

# **The Power and Limits of Cultural Myths in Portugal's Search for a Post-Imperial Role**

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**ABSTRACT:** The central role in Portuguese political culture of the identification of Portugal as a colonizing power legitimized a massive mobilization and violent response to the perceived existential threat of decolonization in the shape of prolonged wars in its main African colonies (1961-1974). If, however, this cultural myth of a Greater Portugal overseas was so powerful, how was decolonization eventually possible? The accumulated human and economic cost of facing three simultaneous, protracted anti-colonial insurgencies eroded this overseas creed and made Catholic and Marxist strands of anti-colonialism increasingly attractive to younger, more internationally connected, Portuguese elites. What also happened, however, this article will argue, was a refashioning of the powerful cultural myth of a special connection between Portugal and tropical Africa. A colonial myth was turned into a post-colonial myth legitimising decolonization as a mutual and fraternal liberation from the same oppressive regime without a loss of strong “natural” cultural bonds. More widely the article aims to show that we cannot ignore the importance of cultural factors in international history. Our approach in this article is pluralist and this means that while arguing strongly for taking culture seriously and focusing on it, it does consider other, including more material, dimensions of power.

**KEYWORDS:** Decolonization; Portugal; Southern Africa; Foreign Policy; Culture.

## **The Power and Limits of Cultural Myths in Portugal's Search for a Post-Imperial Role**

### **1. Towards a mythology of Portuguese colonialism and decolonisation**

Eduardo Lourenço, one of Portugal's most influential thinkers of the past century, in an seminal essay published in 1978 on Portuguese identity, pointed to the overseas empire as central in the nationalist self-image of Portugal because it 'added a mythical dimension to the country [...] avoiding the painful necessity of confronting our smallness'. He then went on to point to a crucial paradox: 'a war lasting for thirteen years [1961-1974] and the sudden collapse of the empire seemed events meant not only to create a deep collective trauma – analogous to the loss of independence [between 1580-1640] – but also a deep revision of our self-image [...]. We all witnessed the surprising spectacle that neither one nor the other actually took place.'<sup>1</sup>

*How did Portugal move away so rapidly from identifying itself as a great country overseas and what were the implications for its foreign policy?* This central question raises a number of other questions: What was the role of the empire in Portuguese political culture? What was the role of this more ideational and cultural dimension in terms of elite perceptions and institutions in the shaping of Portuguese foreign policy? What does this Portuguese effort to reshape their vision of themselves in a world without empire tells us about the wider question of the role of culture in international history?

The concept of myth is helpful in addressing this question. A basic definition of myth is a 'popular belief or tradition [...] especially one embodying

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<sup>1</sup> Eduardo Lourenço, *O Labirinto da Saudade: Psicanálise Mítica do Destino Português* (Lisboa: Pub. D. Quixote, 1978), pp.39-41.

the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society'.<sup>2</sup> In the re-appropriation of this traditional concept in the context of cultural studies, Roland Barthes significantly chooses as an example of the contemporary importance of myths as foundational narratives, a cover of the popular magazine *Paris-Match* showing a young black soldier saluting the French flag, as a symbolic construct representing the myth of France as 'a great Empire' in which all, 'without colour discrimination, serve faithfully'.<sup>3</sup>

In Portugal the myth of empire in its late colonial stage was developed from pre-existing cultural materials by the authoritarian nationalism of the *Estado Novo* regime led by Oliveira Salazar (head of government from 1932 to 1968) around the slogan that "Portugal was not a small country". An important part of this script of a Greater Portugal was an influential image – publicized in posters and other propaganda material – of a map of Portuguese overseas territories covering the whole of Europe. Salazar, in an interview in 1959, however, made clear that one thing was propaganda, the use of culture for political gains, another was his own understanding of global politics, stating that 'we know size is not the same as power'. He also added, crucially, 'we know our size i.e. our smallness, but this does not mean we will not make a stand for what we think is right'.<sup>4</sup> This shows two crucial things. First that culture can be both politically manipulated and mobilized. Salazar was attuned to the "vision thing", to this power of culture, claiming: 'this union [with the overseas territories] gives us an optimism and sense of greatness that are indispensable in energising us and driving away any feelings of inferiority'.<sup>5</sup> Second, that even for a small State the logic of hard power does not necessarily trump the logic of cultural appropriateness, of legitimacy regarding core identity-building norms like Portugal's manifest colonial mission.

Salazar was therefore a *Realpolitiker*, but not one blind to the power of culture. Significantly, scholars usually associated with a Realist approach to international politics, have taken note of the importance of the cultural or

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<sup>2</sup> "Myth", *Merriam-Webster* [online dictionary] at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/myth> (last accessed: 12.02.2013).

<sup>3</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Seuil, 1957), p.189.

<sup>4</sup> António O. Salazar [with Serge Groussard], 'Panorâmica da Política Mundial', *Discursos e Notas Políticas*. Vol. 6 (Coimbra: Coimbra Ed., 1967), 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> This is cited and commented in Valentim Alexandre, 'A África no Imaginário Português, Séculos XIX-XX', *Penélope* Vol.15 (1995), p.62.

ideational dimension of imperialism. Raymond Aron went so far as to claim that many ‘Marxists historians’ (and, we would add, other materialists, including many Realists) ‘have a tendency to believe that all statesmen choose to dazzle their listeners with visions of power and glory, whilst all the time, in reality, they are motivated by an unavowable passion for economic gain. In this particular instance [of imperialism], I suspect the contrary is true: statesmen [...] were exploiting an economic argument [...] in order to disguise their dreams of political grandeur.’ Aron goes on to claim that it was the cultural power of empire in France, the fact that it had ‘offered a field of glory for the fighting services [...] which explains the attitude of certain “colonels” of the present time, and their implacable hostility to the prospect of “decolonization”’.<sup>6</sup> More recently, Realist scholar Jack Snyder in *Myths of Empire* developed an interpretation of imperial expansion as the result of a misconceived notion of security through expansion rooted in domestic political and ideational dynamics.<sup>7</sup>

Constructivist and other culturalist readings of the role of cultural norms in international politics allow us to further explore: the central importance of perceptions and misperceptions, particularly of policy-making elites;<sup>8</sup> the notion of the vital importance of a logic of appropriateness, based on norms and interests related to a given identity and not simply to *Realpolitik*, in terms of a simple calculation of cost and benefit;<sup>9</sup> and, last but not least, the notion that ‘dramatic’ changes in cultural norms ‘are more likely following an exogenous shock’ like a ‘military defeat’ that ‘can destabilize prevailing wisdom’.<sup>10</sup> But even these major crises often involve a refashioning of identity rather than a complete break, thus averting the risk of a dramatic breakdown in societal

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<sup>6</sup> Raymond Aron, *Imperialism and Colonialism*, (s.l., The University of Leeds, 1959) [17th Montague Burton Lecture on International Relations].

<sup>7</sup> Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> The classic reference is Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. e.g. Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, ‘Dangerous Liaisons? Critical Theory and Constructivism’, *EJIR*, Vol.4(3) 1998: 259-294; Ronald Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter Katzenstein, ‘Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security’, in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. (New York, Columbia UP, 1996), maxime pp.54, 56.

<sup>10</sup> Deborah Avant, ‘From Mercenary to Citizen Armies: Explaining Change in the Practice of War’, *International Organization*, Vol.54(1) 2000: 42, 49.

cohesion. The case of Portugal after decolonization is, we argue, an example of this.

Robert Jackson was a pioneer in focusing on the importance of changes in international norms in the analysis of decolonization.<sup>11</sup> This article posits the need to do the same at the level of national political culture. This is necessary to understand why Portugal initially rejected the global normative change that delegitimized colonialism, and how it eventually came to accept it.

The policy of the Lisbon government to resist decolonization at all costs, culminating in the Portuguese Wars of Decolonization between 1961-1974, may be seen as paradigmatic of the danger for a weak state of ignoring the implications of their relative lack of hard power. What Portuguese resistance to decolonization also shows is the power of culture.

The mainstream vision in Portuguese political culture of the country as an overseas power legitimized a massive mobilization in a violent, intransigent response to a perceived existential threat to Portuguese identity. As stated in a key article of Portuguese constitutional law it was ‘part of the organic essence of the Portuguese Nation to pursue the historical mission of possessing and colonizing overseas territories, and civilizing their native populations’.<sup>12</sup> This identification of Portugal with a “manifest destiny” overseas was not exclusive to Salazar and his followers, but was shared by significant Opposition groups until the final years of the regime. Veteran opposition leader Almeida Santos – who would eventually play a significant role in decolonization as the last Overseas Minister in 1974-1975 – acknowledges in his memoirs that ‘in 1961’, when Salazar responded militarily to the first major anti-colonial uprising in Angola ‘he had with him the majority of the [Portuguese] people, including some of his most prestigious political adversaries’.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Robert H. Jackson, ‘The Weight of Ideas in Decolonization: Normative Change in International Relations’, in J. Goldstein & R. O. Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca, Cornell UP, 1993) pp.111-138.

