POSTCOLONIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EUROPE AND ITS FORMER AFRICAN COLONIES: LACK OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY? -THE PARADIGMATIC CASE OF PORTUGAL-

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INTRODUCTION

After 50 years of independence for almost all former African colonies, the time has come to ask: are the old myths and taboos outmoded? Are the former African colonies open to establishing and strengthening diplomatic relations with the countries that once colonized them? This paper will show how Portugal, the first European country to settle in Africa and the last colonial empire to fall apart, has developed their relations with their former territories and states they once colonized.

Colonialism can be appraised two different ways: (*i*) the settler countries, that correspond to the general idea of colonialism; are the countries that really were occupied and had public administration within the hierarchy of the settler (e.g. Cameroon and Angola) and (*ii*) non-settler countries (e.g. India, Jamaica, Nigeria and Sri Lanka)[1]. Nevertheless, some countries such as Zimbabwe and South Africa, which were partially settled by a colonial population don't correspond to any of these categories.

Colonialism has a long history. In fact, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans all built colonies in antiquity. Europeans have also engaged in colonialism in two main historical periods: The first phases of colonialism took place between 250 BC and 480 AD during classical antiquity when the Greco-Roman empire began to expand politically, culturally, and socioeconomically. The second phase of colonialism, or *'modern colonialism'* started with the Age of Discovery between the 15th and 20th centuries and involved European powers competing against each other for sequestering new territories rather than alliance-building in the discrete sense - as was commonly done during the classical era. Regarding the so called second phase of modern colonialism, it must be noted that the European powers maintained an implicit alliance when it came to spreading the influence of empires, thereby establishing rather

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[1] For more developments, see ASHCROFT, Bill, GRIFFITHS, Gareth and TIFFIN, Helen "The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures", 1989.

sophisticated imperial networks throughout the world. In the meantime Portugal and Spain discovered new lands across the oceans and established new trading posts.

For some[2], it is this building of colonies across oceans that differentiates colonialism from other types of expansionism. These new lands were divided between the Portuguese Empire and Spanish Empire, first by the papal bull *Inter Caetera* and then by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) and the Treaty of Zaragoza (1529). In 17th century other empires emerged: British Empire, the French colonial empire and the Dutch Empire. It also featured the establishment of some Swedish colonies overseas and a Danish colonial empire. In the late 18th and early 19th century, due to the American Revolutionary War and the spread of independence claims across Latin America, the colonial empires movement had slown down, at least within the Americas. Nevertheless, within the African continent new and old powers continued to establish new colonies after this period, including the German colonial empire and the Belgian colonial empire. After the First World War, the victorious allies divided up the German colonies and much of the Ottoman Empire between themselves as League of Nations states. These territories were divided into three classes according to how quickly it was deemed that they would be ready for independence. However, decolonization outside of the Americas didn't happen until after the Second World War. In 1962, the United Nations set up a special committee on decolonization, often called the 'Committee of 24' to encourage this process.

Whether colonization is viewed as negative (e.g. virulent diseases, unfair social relations, exploitation, and enslavement) or positive (e.g. build of infrastructures, medical advances, institutions settlement, and technological advancements) its deep impact in both cultures (the settlers and the colonies) is undeniable and the world had undergone tremendous changes. In the 20th century, the African independence movement started to gain momentum and spread throughout the continent. Most of the western European powers were weakened as a result of the Second World War. Therefore, the African insurrection against the European domination gained further prominence.

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[2] See, v.g., HART, Jonathan, "Comparing Empires: European Colonialism from Portuguese Expansion to the Spanish-American War", Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2003 and SAUER, Elizabeth, "Imperialisms: Historical and Literary Investigations, 1500-1900", Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2004.

