

This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 26 Sep 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Edited by Javier Muñoz-Basols, Laura Lonsdale and Manuel Delgado

The Routledge Companion to Iberian Studies

Javier Muñoz-Basols, Laura Lonsdale, Manuel Delgado

The Idea of Empire in Portuguese and Spanish Life, 1890 to 1975

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315709895.ch31>

Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses

Published online on: 28 Mar 2017

How to cite :- Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses. 28 Mar 2017, *The Idea of Empire in Portuguese and Spanish Life, 1890 to 1975 from: The Routledge Companion to Iberian Studies* Routledge

Accessed on: 26 Sep 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315709895.ch31>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

PART IV

The Iberian Peninsula during the twentieth century



History, politics and cultural studies



31

THE IDEA OF EMPIRE IN PORTUGUESE AND SPANISH LIFE, 1890 TO 1975

Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses

Portuguese and Spanish life in the twentieth century was in great part dominated by the experience of dictatorship, which began to take hold in the 1920s and then lasted, with the interregnum of the Second Republic in Spain, until the mid 1970s. Much has been written about the origins, nature, and consequences of the Salazar and Franco regimes, which undeniably shared a number of characteristics, but which also differed in a number of key areas. Some of these differences were born out of the personality, background, and world view of the two dictators; others reflected the economic, social, and cultural realities of Portugal and Spain. One issue brought all these factors together: Empire.

From the British Ultimatum of 1890 until decolonization in 1974–1975, Portugal’s colonial dimension played an ever greater role in the country’s life and politics. In the same period, meanwhile, Spain lost the remainder of its American and Asian empire, became embroiled in North Africa through the Moroccan Protectorate, and then, without much fuss (except for the Southern Sahara) divested itself, in the final years of the Franco dictatorship, of almost all its African possessions. The political consensus in Portugal around Empire across most of this period was striking, but for all the commitment to Portugal’s “civilizing mission,” there was remarkably little pragmatic thought given, across three very different regimes, to its purpose, value, and consequences. Empire, ultimately, was a myth through which Portugal’s political, economic, and cultural elites could find both common ground and a justification for their role and privileges. Given the importance and resources of Portugal’s overseas possessions, this was a powerful and intoxicating myth. How the rest of the country, poor and, by Western European standards, underdeveloped, viewed the enterprise, seemed not to matter. Because of the smaller size of Spain’s territorial holdings, losses in Morocco at the time of the Annual disaster (1921), and genuine popular participation in the country’s affairs during the Second Republic (1931–1936), the situation in Spain was different. Popular indifference or even hostility to the creation by force of a new colonial empire was made manifest. Nevertheless, the idea of “Empire,” however nebulous, was used by the Franco regime to point to a redeeming future, and to justify ongoing sacrifices.

The aim of this article is to compare the idea of Empire in Portugal and Spain during this period, which in both countries involved an evolution from liberal monarchy to republic to dictatorship. The article pays close attention to the mythic status of Empire and its manipulation by successive regimes, stressing, however, that the Portuguese Empire was a more significant

entity than its Spanish counterpart, playing a greater role in national life. It should be kept in mind that dictatorships, by censoring public debate, made difficult any accurate evaluation of the real popularity of conceptions of Empire and corresponding ambitions.

Portugal before Salazar

The history of contemporary Portugal cannot be written in a strictly national fashion, focusing exclusively on events in the metropolis. As Fernando Tavares Pimenta put it recently, “O ‘Século XX Português’ foi radicalmente distinto do ‘Século XX Europeu.’ Essa distinção foi uma consequência direta do peso desproporcionado do fator colonial na história portuguesa” (Pimenta 2010, 8). From 1900 to 1933, Portugal moved from constitutional monarchy to the First Republic, and then to Salazar’s New State. There were differences in the three regimes’ colonial policies, but these were not as important as the continuities that bound them together: for all the hopes pinned on the colonies, and all the sacrifices made in their name, Portugal’s hold over them was always relatively feeble, due not only to internal and external threats, but also to the enormous gulf that separated imperialist rhetoric from reality. While the latter was true of all colonial empires, with claims to a civilizing mission falling far short of the reality on the ground, Portugal’s unique position as an economically weak colonizer meant that even hard-nosed arguments about bringing the indigenous populations into the world economy against their will, or making use of resources that such populations were too backward to tap into, fell flat.