<sup>12</sup> Art.2 in Acto Colonial (Decreto n.º 18 570 de 8 de Julho de 1930 as a constitutional law; then incorporated into the 1933 constitution and in place until July 1974 in <https://dre.pt/application/dir/pdfgratis/1930/07/15600.pdf> [last access: 2.3.2013]).

<sup>13</sup> Almeida Santos, *Quase Memórias do Colonialismo e Descolonização* (Lisboa, Casa das Letras, 2006), p.16. Among those adversaries see Cunha Leal, *O Colonialismo dos Anticolonialistas*. (s.l. Ed. do Autor, 1961) on the colonialismo of anticolonialism. See also Salazar’s Foreign Minister Franco Nogueira – *Um Político Confessa-se (Diário: 1960-1968)*, (Porto, Civilização, 1987), p.99 – who commends the patriotism of the opposition leading newspaper

*If, however, this cultural myth of a Great Portugal overseas was so powerful, how was decolonization eventually possible?* Because core cultural norms can change to some degree and with some effort. It is clear that the accumulated human and economic costs of facing three simultaneous, protracted anti-colonial insurgencies eroded this overseas creed and made Catholic and Marxist strands of anticolonialism increasingly attractive to the younger, more internationally connected, generations of Portuguese elites.<sup>14</sup> What also happened, however, we argue, was *a refashioning of the powerful cultural myth of a special connection between Portugal and tropical Africa. A colonial myth was turned into a post-colonial myth* legitimising decolonisation as a mutual and fraternal liberation from the same oppressive regime without a loss of strong “natural” cultural bonds.<sup>15</sup> *A myth of decolonisation was born, one strongly tinged by Lusotropicalism* – the myth of the Portuguese as uniquely soft colonisers, adapted to the tropics and capable of embracing cultural hybridity and multiracialism and therefore also naturally adept at managing post-colonial relations once the authoritarian regime had been removed.<sup>16</sup>

Naturally, to point to the relevance of the social construction of a Portuguese-speaking identity in terms of foreign policy making elites’ discourses, preferences, practices and institutions, is not the same as to claim this is the only relevant dimension. The *focus* of our analysis will be on the cultural dimension and on decision-making elites, especially in Portugal, but not to the point of complete exclusion of other factors and actors. Our approach in this article is therefore *pluralist* and this means that while arguing strongly for taking culture seriously, it does consider other, including more material dimensions of power.

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editors in their contacts with the US Embassy confirming the ‘national’ nature of this foreign policy option of resisting decolonization.

<sup>14</sup> Deborah Avant, ‘From Mercenary to Citizen Armies: Explaining Change in the Practice of War’, *International Organization*, Vol. 54 No. 1 (2000), pp 41-72.

<sup>15</sup> A point first made by Norrie MacQueen *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa : Metropolitan Revolution and the dissolution of Empire* (London, Longman, 1997), pp.80-84. See also Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, Cornell UP, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> On work of Freyre cf. Peter Burke & Maria Lúcia G. Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre: Social Theory in the Tropics* (Witney, Peter Lang Pub., 2008). For his reception and use in Portugal by the regime to legitimize its discourse cf. Cláudia Castelo, «O Modo Português de Estar no Mundo»:» : *O luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933-1961)* (Porto, Afrontamento, 1998).

The sources of our analysis will be official publications and archival sources, private papers, memoirs, and interviews. We will be primarily engaged in an historical analysis aimed at tracing the role of cultural norms of appropriateness for a given identity in shaping and reshaping Portuguese foreign policy from the era of decolonisation to the post-colonial period.

## **2. Portuguese myths of decolonisation**

Portugal's imperial retreat in 1975 is aptly symbolised in the famous photos of piles of crates containing the belongings of former settlers in Angola and Mozambique lined up next to the massive *Monumento das Descobertas* in Lisbon. Dedicated in 1960, this was *the* iconic national monument to the Portuguese Discoveries, located where many of the explorers' caravels set sail in the early modern era. The dramatic repatriation of more than half a million settlers and others marked the abrupt end of Portuguese colonial rule in Africa. The protracted wars of decolonisation (1961-74) led to a military coup to end the stalemate. Independence agreements were then swiftly negotiated in 1974-1975 arranging for a transfer of power to the armed African nationalist movements. In Guinea-Bissau the Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde [PAIGC] had already made a 'unilateral' declaration of independence in 1973 that had been recognised by more than 80 States, and was now also recognised by Portugal; Guinea-Bissau quickly evolved into a one-party state led by the PAIGC. Mozambique achieved independence in June 1975 after a brief transition period under a Portuguese military High Commissioner and a Portuguese-FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) government. Elections were held in Cape Verde and São Tomé, two small archipelagos off the coast of West Africa where there had been no armed struggle, in 1975; the result was a victory for the Marxist-inspired independence movements, favoured by the local representatives of the new Portuguese left-leaning military leadership. Things did not go as smoothly in Angola, where the Alvor agreement, signed in January 1975 between the three internationally recognised liberation

movements and Portugal, collapsed in March-April 1975, paving the way for an escalation of violence and foreign intervention.

In the summer of 1975, it is important to remember, the fate of the metropole also hung in the balance and with it the potential destabilisation of NATO's southern flank. Portuguese politics was heavily polarised, and after a period of close to a year of relative consensus on the desirability of rapid decolonisation after July 1974, the foreign policy process was again being pulled in different directions. The far-left and the Moscow-aligned Communists, both very active in the capital, were defeated, first in the April 1975 elections to the Constitutional Assembly, and then in the Thermidorian counter coup of 25 November 1975. Thereafter, the purged Coordinating Committee (*Comissão Coordenadora*) of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) that had overthrown the authoritarian colonial regime in 1974 was one very important power broker, and its role as the guardian of the Revolution was enshrined in a constitutional pact with the main political parties to 'guide' the transition to political pluralism. The other key political force, increasingly, were the moderate parties that had prevailed electorally in April 1975 with 86% of the vote, with the communist PCP getting only 12% and only one far left MP being elected. Both the MFA and the moderate parties made, as we will see, a decisive imprint in the emerging foreign policy of the new Portuguese democratic regime.

It was the MFA leaders who played the pivotal role in conducting decolonisation in 1974-1975. Rapid decolonisation as an indispensable condition for the end of the war, however, faced no opposition from mainstream political parties. The only public demonstrations at the time were to demand an even quicker end to the war and to prevent any fresh troops from being sent overseas. After the fact, decolonisation seems to have been perceived with ambiguity by Portuguese public opinion. A poll conducted in 1978 revealed that 68% of the Portuguese population approved of the independence of the colonies, but 59% expressed their disagreement with the way the process had been conducted and stated that the departure from Africa should have safeguarded 'the rights' of Portuguese nationals. There was a very similar response (69% favoured independence in principle, but 73% expressed disapproval of the way it was granted) in a public opinion poll in 1984. This prevailing perception a few years after the event should not make us forget,

however, how popular putting an immediate end to the wars was among all major politically active groups in 1974-1975. It was only once the wars were in the past, and when the costs of decolonisation in terms of civil wars in Africa, the integration of settlers and disputes over property loomed much larger, that ambiguity set in.<sup>17</sup>

The notion that putting an end to empire was not simply unavoidable but also necessary and right – to allow Portugal to become the natural ‘bridge’ between the rich and developed ‘North’ and the poor and exploited ‘South’ – was a central component in the initial phase of the development of a Portuguese myth of decolonisation. According to this Marxist-inspired narrative, Portugal was a mere semi-peripheral facilitator of foreign exploitation of colonial riches, carried out by powerful foreign companies, while the Portuguese continued to devote significant financial resources to maintaining a colonial apparatus, with little or no benefit to their own development. The end of Portuguese colonial rule could therefore be logically heralded as a mutual ‘liberation’, breaking the chains of the imperial subjects *and* emancipating the metropole from being a mere ‘entrepôt colony’ of foreign capitalist interests.<sup>18</sup>

Third-Worldism retained a significant influence in the conduct of Portugal’s foreign policy until 1976, and to a more limited degree for some years after that, through the new, democratically-elected President, General Ramalho Eanes, himself a moderate member of the MFA. Expectations of fraternal cooperation had been formalised in several cooperation agreements with the newly independent African countries which provided for the despatch of Portuguese aid workers (*co-operantes*) as well as various mechanisms of technical assistance and cultural exchanges. Such hopes had also been

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<sup>17</sup> On the 1978 survey see M. Bacalhau, *Sondagem à Opinião Pública. Os Portugueses e a Política Quatro Anos depois do 25 de Abril* (Lisboa: IED/Editorial Meseta, 1978). The 1984 public opinion poll was published by a weekly ‘Descolonizações e Nacionalizações – Muitos a favor mas de outro modo’, *O Jornal* (19-26 April 1984). For the evolution of public perceptions of decolonization in the last decades, see also Carlos Maurício, ‘A Guerra Colonial e a Descolonização vistas pelas Sondagens de Opinião (1973-2004)’, *Nação e Defesa*, N° 130, 2011, 267-295.

