

Nationalisms in Portuguese Imperial Public Sphere

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of press system in the promotion and mobilization of nationalist ideologies in Portuguese Colonial Empire. Throughout the nineteenth century, a growing Imperial Public Sphere performed a central role in socio-political dynamics of Portuguese Empire. The press published in Portugal and in its colonial territories composed an Imperial Public Space of discussion and conflict regarding mainly liberalism and political participation, economic development and colonial administration. Through the press system, imperial, colonial and native elites expressed competitive varieties of nationalist ideology and I try to show three types: 'regional nationalism'; 'proto-nationalism'; and 'colonial nationalism'. Regarding these varieties, this paper is structured in four sections: 1) The conceptualization of the Imperial Public Sphere; 2) The 'regional nationalism' in the Angolan press; 3) the 'Proto-nationalism' in the African press; and 4) 'colonial nationalism' in the metropolitan press.

1. Imperial Public Sphere

Within the scope of the Portuguese colonial empire of the 19th and 20th centuries, this study reveals the Imperial Public Sphere, which had as its privileged structure of interaction the press published in the metropolis, Lisbon, and the titles edited in the colonies, constituting a public space of debate, dispute and confrontation about the sociopolitical dynamics of Portugal, the colonies and the empire.

This hypothesis articulates two central arguments. First, while the press was the decisive structure of the political debate in the Empire, the imperial and colonial elites were the protagonists of this Imperial Public Sphere. Second, if the military, political and economic dimensions were essential in the exercise of Imperial power

in Portuguese colonial modernity, the press was the structure that guided the discourses of propagation of such power in the social, cultural and ideological dimensions of social life.

In the process of constitution of the Public Sphere in Portugal, between 1780 and 1820, a turning point in political culture was associated with the flourishing of the liberal public space and its public opinion. From 1820, with the institutionalization of the Liberal Regime, there is a multiplication of newspapers and a rise in journalistic activity. In this path, the engagement between the press system and political life was strengthened and journalism performed a political role. In the present study I want to demonstrate that such processes will - from 1830, with the emergence of the press in the Asian and African colonies - include and involve the colonial territories and their public opinion, and thus constituting an Imperial Public Sphere.

Habermas' public sphere theory is a contribution to the political theory of democracy. I'm following Habermas' 'a priori', because is my intention to add the Imperial Public Sphere as an analytical and explanatory dimension of the sociopolitical dynamics of the Portuguese colonialism in the context Liberal Regime (1820-1933).

First, the idea of the Public Sphere correlates with the modern and sovereign state in a delimited territory. So, it is also suitable for the formal context of the Portuguese colonial empire of the 19th and 20th centuries, because the empire's have well-delimited borders in Africa and Asia; also, by the political transformation promoted by the Liberal Revolution and, above all, from the so called 'Regeneration', with the consolidation of Liberalism, (in 1851), when the metropolitan government reviews and strengthens its mains policies for colonial territories.

Second, the participants of this Public Sphere are members of the same liberal political community, an argument that is confirmed in colonial government structures, colonial economic groups (landowners and commercial firms) and liberal and intellectual segments. Although the vast majority of the indigenous population was not citizens and did not have political rights, the native and assimilated elites participated and intervened in the public space, assumed

themselves as 'Portuguese' and claimed equality in the context of Portuguese and colonial political modernity.

Third, the '*topos*' of the Imperial Public Sphere were political and economic organization of social life, the capitalist market and state regulation. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the form and exercise of power, in its national and colonial structures, were the focus of discussion and conflict in the public space and in the press.

Fourth, associated with press and modern media, the public sphere requires national infrastructure so that they bring together a dispersed audience. The decrees of Queen Maria II in 1836 to have the national press installed in the colonies and to have the official bulletins printed were the initial step in the construction of this infrastructure. It should also be noted that the connection of the African colonies to the network of European and world submarine cables took place between 1874-1883, enhancing communications between territories and with the metropolis and strengthening the role of the press. In other words, there were multiple channels of information and discussion, published from the metropolis and the colonies, and circulating in every way.

