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The Oxford Handbook of Portuguese Politics

Portugal and Brazil

Andrés Malamud and Pedro Seabra

Abstract: Relations between Portugal and Brazil are often characterized as much by political ambiguity as by a rhetoric that oscillates between fraternity in public speech, and condescendence in private conversation. These features can be found at the core of every advance and obstacle in the institutionalization of this bilateral relationship, and they help to explain the particularities of the political bond between Lisbon and Rio (initially) or Brasília (later). This chapter compares parallel political developments within both countries and highlights points of contention and attraction between the two countries. The chapter is divided chronologically into four sections: colonial rule; the Estado Novo regimes; the end of both dictatorships; and the democratic period. By exploring contrasts, similarities and reciprocal influences, we suggest that historical linkages have worked as a buffer rather than as a driver towards a substantive common agenda.

Keywords: Portugal, Brazil, foreign policy, trans-Atlantic relations, Lusophone community

Introduction

CONTRARY to popular belief, strong historical-cultural connections do not always bring two countries together. Even if such connections do no harm to either party, they are more likely to lead to high expectations than to concrete outcomes. This has proven to be the case with Portugal and Brazil time and again. Indeed, in the words of Kenneth Maxwell, the 'Portuguese and Brazilians have always had an odd relationship', in the sense that it 'assumes familiarity, recognizes a shared history, but at the same time underestimates past and present misunderstandings, as well as covers up often subliminal hostility' (Maxwell, 2019, para. 1; see also Reis, 2018). Both countries have long held a symbolical role in each other's foreign agendas, due to historical-cultural connections rather than to geopolitical strategies (Barahona de Brito, 2005; Silva, 2007). Yet, despite being 'marked by paradoxes, exemplified by a rhetoric that gave common bonds a relevance that did not correspond to the facts' (Carvalho, 2016, ii), Portugal's status in Brazil and vice-versa persistently warrant regular accolades in political and academic circles (Cervo and Magalhães, 2000; Albuquerque and Romão, 2000; Knopffi, 2004).

This state of affairs is best explained as much by historical promiscuity as by an oscillating narrative that falls back on fraternity in official speech and condescendence in informal exchanges. By 'historical promiscuity' we refer to the intellectual cross-fertilization brought about by migration, exile, and enduring family links (including, in early times, the exchange of royals) that feed into a shared cultural background (Carreiras et al., 2006/7). This

background was exceptionally captured by Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) when he wrote '*a minha pátria é a língua portuguesa*' ('my motherland is the Portuguese language'), but also by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1900–1987), as he proposed the concept of Lusotropicalism to describe the distinctive, allegedly benign, character of Portuguese imperialism overseas (Freyre, 1940). Although these fraternal references persist in elite circles and public discourse, popular culture takes on a different approach. In Brazil, Portuguese jokes are tantamount to Polish jokes in the United States, making fun of the alleged dullness of stereotyped rural migrants from Portugal. In turn, young Brazilian women—and male Brazilian workers—are commonly stigmatized in Portuguese society (Selister Gomes, 2013; Pais, 2016). These contrasting narratives can be found at the core of every advance and obstacle in the institutionalization of this bilateral relationship, and help explain the particularities of the political bond between Lisbon and Rio (initially) or Brasília (later). This chapter adopts a dual approach: on the one hand, it compares parallel political developments *within* both countries; on the other hand, it focuses on this bilateral relationship to highlight points of contention and attraction *between* the two countries. The chapter is divided chronologically into four sections: colonial rule; the *Estado Novo* regimes; the end of both dictatorships; and the democratic period. By exploring contrasts, similarities and reciprocal in uences, we suggest that historical linkages have frequently worked as a buffer rather than a driver towards a substantive common agenda.

Overcoming Colonialism

Continents are discovered, countries are created. This was not the case with Brazil, as far as wording goes. Indications abound that Portugal was aware of South America's geographical location when sending the westward-bound naval expedition led by Pedro Álvares Cabral in 1500 (Alexandre, 2000). However, despite the presence of large-scale communities already living in that territory upon Cabral's arrival in Vera Cruz, the myth of discovery quickly permeated much of the incoming bilateral narrative and became central in the organization and management of the new colony.

