JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

VOL17 N1 TD4

Thematic Dossier

From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa

DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726

Editorial. From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa – Francisco Leandro, Anabela Santiago, João Veloso – pp. 3-14

ARTICLES

Linguistic Pluricentrism and Epistemic Justice: Some Perspectives in Light of the Concept of Linguistic Citizenship – Isabel Margarida Duarte, Vasco Magona – pp. 15-42

Language Policy Management for Multilingualism in Portuguese-Speaking African Countries: Discussions From Angola and Mozambique – Jefferson Evaristo, Alexandre António Timbane, Daniel Peres Sassuco – pp. 43-63

Amilcar Cabral: Rewriting History Through Poetic Diction - Vera Borges – pp. 64-86

Revista Claridade and Amílcar Cabral: Poetic Seeds of Political Resistance - Raquel Abi-Sâmara, Rivaldo Mendes Freire Tavares – pp. 87-110

Portuguese or not Portuguese: The Question Between Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire and its Lessons for the Timorese Brothers – Karin Noemi Rühle Indart – pp. 111-129

From Cultural Liberation To Creative And Cultural Industries: Cabral's Legacy And Economic Autonomy In Lusophone Africa - Amélie Lu Yuqing – pp. 130-157

Amílcar Cabral Role in the Linguistic Identity, Multilingualism and Post-Independence Process in Cabo Verde - Miguel Rosa Duque, José Manuel Simões – pp. 158-174

Body, Voice, and Action: Amílcar Cabral's Discursive Performance in the Call to Anticolonial Resistance in Cabo Verde and Guinea Bissau - Rivaldo Mendes Freire Tavares, Raquel Abi-Sâmara – pp. 175-197

Legacies of Portuguese Colonial Rule: Political Volatility, Welfare, and State Formation in Mozambique and Goa (India) - Alisha Dhingra, Saurabh Rai, Anant Prakash – pp. 198-219

Amílcar Cabral and the Political Ecology of Climate Change: A Contribution to Raising Awareness - Pedro Andrade Matos – pp. 220-241

Amílcar Cabral and the Politics of Memory in Post-Independence Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde - Inês Nascimento Rodrigues, Miguel Cardina – pp. 242-262

From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral's Thought in the Face of the Mozambique Peace Accords - Rui Moreira De Carvalho, Ivone Soares, Carlos Vieira – pp. 263-285

Sovereignty Under Construction: Amílcar Cabral and the Reconfiguration of Lusophone Countries in The International System - Eugénio Costa Almeida – pp. 286-308

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL 17 N.º 1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

EDITORIAL

FRANCISCO LEANDRO
fleandro@um.edu.mo

He earned a PhD in Political Science and International Relations from the Portuguese Catholic University in 2010. He is currently Associate Professor with Habilitation in International Relations (2022) at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Macau (China), where he also serves as Deputy Director of the Institute for Global and Public Affairs. His research focuses on international relations, geopolitics, global governance, China–Global South relations, and Lusophone studies. Among his recent publications are Is China a Global Power? (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025) and The Palgrave Handbook on the Geopolitics of Brazil and the South Atlantic (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025). Francisco Leandro is affiliated with the IPRI-NOVA and OBSERVARE, the research Centre for International Relations at the Autonomous University of Lisbon, Portugal. His academic work is characterized by an interdisciplinary and policy-oriented approach, with particular emphasis on the evolving dynamics between China, the Global South, and the Portuguese-speaking world. In 2026, he was awarded the prestigious Senior Fellowship of Advance HE (PR330507) in recognition of his sustained leadership, strategic influence, and demonstrated impact on teaching, learning, and higher education development.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1443-5828

ANABELA SANTIAGO
anabela_santiago@iscte-iul.pt

She has a PhD in Public Policies from University of Aveiro (Portugal). She is currently invited assistant lecturer at ISCTE in Transversal Skills Lab. Researcher at Centre for International Studies (CEI/ Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa). External researcher at GOVCOPP research unit (Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policies) of the Department of Social Sciences, Politics and Territory of the University of Aveiro. Speaker in national and international conferences and congresses with communications linked to Public Administration, Public Health Policies and to the topic of collaborative governance, and scientific diplomacy. Member of COST Action SiDnet - Science in Diplomacy Network working groups, developing a new line of research linked to the EU's activities in terms of scientific diplomacy with partners in the Global South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America). https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3897-0323

JOÃO VELOSO
jveloso@letras.up.pt

He is Full Professor of Linguistics at the University of Porto (Portugal). From 2023 to 2026, he served as Head of the Department of Portuguese at the University of Macau, China. He is a permanent researcher at the Centre of Linguistics of the University of Porto and is also affiliated with the Centre for Linguistics and the Institute of Advanced Studies at the University of Macau. His research primarily focuses on Portuguese phonology, with particular emphasis on the organization of the language's segmental and prosodic systems, including phonological primitives, the interaction between elements and segments, syllable weight, and word-stress assignment. His broader research interests encompass language typology, the history of linguistics, phonology-phonetics and phonology-morphology interfaces, linguistic variation, language acquisition and processing, and language policy. Professor Veloso is the author or co-author of more than one hundred scholarly publications, including books, book chapters, journal articles, and conference proceedings. He has served as principal investigator or co-investigator in numerous national and international research projects in linguistics and higher education teaching innovation. Between 2009 and 2022, he coordinated the Centre of Linguistics of the University of Porto. From 2018 to 2022, he also served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Pro-Rector) of the University of Porto, contributing to the institution's strategic development in both academic and research domains. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5070-8838



How to cite this editorial
Leandro, Francisco, Santiago, Anabela & Veloso, João (2026). Editorial, From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations*. Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL 17, N.º 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 3-14. https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726ED.



JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL 17, N.º 1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 3-14
Editorial – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
Francisco Leandro, Anabela Santiago, João Veloso

FROM COLONIAL RULE TO NATIONHOOD: AMÍLCAR CABRAL AND THE BIRTH OF LUSOPHONE AFRICA

FRANCISCO LEANDRO

ANABELA SANTIAGO

JOÃO VELOSO

Why a special edition on Amilcar Cabral?

The year 2025 marked five decades since the formal independence of the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. While each liberation movement reflected the unique historical, political, and cultural context of its nation, they shared common ideological foundations, aspirations, and strategic approaches. Central to this shared trajectory was Amílcar Cabral (1924–1973) - a visionary leader whose rare ability to combine theory and practice, and to integrate insights from engineering, politics, economics, diplomacy, and literature, played a pivotal role in uniting liberation movements and articulating a vision for a more equitable international order. His commitment to self-determination, cultural emancipation, social justice, and people-centred development not only shaped the struggles for independence in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde but also influenced broader anti-colonial movements across Africa and the Global South.

Amílcar Cabral deserves a special edition of E-JANUS: Journal of International Relations because his intellectual, political, and diplomatic legacy continues to inform some of the most important debates in international relations, development studies, African studies, leadership studies, and post-colonial scholarship. More than five decades after his assassination in 1973, Cabral remains a uniquely interdisciplinary figure whose ideas transcend geographical and temporal boundaries. His reflections on sovereignty, cultural identity, national liberation, and international solidarity remain highly relevant for contemporary leaders of the Global South seeking to navigate persistent challenges of dependency, inequality, external intervention, and geopolitical competition. At a time when emerging powers are striving to increase their agency within an evolving international system, Cabral's emphasis on strategic autonomy, ethical leadership, human dignity, and South–South cooperation continues to offer valuable insights for

policymakers, diplomats, and scholars alike. His enduring relevance lies not only in his role as an architect of decolonization but also as a thinker whose ideas speak directly to contemporary efforts to build more inclusive, equitable, and representative forms of global governance.

As the principal architect of the liberation struggles of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, Cabral offered a sophisticated understanding of self-determination, sovereignty, and anti-colonial resistance that challenged dominant international hierarchies. His contributions to Pan-Africanism helped connect local struggles for independence to broader continental and global movements for justice and emancipation. At the same time, his writings on culture and liberation have become foundational references in post-colonial studies, influencing generations of scholars examining identity, resistance, and the legacies of empire.

Cabral's significance extends beyond politics. With a background in agricultural engineering, he brought scientific insight to the challenges of development, rural transformation, and economic modernization. As a diplomat, he successfully internationalized the cause of national liberation, securing political, diplomatic, and material support across Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas. His advocacy for the active participation of women in liberation movements also offers important insights for contemporary gender studies and the study of inclusive political leadership.

Beyond his historical role, Cabral should be studied as a core thinker in all Higher Education programs in International Relations. His writings and political practice provide a unique bridge between theories of sovereignty, self-determination, diplomacy, development, leadership, and international cooperation. Unlike many canonical thinkers in International Relations, Cabral approached global politics from the perspective of the colonized world, offering critical insights into power asymmetries, cultural domination, national liberation, and the agency of smaller states in the international system. His work enriches both traditional and critical approaches to International Relations by demonstrating how culture, identity, economics, and political mobilization interact in the pursuit of international legitimacy and statehood. Studying Cabral therefore helps diversify the discipline beyond its predominantly Western intellectual foundations and contributes to a more inclusive and representative understanding of global affairs.

A special edition dedicated to Cabral would therefore provide a timely platform to reassess his enduring relevance in a world marked by persistent inequalities, struggles for self-determination, and renewed efforts to amplify Global South perspectives in international affairs. His life and work remain indispensable for understanding both the history and the future of global politics. More than an architect of decolonization, Cabral was a scholar-practitioner whose ideas continue to inspire political leaders, diplomats, policymakers, and researchers seeking to build a more equitable, plural, and democratic international order.

What are the origins of the research featured in this special edition?

This special edition is the direct outcome of the international seminar "Amílcar Cabral: Revolutionary Poet and International Political Figure", held at the University of Macau (China) on 6 November 2025. Jointly organized by the Department of Portuguese of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, the Department of Governance and Public Administration of the Faculty of Social Sciences, and supported by the Institute for Global and Public Affairs, the event commemorated two historic landmarks: the centenary of Amílcar Cabral's birth and the fiftieth anniversary of independence in several Portuguese-speaking African countries.

The seminar brought together scholars from the Macao SAR, Mainland China, Mozambique, Cabo Verde, Brazil, and Portugal to reflect on Cabral's enduring intellectual, political, and cultural legacy. Through discussions spanning literature, poetry, language, political economy, leadership, diplomacy, and regional politics, participants highlighted the continuing relevance of Cabral's thought for understanding contemporary challenges facing the Global South. Particular attention was devoted to the relationship between language, identity, and liberation, themes that occupied a central place in Cabral's reflections on culture as both a site of resistance and a foundation for nation-building. The seminar also explored the contemporary significance of language policies in multilingual and postcolonial societies, examining how linguistic choices continue to shape educational opportunities, cultural preservation, social inclusion, and political participation. A particularly distinctive feature of the event was the multilingual engagement with Cabral's poetry, which was declaimed and discussed in both Portuguese and Chinese, symbolizing the spirit of intercultural dialogue that characterized the gathering and underscoring the role of language as a bridge between diverse historical and cultural experiences.

The contributions assembled in this volume build upon the rich exchanges initiated during the seminar. Together, they demonstrate the breadth of Cabral's influence as a revolutionary leader, writer, diplomat, strategist, and theorist of liberation. By bringing these perspectives into dialogue, this special issue seeks not only to honour Cabral's legacy but also to advance scholarly debates on decolonization, self-determination, Pan-Africanism, cultural identity, language policy, multilingualism, and international relations in the twenty-first century. In highlighting the intersections between language, identity formation, and political emancipation, the volume further explores questions that remain highly relevant to contemporary societies navigating the tensions between national cohesion, cultural diversity, and globalization. In this sense, the publication stands as both a tribute to Cabral's enduring relevance and a testament to the University of Macau's commitment to fostering research and dialogue across cultures, regions, languages, and disciplines.

Amílcar Cabral remains one of the most influential intellectuals and revolutionaries of the twentieth century

Amílcar Cabral remains one of the most influential intellectuals and revolutionaries of the twentieth century. His legacy transcends his role as the leader of the independence struggle of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, revealing a remarkably multi-layered figure whose contributions continue to shape Pan-Africanism, post-colonial studies, development thinking, and gender scholarship.

As a politician and revolutionary strategist, Cabral successfully united diverse ethnic and social groups under the banner of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC), demonstrating that national liberation required both military resistance and political education. His vision of freedom extended beyond independence, emphasizing social justice, cultural dignity, and inclusive nation-building. As a leading Pan-African thinker, he advocated solidarity among African peoples while recognizing the importance of local histories and identities, helping to bridge continental aspirations with national realities.

Cabral was also a trained agricultural engineer, whose scientific expertise informed his understanding of rural economies and peasant societies. His analyses of land use, agricultural production, and social structures contributed to a sophisticated understanding of development and economic transformation. As an economist, he recognized the centrality of productive capacity and self-reliance in overcoming colonial dependency.

Although Amílcar Cabral is most widely recognized as a revolutionary leader, diplomat, and theorist of national liberation, his poetry constitutes an indispensable dimension of his intellectual legacy. Composed primarily during his formative years, his poems offer profound insights into the emotional, cultural, and human sensibilities underpinning his later political thought. Far from being a peripheral aspect of his work, Cabral's poetry served as an early vehicle through which he articulated the aspirations, anxieties, and dreams of colonized peoples. In doing so, it anticipated many of the themes that would later define his contributions to anti-colonial theory, national liberation, cultural resistance, and human emancipation.

The significance of Cabral's poetic oeuvre lies in its ability to bridge cultural identity and political liberation. Through evocative imagery and reflections on exile, homeland, dignity, memory, and resistance, he advanced a vision of freedom that extended beyond the achievement of formal independence to encompass cultural renewal and collective self-discovery. In his poem "Regresso", Cabral captures the enduring bonds between people and homeland, invoking hope and belonging in the lines: "A chuva amiga já falou mantenha / e bate dentro de meu coração" ("The friendly rain has already spoken softly / and beats within my heart") (Cabral, 2019). These verses convey a deep emotional attachment to place, while simultaneously expressing a yearning for national and cultural rebirth.

Equally compelling is his celebrated poem "Quem é que não se lembra", where the personal and the political converge in a powerful affirmation of collective struggle: "Meu

grito de revolta fez vibrar os peitos de todos os Homens, / Confraternizou todos os Homens e transformou a Vida" ("My cry of revolt made the breasts of all men vibrate, fraternized all men and transformed life") (Cabral, 2019). Here, poetry becomes an instrument of solidarity, transcending borders and affirming a shared humanity united in the pursuit of freedom and justice.

These poems demonstrate how Cabral employed literature not merely as artistic expression but as a form of cultural affirmation and political intervention. His poetry remains a rich source for literary criticism, post-colonial studies, Pan-Africanism, and cultural diplomacy, illustrating the transformative power of language in challenging domination and nurturing collective consciousness.

Equally significant was Cabral's role as a writer and public intellectual. Through his essays, speeches, and theoretical reflections, he produced a body of work that remains foundational to post-colonial scholarship. His influential concept of the "return to the source" emphasized the centrality of culture in resisting colonial domination and reclaiming historical agency. Moreover, from a gender studies perspective, Cabral's advocacy for the active participation of women in liberation movements challenged entrenched social hierarchies and recognized women as indispensable political actors in processes of national emancipation and social transformation.

Cabral's achievements as a diplomat were no less remarkable. At a time when many African liberation movements struggled to gain international recognition, he successfully transformed the struggle of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde into a global cause. Through engagements with the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, socialist countries, Nordic governments, and solidarity networks across Europe and the Americas, he positioned the PAIGC as a legitimate representative of colonized peoples. His diplomatic efforts helped elevate the principle of self-determination from an abstract legal norm into a concrete political right for millions living under colonial rule. By linking anti-colonial struggles to broader debates about human dignity, racial equality, and international justice, Cabral contributed significantly to the development of a global decolonization agenda. His speeches consistently emphasized that liberation was not merely the transfer of political power but the restoration of human agency. As he famously argued, "National liberation is necessarily an act of culture" (Cabral, 1973, p. 43), underscoring the inseparable relationship between political sovereignty and cultural emancipation. His diplomatic vision continues to resonate in contemporary discussions of sovereignty, development, and Global South cooperation.

The statehood in Lusophone Africa cannot be understood without examining the life and legacy of Amílcar Cabral

The transition from colonial rule to independent statehood in Lusophone Africa cannot be understood without examining the life and legacy of Amílcar Cabral. As the principal leader of the struggle for the liberation of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, Cabral emerged as one of the most influential architects of African decolonization. His vision extended beyond the attainment of political independence, emphasizing the creation of inclusive,

sovereign, and culturally grounded nations capable of overcoming the legacies of colonial domination (Cabral, 1973).

Cabral understood colonialism not merely as a system of political control but also as a mechanism of economic exploitation, social inequality, and cultural subjugation. Consequently, he argued that genuine liberation required both the recovery of political sovereignty and the reaffirmation of cultural identity. Through the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde, he developed a liberation movement that successfully combined armed resistance with political education, social mobilization, and institution-building (Cabral, 1973; Chabal, 1983). This innovative approach enabled governance structures, schools, health services, and local administrative systems to emerge in liberated territories even before formal independence was secured.

Cabral's influence extended far beyond Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde. His thought and leadership inspired anti-colonial movements throughout Lusophone Africa, including those in Angola, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. His advocacy of self-determination, social justice, and Pan-African solidarity contributed significantly to the political foundations of the Portuguese-speaking African states that achieved independence during the 1970s (Davidson, 1981). By linking national liberation to human dignity, cultural emancipation, and socioeconomic development, Cabral provided an enduring blueprint for nation-building in post-colonial Africa.

The birth of Lusophone Africa was therefore not simply the end of Portuguese colonialism; it was the realization of a transformative political and cultural project in which Amílcar Cabral played a central role. More than five decades after his death, his ideas continue to offer valuable insights into state-building, identity, sovereignty, and development across the Global South (Cabral, 1973; Chabal, 1983).

The Structure of this Special Edition

This structure provides an intellectual progression that reflects the interconnected nature of contemporary social, cultural, environmental, and political challenges while also resonating with the intellectual and political legacy of Amílcar Cabral. The 2026 special edition features peer reviewed contributions from 22 authors (14 men and 8 women), the majority of whom are affiliated with universities and other public institutions, reflecting a diverse yet interconnected scholarly community. As one of the most influential anti-colonial thinkers of the twentieth century, Cabral emphasised the importance of culture, language, historical consciousness, and political agency in struggles for liberation and social transformation. His reflections on national identity, cultural resistance, self-determination, and the reconstruction of post-colonial societies constitute a unifying conceptual framework for the contributions presented here. The articles highlight the continuing relevance of Cabral's intellectual legacy for contemporary debates on governance, education, culture, environment, and social change across the Global South and beyond.

Beginning with linguistic citizenship, language, linguistics, and discourses, this special edition highlights the fundamental role of language in shaping knowledge,

communicating ideas, constructing identities, and mediating power relations. By examining linguistic practices and discursive formations, this section establishes a foundation for understanding how individuals and communities interpret and engage with the world around them. In the spirit of Cabral's recognition of culture and communication as essential instruments of consciousness, emancipation, and revolutionary transformation, these contributions explore how language serves both as a repository of collective memory and as a site of social and political contestation. They further demonstrate how linguistic practices can challenge systems of domination, reclaim silenced histories, mobilize collective agency, and contribute to processes of decolonization. From this perspective, language is not merely a medium of expression but a revolutionary force capable of fostering critical awareness, resisting oppression, and advancing projects of social justice and self-determination.

Building on this foundation, the focus shifts to culture and identity, exploring the ways in which cultural representations, social practices, and collective experiences contribute to the formation of individual and collective identities. This section emphasises the dynamic and often contested nature of belonging, particularly within contexts marked by migration, globalisation, and cultural exchange. Together, the first two sections illuminate the relationship between language, meaning-making, and the construction of social realities. They also echo Cabral's conviction that culture constitutes a source of resistance, dignity, and collective mobilisation, particularly in societies shaped by colonial domination and post-colonial transformation.

The discussion then expands to address climate debates, recognising environmental issues as not only scientific and economic concerns but also social, cultural, and political phenomena. By analysing how climate change is discussed, represented, and contested in public, institutional, and community settings, the special edition highlights the role of narratives, communication, and power in shaping responses to one of the defining challenges of our time. In this regard, the contributions engage with broader questions of equity, sustainable development, and social justice that remain highly relevant to many communities across the Global South, whose experiences continue to reflect concerns that were central to Cabral's vision of development rooted in the needs and aspirations of local populations.

From environmental futures, the volume turns to the politics of memory, examining how historical events are remembered, commemorated, and interpreted. Memory practices influence collective identities, political legitimacy, and social cohesion, while also revealing tensions surrounding historical justice, reconciliation, and competing narratives of the past. This topic underlines the importance of understanding how societies negotiate historical legacies in the present. Such concerns are particularly significant in relation to Cabral's enduring place in collective memory, where his political thought, revolutionary leadership, and vision of liberation continue to inspire debates about history, nation-building, and social transformation in Lusophone Africa and beyond.

The final theme focuses on peace processes, sovereignty, and the legacies of colonial rule, addressing the enduring impact of colonial structures on contemporary political, social, and cultural realities. Through post-colonial and decolonial perspectives,

contributors explore questions of self-determination, state-building, peacebuilding, governance, and historical redress. By examining both continuities and transformations in post-colonial contexts, this section offers critical insights into ongoing struggles for justice, recognition, and inclusive development. These themes directly engage with many of the issues that shaped Cabral's intellectual and political project, particularly his commitment to national liberation, political sovereignty, social inclusion, and the creation of societies capable of overcoming the structural inequalities inherited from colonial rule.

This special edition adopts a multidisciplinary approach that bridges the humanities and social sciences while paying tribute to the continuing relevance of Amílcar Cabral's legacy. It demonstrates how language, culture, environmental debates, memory, and political processes are deeply interconnected, offering readers a comprehensive framework for understanding contemporary global challenges and the diverse ways in which societies negotiate identity, history, power, and change in an increasingly interconnected world. More broadly, the collection underscores the enduring significance of Cabral's insights for contemporary debates on decolonisation, justice, development, and the transformative potential of culture and collective action.

