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French and German support to Portugal: the military survival of the «Estado Novo» (1958-1968)

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Abstract

When the colonial wars erupted in Angola in 1961, Salazar's regime was already preparing the military reaction to the nationalist movements. In this article, we will show how the diplomatic and political manoeuvres allowed Portugal to embrace in a colonial war that would last for thirteen years, fought in three different territories.

Forced by the anti-colonialism of the United States to seek for new supports, the Estado Novo turned itself into the European powers, France and the Federal Republic of Germany, to obtain the military equipment it needed. This represented a major change in the foreign policy strategy of Portugal. Without this successful diplomatic effort, the Portuguese Armed Forces would never have the minimum conditions to fight the Colonial Wars.

French and German support to Portugal: the military survival of the «Estado Novo» (1958-1968)

Nowadays, historiography has proved that the last years of Estado Novo were marked by the military circumstances¹. In fact, Portuguese resistance to decolonization and a long and wasting war fought in three different and separated regions led to the end of Portuguese authoritarian regime in 1974. Although all these constraints, Portugal resisted during thirteen years to decolonization. This resistance was only possible due to a deep change in the Portuguese political environment. In the next pages, we will show how the Portuguese alliance to two democratic European countries, France and Germany, assured the political and military survival of one of the last authoritarian dictatorships in Western Europe.

Despite not being one of the direct contenders in World War II, Portugal suffered deeply from its consequences. The change of the international context and the beginning of the Cold War caused inevitably the readjustment of the Portuguese foreign policy. Although successful, this adaptation was influenced by the obstinacy of Oliveira Salazar², head of the Portuguese government, who did not see with good eyes the change of the Atlantic power from England to the United States. The main reason for this attitude of the Portuguese Prime-minister was his awareness of the favorable American position towards decolonization because, sooner or later, he expected the US to pressure his government to disengage the so-called *Overseas Territories*. Despite the regime's colonial policy, Portugal was admitted to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), above all, because of its strategic position, namely of the Azores islands. For Salazar, the Empire was the basis of «Estado Novo» ideology and the *Overseas Territories* should be recognized by the western allies as the most important strategic element of this Iberian country. Portugal even tried to include its African colonies in NATO's defensive area, which would allow the support of the Atlantic Alliance in case of a military attack.³ However, for the US the Portuguese importance in the Western World was not in its Empire but in the Azores.

The participation of Portugal in the Atlantic Alliance enabled the modernization of the Portuguese Armed Forces and the establishment of a new organizational mentality that shaped Portuguese performance in the Colonial Wars. On one hand, the techniques and armament received from the Western Allies made possible the re-organization of the Armed Forces creating, for the first time, a real defense policy. The establishment of the Ministry of Defense (instead of the previous Ministry of War) and the creation of the Supreme Chief of the Armed Forces post were two major consequences of this reform. Above all, this meant the reinforcement of the political power over the military authorities which were now particularly constrained by the foreign policy guidelines. On the other hand, the attitude brought by a new generation of officials, formed by NATO, along with their flexibility in the adaptation to different forms of war, was determinant to the Portuguese conflict against the African nationalist guerrillas. After 1951, a major renovation in the Portuguese military structure began, which allowed the formation of a new Army, smaller and with a significant aeronautical element, sponsored by NATO.⁴

With the Suez Canal Crisis, in 1956, the last attempt to revive the European colonialism, Salazar's regime finally understood that the development of the African nationalism in the Colonial Empire was only a matter of time. The British, French and

Israeli operation against the Egyptian nationalization of the Canal concerned both superpowers, revealing, at the same time, the importance that the Third World would achieve over the next decades. The President of the United States, Dwight Eisenhower, trying to avoid the clash between the superpowers, forced its European allies to withdraw from the Canal, ending immediately with the military operations. This humiliation imposed by the United States on the two most important military powers in Europe made clear to Salazar that he could not depend on the US for the defense of the Portuguese colonies. From this moment on, it was necessary to find new alliances and to prepare the Armed Forces for a war in Africa.