In the ensuing years, as Portugal experimented with decentralized rule through multiple land grants with extensive governing privileges, the so-called '*capitanias*', Brazil assumed a supplier role of different riches (e.g., precious woods, gemstones, sugar) to the metropolis. At the same time, the territory occupied a subordinate role under an overarching Portuguese empire that expanded into Africa and Asia. That status was only fundamentally inverted when Portugal became the sole European court ever to be transferred to a colony. Under the imminent threat of Napoleonic invasion in 1808, the Portuguese crown took 'advantage of the strategic depth provided by its Atlantic empire' (Reis, 2015: 19) and chose to uproot its seat of power across the ocean in a bid to salvage its lineage and possessions.

The transatlantic crossing not only saved the Portuguese monarchs, it also opened up Brazilian ports to world trade after a period of exclusivity with the metropolis, and fostered ambitions of self-ruling in local elites. After the king returned to Portugal in 1822, leaving his son and heir in Brazil, the latter went on to declare Brazil's independence on 7 September 1822, in what became known as '*grito de Ipiranga*', after the river shore where the oath took place. While Portugal fought a civil war in the name of a liberal monarchy, Brazil opted for a more conservative experiment and instituted an empire of its own. Rather than innovating, Brazilian policymakers fell back on old habits and did not sever ties with Lisbon. Instead, propelled by a revitalized slave trade with the remaining Portuguese colonies in Africa, vows of friendship and perpetual alliance between sibling nations were dutifully pledged under the 1825 Treaty,

by which Portugal recognized Brazil's independence (Reis, 2018). The most notable expression of the abovementioned promiscuity dates back to these times, specifically the year 1826, when Emperor Pedro I of Brazil also momentarily became King Pedro IV of Portugal—with neither country losing its respective sovereignty. The fact that the rst constitutional texts ever proposed for Brazil (1824) and Portugal (1826) mirrored one another further reinforced the notion of intrinsic bonds that survived political separation. In stark contrast with the former Spanish colonies, though, Brazil did not fragment into di erent countries after independence.

Three factors were at the root of Brazil's enduring cohesion: the legitimacy of central authority provided by the continuity of the imperial court, the incipient federal organization that conferred large autonomy to the local elites, and the overwhelming presence of slaves, who greatly outnumbered the white population, and thus created an incentive for the latter to remain united. The late abolition of slave trafficking (1850) and slavery itself (1888) in Brazil, which took place several years after Portugal, refected different economic structures and international power status rather than shared philosophical worldviews (Anciães, 2019; Marques and Krause, 2021).

Once Portugal and Brazil adopted independent paths, in 1822, their dynastic regimes would last less than a century. Then, within just over two decades—from 1889 in Brazil through 1910 in Portugal—monarchy was abolished in both countries and republican forms of government were implemented. Democracy, however, was not in the cards for either country, with oligarchic regimes taking root on both shores of the Atlantic.

Mimicking Corporatism

The liberal constitutional regimes collapsed almost simultaneously—in Portugal, in 1926, and in Brazil, in 1930—and were followed by similar corporatist regimes. The Brazilian regime was modelled along the same lines as the Portuguese one, as they both privileged such principles as nationalism and authoritarianism combined with mechanisms of repression and control, and they both received the same name: *Estado Novo*, or New State (Pinto and Martinho, 2008; Santos, 2006). The two regimes shared nationalist, anti-communist, and authoritarian traits. Although fascist factions were active in both cases, none managed to capture their respective government. In fact, during the Second World War, Brazil followed the United States' (US) lead and lined up with the allies, whereas Portugal offcially declared a 'cooperating neutrality', maintaining diplomatic relations with the Axis while at the same time leaning towards the allies by allowing them to use the Azores islands as a military base.

The main difference between the two *Estado Novo* regimes lay in their leaders: whereas Portuguese António de Oliveira Salazar was a professor of economics with no patience for crowds, Getúlio Vargas was a populist leader who went on to mobilize Brazil's working classes. Such opposite governing styles did not stand in the way of the 1953 Treaty of Friendship and Consultation, which foresaw prior consultations on foreign policy matters of common interest (Cervo and Magalhães, 2000). Not even when Brazil granted asylum to General Humberto Delgado—who had unsuccessfully run against Salazar in the 1958 presidential elections, and had called into question the legitimacy of the ensuing results, to no avail—did this action tarnish the ideological affinity across the ocean (Gonçalves, 2003). However, the bilateral agenda would soon be taken over by two broader issues: migration and the lingering Portuguese colonies in Africa.

