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# Portugal's Resistance to Decolonization and the "White Redoubt" (1950-1974)

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## Summary

Portugal's resistance to decolonization lasted from the mid-1950s until the fall of the regime in April 1974, and it helps to explain why Portugal fought thirteen years of war in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea. Contrary to other colonial powers, the Portuguese rulers were not willing to accept the winds of change nor to meet the demands for the self-determination of its overseas territories that had swept Africa and Asia from the early 1950s. Several factors can explain the inflexibility of Lisbon to accept them, ranging from the ideological nature of the New State; from the strategic context of the Cold War due to the importance of the Azores islands for the United States and NATO; or from Portugal's alliance with Great Britain. When the war broke out in Angola, and the Indian Union seized the "Portuguese India" territories in 1961, prime-minister Salazar did not receive the political support he expected from Washington and London as traditional allies.

In early 1962, Salazar decided to strengthen relations with South Africa and Rhodesia in an attempt to maintain white rule in its overseas territories amidst a drive for independence by African nationalists, so-called "white redoubt," that was the terminology used by the Kennedy administration to refer to the set of African countries and territories dominated by white minority governments: Angola, Mozambique, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. Strengthened ties would aid his strategy to keep the war effort in Africa by taking advantage of the importance of Angola and Mozambique to the security of South Africa. In 1964, Salazar encouraged Ian Smith to unilaterally declare independence from Great Britain to link Angola and Mozambique to the Southern Africa Security Complex led by South Africa, despite widespread criticism of the apartheid in the United Nations (UN). Concurrently, Lisbon tried to seduce Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda in expelling the liberation movements from Malawi and Zambia in exchange for granting transit facilities to ease the international pressure with regards to its colonial policy.

Following several years of military collaboration, in October 1970, Portugal, South Africa, and Rhodesia established a military alliance codenamed "Exercise ALCORA," which aimed to coordinate the global efforts against the insurgency in Southern Africa. Portugal used the ALCORA to obtain substantial aid in the form of military equipment and financial support, which Portugal needed to keep the war effort in the three African territories. In early 1974, Caetano channeled the South African loan to prevent a significant setback in Guinea, because if it were lost, Mozambique and Angola would follow, and consequently the regime.

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**Keywords:** Portugal, decolonization, South Africa, Rhodesia, Exercise ALCORA, NATO, United States

## The Colonial Empire as Portugal's Raison d'Être

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For the New State (*Estado Novo*), the Colonial Empire symbolized the ideological myth of the regime—it reflected the idea of a multiracial, indivisible, and inalienable nation.<sup>1</sup> The Empire was the heart of this nationalism, both a symbol and a tangible goal to unite the nation whenever the need arose.<sup>2</sup> Thus, soon after coming into power, the dictatorship developed mechanisms to prevent the Colonial Empire from gaining a dangerous autonomy.<sup>3</sup> In 1930, the government published the *Acto Colonial* (Colonial Act) and annexed it to the Constitution to circumvent the sanctions which the League of Nations had imposed on indigenous work in the colonial territories. Moreover, the document emphasized the Empire's defense, an issue that was particularly important to the Portuguese elites.<sup>4</sup>

Portugal's historical values as a nation were rooted in the country's colonizing and evangelizing mission, which portrayed the Portuguese people as representatives of Christian civilization.<sup>5</sup> For Salazar, the priority in Portugal's political order was the nation's independence and its right to a maritime, territorial, political, and spiritual legacy outside Europe.<sup>6</sup> The Empire was a moral and spiritual sentiment that symbolized an "extension of Portugal."<sup>7</sup> In 1935, even the Communist Party considered the overseas territories an integral and inviolable part of the Portuguese nation.<sup>8</sup> The Portuguese widely accepted their nation's colonial mission, and any forces that could jeopardize it or its sovereignty were considered a threat to the nation's independence.<sup>9</sup> Under Salazar's leadership, the New State's policy linked Portugal's security and sovereignty to the colonial dimension. As Marcello Caetano wrote in an editorial for the magazine *O Mundo Português* (The Portuguese World) in 1935, Africa was both a moral justification and a *raison d'être* for a small European country such as Portugal.<sup>10</sup> For the regime, and for some sectors of civil society, the African territories were a decisive factor in restoring past glories.

Since Salazar wanted to believe that Portugal was an important European power, the driving force behind the New State's policy was to defend the overseas territories. However, the international political forces at play in the wake of World War II undermined Salazar's plans: the communist peril; the hegemony of the United States and the increasing autonomy of the colonial empires; and the "decline of Europe," with a subtle push from the United States.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Portugal's NATO membership was a sign that it was accepted among the world's democracies.<sup>12</sup>

To prove to other nations that Portugal was a multi-continental country, the Portuguese Constitution of 1951 incorporated the Colonial Act (*Acto Colonial*, 1930). The document was revised to justify Portugal's presence in Africa and India as the country prepared to join the UN. The words "Empire" and "colony" were expunged and the "Ministry of Colonies" was renamed "Overseas Ministry."<sup>13</sup> After the constitutional revision, the regime adopted Gilberto Freyre's sociological doctrine "*luso-tropicalismo*" (luso-tropicalism), which rested on the "peculiar nature" of Portuguese colonialism.<sup>14</sup> The regime's official discourse portrayed Portugal as a multiracial community strengthened by cultural and emotional ties with its

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overseas territories. Brazil, Goa, and Cape Verde were the unique Portuguese solution for the “creation of multiracial societies.” However, the regime used *“luso-tropicalismo”* merely for political convenience.<sup>15</sup> The regime lacked the will to create African political elites capable of leading the effort to reconcile the colonial power with traditional societies. Salazar planned to resist, at all costs, the winds of change that were beginning to blow throughout the African continent. The changes were introduced because the international context demanded it, but they were little more than “cosmetics.”<sup>16</sup>

