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Mozambique (1974–1984)

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Decentering the Cold War in Southern Africa

The Portuguese Policy of Decolonization and
Détente in Angola and Mozambique (1974–1984)

❖ Bruno C. Reis

[Détente] is a policy that can be summarized by the formula: change through rapprochement.

Egon Bahr¹

Portugal was the European country on which détente had the greatest consequences.

Ernesto Melo Antunes²

The end of the Portuguese empire in Southern Africa in 1975, after prolonged wars of decolonization and amid revolutionary turmoil in Portugal, resulted in the independence of Mozambique and Angola under openly pro-Soviet regimes.³ This has long been recognized as an important event in the global Cold War. In particular, the intervention by Cuban forces in the Angolan civil war from 1975 to 1989 to counter South African and Zairean interventions made it a proxy war between the Eastern and Western blocs and a major factor in the so-called crisis of détente during the final stage of the Cold War.⁴

1. Egon Bahr quoted in Timothy Garton-Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (London: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 66.

2. Melo Antunes quoted in M. Inácia Rezola, *Melo Antunes: Uma biografia política* (Lisbon: Âncora, 2012), p. 452.

3. For an introduction to Portugal during the relevant period, see António C. Pinto, ed., *Contemporary Portugal: Politics, Society and Culture* (Palo Alto, CA: Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 2011). For an overall analysis of the April revolution and its implications, see Kenneth Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For an overview of Portugal's third and last overseas empire, predominantly in Southern Africa, see Valentim Alexandre, *Velho Brasil, novas Áfricas: Portugal e o império (1808–1975)* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2000). Also useful are Malyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); and Douglas Wheeler and René Pélissier, *História de Angola* (Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2011).

4. The already extensive literature on the later stages of the Cold War, including détente, has been growing with the opening of more archives. For a recent synthesis, see Melvyn Leffler and Odd

The Portuguese side of this story, however, is not well known. Studies of the Cold War tend not to pay attention to Portugal. Despite the shift toward a more pericentric and global approach, Portugal seems to be perceived as too small to matter. Studies of Portuguese foreign policy usually focus on the turn toward Western Europe. Yet, both the impact of Portuguese decolonization in the Cold War in southern Africa *and* the possibility that a pro-Soviet regime would gain power in Portugal, leading to a potential domino effect in the southern flank of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), were for some time, especially during the crucial final stages of the Helsinki Conference in 1975, an important source of friction between the two Cold War blocs.⁵

Western governments sought to use détente as a way to press the USSR not to support revolution in Portugal led by the pro-Soviet Portuguese Communists. This worked to some degree to the benefit of moderates in Portugal, at least until the Helsinki agreement was signed, justifying Portuguese Foreign Minister Major Ernesto Melo Antunes's claims about the decisive impact of détente in post-1974 Portugal.⁶

The focus of this article will not be on the impact of détente on metropolitan Portugal per se, although that impact will be taken into account as part of the wider context required to understand a Portuguese policy of change through rapprochement or détente toward the pro-Soviet regimes in recently independent Angola and Mozambique that would seem paradoxical in a linear or simplistic reading of the Cold War—the sort of view later

Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 2, *Crises and Détente* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Far fewer recent publications focus on Africa and link the Cold War with Portuguese decolonization. For publications with a focus on the United States, see Witney Schneidman, *Engaging Africa: Washington and the Fall of Portugal's Colonial Empire* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004); and Tiago M. Sá, *Estados Unidos e a descolonização de Angola* (Lisbon: D. Quixote, 2011). For publications with a focus on the USSR, see Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005); Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot "Cold War": The USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2008); José Milhazes, *Samora Machel: Atentando ou acidente, páginas desconhecidas das relações Soviético-Moçambicanas* (Lisbon: Alêtheia, 2010); and José Milhazes, *Golpe Nito Alves e outros momentos da história de Angola vistos do Kremlin* (Lisbon: Alêtheia, 2013).

5. Ample support for this view can be found in the official documents published in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Vol. E-15, pt. 2 (hereinafter referred to as *FRUS*, with appropriate year and volume numbers). See, for example, “Memorandum of Conversation between James Callaghan (UK), Jean Sauvagnargues (France), Hans-Dietrich Genscher (FRG), Henry A. Kissinger (USA) (New York, 5 September 1975),” Doc. 73.

6. Rainer Eisfeld, “Influências externas sobre Revolução Portuguesa: O papel da Europa Ocidental,” in *Conflitos e mudanças em Portugal 1974–1984* (Lisbon: Teorema, 1985), pp. 90–91; Carlos Gaspar and Vasco Rato, *Rumo à memória* (Lisbon: Quetzal, 1992), pp. 59–60; Ana M. Fonseca, “O apoio internacional durante a transição portuguesa para a democracia: O caso da RFA,” in M. Inácia Rezola and Pedro A. Oliveira, eds., *O longo curso: Estudos de homenagem a José Medeiros Ferreira* (Lisbon: Edições Tinta-da-China, 2010), pp. 603–624; and Tilo Wagner, “Portugal e a RDA durante a Revolução dos Cravos,” *Relações internacionais*, Vol. 11 (2006), pp. 86–87.

expressed by the U.S. State Department official who handled Africa in the Reagan administration, Chester Crocker, in his memoirs: “It was not until 1990 that Portugal was able to mount a coherent Angolan strategy.” In fact, the Portuguese state had a long-term, increasingly consensual strategy for both of its former colonies in southern Africa throughout this period. Before 1984, this strategy was probably not one “aimed at peace”—or at least not peace in terms that coincided with the U.S. government’s Cold War interests or those of its local ally, South Africa.⁷ But a lack of coincidence with U.S. strategy is not the same as lack of a coherent strategy, nor is lack of a peace policy the same as lack of a policy. Peace policies were far from the norm in southern Africa during the decade when the region became one of the most violent hotspots of the Cold War.

Portugal, even in revolutionary turmoil, played a significant role in the decolonization of Angola and Mozambique in 1974–1975, favoring through deliberate action or inaction the transfer of power to the Mozambique Liberation Front (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, or FRELIMO) and the takeover of power by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*, or MPLA), still today the dominant political parties in both of these important southern African countries. Furthermore, although much of the literature on Portuguese foreign policy looks at the turn toward Western Europe, the decolonization of Angola and Mozambique did not make them irrelevant for Portugal for cultural, linguistic, economic, and political reasons.⁸

Contrary to the natural expectations of many, the break between Portugal and its former southern African colonies was far from complete after 1975. A decade or more, from 1961 onward, of wars of independence in the Portuguese colonies occurred amid significant international pressure

7. Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (New York: Norton, 1992), p. 150. This is not the only gap in Crocker’s knowledge of Portugal. The U.S. diplomat was convinced that the PCP was fading into oblivion—in fact it has proven remarkably resilient—and alleges in his book that settlers were a powerful voice in conditioning Portuguese relations with Angola.

8. Among the key bibliographical references are several with revealing titles: Scott B. MacDonald, *European Destiny, Atlantic Transformations: Portuguese Foreign Policy under the Second Republic 1974–1992* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993); Norrie MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire* (London: Longman, 1997); António J. Telo, “Relações internacionais da transição,” in J. M. B. de Brito, ed., *Do Marcellismo ao fim do império* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 1999), pp. 225–267; J. Medeiros Ferreira, *Cinco regimes na política internacional* (Lisbon: Presença, 2006); and Vasco Rato, “A revolução de Abril na política externa,” in José M. Almeida and Rui Ramos, eds., *Revoluções, política externa e política de defesa em Portugal Séc. XIX–XX* (Lisbon: Edições Cosmos, 2008), pp. 195–222. For the idea that inertia in commercial relations favored the metropole for some time after decolonization, see A. Ennes Ferreira, “Relações entre Portugal e África de língua portuguesa: Comércio, investimento e dívida (1973–1994),” *Análise social*, Vol. 29, No. 129 (1994), pp. 1,071–1,121.

for rapid decolonization. Opposing alignments in the Cold War were not a promising starting point from which to build strong bilateral relations between Western-aligned Portugal and its former colonies that had fallen under Marxist-Leninist regimes. Nevertheless, in the decade after decolonization in 1975, major sources of tension between Portugal and Angola or Mozambique were gradually resolved or put aside in pursuit of rapprochement. The increasingly consensual Portuguese policy of détente was crucial in normalizing relations earlier than might be expected. Relations between the former metropole and its former southern African colonies were at times difficult and occasionally disrupted, especially in the initial couple of years. But they were always important and proved remarkably resilient, as did multiple personal and political connections. Regime change *and* decolonization led by the leftist Portuguese officers of the Armed Forces Movement (*Movimento das Forças Armadas*, or MFA), as well as the rise of a Marxist but Portuguese-educated Angolan and Mozambican elite, favored the maintenance of multiple connections between the new governing elites in the three countries, despite their different Cold War alignments.⁹

The focus of this article is on Portuguese politics and policy formulation for southern Africa during decolonization and over the next decade of the Cold War. The article presents evidence—memoirs, interviews, personal papers, and official documents—to answer the following key questions:

- How did Portuguese policymakers approach decolonization and foreign policy within a Portuguese polity undergoing its own process of revolutionary transformation and democratic transition from 1974 to 1984?
- To what degree was Portuguese policy toward Angola and Mozambique conditioned by Cold War alignments?
- To what degree was Portuguese policy toward Angola and Mozambique conditioned by cultural and other ideational factors?

In short, what can the so-called cultural turn and global turn tell us about this chapter of Cold War history?

The article is divided into three main sections. The first deals with the main Portuguese political actors' key options for decolonizing Portuguese

9. *Movimento das Forças Armadas* (MFA) was the initially clandestine conspiratorial movement of military officers intent on overthrowing the authoritarian colonialist regime of the *Estado Novo* founded by Antonio de Oliveira Salazar in the early 1930s. From September 1974 the MFA's role was formalized in various ways, the most lasting being the Coordination Committee, which then became the Revolutionary Council and part of the new constitutional structure approved in 1976.

territories in southern Africa in 1974–1975. The second section deals with the period of slow normalization of relations between Portugal, Angola, and Mozambique (1976–1984). A third section presents the implications of these specific themes for the wider debate about European influence in southern Africa, the nature of the global Cold War, and their links with decolonization and globalization, arguing for the need for a more pericentric or decentered analysis of these phenomena.

Losing an Empire and Finding a Role by Supporting Leftist African Elites

Who were the main actors in the Portuguese decolonization of Angola and Mozambique, and what were their aims? Before addressing this key question, it is important to address the dominant perception that, as a result of the revolutionary transformations that took place after the April 1974 military coup, the Portuguese state underwent a process of chaotic fragmentation that led to a complete loss of control over decolonization. The literature on Portuguese foreign policy during this period tends to emphasize the fragmentation of Portuguese politics and policies—internal as well as external—into pro-Soviet, pro-Western, and vaguely nonaligned *tiers-mondiste* factions.¹⁰ As one of the leading historians of Portuguese foreign policy puts it, there “was not one Portuguese decolonization policy but six or more,” namely those defended by General António de Spínola, the president from April to September 1974, and his loyalists, including the more politicized Portuguese settlers in Angola and Mozambique and the far right; by the Coordination Committee (*Coordenadora*) of the MFA, which organized the 25 April 1974 military coup; by the Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista*, PS) and other moderate civilian parties; by the Portuguese Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Português*, PCP); and by others on the far left.¹¹

Political fragmentation did give rise to contending visions of Portugal’s role in the world and the future of its colonial territories, but on the crucial

10. Ferreira, *Cinco regimes*, p. 123. Ferreira argues for the existence of three currents of thought in favor of close relations with Angola and Mozambique, the first based on the more traditional neocolonial or even federal model of General Spínola; the second, a part of the “tropical nonaligned axis” of Major Melo Antunes; and the third, as part of a “pro-Soviet axis” linked with Colonel Vasco Gonçalves, a fellow traveler of the Portuguese Communist Party. To this should be added a fourth current giving clear if not absolute priority to Western Europe. A similar view is expressed by Vasco Rato, “A revolução de Abril na política externa,” p. 206, as signaled by the title of the section “África que divide” (Divided by Africa).

11. António J. Telo, *História contemporânea de Portugal*, Vol. 1 (Lisbon: Presença, 2007), p. 161.

question of the actual decolonization policy after junior military officers seized power in April 1974, only one policy mattered: the one set by the MFA. The real fragmentation of Portuguese policy involved how to proceed with post-colonial relations and lasted for only a relatively short period during and after the summer of 1975.¹² This was when the MFA became openly polarized, mostly because of internal Portuguese politics, and began to transition to a smaller role in foreign policy. Because of the MFA's close association with General António Ramalho Eanes, who served as president from 1976 to 1986 and was himself a moderate MFA officer, the movement nevertheless retained a limited but significant role in foreign policy, especially until the 1982 constitutional revision. From July 1976, however, foreign policy was determined primarily by the democratically elected civilian government. The period of transition from military to civilian supremacy was the most complex period for postcolonial relations with Angola and Mozambique, but it was short-lived. From mid-1974 to mid-1975, only one set of actors really mattered in setting Portuguese decolonization policy: the leading MFA officers in Lisbon and in the soon-to-be-former colonies of Angola and Mozambique.

Portugal had a coherent decolonization policy. Consider that the speedy road to independence in the cases of India/Pakistan, Palestine, and Algeria was at least as much paved with drama and washed with blood as in Angola and Mozambique, given the massive forced displacements of people and lives lost then and in the enduring conflicts that followed on the Indian subcontinent and in the Middle East and North Africa. Yet few would doubt that Great Britain and France had coherent decolonization policies in those cases despite the human costs and the need for some adjustments along the way.