Figure 1 – The Independence of the African Colonies during the 19th Century[3]

Country	Colonial Power	Year of Independence
Libya	Turkey, Italy	1951
Egypt	Great Britain	1922/1936/1953
Sudan	Great Britain	1956
Tunisia	France	1956
Morroco	France, Spain	1956
Ghana	Great Britain	1957
Guinea	France	1958
Cameroon	France, Grat Britain	1960
Senegal	France	1960
Togo	France	1960
Mali	France	1960
Madagascar	France	1960
Democratic Republic of Congo	Belgium	1960
Somalia	Italy, Great Britain	1960
Benin	France	1960
Niger	France	1960
Burkina Faso	France	1960
Côte d'Ivoire	France	1960
Chad	France	1960
Central African Republic	France	1960
Congo	France	1960
Gabon	France	1960
Nigeria	Great Britain	1960
Mauritania	France	1960
Sierra Lione	Great Britain	1961
South Africa	Great Britain	1910/1931/1961
Tanzania	Germany, Great Britain	1961
Rwanda	Germany, Belgium	1962
Burundi	Germany, Belgium	1962
Algeria	France	1962
Uganda	Great Britain	1962
Kenya	Great Britain	1963
Malawi	Great Britain	1964
Zambia	Great Britain	1964
Gambia	Great Britain	1965
Botswana	Great Britain	1966
Lesotho	Great Britain	1966
Mauritius	Great Britain	1968
Swaziland	Great Britain	1968
Equatorial Guinea	Spain	1968
Guinea-Bissau	Portugal	1973
Mozambique	Porugal	1975
Cape Verde	Portugal	1975
Comoros	France	1975
São Tomé and Princípe	Portugal	1975
Angola	Portugal	1975
Seychelles	Great Britain	1976
Djibouti	France	1977
Zimbabwe	Great Britain	1980
Namibia	Germany, South Africa	1990
Eritrea	Italy, Great Britain, Ethiopia	1993
Sahrawi Republic	Spain	1976/Currently

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[3] See LEWIN, Arthur, "Africa is Not a Country, It's a Continent", 1991.

As the table shows, the 1960's a large increase of independence agreements were reached. With Portugal, all Portuguese-African colonies did achieve their independence after the fall of «*Estado Novo*» (New Regime) which took place during 1974, except for Guinea-Bissau. This also put an end to the colonial war which began in 1961 and took place in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. Despite the new independence for some African countries which were involved in the civil wars, apart from being a minority, the African image in the western media was presented in a negative light. The instability caused by ethnic conflicts dragged some countries[4] into economic bankruptcy and put a dark mist on the 'dream of freedom', while nowadays Africa is continent that is experiencing a surge in mobility among Africans settling in other African states as well as migrating to Europe. This trend will continue in the future as African states develop, and migration opportunities to Europe become available.

CASE STUDY: PORTUGAL

Some authors and politicians[5], either in Portugal, or in former Portuguese-African colonies, stated that the process of decolonization was not correctly driven. One of the arguments proposed is the fact that in the agreements that led to the independence of the colonies, it was not guaranteed to the people living there, except for those with Portuguese nationality. By acting in such a way, they tried to justify the exodus of the Portuguese residents, nevertheless, the situation was not that simple. An example of the injustice was that black Africans were denied access to higher education. This led to a vicious social cycle: for a black African it was virtually impossible to reach management positions in companies or institutions. , This contributed towards increasing social tension within the former colonies. By the time of the independence establishment, this tension was very difficult to control. However, both sides were facing their own challenges as Portugal was ruled by a dictatorship regime and when democracy was re-established, an under-developed country had to be rebuilt. Yet

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[4] Such as Mauritania, Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania, Zaire, Zimbabwe and Benin, for example.

[5] Including, Ramalho Eanes, António de Spínola (former Portuguese Presidents).

despite all the challenges that Portugal was facing, many of the former African colonies were eager for social change[6].

