

I - Tradition and “Europeanisation”

It is useful to remember that Portugal acceded to the EU for essentially political reasons: the consolidation of democracy and the search for what Mario Soares calls “a new destiny” (novo destino) to replace the Empire that had been lost in inglorious colonial wars. Some social sectors with strong traditionalist and isolationist positions that still have remnants of influence feel that, because of EU membership, Portugal is losing its ‘special’ traditional relationships and has to put up with “competition” from its European partners in the (not very appropriately named) Lusophone world. But the two dominant parties that have alternated in power since 1985 both see EU membership as a powerful trump card that can further empower Portuguese relations with the countries of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa, CPLP)⁴. Most Portuguese leaders and intellectuals hold similar views. According to Brazilian sociologist Hélio Jaguaribe, “Because it is a member of the EEC and because of its participation in the Luso-Brazilian cultural universe, Portugal will open the door to an important space within the [European] Community for Brazil and, by extension, to Brazil’s Latin American partners.”⁵

⁴ The Community was established in July 1996 by seven countries (Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guiné-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, and S. Tomé e Príncipe), which were later joined by East Timor in May 2002.

⁵ Hélio Jaguaribe, “Portugal e Brasil perante a integração Europeia”, *Estratégia* (Lisbon: 6, 1989).

In its turn, the EEC recognized the benefits of Portuguese accession accruing to European foreign policy, as stated at the accession ceremony: “Portugal’s historical, cultural and economic ties with Latin America, Africa and Asia constitute an important contribution to the action to which the Community is committed, with a view to creating the bases for new equilibrium and new opportunities for peace, particularly in the areas of greatest international tension.”⁶

Twenty years on, it is clear that Portugal – and Spain – have fostered closer ties between Europe and Latin America. Indeed, Latin America is a priority in the foreign policy of both countries, and variations in the intensity of relations have very little to do with the political orientation of governments on either side of the Atlantic. Brazil and Africa have always been priority for the Portuguese presidency of the Union, including this most recent one. As Prime Minister José Sócrates said when presenting the Portuguese Presidency programme to the European Parliament, Portugal hopes to make a “specific contribution to enrich European foreign policy” by promoting the Brazil summit. The summit with the African Union is also a priority, and Portugal has worked very hard to make it happen. It is also the view of the Portuguese presidency that any idea of dividing Africa up into “special domains,” so that some EU countries focus on particular African countries or subregions to the detriment of a global “EU Africa outlook,” is mistaken and should be abandoned.⁷

This view of the national interest as being part of a much broader, shared interest shapes the attitude of many toward the role of Portugal in Europe and the world. Although Portugal obviously pursues “Portuguese” foreign policy goals, it views them as an integral part of a broad “European interest.”

Portugal has contributed to European foreign policy, but being in Europe has also added a new dimension to Portuguese foreign policy: relations with the Maghreb (with which Portugal has very strong, non-colonial, historical ties) and the Mediterranean became an increasingly important foreign policy “interest” after accession, and there are substantial economic interests at play, too. Before

⁶ Speech by Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the Acting European Council, Giulio Andreotti, at the signature of the Acts of Accession, 12 June 1985.

⁷ For instance, I have heard this view expressed by Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, João Cravinho.

accession, the Maghreb was not a Portuguese foreign policy priority; Portugal actually felt it was risky to take an interest in Mediterranean issues because of the role played by the Lajes airbase in the Azores in U.S. Middle East operations. It was because of European membership Portugal that became more like other southern European countries, attaching greater importance to Euro-Mediterranean relations. This is particularly evident in Portugal’s commitment to the Barcelona Process. The increasingly prominent place of relations with the Mediterranean provides a clear example of the Europeanisation of Portuguese foreign policy. Last, but not least, Europeanisation has breathed new life into the so-called ‘traditional’ external relations.

After accession, particularly during the 1990s, Portugal’s historical relations with extra-European regions intensified and acquired greater density; at the same time, participation in European defense initiatives, which was considered compatible with the pre-existing commitment to NATO after some hesitation, became a fundamental aspect of Portuguese defence policy. The Europeanization of a number of high-ranking Portuguese officials is interesting from this point of view, as they became more pragmatic with growing involvement in EU activities than the old geopolitical Atlanticists, whose thought had dominated Portuguese military thinking for so long.

In the first years of the twenty-first century an international arena marked by unilateralism generated a great deal of bewilderment, particularly within Europe, and seriously complicated the Euro-Atlantic balance sought by Portugal foreign policy. It showed that when Portugal has to choose between the European path and Atlantic solidarity, many Portuguese politicians will hesitate, particularly when it comes to security issues, as was the case with the Iraq war. But they are not very different from their European counterparts in this respect. At the same time, Portugal backed the creation of a European defence policy, and increased its participation in UN operations (it took part in the international mission in Bosnia from 1996 to 2007, and maintains a military presence in Kosovo, Afghanistan and the Lebanon).