<sup>18</sup> This point of view was argued first and foremost by the Portuguese Communist Party and then by those groups that were close to it or emerged from it. See Álvaro Cunhal, *Rumo à Vitória* (Porto: Eds. “A Opinião”, 1974) [originally presented as policy memorandum approved by the Central Committee of PCP in Abril 1964]. For the wider influence of these views see Rui Ramos, “O império que nunca existiu”. A cultura da descolonização em Portugal c. 1960-c.1980”, *Revista História das Ideias*, 28, 2007, *maxime*, pp. 450-454

articulated by leading MFA figures during the independence ceremonies of some of those countries.

In Cape Verde, in June 1975, Portuguese prime-minister Vasco Gonçalves stated that, with its new Socialist identity soon to be enshrined in the 1976 Constitution, Portugal was in a unique position to become ‘a European door to African countries’.<sup>19</sup> After a number of revisions, the 1976 Constitution no longer identifies Portugal with socialism, as did the original preamble, but it continues to state in its article 7: ‘Portugal shall maintain special ties of friendship and cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries’.

The original narrative of an exemplary decolonisation, as put forward by the MFA leadership, was based on the notion that Portugal had done what it should in pursuit of national liberation. And it would not be legitimate to defend freedom in the metropole and deny it in the colonies if Portugal was to truly identify as a democratic and progressive regime. Moreover Portuguese decolonisation was exemplary in its strict adherence to the norms set by the international community for decolonization as manifest in repeated United Nations (UN) and Organisation of African Unity resolutions from 1960 onwards. The paradigmatic moment from this point of view was the public commitment of the new Portuguese regime to abide by these international norms of rapid decolonisation with a transfer of power to the independence movements in a joint statement issued during a visit of the UN Secretary-General to Lisbon in August 1974<sup>20</sup>.

This narrative of exemplary decolonisation did not, however, survive in mainstream public memory, once the traumatic aspects of the end of empire became apparent: the somewhat chaotic, even if mostly bloodless, massive repatriation of the Portuguese settler community; the sometimes bloody repression of former colonial ‘collaborators’ by the newly independent states; the setting up of one-party regimes and, in the case of Angola, East Timor, and eventually Mozambique, the onset of vicious civil wars.

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Ramos, “O império que nunca existiu”, p.474.

<sup>20</sup> See Bruno C. Reis, ‘Visões das forças políticas portuguesas sobre o fim do império: dois planos em confronto e uma política exemplar de descolonização’ in F. Rosas, M. Machaqueiro, P. A. Oliveira (eds.), *O Adeus ao Império – 40 Anos de Descolonização Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Vega, 2015), 78-101.

What emerged instead as the dominant memory of Portuguese decolonization was an ambiguous, somewhat contradictory narrative, a collage of old myths of empire and new myths of decolonisation linked to a Portuguese identity that was only partly refashioned.

The resilience of old myths of empire, even if refashioned, is less strange if we take into account who were those who saw themselves, and were still seen by many others, as the liberators of Portugal from a dictatorial and colonialist fascist regime and who retained a measure of political power. The Revolutionary Council (*Conselho da Revolução*) – established in accordance with the April 1975 Pact (revised in February 1976) between the MFA and the main political parties – was until 1982 both a Constitutional Court and a State Council advising the President, and was composed entirely of leading officers of the MFA.

Many of the leading figures of the MFA seemed to have sincerely identified with the African liberation movements. They were eager to retain an active role in the management of Portugal's foreign policy. This could be achieved through their close personal and working relationship with the new President, since Portugal, under the 1976 Constitution, had a semi-presidential system with an elected Head of State who retained some foreign policy prerogatives.<sup>21</sup> And, in June 1976, General Ramalho Eanes, of the more moderate wing of the MFA leadership, was elected with 61% of the popular vote.

Amongst Eanes' closest advisors was Major Melo Antunes, former Minister of Foreign Affairs (1975-1976), and the foremost strategist of the end of the Portuguese empire in Africa.<sup>22</sup> A professional officer with a strong intellectual bent and Marxist leanings – even if lacking sympathy for the orthodox Moscow-aligned Portuguese Communists – Melo Antunes came to personify the Third-Worldist strand in Portuguese foreign policy thinking. At the heart of this approach was a vision of Portugal as being uniquely fit to use multiple international connections to work for a new, fairer global order, acquiring in the process greater credibility and prestige among its former

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<sup>21</sup> António Araújo, 'Função presidencial e política externa', *Relações Internacionais*, 28, 2010, 61-79.

<sup>22</sup> See Maria Inácia Rezola, *Melo Antunes. Uma biografia política* (Lisboa: Âncora, 2010).

colonial territories and in the Global South in general. Speaking at the XXX UN General Assembly (9 October 1975), Antunes stated that:

now that political power in Portugal is at the service of the less privileged classes, committed to a progressive policy of national independence, our historical role has changed radically. Portugal is finally apt, thanks to a decolonisation carried out without any neo-colonial ambitions, to act as the harbinger of a new model relationship between the core countries in terms of wealth and power and the poor exploited nations of the Third World.<sup>23</sup>

In other words, Portugal had a new identity as a progressive country and this should be reflected in an appropriate way in its foreign policy. Moreover, the decision of the MFA leadership to transfer power rapidly to the African liberation movements in 1974-1975 would thus be vindicated, contra the accusations which had started to emerge from right wing factions after 1976 of a ‘stab in the back’, a ‘scuttle’, i.e. ‘treason’.<sup>24</sup>

What is especially important from the point of view of our argument is that this *turn in Portuguese foreign policy, towards the Global South in general and some specific areas in particular, was not simply ideology-driven. It also had a strong dimension of cultural identification.* Melo Antunes made this clear in his farewell speech as Foreign Minister in July 1976, in a strong defence of his new vision for Portuguese foreign policy:

Without a doubt, among Third World countries the main focus of our attention will always be [...] the new Portuguese-speaking African nations as the result of a secular history, sometimes dramatic and cruel; but one that nevertheless left [...] un-perishable marks. This translates primarily in a community of language, of the Portuguese language that the poet [Fernando Pessoa] once called our homeland. Multiple ties at all levels [...]

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<sup>23</sup> Melo Antunes, *Pela Democratização Efectiva das Relações Internacionais* (Lisboa, MNE, 1975)

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. J. Luz Cunha, Káulza de Arriaga et al., *África: a Vitória Traída, quatro generais escrevem...* (Braga, Intervenção, 1977). This ‘victory betrayed’ manifesto by four leading generals rails against the alleged stab in the back and betrayal of Portugal’s manifest destiny and military successes fighting communist subversion in its African territories.

will always remain one of the key necessary determinants of our foreign policy.<sup>25</sup>

This foreign policy option was somewhat qualified – Melo Antunes was always careful to underline that this did not mean Portugal should abandon the Western Bloc, but rather that it should simply diversify its foreign relations and become more autonomous.

Yet in what turned out to be a significant correction of course, it still tended to be attacked as naïve by the more hawkish, Cold Warrior-type figures of the electorally dominant centre-left and centre-right parties. The latter had, moreover, relied on American and Western European support during the revolutionary period. They were painfully aware of the need to be on good terms with Western institutions, such as the IMF, to ease the economic difficulties of the oil-shock of 1973, made worse by revolutionary turmoil. The leaders of the new mainstream political parties were, therefore, unwilling to water-down Portugal's identification with the Western Bloc, or to risk potentially costly suspicions from core allies – not least the US – by flirting with what they saw as an equivocal, or even neutralist or Non-Aligned, foreign policy. Yet this position too was a product of more than material calculation; it was also an expression of a sincere identification of Portuguese mainstream political leaders with Western Europe. Those politicians were also, in the process, of course, struggling to wrest control of foreign policy making from the MFA leaders, namely President Eanes and his advisors.

The so-called First Constitutional Government was sworn into office on 23 July 1976. This was a minority government of the Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista* [PS]) which had come in first with 34,8% of the vote in the first free parliamentary elections. With Parliament dominated by Western-aligned parties, everything seemed to point to a decisive turn of Portuguese foreign policy towards Western Europe and a deliberate break with the legacy of strong engagement with Africa. The new prime-minister, Mário Soares, had strong ties to the Socialist International and had managed to build for his PS a reputation as being the best placed to promote Portuguese modernization as Westernization. Modernity in the collective imagination of Portugal in the 1970s

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<sup>25</sup> ANTT – EMA Cx 70, Pasta 11, Discurso de despedida como MNE do VI Governo Provisório.

was closely identified with the Western European welfare states and the EEC integration project. Soares won the April 1976 elections with the slogan *A Europa connosco!* This explicitly meant “Europe is with us”. But it also meant, implicitly – in a manner crucially revealing of a tacit, culturally determined, common-sense – that it was taken for granted by many that Portugal was not a European country, at least not fully, or not yet.