On the rst account, the Portuguese community in Brazil used to be demographically sizable and politically influential. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Rio de Janeiro was the largest Portuguese-populated city in the world after Lisbon. As a case in point, Carmen Miranda (1909–1955), the world's most renowned Brazilian artist of her time, was born in Portugal and raised in Rio within the Portuguese community (Castro, 2005). Between 1880 and 1960, 76 per cent of all Portuguese migrants had Brazil as their destination (Rocha-Trindade and Fiori, 2009), which reflected both close transnational links and the openness of Brazil's immigration policy. In the inter-war period, though, divided national loyalties became a political issue. The ensuing migration policy developed by Vargas's *Estado Novo* (1937–1944) was dubbed 'forced assimilation'. It aimed at nationalizing education and revitalizing the Portuguese language, going to the extreme of forbidding immigrants from speaking in their mother tongue, even at home (Fiori, 2006). In this context of cultural tension, which included waves of anti-Lusitan nationalism, Gilberto Freyre coined the concept of 'Lusotropicalism' to describe the distinctive character of Portuguese imperialism, proposing that the Portuguese were, in fact, 'better', more integrating colonizers than other European nations. This feature was credited to the fact that Portugal enjoyed a warmer climate and had been inhabited by Celts, Romans, Visigoths, Moors, and other peoples in pre-modern times; this supposedly meant that the resulting mixed population was friendlier and more adaptable to diverse climates and cultures. This perspective eventually became the ideological matrix for the Vargas regime and, in 1939, Portuguese migrants were excluded from restrictions applied to other nationalities. Under the aegis of a Lusitan-infused 'Brazilianity' ('*brasilidade concebida no sentido lusitano*') (Schwartzman, Bomery, and Costa, 1984), Portuguese migrants were virtually turned into national citizens without being required to give up their original nationality (Westphalen and Balhana, 1993).

On the second account, divergences over Portugal's remaining African colonial empire soon became difficult to manage. After offering Portugal initial, if timid, support in the United Nations, Brazil changed gears when Jânio Quadros (1960–1961) adopted his Independent Foreign Policy (*Política Externa Independente*) based on an anti-colonial stance. Revisiting past allegiances to Portugal's presence in Africa thus became a key xture. Even if this policy proved short-lived, until Brazil's military took power in the 1964 coup, it was enough to sow doubts over previous plans that envisioned a broader Luso-Brazilian Community (Selcher, 1976; Carvalho, 2016). These reservations deepened as Brazil began to reach out to Africa of its own accord, emphasizing cultural similarities and projecting the image of a multiracial developing country eager to explore transatlantic trade and economic opportunities with newly-independent nations. By threading the needle between Lusophile elites and growing prospects in Africa, Brazil sought to have it both ways (Dávila, 2010).

Unravelling Authoritarianism

From 1964 onwards, the authoritarian regimes in Portugal and Brazil were politically closer to each other than to their counterparts in their respective regions. Indeed, Spain's Francisco Franco did not hold parliamentary or municipal elections during his time in power, and neither did Argentina's Jorge Videla or Chile's Augusto Pinochet. In contrast, Portugal's *Estado Novo* and the Brazilian military regime held façade elections and maintained working parliaments throughout most of their authoritarian periods, even though both institutions were heavily controlled, and any real opposition was proscribed and persecuted. However, underground movements were already underway, led by military officers in Portugal and by civil society groups in Brazil.

Portugal's turnabout came rst. On 25 April 1974, the Carnation Revolution triggered the third wave of democratization worldwide. Even though Brazil was the rst country to offcially recognize the transitional authorities, just 2 days after the fact, it would only embark on its own transition in the next decade, in line with most of South America. However, the fallout from events in Lisbon had considerable ramifications across the Atlantic. On the one hand, several Portuguese industrialists, businessmen, and their families who were close to the old regime found a welcoming refuge in Brazil (cf. Graça, 2009). On the other hand, Brazilian opposition to the 1964 military regime met newfound support amongst the new political elites in Portugal (Freire, 2010), thus fuelling Brasília's own reservations towards Lisbon (Carvalho, 2016). These dynamics were soon reflected at the policy level.

The most immediate effect concerned, once again, the positions of Portugal and Brazil towards Lusophone Africa. Sensing an opportunity to dispel any unsavoury associations with the Portuguese dictatorship, Brazil moved quickly to recognize Guinea-Bissau's independence on 18 July 1974, and the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA, in the Portuguese acronym) government on 6 November 1975 (Dávila, 2010; Carvalho, 2009). Both decisions were made before Portugal had settled on its own approach, which ran counter to the spirit of the 1953 mutual consultations treaty, but it ensured that Brazil could be seen as ahead of the curve while fostering relations with new leaders on the ground. As Portugal scrambled to reimagine its African credentials and navigate the socio-economic consequences of a hasty decolonization process, the country's competition with Brazil for influence over Lusophone Africa would remain a constant over the coming years.

