

THE INFLUENCE OF HUMAN SECURITY ON THE SECURITY OF MARITIME SPACES: THE CASE OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

A INFLUÊNCIA DA SEGURANÇA HUMANA NA SEGURANÇA DOS ESPAÇOS MARÍTIMOS: O CASO DO ATLÂNTICO SUL

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Abstract

In the late 1970s, Kenneth Waltz said that, in the presence of anarchy, security is the ultimate goal of States, which may only pursue other ends when their survival is assured.

In the wake of the Cold War, there was a widening of the concept of security. Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde were among the leading theorists who questioned the focus on the State in the conceptualisation of security. After this broadening of the field to issues beyond the military political sphere, concepts such as human security and maritime security entered the international relations lexicon.

Using a qualitative research strategy, inductive reasoning and a case study methodology, this article analyses illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the South Atlantic, which has seen a surge since the beginning of the century and is now one of the most significant threats to the security and well being of the region's populations. The findings show that the depletion of fish stocks can undermine the human security of populations, driving people to engage in illegal activities that compromise maritime security in the South Atlantic.

Keywords: South Atlantic; fishery resources; human security; maritime security

Resumo

Afirmou Kenneth Waltz, no final da década de 1970, que, atenta a ordem anárquica vigente, a segurança era o fim mais alto dos Estados e estes apenas poderiam prosseguir outras metas depois de assegurada a sua sobrevivência.

Todavia, no final da Guerra Fria verificou-se uma abertura no modo como a segurança era interpretada. Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver e Jaap de Wilde contam-se entre os principais teóricos que questionaram a primazia do Estado na conceptualização da segurança. E o facto é que o seu

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alargamento a campos além do político-militar levou a que conceitos como segurança humana e segurança marítima tivessem emergido no léxico das relações internacionais.

Seguindo uma estratégia de investigação qualitativa e um raciocínio indutivo, este artigo analisa, a partir de um estudo de caso, a pesca ilegal, não declarada e não regulamentada no Atlântico Sul, uma vez que o seu crescimento ao longo deste século a guindou à condição de uma das mais relevantes ameaças à segurança e bem-estar das populações daquela região. As conclusões evidenciam que a crescente escassez de recursos haliêuticos pode colocar em causa a segurança humana das populações, levando-as a enveredar por atividades ilícitas que podem comprometer a segurança marítima do Atlântico Sul.

Palavras-Chave: *Atlântico Sul; recursos haliêuticos; segurança humana; segurança marítima*

1. Introduction

In the second half of the 20th century, the main theories on security followed the traditional realist school. This school of thought emphasises the constraints imposed on politics by human selfishness and the absence of international government, which require the primacy of power and security in all political life (Donnelly, 2005, p. 30). This approach was characterised by three elements: it emphasised military threats; it was status quo-oriented; and it was centred on states (Booth, 2007, p. 203).

Despite his neorealist origins, Barry Buzan was one of the leading theorists of the Copenhagen School (which had its roots in constructivism) (Huysmans, 1998 p. 483). In 1983, Buzan argued that the concept of security was more powerful and useful than its status at the time would suggest, and that it deserved to be elevated to an equal rank with power, which had been the dominant concept until then (Buzan, 1983, p. 2). In the early 1990s, the idea of a new, broader concept of security began to emerge which moved away from traditional theories' focus on states and military power to include the security of individuals and even the planet (Rothschild, 2007, p. 2). Several personalities (and organisations) discussed the issue during the first half of the decade. In his address to the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 1993, President Bill Clinton spoke about a new understanding of the meaning and nature of national security and the role that individuals and states should play in it (Clinton, 1993). In 1995, the Commission on Global Governance – which had been established in 1992 to suggest new forms of cooperation to promote a global security agenda – recognised that security extends beyond the protection of borders and the exclusive interests of states and includes the protection of people. It did not exclude military threats from the security agenda: it proposed a broader definition of threats that included the humanitarian concerns that arose in the wake of the Cold War (Commission on Global Governance, 1995, p. 3). The main theme of the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for 1994 was the transition from nuclear security to human security. The report defines human security, in general, as safety from constant threats – such as hunger, disease and repression – and protection against sudden and hurtful disruptions (UNDP, 1994, p. 3).

A few years later, Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde proposed a new framework

of analysis for the field of security studies, which examined security dynamics in five distinct sectors: political, military, societal, economic and environmental. This framework clearly rejected the traditional approach that dominated Cold War thinking, in which security was only applicable to the military sector, defining it as a particular type of politics applicable to a wide range of issues. As a result, two separate visions emerged within security studies: the new vision, which defended that the concept should be widened to other fields; and the traditionalist view, which focused primarily on the military and the State (Buzan, Wæver, & Wilde, 1998, pp. 1-2).

In the beginning of the 21st century, Edward Kolodziej proposed that security was a complex and contested notion – charged with emotion and deeply held values – and that most people would agree that a security problem arises when someone – a person, group or even State – threatens the life, physical integrity or livelihood of others. For Kolodziej, its meaning could be extended to different values and interests – from the environmental damage caused by global warming to the struggle for subsistence of millions of communities in the developing world, or to the protection of human rights against various threats, including torture and genocide (Kolodziej, 2005, p. 1).

Therefore, we can say that the concept of security became relevant after the Cold War, and that it has acquired different meanings since. Human security, for example, encompasses a broad agenda and has become a meeting point for various actors who have attempted to raise awareness and support for issues related to development (economic, social and human) and humanitarian foreign policies (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, p. 205). Maritime security is another relatively new term in the conceptual edifice of international relations (IR), especially since the early 21st century, with the intensification of problems related to maritime terrorism and a spike in incidents of piracy, particularly of Somali origin (Bueger & Edmunds, 2017, p. 1293). The term highlights the new challenges in the maritime domain and points to how the problems they create could be addressed (Germond, 2015, p. 138).

