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Angola: Cabinda's miscalculations

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Since the end of the civil war in 2002, Angola has been well on its way to becoming a strong, stable and respectable state led by the ruling MPLA Party and, above all, the Presidency. The legitimacy of these perceptions is premised on the basic assumption that Angola lives in peace. However, the end of a war and the beginning of peace do not always coincide.

The *Coupe d'Afrique des Nations* (CAN) football tournament, held in January in Angola, was meant to be the culmination of eight years of peace, almost like a collective catharsis and a golden opportunity to showcase the country to outsiders. Along with Luanda, Benguela and Lubango, the city of Cabinda was selected to be a host of the competition. Why choose Cabinda, an enclave besieged by a decades-long low-intensity separatist conflict?

On one hand, the central government did not acknowledge any tensions in the region. The conflict officially ended in 2006 when António Bembe, a leader of the FLEC/Renovada (*Frente de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda / Renovada*), signed a peace deal with Luanda, though this was denounced

by N'Zita Tiago, an exiled FLEC leader living in Paris. Any violent clashes were now regarded as acts of criminal groups and the FLEC ceased to be recognized. Beyond this self-assured stance, the CAN was designed to symbolize national unity, peace and progress, so the central government wanted to promote Cabinda as a peaceful region freely integrated with the rest of the country.

The attack on the Togo national team's bus in early January proved those presumptions wrong. Worse, it highlighted that the situation in Cabinda was never dealt with honestly. In trying to portray a strong, united and peaceful Angola, the government consistently downplayed security risks. However, an analysis of the political and security situation in the oil-rich province would never support such assertions. Following the end of the civil war, the government established military occupation of the province and used the usual methods of bribing and co-optation to buy off potential adversaries. Moreover, it viewed one FLEC official – António Bembe – as a spokesman for the whole organization. It was pure wishful thinking to assume that FLEC, which was formed in 1963 from three separate liberation movements, was a single and coordinated entity.

Indeed, at first the source of the attack on the Togo bus was not clear. The Angolan military in the region identified the attackers as FLEC members.

In Luanda, António Bembe blamed the attack on a group of criminals, only to change his statement later by accusing FLEC/FAC (*Frente de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda / Forças Armadas de Cabinda*), based in Paris under N'Zita Tiago, of carrying out the attack. The attack was claimed by another faction as well, the FLEC/PM (*Frente de Libertação do Estado de Cabinda / Posição Militar*), led by Rodrigues Mingas, also living abroad.

Although the attackers claimed they had no intention of targeting foreigners, they obviously knew who they were attacking. This was meant to attract foreign attention and it achieved its goals: a mostly unknown conflict for the last three-decades suddenly vaulted onto the world's front pages. This obviously embarrassed the Angolan government, but it managed to move forward with the tournament, even in Cabinda.

Luanda's reaction was swift and strong. It sent in military reinforcements, arrested civil-rights campaigners and urged France, where FLEC leaders are exiled, to act against these "terrorists". It turned an embarrassing situation into an occasion to be shown as a member of the fight against terrorism, with the blessing of the international community, thus managing to reinforce its international legitimacy.

If the attack did cast a light on the Cabinda situation, this conflict will

view this month with the newspaper *Público* that, when the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force in December 2009, Portugal symbolically closed a foreign policy cycle. In other words, the focus given to Portugal's European integration, at least in its previous form, was now over.

Between 1974 and 2009, Portugal's foreign policy was structured along three main pillars. Transatlantic relations were one of them, in particular the relationship with the U.S. on bilateral level, as well as within multilateral structures, such as NATO. The second pillar included relations with the Portuguese-speaking countries, Brazil in Latin America; Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe in Africa; and Timor Leste in Southeast Asia since its independence in 2001. Last but not least, Portugal's European integration was the third pillar.

