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COLD WAR CONSTRAINTS: FRANCE, GERMANY AND THE PORTUGUESE DECOLONIZATION

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Introduction

In this article, we will analyze the particular role that France and West Germany played in supporting the Portuguese resistance to decolonization. Due to the United States refusal to support the *Estado Novo* colonial policy in the beginning of the 1960s, Oliveira Salazar had to turn to his European Allies. The fact that both France and West Germany were willing to positively respond to this request is explained by the particular context these two countries were experiencing, in a world constrained by Cold War. These two countries decided to support Portugal in its resistance to decolonization mainly due to reasons related with the Cold War and the importance that both Paris and Bonn attached to the particular role played by Portugal in this context. For France, supporting the Portuguese regime was seen as a way of defying the Western superpower and protecting its interests in Africa; for the Federal Republic of Germany, it was a matter of keeping Portugal inside the Atlantic Alliance.

During the 1960s, these were the objectives behind the Franco-German support to the Portuguese colonial policy, which were reflected on the military cooperation and political assistance to the *Estado Novo* regime.

Cold War and Decolonization

Two major events characterized the second half of the 20th century's political and social scenario. After the end of the World War II, the world was divided between two superpowers and their spheres of influence. However, more than the Cold War, it was the emergence of new states, formed as a consequence of the European colonial empires' disaggregation in Asia and Africa, which undoubtedly characterized world history, influencing, until nowadays, the international politics. The most recent

developments in decolonization studies allows us to understand that the Cold War was not just the political context that characterized the independence process of most peoples from Africa, Asia and Central America. Each of these phenomena was part of the other's explanation¹.

In order to understand the interconnection between Cold War and decolonization we must avoid the mistake of mixing these two political, economic and social processes. A quick analysis of the Soviet and North-American documents may lead us to conclude that the decolonization process of the second half of the 20th century was just another element of the bipolar competition, dominated by the two superpowers' rivalry. However, nowadays it is clear that decolonization was a broad political process, which did not begin after the World War II. Being deeply rooted in local features preceding Cold War, it is also undeniable that it followed the bipolar conflict, extending beyond its end.

Nevertheless, particularly after the 1950s, the bipolar competition affected the decolonization process in different levels, mostly because either the United States or the Soviet Union (and, later on, China) tried to export to the new emerging states their own model of political, economic and social organization². This underlines the fact that Cold War cannot be considered just a cause of the decolonization process, but also as a political conflict which framed it ideologically, helping to delay or accelerate the long process of political and social transformation that swept Asia and Africa in the second half of the 20th century. In short, we can say that the relation between Cold War and decolonization relates to the fact that the ideological competition between the two superpowers progressively dominated the international society and politics³.

From a historical point of view, if the World War I helped to create local resistance movements against colonialism, World War II destroyed the colonial system in itself. In the Far East, the occupation by the Japanese destroyed the French, British and Dutch imperial systems and the European powers proved unable to rebuild

¹ Michael Graham Fry, "The United Nations Confronts the United States in 1958", in *A Revolutionary Year. The Middle East in 1958*, ed. by Wlm. Roger Louis e Owen, Roger (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002), p. 143.

² Mark Philip Bradley, "Decolonization, the Global south and the Cold War, 1919-1962", in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. by Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 464-470.

³ Odd Arne Westad, "The New International History of the Cold War: Three (Possible) Paradigms", *Diplomatic History*, 24 (4) (2010), pp. 551-565.

their imperial structure in those territories⁴. We also cannot ignore the impact that the United Nations Charter had in the process of dissolving the colonial structure and ideal. The endorsement of Wilsonian values, this time reflected by the approval of the Declaration of the Human Rights in 1948, reinforced the post-war transnational discourse. Despite the Charter and Declaration of the Human Rights did not include enforcement mechanisms, they acted like an important source of legitimation of the colonial peoples efforts to build their own societies independently of the European powers⁵.

Everything pointed towards a fast disaggregation of the colonial empires. The first big state to obtain its independence was India, in 1947. With the Cold War under way, there was not, however, a substantial interference of the superpowers in this process. The Indian nationalist movement was building up since the 1930s and become more active during the World War II, despite British harsh repression. The United Kingdom's incapacity to forge alliances with the Indian elites intensified the process of transference of power, sealing the end of the British *jewel in the crown*⁶.

In other regions of Asia and Africa, the Dutch, French and Portuguese were not so sensible to the nationalist elites. If Indira Ghandi and Jawaharlal Nehru were able to get India's Independence, Vietnamese Ho Chi Min and Indonesian Sukarno were strongly repressed. Even the United Kingdom decided to keep its control on Malaysia and Singapore, as well as in its African territories. In this first decolonization wave in Asia, within an absolute chaotic and fast-changing environment, the beginning of Cold War was something unimaginable, both for the anticolonial and imperial actors, and even for the United States and Soviet Union. Concerned with the evolution of the situation in Western Europe, both superpowers took a moment to adjust the events in Asia within the Cold War framework. The US, although understanding the radical nature of some movements, hesitated in openly supporting their European allies maintenance of their colonial empires. The American objective passed by

⁴ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 86-87.

⁵ Mark Philip Bradley, "Decolonization, the Global south and the Cold War, 1919-1962", in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. by Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 472.

⁶ William Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Decolonization", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 22 (3) (1994), 462-511.

encouraging their allies to improve the economic and social conditions of the dependent territories, putting definitely aside anachronistic development conceptions⁷.

