

IN DEFENCE OF A BENIGN DUAL HEGEMONY*

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TIAGO MOREIRA DE SÁ
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The book by Tiago Moreira de Sá has three noteworthy features. Theoretically, it offers a succinct framework of the evolution in the international order that delineates the foreign policy of a State like Portugal. Historically, it presents a parsimonious description of the five main political regimes in Portugal under analysis. Politically, it is pertinent for the interpretation of the current foreign policy options open to Portugal. This intellectual alignment is present throughout the book, which is one of the increasingly important collection of essays from the Francisco Manuel dos Santos Foundation. In this way, its author - IPRI-NOVA professor and researcher - achieves an outcome that is unusual in our international relations literature in that it does not fall into a theoretical vertigo, excessive historicism or doctrinal motivation.

The fundamental thesis of this essay results from the author's framing of Portugal's foreign policy within the theory of international relations. According to Tiago Moreira de Sá, we have a historically unique Western post-war order, the institutions of which govern and delineate our external orientations. Any international order dominated by one major power relies on a combination of coercion and consent; however, the hegemony of the United

States has been distinct in that it has been more liberal than imperial and unusually accessible, legitimate and long-lasting. The aggregation of the largest number of open democracies and democratic states not only became a factor in the accumulation of geopolitical power, but also shifted the balance in favour of the order. Moreover, the Western post-war order has a widely supported, unusually dense and comprehensive set of institutions and system of norms. The most important benefit of these characteristics is that they give



the West a remarkable capacity to accommodate emerging powers. The democratic and pluralist order is a powerful circle which is both durable and geographically extensive: the global position of the United States might weaken on many fronts, but it is unlikely that the international system led by the North Americans will cease to predominate in the coming decades.

The last thirty years have changed Portugal. The economy has been modernised, the educational and health systems have been consolidated, and relations between the civil and military spheres have been normalised; the Armed Forces are now placed in a Euro-Atlantic “pluralist security community” that respects standards of technological cooperation and sophistication in a continental framework of deepening economic, financial, commercial, educational and military integration. In other words, Portugal’s membership of the European Union (EU) was vital for the normalisation of democracy and to ensure an appropriate international post-imperial insertion. However, the deepening European integration, notably since the introduction of monetary union and the entry into force of the single currency, consolidated European policy as a truly key dimension of the Member States’ various national policies. Suffice it to say that 80 per cent of Portuguese public investment originates from community funds, not to mention the fact that the vast majority of our legislation derives from European institutions.

Portugal’s relative weight on the European stage has naturally declined since enlargement and the inclusion of larger countries

and those of similar size. These countries have, in turn, shifted the gravitational centre of the EU to the east, assigning Portugal to the position of the western periphery of the enlarged EU. Moreover, it was both natural and predictable that German reunification resulted in Berlin becoming the EU’s real political centre, consolidating a truly German unipolarity in the context of the various European policies. In other words, while the United States has a systemic hegemony in the post war and post Cold War international order, Germany holds a similar status in the European regional order. It is in relation to this dual hegemony that Tiago Moreira de Sá sets out the Portuguese position and its foreign policy options.

It should be said that the author does not have a problem with the dual hegemony. He considers it to be benign, structural and necessary for the respective orders in that both are pillars of the pluralist West and of its leadership in the international economy and geo-politics. But he goes further. He does not believe Portugal is interested in disputing the American and German primacy through anti-hegemonic alliances, or that it is in a position to do so. Rather, it should consolidate its position as a close ally to try and influence its strategic options. While this argument makes sense given the EU’s current situation, the author makes a distinction between being close and being a follower. The fact that Southern Europe is now more coordinated in its questioning of the terms of the budget treaty, which may be the nearest thing to a mechanism to “dispute” German hegemony, is a topic that perhaps

warrants further analysis. The consequences of this debate remain unclear, but it cannot ignore the moment of European pressure that also centres the leadership of the refugee crisis in Germany due to its many visible implications for European security and cohesion. That is, German hegemony is being tested for the first time since reunification and this could lead to the emergence of other countries that bring balance to or upset this primacy.

We have delegated the consolidation of our regime and the modernisation of the economy to the EU, and the supranational path taken in the last twenty years has crystallised it as an integral part of Portuguese domestic policy. This is precisely why there is now a void in the design of foreign policy. On one hand, the relations within Europe have become an internal matter for Portugal, exposing the country to the periods of generalised economic recession in this space and political and financial disorientation in relation to the single currency. On the other, the fact that we have not worked vigorously on the Atlantic ties has restricted the range of compensatory alternatives. Moreira de Sá sees this as the great Portuguese challenge without calling into question the European pillar; the author's analysis could, however, have dared to question the need (or not) to revise the governmental structure in response to the consolidation of European affairs as an internal rather than external dimension. It would also have been interesting to understand how the State organs could interact in this architecture and the friction it could generate between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister's

office, the President of the Republic and even the Constitutional Court.

The author defends, correctly, the position that the three constituencies of democratic Portugal's foreign policy - Europe, the Atlantic Alliance, Portuguese speaking countries - have a continuity and complementarity that is strengthened by Lisbon's greater commitment to their institutions, namely the EU, NATO and CPLP. Moreira de Sá states decisively that there are no compensatory formulas for Portugal's insertion in the world, and argues that there is no need for any of these three pillars to clash strategically in order to survive. In fact, although he could have gone further, the author sets out a good argument for an "Atlantic alliance" as a space for the rescaling of Portuguese foreign policy, as a complement rather than substitute to European integration. Another key point raised in this essay is the relationship with Spain, which Victor Cunha Rego, the former ambassador in Madrid, refers to as "our permanent foreign policy". While Moreira de Sá recognises the two countries have taken a parallel path since Community membership, he claims this should be reassessed and become less dependent and subordinate, more differentiating and personalised, so as to lessen the perception abroad, notably in Washington, of an Iberian bloc and of the devaluation of Lisbon vis-à-vis the rise of Madrid.

Foreign policy should not be an à la carte menu that takes a different course depending on our economic frailties. Foreign policy should be resistant to the storms precisely because its foundations protect

the country from the more negative cycles in the economy and do not leave the State weakened in its relations with the outside world. Shared political values, complementary strategic interests, interlinked economies make the foreign policy of a country like Portugal an added value that builds trust in allies, attracts foreign

investment whilst defending the country's strategic sectors, boosting the economy and providing the State with a sensible but inevitable investment in defence so that it can exercise sovereignty. The essay by Tiago Moreira de Sá sets out these causes in a sober, elegant and courageous manner. **RI**

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