

THE SPLENDOUR OF POLITICAL HISTORY

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The thesis defended by Rui Lopes in October 2011 at the London School of Economics is now made available to a wider public that includes not only scholars of the history of the foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), but also all those interested in political history; this is understood not just as a chronological description of events but as a means of understanding the many dynamics within the complex of political chess (in the broad sense, encompassing everything related to *pólis*, be it domestic or international). The key ideas of this book are set out with analytical and methodological rigour based on an in-depth knowledge of primary and secondary sources. Moreover, the book stands out due to the author's remarkable capacity not to oversimplify what is complex but to clearly present the ambitions, contradictions and constraints of the many agents described. It develops around the Federal Republic of Germany's foreign policy binomial of continuity/rupture in relation to the Portuguese regime under Marcelo Caetano. The book is divided into six chapters that analyse the external and internal pressures faced by Germany (chapters 1 and 2); the tensions in the Federal Government itself regarding the economic policy that should be adopted in the

bilateral relationship with Portugal (chapter 3); the attempts to delimit military cooperation to the metropolis (chapter 4); the evolution of West Germany's diplomatic strategy in the period under study (chapter 5); and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) responses in the contacts with the Portuguese opposition (chapter 6). The six areas addressed (foreign, domestic, economic, military, diplomatic and parties) reveal the different positions adopted by the various actors that shaped them and gave them substance. Let's see how.

RUI LOPES

**West Germany
and the Portuguese
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1968-1974.
Between Cold War
and Colonialism.**

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RUPTURE VS CONTINUITY

In the first chapter, Rui Lopes shows how West Germany reconciled the calls for a rupture from some African leaders as well as from leaders of independence movements with German interests, notably in the Cahora Bassa project, and sought out a moderate ally in Kenneth Kaunda. Bonn did not change its position on Portugal even though West Germany was criticised, accused of involvement in “Operation Green Sea” and warned that efforts to foster an opening in Portuguese colonial policy were not feasible. While on one hand it remained engaged in the development aid programmes, on the other, it did not break off relations with Lisbon; it believed it was possible to safeguard good relations with the Portuguese Government without jeopardising its involvement with African countries, even at a time when it was essential to have their support in the United Nations (UN) to guarantee the success of West Germany’s application for UN membership. Rui Lopes explains what made this difficult path possible, linking the colonial questions with the Ostpolitik promoted by the Bonn Government and describing how the latter prevailed without coming up against opposition from the East Bloc which was also prioritising détente. Parallel to this, the author argues that the Nordic countries’ criticisms of the Portuguese colonial policy did not affect the path proposed by West Germany; in fact, they were more reticent about criticising Lisbon because the Federal Government considered it essential that there was no rupture within NATO at a time when the two blocs were attempting a rapprochement.

In the second chapter, Rui Lopes describes another distinction between the positions adopted by West Germany and the Nordic countries. Unlike what happened in some of these countries, criticisms of the Lisbon regime never became a major issue in West Germany’s internal political debate. Despite the growing number of critics and their steady advance from the left to the centre, it becomes clear how they were opposed and thwarted by important sectors of German society; from trade and industry to the church, they either defended their own interests or were sensitive to the arguments made by the propaganda disseminated by Portugal. This is one of the most original aspects of the book; it reveals the importance that both the Lisbon regime and its opponents gave to the media and German public opinion and brings new data on a subject that is so often considered secondary. In this case also, it is concluded that there was not enough pressure for change to bring about a rupture.

It is on the economic front that the contradictions within the German Government were most visible and Rui Lopes highlights the tension between the Minister for Economic Cooperation and some of his colleagues in government. Despite the Minister’s strong opposition and commitment to obstructing the good economic relations between the two countries, it is clear that fostering Portugal’s economic development was the vision that prevailed and the strengthening of ties with Europe favoured the progressive forces in the Marcelo Government. This positioning extended beyond bilateral relations. Besides defending the free trade agreement between Portugal and

the European Economic Community (EEC), formalised in 1972, some members of the Federal Government, notably the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of the Economy, openly said this was just the first step and would be followed by the concession of associated country status. Essentially, it was a question of applying the formula being used in the East and adjusting it to the West. Meanwhile, the West continued to play both fronts and so, as Rui Lopes explains, while the Portuguese moderates were supported in their efforts to draw close to Europe, the ultras were not abandoned as advocated by the Minister for Economic Cooperation in his Cahora Bassa project.

