

CPLP: the first twenty-five years

CPLP: os primeiros vinte e cinco anos

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22456/2178-8839.122950>

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Introduction

The decision by *Conjuntura Austral* to dedicate a special issue to the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) is to be commended. The uniqueness of the organization justifies a timely review of a small sample of its activities to date. Created in 1996, the CPLP adopted three main vectors of activity: 1) the promotion and dissemination of the Portuguese language; 2) cooperation in a wide array of domains (i.e., education, health, science and technology, defense, agriculture, public administration, communication, justice, public safety, culture, sport and social communication, sustainable development, etc.); and 3) political and diplomatic coordination, especially in multilateral forums. The organization also agreed to adhere to several fundamental political principles such as the respect of the sovereignty of each member country; non-interference in domestic issues; reciprocal treatment; peace, democracy, rule of law, human rights, and social justice; territorial integrity of each member state; and the commitment to the promotion of development and cooperation.

In addition to a common language and shared cultural heritage, the uniqueness of the CPLP results from the union of nine non-contiguous member states into a privileged geocultural space – the lusosphere – dedicated to the active promotion of its three main goals across four continents. It is a privileged forum for a “pluricontinental dialogue” in Portuguese. In addition, each country contributes by bringing its history, its unique interpretation of the “lusosphere” as well as its regional context (i.e., membership in the European Union, Mercosur, Southern African Development Community, Economic Community of West African States, etc.) as well as economic opportunities to the group. By joining, member countries reinforce the group’s collective projection onto the world stage as well as the opportunity to expand each member country’s diplomatic footprint. While each member had different reasons to join (i.e., maximize political-diplomatic cooperation, language promotion, widen access to technical cooperation, etc.), all believe that the CPLP can bolster the group’s overall political and diplomatic prestige while enhancing their collective and individual prospects.

This special issue consists of six articles ranging from language to health, security and defense issues, business negotiations and civilian-military relations. It covers but a few topics from a long list of issues which, after the first twenty-five years of this new international organization, warrant the attention and critical review of academic scholars.

Portuguese and indigenous languages

Any discussion of CPLP activity will, by default, address the importance of the role of language as the main aim of the organization. The first paper in this special issue leads with a defiant challenge arguing that Portuguese should not be the sole official language of the organization since it “fosters hegemonic linguistic power, perpetuates social injustice and



anti-intercultural value, and undermines linguistic and cultural rights and dignity.” Balosa argues in favor of a multi-lingual language policy (there are over 300 languages in the lusosphere) to build greater solidarity among the member states and as a principle of affirming the identity of all lusophone citizens. As the CPLP dedicates much time and political capital in the form of a constant low-intensity effort to turn Portuguese into an official UN language, it cannot neglect arguments such as Balosa’s to better harness the benefits of defending and promoting the indigenous languages within its member countries to secure greater allegiance from the non-elite members of society in all nine member countries. By promoting both Portuguese and the many indigenous languages present in the lusosphere, the CPLP can become a more inclusive multi-lingual and multi-cultural project, ensuring benefits for all. The overall legitimacy of the organization will also be strengthened by acknowledging and defending the each member’s vast cultural diversity, multiple identities and languages throughout the lusosphere.

Health

Health is perhaps the second most successful area of activity within the CPLP. Health authorities, practitioners and institutions quickly banded together following the creation of the CPLP and several lusophone health groups such as health ministries, hospitals, universities, nursing schools, etc. have, over time, come together to collectively study ways to benefit the different communities under the general banner of the CPLP. Pozzatti looks at the lessons drawn from a comparative study of international health cooperation agreements between Brazil and the members of the CPLP (especially Mozambique) and UNASUR (Union of South American Nations).

Pozzatti argues that though Brazil actively promoted South-South cooperation in the health field (led mainly by Fiocruz, the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Brazil’s leading health science and technology institute) in the past, it has lately withdrawn from its active international leadership role. Presidential leadership has often been the driver of many CPLP initiatives in the past, especially in the case of Brazil during the Lula administration, but such leadership did not continue after Lula. Complicating matters further has been Brazil’s gradual estrangement from the main multilateral health organizations, such as the WHO, during the Bolsonaro administration and especially during the COVID pandemic.