The foreign policy section of the 1976 Socialist government programme made the implications of this strategy clear. It underlined that there were ‘no real alternatives’ to EEC membership. Portugal’s interests in Africa were greatly diminished, and any attempt to pursue them as a priority would be inappropriate because it ‘would lead to new forms of isolationism’ similar to the one pursued by the previous regime. The clean break with a foreign policy agenda emphasising ‘fraternal ties’ with the progressive, Marxist, one-party regimes established in former Portuguese African colonies was made clear by the downgrading of the former Minister of Cooperation into a mere Director-General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while simultaneously a Secretary of State for European Integration was created.<sup>26</sup>

Building on a consensus amongst the dominant forces of the political spectrum the Socialist government took decisive steps to apply for EEC membership in the early months of 1977. This move was regarded , not surprisingly given the political and economic difficulties previously described, with some skepticism by a significant number of intellectuals and economic experts. The EEC Nine, partly for geopolitical Cold War reasons, but also arguably because there was an element of shared Western cultural identification in play, rapidly accepted the request for accession negotiations, stilling fears among the Portuguese elite that they might instead make a counter-offer of ‘second-class’ affiliation such as some kind of improved associate membership status that was offered to Turkey.<sup>27</sup> For the new Portuguese elites, full EEC membership, was perceived as vital for the successful transition to a Western-style multiparty democracy. And not just in terms of funding. Integration into

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<sup>26</sup> See Programa do I Governo Constitucional, accessible at <http://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/o-governo/arquivo-historico/governos-constitucionais/gco1/programa-do-governo/programa-do-i-governo-constitucional.aspx>

<sup>27</sup> See Fernando Oliveira Neves, ‘O pedido de adesão de Portugal às Comunidades Europeias’, *Política Internacional*, 13, Primavera-Verão 1997, pp. 57-65.

the EEC would have the effect of tying Portugal to a complex web of shared norms and agreements that were the hallmark of this club of democratic regimes founded in 1957. Moreover, it would create new opportunities for intensifying all kinds of links with the leading Western European nations. The process of strong Europeanisation of Portuguese political culture through intense international socialisation of elites had already started when Portugal became a recipient of Marshall Plan aid in 1948, and a founding member of NATO in 1949, and of EFTA in 1960. Europe was generally perceived amongst policy makers and other elite circles as providing a new foreign policy identity, a substitute for the lost imperial role.

And yet, one can find traces of a strong attachment to the myth of Portugal's special relationship with Africa – no longer as an imperial metropole but as a particularly able 'bridge-building' state – even among more pro-European elites. For example, Medeiros Ferreira, the first Socialist foreign minister (in 1976-1977) cherished the notion that Portugal's imperial connections might be an asset in relation to its international standing after decolonisation. He and others were also confident that a rapid admission to the Western European club would strengthen Portuguese leverage in its dealings with the former African colonies. The complementarity for Portugal between European integration and African rapprochement would be stressed by Medeiros Ferreira in October 1976: 'Portugal will only be of interest to the Third World if it is strong in Europe, and will only be of interest to Europe if it retains influence outside Europe [...]. We really should be true to our vocation [...] to act as bridge between Europe and Africa, between Europe and Latin America'.<sup>28</sup> Even hawkish Soares echoed this in his keynote speech to the 1977 Socialist Party Congress, attended by guests from the MPLA (Angola), PAIGC (Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau) and MLSTP (São Tomé). Soares claimed that Portugal's role in the world would be to work for 'the union between Europe and the Third World, the only [role] that is compatible with the character of our people and our cultural tradition and civilisation'.<sup>29</sup> Portraying Soares as always an adversary of rapprochement with Africa is therefore a mistake. What is true,

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<sup>28</sup> Interview to *Expresso*, 1 October 1976.

<sup>29</sup> Mário Soares, *Relatório do Secretário-Geral ao II Congresso do PS na legalidade* (Lisboa: Editorial Império, 1977), quoted in Manuel C. Magalhães, *Belém e São Bento nas Relações Externas Pós-Coloniais Portuguesas* (Lisboa, 2012, unpublished MA dissertation), p. 44.

and led to some tensions and contradictions, was that the Socialists, and more specifically Soares, were reluctant to share with Eanes and his close circle of MFA advisors the laurels of any foreign policy achievements that might result from a successful re-engagement with the former colonies.<sup>30</sup>

### **3. Refashioning identity and managing interests in post-colonial relationships**

The strong preference to remain engaged with the former colonies survived a first post-imperial decade full of incidents and difficulties that might have put it into question. The former colonies were now significantly identified in most Portuguese media as ‘PALOP’ i.e. Portuguese-speaking African Countries, implying they still had something Portuguese in their identity –.

The management of post-colonial relationships was initially made very complicated by a number of unresolved highly contentious issues (the *contencioso*), ranging from the settlement of various financial issues and demands for compensation from the former settlers or *retornados*, to the fate of large public investments financed by loans that had yet to be paid, such as the colossal Cahora Bassa dam in Mozambique, that would remain one the most complex legacies of late colonial developmentalism.<sup>31</sup> Needless to say, the influence in Angola and Mozambique of foreign powers that had provided assistance to their armed movements was also a complicating factor.

The colonial *contencioso* was irrelevant in the smaller territories of São Tomé, Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau where the presence of white settlers had been negligible. Moreover, these small and weak states were from very early eager to seek Portuguese aid, and also, to a certain extent, diplomatic protection from large ambitious neighbouring states (such as Senegal or Guinea-Conakry in the case of Guinea-Bissau).<sup>32</sup> The smaller states were important in blocking

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with José Medeiros Ferreira, 21 July 2013.

<sup>31</sup> See Allen F. Isaacman and Barbara S. Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement and the Delusion of Development. Cahora Bassa and its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965-2007* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> See Norrie MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa. Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire* (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 231-236.

more hostile statements against Portugal in the summits of the *Five* former Portuguese colonies in Africa, as well as in paving the way for Portugal's gradual attendance of these meetings as a 'guest' from the late 1970s in what became known as the *Five plus One* summits.

Portuguese aid policies have often been criticised by experts as lacking a strategy. This was partly the consequence of stringent constraints on expenditure by the Ministry of Finance. But also and more significantly for our core argument it reflected the fact that cooperation between Portuguese-speaking countries seemed so natural that initially there does not seem to have been much thought about what exactly it was meant to achieve.<sup>33</sup> It was only in 1979 that an Institute for Economic Cooperation, created in 1976, was endowed with a new organic law and some expertise, while the Foreign Ministry retained its Director General for Cooperation with a limited staff. Complaints about 'inertia' were frequent in the following years.<sup>34</sup> In the early 1980s, Portugal did try to explore a new approach to aid that would address some of these problems, one that involved the payment by wealthier states, like Sweden, of Portuguese aid-workers in countries like Mozambique. The Portuguese rationale for this approach was the bridging role: its *cooperantes* would have the sort of 'cultural knowledge' that would make them the ideal agents of Western modernity in countries that needed to be rescued from the influence of Communist states.<sup>35</sup>

Relations between the governments in Lisbon, Luanda and Maputo continued to be plagued with incidents and misunderstandings, as is of course not uncommon in relationships between former metropole and former colonies. What is relevant to us, however, is that while these relationships were often problematic at the inter-state level, they nonetheless remained significant and were deepened by multiple transnational ties between different political

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<sup>33</sup> According to a well placed source, the then deputy head of the Africa-Asia section of the Portuguese Foreign Ministry (1977-83), the scope of Portugal's postcolonial relationship in this period was basically dictated by the 'tension' between the 'cooperation faction' (with a stronger constituency in the Foreign Ministry) and the '*contencioso* faction' (with strong supporters on the Ministry of Finance). Interview with Ambassador Vasco Valente, 22 March 2013.

<sup>34</sup> On the genealogy and development of post-1974 Portugal's aid policy, see Elizabeth Cortes Palma, *Cultura, Desenvolvimento e Política. A Ajuda Pública ao Desenvolvimento nos Países Africanos Lusófonos* (Lisboa: IDI, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> TNA. FCO 9/3250. Mozambique and Angola: a Portuguese view, 8 July 1981. On the idea of a 'trilateral cooperation', see also Michel Cahen, 'Le Portugal et l'Afrique. Le cas des relations luso-mozambicaines (1965-1985). Étude politique et bibliographique', *Afrique Contemporaine*, 137, Janvier-Mars, 1987, pp. 3-55.

parties, cultural movements and public personalities in Portugal, Angola and Mozambique.