In addition, the colonial war turned made things much worse than the racial tension. The colonial war was the first taboo between Portugal and the former African colonies as the traumas settled in both blocks. The Portuguese army was mostly comprised of unqualified troops,[7] and were not prepared to face such a conflict. For some of them it was the first time that a soldier had ever held a gun. In the countries where the war occurred, thousands of innocent civilians were killed. During the 1974 Carnation Revolution the Portuguese troops abandoned the battle, but unfortunately, this didn't translate into peace for these countries. This event always seemed like a forbidden topic, and the lack of dialogue seemed to represent the first step for misunderstanding.

The colonial war had much more dramatic outcomes in Guinea as opposed to Angola or Mozambique as during the conflict those countries were relatively safe. It was possible to circulate throughout the territory and the respective institutions were functioning normally. After the Colonial War, Portugal granted sovereignty to its former colonies, the respective Independence Movements without any period of transition. This was a second political mistake on the part of Portugal, and the first wound that was felt by the local population. (the war itself didn't correspond to the will of the common Portuguese citizen, but only the expression of the dictatorship)[8].

When the Portuguese troops withdrew, the state security was not guaranteed, so violent acts continued to take place. The rivalry among the Independence Movements continued to increase Justas they all sought power for themselves. The instability, threats and violent episodes frightened the people and they abandoned the territory en

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[6] This is one fallacy that almost all newly independent countries fell in. Social changes need time to settle. And, considering particularly the Portuguese case, that was a dictatorship by then, this was even more difficult.

[7] But, by male civilians that were forced to join the army.

[8] Something that can be assed by the number of Portuguese and white Africans affiliated in those movements like UNITA, MPLA or FREMLINO.

masse. They went back to Portugal and were referred to as '*Retornados*' («the Returned Ones»)[9].

The Independence Movements gained traction after the revolution, they stopped forcing members to fight, and opened the doors for those who wanted to join, regardless of political beliefs or social background[10]. The solitary goal was to increase the number of members so they could increase their political force.

Retornados returned to Portugal, a land that was not their own (many people were born in Africa, and grew up in the countries colonized by Portugal). They had to leave behind all of their possessions and returned with nothing[11].

Meanwhile, Portugal was facing the typical challenges associated with a revolution: political and economic instability. It was poor, illiterate and becoming an increasingly isolated country, and this process is still taking place today**.**[12].

Nevertheless, Portugal could have offered political support, not towards the Independence Movement, but simply by taking the responsibility of their common past, and directing its efforts to avoid the imminent civil war. This fact evolved into such a taboo for both Portuguese and African people that it remains an obstacle for mutual understanding over the past 30 years[13].

Despite the fact of various ethnic problems, the Portuguese African colonies had attained a national hegemony. Therefore, the civil conflicts resulted in ideological and political reasons which added to historical motivations[14].

However, it was a different situation in the case of Timor. Indonesia took over after the revolution in Portugal and the absence of its political reaction, and the

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[9] Observe that this departure en mass was beyond the racial tension. The *Retornados* were white, black, mixed, Portuguese or Africans. This was main due to political instability, rather than for anti-colonialism ideals. And the denomination «*Retornado*» was and still being criticized. In fact, people were not returning to their home lands, they were actually refugees. About this topic, see MATOS, Helena, "Retornados: A palavra possível nasceu há 35 anos (I)", *in* Público, that also depicts the lack of political and mediatic attention to this problem.

[10] Note that this «new members» was mainly composed by teenagers with social problems.

[11] For a personal report, see http://retornados.home.sapo.pt/.

[12] Despites the joint of European Union in 1986, Portugal still one of the poorest countries in Europe.

[13] Specially with Angola, Mozambique and Guinea. In these countries social and political disturbance was due to Portugal's attitude of leaving the territory without ensuring the necessary stability.

[14] See, Zaqueu A. Zengo on Angolan case.

international community not taking a lead role, led to Timor becoming overtaken by Indonesia. This has become a taboo for both Portuguese and Timorese, even to this day.