To be sure, there was a significant but very brief initial dispute over the control and direction of Portuguese decolonization policy. However, too much has been made of this. The conflict, which quickly developed after the 25 April 1974 coup, was also quickly resolved. The clash, typical of the so-called salami power dynamics in a coup, occurred between the new head of state, General António de Spínola, and the leading officers of the MFA, who had nominated Spínola to serve as the respectable and well-known figure-head of the new regime at home and abroad. The outcome of this dispute might have seemed uncertain at the time, but in retrospect it was so overdetermined that the end result was all but inevitable. The balance of military power rested firmly from the beginning with the MFA, which always had *de facto*

12. The most relevant example was the Portuguese delay in recognizing the new MPLA government in Luanda. This coincided with an exceptional peak in tensions between radicals and moderates, with the country briefly on the verge of civil war in November 1975.

control over most military units in Portugal, Angola, and Mozambique. That the MFA could also count on popular street support soon became clear with the massive demonstrations of 1 May 1974, and many others afterward, demanding an end to further deployments of Portuguese troops overseas. The demonstrations reinforced the need to achieve a quick end to the wars in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.

The key policy choices were made by the leading officers of the MFA—in Portugal, as well as in Angola and Mozambique—and had great impact on the ground, especially in the initial stages of the transfer of power. Although this is largely denied in the existing literature, it was the conclusion reached by the special U.S. mission sent to Portugal to evaluate the situation after the fall of Spínola in October 1974. The mission, headed by Arthur Hartman, interviewed many of the leading figures in Portugal and concluded that “power is in the hands of an activist group with distinctly leftist-reformist orientation, the Coordination Committee” of the MFA.¹³

Of course, absolute control during a transfer of power is impossible. Decolonization processes were always complex, especially after prolonged conflict. This—and not some ideal and anachronistic wish list—is surely the correct benchmark to be applied in the case of Portuguese decolonization.

Nevertheless, the military capabilities the Portuguese leaders still had overseas in 1974 could make a great deal of difference during the crucial transition period to independence, when still relatively weakly armed nationalist movements, with little or no experience of government, faced competition for effective control of vast territories in southern Africa where they had little or no presence. The MFA was crucial in blocking an attempt to stop the rapid transfer of power by white settlers in Mozambique. In Angola it gave weapons and equipment and transferred African units—namely, long-exiled Katangese auxiliaries or locally recruited commandos—to the MPLA. Additionally, Portugal had, in the international society of states, formal legitimacy to denounce any foreign interference in the decolonization process. The MFA used this prerogative selectively. MFA leaders in Angola denounced and forcefully intervened against Zairian incursions, while turning a blind eye to Cuban intervention.

Major Otelio Saraiva de Carvalho, the top commander in the military structure of the MFA until November 1975, gave strong if secret encouragement to a robust intervention by Cuban forces in Angola during his August

13. Arthur A. Hartman, “Special Mission to Portugal” (17 October 1974), as quoted in Bernardino Gomes and Tiago M. Sá, *Carlucci vs. Kissinger: Os EUA e a revolução Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 2008), Annex 1.

1975 visit to Havana. In a meeting with Fidel Castro, Otelo stressed that Portugal could not directly help the MPLA: “When we are withdrawing from Africa, it would be unthinkable to send troops to support the MPLA.” In reality, the possibility of sending Portuguese forces had been seriously debated within the MFA coordinating committee and was advocated even by relatively moderate officers, including Major Melo Antunes, who played a central role in the decolonization process. But Carvalho clearly saw Cuba as the most convenient alternative to military reengagement by Portuguese troops. He advocated, in his meeting with Castro, that Cuba should not only help the MPLA but do so on a large scale by sending combat troops. Otherwise, “with Savimbi or Holden Roberto. . . South Africa will put its claws on Luanda.” Cuban leaders asked for at least tacit approval from the Portuguese president, General Francisco da Costa Gomes, and Castro seems to have used these explicit or tacit signs from the Portuguese MFA leaders to try to overcome Soviet reservations.¹⁴

According to those who have had access to Cuban sources, the MFA officer who became high commissioner of Angola, “Red Admiral” António Alva Rosa Coutinho, was well aware of the first Cuban military mission to Angola, and the Cubans assumed that he and the “majority” of Portuguese “officers [were] sympathetic towards the MPLA.”¹⁵ The leading military commander in the MPLA, future Angolan Defense Minister Henrique Teles (“Iko”) Carreira, also states that “Portuguese officers [in Angola] (at least the majority of them) knew and shared the ideals of the MPLA” and “were increasingly convinced that it was in the interest of Portugal” to recognize the leading role of the MPLA in Angola.¹⁶ According to Soviet sources, MPLA leader Agostinho Neto’s assurance to his Soviet liaison that he had the “silent consent” of Portuguese MFA military leaders in Luanda helped convince Moscow to supply Luanda with some of the heavy weaponry that would prove decisive in enabling the MPLA to face “external aggression” from Zaire and South Africa.¹⁷

14. Otelo S. Carvalho quoted in Paulo Moura, *Otelo: O revolucionário* (Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 2012), p. 276. See also Oleg Najestkin quoted in Milhazes, *Golpe de Nito Alves*, p. 41. Cubans are reported to have informed the Soviet Union of this démarche and suggested coordination with the USSR. Melo Antunes was formally informed by the Portuguese ambassador in Cuba. See Melo Antunes’s papers in Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo (ANTT), Espólio Melo Antunes (EMA), Cx. 70, Pt. 10.

15. Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), pp. 246, 269.

16. Iko Carreira, *O pensamento estratégico de Agostinho Neto: Contribuição histórica* (Lisbon: D. Quixote, 1996), p. 124.

17. Oleg Najestkin quoted in Milhazes, *Golpe de Nito Alves*, p. 62. Najestkin was the Soviet liaison officer to Neto.

Those who believe that Cuban intervention with Soviet support was crucial in the Cold War in southern Africa should consider what would have happened if the Portuguese military had clashed with and denounced the Cuban military presence in Luanda before November 1975? Castro himself had made clear that “we must avoid at all costs an armed clash with the Portuguese.”¹⁸ Furthermore, what would Cuban troops have defended if, as Melo Antunes credibly claims, Luanda was not already “under the control of the MPLA and defended militarily from an FNLA advance [from Zaire] by Portuguese troops (on my express orders)?”¹⁹

This is a paradigmatic example of how focusing on the peripheries of the Cold War can improve the quality of our analysis by decentering it, by moving it away from a distorting bipolar obsession with the superpowers.

But do these policy options make sense—ideologically, pragmatically—or is Portuguese decolonization as erratic as is often claimed? The policy options make little sense in the context of a linear logic of strict Portuguese ideological and geopolitical alignment with the West in the Cold War. But they do make sense pragmatically in the context of a Portuguese interest in avoiding the partition or subordination of the newly independent states of Angola and Mozambique to neighboring states such as Zaire or South Africa, which might put their Portuguese-speaking option into question. Even ideologically these options make some sense as a reflection of the leftist anti-*Estado Novo* identity shared by the MPLA, FRELIMO, and MFA leaders.

The role of Portugal cannot, therefore, be ignored or dismissed as simply erratic, no matter how messy and difficult things on the ground seemed or indeed were at the time. Revolutions tend to seem chaotic, especially for the ordinary people forced to live through them. As Melo Antunes, the MFA officer who led the process, has said, decolonization was a historical necessity even if it “inevitably had its share of costs and human dramas as is the case of all processes of profound historical change.” Events did not always go according to plan. But this was a problem MFA leaders shared with everyone else, including U.S. and Soviet leaders. Crucially, the MFA still got what it wanted in Angola and Mozambique: a speedy transfer of power to leftwing African elites with strong cultural and linguistic links to Portugal.²⁰

Portuguese decolonization and its aftermath in southern Africa were not periods of diplomacy as usual. “Multiple actors emerged” in relations

18. Quoted in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, p. 261.

19. E. Melo Antunes with A. de Carvalho, interview, *Expresso*, 10 February 1979, in ANTT, EMA, Cx. 70, Pt. 10.

20. Melo Antunes with Carvalho, interview.

that went well beyond normal bilateral state relations. This phenomenon was not without problems—especially for professional diplomats—but it ensured that relations between Portugal and Angola as well as Portugal and Mozambique remained resilient and strong, albeit not necessarily good or easy. Paradoxically, these connections remained strong despite major crises in conventional bilateral diplomatic relations because of strong links between ideologically committed Cold Warriors in Portugal—on *both* sides of the global Cold War—and like-minded groups in the former colonies, no matter how “bizarre” or “amateurish” such relations might have seemed to diplomats at the time.²¹

The MFA Wrests Control of Decolonization Policy from Spínola (April–July 1974)

The sequence of events underscores that MFA decolonization policy was neither improvised nor erratic. MFA leaders approved a draft manifesto, outlining the basic guidelines of Portuguese decolonization policy, during a clandestine March 1974 meeting. This document, as well as the manifesto made public on 26 April 1974, was largely written by Melo Antunes, who went on to play a major role in Portuguese policy toward Africa over the next decade: managing it from July 1974 to July 1976—as minister without portfolio in charge of negotiating decolonization and then as foreign minister from March 1975—and influencing it as a member of the Revolutionary Council (*Conselho da Revolução*) from 1975 to 1982 and as a key presidential adviser and special diplomatic envoy until 1985.

Portuguese decolonization policy also cannot be attributed to the fragmentation of power during the revolutionary period because nearly all political forces wanted rapid decolonization. True, General Spínola, on the night of the 25 April 1974 coup, watered down the original MFA manifesto. The MFA program published on 26 April expunged references to self-determination and the independence of Portuguese territories in Africa and instead mentioned “peace” and “dialogue” to obtain a “political rather than military solution” to the wars in Angola, Guinea, and Mozambique. Furthermore, Spínola inserted a reference to Portugal as “a pluri-continental fatherland.”²² The general had

21. António J. Telo, “Relações internacionais da transição,” in de Brito, ed., *Do Marcelismo ao fim do império*, p. 225.

22. “Programa do movimento das forças armadas” [Armed forces movement manifesto], 26 April 1974. The manifesto was published in all Portuguese media on this date. For the original version with changes negotiated with Spínola, see the Melo Antunes Digital Archive, <http://www1.ci.uc.pt/cd25a/wikka.php?wakka=estrut07>

been a charismatic civil-military *supremo* in Portuguese Guinea (1968–1973) and was widely known nationally and internationally, not least because he had been increasingly at odds with the authoritarian regime in Lisbon. He was, therefore, the logical choice to serve as the respectable public face of the 1974 coup organized by the unknown junior officers of the MFA.

However, if the MFA Coordinating Committee was willing to sacrifice some of its wording in the initial hours of greatest uncertainty during its takeover of power, it would not allow anyone else to run decolonization policy, the most important *raison d'être* of the coup. The committee used legal advisers to draft Constitutional Law 7/74 and forced Spínola to sign it on 27 July 1974.²³ In an assembly of MFA officers Spínola was defeated in his attempt to get a mandate from the metropole and the colonies to control key policies, including decolonization. Control of the politics of regime change and decolonization was thus clarified soon after the April coup in favor of the MFA Coordinating Committee, not Spínola.

Moreover, political differences about decolonization should not be exaggerated by giving equal weight to marginal groups and the most powerful political movements. The latter, from the Communists to the Socialists and the center-right parties (*Partido Popular Democrático*, PPD; and *Centro Democrático Social*, CDS), were all aligned with the MFA on the need for rapid decolonization. This was made clear by the unanimous approval of Constitutional Law 7/74 by the Council of State and the provisional government, in which all the major political parties were represented.²⁴ The approval of this law, therefore, marked not only the triumph of the MFA's vision of decolonization but also the acceptance of its leading role in the transfer of power in Portuguese Africa by all the main civilian political forces.

What led Spínola to agree to this course of action? Was it the alleged risk of a Portuguese military collapse? Too much has been made of the isolated case of the surrender to FRELIMO of a Portuguese garrison on the Mozambique-Tanzania border, not least by Spínola, to gloss over his change of course on this issue. This isolated case of surrender to FRELIMO was arguably more a political act of rebellion than a sign of military desperation. Even before April 1974, Portuguese conscripts had shown increasing signs that they did not want to continue to fight, but that is not the same as saying they could not fight, especially if attacked.

23. This is analyzed in depth and with the use of previously unavailable documents in M. J. Tiscar Santiago, *O 25 de Abril e o conselho de estado: A questão das actas* (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2012).

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 116–143.

Spínola also believed he had obtained an important concession in return for his acceptance of Constitutional Law 7/74, even telling Melo Antunes, in a tacit acknowledgment that the latter was his main rival in leading decolonization policy, “Angola is mine!”²⁵ But Spínola was soon proven wrong again. The fact that he could not obtain significant support from the United States did not help his position. The U.S. administration, beset by numerous internal and external crises facing President Richard Nixon, expressed limited interest in the subject of the future of Angola and Mozambique in 1974. The chief priority for Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1974–1975 was NATO’s southern flank in Europe rather than southern Africa, even if soon after the April 1974 coup he was convinced that Portugal could not retain control of its colonies for more than a couple of years. As the U.S. ambassador to Portugal told Spínola in July 1974, Kissinger “considered the problem [of Communist influence] not merely in relation to Portugal but in relation to . . . Italy, Spain, France and possibly Greece.”²⁶

If we are serious about a truly global approach to the Cold War, it is important to acknowledge that Europe was still perceived by the superpowers—rightly or wrongly—as their key strategic battleground and that any potential change, even on the periphery of Europe, would be a vital challenge to the existing security framework. This was well understood in Portugal by the moderate officers of the MFA and was crucial in making their takeover from Spínola acceptable to the United States. When serving as foreign minister, Melo Antunes repeated several times, “we do not intend to challenge the European balance of power . . . we are for détente, not for tension . . . this is why we stay in NATO,” while at the same time emphasizing his vision of Portugal as a “bridge” between Western Europe and Africa “according to our historical vocation, political will and *raison-d’être* as a nation.”²⁷

In light of the increasing domestic political difficulties facing both Nixon and Spínola, was there ever an opportunity for them to pursue a strong common approach in southern Africa? If such an opportunity existed, it was missed. The evidence from the two leaders’ June 1974 summit in the Azores—namely, Spínola’s refusal to have any of his delegation with him during the talks because, as he explained to Nixon, he did not trust them—underscores

25. Ernesto Melo Antunes, *O sonhador pragmático* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 2004), p. 110.

26. Tel. 163339/Tosec 56, from Dept. State to White House, forwarding cable from US Ambassador, Lisbon, 26 July 1974, in *FRUS*, 1973–1976, Vol. E-15, Doc. 134.