Mao Tse-Tung's arrival to power in China, in 1949, and the beginning of the Korean War in 1950 contributed to truly combine the Cold War dynamics and the process of decolonization. In Vietnam, China began supporting Ho Chi Min forces fighting the French, leading the US to unquestionably support their European allies, at least in those areas that, like Indochina, were of strategic interest for the West. From this moment on, the Cold War contributed for the European resistance to the decolonization⁸. After the Korean War, the developments in Asia and Africa were seen mainly through the Cold War lenses, either by the United States as by the Soviet Union, which was followed, immediately, by China and all the other Third World countries. Based on the modernization theory principles, by which the economic and social development of the population and the preservation of the liberal system was the best way of preventing communist infiltration, the United States tried to influence the European colonial powers and the newly-independent countries to follow the North-American model. In the case of the colonial powers, the 1948 Marshall Plan was the clear example of this policy, having even a special program (Point IV) dedicated to the developing countries, very similar to the one applied in Europe. This reflected the need of implementing a policy which had a direct economic and social impact, but that largely ignored the Third World concerns regarding its own political evolution towards self-determination. From the Western point of view, discarding of the colonial empires seemed to be out of question⁹.

Later on, already during the Eisenhower administration, the United States continued to insist that their European allies should invest on the political and economic development of the colonial societies. At the same time, they tried to appeal the newly independent countries to their political bloc, not understanding that an eventual interest of these countries in the American economic model did not correspond to an extension of the cooperation at the political and diplomatic level. Besides this, and having in mind that Cold War was disputed mainly in Europe, in

⁷ Mark Philip Bradley, "Decolonization, the Global south and the Cold War, 1919-1962", in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. by Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 473.

⁸ Martin Thomas, *Crises of Empire. Decolonization and Europe's imperial state, 1918-1975* (Londres: Hodder Education, 2008), pp. 48-49.

⁹ John Kent, "United States Reactions to Empire, Colonialism, and the Cold War in Black Africa, 1949-1957", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 33 (2) (2005), pp. 195-220.

particular in Germany, the North-American political elites ended up by focusing mainly in the European issues, leaving behind the Third World problems. Thus, they tended to be more sensitive to the European colonial powers' appeals, which argued that they needed their empires in order to stimulate their economic recovery¹⁰.

The intensification of the bipolar conflict and the growing impact it had on the Third World disputes prompted the formation of an alternative position regarding decolonization. In Bandung, in 1955, the main anticolonial leaders defined a new transnational ideological base, which would allow the Asian and African to be protected from the bipolar rivalry. Thus, Bandung created an alternative international order, built by countries which had their colonial past as common ground. In this sense, as the Cold War reached stalemate in Europe, the superpowers spread their ideological competition towards Third World, which proved to be a fertile ground¹¹.

In fact, during the 1960s, the United States, the Soviet Union and also China saw the newly independent Third World countries as stages where their dispute was to be fought. Despite the post-colonial Third World leaders' insistence on following a non-aligned path, they were dragged into this ideological conflict, which was fought between different development models. Thus, Cold War competition was magnified in the post-colonial regions of Asia and Africa, mainly because it overemphasized the local conflicts, which had much more to do with local explanations than with ideological differences¹².

Portugal and the colonial issue in the Cold War

Since the nineteenth century, Portuguese political elites defended the idea that it was impossible for Portugal to survive without the colonial empire, because it would be inevitably absorbed by Spain. Therefore, Portuguese nationalist ideology saw in the construction of the colonial system the "preservation of a historical heritage and a guarantee for the nation's existence". At the same time, the Estado Novo regime

¹⁰ Mark Philip Bradley, "Decolonization, the Global south and the Cold War, 1919-1962", in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. by Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 477.

¹¹ Michael Latham (2010), "The Cold War in the Third World, 1963-1975", in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 258-259.

¹² Michael Latham (2010), "The Cold War in the Third World, 1963-1975", in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 279-280.

stimulated a nationalistic response to Portuguese colonial policy that reached its heights with the Colonial Act passed in 1930¹³. This law reassured the Portuguese sovereignty in the colonial territories stating that it was an “organic essence” of Portugal to possess and to colonize overseas territories and to “civilize native populations”¹⁴. Until World War II, the Portuguese regime created a “true imperial mystic” that could serve as a way of self-affirmation of Portugal abroad. In an era of imperial scramble in Europe, as well as in Africa and Asia, Salazar’s government tried to create a strong connection between the colonial question, the regime and national identity¹⁵. From this moment on, the colonial issue was interconnected with the regime.

The transformation occurred in the international system after World War II forced the Portuguese regime to make some changes in the way Portugal wanted foreign countries to perceive its colonial policy. Salazar’s “natural distrust” regarding the US power, especially because of US anti-colonial positions, made him foresee that the attack to colonial empires was about to begin. Lisbon saw in the strategic importance of the Portuguese Atlantic islands, mainly the Azores, a way to improve the relation with the new world power. Portugal’s invitation to be a founding member of NATO made clear that the United States wanted the Portuguese insertion in the Western Alliance, even though it was a dictatorship. This allowed *Estado Novo* to be able to pursue its traditional guideline in foreign policy: the Atlantic vocation and a preferential alliance with a maritime power that would contribute to the maintenance of the colonial empire. The integration of Portugal in the North Atlantic Pact gave to the regime a statute of equality among the other European powers¹⁶.

After 1949, Oliveira Salazar changed the Constitution trying to substitute the classic imperial idea of the interwar period. Portugal reinforced its colonial assimilationist conception, with the colonies becoming Overseas Provinces, which formed with the European territories a “united and indivisible” nation. This reform

¹³ Valentim Alexandre, “O Império Colonial”, in *Portugal Contemporâneo*, edited by António Costa Pinto (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2004), pp. 67-86.

¹⁴ Decree-Law No. 22 465. Quoted by Cláudia Castelo, *O Modo Português de estar no Mundo: O Luso-Tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933-1961)* (Lisboa: Edições Afrontamento, 1998), p. 46.

¹⁵ Cláudia Castelo, *O Modo Português de estar no Mundo: O Luso-Tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933-1961)* (Lisboa: Edições Afrontamento, 1998), p. 47.

