

Pubblicazione quadrimestrale
numero 3 / 2017

afriche e orienti

www.comune.bologna.it/iperbole/africheorienti

rivista di studi ai confini tra africa mediterraneo e medio oriente

anno XIX numero 3 / 2017

International Solidarities and the Liberation of the Portuguese Colonies

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AIEP EDITORE



"Not Inclined to Be in a Secondary Position": The Soviet Union and the Portuguese Colonial Issue at the United Nations

Aurora Almada Santos

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Introduction

The struggle for independence of the Portuguese African colonies surpassed the frontiers of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe, and reached an international dimension. Although Portugal portrayed the situation as an internal affair, after the wake of the war in Angola the Portuguese colonial issue became widely debated.

To understand the attention given to the subject at least four instances must be considered. First, it is fundamental to look at the anti-colonial movements' agency in presenting their demands in the international arena. The anti-colonial movements' initiatives to denounce the Portuguese colonialism and collect moral, political and material support preceded the war, allowing for the establishment of channels of communication with governments, international organizations and non-state actors. Second, the challenges that the Portuguese colonial policy inspired amid other countries likewise reflected upon its international dimension. The behavior of each country towards the Portuguese colonialism was prompted by their own interests, and

the divisions according to ideological commitments and geographical locations were not clear-cut.

Third, another instance to think over is the involvement of international organizations, namely the United Nations (UN), the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the European Community (EC), in the debate about the Portuguese colonial policy. These organizations addressed the situation within the Portuguese colonies on a regular basis, adopting decisions and promoting initiatives to convince Portugal to take steps for decolonization. Finally, it is essential to emphasize the international solidarity vis-à-vis the anti-colonial movements displayed by non-state actors, such as non-governmental organizations, churches, trade unions or political, student and women's groups. Their solidarity traversed national boundaries and aimed at the isolation, boycott and weakening of the Portuguese government, at the assistance to the national liberation movements and at the mobilization of the international public opinion regarding the territories under Portuguese colonial rule.

The theme of the international dimension of the Portuguese colonial issue has lately seized a place in the historiography. Nevertheless, a survey of the literature highlights that the four instances explained above have been studied in a rather unfinished way. In what concerns the anti-colonial movements' agency, the diplomatic activity of the African Party for Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde - PAIGC) and the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique - FRELIMO) has been analyzed with some detail (Sousa 2011; Tornimbeni 2018; Kaiser 2017). Among the international organizations, even if the UN has received attention, many of its initiatives together with those of NATO, OAU and EC are yet to be addressed, especially through the perspective of the comparative history (Santos 2017a). The third countries approach to the Portuguese colonial issue – in relation to which the actions of the United States (US), United Kingdom, France, Spain, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Brazil, Nordics, Soviet Union, Cuba, People's Republic of China (PRC) and Yugoslavia have been scrutinized – has still not covered all lengths (Santos 2017a; Oliveira 2015). The non-state actors' solidarity started to attract the interest of the academia just a few years ago and remains a fertile field to be explored, particularly regarding the transnational feature of their initiatives.¹

Building on existing studies, this paper focuses on the UN solidarity towards the Portuguese colonies, paying special attention to the behaviour of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).² The literature on this subject, besides not being substantial, has been overshadowed by other dimensions of the Soviet Union contribution to the end of the Portuguese colonialism. Three examples can illustrate this assessment. First, Natalia Telepneva's PhD thesis (2014), which emphasizes how the Soviets became engaged with the Portuguese colonies, the role of ideology in their strategy and the anti-colonial movements' agency in the search of support from Moscow. Another example

is the account of Vladimir Shubin (2008), which crosses the boundaries of academic research and memoir, dealing with the subject from the perspective of the material assistance, namely the financial support and the military co-operation with the anti-colonial organizations. Last, Odd Arne Westad (2007), when studying the entangled histories of Southern Africa struggles for independence and the Cold War rivalry, underlines the USSR contribution, with weaponry and logistical support, for the Cuban military intervention in Angola in 1974–75. Even if they present valuable contributions for the study of the Soviet support for the independence of Portuguese colonies, the picture depicted by these authors is unfinished and neglects the significance of Moscow's moral and political support showed within the institutions of the UN.

This paper does not intend to cover all the UN debate on Portuguese colonial issue, but only to study the discussions at the Security Council, where the USSR had the veto power. It starts with a background explanation regarding the UN involvement in the debate on Portuguese colonialism. It follows with the identification of the ideas prompted by the Soviet Union at the Security Council. It finishes with the review of the implications for the Soviet support to the anti-colonial demands voiced against Portugal. My argument is that even if the USSR gave a major contribution to the Security Council debate, in the end the country helped to transform the Portuguese colonial issue into another episode in the ineffectiveness of the UN organ due to the Cold War rivalry.

A UN priority

The connection between the UN and the Portuguese decolonization has received a revived attention in the academic literature. Portugal became a UN member in 1955, when the organization was experiencing many transformations. The regional balance among its members which prevailed in the first decade of its existence was by then on the way of being transformed by the admission of newly-independent African and Asian countries.³ Increasingly, the General Assembly started to be dominated by the Afro-Asian specific concerns and the organ was regarded as a tool to advance the debate regarding decolonization. Therefore, the UN decided to center its attention on the conditions prevailing in each of the colonized territories, instead of looking at them as a whole.

The debate on colonial issues became one of the most contentious topics on the UN agenda (Luard 1989). It was intertwined with the advent of human rights at the organization, acquiring a prominence far from what was anticipated in 1945 (Normand, Zaidi 2008). The colonial powers – although not keen to abide by the decisions approved by the organization – were unable to escape the UN scrutiny on the evolution of their colonies to independence. The UN adopted mechanisms of international supervision to oversee the colonial powers' behavior, establishing organs to study the circumstances that prevailed in the colonized territories (Hill, Keller 2010).