The second consequence of democratization was Portugal's membership application to the European Economic Communities (EEC). Introduced as the linchpin of a wider strategy to modernize the country, it was perceived by Brazil as an opportunity to benefit, even if indirectly, from an emerging trade bloc. By using Portugal as an entry door to the broader European market, Brazil would ideally be able to overcome its technological backwardness and increase its share of transatlantic exports against incoming tariff barriers. The preference for joint ventures with Portuguese companies, however, resulted in less-than-tangible results during the rst years (Freire, 1988; Freire, 1989; Jaguaribe, 1989). More importantly, Brazil abhorred the notion of having Portugal as its intermediary in Brussels, as it would diminish Brazil's size and stature as a trade partner for the EEC.

While Brazil avoided any public semblance of having Portugal as its informal delegation, Portugal revelled in its potential. In fact, Portugal's accession treaty shared with Spain's a 'Common Declaration of Intentions relating to the development and intensification of EEC relations with Latin America', recognizing the specificity of their transatlantic links. The agreement included collective discussions under the European Political Consultations (EPC) format, whereby Portuguese diplomats began claiming expertise on issues pertaining to Brazil. However, above all else, accession to the EEC represented an overall rearrangement of Portuguese foreign policy priorities, pulling away from Southern latitudes and increasingly towards a European-centred focus. This new pillar of external engagement complemented existing Atlantic ties— historically related to Great Britain and, contemporarily, to the US— anchored in Portugal's founding membership of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The consequences for Brazil of Portuguese alignment with the West were significant. By 1984, Brazilian diplomats had already reached the conclusion that Portuguese foreign policy 'supported initiatives aimed at politicizing the human rights issue, identifying itself with the propositions followed by Western countries' (Carvalho, 2016: 292). However, a new window

of opportunity emerged when Brazilians took to the streets. Even though '*Diretas Já*', a civil society movement that peaked between 1983 and 1984, was unsuccessful in its push for direct presidential elections, the numbers behind the protests were enough to force the hand of the military rulers and paved the way for the congressional election of Tancredo Neves the following year. From then on, a common democratic like-mindedness with Portugal was enough to propel relations to a new level. Moreover, Lusophile views abounded at the top of Brazil's political echelons, which revitalized cultural and historical connections and brought the countries closer. The enthusiasm displayed during Neves's visit to Portugal in 1985—replicated during the visit by his successor, José Sarney, in 1986—gave credence to the belief that a common premium on democracy and economic opportunities in Europe would instil a new bilateral cycle.

However, this renewed rapport was not yet mature. There was a lingering embedded mistrust in Portugal over Brazilian foreign policy initiatives, particularly those related to African Lusophone countries (Seabra, 2021a). To be sure, occasional discord did not affect the long-established perception that Brazil could gure as a key partner in any attempt made by Lisbon to reframe its trans-Atlantic affairs (Correia, 1992; Santos, 2009). Yet the inability of both national elites to move past discursive rhetoric signalled that major geopolitical understandings would remain out of reach. The 1991 General Cooperation Agreement, which was aligned with the framework of the 1953 Treaty, did succeed in institutionalizing bilateral ministerial meetings. However, persistent references to 'special fraternal ties', 'historical and cultural affinities' and the entire 'tradition of friendship, collaboration and deep cultural roots' continued to permeate the public narrative (Fonseca, 2010: 51), without actually translating into further policy dividends.

Connecting Democracies

Today, both Portugal and Brazil are democratic republics. However, the similarities between both regimes end there. In terms of executive format, Portugal adopted an attenuated version of semi-presidentialism, a system according to which a popularly elected president performs protocolary and moderating roles while a prime minister, elected by and accountable to the parliament, leads the government. In contrast, Brazil has a presidential system, whereby the head of state and head of government are embodied in a single person, who is popularly elected every 4 years. The inspiration came from the 1787 American constitution, but institutional emulation did not stop there: indeed, the offcial name of the nascent republic was the United States of Brazil. Only after 1967 was the name of the country replaced with Federal Republic of Brazil, the same maintained to this day. When 'considering all Portuguese-speaking countries, only Brazil has a non- semi-presidential constitution. But even in this country semi-presidentialism has been intensely debated, and often proposed as an alternative to the present pure presidential regime' (Amorim Neto and Costa Lobo, 2014), thus attesting to the lingering in uence from Lisbon. In 1993, a constitutional referendum was held for Brazilians to decide over two dichotomies: republic vs monarchy, and presidentialism vs. parliamentarism. Republicanism and presidentialism carried the day, leaving the constitution untouched.