It was the sight of other powers scrambling for parts of Africa which the Portuguese had long considered, in a vague way, theirs, that woke Portugal from its lethargy at the close of the nineteenth century. Not much thought was given to why, or with what purpose, Portugal laid formal claim to territory in the wake of the Berlin Conference of 1884–5, just a sentiment that others were trespassing on Portuguese lands. And so, without much consideration for available resources, material and human, by 1887 Portugal, in the now famous “mapa cor-de-rosa,” was laying claim not only to Angola and Mozambique, whose borders had been more or less delineated, but also to all the territory in between. This dizzying vision of a second Brazil in Africa, stretching from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, was quickly felled by the British ultimatum of January 1890, which forced the Portuguese to withdraw from what is today Zimbabwe. What had begun as a venture into State-fomented nationalism by the Crown became a national humiliation which benefited the rising Portuguese Republican Party, but few paused to ask why Portugal needed such vast tracts of territory, how it proposed to develop them, and how it could impose its will on their inhabitants.

The inability to find Portuguese investors to operate in the colonies led to the creation of Crown companies, which were active in Mozambique, but with disappointing results. The colonies were also disdained by Portuguese emigrants, who continued to cross the Atlantic in their thousands every year, mostly to Brazil. Portugal had colonies (officially labelled “overseas provinces”), but its hold on them was slight. On the ground, it was a desire for enrichment that drove a handful of Portuguese settlers, and they displayed little concern for the well-being of the local populations, whatever their level of material advancement. There was little sense that the “white man’s burden” weighed on the shoulders of the Portuguese.

The coming of the Republic in October 1910 deepened Portugal’s attachment to the myth of Empire. All republicans believed that Empire, as a living link with a glorious past, would play a key role in reawakening the national genius, dulled by centuries of monarchist and clerical reaction. Maria Cândida Proença writes, “Conscientes da força do império na formação da unidade e identidade nacionais, os republicanos, desde cedo, incorporaram no seu

discurso cultural e político a defesa da salvaguarda, manutenção e desenvolvimento dos territórios ultramarinos como um dos vetores da sua propaganda política” (2009, 205). And there remained, of course, the hope of extracting considerable wealth from the colonies. But such ideological readings of history and pious hopes for the future could not overcome the fact that Portuguese economic agents had not amassed sufficient capital to transform the colonies. Whatever investment occurred was carried out by the State, or was heavily guaranteed by it, to the detriment of the impoverished metropolis.

The difficulties proved insurmountable. The Republic’s colonial programme, based on decentralization, amounted to little in the end. The regime, which relied on the income provided by import and export duties charged on trade with the colonies (Oliveira 2011, 303), had little to say on the ideal relationship with the indigenous population, or on tensions between that population, the (very few) white settlers, and metropolitan business interests, who for the most part simply re-exported colonial goods. Without financial investment in the Portuguese colonies, these remained, for the most part, in the doldrums, and subject to periodic rebellions against Portuguese rule. Portugal’s colonies saw plenty of fighting during the First World War (Meneses 2014). These were sad campaigns, which consumed many lives and much gold for very little gain and which, more often than not, were still “pacification” efforts. But it might be said that enough was done – enough men died – to guarantee that Portuguese rule over the colonies continued throughout the interwar period, despite frequent allegations of labour abuses. Republicans attempted to portray this sacrifice as part of the national renewal they had initiated. It is worth recalling the words of the interventionist feminist Ana de Castro Osório, in her children’s history of the conflict:

Nunca em Portugal se deve ensinar nas escolas nem nas famílias que a nossa Pátria é pequena, pois essa não é a verdade. E pela vida fora, quando diante dum português tal falsidade se disser, têm a obrigação de defender-se como duma verdadeira injúria.
(Osório 1918, 32)

A new impetus was given, after the war, to the material transformation of Angola and Mozambique. High Commissioners, backed by Legislative Councils, were empowered to take out international loans to fund the development of their respective province, while the mercantilist link with Portugal was broken, but the results attained still fell well short of the desired goal. The central problem continued to be the lack of investment capital, now allied to the distrust of the autonomy granted to the colonies on the part of economic groups tied to the re-export of colonial goods (Proença 2009, 218). These groups made the most of a series of scandals, notably the Alves dos Reis “Angola e Metrópole” bank forgeries, to warn that the Empire was in danger, weakening the regime. And as the ultimate guarantor of colonial loans, the Portuguese State became liable for debts whose contraction it could not control.

Spain before Franco

The consequences for Spain of defeat by the United States of America in 1898 are by now well understood. Defeat and the loss of American and Asian territories did not lead to a coup by a wounded army, jealous of its prerogatives, or to a social revolution. Neither did it lead to economic crisis and stagnation. But 1898 did result in heightened political tension, with which the Restoration monarchy did not cope well; a more politically active – and united – officer class; and much soul-searching by Spanish intellectuals about the country’s place in the world, now that the last links with the great Empire of the past had been cut. The year 1898 also had

a powerful effect on the young man who soon after rose to the throne. Alfonso XIII enjoyed close links with the army and wanted to consolidate his political position at home. African military adventures were a shortcut to this goal.

