



# Geopolitics of decolonisation: The subaltern diplomacies of Lusophone Africa (1961–1974)

Federico Ferretti

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## **Geopolitics of decolonisation: The subaltern diplomacies of Lusophone Africa (1961-1974)**

**Abstract:** *This paper addresses the global engagement of certain African intellectuals who strove for the independence of Lusophone Africa. It does so using geopolitical lenses based on new and multilingual archives. Extending current scholarship on subaltern geopolitics, cultures of decolonisation, and critical development studies, I show the performance of the subaltern diplomacies deployed by political leaders such as Amílcar Cabral, Mário Pinto de Andrade, Agostinho Neto, Eduardo Mondlane, and Marcelino dos Santos in capturing international sympathy for their cause from other scholars, activists, and politicians at different levels (from grassroots movements to state leaders and international organisations) across the divides between Cold War blocs and the fields of the 'First', 'Second', and 'Third World'. I argue that these endeavours disrupted mainstream narratives of development and Euro-centred ideas of assimilation, partly due to their emphasis on education and the production of subaltern histories and geographies that were instrumental to the national construction of new decolonised countries from so-called 'Portuguese Africa'. In the 1960s and early 1970s, these intellectuals used the weapons of culture, public communication, and transnational networking as devices that were as important as the accomplishments of their fellow guerrilla fighters in the battlefield. Additionally, these stories confirm the importance of the archive for tracing cosmopolite, multilingual, and diasporic networks and their spatiality, as well as for doing critical geopolitics from perspectives other than Anglo- or Western-centred ones, thus decolonising geography.*

**Keywords:** Subaltern Geopolitics; Decolonisation; Anti-Colonialism; Transnationalism; African Socialism

'Mário: "All that paper? Too much paper in this war." Armando: "Without paper, this war would have no history"' (Davidson 2017, 101).

This paper addresses the geopolitical strategies that were deployed by the national liberation movements of Lusophone Africa between the 1960s and the 1970s in the fields of cultural production, international multilingual communication, and transnational intellectual

networking. I especially focus on the political and scholarly diplomacy that intellectuals such as Amílcar Cabral (1924-1973), Mário Pinto de Andrade (1928-1990), Agostinho Neto (1922-1979), Eduardo Mondlane (1920-1969), and Marcelino dos Santos (1929-2020) performed in seeking worldwide consensus for their cause at the levels of politics and public opinion and the intellectual world. These scholars and activists operated in the transnational circuits of the CONCP (*Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas*). Founded in Casablanca in 1961, this association represented the alliance between the major anti-colonialist organisations in so-called ‘Portuguese Africa’, the Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde PAIGC (*Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde*), the São Tomé e Príncipe CLSTP (*Comité de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe*), and the Angolan MPLA (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*), and the Mozambican FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*). Although these parties were not representative of the entirety of the nationalist organisations that operated in these countries, I focus on these groups and their leaders, especially Cabral, due to their common transnational activities and communication strategies.

In fact, Lusophone anti-colonial movements were often fractious over several ethnical, political, or social cleavages (Opello 1975), and postcolonial archives may have silenced different activists and organisations on which further work will be needed. I choose to focus on these sources because these rich new available archives clearly convey the commitment of the above-mentioned persons and organisations in promoting transnational intellectual networking as part of their political struggle. This also aligns with arguments by Marcus Power, who defined MPLA, PAIGC, and FRELIMO as ‘the three principal forces of liberation’ (Power 2001, 469) in Lusophone Africa, mentioning Neto, Mondlane, and Cabral among the producers of ‘important counter-narrations’ (Power 2001, 487) of the war the Portuguese government waged against anti-colonial movements. To carry out their liberation war, these intellectuals used international networking and cultural multilingual production as geopolitical devices, which were as important as gain in the military battlefield. The relevance of their strategy is indirectly confirmed by historians’ works arguing that guerrilla alone would have been insufficient to liberate the lasting Portuguese colonies in Africa (MacQueen 1997), given that the decisive blow to the Portuguese rule was delivered by a domestic event, namely, the 1974 Carnation Revolution, which ended the fascist-inspired

dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar and his successor Marcello Caetano. However, this change of political regime was not extraneous to frustrations regarding the African war (Power 2001; Sidaway and Power 2005) or to the political propaganda of Portuguese dissidents connected with anti-colonial movements, as I explain below.

Sidaway and Power analysed the geopolitical nature of the Portuguese state's public discourses at the time of the dictatorship. According to these geographers, an 'imperial obsession' (Sidaway and Power 2005, 527) had been essential and consubstantial to nationalistic discourses and the continuity of Salazar's regime. These discourses were reinforced by propaganda maps showing how the extension of the lasting overseas Portuguese possessions was a symbolical revenge against ideas that Portugal was a 'small' and 'marginal' country. Drawing upon Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre's notion of miscegenation as the 'positive' assimilation of White racial characteristics by Black and indigenous people, resulting in a 'lusio-tropical geopolitics' (Sidaway and Power 2005, 530), Salazar argued that Portugal's African and residual Asian colonies (Goa until the early 1960s, and Timor East until 1975) were intrinsic parts of the Lusitanian '*Patria* [Homeland]' (Sidaway and Power 2005, 539), stressing the close link between empire and nation, which was a characteristic of his regime (Cairo 2006). Countering this, Cabral argued, 'Confusing realities that are biological or necessary with realities that are socio-economic and historical, Gilberto Freyre transformed all of us who live in the colony-provinces of Portugal into the fortunate inhabitants of a Luso-Tropical paradise' (Cabral 2017, 182). It is possible to argue that the history of African decolonisation purged these Luso-tropicalist narratives.

In the war of the African colonies against Portuguese imperialism, both sides claimed to be the vanguard of their respective 'worlds', namely, the 'Free World' (meant as the Western Bloc) for Portugal, and the decolonised and socialist worlds for the anti-colonialists. Both sides fought their battles in the field of cultural production and media, including radio broadcasting (Power 2000). My main argument is that, for African anti-colonialists, the use of culture, schooling, and communication for both the external and internal construction of national imageries was understood as one of their main weapons and as part of a specific intellectual diplomacy, which led to what can be defined as a subaltern geopolitical strategy. This strategy entailed building, for the attention of worldwide public opinion, public

discourses countering mainstream ‘geopolitics of development’ (Power 2019), that is, according to Power, strategies serving counter-insurgency in the newly-decolonised ‘Third World’.

This paper extends the literature that analyses claims from non-state or unconventional geopolitical actors as subaltern or liminal geopolitics (Jones and Clark 2015; Sidaway, Mamadouh, and Power 2013; Sharp 2011, McConnell 2016; McConnell and Dittmer 2018) by addressing this case as a specific example of Lusophone African counter-geopolitics of development, which consciously opposed the neo-colonial developmental rhetoric. Although the use of the term ‘subaltern’ to identify these actors and networks is not straightforward, and despite the controversial nature of this definition (Spivak 2010), I draw upon Sidaway’s notion of subaltern geopolitics, which, ‘Characterise[s] those regimes ... whose geopolitical codes are defined by reference to such an understanding, sometimes blended with counter-hegemonic visions and populism ... especially those post-colonies or post-revolutionary ones that challenge the prior status quo’ (Sidaway 2012, 296-297). Some of these regimes originated from the anti-colonial movements of which Lusophone Africa produced outstanding examples, which are discussed here. Recently, the definition of ‘subaltern geopolitics’ has been expanded to include ‘global visions of subaltern resistance to imperialism, as embodied by the Bandung and Tricontinental Conferences’ (Cheong 2019, 989) along with the definition of “‘subaltern realism” to account for the experiences of “subaltern states”” (Cheong 2019, 993), which are often postcolonial ones (Craggs 2018). While locating state representatives who are not devoid of means to make their voices heard and who arguably are elite in the ‘subaltern’ field remains far from easy, the Tricontinental meeting, held in Cuba in 1966, included state actors as well as representatives of anti-colonial guerrilla movements like the CONCP organisations.

