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Cape Verde and the Security Council: time for reelection?

VASCO MARTINS AND PAULO GORJÃO
Portuguese Institute of International Relations and Security (IPRIS)

The main idea underpinning this policy brief is the suggestion that Cape Verde should present its availability to be nominated for a second term as non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The country's development and its position in international affairs appear to be favorable to a new candidature, perhaps in the 2014/2015 biennium. Starting from Cape Verde's democratic credentials and its unique features suited to occupying this position in the UNSC, this policy brief will show that Cape Verde assembles all the necessary preconditions to not only be nominated, but also to assure high quality representation and intervention in the UNSC.

The article will provide a concise insight into the electoral process for the UNSC in Africa, an election usually decided not in the General Assembly of the UN but earlier, within the African Union (AU), which usually presents the UNSC with a 'clean slate' of contenders to occupy the African seats. This will be followed by a quick look at Cape Verde's background, the success of its development and why it portrays such a different picture from other Western African states. Afterwards, different

arguments are presented in an attempt to provide the reader with understandable and clear reasons as to why electing Cape Verde as a non-permanent member to the UNSC would benefit not only the region but the entire African continent, while guaranteeing a term to a country fully abiding international law and the supreme role of the UNSC as a guarantor of peace and security in the world.

The electoral process

Electing ten countries to fill the non-permanent seats at the UNSC is a process that has little to do with the UN itself. When the General Assembly meets to cast the vote by secret ballot it is frequently the case that the contenders have already been chosen – albeit there have been a few exceptions in the past – through a negotiation procedure termed 'clean slates'. The 'clean slate' is a concept designed to enable the number of candidates to match the seats available through previous nomination at a regional body. This proto-nomination is held in regional forums like the AU, where representatives of each state meet and agree on



whom to pre-endorse for the official election held in the UN General Assembly. Unsurprisingly, there is a lot of compromise and horse-trading – since the nomination of one state squares the interests of many – in the run up to the election.

Within the African Group, the entire procedure – largely organized through the African Union – has to abide by a certain regional balance, so as to respect the geographic assortment of the continent. For this purpose, the selection for the three African seats divides the continent in three regions: North and Central Africa; Western Africa; and Eastern and Southern Africa. Except for Western Africa, which always maintains an available seat, the other regions have to go through a process of rotation, so that for example in the case of Eastern and Southern Africa, a country from each region is able to take the one seat available per term (i.e. South Africa in 2007/2008 gave way to Uganda's candidature in 2009/2010). This rotation also helps less 'powerful' countries to be elected, since many do not possess the necessary resources due to the amount of human and capital investment required to run a campaign with the same professionalism other wealthier countries are able to. Nevertheless, there are certain rules that can be disregarded or simply bypassed when attempting to present a clean slate. Although Article 18 of the UN Charter states that "each member of the General Assembly shall have one vote" – meaning size, population and wealth are irrelevant in the electoral process – the practice of reaching a 'clean slate' by negotiating and campaigning in regional forums enhances the position of politically more influential countries like Angola, Nigeria or South Africa,¹ which plays negatively in the aspirations of smaller states like Cape Verde.

Nigeria is currently ending its term as Western Africa's non-permanent member. Since Cape Verde has not presented its candidacy for the 2012/2013 biennium, it can only run for the seat from 2014 onwards, which leaves some time to plan the campaign, lobby and make contacts. However, although the country appears to have remarkable chances of being elected when observed only through the UN's lenses, the fact that there will be at least 18 presidential and legislative elections in Africa during 2011 alone might prove an obstacle. If the democratic wave is broken in many of these countries and leaders refuse to step down and

relinquish power, Cape Verde's arguments for election – heavily based on democracy and development – might score badly and simply not be enough to achieve nomination, thus obliging the country to rethink its campaign concept away from the very principles that define its differences in the region.

The purely paradoxical nature of the 'clean slates' concept can easily boycott the UN's egalitarian electoral values depending on the political imprint of each region. If, in fact, 2011 produces a significant rollback in terms of democracy in the whole of Africa, Cape Verde will most likely have to adapt its arguments and find new ways to win enough support in order to become nominated.

Representation and diversity

The very first reason to suggest Cape Verde should manifest its willingness to be in the race for the nomination to a non-permanent seat at the UNSC in the 2014/2015 biennium is the clear lack of representation countries like Cape Verde have in the UNSC. Table 1 shows the number of times and the corresponding years each Western African country was elected to the UNSC as a non-permanent member.