Relations with Brazil, which had been limited to the cultural sphere for decades, received a strong impetus and gained political and economic substance. Brazil, which had been the main destination for Portuguese migrants during the first half of the twentieth century, became one of the main – if not the principal – source of Portuguese economic internationalization. Fears that membership of the EEC might erode relations with Brazil proved to be unfounded, and many of those favouring a strong dichotomy between Europe and the Atlantic were forced to admit their mistake. There was a peninsular impetus to intensify economic and political Euro-Latin American relations. The first ministerial meeting between the European Community and the Common Southern Market known as Mercosur occurred under the Portuguese presidency in 1992, at a time when the EU saw the Mercosur as a strategic partner that partly emulated and exemplified Europe's preferred kind of regionalism, one based on "deep integration."

Portugal and Spain turned various 'circles' of cooperation with Latin America "Euro-ward," most notably the Ibero-American Summit process, the Secretariat of which is in Madrid. However, their commitment to Latin America (their role within the European Commission, and the emphasis they placed on Latin America under their respective presidencies) was insufficient to consolidate a strategic relationship with the Mercosur. The 1995 Framework Agreement never led to the hoped for Free Trade Agreement, which shipwrecked in the same stormy waters that brought down the Doha Round. This example illustrates the limits of the role of "national champions:" Portugal and Spain influenced EU policy toward Latin America, pushing the region up the ladder of Union priorities. Ultimately, though, the support of other member States was necessary. Relative peace in the region and the context of exacerbated post-11 September fears pushed Latin America back down the ladder of European priorities. The indefinite postponement of a free trade agreement with the Mercosur robbed the Foreign Ministers meeting at Guimarães of impetus, and hopes for a strategic partnership withered away (in truth, Portugal and Spain and some other countries were ambivalent about the impact that such an agreement would have on the Common Agricultural Policy). As this example shows, however much the member States of the Union "Europeanise" their points of view, if they are unable to carry other states with them, this dilutes the "European-ness" of their actions.

Enlargement: Democracy First

If there is any country that clearly backs the future enlargement of the Union today, that country is Portugal. For its "pro-European" leaders (in the Socialist and Social Democratic parties, the PS and PSD), opposing enlargement is close to heresy, given Portugal's recent history. There may be some hesitation at times, but support for enlargement prevails. Some political leaders were initially defensive about eastward enlargement, as they feared that Europe might shift away from the south and, above all, that there would be stiff competition for European funds. Civil society organisations and a part of the business elite were positive right from the start). When the EFTA countries joined in 1995, the reaction was different: Portugal was an EFTA member, these were primarily smaller and wealthy nations, and they backed the "Euro-prudent" view, which was influential in Portugal. Opposition to the accession of the new eastern democracies, which had already vanished at the time of the 2000 presidency, quickly came to be seen as unsustainable: Portuguese openness is the product of an awareness of just how important accession was to help consolidate democracy and promote development. The enlargement of the Union to the borders of the European continent is considered the most significant aspect of Union foreign policy, and the most important and original EU contribution to world peace. Indeed, "democratic inclusion" is the "European method" par excellence. It explains Europe's magnetism, particularly among neighbouring states that want to "join the club."

This vision is clear in the strong support among pro-European leaders for Turkish accession. In the words of Minister of Foreign Affairs Luís Amado, "the positive attraction of the EU can generate a virtuous cycle that will anchor [Turkey] strongly to Europe, we have a commitment to negotiate with Turkey and we should fulfil that commitment in good faith."⁸ The concept of an open Europe based on unity within diversity, is part of the discourse of Portuguese 'Europeanists.' Turkish accession would consolidate a diverse Europe, one that can integrate a country with a Muslim majority; at the same time, Turkey would become a strong example of democracy and peace in a region in which both goods are scarce. In the words of

⁸ Luís Amado, Luís Amado, "Packed Agenda," *The Parliament Magazine*, 249, 2 July 2007.

former Portuguese president, Jorge Sampaio, this is a “real crossroads for Europe: with Turkey Europe will be better off if it talks with Asia; without it, it is very likely that both continents will be compelled to turn their backs to one another.”⁹

The future of an ‘open Europe’ depends largely on whether Turkey joins after scrupulous compliance with stipulated membership conditions. Likewise, Turkish accession will affect the degree to which the EU is a magnet, and the ability of the Union to act and influence others in an increasingly multipolar world, a world that may well regress to a new kind of unstable power politics.

⁹ Jorge Sampaio, “Voies vers la démocratie et inclusion dans la diversité,” speech at the Annual EuroMeSCo Conference, Istanbul, October 2006.