27. E. Melo Antunes speech during official visit of the foreign minister of Ireland (and EEC President), n.d. [1976], in ANTT, EMA, Cx. 70, Pt. 6.

Spínola's extreme isolation. This was hardly conducive to convincing any U.S. administration to risk supporting his policies.

The policy of turning Angola into a Portuguese bastion in southern Africa proved as short-lived as Spínola's presidency, which came to an end in September 1974. The policy seems never to have been more than an illusion allowed by the MFA in order to gain time so that it could focus on taking care of Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, where the military situation was more difficult and the political situation simpler. In Angola the military problem was far less pressing but the political challenges were far more complex, given the existence of three internationally recognized armed movements—the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), MPLA, and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

Spínola wanted to promote moderate political change in both the metropole and Africa by organizing, across all Portuguese territories, a referendum and a snap presidential election in which he would be the only plausible candidate. Proposed for October 1974, the election was blocked both by the MFA and by the main political parties, which feared a personal dictatorship. But Spínola continued to encourage "third forces," such as the *Frente Revolucionária Armada* (FRA), the *Frente Independente de Convergência Ocidental* (FICO), and the *Grupo Unido de Moçambique*, meeting with their leaders and trying to slow the process of decolonization in order to give them time to organize.²⁸ This meant a rejection both of independence as the only solution for the Portuguese wars in southern Africa and of speedy negotiations for independence with the armed nationalist movements conducting them. Such a policy could not deliver peace by political means, as Spínola had promised on 25 April 1974. Instead, as soon became obvious, his policy would make the continuation of the war inevitable. Spínola's preferred approach also had major implications for the MFA in Portugal.

In the end, none of the armed movements, including the MFA, agreed to surrender power to Spínola, who faced an additional problem, namely, that all the member-states of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the vast majority of the United Nations (UN), including many Western allies of Portugal, either adhered to or did not dissent openly from the norm of accepting only speedy decolonization negotiated exclusively with the armed movements leading to independence. The visit to Lisbon by the UN Secretary-General in early August 1974, as well as other meetings between Portuguese officials and foreign leaders, made clear that the MFA plan of speedy decolonization

28. Luís N. Rodrigues, *Spínola* (Lisbon: A Esfera dos Livros, 2010), pp. 352, 362–367.

with transfer of power to the armed liberation movements was, as Melo Antunes says, “the only solution with the full support of the international community.”²⁹

Spínola’s failed policies are worth mentioning not just because so much was subsequently made of them but primarily because they help make the dominant role of the MFA clearer, and they are hard to distinguish from the policies of Portuguese settlers and rightwing movements who wanted to preserve—as much as possible—Portugal’s control over Angola and Mozambique. However, not even these sectors dared to reject the principle of some kind of decolonization. All significant Portuguese resistance to speedy decolonization was defeated by September 1974.³⁰

In moving closer to the settlers, Spínola was moving further away from the military officers who had elevated him to power. One of the main triggers for the military coup of April 1974 was, alongside the often-mentioned difficult military situation in Guinea-Bissau, the public tension between Portuguese troops and settlers in Mozambique. A key March 1974 conspiratorial MFA document presented the rationale for the coup by stating that the “African impasse” “increases the loss of prestige of the military” and that “the recent events of Beira, in Mozambique confirm this”—a reference to a hostile public demonstration by settlers in January 1974 against the Portuguese military’s alleged unwillingness to fight FRELIMO effectively. The events in Beira show how tense relations had become between Portuguese officers and settlers by 1974, as well as the settlers’ fundamental misunderstanding of the fact that no army could ever field enough troops to protect all potential targets (e.g., isolated farms) from surprise attacks by insurgents in territories as vast as Angola and Mozambique.³¹

On 7 September 1974, a settler-dominated movement—FICO—desperately attempted to resist the speedy decolonization being pursued by the MFA, relying on support from Spínola and hoping for aid from Rhodesia and South Africa. The MFA reacted decisively against this direct challenge to its authority to conduct the decolonization process. President Spínola had tried to negotiate with the rebellious settlers before leaving office, but the MFA Coordinating Committee, with the key support of General Costa Gomes, the chief of the General Staff, refused to countenance this and ordered Portuguese

29. Melo Antunes with Carvalho, interview.

30. Riccardo Marchi, “As direitas radicais na transição democrática portuguesa (1974–1976),” *Ler história*, Vol. 63 (2012), pp. 75–91.

31. “O movimento as forças armadas e a nação,” 5 March 1974, available online at <http://www1.ci.uc.pt/cd25a/wikka.php?wakka=ms1a>

elite military units to regain full control of the Mozambican capital and guarantee full implementation of the agreement with FRELIMO. Preventive measures had been taken against a similar settler conspiracy in Angola, in October 1974, by the FRA movement, whose alleged leaders were arrested.

These incidents were a crucial indicator of the real balance of power on the ground. FRELIMO did not seize the moment to march on the capital but demanded instead that Portuguese troops retake control of it. Because FRELIMO still had limited military forces, and because racial violence and chaos in the capital of Mozambique might turn Portuguese public opinion against FRELIMO, a firm stand by Portugal would deprive South Africa of a pretext to provide support to the Mozambican settlers. For South Africa to do so “would be to confront Portugal at a time when the Portuguese government was very popular in the entire West.” The perception of some FRELIMO leaders was that the firm pro-independence position of the MFA had prevented a possible South African intervention.³² This is a perfect illustration of how, under the MFA, Portugal still had enough hard and soft power to make a real difference in crucial moments of the decolonization process in southern Africa.

The liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique never seriously risked a confrontation with the Portuguese military, whose military edge was provided by the still much feared elite units of paratroopers and commandos. According to the testimony of Portuguese settlers, even in the case of the increasingly violent civil war in Angola, “the war was not carried out against the white [settlers],” as had been the case at the beginning of the FNLA insurgency in Angola in March 1961.³³ According to this testimony, the relatively small numbers of settlers who were killed or imprisoned were those who had “become involved” in the Angolan civil war or were perceived to have done so.³⁴ Feelings of insecurity were on the rise, but nothing close to the widespread and extremely bloody intercommunal violence of Algeria in 1961–1962 ever transpired. Portugal’s diplomatic clout and military means helped ensure this, as did the political option of the liberation movements to be perceived not as anti-Portuguese but as simply anti-colonial.

The crucial problem with General Spínola’s strategy for the decolonization of southern Africa was that his aims—moderate political change at home

32. Sérgio Vieira quoted in Shubin, *Hot “Cold War,”* p. 132.

33. Luís Aguiar quoted in Rita Garcia, *SOS Angola: Os dias da ponte aérea* (Alfragide, Portugal: Oficina do Livro, 2011), p. 22. When the insurgency began in Angola in 1961, the FLNA was known as União dos Povos de Angola (Union of the Peoples of Angola).

34. Fernando Teles quoted in *ibid.*, p. 68.

and overseas—were contradictory and politically and militarily unsustainable given the internal and external context. Continuation of the war in Angola and Mozambique—the only way to delay and try to control decolonization by sidelining the armed liberation movements—would have risked increasing the popularity of more radical forces in Portugal, allowing them to monopolize the popular slogan, “No more soldiers overseas!” As a result, Spínola soon found himself politically isolated. His improvised attempt to regain power on 11 March 1975 gave a further boost to more radical policies and resulted in the arrests of Portuguese and African actors perceived to be hostile to the MFA and the nationalist armed movements. Furthermore, the MFA-led Portuguese state had been taking control over key economic assets in the metropole as well as in Angola and Mozambique months before independence, supposedly as a response to Spínola’s coup on 11 March and the threat of a massive flight of both capital and leading capitalists.

Quick Decolonization to Normalize Domestic Politics

Portuguese political parties were not major players in the politics of decolonization. Until the first parliamentary elections of April 1975 they were relatively powerless, their actual popular support still unknown. Power was in the hands of the military officers who had created the MFA and risked their careers by engaging in a coup precisely to take control of decolonization policy away from civilian politicians. But the political parties’ relative absence was also partly a matter of choice. The priority for Portuguese parties after April 1974 was not to try to manage a complex and costly decolonization process but to organize themselves to achieve electoral victory. No political party was suicidal to the point of wanting to present to potential voters a manifesto that argued even implicitly for the continuation of the wars in Angola and Mozambique.

Diogo Freitas do Amaral—the leader of the more rightwing CDS, as well as a top legal expert who had been appointed to the State Council—voted for Constitutional Law 7/74. In his memoirs, he points out, however, that he was not alone. At the time, all the members of the State Council approved the decision that formally recognized the right of Portuguese overseas territories to self-determination and independence. This matched the CDS’s stated position in favor of decolonization when the party was officially launched on 17 July 1974.³⁵

35. Diogo F. Amaral, *O antigo regime e a revolução* (Mem Martins, Portugal: Círculo de Leitores, 1995), p. 219.

Francisco Sá Carneiro, the other major center-right figure—founding leader of the PPD (originally the *Partido Social Democrata*, PSD)—was the civilian politician closest to Spínola. Yet not even he would clearly commit his party to a *Spínolista* policy of slow and limited decolonization. He supported Spínola despite the latter's decolonization policy, not because of it. The PPD had made clear in its presentation in May 1974 that it wanted “an immediate ceasefire negotiated with the liberation movements” while accepting full independence as an end result of the process. Sá Carneiro, in an interview in July 1974 emphasized the need for “an urgent solution to the decolonization problem, from which the solution to many other problems depend.” This included the aim of closer relations with Western Europe.³⁶

Spínola's political isolation became clearer during the crisis of September 1974, when neither of the two main center-right parties—PPD/PSD and CDS—openly supported the “silent majority” demonstration in support of the general. The crisis that induced Spínola to resign from the presidency on 30 September 1974 was triggered by his 10 September speech in which he appealed, like Charles de Gaulle in 1968, to the support of a “silent majority” and denounced radical attempts to destroy “true democracy” in Portugal as well as to “deny a democratic route” for real self-determination in Portuguese Africa. Nowadays, this might seem the ideal, normative democratic option, but it was not the international norm then, and it was, in any case, too complicated and costly for any mainstream Portuguese political parties to support in 1974–1975.³⁷

The political left was more vocal and more openly in favor of rapid decolonization, and not just for pragmatic reasons. The PS, the main leftwing party, had defined itself in its founding manifesto in 1973 as “radically anti-colonialist, defending the right to self-determination and independence” and demanding an end to “the profoundly unjust and oppressive wars by negotiations to be opened immediately with the African nationalist movements.” This position was publicly reaffirmed in the first press conference PS held in Portugal, on 28 April 1974.³⁸ Mário Soares, the leader of PS, became

36. Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), “Linhas para um programa (6 May 1974),” in *Primeiro comunicado: Linhas para um programa: Resposta a um questionário* (Lisbon: PPD, 1974), p. 8; and Sá Carneiro, “Entrevista ao expresso (20 July 1974),” in *Textos*, Vol. 3, (1974–1975) (Lisbon: Alêtheia, 2010), p. 40.

37. Spínola quoted in César Oliveira, *Portugal dos quatro cantos do mundo à Europa: A descolonização (1974–1976)* (Lisbon: Edições Cosmos, 1996), p. 79.

38. Partido Socialista, *Declaração de princípios e programa* (n.p.: Portugal Socialista, 1973), p. 8; and Press Statement, 28 April 1974, in Oliveira, *Portugal*, p. 79.

foreign minister in the first provisional government. As foreign minister he initially showed restraint in his official statements, but he quickly began to restate his party's original position. Thus, Soares and his increasingly close associate Almeida Santos, the overseas/"interterritorial coordination" minister—the only two civilians who played a relevant (though still secondary) role in the decolonization of Angola and Mozambique—were very much in agreement with the decolonization plan put forward by the MFA. This is hardly surprising given their long-standing opposition to the authoritarian and colonial nature of the previous Portuguese regime.

The option for speedy decolonization also had an important pragmatic dimension. Ending the wars in Africa as quickly as possible was a prerequisite for the rapid normalization of politics in the metropole. After all, how could the Portuguese military cease to play a central political role when a war was being conducted overseas? How could the challenging task of organizing free elections involving different political parties after decades of authoritarian rule be managed if Portugal was still considered a pluricontinental state encompassing Angola, Mozambique, and so on?