In fact, in Washington, the biggest problem was the Cold War and the clash with USSR, but in the European countries the biggest difficulty was to deal with nationalist guerrillas that made the colonies increasingly ungovernable. The “strategic headache” of these countries was the national independence movements and “not Moscow and its ambitions – though in some cases the two overlapped”.⁵ Even though, both Britain and France gave up their Empire and in the beginning of the 1960s there were only few remains of their colonial domination. But the Portuguese leader, Oliveira Salazar, refused to follow his western allies. The national territory was not only the «European Portugal», but also and essentially Azores, Madeira and all the Overseas Provinces, as the colonies were known. The Portugal “from Minho to Timor” should not be divided, and therefore the nationalist unrest was to be fought intensively.

From the end of 1956 until 1961, the Portuguese government approved new laws, creating new military regions in Angola and Mozambique and increasing the number of military units. Also, the Defense Minister, Santos Costa⁶, visited the African colonies to analyze the situation, coming to the conclusion that the Portuguese Armed Forces needed, above all, tactical air-transportation equipment that would allow an easier mobility of the ground forces as well as surveillance operations. The Portuguese government asked Washington to give some these airplanes as if it were for the NATO’s Military Assistance Program. However, the American government refused this request, suspecting that the airplanes would be used in Africa, leaving an empty space in the Portuguese military ambitions. The only solution left to Portugal was to try to replace the American equipments by the European ones which were more expensive and not so suited for counter-guerilla operations. Portugal started to buy in the Federal Republic of Germany and in France some of the equipment refused by the United States. But, when the Colonial War erupted, in 1961, the Portuguese Armed Forces were still unprepared and barely equipped to face the conflict.

In retrospect, we can say that the Portuguese government was preparing for the Colonial Wars since 1956 but the absence of support from the United States limited overwhelmingly the results of this effort. To fill in the void originated by the US refusal, Lisbon had to search for new military cooperation, turning to France and the Federal Republic of Germany. This moment marked a true change in the traditional Portuguese alliances, moving from the Atlantic to continental Europe. This meant that the traditional foreign policy guidelines, that had always privileged the alliance with an Atlantic power (United Kingdom and later, the United States) were dramatically inverted towards continental European powers. It is the political consequences of this “inversion of alliances”⁷ that this article sets out to explain. As we will see, the military cooperation between Portugal and each of these two countries was determined by the development of Portuguese foreign policy as well as the Colonial War.

France: From political support to military assistance

The relations between Portugal and France have centuries of history and we can say that, in the 1960s, this friendship was better than ever. Besides being NATO's allies, the French regime of the Fourth Republic and the Portuguese regime of Salazar had problems in common. The colonial policies of both countries were under attack on the international scene, mainly in the United Nations Organization, by the newly emancipated states. In fact, the former African colonies, helped by the USSR and the Latin American countries, began to criticize the colonial empires, struggling, at the same time, for the application of the UN Charter in what concerned the right of all people to autonomy.

On the other hand, in the 1950s France fought militarily against the independence of Indochina and Algeria. Those wars were very similar with the ones Portugal fought during the sixties in Africa. So, we can say that these countries, despite their different influence on the western world, had one and the same problem: their resistance to decolonization. That was one of the main reasons why Portugal and France deepened their political and military cooperation, in the last years of the Forth Republic.

Early in 1958 both governments were renegotiating the trade agreement signed in 1956. Bearing this in mind, the Portuguese Ministry of the Defense saw this as a great opportunity to obtain from France some military equipment that Portugal needed, in order to be prepared when the nationalist wave attacked its *Overseas Territories*. After a long and complicated negotiation process, the trade arrangement was signed in April 29, 1958 and Portugal acquired almost eighty *Panhard* combat cars that were sent to Angola. The deal was extremely favorable to Portugal: 75 per cent of this transaction would be paid to France with goods such as wine, corn and rice. The *Panhard* operation was the first of many good deals Portugal made in France. In addition to the good price achieved, Portugal found in France some understanding, or at least, tolerance towards its military preparation for the defense of its colonial territories.

