

Andrade (2017), citing a very important characteristic of this new world in which we live, and which is embodied in its great unpredictability, believes that the US will not abandon the Lajes base. If on the one hand, it is undeniable that in recent years there has been a substantial reduction in the number of military personnel at the base. On the other hand, the specialist in transatlantic relations does not believe that there will be a total withdrawal from that base, putting forward an explanation for this fact based on one of the main assumptions of Geopolitics: if eventually voids of power are created, they will be immediately filled by someone (Andrade 2017, 76).

For the United States of America, this role resulting from the combination of strategic options with a rigorous technical-military analysis, including a detailed study of the capabilities and limitations of the available means, had been well defined since at least 1994. The Lajes base is then considered a key base for the projection of US forces towards the Middle East. In the document drawn up by the *General Accounting Office* entitled *Strategic Mobility - Serious Problems Remain in U.S. Deployment Capabilities*, of April 1994, of the sixteen bases considered essential by the US Administration, six were in Europe and one of them was the Lajes base.

We realised that the USA would not tolerate another power settling on this first Atlantic meridian, already outside the American territorial space, but prior to any other territory on the other shore of this ocean. We know from history, that the defence of the United States begins not on land,



but on one side, in the Azores archipelago in the Atlantic and, on the other side, in the Hawaii archipelago in the Pacific.

It is important to take into account the substantial decrease since 2015 of both US military personnel and Portuguese civilians working at the Lajes base, which has caused a significant economic and social impact that has not been mitigated by the US authorities. At the same time, difficult consequences of the US presence in the Azores are arising, such as the contamination of the soil around Lajes, which may contaminate aquifers not only in that area, but also in other parts of the island. This issue has marked the agenda of the meetings of the Permanent Bilateral Commission of the Cooperation and Defence Agreement between Portugal and the United States of America.

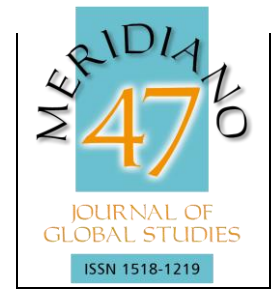
In this respect, and bearing in mind that since the early 1990s the Autonomous Region of the Azores has no longer received any financial compensation from the United States of America, although the idea was to replace this financial component with significant cooperation (scientific, technological, commercial, etc.), this has not materialised. Therefore, in our view, Portugal must in a concerted manner be firm in demanding that the Americans decontaminate the soil around the Lajes base. At the same time, it must renegotiate the current Cooperation and Defence Agreement between the two countries in order to be able to guarantee Portugal, and obviously the Azores, certain compensatory measures which have not in fact been taking place in recent times. We are referring, essentially, to the joint development of cooperation projects, at various levels, and in various areas, between the two governments, but which would specifically involve the Azores archipelago in order to have an impact on its sustainable development (Andrade 2017, 71-72).

In turn, Portugal projects to gain new Atlantic relevance by creating the Centre for Atlantic Defence (CeDA), through the Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 66/2018 - Diário da República No. 99/2018, Series I of 2018-05-23. The main objective of the implementation of the centre is to fill existing gaps in the Atlantic space and contribute to the strengthening of Portugal's affirmation as a producer of security with institutions such as the European Union, the UN, NATO, the CPLP, allies such as the USA and the international community in general.

The Atlantic Ocean is a vast geopolitical and geostrategic area, which links three continents and includes more than 50 coastal states, from the Davis Strait in the North Atlantic to Antarctica in the South Atlantic. The Atlantic basin contains approximately 30% of known oil reserves and 35% of known gas reserves, notably in the Gulf of Guinea. It is part of important maritime routes to and from Europe, America and Africa and is also the ocean through which the largest number of submarine communications cables pass.

Since its strategic importance is obvious, the Atlantic is an essential means of communication for scientific and economic development, but at the same time an area of threats to the sovereignty of States, to the security of their citizens and, as a result, to global security.

As already mentioned, the challenges and threats to the security of the Atlantic are multiple, complex and of diverse sources and nature, from the growing presence of naval means in the North Atlantic to the drug trafficking routes from Central and South America towards West Africa, in transit



to Europe. These challenges, although with a clear expression at sea, require a holistic approach, i.e. at sea, on land, in the air and even in cyberspace.

For all these reasons, the challenge will be to conduct a wide debate, within the Portuguese society, regarding these issues, in order to outline the best strategy to be adopted by the State in this new world we live in. It seems to us, however, that our participation in the European Security and Defence Identity should be a priority to affirm Portugal within Europe and, at the same time, as a contribution to define, together with the United States of America, a more balanced relationship within NATO itself. And here, as Andrade (2017, 89) questions, what role will the Azores play in this new security and defence equation? That is, with the implementation of a Common Foreign and Security Policy by the European Union, how will the Azores be seen and what role could they play in the future? Will the archipelago be seen as the advanced defence of the United States, as it has been until now, or of Europe? Or how can the two be reconciled?

Conclusion

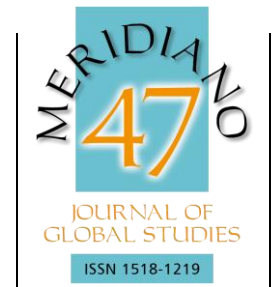
In short, we would say that Portugal should continue to try to make its foreign policy compatible within the European Union with its relationship with the United States of America, including its relationship with Portuguese-speaking countries, both in Africa and in South America, in a context in which the Azores archipelago will play a fundamental role, continuing what has happened over the centuries.

The Azores Archipelago has been an Atlantic bridge and interface of relationships that are lost in time, migrations on both sides, support and logistical and military base, mainly of the United States of America, from the First World War onwards. If, on the one hand, it projects Europe to the west, it has also remained since then as an advanced base for the defence of the United States to the east and protection of the Atlantic routes.

In today's post-Cold War world, since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, in which the USA, especially since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, has assumed the role of hyperpower or the only great power, the Azores archipelago continues to be relevant at geopolitical and geostrategic level. The Lajes base, despite the reduction in personnel, in line with the rationalisation of human resources made possible by technology, remains one of the main bases of North American strategic interest outside its territory.

The close relationship between the USA and the Azores has enabled the region and Portugal to be part of the effort that the western world, led by the Americans, has made to defend peace, freedom, democracy, security, free navigation by air and sea and to structure an international community subject to rules and endowed with multilateral institutions committed to promoting and safeguarding international law and human rights.

Europe and North America, once the old and the new world, are above all a vast community that essentially shares the same values and ways of life so often connoted as belonging to the Western North. Within this framework between East and West, the Azores may contribute, as they have always



been able to do, maintaining the relevance of their strategic position, to the renewal of the Atlantic alliance, in the face of new global challenges, whether in terms of defence and security, climate change, migration, refugees, terrorism, poverty and growing inequality.

In addition to security and defence, the new alliances are also made of research and science, new challenges raise new potentials and possibilities for action. From new projects such as the Atlantic Defence Centre or the *Air Centre*, qualitative leaps can be taken in the long transatlantic relationship.

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