This study analyses security in the maritime domain, particularly the impact of human insecurity on security at sea in a region that has become increasingly relevant since the beginning of this century – the South Atlantic¹ – due to the surge of threats in those waters, including the threat of illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing.

The question that guided the research was: How does the human insecurity of the citizens of South Atlantic coastal states (caused by IUU fishing) affect maritime security in the region?

The article proposes that, if the security of people (mainly fishers) who use the sea lawfully is undermined by IUU fishing in the South Atlantic, the maritime security of the region will be compromised, as many will be forced to make a living in activities linked to transnational organised crime (such as piracy and armed robbery at sea against ships).

¹ In this article, this designation refers to the region of the sea that is bounded to the north by parallel 16° N, to the south by the Antarctic continent, to the east by the African coastline and to the west by South America (Brazilian Navy, 2020, p. 18). This region is delimited by “two large spheres of the southern region of the international system: Africa and South America” (Marins et al., 2020, p.1), which this study will analyse.

This study is relevant because it will examine the causal relationship between human security and maritime security (two concepts that emerged in the IR lexicon in the post-Cold War) in a specific region (the South Atlantic) facing a specific threat (IUU fishing). This article contributes to knowledge by examining the relationship between these two concepts and the conceptualisation of maritime security – a recent buzzword in the field of IR which has not been sufficiently explored, in the opinion of some leading theorists in the field (such as Christian Bueger).

The article is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is this introduction. The second chapter contains the theoretical and conceptual framework. The third chapter describes the research methodology. The fourth chapter contains the findings. The fifth and last chapter presents the study's conclusions, which confirm that IUU fishing is an obvious threat to the human security of the South Atlantic coastal populations who use the region's fishery resources lawfully, and that it could undermine maritime security in the whole region.

2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

This chapter contains the theoretical framework and key concepts of the study: human security; maritime security; and IUU fishing (one of the main security threats in the South Atlantic today).

2.1. Human security

Human security, a relatively new term in IR, has different interpretations. For the Canadian and Norwegian governments, it is associated with the most prominent progressive values of the 1990s: human rights, international humanitarian law and equitable socio economic development (Suhrke, 2007, p. 125). The section below will show that these values have been intrinsically linked to human security ever since.

After the Cold War, the international system underwent changes that led to various local and regional conflicts – or “new wars”, in the words of Mary Kaldor, which “involve networks of state and non-state actors” and in which “most violence is directed against civilians”, as opposed to the “old wars” that “involved states” and in which “battle is the decisive encounter” (Kaldor, 2012, p. vi). According to the principles of international humanitarian law (one of the values mentioned above), human security sought to civilise war and help its victims – saving lives and reducing people's suffering during armed conflicts (2012, p. 128).

But there is another starting point from which one can begin to explore what is at the centre of human security: human development. The UNDP report for 1994 – mentioned in the introduction – examines the relationship between human security and human development. The report describes human security both as an end state to be achieved – “safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression” – and as a process – “protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life” (Suhrke, 2007, p. 129). As an end state, security was subdivided into sectors such as employment, health, education and the environment. Human security was essential for human development because there could be no development without a minimum of stability and security in everyday life. But the opposite

was also true: according to the report, long-term development improved social and economic life, producing more human security. In this sense, “there is no difference between human development and human security, or between process and the end state” (2007, p. 129). Astri Suhrke (2007, p. 130) argued that providing human security often meant taking immediate preventive measures. Human development, on the other hand, is a long-term process that aims to improve people’s wellbeing.

But what are the reasons for the need to protect the most vulnerable? For Robert Goodin, the rationale is that we have a responsibility for the misfortune of others (the “most vulnerable”). Goodin made a distinction between positive and negative duties. Positive duties are acts that are undertaken to produce a benefit for others. Negative duties include non-interference, refraining from doing harm to others (Goodin, 1985, p. 18). The “most vulnerable” are those who are exposed to immediate physical threats to their lives or who are deprived of the resources they need to survive. They are indirectly identified by human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law. But there are also people whose lives are endangered due to extreme poverty or natural disasters. Therefore, there are three categories of extremely vulnerable persons: victims of war and internal conflict; those who live close to subsistence level and are structurally positioned on the threshold of socio-economic disaster; and victims of natural disasters (Suhrke, 2007, p. 131).

At the end of the 20th century, Paul Heinbecker (1999, p. 4) stated that “the components of human security are not new”. Heinbecker pointed out that “victimisation and impunity” were “as old as time” and “infectious diseases were as old as the plague”, that “civil wars date from the Treaty of Westphalia, at least” and that “crime, drugs and terrorism are contemporary challenges of age old phenomena”. Even “environmental despoliation”, a much more recent problem, had existed for generations. What was truly new was the phenomenon of globalisation, which made human security even more important, as threats became more visible and pressing. Heinbecker argued that the lethality of conventional warfare and the fact that most wars are now intrastate were also new factors, adding that “ninety percent of casualties are civilians, predominantly women and children” (1999, p. 4).

This study addresses the security and wellbeing of the South Atlantic’s coastal communities – Goodin’s “most vulnerable” persons –, who may be deprived of their rights to fisheries resources on which they depend for their subsistence by IUU fishing.

2.2. Maritime security

Since the late 1990s, maritime security has been used to describe preventive measures to counter illegal activities at sea (or from the sea). But it was maritime terrorism (which already existed and became more visible after the attacks against the US on 11 September 2001), and especially piracy – with the exponential rise in Somali piracy after 2007 – that brought maritime (in)security to the attention of the global press and the international public (Bueger & Edmunds, 2017, p. 1293).

