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International Dimensions of Portuguese Late Colonialism and Decolonization

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PORTUGUESE STUDIES VOL. 29 NO. 2

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF PORTUGUESE
LATE COLONIALISM AND DECOLONIZATION

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Introduction

MIGUEL BANDEIRA JERÓNIMO AND
ANTÓNIO COSTA PINTO

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The present volume, *International Dimensions of Portuguese Late Colonialism and Decolonization*, offers a multifaceted approach to the role played by international factors and processes in Portuguese late colonialism. In identifying and assessing some of its main manifestations, it explores their relation with metropolitan and colonial historical events and dynamics. Its six original articles examine the ways in which Portugal (and its authoritarian regime) interacted with the fundamental transformations that characterized the international arena after World War II, especially those impacting on imperial and colonial formations, on their late evolution, and eventual demise.¹ The chronological boundaries of this volume correspond to the major transformations of the international regime that resulted from the War, that is, from the constitution of the United Nations system (and in acknowledging the important changes brought after 1945 one must stress the fundamental legacy of the League of Nations in relation to imperial and colonial questions)² to the zenith of the decolonization process in Portuguese Africa, the formal dissolution of its colonial empire.³

Despite evident differences in scope, method and research concerns, these contributions nonetheless manifest a common analytical framework. They examine the historical evolution of the engagements between Portugal and other international actors, including other states, international organizations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, trades unions, found-

¹ These articles are the product of the Research project entitled 'Portugal is not a small country': *The End of the Portuguese Colonial Empire in a Comparative Perspective* (FCT-PTDC/HIS-HIS/108998/2008).

² For the United Nations see David W. Wainhouse, *The Remnants of Empire: The United Nations and the End of Colonialism* (New York: Harper&Row, 1964); Evan Luard, *A History of the United Nations: The Years of Western Domination, 1945–1955* (London: Macmillan, 1982); idem, *A History of the United Nations: The Age of Decolonization, 1955–1965* (London: Macmillan, 1989). For the importance of the League of Nations see Susan Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations', *The American Historical Review*, 112.4 (2007), 1091–1117. Related to the genealogies of the UN system see Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empires and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

³ See Norrie Macqueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire* (London and New York: Longman, 1997); António Costa Pinto, *O Fim do Império Português: A Cena Internacional, a Guerra Colonial, e a Descolonização, 1961–1975* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2001).

ations, churches and missionary bodies, and corporations. This variegated set of relationships is addressed, and contextualized, in the light of the different periods of post-World War II dynamic developments. How these shaped the evolution of Portuguese late colonialism in a context of global decolonization (highlighting, for instance, the relationships between them and anticolonial, nationalist movements); how Portuguese authorities assessed the global and local transformations entailed by Cold War dynamics and the changes in the geopolitical strategies and normative arguments deployed by other states, including imperial ones; and how they perceived and reacted against the potential impact of these developments in the planned continuation of the Portuguese imperial polity — these are some of the questions that unify the contributions to this volume. In order to provide answers to these and other important questions, the articles explore, in different ways, a combined analysis of the international (for example, the effects of the change in the international regime and of the bipolarization of the international system, and respective competing *modernities*),⁴ the metropolitan (for example, the nature and the functioning of the authoritarian political regime and the formulation of its African policies),⁵ and the colonial (for example, the emergence of political liberation movements and the specificities of the *late* colonial state and administration),⁶ aiming to bring together diverse histories and historiographies (international, national, imperial and colonial).

In this sense, these contributions contribute to the ongoing debates about the study of late colonialism and the *endgames* of European colonial empires.⁷ Studies of the Portuguese colonial empire and its demise are scant, and rarely incorporated into international studies. And when they are, there is a tendency to persist in two *explicative* and *interpretative models*, which largely replicate the dominant historiographical trends in the study of the nineteenth-century neo-imperialism: the metropolitan and the peripheral or nationalist ones. Until recently, for instance, international and transnational factors

⁴ See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁵ *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, ed. by Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri, vol. v (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1999).

⁶ Patrick Chabal, 'Emergencies and Nationalist Wars in Portuguese Africa', in *Emergencies and Disorder in the European Empires after 1945*, ed. by Robert F. Holland (London: Frank Cass, 1994), pp. 234–49; Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto, 'A Modernizing Empire? Politics, Culture and Economy in Portuguese Late Colonialism', in *The Ends of European Colonial Empires: Cases and Comparisons*, ed. by Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto (forthcoming, 2014).

⁷ For two recent important syntheses see Martin Shipway, *Decolonization and its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008); Martin Thomas, Bob Moore and L. J. Butler, *Crises of Empire: Decolonization and Europe's Imperial States, 1918–1975* (London: Hodder Education, 2008); *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Jost Dülffer and Marc Fey (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto, *The Ends of European Colonial Empires*. For an exploration of international dimensions see John Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism: Britain, France and Black Africa, 1939–1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and *International Diplomacy and Colonial Retreat*, ed. by Kent Fedorowich and Martin Thomas (London: Frank Cass, 2001).