However, the first years of the Gaullist era in France were followed by Salazar's regime with some concern. Charles de Gaulle came to power broadly defending authority, order and strength of the governmental control, which was seen by the Portuguese regime as a positive change. However, the first reaction in Lisbon was apprehensive. 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 as when Britain left its Empire in Asia and Africa.

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."⁸

It is behind this major objective that the relations between Portugal and the French government in its post-colonial moment 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 *kind* cooperation, could strengthen the French

position in the Western World. In fact, in the beginning of 1960s Portugal was strongly attacked by the United Nations because of its obstinacy against leaving Africa⁹, creating difficulties between the Portuguese government and Kennedy's administration.¹⁰ So it is possible to say that Charles de Gaulle saw in these circumstances the "ideal occasion" to, once again, "tackle American power, condemning it of lack of solidarity towards the European allies."¹¹

That is why, when the Portuguese Foreign Minister Marcelo Mathias¹² met de Gaulle in Paris in October 1960, he promised to help the Portuguese struggle to keep the African territories. Informed by Mathias that Portugal would resist, at "any cost", giving the independence to its colonial possessions, the general reply was clear: France would "ever do anything that could harm the Portuguese ideas towards its colonial possessions."¹³ With this statement, we can say that the French-Portuguese cooperation was reinforced. In the UN, the support received by Portugal during 1961 fits perfectly on the words of de Gaulle. In February 1961, immediately after the beginning of the conflict in Angola, the Third World countries, supported by the United States, tried to pressure Portugal through the Security Council resolutions. On the contrary, France, as de Gaulle had said, never endangered Portuguese position, always choosing abstention as the pattern during the whole 1960s despite the continuous efforts from the Third World countries to obtain a resolution condemning the Portuguese colonial rule.

French commitment with Portugal did go further and France 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 became clearer. The French position was based on its 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 lack of radicalism in their position had the advantage of not showing to the USSR and the Third World the divisions inside the Western Alliance.¹⁴ 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." Doing this, the French president invited his American counterpart to follow the French policy which aimed to "progressively encourage" Portugal to grant the independence to the colonies.¹⁵ 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, the 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 choices 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 war effort: airplanes, helicopters, trucks, ships and submarines. Besides the *Nord-Atlas*, *Broussard* and *Harvard T-6* airplanes bought even before the Colonial War began, Portugal acquired in France, after 1963, the famous helicopter *Allouette III*.

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 Debré¹⁶, 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.¹⁷ As we can see, French considerations in regard to the restriction of military supplies to Portugal were, at least, very broad and an enormous quantity of equipment was sold.

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 favorable attitude from the Defense Ministry. Since 1958, the Portuguese Navy wanted to buy those warships from its French counterpart and, in 1960, some preliminary contact took place. However, 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 discourage any political resistances.

The Portuguese main objective was to get from France the financial support for the construction of the warships. France’s first proposal, although favorable to the Portuguese government, was not welcomed by Marcelo Mathias, the Portuguese Ambassador in Paris since 1961. 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.¹⁸ 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.”¹⁹

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. 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 political support.”²⁰ 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: rockets (37 mm e 60 mm) and cannons (20 mm), among other things.

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 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 ally.

Germany: From the military support to the political constraint

Besides the cooperation with France, Salazar's regime also took advantage of the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) approach initiated in the late 1950s. The German acquisition of ammunitions and other equipment to the Portuguese military industries was the beginning of a long and profitable cooperation between those two countries. In 1959, 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. This transaction would count as Portuguese exportations to the FRG and, in this sense, would contribute to the reduction of the Portuguese deficit on the balance of trade between the two countries. Until 1960, this was the main feature of the military cooperation between Germany and Portugal: military orders to reduce de Portuguese deficit in the commercial relations.