Since then, the term has become a buzzword in academic circles. Christian Bueger (2015, p. 160), one of the leading contemporary theorists on maritime security, proposed

useful frameworks for analysing the concept: the “semiotics” framework (which maps the different meanings of the term by exploring the relationships between maritime security and other concepts); the “securitisation framework” (which provides tools to understand how different threats are included in maritime security); or “security practice theory” (which aims to understand the actions undertaken to create maritime security). The semiotic framework is the most useful to explore the issues analysed in this article. Bueger built a matrix with four dimensions (marine environment, economic development, national security and human security) and four concepts (marine safety, seapower, blue economy and resilience), as well as a set of risks and threats² (which include IUU fishing). Bueger proposed that maritime security can be understood by analysing the relations between each of these concepts (2015, p. 161).

Geoffrey Till (2009), one of the world’s leading experts on naval power, proposed a different approach to maritime security. Like Bueger, Till analysed the threats that undermine it, but his model focused on controlling them by protecting good order at sea (in the areas of the ocean where such threats occur). It also involved different actors, and especially states (supported by regional organisations).

Maritime security deals with (illegal and disruptive) human activities at sea. Threats to maritime security affect states differently, depending on their geographical location. But a country’s involvement in maintaining security at sea also depends on other factors, such as their capabilities and their will to combat threats to the maritime environment when they occur (Germond, 2015, p. 138).

Given the global nature of the sea and the transnational nature of many of the threats to its security, states that are not directly affected by them are contributing to common efforts to contain them because they understand that they will affect them later. In fact, since the beginning of the 21st century, many states (especially the most powerful) have been expanding their zone of control to maritime regions beyond their external boundaries, in what Basil Germond (2015, p. 139) called “postmodern territorial expansion”. Protecting free navigation and guaranteeing the safety of the global commons – the shared resources of humanity – could be a justification for states to deploy their naval forces beyond their traditional borders – the waters outside their sovereignty and jurisdiction, that is, the high seas – after the 200 nautical mile³ limit. Therefore, controlling distant areas of the sea is vital to guarantee the security of states’ borders, at sea and on land (Germond, 2015, p. 139).

The most prominent illegal and disruptive activities at sea or from the sea are trafficking of arms and narcotics, smuggling of people and goods, maritime terrorism, piracy and armed robbery at sea and deliberate marine pollution, but also IUU fishing (Council of the European Union, 2014, pp. 7-8).

This study only addresses IUU fishing in the South Atlantic.

² The terms are distinguished in terms of premeditation: a threat requires an intention to commit illegal acts; a risk does not involve premeditation to commit an illegal act (Silva, 2017).

³ One nautical mile is equivalent to 1852 metres.

2.3. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

IUU fishing refers to fishing activities that violate national, regional and international laws and regulations on conservation and management and are also incompatible with the responsibilities of the flag states (of the fishing vessels involved in those acts) (European Court of Auditors, 2022, p. 7).

Figure 1 shows a visual representation of the maritime zones where IUU fishing can take place: Territorial Sea, Exclusive Economic Zone and High Seas.

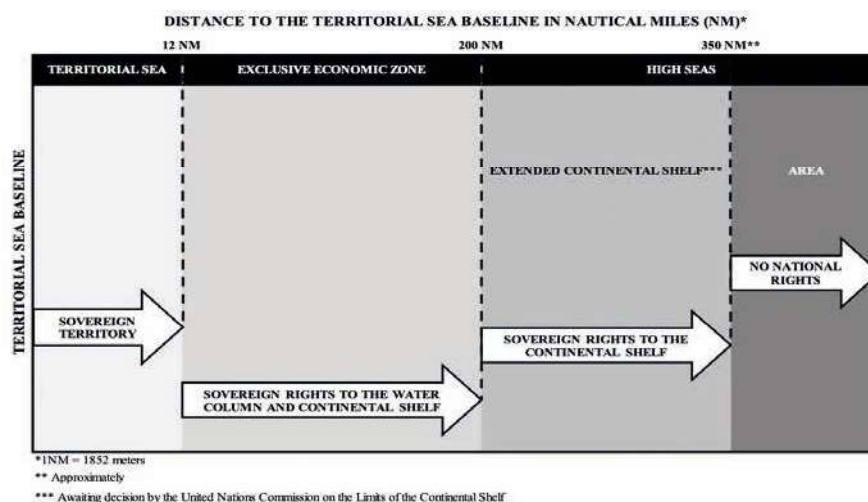


Figure 1 – Maritime zones

Source: adapted from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982)

Fishing activities are considered illegal when they are conducted without a licence or authorisation, when they undermine conservation and management measures or when they violate national laws and/or international obligations. Unreported fishing occurs when fish catches are not declared or are deliberately misreported to the relevant authorities. Finally, unregulated fishing refers to fishing activities conducted in areas with no applicable conservation and management measures, in a way that is inconsistent with the state's responsibilities in terms of conservation of living marine resources, or when the vessel involved in them does not have a nationality (European Court of Auditors, 2022, pp. 7-8).

Illegal fishing activities in the EEZs of coastal states and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)⁴ in the high seas include: conducting fishing activities without a licence; using unflagged or double-flag vessels; catching prohibited species, above established catch limits, fishing in prohibited areas or outside the authorised season; not reporting or

⁴ International groups of states and regional organisations (such as the European Union) with fishing interests in the same region or in the same group of fish species (European Commission, 2024).

misreporting catches to the relevant authorities; using prohibited fishing gear and destructive fishing methods; failing to use the vessel monitoring system; crossing a country's EEZ without permission to conduct fishing activities; and transshipments (transfers of fish to other vessels) without permission of the coastal State (US National Intelligence Council, 2016).