tended to be neglected; and when addressed they tended to be subsumed in diplomatic, bilateral interstate exchanges.⁸ Furthermore, both these models neglect the diverse and dynamic nature of colonial contexts and actors, and tend to amalgamate this complexity into a-historical, monolithic units. The first analytical model attributes pre-eminence to metropolitan socio-political calculus and decision-making processes,⁹ while the second emphasizes colonial nationalism and processes of socio-political mobilization in colonial contexts.¹⁰ Both types and sets of factors are generally privileged as crucial to explaining European late imperial and colonial *modus vivendi*. As stated above, the majority of studies of the Portuguese case tend to replicate this propensity, failing to integrate several distinct scales of analysis, exploring their historical interrelation, their connections and co-constitution, and mobilizing the related different explanatory factors: geopolitics and *international* relations, domestic politics and imperial policies; and African policies and the colonial situation. The integrated study of the *intersections* of international constraints and opportunities, of metropolitan and imperial pressures, strategies and decisions, and of the colonial *situations* is fundamental. No proper study of late colonialism and the demise of colonial empires can fail to acknowledge factors such as the interrelation and co-constitution between the nature and *modus operandi* of imperial authority and forms of colonial sovereignty, and their relation with colonial societies; the origin and scope of socio-political mobilization of metropolitan constituencies regarding imperial and colonial issues, namely their appreciation of the political, economic, social and cultural *costs* and *benefits* — at international, metropolitan and colonial levels — of the continuity or dismantling of the empire; and, finally, the degree of international recognition (not only politico-diplomatic) of the political legitimacy of colonial sovereignty, evolving since the nineteenth century.¹¹ They also tend to miss the benefits, and empirically ponder the disadvantages and problems, of the comparative exercise, a fundamental issue that still needs to be further developed by international literature.

⁸ For the *interpretative models* regarding nineteenth-century neo-imperialism see Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 141–349 and Andrew Porter, *European Imperialism, 1860–1914* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994).

⁹ Inter alia, notwithstanding important differences, see Rudolf von Albertini, *Decolonisation: The Administration and the Future of the Colonies, 1919–1960* (New York: Doubleday, 1971 [1966]); Miles Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France: The Domestic Consequences of International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Jacques Marseille, *Empire Colonial et Capitalisme Français: Histoire d'un Divorce* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1984).

¹⁰ Inter alia, notwithstanding important differences, see Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (New York: New York University Press, 1957); and the original and, at many levels, highly influential, Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹¹ This is a still crucial suggestion made by Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis, in the 'Introduction' to their edited volume, *Decolonization and African Independence: The Transfers of Power, 1960–1980* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

This volume aims to address and tackle some of these questions. On the one hand, all the articles explore the analytical and empirical relevance of international factors in late colonialism and the end of the colonial empire. For example, they assess the impact of the new international normative regime upon the political legitimacy of the Portuguese imperial stand and on political decision-making processes, not only at the diplomatic level, but also at the imperial and colonial levels. The study of the historical constitution of political and diplomatic decision-making processes by Portuguese political and ministerial elites regarding the international, metropolitan and colonial developments of imperial and colonial issues — decoupling *essentialized* narratives that replicate the coeval official discourse — is a fundamental topic that still needs deeper study.¹² On the other hand, these texts place the Portuguese case within the *global* pattern of decolonization (with a special emphasis on the African continent), underlining some specificities, similarities and differences with other cases, and, more importantly, signalling and enabling comparative avenues of enquiry. The multifaceted approach of these texts and the diversity of themes and processes they deal with can open up important comparative possibilities. In political formations suffused with doctrines of *exceptionality*, the comparative exercise is indeed the best antidote.

Based on broad and extensive enquiries in Portuguese and foreign archives, and demonstrating an intensive and extensive use of international bibliography (thus overcoming a longstanding problem of Portuguese historiography),¹³ the authors offer a synthesis of the existing literature and a summary of the main current approaches, arguments and findings regarding their own case-studies, while identifying key avenues for future research.¹⁴

* * * * *

Accordingly, in ‘Internationalism and the *Labours* of the Portuguese Colonial Empire (1945–74)’, **Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo** and **José Pedro Monteiro** investigate the historical engagement between Portugal and the modalities of imperial internationalism, taking the case of *native* labour in the colonial empire as their main subject. In ‘The United States and Portuguese Decolonization’, **Luís Nuno Rodrigues** surveys the transformation of US policy towards Africa, and towards the Portuguese Colonial Empire in particular, from the Truman to the Ford administrations, including an assessment of the political,

¹² For example see, among others, Robert H. Jackson, ‘The Weight of Ideas in Decolonization: Normative Change in International Relations’, in *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*, ed. by Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 111–38.

¹³ Already emphasized by António Costa Pinto, *O Fim do Império Português*.

¹⁴ In particular, the lacuna in comparative research on the international dimensions of Portuguese late colonialism during the Cold War: i.e. the relations between the newly independent African countries, the Soviet Union and the socialist countries, and the liberation movements fighting against Portuguese colonialism.

economic and socio-cultural determinants of its main characteristics, in a Cold War context. In 'Live and Let Live: Britain and Portugal's Imperial Endgame (1945–75)', **Pedro Aires Oliveira** provides an in-depth analysis of the relationship between Britain and Portugal in a period marked by mounting international and colonial pressure towards the formal disintegration of imperial polities. In 'Cold War Constraints: France, West Germany and Portuguese Decolonization', **Ana Mónica Fonseca** and **Daniel Marcos** address the causes and motivations — domestic, imperial and geopolitical — of the supportive role played by France and by the Federal Republic of Germany in the Portuguese overall strategy in opposition to decolonization drives. In 'South Africa and the Aftermath of Portugal's "Exemplary" Decolonization: The Security Dimension', **Filipe Ribeiro de Menezes** and **Robert McNamara** offer a detailed view of the engagement of South Africa with Portuguese late colonialism, with the dynamics of the transfer of power, and with the perceived impact of decolonization at international and regional levels. Finally, in 'Portugal and the UN: A Rogue State Resisting the Norm of Decolonization (1956–74)', **Bruno Cardoso Reis** explores the characteristics of Portuguese political culture and regime and the diplomatic strategies that the Portuguese formulated, especially in relation to the United Nations.