Angolan elites, for instance, were resentful of the fact that the Portuguese government – against the advice of then Foreign Minister Melo Antunes – had only recognized the MPLA-led regime three months after independence, becoming the 82<sup>nd</sup> state to do so. Throughout the years they often reminded Portuguese diplomats of Soares's prominent role in that episode, which was clearly significant to them.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, the MPLA was so close to the Portuguese Communists that Neto was rumoured to have been a member during his student years in Lisbon, had unquestionably escaped Portugal with the help of the Communist clandestine network, and was the only foreigner ever invited to co-chair a meeting of the politburo of the PCP, in 1975.<sup>37</sup> These close affinities between the MPLA and the PCP – the SP's greatest adversary in Portuguese politics for many years – can perhaps explain the persistence of this feud that would be kept alive in the 1980s when Soares was seen by the MPLA leadership as a committed sponsor of their deadly rival UNITA.<sup>38</sup> These are not good or normal inter-state relations, but they are certainly special relations mediated by a shared elite language that made immediate communication, including the exchange of insults, easy.

As Norrie MacQueen has remarked, more damage to inter-state relations was prevented by President Eanes' so-called parallel diplomacy. Eanes made an important contribution to improving some of the most strained bilateral relationships, particularly with Angola, not least with his tacit support for Neto in the context of internal conflicts in the MPLA that culminated in the so-called Nito Alves coup and counter-coup (May 1977). Official visits by the Portuguese President and government figures to Mozambique in the early 1980s also helped restore a degree of normalcy to relations with the Maputo government. This evidently does not mean that real problems and diplomatic incidents ceased to exist. Even though the notion of a kind of Lusophone community was not

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<sup>36</sup> Arquivo Histórico-Diplomático do MNE. PAA 89227. Reunião entre S. Exa. o Ministro e o Ministro das Relações Exteriores da R. P. de Angola, 9 August 1984.

<sup>37</sup> Carlos Brito, *Álvaro Cunhal: Sete Fôlegos do Combatente* (Lisboa: Nelson de Matos, 2010) pp.122-23.

<sup>38</sup> On the Luso-Angolan relationship after 1974, see Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, 'Sobre as relações Portugal-Angola ao fim de trinta anos: um ensaio crítico', *Relações Internacionais*, 8, 2005, pp. 55-72.

meaningless – for instance, the Portuguese press continued to be read by the African Portuguese-speaking elites and the politics of the former colonies continued to be closely followed in the former metropole. This was both an illustration of a significant remnant of Portuguese influence in Africa and a source of problems when the coverage was critical of the ruling elites of the former colonies.

What is clear is that Eanes during his two presidential mandates (1976-1986) used members of his personal entourage, largely from the Revolutionary Council, to engage in personal diplomacy.<sup>39</sup> Even if a good deal of political jealousy existed, in particular from Prime-Ministers Soares and Sá Carneiro, regarding Eanes' preeminence in the African diplomatic front, senior officials at the Foreign Ministry generally saw the President's prestige among African elites as an asset that Portugal could not afford to ignore.<sup>40</sup>

Presidential envoys had two types of missions. The first was to resolve pending issues. The second was to convey personal messages of support to African leaders who were facing challenges to their authority, where Portuguese elites perceived them as more 'moderate' or 'Lusophile' than the alternative. The best example of this is the visit of Major Fonseca de Almeida, sent to Luanda in the aftermath of the so-called Nito Alves coup (May 1977), allegedly inspired by the Soviets. The Angolan president was reportedly grateful for Eanes' gesture, and made clear that inter-state relations should not be impacted by the involvement of some Portuguese nationals with Alves.<sup>41</sup>

In the case of Eanes it is both possible and important to go deeper in exploring his influential vision of Lusophone Africa. In a candid exchange of views on this subject with the British Ambassador in Lisbon, in February 1979, the President is reported to have said that the 'colonial powers had made a fundamental mistake in trying to leave behind them parliamentary democracies on the Western model. There was no state in sub-Saharan Africa which did not

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<sup>39</sup> On Eanes' African diplomacy see, amongst others, Norrie MacQueen, 'Re-defining the "African vocation": Portugal's Post-Colonial Identity Crisis', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 11, N° 2, November, 2003, pp. 181-199.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with José Luiz Gomes, diplomatic advisor to Prime-Minister Francisco Pinto Balsemão (1981-83), 6 February 2015.

<sup>41</sup> See José Freire Antunes, *O Factor Africano* (Lisboa: Bertrand, 1990), p. 112. On the abortive coup itself (a major internal clash in the MPLA, pitting the more 'militant' sections of the party against Agostinho's Neto leadership), see Lara Pawson, *In the Name of the People. Angola's Forgotten Massacre* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

have a single-party system. What the West should have done, he thought, was to build up single parties ‘on the Marxist model’ and hand over power to them.’<sup>42</sup> In other words the MFA strategy had been correct. And the latter cannot be divorced from a certain perception of Africa and its appropriate place in a Western-centric vision of progress and modernity.<sup>43</sup> In 1985, the final year of his presidency Eanes was still espousing very similar views.<sup>44</sup>

This view may not have been entirely shared by the Portuguese ruling elite, but there was an increasingly widespread consensus among the Portuguese establishment that while the MPLA or FRELIMO might be ‘difficult’, they were indispensable partners.<sup>45</sup> The MPLA in particular was a political movement with an urban outlook, led by people with deep roots among the educated *assimilado* elite – i.e. those assimilated into Portuguese culture. They were not to be confused ‘with the jungle people’ as the right-wing Foreign Minister Sá Machado – who had been a high-school colleague of the Angolan Foreign Minister Paulo Jorge and attended the University of Coimbra with other members of the Angolan elite – once bluntly put to David Owen. ‘Jungle people’ is not an uncommon pejorative description among African Portuguese-speaking ruling elites of any alternative to its rule.<sup>46</sup>

What is clear is that President Eanes did take advantage of the good rapport he had with Neto to promote a *détente* in the strained Portuguese-Angolan relationship. This was made easier by the mediation of the Guinean President, Luís Cabral (providing another example of the role of the smaller and more peripheral former colonies in promoting improved relations and cooperation with Portugal). Bissau became the stage for a summit, largely prepared by Melo Antunes, by now Eanes most trusted advisor in African

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<sup>42</sup> TNA/FCO 45/1677. Telegram from [Sir John] Moran to FCO. Views of President Eanes on Africa, 14 February 1979.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2006)

<sup>44</sup> See ‘No seminário sobre África de Língua Oficial Portuguesa, Portugal e os Estados Unidos, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 14 de Maio de 1985’ in *Discursos de Sua Excelência o Presidente da República, General António Ramalho Eanes durante o Primeiro Semestre de 1985* (Lisboa: DG de Comunicação Social, 1985).

<sup>45</sup> Arquivo Histórico-Diplomático do MNE. PAA 89253. Fernando Paulouro das Neves, ‘O Encontro de Bissau’, 20 June 1978.

<sup>46</sup> TNA/FCO 45/2216. Record of a conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary [David Owen] and the Portuguese Foreign Ministry [Victor Sá Machado], 30 June 1978.

affairs.<sup>47</sup> The meeting of Eanes and Neto on 25 June 1978 became a symbol of the rapprochement between Portugal and Lusophone Africa. The so-called 'spirit of Bissau' was trumpeted for some time thereafter by those in Portugal and in Africa who favoured improved relations. The meeting resulted in the signing of an Angolan-Portuguese Cooperation Agreement and the release of a relatively large number of Portuguese citizens – accused of illicit interference in Angolan internal politics – from Angolan jails. In the following years, a series of steps, such as the setting up of a Portuguese-Angolan joint commission to discuss the economic *contencioso* between the two countries, signalled a more positive relationship, even if tangible results in economic terms were long in coming, not least because of the civil war.<sup>48</sup>

Eanes also undertook a series of State visits to African capitals, and hosted a number of African heads of government and heads of state in Lisbon. Presidential diplomacy gained even greater weight during the so-called presidential cabinets – i.e. those led by Prime-Ministers personally chosen by Eanes during a crisis in parliamentary party politics in 1978-1979.

From 1979 to 1983, the so-called Democratic Alliance (AD) coalition became the first right-wing government in Portugal since the 1974 coup. The two AD governments, took pride in their 'Atlanticist' and anti-Soviet stance, but were ready to take a pragmatic line in relation to the former colonies, making concessions that no left-wing leader had been willing or able to make on the *contencioso* (such as the repatriation of the gold reserves at the *Banco Nacional Ultramarino* which Maputo had been claiming for years). Like Nixon with his opening to Communist China in the early 1970s, Sá Carneiro, a charismatic and staunchly anti-communist leader, was the best placed Portuguese politician to get away with 'appeasing' the Afro-Communist regimes in the former colonies without risking too much opposition from the critics of decolonisation at home. But there was more to this turn than pure pragmatism.