IUU fishing is harmful because it depletes fish stocks. It is one of the most important threats to marine ecosystems, undermining the efforts to conserve and manage species, which can even cause some fisheries to collapse. It occurs on the high seas and in maritime regions under the sovereignty or jurisdiction of coastal states, affecting the people who live there, especially in vulnerable areas – such as the South Atlantic (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations [FAO], 2023). IUU fishing is facilitated by collusion between those who engage in illegal fishing and corrupt officials in some of the states where it occurs. It exploits weak management regimes, especially in developing countries that lack the means for monitoring, control and surveillance, which is the case of many South Atlantic states, particularly on the eastern coast (FAO, 2023).

On the other hand, IUU fishing rarely occurs in isolation – it often coexists with other types of crime, including illicit activities ranging from document forgery to tax crimes, money laundering and corruption. These activities are usually linked to international criminal organisations, which underlines the fact that IUU fishing is also a form of organised crime. IUU fishing facilitates trafficking in drugs, arms and human beings and opens the door to environmental crimes. Fishing vessels can be used to hide and transport illicit substances or to refuel other vessels at sea (supplying both fuel and food). Human trafficking can occur simultaneously with IUU fishing when people are promised jobs on fishing vessels and, once on board, are forced to work in subhuman conditions, often under threat, with their wages withheld and no way of escaping (Kaysser & Adal, 2020).

IUU fishing is a serious threat to marine ecosystems because it undermines national and regional efforts to manage fisheries sustainably, compromising the efforts to safeguard marine biodiversity. It is often associated with transnational organised crime, taking advantage of states' lack of means and/or will to combat it.

3. Methodology and method

This study uses an interpretive epistemological approach, an inductive qualitative research strategy and a case study research design, which has been discussed by authors such as Robert Yin (2015).

The data collection method was a literature review which included: works on IR which address the key concepts analysed in the study (human security and maritime security), studies on security and reports on maritime piracy and IUU fishing.

The study was delimited in terms of time, geographical location and content: the article analyses a 21st century phenomenon that occurs in the South Atlantic and addresses the causal link between human security and maritime security. The South Atlantic as a geographical space will be divided into two regions: the South West Atlantic and the South East Atlantic. The latter will be analysed in three sub-regions: Argentina's Blue Pampa; Uruguay's Blue Prairie and Brazil's Blue Amazon.

The key concept of the study is maritime security. The dimension that will be analysed is the security of the South Atlantic's coastal populations. The variables are fishery resources and IUU fishing. The data collection technique is a literature review, in which the primary sources were official documentation issued by the European Council and European Commission, governments and international organisations, and the secondary sources were books, scientific papers, articles such as this one and reports.

4. Study findings

This chapter analyses the impact of IUU fishing and how it affects the security of coastal populations on both shores of the South Atlantic who use fisheries resources lawfully, and examines how human insecurity can have serious consequences for maritime security in the whole region. This analysis will answer the research question.

4.1. IUU fishing in the South West Atlantic

In 2018, a report of the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) warned that legal fishing is essential because it is a source of food and income for the inhabitants of the coastal countries of West Africa. About 6.7 million people in the region depend on fishing for food and livelihood, with fish accounting for more than 50% of animal protein consumption in countries such as Ghana and Sierra Leone. The region is faced with growing poverty and increasingly relies on fishing for both food and income. However, illegal fishing has been increasing steadily, leading to overexploitation of fish stocks and significant loss of revenue⁵. The highest proportion of IUU fishing occurs on Africa's west coast (about 37% of total catches). Every year, the region's economies lose about 2.3 billion dollars to IUU fishing. Only a small fraction of these losses (about 13 million dollars per year) are recovered through fines for offences related to illegal practices (EJF, 2018, p. 6). In particular IUU fishing has also impacted Nigeria's environmental, social and economic development. In 2007, fishing provided employment to about two million people in Nigeria – on a full time, part time or recreational basis –, a significant figure that has risen since then. Fish is also vital for women's economic growth and financial stability (73% of fishers in Nigeria are women) (Okafor-Yarwood, 2020, p. 122).

Also important is the fact that vessels from large fishing fleets flying foreign flags – including from European Union (EU) member states and Southeast Asian countries, especially China – often invade traditional artisanal fishing grounds. According to the NGO Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements, the vessels *Eighteen*, *Twenty*, *Myra Q*, *Idra Q*, *Pegaso Q* and *Orione Q*, which are registered in the Sicilian ports of Palermo and Mazzara del Vallo, made frequent incursions into areas reserved for artisanal fishing in Sierra Leone, have caught fish species for which they were not licensed and transhipped catches without authorisation (FiskerForum, 2019). Gaoussou Gueye, President of the African Confederation of Professional Organisations for Artisanal Fisheries, said:

⁵ Illegal fishing costs the West African region almost 1.95 billion dollars across the fish value chain and 593 million dollars per year in household income (Africa Defence Forum, 2022).

When they come to our countries, the EU people are always talking about how important it is to fight illegal fishing. They always argue that EU fleets fish legally and sustainably. Still, some EU vessels are involved in operations that are far from sustainable, some downright illegal, like the activities carried out by these Italian trawlers over many years in West Africa. If the EU wants to have credibility and be trusted by Africans, then it should not accept such behaviour by one of its Member States' fleet. (FiskerForum, 2019)

In his final remarks, Gaoussou Gueye said:

At a time when the European Union is championing sustainable fisheries globally and claims to be leading the fight against IUU fishing, it is unacceptable that it lets some EU-flagged vessels conduct IUU activities in the waters of African countries with total impunity. (FiskerForum, 2019)

Furthermore, scientists have warned that some fisheries are on the verge of collapse, and will collapse if urgent measures are not taken to curb illegal practices, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) (Samari, 2019). Some pelagic species are especially endangered, including anchovies, mackerel and sardines, which are vital to local economies. In Ghana alone, they provide jobs to more than one million artisanal fishers in the value chain. In 2020, catches of these species by artisanal fishing vessels fell by more than 85% from the peak in 1996 (Business and Financial Times, 2024). In 2020, the EJJ reported that the impact of illegal fishing activities in the previous decade was so intense that Ghana needed to import about half of the fish consumed locally (EJJ, 2020).