Several reasons explain the unbalanced equilibrium between the three pillars. Here it is sufficient to point out that there was a disequilibrium working against transatlantic and Lusophone relationships. Indeed, it is this imbalance that Amado wishes to correct. Thus, he emphasizes that Portugal needs to pay more attention to the North and South Atlantic, i.e. the strategic square that connects Lisbon to the U.S., Brazil and Angola. This rebalancing is more than welcome, since, as Amado also recognizes and points out, Portugal's relevance within Europe will reflect its influence elsewhere. Thus, the main challenge consists in identifying strategic, political, diplomatic and economic niches Portugal can fill. The deepening of the transatlantic and Lusophone relations fits in this overall approach. In particular, Portugal must renew its emphasis on strategic relations with Angola, Brazil and the United States.

However, Portugal's foreign policy needs more than to be rebalanced along the classic three-pillar structure. A new, fourth pillar must be introduced in the conceptual strategic picture. Rather than a strategic

square (Brasília, Luanda, Lisboa and Washington DC), Portugal must devise a strategic pentagon, one that includes the Maghreb as its fourth pillar and the fifth corner of the new pentagon.

Economic, military, security, political and strategic reasons justify it. First, and without being exhaustive, the Maghreb is an increasingly important economic partner. Between 2002 and 2008, Portuguese exports to Algeria and Morocco rose from 0,15% to 0,49%, and from 0,43% to 0,74%, respectively. In 2008 the Maghreb was Portugal's fifth trading partner, as far as exports were concerned, just behind the European Union, the Portuguese speaking countries, North America and Southeast Asia. Moreover, there is still large potential for more growth both in exports and imports, not only regarding Algeria and Morocco, but also Libya, following that country's political agreement in 2003 with the U.S. and the UK, as well as the end of UN sanctions.

Second, bilateral military cooperation is also gaining further importance. The Portuguese government established, with each one of the Maghreb countries, a pluriannual program of cooperation, similar to the one currently ongoing with each of the Portuguese-speaking countries.

Third, since 9/11, the Maghreb became a pivotal region within the overall fight against transnational terrorism, especially concerning the increasing power of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). So far, Portugal has not had any known al-Qaeda threat, but interagency cooperation, namely in the field of intelligence, has become a strategic priority since 9/11.

Fourth, the Maghreb, and Algeria in particular, is a major player regarding energy security. The Portuguese consumption of natural gas has grown considerably in the last ten years, despite the fact that the country lacks any commercially viable reserves. Thus, Algeria is the key strategic gas partner for Portugal. More than 90% of the gas consumed in Portugal comes from Algeria.

Fifth, relations with the Maghreb are also important for political reasons. Inevitably, if the Maghreb is important for the European Union (EU), thus it is important to Portugal. Lisbon has been involved in formulating and supporting all multilateral initiatives towards the Maghreb, namely the Union for the Mediterranean, and before that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Moreover, the Maghreb is an increasingly important player within the African Union. Thus, bearing in mind Portugal's strategic interests in Africa, it is inevitable that more attention to be paid to the Maghreb.

All the above does not mean that Portugal should ignore other areas of foreign policy. Indeed, as Amado also pointed out in the interview, more attention must be paid, for example, to Asia. However, history and geography compel a closer look at the Maghreb, and, as a consequence, the core of Portugal's foreign policy focus cannot and should not ignore it. The new pentagon is not the output of an impulse. It is the result of the circumstances.

São Tomé and Príncipe: Particularities of the presidential party

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Portuguese constitutionalists were divided about the question of whether the election of President Fradique de Menezes as leader of the Democratic Movement Force of Change (MDFM) party on 19 December was unconsti-



tutional or not. Jorge Bacelar Gouveia argued that according to the country's semi-presidential constitution, the President could not exercise any other public or private function, including the post of party leader. However, Jorge Miranda asserted that the two positions were not incompatible, as party leadership was not a public, but a political function. Meanwhile, in São Tomé, the Liberation Movement of São Tomé and Príncipe/Social-Democratic Party (MLSTP/PSD) and the Democratic Convergence Party (PCD), the two partners of the MDFM in the coalition government headed by Rafael Branco (MLSTP/PSD), fiercely criticized the election and announced an appeal to the constitutional court. In turn, Menezes retaliated by withdrawing the four MDFM ministers from the coalition. However, two of the ministers, Justino Veiga and Cristina Dias, declared that they would continue in the government. This was impeded by Menezes, who vetoed Branco's intention to maintain the two ministers in a reshuffled cabinet. On 12 January, President Menezes inaugurated Branco's new government composed by the MLSTP/PSD and the PCD, which together have a majority of 31 seats in parliament.