This special edition would not have been possible without the invaluable support and dedication of our reviewers

This special edition is the result of a collective effort, and it would not have been possible without the dedication of our reviewers. Their careful assessments, critical insights, and constructive recommendations have been instrumental in shaping the articles included in this volume. The Editors wish to express heartfelt appreciation for their indispensable contribution to the success of this special edition. Their names and institutional affiliations are listed below in alphabetical order in recognition of their valued service and commitment to scholarly excellence.

For the avoidance of doubt, the inclusion of reviewers in this list does not imply any association with, endorsement of, or responsibility for any specific research published in this special issue. The quality and scholarly rigor of this special edition have been greatly enhanced by the generous contribution of a distinguished panel of reviewers. The editorial team extends its sincere appreciation to the following colleagues, listed in alphabetical order, for their expertise, time, and commitment to the peer-review process:

Cátia Miriam Costa (ISCTE-IUL, Portugal); Francisco Topa (University of Porto, Portugal); João Paulo Madeira (University of Cabo Verde, Cabo Verde); João Simões (City University of Macao, Macao, China); Li Guofeng (ISCSP, University of Lisbon, Portugal); Li Yichao (Zhejiang Normal University, China); Pedro Steenhagen (City University of Macao, Macao, China); Priscilla Roberts (University of Saint Joseph, Macao, China); Rodrigo Franklin Frogeri (University Center of Southern Minas Gerais - UNIS-MG, Brazil); and Yinkangni Wang (University of Macau, Macao, China).

Their thoughtful evaluations and constructive recommendations have been invaluable in strengthening the academic quality, clarity, and overall contribution of the articles included in this volume. The editorial team gratefully acknowledges their professionalism



and collegial support in ensuring the high scholarly standards of this special edition dedicated to the life, thought, and enduring legacy of Amílcar Cabral.

Technical Note

For the purposes of this special edition, the official designation of Cabo Verde is adopted consistently throughout the text. This editorial decision is grounded in the following considerations:

Although the anglicized form "Cape Verde" has long been used in English-language publications, the official designation of the country is "Cabo Verde." This change reflects a deliberate policy adopted by the Government of Cabo Verde to preserve the country's original toponymy in international usage. On 24 October 2013, the Government formally requested that the United Nations recognize and use the name "Cabo Verde" in all official contexts, following the precedent established by countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, whose name is not translated into other languages.

In response to this request, the Permanent Mission of Cabo Verde to the United Nations issued a formal communication to the Secretary-General and all UN Member States. In a letter dated 11 November 2013, the Permanent Representative of Cabo Verde, António Pedro Monteiro Lima, stated that the Government had decided to retain the official designation "Republic of Cabo Verde" in all diplomatic, institutional, and international correspondence, thereby discontinuing the practice of translating the country's name into foreign languages. The communication further specified that the name "Cabo Verde" should be used uniformly across all official UN languages, with the official state designation rendered as "Republic of Cabo Verde" in English and "République de Cabo Verde" in French (Ministério das Relações Exteriores de Cabo Verde, Circular 071/Gab.Mirex/2013, 11 November 2013).

The United Nations formally accepted this request in December 2013, establishing "Cabo Verde" as the official name used throughout the UN system. Subsequently, other international organizations and institutions, including the International Olympic Committee, the European Union, and the United States Board on Geographic Names, adopted the designation "Cabo Verde" in their official documentation and communications.

Accordingly, while "Cape Verde" may continue to appear in some informal or historical English-language usage, "Cabo Verde" is the internationally recognized and academically preferred designation and should therefore be used consistently throughout this study.

References

Cabral, A. (1973). Return to the source: Selected speeches of Amílcar Cabral. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Cabral, A. (2019). Poema/ Cita / Regresso. Postcolonial Poetry Project. Retrieved from https://postcolonial.poetry.blog/2019/03/23/cita-y-poema-by-amilcar-cabral/

Chabal, P. (1983). Amílcar Cabral: Revolutionary leadership and people's war. Cambridge University Press.

Davidson, B. (1981). No fist is big enough to hide the sky: The liberation of Guinea and Cape Verde. Zed Press.

Melo, O. (2023, January 23). Amílcar Cabral – o homem que sonhava com a concórdia. Xaile de Seda.

Moser, G. M. (Trans.). (n.d.). Poems of Amílcar Cabral. Hall of People. Retrieved from https://hallofpeople.com/en/books/Cabral.php

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

LINGUISTIC PLURICENTRISM AND EPISTEMIC JUSTICE: SOME PERSPECTIVES IN LIGHT OF THE CONCEPT OF LINGUISTIC CITIZENSHIP

ISABEL MARGARIDA DUARTE
iduarte@letras.up.pt
Emerita Full Professor of Linguistics at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto (Portugal). An internationally recognized scholar, she has published extensively in the fields of Pragmatics, particularly discourse markers and forms of address, Portuguese pluricentrism, and the teaching and learning of Portuguese as a mother tongue and as a foreign language. Her scholarly work has appeared in numerous national and international books and peer-reviewed journals, contributing significantly to contemporary debates on language use, variation, and education. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7908-5649

VASCO MAGONA
vascosande@yahoo.com.br
Assistant Professor of Bantu Languages (Theoretical Linguistics) at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo (Mozambique). He earned his PhD in Linguistics from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, Portugal, in 2024. His research is situated at the intersection of decolonial studies, bilingual education, language policy and pedagogy, and the descriptive analysis of Bantu languages, with particular emphasis on morphology and phonology. He is also engaged in textbook development and the promotion of linguistically inclusive educational practices in multilingual African settings.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6107-8299

Abstract

In light of the concept of Linguistic Citizenship, this article reflects on some theoretical and epistemological notions that allow us to problematize the classification of two languages spoken in six countries of southern Africa, including Mozambique, as pluricentric languages. The research adopts a qualitative methodological approach, of an ethnographic nature, within the framework of linguistic ethnography, based on focus group discussions with educated speakers of two African languages. The results of this study suggest the need to consider linguistic pluricentrism without losing sight of the disinhibition of subjectivities imposed by colonialism. But also, as a potential mechanism for reversing the colonial technology of domination based on exclusion. This involves, on the one hand, looking at their generating criteria as unfinished 'products', susceptible to (re)interpretations. On the other hand, it involves, in their rereading, considering the context of use, the adverse colonial past to which African languages were subjected, and the 'logos' of 'peripheralized' subjects. From this framework, we argue that Nyanja and Changana, the languages analyzed, suggest pluricentric scenarios.

Keywords

Pluricentric Languages, Epistemic Justice, Nyanja, Changana, Language Citizenship.

Resumo

À luz do conceito de Cidadania Linguística, este artigo reflete sobre algumas noções teóricas e epistemológicas que nos permitam problematizar a classificação de duas línguas faladas em seis países da África Austral, incluindo Moçambique, como línguas pluricêntricas. A pesquisa

adota uma abordagem metodológica qualitativa, de cunho etnográfico, na vertente da etnografia linguística, a partir de discussões em grupos focais com falantes cultos de duas línguas africanas. Os resultados do presente estudo sugerem a necessidade de repensar o pluricentrismo linguístico sem perder de vista a desinibição de subjetividades impostas pelo colonialismo. Mas também, enquanto mecanismo potencial de inversão da tecnologia colonial de dominação baseada na exclusão. Isso passa, por um lado, por olhar para os seus critérios geradores enquanto 'produtos' inacabados, suscetíveis de (re)interpretações. Por outro, passa por, na sua releitura, considerar o contexto de uso, o passado colonial adverso a que as línguas africanas foram sujeitas e o 'logos' dos sujeitos 'periferizados'. A partir deste enquadramento, defendemos que o Nyanja e Changana, línguas analisadas, sugerem cenários pluricêntricos.

Palavras-chave

Línguas Pluricêntricas, Justiça Epistémica, Nyanja, Changana, Cidadania linguística.

How to cite this article
Duarte, Isabel Margarida & Magona, Vasco (2026). Linguistic Pluricentrism and Epistemic Justice: Some Perspectives in Light of the Concept of Linguistic Citizenship. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations*. Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 15-42. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.1

Article submitted on 27 July 2026 and accepted for publication on 21 August 2026.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 15-42
Linguistic Pluricentrism and Epistemic Justice: Some Perspectives in Light of the Concept of Linguistic Citizenship
Isabel Margarida Duarte, Vasco Magona

LINGUISTIC PLURICENTRISM AND EPISTEMIC JUSTICE: SOME PERSPECTIVES IN LIGHT OF THE CONCEPT OF LINGUISTIC CITIZENSHIP[1]

ISABEL MARGARIDA DUARTE

VASCO MAGONA

Introduction

Linguistic pluricentrism (e.g. Clyne, 1992; Ammon, 2005; Muhr, 2012) has traditionally been associated with European and Asian languages (Palma, 2017), with very limited consideration given to languages outside these regions. In the variationist tradition (e.g. Silva, 2016), only a few African languages (such as Kiswahili, Barber, Hausa and Somali) have been recognised as pluricentric (Ammon, 2005; Kristiansen, 2014). This gives rise, amongst other things, to three main problems, namely: (i) the 'restriction' of the principles and/or criteria for classifying pluricentric languages to a group of languages, namely, but not limited to, former colonial languages (German, Spanish, French, English and Portuguese); (ii) linguistic subordination and/or silencing (Carrera, 2020); and (iii) conceptualising pluricentric theory (solely) on the basis of intellectual canons situated in the Global North.[2] Seen in this light, linguistic pluricentrism takes the form of a measure of dominance, serving as an old colonial technology of linguistic valuation (Kerfoot, 2025). This fact highlights the fact that the contemporary classification of languages (as pluricentric or non-pluricentric) does not adequately account for the role colonialism played in the pluricentric nature of some languages, and should help us problematise the contemporary segmentation of languages.

For this reason, there is an urgent need to reverse the colonial technology of domination based on exclusion, by dismantling the colonial edifice of language (Stroud & Chimbutane, 2025), which, in the African context - with the exception of Kiswahili –

[1] Acknowledgment - The data used in this research was made possible through the generous support of the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS), under Convention No. CO-2025-006-RECH. The research was all so funded by the Fund for Science and Technology, I.P. (FCT) through the project UID/00022/2025 https://doi.org/10.54499/UID/00022/2025.

[2] The terms 'Global North' *versus* 'Global South' constitute a metaphor that links power, exploitation and history to the production of knowledge (Stroud & Chimbutane, 2025). As such, in this study they are used not as geographical concepts, but rather in relation to the empowerment of states, as historical subjects and key actors on the contemporary international stage (Fonseca, 2016).

reduces languages to an "absent presence" (Kerfoot, 2025, p. 179) in global knowledge and resource networks.

The denial of the status of a pluricentric language to most African languages appear to stem from the mistaken notion that associates these languages with an 'inability' to construct the narratives upon which nation-states are founded, a concept stemming from old colonial ideologies, yet essential to this type of linguistic classification (cf. Clyne, 1992; Muhr, 2012, 2016; Kalternegger, 2020).

As is well known, exclusion undermines the full exercise of voice and agency among citizens who, in their daily lives, rely on these languages not only as repositories of language and (local) memory, but also as a resource for building active linguistic citizenship, which can influence contemporary language policies and/or ideologies. In fact, rather than helping African languages to become, alongside the former colonial languages with which they coexist in the field in which we operate, an essential dimension of the repair of colonial memory and epistemic (re)construction (Fraser, 1995; Anderson, 2012), linguistic pluricentrism has been used as a technology of postcolonial domination, with the concomitant differential of sociocultural valuation of speakers and linguistic communities (Stroud & Chimbutane, 2025; Kerfoot, 2025). Thus, this linguistic taxonomy precludes the promotion of pluralism – as a characteristic of the knowledge-construction ecosystem in the Global South (Mignolo, 2009, 2011; Quijano, 2000; Grosfoguel, 2011; Mbembe, 2016). On the contrary, it highlights the parameters of legibility within the epistemic field of modernity (Vázquez, 2011), which underpins the universality of European knowledge (Vázquez, 2011: 27; Kerfoot, 2025, p. 181), without careful consideration of the factors that may work against this, namely the existence of alternative models of thought.

It should be noted that languages which do not meet the legibility criteria set out in the 'exclusionary' standards established by the intellectual canons of the Global North are relegated to the margins of modernity (Stroud, 2018). They are therefore subject to epistemic injustice (Friker, 2003; Anderson, 2012; Stroud & Kerfoot, 2020). This demonstrates how the coloniality of language (Veronelli, 2015) is deeply rooted in Western political structures and thought (Kerfoot, 2025).

In light of Linguistic Citizenship (Stroud, 2001; 2018; 2025), a theoretical concept from the Global South that serves to 'raise awareness' (Bowen, 2006), as we shall see in (2.1), it is imperative to consider linguistic pluricentrism without losing sight of the need to dismantle subjectivities imposed by colonialism (Bock & Stroud, 2019). Linguistic Citizenship is also a potential mechanism for reversing the colonial technology of domination based on exclusion.

On the one hand, this involves viewing their generative criteria (cf. Clyne, 1992; Muhr, 2012, 2016) as unfinished 'products', open to (re)interpretation. On the other hand, there is a need, in their reinterpretation, to consider the context of use, the adverse colonial past to which African languages were subjected, and the 'logos' of 'peripheralised' subjects. In other words, the rationality of speakers of marginalised languages (Stroud & Chimbutane, 2025), contrary to what we have observed in many studies on this subject, favours an essentialist conception of language, based on claims of universal

relevance (Stroud, 2007). Although these studies are relevant, they appear to fall short in several respects, including: (i) ignoring the tensions between what is historically and institutionally imposed and the everyday lives of language speakers, a starting point for epistemic (re)construction; (ii) suggesting the omission of the potential of acts of Linguistic Citizenship in terms of offering pathways to reverse the prevailing linguistic marginalisation and alienation of the most vulnerable populations (Chimbutane, 2018). There are numerous instances in which speakers of African languages have been labelled 'pejoratively' as minority language speakers, due to the divisions that some European countries created during the colonial period when drawing the current borders between African nation-states. Henriksen (2026) refers to Mozambique and other neighbouring countries, including South Africa.

The primary aim of this article is to reflect on theoretical and epistemological concepts that will enable us to examine the classification of some African languages as pluricentric languages. Following this introductory note, we shall then explain the methodological procedures and a theoretical framework (cf. (2)) within which the key points of various concepts, such as Linguistic Citizenship (cf. (2.1)) and Linguistic Pluricentrism (cf. (2.2)), so that we may understand the proposal to include other African languages as pluricentric languages (cf. (3)). As mentioned earlier, this inclusion is essentially based on a (re)interpretation of the criteria that define pluricentric languages. In fact, we seek to undertake a (re)reading that leads us to subvert the vestiges of the 'silent' legacy of the colonial past, encapsulated in the criteria proposed by Clyne (1992) and continued by his followers (e.g., Ammon, 2005; Muhr, 2012; 2016; Kristiansen, 2014; Silva, 2016; 2018). Finally, we will move on to the Concluding Remarks in (4), a section in which we will highlight the main conclusions of the text and point towards future research.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a qualitative methodological approach (Kalthoff, 2013), of an ethnographic nature (Jankowski & Wester, 1995 [1991]), within the field of linguistic ethnography (Shaw, Copland & Snell, 2015). The data analysed were collected in Mozambique using semi-structured interviews (Ketele & Roegiers, 1993), involving two focus groups of participants comprising higher education students who are native speakers of one of the African languages under analysis, namely *Nyanja/Chewa* and *Changana/Tsonga* (hereinafter referred to as *Nyanja* and *Changana*)[3].

Each focus group included three (3) participants. Besides being native speakers, the following criteria were used for their selection: (1) students had to demonstrate strong linguistic awareness; (2) have knowledge of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial linguistic policies and practices; (3) gender and numerical parity, that is, of a total six participants comprising our sample, half should be female and the other half male; (4)

[3] The designation of the analysed languages varies by geography. For example, in Malawi, political reasons have led to the *Nyanja* language being referred to as *Chewa*. This is not the case in Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Similarly to *Nyanja*, *Changana* is called *Tsonga* in South Africa and Eswatini. However, *Tsonga* is the generic term covering all African languages of the Bantu group within the S50 zone, namely *Changana*, *Ronga* and *Tshwa* (cf. Guthrie, 1967–71; Maho, 2009).

participants also had to be in one of the last two levels (3rd and 4th years) of the Bantu Language Teaching course at Faculty of Arts of Eduardo Mondlane University. We believed that at this stage of schooling their sociolinguistic maturity would be high. Therefore, they would be able to discuss and interpret complex linguistic issues with some expertise. However, it should worth not true that by opting for a 'seemingly' smaller universe of participants, we essentially intended to minimise social biases associated with interviews conducted with large focus groups. On the other hand, we aimed to record in detail their subjectivities and alternative constituency.

The interviews resulted in two and half hours of audio recording, from which, among other aspects, the following emerge as themes: (1) awareness that some African languages are the same in several countries; (2) awareness that, among the various linguistic varieties, there are differences (especially lexical) but they are mutual intelligible; (3) a militant stance – to claim, raise awareness and try to change the mentality about the understanding of what is language, dialect and reference variety; (4) awareness of negative consequences of colonialism in relation to the devaluation of Bantu languages and their formal teaching; (5) asymmetries between linguistic policies and practices of different European colonizers; and (6) a claim regarding the issue of the symmetrical use of languages (ex-colonial and native languages), including their linguistic varieties. The recorded conversations were then transcribed in full, so that we could subject them to a more detailed analysis – based on the themes that emerged, especially those related to the topic under study – a form of content analysis (Bardin, 2013).

Thus, the transcripts analysed are not merely the result of applying the conventional technique of a traditional focus group interview – based on questions and answers – but also stem from the participants' self-reflection – a dimension that sought to capture the influence of language comprehension on the informants' reasoning. Consequently, through this technique, we were able to 'record' the subjectivities and alternative constructions of the interviewees. The data analysed were collected using an approach we shall term a 'logos-based interview', which led us to an emic interpretation. This is a complementary data collection technique using autoethnography, viewed as "a form of inquiry, writing, and/or performing that puts questions and 'issues of being' into circulation and dialogue" (Bochner, 2013, p. 54).

During the collection of (primary) data, informants were asked to provide informed consent authorising the use of the information in scientific studies. Furthermore, the data was processed in accordance with the ethical procedures in force at Eduardo Mondlane University and the University of Porto, particularly with regard to the redaction, cataloguing and anonymisation of the information prior to its release to the public. It is important to emphasize that, out of the total of six (6) 'transnational' languages shared between Mozambique and neighbouring countries, our choice was *Nyanja* and *Changana* for two reasons: (1) they were the African languages with the highest number of students in the aforementioned course, in the semester in which one of the co-authors of this study was teacher in those classes; and (2) they are languages located in equidistant regions, with *Changana* spoken in the south and *Nyanja* in the north of Mozambique, as we will see in due course.

Linguistic Citizenship

Linguistic citizenship is an 'awareness-raising concept' (Bowen, 2006) and a decolonial concept, which "emerged from the contradictions surrounding educational programmes and practices in mother-tongue and bilingual education in the 1990s, in the context of the Global South" (Stroud, 2025, p. 85). However, it has evolved rapidly over the years, on the one hand to address the need to rethink our understanding of language through the lens of citizenship and historical democratic participation, whilst at the same time inviting us to reconsider our understanding of citizenship through language (Stroud, 2018). On the other hand, it aims to "establish a perspective that situates speakers' linguistic practices and representations within the context of their everyday socio-political efforts to achieve agency, transformation and participatory citizenship" (Stroud, 2025, p. 86).

Indeed, Linguistic Citizenship "critically examines the historical, socio-political and economic constraints on language construction, whilst identifying the linguistic, structural and institutional conditions necessary for change" (Stroud, 2025, p. 88). Linguistic Citizenship thus has the potential to provide tools for thinking beyond the problems of language in education, by considering utopian elements such as 'love', 'hope' and 'care' as an existential dimension of *homo sapiens amans* (Maturana & Caberon, 2018).

> *'Love' embodies a form of selfless recognition of the 'Other' as distinct from the 'Self', even whilst coexisting with the 'Self'. It presupposes allowing the 'Other' to emerge on their own terms. An important aspect of citizenship in shaping new and better futures involves caring for others and for the world in which we live. 'Care' involves concern for the well-being of the 'Other' and the environment in which we live, values that must not be sacrificed in the name of our dreams. 'Hope' presupposes the dream of a better future, foreshadowed in the present and guided by an ethic of inclusion, harmony and sharing* (Chimbutane & Stroud, 2025, p. 257).

It is in this sense that, when classifying pluricentric languages, we consider the use of acts of linguistic citizenship to be beneficial. "In the sense that, through the semiotics of hope, [for example,] a better world is foreshadowed, one that may become a reality in the future" (Chimbutane & Stroud, 2025, pp. 257-8). However, the concept of Linguistic Citizenship also emerges in this study to help us recognise that speakers themselves can exercise control over their language, deciding what counts as a language or languages, what it or they signify, and how linguistic issues may be discursively linked to a variety of social, political and historical issues (Stroud, 2018; Magona, 2020). From this perspective, Linguistic Citizenship informs epistemic justice (Friker, 2003; Anderson, 2012; Chakraborty, 2024) by focusing on the potential of languages for the ontological reshaping of 'selves', socialities and concomitant knowledge, offering a way to (re)signify linguistic attitudes and ideologies, including an awareness of the sense of linguistic community as a transformative epistemology (Fraser, 1995; Stroud, 2025). In fact, Linguistic Citizenship goes further than this, recognising the need to deconstruct and reconstitute social life and its institutions on the basis of a reconfiguration of language

(Fraser, 1997; Stroud, 2025). Therefore, in the light of linguistic citizenship, language is conceived as one of the semiotic means of resistance, through which the most vulnerable communities claim the exercise of voice and agency. In other words, on this basis, exclusionary ideologies are rejected.

It seems to us that this perspective is not being adequately considered when classifying languages as pluricentric or non-pluricentric, a fact which highlights that the parameters of this linguistic taxonomy are not based on the recognition of cultural, historical, political and identity-related inequalities, or of the collective values embodied in the concept of Linguistic Human Rights (Stroud, 2001).