Another factor that undermines legal fishing on the west coast of Africa is the capture by foreign industrial vessels of significant quantities of fish, which is frozen on board and transported by small boats to shore to be commercialised. This practice, which is known as saiko and is illegal in Ghana, is having a devastating impact, significantly depleting several of the country's fisheries, affecting more than two million people who depend on them for their livelihoods and food security. In 2019, the World Bank criticised the "Ghanaian government's weak commitment to reducing the industrial segment's fishing capacity" and raised concerns about foreign vessels that were allowed to register in Ghana, benefiting from ownership agreements. The state that issued the most flags of convenience for industrial fishing vessels was China (in 2019, more than 95% of vessels with active fishing licences were crewed by Chinese citizens) (Samari, 2019).

The social, economic and environmental cost of IUU fishing in the South East Atlantic (particularly in the GoG) is tremendous. Industrial fishing in artisanal fishing areas and the proliferation of flags of convenience issued to foreign vessels have contributed to the imminent collapse of several pelagic species.

4.2. IUU fishing in the South West Atlantic

The South West Atlantic does not have an RFMO, which makes the management of fish stocks in that region even more complex. The following section analyses IUU fishing in three important South West Atlantic states: Argentina; Uruguay; and Brazil.

4.2.1. Argentina's blue pampa

Among the South West Atlantic states, Argentina is the most affected by IUU fishing. The country has become a hotspot for predatory fishing. The government and the local coastal populations are well aware of the proliferation of vessels from foreign states exploiting fisheries in the areas adjacent to Argentina's EEZ, and of their incursions into their jurisdictional waters. Argentina's extensive coastline makes it particularly difficult to maintain constant vigilance on the high seas, leading the country to authorise foreign enterprises to exploit their fisheries resources (Barretto, 2024). In 2013, it allowed 20 Chinese fishing vessels to enter its EEZ, with licences that ranged from 10 to 30 years, returning to a practice that was common in the 1990s, when it granted squid fishing licences to South Korean and Japanese fleets (Lende, 2015, p. 86). In the last decade, this massive (and uncontrolled) granting of licences to vessels from distant fishing fleets from Asia-Pacific states (especially China) has led to a spike in IUU fishing. To tackle the problem, Argentina has stepped up efforts to research and develop its resources in the South Atlantic by launching the "pampa azul" project in 2014 (MercoPress South Atlantic NewsAgency, 2014), and to enforce the law at sea in its jurisdictional waters. The problem became so severe that the local press coined the term "floating city" to refer to the accumulation of fishing grounds in the areas adjacent to the 200-mile coastline. These vessels, which mainly fished for squid, operated at night using powerful reflectors to attract their prey to the surface (Lende, 2015, p. 86). On the other hand, the depredation of fish resources in Argentine waters and the boom in exported catches led to price inflation on the domestic market. The scarcity of fish has forced the country to rely on imports to prevent internal shortages – fish imports increased by 3,121.90% between 1990 (6,113 tonnes) and 2013 (190,843 tonnes). At the same time, the prices for Argentine consumers were 116% higher than the price of the same products in the international market (Lende, 2015, p. 87).

Abusive fishing practices in Argentina's waters (particularly IUU fishing) could compromise food security for local populations because there is less fish available for sale on the local market (and prices are inflated, as most fish is imported). The Argentinian Navy and the Prefectura Naval have made efforts to enforce state authority at sea and control IUU fishing in the region. However, the country's vast coastline poses significant challenges. Argentina has not been especially committed to implementing measures to tackle the issue through regional cooperation agreements – as predatory fishing on the high seas and its impact on ecosystems are still seen as a matter of protection of national natural resources against foreign interference (Barretto, 2024). However, it is aware that, if the intensive exploitation of living resources in its waters continues, such measures may become inevitable in the near future.

4.2.2. Uruguay's blue prairie

Uruguay is aware of the importance of its marine territory, which is significantly larger in terms of surface area than its territory on land, as well as of the importance of valuing and defending its maritime sovereignty. Minister of Foreign Affairs Omar Paganini stated

as much at a ceremony on 9 September 2024, in which he unveiled a new map of Uruguay that included the country's maritime jurisdictions. Paganini discussed the concepts of "Blue Uruguay", "expanding horizons" and "blue prairie", describing them as a way to promote oceanic Uruguay and the state's policies for its maritime spaces, including its strategic vision for the country's ports, maritime jurisdictions, national sovereignty and new opportunities for economic development (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2024).

In 2019, Uruguay was one of the 26 countries leading the efforts to combat IUU fishing, according to the IUU fishing risk index issued by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (Macfadyen & Hosch, 2023). However, the port of Montevideo is frequently used by vessels from distant fishing fleets of states in other regions of the world that operate mainly in the areas adjacent to Argentina's EEZ. The vessels dock in Montevideo to unload their catches, change crews, refuel and make minor repairs. Even though this has clear benefits to the local economy, this behaviour from authorities can encourage IUU fishing. In 2022, Uruguay dropped to 39th place in the ranking of states best prepared to combat IUU fishing, and it dropped again to 62nd place (out of 152 countries) in 2023 (Macfadyen & Hosch, 2023, p. 114).