Security and defense

Da Silva zeroes in on another topic of growing importance: the (Portuguese-speaking) South Atlantic in the security and defense agenda of the CPLP. A quick look at the map will confirm the immediacy and importance of the South Atlantic to CPLP countries. The Atlantic Ocean is literally at the center of the CPLP. A growing number of security concerns (i.e., piracy, organized crime, terrorism, protection of maritime exclusive economic interest zones and the safety of major trade routes) have prompted the armed forces of CPLP countries (primarily the Navy of each member country) to work together to seek greater cooperation and synergy in this area. CPLP members have engaged in civilian and military cooperation since 1998, driven mainly by Portugal’s expertise in training Portuguese-speaking African countries and Brazil’s emergence as a military and economic regional power concerned with protecting its economic and security interests in the South Atlantic.

As a result of CPLP’s growing attention to security affairs, it created a Center for Strategic Analysis (CAE) in Maputo, Mozambique and units in all member countries. While the center’s initial agenda focused on peacekeeping operations, training, and the resolution of regional crises it has gradually shifted its focus to maritime safety and ocean issues management. Lack of funding and limited institutional capacity of some member countries (i.e., Guinea Bissau and East Timor) however, keep it from playing a larger role in the organization.

Since 2000, CPLP member have participated in *Operation Feline*, organized to better prepare CPLP members for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. The main benefit of such operations is improved interoperability of Portuguese-speaking forces. These military exercises are viewed as the most valuable component of CPLP’s current

security and defense strategy. The shift from land security to maritime security has been welcomed by all but the chronic issue of lack of funding limits substantial real progress on this front.

South Atlantic

Schütz contributes a related article on Angola and the South Atlantic. Angola has emerged as a significant regional military power coupled with an increasingly ambitious foreign policy. Angola occupies an important geostrategic location given its extensive coastline in the South Atlantic as well as its strategic land borders with its neighbors. Schutz argues that Angola regards the CPLP as an important forum through which to leverage its growing military and diplomatic power. With six Atlantic ports and the sixth largest Exclusive Economic Zone, Angola has substantial vested interests in the future management of the South Atlantic and believes that the CPLP has an important role to play regarding oceans in general and the South Atlantic in particular. CPLP's "Strategic Triangle" anchored around Portugal, Brazil and East Timor ensures a substantial lusophone footprint in both the Atlantic and Indian oceans. Angola, together with the other CPLP members, has come to view the economic potential of oceans and the common language as the main benefits of CPLP membership.

Civil-Military relations and business negotiations

The last two articles cover civil-military relations within the CPLP and international business negotiations between individual members of the CPLP. Zeca argues that several CPLP countries require assistance in modernizing their armed forces (i.e., Guinea Bissau) and expanding the overall capacity of their public institutions. Finally, Moma examines the case of Angola's BIC Bank and negotiations between the Angolan and Portuguese governments and private companies. To date, not much has been written about the economic relations between the members of CPLP since economic matters have not been a primary focus in the CPLP during the group's first twenty five years.

Future research agenda

The CPLP's working agenda has clearly expanded over time. Included in the current agenda are important global issues which warrant closer academic attention such as sustainability, development, climate change, public health and pandemics, sustainable fishing, food security and water management. *Conjuntura Austral* will continue to follow developments in the lusosphere as well as the individual international trajectories of CPLP members. Listed below are some suggestions for future research projects.

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea joined the CPLP in 2014 and remains its least integrated member. Full integration into the organization remains a challenge and is worthy of detailed studies of the current obstacles to full integration as well as prescriptive solutions to fully comply with existing CPLP requirements.