What was said and done during the State visits in the crucial period for the normalisation of relations between Portugal and its former colonies in Africa – despite opposite alignments in the global Cold War – is quite revealing of the

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<sup>47</sup> See M. Vieira Pinto, *O General Ramalho Eanes e a História Recente de Portugal. I Volume (Dos antecedentes ao 1º Mandato)*, Lisboa, Âncora, 2014, pp 337-338 and 342-345.

<sup>48</sup> On this see Norrie MacQueen, 'Portugal and Africa: the politics of re-engagement', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 23 (1), 1985, *maxime* pp. 40-42.

resilience of certain aspects of Lusotropicalism. This is less paradoxical than it might seem, not only because Lusotropicalism was not exclusive of the previous regime, but also because some of the diplomats and decision-makers that were again in positions of power during the AD government had previously served under the *Estado Novo* regime – from Hall Themido to Leonardo Mathias and Caldeira Coelho, to the Foreign Minister André Gonçalves Pereira himself.

But what then are the salient points of this Lusotropical script in Portuguese relations with its former colonies in Africa? Firstly, the new African leaders were frequently addressed as ‘brothers’ and ‘friends’. The relationship between the former metropole and the PALOP was often described as ‘imperishable’ and ‘fraternal’, built upon a ‘common cultural experience’ which the alleged parenthesis of the recent wars of decolonisation had not been able to destroy.<sup>49</sup>

On several occasions, Eanes’ African interlocutors responded in a way that seemed to validate these claims of shared identity. Agostinho Neto declared in Bissau that his relations with Eanes ‘were not only friendly [...] he is like family to me’. One of Eanes’ former collaborators in Belém claims that the *persona* of the President – a Portuguese MFA officer with a shared experience of fighting in Africa, even if on the opposite side until he saw the error of his ways – made a positive impression on his African counterparts. The upright, austere, military-type style of Eanes was apparently also appreciated because he was perceived to share a dislike of parties and parliamentary politics.<sup>50</sup>

As if to overcompensate for greater difficulties and greater distance, the stress on the symbolic and cultural dimensions of Portugal’s African diplomacy was, if anything, even more in evidence in the case of Mozambique. The FRELIMO ruling elite was perceived as not being as strongly connected to the former metropole, in cultural terms, as their counterparts from other former colonies. Melo Antunes, who had conducted the negotiations leading to the Lusaka independence agreement of 1974, and was well connected with key

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<sup>49</sup> Eanes was very emphatic on this point during his visit to Guinea-Bissau in February 1979. One of his symbolic gestures was to offer a plaque to a future monument to Amílcar Cabral, paying tribute to his ‘universal humanism of Guinean and Portuguese roots’. See Manuel V. Pinto, *ob. cit.*, p 370.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Ambassador António Franco, 18 February 2015. That this was a misperception, certainly in terms of Eanes being anti-Western democracy, does not mean it was irrelevant.

figures of Machel's entourage, explained to the British Ambassador in Lisbon why relations with Mozambique were more difficult. It was not just because of the control of FRELIMO 'by hardline Marxists', but also, and crucially to our arguments, because of 'the lack of cultural rapport between the leaders of Frelimo and the Portuguese (in marked contrast with Angola)' and 'the fact that many Frelimo leaders had grown up outside the Portuguese environment'.<sup>51</sup>

In the early 1980s, however, a number of factors made a rapprochement between Lisbon and Maputo possible. This is, by the way, an important reminder that cultural factors cannot be properly analysed in isolation or seen as the only determining factor. Facing an increasingly destructive internal insurgency, backed by South Africa, and desperately in need of foreign aid, those within the Mozambican leadership arguing for a rapprochement with Portugal gained the upper hand. Portugal became a useful intermediary to some of the more hawkish Western countries, first and foremost the US under the Reagan Administration.<sup>52</sup> Eanes and the AD governments worked in tandem to make the best out of two state visits – one by the Portuguese President to Mozambique (December 1981), and the other by the Mozambican President to Portugal (October 1983).

The first visit was not without incidents – the mercurial Machel did not refrain from addressing provocative remarks to the Portuguese Foreign Minister, alluding to his exemption from military service during the colonial wars, in contrast with a 'fellow combatant', President Eanes, whose strained relationship with the centre-right coalition was well-known. The Portuguese delegation discussed the possibility of putting an early end to the visit, but the cautious advice of Portuguese diplomats prevailed and Machel adopted a more conciliatory tone.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> FCO 106/84. From British Embassy in Lisbon to FCO. Portugal's relations with Angola and Mozambique, 23 May 1974.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Ambassador José Luiz Gomes. On Mozambique's approach to the West in the early 1980s, see Mark Simpson, 'Foreign and Domestic Factors in the Transformation of Frelimo', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 21, 2 (1983), pp. 309-337.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Ambassador Leonardo Mathias, then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1 March 2013. See also the account of the visit by a member of the Portuguese delegation (unidentified) on the weekly Mozambican *Savana*, 'Quando Samora se zangou com Gonçalves Pereira', 28 July 2012, reproduced in [http://macua.blogs.com/moambique\\_para\\_todos/2012/07/quando-samora-zangou-com-gon%C3%A7alves-pereira.html](http://macua.blogs.com/moambique_para_todos/2012/07/quando-samora-zangou-com-gon%C3%A7alves-pereira.html) [accessed 20 March 2015].

President Machel was viewed by Portuguese officials as pivotal to rapprochement, as a leader involved in a delicate balancing act between hardliners and moderates inside FRELIMO. Making the most of the symbolic dimension of state diplomacy, the Portuguese took the decision to award Machel the Order of Prince Henry – the highest Portuguese decoration given to foreign dignitaries – and the rank and sword of Field-Marshal.<sup>54</sup>

Machel's visit to Portugal in October 1983 was especially revealing of the diplomatic use of the power of culture. Facing one of the most severe economic crises post-1974, including an IMF bailout and austerity program, Portugal had difficulties providing any financially significant aid to Mozambique. The decision was therefore made to maximise the use of Portuguese soft power during the visit. This involved taking President Machel to some of Portugal's most symbolic monuments (Jerónimos and Batalha monasteries, the University of Coimbra and Guimarães castle). A very prestigious writer, well-known for his opposition to the authoritarian regime, Miguel Torga, was one of his guides. Other types of personal 'bonding' were also not neglected, with the Presidential couple hosting Machel's youngest son in the Belém Presidential Palace.<sup>55</sup> President Eanes made abundant use of expressions like 'fraternity' and 'friendship', while always stressing Portuguese respect for Mozambican sovereignty. The visit provided the setting for Eanes to underline the parallels between Portugal's 'indomitable perseverance' fighting for its independence as one of Europe's oldest nation-states, and Mozambique's own hard-won struggle for independence.<sup>56</sup> Machel blended Marxist references with allusions to a shared cultural heritage that fitted with Portuguese expectations: 'We possess a common tool to work, think and communicate: the Portuguese language. In our schools, Mozambican and Portuguese children learn to name things, feelings and concepts using the same words. Mozambican writers and poets express themselves using Camões' language. [...]. This [cultural] given is something our

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<sup>54</sup> TNA/FCO 9/3250. Telegram from Maputo to FCO, 1 December 1981.

<sup>55</sup> Written testimony of Ambassador Paulouro das Neves to authors, 23 February 2015.

<sup>56</sup> *Viagem a Portugal do Presidente da República Popular de Moçambique Samora Machel. Discursos oficiais proferidos durante a visita do Presidente da República Popular de Moçambique, Samora Machel, a Portugal. 8 a 11 de Novembro de 1983* (Lisboa, DG da Divulgação, 1984).

peoples are bound to use to cement their exemplary relationship of friendship and cooperation'.<sup>57</sup>

This cultural route to diplomatic normalisation had an interesting symbolic follow-up. In 1985, Portugal returned the remains of Ngungunhane (1850-1906), the Nguni ruler whose defeat and deportation in 1896 marked the high-point of the Portuguese campaigns of colonial occupation of what would become Mozambique. Ngungunhane was eventually adopted by newly independent Mozambique as a national symbol of resistance to colonialism. The ashes of the 'Lion of Gaza' were taken with great pomp from his burial place in the Azores islands to Mozambique. Significantly the Portuguese Ambassador in Maputo was invited by Machel to accompany him in the final stages of the ceremony 'to mark a new beginning in our relationship'.<sup>58</sup>

In the mid-1980s, therefore, Eanes' presidential diplomacy as well as, increasingly, government-led initiatives, despite some tensions between the two were being articulated by senior officials in the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, managed to bring a successful rapprochement in post-colonial relations.