Table 1: Times present at the UNSC and year²

Country	Times present at the UNSC	Year
Benin	2	1976/1977, 2004/2005
Burkina Faso	2	1984/1985, 2008/2009
Cape Verde	1	1992/1993
Côte d'Ivoire	2	1964/1965, 1990/1991
Gambia	1	1998/1999
Ghana	3	1962/1963, 1986/1987, 2006/2007
Guinea	2	1972/1973, 2002/2003
Guinea-Bissau	1	1996/1997
Liberia	1	1961
Mali	2	1966/1967, 2000/2001
Mauritania	2	1974/75, 1977/1978
Niger	1	1980/1981
Nigeria	4	1966/1967, 1978/1979, 1994/1995, 2010/2011
Senegal	2	1968/1969, 1988/1989
Sierra Leone	1	1970/1971
Togo	1	1982/1983



Throughout its post-independence history, Cape Verde was only once seated at the UNSC, during the 1992/1993 term. Almost 20 years later, it is time for the country to once again showcase its policies, its political culture and exert its singular character at the UNSC. When analyzing the data presented in Table 1 it is not difficult to understand the dire need for a more just rotation and representation by sponsoring diversity in nominations. Along with Cape Verde, only Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo³ were once at the UNSC. All the other countries were nominated and elected more than once, with Nigeria scoring four nominations to the UNSC. Yet, when matching the number of times each country was present at the UNSC as a non-permanent member with their respective GDP, a pattern begins to point to potentially coincidental relations between GDP and the number of times each country had a seat on the UNSC.

Table 2: Correlation between GDP and number of times each country was present at the UNSC⁴

Country	GDP US\$ in millions (approximately)	Times present at the UNSC
Benin	6,655	2
Burkina Faso	8,140	2
Cape Verde	1,549	1
Cote d'Ivoire	23,304	2
Gambia	733	1
Ghana	26,169	3
Guinea	4,103	2
Guinea-Bissau	836	1
Liberia	876	1
Mali	8,996	2
Mauritania	3,030	2
Niger	5,384	1
Nigeria	173,003	4
Senegal	12,821	2
Sierra Leone	1,941	1
Togo	2,854	1

As Table 2 shows, with regard to GDP, only Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo consistently appear at the top of Western Africa's poorest states⁵ (below US\$6 billion GDP), the exact same states which only once held a seat at the UNSC. Furthermore, when comparing the size of territory and population of each country with the amount of times seated at the UNSC, the correlation between the forces of wealth, territory and population becomes much clearer.

Table 3: Correlation between times present at the UNSC and size of population and territory⁶

Country	Times present at the UNSC	Population	Territory in km ²
Benin	2	8.934.985	112.622
Burkina Faso	2	15.756.927	274.222
Cape Verde	1	505.606	4.033
Cote d'Ivoire	2	21.075.010	322.463
Gambia	1	1.705.212	11.295
Ghana	3	23.837.261	238.533
Guinea	3	10.068.724	245.857
Guinea-Bissau	1	1.610.746	36.125
Liberia	1	3.954.979	111.396
Mali	2	13.010.209	1.240.192
Mauritania	2	3.290.630	1.025.520
Niger	1	15.290.102	1.267.000
Nigeria	4	154.728.892	923.768
Senegal	1	12.534.228	196.722
Sierra Leone	1	5.696.471	71.74
Togo	1	6.618.613	56.785

The data in Table 3 appears to show that there might be a correlation between size, population and the amount of times a country was seated at the UNSC in the case of Western Africa, with the exception of Niger. Along with GDP, states with small territories and little population are deemed to have been fewer times at the UNSC than any other country in Western Africa. Although this configuration might not be a 'modus operandi' but rather a coincidence derived from many factors, it still serves to prove a connection between territory, population and the number of seats a country had at the UNSC. Indeed, the 'clean slates' process facilitates the nomination of countries politically more influential and with more resources of power, derived from the size of their workforce, the extension of territory, existence of raw materials and other valuable exportable goods, and the annual revenue they possess, all factors that serve to enhance the visibility and international weight of a country, thus heavily improving the chances of nomination and election to the UNSC. Hence, it is not a coincidence that Nigeria, the most populated and richest country in Western Africa is the one to have been the most times at the UNSC.