Party systems also differ starkly between the two countries. Portugal enjoys a moderate multiparty system in which one party, or a two-party coalition, have been enough to form stable governments for the last 40 years. In contrast, Brazil features the most fragmented party system in the world, as extreme multipartyism took root even though social cleavages and electoral rules did not change (Zucco and Power, 2000).

Two events capture the contrast between the two countries. In 2000, António Guterres led a single-party government supported by exactly half of the parliament. Requiring at least one member of the opposition to abstain in order to pass the budget, he offered pork to a northern cheesemaker in exchange for the support of their local representative. The budget came to pass, but the government was broken, both guratively and in the eyes of public opinion: 1 year later, Guterres's party lost the municipal elections and he resigned. This antecedent boded ill for the single-party government with parliamentary support that was inaugurated in 2015. Pejoratively labelled as *geringonça* ['contraption'], it proved nonetheless capable of completing its parliamentary term. In Portugal, party fragmentation did not lead to the parcelling of neither government nor state.

In contrast, Brazil's 'coalition presidentialism' (Abranches, 1988), in which presidents never enjoy a congressional majority and need to confer ministerial positions—as well as additional state perks—to other parties in order to establish a working relationship with congress, has proven far more hazardous. Dilma Rousseff, for one, presided in 2016 over a 38-strong ministerial cabinet that encompassed ten different political parties. Her subsequent impeachment inflicted significant damage on the political system and ushered in a new wave of national populism.

Despite their differences regarding the executive format and party systems, Portugal and Brazil have exhibited parallel records in issues such as the management of civil-military relations (Bruneau, 2019) or the oversight of intelligence services (Arturi and Rodriguez, 2019), largely resulting from the speci cities of their own transition processes to democracy. Further intersections have been recorded, as in the frequent exchanges of military officials that led to one-time experiments such as the embedment of Brazilian army officials in Portuguese military contingents assigned to the European Union (EU) Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM- CAR), or the assignment of Brazilian navy officials to training institutions in Portugal (Ministry of Defence of Brazil, 2013). Portuguese and Brazilian law have also routinely influenced one another (Justo, 2008). Even more visibly, both countries have come to share a ubiquitous feature of contemporary politics: corruption scandals involving former heads of state. Former socialist Prime Minister José Socrates was arrested in November 2014 on suspicion of corruption and money- laundering, and remained in jail until September 2015. In turn, former President Lula was imprisoned from April 2018 through to November 2019, when he was released before completing a 12-year corruption sentence. Both leaders continue to face criminal investigations.

Foreign relations between Portugal and Brazil took an upturn when Portuguese governments started to seriously look into the economic opportunities opened up by Brazilian democratization. By the mid-1990s, the administration headed by António Guterres adopted the 'Brazil option' as a programmatic goal (Fonseca, 2010: 58; Leal, 2012). Within just 5 years, from 1995 to 2000, Portugal went from being Brazil's 21st foreign investor to becoming 3rd. Equally fast, though, was its recoil back to 14th place in 2003 (Costa, 2005: 16–17; Silva, 2002). In contrast with the economic instability experienced in Brazil at the time, the stability provided by the euro contributed to redirecting most Portuguese foreign investment towards Europe. The tide would change again after the euro crisis, which impacted Portugal after 2011 and led to a frenzied privatization of state-owned enterprise. Even though Brazilian companies were among the favoured potential buyers (Silva, 2014), Portugal opted by and large for Angolan and Chinese capital instead. The trade potential between both countries has only barely remained above water: in 2019, Brazil was the 11th market for Portuguese exports, with

a meagre 1.3 per cent share of Portuguese exports, while Portugal faded into the background as the 38th destination for Brazilian products (AICEP, 2021).

High-level summits provided the political framework for increased contacts, even if they became increasingly infrequent (Sousa, 2010). Consensus was found, for instance, around a common spelling reform (the '*acordo ortográfico*') signed in 1990 by every Lusophone country, as the result of direct negotiations that begun in 1980 between the Lisbon Science Academy and the Brazilian Academy of Letters. This agreement implied the notion that it was easier to achieve goals in the cultural domain rather than over harder—i.e. political and economic—issues in the bilateral agenda; yet, the ensuing controversy surrounding its loose implementation eclipsed much of the perceived unanimity heralded at the time (Zúquete, 2008).