¹⁶ Nuno Teixeira, “Entre África e a Europa: a Política Externa Portuguesa, 1890-2000”, in *Portugal Contemporâneo*, edited by António Costa Pinto (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2004), pp. 87-116. See also António Telo, *Portugal e a NATO: o reencontro da tradição atlântica* (Lisboa: Edições Cosmos, 1996).

maintained, however, the Native Statute, taking apart citizenship for the majority of the colonized people¹⁷. In overall, we can say that the reorganization of Portuguese colonial empire after World War II tried to prove that Portugal could only survive as an intercontinental block. For the Portuguese political elites, in the Cold War world there was no space for small countries because world tended to assist for the constitution of great territorial blocks, economically strong and politically united. In other words, in this world “smaller nations felt oppressed” and tended to be absorbed by powerful countries or blocs¹⁸.

The great importance that the Portuguese regime attached to its colonial empire made it resist by the use of force to the decolonizing movement. Mainly after 1955, with Portugal’s admission to the United Nations Organization, the Portuguese colonial policy began to be strongly criticised by the international community. The *Estado Novo* refusal of decolonization and the decision to defend its empire by force favoured a diversification of the Portuguese traditional alliances. In fact, the new US policy towards Africa, defined after the Suez Crisis and which favoured an exit of European powers from the continent, created a period of increased tension to the American-Portuguese relations. Facing United States’ pressure forced Portugal to react, refusing the renovation of the Azores agreement. This situation endured from 1962 to 1971 and ultimately increased the gap between Washington and Lisbon¹⁹.

In the end of the 1950’s, the Portuguese foreign policy gradually shifted from a strong relation regarding the Atlantic powers (United Kingdom and United States) towards the continental countries (France and Federal Republic of Germany), which were already economically and politically recovered from World War II. By becoming closer to France and West Germany, Portugal sought to compensate the political and military support given until then by the US and NATO, turning its back from its Atlantic tradition and embracing a European continental stance. It is within this context that we understand French and German relations with Portugal during the 1960s²⁰.

¹⁷ Valentim Alexandre, “O Império Colonial”, in *Portugal Contemporâneo*, edited by António Costa Pinto (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2004), pp. 67-86.

¹⁸ Alberto Franco Nogueira, *A Luta pelo Oriente* (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Políticos e Sociais, 1957), p. 97.

¹⁹ António Telo, “As Guerras de África e a mudança nos apoios internacionais de Portugal”, *Revista de História das Ideias*, 16 (1995), 347-369, p. 368.

²⁰ António Telo, “As Guerras de África e a mudança nos apoios internacionais de Portugal”, *Revista de História das Ideias*, 16 (1995), 347-369, p. 368.

This shift reflects the major concern of Portugal regarding its colonial policy. As the United States were not able, either by domestic or external reasons, to assure the support to the maintenance of the Portuguese colonial empire, there was no alternative to Lisbon but to adopt a more pragmatic and flexible foreign policy. It would always be sympathetic with the Western values, as long as that did not threatened Portuguese interests in Third World. Whenever the Portuguese sovereignty was put to test outside Europe, Portugal would search for an alternative support, assuming an autonomous position towards the Atlantic power, also as a way to assure the preservation of the Portuguese colonial policy. Simultaneously, the disposition of France and West Germany towards Portugal can be understood as a reflection of the search for a “progressive autonomy” of the Western countries regarding the United States²¹.

French and West German position regarding the Portuguese resistance to decolonization

The above mentioned diversification of alliances in Portuguese foreign policy was only possible due to the good will of France and FRG towards the Portuguese colonial policy. On the one hand, France and Portugal shared since the 1930's a common position regarding their colonial empire, namely sharing the assimilationist principles. During the World War II, there was even some ideological closeness of Portugal with the Vichy regime, which contributed for an understanding between the two countries²². However, and contrary to what one may think, this understanding was not broken after France's liberation. The two countries' cooperation was constant until 1974, based on the fact that both shared common interests in Africa. Portugal had a tough policy of resisting decolonization while France saw Africa as one of its strategic areas of influence²³.

²¹ John Lewis Gaddis defines progressive autonomy as something that the countries within each bloc tried to obtain especially in the end of the 1950s. In the Soviet bloc, the main example is People's Republic of China. In the Western bloc, De Gaulle's France shows the progressive difficulty that the US had in controlling their allies. Gradually, the “weak were discovering opportunities to confront the strong”. John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (New York: Allen Lane, 2005), pp. 119-155.

²² Conferir Helena Pinto Janeiro, *Salazar e Pétain: as relações luso-francesas durante a II Guerra Mundial (1940-1944)* (Lisboa: Edições Cosmos, 1998), p. 203.

²³ Amaral da Silva Lala, ‘L'enjeu colonial dans les relations franco-portugaises, 1944-1974’ (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Institute d'Études Politiques de Paris, 2007), p. 28.

On the other hand, West Germany was founded in 1949 as a direct consequence of its occupation after World War II. The firm decision of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in binding the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to the Western bloc marked the first years of West German foreign policy. In 1955, FRG was finally admitted in NATO and recognized as an autonomous international actor. Due to its sensitive position (a divided country in a divided Europe), Bonn's main concern was with the stability of the Western bloc. The conservative elites ruling the country had always demonstrated a particular respect and admiration towards Salazar, the Portuguese Prime-Minister, who represented the spirit of «old Europe», namely in its conservative, catholic character²⁴. Besides this personal dimension, West Germany was particularly interested on the political stability of Portugal and the maintenance of the regime, in order to avoid any possibility of a communist takeover, which might spread to Spain²⁵.

These were the two starting points for the role these countries played in the Portuguese resistance to the decolonization process. France and Portugal had in common a colonial empire, which would face the same type of challenges. Although the two countries found somewhat distinct answers to these challenges, they had a similar view regarding their interests in the Third World. West Germany, for its turn, was mainly concerned with the international impact of the Portuguese colonial problem, which led Bonn to develop an ambivalent policy regarding this issue.

*French and Portuguese cooperation in the colonial issue*²⁶

For both Portugal and France, the beginning of the decolonization movement after World War II was perceived as a threat for their role in world affairs. In reaction to this, both countries tried to resist granting self-determination to their colonies and saw every international development towards decolonization as a threat. Therefore, the approval of the United Nations Charter as well as the Marshall Plan initiatives regarding the developing of European dependent territories was considered truly

²⁴ Ana Mónica Fonseca, “A República Federal da Alemanha e a política colonial do Estado Novo no início da década de 1960”, in *Outros Horizontes. Encontros Luso-Alemães em contextos coloniais*, edited by Fernando Clara (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2005), pp. 65-78.