## **The Defense of the African Territories in the 1950s: Drawing the US’ Attention to the South Atlantic**

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In 1950, Portugal joined the Committee for Technical Cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa (CCTA), whose official aim was to set up *“Eurafrica”* as a political and economic project that would fully integrate the metropolises with their overseas dominions in Africa.<sup>17</sup> Lisbon used the CCTA as a defensive strategy to promote regular meetings to discuss contending issues with other colonial powers at a time when the UN discussed the links between colonialism and African underdevelopment, as well as to point out the value of the African territories for the West.<sup>18</sup> Despite having been created as a technical body, its members wished to turn the CCTA into a political organization that could enlist the support of the United States by warning about the threat posed of Soviet expansion into the South Atlantic, which would make the African territories under European control vital in case of a military confrontation.<sup>19</sup>

In 1951, at South Africa’s proposal, the CCTA organized the African Defense Capabilities Conference in Nairobi to draw the attention of the United States to the importance of the South Atlantic for the “defense of the West” and to stress the need to keep the colonial powers in Africa.<sup>20</sup> This was in line with Pretoria’s aim of becoming a member of the Atlantic Pact since South Africa considered itself a Western country.<sup>21</sup> However, Portugal believed that Pretoria’s aim was to attain regional hegemony on all matters of African defense and rejected any proposals that implied the staging and transit of military forces in the “provinces.”<sup>22</sup> Portugal intended to discuss the creation of an “African Pact” to control the Cape route, expecting it to draw Washington’s attention.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Portugal and the United States had recently signed the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement and were in the process of negotiating the Defense Agreement (which would be signed in September 1951), which set the terms for the use of the Azores base.<sup>24</sup> Unsurprisingly, there were no relevant outcomes from Nairobi because the participants had misgivings about South Africa’s agenda.<sup>25</sup> In early 1954, France proposed holding a conference in Dakar to discuss the concession of facilities in several war scenarios, including generalized insurgency in Africa. The Portuguese delegation did not engage in any agreements to grant facilities because the Atlantic Pact did not cover the defense of the colonies.<sup>26</sup>

As had happened in Nairobi, the Portuguese attitude reflected both the ongoing negotiations to renew the concession of the Azores base to the United States and the latent conflict with the Indian Union. In the summer of 1954, the Indian Union isolated the Dadrá and Nagar-Aveli enclaves, denying transit to all Portuguese military forces until Portugal agreed to negotiate the inclusion of Goa, Damão, and Diu in the Indian Union. Portugal requested support from the United States, but Washington refused to make any public statements and Salazar suspended the negotiations to renew the concession. However, both the United States and the

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Portuguese representatives prepared and issued a communiqué saying that the territories outside Europe were “provinces” with the same status as the mainland.<sup>27</sup> This time, the United States caved to the Portuguese pressure due to Washington’s ambiguity, which stemmed from other developments in the Cold War.<sup>28</sup> Washington’s attitude was a sign of things to come.

In 1955, the Bandung Conference declared that racial segregation in the United States, apartheid in South Africa, and colonialism were imbalances in the international system and cemented the Afro-Asian bloc as “an anti-Western spearhead” within the UN.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, Lisbon and Pretoria saw the Afro-Asian bloc as the driving force behind the “communist penetration” in Africa, which drew its support in Europe and the United States from the ideological confrontation of the Cold War.

Portugal joined the UN in December 1955, and its first clash with the General Assembly concerned the application of Article 73 of the Charter. Lisbon denied that Portugal had non-autonomous territories and opened a long-running dispute in the UN General Assembly over domestic authority, colonialism and self-determination, criticism of the Charter, observance of human rights, and threats to international peace and security.<sup>30</sup> Lisbon was sure that it would shatter all opposing arguments because its approach relied on “legal-historical doctrine” to justify the specificity of the Portuguese presence in Africa and India.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the legal dispute at the UN, Portugal initiated talks with South Africa regarding the possibility of developing a defense project for Southern Africa in which NATO could take part.<sup>32</sup> In mid-1956, Pretoria and London discussed the creation of a defense arrangement for the South Atlantic. When invited to join, Lisbon raised several obstacles because it had no guarantees that NATO would participate.<sup>33</sup> Lisbon wanted NATO to join to eschew the appearance of a colonialist front, as this would weaken its position at the UN, where South Africa was on the wrong side.<sup>34</sup>

In 1957, France and the United Kingdom declared that they would grant independence or autonomy to their overseas territories and surrendered the information requested by the UN under Article 73 of the Charter, unlike Portugal and Belgium.<sup>35</sup> In 1960, fourteen newly independent countries joined the General Assembly, bolstering the ranks of the anti-colonialist bloc. Despite this pressure, which did not translate into effective action due to the lack of the required two-thirds quorum, Portugal was able to resist until 1961. Portugal used the UN to affirm its legalistic view of sovereignty, which rested on non-intervention in internal affairs, and did not see its “defeats” as signs of isolation but as a sign of the decadence of the UN and the West.<sup>36</sup> However, its membership exposed the weakness of the legal basis for Portugal’s desire to be seen as a “multi-continental” and multiracial nation.<sup>37</sup>

## Portugal Turns to the “White Redoubt”

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On February 3, 1960, in Cape Town, Harold Macmillan made his famous “Wind of Change” speech where he warned South Africa that London and Washington’s protection would soon come to an end.<sup>38</sup> The first sign was the racial tension that permeated US domestic politics, especially within the Democratic Party, which led to a sudden change in the country’s

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relationship with the white supremacist regimes in Africa.<sup>39</sup> In the case of Portugal, the Azores base influenced US policy but did not stop Washington from overtly opposing Lisbon's colonial policy.<sup>40</sup>