Concerning the Portuguese colonies, the UN's initial approach intended to implement the Article 73 of the Charter according to which the colonial powers had to transmit technical and statistical information on non-self-governing territories. Portugal reacted to the UN pressure reinforcing its determination to not relinquish the sovereignty upon its colonial territories. Early on, confronted with the independence of the Sub-Saharan colonies and the prospect of the UN demands, the *Estado Novo* regime attempted to shield its colonial policy against external interference (Alexandre 2017). Underlying what was considered as the specific nature of the Portuguese colonialism, Portugal resorted to the use of force in combination with a reformist agenda nurtured by different segments of the government as a tool to surpass the vulnerabilities of the colonial policy (Alexandre 2017).

The Portuguese refusal to fulfill the requirements of the Article 73 instigated a dispute regarding the mandate of the General Assembly to interpret the Charter and to decide which territories should have the non-self-governing status. The USSR was at the forefront of the dispute since Nikita Khrushchev's reassessment of the Soviet diplomacy after replacing Stalin dictated an increasing proximity to the newly-independent African and Asian countries (Kanet 2006: 334). Committed to winning followers for its social, economic and political system, the Soviet Union started to offer developmental assistance, military equipment and advice to those countries (Bradley 2010: 475). The USSR became an active player in the so-called Third World, providing theoretical foundations for development and counteracting the idea that capitalism could deliver solutions for their problems (Bradley 2010: 475). In the context of Khrushchev's policy, in the late 1950s Moscow established contacts with the anti-colonial organizations, namely from the Portuguese colonies (Telepneva 2017: 30-31). The interactions with members of the national liberation movements from Portuguese colonies, initially established mainly for cultural exchanges, were crucial in shaping the USSR interventions at the UN (Telepneva 2017: 6).

When considering the Soviet Union involvement in this situation it is imperative to consider the Cold War rivalry, which affected the UN and helped to instigate the superpowers concerns vis-à-vis colonialism. The Cold War dynamics deeply constrained the organization and in many instances the conflict influenced the attitudes and voting of the member states (Bosco 2009). One element that shows us the amplitude of this problem was the Soviet Union willingness to use the veto power, preventing the adoption of collective decisions against threats to world peace and security. Most of the topics debated in the organization, even when not related to the Cold War, were distorted into episodes of the struggle between the two ideological fields under the leadership of the USSR and the US (Gaiduk 2012).

The dispute in the General Assembly on the Portuguese question incited the approval of the resolution 1541 (XV), establishing an interpretation with respect to the concept of non-self-governing territories.⁴ The territories geographically detached

from the metropolitan state, with ethnical and cultural differences in relation to the administrative power and which were in a position of administrative, juridical, economic, and social subordination were designated as non-self-governing. In addition, the resolution 1542 (XV) decided that the Portuguese colonies fulfilled the criteria of non-self-governing territories and that Portugal had the obligation to transmit the information requested by the Charter.⁵

Almost at the same time, the UN adopted the resolution 1514 (XV), presenting the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The resolution was a Soviet Union initiative, seeking to win the goodwill of the Afro-Asian countries for its initiatives at the UN (Iandolo 2017). According to the regional balance within the organization, the USSR and the related Eastern European satellites were a minority group (Peterson 1990: 11-12). Given that the Afro-Asians were becoming the driving force at the General Assembly, they were targeted by the Soviet diplomacy which aimed to use their number to improve its score at the UN and influence the decisions (Iandolo 2017: 129). Knowing that decolonization and development were the Afro-Asians main goals, the USSR proposal on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples had a pragmatic dimension, intending to reinforce its international prestige.

Understandably, the Soviet initiative was received with suspicion by the Afro-Asian countries. Instead of taking into account Moscow's draft resolution, the group approved its own version of the Declaration, establishing that all peoples had the right to self-determination, to freely determine their political status and to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (Santos 2017a). The elaboration of the idea of self-determination as a right for the colonized peoples was the culmination of a long debate which was in progress at the UN and that would continue in the following years, becoming intersected with the Portuguese colonial issue. In fact, in the debates regarding Portuguese colonialism the Afro-Asian countries tried to cultivate an interpretation of the right to self-determination which was equivalent to independence.⁶ On the contrary, other countries emphasized that independence was only one of the possible outcomes of the right to self-determination. Even though the controversy surrounding the idea of self-determination would last, the resolution 1514 (XV) was accepted as the normative framework for the discussions on Portuguese colonialism when the latter was transformed into a UN priority (Santos 2017a).

A systematic campaign

After an USSR intervention in 1971 at the Security Council, the Portuguese representative reported to Lisbon that the Soviet Union gave the impression of being eager to assert that it was "Not Inclined to Be in a Secondary Position" in matters of colonialism.⁷ Evidence shows that the Portuguese colonial issue was not a high priority for the Soviet Union foreign policy, being a subsidiary topic. The Soviet leadership was much more

interested in other contemporary events, such as the Vietnam War, the Middle East or the superpowers *détente* (Telepneva 2014: 280). In the African continent in the early 1960s, the crucial event for the Soviet foreign policy was the Congo crisis. Moscow supported the Leopoldville government by giving political backing, economic aid and transport planes, although not in a significant amount, to Patrice Lumumba. Moreover, USSR was involved in the UN peacekeeping operation in Congo, which became a source of controversy, insofar as it was viewed by the Soviets as acting as proxy for the US (Iondolo 2014: 51). The mistrust strained the USSR relations with the UN, paving the way for a deepening rift between that country and the organization.