²⁵ Ana Mónica Fonseca, *A Força das Armas: o apoio da República Federal da Alemanha ao Estado Novo (1958-1969)* (Lisboa: Instituto Diplomático, 2007).

²⁶ A previous draft version of this topic was published in *Portuguese Studies Review*, 16 (2) (2008), 103-119, pp. 106-111.

suspicious by both Paris and Lisbon governments. This situation allowed the beginning of a technical and economic cooperation between the two countries in international forums such as the African Commission for Technical Cooperation²⁷.

Additionally, for Portugal, France's traditional Christian and colonial heritage was perceived as an alternative for the American cultural supremacy in the Western alliance. However, what could be seen as a perfect conjunction for cooperation was affected by the different nature of the political system in both countries. Portugal assisted with deep sorrow France's departure from Indochina in 1954, from Tunisia and Morocco in 1956 and African Algeria in the early 1960s²⁸. Contrary to what happened in democratic France, Portuguese resistance to decolonization was mainly explained by the authoritarian nature of its regime. It was the *Estado Novo*'s political elites and Oliveira Salazar himself who decided to resist by force to the self-determination of the Portuguese empire, mainly because it was inconsistent with the nationalist ideology of the regime²⁹.

Despite these differences, until the end of Portuguese colonial empire, France and Portugal developed a common share of interests. Together, they tried to avoid the attacks that both countries suffered in the United Nations (France until leaving Algeria, in 1962; Portugal until the end of the *Estado Novo*, in 1974). On the other hand, and of particular importance for France, supporting Portugal meant to help a country in its dispute with the United States because of its colonial policy. Finally, and most importantly, it represented assisting a country that had an important presence in Africa, a region that France considered of strategic importance. These were the main reasons why Portugal and France deepened their political and military cooperation, in the final years of the Portuguese empire³⁰.

Notwithstanding, the first years of the Gaullist era in France were followed by Salazar's regime with some concern. In 1958, Charles de Gaulle came to power broadly defending authority, order and strength of the governmental control, which

²⁷ Commission de Coopération Technique Africaine (CCTA). Amaral da Silva Lala, 'L'enjeu colonial dans les relations franco-portugaises, 1944-1974' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Institute d'Études Politiques de Paris, 2007), pp. 60-88.

²⁸ Amaral da Silva Lala, 'L'enjeu colonial dans les relations franco-portugaises, 1944-1974' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Institute d'Études Politiques de Paris, 2007), p.80 and Sandrine Bègue, *La Fin de Goa et de l'Estado da Índia: Décolonisation et Guerre Froide dans le Sous-Continent Indien (1945-1962)*, Vol. 1 (Lisboa: Instituto Diplomático, 2007), pp. 555-557.

²⁹ Pinto, António C. *O Fim do Império Português: a cena internacional, a guerra colonial e a descolonização, 1961-1975* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2001), p. 86.

³⁰ Daniel Marcos, *Salazar e de Gaulle: a França e a questão colonial Portuguesa (1958-1968)* (Lisboa: Instituto Diplomático, 2007), pp. 235-246.

was seen by the Portuguese regime as a positive change. However, the first reaction in Lisbon was of apprehension. The revision made by de Gaulle in regard to the French colonial policy, testified by the independence of French Guinea and the other colonial territories and by the developments pursued in the Algerian war, terrified the Portuguese government. Salazar's regime saw this change in the French policy as the end of an advantageous cooperation between these countries, similar to the one which happened when Britain left its Empire in Asia and Africa³¹.

Nevertheless, this didn't happen. The recognition of the right to self-determination and, therefore, of decolonization by the new French government did not mean the end of cooperation between Portugal and France, despite Salazar's rejection on that course of action. For Charles de Gaulle, ending the colonial bond with the African possessions was crucial to the new politics he wanted to pursue: the reinforcement of France as a European power with nuclear capability and, in some ways, militarily independent from American protection. Just like John Lewis Gaddis put it: France's "goal was nothing less than to break up the bipolar Cold War international system."³²

It is bearing this in mind that the relations between Portugal and the French government should fit. Charles de Gaulle tried to take advantage of the Portuguese refusal towards decolonization realizing that the isolation of Salazar's regime, despite French cooperation, could strengthen the French position in the Western World. In fact, in the beginning of 1960s, the Portuguese colonial policy was strongly condemned in the United Nations due to Portugal's obstinacy against leaving Africa³³. This situation was the beginning of a tense period in the Portuguese-American relations. In the early 1961, after the war started in Angola, the newly empowered Kennedy Administration sought to pressure the Portuguese government to transform its colonial policy in order to pave the way to self-determination. Also in the United Nations, and for the first time, the American administration voted against Portugal and in favour of Third World countries in a set of resolutions that

³¹ Daniel Marcos, "Portugal e a França na Década de 1960: A questão Colonial e o Apoio Internacional", *Relações Internacionais*, 11 (2006), 31-45, pp. 34-35.

³² John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 138.

³³ Three resolutions were approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December, 1960. These resolutions condemned the Portuguese colonial policy and demanded the decolonization of the non-self-governing territories. For a detailed description of all the UN resolutions regarding Portuguese colonial policy, see A. E. Silva, "O Litigio entre Portugal e a ONU (1960-1974)", *Análise Social* 130 (1995), 5-50.

condemned the beginning of the war in Africa.³⁴ Considering this, it is possible to say that Charles de Gaulle saw in these circumstances the “ideal occasion” to, once again, “tackle American power, condemning it by the lack of solidarity towards the European allies.”³⁵

That is why, when the Portuguese Foreign Minister Marcelo Mathias³⁶ met de Gaulle in Paris in October 1960, the French President promised to help the Portuguese struggle to keep the African territories. Informed by Mathias that Portugal would resist, at “any cost”, granting independence to its colonial possessions, the General’s reply was clear: France would “never do anything that could harm the Portuguese ideas towards its colonial possessions.”³⁷ With this statement, the French-Portuguese cooperation was clearly reinforced. In the UN, for example, the support given to Portugal by France during 1961 fits perfectly on the words of de Gaulle. As described above, if the United States were supporting the Third World countries’ resolutions against the Portuguese colonial policy, France always choose to follow an abstention position, a pattern followed until 1974.