In June 1960, the segregationists in the United States and South Africa used Congo's independence process to warn about the dangers of granting independence to ill-prepared countries.<sup>41</sup> A few weeks later, Pretoria asked Lisbon to consider a military agreement that would turn Angola and Mozambique into a buffer zone against insurgency.<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding the looming peril, Lisbon replied that it was too early to consider such an agreement. The answer was cautious to avoid any reprisals at the UN General Assembly.<sup>43</sup> In September 1960, Pretoria insisted and proposed a military agreement to Portugal and Southern Rhodesia that included the supply of military equipment and the coordination of military forces along shared borders.<sup>44</sup> Lisbon saw some advantages in this proposal but rejected any South African or Rhodesian military intervention in Angola and Mozambique because Salazar did not want Portugal to appear incapable of defending its colonies.<sup>45</sup>

However, the revolts of February 1961 in Angola forced a military rapprochement between Portugal and South Africa.<sup>46</sup> The authorities in Angola displayed an apparent lack of foresight and ability to deal with the insurgency, making the alarm bells ring in Pretoria.<sup>47</sup> The reports coming out of Luanda described ill-equipped armed forces inept at suppressing the insurgents, who were able to attack the population with ease. A few days later, the military authorities in Angola requested urgent help from South Africa with the justification that the conflicts in Angola also affected South Africa.<sup>48</sup>

The revolts in Angola and the authorities' overreaction attracted international attention when Liberia decided to take the matter for discussion at the UN Security Council (March 15, 1961), with support from the Kennedy administration. This came as a shock and as a surprise to Lisbon.<sup>49</sup> That same day (March 15), the Union of the People of Angola (UPA—*União das Populações de Angola*) launched a large-scale attack that killed hundreds of blacks, mestizos, and whites in northern Angola. The Portuguese press covered the carnage to fuel nationalism but only succeeded in shocking South Africa's white population.<sup>50</sup> At once, Portugal started a public diplomacy campaign to change the Kennedy administration's stance towards Portugal. First, Lisbon hired Salvage & Lee, a public relations company, to garner favor with US journalists, businessmen, congressmen, and even with J. Kennedy's power brokers. Portugal wanted to convey the message that "international communism" had orchestrated the rebellions in Angola. The campaign was a success, and, in only one year, Portugal's reputation in the United States improved considerably, an achievement that D. Rusk described as extraordinary.<sup>51</sup> Concurrently, Salazar changed the legislation on the *Indigenato* and announced it to the national and international press to appease the international critics at the UN and Portugal's NATO allies.<sup>52</sup>

The US policy towards Portugal had changed dramatically. In addition to its vote in the UN in 1961, the United States intensified contacts with the UPA and canceled the sale of military equipment to prevent Portugal from using it in Africa.<sup>53</sup> On December 18, 1961, the Indian Union seized the remaining territories of Goa, Damão, and Diu. The attack came as a shock to Salazar because he had expected that the facilities Portugal had granted to the United States in the Azores and the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance would be enough to deter Nehru. The United



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States broke the “Western solidarity” and triggered a pivot in Lisbon’s foreign policy.<sup>54</sup> The diplomatic protection that the United States had granted would have to be replaced by more effective cooperation if the Portuguese wished to keep their foothold in Africa.

Pretoria saw the UPA’s attack and the US’ attitude as a warning that things were changing. After the Indian Union attack, the South African ambassador in Lisbon reported that the difficulties Portugal was facing could lead to collapse in Angola and, if that happened, South Africa would have to deal with insurgency near its borders.<sup>55</sup> In early 1962, Salazar realized that he urgently needed to rethink his foreign policy. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Franco Nogueira, told the South African ambassador in Lisbon that Portugal was prepared to set up bilateral alliances with Rhodesia and South Africa that would cover all forms of cooperation.<sup>56</sup> However, Salazar was reluctant to ask for assistance because he feared that Pretoria would see it as a sign of subordination. He wanted to avoid this, and implied as much during a conversation with Jim Fouché, the South African minister of defense, in July 1961, in which they discussed South Africa’s willingness to come to Portugal’s aid.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, Salazar had to decide if linking the provinces to South Africa to resist the “winds of change” would be effective. A foreign affairs study, dated April 1962, suggested that the political protection granted by the “traditional alliances” should be replaced by closer ties with Rhodesia and South Africa, who would be willing to provide the assistance Portugal needed because their survival depended on its ability to keep Angola and Mozambique.<sup>58</sup> This assistance consisted of a “secret military pact and different forms of economic cooperation,” which aimed to defend the territories against communist-led movements.<sup>59</sup>

Two years later, in August 1964, at the height of the Katanga crisis, Verwoerd’s envoy Harold Taswell met Salazar in Lisbon to discuss sending aid to Moise Tshombe.<sup>60</sup> The meeting allowed Salazar to indirectly declare his interest in enlisting South Africa’s aid to help the war effort. Pretoria would feel safer if Angola and Mozambique were free of insurgency.<sup>61</sup> Salazar moved first when he decided to support Ian Smith and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) of Southern Rhodesia. By linking the defense of Angola and Mozambique to the “white redoubt,” Salazar expected to receive military aid without asking for it outright.

## **Salazar’s Trump Card: Supporting Ian Smith to Ensure the Defense of the African Territories**

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The dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was the event that most influenced Salazar’s strategy for Africa, as the United States and United Kingdom would not decisively intervene to defend Portugal’s presence in Africa. In early 1964, by decision of the British government, the Federation split into two new states ruled by black nationalist governments: Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) and Malawi (Nyasaland). However, Southern Rhodesia remained a British territory because the political objective of “majority rule” was not guaranteed, as the black population had to meet strict requirements to be eligible to vote.<sup>62</sup> These strict requirements were a stratagem of the Rhodesian government to ensure the hegemony of the white minority.<sup>63</sup> The goal of the British Labour Party led by Prime Minister Harold Wilson was to grant independence to Southern Rhodesia only if the government