Whilst we recognise that linguistic human rights are "depoliticised and ahistorical" (Yeatman, 2001, cited in Stroud, 2025, p. 88), it is nonetheless worth noting that their "appeals are situated in local space and time and filtered through contingent political, social and economic structures" (Stroud, ibid.). On the contrary, what is evident regarding the taxonomy under consideration is that it establishes practices which uphold the universality of 'exclusionary' criteria, inherited from the status quo of linguistics narratives from the Global North, which are closely associated with colonialism and do not appear to be in tune with the socio-political structures of the Global South. Within this framework of ideas, in the present study, we challenge this essentialist understanding of language, which is based on claims of universal relevance, as previously discussed. Thus, we draw upon the sensitising, transformative and decolonial nature (Fraser, 1995; 1997) of the notion of Linguistic Citizenship to 'critically interrogate the historical and socio-political constraints' (Stroud, 2025, p. 88) that shape the classification of pluricentric languages. At the same time, we call for epistemic justice (Friker, 2003; Anderson, 2012). This implies that there is a need to establish an alternative mode of thought based on accounts provided by speakers of so-called 'subaltern languages' (Mbembe, 2016), situated within a historical and geopolitical context distinct from that of the Global North (see, for example, Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2009, 2011; Grosfoguel, 2011). In fact, allowing for a contextual, temporal, and apolitical reinterpretation of the criteria that define the classification of pluricentric languages is, in our view, a way to ensure the epistemic liberation of minority languages – thereby healing the 'scars' left by the consequences of colonial linguistic ideologies. It also means paving the way for us to view language as a semiotic means of resistance and of historically redressing linguistic silencing. Furthermore, it means acknowledging that the languages of communities in the Global South are one of the semiotic means of producing autonomous knowledge, which may be valid in other contexts. For this to be feasible, among other measures, it is necessary to reverse the prevailing marginalization of African languages in both local and international socio-political spheres, including in linguistic taxonomies such as the one examined in this research.

Linguistic Pluricentrism

When examined from the perspective of Cognitive Sociolinguistics (Silva, 2016, p. 12), the concept of pluricentric languages is associated with "Georg V. Stepanov (1957), Alexandr D. Shvejtser (1963), Heinz Kloss (1967, 1976) and William Stewart (1968)"

(Clyne, 1992, p. 1; Ammon, 2005, p. 1536). However, its approach in modern linguistic theory gained prominence thanks to the seminal 'Pluricentric Languages', edited and published in the 1990s by the German-Australian linguist, academic and intellectual Michael Clyne (1939–2010).

Clyne's (1992) contribution would lay the foundations for a discussion of national varieties from the perspective of interacting centres, in contrast to the earlier model, which regarded linguistic varieties as 'deviations from the centre' (Silva, 2016, p. 12; see also Kristiansen, 2014; Silva, 2018). According to Ammon (2005, p. 1536), the two terms used to address this type of categorisation are: (i) the *centre of a language* (e.g. Great Britain); and (ii) the *standard variety of a language* (e.g. British Standard English). Thus, the definition of a pluricentric language refers to "[…] codified standard varieties of a language which are said to differ in various states in which the language is used" (Kristiansen, 2014, p. 9). On the other hand, pluricentricity tends to be "a special case of lethal variation, characterised by issues of national identity and power" (Silva, 2016, p. 12). From this perspective, a pluricentric language must be capable of being institutionalised in the sense that it comprises different varieties, each with its own standard (cf. (3)). Besides, according to Silva (2018, p. 113), "all languages are, to a certain extent, pluricentric, insofar as they contain dialectal variation and different local norms". It is within this theoretical framework that our aim to reinterpret the criteria that generate the pluricentricity of a language fits, thereby including African languages – the subject of our analysis – as pluricentric.

On Nyanja and Changana – languages under consideration

Before we get to the heart of the matter, we should first point out that the languages spoken in Africa belong to four different language families, namely Afro-Asiatic (covering those spoken in North Africa), Congo-Kordofanian (those spoken in sub-Saharan Africa), Nilo-Saharan (spoken south of the Sahara Desert) and Khoisan (spoken in south-western Africa) (cf. Guthrie, 1967–71; Maho, 2009).

The *Nyanja* (N31) and Changana (S53) languages, according to Guthrie's (1967–71) referential classification, belong to the Niger-Congo subfamily of the Congo-Kordofanian family. As part of the Bantu language group, they are spoken predominantly in sub-Saharan Africa's southern region (Magona & Wilson, 2023).

Nyanja is a 'transnational' language spoken in Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia (Ngunga *et al*., 2022), where it enjoys, in the first country, the status of 'national language' (cf. Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, 2004) and, in the other three countries, the status of 'lingua franca' and 'symbol of national unity' (Taylor, 2020). It is also believed that there are *Nyanja*-speaking communities in other countries, notably Zimbabwe and South Africa (cf. Reilly, 2016, 2019; Taylor, 2020).

In Zimbabwe, the *Nyanj*a language is the third-most widely spoken, behind only *Shona* and *Ndebele* (Taylor, 2020). The total number of speakers across the five countries is unknown; however, in Mozambique, 1,568,701 speakers are recorded (INE, 2019). The language comprises three dialectal variants: *Cinyanja*, *Chichewa*, and *Cingoni* (Ngunga

et al., 2022, p. 124). The *Nyanja* spoken in Lusaka is sometimes referred to as 'urban *Nyanja*', as opposed to 'rural *Nyanja*', spoken in rural areas and other parts of Zambia (Taylor, 2020). It should be noted that the standard dialectal variant is *Cinyanja* of Tete (in Mozambique), also known as Central *Nyanja*.

With a standardised and harmonised writing system (Banda, 2008; 2016), this language is used in the education system in three countries, namely Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia, where so-called transitional bilingual education programmes with early or late transition are offered. These teaching models involve using L1/the non-dominant language as the medium of instruction in the early years of schooling, with L2/the dominant language introduced progressively throughout the curriculum (cf. Hornberger, 1991). This continues until the pupil has acquired 'some' knowledge of Portuguese or English, the dominant languages in their respective countries. Subsequently, L2 (Portuguese or English, as the case may be) becomes the language of instruction, usually after the first three years of schooling – the early-exit transitional model – or in the fifth or sixth years – the late-exit transitional model (Chimbutane, 2009, p. 29).

The educational objectives advocated in this model of bilingual education result in a degree of monolingualism in L2. As such, its programmes are based on the mistaken notion that L1 must be removed from the curriculum after a period of use so that L2 can be effectively learnt (Benson, 2009, p. 63).

Changana is also a 'transnational' language, spoken in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Eswatini and the Transvaal province of South Africa. As with *Nyanja*, the total number of speakers across the four countries is unknown; however, in Mozambique, there are 1,926,879 speakers (INE, 2019; Ngunga *et al*., 2022), making it the third-most widely spoken 'national language' in the country (Chimbutane *et al*., 2023). On the other hand, there appears to be a consensus that *xihlanganu*, *xidzonga*, *xin'walungu*, *xibila* and *xihlengwe* are the attested dialectal variants (Magona & Wilson, 2023). Of these, *xidzonga* (also known as *xitsonga*) – spoken in the vast region stretching from Mozambique to South Africa, encompassing the districts of Magude, Bilene and part of Massingir (in Mozambique) to the Transvaal province (in South Africa) – is taken as the reference variant. In other words, the standard dialectal variant, for the purposes of linguistic standardisation, including the production of school textbooks and use in the classroom.

In addition to their use in education, the languages under analysis are also used in the mass media, notably radio and television. Furthermore, they provide translation and/or interpreting services (at rallies and other types of campaigns, including during elections). However, their coverage is localised, extending only to the communities that speak these languages. Furthermore, these languages are widely used in religious services and in ancestral invocation practices (e.g., in *kupatla*[4] ceremonies – among the *Changana* people).

[4] This is a ceremony in which permission is sought from the ancestors to carry out a particular activity, such as the construction of public infrastructure.

Pluricentric Languages: A classification for liberation or for linguistic subjugation

Africa is, in itself, a continent of great linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity (cf. Bamgbose, 1991), home to around 25% of the world's 8,000 languages (Zavale, 2026, p. 248). In this context, any discussion of the pluricentric nature of the languages spoken there must consider the historical relationships among the peoples there. In other words, the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history of contemporary African nation-states can reveal a great deal about whether or not African languages are included in the linguistic taxonomy under consideration. This is further reinforced if we consider that linguistic pluricentrism is a non-apolitical phenomenon (e.g. Muhr, 2012; Kalternegger, 2020), more readily perceived within models of knowledge production and validation from the Global North, closely associated with old monolingual ideologies (cf. Chimbutane, 2026; Zavale, 2026) and colonial governance structures (cf. Stroud, 2025). This explains, for example, why the underlying idea of 'inseparability' between (i) the status of a language, (ii) codification (e.g. language norms), (iii) the centre of a language, and (iv) the standard variety of a language (cf. Ammon, 2005).

> *A pluricentric language is a language that is used in at least two nations where it has an official status as state language, co-state language, or regional language with its own (codified) norms that usually contribute to the national/personal identity, making the nation a norm-setting centre by the deliberate use of the norms native to this specific nation* (Muhr, 2016, p. 16).

From Muhr's (2016) definition, it can be inferred that "language is not powerful on its own it is a means to gain and maintain power by the use powerful people make of it" (Reising & Wodak, 2009 cited in Pinto, 2021, p. 31). In fact, this highlights the fact that linguistic issues are discursively linked to social and political issues, as mentioned earlier. Thus, if we take strict adherence to the above definition at face value, then the *Nyanja* and *Changana* languages, for which we propose to suggest the status of pluricentric languages, cannot be included in this group. Firstly, because they do not meet the 'state language'[5] requirement – on the basis of which, according to the narratives of the Global North about pluricentric languages, one could (or might) claim the status of a 'centre of a language' (Ammon, 2005, p. 1536), at least across a considerable part of their territory, namely in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia in the first case, and in Eswatini, Mozambique and Zimbabwe in the second case.[6] This is due not only to the legacy of monolingual colonial ideologies (cf. Lines 4–9, Excerpt 1), but also to the failure to take into account both the context (the place where the languages are situated) and local

[5] In contemporary Africa, due to the consequences of colonial ideologies regarding language, a strategy of avoidance prevails. Avoidance is a technique adopted by most African countries and is characterised by sparing the government the unpleasant political consequences that any pronouncement on language policy may provoke in sections of the population (Bamgbose, 1991). Therefore, although many African languages are, from a demographic, social or dialectological point of view, they are still not, from a 'political' point of view, 'eligible' for the status of official, regional or lingua franca.

[6] *Nyanja* is a lingua franca in Malawi and Zambia, where it also has the status of a regional language. In contrast, *Changana* is an official language only in South Africa (cf. Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Reilly, 2016; 2019; Taylor, 2020).

history (the historical past of contemporary language communities), aspects that emerge clearly in excerpt (1) below:

		Excerpt 1	
1	E	Acha que o colonialismo contribuiu negativamente ou positivamente para o estágio em que se encontram as línguas africanas na atualidade?	Do you think that colonialism contributed negatively or positively to the present stage of the African languages?
	P1		
5		Só que nós não levamos isso em conta, porque em algum momento nós fomos colonizados, ou seja, aculturados. Na verdade, adquirimos aqueles que são os hábitos e costumes do povo colonizador. O que desencadeou se calhar na mais	We don't take it into account, because at some moment we were colonized. I mean acculturated. In fact, we acquired the habits and customs of the colonizing people. That means that the foreign language was more valued. I am talking
10	P2	valorização das línguas estrangeiras. Estou a falar muito mais do português.	about Portuguese, specifically.
		O que motiva a isso, eu acho que são as próprias políticas adotadas pelo país, que	I believe the reason for this lies in the policies adopted by the country itself, which were left behind by the colonisers.
15		foram deixadas pelo colono. Essas políticas influenciaram a vida das pessoas. Enquanto que o colono britânico tinha apresso as línguas, a língua *nyanja*, o colono	These policies have shaped people's lives. Whilst the British colonists had embraced the languages, or *Nyanja*, the
	P3	português proibia o uso dessa língua. Então, isso causou essa continuidade,	Portuguese colonists prohibited the use of that language. This led to a situation where, even today, people continue to
20		continuidade que, até hoje as pessoas continuam a ter atitudes negativas em relação a nossa língua, diferentemente do Malawi e Zâmbia.	hold negative attitudes towards our language, unlike in Malawi and Zambia.
		A política linguística colonial, para o nosso caso, foi uma política negativa. Essa política foi contínua. Até agora continua, razão pela qual as nossa línguas ficaram numa posição menos privilegiadas. (...) o colono ensinou a validação do português do que a própria língua local – língua materna da maioria dos moçambicanos.	Colonial language policy, in our case, was a negative policy. This policy was ongoing. It continues to this day, which is why our languages have been placed in a less privileged position. (...) the coloniser promoted the use of Portuguese rather than the local language itself – the mother tongue of the majority of Mozambicans.

Excerpt (1) not only highlights the asymmetries between colonial politics and linguistic practices, but also reveals the underlying 'coloniality of language' (Veronelli, 2015). In the context in which we operate, this fact is made visible by the lack of awareness of the limits imposed by colonialism, which is reflected, for example, in the government's lack of commitment to the need for an ontological reconfiguration of colonial ideologies, policies and language practices, including within education systems (cf. Lines 18–21, Excerpt 1). Despite this situation, there seems to be a consensus that, in the African context, national languages "usually contribute to national/personal identity", given that they constitute one of the main semiotic means through which peoples identify themselves (cf. lines 7–15, Excerpt 2). Furthermore, they represent a worldview (e.g. anthropological, philosophical, cosmogonic, sociological, etc.), as they are the primary

repository of the local collective memory, namely African existence and thought. (cf. Line 11, Extract 2; Lines 17–18, Extract 4).

Excerpt 2			
1	E	Enquanto falantes de uma das variantes de uma língua africana, vocês sentem-se legítimos proprietários dessa língua ou consideram-se apenas parte da comunidade falante da língua? Por quê?	As speakers of a variant of an African language, do you consider yourselves as legitimate owners of that language or do you consider yourselves as part of the community of speakers of that language? Why?
5	P3	Eu, em particular, sinto-me proprietário da língua. Bem, porque a língua como eu disse faz parte, ou seja, é identidade de um povo. Então, se eu nasci, por exemplo,	I, myself, feel I am an owner of the language. Well, as I said previously, language is part of the identities of people. So, if I was born, for example,
10		dentro de um determinado sítio, por exemplo, num determinado sítio, cresci ali, não é? ((faz pergunta retórica)) A minha forma de puder ter a identidade, então, a	into some place, for example, grew up there, you know? ((rhetoric question)). My way to have my identity, so the
15		língua é como um elemento da minha forma de viver. Então, eu nasci naquele local, cresci ali, aprendi aquilo e daquela forma. Então, aquilo pertence a mim. Identifica-me como alguém que pertence aquela comunidade. Então, eu sinto-me legítimo proprietário da língua. É minha língua.	language functions as an element of my manner of living. So, I was born and grew up in that place, and I learnt this and that. Now that belongs to me. I am identified as someone who belongs to that community. So, I feel like I am a legitimate owner of the language. That is my language, I mean.

In this context, Muhr's (2016) definition, whilst well-crafted, seems too narrow to be comprehensive: on the one hand, by ignoring contextual issues – which are essential for understanding the terrain in which we operate; on the other hand, by failing to consider the colonial monolingual ideologies practised by some colonisers, notably Portugal (cf. Lines 17–22, Excerpt 1). The definition also overlooks the arbitrariness involved in the drawing of the borders of contemporary African nation-states by the European imperialist powers at the Berlin Conference, which defined the current geography of African countries. Furthermore, by emphasising the idea associated with codification, it is partly within the framework of these ideas that the need for an epistemic reconfiguration of the notion of pluricentric languages is situated. This implies recognising the need to promote, contextually, an understanding of language by speakers in the Global South (cf. Lines 10–16, Excerpt 1); on the other hand, it suggests the need for a differentiated application of the criteria generated by pluricentric languages, or indeed, their alignment with the specificities of different linguistic landscapes. In doing so, however, it is necessary to overcome the limitations imposed by the narrative that underpins the idea of "epistemic exclusion and silencing" (Zavale, 2026, p. 248), which suggests, amongst other aspects, the idea that languages eligible for this linguistic classification must be, albeit to varying degrees, 'prototypically pluricentric' (Silva, 2018).

Although the *Nyanja* and *Changana* languages have guiding writing standards (cf. (2.3)), i.e. standardised and harmonised writing – shared across the different nation-states where they are spoken (cf. Banda, 2008; 2016; Ngunga *et al*., 2022), demanding strict adherence to this aspect without careful consideration of the fact that these languages belong to an oral tradition – and have only been written down recently – contributes to the legitimisation of the 'coloniality of language', reflected in subjugation, linguistic silencing and the perpetuation of epistemic injustices (cf. Anderson, 2012; Chakraborty, 2024) to which African languages have been and continue to be subjected since the colonial period (cf. Lines 18–23, Excerpt 1).

Thus, our informants suggest that it is impossible to establish a strict correlation between what is conventionally referred to as strict conformity and/or alignment between the criteria of linguistic pluricentricity and the actual situation of the context in which we operate. Among the reasons given, linguistic hegemony stands out, reflected in the excessive valuing of colonial monolingual ideologies (cf. Lines 7–9, 18–23, Excerpt 1). In this context, it is necessary to challenge the "parameters of legibility of the epistemic field" (Kerfoot, 2025, p. 227) that underpin the universal relevance of some languages and the knowledge associated with them. Repudiation constitutes a form of resistance and/or alternative approach in the epistemic reconstruction (Friker, 2003) of the criteria for the legibility of a language's pluricentricity. This reconstruction must, however, not only transcend the limits imposed on African languages by colonialism (cf. Lines 20–23, Excerpt 1), but also capture the idea that all languages are, to a certain extent, pluricentric (Silva, 2018, p. 113).

To accept this premise is to pave the way for historical redress for linguistic subjugation and silencing. But it also, without reservation, enables those situated on the margins of modernity's narratives (cf. Quinjano, 2000; Mignolo, 2009) to fully exercise their plural voices and agency, given that, through this, they are recognised as having control over their languages (Stroud, 2018; Bock & Stroud, 2018). In fact, they are allowed to become active agents in the (re)configuration of the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the linguistic taxonomy under consideration. Consequently, the pluricentric theory is no longer viewed as an exclusionary taxonomy in which languages are classified on the basis of, but not limited to, the centre/periphery dichotomy. On the contrary, it serves, albeit in a symbolic sense, as a platform for sociolinguistic dialogue, challenging, amongst other things, the prevailing continuity of colonial ideologies, policies and linguistic practices.

From a theoretical and practical perspective, this means acknowledging that micro- and/or macro-dialectal variations - namely, *xihlanganu*, *xin'walungu*, *xibila* and *xihlengwe* (in the case of *Changana*) or *Chichewa* and *Cingoni* (in the case of *Nyanja*), including their standard variants (cf. (2.3)), transcend the limits of artificial colonial borders – which favoured monolingual ideologies. On the other hand, it means recognising that these are legitimate diatopic variations. Indeed, they even reflect what Silva (2018, p. 112) refers to as the 'political militancy of separation and autonomisation' (cf. Lines 11–12, Excerpt 3). Thus, rather than drawing an analogy with what happens with the languages of the Global North, particularly the so-called 'neo-imperialist languages', namely Portuguese, English, Spanish, French and German (Mohanty, 2009,

p. 8), the dialectal variants referred to above should be seen as legitimate candidates for the establishment of their own norms and/or centres of a pluricentric language, in the local sense and context in which we operate, as emerges more explicitly in the following statement:

Excerpt 3			
1	E	E se tivessem que escolher uma variante a ser usada em fóruns internacionais, que critérios é que vocês considerariam? E porque desses critérios?	If you had to choose a variant to be used in international forums, what criteria would you consider? And why those criteria?
	P3		
5		Iria olhar até onde a minha variante dialetal chega. Até onde a minha variante chega ((secunda)). Do ponto de vista de distribuição geográfica. E, se calhar, estabelecer uma comparação com uma	I was going to see how far my dialectal variant extends. How far my variant extends ((repeats)). From the point of view of geographical distribution. And perhaps draw a comparison with another
	P2	outra variante dialetal.	dialectal variant.
10			
		Para mim, a questão, também, de influência política de, de, dessa variante. Temos uma variante que é *Cingoni* só que é uma variante que é falada, é falada nesse	For me, the issue is also one of the political influences of this particular variant. We have a variant known as *Cingoni*, but it is a variant that is spoken
15		caso em dois distritos. Só que lá é onde existe a influência política que é o que se chama *nkosizama*. Enquanto *nyanja* padrão é falado em muitos sítios. Então, deveria-se adotar o *nyanja* que é falado em muitos sítios, portanto, em Moçambique, em Malawi, ahmm… é falado em Moçambique, em Malawi, tanto em Zâmbia, queria dizer.	- in this case - in two districts. However, that is where the political influence lies, which is what is known as *nkosizama*. Whereas standard *Nyanja* is spoken in many places. So, one should adopt the *Nyanja* that is spoken in many places, that is, in Mozambique, in Malawi, ahmm… it is spoken in Mozambique, in Malawi, and in Zambia, I mean.

Within the framework of linguistic citizenship, empowering these linguistic variants amounts to promoting alternative models of thought. Furthermore, it entails granting the right for "speakers of these varieties to establish legitimate forms of schooling, [for example]" (cf. Kerfoot, 2025, p. 226). Furthermore, it means recognising that the criteria underpinning pluricentric languages should not be based solely on the landscape and understanding of the Global North's models of rationality, which are closely associated with the invisibilisation of minority languages, notably African ones. On the contrary, one should consider the local context and time as potential factors for assessing the specific characteristics of different linguistic landscapes (cf. lines 9–16, Excerpt 3). It must be acknowledged, however, that "the history of colonial impositions makes this a complex and sensitive debate" (Kerfoot, 2025, p. 225).