An additional reason for associating rapid decolonization overseas with democratization in Portugal, one that Soares as foreign minister increasingly realized, was the fact that the new regime needed sizable international aid to consolidate its political transition, given the serious economic crisis that hit Portugal particularly hard after the Arab oil embargo of 1973, sparking political and social turmoil. This aid would come only if Portugal could rapidly show the UN and the European Economic Community (EEC) that it had fundamentally shifted its foreign policy options to align with the new international norm that made large colonial empires unacceptable. Portugal must "get out of the African wasp nest," Soares affirmed with his usual bluntness.³⁹

From the point of view of the MFA and all mainstream political actors in Portugal, *democratization* could not be consolidated without external help for *development*, which required rapid *decolonization*. These "three Ds" were the official core aims of the MFA. They were not simply MFA propaganda, they became policy priorities widely accepted across the political spectrum.⁴⁰

39. Mário Soares, *Portugal: Que revolução?* (Lisbon: Perspectivas e Realidades, 1976), p. 36.

40. One could argue that the Communists were part of the political mainstream. Communist ministers did serve in the provisional governments in 1974–1975, but they held no official roles after 1976. Thus, although the argument might have some truth when applied to the short, highly contested Góncalves period, it does not hold up for later periods.

The MFA as a Fourth Liberation Movement?

If the MFA Coordinating Committee defined *the* Portuguese policy for decolonization, what was it? Major Melo Antunes is as close to the official mind of Portuguese decolonization as is possible to get. He played a central role in thinking about and managing Portuguese decolonization. Melo Antunes had a history, before 1974, of close connections with the opposition to the authoritarian regime, including public support for a vetoed MP candidacy during the 1969 elections. He was allowed to remain in the military only because of the Portuguese regime's need for military cadres to fight in the wars of decolonization—the very wars Melo Antunes eagerly wanted to end. Not only was Melo Antunes the main author of the MFA manifesto; he was also the key negotiator of both the Lusaka Agreement of July 1974 with FRELIMO and the Alvor Agreement of January 1975 with the FNLA, MPLA, and UNITA. No one—not even his critics—seriously disputes his central role in Portuguese decolonization.

What does Melo Antunes have to say about what became, a posteriori, a controversial episode in Portuguese history? Unlike others, he does not plead impotence and claim that he was unable to resist the tide of events.

The prevailing image of Portuguese decolonization as simply a chaotic “mess” ignores the fact that the key figure, Melo Antunes, has repeatedly made clear that what happened was largely “decolonization as we [i.e., MFA leaders] planned it.” This does not mean he and the other leaders of the MFA planned everything that happened. What it does mean is that decolonization was part and parcel of the revolutionary transformation the MFA aimed for, a transformation that required “a break with the colonial system and a leap toward independence.” Melo Antunes makes clear that decolonization happened as it did—with a rapid transfer of power to FRELIMO and the MPLA—“not because of naiveté” but according to “a decolonization strategy” decided by the MFA.⁴¹ Melo Antunes's claim gains credence because it was consistently made throughout his life, and he was well aware it was not a popular statement in many quarters after 1976. Even more important, Portuguese political and military actions in southern Africa are largely consistent with the strategy he describes.⁴²

41. Melo Antunes, “Apresentação,” in João P. Guerra, *Descolonização Portuguesa: O regresso das caravelas* (Alfragide, Portugal: A Oficina do Livro, 2009), pp. 14–15.

42. For Angolan matters from the point of view of the MFA, see Pezarat Correia, *Descolonização de Angola: A jóia da coroa do império colonial Português* (Mem Martins, Portugal: Editorial Inquérito, 1991). Correia, of the local MFA committee, was also the most senior Portuguese officer working with the former Katangese gendarmes in Angola. For the perspective of critics of the MFA strategy,

The MFA used its control of the state apparatus and the military to favor the MPLA in Angola and FRELIMO in Mozambique. This was indispensable in pacifying Lourenço Marques (renamed Maputo in 1976) and handing it over to FRELIMO. It was even more decisive in favoring control of the Luanda municipality by the MPLA, a step that proved crucial in achieving international recognition, as well as in transferring the Katangese militia to the MPLA, which shared the MFA's determination to prevent pro-Mobutu FNLA forces from gaining power in Angola.

Why did Portuguese decolonization favor the MPLA and FRELIMO? If the aim was simply to exit at any cost and find a quick way out, then in Angola the FNLA or other factions within the MPLA should have been favored, rather than Neto's MPLA, which was relatively weak militarily. Nor did it make sense for the military leaders of a NATO country (i.e., Portugal) to favor the takeover of power by radical, Marxist-dominated, pro-Soviet movements. Nevertheless, at the time (1974–1975), Portugal's NATO allies did not challenge the OAU/UN norm that armed anti-colonial movements were the sole representatives of the local people in the Portuguese colonies.

For MFA leaders, as well as for most among the new Portuguese political elite who had emerged from decades of exile and struggle against the *Estado Novo*, the issue was clear: the MPLA and FRELIMO were the *real* liberation movements because they shared with the MFA a history of resistance against the previous regime. For instance, Admiral Rosa Coutinho was openly dismissive of the more than 40 parties, with their "crazy manifestos," that had emerged during his tenure as high commissioner in Angola. The MFA was not going to accept easily what Melo Antunes designates as "pseudo-movements."⁴³ The latter were perceived as having emerged opportunistically after April 1974 (when it was safe to do so) and, worse, as involving individuals who had cooperated with the previous regime or were in close connection with Spínola and his efforts to find a third way that would dispense with the MFA in Portugal and with the armed independence movements overseas.⁴⁴

Still, the question remains: Why, in Angola, did the MFA favor Neto's MPLA over other armed movements that had also fought colonialism, such as the FNLA or UNITA? Melo Antunes's justification is that the MPLA "had the overwhelming majority of nationalist cadres . . . [they] had studied in Portugal, had been our colleagues, had participated in the same discussion

see Silva Cardoso, *Angola: Anatomia de uma tragédia* (Alfragide, Portugal: A Oficina do Livro, 2000), p. 360.

43. Antunes, *O sonhador pragmático*, p. 117.

44. Rosa Coutinho quoted in Guerra, *Descolonização Portuguesa*, p. 123.

groups . . . they were part of the Opposition, they were anti-Fascists.”⁴⁵ This kind of socialization in the resistance to Salazar’s regime evidently created a sense of shared identity and common purpose that mattered both for the MFA officers who had opposition credentials, such as Melo Antunes, and probably even more for the MFA officers who lacked such credentials.

The FNLA might have been the choice of the United States in 1975, as it had been back in 1961, but in the view of the dominant Portuguese actors at the time this factor was irrelevant. What was relevant was the perception, widely held among Portuguese elites, that the FNLA was a tribal movement tainted by genocidal violence against Portuguese settlers and other Angolan ethnic groups, not to mention concerns that it was a mere extension of Mobutu Sese Seko’s Zaire.

Even if Portuguese decision-makers such as Melo Antunes criticized the MPLA’s performance in power after 1975, this was not because of any misgivings about the choice made in 1975 but because of the great expectations they had for what they saw as the most progressive and advanced nationalist movement.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Melo Antunes—contrary to what some have argued based on U.S. and Zambian sources—did not turn into a supporter of Jonas Savimbi in the summer of 1975. He simply argued that the best way to oppose the FNLA and ensure a peaceful transfer of power was an MPLA/UNITA alliance.⁴⁷ This made sense strategically in terms of balance of power on the ground, even if it proved impossible politically.

If Melo Antunes had any regrets, it was that the MFA preference for the MPLA was not made public and followed through all the way; namely, because of U.S. pressure and divisions within the Portuguese moderates on whether to treat the matter as a national or Cold War issue. According to Melo Antunes, “it was a mistake to adopt an official policy of neutrality in Angola,” and the MFA “should have courageously supported the MPLA more openly and more decisively.” In his final speech as foreign minister, he said, “those who opposed recognition [of the MPLA government] did not serve the national interest, and we are still paying for that mistake.”⁴⁸

45. Antunes, *O sonhador pragmático*, p. 163.

46. *Ibid.*

47. President Kenneth Kaunda and President Gerald Ford, Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, DC, 19 April 1975, in Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, National Security Adviser, Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Series: Memoranda of Conversations - Ford Administration, Box 11. Kaunda was trying to make the case for Savimbi and used Melo Antunes to that end.

48. Antunes quoted in Almeida Santos, *Quase Memórias Almeida Santos*, Vol. 2: *Descolonização* (Lisbon: Casa das Letras, 2006), p. 189; and Discurso de despedida como MNE do VI GP, in ANTT, EMA, Cx. 70, Pt. 11.

These cultural and social biases in favor of the MPLA over other movements in Angola were present even in senior officers who were not on the left and were not identified with the MFA. General Silva Cardoso, a relatively powerless Portuguese high commissioner in Angola, was critical of both the MFA Coordinating Committee's role as the center of power and the MPLA as the main beneficiary of this situation. Still, he acknowledges being impressed by the first MPLA delegation he met, headed by a "gentleman" who had graduated from the University of Coimbra, the oldest in Portugal, and who had also played on its football team, *Académica*.⁴⁹ Even more significant is the statement made in May 1974 to the British consul in Luanda by the acting governor (and later presidential candidate), General Soares Carneiro.⁵⁰ The record of the meeting indicates the general believed "only the MPLA has the intellectual capacity to govern. He knew personally of twenty-eight university graduates who had recently gone over to the MPLA." In contrast, "the FNLA had only one or two intellectuals," and UNITA was a one-man Savimbi show.⁵¹ All of these elements of social and cultural preference or prejudice may seem beside the point in the context of a deadly Cold War strategic contest, but they were clearly present and mattered in Portuguese decolonization options.

The *assimilado*—the word used by the Portuguese colonial regime to designate Portuguese-educated elites often of mixed-race who dominated the leadership of MPLA and FRELIMO—were favored by the MFA in the transfer of power. Their familiarity with Portuguese culture and language proved to be an enduring bond. Not that it could prevent serious political conflicts and crisis, but a cultural bond helped to ensure a strong if sometimes difficult link between Portuguese, Mozambican, and Angolan elites. The Portuguese ambassador in Luanda in the early 1980s reported that the Angolan elites were mostly native speakers of Portuguese with no knowledge of African languages, and that they were more at home in Lisbon than in the rural African hinterland, and prone to complain about the way Cold War political tensions had resulted in a lack of scholarships for their sons to study at Portuguese universities.⁵²

49. Cardoso, *Anatomia de uma tragédia*, p. 348.

50. Soares Carneiro would run as the main rightwing presidential candidate in the 1980 elections, losing to the incumbent, General Eanes.

51. Dispatch from UK Embassy in Luanda to FCO, 29 May 1974, in The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNAUK), FCO 45/1503.

52. António P. da França, *Angola: O dia-a-dia de um embaixador 1983–1988* (Lisbon: Prefácio, 1986), pp. 175–176.

The MFA identified, regardless of the Cold War, with MPLA and FRELIMO, the anti-colonial nationalist movements with which it had more in common not just politically but culturally and socially. The MFA did not automatically identify, however, with the Portuguese settlers. Shared culture was not enough there; social and political factors also mattered. The settlers were seen as one aspect of the authoritarian system that the MFA was determined to destroy. In 1974 some in the MFA were openly hostile to settlers. The reverse was also true. The hostility came not just from the MFA officers who had drifted to the far left. Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo was appointed prime minister in the summer of 1975 as an MFA moderate. Although he was somewhat erratic and always outspoken, he became active in rightwing politics after 1976. Yet, he was anything but moderate when pressed about the urgent need for the MFA to support Portuguese settlers, responding with a brutal proverb: “They have eaten the flesh, now let them eat the bones!” That is, the settlers, according to Azevedo, had benefited from colonialism in the past, and now they had to pay the cost of decolonization.⁵³ Still, this should not be seen as a literal expression of the policy of the MFA toward this complex aspect of decolonization. MFA leaders did not seek a massive exodus of settlers from Angola and Mozambique but hoped that many would be able to fit into the newly independent states. However, the settlers were not the priority for the MFA, even if some formal assurances were sought in the decolonization agreements and a safe evacuation of the vast majority was guaranteed. Given the willingness of MFA leaders to bear such a significant cost (the number of displaced people was eventually close to 500,000), it is hardly surprising that they were unwilling to subordinate their priorities or preferences to a close Cold War alignment with the United States—all the more so given the U.S. administration’s relative lack of interest in Portuguese decolonization until late in the day.

To be sure, there were some divisions within the MFA. This is always the case with any revolutionary group after a triumphant coup. Building consensus against a status quo is always easier than building consensus for a specific alternative. The crucial point, however, is that favoring rapid decolonization was a key component of being against the status quo. Thus, although factions within the MFA differed regarding the constitutional, economic, and social future of metropolitan Portugal and regarding Cold War alignment or nonalignment, this was not the case with respect to decolonization. As a clandestine internal MFA document indicated in March 1974, a month before

53. General Gonçalves Ribeiro quoted in Garcia, *SOS Angola*, p. 39.

the movement's takeover of power, "the biggest problem for the Portuguese people, the one that in large measure conditions all the others, is the war in the African territories."⁵⁴ The words and deeds of the MFA show that they wanted to put an end to the war as rapidly as possible.

But is this not similar to the idea of the MFA as a fourth liberation movement, an idea that Norrie MacQueen has argued was no more than a convenient myth, a facade that allowed Portuguese officers to turn defeat into victory by transforming themselves from losing soldiers into freedom fighters?⁵⁵ MacQueen has argued his case well, and his arguments are worth pondering. For some Portuguese officers, possibly even the majority, his argument may well be at least partly true. But this shared identity was not simply a Portuguese creation; it was also an identity constructed by African nationalists out of conviction and as a way to facilitate the transfer of power. Samora Machel, upon arriving in Mozambique for independence day, declared that an end to "oppression was not just for the Mozambican people, it was also for the Portuguese people, this is not just our victory, it is also a victory for the Portuguese people. Portugal . . . has a new identity well accepted throughout the world."⁵⁶ Well before the April 1974 coup, most of the new civilian leaders in Portugal had a history of opposition to the *Estado Novo* regime, and this was also the case with some key MFA officers—in particular, the central figure in the decolonization process, Melo Antunes. Other leading MFA figures, such as Major Otelio and Colonel Vasco Gonçalves, saw themselves as part of a vanguard liberation movement to the bitter, inglorious, and sudden end of their careers, even when it was increasingly clear that militant involvement in radical left politics was a losing option. Today it is perhaps too easy to discount just how strong a sense of shared identity there could be between Portuguese officers playing a major role in creating a new regime and trying to develop a poor peripheral European country and those who were struggling to create and develop new African states.