French commitment with Portugal did go further to the point that France even tried to influence the Western superpower in regard to the Portuguese question. In May 1961, the representatives of France, the United States and United Kingdom met in London to discuss the question of Angola. On this occasion, the division between France and the US become clearer. The French position was based on the conviction that Portugal was capable of sustaining the nationalist uprisings. Thus, the attitude towards Portugal should be persuasive, only lightly pressuring Salazar to accept decolonization. According to the French, the suggestion of a softer position had the advantage of concealing from the USSR and the Third World the existence of divisions inside the Western Alliance regarding the colonial issue.³⁸ At the end of May, during the visit of the American president in Paris, de Gaulle insisted to Kennedy that the Western World shouldn’t “offend” Portugal, attacking publicly its colonial policy because that would only “instigate the unrest in Angola.” By doing

³⁴ Luís Nuno Rodrigues, *Salazar-Kennedy: a crise de uma aliança* (Lisboa: Editorial Notícias: 2002).

³⁵ Daniel Marcos, *Salazar e de Gaulle: a França e a questão colonial Portuguesa (1958-1968)* (Lisboa: Instituto Diplomático, 2007), p. 232.

³⁶ Marcello Mathias (1903-1999) was Foreign Minister between 1958 and 1961. After leaving the Ministry he was appointed as Ambassador in Paris, where he remained until 1971.

³⁷ Maurice Vaïsse, *Documents Diplomatiques Françaises, 1960* (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1996), pp. 457-458.

³⁸ Daniel Marcos, *Salazar e de Gaulle: a França e a questão colonial Portuguesa (1958-1968)* (Lisboa: Instituto Diplomático, 2007), pp. 84-95.

this, the French president invited his American counterpart to follow the French policy of “progressively encourage” Portugal to grant the independence to the colonies.³⁹ In this sense, this moderate attitude towards the Angolan question should avoid the retreat of Portugal from the Western Alliance, keeping away from the Iberian Peninsula political instability or even the establishment of a Communist regime, which would certainly happen in case of a sudden loss of the empire.

The comprehensive relation of France towards the Portuguese colonial policy led these two countries to reinforce their solid military cooperation. Moreover, some higher Portuguese military chiefs were former students of the French War Academy, which gave them a deep knowledge of French military equipment. France became one of the first alternative options when the US supplies started to become scarce. During the 1960s the Portuguese-French military cooperation allowed Portugal to obtain equipment which was indispensable to its African war effort: airplanes, helicopters, trucks, ships and submarines. Besides the *Nord-Atlas*, *Broussard* and *Harvard T-6* airplanes bought even before the Colonial War begun, Portugal acquired in France, after 1963, the famous helicopter *Allouette III*⁴⁰.

Nevertheless, the political circumstances forced France to impose some restrictions on the military supplies to Portugal. In 1962, the French government was forced by the deterioration of the Portuguese international position to limit the type of military equipment sold to Portugal. According to the French Prime-Minister, Michel Debré⁴¹, France should only sell to Portugal “strictly defensive” material such as means of transport and cargo airplanes, while the sale of equipments “capable of being used in counter-guerrilla warfare” should “rather” be refused.⁴²

However, the negotiations between Portugal and France for the construction of eight warships, four submarines and four escort vessels in 1963-64, reflected, more than ever, the interference of the political circumstances in military cooperation. In this case, Portugal had to deal with the resistances of some French ministries, mainly Finances (concerned with the stability of the French currency) and Foreign Affairs, but received a favourable attitude from the Defence Ministry. Since 1958, the

³⁹ Maurice Vaisse, *Documents Diplomatiques Françaises, 1960* (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1996), pp. 669-670.

⁴⁰ Daniel Marcos, *Salazar e de Gaulle: a França e a questão colonial Portuguesa (1958-1968)* (Lisboa: Instituto Diplomático, 2007), pp. 153-159.

⁴¹ Michel Debré (1912-1996) was French Prime-minister between 1959 and 1962.

⁴² Archive du Ministère des Affaires Étrangère de France (AMAE), Europe/Portugal (1961-1970)/Vol. 90: “Note from the Foreign Ministry”, June 1, 1970.

Portuguese Navy wanted to buy those warships from its French counterpart and, in 1960, some preliminary contact took place. Nonetheless, the beginning of the Colonial War in Angola postponed the talks until 1963 when the negotiations were resumed. Once again, what seemed to be strictly military talks suffered the constraints of the political background. Also in this year the French government presented to Portugal a proposal for the establishment of a military base in the Azores islands that would enable the French Armed Forces to test their ballistic equipment. As we will see, both issues were related and the Portuguese government had to use the French strategic and military needs in order to overcome any political resistances.

The Portuguese main objective was to obtain from France the financial support for the construction of the warships. France's first proposal, although favourable to the Portuguese government, was not welcomed by Marcelo Mathias, at this time already the Portuguese Ambassador in Paris. In his words, Portugal wanted "the payments to start as later as possible, for the longest time as possible and with the smallest rate of interest as possible" and the Portuguese diplomat was not afraid to threaten his French colleagues with the possibility of the Azores negotiations to be called off.⁴³ It was a high risk move but Portugal did accomplish its purposes. France agreed to build up eight warships with the financial operation being supported by French enterprises. Beyond this, the Portuguese Armed Forces also obtained the French government assurance for the supplying of the ammunitions to the ships for fifteen years. As Mathias wrote to Salazar, this agreement was extremely important to Portugal because it showed how good the relations between these two states were. Despite the international criticism of the Portuguese colonial policy, France "did not hesitate to prove to Portugal its friendship" and "its conviction that our policy in Africa won't lead us to a catastrophe."⁴⁴

In regard to the establishment of a French military base in the Azores, this also turned out to be a very profitable deal for the military needs of the Portuguese Armed Forces in Africa. The signing of the agreement in April 7, 1964 was a way Portugal had to return the French "friendship and loyalty" and, at the same time, it was an opportunity for Portugal "to safeguard kindly the stability of French military and

⁴³ Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo, AOS/CO/MA-5, "Telegram from the Portuguese Embassy in Paris", 1964.

