

Portugal Foreign Policy, the European Union and Bilateral Relations

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Introduction

This article aims to provide a background and a proper analysis Portuguese foreign policy and her bilateral relations in terms of both the historical and contemporary context. Portugal, a small sized country once had an overarching international impact because of her status as a former empire. In the modern era, Portugal was ruled by a dictatorial regime for a long time before seeking integration with the West in order to stabilize her newborn democracy. Here, I argue that Portugal has undergone significant changes in the direction of her foreign policy through the European Union (EU) and via bilateral relations in order to survive and increase her influence amidst the changing circumstances of international politics.

Foreign policy during dictatorship

Before becoming part of the integration process with the European Union, Portuguese foreign policy was ambiguous. Of course, Portugal should be regarded as belonging to the European continent for several reasons. She is one of the oldest nations-states in Europe whose borders are the most stable on the continent. She has long-developed privileged ties with the old European powers (Flanders, France and England) and has participated in some of the most fundamental episodes of European history, among them, the conquest of the new world and expansion of power.² At the same time, Portugal once placed herself in opposition to Europe by reaffirming her identity as an empire and giving preference to her colonial relations. So, the main concern for

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² Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, *"The Member States of the European Union"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 233.

Portuguese foreign policy in the old days was Africa not Europe. She also structured herself in opposition to Spain with the economic, political and military support of England, which at the time was considered as non-European.³

Salazar's regime was caught up in the emergence of the bi-polar system of the two non-European Superpowers during the Cold War⁴, the United States and the Soviet Union. Salazar remained skeptical towards the United States as the main maritime power that had replaced the declining Britain⁵ and Portugal

rejected a multilateral framework under the auspices of the United Nations. Salazar still reserved the right of Portugal to govern its African colonies, countering the trend towards decolonization that had begun after the end of World War II, and he watched the process of European integration⁶ and construction in silence. However, the Lajes Treaty Agreement in 1948, a bilateral defence pact between Portugal and the United States, signaled Portugal's incorporation into the Atlantic security system, which was later transformed into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949.⁷

³ British foreign affairs were characterized by a partial feeling of difference towards Europe. Britain was dubbed as an "awkward partner" of the EU. Please see Stephen George, *An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community*, 3rd Edition (Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁴ Mainstream scholars say that the Cold War was an equal fight between two titans, the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States was forced to abandon its isolationist policy and reluctantly adopted internationalism in order to protect democratic values and save the world from communist expansion by an autocratic Soviet Union. The United States may have constructed a postwar empire but it was democratic and defensive in character. Moreover, the Cold War was considered as long moment of peace as John Lewis Gaddis has argued. There were no major wars among the great powers. However, revisionists have seen tragedy in the mainstream Cold War historiography. Walter Lafeber argued that the aim of American foreign policy was to establish and perpetuate capitalism after World War II. The Cold War was not a bi-polar system but rather unipolar and the Soviets was inferior to the United States in all respects. For the debate between the two main schools, please see Soravis Jayanama, "Rethinking the Cold War and the American empire," in *Asian Review 2003*, ed. Kullada Kesboonchu Mead (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2003)

⁵ Even before Pearl Harbor and the American entrance into World War II, America and political business leaders had agreed that two things were necessary to breathe life and energy back into the world system and the United States was the only entity that had capacity to see them done. Firstly, the US had replaced a declining Pax Britannica as the new hegemony, playing the dual role of judge and policeman in the system. Secondly, was to restore economic expansiveness to a system that had been racked and distorted by the Great Depression and the ensuing war. Please see Thomas McCormick, "Crisis, Commitment, and Counter Revolution, 1945-1952," in *America in Vietnam*, eds. William Appleman Williams et al. (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989)

⁶ Geir Lundestad observed there are five logical reasons why European integration was supported by America, as follows; (1) to promote the US "corporatist" system as a model (2) to create a more rationally organized and efficient Europe (3) to reduce the US' financial burden (4) as a part of strategy to contain the USSR (5) to contain Germany

⁷ Antonio Costa Pinto, "Portugal and European Integration-an Introduction; Conference EU and Democracy in Southern Europe: Portugal, Spain and Greece" (Institute of European Studies: University of California-Berkeley, 2002), 2.