The army's desire for a leading role in national life, allied to a growing awareness of the "Scramble for Africa" among certain economic interest groups, pushed Spain into an unlikely and costly colonial venture in Morocco. Alfonso de la Serna writes, "La tentación colonial africana sería entonces la gran trampa que el destino iba a tender a España" (2001, 190), before asking, having laid out the diplomatic scenario, "Cómo podía nuestro país ser indiferente al gran juego político, económico y militar que se abría sobre el estratégico tablero extendido ante nuestras costas?" (2001, 191). The seeds were in place: military activity in the region throughout the nineteenth century; a powerful if anachronistic legate in the shape of Isabel la Católica's will, which urged her heirs to continue the conquest of Africa and the struggle against the "infidels;" and the creation of a number of learned societies such as the "Sociedad de Africanistas" (1864), the "Sociedad Geográfica de Madrid" (1876), and the "Asociación Española para la Exploración de África" (1876). Joaquín Costa was an early proponent of a greater commercial contact with Africa, sponsoring caravans from the Saharan coast to the Sudan, and then serving as the point of contact between this reputedly fabulous trade, Europe, and Spanish-speaking America. There was an enormous gulf, however, between the ambitions of these early *africanistas* and the possibilities of the Spanish state, which watched impotently as France laid claim to the territories it coveted.

Coincidentally, the creation of a Spanish sphere of influence was required by the other powers interested in the peaceful carve-up of North Africa. But the Protectorate over northern Morocco was a poisoned pill, given the ferocity with which its population resisted Spanish "pacification." This constant demand for military action proved unpopular at home – beginning with Barcelona's "Tragic Week" in 1909 – and led to the creation of a specialized officer corps, at odds with the broad mass of the population, civilian politicians, and even their Peninsula-based comrades (Balfour 2002). The blood-letting at Annual, twenty-three years after the 'disaster' of 1898 (with the significant milestone of the costly 1909 Melilla campaign halfway between the two) consolidated popular opposition to wars of expansion. General Primo de Rivera's initial popularity was due in no small part to his "abandonista" stance in relation to Morocco. It was hard to conceive of the Moroccan Protectorate, consolidated only in the mid 1920s after the final defeat of Riffi leader Abd-el Krim, as the worthy heir of the Spanish Empire of the past, but some commentators tried to do just that (Meneses 2005).

However, there was another dimension to Empire in Spanish minds, notably among nationalist thinkers. This was an entirely spiritual dimension, born of the nostalgic belief that Empire had been a mission in pursuit of which Spain, a grouping of different kingdoms, had been forged, and had attained greatness. While the formal links with the old colonies were gone, it was still believed – and vehemently preached – that Spain's role as a beacon for the rest of the Hispanic world remained valid and indeed necessary. Quite how this role was to be fulfilled was by no means evident, but the general view was that this kind of Empire would be more elevated, and less materialistic, than its Anglo-Saxon equivalent. Spain would be a guide to its successor states on the American continent, and it would be able to count on the support of Spanish emigrants now residing in those states. José Antonio Primo de Rivera, who rarely mentioned Spain's actual colonies (Nerín and Bosch 2001, 36), was one of the principal proponents of this strengthening of cultural links with Latin America. Others were Ramiro de Maeztu, author of *Defensa de la hispanidad*, and Antonio Tovar, the Falangist author of *El imperio de España*. This whole scheme was at the very least delusionary. As *The Times* put

it on the eve of the Second World War, “In Argentina and Uruguay, where a mixed European immigrant population predominates, there was before the Civil War a tendency to despise Spain as being picturesque but materially backward. South Americans who visit Europe find hygiene less advanced than in the big cities of the New World” (“Spain across the sea” 1939). Manuel Chaves Nogales, a republican in exile writing for *The Washington Post*, explained that:

As for the restoration of the Spanish empire of the sixteenth century, this is an idea which is discussed by many good Spanish patriots. For 40 years – that is, since the war with the United States and the loss of the Spanish colonies – it has been an idea shared by all honest and intelligent Spaniards that any attempt at national reconstruction should be based upon the admission of Spain’s present inferiority. This intellectual discipline, imposed by a series of national catastrophes due to the disproportion that long had existed between Spain’s real strength and the amplitude of her enterprises, is actually the cause of the division between the two Spanish parties. Against this principle of the true limits of Spain, Franco, obsessed with the dawning imperialism of the totalitarian countries, has resuscitated the idea of this empire – which is merely a will to power devoid of any real basis. The only resource left to Spanish imperialism is to exercise its influence in the Spanish-speaking world in the hope of some day assuming a kind of spiritual mandate over the 16 American republics of Spanish origin.