The recent initiative of the Uruguayan government to increase the visibility of its maritime space (by producing a map of the country with its maritime jurisdictions) also shows more commitment from the government since it must take concrete measures to effectively combat the threats to these spaces (which include IUU fishing, as shown by the country's ranking in the index of the global initiative against transnational organised crime for 2023). Even though Uruguay is a signatory to the Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA), the agreement benefits states that are not parties to it, but which have relevant interests in the behaviour of certain ships. These states must be informed if vessels suspected of conducting IUU fishing activities in their waters are inspected in a port of a state party. However, the agreement does not mention coastal states which are affected by IUU fishing on the high seas in the areas adjacent to their EEZs. The PSMA is valuable instrument for cooperation against IUU fishing, but it has some shortcomings. First, it does not define the minimum number of vessels that each port state must inspect. This would be useful to discourage states from joining the agreement to disguise their lack of interest in controlling IUU fishing outside their own maritime spaces. On the other hand, although the PSMA repeatedly warns that there is a need for cooperation between port states, states parties, flag states and other interested states, it does not compel a state party to conduct inspections at the request of another. Furthermore, the application of the PSMA to the South West Atlantic highlights a new problem: the fact that it depends on RFMOs (which, as we mentioned, do not exist in that region) (FAO, 2016).

Given Uruguay's difficulty in controlling IUU fishing in its maritime spaces, it is clear that the country must find alternative ways to deal with this phenomenon. Establishing an RFMO could be a solution for the South West Atlantic. However, as a port state, Uruguay must stop the practices that allow it to profit from predatory fishing in other countries' maritime spaces and step up efforts to implement measures against illegal fishing practices.

4.2.3. Brazil's Blue Amazon

Brazil has been pursuing a maritime expansionism policy since the second half of the 20th century, even more so since the UNCLOS came into force. This policy aims to “maximize the oceanic spaces under national jurisdiction, on the one hand, and the strength of this jurisdiction, on the other”⁶. To do this, it developed the “Blue Amazon”⁷ concept, which links the vastness and abundance associated with the “green” Amazon to its “blue” maritime spaces (Barretto, 2024, p. 25). Brazil’s pre-salt reserves are located in the Blue Amazon – about 85% of oil, 75% of natural gas and 45% of fish produced in the country is obtained from there (Pereira, 2019).

This initiative has led to a series of innovative policies based on the UNCLOS, which could be used to discourage unrestricted fishing on the waters adjacent to the country’s maritime borders. Brazil does not (yet) see predatory fishing on the high seas as a problem that affects it directly, but this can change if there is an increase in fishing activity close to its jurisdictional waters (especially by foreign vessels, which are flexible about where they catch fish and can easily enter “Brazil’s jurisdictional waters”⁸) (Barretto, 2024, p. 27).

Brazil’s expansionist maritime policy and its awareness of the sea’s resources and of its right to use them for the benefit of its citizens, rather than for foreign interests, can also be used to combat IUU fishing. If vessels from foreign distant fishing fleets operating close to the borders of Brazil’s EEZ enter the country’s jurisdictional waters, the Brazilian authorities are likely to take repressive action. However, in the case of deep sea trawlers or vessels operating in unseaworthy conditions, the Brazilian authorities can intervene if they deem that a vessels’ fishing activities threaten the integrity of the resources on the national continental shelf, using it as justification to intervene, even on the high seas (Barretto, 2024).

As shown above, Brazil has not been affected by IUU fishing in its jurisdictional waters (at least not yet). The country is aware of the presence of distant fishing fleets from states in other regions (particularly Asia-Pacific and Europe) on the high seas (that is, beyond the limits of jurisdiction imposed by UNCLOS), and the Brazilian authorities will intervene if (and when) they deem that the country’s interests are being jeopardised, that is, when a vessel is detected operating illegally in areas under national jurisdiction. Thus, it seems clear that, even in the case of Brazil, a multilateral response may be required. This could be done by establishing an RFMO that includes at least the three states analysed in this study: Argentina; Uruguay; and Brazil. But there is still a long way to go for this to happen. First, all three states must be willing to take that step (and this has not been the case in the last decades).

⁶ Brazil’s project to maximise the maritime spaces under its jurisdiction encompasses the seabed and the subsoil. The country is in the process of delineating its extended continental shelf within the framework of the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, 2024)

⁷ With 7,400 kilometres of coastline, Brazil has a vast area of 3.5 million square kilometres of maritime space under its jurisdiction. Thanks to its abundant natural and mineral resources, this area has been dubbed the Blue Amazon, a term that evokes the Amazonian rainforest’s importance for the country (Pereira, 2019).

⁸ This includes all the areas of the sea over which Brazil has some kind of jurisdiction. The concept was created to allow the Brazilian Navy (which also has typical coastguard duties) to monitor and control research and exploration activities on the country’s continental shelf (Barretto, 2024, p. 27).

Argentina is perhaps the most reluctant because, if an RFMO for the South West Atlantic is created, the United Kingdom, with which Argentina has a long-standing dispute, will become a state party (through the Falkland Islands). However, the absence of an RFMO makes the South West Atlantic region especially unprotected: it is one of the last areas not covered by an international fisheries agreement, a situation that must be rectified.

4.3. The relationship between IUU fishing and human insecurity

While it is difficult to ascertain the exact impact of IUU fishing, it was estimated to have reached from 11 to 26 million tonnes worldwide in the beginning of the 21st century (11% to 19% of reported catches, which corresponds to a value between 10 and 23 billion dollars). Developing countries were (and still are) more vulnerable to IUU fishing: on the west coast of Africa, total catches are about 40% higher than reported catches (Agnew et al., 2009, p.1). There are considerable profits to be made and a fairly low risk of legal repercussions, as most African States do not have the capacity to intervene. This means that the incentive to fish illegally in the waters off the west coast of Africa is indeed high. As a result, that region has the highest rates of IUU fishing in the world – 37% of its fish stocks are caught illegally by vessels from countries that include Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea and Russia. Overexploitation compromises the sustainable management of marine ecosystems in the South East Atlantic and the food security and livelihoods of coastal populations (Brower-Berkhoven, 2014 p. 36), and is a serious threat to the stability and security of the entire region – especially in the GoG (Igbogi, 2019, p. 30). IUU fishing destroys the livelihoods of fishers who use legal practices because it monopolises fish stocks which are already depleted. This affects most countries in the South East Atlantic, albeit in different ways. The social implications are far-reaching, especially because poverty is on the rise. Many of the region's ecosystems are on the verge of collapse, which will have severe implications for the economy and the environment (Igbogi, 2019, pp. 30-31).