Thus, during the 1950s, the Atlantic front and the position of the United States were the cornerstone of Portuguese foreign policy. Portugal stood alongside her partner Britain in the integrationist movement and she closely followed the positions adopted by the United Kingdom in European affairs, at least until it became a founding member of European Free Trade Association (EFTA).⁸ Intense economic relations with the European states put more pressure on Portugal to seek for partnerships abroad for the sake of Portuguese economy. The choice had to be made between the European Economic Community (EEC) and EFTA. Being against any loss or transfer of sovereignty, EFTA was seen as the preferred choice, allowing Portugal economic advantage without political cost. EFTA was a free trade zone rather than a customs union and it was intergovernmental in character, allowing Portugal to remain within the organization whilst maintaining a privileged relationship with her colonies.⁹ Later, during Marcello Caetano's incumbency, the ideas on European integration and colonial ties did not differ dramatically from Salazar's approach. Britain's resignation from EFTA and her renewed request for EEC membership forced Portugal to forge a relationship with the EEC by negotiating directly and bilaterally.

Following in the UK's footsteps, Portugal submitted her application to join the EEC in 1970. A trade agreement between the EEC and Portugal was reached in 1972.

In conclusion, Portugal's approaches from 1945 to 1974 laid emphasis on intergovernmental cooperation while rejecting supranational or integrationist features. Europe was a necessity. It could partly help boost Portugal's economic performance via foreign trade and tourism as was longed for by some economic interest groups but it was not a main project because to become fully-integrated into Europe, Portugal required democratization and decolonization. The maintenance of empire and her colonies was at the heart of the political elite that time.

After the empire, framework within the EU, a More on Europe

Portuguese foreign policy underwent a considerable modification after the collapse of the authoritarian regime on 25th April 1974. A coup d'état paved the way for Portuguese democracy to take root and this meant the curtain was drawn on the Portuguese empire. Portugal became the first country to undergo a process of democratization euphemistically labelled by

⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹ Ibid., 4.

Samuel Huntington the Third Wave of Democratization.¹⁰ The EEC observed Portugal's transition with discretion. After the first democratic election took place in 1975, the European council announced that it was ready to resume economic and financial negotiations with Portugal on the condition that Portugal complied with Europe's historical and political tradition by supporting a pluralist democracy.¹¹

The first significant international challenge for the nascent Portuguese democracy was to strip herself of her imperial mantle and free the colonies.¹² The second task lay in setting Portugal free on the international arena and her diplomatic resurrection with all countries, nullifying the international isolation that had been imposed by the dictatorial regime. During the accession period, the European integration process became the primary motivation of the Portuguese elite in order to strengthen her newborn democracy. After the election of the first constitutional government in 1976, it was clear that both Atlanticist and European vectors were to become Portugal's main strategy. Portugal positioned herself as a

Western country and the establishment of good bilateral relations with the United States and the fostering of multilateral ties within NATO were the most apparent gestures of the new democracy's international position.¹³

However, there were some domestic factors which hindered the accession negotiations. The economy was impeded by the nationalization of important economic sectors. Furthermore, the process of democratization was not complete. The new Portuguese regime was unstable and it was a democracy under the tutelage of an undemocratic military. Power was concentrated within the Council of the Revolution which had given birth to the 1976 constitution and only after the revision of the constitution in 1982, abolishing the council and creating a civilian Constitutional Court and adopting the National Defence Law, together with the election of the civilian, Mario Soares, as President of the Republic, in early 1986, that one could speak of a completed process of civilianization of the new political system.¹⁴ In the same year, Mario Soares signed a letter requesting EU accession. It was the entry to the EC

¹⁰ Ian Manner and Richard G. Whitman (eds.), *"The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 162.

¹¹ Antonio Costa Pinto, *"Portugal and European Integration: An Introduction. Conference EU and Democracy in Southern Europe: Portugal, Spain and Greece"* (Institute of European Studies: University of California-Berkeley, 2002), 6.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴ Ian Manner and Richard G. Whitman (eds.), *"The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 164.

on 1st January 1986 that launched the reconstruction of Portuguese foreign and defence policy.

By incorporating Portugal into the EU, the “EU-isation” of bilateral relations between Portugal and the other 26 Member States took place and this was a demonstration of the EU’s development as an international actor and her expansion across the European continent. If it had not been for the EU, Portugal would not have had any reason to forge any sort of bilateral relations with countries such as those in Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁵

The most peculiar element of adaptation through membership was, and is, Portugal’s

relationship with Spain¹⁶. For centuries, the two states lived back-to-back but with European integration both countries began to travel in the same direction in terms of their identity in general and foreign and defence policy in particular. Both countries had to abandon the isolationist standpoints of their authoritarian regimes and became firmly interlinked with the European defence identity.¹⁷ European integration has also enhanced Luso-Spanish bilateral relations, locating bilateral co-operation between the two Iberian states firmly in the EU context.¹⁸

Portugal’s foreign policy can be appraised through the Europeanization lens¹⁹. Over the

¹⁵ Steven Robinson, “Assessing the Europeanization of Portuguese Foreign Policy” (UCAS Annual Conference: College of Europe, 2010), 11-12.