These representatives (including Cabral) can embody to a certain extent the figure of the ‘organic intellectual’ described by Antonio Gramsci, as noted, for instance, by scholarship on Mozambique (Munslow 1983). This figure embodies the contradictions of subalternity, given that intellectuals’ intermediations contribute to further silence the ‘subaltern’, as Gayatri Spivak noted in her critique to Foucault and Deleuze, countering the ‘belief that theory is practice’ (Jazeel 2019, 184). Nevertheless, while Cabral and his friends were intellectuals,

they were also activists and fighters participating in field operations. Therefore, they merged theory and practice in ways that chime with recent geographical postcolonial and subaltern scholarship defining subaltern geopolitics as ‘practices of geopolitical knowledge production that fall outside traditional geopolitical binaries of political domination and resistance’ (Jazeel, 2019 193) and that can be addressed through ‘ethnographic, archival, and analytical work’ (Jazeel, 2019, 194). Finally, the notion of ‘liminal geopolitics’, akin to that of subalternity, is currently applied to non-state (or not yet state) geopolitical actors and their diplomacies, while simultaneously stressing the importance of the archive (Dittmer 2017) and the idea of a ‘threshold’ that these liminal actors need to cross to acquire institutional legitimisation (McConnell and Dittmer 2017). This concept explains the periodisation adopted in this paper, starting in 1961 with the founding of the CONCP, and ending in 1974 with the collapse of the Portuguese empire (preluding independences, which would be formalised in the following year). At that moment, one can assume that the ‘liminal’ period of the anti-colonial struggle ended, as Lusophone African nations crossed the ‘threshold’ of statehood.

In addition, this paper extends and connects geographical scholarship calling for exploring cultures of decolonisation, internationalism, and anti-colonialism by including perspectives which are not the usual Northern and Anglophone ones (Craggs and Neate 2019; Clayton and Kumar 2019). Geographies of internationalism have recently focused on the transnational nature of anti-racist and pacifist networks and their interactions with anti-colonial movements (Hodder, Legg, and Heffernan 2015; Hodder 2017). Jake Hodder has investigated the travels of US Black activist Bayard Rustin, who liaised with anti-colonial leaders Kwame Nkrumah and Nnoma Azikiwe in the 1950s, to Africa. According to Hodder, these meetings inspired Rustin’s original synthesis of Pan-Africanism, Afro-American struggles, and pacifism, which countered European stereotypes regarding the alleged incapacity of African peoples to develop democratic skills, even arguing for some ‘African social and political model of democracy, centred on pristine African village culture ... to dispel the falsehood that black people were somehow incapable of civilisation’ (Hodder 2016, 1366). Recent works by Andrew Davies show the relevance of reading anti-colonial movements by analysing their transnational networks, spatialities, and ‘diverse set of activities, which crucially were productive of new geographies of the world’ (Davies 2019a, 2). For Davies, it would be

reductive to confine these movements to the past or consider them mere reactions to colonial domination. Hence, anti-colonialism is a notion on which geographers are called to engage more, given its ability to create ‘New revolutionary spaces by which an alternative world could be imagined’ (Davies 2019a, 14), even crossing the boundaries between different political approaches such as anarchism, Marxism, humanism, and nationalism.

Moreover, this paper contributes to scholarship stressing the importance of transnational anti-colonialist and anti-racist networking (Featherstone 2015) and the creative role that exile can play in the careers of scholars and activists (Ferretti 2018). Recent scholarship on subaltern geographies has argued for the centrality of places, spaces, and mobilities in understanding colonial and post-colonial situations (Jazeel and Legg 2019), focussing on the direct involvement of European and Latin-American geographers in African decolonisation (Ferretti 2020; Sharp 2019). Against dominant narratives underplaying subaltern agency in the binary framework of the Cold War, Power shows how several Third World actors autonomously implemented their geopolitics of development: ‘Cuba and Vietnam challenged not only Washington’ (Power 2019, 98), but also Moscow’s directives, despite Western propaganda pretending that social movements in the Third World were substantially Soviet plots. While the CONCP organisations requested some economic or military aid from the Soviet Union and East European countries, or to a lesser extent from China, given the popularity of some visions of Maoism as ‘subaltern globalism’ (Power 2019, 143), they generally pursued their own versions of socialism, which did not always match established schemes. Even French anti-colonialist geographer Jean Suret-Canale (1921-2007), whose archives are among the primary sources analysed in this paper, harshly criticised the Russian policies in Western Africa, despite his political orthodoxy as a member of the French Communist Party (Suret-Canale 2011).

This paper is based on two sets of exceptional and multilingual archival collections. The first comprises the folders of Suret-Canale’s huge personal archives surviving at the Departmental Archives of Seine-Saint Denis in Bobigny (France), which cover international propaganda and correspondence from the PAIGC, MPLA, and FRELIMO. These materials especially elucidate the establishment of the French *Comité national de soutien de la lutte de libération dans les colonies portugaises* (CNSLCP) in 1969, following the *Comité de soutien à l’Angola*



*et aux peuples des colonies portugaises*,<sup>1</sup> which formerly operated in Paris. The second set comprises the materials from the Amílcar Cabral and Mário Pinto de Andrade archives, consultable online on the website of the Fundação Mário Soares in Lisbon, and clarifies the international networking and intellectual activities of these nonconventional leaders. In the first part of my paper, I address Cabral's activities through geopolitical lenses. In the second part, I analyse the 'intellectual diplomacy' deployed by African Lusophone leaders to gain the sympathies of the international 'Republic of Letters' in the context of the Cold War. In the third part, I analyse their wider international networking to establish the subaltern geopolitical field that served their immediate purpose, namely, ending Portuguese colonial oppression.

### *1. Cabral and geopolitics.*

Amílcar Cabral is undoubtedly the most famous figure within Lusophone Africa's liberation movement. His work is included alongside the works of authors such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, among the 'non-Eurocentric' intellectual references for scholars of the Modernity-Coloniality-Decoloniality collective (Mignolo 2010). It is considered a major reference for *Africana Critical Theory* by Reiland Rabaka (2009, 2014, and 2016), for an 'agronomy of liberation' by Filipa César (2018), and for decolonisation by Cabral's biographers (Chabal 2003; McCulloch 2019). However, few works address Cabral's rich archives, and his contribution is hardly analysed through geographical or geopolitical lenses. This section is a first attempt to fill this lacuna.

Born to a mixed Guinean and Cape-Verdean family in 1924, Amílcar Cabral was among the relatively privileged African students who could attend university in Lisbon. He resided from 1945 at the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império*, which was later 'condemned as subversive and closed by the government in 1965' (Chilcote 1972, xxx). There, in 1948, Cabral co-founded a 'Centre for African Studies', regarded as a landmark for the history of pan-Africanism and negritude movements (Adi 2018, 186), with some of the future leaders of the Angolan and Mozambican struggles for liberation, such as Agostinho Neto, Mário Pinto de Andrade, and Marcelino dos Santos (Davidson 2017). This early student networking is key to

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<sup>1</sup> Fundação Mário Soares, Documentos Amílcar Cabral (hereafter FS, DAC), 04614.070.109, Mettas to Cabral, 1963. All quotes from texts originally in Portuguese, French, and Italian have been translated by the author.



understanding the anti-colonial endeavours of Lusophone Africa, as it anticipated some of the key characteristics of the organisations that were then led by these intellectuals, such as transnationalism, multilingualism, global networking, and emphasis on public communication and the alphabetisation of the people. In one of his key texts on national liberation and culture, Cabral explicitly addresses the idea of ‘cultural resistance’ (Cabral 1974, 12) claiming it for rediscovering neglected or denied African peoples’ histories as a weapon for fighting colonialism and constructing national consciousness.

These intellectuals rejected the uncritical assumption of predefined ‘Northern’ models, which they considered as requiring substantial rereading and specific adaptations to African realities. A relevant example is the debate on Cabral’s alleged ‘Marxism’, which is often stated as commonplace, although the Guinean leader always took critical distance from all ideologies of European origin, even expressing annoyance about the questions he constantly received from European audiences about the PAIGC’s ‘ideology’. A series of conferences that Cabral held in London in 1971 illustrated this, when he responded that ‘ideology is not a religion’ and that the distinctions between ideological sects did not concern his struggle: ‘If you want to call it Marxism, you may call it Marxism. That’s your responsibility ... I am a freedom fighter in my country ... If you decide it’s not Marxism, ... it’s not Marxism. But the labels are your affair’ (Cabral 1973, 25). While Marxist scholars succeeded in endeavours such as including some pages where Cabral never mentions Marx, Engels, Lenin, or Gramsci in an anthology of Marxism’s ‘essentials’ (Cabral 1988), I would be wary of pretensions regarding the Marxist monopoly of everything that is located in the socialist field. Cabral clearly stated about the PAIGC (valid at least until his death): ‘We are not a Communist party or a Marxist-Leninist party ... all I can say is that at the moment our struggle is going well’ (Cabral 1971, 55).

