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- 3 CAPE VERDE AND ECOWAS: THE CHALLENGES OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION  
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### Portuguese Journal of International Affairs

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**Articles in journals:** Paulo Gorjão, "Japan's Foreign Policy and East Timor, 1975-2002" (*Asian Survey*, Vol. 42, No. 5, September/October 2002), pp. 754-771.

**Articles in newspapers:** Paulo Gorjão, "UN needs coherent strategy to exit from East Timor" (*Jakarta Post*, 19 May 2004), p. 25.

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# Cape Verde and ECOWAS: the challenges of regional integration

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Regional integration is based on the geopolitical context of closeness and proximity between countries. It leads to the realization of specific cooperation projects, including economic and political ones, which aim to capture, for each country, the benefits that result from the operation of larger spaces, institutionally organized within this perspective. Regional integration meets various degrees of fortune, if we compare the examples underway in Europe, Africa, America or Asia.

In Africa, regional integration refers to, at a continental level, the African Union and its various instruments, mainly its African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) regarding the establishment of democratic governance and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a platform for economic and social development of the continent. Politically and institutionally, Africa has been divided by the discussion on the establishment of a United States of Africa, a debate which divides, on the one hand, those wanting to create such a government immediately, and on the other progressives who defend the need for previous consolidation of institutions, as well as the gradual convergence of policies and governance among African countries – elements which are considered essential to that objective over the longer term. In short, Africa holds a debate similar to the European one, but in this case, it stands between the devolution of more responsibilities to the continental Organization and the continued development of conditions to allow real integration.

Regional integration in Africa also includes 14 sub-regional organizations, as well as the African Union, which wants to reduce that number of these to five in order to stick to the continent's regional subdivisions – north, south, east, west and central Africa.

Regional integration cannot proceed without a balanced distribution of the principle of subsidiarity between the continental, sub-regional and national levels. In this regard, the African Union should value its role of spokesman for the continent on the big issues of global governance, and lead, in a coherent manner, the current dialogue between Africa and other continents or large countries. Sub-regional organizations ought to be responsible for the integration and harmonization of economic and political spaces of proximity and their external dialogue. Finally, it is up to individual states to take responsibility for their governance and national development.

Despite being a member of the African Union, Cape Verde is nonetheless primarily integrated in the West African region. In 1977, two years after its independence, it joined the Abuja Treaty establishing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). After a long period looking inward and focussing on state-building and national development, the country began to pay more attention to its integration in the region. It was particularly the case after 2006, in the aftermath of the transformation of the then Executive Secretariat into today's ECOWAS Commission, which led to a steady increase in Cape Verde's participation in the political activities and institutional development programs of ECOWAS.

On this basis, Cape Verde has been requested to host several regional events and institutions, with emphasis on the ECOWAS and ECOWAS/Brazil summits held on the island of Sal in July 2010. Today, Cape Verde welcomes the headquarters of the West Africa Institute (WAI), as well as the headquarters of the ECOWAS Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), and received the "ECOWAS Conference on Drug Trafficking, a threat to security in the region", which adopted the Praia Declaration and Plan of Action, in October 2008. Furthermore, Cape Verde benefited from sectoral development programs 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.

Moreover, Cape Verde has sought to be considered a useful conflict management country in West Africa, defending, in each case, a peaceful outcome to crisis through negotiation and dialogue, and fighting the specter of war via the alternative to military interventions. That was the stance it adopted in the case of Guinea Bissau – by organizing the "Praia roundtable on security sector reform (SSR) in Guinea-Bissau" in April 2009 – and more recently in Côte d'Ivoire, by taking part in mediation under the auspices of ECOWAS.

However, as part of its participation in ECOWAS, Cape Verde has lobbied for and defended a differentiated treatment in relation to certain matters, relying for that purpose on Article 68 of the Abuja Treaty, which alludes to this possibility. More precisely Article 68 states that "member states, taking into account the economic and social difficulties that may face some member states and particularly the island states and landlocked, agree to provide, if necessary, these states special treatment, as regards the application of certain provisions of this Treaty and to provide other necessary assistance".

Indeed, apart from being a unique island nation in the context of West Africa, Cape Verde is also the smallest country both in physical and population sizes in the region. Its economy is mainly services oriented, while the remaining countries are primarily exporters of raw materials. The disparity in economic and human development is also high among the 15 countries of the Organization, as one can read in the table below.

**Table 1** ECOWAS countries profile

Countries	Surface Km <sup>2</sup>	Population 2010	GNP per capita / PPP 2008 USD	HD Index 2010 / Ranking
Benin	115.762	9.200.000	2.387	0.435 – 134
Burkina Faso	274.000	16.300.000	1.215	0.305 – 161
Cape Verde	4.033	500.000	3.306	0.534 – 118
Côte d'Ivoire	332.462	21.600.000	1.625	0.397 – 149
Gambia	11.295	1.800.000	1.358	0.390 – 151
Ghana	238.538	24.300.000	1.385	0.467 – 130
Guinea-Bissau	36.125	1.600.000	0.538	0.289 – 164
Guinea	245.860	13.300.000	0.953	0.340 – 156
Liberia	111.370	4.100.000	0.320	0.300 – 162
Mali	1.240.192	13.300.000	1.171	0.309 – 160
Niger	1.267.000	15.900.000	0.675	0.261 – 167
Nigeria	923.768	128.700.000	2.156	0.423 – 142
Senegal	193.000	12,900.000	1.816	0.411 – 144
Sierra Leone	71.710	5.800.000	0.809	0.317 – 158
Togo	56.785	6.800.000	0.844	0.428 – 139
Total	5.121.900	276.100.000		

Compilation and Report: HD/UNDP 2010.