(Nogales 1939)

Salazar’s new state

The Portuguese Republic was replaced in 1926 by a military dictatorship, whose leaders quickly invited António de Oliveira Salazar to be the country’s “financial dictator.” In 1932 he was appointed Prime Minister, and unveiled a new regime, the “New State.” Salazar did not, initially, view the colonies as his main preoccupation. This was reserved for resolving the country’s financial situation, using the political capital accrued by this success to make himself indispensable. This in turn meant bringing the colonies to heel, financially and economically speaking. We should remember, too, that the Great Depression, which coincided with Salazar’s rise to power, saw a collapse in the value of colonial exports, which lessened the importance of the colonies in his eyes. Securing Portugal’s overseas possessions was, however, an important part of shoring up his power, and so Salazar unveiled a new legal framework for the relationship between the metropolis and the colonies – the Colonial Act, drafted with the help of an established ideologue, Quirino de Jesus, and a rising political star, Armindo Monteiro. This legislation, which formally constituted an Empire and introduced the word “colony” into Portuguese legal terminology, reasserted unequivocally the authority of the metropolis.

The Colonial Act was welcomed by existing economic interest groups in Lisbon, nationalist circles, and the armed forces, who generally administered the Empire. It set out to redefine the relationship between Lisbon and the colonies, but also to proclaim, more clearly than ever before, the reason for Portugal’s overseas efforts:

É da essência orgânica da Nação Portuguesa desempenhar a função histórica de pos-
suir e colonizar domínios ultramarinos e de civilizar as populações indígenas que

neles se compreendam, exercendo também a influência moral que lhe é adstrita pelo Padroado do Oriente.

(“Ministério das Colónias” 1930)

One of the missions Portugal set itself was ensuring the well-being of the native populations under its charge, preserving them from abuses and labour exploitation (these were merely pious expressions of intent, with little in the way of substance to back them up). What the Act failed to do, however, was to address Empire’s future. Could the indigenous population ever be accepted as full citizens? What would happen when Angola or Mozambique could survive and thrive on their own – would they be set free? Could they become new Brazils?

Armindo Monteiro, who took over the Colonies portfolio (1931–1935), attempted to generate an imperialist sentiment in Portugal. It was his aim to make the Portuguese appreciative and worthy of the Empire they had supposedly inherited from their ancestors, proud of its size and power, and willing to engage productively with the colonies. With Armindo Monteiro began the age of colonial exhibitions (which culminated later, in 1940, with the *Exposição do Mundo Português* in Lisbon), in which the Empire was brought home to the Portuguese. Salazar allowed this propaganda to go ahead, as he allowed other ministers’ pet projects, but his heart was not in it, and he eventually lost interest. He understood that there remained strict limits to what could be done even by those whose enthusiasm for the colonies had been awakened. Settlement was not encouraged; foreign investment was discouraged; and all around, thanks to poverty, underemployment, and illiteracy, was abundant evidence that Portugal’s status as an imperial nation was questionable.

Portugal remained neutral in the Second World War, and the regime survived. But as other European countries began to wind up their colonial empires, willingly or unwillingly, the New State woke up to the need to reform its own, especially in light of the United Nations Charter. True to form, the change envisaged was extremely restricted to a legal/constitutional setting, having little impact on settlers and Africans alike. No serious consideration was as yet given to inviting Africans to participate in decision-making at any level, while white settlers were distrusted, given their support for the democratic opposition movement in the 1945 elections. The Empire was rebadged *Ultramar Português*, while its individual units reverted to the more traditional designation, *Províncias Ultramarinas*. Legislative Councils were created in Angola and Mozambique, although their powers were extremely limited, they met infrequently, and most of their membership (white, “mestiço,” and black) was appointed, not elected. Power remained in the hands of the Governor General and, through him, the Overseas Ministry in Lisbon. The economic subordination of the colonies to Lisbon also remained in place. There was one important change after the war: a sudden government enthusiasm for white settlement in Africa, notably Angola, which was now given official sanction and some support. From 44,083 in 1940 and 78,826 in 1950, the population rose to 172,529 in 1960 (from 1.2% to 3.6% of the total population). The numbers for Mozambique in the same period were 27,438, 48,910, and 97,245 (from 0.5% to 1.5%) (Pimenta 2010, 95). It was hoped that these arrivals would strengthen the Portuguese claim to the territory, and that they would dilute the spirit of opposition to Lisbon among the established white community, but this was not always the case (Pimenta 2010, 95).