But this situation was going to change in the beginning of the 1960s. In fact, the strategic position of the Iberian Peninsula and the fact that Portugal was a member of NATO were determinant for choosing Portugal as the location for a German logistic base. During 1960, the military relations between these two countries were deepened. In January this year, the German Defense Minister, Franz Josef Strauss²¹, visited Portugal and presented to Salazar's government a proposal for a stronger military cooperation. This proposal, which was beyond the NATO framework, consisted in "the reciprocal use of military bases, the possibility of storage of German reserves of war in Portugal and the production and acquisition of war material of common interest to both countries."²² Signed in January 16, 1960, the "Convenção Administrativa" (Administrative Convention) established the formal dimension of the military cooperation between the two countries. After consulting the military commanders, the Portuguese government decided that the Beja Air Base, in the Alentejo, was the most suitable for the German purposes. This choice was not innocent. The modernization of the air base would be paid by the German government but the base would always be Portuguese. Additionally, it would always be an advantage for the Portuguese Air Force to have an operational base in the south of Portugal. At the same time, Beja was in a hinterland that had the transportation facilities required by Bonn. Thus, in case of war, the Beja Base was also very useful as a strategic supplying platform from the United States for Western Europe.

This decision was presented to the Bonn Defense Minister in July 1960, and in December of the same year the official Agreement was signed. In this agreement, the

Portuguese government gave the German Armed Forces permission to use the Beja Air Base for flight training and logistical storage. But the enlargement of the landing strip as well as the construction of a residential area, the hangars and other equipment, would be the responsibility of the German government. This meant that all the expenses were to be paid by the FRG and Portugal would only have to give any assistance required. The German Air Force had also requested the overhauling of some of its airplanes in the Oficinas Gerais de Manutenção Aeronautica (OGMA). All specialized workers involved in those operations would receive proper training in Germany, which was also very favorable for the Portuguese Air Force.

One of the most important elements of this cooperation was the commitment of the German Defense Ministry that the FRG would “always keep the Portuguese military production units occupied with substantial orders”.²³ Therefore, these industries would always be able to produce weapons and ammunitions for the Portuguese Armed Forces. As a consequence of this commitment, Lisbon had only to pay the cost of the production, since the maintenance expenses were already covered by the German government. This situation proved to be particularly profitable to Portugal after March 1961, when the Colonial Wars erupted.

Between 1961 and 1965, the Portuguese-German relations were very advantageous in regard to the Portuguese interests. Despite having to face the nationalist armed rebellions in Angola, Guinea and Mozambique, the Portuguese government had the support from Bonn. In fact, this support was a consequence of the commitments assumed by the German government as a counterpart for the establishment of the Beja Air Base. Although it was something expectable, the German authorities did not know that a Colonial War would begin in the Portuguese Empire, only a few months after the signature of the Beja Agreement.

Even so, the maintenance of the military supplies revealed the German position towards Portugal. It was a dubious position but it is reasonable to say that Germany supported the Portuguese regime. Bonn was divided. On the one hand there was the *West*, in which it was vital to keep Portugal and the Azores islands, under the influence of the Atlantic Alliance. To do so, the German government thought that the best solution was maintaining Oliveira Salazar and his firm regime in power. 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 the Portuguese retreat from NATO was something essential to be avoided in the eyes of the German government. Another reason to this behavior was the fear felt in Germany that, in case of a sudden loss of the Empire, Salazar’s «Estado Novo» would disappear, leaving space for political unrest that could contaminate the whole Iberian Peninsula. The possibility of a communist Iberia was something to avoid at all costs²⁴.

On the other hand, Bonn was trying to carry out its own policy towards the newly independent states in Africa. This penetration in Africa, mainly through economic assistance, had the main objective of gaining the Third World support in the Berlin question against the German Democratic Republic. This compelled the FRG to adopt a dubious position: Bonn support to Portugal would never endanger Germany’s situation in the African continent. But the reality was not exactly like this and, despite some initial vacillation in the beginning of 1961, a large number of airplanes, weapons and ammunitions was given to Portugal during this 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 to be able to make recognition flights as well as surveillance operations with armed support to the ground forces²⁵. 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 Defense Ministry and should be used accordingly to the spirit of NATO.”²⁶ This declaration, requested by the German government as a guarantee, was intentionally ambiguous and it could be understood in many senses, which favored both the Portuguese and German interests. From the Portuguese point of view, it corresponded to the reality, because the Portuguese ideology stated that the defense of Europe should begin in Africa, and Salazar believed that the Colonial Wars were also a way of preventing the Russian 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 region.

