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The Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), Portugal and the future

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Introduction

The role of linguistic and cultural ties plays a significant part in today's globalized world as a form of hindering differences and highlighting similarities between societies spread across the globe. In this sense, international organizations based on past asymmetric relations between the colonizer and the colonized draw upon the long-lasting imprints left by the former empires, namely in linguistic, cultural, historical or economic terms. These organizations are atypical in contemporary international relations, not least because they contradict the current trend for regionalism, as it is the case of the Commonwealth or the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) with members spread across the globe. The *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, hereinafter Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) is an international organization founded in 1996 by Angola,

Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and São Tomé and Príncipe. Nowadays, the organization is composed of nine states, the aforementioned, East Timor and Equatorial Guinea, who joined in 2002 and 2014 respectively. The foundation of the organization is rooted in historic and cultural characteristics existing in the above-mentioned countries, part of the Portuguese colonial empire at some point in their past and consequently sharing the Portuguese as the official language.

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The constitutive declaration of the CPLP highlights the principles of equal sovereignty of its member states, respect for national identities and territorial integrity, non-intervention in internal affairs of other member states, promotion of rule of law, democracy, peace and human rights and the promotion of development and cooperation in diverse areas. As for the objectives of the organization, the CPLP is regarded as an organization to align political and diplomatic positions between members and consequently reinforce the position of said members in the international fora. Furthermore, cooperation in diverse areas such as education, justice, health, science, defense, public administration or culture is its cornerstone. Lastly, the promotion and diffusion of the Portuguese language in the world is also an important axis of actuation. Illustrative of this fact has been the attempt to upgrade Portuguese as one of the official languages of the United Nations.

In comparison with the Commonwealth and the OIF, the CPLP is ruled by a fairly similar set of principles and objectives. These organizations are based on the role of language and shared history as an agglutinating factor between its members and the protection of quasi-universal values such as the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. Thus, the aforementioned have overlapping competences which in turn adds a degree of competition between the organizations due to the fact that the three strive to magnify their normative power and are present in the same regional contexts, namely in Africa. Indeed, Mozambique is

simultaneously a CPLP and a Commonwealth member state while Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and Equatorial Guinea are members of the CPLP and the OIF. Furthermore, both in the number of member states and budget for the operationalization of the organization, the CPLP is of a considerably smaller scale. The OIF and the Commonwealth have 54 and 53 member states respectively, while the CPLP has only 9. Additionally, between 2010 and 2013, the average budget of the OIF was 85 million euros, while the CPLP's budget for 2019 will be around 2,7 million euros. The resources do not equate the difficulties found in the context that the CPLP is inserted in.

Cultural vs economic organization

Having noted the challenging and competitive environment the organization faces in the regional and global arenas, it is also important to acknowledge difficulties arising within, particularly different understandings of the organization itself. For Portugal, the concept of Lusophony not only refers to the politico-cultural speakers of Portuguese language but also to a cultural and historical self-perception with a hint of mysticism. Indeed, the idea of a country that does not conform to its relatively small size and limited leverage and has in its culture, language, and history important assets of soft power. Thus, the CPLP is a privileged platform to project Portugal's main perceived assets in the international arena. In this sense, Portugal's interest in the organization is rather more cultural than economic, even though the CPLP provides an important stage for the

development of economic relations between the countries involved.

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On the other hand, other countries within the organization have different strategic objectives and visions connected with the economic potential of the CPLP. In 2014, the CPLP was the 4th biggest producer of oil in the world with an estimated production of circa 5 million barrels per day, of which around 4 million were from Angola and Brazil sources. Additionally, the CPLP as a whole is the 6th biggest economy in the world. The economic potential of the CPLP has generated a vast interest in the organization.