The Portuguese colonial issue was first raised at the Security Council in March 1961 after the uprising in Angola. The Afro-Asians, represented by Liberia, United Arab Republic and Ceylon, assumed a leading role in the discussion, labeling the conflict as a threat to world peace and security, and recognizing the Security Council's mandate to address the events notwithstanding the Portuguese allegation that they were an internal affair (Santos 2017a: 41). But which ideas the Soviet Union prompted in the discussion about Angola? Wishing to gain an upper hand on the Portuguese colonial issue, USSR pushed for the dismantling of the Portuguese colonialism. After a visit of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola - MPLA) to Moscow, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia approved the first package of material assistance and military training for the movement (Shubin 2008: 8-9). Later, the same support was extended to the PAIGC and the FRELIMO (Shubin 2008: 121; Telepneva 2017: 6, 14).⁸ At the Security Council, the Soviet representative – following the Afro-Asian example – branded the Angolan War as a threat to world peace and security, voicing his country's condemnation of Portuguese colonialism.⁹ Aiming to embarrass Portugal at the UN, the USSR displayed a concerted effort to portray the living conditions in the colonized territories, speaking of oppression, lack of democracy, forced labor, illiteracy and poverty. The Soviet Union requested the Security Council to adopt decisions to compel Portugal to assume its obligations, to implement the UN decisions regarding the right to self-determination and to allow the independence of Angola.¹⁰

To contradict the Soviet claims and use the Cold War to gain the favor of the Western powers, Portugal accused Moscow of encouraging the uprising in Angola.¹¹ Portugal did not accept the Soviet Union criticism, judging its initiatives as "A Systematic Campaign" to demoralize the country's colonial policy.¹² Other participants in the discussion, namely the Afro-Asians countries, also regarded the USSR rhetoric with suspicion, assessing the Soviet behavior as a propaganda campaign to promote its own political interests.¹³ Afraid of the Cold War impact and increasingly supporting a neutral stance, which would give rise to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Afro-Asians only intended to establish a sub-committee to inquire on the events in Angola (Alden, Morphet, Vieira 2010). Both the USSR and the US – whose policy regarding

the Portuguese colonial issue changed with John Kennedy – supported the Afro-Asian proposal, although assuming different viewpoints (Rodrigues 2002). The US argued that Portugal should implement the right to self-determination to avoid possible threats to world peace and security.¹⁴ The Soviet Union – which was being targeted by the US to discredit its support to decolonization and to portray the country as an imperialist one – stressed that the threat already existed (Heiss 2015). Evincing the limits of the anti-colonial initiatives at the Security Council, the Afro-Asian proposal failed to be approved since Chile, Republic of China, Ecuador, France, United Kingdom and Turkey abstained.

Facing a deadlock, the Afro-Asians resorted to the General Assembly, approving the draft resolution presented at the Security Council and establishing the Subcommittee on Angola.¹⁵ Then, the Security Council resumed the discussions in June, beginning to adopt the confrontational style that would be dominant in the debate on Portuguese colonialism. The Afro-Asians accused Portugal of escalating the Angolan conflict, reinforcing the repression and the threat to world peace and security.¹⁶ Represented by a number of members, the Afro-Asians were not a homogenous group, considering that countries like Morocco assumed a stronger position, calling for assistance to the national liberation movements and the approval of sanctions if Portugal continued to challenge the organization.¹⁷ Exhorting the UN to eradicate the Portuguese colonialism, the Soviet Union laid layers on the Afro-Asian arguments, denouncing that Portugal was waging a massive and merciless war in Angola. The USSR undertook efforts to intertwine decolonization and Cold War, mobilizing arguments against the NATO countries and accusing them of supporting the Portuguese colonialism.¹⁸ The Soviet Union maintained that the Security Council should demand Portugal to cease the war, condemn the actions against the Angolan people, adopt decisions to help the implementation of the right to self-determination and, eventually, apply the provisions of the Charter related to threats to peace and security.¹⁹ These proposals were put forward as a matter of urgency and the Sub-Committee on the Situation in Angola was urged to launch its inquiry and to visit the territory.

Refusing to accept that the events in Angola were threatening world peace and security, United Kingdom, Ecuador, Chile, Turkey and the Republic of China rose to defend that the Sub-Committee on the Situation in Angola should fulfill its mandate before the Security Council could take any decision.²⁰ Once again, the Portuguese intervention alienated the Afro-Asians, whose draft resolution framed the situation in Angola as a threat to world peace and security, asking the Sub-Committee to fulfill its mandate and inviting the Portuguese government to end repression.²¹ The US, viewing the proposal as destructive, worked behind the scenes to present amendments, using the Chilean representative as middleman.²² The US amendments shaped the language of the Afro-Asian proposal, removing the affirmations regarding threats to peace and security and voicing hope that the Angolan crisis would have a peaceful solution.²³ Reasoning that

the Afro-Asian proposal lacked ambition, the Soviets resorted to the same technique of the US but aiming to an opposite effect. To reinforce the wording of the draft, the USSR amendment proposed the condemnation of the Portuguese war against the Angolan people.²⁴ After the ballot, only the US amendments and the Afro-Asian draft were approved. The Soviet amendment was rejected since it went far beyond the intentions of the remaining Security Council members.

As depicted in the table below, the Western powers did not assume a public support to the Portuguese colonial policy, resorting instead to abstention. The voting record revealed that abstention would become one of the key tactics for the Western countries and their allies to deal with the Portuguese colonial issue (Santos 2017a). The rapid escalation of the verbal confrontation promoted by the Afro-Asian countries with the assistance of the USSR was one of the explanations for such behavior.