Fifth, in all colonial territories the Portuguese language was the common language of the press, used by all social and political groups. Although newspapers appeared in native, or bilingual languages, which fulfilled relevant functions in the constitution of communicative sub-spheres, these were minority and ephemeral. It is noted that it was the Portuguese colonial elites who promoted the press in the territories and reproduced the genres and ideologies of an 'imagined national community', which was appropriated by the native elites who would later seek to subvert them.

Simon J. Potter (2003) situates between 1876-1922 the emergence of an 'Imperial Press System' in the British Empire. National and imperial identities have expressed themselves in the British press system, in addition to emerging regional identities associated with the colonies between European and native groups. My study follows Potter's clue, and demonstrates that also in the case of the Portuguese

empire through the press different national identities and ideologies were manifested.

In Macau and Portuguese India, the press flourished in 1820, following and affirming the liberal revolution in these imperial territories. In the mid-19th century, the press reached the Portuguese colonies in Africa through official bulletins, which gave publicity and ideological unity to the policies of the Empire. At the end of the 19th century, an Imperial Public Sphere had asserted itself in the Portuguese empire as a channel for mobilizing political forces and as the stage for conflicts between social groups. Imperial elites, based in Lisbon or serving in governments and/or economic enterprises in the territories; colonial elites, who had emigrated, been exiled or born into the colonies; and the native or indigenous elites, African-Portuguese's; were the protagonists of this Imperial Public Sphere.

2. Angola: 'regional nationalism'

The independent press flourished in Angola from 1860, during the Constitutional Monarchy. Throughout the period, the press of the territory was the protagonist of the social and political struggles of the empire and the colony. The periodicals of Angola had different political orientations: 1) aligned with the colonial empire and supporters of the policies of the central government; 2) aligned with the empire and defenders of an autonomous government in Angola; 3) critics of central and local government, but advocates of colonialism and Portuguese nationalism. In another angle, there were also anti-imperialist newspapers, which fought for independence from Angola, especially the newspapers of the African elites.

Here, the case of Angola demonstrates the role of the press and journalism in the propagation of a 'regional nationalism', which called for the decentralization of imperial management and the self-government of Angola. This regional nationalism was promoted by the colonial elites (landowners, agents of commerce and local industry) and also made up of liberal and intellectual professionals who recognized themselves as 'Portuguese from Angola'.

The weekly *O Mercantil* was published between 1870 and 1897, had a circulation of 700 copies and correspondents in various parts of the colony, in Portugal and Brazil. Over its 27 years the newspaper denounced corrupt civil servants (no. 442, May 1877); defended the importance of the 'degredados' in the development of the colony (no. 558, August 1879); criticized the abandonment of state institutions and irregularities committed by the military (no. 621, June 1881); applauded the Portuguese occupation and military expansion in Angola (no. 689, October 1882); and defended colonization in Africa and the colonial project of the central government (no. 806, January 1885). The strong imperial nationalism of the newspaper and its alignment with the central government was combined with a regional nationalism supported by economic reasons and *O Mercantil* fought for Angola's autonomy. In February of 1883, the editor wrote: "We are a colonial country, it is perhaps our colonial predominance that gives reason to our autonomy; because not even to our colonies can go many of the industrial products of the country, not even colonies can exchange their products".

In 1882 the newspaper *União Africo-Portuguesa* circulated in the province. The newspaper's ideas are exemplary of regional nationalism at the time. The first issue presented the principles of the newspaper: 1. "the integrity of the territories that make up the nation; 2. solidarity, dignity and the national interest; 3. calls for the maximum of decentralization for the whole country in all kinds of administration, except in military and political; 4. the self-government for Angola, without breaking or relaxing of the bond by which all overseas provinces with metropolis must to constitute a political unit; 5. the revision of the constitution, institutions, laws and governance of the monarchy; and 6. calls for the necessary reforms to guarantee individual and social rights."

The economic interests of the province and the Portuguese of Angola sustained the defense of colonialism associated with 'regional nationalism'. In June 1882 the newspaper warned the public: "Let us not leave without opposition and competition our foreign influence in Zaire. Let us colonize those regions, exploiting their inexhaustible wealth; let us deepen and extend there the foundations of our preponderance; let us take, and make solidarity, our interests and those of those

peoples. We want to create with Portuguese person: family, homeland, culture, building, industry, commerce, navigation. We can achieve in Angola the colonization, civilization, capital and Portuguese activity."