Unexpectedly, two days later, Menezes resigned the MDFM leadership, but denied that his decision had been influenced by any outside pressures. However this may be, this episode has shed light on the inner workings of the presidential party in São Tomé.

With Menezes's resignation as *de jure* party leader, the country has returned to a political consensus based on the semi-presidential system, according to which the President cannot be simultaneously party chairman. However, there has been a tacit agreement that the President can be *de facto* party leader. The country's first presidential party appeared in 1992 when the followers of ex-President Miguel Trovoada (1991-2001) created the Independent Democratic Action (ADI). While everybody knew that Trovoada was the true ADI leader, offi-

cially he always dissociated himself from the party.

In December 2001, five months after Menezes was elected President with the support of Trovoada and the ADI, his own followers constituted the MDFM. Contrary to Trovoada, Menezes has never denied his *de facto* leadership of the MDFM and publicly declared himself to be the party's "virtual leader".

One characteristic of the presidential party is that it is not founded on programmatic political differences, but on the president's personal interests. Consequently, the cohesion and sense of belonging within the MDFM is rather weak. Besides, unlike the MLSTP/PSD and the PCD, its members are not tied to the party by a common political history either, but rather by their own clientelist interests. As a result, the MDFM has repeatedly been plagued by divisions within its leadership. In late 2002 the MDFM deputies annoyed President Menezes by approving a revision of the constitution that reduced the executive powers of the president, as they had disagreed with the dismissal of the then-Prime Minister Gabriel Costa by Menezes in September that year. In November 2008, the two MDFM leaders, Manuel Deus Lima and Agostinho Rita, who had been elected only two months before, were dismissed from their posts following disputes over whether the MDFM should leave the government after Rita had been sacked as natural resources minister by Prime Minister Branco due to allegations of corruption. The latest example is the two ministers who refused to leave the government.

Another characteristic of the presidential party is that it is autocratically ruled by the party patron. Compared with the MLSTP/PSD and the PCD, there is less inner-party democracy within the ADI and the MDFM. In 2001, Miguel Trovoada appointed his son Patrice as ADI leader, while in December 2009, Menezes selected the four current MDFM leaders. Menezes's presidency and his financial resources guarantee a relatively strong

party membership and electoral support, but it is very unlikely that the MDFM will win a majority in the legislative elections this year. In the archipelago, only twice, in 1991 and 1998, has a party won an absolute majority in legislative elections; however, in those years, only two and three major parties respectively competed. The MDFM has never participated independently in elections, but in 2002 and 2006 formed a joint list with the PCD. Given the cleavages between the two parties that emerged in May 2008 when – against Menezes's will – the PCD helped to remove Prime Minister Patrice Trovoada by a motion of no confidence, a new edition of this electoral alliance seems improbable and further political discord quite likely.



take up her post as the UN Secretary-General's new Special Representative to the country.

13 January 2010 (Dili):

Secretary of State Agio Pereira released a statement saying the Timorese government had rejected Woodside's plan to develop the offshore Sunrise field without building an on-shore plant to liquefy gas. Doubts about the commercial viability of Woodside's proposal to pipe gas from the field to either an existing

Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) processing plant in Darwin or to a floating LNG plant, were the main concerns.

20 January 2010 (Kuala Lumpur):

Malaysian Petronas has been invited by Timor Leste's government to invest in the development of the Greater Sunrise gas field.

26 January 2010 (Jakarta):

Indonesia's National Human Rights Commission

signed a cooperation agreement with Timor Leste's Human Rights and Justice Ombudsman to find missing persons from the post-referendum riots in 1999.

28 January 2010 (Dili):

President José Ramos-Horta asked Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão to reshuffle the existing coalition government of the Alliance of the Parliamentary Majority, amid ongoing allegations of corruption.

Reading List

Andrea Molnar, *Timor Leste: Politics, History, and Culture* (Routledge, 2010).

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