Tab 1: Resolutions Adopted by the Security Council

	Yes	No	Abstention
Resolution 163 (1961), 9 June 1961	9	0	France United Kingdom
Resolution 178 (1963), 24 April 1963	11	0	0
Resolution 180 (1963), 31 July 1963	8	0	France United Kingdom United States
Resolution 183 (1963), 11 December 1963	10	0	France
Resolution 204 (1965), 19 May 1965	11	0	0
Resolution 218 (1965), 23 November 1965	7	0	France Netherlands United Kingdom United States
Resolution 226 (1966), 14 October 1966	11	0	0
Resolution 241 (1967), 15 November 1967	15	0	0

Resolution 268 (1969), 28 July 1969	11	0	France Spain United Kingdom United States
Resolution 273 (1969), 9 December 1969	13	0	Spain United States
Resolution 275 (1969), 22 December 1969	9	0	Republic of China Colombia France Spain United Kingdom United States
Resolution 289 (1970), 22 November 1970	15	0	0
Resolution 290 (1970), 8 December 1970	11	0	France Spain United Kingdom United States
Resolution 294 (1971), 15 July 1971	13	0	United Kingdom United States
Resolution 295 (1971), 3 August 1971	15	0	0
Resolution 302 (1971), 24 November 1971	14	0	United States
Resolution 312 (1972), 4 February 1972	9	0	Argentina Belgium France Italy United Kingdom United States
Resolution 321 (1972), 23 October 1972	12		Belgium United Kingdom United States
Resolution 322 (1972), 22 November 1972	15	0	0
Resolution 356 (1974), 12 August 1974	15	0	0

Source: United Nations Security Council.²⁵

The USSR decisive intervention at the Security Council took place following the invasion of Goa, Damão and Diu in December 1961 by Indian troops. Having the Portuguese government requested an emergency meeting, the starting point of the discussion was the legitimacy of the use of force to fulfill the right to self-determination (Santos 2017a: 75). The US, United Kingdom, Turkey, France, Ecuador, Republic of China and Chile refused to have the use of force tolerated, while Liberia, United Arab Republic and Ceylon argued that India acted in territories illegally occupied by Portugal.²⁶ In support of the Indian action, the Soviet Union reasserted the Afro-Asian assumption that the matter was an internal affair of India, to whom the territories belonged. Instead of debating the events related to the invasion, Moscow cautioned that the relevant subject was the Portuguese refusal to implement the right to self-determination.²⁷ The Soviet representative warned that it was necessary to cease all assistance to the Portuguese colonialism and to apply the Charter to convince Portugal to observe the UN decisions on colonialism. Establishing an implicit dichotomy between its behavior and the other great powers, the USSR painted the US and the United Kingdom as accomplices of Portugal and enemies of subjugated peoples.²⁸

The conflicting views expressed in the discussion were embodied in two draft resolutions. The US, France, United Kingdom and Turkey presented a proposal regretting the use of force by India, requesting the end of hostilities, inviting the Indian government to withdraw its forces and demanding both sides to adopt steps to reach a peaceful solution.²⁹ The resolution proposed by Ceylon, Liberia and the United Arab Republic targeted Portugal, rejecting its complaint and inviting the Portuguese government to cease hostilities and to work with India for the dissolution of its possessions in the Indian sub-continent.³⁰ In the end, neither the US nor the Afro-Asians saw their proposals approved. The Soviet Union used the veto against the first draft and the second did not secure enough votes. The debate was inconclusive, revealing how the divisions among the Security Council members undermined the decision-making process.³¹ The use of force for the elimination of colonialism was not condemned, prompting an implicit endorsement of the invasion of Goa, Damão and Diu by India.

The divisions at the Security Council surfaced again when the organ decided to study all Portuguese colonies in July 1963. The Afro-Asians refuted the Portuguese affirmations about the interference in its internal affairs and Tunisia and Sierra Leone verbalized appeals for sanctions to stop the escalation of the Portuguese military presence in the colonies.³² Madagascar rather insisted on the similarities between the policies of Portugal and South Africa, describing them as threats to world peace and security.³³ Unlike other participants, Ghana started to reveal the inclination to incorporate USSR ideas in its statements (Iandolo 2017). In this case, the country resorted to the affirmation that NATO was sponsoring the Portuguese colonial war. To provide a remedy for the situation, the Ghanaian representative demanded the Security Council to invite all states to avoid any support or assistance which could be used by Portugal to pursue its colonial policy.³⁴

As before, Moscow continued to embrace the Afro-Asians viewpoints, echoing their claims regarding the legitimacy of the discussion. The Soviet Union likewise reinforced its statements establishing connections between the Portuguese repressive measures and the NATO military support.³⁵ Moscow was very active in using the UN as a platform to highlight the economic exploitation which, according to its arguments, Portugal and the NATO countries were conducting in the territories under Portuguese rule. To confirm the accusations, the USSR representative provided names of American, British, Belgium, French, Dutch and Western Germany companies allegedly involved in such activities.³⁶ The Soviet Union envisioned a dynamic role for the Security Council, asking for sanctions and a specific deadline for the liquidation of Portuguese colonialism: the end of 1963.