⁴⁴ IAN/TT, AOS/CO/MA-5, "Communications from the Portuguese Embassy in Paris", February 29, 1964.

political support.”⁴⁵ With this *sympathetic* attitude Lisbon managed to force France to ignore the restrictions imposed on military exportations to Portugal since 1962, receiving authorization to import military equipment needed by its Armed Forces, namely rockets⁴⁶.

With these developments, the year of 1964 was the highest point of the Portuguese-French political and military cooperation. From this year on, the military relations between the two countries stagnated, although we cannot say that they got worse. Until September 1968, when Salazar left the government, France and Portugal didn't have any more outstanding moments in their relationship. Despite the French military lobby desired to increase the cooperation with Portugal, the acquisition of twelve helicopters *PUMA* in 1969 was probably the most important Portuguese purchase in the second half of the 1960s. Nevertheless, politically, France continued supporting Portugal in the United Nations, struggling along with its Iberian ally⁴⁷.

*West Germany and the Portuguese colonial issue*⁴⁸

On the contrary to what happened with France, the main element of Portuguese-West German relations was military cooperation. Initiated after FRG's admission to NATO, in 1955, this cooperation began by the establishment of a training base for West German Air Force in southern Portugal, in the end of 1960. This base, to be installed in Beja (Alentejo), would serve for the training of long-distance flight and it was part of a larger system of bases designed for logistic support in Europe, in case of war. In return for the establishment of this basis on its territory, it was agreed between Lisbon and Bonn that the German Armed Forces would order to the Portuguese military industries (especially to the Fábrica Nacional de Braço de Prata – FNBP) the production of a large amount of ammunitions and hand grenades. One of the most important elements of this agreement was the commitment of the German Defence Ministry that the FRG would “always keep the Portuguese military production units

⁴⁵ “Letter from Marcelo Mathias to Oliveira Salazar”, in *Correspondência Marcelo Mathias/Salazar, 1947/1968*, edited by Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão (Lisboa: Difel, 1984), pp. 465-466.

⁴⁶ Daniel Marcos, *Salazar e de Gaulle: a França e a questão colonial Portuguesa (1958-1968)* (Lisboa: Instituto Diplomático, 2007), pp. 202-206.

⁴⁷ Amaral da Silva Lala, ‘L'enjeu colonial dans les relations franco-portugaises, 1944-1974’ (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Institute d'Études Politiques de Paris, 2007), pp. 323-401.

⁴⁸ A previous draft version of this topic was published in *Portuguese Studies Review*, 16 (2) (2008), 103-119, pp. 111-117.

occupied with substantial orders”.⁴⁹ Therefore, these industries would always be operative and able to produce weapons and ammunitions for the Portuguese Armed Forces. As a consequence of this commitment, Lisbon had only to pay the production costs, since the maintenance expenses were already covered by the German compromise. The two ministers of Defence, Júlio Botelho Moniz and Franz Joseph Strauss signed the final agreement for the establishment of the Beja Airfield in December 1960⁵⁰.

However, the fact that, only three months after the signature of this long-term compromise between Bonn and Lisbon, the colonial wars erupted in Angola gave to this otherwise regular cooperation between two NATO Allies a completely different character. Confronted with the Portuguese refusal in recognizing the right to self-determination of its colonial possessions, the Federal Republic found itself divided as to what attitude to take. On the one hand, the strategic importance of Portugal to the Atlantic alliance was something that Bonn could not overlook. In other words, it concerned the importance of supporting a NATO ally, strongly anti-communist and that controlled one of the main elements of Western – and most importantly, West German – security: the Azores. At the same time, the West German leaders feared that, in case of losing the empire, the whole regime of the Estado Novo would fall apart, causing a void of power, which would allow a communist takeover in Portugal. Such an event would certainly reach Spain, thus bringing an enormous risk of political instability to the whole Iberian Peninsula, something that Bonn could not accept. Moreover, acting this way, Germany believed it was showing to Salazar that he was not alone in the Western World, despite the difficulties created by some other European allies, as well as by the Kennedy’s administration. In this sense, it is clear that a Portuguese retreat from NATO was something to be avoided at all costs by the German government⁵¹.

On the other hand, the Federal Republic of Germany was trying to enter in Africa, with the objective of gaining some leverage over the Afro-Asian bloc. Besides the economic interests (mainly related to the access to raw materials and to the exportation of German products), Bonn had the objective of avoiding the international

⁴⁹ IAN/TT, AOS/CO/GR-10, “Report of the conversations between the Defense Ministers of Portugal and the Federal Republic of Germany”, January 16, 1960.

⁵⁰ Ana Mónica Fonseca, *A Força das Armas: o apoio da República federal da Alemanha ao Estado Novo (1958-1968)* (Lisboa: Instituto Diplomático, 2007), p. 43-53.

⁵¹ Ana Mónica Fonseca, “Dez anos de Relações Luso-alemãs: 1958-1968”, *Relações Internacionais*, 11 (2006), 47-60, pp. 51-52.

recognition of the «other Germany», the German Democratic Republic (GDR), at the same time that it tried to gain the support of the new African states to the federal government in the issues regarding Berlin (which became even more relevant after the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961)⁵². Bonn then developed a broad range of instruments to gain the attention of the developing countries in Asia and Africa, which were mainly applied through the so-called “development aid”. In early 1960s it was created the Ministry of Economic Cooperation⁵³ with the main objective of managing the funds given by the federal government to this purpose⁵⁴. As we can see, Bonn’s position regarding the Portuguese colonial policy was always conditioned by the Cold War, either by the importance of the political stability in the Iberian Peninsula, or by the competition with Eastern German in the Third World.