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guaranteed equal political rights for the black population.<sup>64</sup> Wilson did not want to be accused of allowing the creation of a segregationist regime in Rhodesia at a time when the South African apartheid system was being universally attacked, particularly at the UN.<sup>65</sup>

Since Angola and Mozambique shared borders with the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the negotiations with the British government for its dissolution drew Salazar's attention early on. The end of the white minority's hegemony in Southern Rhodesia could prove the *coup de grace* for Portugal's presence in Africa because a black majority or a multiracial government in Salisbury would leave Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa as the only examples of European rule in Africa. Therefore, in addition to the threat of subversion, a multiracial Southern Rhodesia would pose a serious political problem for Salazar: it would increase the chances of a contagion effect that would lead to more civil rights demands from the black population of Angola and Mozambique. It was next to impossible for Rhodesia to gain independence without London's consent because the country was economically dependent on the United Kingdom and because it would bolster pan-African pressure at the UN.<sup>66</sup> However, Salazar had a different opinion. He was convinced that South Africa "would not fail to assist a distressed Rhodesia," and that Portugal could profit from that by linking the fate of Angola and Mozambique to the survival of the "white redoubt."<sup>67</sup>

In early 1964, hardliner Ian Smith replaced Winston Field as prime minister, supported by RFP radicals who expected him to lead them to independence, even if it meant political and economic isolation.<sup>68</sup> As Consul General Pereira Bastos reported, if that happened, Roy Welensky, the former prime minister of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, would replace Smith because he favored a multiracial solution for Rhodesia. Bastos did not understand Salazar's perspective because he believed that a multiracial Rhodesia would unite the people of Mozambique and Angola and weaken the Afro-Asian bloc at the UN.<sup>69</sup>

However, for Salazar, a multiracial Rhodesia would have negative repercussions for Mozambique and Angola. Consequently, in June 1964, Nogueira instructed Bastos to start a campaign to convince Rhodesia's senior officials that only the UDI could preserve the living standards of the white populations and provide some political stability. Bastos was reluctant to do this for several reasons. First, Portugal would be associated with Smith's decision, no matter how covert the Lisbon "campaign" was. Second, the country would be accused of solidarity with the coup against London and of supporting apartheid. This would jeopardize Salazar's strategy of convincing Hastings Banda (Malawi) and Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia) to withhold support from the liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique.<sup>70</sup> By encouraging Smith, Salazar proved that, contrary to what Portugal proclaimed, he did not believe in multiracialism as a solution for Angola and Mozambique.

In September 1964, Smith met Salazar in Lisbon to discuss the terms of the aid and to assess how determined Salazar was before meeting Wilson in London.<sup>71</sup> In January 1965, to ensure that his strategy was executed, Salazar appointed Freitas Cruz as consul general in Salisbury, replacing Bastos. That same year, Lisbon defied Harold Wilson's government. The Rhodesian diplomatic representation in Lisbon outside the purview of the British Embassy was the main source of friction, as Smith and Salazar had predicted. If London acquiesced, then Rhodesia's independence would be a *fait accompli* and a refusal would give Smith a plausible reason to declare it unilaterally. Therefore, in either case, the British government faced a dilemma in



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which Portugal played an important role.<sup>72</sup> Consequently, London informed Lisbon that recognizing the Rhodesian representative would be comparable to London recognizing the representative of the Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the warning, Lisbon recognized the representative of Rhodesia “*de facto*” because it could not accept him “*de jure*.”<sup>74</sup> On September 21, 1965, H. Reedman presented his credentials to Minister Nogueira as the accredited representative and head of the Rhodesian diplomatic mission in Lisbon.<sup>75</sup> The quarrel between Portugal and the United Kingdom aside, Reedman did, in fact, act outside the umbrella of the British Embassy, and the Rhodesian mission functioned as an independent office. To circumvent future economic sanctions, in February 1965, Portugal sent an economic delegation to Salisbury to discuss ways to export Rhodesian products through Angola and Mozambique.<sup>76</sup>

On November 11, 1965, Ian Smith proclaimed the UDI of Southern Rhodesia, which Salazar received with enthusiasm.<sup>77</sup> By supporting Rhodesia, Portugal had exposed its position at the UN, but the belief that a crisis derived from the UDI would be short-lived may have factored into Salazar’s decision.<sup>78</sup> From then on, Portugal used all mechanisms at its disposal to circumvent the sanctions imposed by the UN (UN Security Council Resolutions 221 and 232), one of which—the Beira Patrol set up by Great Britain—was a significant source of friction with London due to the threat of a possible extension to the Lourenço Marques (Maputo) seaport.<sup>79</sup> To eschew any formal responsibility, Salazar asked businessman Jorge Jardim to use his company SONAREP to supply fuel through the Beira pipeline.<sup>80</sup> Portugal’s aid to Smith’s regime prevented Rhodesia from being controlled by a black majority that could promote subversion in Angola and Mozambique.<sup>81</sup> Salazar’s actions to ensure Smith’s survival framed Portugal’s colonial problem within a regional security complex centered on the survival of the “white redoubt,” as Salazar had planned since his meeting with Taswell in mid-1964. The event that followed was the establishment of Exercise ALCORA in November 1970.

## The Collaboration with Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda

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Since the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Salazar saw Malawi and Zambia as potential breeding grounds for subversion in Mozambique and Angola. Since they were landlocked countries that depended on the Angolan and Mozambican seaports, Portugal was able to use this leverage to persuade them to prevent the liberation movements from setting up insurgent camps in those countries. Moreover, if this plan succeeded, Portugal would be able to declare its good-will towards the new African states, both to justify the assistance provided to Smith and to assert its strategic autonomy with South Africa.