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 lower price to Portugal and were paid with the maintenance of the German airplanes in 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 Germany.

Although Portugal never stopped receiving airplanes from Germany, after 1965 the relations between these two countries grew colder. The *F-86 Sabre* were jet fighters that belonged to the Portuguese NATO forces. From the beginning of the Colonial Wars the Portuguese Air Force used these airplanes in Africa, but in 1963 it was forced by the Atlantic Alliance to send them back to Lisbon because it was forbidden to use NATO equipment in the colonies. In 1965, the German Defense Minister proposed to Portugal the acquisition of 65 *F-86 Sabre*.²⁷ These airplanes had been bought by Germany to Canada and the Canadian government obliged the Federal Republic to request permission in case of selling them to third countries. When it knew that the airplanes were to be sent to Portugal, Canada refused the transaction. Salazar’s government developed a strong diplomatic action, which involved contacts in France in order to accomplish this operation, but they were unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the German Defense Ministry also pressured the German Foreign Office, with the intention to close the question. This case is an example of how the interference of the military authorities helped to solve the problems related to the international constraints of the Portuguese-German cooperation. Even though it was impossible to sell the *F-86 Sabre*, the German government resolved this with a better solution for the Portuguese Air Force. In fact, 40 brand new *Fiat G-91* were sold at a smaller price than the old and used *F-86 Sabre*, and were immediately sent to Guinea, where they performed in missions of attack, reconnaissance and support to the ground forces.

Despite the good resolution of the *Sabre* issue, the political relations were affected and the German government asked for the establishment of new terms, more accurate, regarding the selling of military equipment. From 1965 onwards, “all the weapons and airplanes sold or given by the Federal Republic should be used strictly in Portugal to defensive operations in the North Atlantic Treaty system”.²⁸

With the changing of the international context and with the German persistence to penetrate the African continent, the Portuguese-German relations declined. The pressures of the African states and the economic crisis of the second half of the 1960s, as well as the arrival into power of the SPD (in coalition with the CDU/CSU) in December 1966, provoked the reduction of the Beja Base project with consequences to the military relations in general. In fact, the Great Coalition government operated a change in the foreign policy of the Federal Republic. The clearer defense of the *Détente* and the beginning of the *Ostpolitik* made the obstinate Portuguese attitude of keeping the Empire by force less comprehensible in the eyes of the German leaders. Mainly because of its economic difficulties, the German government decided to reduce the Beja Air Base project, giving to Portugal, nonetheless, a final reward. As compensation for abandoning the base, the German Defense 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.

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 government and regime, mainly because they allowed the maintenance of the Colonial Wars. Nevertheless, this relationship was deeply affected by the political changes in Germany. In this sense, the political aspects shaped the end of the advantageous military cooperation. We cannot say that, with the reduction of the Beja Air Base project, the German military supplies stopped. Indeed, the Bonn government continued to provide Portugal with some of its material. The essential difference resides in the fact that these supplies were becoming harder to get. The German Foreign Ministry was now analyzing each request of military material individually, taking much more time. The military cooperation was, for the first time, dependent on the political circumstances. In other words, the military and strategic aspects were now secondary when confronted with the political consequences of the German support to Portugal²⁹.

Diplomacy and Colonial Wars

The military support of France and Germany until the end of 1960s allowed Portugal to minimize the absence of the American supplies. The American anti-colonialism tradition was a long, rooted process that would reach its peak after World War II. With the beginning of Cold War and after achieving the stalemate in Europe, the Soviet-American world contest turned into the Third World nationalists. After the Korean War, Washington understood the importance of assuring the support of the nationalist leaders from Africa and Asia. Thus, it was intolerable for the US that the European countries maintained their imperial dominance, because that would discredit the west in the regions where colonialism existed. The Suez Canal crisis marked the beginning of the visible intolerance of Washington towards any kind of European resistance to decolonization.