Bearing this in mind, the solution was to follow an ambiguous policy. Bonn decided not to take any attitude that could challenge the Portuguese colonial policy, at the same time it tried to avoid any action that could be understood by the Third World as a support to the maintenance of the Portuguese empire. The result of this ambiguity was an extremely favourable policy towards Portugal. In what concerned the military cooperation, since the beginning of 1961, a large number of airplanes, weapons and ammunitions were given to Portugal during the decade. The most important airplanes were the *Dornier DO-27* and the *Harvard T-6*, the first suited for transportation and the second used as bomber. The *Dorniers DO-27* were later transformed in Portugal in order to be able to make recognition flights as well as surveillance operations with armed support to the ground forces⁵⁵. Although the German authorities knew that these airplanes were to be sent to Africa, they trusted in the Portuguese declaration stating that “the planes belonged to the Portuguese Defence Ministry and should be used accordingly to the spirit of NATO.”⁵⁶ This declaration, requested by the German government as a guarantee, was intentionally ambiguous and it could be understood in many senses, which favoured both the Portuguese and German interests. From the

⁵² Ana Monica Fonseca, “Dez anos de Relações Luso-alemãs: 1958-1968”, *Relações Internacionais*, 11 (2006), 47-60, pp. 51-52.

⁵³ *Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit*, BMZ

⁵⁴ Bastian Hein, *Die Westdeutschen und die Dritte Welt. Entwicklungspolitik und Entwicklungsdienst zwischen Reform und Revolte, 1959-1974*, (Oldenburg: Institute für Zeitgeschichte, 2004), p. 38-41.

⁵⁵ John P. Cann, *Contra-Insurreição em África. 1961-1974. O modo português de fazer a guerra*. (Lisbon: Edições Atena, 1998), p. 177; *Politisches Archiv von Auswaertiges Amt*, B 26, 113, “Note of the Auswaertiges Amt”, October 6, 1961.

⁵⁶ *AHD-MNE*, PEA, M. 486, “Telegram 132 from the Portuguese Embassy in Bonn”, October 18, 1963.

Portuguese point of view, it corresponded to the reality, because the Portuguese ideology stated that the defence of Europe should begin in Africa, and Salazar believed that the Colonial Wars were also a way of preventing the Soviet influence on the African territories. On the other hand, this declaration also suited the German government, allowing it to say to the African states, who accused it of helping Portugal in the Colonial Wars, that Salazar's government had given an assurance for the use of the equipment only inside NATO region⁵⁷.

A good example of the advantageous cooperation between Portugal and the Federal Republic of Germany are the agreements of November 4, 1963, in which the FRG sold to the Portuguese Air Force a total amount of 46 *Dornier DO-27* and 70 *Harvard T-6*. These airplanes were sold at a low price to Portugal and were paid with the maintenance of the German airplanes in *Oficinas Gerais de Manutenção Aeronáutica* (OGMA). As we can see, the Portuguese government would not have to give any money for the airplanes; it was a direct exchange of services – with much more valuable revenue to Portugal than to Germany⁵⁸.

With the changing of the international context and with the German persistence to penetrate the African continent, in the second half of the 1960s the Portuguese-German relations declined. The pressures of the African states and the economic crisis of the period, as well as the arrival into power of the SPD (in coalition with the CDU/CSU) in December 1966, caused the reduction of the Beja Base project with consequences to the whole military relations. Mainly because of its economic difficulties, the German government decided to reduce the Beja Airfield project, giving to Portugal, nonetheless, a final reward. As compensation for abandoning the base, the German Defence Ministry sold to Portugal – at a very convenient price – 30 *Dornier DO-27* and allowed the establishment of conversations between Lisbon and *Dornier* in order to make possible the production of the airplanes in Portugal. In May 1969, already with Marcelo Caetano as head of government, Portugal and Germany agreed that the Beja Air Base would become a training base for civil aviation companies, namely TAP and Lufthansa. All the other projects, including the residential area, hospitals and the ammunitions storehouse, were either abandoned or dramatically reduced.

⁵⁷ Ana Mónica Fonseca, *A Força das Armas: o apoio da República federal da Alemanha ao Estado Novo (1958-1968)* (Lisboa: Instituto Diplomático, 2007), p. 165.

⁵⁸ AHFA, EMFA, Proc. nº 551,13 – Agreement between the Federal Ministry of Defense and Portuguese National Defense Ministry, November, 04, 1963.

Indeed, the German Social-democrats' arrival to power in Bonn coincided with the deceleration of the Portuguese-German military cooperation. While in the opposition, the SPD had even developed some contacts with the liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies. However, when in government, and despite having their leader, Willy Brandt, in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Social-democrats did not have the political space to dramatically change the relations with Portugal. Adding to this, there was now a spread belief that the best way to favour the political evolution of the Portuguese regime was to attract it towards Europe and the EEC, in which West Germany played a fundamental role. Thus, the arrival of the SPD to power would not mean a radical interruption of the relationship between Portugal and FRG⁵⁹.

This was even more obvious after 1969, when the SPD became the majority party in Bonn (in coalition with the Liberals). Despite actively pursuing an understanding with the Eastern bloc and Soviet Union (which was obtained in mid-1970s), Bonn continued this ambiguous position regarding the Portuguese colonial policy. In fact, the division inside the government was even larger now. The Foreign Affairs Minister, the Liberal Walter Scheel, sustained that the military cooperation should be preserved, as it was “the only realistic and adequate alternative for the Western Alliance strategic objectives *and* the West German economic interests”⁶⁰. On the contrary, the Minister for Economic Cooperation, Erhard Eppler (from the left-wing of the SPD), argued that it was time to end the military cooperation with Portugal and that Bonn should begin supporting the African liberation movements, which was eventually done by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation⁶¹. However, once again, this division had no direct results on the Portuguese-German relations. Despite the decreasing of the military cooperation, the participation of West German

⁵⁹ Antonio Muñoz Sanchez, “La Socialdemocracia alemana y el Estado Novo (1961-1974)”, *Portuguese Studies Review* 13 (1-2) (2005), p. 484.