¹⁶ Both states were former empires, competing with each other to acquire territories for strategic and economic calculations over the centuries. In the Seven Years war in the 18th century, Portugal aligned herself with Britain while Spain sided with Bourbon France. At that time, Spain launched an invasion of Portugal. Portugal and Spain still have a territorial dispute over Olivenza. Spain claims *de jure* sovereignty over Olivenza on the grounds that the Treaty of Badajoz still stands and has never been revoked. Portugal claims *de jure* sovereignty over Olivenza because the Treaty of Badajoz was revoked on its own terms when Spain invaded Portugal in the Peninsular War of 1807.

¹⁷ Ian Manner and Richard G. Whitman (eds.), “The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States” (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 164.

¹⁸ Steven Robinson, “Assessing the Europeanization of Portuguese Foreign Policy” (UCAS Annual Conference: College of Europe, 2010), 12.

¹⁹ There are several facets which establish the term “Europeanization”; 1) development of institutions of governance at the European level 2) central penetration of national and sub-national systems of governance 3) exporting forms of political organization and governance which are typical and distinct for Europe beyond the European territory 4) a political project aimed at unifying a politically-strong Europe 5) a process whereby domestic politics becomes increasingly subject to European policymaking. The relationship between the EU and its member states is not a one-way street. Member states are not merely passive receivers of EU demands for domestic change as is commonly thought. They may proactively shape European policies, institutions, and processes to which they have to adapt later. Moreover, the need to adapt domestically to EU pressures may have significant return effects at the European level, where member states seek to reduce the misalignment between European and domestic arrangement. Please see Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, “The Member States of the European Union” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

past twenty five years, her foreign policy has become synergetic with the EU. It was in the third revision of the constitution that the major parties adjusted it to meet the new qualifications in order to comply with the Treaty on the European Union (TEU).²⁰ Europeanization, elite socialization and networking have shaped Portugal's relations with Europe since the 1970s. The Portuguese centre-right eventually became more enthusiastic towards Europe²¹ and the political elite and policymakers have firmly anchored themselves in Europe and placed national foreign policy priorities firmly in the context of EU membership, intertwining Portugal's national interest with the broader European ones.²²

For example, it had long been commonly understood that Portugal has long standing ties with her former colonies and in spite of jumping into the integration process, Portugal still wants to preserve her influence over Africa and Latin America. This suggests that the idea of being a former empire has not totally disappeared. Portugal has been very keen on strengthening a Euro-Africa dialogue and she was a major force

in shaping the dialogue between the EU and the South Africa Development Community (SADC). The Lisbon government was successful in uploading her agenda on the EU, putting Brazil and Africa at the "service of the EU" and aiming at preserving her privileged political and economic ties, especially during the Presidency of the EU Council in 1992, 2000 and 2007.²³ In 2000, the EU-Africa summit in Cairo and a dialogue between the EU and Latin America took place. In the second half of 2007, the former Prime Minister, Jose Socrates, the President of the European Council at that time, outlined three key issues concerning external relations. The first was to reform the Treaties following the demise of the European Constitution. The second was concerned with the modernization of Europe's economies and societies. The last was to use the Portuguese Presidency to bolster Europe's place in the world. This was achieved by the first EU-Brazil summit and the Second EU-Africa Summit.²⁴ Portugal's economic inability to maintain effective post-colonial bilateral relations with her former colonies forced her to follow

²⁰ Ian Manner and Richard G. Whitman (eds.), *"The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 167.

²¹ Steven Robinson, *"Assessing the Europeanization of Portuguese Foreign Policy"* (UCAS Annual Conference: College of Europe, 2010), 12-13.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

a different approach from the other wealthier European countries, such as Britain and France. Rather than following a more autonomous path, the strategy embraced by Lisbon was to assume the role of 'intermediary' between the EU's resources and the development needs of her former colonies.²⁵ However, it was believed that, actually, Portugal was more likely to push for more aid measures rather than trade liberalization. Indeed, as a full Member State, Portugal started lobbying the Community for greater financial support for the Lusophone countries and tried to complement her own resources by joint funding. Such collaboration enhanced Portuguese business interests, which in turn should have contributed to reinforcing Portugal's African policy.²⁶

The case of East Timor was a clear manifestation of the fostering of a national position through common action with the other Member States of the EU. Since her accession to the European Community (EC), Portugal had always tried to influence the position of the other

Member States on this issue through the European Political Cooperation (EPC), and later the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Portugal was able to achieve a common position in the EU towards East Timor, in 1989, during the Greek presidency, there by reinforcing the Portuguese position.²⁷ A condemnation of the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia was achieved in 1996. In other words, Portuguese diplomacy was very enthusiastic to restore to the East Timorese people the right to choose for themselves which kind of political solution they would like for the future.²⁸ Here, Portugal projected herself as a truly European country and was able to take advantage of the synergies of policy created within the EU forum.