The official mind of the MFA decolonization policy, Melo Antunes, clearly viewed Portuguese counterinsurgency in Africa as both wrong and a drain on scarce resources and young men crucial for the development of Portugal itself. In his view, the future for both metropole and the colonies lay in building a new fraternal relationship based on liberation from an authoritarian and colonial regime, "escaping from the hegemony of great powers," and

54. "O movimento, as forças armadas e a nação."

55. Norrie MacQueen *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire* (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 80–84.

56. Samora Machel, *Moçambique: Uma lança em África* (1975; Lisbon: RTP, 2015), videotape.

pursuing shared progressive aims “in a fairer and more balanced international order.” For this, a progressive reading of détente was a necessity, as was made clear numerous times during Melo Antunes’s period as foreign minister.⁵⁷

The puzzle, then, is the willingness of the U.S. government to support someone like Melo Antunes. After some disputes between the more hardline approach of Kissinger and the more pragmatic approach of the U.S. ambassador in Lisbon, Frank Carlucci, as well as strong pressure from Western European allies to pursue the latter, Antunes was seen by the Ford administration as the lesser evil. He and other moderate MFA officers might have had too much sympathy for the Third World and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) from the point of view of Cold War U.S. decision-makers, but at least they were willing to guarantee to Kissinger in person that, as Melo Antunes said, they were prepared “to face politically and militarily” the threat of a “Communist takeover of power in Portugal.”⁵⁸ For the United States, southern Africa was of lower priority than the goal of preventing a Communist takeover in Portugal, and thus a potential domino effect that could undermine NATO’s southern flank.

Two important consequences follow from that. First, the amount of attention and pressure the United States exerted on Portuguese policies in southern Africa was limited, giving Portuguese decision-makers leverage to pursue decolonization and then détente. Second, a truly global history of the Cold War cannot simply mean moving away from Europe and focusing all attention on South America or southern Africa; it has to mean paying closer attention to smaller powers no matter where they are, without presuming a priori that one superpower or the other always prevailed or that countries like Portugal, Angola, or Mozambique had no real agency.

Portuguese Détente: Reconciling a Role in the West and in Southern Africa

Full reintegration of Portugal into NATO and the arrival of significant U.S. aid and cooperation provided the Portuguese military with a rewarding professional way out of active engagement in politics and back into the barracks from 1976 onward. This shift was linked to public statements reaffirming Portugal’s alignment with the United States and NATO in the Cold War. Greater

57. For example, Tel. TASS, joint communiqué meeting, Melo Antunes with Brezhnev, 4 June 1976, in ANTT, EMA, Cx. 70, Pt. 3.

58. Antunes quoted in Rezola, *Melo Antunes*, pp. 454–457.

aid from the EEC and the prospect of future membership—Portugal’s application was submitted in March 1977—were a crucial replacement for a centuries-old national strategy of preserving the small country’s colonial empire as a vital external source of wealth, power, and strategic depth to counter its much larger neighbor to the east and its lack of natural resources. However, neither a clearer Western Cold War alignment nor a more Eurocentric Portuguese foreign policy meant that the aim of maintaining strong relations with Angola and Mozambique was abandoned by the major political actors in Portugal. As Melo Antunes made clear in numerous speeches as foreign minister during the crucial transition period of 1975–1976, *détente* offered a way to accommodate both Western alignment and strong engagement with Portugal’s former colonies in southern Africa, even if those former colonies were now pro-Soviet single-party states.

President Eanes and the Powerful Remnants of MFA Influence

The triumph of military and political moderates—electorally, in the streets, and in the 25 November 1975 counter-coup—against the radicalism of the far left and its military allies within the MFA allowed Portugal’s return to full NATO membership, opened the door to future integration into the EEC, and led to the consolidation of a liberal multiparty democracy on the Western model. However, these forces were moderate only in the context of that period of great revolutionary turmoil, and for at least some of them attachment to the West reflected geopolitical and economic pragmatism more than ideological commitment.

The “Document of the Nine,” a public manifesto that became a reference for moderate MFA officers in the decisive summer of 1975 was drafted by none other than Melo Antunes. This document is often mentioned as a turning point in internal Portuguese politics, but what it says about Portuguese foreign policy has been largely ignored. The manifesto makes clear that the more moderate MFA leaders wanted a foreign policy guided by Portugal’s “historical, cultural and geo-political realities.” Probably because the United States and NATO were too much of a propaganda tool for Communists and other leftist radicals, the document identifies only two foreign policy priorities: first, to “strengthen and deepen our relations” with Western Europe (“EEC and EFTA”); second, a “strong will to engage with the Third World (particularly with our former colonies).”⁵⁹

59. “Documento dos nove: (Documento Melo Antunes),” *Jornal Novo*, 7 August 1975, available online at <http://media.rtp.pt/memoriasdarevolucao/acontecimento/documento-dos-nove/>.

We would be mistaken if we simply dismissed the stated aims of leading MFA figures as irrelevant after 1976. True, from April 1976 Portugal had a democratic constitution, and from July 1976 a democratically elected civilian government, but the Portuguese democratic system was then still in the early stages of its transition. For instance, even after Melo Antunes left the Foreign Ministry, he remained a key member of the MFA's Revolutionary Council, which during the transition period held veto power on key issues, and he was a close adviser of the newly elected president, especially on matters related to Portuguese-speaking Africa.⁶⁰

Eanes, the first democratically elected head of state, was also a general who had emerged from within Melo Antunes's group of moderately leftist MFA officers and had been nominated *de facto* by them as their presidential candidate, ensuring the support of all the main parties. As president from 1976 to 1986, Eanes retained significant powers in foreign and defense policy, especially until the first amendment to the 1976 constitution was approved in 1982. He took major steps to help normalize Portuguese participation in NATO—initially he was both president and chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces—but he was also personally engaged in improving relations with Angola and Mozambique.

As far as President Eanes was concerned, and in this he was closely and avowedly following the thinking of Melo Antunes, "Portugal has always been a Euro-Atlantic country. We needed to have good relations with the United States but not strict alignment in all circumstances." This would be a good description of Cold War *détente* as practiced by European states in general, and of German *Ostpolitik* in particular. Eanes emphasized that the Portuguese policy of *détente* meant that "we also needed to have special relations with Portuguese-speaking countries, and we could not do that if we were on hostile terms with the rest of the Third World." Moreover, even if the Third World and the former colonies "were more inclined toward the Eastern bloc," Portuguese decision-makers should not give too much importance to Cold War alignments because, he claimed, "our common heritage gave us the assurance that this [division] would not last."⁶¹ That is, the Portuguese language and other cultural bonds were expected to outlast Angolan and Mozambican alignment with the Communist bloc.

60. This point is made abundantly clear in his biography. See Rezola, *Melo Antunes*, pp. 602–607, 626–642.

61. Statement by Ramalho Eanes in response to a question by the author at the seminar "O V governo constitucional," Instituto História Contemporânea, Universidade Nova Lisboa, 25 June 2009.

Eanes's foreign policy aims were made clear in his first New Year's presidential message, in January 1977: "The reconciliation of the Portuguese with their destiny and their history means getting rid of any *Africa syndrome* by re-engaging [with the former colonies] in a relationship based on mutual respect and on the national interest." In a presidential message to parliament in October 1977, Eanes clarified that although it was nonsense to question the need for Portugal to align itself with the West in general and with Western Europe in particular, the "normalization of relations with Portuguese-speaking countries" should also be a priority as part of a prudently "diversified" foreign policy.⁶² This Portuguese *Südpolitik*, or policy of détente for southern Africa, was not incompatible with a Cold War Western alignment—in the same way that *Ostpolitik* was not incompatible with West Germany's Western alignment—or so Eanes and his MFA advisers thought.

Melo Antunes continued to play an important role as an adviser and a special presidential envoy for delicate talks with President Neto in 1978 and with President Machel in 1979. During these talks he tried to defuse the tensions that had built up during the initial years of relations with Angola and Mozambique. For example, diplomatic ties with Angola had been suspended twice: first, for a few months shortly after ties were established in February 1976, and then again in 1977 after anti-MPLA demonstrations and a bomb attack against the Casa de Angola, which served as the de facto Angolan/MPLA office in Lisbon.

The first big success of this Portuguese détente toward Angola was a highly symbolic meeting during a three-day presidential summit in Bissau in June 1978, just days after Melo Antunes's preparatory mission. Eanes and Neto met to discuss bilateral matters under the auspices of Guinea-Bissau's president, Luís Cabral—brother and successor to the late Amílcar Cabral, a major ideologue of the Portuguese-speaking liberation movements in Africa and a prestigious advocate of differentiating the fight against the Portuguese colonial regime from a fight against Portugal.⁶³

At the end of the Bissau summit, a joint declaration was issued that put an end to this period of greatest tension between Portugal and Angola. The cooperation agreement signed by the two countries broke the near-monopoly of Communist-bloc or nonaligned cooperation with Angola and marked the

62. Eanes quoted in Moisés S. Fernandes, "Portuguese Foreign Policy towards Lusophone Africa 1974–1992," M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1993, p. 32; emphasis in original. Although I disagree with Fernandes on some points, his thesis is an important contribution that unfortunately remains unpublished.

63. Patrick Chabal, *Amílcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War* (London: Hurst, 2002). Cabral, like Neto, married a Portuguese university colleague.

beginning of a growing trend toward more normal, intensive, and cooperative relations.

The role of MFA officers declined after 1979 and especially after 1982. By then, however, irreversible steps had been taken in normalizing Portugal's relations with its former southern African colonies, not least by the energetic Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, the first Portuguese female prime minister. Pintasilgo was appointed by President Eanes—on the advice of Melo Antunes and the majority of the Revolutionary Council—to lead an emergency government in the second half of 1979, before new parliamentary elections could be called. Eanes argued that the appointment was needed to overcome the political impasse that had arisen when the main parties in parliament proved unable to form stable governments. Pintasilgo was a militant Catholic of the social-minded progressive type who fit perfectly with the worldview of leading MFA officers. Her appointment enabled Melo Antunes to regain dominant influence over Portuguese foreign policy, to the point of being accused by the rightwing opposition of being a shadow *tiers-mondiste* foreign minister.

In a speech at the UN General Assembly in September 1979 Pintasilgo pointedly stated that the death of President Neto of Angola was a “great loss for Africa and for the family of Portuguese-speaking nations.” She also decided to have Portugal attend a summit of the NAM as an observer, and she insisted, as Melo Antunes so often did, that the North/South, developed/underdeveloped countries divide was much more important in global politics than the East/West divide and that Portugal should help bridge the former. This viewpoint was questioned by other Western countries, particularly Britain and the United States, but was publicly supported by Eanes and Melo Antunes. The latter had always argued that to oppose a European option to an African option in Portuguese foreign policy was a false dichotomy.⁶⁴

The moderate wing of the MFA was therefore the one group that continually played a major role in Portuguese decolonization and détente policies toward southern Africa in 1974–1985. The moderates used their influence to push for improving relations with MPLA-led Angola and FRELIMO-led Mozambique, a position the MFA had also favored during the decolonization process. In 1979, President Eanes summarized his efforts to the British ambassador, arguing that Portuguese attempts at rapprochement had been relatively easy in the case of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, “small countries” that were “economically weak” and therefore “increasingly ready to look once more towards Portugal.” Angola and Mozambique were harder cases, especially the

64. “Prime Minister’s Speech to the UN General Assembly,” Pintasilgo, 1979, in Private Papers of Maria L. Pintasilgo, Fundação Cuidar o Futuro, Centro de Documentação e de Publicações.

latter, where “very strong anti-Portuguese feelings” persisted, and thus “little progress has so far been made.” But now that Neto “was fully in charge” of Angola, things looked set to improve, even if some groups still resisted closer relations both in the former colony and in Portugal for nationalistic or ideological Cold War reasons or a mix of both.⁶⁵

Eanes was the only non-African and the only Western head of state to attend Neto’s funeral in 1979, a year of renewed tensions in the global Cold War. At the funeral he met the new Angolan president, Eduardo dos Santos, who insisted that he remained “committed to a policy of improved relations with Portugal.”⁶⁶ This was not easy to achieve, however, not least because the rightwing coalition of CDS and PPD/PSD, as well as the PS led by Soares, were hostile to the foreign policy role of President Eanes and the MFA. However, not even governments of committed anti-Communist Cold Warriors wanted a complete reversal of the gains that had been achieved in improving relations between Portugal and its former colonies in southern Africa.

The Socialists as the Leading Cold War Party in Portugal

Socialist Party leader Soares headed the first two democratically elected Portuguese governments from 1976 to 1978 and served again as prime minister in 1983–1985. He, and those close to him, insisted on strict loyalty to the “Free World,” which meant a Western Europe–first foreign policy. Soares’s attitude also reflected a strong Cold War persona, born of his life-or-death confrontation with Communism and the far left in Portugal and a resulting visceral intolerance to Marxist dictatorships. At least initially, Soares was also concerned with ensuring the success of his foreign policy agenda and his vision for the future of Portugal by gaining some distance from what he believed to be, historically, an excessively close Portuguese attachment to Africa. Soares complained that Angola, in particular, was “always a passionate affair for Portugal,” the result of “deep sentimental connections,” including personal and family connections. The problem was how to manage this in the middle of a global Cold War that “divided the world in two,” with Portugal and Angola on opposite sides.⁶⁷

65. Tel. from UK Embassy in Lisbon to FCO, “Views of [Portuguese] President on Africa,” 14 February 1979, in TNAUK, FCO 45/1503.