Lusophone citizenship

While the CPLP has gained considerable experience as a relatively new political and diplomatic forum with a growing number of officials and government agencies working under its auspices, the organization remains largely removed from the daily lives of most citizens in the nine member states. The most recent effort to reduce the distance between the work of CPLP officials and its relevance to the lives of citizens of member countries is the recent CPLP Mobility Agreement. This treaty aims to facilitate the free circulation of citizens of the member countries throughout the CPLP universe.

The mobility agreement will be implemented at different speeds determined by each country. It is expected to reduce the number of illegal migrants and may also help improve transportation options among the member states.

Initially approved for diplomats and businessmen, the mobility agreement is eagerly awaited by students, teachers, professionals, etc. It is also expected to further boost the promotion of the language, especially in areas such as business, the arts and education. The greater challenge is for the CPLP to redefine its purpose as a citizen-focused organization and to develop a clearer definition of lusophone citizenship.

Internationalization of Portuguese language

The desire to make Portuguese an official language of the UN has been a stated objective of the CPLP since its establishment in 1996. The reality, however, is that there has not been a concerted strategic effort to push this objective forward nor is there a blueprint of how much such a project would cost and what are the likely sources of funding. Substantial research is encouraged to determine an approximate value of the language as an economic variable to the economies of CPLP member states. There are roughly 280 million Portuguese speakers with the largest contingent in Brazil. Over time, the center of gravity regarding the location of the majority speakers will gradually shift from Brazil to Africa. Portuguese is the fifth most spoken language in the world and spans all continents. Portuguese is an official language of the European Union, Organization of American States, MERCOSUL, African Union and UNESCO. Such arguments call for additional academic research on the “political economy” of such an important language and its ultimate economic impact on each of the CPLP member countries.

Organizational leadership

After twenty-five years, the CPLP can benefit from research examining its leadership history and current internal leadership capacity. While it is a small organization with a very limited budget, a review of the historic choices of its executive leadership and technical staff, as well as its internal training and capacity building efforts, management of its institutional memory and communication policies will undoubtedly result in greater transparency, visibility and additional opportunities to expand its effectiveness and attract future talent.

Education and cultural diplomacy

An organization built around the promotion of the common language of its members requires substantial investment in education and cultural diplomacy. Properly managed, the organization’s common heritage can become an important source of soft power. Portugal’s *Instituto Camões* has played a leading role in promoting lusophone culture and language and Brazil has recently created its own *Instituto Guimarães Rosa*. A comprehensive collective plan of action is necessary to promote the teaching of Portuguese and lusophone culture around the world, including in many CPLP member states. Drawing on cooperation experience with specialized international agencies (i.e., UNESCO’s role in developing scientific exchange programs, network of creative cities, etc.) will go a long way in providing alternative solutions to the chronic lack of funding. Greater student-teacher mobility throughout the lusosphere will also contribute to increased visibility, capacity building and resilience.

Focus on business

The CPLP has only recently started promoting commercial and economic opportunities and greater business synergy among its member countries. Representatives of lusophone export promotion agencies as well as Ministers of the Economy have recently for the first time and the CPLP’s Business Confederation continues to grow but remains quite small in size. Specialized units dedicated to Young Entrepreneurs and Female Entrepreneurs show promise but require ongoing incentives to accomplish their mission. Lack of funding remains the main obstacle to moving many projects forward. How can the CPLP work with multilateral finance organizations to secure funding and increase capacity and resilience to

increase the promotion of exports, stimulate economic development, and encourage investment in CPLP countries? Sustained attention to business and commercial issues is necessary to attract greater public support for the organization.

Geo-economics of oceans

CPLP's center of gravity is the Atlantic Ocean with a growing list of member interests tied to maritime issues. The study of the relationship between the CPLP, its individual members and oceans in general is a vast subject prime for innovative and creative academic research. The sea is a permanent fixture for all members and serves as a guide to a list of economic, environmental and security issues affecting the organization.

Relationship with China

It is inevitable that CPLP must deal with China given its overwhelming role in international affairs as well as a long history of interaction, especially between Portugal and China and recent substantial investments across Africa, including lusophone countries. China has manifested its interest in the Portuguese-speaking world by creating the Macau Forum as a multilateral vehicle for cooperation. While every CPLP member is attracted to China as a source of ample funding the CPLP does not yet have a collective strategy towards China.