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The accession of Equatorial Guinea in 2014, proved to be an important setback in the direction Portugal wanted to steer the

organization and critically damaged the CPLP's normative power. Unlike the other members of the organization, Equatorial Guinea does not have a sizeable number of Portuguese speakers nor does it have the strong imprint of Portuguese culture and history, as the country was since 1777 a part of the Spanish empire. The country has only made Portuguese its official language in 2011 to be able to enter the organization. Furthermore, the government of Malabo did not abolish the death penalty (merely instituted a moratorium on the capital punishment) and continues to commit several other violations of human rights. Portugal was opposed to the accession of Equatorial Guinea to the CPLP and was able to prevent it in 2010 and 2012. Nonetheless, the other CPLP countries acknowledged the opportunity to have on board another fellow producer of oil together with the economic opportunity it carries and convinced the strong-armed Portugal into accepting the accession of Equatorial Guinea to the CPLP. Thus, the accession of Equatorial Guinea was clearly a moment of cleavage in the orientation of the organization. It became clear that there is a majority that intends to steer the organization into an economic rather than a linguistic-cultural path. That, in turn, will result in the demise of the role of Portugal in the organization, as the country does not have strong economic potential and is not a producer of oil or gas.

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The Future ahead

The future of the organization seems uncertain and the outlook vague. The above-mentioned modification of the path of the organization will undoubtedly deviate Portugal from the leadership of the organization. It remains to be seen if this path is to be maintained and followed, particularly because of uncertainty regarding internal affairs in Angola and Brazil, two important members in the CPLP. Both countries are facing a process of internal transition, a transformation of the ruling political elite that entails ambiguity regarding their participation and engagement in the CPLP.

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The rule of José Eduardo dos Santos (JES) in Angola ended after 38 years as the President. JES was substituted by a fellow People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) party member João Lourenço. While early forecasts pointed João Lourenço as a follower of JES's policies, the newly appointed President of Angola has cut ties with most of the political elite connected with the former President and pushed several reforms in the country, predominantly to fight corruption. In foreign affairs, João Lourenço has also pursued a different course of action compared with his predecessor. In his inauguration speech, the President - elect excluded Portugal from his list

of strategic partners and has shown interest in joining the Commonwealth and the OIF, consequently fading Angola's role in the CPLP. The future engagement of the country in the CPLP, therefore, remains unknown and unpredictable.

Brazil elected Jair Bolsonaro, a former military officer and a proponent of far-right policies. An admitted admirer of the Trump Administration, Bolsonaro is set to pursue a similar stance in internal affairs. Not many details are known regarding the foreign policy to be followed by the new Brazilian President. However, it seems clear that Bolsonaro will attempt to foster close collaboration with the US, its allies and other states, not having multilateralism as a priority. That in turn, sheds doubt about the role of Brazil in CPLP and its interest in the organization.

Therefore, the future of the CPLP is divided into two possible paths. The first where Angola and Brazil will maintain a proactive engagement in the organization and consequently, the CPLP will increasingly have an economic bias, resulting in the demise of Portugal's leadership in the organization. The second will necessarily be connected with the disengagement of Angola and Brazil from the CPLP as a consequence of new foreign policy design in both countries. Accordingly, Portugal will necessarily assume the leadership role and carry the organization back to its origins.

Conclusion

The CPLP as a cultural and linguistic organization which promotes Portuguese soft power in the international arena is of particular

relevance in the Portuguese foreign policy. Additionally, the organization has a very specific importance in historical terms, as it serves as a platform to engage with former colonies, now independent countries that through the course of events share a similar past.

Conflicting interests within the organization ask for a clarification in terms of the vision and objectives of the CPLP.

If the past was marked by an asymmetric relation, the present and the future is marked by esteem and equality between the CPLP members. In this sense, each of the countries choose the path within the CPLP that best serves their national interests, given the fact that there is not a clear alignment of positions within the organization. For Portugal, the normative power of the organization alongside with the promotion of the Portuguese language, culture and history is of the utmost importance. Nonetheless, for many of the other members of the CPLP, the focus relies on the transfer of know-how, cooperation and mainly

trade and investment. This gap in perception and objectives for the organization results in a certain lack of cohesion and in the absence of a concerted vision for the future. Particular evidence of the aforementioned was the accession of Equatorial Guinea, a country that did not meet the principles of the organization but gathered overwhelming support from a majority of the CPLP members, due to economic factors. Thus, conflicting interests within the organization ask for a clarification in terms of the vision and objectives of the CPLP. Consequently, this clarification will most likely happen forcefully through the above-mentioned actuation of both Angola and Brazil and the design of their own foreign policies which will necessarily shape the future of the CPLP.

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