This is also confirmed by Cabral’s archives, where traces of PAIGC debates on the possible publication of a Portuguese translation of Marx and Engels’s *Manifesto*, along with other books and brochures on African history and philosophy’s essentials are present. Cabral recommended adapting the *Manifesto* in particular ‘To the understanding of the P[AIGC]

comrades'.<sup>2</sup> In his discussions on 'Africana Critical Theory', Rabaka acutely notes how: 'Cabral distinguished his critical theory from those of Marx and his disciples ... reiterating to his European (and often extremely Eurocentric) Marxist comrades: "Marx did not write about Africa"' (Rabaka 2009, 232). Crucially, Rabaka stresses the originality of: 'Cabral's coupling of the weapon of theory with revolutionary praxis: critically modifying (without repudiating) Marxism, dialectical and historical materialism, nationalism, and humanism ... To argue that Cabral was a Marxist, in many respects, conceptually incarcerates him and his critical theory and revolutionary praxis within the Eurocentric world of Marxism' (Rabaka 2009, 241). While this idea complements the merging of different political approaches within anti-colonial struggles that has been highlighted above, early Lusophone African anti-colonialism was generally oriented towards praxes beyond imported theoretical recipes, as noted by Patrick Chabal (2003), which confirms the aforementioned need for considering theories along with practices. Rabaka stresses how rediscovering Cabral's thinking today can contribute to the 'Growing out of various transnational traditions of revolutionary decolonisation, revolutionary humanism, critical multiculturalism, democratic socialism, racial justice, gender justice, women's liberation, [and] freedom of sexual orientation' (Rabaka 2016, 32-33). Hence, I would argue that a geopolitical analysis of Cabral's works and archives confirms that this enthusiasm for their rereading today is not unjustified.

While several of Cabral's published writings were translated into English and discussed by numerous authors, I focus here on some lesser-known aspects of his work that can be read through geopolitical lenses. These are especially related to the transnational engagement of Cabral and his friends, who distinguished themselves in the wider panorama of decolonisation by explicitly arguing 'against narrow nationalisms' (Cabral 1971, 15). They repeatedly opposed all forms of racial hatred towards European or white people, insisting on the fundamental distinction: 'Between the fascist colonial government and the people of Portugal ... We are certain that the elimination of Portuguese colonialism will bring about the destruction of Portuguese fascism' (Cabral 1971, 15-16). In the field of international diplomacy, the card of requesting solidarity against a fascist regime was cleverly played by Cabral and his friends.

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<sup>2</sup> FS, DAC, 07197.160.024, *Programa do Trabalho Ideológico*, 1971-1972.

In their interventions to assemblies and commissions of the United Nations, where they were invited since the early 1960s, CONCP anti-colonialists constantly denounced the crimes of the Portuguese regime using the terminology of anti-fascism, for instance, when reporting the existence of ‘concentration camp[s]’ in Cape Verde and Angola (Cabral 1971, 19). Geopolitically, their analysis focused on the need to oppose the broad alliance between Salazar’s Portugal, Franco’s Spain, and the racist regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia against their anti-colonial struggle. As Power noted, ‘Portugal was heavily influenced by the development of counterinsurgency in neighbouring Rhodesia’ (Power 2001, 474). Against that backdrop, African anti-colonialists styled themselves as ‘soldiers of the humanity’ (Cabral 1971, 65) and declared the transnational nature of their movement, composed by ‘the first colonies to have joined together’ (Cabral 1971, 69). They sought connections with the struggles of the Afro-American movements and the anti-Vietnam war movements in the United States.

However, in a speech to a North-American Black audience, Cabral continued to claim the autonomy of his struggle from any external direction, ironically noting that, despite his (and his interlocutors’) common admiration for Nkrumah as a reference for pan-Africanism, ‘Nkrumah was not the father of Pan-Africanism. An American, DuBois, was the father, if you want’ (Cabral 1973b, 91). Nevertheless, it was also thanks to these ‘Black’ networks that Cabral could claim his last diplomatic victory in January 1973, a few weeks before his assassination in Conakry. ‘The historic resolution of the Security Council which, under its first woman President, our Guinean sister and comrade Jeanne Martin Cissé, unanimously adopted a resolution condemning Portuguese colonialism and demanding the Portuguese Government to stop the colonial war in Africa’ (Cabral 1973b, 103).

In the specific case of the PAIGC (which was not always the case with its sister organisations), the help that was requested from abroad included propaganda, weapons, and medicines, but categorically excluded foreign fighters. As Cabral reportedly said: ‘We want no volunteers ... and we shall turn them back if they present themselves. ... They would rob my people of their one chance of achieving a historical meaning for themselves: of reasserting their own history, of recapturing their own identity’ (Davidson 2017, 1599). This independence ‘from Soviet or Chinese directives’ (Chilcote 1969, 386) was similarly noted

by Riverside specialist in Brazil and Lusophone Africa Ronald Chilcote, who edited and translated into English an impressive collection of documents from the CONCP organisations and other African parties until 1965 (Chilcote 1972) and corresponded directly with Cabral to obtain first-hand materials.<sup>3</sup> Cabral's aim of securing foreign sympathies implied highlighting the ethical choices that guerrilla fighters made in terms of the treatment of prisoners and civilians. 'In the beginning of our struggle there were comrades who ... suggested committing certain atrocities. But we refuse that ... Anyone who took up arms but has deserted will no longer be considered an enemy: he is a human being who should be treated well' (Cabral 2016, 84-85). Conversely, Power describes a sort of 'Vietnam syndrome' among the Portuguese, who experienced 'the tediousness and psychological fear; contradictory relations and criminal activities; the horror and the suffering' (Power 2001, 463).

Finally, it is worth noting that one of the earliest brochures containing the PAIGC's statutes and programme that circulated in French, which was then a sort of lingua franca for anti-colonialist movements, drafted a socialistic programme while launching more widely appealing slogans. These included 'Democratisation and emancipation',<sup>4</sup> and they kept open various possibilities for the economic organisation of the future independent state, which had to be based on the nationalisation of the means of production, but included their 'cooperative exploitation on the basis of free agreement',<sup>5</sup> which appears closer to the anarchist tradition (maybe heard about from Spanish exiles in Morocco and Algeria) than state socialism. The Guinean revolutionaries also guaranteed the inviolability of 'personal property' of houses and 'savings resulting from work',<sup>6</sup> as well as 'religious freedom'.<sup>7</sup> They confirmed their 'non-adhesion to military blocs'<sup>8</sup> and independence from all foreign influence, similar to what was stated in documents from FRELIMO and MPLA, which were approved in the same year.<sup>9</sup> While this appeared to be far from the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and it could appeal to

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<sup>3</sup> FS, DAC, 04614.070.064, Chilcote to Cabral, 30 May 1963.

<sup>4</sup> FS, Arquivo Mário Pinto de Andrade (hereafter AMPA), 10191.002.007, PAIGC. *Statuts et Programme*, 1962, 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Statuts et Programme*, 24.

<sup>6</sup> *Statuts et Programme*, 24.

<sup>7</sup> *Statuts et Programme*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> *Statuts et Programme*, 27.

<sup>9</sup> Bobigny, Archives Départementales de Seine-Saint-Denis, Fonds Suret-Canale - 229 J (hereafter ADSS), 18, FRELIMO, *1<sup>er</sup> Congrès, Dar es Salaam 23-28 septembre 1962* ; 19, MPLA, *Statuts et Programme*.

heterogeneous international support, the point on the ‘development of autochthonous languages and of Creole dialect [a local version of Portuguese]’<sup>10</sup> introduces the next section, which discusses how Lusophone African revolutionaries pursued their own way of building their decolonised nations by appealing first to the minds and hearts of their foreign supporters and their fellow fighters through intellectual diplomacy, alphabetisation, and national identity building.