A small but insular state

The insularity argument, based on the under representation of island states in the UNSC, serves as an appeal to



diversity in the true sense of territorial geography. Based on the isolation of small islands with regard to their respective continental shelves, this concept argues for greater sensibility and consideration when nominating countries for seats that require a certain rotation, by pushing for a more regular inclusion of small island states. The insularity argument is frequently mixed with the small state representation argument. Indeed, the small state argument is also worthy of reflection by international forums and organizations, where the under representation of small states is all too obvious. Yet, by associating the two state related geographical concepts, the true differences between island states and small states become less apparent in the case of Cape Verde, differences which are two-fold in the country.

Rarely are island states able to articulate their geographic insularity as a primary source of categorization in world forums, especially when their economic, social and security constraints are profoundly unique and frequently underrepresented in the UNSC. Small island states have a specific set of conditions which make them differ from continental countries, large or small. Stemming from issues related to energy consumption, industry manufacture and raw material exploration, to remarkably simpler tasks such as assuring basic health services and food and potable water availability,⁷ small island states are characterized by a singular geographical imprint which greatly influences their capacity for self-rule and 'normal' statehood. Because their intrinsic circumstances do not favor economic viability in order to assure political prowess, small island states are rarely able to influence security arrangements through the UNSC. Cape Verde's nomination – which carries the social and economic circumstances imposed by insularity and a small territory – would underpin the UN's solidarity and recognition of the hardships imposed by these regional and territorial features. However, the country's nomination would also bring awareness to issues related to security.

Like many other states, Cape Verde was hit by the financial crisis. It is part of a regional economic group – the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) – where most of its members' economies are based on the primary sector (agriculture), whereas Cape Verde's economy is largely upheld by the tertiary sector (service-based economy). The very fluctuations of its economic development and the far from optimal state of its armed forces, combined with the size of its

economic exclusive zone, make it impossible for the archipelagic island state to efficiently patrol its waters. The complexity of monitoring its waters with little surveillance equipment and engagement materials opens the door to illegal immigration and all sorts of illegal trafficking. Furthermore, the risk of having piracy groups assaulting its vital trade routes represents a real menace and a serious threat to the economic survival of Cape Verde, which due to its archipelagic and insular nature relies mainly on sea trade.

Cape Verde's insularity provides a two-fold argument. Its nomination to the UNSC would represent not only insularity and heterogeneity but also the difficulties inherent to being an archipelago and the struggle to maintain a minimum degree of security in its waters. Furthermore, it combines the need to fight piracy and underdevelopment in places where the importance of cracking down on parallel economies subsidized by organized crime – especially drug trade – is still not clear. As a result, West African economies and development tend to regress.

Cape Verde's nomination provides the Western African Group and the AU with a unique opportunity to channel concerns related to isolation, organized crime and the lack of representation small states and small island states have in the UNSC, while updating the challenges attached to globalization in the world's top body for security arrangements.

A model of good governance in West Africa

Cape Verde is a top country with regard to good governance, not only in Africa but in the world. The country presents good rankings in most global organizations dedicated to tracing and evaluating a country's profile.

- Transparency International – an organization which measures the degree of corruption and transparency in the political and economic life of a country – gives Cape Verde 5.1 points (out of a possible 10), higher than Italy's 4.3 and close to Portugal's 5.8. The country ranks even higher than African political and economic giant South Africa, which ranks 4.7.
- In the Heritage Foundation's 'Economic Free World Ranks 2011' Cape Verde ranks 64.6 (out of 100) in terms of economic freedom, 2.8 points up from 2010. In comparison, the country ranks higher than Portugal's 64.0 and exactly the same as European leading economy France. The Heritage Foundation measures



economic freedom as “the fundamental right of every human to control his or her own labor and property. In an economically free society, individuals are free to work, produce, consume, and invest in any way they please, with that freedom both protected by the state and unconstrained by the state. In economically free states, governments allow labor, capital and goods to move freely, and refrain from coercion of constraints of liberty beyond the extent necessary to protect and maintain liberty itself”.⁸