More importantly, the Portuguese imperial myth reinvented itself in the face of the mounting challenge to colonialism. The brutal assertion of strength and domination typical of the Colonial Act was now replaced by “luso-tropicalism,” an idea posited by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre. This was a uniquely Portuguese approach to life in the tropics that facilitated a cultural exchange unblemished by racism. Luso-tropicalism was manna from heaven for

the Portuguese, who used it to differentiate their overseas action from the crude, materialistic colonialism of other Europeans. Portugal was building multi-racial societies in its overseas provinces; it did not have colonies, but was one nation, with one outlook and purpose, spread out over a variety of continents. That white Europeans occupied the most important positions was simply a measure of their head start in the modern world, but they had no innate right to those positions. This set of beliefs, which flew in the face of so much concrete evidence (in terms of established economic exploitation, such as compulsory cultivation of cotton, the labour abuses denounced by Henrique Galvão (1961, 57–71) and the kind of brutal repression evident in Pindjiguiti, Portuguese Guinea, in 1959 and in Mueda, Mozambique, in 1960), was to colour Portuguese thinking in relation to colonial matters until decolonization and, for great swathes of the population, ever since.

Spain under Franco

The hopes for both a larger and more permanent presence in North Africa and a spiritual/intellectual leadership of the Hispanic world can be discerned in the rhetoric and actions of Francisco Franco. Nerín and Bosch write:

el discurso africanista de los vencedores de la guerra civil no procedía ni de la vieja Falange ni del carlismo. Para crear una nueva ideología colonial se hubo de fundir la ideología militar africanista con algunos elementos de la retórica imperial falangista, con retazos del pensamiento regeneracionista y con los fundamentos ideológicos del africanismo decimonónico de las sociedades geográficas.

(2001, 38)

Franco, whose career prospects and world view had been transformed by fighting in Morocco, easily adopted the Falangist discourse of Empire, born of a preoccupation with the seemingly relentless loosening of the bonds that held Spain together. This was an imperialism of the mind, impossible to realize in the face of Spanish weakness and the indifference, if not outright hostility, of other Spanish-speaking countries (Kennedy 1946); but instilling this will to Empire was seen by the Nationalist authorities as an essential task. As early as November 1940, a *Consejo de Hispanidad* was created in Madrid. An American observer wrote in the 1940s:

What Franco and his imperialist intellectuals dreamed of was a league of totalitarian governments stretching all the way from Cape Horn to the Rio Grande. Whether they would be out-and-out Fascist government or would merely lean to Fascism would depend on local conditions. These governments, from the very nature of things, would be cooperative with Franco, as indeed some of them are already. Fascist Spain, therefore, would be in a position to act as their spokesman and tutelary genius in the same way that England, as a democracy, acts in many things for Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

(Hamilton 1944, 467)

The Second World War presented for a brief moment the possibility of turning imperial aspirations into concrete reality. Might Spain be able to profit from others' (notably France's) misfortune? Might a victorious Germany reward Spain with a larger slice of North Africa, leading to the establishment of a viable Empire (Goda 1998)? The territories lusted after included all

or part of the French Protectorate (based on all kinds of argumentation that “demonstrated” the strong affinities, if not actual unity, of Spain and Morocco, their land and their people) and the area around Oran, where there was a substantial Spanish settler population. Good diplomatic fortune might even lead to the acquisition not just of Gibraltar, but, some extremists thought, possibly of Portugal as well – and with it Portuguese colonies across Africa and Asia (Hamilton 1944, 465). Even the Philippines were occasionally mentioned as a possible avenue for expansion. Those same powers that had helped the Nationalist camp in the Civil War were now at war – and defeating – the countries that had traditionally stood in the way of Spanish colonial expansion, France and Great Britain. Newspapers such as *El Alcázar* speculated feverishly about the possibilities opened up before Spain: “Before the prospect of a readjustment of colonial dominions in Europe, we are forced to put on record that Spain has been repeatedly frustrated as far as her rights in Africa are concerned, and that one way or the other it will be necessary to end an unjust situation which does not conform to her geographical position or history, nor allow for her excess population” (English 1940b). Writing some years later, Thomas J. Hamilton noted how:

Times have changed since the summer of 1940, when gangs of Fascists roamed the streets of Madrid shouting their claims to Gibraltar, and the Franco government put up official posters laying claim not only to Cuba and the Philippines but to California, Arizona, Texas and Florida. In those exuberant days Fascist toughs stoned both the British and American embassies, Fascist newspapers made daily attacks upon the “decadent pluto-democracies” in the best Goebbels style, and either Franco or his brother-in-law Serrano Suñer delivered a weekly speech attacking the Allies and threatening that Spain would enter the war at any moment.

(1944, 466)

Falangist ambitions were eventually codified into the *Reivindicaciones de España*, published in the summer of 1941 by José María de Areilza and Fernando María Castilla, on behalf of the party’s Institute of Political Studies. It demanded Gibraltar, Tangier, French Morocco, and most of Algeria, “plus a broad strip of desert from the southern reaches of Algeria to the Atlantic below Rio di [*sic*] Oro” (Hamilton 1944, 466).