## *2. The invention of tradition: histories, geographies, and intellectual diplomacy.*

### *2.1 Owning a geography*

Classical literature on the creation of national identities has shown the importance of histories, geographies, and shared languages and traditions in building national imaginaries to create a common sense of citizenship (Anderson 1991; Hooson 1994). This section shows how this was performed by Lusophone African anti-colonialists in parallel with their transnational geopolitics, which included intellectual diplomacy. While these African leaders, who were mostly intellectuals and writers, often praised indigenous languages, they wittingly chose to communicate in French and English when speaking to worldwide publics and used Portuguese at their clandestine schools. Cabral said: ‘Our language has to be Portuguese. And this is an honour. It’s the only thing we can appreciate from the *tuga* [the Portuguese invader], because he left his language after having stolen so much from our land’ (Cabral 2016, 136). This corresponded to the idea enounced as: ‘The constant application of the principle of critical assimilation, that is, availing ourselves of others, but criticising what can be useful for our land and what cannot’ (Cabral 2016, 137).

While Cabral’s idea of ‘critical assimilation’ might be questionable from a contemporary decolonial standpoint, Dan Clayton has recently shown that most of the geographers who addressed decolonisation matters including (among others) British geographer Keith Buchanan, the French Jean Dresch, and Third World scholars such as Jakayo Peter Ocitti (Uganda), Assane Seck (Senegal), and Vernon C. Mulchansingh (Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago) tried to: ‘Combine Western and African and Asian knowledge, theory, and methods ... To discard Western ways of doing geography just because they were Western, they

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<sup>10</sup> FS, AMPA, 10191.002.007 PAIGC. *Statuts et Programme*, 26.

pleaded, was to throw the baby out with the bath water' (Clayton 2020, 11). Current scholarship generally criticises this kind of approach, focusing rather on plural attempts towards an 'epistemological disruption' (Jazeel and Legg 2019, 4) of Euro-centred models. The deliberate choice of intellectuals such as Mondlane to consider 'the modern state' as a 'bequest' (Meneses et al. 2018, 23) from the colonialist to be preserved is criticised by contemporary postcolonial literature drawing on Sousa Santos's notion of 'epistemicide', arguing that the attempts to impose a national identity on the European model created several problems for postcolonial states such as Mozambique (Meneses et al. 2018). However, Lusophone African anti-colonialists provided examples of critical engagement with 'Northern' intellectual models without forgetting the creative role of local cultures.

For Cabral, this nation-building endeavour included writing the first histories and geographies of Guinea-Bissau, to be used for both popular alphabetisation inside the country and worldwide propaganda outside. A highly revealing document survives (in typewritten and handwritten forms) in Cabral's archives, accounting for the geography of 'So-Called Portuguese Guinea'.<sup>11</sup> The first couple of pages look like an ironic overturning of the classical European geography textbooks for primary schools through preliminary statements such as: '[Guinea's] terrestrial frontiers established by the French and Portuguese imperialists (1886 Convention) extend on 680 kilometres'.<sup>12</sup> The 'Population' section clarifies what is defined as a 'multinational country', providing demographic data on the different ethnic groups, many of which were deemed to have 'resisted the foreign domination in the most tenacious and heroic way'.<sup>13</sup> Although he noticed the religious differences between 'Islamised' and 'Animist' groups, Cabral argued that: 'All of Guinea's peoples have a common ancestral ground revealed by similar traditions, uses, and customs'.<sup>14</sup> The section dedicated to the 'Economy' states the potential economic resources that would enable the creation of an independent state, lamenting that at that moment, 'While agriculture is practiced by the Africans, commerce and exports are entirely in the colonialists' hands'.<sup>15</sup> The mobilisation of geographical arguments for the creation of a national invention could not be clearer.

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<sup>11</sup> FS, DAC, 07059.021.002, A. Cabral, *La Guinée dite 'portugaise'*, August 1960.

<sup>12</sup> *La Guinée dite 'portugaise'*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> *La Guinée dite 'portugaise'*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *La Guinée dite 'portugaise'*, 1.

<sup>15</sup> *La Guinée dite 'portugaise'*, 1.

In the tradition of the classical French school, Cabral included a historical section, in this short geography of Guinea-Bissau, starting with a part titled ‘Before colonial domination’. Cabral’s arguments matched concurrent projects by African and European or American scholars such as Basil Davidson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Josph Ki-Zerbo, Nazi Boni, and Jean Suret-Canale, which countered the common prejudice that the Africans were peoples ‘without history’ or incapable of writing their own history. Cabral described the social organisation of Guinean peoples, highlighting how ‘The colonialists destroyed [our] economic and social structures’.<sup>16</sup> The section on ‘The colonial domination’ especially highlighted African agency and indigenous insurgency beyond any victimisation: ‘Our people has never accepted the Portuguese presence and struggled to the end of strength against foreign domination’.<sup>17</sup> While countering Luso-tropicalism by highlighting the brutal nature of the Portuguese presence in Africa, this text also resonates with successive works discussing how hunger and famines were engineered under colonial rule (Davis 2001; Davies 2019b), by noticing that the Portuguese exported ‘Rice, that is the basic food of our people, who are compelled to suffer the famine’.<sup>18</sup> Sarcasm on the alleged ‘civilising mission’<sup>19</sup> of the imperialists was not lacking in these pages, which end with a ‘Minimum Programme’ and a ‘Maximum Programme’ towards national independence, including ‘African Unity’ and the establishment of a ‘Democratic anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist regime’.<sup>20</sup> This document was clearly meant to be read by newly recruited PAIGC militant cadres, given the need for the basic alphabetisation of militants who came from villages where most residents were illiterate.

A geography examination paper surviving in the same archive alluded to technical details on winds and aerodynamics for future aircraft pilots,<sup>21</sup> showing how geography also had practical finalities in the guerrilla’s schools organised in the bush. However, it was supposedly to build national identities that Cabral and his comrades used to produce maps of Guinea-Bissau, displaying the country’s shape as a symbol of its future independence.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *La Guinée dite ‘portugaise’*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> *La Guinée dite ‘portugaise’*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> *La Guinée dite ‘portugaise’*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> *La Guinée dite ‘portugaise’*, 5.

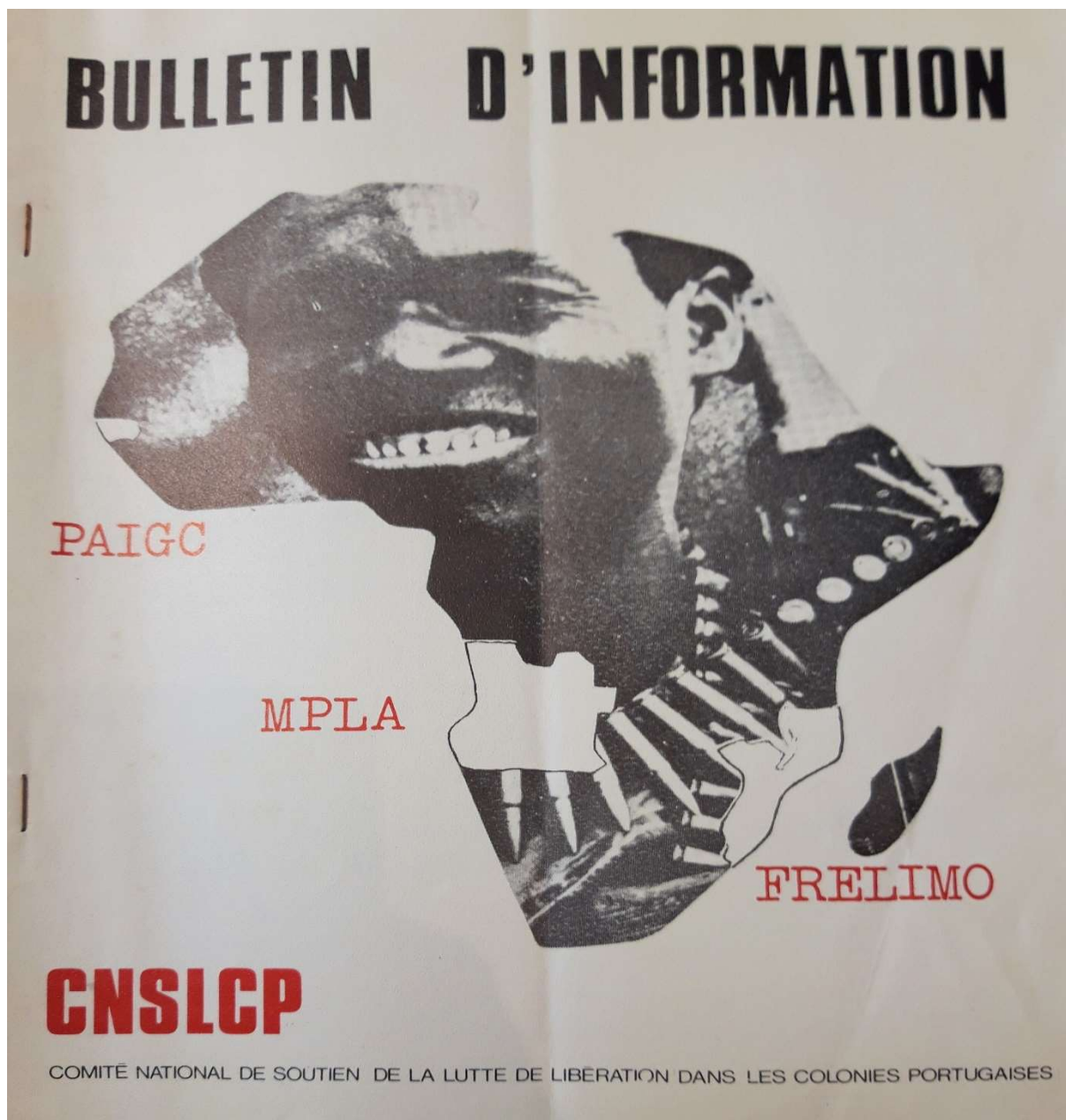
<sup>20</sup> *La Guinée dite ‘portugaise’*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> FS, DAC, 07200.171.004, Ponto de exame de Geografia, 11 June 1968.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Amílcar Cabral, o pai da nação guineense’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNgKoNCiAHQ>