⁶⁰ “Memorando do Ministério Federal dos Negócios Estrangeiros sobre a Cooperação militar luso-alemã”, 16 de Novembro de 1970, Akten der Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (AAPBRD), 1970, pp. 2069-2070.

⁶¹ The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) is a political foundation associated with the SPD, which developed intense international activity. Particularly during this period, the FES represented the left wing of the Social-Democratic Party. One of the most obvious examples of this is the fact that it became public that the Foundation was giving moral and financial support to the nationalist movements of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea. See Patrick von zur Mühlen, *Die internationale Arbeit der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des Ost-West-Konflikts* (Bonn, Dietz Verlag, 2007).

companies in the construction of the Cahora-Bassa Dam was an important signal of continuity⁶².

Only in September 1973, when both Germanies were admitted to the United Nations, did the federal government publicly criticize the Portuguese colonial policy. Aware that the GDR would, most certainly, support any type of radical resolution against Portugal in the UN General Assembly, thus supporting African ambitions, which would reinforce East Germany's leverage on the Third World, Brandt had to decide whether maintain the ambiguous, and increasingly more difficult, policy of cooperation with Portugal, thus facing the criticism in the international arena, and even of his own Party, or to radically change the Federal Government's position. The increasing criticism of the SPD and of the Social-democrat youth, on the one hand; and publication of the *Times*' article denouncing the Wiryamu massacre, in Mozambique, in the summer of 1973, left no option to Chancellor Willy Brandt: in September, 1973, Brandt declared in the UN General Assembly FRG's support "to the liquidation by the United Nations of the remaining colonialism, especially in Africa"⁶³.

As we can see, the relations between Portugal and the Federal Republic of Germany during the 1960s were based essentially on the military aspects. These were of greater importance to the Portuguese regime's colonial policy, mainly because they were fundamental for the maintenance of the wars in Africa. Despite West Germany's constant dilemma between supporting Portugal and penetrating in Africa, we can say that the cooperation with Portugal was favoured. Contrary to what one may think the arrival of the SPD to power (first, in the Grand Coalition, then as the majority party) did not affect deeply the economic and military cooperation between Bonn and Lisbon, as the West German participation on the Cahora-Bassa Damm attested. Only when it had to take a public position regarding the Portuguese colonialism, did the FRG opt by criticising its ally, always having in mind the constraints of the Cold War and in particularly the competition with Eastern Germany.

⁶² Rui Lopes, 'Between Cold War and the Colonial Wars: the making of West German Policy towards the Portuguese dictatorship, 1968-1974' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011).

⁶³ By referring directly to *the* remaining colonialism, there was no doubt that this was a reference to Portugal. Thomas Kreyssig, *Die Portugal Politik der SPD*, p. 35

Final remarks: Cold War and the Diversification of Portuguese alliances in order to resist Decolonization

Decolonization and Cold War were two parallel processes that characterized the second half of the 20th century. Even though decolonization was a social and political process that pre-dated the beginning of Cold War, the ideological competition between the superpowers in the early 1950s quickly affected the struggle for independence of the colonial territories. For a small country as Portugal, which attached major importance to its colonial possessions, the decolonization movement that followed the end of World War II caused great apprehension. Fearing that the end of the empire would conduct to both the end of the regime and the loss of Portugal's importance in Europe, the *Estado Novo* took advantage of its authoritarian nature, resisting to granting any kind of self-determination to its colonies.

This was also possible due to Portugal's insertion in the Western bloc. Being a founding member of the Atlantic Alliance, mainly because the geostrategic position of the Azores, the Cold War constraints led Portugal to establish close relations with the main Atlantic power, the United States, even though Salazar's natural distrust regarding Washington's traditional anti-colonial position.

However, as the developments in Third World increased the pressure over the European colonial powers, Portugal clearly understood that it would have to find alternative support to the maintenance of its colonial policy. Taking advantage of the close relationship with France and FRG, within NATO, Portugal gradually shifted its foreign policy towards the continental European countries. But why choose France and West Germany?

Both Paris and Lisbon decided to keep their colonial territories for as long as it was possible. However, France eventually abandoned its empire, in the beginning of the 1960s. But this did not mean that these two countries should follow separate paths regarding the decolonization issue. In fact, there were two distinct reasons behind French support to Portugal in its international dispute against the anti-colonial movement. First, because France continued to see Africa as one of its strategic areas of interest and as such it would not abstain from taking a position in this region. Secondly, and most importantly, De Gaulle's France opted openly to show a high degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the United States. When the Atlantic superpower demonstrated that it was not willing to support Portugal, even voting against its ally in

the United Nations, France immediately accused Washington of abandoning Portugal. Inversely, France would assume its responsibility in supporting Portugal, both politically and military.

West Germany, in turn, supported Portugal mainly for reasons related with the stability of the Western bloc. Indeed, the German-Portuguese cooperation derived directly from the participation of both countries in NATO. However, after the beginning of the colonial wars, FRG decided to maintain the close relationship it had with the *Estado Novo*. In this decision, Bonn faced a typical Cold War dilemma, divided between supporting a Western ally and penetrating in Africa, a region increasingly important, not only for economic reasons, but mainly for reasons related to the competition with the German Democratic Republic. Only in the beginning of the 1970s did the West German support to the Portuguese regime's colonial policy diminished in its importance, once again due to the evolution of the Cold War and the admission of both Germanies to the United Nations.

Therefore, the Cold War constraints were the main motives which led to the support of France and West Germany to the Portuguese colonial policy, and that, conversely, allowed for the survival of *Estado Novo* until 1974.