Moreover, the "Mediterraneanisation" of Portuguese foreign and security policy was extremely marked. It was illustrated by its participation in two major forces for rapid intervention in the Mediterranean region; the Eurofor operation in Albania and the Euromafor operation in Macedonia²⁹, established in 1995, and consisting

²⁵ Antonio Raimundo, *"The Europeanization of Portugal's aid Policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa: Chiefly Projecting National Preferences?"* (Department of International Relations: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011), 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁷ Ian Manner and Richard G. Whitman (eds.), *"The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 171.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Both have been participated in two deployments. The first was "Mission Albania", a response, under the auspices of NATO, to deal with the refugee crisis in Albania following the Kosovo War. The second operation was "Mission Macedonia". This mission took place in 2003 when the Macedonian authorities asked for assistance in establishing a stable and secure environment.

of Spanish, Italian, French and Portuguese troops.³⁰ These two forces can be used by NATO, the UN and the EU. The Portuguese government also has observer status in the Eurocorps and is well-engaged in several peacekeeping and monitoring missions around the world under the auspices of the United Nations (UN).³¹

Economic co-operation lies at the core of the Mediterraneanisation of Portuguese foreign policy. The northern and the southern rims of the Mediterranean have been brought together through 5+5 dialogue. The forum groups together Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Malta from the northern Mediterranean and Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and Mauritania from the south. The most important initiative was originated by Spain in November 1995. The Barcelona Conference, during the Spanish presidency, initiated what is now called the Euro-Mediterranean partnership which led to the creation of a Mediterranean Free Trade Area (MEFTA), consisting of European Union Member States and 12 southern and eastern Mediterranean States, namely Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. A fund from the EU and this organi-

zation are intended to improve the living conditions of the population on the southern rim of the Mediterranean and bring these countries closer to the level of economic development in the northern rim EU Member States.³² The Mediterranean region became less volatile and emigration to the EU from Africa can be stopped. Portugal is a true supporter to all these mechanisms.

Promotion of Democracy; an Epitome of the Kantian Manner

Many International Relations scholars believe that the EU is capable of becoming a superpower in the future but some, for example John McCormick, argue that that day has already arrived. The EU is now an alternative superpower but without pursuing military means. The EU is an economic colossus, the world's biggest capitalist market place, the world biggest trading partner and a magnet for foreign direct investment (FDI). Also, with the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, the EU surpassed the United States as the biggest and richest capitalist market place in the world, accounting for nearly one-third of the world's GDP and nearly half of the industrialized world's consumer population. Apart from looking at

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ian Manner and Richard G. Whitman (eds.), *"The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 172.

it through the economic lens, the EU actively contributes to world peace. It has operated at least 15 civil and military operations under the aegis of European security and defence policy (ESDP) since 2003. Furthermore, as Robert Kagan has suggested, the EU and the US are totally different. The former lives in a Kantian world of perpetual peace while the latter resides in a Hobbesian world. Europe is turning away from power and moving into a self-contained world of laws, rules, transnational negotiations and co-operation.³³

Portugal's actions correspond well with the Kantian identity of Europe. The Lisbon government has a good record of support for the promotion of democracy abroad and is an active participant in the OSCE, the UN and NATO. This has highlighted her commitment to these organizations and the effort to support the construction of a democratic Europe.³⁴ European integration is being exported to other parts of the world and the Community method has become a new way of overcoming regional tensions and fostering democratic behaviour and economic co-opera-

tion. There is no longer a contradiction between Portuguese foreign policy from within and without European parameters, the main reason being that the EU is highly committed to the UN's principles of peace, democracy and human rights.

After decolonization, civil wars between different political factions broke out and this weakened economic and social development in almost all the African states. The reconstruction of Portugal with other Portuguese-speaking countries started in the 1990s and led, in 1996, to the creation of the Community of Portuguese-speaking countries (CPLP), which attempts to foster political, economic, social and cultural co-operation between the different countries.³⁵ The forum's progress constantly intensifies.