Unfortunately, it has not been easy to find effective solutions to prevent IUU fishing off the west coast of Africa, as transgressors are able to evade conservation measures by regional organisations to manage fisheries sustainably (Logo, 2022, p. 14). Former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan stated that:

In Africa's coastal waters, IUU fishing has reached epidemic proportions. This plunder destroys entire coastal communities when they lose the opportunities to catch, process and trade. Commercial trawlers [...] are engaging in organised theft disguised as commerce." (Daniels et al., 2022, p.10)

Several factors have made the African continent increasingly vulnerable to IUU fishing. One of the most significant is political instability in several GoG states. A history of civil conflicts, social unrest and various crises that have plagued several states in the region are other factors that allow IUU fishing to thrive. On the other hand, several reports emphasise that maritime monitoring, control and surveillance systems have not had the expected results. Some reports mention institutional corruption, while others warn that, even when sanctions are applied, they are often insufficient – especially when weighed against the profit made from illegal catches (Daniels et al., 2022, pp 12-14). The legislation is inadequate and there is

a lack of political commitment to effectively combat IUU fishing. Finally, the maritime spaces under the jurisdiction of coastal states are not regularly patrolled (Brower-Berkhoven, 2014, p. 37). There is a need for regional cooperation and policies regarding the conservation and sustainability of living resources (Igbogi, 2019, p. 31).

In the South West Atlantic, the effects of IUU fishing have not been felt in the same way. The three states analysed in this article (Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil) have seapower capabilities (and a coastguard, in the case of Argentina) that allow them to prevent the vessels of distant fishing fleets from states in other regions of the world from repeatedly crossing the borders of their maritime jurisdictional spaces. However, an RFMO would not prevent those vessels from fishing beyond the limits of their EEZs, because no RFMOs have been established for those spaces. In the long term, illegal fishing – in this case, unregulated fishing – could irreversibly damage many of the region's ecosystems. This will inevitably lead to increased pressure on fisheries in the maritime spaces where they still exist, that is, in the waters under the jurisdiction of those states. If (and when) this happens, the interests of these states will be jeopardised. There will be fewer fish available for local fishing industries – leading to a loss of income for many people and threatening the food security of populations who rely on fish as a source of protein.

IUU fishing in the South East Atlantic could have dramatic consequences for the human security of coastal populations that exploit fisheries lawfully by depriving them of vital resources. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the security forces of coastal states have the capacity (or even the will) to combat the phenomenon. However, the pressure to extract living resources from the ocean will increase in the near future (especially by distant fishing fleets from states in other regions). This may lead to an increase in illegal and unreported fishing in the jurisdictional waters of the region's coastal states, creating new challenges for their fishing fleets by reducing fish catches and jeopardising their sustainability.

4.4. The impact of human insecurity on the security of maritime spaces

IUU fishing, piracy and wider economic issues are closely linked. In the case of Somali piracy, the decline of Somalia's fishing sector in the end of the 1990s worsened the country's already difficult economic conditions since the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, leading coastal populations to attempt to regain sovereignty over fish stocks by boarding foreign fishing vessels that were engaging in predatory and uncontrolled fishing by "detaining" or "fining" their crews. These communities' desire to defend their fishing rights (in the absence of a Somali government) and the prospect of easy profits may have been what drove them to rob foreign fishing vessels, but it also led to large-scale piracy in the waters off the Horn of Africa – the southern Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Somali basin (Lucas, 2013, p. 58). As the section below will show, this could occur in the South East Atlantic (particularly in the GoG).

While piracy in the South East Atlantic is a growing concern for the international community, IUU fishing is a bigger problem for local populations. While piracy compromises the security of critical international shipping lanes (including energy trade routes), illegal fishing is a systemic problem for countries that are unable to effectively patrol their waters –

almost all of the GoG states – because it can undermine law enforcement at sea and threaten the economic and social stability of the region (Brower-Berkhoven, 2014, p. 36). The decline (or lack) of means to enforce the law at sea creates other security problems and encourages illegal activities such as IUU fishing. Furthermore, the problems created by this snowball effect can be worsened by the overfishing practices of international fishing fleets. Fish stocks could be depleted to such an extent that piracy and armed robbery at sea against ships may once more become a problem in the South East Atlantic, especially in the GoG (Igbogi, 2019, p. 34).

The number of piracy incidents in the region increased since 2015, especially in relation to Southeast Asia – the problem was residual in the Horn of Africa –, and between 2018 and 2020, the region became a global hotspot for attacks by pirates (Alexandre, 2023, p. 169). From 2017 to 2020, the three GoG states with the highest number of reported incidents were Nigeria (187), Ghana (26) and Benin (20) (International Maritime Bureau [IMB], 2021). The situation has improved since then (Figure 2 shows the reported incidents in global hotspots over the last seven years).