### The Collaboration with Hastings Banda

The independence of Rhodesia shaped the relationship between Portugal and Malawi, where businessman Jorge Jardim was the agent of Salazar’s strategy.<sup>82</sup> He aimed to ensure the full cooperation of Malawi in the fight against the Mozambique Liberation Front (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, FRELIMO) and in strengthening Portugal’s presence in Africa. The Malawi Congress Party (MCP) had links to the Mozambique Revolutionary Committee (*Comité Revolucionário de Moçambique*, COREMO) and the National Democratic Union of

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Mozambique (*União Democrática Nacional de Moçambique*, UDENAMO), through which Malawi could foster insurgency in Mozambique. Nevertheless, Salazar considered Hastings Banda the least dangerous of all MCP leaders.<sup>83</sup>

Immediately after the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the relations between both countries were good because Malawi depended on the railway link to Mozambique's seaports to achieve its strategic (and especially economic) objectives, and thus achieve independence. This provided Salazar with a trump card to prevent the country from supporting FRELIMO.<sup>84</sup> In mid-1962, Banda met with Nogueira to negotiate the concession of transit facilities in exchange for Malawi's collaboration and its refusal to support the liberation movements in Mozambique.<sup>85</sup>

In May 1964, two months before the country declared independence, Jardim invited Banda to visit the Nacala seaport (Mozambique) and promised that Portugal would refurbish it to accommodate Malawi's requirements. This led Banda to appoint Jardim as honorary consul in Beira, making it easier for Salazar to put his strategy into action.<sup>86</sup> A mere few weeks after Malawi declared independence, Jardim convinced Banda he was in danger due to the unrest generated by the Revolt of the Ministers led by Chipembere and supported by Nyerere.<sup>87</sup> As a result, between 1965 and 1967, Banda authorized Jardim to carry out an arms supply and training operation inside Malawi to prepare the Malawi Young Pioneers for the task of protecting Banda and his government.<sup>88</sup> Thanks to this close relationship, both countries were able to exchange military intelligence and cooperate in matters of state security. Malawi's secret agents often disclosed the minutes of FRELIMO, COREMO, and the National African Union of Independent Mozambique (*União Africana de Moçambique Independente*, UNAMI) meetings to Jardim.<sup>89</sup> Banda had no qualms in aligning with South Africa, Rhodesia, Angola, and Mozambique, from whom he was receiving political and financial aid.<sup>90</sup> Banda frequently denounced the "communist danger" and reiterated his intention to maintain relations with Portugal and South Africa, condemning those who wanted to "expel the white man" from Southern Africa.<sup>91</sup>

However, these good relations cooled in 1970 because the Portuguese forces proved incapable of preventing FRELIMO from attacking the railways and intercepting road transit to Malawi. Furthermore, border crossing violations by the Portuguese military forces were a source of embarrassment for some Malawi senior officials and put Banda in a delicate position.<sup>92</sup> The collaboration lasted until the end of the regime, but Banda realized that FRELIMO would be the next interlocutor in Mozambique and agreed to FRELIMO's presence in Malawi to assuage the discontent within the government.<sup>93</sup>

## **Against the Wall: Kaunda Was Not Seduced**

When the relations with Banda were at their height, Salazar tried to exploit the effects of the boycott on Rhodesia to entice Kaunda. Zambia depended on Rhodesia for electricity, coal, and transport, which Portugal could provide due to the sanctions imposed on Southern Rhodesia. However, Kaunda saw the political and military links among the "white redoubt" as the main threat to Zambia's economy, which could be strangled by closing the railway links and cutting off the energy supply to the Copperbelt.<sup>94</sup> Salazar saw this as a unique opportunity to approach Kaunda and attempt to strike a deal. Portugal could gain some strategic autonomy

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by showing that it was willing to establish good relations with black African countries and send the message that its assistance to Smith through the Beira Railway and the Beira pipeline was not meant to circumvent the boycott, but to fulfil its obligation of granting access to the hinterland. Moreover, at that time, the price of copper, a strategic mineral for the United States, had begun to climb.<sup>95</sup>

Fearing that Rhodesia would unilaterally declare independence at any moment, some senior executive members of the mining companies operating in the Copperbelt asked Kaunda to seek authorization from Lisbon to transport ore through the Benguela Railway.<sup>96</sup> Portugal had already approached Zambia in early 1966 to discuss alternative fuel supply solutions since it could not use UK, US, or Canadian airlift during the boycott imposed on Rhodesia.<sup>97</sup> Smith did not want Zambia to use the Benguela Railway as a replacement for Rhodesia Railways because he wanted to pressure London into ending the boycott.<sup>98</sup> In any case, Salazar persisted in his strategy of enticing Kaunda because Rhodesia had cut off energy supply to the Copperbelt.

In November 1967, at Zambia's request, Portugal sent a diplomatic mission to negotiate directly with Kaunda.<sup>99</sup> Lisbon accused Zambia of allowing the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*, UNITA) and People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*, MPLA) to have offices in Lusaka and stated that it would only grant the facilities if Kaunda expelled them.<sup>100</sup> For his part, Kaunda believed that Portugal's stubborn colonial policy and its relationship with Salisbury and Pretoria was largely to blame for the conflict in Southern Africa.<sup>101</sup> Kaunda wanted peaceful coexistence and offered to help Portugal negotiate with the liberation movements. He had already decided for the railway link to Dar es Salaam and the construction of the Kafue dam rather than use the Benguela Railway and the Cabora Bassa dam for power supply.<sup>102</sup> Kaunda did not want to rely on Portugal because he believed that the United States and the United Kingdom would continue to aid Zambia due to the strategic value of copper in the Cold War. Furthermore, the United States viewed Zambia as the cornerstone for peace in Southern Africa.<sup>103</sup>