On the military front, this duplicity is not nearly so marked. The ties established in the late 1950s were so strong that even the increasingly audible critics were unable to weaken them. Despite various difficulties that arose with the Beja Base project and the attempts to reduce or dissemble the export of war material from West Germany to Portugal, here too we cannot speak of rupture. The author points out that while on one hand the Government led by Kissinger had previously curbed the ambitious military cooperation projects put in place by Minister Strauss, on the other, in 1973 it was the Minister of Defence himself who argued that the reduction of military investments in Portugal was a practical matter and had nothing to do with Portugal's colonial policy. Nevertheless, due essentially to pressure exerted by the SPD deputies, the relations between the two countries suffered from the effects of the Federal Security Council's decision, approved in May 1971, to block the export of war materials unless

there were guarantees they would not be used in Africa. But this is not what stands out most in this chapter. The most striking aspect is the complexity and intensity of the web that involves two such different countries, connected by an almost perfect symbiotic relationship that can be conveyed by one concrete fact: in 1970, Portugal became the second largest importer of German war material and in that year it bought the three largest ships built in West Germany since the Second World War. This involvement makes the decision to impede new exports to Portugal easier to understand. Discretion was necessary after such flagrant complicity.

The phases of this evolution from the Government of the "Great Coalition" to the SPD-FDP Government is analysed in depth throughout the fifth chapter, which picks up again on some of the topics addressed in previous chapters.

The continuity which occurred is largely explained by the fact that Willy Brandt left the Foreign Affairs portfolio in the "Great Coalition" to lead the alliance with the liberals. Indeed, Rui Lopes argues that the changes that took place (a position favouring more intervention so as to find a way to steadily withdraw from Africa and trying to involve Paris and London in this manoeuvre) were essentially responses to a set of factors that were external to the Government.

The most striking of these factors was that some SDP deputies had proved to be particularly committed to the cause of the independence movements; this is one of the signs of what Rui Lopes calls the "parallel front". This had other ramifications and

went beyond just having contacts with these movements; it also involved opposition to the Caetano regime in articulation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. These links and their importance to the affirmation of the Portuguese socialists are already well known. But Rui Lopes defends an idea that is not so widely disseminated, namely that the purpose of SPD's action in this field was not only to cause a rupture in the relationship with Portugal, but, paradoxically, also to safeguard good relations with the Lisbon Government. This constitutes an excellent example of Bonne's political ambiguity.

PRIORITIES

Notwithstanding, the book by Rui Lopes does not paint a black picture of Machiavellian politics or of the pragmatism of its actors. On the contrary, by presenting the materialistic and ideological arguments of those in favour of rupture and those who favoured continuity, he reveals the many nuances in the relationship between the two countries. Indeed, Rui Lopes does not paint

a black picture because he distinguishes between the range of colours on the canvas; in addition, he does not make the mistake of presenting a blank canvas by overlapping all the primary colours. Besides separating the colours and then mixing them again, the author takes care to show the relationship between them and how chromatic hierarchies are established so that it becomes clear to the reader how one colour stood out over the others.

The result is a portrait focussing on West Germany's relationship with Portugal. It is drawn taking other perspectives into account and including a more complex context in which we also find multilateral organisations, like NATO, EEC, OSCE and UN, both Federal State and private interests, party strategies, divergences at the governmental level, ministerial sensibilities, the role of public opinion, the relationship with the African countries and independence movements and it explains how Willy Brandt managed to make these different vectors of foreign policy subordinate to a grand plan: Ostpolitik. **RJ**

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ENDNOTE

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