Other newspaper that expressed a regional nationalism ideology was *O Desastre*, published between 1889-1893. Owned by the 'son of the country' Mamede de Sant'anna e Palma, the periodical was republican, a supporter of the self-government of Angola and the rights of the African people. Very critical of the policies of the central and local government, the newspaper advocated a Luso-Angolan Union that promoted agriculture, industry and trade. Such Union would also defend the province from the economic interests of other European colonial empires, "which could lead everyone to belong to a foreign country other than Portugal".

O Correio de Loanda (Loanda Post) was a weekly owned by Abílio de Almeida Soares, a lawyer and civil servant, and circulated between 1890 and 1896. The newspaper asserted itself in the ranks of Portuguese colonial journalism. In 1892, no. 114, *o Correio de Loanda* considered that the seriousness of the political situation in the context of British Ultimatum would lead Portugal to be administered by a committee of foreign powers and demanded "a self-government for the province, like the English colonies of Australia and the Cape". The expression of a regional nationalism ideology continued until the end of the newspaper, inclusive with opposition to the reform of the army, which aimed to unify the military of the metropolis and overseas.

In addition to the newspapers of Luanda, the press from hinterland also expressed regional nationalism. *O Sul d' Angola* (South of Angola), was published in Mossamedes district and circulated between 1892-95. In October 1893 the newspaper stated its regional nationalism: "From this corner of the black continent, where we live without being sure to which nationality we will belong tomorrow, without political ideas, to be Portuguese of heart and for the love of the homeland, and only for it, we accept all sacrifices, so much that we will see it free and honorable, though poor, as we saw it in the time of our grandparents'.

The Voice of Angola, Liberating for Peace, equaling for justice, progressing for autonomy, was published between the end of the Monarchy and the beginning of the Republic, 1908-1911. Republican, critical of the metropolitan government's strategy and defender of African rights, was published by civil servant, military and politician Júlio Lobato. In January 1908, the newspaper addressed Angola's priorities, which were associated with a regional nationalist ideology: 1. a decentralized regime; 2. the remodeling of the contract of the workers for the end of slavery; 3. the reduction of military personnel; 4. the review and increase of public expenditure in Angola; 5. the civilization of the indigenous peoples; 6. the creation of agricultural areas by indigenous peoples and commercial points by Europeans; 7. protection of the industrial aspirations of the economy; and 8. exploitation of ores with State aid. The creation of a 'League for the Defense of Interests of Angola' was proposed by the newspaper in August 1909, no. 89. In October of the same year, the newspaper attacked the government for "purposely delaying the solution of fundamental problems for the economic development of the province" which required at the same time the separation between the interests of the metropolis and the colony and required military service in areas where Portuguese sovereignty was weak.

With the case of Angola, I hope to have illustrated some dimension of the regional nationalist ideology expressed by social forces through the press. In the journalism of other colonies, as Mozambique, Macao and India, we can see the same regional nationalism, which combine Portuguese colonial nationalism with regional political autonomy based in local culture and interests.

3. São Tomé and Prince: African Intelligentsias and nationalism ambiguities

Starting from the second half of the nineteenth century, Europeans (landowners and political elites) started to impose their rule on the archipelago and the natives through political and economic power. The productive system of São Tomé and Príncipe, depending on the indigenous policies of Mozambique, Angola, and Guiné, was crucial to this end. Plantations (roças) alienated Africans, withdrew their rights and left them immobilized in terms of any potential for resistance. Thus, São

Tomean natives were prominent in political struggles during the republican period. Conflicts between groups had a political, economic and social nature. These conflicts took up space in newspapers and the local administration and the metropolitan government were at its epicentre. Africans in São Tomé and Príncipe affirmed themselves as 'Portuguese natives', at the same time defended pan-africanism and demanded the territory's independence.

The case of São Tomé and Príncipe is paradigmatic of intelligentsias promoting a rational and permanent opposition to the status quo. "The natives of this island have no ambition other than that of struggling for freedom, equality, fraternity and for the moral and material interest of the land in which they were born", expressed the *Folha de Annuncios, Semanário Político, Literário e Noticioso* (Bulletin, Political, Literary and News Weekly) in its first issue in July 1911. So, this article is illustrative of natives claiming for the same civil status of Portuguese's, and resonate Portuguese nationalism in the context of empire.