The diplomatic mission failed to persuade Kaunda, which led to numerous incidents caused by an increase of military activity along the Zambian border. In November 1968, Kaunda wrote a letter to Portugal's new Prime Minister, Marcello Caetano, to persuade him to change Portugal's colonial policy. Kaunda stated that he did not expect Angola and Mozambique to become independent at once and offered to use his reputation to mediate the negotiations with the liberation movements.<sup>104</sup> Caetano thanked Kaunda but replied that, constitutionally, both Angola and Mozambique were Portuguese territories.<sup>105</sup> From that moment on, like Rhodesia and South Africa, Portugal saw Zambia as the main threat to the "white redoubt." As a result, the military command in Angola set up the Eastern Military Zone, which encompassed the districts of Lunda, Moxico, and Cuando Cubango, to contain insurgent infiltrations from Zambia and to protect the avenues of approach to Angola's central plateau. The area became the focus of effort of the Angolan military forces and colonial administration.<sup>106</sup>

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## Portugal and the Global Strategy for Southern Africa: The Absence of an Exit Strategy

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As already mentioned, Lisbon's reservations about South Africa during the 1950s were replaced by the need for more intense collaboration to retain the African territories. South Africa was the sole country to express solidarity with Lisbon in the wake of the incidents in Dadrá and Nagar-Aveli in April 1954.<sup>107</sup> After the Bandung Conference, both countries realized that they had entered a new era in their collaboration.<sup>108</sup> The famous "Wind of Change" speech, the 1960 Congo crisis that followed the country's independence, and the change in the US' and UK's stance towards Portugal's colonial policy were factors that contributed to the cooperation between Portugal and South Africa.<sup>109</sup>

Furthermore, the relationship between the United States, the European colonial powers, and South Africa had changed with the Kennedy administration's public support of the African liberation movements and the right to self-determination. This change in the US' relationship with the colonial powers drove South Africa to Portugal's aid because Angola and Mozambique were a buffer zone where it could intervene if the Portuguese forces proved unable to cope with insurgency.<sup>110</sup> In December 1961, after the fall of Portuguese India in the wake of the attack by the Indian Union, Pretoria realized that Portugal needed urgent aid. From 1964 onwards, Salazar placed a premium on the new strategic context that emerged out of the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Salazar conceived a strategy to shape Portugal's role in Southern Africa, which consisted of encouraging and supporting Ian Smith's UDI, because he believed that Angola and Mozambique were essential for the future of the white supremacist regimes in Southern Africa and would receive help from Pretoria.<sup>111</sup>

In mid-1966, the alarm bells rang in Pretoria when South Africa became aware that South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) fighters regularly crossed southern Angola to infiltrate South West Africa due to the lack of Portuguese military forces in the Cuando Cubango district.<sup>112</sup> Thus, in April 1967, P. W. Botha, then minister of defense of South Africa, met Minister Nogueira in Lisbon to tell him that both countries urgently needed to engage in formal talks. South Africa was able to provide arms and equipment at symbolic prices if Portugal required it.<sup>113</sup> In July, Nogueira repaid the visit and met Vorster in Pretoria to discuss how South Africa could help Portugal sustain the war effort in Angola.<sup>114</sup> The conversations were followed by regular contacts that led to "Operation BOMBAIM," through which the South African Air Force supported Portuguese military operations in Cuando Cubango.<sup>115</sup>

Marcello Caetano replaced Salazar as prime minister in October 1968 and inherited a war that was the regime's most significant burden. With his hands tied by the regime's power players, Caetano was unable (or unwilling) to find a solution for the colonial problem other than to continue the war.<sup>116</sup> Caetano was fully committed to the war effort to prevent Portugal's African territories from falling under the control of nationalist movements. The refusal to negotiate any peace agreement with the liberation movements meant that war was the only solution and did not have any exit strategy.<sup>117</sup>

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In March 1969, Caetano traveled to Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea to personally assess the military situation there and found officers and soldiers with low morale and lacking the arms and equipment they needed to reverse the situation.<sup>118</sup> In late 1969, Caetano was at a crossroads. First, the “Salazarist faction” rejected any course of action that did not involve continuing the war.<sup>119</sup> Second, Caetano was convinced that Nixon would drastically change Kennedy’s and Johnson’s foreign policy towards the “white redoubt” because he considered the Azores base and the Portuguese presence in Africa as decisive to counter the Soviet and Chinese influence in Africa, as stated in National Security Study Memorandum 39, Tar Baby Option.<sup>120</sup> Third, straightening relations with Pretoria was a point of disagreement among some Portuguese senior officials. One of them, Rui Patrício, who had replaced Nogueira as minister of foreign affairs, feared Portugal’s strategic submission to South Africa.<sup>121</sup> Some senior officials did not believe the arrangement with South Africa would be successful because of the liberation movements’ inexorable advance throughout Africa.<sup>122</sup> However, Caetano knew that the regime would only survive if he continued the war, and only South Africa could help him do it.<sup>123</sup>

In March 1970, a South Africa delegation led by General Charles Fraser traveled to Lisbon to inform his Portuguese counterparts that “Operation BOMBAIM” was unsuccessful because the forces in Angola did not commit enough efforts to defend Cuando Cubango. Thus, Fraser proposed a Plan for the Defense of Southern Africa which would coordinate all counterinsurgency efforts and mitigate any gaps in the Portuguese capabilities.<sup>124</sup> On October 7, 1970, military representatives from Portugal, South Africa, and Rhodesia met in Pretoria to discuss the Plan for the Defense of Southern Africa and lay the groundwork for a secret political and military alliance codenamed “Exercise ALCORA,” which aimed to defeat insurgency in Southern Africa. While the plan initially focused on military aspects, it could be expanded to include other dimensions as needed.<sup>125</sup> Pretoria used the ALCORA as a formal agreement to ensure a commitment from Portugal in exchange for substantial financial and military assistance because Angola and Mozambique had strategic value to South Africa’s survival. It was a clear indication that Pretoria wanted to lead the global strategy for Southern Africa, and Caetano would take advantage of this to avoid the collapse of the regime, which was the most likely outcome if he were to enter into any peace agreements with the insurgents.