During the past thirty years, Portugal has received thousands of immigrants from its former colonies. With their countries of origin going through complicated situations due to civil war or political instability, they sought refuge in Portugal. the state had the same language, and the cultural proximity seemed a perfect place to start a new life. But, as time progressed, Portugal didn't redeem itself from the mistakes they made in the past.

A lot of issues regarding the immigrant's integration started to be raised as time went by. The political powers were not concerned with it, and they didn't take the necessary social measures to solve this problem. Several slums were built around the metropolitan area of Lisbon, and most of its residents were immigrants from the former Portuguese-African colonies. This lack of social support, along with a very rigid Nationality Law[15] tarnished the image of Portugal. People felt abandoned and then *personas non gratas* in a country that had a historical obligation of receiving them and working towards integrating them socially. However, it took a long time for Portugal to address this problem,[16] and this created a gap between Portugal and its former compatriots. Despite the fact that they were living in the same country, they were separated by an absence of social integration policies and an unfair nationality law.

Figure 2 – Foreign population residing legally in Portugal for main nationalities[17]

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[15] Law number 37/81, of October 3rd (deeply modified in 2006). It imposed hard and strict requirements for one's to have access to Portuguese nationality. Practically, only the ascendency principle was in force and the particular conditions of those that emigrated from the former colonies were not safeguarded.

[16] As Mark Donfried (Institute for Cultural Diplomacy's co-founder) says, "recognizing our failures and mistakes can really strengthen the bonds between us rather than only state our successes and accomplishments".

[17] Source: Instituto Nacional de Estatítica (INE) – www.ine.pt
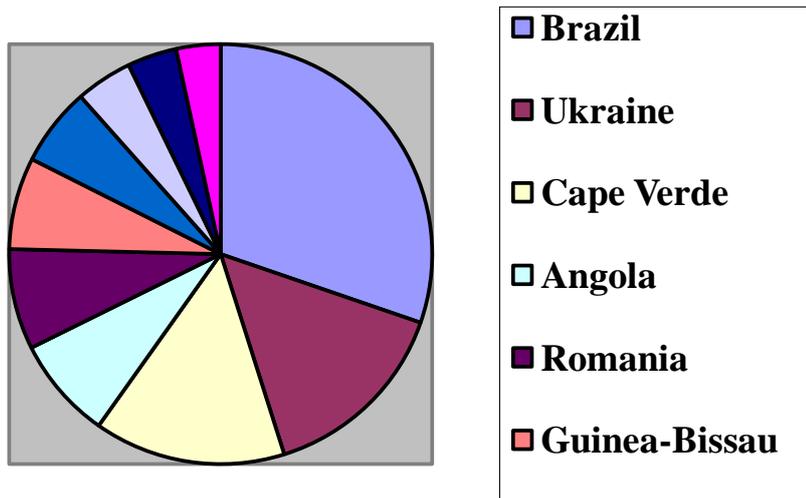
Angola used to represent the largest immigrant presence in Portugal. Today, they have been overtaken by Brazilians, however this has become a very recent trend. There is also an increasing number of immigrants from the eastern European countries such as Ukraine, Romania and Moldova.

The public discussion on integration problems with migrants took place after an unfortunate incident. On June 10th 2005, several people were robbed by a group of people in a well-known beach called Carcavelos, which is located just outside Lisbon . All TV channels and newspapers reported on this incident, but the facts were not reported as they really happened and were distorted by misconceptions. It was reported that this mass robbery was carried out by five hundred black individuals![18]. This event and subsequent reporting resulted in instant panic about the immigrants' presence in Portugal was created. However, after the police investigated this crime further, it was concluded that a small group of young delinquents started a fight and took advantage of the chaos created and started to rob and attack other people. It was also concluded that the media falsely reported the numbers because the majority of beachgoers were black, and they were running away from the confusion trying to save themselves. Nevertheless, because of their race they were portrayed as criminals by the local media