This crisis also marked the beginning of the distancing between Portugal and United States that would force the first to reach for new military and political support in the Western world. France and Germany become the chosen states to help Portugal in the difficult times expected in the Colonial Empire. However, the reasons for the reinforcement of the relationships with these countries were different. If, in the case of France, the relations evolved from political to military support, with Germany, the military cooperation came first and deepened the political partnership.

The cooperation with France developed with the arrival to power of General Charles de Gaulle. Despite accepting the decolonization of its African territories, the foreign policy guidelines of the French president favored the support to Portugal. In fact, de Gaulle's objective was to become an alternative power competing with the United States. Helping Portugal, whether in the United Nations or with military support, was one of the many instruments used in this challenge. The French-Portuguese relation developed favorably, reaching its best moment in 1964, with the establishment of a French military base in the Azores. This concession allowed the Portuguese government to obtain for its Armed Forces a considerable amount of military equipment, extremely needed for the Colonial Wars. Therefore, one of the main features of the French-Portuguese relations was the fact that they were originated by political concerns, namely the position of these two countries in the United Nations and their defiance towards US. Based on this common political attitude, military cooperation was the next step. Regarding the difficulties of the Portuguese international position and the existence of ties between both military elites, France was a natural choice for the rearmament of the Portuguese Armed Forces during their military efforts in Africa.

In contrast, the Portuguese-German relations began with the military cooperation. The first contacts between Bonn and Lisbon were caused by the German necessity for a training base for its Air Force. The concession of this base was seen by the Portuguese government as way of possibly obtaining some military equipment, as a compensation for the establishment of a potential target on its territory. Despite all the problems related, the Beja Air Base indeed gave Portugal the access to a vast range of armament, ammunitions and airplanes, which would have never been possible to buy without the German collaboration. But the German-Portuguese relations were constrained by the international circumstances. Germany was not willing to endanger its friendship and alliance with the United States because of Portugal's inflexible attitude and was, at the same time, trying to gain some influence over the African new states. These two aspects, both related to the foreign policy of the FRG, were determinant to the evolution of the cooperation with Portugal. After 1965, the military support became conditioned by the submission of the German government to the pressures of the African states and by the development of the *Ostpolitik*. In this sense, the Portuguese-Germany relations were strongly affected by the interference of the political aspects in the military cooperation. Portugal's strategic position to the Atlantic Alliance was still important, but only in which regarded the political stability of the country. The German fear was the establishment of a communist regime that might put in danger the American base in the Azores.

Therefore, the military needs of the «Estado Novo», in order to be able to face the nationalist insurgency in its colonies, forced a major change in the Portuguese foreign policy. It can be said that it was a successful change because most of the government's objectives were accomplished: Portugal avoided the possibility of an international isolation at the same time it pursued, by force, its colonial policy for thirteen years.

Moreover, the end of the Colonial War and of the regime itself only happened due to internal problems related to the military structure, despite the international constraints and pressures. So, the *military survival* of the Portuguese regime was, indeed, assured mostly by France and the Federal Republic of Germany.

¹ Daniel Marcos, “O Apoio ao Imobilismo: As Relações entre Portugal e a França, 1958-1968”, MA Thesis, Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa-ISCTE (Lisboa: 2005); Ana Mónica Fonseca, “As Relações entre Portugal e a República Federal da Alemanha. 1958-1968”, MA Thesis, Instituto Superior das Ciências do Trabalho e Empresa-ISCTE, (2005); António Costa Pinto, *O Fim do Império Português* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2001); Fernando Rosas, ed., *Portugal e a Transição para a Democracia (1974-1976)* (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 1999); J. M. Brandão de Brito, ed., *Do Marcelismo ao Fim do Império* (Lisbon: Circulo de Leitores, 1999); Norrie Macqueen, *A Descolonização da África Portuguesa. A Revolução Metropolitana e a Dissolução do Império* (Lisbon: Editorial Inquérito, 1998); Kenneth Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

² António de Oliveira Salazar was born in 28/04/1889 and was head of government since 1932.