Falangist groups and their press might have dreamed of an expanding empire, but how far did Spanish society share these ambitions? Given their lack of popularity before 1936, and the moral and material state of the country after 1939, it is almost impossible to conceive that anyone saw Spain’s resurgence as a great power as a realistic goal, whatever the outcome of the war. The generalized distrust and dislike of the Falange must also be borne in mind. As one observer put it, “The country is in such a state that, if the Germans were not on the frontier, the Falange, and with it both Franco and Serrano Suñer, would almost certainly disappear overnight” (Situation in Spain 1940). But the Falange was not the only organization that craved expansion. The Army was equally ambitious and ready to intervene should the Pétain government collapse, or de Gaulle stage a coup in the French Protectorate. In any case, in the summer of 1940 the regime launched a major campaign to turn territorial aggrandizement into a true national goal – insofar as this was possible in post Civil War Spain. Newspaper articles and columns became progressively more annexationist as France’s woes deepened. Robert Gale Woolbert wrote, shortly after the Second World War’s end:

This enthusiasm is not shared by the average Spaniard, for whom African adventures have in the past almost invariably spelled unwanted military service, higher taxes and

national humiliation. Since the end of the Civil War the Spanish imperialists have tried valiantly to counteract this popular hostility and to arouse a pride in Spain's imperial past, an interest in her present modest colonial empire and a faith in its glorious future.

(1946, 724)

Spain carried out one act of international aggression – the seizure of the city of Tangier, an internationally run enclave within the Spanish protectorate (English 1940a; Preston 1993, 361–362) – but refrained from taking matters further, despite, for example, assuming an aggressive posture on the borders of French Morocco (and fomenting unrest among that territory's indigenous population), and massing troops outside Gibraltar. The difficulties involved in either of these operations dwarfed the limited means available to the Spanish armed forces. Spain's dependence on Great Britain for the supply of essential goods also undercut any aggressive action. Ultimately, an African empire could only have been built on the back of a German military victory, but there was even no guarantee that in the aftermath of such a victory Spain would emerge as Germany's favourite, deserving of such rich prizes. In the wake of France's armistice with Germany, Pétain, with Berlin's blessing, moved troops into North Africa to preserve the status quo. No change was possible. Following this brief dalliance with North Africa, Spanish imperialist dreams focused once again on *Hispanidad*: "Not even the wildest *Falangista* really ever believed that the Spanish flag would again fly over any of the twenty nations of Latin America. But there is ample evidence of the Franco regime's determination to assert itself in that area to the maximum" (Hamilton 1944, 467).

As a result, the pacified Protectorate continued to be Spain's principal African possession, of little bearing in Spanish life, alongside other territories such as the Spanish Sahara and the neighbouring enclave of Ifni. Awarded to Spain at the Berlin Conference in 1884 (at a time when Madrid's eyes were still firmly set on the Caribbean and the Philippines), Ifni was sparsely inhabited by Berbers and, interestingly, was occupied only in 1934, during the Republic's "Bienio Negro"). Farther south, Spanish Guinea was a classic example of colonial inactivity. Taken together, these territories were of little economic value. Spanish Guinea's offshore oil deposits had not yet been identified, and the colony was a backwater, eventually gaining its independence in 1968. By then the Protectorate had long been absorbed by the rest of Morocco as it recovered its full independence. Spanish authorities had been reduced to using the Protectorate as a way of ingratiating themselves with the Arab world, posing as friends of Moroccan nationalism – in contrast with the French, whose policies they were sabotaging. This did not prevent a last bout of repression in the Spanish zone before Franco "showed a sense of realism" and accepted the Protectorate's immediate demise (Preston 1993, 644). Less realism was shown towards Spanish Sahara and Ifni. A decree of 10 January 1958 would declare Ifni and the Sahara to be Spanish provinces, an integral part of Spain. This was as absurd for Spain as it was for Portugal and, as in Portugal, the move was a response to the anti-colonial threat posed by the United Nations. Unlike Salazar, however, Franco would eventually recognize that this was an untenable situation, and military action against Moroccan forces alternated with negotiations and the return of territory. In the Spanish Sahara, a Berber resistance group, the Polisario Front, fought a guerrilla war against Spanish forces, but it was eventually pressure from Morocco, at a time when Spain was focused on Franco's impending death, that forced Madrid's withdrawal. These conflicts were always low-level, and did not affect Spanish life – wrapped up in economic growth – greatly. By the 1960s, moreover, there was no thought of these remaining African territories fitting into some kind of imperial scheme, or a wider narrative of Spanish imperial mission.