Linguistic pluricentrism as a space for sociolinguistic dialogue

As we have seen, many of the criteria used to determine whether a language is pluricentric are out of step with the African context and stem from a Eurocentric view of languages, which are generally divided along nation-state lines - a result of historical circumstances quite different from those described here. If the speakers of the languages in question are spread across several countries, this, as mentioned, stems from the arbitrary division that Europeans imposed on Africa, disregarding the ethnic and historical realities that existed prior to their arrival. We might even consider that, for the two languages under study, they occur "in at least two nations that function as 'interacting centres'". However, it can no longer be claimed, in the terms of Clyne, Muhr and followers', that "the national varieties function as norm-setting centres." This is because the countries are strongly multilingual and, in the case of Mozambique, given the avoidance strategy announced in due course, none of the native languages is officially recognised as a "national variety". However, they are used in both bilingual and monolingual education, where, in the latter case, they serve as resources for learning Portuguese, the country's official language. This is particularly evident in rural areas where the former colonial language is scarcely taught (cf. Magona, 2024).

On the other hand, if neither language has official status in at least two countries, we can say that both are regional languages (such as Catalan in France, an example cited by *Pluricentric Languages*). Whilst the number of French speakers of Catalan is estimated at 125,000 (Ferrer, 2022), the Mozambican speakers of *Nyanja* or *Changana* undoubtedly carry greater weight. It is difficult to regard these languages as 'minority' languages, not least because their teaching in bilingual education implies 'official recognition' by the authorities (cf. INDE, 2003; MINEDH, 2020). If they do not have explicit official status[7], they do have at least official recognition (RM, 2004) and are accompanied, at the very least, by a strong ethnolinguistic awareness (cf. Lines 5–14, Lines 15–19, Lines 21–24, Extract 4) among the communities that speak them in the various countries (Lines 28–29, Extract 4). Undoubtedly, these languages contribute, as mentioned, to a strong sense of ethnic and individual identity, as evidenced in Extract (4) below:

Excerpt 4			
1	E	E, qual é a relação que vocês têm com essas pessoas? do ponto de vista linguístico, como é que vocês se vêm, se vêm como sendo falantes de línguas diferentes, de variedades diferentes ou de	And what is your relationship with these people? From a linguistic point of view, how do you see yourselves – as speakers of different languages, of different varieties, or as part of a single
5	P2	comunidade de uma língua?	language community?
		Em relação ao *nyanja* que é falado tanto em Moçambique, Malawi e Zâmbia, uhmm, vou dizer que nos sentimos muito amigos, entre	As for the *Nyanja* language, which is spoken in Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia, well, I'd say that we feel very
10		os *nyanjas* do Malawi e Zâmbia. Até somos muito mais apagados aos *nyanjas* do	close to our *Nyanja*-speaking neighbours in Malawi and Zambia. In fact, we're

[7] In the sense of the absence of a legislative instrument, namely a Decree-Law.

15		Malawi e trocamos ideias, uhmm, a informação que partilhamos é a mesma, tanto o desporto, rádio, a informação que recebemos, portanto, é a mesma. Para dizer que nessa comunidade, nos vemos, queria dizer nos vimos como uma comunidade *nyanja*. Partilhamos os mesmos laços e somos amigos.	much closer to the *Nyanja* people of Malawi and we exchange ideas; the information we share is the same, whether it's sport, radio or the news we receive, so it's all the same. To say that within that community, we see ourselves – I mean, we see ourselves as a *Nyanja* community. We share the same bonds and we're friends.
20	P3	Queria acrescentar, que nós éramos uma comunidade alguém impôs as suas fronteiras e fomos divididos. Na verdade, partilhamos a mesma identidade, os mesmos conceitos sobre o mundo. Então, é legítimos reivindicarmos.	I would like to add that we used to be a community, but someone imposed their boundaries on us and we were divided. In fact, we share the same identity and the same views of the world. So, it is only right that we make our claims.
25	P1	É sabido que *changana*, também é falado na vizinha África do Sul, principalmente e, alguns grupos também, além da África do Sul, Swazi[lândia] tem falantes de *changana*. Então, eu considero que este povo aqui é da mesma comunidade. A África do Sul, ahmm, apesar de ter sido colonizada pelos ingleses ou britânicos, eles têm o inglês como língua oficial, mas cada distrito ou província tem aquilo que é a sua língua materna. Eles valorizam a língua materna daquela região.	It is well known that *Changana* is also spoken in neighbouring South Africa, primarily there, and some groups outside South Africa as well; Swazi[land] also has speakers of *Changana*. So, I consider these people here to be part of the same community. South Africa, uhmm, although it was colonised by the English or the British, and English is its official language, each district or province has its own native language. They value the native language of that region.

In this Excerpt (4), the informants not only highlight the recognition that some African nation-states accord to local languages, but also point out that language is an essential element of a people's identity. On the other hand, they are aware that, although speakers of the Nyanja and *Changana* languages are separated by artificial colonial borders, they belong to the same ethnolinguistic communities. Thus, the criterion of 'linguistic distance (Abstand)' appears to be present in the languages studied. Whilst we cannot refer to these as 'national varieties', we have confirmed, through the students' discussions, that they 'have enough linguistic (and/or pragmatic) characteristics that distinguish them from other varieties and can thus serve as a symbol for expressing identity and social uniqueness' (cf. lines 6–8, Excerpt 5) The fact that the students list differences between the language as they speak it and the language as it is spoken on the other side of the border is illuminating in this regard. Note extract (5) below:

Excerpt 5			
1	E	Existem traços comuns, existem palavras diferentes que vocês podem citar? Ainda que não sejam palavras muito frequentes aqui, mas que sejam frequentes lá, entretanto, que vocês compreendem.	Are there any common features? Are there any different words you can think of? Even if they aren't used very often here, but are common there, as long as you understand them.
5	P1	Sim, por exemplo: os sul africanos, nem!... tem o *changana* como uma língua, usam a palavra ***nitakuxaya*** que significa bater ((quer dizer, vou bater-te)). Enquanto que para nós, nem!, usamos muito mais ***nitakuba***. Mas, há aqui alguma similaridade.	Yes, for example: South Africans, uhm!... They have 'changana' as a language, and they use the word '***nitakuxaya***', which means 'to hit' (as in, 'I'm going to hit you'). Whereas for us, uhm! We use '***nitakuba***' much more. But there is some similarity here.
10	P2		
15		Em relação ao *nyanja*, há algumas palavras que por causa da..., da..., ((organiza o raciocínio)) da própria dimensão, da..., dessa expansão que o *nyanja* tem no Malawi, Zâmbia, em Moçambique, temos também.... (...) acabamos por criar	As for *Nyanja*, there are some words which, because of the... the... ((organises his thoughts)) the very scope of the language, the... this widespread use of *Nyanja* in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique, we also have... (...) we have ended up creating some words that you may not understand, but, ahmm… a speaker of *Nyanja* will be able to fill that gap, which is mainly due to phonetic and phonological variation.
	P3	algumas palavras que podem não entender, mas, ahmm..., o falante que fala *nyanja* vai conseguir preencher essa lacuna	
20	P2	que é devido, principalmente, à variação fonética, fonológica.	
25		Estaria a falar sobre a questão de criação de novos termos devido ao contacto de línguas ou, trata-se de empréstimos?	Are you referring to the creation of new terms resulting from language contact, or are you talking about loanwords?
		Ya! Posso dizer: há umas palavras, posso dizer, porque *nyanja* em Niassa tem fronteiras com outras comunidades linguísticas e acaba criando umas palavras daquela comunidade linguística, quanto o *nyanja* de Tete faz fronteira com..., ((I3 ^ahmm, sim)) com uma outra língua, acaba pedindo palavras dessa língua.	Ya! I can say: there are some words – I can say that –because *Nyanja* in Niassa borders other linguistic communities and ends up borrowing words from those communities, whereas *Nyanja* in Tete

			borders... ((ahmm, yes)) another language, so it ends up borrowing words from that language.

Although resulting from contact, Excerpt (5) points to the existence of lexical differences. In fact, these differences are not exclusively the result of linguistic contact, as our informants suggest (cf. Lines 21–25, Excerpt 5). On the contrary, they extend to the intralinguistic level. For example, in *Xibila*, a dialectal variant of *Changana*, the word *bhuti* means 'boy', whereas *jaha* is used in *Xihlengwe*. Something similar occurs between *ximasi* and *xiqamelo* 'cushion', *kuhlamula* and *kuyangula* 'to answer', *xipixi* and *xingove* 'cat', *kuboha* and *kutsimba* 'to tie', *mbalu* and *volo* 'blanket', *kuchima* and *kutsundza* 'to dirty', *bewula* and *chate* 'axe', *n'wingi* and *mamanyana* 'daughter-in-law', words used in the dialectal variants *xilhanganu* and *xidzonga,* respectively. It should be noted, however, that this is not a case of pure synonymy. On the contrary, it reveals significant diatopic variation within the language.

It seems to us that the criterion of pluricentricity is met by speakers of *Nyanja* or *Changana*, as is clearly evident in Excerpt (6). Rather than a national identity, the language forms part of an ethnic identity (cf. Lines 14–16, Excerpt 2). This is because its speakers do not all belong to a single nation, but rather to the same group. There is, however, a strong awareness that these languages, spoken in this way, form part of the country's sociolinguistic reality.

Excerpt 6			
1	E	Acham legítimo reivindicarmos o estatuto pluricentrico para as línguas africanas, nomeadamente *nyanja* e *changana*? Por que?	Do you think it is justified for us to call for a pluricentric status for African languages, particularly *Nyanja* and *Changana*? Why?
	P3		We think it's legitimate.
5		Achamos legítimo.	Well, I think it's fair for us to claim the
		Bom, eu acho justo reivindicarmos o estatuto de línguas pluricêntricas. Por que, até a língua portuguesa, o inglês, francês, mais outras línguas partiram...,	status of pluricentric languages. Because even Portuguese, English, French and other languages emerged… let's say, from a process of selection. In the same way
10		digamos de um estudo de seleção. A mesma forma como o português é usado ou o inglês, essas línguas expandiram-se. Então, se essas línguas foram expandidas para o uso, porque é que as nossas línguas não podem passar, também, pelos	that Portuguese is used, or English, these languages have expanded. So, if these languages have expanded into use, why can't our languages also go through the same processes? So that, uhm, let's say,
15	P1	mesmos mecanismos? para ahmm..., digamos, com que as pessoas tenham acesso? Então, reivindicar o uso pluricêntrico dessas línguas, é legítimo.	people have access to them? So, claiming the pluricentric use of these languages is legitimate.
			Yes, it is only right that we make this claim. Because we have speakers too. So,

	P2	Sim, é legítimo nós reivindicarmos. Porque nós também temos falantes. Então, se nós prestigiamos uma língua colonial, porquê é que não podemos prestigiar o *changana*, o *nyanja* ou qualquer língua ((africana))? É legítimos reivindicarmos.	if we value a colonial language, why can't we value *Changana*, *Nyanja* or any other ((African)) language? It is right for us to make these demands.

In excerpt (6), when our informants compare the unequal treatment of the languages under study with that of the languages of the Global North – namely Portuguese, English or French – they challenge the reproduction of "symbolic power" (cf. Bourdieu, 1991), understood as "the imposition of categories of thought and perception upon dominated social agents, so that they continue to serve the ruling class(es) and ensure the maintenance of the prevailing social order" (Chimbutane, 2025b, p. 243). In doing so, they not only call for epistemic freedom, but at the same time, they resist. This resistance is reflected, for example, in the desire to see an end to hostility, subjugation, and the silencing of African languages (Lines 16–18, excerpt 6). This fact highlights *care* as a dimension of linguistic citizenship. In the taxonomy under study, this care should enable the humanisation of relations with others, including their language, granting it equal value.

We reiterate that this is one of the dimensions of Linguistic Citizenship that the criteria defining a language's pluricentricity appear to deliberately ignore. Thus, if we continue to view Clyne and Muhr's criteria solely through the lens of the Global North, without careful consideration of alternative models of thought, we are 'blindly' subjecting ourselves to the continued marginalisation of the languages of the Global South within this taxonomy, rather than attempting to remove the epistemic barriers that exclude them from this classification.

It also became clear that, in the case of *Nyanja* and *Changana*, we cannot speak of a national norm; therefore, we cannot assert that "the national norm has to be relevant to social identity and must be (to some degree) evident to the language community and lead "to at least some of its own (codified) norms."[8] However, we can say that the national varieties, including the local micro- and macro-varieties of the two languages spoken in Mozambique, are relevant to the social identity of the speakers, as evidenced by the data collected from the students. (e.g. Lines 10–16, Excerpt 2).

The final criterion, concerning the codification of the standard, does not hold true in the manner in which it is formulated in *Pluricentric Languages*; however, once languages have been described – namely in dictionaries (e.g. Sitoe, 2014), grammars (e.g. Torrend, 1891; Watkins, 1937; Ngunga & Simbine, 2012), reports on standardisation and linguistic harmonisation (e.g. NELIMO, 1989; Ngunga & Sitoe, 2000; Ngunga *et al*., 2022) and, above all, where there are textbooks for bilingual education (cf. Ouane & Glanz, 2011; ADPP-Mozambique, 2018), with literacy provision included in them (cf. INDE, 2003), one

[8] Retrieved from https://pluricentriclanguages.org/pluricentricity/what-is-a-pluricentric-language/

cannot claim that there is no form of codification in books. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, there are varieties considered standard, on which linguistic standardisation and textbook production are based.

Thus, even though not all the criteria for pluricentric languages apply to *Nyanja* and *Changana*, in the sense of narratives of the Global North, or only partially, the term 'pluricentric' can help us understand the linguistic reality of the populations who speak these languages. We therefore argue that the criteria in question should consider historical and linguistic realities that are quite different from those of languages unhesitatingly considered pluricentric, and be adapted to this specific multilingual reality. Alternatively, new criteria could be devised to extend the designation to concrete realities, such as the African context. But undoubtedly, the pluricentricity of *Nyanja* and *Changana*, even if it does not strictly adhere to Clyne and Muhr's criteria, is a concept that helps us reflect on languages as spaces for sociolinguistic dialogue.

To consider linguistic pluricentrism in the light of Linguistic Citizenship is to recognise the need to dismantle the linguistic injustices 'imposed' on African languages and communities since the colonial period. As noted, Linguistic Citizenship refers to "cases in which speakers exercise agency and participation through the use of language(s), registers or other multimodal means in circumstances that may be adjacent to, within or outside institutionalised democratic structures for democratic purposes" (Lim *et al*., 2018, cited in Chimbutane & Stroud, 2025, p. 253).

Based on 'love', 'hope' and 'care' – the biological foundations of the 'loving human being' (*homo sapiens amans*) as described by Humberto Mutarana – from which language likely first emerged in a context of harmonious, attentive and hope-filled collaboration (Chimbutane & Stroud, 2025, p. 258), the concept of Linguistic Citizenship has shown us that it carries a significant theoretical distinction that enables us to understand and explain contemporary linguistic policies and practices. Thus, in the taxonomy under consideration, 'love' can be translated as "a fight for a fairer and more open world" (Muhr, 2025). That is, "in the creation of spaces for the acceptance, recognition and audibility of the 'Other', who is often marginalised and disrespected" (Chimbutane & Stroud, ibid.). In turn, the idea that "we should do everything we can to preserve our democracies to enable our research and contribute to the self-determination of people and the self-definition of underprivileged groups" (Muhr, 2025) helps to fuel the 'hope' of marginalised communities regarding the transformative power of the concept of Linguistic Citizenship. Through this, we can build "a better future based on the present. A future that may not have been possible to achieve in the past, but is attainable given the circumstances and aspirations of the present" (Chimbutane & Stroud, 2025, p. 258). Finally, 'caring' means reversing the neglect and marginalisation of languages and their dialectal variants. It is in a context such as this that we speak of

> *When there is variation in language, people are also able to differentiate themselves and develop an identity that may not correspond to the one demanded by political leaders. Linguistic variation is also a social variation that can only be controlled through extra effort. If it cannot be fully controlled, authoritarian systems will do whatever is necessary to extinguish*

> *the social and personal self-determination associated with linguistic variation* (Muhr, 2025).

Muhr's quote above, if applied to Portuguese-speaking African countries, clearly warrants more reflection. During the colonial era, when Portugal was under a dictatorial regime, that totalitarian regime had no interest whatsoever in embracing multilingualism, and national languages were severely suppressed and devalued. That means "colonial language policy operated on the basis of exclusion" (Chimbutane & Stroud, 2025, p. 264) rather than seeking to promote African multilingualism. As Muhr points out, this measure, to a certain extent, allowed control over the multiple identities of the various peoples inhabiting the colonies. Obviously, the Portuguese dictatorship failed to control these identities, which remained alive. With the independence of African countries, native languages gradually gained greater recognition and importance. Now, if researching pluricentric languages is a 'war', in the interests of linguistic justice and to protect the less privileged languages and their varieties, perhaps we should start by looking at the criteria we use to the criteria we use to classify a language as pluricentric, from a new, decolonial and transformative perspective.

Conclusion

We have attempted to examine the classification of two African languages, spoken in six countries in southern Africa, as pluricentric. This would require some revision of Clyne and Muhr's criteria, in light of theories originating in the Global South, where these criteria cannot be applied in the same way as in the Global North because the sociolinguistic and historical contexts are very different. This situation stems, to a large extent, from the colonial policies of certain European countries. To fail to take these policies and their consequences for languages – in our case, African languages – into account amounts to maintaining an attitude of subordination towards the native languages of the speakers. Thus, after listening to a group of speakers at the university in Maputo, we considered that their perceptions indicate that these languages are strongly identity-defining for their speakers. On the other hand, they share a strong sense of community with speakers from other countries where they are spoken. They can also identify differences depending on where the language is spoken. And they are also able to problematize issues such as the standard variety of these languages and other varieties, pointing out, for example, lexical and phonetic-phonological differences. As we have also seen, these are described languages and possess standardisation tools, such as dictionaries and textbooks. Considering all these characteristics, we argue that the *Nyanja* and *Changana* languages are, in their own way, pluricentric. We, too, are "concerned with the variability of languages and the variation within a language that spreads across the borders of several countries. Whether this fact is recognised or not is not in the hands of the researchers […]." (Muhr, 2025). Our conclusions about speakers' opinions serve as a starting point for our argument that the criteria used to determine the pluricentricity of languages need to be rethought.

We are aware that further steps could strengthen our argument. We would like to continue the research by investigating, first, how speakers of *Nyanja* and *Changana* from countries outside Mozambique view their language and their communities. It is important to know if they are aware that the language is spoken in other countries. It would also be worthwhile to draw a more consistent picture of differences between varieties of the languages, depending on the country where they are spoken. Here are our ideas for future research.

References

ADPP-Moçambique (2018). Guia de sugestões metodológicas: Xichangana e Xirhonga, 2.ª classe. ADPP.

Ammon, U. (2005). Pluricentric and divided languages. In U. Ammon (Ed.). Sociolinguistics: An international handbook of the science of language and society. De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 1536–1542.

Anderson, E. (2012). Epistemic justice as a virtue of social institutions. Social Epistemology, 26(2): 163–173.

Bamgbose, A. (1991). Language and the nation: The language question in Sub-Saharan Africa. Edinburgh University Press.

Banda, F. (2008). «Orthography design and harmonization in development in Southern Africa». Open Space, 2(3): 39–48.

Banda, F. (2016). Language policy and orthographic harmonization across linguistic, ethnic and national boundaries in Southern Africa. Language Policy, 15: 257–275.

Bardin, L. (2013). Análise de Conteúdo. Edições 70.

Benson, C. J. (2009). Designing effective schooling in multilingual contexts: Going beyond bilingual models. In: T. Skutnabb-Kangas; R. Phillipson; A. K. Mohanty & M. Panda (Eds.). Social justice through multilingual education. Multilingual Matters, pp. 37–63.

Bochner, A. (2013). Introduction: Putting meanings into action. Autoethnography's Existential Calling. In Holman Jones, S., Adams, T. E., & Ellis, C. (eds.), Handbook of Autoethnograpy. Routledge, pp. 50-56.

Bock, Z. & C. Stroud (2019). Project proposal for Mellon supra-institutional project on decolonial turn (unsettling paradigms) – 2018. Multilingual Margins, 6 (1): 89–93.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). Language and symbolic power. Polity Press.

Bowen, G. A. (2006) Grounded theory and sensitizing concepts. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5(3): 12–23. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500304.

Carrera, A. (2020). Pluricentrism and unity: Visions and managements of dialectal variation in the process of codification and standardisation of Occitan. In R., Muhr, J. A.

M., Castelles & J., Rueter (eds.), European pluricentric languages in contact and conflict. Peter Lang, pp. 111–132.

Chimbutane, F. (2009). The purpose and value of bilingual education: A critical, linguistic ethnographic study of two rural primary schools in Mozambique. PhD thesis, The University of Birmingham.

Chimbutane, F. (2018). Micro language planning and agency in the context of bilingual education provision in Mozambique. In J. Bouchard & G. P. Glasgow (Eds.) Agency in language policy and planning. Routledge, pp. 77–99.

Chimbutane. F. (2025a). Línguas, educação e cidadania em Moçambique nos períodos colonial e pós-colonial. In Chimbutane, F. & Stroud, C. (Orgs.) Ensino Bilingue em Moçambique: Um espaço para o exercício da cidadania linguística. Ethale Publishing, pp. 47-84.

Chimbutane. F. (2025b). Caminhos educacionais para a cidadania multilíngue: O caso de Moçambique. In Chimbutane, F. & Stroud, C. (Orgs.) Ensino Bilingue em Moçambique: Um espaço para o exercício da cidadania linguística. Ethale Publishing, pp. 239-252.

Chimbutane, F. (2026). «Preface». In Christian Ollivier & Silvia Melo-Pfeifer (eds), Encyclopédie de l'éducation plurilingue / Encyclopaedia of plurilingual education. Peter Lang. pp. 25-29.

Chimbutane, F. & Stroud, C. (2025). Ensino Bilingue, Cidadania linguística e transformação social. Chimbutane, F. & Stroud, C. (Orgs.) *Ensino Bilingue em Moçambique: Um espaço para o exercício da cidadania linguística.* Maputo: Publishing, pp. 253-124.

Chakraborty, A. (2024). Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Resistance. Routledge.

Clyne, M. (1992). Pluricentric Languages: Differing Norms in Different Nations. Mouton de Gruyter.

Ferrer, A. B. (2022). Le catalan en Catalogne Nord et dans les Pays Catalans. Presses universitaires de Perpignan. DOI: 10.4000/books.pupvd.40060

Fonseca, L. R. B. (2016). O Sul Global e o desenvolvimento do conceito da responsabilidade de proteger: CIBAS e o caso líbio. Master's dissertation. Universidade Federal da Paraíba (unplub).