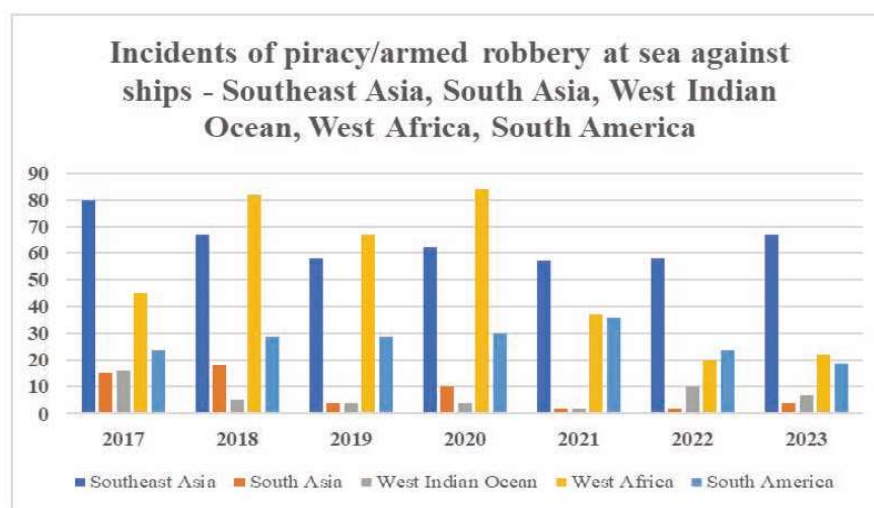


Figure 2 – Incidents of piracy/armed robbery at sea against ships in *major* hotspots

Source: Adapted from (IMB, 2023) and (IMB, 2024)

Figure 2 also shows that, even though the number of occurrences on the west coast of Africa – especially in the GoG – remained low in 2021 and 2022 (as a result of the measures that were implemented, which will not be addressed in this article as they fall outside the scope of the study), the phenomenon is far from being eradicated.

The number of incidents may increase even more (compared to the number of incidents reported in the last two years) due to the uncontrolled growth of IUU fishing. If this happens, the human security of several thousand fishers from states on the west coast of Africa will be jeopardised. This will compromise the food security of communities in the region who

depend on the animal protein that fish provides – and which is sometimes the only source of protein for millions of people in the GoG (Okafor-Yarwood, 2020). Finally, human insecurity will lead to an increase in maritime insecurity in the South East Atlantic, as many local fishers will have no choice but to engage in illicit activities such as piracy and armed robbery at sea against ships.

On the other hand, in the South West Atlantic, the outlook is less bleak. The region's coastal states (particularly Argentina and Brazil) have strong naval capabilities (especially when compared to most countries in the South East Atlantic) which allow them to combat the threat of IUU fishing in the region, even if Brazil has a different perception of this threat to the security of its waters – given that, for the time being, illegal fishing occurs almost exclusively on the high seas.

The above shows that human insecurity in the South-East Atlantic caused by IUU fishing could have serious consequences for the maritime security of the whole region. On the other hand, IUU fishing in the South West Atlantic is not a critical problem yet, but the lack of regional agreements to regulate and manage fishing on the high seas could lead to an increase in IUU fishing in the waters under the jurisdiction of coastal states. This will create more insecurity for people who catch and consume fish, compromising the maritime security of those waters.

5. Conclusions

The opening up of the security agenda in the wake of the Cold War led to the emergence of the concept of human security, which has since become associated with values such as socioeconomic development. But human security is also linked to the need to protect the most vulnerable people (those who are exposed to direct physical threats or deprived of access to resources that are critical for their survival). This can only be achieved by guaranteeing basic needs, which include access to sources of income that generate security and well-being.

Legal fishing provides an income for millions of fishers in the South Atlantic and contributes to the food security of the populations who depend on the animal protein that fish provides. However, the region's fish stocks have been depleted by IUU fishing since the beginning of the 21st century, endangering many marine ecosystems. Some fish species (especially pelagic fish) are already on the verge of collapse due to unsustainable practices such as overfishing, industrial fishing in artisanal fishing grounds, fishing by unlicensed vessels and unauthorised catches. If IUU fishing is not stopped, particularly in the South East Atlantic, the social and economic costs for coastal populations will be extremely high in the long term. There will be fewer catches (and smaller quantities of fish available) and a considerable loss of income for local fishers, many of whom may not be able to continue fishing. If this happens, several thousand fishers will be driven to other activities to obtain the income that fishing no longer provides (and many will find work in occupations linked to international organised crime, as was the case in the Horn of Africa region at the beginning of the 21st century).

The above analysis has provided an answer to the research question: the human insecurity of the South Atlantic's coastal populations caused by IUU fishing affects the maritime security

of these areas, albeit in different ways in the two regions that comprise it. In the South East Atlantic, the fact that the majority of states on the west coast of Africa are in a vulnerable situation means that they are unable to enforce the law at sea, and the uncontrolled capture of fisheries resources occurs even within those states' jurisdictions. This could have catastrophic long-term consequences for the coastal communities of many states, forcing many people to seek employment in illicit activities, compromising the maritime security of the whole region. In the South West Atlantic, the situation is not as critical yet. IUU fishing usually occurs in areas outside the jurisdiction of the states analysed in this study, all of which have the capabilities (namely military) to combat it. However, in the long term, IUU fishing could spread to areas within the jurisdiction of those states. If this happens, the resources of those states could be jeopardised, endangering the livelihoods of all who engage in lawful fishing in those areas. The security of these people could be threatened, which in turn would compromise the maritime security of the whole region.

This article aimed to explain the phenomenon of IUU fishing as a threat to the human security of those who depend on legal fishing to obtain the food they need for their subsistence and for all those who need the protein that fish provides for their food security. The article also aimed to understand how this insecurity for coastal communities could have consequences for the South Atlantic's maritime security, and how it affects the states on the South East and South West shores in different ways. Finally, the article illuminates the causal link between two concepts (human security and maritime security) which are relatively new in the lexicon of International Relations, in a specific maritime space.

The study's limitations include the fact that, due to length restrictions, it was not possible to analyse other countries on the coast of South America and the Caribbean. Future studies are needed to examine the impact of IUU fishing in other states on the western shore of the South Atlantic, as well as to understand its impact on the maritime security of these regions.

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