Combative geographical metaphors and imageries representing Lusophone Africa were widely deployed by all the CONCP organisations and their supporters,<sup>23</sup> implicitly countering the aforementioned cartographic rhetoric deployed by the Portuguese regime (Fig. 1-2), while employing some of their rhetorical devices such as an oversimplification of the countries' shapes (Cairo 2006).



**Fig. 1 - ADSS, 19, *CNSLCP Bulletin d'information***

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<sup>23</sup> ADSS, 19, *MPLA Informations*, 3, 1970.



**Fig. 2 - ADSS, 19, 2eme Conférence des organisations nationalistes des colonies portugaises**

In a 1970 letter to Maurice Gastaud, a French supporter of his cause, Cabral argued that their struggle was 'Mainly against ignorance and other social evils which are the fruit of colonialism'.<sup>24</sup> This implied seeking UNESCO support to print a few dozen thousand copies of a list of textbooks for primary teaching, which included two geography books. According

<sup>24</sup> FS, DAC, 04619.100.005, Cabral to Gastaud, 29 January 1970.

to Cabral's letters to French anti-colonial publishing house *Présence Africaine*, some of the geography texts had to be authored by Suret-Canale. This non-academic model for the production of knowledge did not rigidly distinguish between scholarly materials and readings that could serve multi-level educational and propaganda purposes.<sup>25</sup> It is clear that history and geography, along with other human and social sciences, had to play a key role in building national anti-colonial consciousness.

## 2.2 Geopolitics of narration and translation

Anti-colonial fighters from Lusophone Africa had the support of numerous prestigious 'Western' intellectuals including Immanuel Wallerstein (1930-2019), who published a paper titled 'The lessons of the PAIGC', defining its struggle as 'fascinating'<sup>26</sup> and corresponding with both Cabral and Pinto,<sup>27</sup> whom he defined as 'Friends, leftists, and intellectuals who would like to translate their thoughts into political action'.<sup>28</sup> The exceptional multilingual and cosmopolite Italian poet and novelist, Joyce Lussu, née Gioconda Salvadori (1912-1998), was another of their supporters. Born to a family of Tuscan antifascists exiled during Mussolini's dictatorship, she followed her family in their exile in Switzerland, where she met and later married Emilio Lussu, a leader of *Giustizia e Libertà* (Justice and Freedom), the liberal-socialist organisation allied with the anarchists within the brigades of Italian volunteers during the Spanish Civil War (Bernerli 2019), and later contributed to the anti-fascist *Resistenza* in Italy. After explaining the couple's amazing transnational exile trajectories in her book *Fronti e Frontiere* [Fronts and Frontiers], Joyce Lussu started a career as an editor and translator of Third World revolutionary poets, a category in which she included Cabral and Marcelino dos Santos (Ballestra 2012), although she especially engaged with poems by Agostinho Neto and Mozambican writer and activist José Craveirinha (Lussu 1998). Neto's poems were also translated into English in Tanzania, with a foreword by Davidson explicitly acknowledging the political relevance of this poetry, although it was far from 'empty cries of propaganda' (Davidson 1974, xiii).

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<sup>25</sup> FS, DAC, 04616.077.009, Cabral to *Présence Africaine*, 23 March 1970.

<sup>26</sup> FS, AMPA, 10191.002.025, The Lessons of the PAIGC, 1971, 62.

<sup>27</sup> FS, DAC, 04610.059.026, Cabral to Wallerstein, 6 September 1970.

<sup>28</sup> FS, AMPA, 04311.003.008, Wallerstein to Andrade, 11 June 1970.

In the contemporary field of feminist translation studies, Lussu's work is deemed a highly original case of disrupting positivistic canons in translation by using poetry as a political tool to make known faraway freedom fighters to Italian and international publics (Taronna 2017). In Lussu's recollections, one can appreciate how these translations were not armchair work: Lussu's translation philosophy implied empathy and in-person acquaintance with the poets whose work she translated, sitting with them to perform this task, regardless their eventual linguistic proficiency. Lussu recounted with remarkable humour the story of her meeting with Neto. In the early 1960s, Neto was imprisoned in Lisbon, and Lussu, in Italy, had read a few newspaper lines on the case of this 'unknown Angolan poet' who risked his life in Salazar's prisons. It is worth noting that, according to Heriberto Cairo, it was in these years that some 'counter-narratives' (Cairo 2006, 387) to *Estado Novo* commonplaces circulated in Africa through novels.

Lussu travelled to Portugal to meet Neto in prison and persuade him to sign a contract with the prestigious Italian publisher Mondadori, taking advantage of her position as the wife of Italian senator Emilio Lussu (who was quite famous at that time). She knowingly played the role of the candid lady enthusiastic about poetry during a personal meeting that she obtained with the chief of the infamous PIDE (*Polícia Internacional de Defesa do Estado*), which Cabral defined as 'the Portuguese colonial Gestapo'<sup>29</sup> in his letters to other African leaders. Lussu was not permitted to see Neto, but she was allowed to send him the editorial contract, 'which he returned to me signed after a couple of days' (Lussu 2012, 126). Amazingly, Lussu's attempts to obtain Neto's liberation triggered a sort of diplomatic incident between Italy and Portugal, with the result being that Neto was provisionally released, the chief of the PIDE was removed along with the Italian ambassador in Lisbon, and Lussu was expelled from Portugal. Subsequently, her African odyssey started.

In fact, Neto fled from Portugal and Lussu travelled to catch up with him in Rabat, where 'There was the central office of the federation of the liberation movements of Portuguese colonies ... There I met Amílcar Cabral and Marcelino dos Santos ... But Neto had already left for Léopoldville (now Kinshasa), where there was the MPLA headquarters, close to the frontier with Angola. I joined him in Congo' (Lussu 2012, 128). These headquarters soon had

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<sup>29</sup> FS, DAC, 07070.117.069, Cabral, to Houphouët-Boigny, 1962.

to move from Léopoldville to Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo, ex-French) due to the hostile political turn of the Democratic Republic of Congo (ex-Belgian) after the assassination of anti-colonial leader Patrice Lumumba. Together with the analysed archives, Lussu's recollections explain the diasporic places where the anti-colonial activists had to meet, especially African capitals such as Rabat, Casablanca, Dakar, Conakry, Brazzaville, Lusaka, Dar es Salaam, Addis Ababa, and Algiers, where a *Centro de Estudos Angolanos* operated in the 1960s.<sup>30</sup> In these cities, progressive governments provided some support, which, as I explain in the next section, was never easy or straightforward. However, the place which fascinated Lussu more was the forest.