The USSR rhetoric provoked embarrassment among the Western countries, which assumed a discreet position, evincing their suspicions of the UN involvement in colonial affairs (Heiss 2008: 28). Brazil, Norway, France, United Kingdom and the US argued that it was still possible to influence Portugal through persuasion, warning against severe measures.³⁷ The US behavior must be understood in the light of the American reassessment of its position towards the Portuguese colonialism since the end of 1962 due to the significance of the Azores base (Rodrigues 2002). Established after World War II, the base was pivotal for the air communications between the US and Europe, explaining why Portugal was invited to become a founding member of the NATO alliance. When the representatives of Ghana, Morocco and Philippines were drafting a resolution proposal, the US and other Western countries acted behind the stage to avoid the condemnation of its NATO ally.³⁸ The Western interference explains why the draft did not anticipate sanctions and in addition Venezuela introduced eight amendments, depriving the document of its stronger dispositions by replacing words such as "decide", "condemn" and "endangers".³⁹ Even so, the resolution called the member states to cease all assistance which could allow Portugal to continue its repression and to adopt measures to end the sale and supply of weapons and military equipment to the country.⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, the appeal was directed to the NATO members, showing how the Afro-Asians were being affected by the USSR rhetoric. Powerless to avoid another resolution against its colonial policy, the Portuguese government anyway managed to keep the support of the Western powers and the Western-leaning countries to counteract the Afro-Asians initiatives. This ability to maneuver at the Security Council was in sharp contrast with the remaining UN bodies, where Portugal was regularly condemned through decisions resembling sanctions (Santos 2017a).

In the aftermath of the unsuccessful conversations held between Portugal, Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Nigeria, Tanganyika, Ghana, Guinea and Morocco in October 1963, the African countries summoned the Security Council in December. The discussion, reverberating the controversies of the conversations, focused on the idea of self-determination, revealing an apparent rift among the African countries. Ghana

and Liberia adopted a minimalist interpretation, stressing that self-determination was equivalent to independence.⁴¹ Madagascar and Tunisia assumed an ambiguous position, avoiding clear statements about self-determination.⁴² Serra Leone admitted that independence was just one of the possible outcomes for self-determination and that other solutions could be implemented.⁴³ Not surprisingly, in harmony with the image of the champion of decolonization that it was cultivating, the USSR resorted to the minimalist interpretation.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Moscow accused Portugal of increasing the repression in the colonies, using NATO weapons against the civilian population. The Soviet Union denounced that Portugal had liaisons with the white minority regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia, strengthening their capacity to suppress the liberation movements in Southern Africa.⁴⁵ This framing of the Portuguese colonial issue in the regional politics was a continuation of a wide-ranging Afro-Asian strategy to maximize the subject through the combination with other controversial topics such as racial discrimination (Santos 2017b). In terms of the decisions to be taken, rather than once again advocating sanctions, the USSR only demanded the Council to compel Portugal to change its policy.

To overcome the controversy, Ghana, Morocco and Philippines prepared a draft resolution, presenting an interpretation of the meaning of self-determination. The US and Brazilian interference prevented controversial dispositions and the idea of self-determination endorsed by the joint proposal was the one previously established in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.⁴⁶ It should be recalled that the Declaration became a statement of the UN support to decolonization. Its main value was the contribution to understanding self-determination as equal to independence and the establishment of sovereign states (Santos 2017a: 31–39). Even if by 1963 such interpretation was praised by most of the countries, the draft resolution of Ghana, Morocco and Philippines was approved at the Security Council with the French abstention and the USSR protest, arguing that a stronger decision was needed.⁴⁷

In the meantime, during the 1964–1965 session the US invoked a clause to deprive the Soviet Union of the right to vote insofar as the country was not paying its contributions for the Congo operations. The UN had to operate by consensus, avoiding contentious issues, and after the stalemate the Portuguese colonial policy was increasingly perceived according to the regional developments in Africa. The Rhodesian unilateral declaration of independence (11 November 1965) reinforced the determination to draw comparisons between Portugal and the Southern Africa white minority regimes (Santos 2017a: 159). Under the influence of the debate on Rhodesia, when for the first time the Security Council adopted sanctions, in November 1965 sessions were held to address the Portuguese colonial policy. The discussion involved strong accusations by the Afro-Asians delegations, which in addition targeted the NATO countries for the supply of armaments to Portugal.⁴⁸ Initially, such accusations against NATO were slowly borrowed

from the Soviet Union, but now they were becoming one of the dominant topics of the Afro-Asians interventions. Additionally, Tunisia and Sierra Leone gave continuity to the Soviet allegations on the role of foreign economic interests in the Portuguese colonial rule.⁴⁹ The USSR, in a moment when the country was expanding the aid to the national liberation movements, redoubled its efforts to prove the proximity of its views to those of the African countries (Telepneva 2014: 128-137). The Soviet Union reintroduced the claims on the NATO military support to Portugal and on the complicities between the Portuguese government and the foreign companies conducting business in its colonies.⁵⁰ Besides voicing condemnations, the Soviet Union demanded sanctions, requested a UN active role in the process of ending colonialism and asked the Council to consider the NATO involvement in the wars waged in the Portuguese colonies. Finally, the USSR representative expressed support to all countries engaged in the assistance to the anti-colonial struggle in the Portuguese colonies, stating that the Soviets would maintain their moral and political support.⁵¹

Having the Afro-Asian and USSR critique aimed predominantly against them, the Portuguese supporters had an active participation in the discussion. Such engagement perhaps can be explained by the circumstance that in August 1965 the Council non-permanent seats were expanded to include four additional members.⁵² Since the body became a less predictable place for the Western powers, probably they decided to prevent the meeting from being dominated by the Afro-Asians and the USSR (Bosco 2009: 102). At the heart of their interventions were the same arguments used by Portugal and the refutation of the accusations regarding the supply of armaments and economic assistance to the Portuguese government.⁵³ Duplicating the contentions tone voiced in the discussion, the Afro-Asians proposed a draft resolution intending predominantly to appeal to decisions resembling military embargo and economic sanctions.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the Uruguayan representative, probably with the knowledge of the US, managed to remove those clauses.⁵⁵ The immediate effect of this maneuver was to narrow the draft to the dispositions previously adopted against Portugal. Following the vote approving the resolution and the abstention of the NATO countries, the Afro-Asians expressed their disappointment for the difficulties experienced in trying to go beyond the provisions of the Charter for the peaceful solution of disputes.⁵⁶ Afterwards, the Security Council started a period in which the discussions centered on Portugal's violations of the sovereignty of African countries sharing frontiers with its colonies.⁵⁷ The work on the Portuguese colonial policy was resumed in January and February 1972, in meetings held in Addis Ababa, following an invitation from the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Why the Afro-Asians abstained for so long to demand the Security Council to study the Portuguese colonialism? The main reasons were the difficulties faced by them to approve powerful decisions and the minor visibility of the Portuguese colonial issue on the UN agenda in the late 1960s (Santos 2017a: 242-243). In Ethiopia, the African countries laid the foundation for the quarrel on