³ Nuno Severiano Teixeira, “Entre a África e a Europa: a Política Externa portuguesa, 1890-2000” in António Costa Pinto, ed., *Portugal Contemporâneo* (Lisboa: D. Quixote, 2005), 108.

⁴ António José Telo, “A Viragem” in Aniceto Afonso, ed., *Guerra Colonial* (Lisboa: Editorial Notícias, 2001), 28-30.

⁵ Tony Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945*, (London: William Heinemann, 2005), 282.

⁶ General Fernando Santos Costa (1899-1982) was Minister of Defence between 1950 and 1958 and a strong supporter of Salazar.

⁷ António José Telo, “As guerras de África e a mudança nos apoios internacionais de Portugal,” *Revista de História das Ideias* 16 (1994): 347-369.

⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 138.

⁹ Three resolutions were approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December, 1961. 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 Litígio entre Portugal e a ONU (1960-1974)” in *Análise Social* 130 (1995), 5-50.

¹⁰ Luís Nuno Rodrigues, *Salazar-Kennedy: a crise de uma aliança* (Lisboa: Editorial Notícias: 2002).

¹¹ Daniel Marcos, “O Apoio ao Imobilismo”, 181.

¹² Marcello Mathias (1903-1999) was Foreign Minister between 1958 and 1961. After this year he was appointed as Ambassador in Paris, where he remained until 1971.

¹³ Maurice Vaisse, *Documents Diplomatiques Françaises, 1960* (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1996), 457-458.

¹⁴ Daniel Marcos, “O Apoio ao Imobilismo”, 60-62.

¹⁵ Maurice Vaisse, *Documents Diplomatiques Françaises*, 669-670.

¹⁶ Michel Debré (1912-1996) was Prime-minister between 1959 and 1962.

¹⁷ Archive du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères de France (AMAE), Europe/Portugal (1961-1970)/Vol. 90: “Note from the Foreign Ministry”, June 1, 1970.

¹⁸ Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo, AOS/CO/MA-5, “Telegram from the Portuguese Embassy in Paris”, 1964.

¹⁹ IAN/TT, AOS/CO/MA-5, “Communications from the Portuguese Embassy in Paris”, February 29, 1964.

²⁰ “Letter from Marcelo Mathias to Oliveira Salazar”, in Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *Correspondência Marcello Mathias/Salazar, 1947/1968* (Lisboa: Difel, 1984), 465-466.

²¹ Franz J. Strauss (1915-1988) was Defense Minister between 1956 and 1962.

²² *Arquivo Histórico-Diplomático do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros*, PEA, M. 337, “Memorial on the Portuguese-German military relations”, January 19, 1968.

²³ 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.

²⁴ Ana Mónica Fonseca, “As Relações entre Portugal e a RFA”, 106-107.

²⁵ John P. Cann, *Contra-Insurreição em África. 1961-1974. O modo português de fazer a guerra*. (Lisbon: Edições Atena, 1998), 177; *Politisches Archiv von Auswaertiges Amt*, B 26, 113, “Note of the Auswaertiges Amt”, October 6, 1961.

²⁶ *AHD-MNE*, PEA, M. 486, “Telegram 132 from the Portuguese Embassy in Bonn”, October 18, 1963.

²⁷ IAN/TT-AOS/CO/GR-10, “Letter from Oliveira Salazar to the Portuguese Embassy in Bonn”, June 28, 1965.

²⁸ *Politisches Archiv von Auswaertiges Amt*, B 02, 151, “Letter from the Chancellor Ludwig Erhard to Oliveira Salazar”, August 2, 1965.

²⁹ Ana Mónica Fonseca, “As Relações entre Portugal e a RFA”, 150-155.