Portugal's colonial wars

In 1961 the wave of African nationalism finally crashed down on Angola. Under fire in Africa and at the UN, Portuguese colonialism, while resorting to arms, once again attempted to reinvent itself. This happened in many stages. Adriano Moreira, appointed Overseas Minister in 1961, was perhaps the most fervent believer in official Portugal in the luso-tropical model, and wanted to formulate policy anchored in this reading of the Portuguese overseas action. He was trapped, however, between the deep conservatism of the man he served – Salazar – and the white Angolan elites' desire for a radical overhaul of their province, allowing for much greater economic freedom and rapid development. These elites found in Governor-General Venâncio Deslandes a champion. Moreira was also searching for a political solution to the conflict begun in March, based on a gradualist approach to autonomy and, eventually, self-determination of the overseas provinces, to be arrived at in partnership by the metropolis and the local elites, whatever their colour. To bring this about he needed immediate changes on the ground, as well as a review of the legal framework for Portuguese practices overseas. Numerous early measures introduced by Moreira included the abolition of the *Código do Indigenato*, the end of compulsory cultivation of cotton, the reinforcement of the Governors' powers and each province's representation in the National Assembly, greater public investment in Overseas Portugal and the opening up of the colonial economies to international investors (Moreira 1962). But his thunder was stolen in Angola by the "Deslandes Plan," approved on 7 October by the Legislative Council of Angola. It contained reforms in all sectors: the economy, education, public works, transport and communications, health, etc. It also promised to reinforce the power of the Council, leading to greater popular involvement in decision-making. Deslandes took the search for collaborators as far as establishing a line of communication with Agostinho Neto's MPLA, not yet engaged in a violent campaign against Portugal. In a letter to Salazar, Deslandes defended a federal approach for Angola and Mozambique. The tipping point came on an issue close to Salazar's heart: university education. The ensuing political crisis was eventually resolved by the twin removal of Deslandes, who at one stage described himself as the head of government of the largest portion of national territory, as well as the leader of the strongest military force Portugal had ever assembled, and Moreira, seen as having stirred up a hornet's nest. In the meantime, the rapid loss of the Portuguese State of India in December 1961 came as a shock to the country and to Salazar himself.

A second period of reform was unveiled under the overall control of Salazar's energetic successor, Marcelo Caetano. Caetano had long been associated with an evolution of Overseas Portugal along federal lines. Appointing him Prime Minister, Admiral Américo Tomás, the President of the Republic, was taking a gamble – one he thought was worth taking, given the fact that he himself had now considerably more power than under Salazar. Caetano understood this, and defended a policy of "progressive and participatory autonomy," by which legislative and executive power would be devolved slowly, as each province revealed itself able to cope with it. The main beneficiaries of this gradual approach, Caetano hoped, would be the white settlers, who would eventually – in a distant future – inherit power, as had occurred in British Dominions (although this was a view that Caetano could not exactly espouse in public), keeping their respective territory, once independent, within a wider Portuguese community. In their diplomatic contacts with friendly governments, Caetano and his Foreign Minister, Rui Patrício, stressed the unique nature of Portugal's mission to create independent, multi-racial societies (Patrício 2012; Pimenta 2008, 316).

To his credit, Marcelo Caetano, as Prime Minister, did something Salazar had never done in all his years of power – he toured the “Overseas Provinces,” selling his idea of gradual devolution of authority. He came back impressed by the growing strength of the Portuguese presence in Africa, and more determined than ever to preserve it. Settlers’ economic associations welcomed this development, and were extremely active in this period. There was a trade-off: immediate political support at national level for an embattled Caetano, in return for the promise of future control over Angola and Mozambique. Many of the deputies elected by Angola in the 1969 legislative elections represented these interests. But still, against the hopes and aspirations of the settlers, stood the conservative faction of the New State, headed now by Thomaz (Pimenta 2008, 314–343). And so the changes made were essentially cosmetic, beginning with the promotion of Angola and Mozambique to “States.” The governor-general continued to be appointed by Lisbon, but was now seen as a cabinet member in the metropolitan government, while presiding over his respective State’s government. Legislative Assemblies were unveiled, more powerful than their predecessors, the Councils. There was a rise in the number of deputies sent to Lisbon (from seven to twelve) and in the number of overseas electors, from 183,000 to 628,000. It was hoped that recently enfranchised *mestizo* and black electors would act as a bulwark to the nationalist movements, and help the whites to build an – eventually – independent Angola. What Caetano could not do, however, was end both the financial subordination to Lisbon and the war. Ultimately, Caetano was deluding himself and the country. The continuation of the war saw Portugal increasingly reliant on some very unsavoury friends whose stated racial policies were the opposite of the Portuguese multi-racial mission: Rhodesia and South Africa. Their intelligence services met regularly and exchanged information; South African investment made a number of emblematic projects possible, notably the Cahora Bassa Dam in Mozambique; and their armies, grouped in what was called Exercise ALCORA, collaborated in the destruction of what was now deemed a common enemy (Meneses and McNamara 2012).