Portuguese colonialism, adding to their previous propositions the idea that the Security Council should support the national liberation movements.⁵⁸ While the Africans had an active role, the USSR did not issue condemnations against Portugal. Indeed, the Soviet Union, as well as the US, United Kingdom, Italy, PRC, Argentina, Panama and Japan, had no intervention in the discussion (Santos 2017a: 262). In what concerned the Soviet Union, it is only possible to speculate about such unusual behavior. An intentional desire of Moscow to not monopolize the debate, to allow the African countries to make the most of the Security Council presence in Africa, was likely the key motivation. Being the first Council gathering outside New York, the visit to the OAU headquarters was planned to advance the interests of the African continent in the view of the allegations that the UN decisions were being applied slowly.⁵⁹ The Rhodesian issue was at the center of the interventions and a great deal of criticism from the Soviet Union probably would have undermined the consensus the African countries wanted to achieve about the Portuguese colonies.

Furthermore, the USSR conduct adjusted well with the African desire to give a leading role to the national liberation movements, which presented their case at the Security Council.⁶⁰ Other than the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola - FNLA), all the movements from Portuguese colonies that were granted hearings – MPLA, FRELIMO, and PAIGC – were sponsored by the Soviet Union. These movements replicated Moscow's ideas, most importantly the disapproval of the NATO's conduct towards the Portuguese colonialism and the request to establish a deadline for independence.⁶¹ Together with the USSR's lack of intervention, another singularity was the presence of the PRC, following the assignment of the Republic of China seat to Beijing. The USSR and the PRC were seeking influence among developing countries, and the Chinese assistance became a sensitive matter between the Soviets and the national liberation movements from the Portuguese colonies, namely the MPLA and FRELIMO (Friedman 2015: 180-214; Shubin 2008: 21, 129). Reports circulated that both countries competed in Addis Ababa to express friendship to the African states, whose initiatives led to the approval of a resolution recognizing the legitimacy of the armed struggle waged by the national liberation movements.⁶² Initially, the draft resolution was extremely harsh towards Portugal, but the Western countries lobbied the Africans to remove the dispositions regretting the actions of those states that continued to concede military assistance to the Portuguese government (Santos 2017a: 263).

The Security Council addressed the Portuguese colonial issue for the last time in November 1972, when most of the participants rallied against Portugal. A number of Afro-Asian countries – Liberia, United Republic of Tanzania, Somalia, Sudan, Burundi, Morocco, Tunisia, Nigeria, Guinea and India – and the national liberation movements admitted to the discussion – MPLA, PAIGC and FRELIMO – continued to borrow from the Soviet Union arguments.⁶³ Condemning the Portuguese colonial policy, the Soviet

Union revealed the intention to retake control of the anti-Portuguese cause. The constellation of arguments used by its representatives over the years was once again at work. Moscow maintained the assertions concerning the Portuguese association with the white minority regimes, the NATO support to Portugal, the role of the international monopolies in preserving the *status quo* in Southern Africa, the need to establish a date for the independence of Angola, Guinea and Mozambique, as well as the responsibility of the Council to impose sanctions in the event of the non-compliance with the UN decisions.⁶⁴ Moreover, the Soviet Union enlisted the support of the Cuban delegation, which expressed much of the same sentiment, condemning the Portuguese colonialism and requesting assistance to the national liberation movements.⁶⁵ Cuba reinforced the USSR inclination to impose a Cold War framework, while the remaining socialist countries involved in the discussion – Yugoslavia and PRC – kept the distance from the Soviet Union, presenting competing voices and challenging Moscow hegemony in the socialist camp in terms of demonstrations of solidarity with the Portuguese colonies.⁶⁶ The Western countries and their followers – Belgium, Italy, Argentina, Panama, Japan, France and United Kingdom – voiced support to Portugal, denying any collusion in the repression of the populations of the Portuguese colonies.⁶⁷ In the draft resolution submitted by Guinea, Somalia and Sudan, the African countries intended to: i) appeal to Portugal to start negotiations with the national liberation movements; ii) decide that all states, specially the NATO allies, should cease the supply of armament to the Portuguese government as long as the country was pursuing its colonial policy; and iii) establish a sub-committee to enforce the end of the military assistance to Portugal.⁶⁸ Such dispositions revealed to what extent the USSR attitude at the Security Council was transformed into Soviet influence among the African countries. In fact, it is evident that the African countries incorporated Soviet ideas in their own proposals. Nevertheless, owing to the pressure of the Western countries, the sponsors (Guinea, Somalia and Sudan) replaced the draft resolution with two different proposals, focused on the need for negotiations to solve the conflict in the Portuguese colonies and on the decisions concerning the supply of armament to Portugal.⁶⁹ The two proposals were a soft version of the first draft and the NATO countries were not directly targeted as before. On the other hand, the US forced the African countries to amend the first of the two new proposals, which was approved unanimously, since the document was so vague that it could be interpreted in many, and conflicting, ways.⁷⁰ The second draft was not submitted to vote due to the US and United Kingdom threats of veto, confirming once again the inability of the African countries to impose their views on the Portuguese colonial issue.⁷¹