In the third issue, the *Folha de Annuncios* changed name to be called *A Verdade, Semanário Democrático Independente para a Defesa dos Interesses da Província* (The Truth, Democratic Weekly for the Defence of the Interests of the Province). The journal was directed and owned by the native activist Ezequiel Pires dos Santos Ramos. The themes of the journal were primarily political, such as the debate on the economic future of the province and the demands for the rights of the native population, such as in the sixth issue in August 1911: "the economic crisis in São Tomé and Príncipe derives from administrative mistakes [...] the native population is reduced to misery [...] trade is paralyzed and agriculture is numb, public revenue grows but private wealth diminishes". Again, we can see a nationalism that demands the same rights of Portuguese to native elites and also criticizes central and local administration, claiming for a strong intervention of colonial policies.

A further emblematic case is constituted by *A Liberdade* (Freedom), a leading African paper. Among the main themes of the weekly were the rights of Africans, in particular cocoa labourers, and the political struggle against the local administration. In this context, the issue of land stood out: "the expansion of lands was the most common method to steal land from indigenous people [...] monarchic influences passed on to the republic and nothing was done to solve the land theft

and to rebalance the situation”, the journal denounced in its number 22, on December 1920.

On the other side, the paper reflected the emergence of Pan-African ideals in STP, for instance agreeing with and publicizing the goals of the Pan-African Congress occurred in London in 1921. *A Liberdade* asked for the nationalization of the colonies; called for the rejection of the laws of exception; claimed for the freedom of cocoa labourers and the abolition of forced labour/slavery. It propagated the demand for native education; the need for assistance to women; and, based on criticism towards the local administration, claimed for elections. With this example, we can see the emergence of an African-nationalism, or a proto-nationalism.

Moreover, in 1925, the ephemeral and vociferous *O Combate*, (Struggle, Weekly Journal Defending the Public Interests of the Province, of the Oppressed with no Distinction as to Colour, Race or Hierarchy) started to circulate, although it lasted only six editions. The publisher was the native intellectual Augusto Gamboa, an advocate of African interests and a sharp critic of the colonial administration. “O Combate was born to fight: an unrelenting fight against despotism, against tyranny [...] We will defend reason, rights and justice with all our strength” was the presentation of the first issue in March 1925. The paper denounced the colonial administration as unable to rule. But, at the same time, the newspaper was calling for local elections, what demonstrate that native elites wanted to participate in local administration in the context of Portuguese empire. Finally, *O Combate* was suspended.

African press in São Tomé and Príncipe is paradigmatic of the dualities and ambiguities of colonial rule. Journalism was the arm of African intelligentsias: in a context of social, political and economic inequality with Europeans, native elites resisted in two directions: reclaiming civil status as Portuguese and expressing a ‘native nationalism’; and, in other hand, fought against colonialism and promoting a proto-nationalism.

4. **Gazeta das Colónias: 'colonial nationalism'**

News, reporting and opinion articles on colonial issues in general and about each of the territories in Africa and Asia were present in the contents of the Portuguese press throughout the 19th and 20th century. However, the *Gazeta das Colónias - Weekly Of Propaganda and Defense of the Colonies (1924-1926)* - was one of the first initiatives of a press specialized in the colonial issues of the Portuguese empire.

Gazeta had as publishers and writers military's, politicians and entrepreneurs with colonial experience. The journal's collaborators reveal an elite of military, politicians, civil servants, intellectuals and scholars from Africa with experience in the field, concerned with colonial issues and eager of intervention on the course of action of imperial program. The analysis of the contents of the *Gazeta* shown us the divergences between the imperial and colonial elites and the prominent role of the press as an institution that channels the conflict of the colonial project.

A diversity of themes transversal to the colonial situation was present in the pages of the *Gazeta das Colónias*, revealing the 'colonial nationalism' In the editorials, the themes related to the management of the empire were privileged, among them: autonomy versus political centralization; financial and economic politics; the religious question; the problem of work and 'indigenous' policies; and the international image of the empire.