Fraser, N. (1997). Justice interruptus: Critical reflection on the 'postsocialist' condition. Routledge.

Fricker, M. (2003). Epistemic injustice and a role for virtue in the politics of knowing. Metaphilosophy, 34(1): 151–173.

Grosfoguel, R. (2011). Decolonizing post-colonial studies and paradigms of political-economy: Transmodernity, decolonial thinking, and global coloniality. Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1(1): s/p.

Pinto, A. G. (2021). A construção da identidade da mulher num acórdão sobre violência doméstica. Revista Linguística special number: 27-48.

Guthrie, M. (1967/71). Comparative Bantu: An introduction to the comparative linguistics and prehistory of the Bantu languages. Gregg International.

Henriksen, S. M. (2026). Mozambican languages in the public sphere: An opportunity to be seized. Doris Löhr, Comfort Beyang Oben Ojongnkpot, Taiwo Oloruntoba-Oju, Bert van Pinxteren, Ayodele Yusuff (eds.), Local Languages, Global Futures - Language, Learning, and Sustainability in Africa. AVM Edition. pp. 99-122. DOI 10.23780/9783960916604

Hornberger, N. H. (1991). Extending enrichment bilingual education: Revisiting typology and redirecting policy. In O, García (Ed.). Bilingual education: Focusschrift in honour of Joshua A. Fishman (Vol. I). John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 215–234.

INE (2019). IV recenseamento geral da população e habitação 2017: Relatório final. Instituto Nacional de Estatística.

INDE/MINED (2003). Plano curricular do ensino básico. INDE/MINED.

Jankowski, N. W. & Wester, F. (1995[1991]) The qualitative tradition in social science inquiry: Contributions to mass communication research. In Jensen, K. B. & Jankowski, N. W. (eds.), A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research. Routledge, pp. 44–74.

Kaltenegger, S. (2020). Modelling Chinese as a pluricentric language. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 1: 1–12.

Kalthoff, H. (2013) Field notes: Ethnographic writing reconsidered. *Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory,* 14(3): 271–238.

Ketele, J.-M & X. Roegiers. (1993). Metodologia de recolha de dados: Fundamentos dos métodos de observação, de questionário, de entrevistas e de estudo de documentos. Instituto Piaget.

Kerfoot, C. (2025). Comentário – Tornando as ausências presentes: Política linguística a partir da base. In Chimbutane, F. & Stroud, C. (Orgs.) Ensino Bilingue em Moçambique: Um espaço para o exercício da cidadania linguística. Ethale Publishing, pp. 221 – 238.

Kristiansen, G. (2014). Introduction pluricentricity, language-internal variation and cognitive linguistics. In A. Soares da Silva (Ed.). Pluricentricity: Language variation and sociocognitive dimensions. De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 1–16.

Magona, V. (2020) Produção do livro escolar em línguas africanas: O caso da ADPP-Moçambique. Multilingual Margins: A Journal of Multilingualism from the Periphery, 7(1): 48–68.

Magona, V. (2024). Manuais didáticos em Moçambique: Entre modelos e procedimentos de produção. Linguarum Arena - Revista de Didática da Universidade do Porto, 15: 91–117.

Magona, V.; F. Wilson (2023). Concatenação de afixos em Bantu: Algumas leituras a partir da fonologia lexical. Revista de Estudos Linguísticos da Universidade do Porto, 18: 99–127.

Maho, J. F. (2009). NUGL Online: The online version of the new update Guthrie's list a referencial classification of the Bantu language (4 June 2009) Retrieved from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download;jsessionid=C698C04A6EAEBC5F6A50FCED424565B0?Doi=10.1.1.603.6490&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Maturana, H. & Caberon, E. (2018). Value and competencies in the school of the future. In Taylor, H. & Hogenbirk, P. (eds.), Information and communication technologies in education. Spring, pp. 239-247.

Mbembe, A. J. (2016). Decolonizing the university: New directions. Arts & Humanities in Higher Education, 15(1): 29–45.

Mignolo, W. (2009) «Epistemic disobedience, independent thought and de-colonial freedom». Theory, Culture and Society, 26(7/8): 159–181.

Mignolo, W. (2011). Epistemic disobedience and decolonial option: A manifesto. Transmodernity, 1(2): 44–66.

MINEDH. (2020). Estratégia de expansão do ensino bilingue: 2020 – 2029. MINEDH.

Mohanty, A. K. (2009). Multilingual education: A bridge too far? In T. Skutnabb-Kangas; R. Phillipson; A. K. Mohanty & M. Panda (Eds.). Social justice through multilingual education. Multilingual Matters, pp. 3–18.

Muhr, R. (2012). Linguistic dominance and non-dominance in pluricentric languages. A typology. In Rudolf Muhr et. al. (ed.) (2012): pp. 415-434.

Muhr, R. (2016). The state of the art of research on pluricentric languages: Where we were and where we are now. In:Rudolf Muhr, Kelen Ernesta Fonyuy, Zeinab Ibrahim, Corey Miller (eds.) *Pluricentric Languages and non-dominant Varieties worldwide.* Volume 1: Pluricentric Languages across continents – Features and usage. Peter Lang Verlag. pp. 9-32.

Muhr, R. (2025). «15 Years Research on Pluricentric Languages - Preserving Democracy and Fighting Authoritarianism for enabling research on pluricentricity». Retrieved from https://www.uc.pt/celga-iltec/pcl2025/programme/conference-programme/keynote-3/

NELIMO (1989). Relatório do 1.º seminário sobre a padronização da ortografia das línguas moçambicanas. INDE/NELIMO/UEM.

Ngunga, A. & Simbine, C. M. (2012). Gramática descritiva da língua changana. CIEDIMA.

Ngunga, A.; Manuel, C.; Langa, D.; Machungo, I. & da Câmara, C. L. (2022). Padronização da ortografia das línguas moçambicanas: Relatório do 4.º seminário. Centro de Estudos Africanos/UEM.

Ouane, A. & Glanz, C. (2011) Optimizing learning, education and publishing in Africa: The language factor. UNESCO, Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL).

Palma, E. (2017). De boca em boca: A importância de uma abordagem pluricêntrica no ensino do PLE. Anais do simpósio *SIPLE 2017.* [30 e 31 de outubro de 2017].

Quijano, A. (2010) Colonialidade do poder e classificação social. In Santos, B. de S. & Meneses, M. P. (orgs.), Epistemologias do Sul. Cortez, pp. 84–130.

República de Moçambique (RM) (2004). Constituição da República. Imprensa Nacional de Moçambique.

Reylly, C. (2016). Language use and language attitudes in Malawian universities. PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow.

Reylly, C. (2019). Language in Malawian universities: An investigation into language use and language attitude amongst students and staff. PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow.

Shaw, S., Copland, F. & Snell, J. (2015). An introduction to linguistic ethnography: Interdisciplinary explorations. In J. Snell, S. Shaw & F. Copland (eds.), Linguistic ethnography. Palgrave, pp. 1–13.

Silva, A. S da. (2016). The cognitive approach to pluricentric languages and the pluricentricity of Portuguese: What's really new? In Muhr, R. (ed.). Pluricentric languages and non-dominant varieties worldwide. Part II: The pluricentricity of Portuguese and Spanish. New concepts and descriptions. Peter Lang, pp. 13-34.

Silva, A. S da. (2018). O português no mundo e a sua estandardização: entre a realidade de uma língua pluricêntrica e o desejo de uma língua internacional. Centro de Estudos Humanísticos da Universidade do Minho.

Sitoe, B. (2014). Dicionário Changana-Português (2nd ed). Texto Editores.

Sitoe, B. & Ngunga, A. (2000). Relatório do 2.º seminário de padronização da ortografia de línguas moçambicanas. NELIMO.

Stroud, C & Kerfoot, C. (2020). Decolonizing higher education: Multilingualism, linguistic citizenship and epistemic justice. In Z. Bock & C. Stroud (Eds.). Language and literacies in higher education: Reclaiming voice from the South. Bloomsbury, pp. 1–34.

Stroud, C. (2001). African mother tongue programmes and the politics of language: Linguistic citizenship versus linguistic human rights. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 22(4): 339–355.

Stroud, C. (2007). «Bilingualism, colonialism and postcolonialism». In Heller, M. (ed.), Bilingualism: A social approach. Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 25-49.

Stroud, C. (2018). Linguistic citizenship. In Lim, L., Stroud, C. & Wee, L. (eds.), The multilingual citizen: Towards a politics of language for agency and change.: Multilingual Matters, pp. 17–39.

Stroud, C. (2025). Cidadania linguística. In Chimbutane, F. & Stroud, C. (Orgs.) Ensino Bilingue em Moçambique: Um espaço para o exercício da cidadania linguística. Ethale Publishing, pp. 19-46.

Stroud, C. & Chimbutane, F. (2025). Introdução. In Chimbutane, F. & Stroud, C. (Orgs.) Ensino Bilingue em Moçambique: Um espaço para o exercício da cidadania linguística. Ethale Publishing, pp. 253-124.

Taylor, A. (2020). A short language profile for *Chichewa* and the need for datasets. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343282582_A_short_language_profile_for_Chichewa_and_the_need_for_datasets

Torrend, S. J. (1891). A Comparative Grammar of the South African Bantu Language. Cambridge Press.

Vázquez, R. (2011). Translation and erasure: Thoughts on modernity's epistemic violence. Journal of Historical Sociology, 24(1): 27-44.

Veronelli, G. A. (2015). The coloniality of language: Race, expressivity, power, and the dark side of modernity. Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's & Gender Studies, 13: 108-134.

Watkins, A. (1937). A Grammar of Chichewa Language. Cambridge Press.

Zavale, N.C. (2026). Decolonial perspectives in plurilingual education. In Christian Ollivier & Silvia Melo-Pfeifer (eds), Encyclopédie de l'éducation plurilingue / Encyclopaedia of plurilingual education. Peter Lang.pp. 247-249.

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

LANGUAGE POLICY MANAGEMENT FOR MULTILINGUALISM IN PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING AFRICAN COUNTRIES: DISCUSSIONS FROM ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE

JEFFERSON EVARISTO
jeffersonpn@yahoo.com.br
Professor of Portuguese at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), where he teaches on the postgraduate programmes PPGLILP and PPLIN/FFP. He is currently undertaking postdoctoral research in Linguistic Studies and has previously completed postdoctoral research in Linguistics and Portuguese Language. He holds a PhD in Portuguese Language from UERJ, as well as a PhD and an MA in Neo-Latin Studies (Italian Language) from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). A recipient of the Young Scientist of Our State fellowship awarded by FAPERJ and the Procientista scholarship granted by UERJ, he is an elected member of the Brazilian Academy of Philology, where he occupies Chair 18. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7561-5400

ALEXANDRE ANTÓNIO TIMBANE
Alexandre.timbane@unilab.edu.br
Linguist whose academic career spans Brazil and Mozambique. He holds postdoctoral qualifications in Philology and Portuguese Language from the University of São Paulo (USP), in Letters from the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS), and in Forensic Linguistics from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). He also completed both a postdoctoral degree and a doctorate in Linguistics and Portuguese Language at São Paulo State University (UNESP). He holds an MA in Linguistics from Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique, and a Licentiate and Bachelor's degree in French Language Teaching from the Pedagogical University of Mozambique. He serves as a faculty member at the University for International Integration of the Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB) and the Graduate Programme in Linguistic Studies at the State University of Feira de Santana (Brazil). http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2061-9391

DANIEL PERES SASSUCO
dperesasuku@gmail.com
Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Humanities at Agostinho Neto University (Angola). He holds a PhD in General Linguistics from Atlantic International University (USA) and a PhD in Language, Culture and Society from Zambeze University, Mozambique. He earned a Master's degree in Multilingual Information and Communication Processing from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain, and a Licentiate and Bachelor's degree in Applied Pedagogy, specialising in French and African Linguistics, from the Higher Pedagogical Institute of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His teaching and research interests encompass linguistics, multilingualism, language policy, and intercultural communication. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0965-0483

Abstract

Language policy management is a significant challenge in the African Portuguese-speaking Countries (APSC). It stems from the idea that poorly constructed language policies threaten the existence of languages, reducing their preservation, and can contribute to their obliteration. In this sense, Angola and Mozambique share a common historical and linguistic past: the existence of Bantu and Khoisan African languages and their coexistence with Portuguese, a language inherited from Portugal and also the only language established for administrative services, which puts multilingualism in check. Our research aims to analyse the sociolinguistic situation of Angola and Mozambique, describing the established policies and the challenges that can contribute to the revitalization of endangered languages. This is bibliographic research (also supported by interviews) that seeks to understand how language

policies can be established that effectively contribute to the safeguarding, revitalization, and preservation of Bantu and Khoisan African languages in both contexts. In conclusion, our discussion points to the need to rethink the place of African native languages in the APSC countries and to debate the need to implement multilingual education, as well as the creation of grammars for the African varieties of Portuguese.

Keywords

Language Policies; Multilingualism; African Languages; Angola; Mozambique.

Resumo

A gestão de políticas linguísticas constitui-se como um desafio significativo nos Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa (PALOP). Parte-se da ideia de que políticas linguísticas mal construídas ameaçam a existência das línguas, reduzem sua preservação e podem contribuir para sua obliteração. Nesse sentido, Angola e Moçambique compartilham um passado histórico e linguístico comum: a existência das línguas africanas bantu e khoisan e a convivência com o português, língua herdada de Portugal e, também, a única língua instituída para os serviços administrativos, o que coloca o multilinguismo em xeque. Nossa pesquisa visa analisar a situação sociolinguística de Angola e de Moçambique, descrevendo as políticas estabelecidas e os desafios que podem contribuir para a revitalização das línguas em perigo. Trata-se de uma pesquisa bibliográfica (com suporte, também, em entrevistas) que busca entender como se pode estabelecer políticas linguísticas que efetivamente contribuam para a salvaguarda, a revitalização e a preservação das línguas africanas bantu e khoisan nos dois contextos. Ao final, nossa discussão aponta para a necessidade de se repensar o lugar das línguas originárias africanas nos PALOP e de debater a necessidade de implementar uma educação multilíngue, assim como a criação de gramáticas para as variedades africanas do português.

Palavras-chave

Políticas Linguísticas; Multilinguismo; Línguas africanas; Angola; Moçambique.

How to cite this article

Evaristo, Jefferson, Timbane, Alexandre António & Sassuco, Daniel Peres (2026). Language Policy Management for Multilingualism in Portuguese-Speaking African Countries: Discussions from Angola and Mozambique*. Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 43-63. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.2

Article submitted on 12 July 2026 and accepted on 14 August 2026.

CC BY

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 43-63
Language Policy Management for Multilingualism in Portuguese-Speaking African Countries: Discussions from Angola and Mozambique
Jefferson Evaristo, Alexandre António Timbane, Daniel Peres Sassuco

LANGUAGE POLICY MANAGEMENT FOR MULTILINGUALISM IN PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING AFRICAN COUNTRIES: DISCUSSIONS FROM ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE[1,2]

JEFFERSON EVARISTO

ALEXANDRE ANTÓNIO TIMBANE

DANIEL PERES SASSUCO

Introduction

Angola is a country located in Africa, more specifically in the Southern African region, occupying an area of 1,246,700 km². According to the final results of the Census (INEA, 2024) [3], the population is 36,604,681. With an area of [insert area here] 4.837 km, its land borders are located in the north of the province of Cabinda with Congo Brazzaville, to the north and to the east with the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), to the East with Zambia, and to the South with Namibia. In accordance with Law No. 14/24 of September 5th [4], the new Political-Administrative Division of the country was approved [5], establishing 21 (twenty-one) Provinces, 326 (three hundred twenty-six) Municipalities, and 378 (three hundred seventy-eight) Communes. On the ground, Angola is to the South of the Francophone countries of the centre and to the North of the Anglophone countries, being the only Lusophone country in this region.

Mozambique, located on the southeastern coast of Africa, is a country composed of eleven provinces, with an estimated population of over 26 million, according to the General

[1] Declaration of Interest - The author declares that there are no known financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have appeared to influence this research. The author has no competing interests to declare.

2 Acknowledgment - The author acknowledges the use of Microsoft Copilot in assisting with the improvement of English grammar, the formatting of references, and the standardization of citations in this work. All intellectual content, arguments, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the author.

[3] Retrieved from https://www.ine.gov.ao/publicacoes/detalhes/NDc0MTE%3D

[4] Retrieved from https://mpla.ao/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Lei14.24de5deSetembro.pdf

[5] Retrieved from Diário da República [Official Gazette] of November 28, 2024, Iª Série, nº 229/12938. Also, in Law nº 14/24, of September 5, of the Political-Administrative Division, which revokes Law nº 18/16, of October 17, Law of the Political-Administrative Division, and all legislation that contradicts the provisions of this Law.

Population and Housing Census conducted in 2017. The Mozambican people are characterized by their wide geographical, cultural, and linguistic diversities. With a vast territory and a multi-ethnic population, it borders Tanzania to the North, Malawi and Zambia to the northwest, Zimbabwe to the West, Eswatini and South Africa to the southwest, and is bathed by the Indian Ocean to the East. The arrival of the Portuguese language through the colonization process brought profound changes to the lives of Angolans and Mozambicans, especially from the prohibition of the use of local languages.

Thus, the consolidation of Portuguese as an official and taught language intensified its spread, especially throughout the 20th century, producing profound linguistic and social inequalities: both countries came to have Portuguese as an official language because they were overseas provinces of Portugal. During the colonial period, local languages were prohibited, and the colonial system contributed to their silence, an erasure aimed at potentiating Portuguese dominance and materializing its linguistic superiority. In the colonial context, Portuguese was a superior language that should be compulsorily learned and known by the citizens of the colonies.

Angola and Mozambique fought for and won their freedoms, proclaiming their independences in 1975. However, with power in their hands, they adopted attitudes similar to those of colonial language policies: both imitated the Portuguese government and made Portuguese the official language, to the detriment of the local languages spoken at the time by the majority of the population. The independence fighters failed to see that this strategy was an authentic erasure of the local languages that constituted the languages of the cultural identities and traditions of their respective peoples. The idea of forming the post-colonial "new man," therefore, failed, because the "new man" was supposed to abandon his traditions, cultures, languages, and religion, behaving in practice as a "non-African," a replica of a "Portuguese."

In this sense, the linguistic issue has been neglected in the African Portuguese-speaking Countries (APSC[6]), especially in Angola and Mozambique, and politicians rarely discuss the subject publicly. The universities have conducted studies and researches presenting these linguistic challenges, but the topic of languages is treated as a secondary and complementary element. For example, fifty years after independence, the sign languages have not been included in education and public institutions, multilingual/bilingual education is not promoted, and the protection and revitalization of local languages of African origin is not encouraged. The local radio stations are exceptions, providing parts of their broadcasts in local languages.

On the other hand, incentives for literary production in local languages are non-existent, public television channels ignore the presence of deaf people in both countries, and local languages are only used during election campaigns. All these concerns are considered of little interest, which explains the absence of language policies promoting locally spoken languages.

It is important to say that we do not support the idea of prohibiting the use of Portuguese in the APSC because this language allows communication between ethnic groups within

[6] The original: PALOP – Paises Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa

the country and with the outside world; however, learning a language for national and international communication does not mean abandoning local mother tongues. We, therefore, advocate for equal opportunities and respect among speakers of these languages.

This study aims to analyse how language policy management can influence the dimension of multilingualism in the APSC. We start from the idea that the similarity of political decisions has largely hindered the expansion of Angolan and Mozambican languages. Specifically, we seek to (i) explain the current linguistic situation in Angola and Mozambique; (ii) criticize established language policies, drawing attention to a future in which local languages may disappear; and (iii) explore possible paths towards a more inclusive language policy and planning that does not exclude other languages which are spoken in these territories, understanding that linguistic hierarchies are ideological and colonizing, and above all, constructs of cultural domination should be critically examined. Thus, through bibliographic and documentary research (also supported by interviews), we were able to understand the sociolinguistic reality, language management, and language policy decisions in this context.

This research is divided as follows: the first section discusses (de)coloniality, seeking to understand how linguistic ideology was implemented in the two countries. The next one, we discuss language policies, language planning, and their impacts. In sections 3 and 4, we analyse the sociolinguistic realities of Angola and Mozambique from the (de)coloniality paradigm. Finally, in the fifth section, we compare the two realities in order to present some concluding remarks.

Coloniality and decoloniality

The African case is perhaps the most evident example for a discussion of coloniality and decoloniality. Understanding its existence and implications, first, recognizing that the Portuguese overseas colonization that began in the fifteenth century went beyond the physical occupation of territories, constituting a broad project of domination, control, and the political, economic, cultural, and epistemological reorganization of the affected regions; it was also a form of linguistic domination.

Although the etymological origin of the term refers to the Latin verb *colo* , originally associated with the occupation and cultivation of land, authors such as Bosi (1992) demonstrated that the colonial process also implied the imposition of values, languages, forms of knowledge, and models of social organization that disrupted the cultures of the subjugated peoples. Colonization, in this sense, produced lasting effects that did not end with the political independence[7][8] of the former colonies (Nascimento and Bittencourt,

[7] "On November 11, 1975, a date agreed upon between Portugal and the Angolan liberation movements, Angola's independence was declared" (Pinheiro, 2007, p. 83).
"The Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) was responsible for leading the movement that culminated in the independence of Mozambique in 1975" (Rêgo, 2024, p. 22)
[8] All quotations in our text were freely translated by the authors.

2016), remaining present in power relations, institutions, and the production of knowledge.

It is precisely this permanence that underlies the concept of coloniality, developed primarily through the work of Aníbal Quijano and further developed by authors such as Mignolo (2003). From this perspective, modernity cannot be understood separately from the European colonial expansion that began in the sixteenth century. Contrary to traditional interpretations, which locate its origin in the Enlightenment or the Industrial Revolution, decolonial studies argue that the conquest of Africa and America, together with the consolidation of the colonial system constitutes the initial landmark of modernity. European centrality brought about a fundamental rupture in those colonized countries, relegating the experiences of their peoples to the status of peripheral or inferior knowledge, originating from societies equally inferior to the colonizer.