In the African bush, Lussu became familiar with cultural models that differed from what she had understood as the *Négritude*, including writings by Léopold Senghor (a mild supporter of the CONCP at that moment). Lussu criticised these intellectuals because they used 'the language of the Sorbonne' (Lussu 1998, 61) and represented the 'assimilated Africans of the national bourgeoisies' (Lussu 1998, 78), whom she considered imitators of European models. For Lussu, a contrasting model was represented by intellectuals such as Neto, who, despite being 'very fluent in English and French' (Lussu 1998, 72), paid attention to the cultures of his land, using Portuguese 'due to the obscurantist pressure of a narrow Europeism' (Neto 1963, 20) but adopting the same model which was defined by Cabral as 'critical assimilationism'. This was also discussed by Pinto, who argued that 'cultural dualism is typical of the colonial domination' (Cabral et al. 1971, 25) and that 'it is first among the "assimilated" that we see originating the contestation of the colonisers' culture' (Cabral et al. 1971, 26). In this cultural model under construction, poems were mobilised along with popular songs and dances within what Lussu defined as Angola's 'most active, living, and rebel groups – that is the true expression of the nation' (Ballestra 2012, 53). This matched anti-colonial arguments that revolutionaries were the true living forces of their respective countries, in opposition to the colonial 'decadence' of the Portuguese regime.

Lussu's journey to Guinea-Bissau was motivated by the popular poems and songs on which she had made agreements with French left-wing publisher Maspéro, likewise a Cabral's

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<sup>30</sup> ADSS, 18, *Bulletin bilingue du Centro de Estudos Angolanos*.



supporter,<sup>31</sup> travelling from Paris to Conakry and then crossing the border on foot with Guinea-Bissau. She walked with ‘guerrilla fighters, in the zone of the Balantas, accompanied by the sounds of a sweet and slow language which seemed to me an Italian dialect’ (Lussu 2012, 130). In the region of the Balantas, which constituted the main ethnic basis for the PAIGC, Lussu noticed how, in the villages that she visited, ‘Communitarian traditions were still living. [Therefore] the proposal of a socialist society with a democratic use of modern techniques seemed quite natural’ (Lussu 2012, 130). While Lussu observed the importance of anonymous ‘songs of the resistance’ and theatre pieces on guerrilla episodes improvised by ‘the boys and girls of the village’ for communitarian life (Lussu 2012, 130), she also stressed the strategic place of education in this guerrilla warfare. ‘As soon as the fighters free a zone, they immediately create schools ... the Portuguese are very willing to destroy these’ (Lussu 1998, 97). An important point that Lussu noticed was the key role that women played in these processes, in which Cabral noticed how, in certain ethnic groups, women ‘have no rights’, while in others, they were ‘fairly free’ (Cabral 1971, 47), female emancipation remaining one of the key goals of the CONCP organisations.

Cabral’s archives show the PAIGC’s willingness to favour the works of intellectuals such as Lussu, who was inserted in a list of foreign journalists to be kept informed.<sup>32</sup> Amazingly, one of Cabral’s letters to his party fellow and future President of Cabo Verde Aristides Pereira (1923-2011) stated the need for some caution in accompanying Lussu: ‘Although she is a friend whom we like very much, she should just do her visit and then walk away’.<sup>33</sup> This was due to concerns for the safety of foreigners arriving in war zones: while they were a precious resource in terms of obtaining the sympathies of international publics, any incident could have resulted in the opposite effect. Another international intellectual who organically sided with Lusophone African anti-colonialist was Basil Davidson, who travelled extensively in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau (Davidson 1975). In his history of the PAIGC, based on first-hand observation of the guerrilla operations, Davidson sarcastically commented on the napalm cartouches that he found on the ground as ‘Part of the military material which the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation supplies to Portugal. For the defence

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<sup>31</sup> FS, DAC, 04610.059.011, Cabral to Maspéro, 4 May 1970.

<sup>32</sup> FS, DAC, 07061.033.020, Cabral to Caetano, 9 August 1966.

<sup>33</sup> FS, DAC, 07061.032.024, Cabral to Xido [Aristides Pereira], 19 April 1966.

of the Free World. A strange region, this Free World' (Davidson 2017, 354). This resonates with Power's remarks on the 'Vietnam model' mentioned above.

One of the most important international places where intellectual and political solidarity with Lusophone Africa was deployed was Paris. The CONCP leaders were proficient in French, and some of them, like Pinto de Andrade, had lived for several years in Paris or in French-speaking countries. Among their intellectual acquaintances, it is worth noting Suret-Canale, who had been involved in cultural work in the early years of Guinea-Conakry independence, collaborating with controversial leader Sékou Touré, who was one of the staunchest supporters of the PAIGC (Cabral 2016). A correspondent of Davidson, Du Bois, Boni, and Ki-Zerbo, Suret-Canale authored volumes on the history of Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, which were among the first attempts to view the history of the continent from the perspective of the colonised (Ferretti 2020b). A friend and correspondent of Pinto de Andrade, Suret-Canale stressed his aim to inform widely 'French [public] opinion'<sup>34</sup> regarding the situation in the Portuguese colonies and committed to organise public manifestations in solidarity with their cause in France and Western Europe.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, he discussed with Pinto how decolonisation questioned classical theoretical schemes through practical needs. For instance, the ex-colonies had to simultaneously accomplish 'The tasks which were those of the bourgeois revolution elsewhere, and those of the socialist revolution'.<sup>36</sup> Although challenging, this simultaneity of tasks was worthy of sympathies in both socialist and liberal milieus. As Suret-Canale's archives show, these intellectual connections were instrumental in widening the international and multilingual communication strategy in the context of transnational networking and 'subaltern diplomacies' simultaneously targeting intellectuals, the public opinion, unions, and political leaders at several levels in the 'First', 'Second', and 'Third' Worlds.

### *3. Fresh blood and transnational networking.*

In his anthology of writings from Lusophone Africa, Chilcote observed that many of these documents 'were prepared as press releases in the hope of attracting mass-media coverage' (Chilcote 1969, xli) and were widely circulated in the form of brochures, leaflets, or

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<sup>34</sup> FS, AMPA, 04319.007.013, Suret-Canale to Andrade, 27 June 1971.

<sup>35</sup> FS, AMPA, 04311.003.033, Suret-Canale to Andrade, 6 August 1970.

<sup>36</sup> FS, AMPA, 04311.003.033, Suret-Canale to Andrade, 3 April 1972.



typewritten documents. In a 1961 press conference in Congo, Pinto de Andrade explained that their action was inspired by what he called a ‘Positive neutralism [stimulating] sympathy and solidarity from all the world forces towards our people’.<sup>37</sup> The importance of performing diplomacies from below to move things at the highest (geo)political levels was strategically outlined by Cabral in his speeches to the PAIGC. For instance, in the context of the Cold War, ‘a great victory’ was that ‘A Western country that had dealt with Portugal in the commercial context has put itself entirely on our side: Sweden’ (Cabral 2016, 88). To explain the importance of this victory, Cabral noted that the Portuguese government was much more disappointed with this than with the support anti-colonialists received from Cuba and Eastern Europe, because anti-colonial activities in the ‘First World’ disrupted the Cold War logics in which Salazar’s regime styled itself as the champion of the ‘Atlantic’ cause. Conversely, Cabral believed that ‘Progressive forces, for example, from America, England, and France ... can rise up and decide to ask their rulers to assist the African liberation movements’ (Cabral 2016, 89).

Suret-Canale’s archives contain correspondence, brochures, typewritten documents, circulars, and magazines explaining the activities of the CONCP organisations and the support they received from Europe. In France, this was especially the case with the CNSLCP, chaired by Gilles Tchernia, which published a bulletin stating how, one year after the creation of this committee in 1969, ‘The information has progressed’. Indeed, an international conference held in Rome in June 1970 for the independence of Portuguese colonies was attended by ‘117 political parties and organisations proceeding from 64 countries’.<sup>38</sup> Their main points were the request to stop military aid to Portugal from Western countries (including Italy and France) and the declaration of Portuguese acts in Africa as ‘Genocidal wars ... a crime against humanity’.<sup>39</sup> These endeavours received solidarity from the most disparate organisations, including the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, which approved a resolution requesting that the anti-colonial parties in Lusophone Africa become ‘subjects of international right’,<sup>40</sup> acknowledging their struggle as a legitimate war under international conventions.

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<sup>37</sup> ADSS, 19, Conférence de presse de Mário de Andrade, président du MPLA, 30 October 1961.