- One of Cape Verde’s greatest achievements was becoming eligible to receive aid from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a foreign aid agency created by the US Congress. “In July 2005 the MCC signed a five year US\$110 million compact with the government of Cape Verde, aimed at transforming the economy from aid dependency to sustainable, private-sector led growth”.⁹ The program was such a success that Cape Verde was again selected on January 5th 2011 to sign another compact program.
- The 2010 Ibrahim Index of African Governance places Cape Verde in the 4th position of countries with best indicators of governance. Preceded only by Mauritius, the Seychelles and Botswana, Cape Verde ranks 75.5 out of 100, the highest ranking country in all Western Africa. The Ibrahim Index measures the “delivery of public goods and services to citizens by government and non-state actors” and “Uses indicators across four main categories: Safety and Rule of Law; Participation and Human Rights; Sustainable Economic Opportunity; and Human Development as proxies for the quality of the processes and outcomes of governance”.¹⁰
- In 2007 Cape Verde stopped figuring in the UN’s Least Developed Country list and graduated to the Developing Country category. Cape Verde’s developing efforts were hailed by the UN and represent a matter of great pride to Cape Verdeans in general.

Cape Verde’s good governance and social and economic development indicators are uncontested. The country is a beacon of good governance in Western Africa, as is attested by several countries and organizations, including the European Union (EU), who has established a strategic framework for cooperation – a Special Partnership –

between the Commission and Cape Verde. Nevertheless, and although good governance must always be prized, it is an argument which carries little impetus in Africa, when compared to other regions.

Although Cape Verde’s governance and development argument is politically powerful and viable, Cape Verde’s nomination during the process of clean slates (in the short term), is dependent on a panoply of issues, which will influence and possibly even dictate the success of its nomination. These issues include the resolution of the Côte d’Ivoire crisis, the stabilization of the situation in Nigeria, South Sudan’s success in scoring a peaceful partition with Sudan, and above all, the many elections taking place this year in Africa and the degree of freedom, fairness and democratic practice they entail. However, the resolution of all of these issues can include a certain degree of repression and conflict. If their solution does not uphold the basic principles of democracy and political, social and economic freedom in their respective countries, Cape Verde’s immense efforts to achieve a respectful level of governance and development will not weight enough for a possible nomination for the UNSC and thus cannot be used in their fullest extent. Hence, governance and development, although important, must not be Cape Verde’s only ‘trump card’ to achieve nomination.

The multilaterally experienced state

Cape Verde is a country fully integrated in the international system and a strong supporter of multilateralism. Within this current context, Cape Verde conducts its foreign policy taking into account economic, social, political and cultural criteria, which not only contribute to a deeper integration in the spaces it is inserted, but also add value to the organizations the country is a member of.

In the political and economic sphere, and mostly since 2006, Cape Verde leaned towards the ECOWAS – after the transformation of the Executive Secretariat into the ECOWAS Commission – a regional economic organization which also possesses certain peacekeeping instruments. The devotion Cape Verde has dedicated to ECOWAS activities has awarded the country several responsibilities and tokens of appreciation. According to Portuguese diplomat José Augusto Duarte, “today Cape Verde welcomes the headquarters of the West Africa Institute, as well as the headquarters of the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), and received the ECOWAS Conference on Drug Trafficking, a threat to security in the region”.¹¹ Moreover, José Augusto Duarte continues, “Cape



Verde benefited from sectoral development processes funded by the ECOWAS Commission and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID). Finally, Cape Verdeans were appointed to the positions of ECOWAS Vice-President of the Court, Vice-President of Parliament and Deputy Chairman of the Audit Committee, and Cape Verde is expected to join the next Commission team".¹²

Cape Verde also dedicates its attention to matters of security in the region. Recently, while representing ECOWAS, President Pedro Pires – along with two other Western African leaders – was nominated to mediate in the Côte d'Ivoire electoral crisis, enabling Cape Verde to have a central role not only in negotiations between the two conflicting parts and ECOWAS, but also with the African Union and the United Nations. As a country devoted to the peaceful mediation of conflicts – only favoring military intervention as a last resort and in extreme cases – Cape Verde had the opportunity to show its diplomatic skills through not one but several multilateral organizations, while remaining faithful to the principles of international law. Yet, Côte d'Ivoire was not the only place where Cape Verde had to play a significant role. The country was also the organizer in of the "Praia Roundtable on Security Sector Reform" in April 2009 regarding Guinea-Bissau, a country which went through a period of renewed social and political convulsion after the assassination of former President João Bernardo 'Nino' Vieira in March 2009.