Many of today's geopolitical boundaries were imposed through the process of colonization. It was the Europeans, for example, who demarcated African territories and separated families, ethnic groups, and languages. We need only remember that no African was present at the Berlin Conference (1884/1885), the event that defined the current partition of Africa. In the context of the APSC, this reflection takes on particular relevance. Angola, Mozambique, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe, for example, experienced long processes of Portuguese colonization that left deep marks on their political, cultural, and linguistic structures. The fact that Portuguese played an important role in the construction of nation-states and in communication between different linguistic groups results from colonial policies that sought to marginalize African languages and associate the colonizer's language with social prestige, access to education, and the exercise of power.

From this perspective, decoloniality does not propose rejecting the Portuguese language or denying the shared history between these countries. Its objective is to problematize the hierarchies inherited from colonialism and to recognize the legitimacy of the multiple forms of cultural, linguistic, and intellectual production existing in these territories – and, as a consequence of this position, to act for their promotion, safeguarding, and protection, understanding these actions as fundamental issues of language policies and multilingualism. By shifting the centre of knowledge production to the historical and social experiences of the Global South, decolonial thought contributes to valuing local knowledge, strengthening national identities, and broadening the understanding of Portuguese-speaking African societies beyond the categories traditionally constructed by the Eurocentric gaze. It is, therefore, a movement that seeks to make visible historically silenced epistemologies, reaffirming the cultural and linguistic diversity that characterizes the APSC and questioning the mechanisms by which coloniality continues to produce asymmetries even after the end of formal colonial domination. Thus, the decoloniality movement can be summarized by the following assumptions: Decolonial studies share a systematic set of theoretical statements that revisit the question of power in modernity. These conceptual procedures are:

> *1. The location of the origins of modernity in the conquest of America and the control of the Atlantic by Europe, between the late 15th and early 16th*

> *centuries, and not in the Enlightenment or the Industrial Revolution, as is commonly accepted;*
>
> *2. Special emphasis is placed on the structuring of power through colonialism and the constitutive dynamics of the modern/capitalist world-system and its specific forms of accumulation and exploitation on a global scale;*
>
> *3. Understanding modernity as a planetary phenomenon constituted by asymmetrical power relations, and not as a symmetrical phenomenon produced in Europe and subsequently extended to the rest of the world;*
>
> *4. The asymmetry of power relations between Europe and its "others" represents a constitutive dimension of modernity and, therefore, necessarily implies the subordination of the practices and subjectivities of the dominated peoples;*
>
> *5. The subjugation of the majority of the world's population is established through two structural axes based on the control of labour and the control of intersubjectivity;*
>
> *6. The designation of Eurocentrism/Westernism as the specific form of knowledge and subjectivity production in modernity* (Quintero, Figueira and Elizalde, 2019, p. 5)

Originating in the Global South, the notion of decoloniality finds its first contributions from subaltern studies, pioneered in India by the research of Ranajit Guha and strongly influenced by Gramscian Marxism, constituted an important contribution to the critique of Eurocentrism and the general dynamics of colonialism during the 1980s (Quintero, Figueira and Elizalde, 2019, p. 4).

If "the second half of the 20th century was marked by a series of conflicts and events that highlighted the rupture between the colonizer and the colonized, now independent" (Rêgo, 2024, p. 21), this occurred, to a large extent, coinciding with the growing discussion about decoloniality. We have seen, with Pinheiro (2007), Rêgo (2024) and Nascimento and Bittencourt (2016), that this process, which took place in Angola and Mozambique in 1975, culminated in the liberation of these countries, then Portuguese colonies, and led to their autonomy from the former colonizing country.

This autonomy, however, could not be verified in all areas. In our analysis, this is particularly evident in the linguistic domain and directly impacts language policy issues, especially in relation to the expected Lusophony that would unite PSC or, on a more localized level, the articulation of different African countries as a cohesive group based on the APSC. The following section addresses these issues.

Language policies, language planning and their impacts

The discussion about language policies – or, more broadly, "policy" and "policies," even if not necessarily "linguistic" ones – historically dates back to the Greek world, with

Aristotle systematizing the first structured argument in this regard (although Socrates and Plato had already begun developing ideas in this direction). In Evaristo (2021a; 2021b), one can find an extensive discussion about the diverse interpretations of the concept of politics, ranging from the Greek world, Aristotle, Augustine of Hippo, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and contemporary authors, especially based on dictionaries. This long journey shows how the idea of politics is multifaceted and how different authors have appropriated it in very varied, sometimes conflicting or mutually exclusive ways. Following the discussion and bringing the idea of "politics" closer to the linguistic field, we arrive at the new concept of "language policies." Its first appearance as an autonomous idea conventionally dates back to the discussions initiated by Ferguson in 1959 (Calvet, 2007), when he systematized problematizations about the relationship between languages and societies and outlined the first aspects of the organization and management of these languages. Naturally, it is possible to find many other episodes in human history where one could say there was some discussion about what we understand today as language policy, such as the Socratic and Platonic discussions of the Greek world, the defence of the Latin language as a unifying factor of the Roman Empire, the perception of a socio dialectal variation in the 14th to 17th centuries, or even the first steps of Philology and the historical-comparative method, to cite a few occurrences. However, although they existed, these situations showed the seeds of a discussion that only centuries later would acquire a name and transform into an autonomous concept. Here, it is also possible to consider that, in a certain way, the emergence of the concept of language policy could only have occurred from the point of the very foundation of Linguistics as a science, which took place at the beginning of the 20th century.

From Ferguson's initial proposal in the late 1950s, even if not in immediate and direct connection, discussions arose regarding the position of European languages in the world, a situation in which the Portuguese language fits. This fact shows, once again, how the status of these languages remains almost perpetually high and prestigious, reinforcing their interpretation from the notion of coloniality. In Calvet (2007), for example, there is a detailed exposition of the notions of Francophonie and Anglophonie, indicating their historical development. The fact of thinking about a "Francophonie" and an "Anglophonie" - and, in our case, a "Lusophony" - is an unequivocal demonstration of how these languages expanded through processes of colonization and how they occupy places of symbolic power as a result of these events.

In this movement, we arrive at the idea of Lusophony, a theoretical construct that has been widely discussed, fundamentally because of its implications for language policies. On the one hand, we have authors such as Brito (2013), Bastos (2012), and Martins (2014), who associate – not without critical connotation – Lusophony with the linguistic and cultural rapprochement between Portuguese-speaking countries, identifying positive points and geopolitical advances in its adoption; on the other hand, we have authors such as Bagno (2017) and Faraco (2016), who will show the theoretical inconsistencies of this construct and argue that it is yet another colonial stage of Portugal, which would recolonize its former dominations from a new form of control and exercise of power. Finally, authors such as Rizzo (2019) critically discuss the implications of different ways of understanding Lusophony and how it oscillates between the imaginary of a natural

association among countries, as if they were all perfectly equal not only linguistically but also politically and socioculturally; a union of forces shaped by international geopolitics; and an epistemology of neo-colonization that should be resisted. However, regardless of how we understand Lusophony, the fact remains that it presents itself as an unavoidable form of categorization for its member countries. Thus, Lusophony is a construct that directly impacts the context of the APSC countries, the situation of Angola and Mozambique. As a political and administrative construct, the idea of APSC emerged around the 1970s, coinciding with several of the independence movements of these countries. Chabal *et al* (2002) show, for example, a fundamental problem in constructing the idea of a "Lusophone Africa." For the authors, thinking of African countries as a single linguistic unit is a reductionist view of reality, since, after their independence processes, the post-colonial trajectory of each country was such that it would be impossible to consider these countries as part of any unified bloc. Thus, starting from an epistemological discomfort with the idea of "Lusophone Africa," the work served to show how adopting the notion of APSC could be more realistic given the context of these countries: a non-homogeneous and natural union of nations on the African continent, but rather an agglomeration of countries that shared the common characteristic of maintaining Portuguese as an official and prestigious language due to their historical colonization.

The APSC, then, will be a key conceptual element in our analysis, since they will represent, at the same time: (i) the language policies of these countries, which adopted a certain bureaucratic monolingualism based on the Portuguese language; (ii) the territoriality of these countries, belonging to the African continent; and (iii) the inseparable link between language policies and coloniality. In Evaristo (2020; 2022) we can see a discussion that extends to dictionaries and shows that, in practice, little attention is paid to the concept. The management of language policies, therefore, constitutes a significant challenge in the APSC from the colonial period to the present (Timbane, 2022). In our proposal, as mentioned, we start from the idea that poorly constructed language policies threaten the existence of languages, reduce the preservation of these languages, and can contribute to their obliteration, as we will see in the analyses of the Angolan and Mozambican contexts. In this sense, the two countries share a common historical and linguistic past which, in effect, is also that of all the almost 60 African nations: "observing the 54 Constitutions [of the African nations,] it is observed that there was the inclusion of at least one European language for official status" (Timbane and Tamba, 2020, p. 99). Furthermore,

> *What is observed in the constitutions seems to be a combination of factors across countries. This is because the place of African languages is secondary or tertiary. Colonization was so intense that Africans were unable to appreciate the value of their native languages* (Timbane and Tamba, 2020, p. 99).

In this way, the existence of African Bantu and Khoisan languages, for example, is erased or diminished. This gesture amounts to a new form of linguistic colonialism - or, echoing

Phillipson's (1992) discussion, linguistic imperialism. Although Phillipson's analysis focuses on English, his observations apply by analogy to the Portuguese language in Africa - a context also deeply marked by imperialism and colonialism. As the author demonstrates, the sociopolitical dimensions—note: not merely "linguistic," but broadly "sociopolitical"—of these countries deemed subaltern are rarely considered based on their own premises; instead, they are viewed (almost) exclusively from external perspectives that disregard their actual needs.

In the preface to the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, Bokova (2010, p. 7) states: "Over recent decades, as information technologies have brought more of the world's knowledge to more of the world's people at unprecedented speed, humanity's linguistic diversity has been shrinking." This statement by the UNESCO Director aligns with our discussion and illustrates that, in the African context, the risk of such disappearance is real - specifically regarding local mother tongues, as highlighted by Firmino (2014). Thus, even though these local languages coexist with Portuguese - a language inherited from Portugal and the only one established for administrative services - this fact calls multilingualism into question (Timbane and Penha, 2022). As we indicated earlier, our research aims to analyse the sociolinguistic situation of Angola and Mozambique, describing the established policies and the challenges that can contribute to the revitalization of endangered languages, a situation in which they are minority or marginalized (Lagares, 2011). In the following section, we will address the situation of Angola in relation to its language policies.

The sociolinguistic reality of Angola: issues of language policy.

Angola achieved its independence on November 11, 1975, and adopted Portuguese as its official language. In sociolinguistic terms, Angola is a multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multilingual country. Its original population is comprised of two origins: Bantu and non-Bantu. The Bantu includes the Ovimbundu, Ambundu, Tvucokwe, Bakongo, Ovakwanyama, Vangangela, Ovahelelo, Ovanyaneka, Vambunda, Valuvale, Andembo, and Vasongo; the non-Bantu include the Khoisan [9]. People present in the provinces of Cunene, Kwando Kubango, Huíla and Namibe (Kondja, 2023, p. 32), and by the Indo-European community represented by Portuguese descendants. Bantu languages cover the entire national territory and are divided into three linguistic zones (Guthrie, 1948), as described in Maho (2009, pp. 63-86):

(i) Zone **H,** with the Kikongo (H16) and Kimbundu (H21) languages;

(ii) Zone **K** with languages Cokwe (K11), Lwimbi (K12a), Ngangela (K12b), Luchazi (K13), Lwena or Luvale (K14), Mbunda (K15), Nyengo (K16), Mbwela (K17), Nkangala (K17), Lunda Ndembo (K22); and

(iii) Zone **R** with the languages Umbundu (R11), Oshikwanyama (R21), Olunyaneka (R13), Olukumbi (R14), central Herero (R31a).

[9] Khoisan has two lexemes: khoi-, which designates people, the indigenous herders and farmers, and -San, which means hunters, gatherers.

Considering the sociolinguistic overview above, the INEA (2024) classifies the most spoken languages and those included in social communication in this order: Portuguese 71.15%, followed by *Umbundu* (22.96%), *Kikongo* (8.24%), *Kimbundu* (7.82%), *Cokwe* (6.54%), and other several languages distributed among the remaining percentages. Therefore, three groups of languages define the country's sociolinguistic landscape, namely: Portuguese, Bantu languages, and Khoisan languages. In any case, "the official language of the Republic of Angola is Portuguese" (CRA, 2010, p. 9), and the other languages are considered Angolan national languages (Oliveira, 2018).

This kind of consecration of the Portuguese language dates back to 1975, with National Independence, when it was reinforced by the Basic Law of the Education and Teaching System [10], which defined Portuguese as the language of schooling and communication. This fact ruled out both the possibility of education geared towards multilingualism/bilingualism and any possibility of adopting educational policies in this sense. Thus, the definition of Portuguese as the sole official language in Angola was accompanied by the adoption of prejudiced ideologies, cultural negligence, and devaluation and social injustice that implied seeing the world somewhat distant from the pluridiscursive, multilingual, and diverse reality of Angolan identity; consequently, the Portuguese language acted strongly as an element of silencing, isolation, and hierarchies (Oliveira, 2018).

The Constitution of the Republic of Angola (CRA, 2010) does not clearly define its role regarding the Bantu languages of Angola: even with its five revisions between 1975 and 2010, none of these occasions saw any increase in the number of languages recognized. The document only mentions Angola's multilingual status by stating that "the State values and promotes the study, teaching and use of the other languages of Angola, as well as the main languages of international communication" (CRA, 2010, p. 9 [emphasis added]). Even so, in the only article that provides legal provisions on language, the document cites "the other languages of Angola," without specifying which languages these are. Ultimately, this could include both Bantu languages and non-Bantu languages, or foreign languages from other nations. In short, there is no clear provision regarding local/national languages.

In Article 21 CRA, when listing some of the "fundamental tasks of the Angolan State" (CRA, 2010, p. 10 [emphasis added]), it only speaks, in a generic way, of "protecting, valuing and dignifying Angolan languages of African origin, as cultural heritage, and promoting their development as languages of national identity and communication". Bernardo (2026), an Angolan linguist, regarding language policies in this context, states:

> *I understand language policies in three very fundamental dimensions: those related to decisions, actions, and laws themselves. These elements are adopted by a given government to manage, promote, or restrict the use of certain languages by a specific group.*

[10] Retrieved from https://sys.portais.gov.ao/uploads/13lei_32_20_de_12_de_agosto_lei_de_bases_de_educacao_e_ensino_alteracao_a_lei_17_137004928963237a670211f_16_compressed_28b9365abc.pdf

Let us examine the Angolan context from the perspective of the CRA and the statement on language policies made by Bernardo (2026), and the result can only be one, as anticipated by the author himself:

> *Now, anyone who intends to act in the area of language policy must first decolonize their mind. This is a very fundamental element because the exercise of decolonizing the mind is an element that makes people remove the blindfold from their eyes and begin to see elements that, until very recently, were seen as fundamental to the language policy we have today in Angola. I am referring here to the language policies currently upheld by Angola, which focus on the Portuguese language and marginalize national languages.*

It is noteworthy that the Angolan Constitution does not concretely define the function of national languages, which contributes to their marginalization and secondary position in the Angolan sociolinguistic landscape. Further evidence of this can be seen in the constant confusion of nomenclatures, since the concept of "national languages" does not appear in the CRA: the document speaks, as we have seen, of "Angolan languages of African origin" or "languages of Angola," which shows a real lack of attention and consistency in language policy. When listing national symbols in Article 18 (CRA, 2010, p. 9), the national flag, the national insignia, and the national anthem are listed; nothing is said about the Portuguese language or the other languages mentioned.

In linguistic terms, therefore, the only point that is clearly defined is the fact that Portuguese is the official language of the Republic of Angola; for all other languages, the State recognizes and promotes their study and protects them as cultural heritage and identity of the indigenous peoples of Angola. Nothing more. Thus, "the official monolingual model marginalizes national languages, exacerbating social exclusion and school dropout in rural areas" (Bernardo, 2026).

> *In our view, colonial ideology was so strong that it obscured the relevance of local languages. We repeat: multilingualism had never been seen as a problem before colonization. The linguistic policy of Africans failed by denying the potential of their languages* (Timbane and Tamba, 2020, p. 99).

Thus, colonialism on the African continent is still a reality, at least linguistically, even though political-territorial and economic domination has ceased. In this context, thinking about language policies and the planning of different languages in society involves understanding that one of them will have official *status,* social prestige, and public and everyday acceptance; all the others will have to coexist with the central language, adapt to its restrictions, and seek, in their own way, to remain alive. Even so, it would be possible to ask ourselves if, from the point of view of language policies and decoloniality, there is any possible progress for the Angolan scenario. The answer given by Bernardo (2026) is direct:

> *Unfortunately, no. I say no because, until very recently, there was a proposed law for national languages that included some elements which, in turn, raised several questions, among them the conception of the status that should be attributed to national languages, because thinking about attributing a status to national languages in the Angolan context presupposes looking at the Constitution of the Republic of Angola. That's how I understand it. If we only look at the status of national languages, without considering the Constitution of the Republic of Angola, which has an article that defines Portuguese as the only official language, we will hardly give due space to national languages, which are very marginalized and segregated.*

Angola, then, is an example of a country where language policies have failed to promote the safeguarding of the country's linguistic heritage, value its linguistic diversity, or even respect the existence of these other languages. In the next section, we will examine the Mozambican context and then we will compare the two scenarios.

The sociolinguistic reality of Mozambique: issues of language policy

The official status of the Portuguese language in Mozambique dates back to the country's independence, when FRELIMO adopted it as the movement's official language:

> *It was the language of the movement—the one that could unite everyone. The name itself says it all: it was a "front," a union of all people, provided they held an anti-colonial stance. FRELIMO brought together diverse tendencies; we chose a common catalyst, and the Portuguese language served that purpose. However, this often confuses people: it does not mean that everyone spoke Portuguese* (Firmino, 2014).

Unlike what happens in Angola, in Mozambique, only Bantu languages exist. These languages are classified as such due to their common characteristics. Mozambique encompasses 4 zones, namely Zone G (G40-Swahili), Zone P (P20-Yao, P30-Makhuwa), Zone N (N30-Cewa-Nyanja, N40-Nsenga-Sena) and Zone S (S10-Shona, S50-Tswa-Ronga, S60-Kopi), according to Guthrie's classification, updated by Maho (2009).

Mozambique possesses a linguistic diversity characterized by the coexistence of Bantu languages and Portuguese, the official language, according to the CRM, the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (2004), in its Article 10. In addition to Portuguese, approximately 20 Mozambican Bantu languages are spoken in Mozambique, of which 17 already have standardized the orthography, according to Ngunga and Faquir (2011): Kimwani, Shimakonde, Ciyaawo, Emakhuwa, Echuwabu, Cinyanja, Cinyungwe, Cisena, Cibalke, Cimanyika, Cindau, Ciwute, Gitonga, Citshwa, Cicopi, Xichangana, and Xirhonga. There are also languages of Asian immigrants (Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, and Konkani, according to Maciel [2018]). There are Bantu languages from neighboring countries, spoken in the border regions: cimanyika, cishona, isiswati, isizulu, kunda, nsenga, tonga,

nindi, mwera, kokola, chewa, kunda, tawara. There are also languages classified as foreign, international and used in trade relations (English, French, Mandarin) and languages of religion (Arabic, isizulu, Swahili), in addition to Mozambican Sign Language (LMS).

This linguistic mosaic does not pose a problem for the lives of Mozambicans, as each language has its own domain of use. Firmino (2014), a renowned Mozambican linguist, when asked in an interview which language he learned first, explains:

> *It is very difficult for some Mozambicans to say what their first language is, because we are exposed to so many. The one spoken at home – which was likely the first I heard, though I cannot be certain – is a Bantu language, Gitonga, one of the many in the country. My parents live in a region where another Bantu language is also spoken; so, when I was with my friends, I had to speak a different language. And throughout my life, I went on to learn others.*

The same author (Firmino, 2014) goes on to say that "Mozambique is multilingual; people speak various languages. There are various pockets of languages, and even when we say 'multilingual', we are simplifying". Multilingualism is a normal phenomenon in each member of the communities, based on the idea that each language carries cultural traits of its speakers. We understand that if Bantu languages spoken in Mozambican territory were official, they would have greater vitality and would not experience a decrease in the number of their speakers, as the Table 1 illustrates:

Table 1. Census results for speakers of Portuguese and Bantu languages (as mother tongues)

Languages	**1980**	**1997**	**2007**	**2017**
Bantu (L1)	98.8%	93%	85.2%	79.2%
Portuguese (L1)	1.2%	6.5%	10.7%	16.5%

Source: Data from INEM (1980, 1997, 2007, 2017)

As shown in Table 1, the number of native Portuguese speakers has been increasing, while the number of Bantu languages spoken as native languages has been decreasing. From 1980 to 2017, there was a reduction in the number of native Bantu language speakers, a fact that is dangerous in a context where Portuguese is valued at the expense of African languages.

The data presented warn of the possibility of language extinction in the coming decades. A language dies when the last speaker passes away, and with them disappears a way of looking at and organizing the world specific to the community that speaks it. With the language dead, the knowledge and wisdom accumulated by that community throughout its history also disappear (Crystal, 2005). The extinction of a language is an incomparable, irreparable, and inestimable loss for human diversity. What we are analysing in this table is a gradual, slow and collective process of the disappearance of speakers of Bantu languages as mother tongues. Languages expand rapidly through

acquisition processes, not learning, because acquisition involves more everyday uses that represent the culture and life of the speech community.

We are not aware of the death of a language in the context of Mozambique, but rather of the death of varieties. There are varieties that are no longer spoken or heard. This is already a reality that warns that, soon, the death of these languages may be observed if the established language policies are not adjusted to the real context. For example, Xirhonga is a Bantu language (S54) with 4 variants, according to Bachetti (2006): (i) Xilwandle or Xikalanga, spoken in the Manhiça district; (ii) Xinondrwana, spoken in Marracuene, Maputo, Matola and Boane; (iii) Xizingili or Xiputru, spoken from kaTembe to Ponta do Ouro; and (iv) Xihlanganu, spoken in Moamba, the capital and part of the Namaacha district. The districts of Manhiça, Marracuene, Boane, Namaacha, Moamba and kaTembe are no longer inhabited by speakers of these varieties: they have become urbanized districts inhabited by people from various parts of the country, which weakens the maintenance of the Xirhonga variant.