66. Eduardo dos Santos in S. Tomé to Portuguese Foreign Ministry, reporting on talk with his Angolan colleague, 12 October 1979, in Private Papers of Maria L. Pintasilgo, Fundação Cuidar o Futuro.

67. M. Soares and M. J. Avillez, *Democracia* (Lisbon: Público, 1996), p. 136.

Making Portugal part of the club of rich liberal democratic Western European states was also a popular way for Soares to achieve his main political aim of full civilian supremacy in the new system. He was also a committed Europeanist. The PS's slogan in its victorious 1976 electoral campaign was "*A Europa conosco*" (Europe with us!). This was an affirmation of a domestic and foreign policy priority of emulation and engagement with Western Europe. The slogan is also doubly revealing: first, it equates "Europe" with Western Europe; second, it demonstrates the estrangement of Portugal's political culture from the rest of Europe, implying that the Portuguese did not identify themselves naturally or fully as part of Europe.

Soares's first government could not have pursued a clearer program. It targeted those who defended closer links with the Third World and the Eastern bloc, stating that "attacks against [Western] Europe are anti-democratic," and it argued that there were "no real alternatives" to EEC membership and that any attempt to pursue them "would lead to new forms of isolationism" similar to the ones pursued by the previous regime.⁶⁸ Soares believed that *tiers-mondisme* and any efforts to move Portuguese foreign policy toward a less Western-aligned position were at best a perilous distraction and at worst a dangerous challenge to the indispensable task of economic and political consolidation of a Western democracy in Portugal. The fact that Melo Antunes, Eanes, and Pintasilgo objected to this as a mischaracterization of their policy of engagement with *both* Western Europe and Africa is beside the point. Soares wanted this dichotomy because he wanted clear priorities.

Soares's strategy found institutional translation in the decision he made in his first government to downgrade the Cooperation Ministry (the successor to the Overseas Ministry) to a directorate within the Foreign Ministry while also establishing a new secretary of state for European integration. Relations with the two former southern African colonies worsened after Soares publicly criticized Mozambique and suspended flights in September 1976, leading to the nationalization of additional properties belonging to Portuguese settlers and to a break in diplomatic relations in 1977. Crises with Angola erupted in April 1976 when the MPLA Politburo accused Portugal of having become the center of reactionary forces against it. A meeting in Cape Verde in September 1976 led to the reestablishment of relations, but this was a temporary truce.

Soares's first foreign minister, José Medeiros Ferreira, expressed a willingness to cooperate with President Eanes in normalizing relations with Angola and Mozambique as a complement to European integration. Toward this end,

68. "Programa do I Governo Constitucional" 1976, available online at <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/media/464012/GC01.pdf>.

he had even met with the Angolan foreign minister. For Soares, this came too close to fraternization with the enemy, and Medeiros Ferreira ended up being dismissed. Soares's own timid efforts at parallel diplomacy with Angola involved the Socialist member of parliament Manuel Alegre, a poet and former exile whose prestige among the opposition to the *Estado Novo* Soares hoped would help. This approach offended Medeiros Ferreira, further deepening the split between him and Soares.⁶⁹ In fact, the profile of the emissary is significant for my argument regarding shared cultural and political identity, as is the fact that even Soares, who often resisted major efforts to reengage with Angola (the most Soviet-aligned of the former Portuguese colonies), did not prevent contacts, if he was the one controlling them closely. The program of the second government led by Soares, in 1978, mentions a cautious "rapprochement" and, as if to show that this was possible if the other side also wanted it, points out that a "good rapport" already existed with the three smaller Portuguese-speaking African countries.⁷⁰

When Soares again became prime minister in 1983, the new Portuguese ambassador to Angola was made aware by a diplomatic aide to Soares that "he [Soares] intends to break all the furniture" and that, if relations were to have a positive tone, the MPLA "cannot remain as Marxist as it is!"⁷¹ Soares's desired change in the MPLA did take place, but only gradually and mostly after 1985, when the Portuguese Socialists were again in opposition and the Cold War was coming to an end. Still, this is a sign that even within a stricter Cold War framework Soares was willing at least to try to change the MPLA and FRELIMO regimes by pursuing a conditional rapprochement.

Soares's hostility to the MPLA was reciprocated. MPLA leaders referred to the PS "as their main enemy" in Portugal. But the MPLA made a point, from the beginning, of distinguishing between the Portuguese government, some political parties, and the Portuguese people. This was done, for instance, by inviting and giving full state honors to Vasco Gonçalves, the pro-Communist former prime minister during the most radical stage of the 1974–1975 Portuguese revolutionary period, as well as to Portuguese Communist leaders. Angolan leaders increasingly sought, however, to establish better relations with the Portuguese state, and a dismayed Angolan foreign minister, Paulo Fernandes—evidently not perceiving the Cold War alignments of Portugal

69. Mário Mesquita, "A demissão de Medeiros Ferreira," in *A regra da instabilidade* (Lisbon: INCM, 1987), pp. 183–84; originally published in *Diário de notícias* (1977).

70. "Programa do II Governo Constitucional," 1977, available online at <http://www.portugal.gov.pt/media/464015/GC02.pdf>.

71. França, *Angola*, p. 32.

and Angola as a sufficient explanation—even asked the Portuguese ambassador, “Why does he [Soares] hate us so much?”⁷²

Another factor to take into account is that from 1983 to 1985 Soares was sharing power in a grand coalition government. This forced him to moderate his impulses in the case of Angola and meant an increasingly consensual Portuguese policy of minimal *détente* toward former southern African colonies.

In the case of Mozambique, Soares seemed more willing to accept a policy of *détente* earlier. Paradoxically, Machel’s FRELIMO was at least as radical as the MPLA in its aims as a revolutionary vanguard. But Machel did not have the same closeness as Angola to Portuguese Communists or the same visible dependence on the USSR or Cuba.⁷³ This also meant that Mozambique was more exposed to military threats from South Africa and more interested in some kind of *détente* with the West that could help contain the threat from Pretoria. Moreover, Soares had a more direct connection with Mozambique through the personal networks of his close political ally, Almeida Santos. The latter had lived in Mozambique until 1974 as a prominent lawyer of the opposition group Democrats of Mozambique, which had contacts with FRELIMO before independence and some of whose members stayed on and formed part of the new Mozambican ruling elite.

Almeida Santos helped, for instance, to promote the idea of the first visit of President Machel to Portugal, in October 1983, at the invitation of President Eanes. He also arranged an interview with Portuguese public television to help the Mozambican president win the sympathy of the Portuguese population. The 1981 raid by South African commandos against the African National Congress headquarters in Matola, on the outskirts of Mozambique’s capital, had shocked the Mozambican elite, not least because it made clear that Soviet help would not be forthcoming. Almeida Santos claims to have used his business contacts in South Africa, specifically with Harry Oppenheimer, to arrange an initial informal channel between Machel and South African President P. W. Botha. Assistant Secretary Crocker—in charge of Africa in the U.S. State Department during Ronald Reagan’s presidency—was also apparently contacted informally by Almeida Santos, who informed him of these developments, although no mention of this is made in Crocker’s memoirs. This eventually led to the Nkomati Agreement of 1984. U.S. interest in de-escalation in southern Africa was growing, and engagement with Mozambique was also seen as a way toward rapprochement with Angola insofar as the

72. *Ibid.*

73. Shubin, *Hot “Cold War,”* p. 140.

revolutionary Angolan and Mozambican elites enjoyed close relations. President Eanes and his foreign policy advisers followed the U.S. overtures with interest. Portuguese and U.S. diplomats exchanged views during this period not least because Washington was convinced that Portuguese intelligence had links to anti-FRELIMO insurgents. U.S. diplomats credited their Portuguese colleagues with offering useful advice: “in the end [Frank] Wisner recalled how, for a long time, we had told them that the way to Luanda was through Maputo.”⁷⁴ Crocker did use his new Mozambican contacts—primarily Jacinto Veloso—to help get Angolans, Cubans, and South Africans around the negotiating table.⁷⁵

Eventually even Soares, despite his reservations about getting too involved in Africa, realized that one way to make Portugal more influential in the Cold War was to use the country’s close connections and familiarity with southern Africa. Soares, for instance, “saw UNITA as a useful lever to prevent Angola from becoming a mere Soviet satellite,” and through his family he became close to the leaders of that movement, despite his arguments about an excessively sentimental relationship toward Angola. He also claims, somewhat contradictorily, that “before the death of Agostinho Neto. . . I helped build the first bridges between the United States and Angola” through a mutual friend, Arménio Ferreira, who, like Neto, was a medical doctor. Soares claims his May 1984 announcement of a new, more “realist policy” toward Africa was in line with a greater pragmatism that “helped promote important commercial relations.”⁷⁶ By 1984 the Portuguese policy of détente toward its southern African colonies was becoming increasingly solid and more economically significant.

In Portugal, unlike in West Germany, a socialist leftwing leader came closest to conforming to a strict Cold War posture in his defense of an almost exclusive Portuguese alignment with the West, the EEC, the United States, and NATO. Soares’s position on, for instance, the Euromissile crisis was in strict alignment with that of the United States.⁷⁷ One result (which amounted to a feedback loop of sorts) was a great rapport between Soares and influential U.S. Cold Warriors, first and foremost Carlucci, who had been a Central Intelligence Agency officer, had served as ambassador in Lisbon during the key years 1974–1978, and soon became an important figure of the U.S. national

74. Aerogram 3952, Portuguese Embassy, Washington, DC, 13 February 1985, in ANTT, EMA, Cx. 51, Pt. 11.

75. Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, pp. 159, 241.

76. Soares, *Democracia*, p. 232.

77. This was a matter of politics. The question of actually basing Pershing missiles in Portugal was never on the table because of the range of this type of missile.

security establishment, in particular during the Reagan administration, when he was appointed defense secretary. This closeness is illustrated by the audience President Reagan granted Soares in 1983. At the time, Soares was still only the leader of the opposition. When he decided to run for president in 1985, Carlucci provided help in the shape of U.S. political consultants.⁷⁸

Soares wanted rapid decolonization to mean a clear-cut disengagement from Africa, seeing this as the best way to ensure that the Portuguese would fully embrace a West European identity and in this way consolidate a Portuguese multiparty democracy and secure EEC membership and significant European and U.S. aid. Decisive progress in the consolidation of Portugal's democratic transition and the move toward full Portuguese membership in the EEC made Soares increasingly sure by the mid-1980s that stronger links with the former colonies would no longer jeopardize his policy priorities. The risk that stronger links would be perceived as a shift in Cold War alignment had disappeared; it would now be perceived as Portuguese *Südpolitik*, a policy of détente by a Western democracy toward its Soviet-aligned former colonies in southern Africa.

The Portuguese Communist Party: Spoiler and Alternative Connector

Founded in 1921, the PCP is among the oldest Communist parties in Western Europe, as well as one of the most electorally significant, resilient, and closely aligned with Moscow during the Cold War. That it should have had a negative impact on relations between Portugal and its former colonies is hardly surprising. The party's apparent initial desire for a near-monopoly on relations with its comrades from the MPLA in Angola and FRELIMO in Mozambique created problems for the diplomats of the new Portuguese government that were aggravated by the partial defeat of the PCP and the total defeat of the far left in November 1975.

The PCP and the liberation movements in Portuguese Africa were close for historical reasons. Long before other Portuguese political movements, the Communists had declared in favor of decolonization in 1957 and had opposed the Portuguese wars of decolonization, from 1961 to 1974, in accordance with the party's close alignment with the USSR.

Álvaro Cunhal, the charismatic leader of the PCP from the 1940s until 1992, played a not insignificant role in the decolonization of Portuguese

78. Soares, *Democracia*, pp. 140, 148–150, 269.

Africa, though he did so mostly behind the scenes, and thus his efforts are difficult to trace. Cunhal was also sometimes an important intermediary between the African movements and the Soviet governing elite in Moscow, where he often lived during his exile from 1960 until 1974. His relations with the MPLA were especially close.

Neto, the leading figure in the MPLA, had escaped from Portugal using a clandestine Communist extrication network—as did other leading African nationalists. Moreover, in the context of the internal struggles and purges that plagued the MPLA, Cunhal was a key advocate in Moscow of Neto. When the Soviet Union decided in 1964 to recognize Roberto's FNLA "government in exile," Cunhal played a decisive role in persuading Soviet officials to reverse a change in course that might have made a huge impact in the final stages of the Cold War in southern Africa a decade later. If the USSR had gone ahead, it would have foreclosed any opportunity for Cuban intervention in 1975, and the FNLA most likely would have taken over Angola.

Petr Esyukov, the leading Soviet official for relations with Lusophone southern Africa has argued that the "only man who could correct the situation and save the MPLA was Álvaro Cunhal." Esyukov (known as *camarada Pedro*) and Neto got in touch with Cunhal and asked him to use his prestige with Soviet leaders. Cunhal got the decision reversed, and ten years later he again intervened decisively to press the USSR to support Neto instead of militarily stronger alternatives within the MPLA, such as the faction led by Daniel Chipenda.⁷⁹

What about the post-1975 Portuguese government? Cunhal says he believed that after 1975 "the Portuguese government [ran] to Washington to get instructions" for its foreign policy. His perception that the Portuguese government had totally aligned itself with the United States in the Cold War led him to conclude that Portugal "has a servile foreign policy, a disgrace to our country."⁸⁰ This is not an accurate depiction of Portugal's relations with Angola and Mozambique, but the Communist leader saw things differently and was therefore not inclined to cooperate with Portuguese foreign policy.