Conclusion

The Security Council institutional apparatus was established on the premise that the UN should rely mainly on the great powers to face the threats to world peace

and security. Actually, the Council became an elitist organ given the five permanent members veto power. The disagreements among its members prevented decisions that could have influenced the evolution of the events in the Portuguese colonies. In these circumstances, questions can be raised regarding the value of the USSR participation at the Council's debate on the Portuguese colonial issue. It can be argued that the Soviet Union did not contribute to enhance the Security Council's ability to overcome the Portuguese refusal to implement the UN decisions on the right of the colonized peoples to self-determination and independence. However, it is also clear that its engagement in the discussions helped to shape the campaign against the Portuguese colonialism. This paradox between the lack of practical outcome and the symbolic contribution was perhaps the most striking feature of the Soviet interventions.

Even if the Afro-Asians had a leading role in the process that unfolded at the UN, ultimately the Portuguese colonial issue was another episode in the tensions between the USSR and the US that undermined the organization in its first decades. A variety of factors explains this situation. The USSR rhetoric and the effort to rally the newly independent countries, placing itself on the side of the majority, was one of the factors. The balance within the Security Council, having the Western powers influenced the orientation of delegations such as the Latin Americans or the Republic of China, also proved to be decisive. Finally, the Portuguese diplomacy played a role in maneuvering the Cold War by enlisting the support of the countries whose alignment with the Western powers dictated their abstention at the Security Council.

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Such assertions aside, this paper allows us to evaluate topics related to the limits of the Security Council, the rising of the anti-colonial agenda and the growing activism of member states. Nonetheless, at a time when the Soviet Union records about the period studied here are still sealed, it is difficult to have a complete picture of its involvement in the debate on the Portuguese colonial issue. The detailed account of the USSR support to the anti-colonial campaign against Portugal must explore the directives sent from Moscow to the representatives at the Security Council. It is necessary to address the Soviet Union behind the scene diplomacy with the Afro-Asians in order to build on recent interpretations according to which these countries shaped the USSR's foreign policy (Engerman 2011). In addition, Moscow's behavior needs to be understood as part of the Soviet wide-ranging struggle against the Western colonialism, since similar activism was displayed towards the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, and Netherlands.

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NOTES:

- 1 - See the programme of the conference *The International Solidarity and the Struggle for Self-determination and Independence of Portuguese Colonies*, held on June 30-July 01, 2016, at the Contemporary History Institute of the New University of Lisbon, Portugal.
- 2 - This paper is based on the available archives sources, namely the UN records and the Portuguese Foreign Ministry records. For the USSR perspective are used secondary sources.
- 3 - The Afro-Asians countries are usually qualified as Global South, Third World, Developing Countries or Less Developed Countries. Since these qualifications are open to criticism we decided to use the geographic criterion to identify the African and Asian post-colonial states which became the majority at the UN. See Alden, Morphet, and Vieira (2010).
- 4 - United Nations, *Resolution 1541 (XV)*, 15 December 1960, n.d.: <http://www.un.org.com>.
- 5 - United Nations, *Resolution 1542 (XV)*, 15 December 1960, n.d.: <http://www.un.org.com>.
- 6 - United Nations, *Resolution 1514 (XV)*, 14 December 1960, n.d.: <http://www.un.org.com>.
- 7 - Arquivo Histórico Diplomático (AHD), Fundo Política e Organismos Internacionais (POI), Maço (Mç.) 542, Proc. POI 4, Ano de 1971, vol. III, *Telegrama da Missão de Portugal na Organização das Nações Unidas (ONU) para o Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros (MNE)*, de 25 de Novembro de 1971, p. 1.
- 8 - According to Shubin, the acceptance of Marxism by the national liberation movements was not a precondition for Soviet assistance, while Telepneva argues that ideology was an important factor in shaping the USSR attitudes towards the MPLA, FRELIMO and PAIGC. Shubin and Telepneva argue that the USSR support to the national liberation movements was not an outcome of the Cold War rivalry. Both authors stress that such support was a response to the national liberation movements' demands (Shubin 2008: 16; Telepneva 2017: 281).
- 9 - Nations Unies (1961), *A/4867 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à L'Assemblée Générale*, 16 Juillet 1960 - 15 Juillet 1961, New York, p. 79.
- 10 - *Ibidem*.
- 11 - Portugal used the same argument regarding the Soviet intervention in the events in Angola in behind the scene diplomacy, searching for support at the Security Council. Among other examples see AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 164, Proc. XM-1, Ano de 1961, vol. III, *Telegrama do MNE para a Embaixada de Portugal em Paris*, de 3 de Junho de 1961, p. 1-2.
- 12 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 163, Proc. XM-1, Ano de 1961, vol. I, *Telegrama do MNE para a Embaixada Portuguesa em Santiago do Chile*, de 16 de Março de 1961, p. 1.
- 13 - Regarding the Afro-Asians suspicions vis-à-vis the Soviet Union anti-colonialism, see Heiss (2015: 105-106).
- 14 - Nations Unies (1961), *A/4867 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à L'Assemblée Générale*, 16 Juillet 1960 - 15 Juillet 1961, New York, p. 78.
- 15 - United Nations, *Resolution 1603 (XV)*, 20 April 1961, n.d.: <http://www.un.org.com>.
- 16 - Nations Unies (1961), *A/4867 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à L'Assemblée Générale*, 16 Juillet 1960 - 15 Juillet 1961, New York, p. 85-86.
- 17 - *Idem*, p. 86-87.
- 18 - *Idem*, p. 84.
- 19 - *Ibidem*.
- 20 - *Idem*, p. 87-88.
- 21 - *Idem*, p. 83-84.
- 22 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 164, Proc. XM-1, Ano de 1961, vol. III, *Telegrama da Missão de Portugal na ONU para o MNE*, de 10 de Junho de 1961, p. 1-3.
- 23 - Nations Unies (1961), *A/4867 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à L'Assemblée Générale*, 16 Juillet 1960 - 15 Juillet 1961, New York, p. 88.
- 24 - *Ibidem*.
- 25 - *Security Council Resolutions*, "United Nations Security Council", n.d.: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/>.
- 26 - Nations Unies (1962), *A/5202 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à L'Assemblée Générale*, 16 Juillet 1961 - 15 Juillet 1962, New York, p. 50-51.
- 27 - *Ibidem*.