Mozambique is not a monolingual country, and the co-officialization of local languages (of Bantu origin) would be fundamental not only for their revitalization but also for their expansion to new generations. The situation presented shows that new generations are not learning Bantu languages. These generations do not learn them because the dominant and official language has greater power compared to the local languages, which causes parents to lose interest in their acquisition. Politicians rarely debate language policy and seldom read studies and research on the subject. Languages disappear in a short period of time, and the factors leading to their disappearance are not exclusively linguistic, but markedly political and of colonial origin, as the scenario allows us to affirm.

To grant official status to a language is to give it power; it is to confer legitimacy and, above all, to give it an opportunity to be taught in schools, to be used without prejudice and without fear. We understand that "from the State's perspective, it is important to find the common factor, especially to awaken in people the awareness that they belong to the same State" as argued by Firmino (2014); however, we also understand that this common factor cannot be used to reject other linguistic forms. We believe that there are no languages superior to others, just as there are no weak, poor, or inferior languages (Soares, 2015). Timbane and Berlinck (2012) show that, at times, the linguistic prejudice of teachers is passed on to students, with many still repressing any kind of manifestation of linguistic variety, punishing errors, crossing out locally used words, deducting points on tests, and promoting the failure of students. This has undermined the self-esteem and self-confidence of students, who feel that they will never be able to perfectly master their languages, especially grammatically.

Language policy and planning, therefore, interfere with and influence the valuation or devaluation of languages. Even so, Bantu languages resist the expansion of Portuguese, as the three most spoken mother tongues continue to be Emakhuwa (26.3%), Xichangana (11.4%), and Cisena (7.8%) – even though, according to CRM (2004), Portuguese is the only official language among other national and international languages spoken in the territory. "Even now, in Mozambique, many people don't speak Portuguese"

(Firmino, 2014). This data is corroborated, for example, by the INE (2017, p. 25), which shows that:

> *In urban areas, the mother tongue with the highest percentage is Portuguese (39.2%) and is spoken most frequently at home (42.8%). Only 5.2% of the population residing in rural areas has Portuguese as their mother tongue (Table 8.1). The data show that, overall, almost half (47.4%) of the population aged 5 and over can speak Portuguese, with urban areas standing out (78.1%) compared to rural areas (31.7%).*

In rural areas, there are more women (52.1%) than men (47.9%). The women, in the vast majority of cases, who teach their children their first language. If these women have a Bantu language as their mother tongue, there is a greater likelihood of having more speakers of Bantu languages over the next few decades, since Portuguese is learned as a second language in school there. When they return home from school, students continue speaking Bantu languages, which are the languages of the community's cultures and traditions. This interaction between the few Portuguese speakers and the majority of Bantu language speakers contributes to the stabilization of the local variety of Portuguese, which linguists refer to as the "nativization" of Portuguese (Silva and Mevis, 2024).

Illiteracy is one of the major problems in Mozambican society, especially in rural areas. Schools need to move out of the city and into rural areas. More attention needs to be given to the rural population, where illiteracy rates are higher. Data from the INE (2017) shows a significant reduction in illiteracy rates, but efforts must be redoubled to truly reach rural populations. Mozambique has been independent for half a century, but progress in the linguistic and educational sectors is slow and contradicts the promises of the independence movement. Education should be a priority because no country in the world has developed without investing in the education of its people, and in the post-colonial context of the APSC, the scenario could not be different.

Angola and Mozambique: Sociolinguistic realities in comparison.

By way of comparison, Angola and Mozambique share some aspects that we would like to highlight: in the sociocultural and political-administrative domain, they are former Portuguese colonies, inherited Portuguese as their official language, and achieved independence in 1975. They suffered linguistic reprisals, forcing indigenous people, who had no right to education, to speak Portuguese (Mingas, 2000; Ngunga, 2010; Severo et al., 2014). They looked down on Bantu languages and those who spoke these, culminating in punishments for their use – which led, to a large extent, to the progressive and massive abandonment of Bantu languages.

In the realm of language policies, these countries, in the post-independence context, intended to restore the freedom, autonomy, and circulation of national languages to their peoples, so that they would feel valued and effectively integrated into the country (Sassuco 2016). Over the years, however, the situation took a new turn, since the

adoption of Portuguese as the sole official language not only created discontent but definitively established a hegemonic linguistic colonization. The sequence was even worse: until today, there are no clear language policies to guide the use and management of linguistic and cultural diversity in these countries, maintaining only the common fact of the official language as established by their constitutions.

This reality further delays the desire and hope of seeing Bantu and Khoisan languages as languages of administration and schooling, although there are now greater efforts to value multilingualism and cultural plurality in these countries. The "linguistic situation of Angola, like that of most African countries, characterized by heterogeneity where most languages are of Bantu origin and have a more or less limited and defined territorial location," writes Miguel (2014, p. 13), which leads us to consider that in these two countries, policies of linguistic oppression, exaggerated monolingualism, linguistic coloniality, linguistic exclusion, injustice, and linguistic prejudice prevail as a result of the hegemony of Portuguese. This scenario can lead, as we have seen, to the genocide of Bantu and Khoisan languages in these spaces.

Mozambique and Angola share a common historical past, that is indisputable. First, because both nations are made up of peoples of Bantu origin whose cultures and traditional practices are similar; second, because in both nations Bantu languages are spoken as the languages of the majority of the population. The term "Bantu" was coined by Guthrie to designate a set of African languages that have a common vocabulary; that have a set of invariable roots from which most words are formed by agglutination of affixes; third, because Angola and Mozambique were colonies of Portugal and their territories were demarcated by the Europeans at the Berlin Conference, with Portuguese being the only official language among dozens of local languages; fourth, because both achieved independence in 1975, after years of armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism; fifth, because in both nations the formation of [11]Portuguese-based "creoles" did not occur, a situation of linguistic contact that happened in Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

The reasons for the non-existence of creoles in Mozambique and Angola were diverse: (i) African (mother tongue) languages were used in everyday life in all contexts, beyond the specific situations of communication with the Portuguese; (ii) there were many bilingual intermediaries, such as missionaries and merchants; (iii) the territorial extension of these countries is vast, given the small number of their speakers (Portuguese) compared to the number of speakers of Bantu languages; (iv) the stability and isolation of rural groups and the low mobility strengthened these languages among autochthonous populations (Timbane, 2017); (v) both are potentially rich countries with varied natural resources, but with very poor populations and low life expectancy.

Above all, and ultimately, both countries have in common the fact that their language policies and sociolinguistic realities do not work to promote, safeguard, or protect their linguistic heritage. This, in fact, lies the main colonial problem that independence failed to resolve.

[11] The term, as described by several authors, is questionable and problematic (Bagno, 2017).

Conclusion

As we have seen, the constitutions of neither Angola nor Mozambique make any reference to Bantu or Khoisan languages that would define, protect, or promote them within their respective countries. This omission reflects a problematic approach to language policy that contributes to social injustice and reinforces the hegemony of Portuguese at the expense of indigenous languages. In doing so, it perpetuates colonial dynamics and hierarchies that have persisted beyond the independence processes of the African Portuguese-Speaking Countries (APSC). However, these actions provoke enormous dissatisfaction because they are seen as linguistic and cultural genocide that promotes the erasure of these languages and their cultures for future generations. This represents a genuine lack of linguistic planning and encourages a linguistic and sociocultural devaluation of the legitimate peoples of this immense multilingual and multicultural territory. Ultimately, the management of linguistic policies in the two countries, we analysed, does not promote multilingualism or concern itself with the preservation of local languages.

Angola and Mozambique share very similar sociolinguistic realities, including challenges in teaching the Portuguese language and managing other languages, which are frequently and imminently at risk of extinction. At the same time, Angolan Sign Language (LGA) and Mozambican Sign Language (LMS) still lack accommodation and support from their respective states, which also means that established language policies are not inclusive. Angolan and Mozambican varieties of Portuguese are present in the daily lives of teachers and students, and their existence cannot be ignored; however, teachers need to engage in debates on the subject, especially given that these varieties do not coincide with the variety of Portuguese spoken in Portugal. Bringing discussions about linguistic variation into the classroom is a necessary, positive, and, in this context, courageous attitude, since presenting students with the different varieties and forms of language use is an important step in combating linguistic prejudice.

A language policy management approach for multilingualism is one that values local languages and offers equal opportunities for development, a principle also defended in other official international documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996), which states that all linguistic communities have the right to self-organize, ensure their survival, and have their languages represented in socio-political and administrative functions, while also maintaining the right to officialize them, create mechanisms for standardization and normalization, without having to submit to external influences. This guarantees – or should guarantee – a more efficient language policy management, as it would make it possible to preserve and promote the teaching and preservation of local languages in the PALOP countries.

No foreigner will value local languages on behalf of Angolans or Mozambicans, meaning that, this language policy action must come from Africans themselves. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, historian and philosopher, in his work "When Africa Will Come," argues that Africa cannot achieve "endogenous development" without the use of local languages, because they are the means of understanding its world, making it necessary to "return to literacy and schooling in African mother tongues" (Ki-Zerbo, 2006, p. 17). Both Angola and

Mozambique have constitutional indications that the State should be concerned with national languages, even if this is superficial and vague in these documents. This makes it clear that the legislator's discourse does not align with decisions on language policies. The promotion of Angolan and Mozambican languages remains a wish, the teaching of these languages is still in the realm of imagination, and their use continues to be undervalued. In this sense, the languages of the Khoisan group are the ones that suffer the most prejudice and social exclusion, due to the isolation of their peoples.

The effective management of multilingualism in Angola and Mozambique depends on the recognition by state institutions of the sociocultural, historical, and communicative roles played by indigenous languages. Such recognition must be accompanied by measures aimed at their preservation, protection, and promotion through comprehensive linguistic, educational, and public policies. Official recognition of these languages would represent a significant step toward their revitalization and the mitigation of ongoing language shift and speaker decline. Moreover, sustained state support for literary, cultural, and artistic production in indigenous languages is essential for safeguarding linguistic diversity and sustaining multilingualism within these societies. By contrast, the continued marginalization of local languages is likely to accelerate processes of language attrition, contributing to linguistic homogenization and potentially culminating in language extinction, or linguicide, in the coming decades.

References

Bachetti, C. (2006). *Gramática da língua Ronga*. Paulinas Editorial. Maputo.

Bagno, M. de A. (2017). *Dicionário crítico de sociolinguística*.

Bastos, N. B. (2012). *Língua portuguesa: Aspectos linguísticos, culturais e identitários*. EDUC

Bernardo, Ezequiel. (16 de junho de 2026). *Se a gente aqui disser que não existe um português de Angola, a gente está doente e é preconceituoso*. Recurso. Retrieved from https://recurso.info/se-a-gente-aqui-disser-que-nao-existe-um-portugues-de-angola-a-gente-esta-doente-e-e-preconceituoso/

Brito, R. H. P. (2013). Sobre lusofonia. *Verbum,* 4, 6–19

Bokova, I. (2010). Preface. In C. Moseley (Ed.), *Atlas of the world's languages in danger* (3rd ed., pp. 6–7). UNESCO Publishing. https://lenguasdearagon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Atlas-of-the-World-Languages.pdf

Bosi, A. (1992). *Dialética da colonização*. Companhia das Letras.

Calvet, L.-J. (2007). *As políticas linguísticas.* Parábola Editorial; IPOL.

Chabal, P., Birmingham, D., Forrest, J., Newitt, M., Seibert, G., & Andrade, E. S. (2002). *A history of postcolonial Lusophone Africa*. Indiana University Press

Cristine, G. Severo; Bento, Sitoe e José, D. Pedro (2015). Estão as línguas nacionais em perigo? 1ª ed. Escolar Editora. Cadernos de Ciências Sociais, ISBN9789725924563.

Crystal, D. (2005). *A evolução da linguagem.* Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed., 2005.

Cunha, A. G. da. (2010). *Dicionário etimológico da língua portuguesa*. Lexikon.

Evaristo, J. (2021a). O conceito de política no período antigo e medieval: Maquiavel e Aristóteles como bases epistemológicas da política contemporânea. *Medievalis, 7*, 1–9.

Evaristo, J. (2021b). Do bem comum da *Pólis* em direção à Cidade de Deus: O conceito de política em Agostinho de Hipona em comparação com Aristóteles. *Medievalis, 7*, 1-9.

Faraco, C. A. (2016). *História sociopolítica da língua portuguesa.* São Paulo: Parábola Editorial

Firmino, G. (2025). A situação do português no contexto multilíngue de Moçambique. *Comunicação apresentada no Colóquio sobre diálogos Culturais em contexto Post-Colonial*, Universidade de Genébra, Suíça (UC), aos 10-11 de Dezembro 2015.

Firmino, Gregório. (24 de janeiro de 2014). *Os limites da Lusofonia, segundo o linguista Gregório Firmino, de Moçambique*. Recurso. Retrieved from https://ventosdalusofonia.wordpress.com/2014/02/02/os-limites-da-lusofonia-segundo-o-linguista-gregorio-firmino-de-mocambique/

Guthrie, M. (1948). *The classification of Bantu languages*. London: Oxford University Press.

Instituto Nacional de Estatística de Angola (2014, 2016, 2024). *Resultados definitivos: Recenseamento Geral da População e Habitação 2011.* Luanda: INE.

Instituto Nacional de Estatística de Moçambique. (2017, 2007, 1997, 1980). *Recenseamento Geral da População e Habitação.* Maputo: INE.

Ki-Zerbo, J. (2006). *Para quando África?* Entrevista com René Holenatein. Trad. Carlos Aboim de Brito. Rio de Janeiro: Pallas.

Lagares, X. C. (2011). Minorias linguísticas, políticas normativas e mercados. In X. C. Lagares & M. Bagno (Orgs.), *Políticas da norma e conflitos linguísticos*. Parábola.

Maho, J. F. (2009). *The Online Version of the New Update Guthrie List*, a Referential Classification of the Bantu Languages, NUGL Online.

Martins, M. de L. (2014). Língua portuguesa, globalização e lusofonia. In N. B. Bastos (Ed.), *Língua portuguesa e lusofonia*. EDUC.

Mignolo, W. (2003). *Histórias locais* / projetos globais. UFMG.

Miguel, Maria Helena (2014). *Dinâmica da pronominalização no português de Luanda*. Luanda: Mayamba Editora.

Mingas, Amélia (2000). *Interferência do Kimbundu no português falado em Luanda*. Luanda: Chá de Caxinde.

Moçambique (2004). *Constituição da República de Moçambique*. Maputo: Assembleia da República.

Nascimento, A., & Bittencourt, M. (2016). Quatro décadas de independência: da cartilha ideológica às contingências políticas e sociais nos PALOP. *Estudos Ibero-Americanos*, 42(3), 797–814. https://doi.org/10.15448/1980-864X.2016.3.25663

Ngunga, A. (2015). *Introdução à linguistica bantu.* Maputo: Imprensa Universitária.

Ngunga, Armindo (2010). *A problemática de interferências das línguas moçambicanas na língua portuguesa*. 1 ed.

Oliveira, Heloisa (2018). Tramontim de. Língua Portuguesa em Angola: silenciamentos, isolamentos e hierarquias*. Revista da ABRALIN*, [S. l.], v. 17, n. 2.

Pinheiro, L. (2007). "Ao vencedor, as batatas": o reconhecimento da independência de Angola. *Revista Estudos Históricos*, *1*(39), 83-120.

Quintero, P., et al. (2019). *Uma breve história dos estudos decoloniais*. MASP.

Rêgo, A. S. (2024). O Processo de Independência dos PALOP: Uma Análise da Independência de Moçambique e sua Trajetória. *Revista CEDEPEM,* 4(3).

Rizzo, M. F. (2019). Discusiones actuales en torno a la lusofonía: Panorama de los estudios sobre política internacional del portugués. *Trabalhos em Linguística Aplicada*, 58(1), 287–312.

Sassuco, Daniel Peres (2016). Pistas essenciais para um Português de Angola. In *kadila. Culturas e ambientes.* Diálogos Brasil-Angola, Blücher. Pp. 199-218,

Timbane, A. A. (2012). Os estrangeirismos e os empréstimos no português falado em Moçambique. *Cadernos de Estudos Linguísticos,* Campinas, SP, v. 54, n. 2, p. 289–306, 2011.

Timbane, A. A**.** (2022). Políticas linguísticas de internacionalização do português nos Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa: Caminhos e desafios do português africano. *Revista de Estudos de Português Língua Internacional, 2*(2), 187–205.

Timbane, A. A., & Tamba, P. (2020). A política linguística na África e situação das línguas autóctones na educação: Uma análise crítica das Constituições. *Revista Digital de Políticas Linguísticas, 12*, 85–105.

Timbane, A. A.; Berlinck, R. de A. (2022). A norma-padrão europeia e a mudança linguística na escola moçambicana. *Revista Gragoatá:* Revista dos Programas de Pós-Graduação do Instituto de Letras. Niterói, n.32, p.207-226.

Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights. (1996). Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights [Declaração Universal dos Direitos Linguísticos]. World Conference on Linguistic Rights.

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

AMILCAR CABRAL: REWRITING HISTORY THROUGH POETIC DICTION

VERA BORGES
borgesvera@cityu.edu.mo
Associate Professor in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the City University of Macau (China), where she coordinates the Portuguese Language Programme. She holds a PhD in Literature from the University of Lisbon. Prior to joining the City University of Macau, she taught at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon and at the University of Saint Joseph (Macau), where she served as Coordinator of the Department of Portuguese Studies. Her research focuses on postcolonial studies, intercultural studies, World Literature, comparative literature, Portuguese-language literatures, and the didactics of Portuguese as a foreign language. She has published extensively in these fields, with particular attention to cultural representations, literary circulation, and intercultural encounters within the Portuguese-speaking world. Among her recent publications, A contas com o império: imagens a Oriente na poesia em português (2024) stands out as a significant contribution to the study of representations of the East in Portuguese-language poetry. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3893-7360

Abstract

The discourse on Africa, particularly from an African perspective, challenges the dominant narratives shaped by European glorification since the 15th century. As articulated by Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe, writing about Africa necessitates a corrective approach to the narratives that glorify the European endeavor that has lacerated the African continent for centuries. History over history, landscape over landscape; thus, the European domination that obliterated the existing order must, in turn, be disavowed, exposed, and redacted in the rewriting that corrects it. Mbembe highlights the importance of restitution and reparation—sine qua non, the effects of the "colonial wound" (W. Mignolo, 2005) cannot be resolved: "Reparation, furthermore, is necessary due to the cuts and scars left by history" (Mbembe, 2017). We will explore how this necessary reparation of history is reflected in some poems by Amílcar Cabral, which grapple forcefully with the myths arising from the "dreamily imperial" vision (Eduardo Lourenço, 2014) that has shaped much of the literature written in Portuguese. Paradoxically, writing about Africa and reclaiming its history from the epistemology of bad faith, constructed by a hegemonic Eurocentric perception, has required many African authors to engage with the symbols that embody this ideology. Committed to the liberation struggle of his homeland and the African continent from the bonds of colonial oppression, Amílcar Cabral understood the struggle for emancipation as an act of culture, rooted in the reclamation of the cultural identity of the oppressed. In a time very different from today, and for a spirit mobilized by what would become the effective struggle—the revolution and the war to be fought, both in the minds and on the fields—against colonial oppression, as experienced by Cabral, the time is not (yet) one for demanding reparation in the terms proposed by Mbembe. However, in his poetry, one recognizes a subtle but persistent gesture of rewriting or correcting a mythical vision that supports a particular history and the epistemology it entails. We will reflect on the significance of the symbols that emerge from

this puzzle of reconstructing a historical narrative, articulating it with more recent poetic expressions that elaborate on the theme of the need for reparation as a cornerstone for identity building.

Keywords

Poetry; history; symbol; colonialism; reparation.

Resumo

O discurso sobre África, particularmente a partir de uma perspetiva africana, desafia as narrativas dominantes moldadas pela glorificação europeia desde o século XV. Como articulado pelo filósofo camaronês Achille Mbembe, escrever sobre África exige uma abordagem corretiva das narrativas que glorificam a empresa europeia que lacerou o continente africano durante séculos. História sobre história, paisagem sobre paisagem; assim, a dominação europeia que obliterou a ordem existente deve, por sua vez, ser desautorizada, exposta e reconfigurada na escrita que a corrige. Mbembe destaca a importância da restituição e da reparação — sine qua non, os efeitos da "ferida colonial" (W. Mignolo, 2005) não podem ser resolvidos: "A reparação, além disso, é necessária devido aos cortes e cicatrizes deixados pela história" (Mbembe, 2017). Exploraremos como esta necessária reparação da história se reflete em alguns poemas de Amílcar Cabral, que lidam de forma contundente com os mitos decorrentes da visão "oniricamente imperial" (Eduardo Lourenço, 2014) que moldou grande parte da literatura escrita em português. Paradoxalmente, escrever sobre África e resgatar a sua história da epistemologia da má-fé, construída por uma perceção eurocêntrica hegemónica, exigiu que muitos autores africanos se confrontassem com os símbolos que corporizam essa ideologia. Comprometido com a luta de libertação da sua pátria e do continente africano dos laços da opressão colonial, Amílcar Cabral entendia a luta pela emancipação como um ato de cultura, enraizado na reconquista da identidade cultural dos oprimidos. Num tempo muito diferente do atual, e para um espírito mobilizado por aquilo que viria a ser a luta efetiva — a revolução e a guerra a travar, tanto nas mentes como nos campos — contra a opressão colonial, tal como vivida por Cabral, o momento não é (ainda) o de exigir reparação nos termos propostos por Mbembe. Contudo, na sua poesia, reconhece-se um gesto subtil mas persistente de reescrita ou correção de uma visão mítica que sustenta uma determinada história e a epistemologia que esta acarreta. Refletiremos sobre o significado dos símbolos que emergem deste puzzle de reconstrução de uma narrativa histórica, articulando-o com expressões poéticas mais recentes que desenvolvem o tema da necessidade de reparação como pedra angular para a construção identitária.

Palavras-chave

Poesia; história; símbolo; colonialismo; reparação.