Portugal has been especially helpful to her former colonies in supporting their efforts to hold free and fair elections by monitoring these votes, assisting non-governmental organizations and putting pressure on recalcitrant regimes via sanctions. After more than two decades of bloodshed in Timor, orchestrated by the Indonesian government, Portugal ardently defended her

³³ Please see John McCormick, *The European Superpower* (Hamshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) and Robert Kagan *Of Paradise and Power: American and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003)

³⁴ *Defending Democracy: a Global Survey of Foreign Policy Trends 1992-2002*, "Portugal" available from www.democoalition.org/pdf/Portugal.pdf; accessed 20 May 2012.

³⁵ Ian Manner and Richard G. Whitman (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 173.

former colony's right to self-determination and democratization.³⁶ This was, in part, assisted by UN negotiations. In Zimbabwe, the Portuguese government made use of the EU's leverage to provide humanitarian assistance to the people, to impose targeted sanctions against Mugabe's clique and demand the maintenance of EU observers in Zimbabwe to supervise the electoral process.

Portugal was once unable to get along with Spain in the promotion of democracy but Portugal increased her commitment to the Ibero-American cooperation initiated by Spain in July 1991 in Guadalajara in Mexico. The summit was designed for the exchange of information on the challenges associated with poverty, external debt, economic, social, technological and cultural development, childhood, health, drug trafficking, marginalization, underdevelopment and co-operation.³⁷ At first, the Portuguese elite viewed Spain with suspicion on these matters but, since 1995, co-operation between the two countries in synergetic foreign policy issues has increased markedly. Portuguese and Spanish are the two languages of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR)

and this may have helped empower the bridge between Portugal and Spain in a future more well-defined EU CFSP.³⁸

On Asia-Pacific; Macau

Portugal completed her process of decolonization by handing over Macao to China at the end of 2000. Since the establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR), Macao has remained on good terms with Portugal. The Macao Economic and Trade Representative Office in the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, further strengthens the relationship between the two partners. The agreement between MSAR and Portugal was reached in 2001 in order to promote greater co-operation in the areas of economics, finance, science, technology, culture, internal public security and justice.³⁹

Portugal and China have forged a strategic partnership and this has allowed Macau to become a platform for China and the Portuguese speaking countries. The central government of Macao also attaches importance to hosting the Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic

³⁶ *Defending Democracy: a Global Survey of Foreign Policy Trends 1992-2002*, "Portugal" available from www.democoalition.org/pdf/Portugal.pdf; accessed 20 May 2012.

³⁷ Ian Manner and Richard G. Whitman (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 174.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ "External Relations" available from www.gcs.gov.mo/files/factsheet/external_en.pdf; accessed 20 May 2012.



and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. The first meeting was held in 2003. China and seven Portuguese speaking countries sent government and business delegations to this significant event. Macau's role is to facilitate multi-lateral business relations such as trade and investment. The statistics show that trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries grew by 35% in 2007 and amounted to US\$46.35 billion.⁴⁰ Portugal was the third largest trading partner of China.

Forming a partnership with China for Macao and the Portuguese speaking countries was a wise move. Now that the Euro economic area is troubled by sovereignty debt crises and the European Union accounts for 70% to 75% of Portugal's exports, market diversification is urgently required.⁴¹ Portugal has to be where the interests of Portugal and business opportunities are and between the 1998 and 2008, the weight of non-EU markets in regard to Portuguese exports rose from 16% to 26%.⁴²

Conclusion

After the collapse of the authoritarian regime which was responsible for the end of the Portuguese empire, Portugal underwent significant changes in her foreign policy. European integration was responsible for a modification of strategy and the fostering of Portuguese foreign policy within the European framework. Thus, Portuguese foreign policy became not only less fragmented but also more integrated, efficient and pragmatic. The peaceful settlement of conflicts, the promotion of democracy, trade and investment and the improving of wellbeing became the cornerstones of Portuguese foreign policy, which was very much orientated towards Europe. This article would like to conclude with the observation that with the EU, the dignity of a territorially and politically small state like Portugal has been restored.

⁴⁰ "The Role of Macao as an Economic Co-Operation Platform Between the People's Republic of China and Countries of the Portuguese-Speaking World" available from www.ipim.gov.mo/en/ccpsc/index.htm accessed: 20 May 2012.

⁴¹ Paulo Gorjao, "Portugal's Economic Diplomacy: A New Paradigm or Old Rhetoric?" in *Ipris Viewpoint* (Lisbon: Portuguese Institute of International Relations and Security), 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.

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