And this rapprochement between former colonies and former colonizer was more than words, important as discourse and rhetoric is. One of the concrete milestones of this Portuguese policy of *détente* towards Africa was the unanimous support by the PALOP to the successful Portuguese candidacy for a seat on the UN Security Council in 1982, in a contest with Malta which was backed by the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>59</sup> Another concrete landmark was the tripartite agreement between Portugal, Mozambique and South Africa (1984) regulating the supply of electricity from Cahora Bassa to the latter, a fundamental step to 'allow Maputo to earn badly needed foreign reserves and give Portuguese investors an opportunity to recoup their losses'.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Viagem a Portugal do Presidente da República Popular de Moçambique*, p. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Written testimony by Ambassador Paulouro das Neves to authors, 23 February 2015

<sup>59</sup> Maria do Céu Pinto, "A experiência portuguesa no Conselho da Segurança das Nações Unidas: 1979-1980, 1997-98 e Biénio 2011-12" in Alice Cunha, Aurora Santos e Yvette Santos (ed.), *Portugal e as Organizações Internacionais. Comportamentos, Mensagens e Impactos* (Lisboa: Observatório Político, 2014), p. 75-106. See also Bruno C. Reis, Decentering the Cold War and Decolonization: the Portuguese policy of decolonization and *détente* in Angola and Mozambique (1974-1984), *Journal of Cold War Studies* [forthcoming].

<sup>60</sup> Scott MacDonald, *European Destiny, Atlantic Transformations. Portuguese Foreign Policy Under the Second Republic 1974-1992* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1992) p. 113.

Culture alone does not explain these changes. While its former colonies were caught in the crisis of the Soviet bloc, Portugal moved towards full membership of the EEC, giving it greater diplomatic clout and economic appeal vis-à-vis its former colonies, increasingly interested in joining the Lomé Convention. *But culture was, at a minimum, an important factor in facilitating, legitimising and deepening this rapprochement* between the former metropole and its former colonies in Africa, *and, we posit, was in fact a determining factor, in explaining the persistence of these efforts despite many setbacks and, for a long time, the very limited returns in economic terms.*

Culture, moreover, was not just an underlying basis for these diplomatic relations, it was formally part of it. Five cultural agreements were signed from 1977 to 1982 between Portugal and the PALOP, paving the way for a network of Portuguese cultural centres and lectureships in Lusophone Africa, as well as for the systematic appointment of cultural attachés to Portuguese embassies. In a clear indication that culture is also perceived as power, this move was seen in Lisbon as essential to counter the ‘cultural penetration’ of other states, not just from the Eastern bloc but also Western competitors for influence, in particular France. A significant number of fellowships were also made available in Portuguese universities to students from its former colonies. The dominance of the Portuguese language among the elites of its former colonies is not, in other words, a mere accident of colonial history.<sup>61</sup>

One of the most serious obstacles to a stable post-colonial rapprochement was the fact that until the early 1990s both the MPLA-led State in Angola and the FRELIMO-led State in Mozambique were still facing major insurgencies (by UNITA in Angola, and by RENAMO in Mozambique), both sponsored by South Africa and, in the case of the former also by the US and other Western powers. Even though successive Portuguese government distanced themselves from these movements, and occasionally tried to act as mediators (e.g., in the initial stages leading to the Nkomati agreement between Mozambique and South Africa in 1984), some Portuguese, including high-profile politicians, identified with, and were keen to act on behalf of, these

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<sup>61</sup> On this cultural diplomacy, see Armando Marques Guedes, ‘Continuidades e transformações na política cultural internacional do estado português, 1974-2001’ in Cristina Montalvão Sarmiento (ed.), *Universidade em Rede. XVII Encontro da Associação das Universidades de Língua Portuguesa* (AULP, Praia, 2010), pp. 201-221.

insurgents presented as anti-Communists. This caused a great deal of anger in ruling elites in Luanda and Maputo, apparently convinced that these groups could only operate in Portuguese territory openly, appealing for support and attacking the Angolan or Mozambican governments, with the complicity of Portuguese authorities. A perception that seems unfounded but cannot be entirely dismissed, at least not until Portuguese intelligence sources are made available. This also reflected a disproportionate interest and scrutiny by Angolan and Mozambican elites towards the way they were perceived and publicly portrayed in Portugal.

The Cold War, the near economic collapse and complex politics of these former colonies should have led Portuguese decision-makers – if following simply a cold Realist logic – to have given-up on the possibility or interest of strong post-colonial relations. But this was very often and very widely perceived, as we saw in previous pages, as a family relationship, often tense, but naturally intense, and not optional.<sup>62</sup>

The seemingly never-ending civil wars, and the dire economic situation which almost all the PALOPs faced, did eventually create a mood of Afro-pessimism among some in Portugal in the late 1980s. The road to modernization and economic prosperity seemed to point in a single direction – full Portuguese integration in Western Europe. Yet even in those circumstances, and even those Portuguese decision-makers who had acquired a reputation for skepticism towards Third-Worldism, like the Socialist Foreign Minister Jaime Gama (in office in 1983-85, and again in 1995-2001), felt obliged to pay tribute to the Lusophone mythology that permeated the political culture of post-authoritarian Portugal. For instance, Gama made reference in one of his speeches to the ‘humanist nature of our dialogue with Africa’, and defined Portugal’s relations with Brazil – not the focus of this article but still relevant in terms of post-colonial relations – as taking place in an ‘atmosphere of human fraternity with no parallel in history’.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Even if we do not entirely subscribe to its arguments, the importance of this ‘family’ framing in post-colonial relations is powerfully argued by Brysk, Alison, Craig Parsons, and Wayne Sandholtz. ‘After Empire: National Identity and Post-Colonial Families of Nations.’ *European Journal of International Relations* 8(2), 2002, pp.267–305.

<sup>63</sup> Jaime Gama, *Política Externa* (Lisboa: MNE, 1985), pp. 158-159.

Even in a period often presented as entirely dominated by the prospect and challenges of European integration, therefore, we cannot but be struck by the refashioning of old modes of thinking and the persistent preference in Portuguese foreign policy for trying to maintain a Portuguese influence in its former African colonies. Equally striking is the prevalence in Portuguese diplomatic discourse and practice of symbols, memories and myths associated with the Empire (although refashioned, as demonstrated by the disappearance of the word 'empire' from public discourse and its replacement by more positive terms such as Overseas Expansion and Discoveries).

These symbols were, significantly on display in some of the most important cultural exhibitions sponsored by the Portuguese state to celebrate national identity and memory, at home and abroad. In 1986 this was the *raison d'être* for a National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries, as a Portuguese response to the highly visible Spanish quinqucentenary celebrations of the discovery of the Americas. That this was done the same year that Portugal became a full member of the EEC makes clear that there was no complete break in identity and memory away from the imperial past because of European integration. Arguably the reverse seems to be the case. *The more Portugal was becoming fully a part of the EEC/EU, the more Portuguese elites seemed to identify with a certain Lusotropical vision of the Portuguese imperial past, with a significant impact in the discourse and practice of Portuguese foreign policy to fit a re-constructed identity.*

The ceremony itself of the signing of the accession treaty of Portugal to the EEC (June 1985) is paradigmatic of this. The Jerónimos Monastery, burial site of the kings and heroes of the golden period of Portuguese maritime discoveries, was chosen as the place for this symbolic act that marked the integration of post-authoritarian Portugal into the community of Western European democracies. In his speech Mário Soares, now again Prime-Minister (1983-1985), introduced the by now consensual theme of Portugal having a manifest destiny as a bridge-builder between continents stating that: 'the European Community's vocation for North-South dialogue is now greatly strengthened by the accession of Portugal and Spain, countries with a history forged in contact with other peoples and civilizations and with languages that are currently spoken by more than 400 million people. Portugal, which gives

primary importance to fraternal ties with the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and Brazil, is confident that its accession to the EEC will contribute to creating a new dynamic in European cooperation with Africa and Latin America.’<sup>64</sup>

The re-engagement with Portuguese-speaking Africa seems to be both a way to address the delayed identity crisis that followed decolonisation, and a reflection of an increasing confidence by more *Realpolitiker* pro-Western Portuguese elites that this Lushopone identity was not incompatible with Portugal becoming a full member of the EEC, in fact it could provide additional leverage in Brussels.

#### **4. Conclusion: Cultural ties, tensions and Foreign Policy preferences**

This article has highlighted the power of identity, myths and more widely of culture over foreign policy discourse, practice and institutions in post-authoritarian Portugal. We have shown how certain perceptions of the past have been mobilized to allow Portugal to overcome the loss of power which resulted from the end of the oldest of European colonial empires, and to endow its post-colonial foreign policy with a sense of purpose. As one of the most perceptive observers of this transformation has remarked: ‘the April Revolution was not aimed at *putting an end to the image of Portugal as an exemplary coloniser*, but rather to fit within it an equally exemplary Portuguese decolonisation.’<sup>65</sup> A myth of decolonisation followed a myth of colonisation.