The strong relationships between the PCP and the MPLA and, to a lesser degree, FRELIMO, were an obstacle for a Portuguese diplomacy aimed at normalization of state relations. However, the PCP provided an

79. Quoted in Shubin, *Hot "Cold War,"* p. 18. See also Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way,* pp. 445, 450.

80. Álvaro Cunhal with Maria J. Avillez, *Entre palavras 1974/1984* (Lisbon: Difel, 1984), p. 163 (entry for 25 April 1981).

important alternative connection between a sector of Portuguese elites and the former colonies in southern Africa, especially in times of great tension in state relations. Thus, even during the former Portuguese colonies' period of stricter pro-Soviet Cold War alignment, this did not necessarily mean a complete break between the Angolan or Mozambican elites and Portuguese elites. Orthodox pro-Soviet Portuguese Communists encouraged and admired the MPLA's and FRELIMO's policy of alignment with Moscow.

Even in the case of trade relations, Portuguese Communists acted as a connector. Economic relations between Portugal and its former colonies reached a nadir in the years immediately following independence. The combination of economic disruption and uncertainty caused by the revolutionary turmoil in Portugal, the decolonization process itself, and the civil wars in Angola and Mozambique made a decline in trade all but inevitable. But the decline was soon partly overcome, and Portugal regained its role as a significant exporter to Angola and Mozambique.⁸¹ This happened not despite but with the active help of Portuguese Communists and other elements of the far left, some of whom had taken refuge in Angola and Mozambique and found ways of making a living through their connections with the local ruling elite, while claiming they were thus helping these newly independent states gain much needed access to Western markets. The PCP was reportedly also behind the trading firm VESPER, which was often used by Portuguese businesses that needed an intermediary to gain access to Angola.⁸²

These additional connections did not come without a price. The best example of the complexity of this relationship in the context of the Cold War is the alleged May 1977 coup in Angola and the very real and deadly tensions between factions within the MPLA, whose leaders argued that those being purged were both black racists *and* radicals too closely connected with the PCP and the USSR. Those connections were thought to run through some of the Portuguese militants who had chosen to live in Angola after Portugal had fallen back into the Western sphere. Neto suspected their primary loyalty was not to him. The Portuguese Communist leaders evidently foresaw this risk and tried to prevent problems. In the end the PCP distanced itself from the alleged plotters and sent a special delegation to try to minimize tensions with the victorious elements in the MPLA.⁸³

81. Ferreira, "Relações entre Portugal."

82. França, *Angola*, pp. 283–284.

83. Shubin, *Hot "Cold War,"* p. 69; and Milhazes, *Golpe de Nito Alves*, p. 75. These authors take different views of Soviet involvement. Shubin argues it was all a misunderstanding born of, on the one hand, Leonid Brezhnev's inability to respond promptly to Neto's direct question and, on the other

This dynamic gave the Portuguese state, specifically President Eanes, an opportunity for rapprochement with the Angolan president. Eanes publicly supported “the restoration of public order” in Angola and even played the card of a shared experience in dealing with “leftist” attempted coups, which was how the 25 November 1975 coup/countercoup in Portugal was perceived by Eanes and his allies. Eanes also managed to induce Neto to agree to the repatriation of the Portuguese-born nationals who had survived the purges. They were then interrogated by Portuguese military intelligence about their alleged involvement in the plot against Neto, as well as their views regarding the future of the relationship between Portugal and Angola. The “Nito Alves plot” gave the Portuguese authorities an opportunity to highlight to the MPLA government the danger of too much disengagement from the Portuguese state and too much engagement with Portuguese radical leftists.⁸⁴

The landmark summit between Eanes and Neto in Bissau in 1978 emerged from a context in which “disruption threatened leaders everywhere.” The summit was a paradigmatic illustration of how, as Suri argues, “détente was a reaction to these troubling circumstances” by leaders who, across the Cold War divide, “colluded to stabilize their societies and preserve their authority. . . . They collaborated to bolster their respective images. The summits and agreements of the period made the leaders appear indispensable.”⁸⁵ This was certainly the case of Portuguese détente in southern Africa.

Rightwing Parties, Former Settlers, and Cold War Paradoxes

Sá Carneiro was the most charismatic leader of the Portuguese right from 1975 until his death in a plane crash in 1980. Part of his charisma was built on his confrontational style of politics. Unlike the more gradualist politics of the Socialists, Sá Carneiro opposed head-on the continuation of the political role of MFA officers through the Revolutionary Council and the important role President Eanes had retained in foreign policy and defense.

Sá Carneiro’s opposition to what he perceived as a competing foreign policy *role* by the president does not necessarily mean, however, that he

hand, a smear campaign by the West. Milhazes argues that certain Soviet sources acknowledge that some Soviet officials and actors on the ground were in contact with Nito Alves, the leader of the dissidents opposing Neto, and sympathized with him.

84. For reactions of top Portuguese political leaders (e.g., Eanes, Soares, Cunhal), see Dalila Mateus and Álvaro Mateus, *Purga em Angola: 27 de Maio de 1977* (Lisbon: Texto Editora, 2013), pp. 185–192.

85. Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 261.

opposed Eanes's foreign policy *aims*. When Sá Carneiro became prime minister in 1979 as part of the first rightwing government since the April 1974 coup, he denounced Eanes for his *diplomacia paralela* (parallel diplomacy) using personal envoys (namely Melo Antunes), in dealing with Portuguese Africa. But Sá Carneiro and Freitas do Amaral—foreign minister in the first AD government and leader of the junior coalition partner—did not abandon a policy of rapprochement with the former Portuguese colonies; instead, they tried as much as possible to take it over. What the AD government wanted was to strip Eanes of his role in leading Portuguese détente.

Why would the first Portuguese rightwing government after 1974 seek a détente with Angola and Mozambique, countries ruled by openly Marxist regimes? This attitude seems all the more paradoxical in the early 1980s, a period of heightened tension in the global Cold War.

The Portuguese rightwing parties were receptive to the idea of a shared Lusophone, Portuguese-speaking cultural identity. Furthermore, for a combination of historical reasons the Portuguese right was not as close to the United States as might be expected. Sá Carneiro resented the close bond forged between Carlucci and Soares. Furthermore, the election of an AD government meant a return to power of senior Portuguese diplomats who had played important roles in the previous regime and knew how difficult relations with the United States had been before 1974.⁸⁶

The AD government quickly achieved results in the case of Mozambique, where an economically and militarily weakened Machel was increasingly keen on receiving aid and support from any quarter, irrespective of Cold War alignment.⁸⁷ A letter from Prime Minister Sá Carneiro to President Machel, delivered by the new Portuguese ambassador, José Cutileiro, was an important step in moving détente along. The letter ended a renewed crisis in bilateral relations, one that had resulted from internal division within the Mozambican elite regarding relations with Portugal and the West, reflected in the execution of a Portuguese national while negotiations were taking place in Maputo in April 1979.⁸⁸ Sá Carneiro made clear that, contrary to the expectations of

86. João Hall Themido, the new permanent secretary of the Foreign Ministry, had been close to Franco Nogueira, the foreign minister from 1961 to 1969. The foreign minister of the second AD government, André Gonçalves Pereira, had served as a legal expert for the Portuguese delegations to the UN General Assembly in the late 1950s and 1960s.

87. Shubin, *Hot "Cold War,"* p. 140.

88. Aerogram 6269-70, Portuguese Embassy in Maputo to MNE, 1 April 1979, in ANTT, EMA, Cx. 51, Pt. 6. These oscillations in relations were typical of Mozambican relations with Western countries, particularly the United States, during this period.

many, the first Portuguese rightwing government after 1974 would accept the status quo and, crucially, would not insist on the so-called *contencioso*; that is, contentious matters regarding Portuguese settlers' property and other similar issues. This was followed by an offer of a cooperation program, which was signed in May 1981 by Secretary of State Leonardo Mathias and included military cooperation. According to Ambassador Cutileiro, the Soviet ambassador in Maputo turned to him during a military parade and asked—no doubt with “Cold War irony”—whether the weapons on parade were “yours or ours?”⁸⁹

A significant indication of this policy of rapprochement was the first official visit to the former Portuguese colonies in southern Africa by a Portuguese prime minister. In 1982, Francisco Pinto Balsemão, Sá Carneiro's successor as leader of the AD coalition government, visited Mozambique, an indication that top Portuguese civilian politicians were taking full ownership of a Portuguese policy of détente in southern Africa that was initially led by President Eanes and special envoys such as Melo Antunes.

The rapprochement between Portugal and Mozambique culminated in Machel's state visit to Portugal in October 1983. The improvement in relations with Angola was more incremental. Because of the massive presence of Cuban and South African troops on Angolan territory, officials in Luanda were more constrained in their ability to operate internationally. Realizing that, Portuguese Foreign Minister André Gonçalves Pereira, in New York for the UN General Assembly, went so far as to state to the press that “Cuban troops should continue in Angola” because their exit would be “disastrous” and “suicidal” and their presence was necessary to guarantee security and the territorial integrity of the country. President Eanes had stuck to the less contentious if somewhat twisted argument that the presence of Cuban troops was “an internal issue of Angola about which I do not wish to make any statement.”⁹⁰ In contrast to the United States, whose main concern in southern Africa was the significance of the massive intervention of Soviet-supported Cuban troops in Angola in the context of the Cold War, Portugal, even when led by a rightwing government, tended to look beyond the Cold War,

89. Ambassador José Cutileiro, personal testimony, Lisbon, 9 May 2009, during “Southern Africa in the Cold War Era” seminar, Instituto Português de Relações Internacionais/London School of Economics IDEAS Centre.

90. António M. Pereira, *O pensamento de Sá Carneiro em política externa* (Lisbon: D. Quixote, 1981), p. 39.

perceiving the Cuban and Soviet presence as inherently more transitory than that of South Africa, whose potential as a regional hegemonic power was a much greater threat to an enduring Portuguese influence.

In line with this policy of détente from the AD government toward the former Portuguese colonies in southern Africa was its reaction to the MPLA's unilateral decision to nationalize the Portuguese stake in Diamang, the holder of a monopoly over Angolan diamond production. The Portuguese government retaliated by doing the same to the Angolan stake in a Portuguese-based diamond processing company, while signaling its willingness to forget the whole issue. A few months later, during a meeting of the Portuguese foreign minister with his Angolan counterpart, the two sides agreed to increase cooperation and trade.⁹¹

The first Portuguese rightwing governments after the 1974 coup were thus more willing and able than the previous Socialist-led governments to promote a fresh start in southern Africa, pragmatically focusing on increased cooperation and increased trade across the Cold War divide. The Portuguese right was politically better placed to do this. The former Portuguese settlers had no significant political alternative to which they could transfer their protest vote. Also, the Portuguese right could improve relations with Mozambique and Angola without being suspected, as President Eanes and his allies had been, of being less than fully committed to NATO or harboring leftist Third World sympathies. The AD government manifesto was careful to state that integration into Western Europe was “the primary priority” of its foreign policy agenda. But immediately after this first item came improved relations with Portuguese-speaking countries.

The AD government also took care to balance the southern African détente with loud public denunciations of Soviet imperialism in Afghanistan. This had the additional advantage of embarrassing the Portuguese Communists who supported Moscow's Afghan intervention.⁹² According to the AD government, Cuban intervention in Angola and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan were two very different things. Certainly they were treated as such by Portuguese foreign policymakers. The few lone voices who protested

91. Diogo F. Amaral, *A transição para a democracia: Memórias políticas (1976–1982)* (Lisbon: Bertrand Editora, 2008), pp. 241–257.

92. In an interview with the main Portuguese newspaper, the Communist leader passionately defended the invasion as an effort to aid a revolution in danger. See Álvaro Cunhal with Maria J. Avillez, interview, in *Entre palavras 1974/1984* (Lisbon: Editorial Difel, 1984), p. 163.

from within the AD ranks against this lack of coherence seem to have had little or no impact.⁹³

It may seem strange that more than half a million former settlers from Angola and Mozambique did not have a greater political impact on Portugal's rapprochement with pro-Soviet regimes in its former colonies. But they were barred from forming a political organization along those lines by the 1976 constitution, which prohibited fascist parties. Moreover, colonialism after 1974 was very much associated in public discourse with the former regime and with fascism, not least by the senior officers of the MFA, who, as members of the Revolutionary Council, retained the prerogative of constitutional review until 1982.

The former settlers were also not a cohesive, well-organized constituency. General Carlos Galvão de Melo, who in 1976 became an MP in the rightwing CDS list and who tried to present himself as the spokesman for the plight of the settlers/*retornados*, provides a relevant test case. Rather than gaining political support and leverage, he was increasingly isolated politically. In the December 1980 presidential elections, Galvão de Melo refused to support the AD presidential candidate, General Soares Carneiro, and presented himself as an alternative, but he managed to win the support of only 1.7 percent of the electorate. The result confirmed the political insignificance of the protest vote by the *retornados*, who had by then increasingly become "*integrados*"—that is, they had integrated, not necessarily happily but effectively, into Portuguese society. Many were first-generation settlers who had returned from southern Africa after at most a few decades away, still having close family and some property in Portugal. Those who had been public servants in southern Africa were guaranteed employment in Portugal. Integration had been the priority for most and was especially easy for the more qualified professionals, who might otherwise have become leaders of a protest movement.