<sup>38</sup> ADSS, 19, *CNSLCP Bulletin d’information*, December 1970.

<sup>39</sup> *CNSLCP Bulletin d’information*, December 1970.

<sup>40</sup> *CNSLCP Bulletin d’information*, December 1970.

In parallel with propaganda, material solidarity was provided from Paris in the form of deliveries of fresh blood, which served the guerrilla's hospitals in Guinea. This can be considered an example of what David Featherstone calls 'thinking solidarity politically' (Featherstone 2012): volunteers were encouraged to donate their blood in Paris ambulatories, from which it was sent to Conakry and then to the PAIGC, 'fortnightly'.<sup>41</sup> Based on the documents from both Suret-Canale's and Cabral's archives, this endeavour seems to have been technically successful, and Cabral repeatedly wrote to Tchernia, acknowledging this blood in poetically anti-racist terms. 'French blood flows now in the vessels of some of our country's fighters, confirming the poet: the same river flows through the bodies of all men'.<sup>42</sup> Cabral also saluted the CNSLCP's foundation as 'A victory of French people, who are mostly anti-colonialist'.<sup>43</sup> This committee also supported the publication of an illustrated magazine in French called *PAIGC Actualités*, printed in Conakry and Dakar between 1969 and 1970 in monthly brochures, surviving in both Pinto's and Suret-Canale's archives,<sup>44</sup> including a special issue dedicated to female fighters dated 8 March 1970.<sup>45</sup> This publication appears as an impressive accomplishment for a clandestine guerrilla group in a small and 'peripheral' country, showing how transnational action was not incidental, but intrinsic to its cause. It also reveals how the PAIGC was substantially aligned with Cabral's thinking, at least until his death.

CNSLCP members also exerted direct pressure on the French government. For instance, at a meeting between the French Prime Minister and the Portuguese Minister for Foreign Affairs, a delegation composed of representatives of the CNSLCP and a dozen unions and civil society associations went to the Hôtel de Matignon to request the ceasing of 'Weapons' selling to the racist government of South Africa and to the Portuguese government'.<sup>46</sup> The *Bulletin* repeatedly denounced the French government as 'One of Lisbon's most faithful allies'.<sup>47</sup> The alliance between Portugal and the South African regime against MPLA and

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<sup>41</sup> *CNSLCP Bulletin d'information*, December 1970.

<sup>42</sup> FS, DAC, 04610.059.005, Cabral to CNSLCP, 7 February 1970.

<sup>43</sup> FS, DAC, 04610.059.005, Cabral to CNSLCP, 7 February 1970.

<sup>44</sup> ADSS, 6, 50.

<sup>45</sup> FS, AMPA, 04341.004.015, *PAIGC Actualités*, 15 March 1970.

<sup>46</sup> ADSS, 19, *CNSLCP Bulletin d'information*, March 1971.

<sup>47</sup> ADSS, 19, *CNSLCP Bulletin d'information*, March 1972.

FRELIMO was especially used to shame the countries that supported these regimes, given the indignation that the Apartheid horrors inspired worldwide. In 1969, the MPLA bulletins, often printed in both English and French, denounced the preparation of a possible Austral NATO, that is, a military ‘Pact of the Southern Atlantic’<sup>48</sup> involving Rhodesia, South Africa, Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand, one which was backed by the United States and by ‘Brazilian imperialism’.<sup>49</sup> Brazil was then suffering the most virulent phase of the military dictatorship which ruled that country from 1964 to 1985, which compelled African fighters to consider Brazil a geopolitical adversary and to protest indignantly at occasions such as the visit of a Brazilian military representative in Bissau, claiming friendship with the ‘Brazilian people’ rather than with their government.<sup>50</sup> It is worth noting that, even before the dictatorship, Cabral wrote to Brazilian democratic president Juscelino Kubitschek, protesting Brazil’s support for ‘Portuguese colonial domination’.<sup>51</sup> This shows how Lusophone solidarity alone cannot fully explain this story, which should be understood in a wider transnational and multilingual context.

Suret-Canale’s archives confirm the intrinsically transnational working of the CONCP parties, which characterised their very organisational structures: among many possible examples, one finds an MPLA declaration denouncing the condescending policy of Ivorian leader Houphouët-Boigny towards South Africa that was approved in Lusaka, printed in Stockholm, and released in Paris by the CNSLCP.<sup>52</sup> MPLA’s and FRELIMO’s war communiqués in English could be sent from Dar es Salaam, where Tanzanian president Nyerere supported their struggle,<sup>53</sup> or from Brazzaville. There, the anti-Angolan politic of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where Angolan fighters were captured and taken to ‘concentration camps’,<sup>54</sup> was again denounced. To capture the widest international attention, denouncing the fascist nature of the Portuguese regime was strongly emphasised by highlighting the continuity between Salazar and his successor Caetano, defined as ‘a new

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<sup>48</sup> ADSS, 19, *Vitoria ou morte. Organe d’information et combat du mouvement populaire de libération de l’Angola* [1969], 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Vitoria ou morte* [1969], 6.

<sup>50</sup> FS, DAC, 07073.131.224, Cabral to ‘Ministro das Relações Exteriores do Brasil’, 22 May 1970.

<sup>51</sup> FS, DAC, 07073.131.353, Cabral to Kubitschek, n.d.

<sup>52</sup> ADSS, 19, *CNSLCP Bulletin d’information*, March 1971, 12.

<sup>53</sup> ADSS, 19, MPLA, War communique n. 6, 10 May 1969.

<sup>54</sup> ADSS, 19, MPLA, Communiqué, 26 March 1968.

Portuguese fascist leader'.<sup>55</sup> The presence of concentration camps in Cape Verde and Angola, where African prisoners were set to die in inhuman conditions, was internationally denounced with explicit comparisons between these experiences and 'Nazi Germany', including the unsettling presence of 'crematoriums'.<sup>56</sup>

There are war communiqués of these organisations in Suret-Canale's archives, including some PAIGC releases signed by Cabral, in which the generally ecumenic and 'pacifist' tones of the Guinean leader were counter-balanced by announcements of military victories such as the destruction of an 'Alouette helicopter'<sup>57</sup> (of French production) or the declaration that, after the blows they suffered, the Portuguese military men were 'Desperate before their defeat'.<sup>58</sup> Obviously, guerrilla operations were only possible due to military provisions from countries whose governments supported this cause. Cabral's archives contain a relevant amount of correspondence that was sent to leaders of the Socialist Bloc or neighbouring African countries to explicitly request weapons. For example, he personally requested '60 bazookas' and '30 cannons'<sup>59</sup> from the Russian Communist Party; 10,000 'howitzers', 250 'AK-10 gun-machines', 300 'semi-automatic rifles',<sup>60</sup> and ammunition from the Bulgarian Communist Party; authorisation for transporting war material in Senegalese territory from Senghor;<sup>61</sup> military training and logistic support from Touré,<sup>62</sup> and even the delivery of military uniforms via Algiers, as he wrote to Algerian leader Boumédiène.<sup>63</sup>

However, diplomacy remained the most important battlefield. While the conferences of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Cairo in 1964, in Lusaka in 1970, and in Algiers in 1973<sup>64</sup> were a usual meeting point for CONCP activists, documents from some of their conferences show the close interconnection between member organisations, which included the

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<sup>55</sup> ADSS, 19, *Angola in Arms*, 4 February 1969, 40.

<sup>56</sup> ADSS, 19, *CNSLCP Bulletin d'information*, 1973.

<sup>57</sup> ADSS, 50, Communiqué, April 1970.

<sup>58</sup> ADSS, 50, Communiqué, 7 February 1970.

<sup>59</sup> FS, DAC, 04621.115.035, Cabral to 'Comité Central do PCUS', 1 February 1966.

<sup>60</sup> FS, DAC, 07066.090.007, Cabral to 'Comité Central do Partido Comunista Búlgaro', 26 May 1970.

<sup>61</sup> FS, DAC, 04612.064.075, Cabral to Senghor, 17 April 1970.

<sup>62</sup> FS, DAC, 04606.049.014, Cabral to Touré, 19 December 1961.

<sup>63</sup> FS, DAC, 07073.131.181, Cabral to Boumédiène, 15 January 1970.

<sup>64</sup> ADSS, 19, Guinée-Bissau: indépendance, 24 September 1973.

