

TENSIONS, AMBIGUITIES AND MISCONCEPTIONS OF A PRAGMATIC RELATIONSHIP¹

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More than a decade after arguing his doctoral thesis 'A circumstantial alliance: Portugal and the United States in the 1950s', Daniel Marcos publishes, with the seal of the *Imprensa de História Contemporânea*, a revised and updated version of his study dedicated to Portuguese-American relations between 1949 and 1961.

Based on a rigorous work of research of primary sources in national archives (National Defence archive, Air Force archive, Historic-Diplomatic archive, Military History archive, Oliveira Salazar archive) and international archives (President Eisenhower archive, President Truman archive, State Department archive, Foreign Office archive), along with various printed sources (official publications of diplomatic documentation), the press and a significant body of secondary sources that frame Luso-American bilateral relations in the context of the Cold War and articulate the foreign policy of the two countries with their respective domestic policy dynamics, the book now published draws an in-depth and rigorous, comprehensive and enlightening picture of this decade which remained a scarcely studied period in the history of Luso-American relations.

Compressed between the turbulent 1940s and the menacing 1960s, the 1950s have

not attracted much attention from researchers who are dedicated to the study of this bilateral relationship from the perspective of the history of Portuguese international relations. The apparent stability and continuity of these years has probably driven away those who have chosen, and rightly so, to analyse the breaking and changing points, or the Portuguese participation in international multilateral organisations that impacted the Portuguese-American bilateral dynamics.² However, under the decep-

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tive appearance of a flat and shallow sea, it was in this decade that important conflicts and tensions began to touch the surface, fully emerging at by the beginning of the following decade.

This book presents to us these conflicts and tensions in a twofold dimension. On the one hand, in the bilateral dimension, marked by the coexistence of shared views and strategies regarding the need to contain the Soviet threat in Europe and the North-Atlantic, an understanding and approximation that, however, did not extend to other geographies, namely the Indian subcontinent or Africa, laying bare the differences between the former colony, which sought to assert itself as the great democratic power on a global scale, and the small European country, where an authoritarian regime was in force and sought to secure the legacy of a vast colonial empire, legally and theoretically transformed into a multicontinental nation, in a final attempt to adapt to the decolonising dynamics. On the other hand, and this is one of the greatest insights of the book, the points of contention within the US administration itself regarding which was the best strategy to adopt in the face of the colonial policy of *Estado Novo*, encompassing the Portuguese issue in the broader US strategy regarding the binomial Europe/Africa, are well manifest. That is, in the difficult and lengthy process of choosing between maintaining good US relations with its traditional European allies – many of them colonial powers who were reticent in abandoning that status –, and the efforts to promote a new phase in the United States' relationship with the

African continent in the face of the growing commitment and involvement of the USSR. This new stage should be driven, nurtured and implemented according to an increasingly influential trend that was asserting itself at the US State Department, through clear support for the application of the principle of self-determination, criticism of colonialism and rapprochement with independent movements even if this stance might ultimately call into question the interests of European powers and relations between North America and Western Europe.

Since the book has as its starting point the integration of Portugal, as a founding member, in the Atlantic Pact, the author argues that Portuguese-American relations would not evolve in the following years 'to a level deeper than that which derived from the link between Portugal and the United States within NATO' and that this was due to 'the difficulty in harmonizing the Portuguese-American positions in Europe and in the Third World, which ensued from the particular national interests of each State' (p. 32). If it is true that this elusive convergence prevented a deepening of the bilateral relationship, we can also surmise from its reading that, instead of an strengthening, what was almost invariably on the horizon during the 1950s was a degradation of the bilateral relationship, which would only be halted due to the action of three major factors: the strategic importance of the Azorean bases, the aforementioned conflicting viewpoints within the American administrative machine on the policy to be adopted for the African continent and President Eisenhower's bene-

volent stance regarding the colonial policy of the Portuguese dictatorship.

Only this combination of dynamics prevented a setback in the relationship between the two countries, which underwent several *stress tests* during the period under analysis. The tension surrounding the extension to Macao of the economic embargo imposed by the US on the People's Republic of China in early 1951, which called into question the main reason for being of that territory as a trading post; the American silence in the face of the invasion of the enclaves of Dadrá and Nagar Aveli by Indian Union-backed forces in 1954; the repercussions of the Suez crisis in 1956; and the absence of strong US support in the face of a growing wave of criticism targeted at Portuguese colonialism within the United Nations throughout the second half of the 1950s, undermined and challenged the foundations of a relationship based on a major unifying element: the Azores.

It was mainly due to the Azores trump card, and the precarious and well-defined concessions offered by Portugal for the maintenance of US military forces in peacetime within the national territory, with a view to prevent the establishment of new Gibralters (p. 58), that the Portuguese authorities managed to pull out from the United States a declaration of support for the colonial policy of the Lisbon Government (p. 132, pp. 182–83). It was also thanks to this asset that Salazar could afford to give instructions for the invitation to President Craveiro Lopes for an official visit to the U.S. at the end of 1954 to be declined (pp. 165–66).

Also important was President Eisenhower's position in the face of the growing affirmation of the Africanist sector within the American diplomatic machine. It was only through the individual decision of the President that the US favourable vote was halted regarding resolution 1514 which, reaffirming the fundamental principles of human rights, condemned all forms of colonialism, underlined the right to self-determination and rejected the use of arguments aimed at deferring independence processes (p. 281). President Eisenhower's visit to Portugal in May of 1960 sealed this pragmatic relationship marked by tensions, ambiguities and misinterpretations. Among the latter, the prognosis of the American consul in Luanda who, in January of 1961, deemed it unthinkable that a contestation might be raised calling into question the presence of Portugal in Africa (p. 284).

Although it did not immediately take the form of a book, the scarcity of studies devoted to this subject in this specific period, and the quality of the research carried out, fully justify that several of the aspects addressed by Daniel Marcos in his doctoral thesis have since been incorporated into the most relevant and recent bibliography dedicated to the history of Luso-American relations³ or the history of Estado Novo's foreign policy.⁴ Which should not disqualify an attentive reading of the work now published. On the contrary, this edition should serve as a stimulus and starting point for further research on Luso-American bilateral relations, transatlantic relations and the evolution of the triangular dynamics between North America and Africa. **RI**

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■ ■ ■ ENDNOTES

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² RODRIGUES, Luís Nuno – *Salazar e Kennedy: A Crise de Uma Aliança. As Relações Luso-Americanas entre 1961 e 1963*. Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 2002; RODRIGUES, Luís Nuno – *No Coração do Atlântico. Os Estados*

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³ SÁ, Tiago Moreira de – *História das Relações Portugal-EUA (1776-2015)*. Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2016.

⁴ PEREIRA, Bernardo Futscher – *Crepúsculo do Colonialismo. A Diplomacia do Estado Novo (1949-1961)*. Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2017.

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