On the cultural front, Cape Verde is a plenipotentiary member of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), an international organization of countries who share Portuguese as their official language, serving as a vector of unity and political dialogue. Cape Verde's national identity relates immensely both to European and African backgrounds. The sheer geographical position of this archipelago, located in the Macaronesia¹³ group of islands is nothing but a clue to the identity duality of Cape Verdeans, which often makes them uniquely capable of quickly integrating in several multilateral forums and international organizations.

Cape Verde is also a member of both the African Union and the United Nations, revealing itself as a strong proponent of the latter's reform of institutional architecture. The country is an advocate of the UN's centrality as the only body guarantor of peace and security in the world. Furthermore, Cape Verde enjoys a special partnership with the European Union, unique in its type and format in all of Africa.

If in ECOWAS Cape Verde finds a regional and economic connection, the same can be said with regard to the EU. In

the CPLP, Cape Verde celebrates its culture and political identity, while immersed in the continental policies of the African Union. This panoply of international interactions and presences underpins the heavy diplomatic experience Cape Verde has with relation to its size and political influence, which make the country particularly well suited to holding a term at the UNSC. Moreover, its position as a bride of dialogue and connection between three continents – Africa, America and Europe – reinforces the very nature of Cape Verde's cosmopolitan and sophisticated foreign policy.

Final remarks

There are many reasons to support Cape Verde's potential candidacy to a seat as a non-permanent member of the UNSC. All the arguments presented above underpin the favorable conditions and strong chances the country has of making a successful contribution to the UNSC, although the wide-ranging concepts presented here might not serve to convince all actors of Cape Verde's high suitability for this endeavor.

Above all, in order to become successfully nominated, Cape Verde must pay close attention to the clean slates procedure, an arrangement not beneficial for the country, since it appears to be connected to certain indicators generally disregarded by the UN in favor of an egalitarian status. Nevertheless, Cape Verde's reasons for nomination can surpass this first difficulty. The country is not only a symbol of the need to have a more inclusive representation and variety in the UNSC, but also supports this claim with proven experience in several multilateral organizations and inter-governmental forums, something most countries sharing its specificities find difficult to achieve. Good governance must also not be excluded from the nomination campaign. While it is true that this argument is dependent on several issues – mainly the results of the 2011 elections in many African countries – it is also a concept most African states cannot disregard, regardless of their domestic political situations.

Ultimately, the time is right to start thinking about such matters. Although some countries prefer to announce their candidacy years in advance, there is still time for Cape Verde to start working towards a nomination for the 2014/2015 biennium. The country's diplomatic experience and continuous development signals an important contribution not only to the UN and the African continent, but also to those countries struggling to surpass their development handicaps, while positioning Cape Verde in the security policy map. Hence, the value of Cape Verde's nomination.



Notes

- 1 After being present at the UNSC in the 2007/2008 biennium, South Africa was re-elected for the 2011/2012 period. This is mainly due to the country's political weight, influence and reformist agenda in the UNSC – a policy shared by many countries in the region – playing through the clean slate process.
- 2 Source: United Nations Security Council website.
- 3 Sierra Leone and Liberia were often non-contenders for nomination but rather the target of UNSC resolutions, due to the internal convulsions the two countries continuously experienced throughout their history.
- 4 Source: World Bank Data Catalogue.
- 5 Even though Cape Verde ranks highest in terms of Human Development in the entire Western African region.
- 6 Source: World Bank Data Catalogue.
- 7 Due to recurrent droughts Cape Verde imports more than 80% of its food supplies.
- 8 Heritage Foundation 2011 Index of Economic Freedom website.
- 9 Millennium Challenge Corporation website.
- 10 The Ibrahim Index, 2010 edition of the Ibrahim Index of African Governance.
- 11 José Augusto Duarte, "Cape Verde and ECOWAS: the challenges of regional integration" (*Portuguese Journal of International Affairs*, No. 4, Autumn/Winter 2010), pp. 3-7.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Macaronesia is formed by a number of islands located in the Atlantic belonging to Portugal (Madeira and Azores), Spain (Canary Islands) and Cape Verde. For more, see Pedro Seabra, "Macaronesia: the latest wish in Cape Verde's bucket list" (*IPRIS Lusophone Countries Bulletin*, No. 14, December 2010), pp. 1-2.

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Portuguese Institute of International Relations and Security (IPRIS)
Rua Vitorino Nemésio, 5 - 1750-306 Lisboa
PORTUGAL

<http://www.ipris.org>
email: ipris@ipris.org

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