The relative success of the economic integration of former colonial settlers was greatly facilitated by Western economic aid to Portugal. Ambassador Carlucci rightly emphasized that this vast human wave would help to consolidate a political barrier against the far left. This was not the whole story, however. A small but active minority of settlers did support UNITA against the MPLA and also contributed to the rightwing networks of the Cold War.

93. Pereira, *O pensamento de Sá Carneiro*, pp. 15–34. Although this text points to real tensions, it should be understood in the context of the rivalries within the PSD itself, not least those between the author (Pereira) and the then foreign minister, André Gonçalves Pereira.

This became a source of tension with the Angolan government.⁹⁴ Support for the Mozambican National Resistance mostly came from the significant number of Portuguese settlers, including former intelligence officers, who had moved to Rhodesia and South Africa after decolonization. This did not stop Mozambique from presenting formal complaints on the matter to the Portuguese government.⁹⁵

In a cold *Realpolitik* evaluation of Portuguese state interest, the massive dramatic exodus of Portuguese settlers from southern Africa can even be seen as having had some positive aspects. In the case of Angola, a massive air bridge meant this source of tension was greatly diminished by the time of independence. In Mozambique, the slower exodus meant issues with Portuguese settlers continued to cause tensions until the end of the 1970s. This—along with the case of Zimbabwe before Robert Mugabe’s downfall—shows that the mass exodus of Portuguese settlers, despite its undeniable human and economic cost, was difficult to avoid and probably removed a potential cause of long-term tension in diplomatic relations between Portugal and its former colonies. The exodus was also so massive—including some mixed-race elites—that it left huge gaps in Angola and Mozambique that regime loyalists and East-bloc experts were unable to fill, as Soviet officials themselves recognized.⁹⁶ This created new opportunities for Portugal to export goods and expertise to the new states after independence, an important element of Lisbon’s détente policy.

Portugal’s Socialist foreign minister from 1983 to 1985, Jaime Gama, made a point of having his first official lunch with the ambassadors of the Portuguese-speaking African countries. At the lunch, Gama summarized the arguments Portugal was then using to justify détente with Angola and Mozambique. He spoke in favor of “peace in southern Africa” but underlined a key point in Portuguese decolonization policy and foreign policy; namely, that peace should be achieved “with full respect for your sovereignty and territorial integrity.” Gama also argued that Portugal’s special relations with Portuguese-speaking Africa “transcend a single generation” and, therefore, should be a priority for any Portuguese government. Although he acknowledged that “Portugal is not a great or medium power but a small country,” he then affirmed that the Portuguese government would pursue “special cooperation” with Portuguese-speaking countries as part of its rapprochement with its former colonies. Finally, in a clear reference to rigid Cold War

94. Jaime N. Pinto, *Jogos Africanos* (Lisbon: A Esfera do Livro, 2008).

95. Soares, *Democracia*, p. 231.

96. Shubin, *Hot “Cold War,”* pp. 138–139.

alignments, Gama emphasized that, on policy toward Africa, Portugal “refuses to act except in its own name” and that “one can be more candid, trusting and freer among smaller powers,” a critical allusion to the role of the Cold War superpowers in southern Africa.⁹⁷

Portugal in Southern Africa (1974–1984): Cold War, Culture, and Globalization

Portuguese decolonization followed a strategy of rapid transfer of power in Angola and Mozambique to the armed movements most closely aligned culturally with Portugal. They offered the best guarantee against the dominance of Angola and Mozambique by powerful neighbors such as Zaire and South Africa. Portugal eventually developed good relations with both countries but did not want them to dominate its former colonies. Although the process of decolonization could be tense and sometimes violent, important linkages remained. This led, regardless of opposition by some actors, and despite significant practical difficulties, to a relatively coherent Portuguese policy of détente toward its former colonies in southern Africa, aligned with the Soviet bloc. A rapprochement effort that started with some tinges of leftist *tiers-mondisme* turned into an increasingly systematic effort at building a Portuguese-speaking community of states and eventually became a contributing factor to the end of the Cold War in southern Africa with the triumph of the West and its model of globalization, at least initially.

How can we best explain the paradoxical resilience of postcolonial relations between Portugal, Angola, and Mozambique in the context of Cold War alignments that placed them in opposite camps? How can we best characterize their relationship?

Strong Cultural Links

To pay proper attention to cultural factors in international politics does not mean disregarding power politics or hard international systemic constraints. Strong cultural links are, moreover, not to be confused with good interstate relations, although they tend to mean deeper, more multidimensional transnational relations, which are therefore more enduring, resilient, and significant.

97. Speech at lunch with ambassadors of Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa (PALOP), 24 June 1983, in Jaime Gama, *Política externa 1983–1985* (Lisbon: Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 1985), pp. 17–18.

Nor does this attention to the important role of culture in relations between Portuguese-speaking countries mean falling into some kind of lyrical Lusotropicalist approach based on the idea of a unique natural community of interests and views between Portugal and its former “tropical” colonies.⁹⁸ In politics there are no natural communities; they are all historically constructed. Nor was Portugal unique as a former colonial power in benefiting from cultural links, personal networks, and a degree of inertia in economic flows.

A shared experience of fighting Salazar’s authoritarian and colonial regime also helped create a sense of shared identity among the new governing elites in Portugal, Angola, and Mozambique after the revolution of April 1974. Portuguese-speaking cultural identity played a role in conditioning crucial choices regarding the transfer of power during decolonization and then in maintaining sometimes tense but always intense and important contacts between elites in Portugal, Angola, and Mozambique, often regardless of Cold War alignments. Cultural links between Portuguese-speaking elites in Portugal and in its former colonies have to be taken into account as part of the explanation for the paradoxical resilience of this relationship in the context of the Cold War. These links allowed Portugal’s relations with Angola and Mozambique to overcome and help transform the Cold War in southern Africa. Portugal was avowedly and evidently not a great power, but it still had a significant autonomous role to play in Europe and in southern Africa that deserves to be properly analyzed.

Southern Détente Not Françafrique

Can we find significant parallels to Portuguese policies toward Angola and Mozambique? France is the obvious point of reference when comparing the foreign policy of former colonial powers toward former colonies in Africa. France managed to retain powerful assets in many of its former African colonies, including intelligence networks and military bases.⁹⁹ Portugal never had the power capabilities of France. Portuguese elites were aware of this and never tried to emulate France’s claim to be the Western gendarme in Francophone Africa.

However, some parallels can be identified. Both Portugal and France used presidential diplomacy through personal envoys as an alternative to more

98. Peter Burke and Maria Lúcia G. Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre: Social Theory in the Tropics* (Oxford, UK: Peter Lang, 2008).

99. Jean-Pierre Bat, *Le syndrome Foccart: La politique française en Afrique, de 1959 à nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), p. 213.

formal diplomatic channels. Melo Antunes might not have been a Portuguese version of Jacques Foccart, the Gaullist regime's éminence grise for Francophone Africa, but he did play an important role as an adviser and personal envoy of President Eanes. But Melo Antunes vehemently opposed what he saw as French neocolonial policies, and Portugal never experienced the centralization of power that characterized the French presidency during the Fifth Republic. Still, the comparison is important in reminding us that the use of personal envoys—so-called parallel diplomacy—which generated so much controversy in Portuguese internal politics during these years, was far from unique to Portugal; it was, in fact, frequent in relations between former colonial powers and their former colonies in Africa, where power tended to be highly concentrated in the presidents and their trusted personal entourages.

The French ambassador to Angola in the early 1980s offered his Portuguese colleague an informal “entente neo-colonial” for conduct of the Cold War in Africa. He “never tired” of assuring the Portuguese ambassador in Luanda that France “cannot and is not trying to replace us” in the “special relationship” with Angola and that “only” Portugal “can defend Western interests in this country.” At least as much confidence in a Portuguese *Südpolitik* was expressed by the West German ambassador, who allegedly often made clear to his Portuguese counterpart that he trusted his intervention or unique insight to help solve or explain Angolan politics. Although Ambassador Pinto da França notes that he discounted French diplomatic niceties and tempered West German diplomatic expectations, he nonetheless claims that Portugal, uniquely among the Western Cold War allies, had a special status in Angola.¹⁰⁰

That this was not irrelevant or simply a matter of Western (mis)perception is illustrated by a meeting in 1984 that helped to overcome one of the periodic, if by now smaller-scale, crises in relations between Portugal and Angola. Portuguese Foreign Minister Gama argued that Western powers “gave special credit” to Portugal regarding Angola. Tensions between the two countries were therefore bad from the point of view of Angolan interests in the wider international context, not just for bilateral relations. President Santos did not deny this. Instead, he complained that he knew his enemies in UNITA had as much or even stronger support in other Western countries but in the case of Portugal, “bonds of blood, culture and worldview are so deep that it hurts much more when it happens.” This comment illustrates how cultural links that transcended Cold War alignments could work both

100. França, *Angola*, pp. 32–36.

ways.¹⁰¹ A shared cultural identity could be used as an argument by Angolan or Mozambican leaders to try to influence Portuguese leaders, as well as the reverse.

A Decentered Analysis of Détente in the Cold War

This article validates the views of those who argue that détente had a significant global afterlife once it had ceased to be a workable policy between the two superpowers. Portugal had a policy of détente toward Angola and Mozambique that was a logical, though not necessarily easy, follow-up to a policy of decolonization by the new Portuguese revolutionary elite in favor of a transfer of power to FRELIMO in Mozambique and to the MPLA in Angola. MFA leaders believed that systematic efforts at rapprochement with Angola and Mozambique would facilitate strategic aims that are best summarized by the foreign minister of the first Portuguese government to be democratically elected under the new 1976 constitution. Portugal wanted to “weaken” the influence of the USSR without “aiming at eliminating it,” a goal that would be beyond its capabilities and was also undesirable absent certain conditions. The key aim was “avoiding the emergence of a hegemonic power in southern Africa” hostile to Portugal. The Soviet Union and Cuba never seemed like credible candidates to fill that role, but South Africa, a historic rival of Portuguese influence in the region for over a century, was far more credible as a long-term regional hegemon and was therefore a threat to Portuguese influence in the region.¹⁰² Portuguese détente in southern Africa thus resulted not only from a logic of Lusophone identity; but also from a realist approach to regional geopolitics—even if that approach was not automatically in line with a bipolar Cold War logic—as well as from internal political dynamics in Portugal, Angola, and Mozambique that sometimes favored détente.

The case of Portugal and its southern African former colonies shows how important it is to look more closely at the complex but all-important interactions between decolonization and the Cold War and their impact on globalization, as Jeremy Suri, Martin Thomas, and Andrew Thompson, among others, have argued.¹⁰³ However, reaching this broader perspective requires the development of a more globalized, pericentric, or decentered approach to the

101. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

102. Medeiros Ferreira, *Cinco regimes*, p. 124.

103. Jeremi Suri, “The Cold War, Decolonization, and Global Social Awakenings: Historical Intersections,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2006), pp. 353–363; and Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, “Empire and Globalisation: From ‘High Imperialism’ to Decolonisation,” *International History Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2014), pp. 142–170.

Cold War in general and to détente in particular. The significant and largely autonomous role of Cuba in Angola has long been seen as paradigmatic of the pertinence of this kind of approach. Yet Cuban intervention in its initial stages was not only crucially facilitated but actively encouraged and supported by Portuguese actors. This is just one example of the relevant (if far from linear) role that Portuguese actors played during decolonization and the period that followed in the Cold War in southern Africa.

It makes a great deal of sense in this case to “look at the history of the Cold War from the point of view of . . . junior allies and actors.” Portugal, despite being a colonial power in retreat and facing revolutionary turmoil at home, still retained real power during decolonization in relation to relatively weak nationalist movements soon to be faced with the arduous task of state-building in the vast territories of Angola and Mozambique. Furthermore, after independence, the Portuguese state and a variety of Portuguese actors did not shy away from developing an active policy of reengagement with these former colonies, despite being on opposite sides of the Cold War. This article is, therefore, very much concerned with looking at the “agency that alleged power vacuums actually possess.”¹⁰⁴ A “disastrous vacuum of power” is precisely the way the Portuguese role in decolonization in southern Africa and its aftermath has often been described.¹⁰⁵ In actuality, despite serious obstacles and some setbacks, the Portuguese did have a strategy for transferring power to FRELIMO in Mozambique and for facilitating the takeover of power in Angola by the MPLA, followed by rapprochement with the postindependence Marxist regimes in the two southern African former colonies.

Even in a context of great pressure from domestic revolutionary regime change and the international political realities of the Cold War, Portuguese decision-makers retained a degree of autonomy in their *Südpolitik*. The former colonies’ willingness to engage in détente with Portugal also suggests that Angolan and Mozambican ruling elites cannot be seen simply as the pawns of Moscow or Havana.

We need a richer, deeper understanding of the Cold War in its complex global, regional, and domestic implications, one that takes cultural factors and weaker peripheral states into account. Eventually, in the second half of 1980s, the United States was willing to forge a rapprochement with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. This made it easier for Portugal to pursue normalization and deeper relations with its former colonies. Portuguese policy toward Angola

104. Tony Smith, “New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2000), pp. 590–591.

105. Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, p. 35.

and Mozambique is an example of the importance of globalizing détente and decentering our understanding of the final stages of the Cold War.¹⁰⁶

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106. This is in line with Sara Lorenzini, “Globalizing Ostpolitik,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2009), pp. 223–242. See also Andrew Hurrell, “Can the Study of Global Order Be De-centred?,” PRIMO Working Paper No. 2/2015, Power and Regions in a Multipolar Order Project, Hamburg, 2015.