In this context, the controlled circulation of people in the region, the need for some safeguard clauses in the construction of the customs union and common market, the adoption of a single currency, or the negotiation of a trade regime (Economic Partnership Agreement - EPA) between the region and the European Union, are some of the most relevant areas for Cape Verde.

Regional integration, as defined initially, should be an achievement benefitting all countries belonging to it, a source of regional peace and security, a way for people and goods to access a broader market, a promoter of regional funding – including the mobilization of external resources – in a spirit close to that of a regional cohesion fund. Moreover, regional integration should be a milestone of solidarity among member countries, particularly in the areas of human security and combating natural disasters. Regional integration should also be an instrument and complement to the development of the region and individual countries in particular. In short, regional integration is a process that must be evaluated according to how it promotes progress in the region and is able to bring satisfaction to each member individually.

The implementation of regional integration in West Africa shows evidence of attempts to achieve those goals. At the same time however, the path towards integration in the region still faces some major challenges that fall within three main areas of interest.

Firstly, the challenges of peace and security. For many decades, the region has been confronted with political instability, ranging from struggles for independence to more

recent conflicts. While there is no longer any war between states, and the region is not facing civil war (even if some countries must still overcome their previous crisis), various forms of instability still exist, from internal struggles for undemocratic conquest of power, terrorist threats and drug trafficking, to other illicit political conflicts drawing from deficits in democratic governance. The ongoing situation in Côte d'Ivoire is paradigmatic of how ECOWAS is incapable of facing the political constraints of reaching a solution, as the Organization is divided in its means and leadership on how to solve this crisis. An implosion in Côte d'Ivoire may mean a setback for the global integration process in West Africa. Indeed, on the one hand regional integration has made provisions to resolve peace and security issues by way of political consultations and mediated decisions, by establishing principles and guidelines for intervention and by creating an ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF); on the other, this organization's capacity to act has certainly proven to be limited, which can be an obstacle to overcoming these challenges.

The next challenge is that there should be a direct correlation between integration and the political, economic and social convergence among states in the region. The ECOWAS Charter on Democracy and Good Governance sets the direction of the convergence that must be achieved, so that countries can adopt similar practices concerning elections, democratic governance, consistent application of the rule of law, respect of civil power by armed and security forces and oriented development toward economic progress and social justice. Still, there are great disparities, and larger obstacles to overcome, among them the belief that democracy is a western concept meant to weaken traditional African values, an assumption which has very often led to the rejection of the principles and rules of representation as a universal asset that should guide and assist worldwide in the achievement, maintenance and rotation of political power.

Lastly, there is the challenge of leading the process of regional integration. Politically, this process it is not only the biennial rotation for the organization's presidency, where national interests often overlap or prevent regional integration from progressing. It is rather the creation of conditions to govern the organization according to a roadmap and a set of specifications that are the result of political will and consensus among participating states, where each one of them can anticipate its contribution and benefits. And this is only possible in a context of greater peace and security in the region, as well as greater convergence in the democratic governance between states. At the institutional level, the Commission – as the organization's acting government – must overcome its current interim presidency to create a suitable executive leadership for ECOWAS. To that end, it must reform the composition of the Commission and overcome the current difficulty in replacing the team of Commissioners: due to a failure to agree on criteria for rotation among member states, nominating a commissioner from each state appears to be a good solution. Finally, the Commission should push its management to achieve better results, and consequently carry out an assessment of current constraints and measures in order to find possible solutions.

Regional integration in West Africa is a structuring dimension of foreign policy in Cape Verde, and it is important on that basis. By providing access to this vast market, it plays a vital role in enabling the Cape Verdean hub to export services and goods produced locally or from transshipment activities and takes advantage of Cape Verde's geostrategic position in the mid-Atlantic, near the African coast.

Regional integration could also be a way of integrating Cape Verde with the other Macaronesian archipelagos (Azores, Canary Islands and Madeira), with which the country shares the advantages of proximity, but also economic constraints and bio-geographic characteristics. On this basis, a summit was prepared by Cape Verdean initiative, the first meeting taking place in the city of Mindelo in Cape Verde on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2010. It created an autonomous space of integration among the four archipelagos, and aimed to promote cooperation with the regions in their immediate geographical proximity, notably the European Union and ECOWAS.

It is also important to note the fact that Cape Verde's regional integration in these two areas – ECOWAS and the European Uttermost Region in Macaronesia – is not only encouraged by the special partnership between Cape Verde and the European Union, but also constitutes one of its pillars. For the EU and Cape Verde, having a special partnership and engaging in regional integration are, in reality, far from being mutually exclusive – on the contrary, they are complementary.

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that Cape Verde's foreign policy is certainly not limited to regional integration. Foreign policy tends to assign multiple belongings to Cape Verde and build, with these objectives in mind, strategic multilateral or bilateral partnerships that represent added value to the island nation in the fields of peace, security and development.

\* The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the position of the government of Cape Verde.



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