UN Security Council

Given the vast socio-economic differences among its members and despite a broad consensus regarding the benefits of membership in the CPLP, some intra-CPLP disagreements at the multilateral diplomatic level is to be expected (i.e., recent Russian invasion of Crimea and war with Ukraine, Russian suspension at the UN Human Rights Council, etc.). Scholarly research of the voting history of CPLP members in multilateral organizations over the last twenty-five years would be useful and may help strengthen the call for greater strategic long-term planning regarding CPLP's relationship with the UN Security Council. Given CPLP's role as a privileged forum for discussion and negotiation – a lusophone commonwealth – there has not been much high level policy attention or strategic long term planning dedicated to securing the election of member countries to the UN Security Council.

Over the last twenty-five years there have been several occasions when one or more members have simultaneously sat on the UN Security Council (Portugal and Brazil in 2011, Angola and Brazil in 2004, Brazil and Portugal in 1998) providing an opportunity to draw the world's attention to issues of interest to CPLP member states (i.e., Brazil has chaired the Peace Building Commission on Guinea-Bissau since 2007). Lusophone countries currently lack a concerted strategy to guarantee continuous representation on the Security Council. There is no greater opportunity for international visibility than participation in the UN Security Council. Participation in the Security Council would benefit all lusophone countries with increased political prestige, diplomatic power, and negotiation opportunities. Why would the CPLP not make a better effort to help secure more seats for its members? How can it organize to achieve this objective?

Conclusions

The CPLP is a relatively young organization that has not yet resolved some of its internal conflicts nor consolidated its advances. It remains an organization of nine member countries (and a growing list of associate members) with very disparate levels of economic, military, cultural and social development. After twenty-five years, the CPLP has not yet been able to fully harness the potential of its common language, business interests, and collective economic and diplomatic power. The process of creating an inclusive and well-functioning community will require additional time and work. The organization does not seem ready to fully embrace the breadth of its aspirations. It remains a marginal player in the international arena with its main members unwilling or unprepared to assume a greater leadership role. There is also

a considerable gap between societal expectations and governmental responsiveness as well as a chronic lack of funding to finance an increasing long list of projects and to secure the overall effectiveness of the organization.

While regular monthly meetings take place at the Conde de Penafiel palace in Lisbon, lusophone communities around the world consolidate the lusophone identity among the different Portuguese language diasporas on a daily basis. A random visit to any of the many lusophone expatriate communities in Boston, Newark, Caracas, London, Toronto, Paris, Luxembourg, Cape Town, etc. will highlight the constructive interaction between Brazilian hairdressers, Portuguese bakeries, Cape Verdean restaurants that eventually will set the agenda and urgency of discussion and negotiations among member governments. Today's lusophone expatriate community is also very likely to include young Portuguese architects, Brazilian fintech start-up entrepreneurs, and Angolan and Timorese businessmen working side by side, if not together. The lusophone diaspora (estimated at approximately 7 million people) is not waiting for government action from the various capitals.

This interaction and subsequent benefits gained on the ground (often converted into important remittances sent back home) are driven by a common language and shared cultural heritage which greatly facilitate cooperation and mutual advancement before leading to official governmental policies. CPLP member states have been slow in delivering more to the populations of its member countries (i.e., student and professional exchange programs, funding for small and medium-sized businesses, better transportation links, etc.). As an organization, the CPLP does not seem to have yet earned the interest and respect of the population of its member states. It must move faster and more effectively to make a more immediate positive impact in the lives of its citizens and validate its original premise that a common language and shared heritage can lead to a successful community of peoples and a better future for all.

Authors' Contributor Roles

Joseph Marques

Conceptualization; Methodology; Validation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Writing (Original Draft Preparation); Writing (Review & Editing).

Information provided by the author according to the [Taxonomy of author contributions \(CRediT\)](#)