Conclusion

For Portugal, Empire ended in tragedy. The idea of Empire, which was meant to unite the nation, ended up dividing much of it: on one side, the ever larger number of settlers attracted by the late blossoming of the colonial economy, at a time when the entire enterprise was doomed. On the other, those called upon to sacrifice their lives for Overseas Portugal, but who could discern no end to wars that counter-insurgency doctrine taught them could only be resolved by a political solution. The result was not only the 25 April 1974 revolution, but also the confused and often chaotic decolonization process that ensued, which in the case of Angola led directly to civil war, and in the case of East Timor to Indonesian occupation. The great wave of *retornados* should have brought home to Portugal the cost of its imperial folly, but their surprisingly easy integration into Portuguese life, at a time of great political and social agitation, ensured the survival of certain benign interpretations of Portuguese colonialism. In Spain, the real cost of Empire had been learned much earlier, and there was no chance of any late blossoming of popular enthusiasm for colonial ventures. Both discourse and reality were an idiosyncratic characteristic of a regime which at times seemed completely divorced from the reality of Spain’s place in the world. While decolonization was a footnote in the history of Spain’s transition to democracy, it provided the immediate cause of Portugal’s transition, as well as playing a major role in its course, if nothing else because it placed Portugal at the very centre of an international conflict between the superpowers that it could not hope to control.

Works cited

- Balfour, Sebastian. 2002. *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- English, Maurice. 1940a. "Spanish Occupy Tangier; Call It Start of Empire." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 15.
- . 1940b. "North Africa Is Our Rightful Sphere, Says Spanish Press." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 23.
- Galvão, Henrique. 1961. *Santa Maria: My Crusade for Portugal*. Cleveland: World Publishing Company.
- Goda, Norman J. W. 1998. "Franco's Bid for Empire: Spain, Germany and the Western Mediterranean in World War II." *Mediterranean Historical Review* 13 (1–2): 168–194.
- Hamilton, Thomas H. 1944. "Spanish Dreams of Empire." *Foreign Affairs* 22 (3): 458–468.
- Kennedy, Paul K. 1946. "Franco Espouses Cultural Empire." *New York Times*, October 13.
- Meneses, Filipe Ribeiro de. 2005. "Popularizing Africanism: The Career of Víctor Ruiz Albéniz, *El Tebib Arrumi*." *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies* 11 (1): 39–63.
- . 2014. "The Portuguese Empire." In *Empires at War, 1911–1923*, edited by Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, 179–196. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Meneses, Filipe Ribeiro de and Robert McNamara. 2012. "The Last Throw of the Dice: Portugal, Rhodesia and South Africa, 1970–1974." *Portuguese Studies* 28 (2): 201–215.
- "Ministério das Colónias. Secretaria Geral. Decreto 18:570." 1930. *Diário do Governo*, July 8.
- Moreira, Adriano. 1962. *Portugal's Stand in Africa*. New York: University Publishers.
- Nerín, Gustau and Alfred Bosch. 2001. *El imperio que nunca existió: la aventura colonial discutida en Hendaya*. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés.
- Nogales, Manuel Chaves. 1939. "America Held Franco's Best Imperial Hope." *Washington Post*, May 24.
- Oliveira, Pedro Aires. 2011. "O factor colonial na política externa da Primeira República." In *A Primeira República Portuguesa: Diplomacia, guerra e império*, edited by Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses and Pedro Aires Oliveira, 299–332. Lisbon: Tinta da China.
- Osório, Ana de Castro. 1918. *De como Portugal foi chamado à guerra: História para crianças*. Lisbon: Casa Editora "Para as Crianças."
- Patrício, Rui. 2012. "Política externa portuguesa, 1970–1974." In *Marcelo Caetano: Tempos de transição*, edited by Manuel Braga da Cruz and Rui Ramos. Oporto: Porto Editora.
- Pimenta, Fernando Tavares. 2008. *Angola, os brancos e a independência*. Lisbon: Edições Afrontamento.
- . 2010. *Portugal e o Século XX: Estado-Império e descolonização (1890–1975)*. Lisbon: Edições Afrontamento.
- Preston, Paul. 1993. *Franco: A Biography*. London: Harper Collins.
- Proença, Maria Cândida. 2009. "A questão colonial." In *História da Primeira República Portuguesa*, edited by Fernando Rosas and Maria Fernanda Rollo, 205–228. Lisbon: Tinta da China.
- Serna, Alfonso de la. 2001. *Al sur de Tarifa. Marruecos-España: Un malentendido histórico*. Madrid: Marcial Pons.
- "Situation in Spain." Note by the Prime Minister. National Archive, London, Cabinet Papers, CAB 66/12/12 Secret W.P. (40): 382, 21 September, 1940, War Cabinet.
- "Spain across the Sea. Echoes of the Civil War. From our Buenos Aires Correspondent." 1939. *The Times*, June 19.
- Woolbert, Robert Gale. 1946. "Spain as an African Power." *Foreign Affairs* 24 (4): 723–735.