

The Azores of Europe and the Atlantic

The Portuguese Journal of Political Science, a publication initiated in 2010, has been asserting itself in the global space with the designation of Political Observer, by imposition of the international indexing needs and by the English-speaking pressure thereof. However, this aim does not prevent us from focusing on the national space, the primary vocation of political studies, and from producing specific reflections in this regard.

A European country, Portugal has itself an archipelagic dimension that is revealed in the Atlantic islands of the Azores and Madeira. These archipelagos, with their own identities, have in their particular space a specificity that distinguishes them, which in the light of critical geopolitics can be understood as a 'geographic space that is represented and signified by political agents as part of a larger project of accruing, managing and aggrandizing power' (Wu, 2018, p. 786).

So, in this case, writing about the Azores is therefore always a challenge and a responsibility. Filled with historical episodes, the reality of the Azorean archipelago, nowadays, seeks to enhance its political-social and scientific-technological potential, inevitably anchored by the geostrategic factor. This means that the Azores, within the Portuguese scope, remain between Europe and the world, belonging to the European spaces, understood from the continental and Atlantic points of view.

If, on the one hand, since the discovery and settlement of the Azorean archipelago until the mid-twentieth century, that territory was essentially characterized as an Atlantic asset, on the other hand, with Portugal's accession to the European Communities, the Azores embraced and have been strengthening its position with the European Union in the framework of the ultra-periphery. On the other hand, the Azores' dual relationship between the Atlantic and the European Union is undoubtedly an issue that deserves attention, given its relevance in the 21st century.

Within the scope of the international system, it is human decisions that constantly modify the spaces where populations live, which can be understood from perceptions, identities and values, which transform space into something dynamic and complex. The systemic changes that time carries with it can be better understood, therefore, from its agents, main and secondary actors, from a experienced reality. We thank the authors of the papers, among many of the builders of this 'built truth', who in this way outline the dynamics and the political process that underlie them.

Thus, in the first part, this Journal gives voice to the effective protagonists, as illustrated by the debate on the Autonomy of the Azores and Madeira in the Constituent Assembly, described here by one of its most important promoters and protagonists, João Bosco Mota Amaral, in this so-called policy in context. The articles by Luís Andrade and Miguel Rocha respectively place the Azores in international relations and in the Portuguese Foreign Policy, three fundamental vectors for understanding the internal and external position of the archipelago.

In the second part, the particular advantages and constraints of the geographical position of the Azores are discussed, which oscillates between the Atlantic centrality and the European ultra-periphery, which Paulo Fontes, Nuno Lopes, Isabel Valente, Cristina Montalvão Sarmento and Tomé Ribeiro Gomes, envision from several views to which events and history are not strangers.

With regard to the suggested readings that critical reviews always bring, these are illustrated by three works published in 2021 that keep the Azores on the horizon. Whether recalling the French presence in the Azores, whether particularizing the island of Santa Maria in international relations, or revisiting the photobiography of João Bosco Mota Amaral, through the successive pens of Mariana Borges, Henrique Fonseca and José Luís Brandão da Luz, who offer an overview of the current regional interests.

This special issue of the *Portuguese Journal of Political Science*, dedicated to the Azores, intends to raise awareness of the scientific community, as well as, and perhaps more importantly, of civil society. The articles published in this issue are the reflection of an archipelagic, insular and ultraperipheral region that dares to position itself and stand out, in a troubled international system.

José Enes, the University of the Azores' first Rector, wisely wrote that “*the geopolitical consideration, however, does not attend only to the physical characterization of space. Part of it, certainly, seeks to discover it through the various scientific perspectives and explores them by inventing and applying multiple technologies, but it does so from the perspective of the political project that is organized around it.*” (2015, p. 122). The *contemporary Azores* have made this thought come true.

Within the scope of the rules of a periodical publication, which we assume to be, the edition of special issues poses several challenges: the opening of calls for special articles, their collection, the promptness of their preparation, and finally the need for peer review, which in these cases becomes more specialized. It should be noted that the production of this issue is due to the real immersion in everyday life in the Azores islands of both signatories, supported in this special issue by Patricia Oliveira, PhD, who shares with us the desire to bring to light the political reality through research, which then does not distance itself from the creativity associated with it.

Therefore, as is tradition, this issue's cover is also dedicated to urban art, as it reflects positions, values and identity. The cover image was created and can be found on *Rua da Solidaridade*, in the Municipality of *Lagoa* in São Miguel island. Named by its author, Ricky Lee Gordon, as “The Road of Solidarity”, it was prepared within the framework of the Walk & Talk festival, an arts festival promoted by the non-profit cultural association of the same name, founded in 2011, here analyzed and contextualized by Patrícia Oliveira. The festival, supported by the Azorean Government, motivates the creation of original objects in dialogue with the territory, and acts in the involvement of local communities and migrants around

the knowledge generated in the expanded field of arts, intersecting visual arts, performance, music, architecture and design, which are an integral part of the political dynamic. This is the reason why the association is part of the Central Peripheries reflection and working group; it is one of the nine partners of the Centriphery program, winner of the European Commission's Creative Europe 2019-2022; and Festival Walk & Talk is a member of EFFE – Europe for Festivals, Festivals for Europe.

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References

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- Wu, Z. (2018). Classical geopolitics, realism and the balance of power theory. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41 (6), pp. 786-823.