We have shown how underneath the commitment to a modernising project, aimed at anchoring Portugal in a post-imperial Western Europe, old nationalist perceptions and preferences have proven remarkably resilient as conditioning factors of Portuguese foreign policy. More or less refashioned they have continued to be present among politicians, diplomats and intellectuals and other elite groups. Their significant impact in Portuguese foreign policy in the

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<sup>64</sup> Mário Soares’ speech during the accession ceremony, Lisbon, 12 June 1985. [http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2001/10/22/0681895a-4ad6-4444-94fc-63304cof6f4a/publishable\\_pt.pdf](http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2001/10/22/0681895a-4ad6-4444-94fc-63304cof6f4a/publishable_pt.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> Eduardo Lourenço, *O Labirinto da Saudade* (Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote, 1992 [1st ed. 1978],) p. 44.

decades following decolonisation is manifest in the ritual of summitry and the rhetoric of official documents. This process culminated in the institutionalization of a Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries or CPLP (*Comunidades dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*) in 1996, with its headquarters in Lisbon, and the emphasis given during the last Portuguese Presidency of the EU (2007) to the EU-Africa and EU-Brazil strategic partnerships. If Portuguese foreign policy has been Europeanised, Portugal has been committed to Africanising and Americanising EU external policy.<sup>66</sup> In this analysis we do not argue we should ignore the more material dimension power. In a more Realist vein, it is important to underline the widespread consensus in Portugal regarding the primacy of the security alliances and economic regional organisations of the West and the Euro-Atlantic community. And yet the powerful attraction and identification with other countries perceived as Lusophone has never ceased to be present alongside or in competition with the Western alignment of Portuguese foreign policy priorities since 1976. This coexistence became increasingly consensual and was not seriously questioned, at least until the post-2008 crisis, and even then only by a few, if highly visible intellectuals of the radical left, that significantly turned to their own Third Worldist variation of a special relation of Portugal with the former colonies, arguing for a 'transcontinental integrated regional market' based on the CPLP.<sup>67</sup>

Official documents and public speeches, state sponsored exhibitions, and public opinion surveys, all illustrate the salience of the Discoveries in Portuguese collective memory and identity.<sup>68</sup> Portugal is perceived by those who shape its official mind as a small, peripheral state which lacks critical mass. But the lesson most frequently taken from this is that Portugal should diversify its foreign policy priorities, and the choice of less geopolitically obvious priorities is strongly conditioned by culturally determined perceptions and preferences rooted in Portuguese collective memory and identity.

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<sup>67</sup> B. Sousa Santos, "Para sair da crise", *Público*, 8 April 2011. For a critical analysis of these and other issues concerning the CPLP's 'cohesion' see Michel Cahen, 'Des caravelles pour le futur? Discours politique et idéologie dans l'"institutionnalisation" de la Communauté des Pays de Langue Portugaise', *Lusotopie*, 1997, pp.391-433 and 'What good is Portugal to an African?' in Stewart Lloyd-Jones and António Costa Pinto (eds), *ob. cit.*, pp. 83-98.

<sup>68</sup> See José Manuel Sobral, *Portugal e os Portugueses: uma identidade nacional* (Lisboa, FFMS, 2011), pp. 78-79.

With more or less emphasis, ever since the 1974-1975 agreements granting independence to the colonies, the identification of Portugal as a transcontinental bridge builder has always figured in the mental maps of its decision-makers. It is a strong social construct, not often subject to critical analysis. And there is evidence suggesting that elites from the former colonies have shown themselves adept at using this symbolic *repertoire* according to their own interests. What is clear is that these strong cultural links – regardless of the pressing need for further research into the African side of this relationship – do not mean that the elites of the national liberation movements in Portuguese Africa subscribe to the benign view of the ‘colonial encounter’ that has gained ground in Portuguese collective memory. Much less do they accept Portuguese leadership of CPLP. After all, an important part of their identity was shaped by an anti-colonial stance forged during the wars of independence– an attitude that required a degree of rejection of Portugal.<sup>69</sup> This tended to be discounted by Portuguese elites as the attitude of a fringe group aligned with the Soviet-bloc, bound to disappear in time, namely after 1991. But whether this was indeed the case is very much open to question. African nationalist elites were and are capable of speaking perfect Portuguese and yet still resent a real or perceived paternalistic stance by Portugal towards them. A case in point is the apparent tendency in the Portuguese official mind to disregard African (or Brazilian) agency in the process that led to the creation of the CPLP, and especially the regular meetings and close cooperation among the five PALOP countries dating back to the liberation movements’ membership of CONCP (Conference of the Nationalist Organisations of the Portuguese Colonies), set up back in 1961 to coordinate their initial efforts in the fight against the Portuguese colonial regime.

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<sup>69</sup> A good example is Samora Machel’s rhetoric during Mozambique’s transition to independence (1974-75), which was tinged by a notorious scorn vis-a-vis the cultural legacy of the colonizing power. See Margaret Hall and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan. Mozambique since independence* (London: Hurst, 1997), p. 6. An attitude of hostility towards the ‘nefarious’ impact of Portugal’s colonization has always been common among influential segments of Brazil’s political and cultural elites from the nineteenth century to the present day, prompting occasional angry reactions from Portuguese diplomats. See José Manuel Fernandes Fafe, *A Colonização Portuguesa e a Emergência do Brasil* (Lisboa: Temas e Debates, 2010). It should be clear that we do not see these Brazilian or Mozambican exercises of identity building as a priori any less legitimate, but also as any more rigorous or less prone to myth-making than the Portuguese ones.

It must be noted, of course, that ambiguities, tensions and illusions are not uncommon in the post-colonial relationships of other European states. In the case of France, for instance, despite the controversies surrounding the best way to engage with Francophone states in Africa, they have remained important, and a certain refashioned vision of French *mission civilisatrice* has arguably continued to impact its foreign policy.<sup>70</sup>

What cannot be in any doubt however, is that the idea of Portuguese-language as a shared community marker is not simple poetry – even if any literate Portuguese speaker will know Fernando Pessoa’s famous verse: *a minha pátria é a língua portuguesa* (my fatherland is the Portuguese language). It has had a major impact in the way Portuguese foreign policy elites think and act. Myths of decolonization are important, even if they do not always work in practice, they have had a real impact in Portuguese foreign policy. This is clearer in culturally driven preferences, such as the prestige and status attached to the appointment of an ambassador to another Lusophone capital. This is true not just in the case of Portugal. The appointment as ambassador to Lisbon, despite the cynicism shown by some diplomats about the Lusophone connection, is more important for the career of a Brazilian or an Angolan diplomat than the appointment to any other country comparable in terms of hard material power to Portugal.

To summarise and conclude, *what does this reshaped Lusophone identity and the Portuguese myths of decolonization amount to?* A short but rigorous answer has to point to a certain degree of ambivalence. On the one hand, it is impossible to ignore their importance at the level of discourse and practices. *It has allowed Portuguese elites to suggest that the loss of the overseas empire should not be equated with a total loss of international status. And if there have been failures by pursuing this narrative too far, there have also been some real successes, like the existence of the CPLP.* Or indeed the independence of East-Timor, in 2002, to the amazement of many *Realpolitiker*. Even more amazingly not only did East-Timorese choose independence, but its governing elite declined to choose Bahasa or English as the official language,

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<sup>70</sup> See for instance Margaret A. Majumdar, ‘Exceptionalism and Universalism: the uneasy alliance in the French-speaking world’, in E. Galin and T. Chaffer (eds.), *The French Exception* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 16-29.

instead investing a lot of money and effort into becoming the only country in Asia with Portuguese as their official language. The new state became the 8th CPLP member, trying to affirm itself among very powerful neighbours through a distinct identity linking it to other Portuguese-speaking countries.

On the other hand, a more positive or self-congratulatory image may come at the price of a certain misperception and miscalculation. In the four decades since the end of empire, some will argue this Portuguese identification with a Lusophone world has nourished the illusion that Portugal might carry out an easy profitable balancing act between its new-found European identity and a deep engagement with its former colonies. *Perhaps the most dangerous illusion – but no one said that the power of cultural myths was necessarily for the good – would be that a Portuguese-speaking identity of Lushophone countries could be easily translated into a decisive degree of influence by Portugal over its former colonies.* The 2014 CPLP crisis, when Portugal risked isolation because of its reservations about granting full membership to Equatorial Guinea, are a case in point. The resulting disappointment among some in Portugal with the CPLP seems to be a case of unmet exaggerated culturally-driven expectations.

The case of Portugal and its Lusophone identity and the community-building efforts that stem from it, show that more or less contested, more or less prone to misperceptions and miscalculations, culture and identity do play a significant role in international politics. The most powerful Portuguese cultural myth of decolonization can best be summarised as the idea that Portuguese-speaking states in the former colonies could be naturally, sooner rather than later, equated with a Portuguese-friendly foreign policy. To deny this is true, as we do, is not to deny that a shared Portuguese language and the cultural links that go with it have remained a powerful factor in shaping strong and resilient relations between these countries' elites and institutions, even when everything else, from geopolitics to economics, from East-West to North-South tensions, seemed to be pulling them apart.