‘Democratic Union of Guinea’s and Cape Verde’s Women’.<sup>65</sup> At the CONCP conference held in Dar es Salaam in October 1965, which was attended by several international observers from Southern and Northern countries, one of the key points was the ‘edification of the African homeland, free from all forms of oppression’<sup>66</sup> along with solidarity with Vietnam against the ‘coward aggression war’<sup>67</sup> of the United States. Great hope was placed in the Tricontinental meeting in Cuba, which was scheduled for the following year (Mahler 2018). Significantly, the conference entrusted leaders from different organisations to represent all of them unitarily in the next international venues: Cabral was the spokesperson for the Tricontinental, Neto, for the forthcoming Organisation of African Unity conference in Accra, and FRELIMO leader Mondlane became the representative for the United Nations.<sup>68</sup>

Regarding Guinea-Bissau, United Nations lobbying through delegates of allied states allowed for UN observers’ missions and for the recognition of the country’s unilaterally declared independence by ‘more than forty foreign governments’.<sup>69</sup> Sadly, this independence was proclaimed when Cabral had already been assassinated during a conspiracy, internal to the PAIGC, but probably engineered by the Portuguese security services (Davidson 2017). Being a scholar as well as an anthropologist, Mondlane saluted the Conference in Support of the Peoples of Portuguese Colonies and Southern Africa, which occurred in Khartoum in 1969, as the first of this kind, fostering the on-going attempts to separate Portuguese people from their governors, knowing that Portuguese soldiers ‘do not fight voluntarily against us’<sup>70</sup> and that some of them were deserting and even joining ranks with the guerrilla. Mondlane was also assassinated in the same year (Roberts 2017), and a Mondlane Foundation was created in the Netherlands to support Lusophone anti-colonial movements.<sup>71</sup>

Cabral’s archives contain a wealth of correspondences, which he exchanged with political leaders and international organisations, whose full analysis deserves a specific work and goes beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this ceaseless activity of

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<sup>65</sup> ADSS, 19, *2eme Conférence des organisations nationalistes des colonies portugaises*, Dar es Salaam, 3-8 October 1965.

<sup>66</sup> ADSS, 19, *2eme Conférence*.

<sup>67</sup> ADSS, 19, *2eme Conférence*, 24.

<sup>68</sup> ADSS, 19, *2eme Conférence*, 30.

<sup>69</sup> ADSS, 19, Guinée-Bissau: indépendance, 24 September 1973, 7.

<sup>70</sup> ADSS, 19, A. Neto, A. Cabral. E. Mondlane, *La voix des peuples en lutte*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Amsterdam, International Institute of Social History, Archief Eduardo Mondlane Stichting.

networking at all levels complemented the strategy for gaining international support and fostering common African or pan-African perspectives.<sup>72</sup> This included attempts to consolidate alliances in Northern Africa by interacting with Algerian leader Houari Boumédiène,<sup>73</sup> Tunisian Habib Bourguiba,<sup>74</sup> and Egyptian Anwar El-Sadat.<sup>75</sup> Regarding Sub-Saharan Africa, beyond the decisive collaboration of Touré and certain staunch political and military supporters such as Nkrumah<sup>76</sup> and Nyerere, who always saluted the successes of his ‘brothers’<sup>77</sup> of the PAIGC, relations were not always straightforward. For instance, incidents with the Senegalese authorities of the southern region of Casamance compelled Cabral to protest to the authorities of Dakar in favour of his activists operating there.<sup>78</sup> Along with criticising the ‘anti-Angolan politics’<sup>79</sup> of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the CONCP leaders also criticised Ivorian leader Félix Houphouët-Boigny due to his possibilist positions towards South-Africa, despite early diplomatic efforts to secure the collaboration of the ‘brothers’ of Ivory Coast.<sup>80</sup> Conversely, relations with Latin-American leftist leaders such as Salvador Allende<sup>81</sup> and Fidel Castro<sup>82</sup> looked generally good. Although Cabral could not see the independence of his country, this multi-level subaltern diplomacy was effective, and it further clarifies historiography highlighting the decisive role played by African fighters in hastening the collapse of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974.

## Conclusion

Although more work will be needed on these archives to clarify several specific matters, this paper has shown the importance of investigating spaces and transfers of transnational anti-colonial networks at the time of decolonisation. It has highlighted how multi-level networking, including multilingual public communication and intellectual diplomacy, was effective in gaining worldwide support and manifold sympathies for Lusophone African anti-

<sup>72</sup> FS, DAC, 07061.032.001, Amílcar Cabral to Luís Cabral, 17 June 1960.

<sup>73</sup> FS, DAC, 04606.045.113, Cabral to Boumédiène, 27 May 1967.

<sup>74</sup> FS, DAC, 07073.131.187, Bourguiba to Cabral, 1970.

<sup>75</sup> FS, DAC, 07073.131.216, Cabral to Sadat, 29 September 1970.

<sup>76</sup> FS, DAC, 04621.115.014, Nkrumah to Cabral, 27 February 1963; 04621.115.007, Pereira to Nkrumah, 2 December 1961.

<sup>77</sup> FS, DAC, 04621.115.020, Nyerere to Cabral, 2 June 1970.

<sup>78</sup> FS, DAC, 04612.064.013, Cabral to ‘Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros da República do Senegal’, 7 May 1970.

<sup>79</sup> FS, DAC, 04606.045.107, Cabral to ‘Presidente do MPLA’, 8 April 1967.

<sup>80</sup> FS, DAC, 04621.113.021, Pereira to Houphouët-Boigny, 2 January 1962.

<sup>81</sup> FS, DAC, 07073.131.304, Allende to Cabral, 18 November 1970.

<sup>82</sup> FS, DAC, 04606.045.103, Cabral to Castro, 1967.

colonialists, from grassroots movements to state leaders and international organisations. This occurred in all milieus, from fellow intellectuals to wider public opinions. Such geopolitical strategies challenged the mainstream ‘development-security nexus’ (Power 2019, 220) analysed by Power by reverting ironically the vocabulary of development and underdevelopment as well, for instance, by defining colonial Portugal as the truly ‘underdeveloped’ country.<sup>83</sup>

The geopolitical and diplomatic aspects of these intellectuals’ engagement explain why Lusophone Africa’s freedom fighters were so keen to use knowledge as one of their main weapons for both external and internal purposes. Not only was this more effective, at a global scale, than the relatively small number of weapons and military instruction that they received from socialist countries, but it was also their own way of gaining independence and autonomy through what they called ‘a critical assimilationism’, merging elements of European cultures (including the Portuguese language) with indigenous communitarian traditions. Their explicit goal was to go beyond tribalism in creating their respective nations, a task in which local histories and geographies were strategically deployed. However, it is clear that the very idea of the nation-state came from Europe and that it needed some appropriation of European notions; this may have constituted a limitation, in the light of the problems that Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola experienced after their formal independencies in the mid-seventies. While this goes beyond the scope of this paper, the endeavours of Cabral and his colleagues proved remarkably effective during the ‘liminal’ period of their anti-colonial struggle.

This work extends notions of subaltern geopolitics and liminality by analysing networks that were formed through activism and political solidarity and were not (or were not yet) institutionalised. It shows how these voluntaristic efforts could succeed only thanks to external help, including international solidarity, and how they were deployed transnationally. These activists’ calls for (external and internal) solidarity included the use of ‘popular geopolitics’ (Cairo 2006, 390) through the production of propaganda maps and performative descriptions of their respective decolonised nations.

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<sup>83</sup> FS, DAC, 07197.160.008, PAIGC, Communiqué, 26 February 1972.



Finally, my paper has also demonstrated the effectiveness of archival multilingual investigation of cultures of decolonisation and anti-colonialism, a field of studies on which further work is needed. Authors such as Andrew Davies have recently discussed how studying early anti-colonialism can foster current agendas addressing ‘the necessity of a geographical anticolonial thought’ (Davies 2019a, 161), including the plural efforts to associate decolonial ideas with the fields of critical geographies and geopolitics highlighted by authors such as Tariq Jazeel (2019). While these broad agendas go beyond the objectives of this paper, the story of Lusophone Africa’s anti-colonialists contributes to these endeavours by reverting the imperial orientation of the discourses that underlined mainstream geopolitics of development, showing heterogeneous ways to use scholarship and cultural production in decolonial terms, from the production of alternative mappings to the elaboration of geographical discourses radically opposed to the colonialist ones.

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