Issue nº 6 (August 1924) addressed the *Dangerous Colonial Administration* and advocated the decentralizing legislation of the First Republic, which followed the British model, instituted the high commissioners and had given financial autonomy to the territories. For the author, Ernesto de Vasconcelos, president of the Lisbon Geography Society, the defect of the legislation was not having met the specificities of the territories, allowing that Angola and Macao, for instance, being managed in the same way.

The conflicts between central government and colonial officials were continuous in the Portuguese empire and appeared in the press of the colonies and the metropolis, revealing the dispute between elites in the occupation of the executive positions of the colonial administration. In its number 10 (October 1924), the *Gazeta* demanded that "it is necessary to choose men for places and not places

for men", insisting that "appointments are made freely, without any pressures of political parties and subordinated exclusively to the value of men and the qualities they possess for the performance of positions".

It was through the 'propaganda' of the empire in the press that the political and cultural ideology of the Portuguese 'colonial nationalism' spread. Among its main characteristics the Portuguese 'race' and culture, the pioneering and entrepreneurship of the nation, the profound Catholicism and its civilizational mission. A prominent figure among the imperial elites, the conservative Republican Brito Camacho defended as an urgent "a system of colonial policy, comprising the relations between the Metropolis and the Colonies and the administration of each Colony, which would be absurd to make uniform" (no. 19, February 1925).

Despite the secular feature of the First Republic and the decision to end Catholic missions, the "Religious Issues" concerned the editorial board of the *Gazeta*, thus associating Portuguese Catholicism to the 'colonial nationalist' ideology and the role of the Church in the imperial program. In issue nº 16, the editorial article defended the relevance of religious missions "in our work of colonization" and called for the subject to be "officially viewed, subordinating its study and resolution to the interests of the country and the demands of our condition as a colonialist nation".

On the eve of the 6th Assembly of the Society of Nations, the publisher of the *Gazeta* wrote an editorial with the title "The Farce of Slavery" (no. 25, September 1925). In a five-page article, Leite Magalhães responded to the "American farce", which accused Portugal of compulsory work, non-paid work, lack of justice and lack of assistance for workers. The appeal of the military indicates the strong 'colonial nationalism' propagated by the elites of Lisbon: "people of Portugal, since no one arms your arms to defend our possessions and work in Africa, raise your head and spit on the unworthy traffickers who hurt our honor to steal us".

Strong attacks on the metropolitan government and the Republican Party were delivered in the editorial of no. 29 of the *Gazeta* (November 1925). Under the title "The Week of the Colonies" the article denounced, "the largest of the parties of the Republic, holder of power, did not consider important to have colonials of heart and knowledge in the new Parliament". Angola's "acute crisis," the "devaluation of

the money" in Mozambique, a "rebellious governor" in India and an "inconceivable administration" in Timor illustrated the criticism summing up of an imperial, military and political elite, who called for changes in colonial policies and advocated a 'colonial nationalist' ideology. The article reveals the weight of the colonial question at the end of the First Republic, as well as the role played by the military in the coup of May 28 in 1926 and in the legitimation of the following Authoritarian Estado Novo.

Conclusions

Through these case-studies, I hope to have demonstrated the coexistence of different types of nationalists' ideologies in the context of Portuguese political liberalism and imperial colonialism. To conclude, I would like to present the conceptualizations of these three varieties of nationalism.

First: by 'colonial nationalism', I mean an ideology that propagates Patriotic feelings regarding Portugal race, history and culture. An ideology that also point out the pioneering and entrepreneurship of Portuguese people, underlining its global role in civilizing and colonizing in Asia and Africa. At the same time, 'colonial nationalism' demanded decentralization to colonies, the increase of resources to economical development and also more political representation and intervention of the colonies.

Second: by 'regional nationalism', I mean an ideology that combines the characteristics of Portuguese nation with local and regional culture of colonial territories. In political terms, this ideology defended the colonies as part of the empire and the nation, but also requires self-government and financial autonomy.

Third: by 'native nationalism' and 'proto-nationalism', I mean an ideology that believed and revindicated that Africans were also members of Portuguese people and nation, because they shared the same culture. In this way, this ideology demands the same civil rights, inclusive political participation. On the other hand, this ideology supported the African and pan-African ideology, what configurated a proto-nationalist ideology. This ambiguity and duality are features and also consequences of European imperial and colonial powers.