- 28 - *Ibidem*.
- 29 - *Idem*, p. 52.
- 30 - *Idem*, p. 53.
- 31 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 118, Proc. XA-20, Ano de 1961, vol. I, *Telegrama do MNE para a Missão do Portugal na ONU, de 18 de Dezembro de 1961*, p. 1.
- 32 - Nations Unies (1964), *A/5802 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à l'Assemblée Générale, 16 Juillet 1963 - 15 Juillet 1964*, New York, p. 10.
- 33 - *Ibidem*.
- 34 - *Idem*, p. 12.
- 35 - *Idem*, p. 11.
- 36 - *Ibidem*.
- 37 - *Idem*, p. 13.
- 38 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 207, Proc. WE-Geral, Ano de 1963, *Telegrama da Embaixada de Portugal em Londres para o MNE, de 29 de Julho de 1963*, p. 1-2.
- 39 - Nations Unies (1964), *A/5802 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à l'Assemblée Générale, 16 Juillet 1963 - 15 Juillet 1964*, New York, p. 16.
- 40 - United Nations, *Resolution 180 (1963), 31 July*, n.d.: <http://www.un.org.com>.
- 41 - Nations Unies (1964), *A/5802 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à l'Assemblée Générale, 16 Juillet 1963 - 15 Juillet 1964*, New York, p. 18-19.
- 42 - *Idem*, p. 18.
- 43 - *Idem*, p. 18-19.
- 44 - *Idem*, p. 19.
- 45 - *Ibidem*.
- 46 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 207, Proc. WE-Geral, Ano de 1963, *Telegrama da Embaixada de Portugal em Londres para o MNE, de 11 de Dezembro de 1963*, p. 1.
- 47 - Nations Unies (1964), *A/5802 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à l'Assemblée Générale, 16 Juillet 1963 - 15 Juillet 1964*, New York, p. 20-21.
- 48 - Nations Unies (1967), *A/6302 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à l'Assemblée Générale, 16 Juillet 1965 - 15 Juillet 1966*, New York, p. 47.
- 49 - *Idem*, p. 47-48.
- 50 - *Idem*, p. 51.
- 51 - *Ibidem*.
- 52 - After the reform, the Security Council members were Argentina, Bulgaria, China, France, Japan, Jordan, Mali, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Uganda, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay.
- 53 - Nations Unies (1967), *A/6302 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à l'Assemblée Générale, 16 Juillet 1965 - 15 Juillet 1966*, New York, p. 50.
- 54 - *Idem*, p. 52-53.
- 55 - *Idem*, p. 54.
- 56 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 162, Proc. ZC-2, Ano de 1965, vol. II, *Carta do Diretor-Geral do MNE para o Gabinete dos Negócios Políticos do Ministério do Ultramar, de 6 de Dezembro de 1965*, p. 2-3.
- 57 - Complaints against Portugal, alleging violations of their sovereignty, were presented by Senegal, Guinea, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia.
- 58 - Nations Unies (1972), *A/8702 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à l'Assemblée Générale, 16 Juillet 1971 - 15 Juin 1972*, New York, p. 104.
- 59 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 609, Proc. POI 6.0, Ano de 1972, vol. I, *Circular POI-4 do MNE, de 24 de Janeiro de 1972*, p. 3.
- 60 - Nations Unies (1972), *A/8702 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à l'Assemblée Générale, 16 Juillet 1971 - 15 Juin 1972*, New York, p. 109.
- 61 - *Idem*, p. 110-111.
- 62 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 609, Proc. POI 6.0, Ano de 1972, vol. II, *Telegrama da Embaixada de Portugal em Londres para o MNE, de 8 de Fevereiro de 1972*, p. 1-2.
- 63 - Nations Unies (1973), *A/9002 - Supplément n. 2, Rapport du Conseil de Sécurité à l'Assemblée Générale*,

16 Juin 1972 - 15 Juin 1973, New York, p. 87-91.

64 - *Idem*, p. 89-90.

65 - *Idem*, p. 92.

66 - *Idem*, p. 92, 94.

67 - *Idem*, p. 90, 92, 94-95.

68 - *Idem*, p. 88-89.

69 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 611, Proc. POI 6, Ano de 1972, vol. I, *Telegrama da Missão de Portugal na ONU para o MNE, de 19 de Novembro de 1972*, p. 1.

70 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 611, Proc. POI 6, Ano de 1972, vol. II, *Telegrama da Embaixada de Portugal em Londres para o MNE, de 24 de Fevereiro de 1972*, p. 1-2.

71 - AHD, Fundo POI, Mç. 611, Proc. POI 6, Ano de 1972, vol. II, *Telegrama da Embaixada de Portugal em Paris para o MNE, de 22 de Novembro de 1972*, p. 1-2.

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ISBN 8860861462



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ISSN 1592-6753

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