In late 1971, Caetano hosted the Nixon-Pompidou summit in the Azores. The choice of location was a sign that the Azores were a linchpin of the US’ strategy. The documentation prepared by Caetano’s cabinet highlighted the value of Portugal’s territories in Europe and Africa for NATO and the United States, notably in controlling the Atlantic and the access to the Indian Ocean.<sup>126</sup> A few days earlier, Nixon had promised to grant a loan of about 700 million dollars, almost double the total loans granted by the United States since 1946, to repay Portugal for the use of the Azores base.<sup>127</sup> Thus, Caetano was convinced that Nixon wished to reshape NATO to include the South Atlantic.<sup>128</sup> Still, all signs from the Nixon administration led Vorster to believe that the United States preferred the “white redoubt” in control of Southern Africa.<sup>129</sup>

After three years of negotiations, South Africa agreed to grant Portugal a loan of 150 million rand (only five million were transferred due to the regime change in April 1974) to purchase first-tier equipment such as French Mirage III fighters and air defense assets. South Africa decided to grant the loan because it hoped this would allow it to influence the Portuguese

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military strategy for Angola and Mozambique. South Africa may have considered Exercise ALCORA as the first step towards political integration across the “white redoubt,” a “confederation to defeat the insurgency in Southern Africa,” as South Africa’s Defense Force Operational Commander, General Charles Fraser, proposed in 1973 to the then Minister of Defense, P. W. Botha.<sup>130</sup>

Interestingly, Caetano used Exercise ALCORA to obtain the financial resources he needed to prevent a major setback in Guinea. The formalization of this alliance is further proof that Caetano did not have any political solutions for the war. Aside from strategic considerations, the composition of his governments, especially the defense and overseas ministries, shows that no massive changes were expected from the very beginning of Caetano’s term in office. ALCORA was negotiated by Minister of Defense General Viana Rebelo, who also served as minister of the army since being appointed by Caetano in early 1970. Rebelo was the former governor of Angola and a fierce defender of the colonial policy and of continuing the war.<sup>131</sup> In late 1973, Viana Rebelo was replaced by former Overseas Minister Silva Cunha, a hardliner who supported the Portuguese presence in Africa and the continuation of the war.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, no significant changes in policy were expected from Caetano.

ALCORA was primarily a military project, but it would be the first step towards a broader political project that aimed to create the conditions to make Southern Africa a developed region, self-sufficient and free from communist-led subversion. Caetano may have considered giving some autonomy to the territories, but only if they remained under the control of an elite linked to the Portuguese regime. Caetano refused to entertain the notion of handing over the territories to the same liberation movements Portugal was engaged in fighting. On March 22, 1973, in reply to General Spínola’s proposal to settle a political agreement with African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (*Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde*, PAIGC), Caetano stated there were “no political solutions to exit from Africa,” and that this included negotiating with the “enemy.” The main problem Portugal faced at the time was in Southern Africa, where the future of the Portuguese presence in Africa was being decided.<sup>133</sup>

Between mid-1973 and early 1974, the discussion at the National Security Council gravitated around the financial and procurement problems in supplying the army with modern arms and equipment. On May 22, 1973, Caetano stated that all the necessary military resources had to be obtained (whatever their source) to prevent a military defeat that seemed inevitable, particularly in Guinea. Minister of Defense Viana Rebelo proposed to solve this problem with an urgent loan from South Africa that included arms and money. Caetano was favorable to the idea and expressed his “firm intention to continue to make efforts” and to take “urgent measures” to overcome those difficulties.<sup>134</sup> In October 1973, Rebelo mentioned that the agreement with South Africa was virtually closed and that the weapons were being delivered as of September.<sup>135</sup> In February 1974, Caetano again stated that the government continued to attempt to obtain military aid to avoid collapse, despite the difficulty in finding suppliers.<sup>136</sup> South Africa delivered the first loan remittance of 5 million rand (of a total 150 million rand) just a few days before the military revolt of April 25, 1974.

Exercise ALCORA ended in October 1974, after the military coup that toppled Caetano. There is no way of knowing how effective it would have been or into what it could have evolved. The regime change led to lack of consensus regarding decolonization, and, by the summer of 1974,

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the majority of the new political parties that emerged in Portugal and the young officers who had planned and executed the coup favored a rapid decolonization process and handover of power to the liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea. In the international context of the mid-1970s, it became apparent that the swift end of the Colonial Empire was the only solution.<sup>137</sup> Understanding how Portugal and South Africa framed and developed Exercise ALCORA helped to paint a more comprehensive picture of the strategic importance of Angola and Mozambique as part of South Africa's "cordon sanitaire" against the inexorable advance of communist-backed black nationalism, and provided some insights into South Africa's motives for intervening in Angola in 1975: SWAPO incursions into South West Africa from southern Angola undermined South Africa's rule and were a major strategic concern to its national security.<sup>138</sup>

The resistance to decolonization was directly proportional to the means available to convert the low-intensity conflict that started in 1961 to a high-intensity military confrontation that Caetano had to deal with from the very beginning of his government. Eventually, Portugal's resistance to decolonization in Southern Africa resulted in a fierce conflict that lasted two decades and brought the racial supremacist regimes in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia to an end.

## Discussion of the Literature

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There is an extensive bibliography on the Portuguese resistance to decolonization, notably on how Portugal used its diplomatic instrument to resist the decolonization wave that started at the outset of World War II. Due to the value of the Azores to the United States and NATO, the essential historiographical works focus on how Portugal tried to influence the United States to protect its overseas possessions in exchange for the use of the Azores base.<sup>139</sup> Of particular interest to this essay are two works of L. N. Rodrigues, entitled *Salazar e Kennedy: a crise de uma aliança* and "The United States and Portuguese Decolonization," which provide a detailed analysis of the friction caused by the change in the US policy towards Africa.<sup>140</sup> Rodrigues's article "Missão impossível: o Plano Anderson e a questão colonial portuguesa em 1965" analyses the Johnson administration's efforts to find a solution to Lisbon's colonial problem.<sup>141</sup> It was Washington's reluctance in supporting Lisbon's colonial policy that triggered Salazar's decision to turn to South Africa and Rhodesia to maintain control over the territories in Africa.