This period has also been characterized by the translation of bilateral affinities into larger groupings. The most prominent concerns the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP, in its Portuguese acronym). Despite initial roadblocks imposed by Brazil on greater institutionalization of contacts (Monteiro, 1996), the dual leadership of Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Portuguese president Mário Soares eventually prevailed and pushed for the formalization of a new language-based international organization—akin to the Commonwealth or the *Organization Internationale de la Francophonie*. Much like before, however, the existence of this new platform for regular exchanges did not isolate both countries from competition for sectoral opportunities in other African Lusophone partners (Seabra and Abdenur, 2018), or from occasional disagreements concerning the management of CPLP itself (Seabra, 2021b). The forum has, however, allowed for the sharing of support behind applications for high-level positions in multiple international organizations, thus enhancing each country's foreign stand.

Simultaneously, the long-coveted goal of bringing Brazil and Europe closer via Lisbon has undergone significant developments. The formalization of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership coincided with Brazil's perceived rising status abroad (Malamud and Seabra, 2015; Ferreira-Pereira, 2021), and received considerable support from Portugal (Ferreira-Pereira, 2010; Carvalho, 2011), in a bid to further burnish its bridge-building credentials. Since then, Portugal has remained steadfast in pushing for the completion of a free trade agreement between the EU and Mercosur as the nal missing component of the transatlantic relationship.

There was also a historic reversal of fortune on migration. After decades as an emigrant nation, Portugal became an immigration country in the 1980s, with its foreign population doubling within 10 years: from 54,414 residents in 1981 to 107,767 in 1991 (Fonseca, 2010). The Schengen Agreement, to which Portugal signed up in 1991, led to tighter external border controls, but for a while 'Portugal managed to keep a positive discrimination vis-à-vis Brazil under the 1960 Visa Waiver Agreement, which allowed for the entrance and permanence of Brazilians up to six months without a visa' (Santos, 2004: 110). In the 1990s, Brazilians became the largest immigrant community in Portugal, being consistently considered the closest by Portuguese public opinion (Malheiros, 2007). The 'dentist crisis', involving the recognition of university degrees to Brazilian orthodontists, created a diplomatic rift that was eventually solved at the highest level, which included presidential intervention. In 2000, the bilateral Porto Seguro Treaty established reciprocity regarding the acquisition of citizenship and political rights, as well as the regularization of workers. This agreement confirmed the privileged status that Brazilian citizens enjoy in Portugal compared to other non-European foreigners, thus emulating the benefits that had been extended to the Portuguese in Brazil in earlier decades.

Conclusion

Portugal accessed the European Communities in January 1986, an event that became a national turning point both in terms of space and time. As regards space, the accession meant redirecting Portugal's foreign attention from its former colonial empire to the European mainstream. As regards time, Europeanization implied changing Portugal's national narrative from historical tradition to modernization. A Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) record on Portuguese-Brazilian relations, dated from September 1986 and recently declassified, helps to understand the sea change that took place between then and now. It described this bilateral relation as 'friendly, but of only secondary importance to each country'. It highlighted the divergent paths taken since independence, as Brazil became the dominant geopolitical power on its continent, while Portugal remained 'backward and isolated from the European mainstream', therefore reverting 'the customary relationship between mother country and colony'. The document observed that relations between the two countries had both cooperative and competitive aspects, and noted that 'although leaders of the two countries have talked from time to time about working together to expand their economic links with the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, they have more often than not vied with each other in those countries' (CIA, 1986).

Most elements have remained remarkably unaltered since the document was issued, but a few have changed. The most relevant one is a full circle reversal of fortune, as Portugal has become a developed country, while Brazil remains a developing one. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (2020), Portugal ranks as 'very high', with 0.864 on a ten-point scale, whereas Brazil ranks as 'high' with 0.765, one full point below. This gap notwithstanding, both countries remain far above Angola, which ranks as 'medium' in human development with a value of 0.581, and 'low' Mozambique, with 0.456. The heterogeneity of the Lusophone family of countries spans the full development range, and Portugal remains at the higher end of that scale. Yet, whether the focus is set on reinforcing multilateral venues or on expanding bilateral channels, one element remains constant: a reliance on old tropes. By lauding historical-cultural affinities ahead of concrete political dividends, relations between Portugal and Brazil are likely to remain comforting rather than innovative.

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