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[18] This reported was later disclaimed by the police:

http://jn.sapo.pt/paginainicial/interior.aspx?content_id=504380, but the Portuguese image was already stained. See, CARVALHEIRO, José Ricardo, "Etnicidade e os Media: o "arrastão" de Carcavelos na Imprensa, Observatório Journal, 5, 2008, pp. 297-323, available in:

http://www.obercom.pt/ojs/index.php/obs/article/viewFile/133/160.

which led to the reinforcement of prejudices which already existed in Portuguese society. The aftermath culminated with parliamentary discussions about the second generation of immigrants. They were teenagers and young adults, that had lived their whole lives in Portugal, but were not entitled to the Portuguese nationality. The nationality law was altered in 2006[19] and it's now easier for people from former Portuguese African Colonies to be granted Portuguese nationality.

In the past few years the political and economic relations between Portugal and Angola[20] have experienced a significant improvement, due in large part to the rise of Angola's[21] economy. In 2003 Portugal was the third largest foreign investor in Angola (After Russia and the British Virgin Islands), with an investment of 752 million EUR (nearly 11 % of the total of the approved investment). As a result of the growing interest of the Portuguese business community in Angola, the rate of exports for Portuguese goods to Angola began to rise, and represented the ninth destination for Portuguese exports. Diplomatically, both countries have also improved their relations. And in the past four years, there have been four separate official state visits. In 2006 and 2008, José Sócrates, Portuguese Prime-Minister, visited Angola; 2009, José Eduardo dos Santos visited Portugal, his first visit to Portugal in thirty years of power; and, 2010, Cavaco Silva, Portuguese President, visited Angola. Before 2006, only two State visits took place. This was a clear sign of proximity between the two countries.

A RELATION WITH FUTURE

The great affinity between Portugal and the PALOP, established during the colonial era, is obvious at the cultural, religious and linguistic level and constitute an

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[19] Nowadays, besides the ascendency principle the attribution of the nationality is applicable to individuals born within Portuguese territory, children of foreign parents that reside in Portugal for at least six years or if the children in question complete the elementary school in Portugal, which previously was not possible. There are also special requirements for Portuguese speaking countries nationals.

[20] Here portrayed as a positive example of improvements in the relation between Portugal and its former African colonies.

[21] That lately has registered one of the highest economic growing rates in the world. Source: IndexMundi (www.indexmundi.com).

important anchor in maintaining the bonds between both states. Portugal's attempt to strengthen the relation with PALOP can be assessed by its active involvement in international organizations and by the celebration of bilateral agreements, mainly with Angola.

The bilateral relation between Portugal and PALOP can be sustained by four cornerstones[22]: The first is the sharing of a common language that increases the likelihood of interchange, once the mutual understanding is implicit in the cultural proximity. The second cornerstone is the existence of the *Community of the Countries of Portuguese Language*[23] (CPLP) which represent a platform for strengthening economic and cultural relations among its members. The third cornerstone is the current level of economical integration, in terms of commercial exchanges and IDE, which is an important network for experience, knowledge, competition, market and legal structure levels. The fourth cornerstone relays the existence of certain private and public institutions[24], that are entitled to advise Portuguese foreign investment finance and give priority to PALOP.

So, the legacy remains and the direction seems to be the reinforcement of relations between Portugal and its counter partners both diplomatically and economically. But the proximity of cultures can be a stronger cultural bridge in the future, depending on political There is great potential to be achieved towards a better understanding, multi-lateral commitment and on building a fairer and peaceful society.

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[22] See, Fábio André Lagoa Pereira (2009), pp. 13.

[23] In Portuguese: Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa.

[24] Such as AICEP (that stands for *Agência para o Investimento e Comércio Externo de Portugal* - Agency for the Foreign Investment and Trade of Portugal), the SOFID (*Sociedade para o Financiamento do Desenvolvimento* – Society for the Development Finance) or ELO (*Associação Portuguesa para o Desenvolvimento Económico e a Cooperação* – Portuguese Association for the Economic Development and Cooperation).

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