The shift in Lisbon's foreign policy towards Rhodesia and South Africa has been addressed in studies published in the early 21st century which aim to understand how it helped Portugal resist the decolonization wave and how it was conceived to keep the "Overseas Provinces" under Lisbon's control. António Telo wrote two seminal texts on the topic. The first, "As guerras de África e a mudança nos apoios internacionais de Portugal," describes the international climate that framed the choices of the Portuguese government.<sup>142</sup> The second text, "A prioridade a África (1959-1974)," presents the engagement with South Africa and Rhodesia as part of a strategic alliance reversal that began in the mid-1950s, when Lisbon set up closer relations with France and the Federal Republic of Germany, in response to the US' and UK's refusal to defend the Portuguese Empire.<sup>143</sup> The relationship between Portugal and Rhodesia during Salazar's tenure is analyzed in depth by Pedro Aires Oliveira in his book *Os*



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*despojos da aliança: a Grã-Bretanha e a questão colonial portuguesa, 1945-1975*, where the author provides an account of how Lisbon's acceptance of the Rhodesian representative caused some political friction in the relationship between Portugal and Great Britain.<sup>144</sup>

P. Correia and G. Verhoef published the first work on the topic of this essay, which partially filled the gap in the literature on the relationship between Portugal and South Africa. The work describes and analyses this relationship from the early 1950s to the fall of the Portuguese regime on April 25, 1974, highlighting the most important periods and concluding that Exercise ALCORA ended before producing any decisive results.<sup>145</sup> The relationship between Portugal, South Africa, and Rhodesia, and how it helped Salazar and Caetano defend the African territories against insurgency is addressed in two crucial Portuguese studies. The first, *Salazar, Caetano e o "reduto branco": a manobra político-diplomática na África Austral (1950-1974)*, by Luís Barroso, explains how and why Lisbon conceived a strategy to persuade South Africa to provide the material support it needed to sustain the war effort in exchange for its strategic subordination in Exercise ALCORA.<sup>146</sup> To compensate for this loss of power, Lisbon tried to entice Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda in an effort to stay relevant in the strategy of the "white redoubt" to defeat insurgency in Southern Africa. The second work, a book by Aniceto Afonso and Carlos Matos Gomes titled *Alcora: o acordo secreto do colonialismo*, describes and analyses in detail the beginning of Exercise ALCORA and how it was used by Lisbon to keep control over Angola and Mozambique.<sup>147</sup>

F. Meneses and R. McNamara provide a more in-depth historiographical work on the origins and development of Exercise ALCORA from the South African side. They argue that Exercise ALCORA was only possible due to the forces at play during the Cold War, which led to the implementation of a "Total Strategy" to preserve white domination in Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa.<sup>148</sup> According to the authors, the three countries fought African nationalism as if it were an extension of international communism to show the Western powers that the "white redoubt" was a crucial ally in the Cold War. Exercise ALCORA was the result of their entrenchment and isolation, which ended unexpectedly with the fall of the Portuguese regime.<sup>149</sup> The authors expanded their research in the book *The White Redoubt, the Great Powers and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1960-1980*, where they analyze the collaboration between the three "white powers" in Southern Africa, how the international community responded to that "unholy alliance" and how the situation evolved in those three countries.<sup>150</sup> The way Pretoria used the war in Angola, which led to the end of the white rule in Rhodesia, is evidence of its strategy to keep insurgency away from South Africa's borders and explains why ALCORA was the means by which it was carried out.<sup>151</sup>

The international context played a crucial role in determining Lisbon's strategy, and several works have studied the diplomatic and political networks that were established at the time. In *O fim do império português: a cena internacional, a guerra colonial, e a descolonização*, António Costa Pinto provides a comprehensive overview of the international climate regarding the Portuguese government's stubborn colonial policy.<sup>152</sup> The diplomatic strategy conceived by Lisbon to resist the decolonization wave at the UN is examined in works by Fernando Martins, Duarte Silva, and Bruno Reis, which give us a clear idea about the pressure Portugal faced from the moment it was admitted to the UN General Assembly.<sup>153</sup> The relationship with Germany and France and its role in the strategic shift in Lisbon's policy are addressed by Ana M. Fonseca and Daniel Marcos, respectively.<sup>154</sup> The close relationship with Katanga leader Moise Tshombe is covered by Rui Velez and Maria J. T. Santiago.<sup>155</sup>

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For the South African documents, a professional freelance researcher was hired at the National Archives repositories to access the documents from the archives of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Defense.<sup>156</sup> All the AHDMNE documents used in the essay are stored in the fund of the Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros (MNE, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), which holds the documentation produced by the Portuguese Embassies, Consulates, and Missions. The AHDMNE archives also hold the documentation produced by the Gabinete dos Negócios Políticos do Ministério do Ultramar (Political Affairs Office of the Overseas Ministry). The Archives of the Ministry of Defense (ADN) documents are available for consultation in the following funds: Gabinete do CEMGFA (Office of the Chief of Defense); Defesa Militar do Ultramar (Military Defense of the Overseas Territories); and Secretaria-Geral da Defesa Nacional (Secretary General of the Ministry of Defense). Some documents were retrieved from the Arquivo Oliveira Salazar (AOS –Oliveira Salazar Archive) and the Arquivo Marcello Caetano (Marcello Caetano Archive) at the Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais da Torre do Tombo  [<http://antt.dglab.gov.pt/pesquisar-na-torre-do-tombo/fundos-e-coleccoes/>](http://antt.dglab.gov.pt/pesquisar-na-torre-do-tombo/fundos-e-coleccoes/) (IANTT, Torre do Tombo National Archives).

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