How to cite this article
Borges, Vera (2026). Amilcar Cabral: Rewriting History Through Poetic Diction. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 64-86. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.3

Article submitted on 14 July 2026 an accepted on 18 August 2026.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 64-86
Amilcar Cabral: Rewriting History Through Poetic Diction
Vera Borges

AMILCAR CABRAL: REWRITING HISTORY THROUGH POETIC DICTION[1]

VERA BORGES

Onde a poesia não estiver nada de real pode ser fundado. (…)
A poesia é primordial e anterior à política.
[wherever poetry is not present, nothing real can be founded. (…)
Poetry is primordial and prior to politics.]
Andresen (1977)

Introduction

The discourse on Africa, particularly from an African perspective, challenges the dominant narratives shaped by European glorification since the 15th century. As articulated by Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe (2017), writing about Africa necessitates a corrective approach to the narratives that glorify the European endeavour that has lacerated the African continent for centuries. History over history, landscape over landscape; thus, the European domination that obliterated the existing order must, in turn, be disavowed, exposed, and redacted in the rewriting that corrects it. Mbembe highlights the importance of restitution and reparation - sine qua non, the effects of the "colonial wound" (W. Mignolo, 2011) cannot be resolved: "Reparation, furthermore, is necessary due to the cuts and scars left by history" (Mbembe, 2017, p.183). We will explore how this necessary reparation of history is reflected in some poems by Amílcar Cabral, which grapple forcefully with the myths arising from the "dreamily imperial" vision (Lourenço, 2018) that has shaped much of the literature written in Portuguese. Paradoxically, writing about Africa and reclaiming its history from the epistemology of bad faith, constructed by a hegemonic Eurocentric perception, has required many African authors to engage with the symbols that embody this ideology. One of the difficulties has been the use of Portuguese, the 'language of the colonizer' and one of the six 'imperial languages' (Mignolo, 2011, p. 47) - an issue still being dealt with today, and one that Amílcar Cabral addresses in his writings, not without causing controversy and discomfort, as we shall see.

[1] Declaration of Interest - The author declares that there are no known financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have appeared to influence this research. The author has no competing interests to declare.

Presented at Lisbon's Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation from November 15, 2024, to January 13, 2025, *dance not dance* marked the seventh edition of the project *For a Timeline to Be – genealogies of dance as an artistic practice in Portugal*, initiated in 2016 by Ana Bigotte Vieira and João dos Santos Martins. The exhibition concluded a two-year program of performances, talks, and films researching New Portuguese Dance and mapping histories omitted from mainstream art and cultural narratives[2].

Writing for *Buala*, Rui Eduardo Paes presents an in-depth appraisal of the exhibition, its context, and its significance. Particularly noteworthy is his understanding of New Dance - and of the exhibition itself - as "something imminently political," an "embodied staging" of what Chantal Mouffe names as conflict, at the very core of the building of a society aspiring "to be free and equal", opposed to consensus. Paes notes that *dance not dance* "incorporates the cultural genealogies of African dances and those of the Black diaspora in the Americas", spanning "from Josephine Baker to the National Ballet of Guinea-Bissau, (…) and from Charleston to breakdancing", thereby attesting to "the process of contamination of the Western (and Portuguese) coloniser by colonised and neocolonised Africa after independence." According to Paes, the exhibition also echoes "Samuel R. Delany, Octavia Butler, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Robert Springett, Funkadelic, Earth, Wind and Fire, Lil Nas X, Afrika Bambaataa, Herbie Hancock and Sun Ra" … Likewise, it resonates with "the exaltation of Blackness by Léopold Senghor, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, Amílcar Cabral, Agostinho Neto, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), James Baldwin, and bell hooks." This framework, states Paes, is not explicitly referred to, but should instead be perceived "as a meta-narrative" (Paes, 2026).

Amílcar Cabral holds a place of his own in the genealogy of eminent revolutionary leaders and intellectuals, particularly in relation to "the exaltation of Blackness." His thought and life serve as a source of inspiration for a global project of social transformation - here articulated through an insurgent artistic practice centred on dance, 53 years after his death. Let us try to understand why he is perceived as exemplary through the lens of poetry: first, through that written by others, and secondly, through his own.

The myth: the "African Guevara"

Amilcar Cabral met a treacherous and violent death in 1973, in Guinea-Conakry, at the hands of two fellow party members from the very organization he had founded in 1959, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC). The involvement of the Portuguese authorities was not ruled out at the time. The shock caused by the passing of a political leader of his stature and the tragic circumstances of his assassination made a profound impression on his contemporaries. Let us dwell on a few poetic expressions in which his figure and his death are evoked.

Alda Espírito Santo, a native of São Tomé and Príncipe and a foundational figure both for the liberation struggle and for the poetry that echoed it, met Amílcar Cabral—the son of

[2] Source: https://gulbenkian.pt/en/agenda/exhibition-dance-not-dance/

Cabo Verdeans born in Guinea-Bissau - in Lisbon when they were both university students. The Casa dos Estudantes do Império (House of Students of the Empire), created in Lisbon in 1943–44 by the *Estado Novo* to domesticate university students arriving from the then-designated overseas provinces, quickly inverted the purpose of its creation, becoming a center for revolutionary thought and the anti-colonial movement they spearheaded, and founding a Centre for African Studies. Many of them emerged as distinguished political leaders, writers, and artists, committed to the fight against colonialism and the liberation of their native territories, which had been under Portuguese rule since the 15th century.

Alda Espírito Santo wrote a beautiful "Requiem for Amilcar Cabral", dated from "20/1/73", the day of his death:

Chora terra bem amada
O teu filho bem amado
Morto fisicamente
Por balas assassinas.
Guevara de África
te baptizaram
Dias antes
Da cilada trágica.
Na historia da terra africana.
Teu nome ímpar
apontará aos filhos
do país natal
a dignidade da tua vida
Cimentada com teu sangue
Cimentada com
o sacrifício da existência inteira
a esperança do futuro
Duma terra sem madrasta.
As páginas do porvir
Contarão ao mundo

[Weep, beloved land
Your beloved son
Physically dead
By murderous bullets.
Guevara of Africa
they baptized you
Days before
The tragic trap.
In the history of the African land.
Your unique name
will point out to the children
of your native country
the dignity of your life
Cemented with your blood
Cemented with
the sacrifice of your whole existence
the hope of the future
Of a land without a stepmother.
The pages of the future
Will tell the world

a força da tua personalidade dinâmica
ao serviço da tua inteligência
Canalizada
Para os arrozais
da parcela
do golfo enquistado
onde mãe Iva
te doou à terra
Não chores mãe Iva.
A terra de África inteira
De pé
A teu lado
Saúda a figura gigante
Do Grande Líder
Da África Ocidental

the strength of your dynamic personality
at the service of your intelligence
Channelled
To the rice fields
of the plot
of the enclave gulf
where mother Iva
gave you to the land
Do not weep, mother Iva.
The land of all Africa
Standing
By your side
Salutes the giant figure
Of the Great Leader
Of West Africa

Terra bem amada *O sangue do herói* *Será transfusão* *Nos anais da tua história.* *(Santo, 1978, p.117-118)*[3]	*Beloved land* *The hero's blood* *Will be a transfusion* *In the annals of your history.]*

According to gender conventions, the poem is a funeral elegy, lamenting someone's passing and praising the dead. Anthropological research states that at the roots of this genre, in various parts of the globe, dirges were chanted by female voices. This ritual of farewell, which marks the process of mourning and was taken on by women, fulfilled two purposes: to console the community going through loss, allowing them to experience a catharsis of their grief, and at the same time to free the deceased, allowing for their transition to the afterlife. This afterlife where Alda Espírito Santo's lament places Cabral involves him deeply in the destiny of the mourning community. This farewell and panegyric transform into a tribute to Cabral as a symbol of the revolution—the "Guevara of Africa"—, a martyr guaranteeing "the hope of the future," "Cemented with your blood / Cemented with the sacrifice of an entire existence." Emotion and solemnity mark the towering rise of the leader to the scale of the continent he emblematizes and which his death will galvanize: "The land of all Africa / Standing / (…) / Salutes the giant figure / Of the Great Leader / Of West Africa. / Well-beloved land, / The hero's blood / Will be a transfusion / In the annals of your history."

Two other women, younger poets, include tributes to Cabral in their work, confirming the tutelary and revolutionary nature of the figure invoked by Alda Espírito Santo. Vera Duarte, a Cabo-Verdean poet, dedicates her "The primordial poem" to Amilcar Cabral:

então *a tua voz* *feita das vozes* *ecoou* *(…)* *cruzando o céu das ilhas* *circulou por África* *pelas terras verdes da Guiné* *pelas terras secas do Sudão* *e fez-se ouvir na Europa* *fez-se ouvir nas Américas* *fez-se ouvir pelo mundo* *Do teu gesto singelo* *do teu olhar solidário* *do aperto caloroso da tua mão* *Brotou o sangue redentor* *do poema primordial*	*[Then* *your voice* *made of the voices* *echoed* *(…)* *crossing the sky of the islands* *circled through Africa* *through the green lands of Guinea* *through the dry lands of Sudan* *and made itself heard in Europe* *made itself heard in the Americas* *made itself heard throughout the world* *From your simple gesture* *from your solidary glance* *from the warm grip of your hand* *Sprouted the redeeming blood* *of the primordial poem*

[3] Unless an alternative source is credited, all poem translations are by the author.

com que construímos o futuro
E porque amo
o teu gesto e a tua gesta
ofereço-te nesta canção
o som desta nação
que não deixaste aprisionar
no seu destino colonial
(2018, p.37-38)

with which we build the future
And because I love
your gesture and your heroic deeds
offer you in this song
the sound of this nation
that you did not allow to be imprisoned
in its colonial destiny]

Once again, Cabral assumes gigantic proportions, gaining a global dimension, starting from his original impact in Africa: "your voice/ made of the voices/ of all the voices// echoed (…) crossing the sky of the islands/ circled through Africa/ through the green lands of Guinea/ through the dry lands of Sudan// and made itself heard in Europe/ made itself heard in the Americas/ made itself heard throughout the world". The praise delves into the proximity, the warmth, and the reality of his imagined and idealized presence: "From your simple gesture/ from your solidary glance/ from the warm grip of your hand". Like in Espírito Santo, Amílcar's Duarte becomes the soil from which redemption sprouts, the sacrificial lamb whose martyrdom justifies and empowers the revolutionary African who received his legacy: "Sprouted the redeeming blood/ of the primordial poem/ with which we build the future". Poetry and the fight against colonialism are one and the same. His actions (*gesto*) are deeply correlated with the heroic legend he became (*gesta*), and he is hailed as the liberator of the nation: "And because I love/ your gesture and your heroic deeds (*gesta*)/ I offer you in this song/ the sound of this nation that you/ did not allow to be imprisoned/ in its colonial destiny".

Conceição Lima, a São Toméan poet from Duarte's generation who refers to the assassination of Cabral as a scar (Lima, 2011, p. 85), sings of him in much the same terms: "Chove na capital que morto libertaste" ("Rain falls upon the capital you freed in death"). This line brings together the death of the guerrilla leader and the liberation he brought about through his sacrifice (Lima, 2011, p.89).

Duarte apeals to the "Jovem inconformado" ["Unresigned youth"], who "Do sonho à doce utopia (…) te entregaste à luta (…) Em tempos de pesadelo colonial// Tu que és Amílcar e Aristides (…) / E és tantos e tantas / combarentes da liberdade" ["from the dream to the sweet utopia (...) you gave yourself to the struggle (...) In times of colonial nightmare // You who are Amílcar and Aristides (...) / And you are so many, men and women / freedom fighters"] (Duarte, 2018, p.39). Hence, Amílcar Cabral is hailed in a persistent African poetic tradition of songs of mourning and praise as an iconic model for African revolutionary youth. He is still the object of a tribute payed to him with exalted gratitude.



Amílcar!
Há hélice & sonho
na raiz da árvore que tomba
Há sangue e ombro
na pele do tambor que rompe

E da pedra
E do Sol
Que move
O sangue e o rosto da pirâmide
Não há Janeiro
Não há Novembro
Que não seja
Uma península de dor
Entre duas bandeiras
(Fortes, 2010, p.268-269)

Amílcar!
There is a propeller and a dream at the root of the tree that falls
There is blood and a shoulder in the skin of the drum that breaks

And of the stone
And of the Sun
That moves
The blood and the face of the pyramid
There is no January
There is no November
That is not
A peninsula of pain
Between two flags

In the recurrent African stream of tribute to Amílcar Cabral, his name is always synonymous with affection, utopian dreams, and idealism, but also with pain and struggle ("There is a propeller and a dream at the root of the tree that falls// There is blood and a shoulder/ in the skin of the drum that breaks"), celebrated as an inseparable whole (" A peninsula of pain /Between two flags"), as seen in the poem entitled "Amílcar" by the Cabo Verdean poet Corsino Fortes. *Mantenhas para quem luta! A nova poesia da Guiné-Bissau [Mantenhas to those who fight! The new poetry of Guinea-Bissau*] is a collection of texts by several poets that was edited by the National Council of Culture in 1977, in Bissau, Guiné, and re-edited in 1993. The title, in creole, means "Warm greetings to those who carry on the fight." We will dwell on two poets published in this antology who evoke Cabral and his perennial meaning and value. The Guinean Tony Tcheka (António Soares Lopes Jr.) grounds his appeal for the people's heroic commitment to the future in the merit of Cabral and other legendary references, dreaming of a future with no more "Botas estrangeiras espezinhando o nosso sentimento/ A nossa cultura …/A nossa razão …" [No more "Foreign boots trampling our feelings / Our culture … / Our reason …"]. Again, Amilcar's blood, his sacrifice, along with his moral virtues – a deep sense of service and humility –, are at the root of the people's unity and fight against any kind of oppression, striving for freedom, dignity and identity:

Mantenhas trago para ti
Mantenhas de quem o povo serviu
Mantenhas de quem, sendo simples
Grandemente o povo serviu
Mantenhas daquele que sucumbindo
Com o próprio sangue o inimigo acertou
(A luta é assim, exige Sacrifícios)
(Tcheka, 1993)

[Mantenhas I bring to you
Mantenhas from one who served the people
Mantenhas from one who, being humble,
Greatly served the people
Mantenhas from he who, in falling,
Struck the enemy with his own blood
(The struggle is like this, it demands sacrifices)]

The Guinean poet Nagib Said is one of those who continue to pay homage to Cabral as a top reference for their moral and total engagement with their nation's progress: "E juro-te, farei como tu fizeste./ Darei o meu sangue palpitante por esta terra bem amada,(…) Quero que saibas/ No frio da tua tumba,/ Que o faço com orgulho e esperança /(…) Por uma Guiné e Cabo Verde voltados para o progresso". ["And I swear to you, I will do as you did. I will give my throbbing blood for this beloved land, (…) I want you to know, In the chill of your tomb, That I do it with pride and hope/ (…) For a Guinea and Cabo Verde turned toward progress"]. Nagib Said publishes an hymn to poetry, as a driving foundational force: "Dizem-me que não há poesia na minha terra,/ Mas eu não me submeto!/ (…) Nós somos poetas (…) / Nós somos poesia. E,/ Se somos poesia…/ São para vós os poemas que eu canto,/ Madrugadas do meu país,/ Poemas de dor e de riso em gargalhadas,/ Poemas de força, poemas de mim". ["They tell me there is no poetry in my land, / But I do not submit! / (…) We are poets (…) / We are poetry. And, / If we are poetry… / The poems I sing are for you, / Dawns of my country, / Poems of pain and of bursting laughter, / Poems of strength, poems of me"] (Said, 1993). We will see that Cabral shared this very same inspirational vision of poetry, which continues to drive idealistic young poets bound by a love for their nation.

Culture, Poetry, and Emancipation

Hence, Amílcar Cabral is perceived as a mythical figure in various pantheons—in that of the struggle for his country's independence, in that of the great leaders of the anti-colonialist struggle in Africa, and in that of the great thinkers and political leaders of the 20th century, whose lessons can benefit all those interested in the fight against oppression and the construction of a more just society. A man of action and a theorist of the revolution he set in motion, he always distinguished himself through his assertion as a man of culture—an intellectual who defined culture as the fundamental piece of resistance against oppression, particularly imperialist oppression in its colonialist dimension. In the opening of his "National Liberation and Culture," delivered in 1970 , as part of Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture, he cites the caricatured but highly significant episode of Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister, who would draw his pistol from its holster every time he heard the word "culture" (Cabral, 1974, p.12).

The emancipation struggle was, for Cabral, an act of culture, says the Guinean writer Odete da Costa Semedo, and is rooted in the reclamation of the oppressed's cultural identity (Andrade, 2018).

The complete domination of one people over another would always involve the annihilation of their cultural identity, which is simultaneously a fruit of their history and that which determines it, giving it form and meaning. The "especially backward Portuguese colonialism" (another quote from Cabral) reflected this need to erase the history of the other through its policy of assimilation - the denial of an African identity (Cabral, 1973, p.7).

The question I am interested in discussing here concerns the poet. "Amílcar Cabral, in his youth, was essentially a poet," states the Cabo Verdean author José Luís Hopffer Almada (Andrade, 2018). Ever since his days as a high school and university student, he bore witness to himself through poetry. In a 1946 text published in *Seara Nova*,when he is 22 years old, he writes in a poem entitled "A minha poesia":

A minha poesia sou eu
… Não, Poesia:
Não te escondas nas grutas de meu ser,
não fujas à Vida.
Quebra as grades invisíveis da minha prisão,
abre de par em par as portas do meu ser
— sai…
Sai para a luta (a vida é luta)
os homens lá fora chamam por ti,
e tu, Poesia és também um Homem.
Ama as Poesias de todo o Mundo,
— ama os Homens
Solta teus poemas para todas as raças,
para todas as coisas.
Confunde-te comigo…
Vai, Poesia:
Toma os meus braços para abraçares o Mundo,
dá-me os teus braços para que abrace a Vida.
A minha Poesia sou eu. (Cabral, 2021)

[My poetry is me
… No, Poetry:
Do not hide in the caves of my being,
Do not flee from Life.
Break the invisible bars of my prison,
throw wide open the doors of my being
— go out…
Go out into the struggle (life is a struggle)
the men out there are calling for you,
and you, Poetry, are also a Man.
Love the Poetry of all the World,
— love all Men
Release your poems to all races,
to all things.
Merge yourself with me…
Go, Poetry:
Take my arms to embrace the World,
give me your arms so that I may embrace Life.
My Poetry is me.]

In this text, published at the age of 22 years old, Cabral rejects poetry as a solipsistic or intimate expression ("Do not hide in the caves of my being, do not flee from Life. (…) — go out…") ; instead, poetic diction projects itself onto the world ("Go out into the struggle (life is a struggle) the men outside are calling for you, and you, Poetry, are also a Man").

It goes deeper, however, than the rejection of introspective poetry, focused on the emotions of the self. Cabral is at core a humanist, and that is one of the reasons why even his political thought made a deep impression on Portuguese minds, alluring many young Portuguese into the field of the anticolonial arena. The Portuguese poet Manuel Alegre was deployed to Angola in 1961, when the war for the independence of several Portuguese colonial territories in Africa began. Engaging in political activity leading to an attemptied military coup in Luanda, Alegre was arrested and sent back to Portugal. He deserted and fled to exile, in Argiers, from where he continued his political fight against the Portuguese colonial regime. Alegre attests that many Portuguese officers ended up being won over by the thought of Amílcar Cabral, impressed by his cultural dimension and deep humanism, becoming aware of the necessity of political reform, both in the so called colonies and in Portugal as well. Cabral repeatedly stated that his feud was against the Portuguese regime of Salazar, not with the Portuguese people. In a symposium held in Cabo Verde on Amílcar Cabral in 1984, Alegre would underscore the "cultural double

meaning" of Cabral's political system of thought: he understood that 'by liberating themselves, the oppressed also lead the oppressor to liberate themselves. By disarming them, they arm them. That is to say: the national liberation process of the colonized people is also a process of cultural liberation for the people of the colonial country" (Ribeiro, 2024, p. 39).

Let us return to the idea of poetry. Its vocation should be rooted in service - a universal service ("Release your poems to all races," embrace the World) - while simultaneously it should be understood as a vehicle for the full expression and wholeness of the lyrical subject ("give me your arms so that I may embrace Life. My Poetry is me.")

Three poets writing in Portuguese, Amilcar Cabral was studying Agronomy, Francisco José Tenreiro, a poet from San Tomé and Príncipe, studied geography; and the Portuguese Ruy Cinatti studied Agronomy and anthropology, before traveling to the then African colonies and fall in love with Timor. The recognition of poetic diction as a vehicle for existential testimony and the pursuit of truth, combined with the scientific and technical training that their professions would bring them, are characteristics that Cabral shared with the São Toméan Francisco José Tenreiro and with Ruy Cinatti, the Portuguese brother to the Timoreneses.

In *Cabo Verde. Boletim de Propaganda e Informação* published in 1952 in Praia, by Imprensa Nacional, ano III, nr 28, we find an article by Amilcar Cabral on poetry: "Apontamentos sobre poesia Cabo-verdeana" ["Notes on Capeverdean poetry"].

The epigraph is significant: by the Portuguese poet Miguel Torga, a *presencista* who found his own path, Cabral's choice of it is, in itself, equivalent to a poetic program:

«Não me doi nada meu particular.
Peno cilícios da comunidade.
Água dum rio doce, entrei no mar
E salguei-me no sal da imensidade.»
(Cabral , 1952, p.5)

[Nothing of my private self hurts me.
I suffer the cilice of the community
Water of a Sweet river, I entered the sea
And I salted myself in the salt of immensity]

The entire article focuses on the rejection of poetry centered on the private sorrows of an individual self ("Nothing of my private self hurts me./ I suffer the cilice of the community"), as opposed to the poet's commitment to the sorrows of his community ("imensity" versus "private"), which it is every poet duty to express, with the assumed purpose that this poetic gesture corresponds to a form of effective social intervention.

The core question to debate is whether poetry should be "disinterested" (striving for art for art's sake) or "interested," with the answer being unequivocal from Cabral's perspective: "It is not possible to consider art (Poetry, in the present case) independently of man-as-a-social-being. "Art is and must be, to deserve such a designation, a product of Man for Men." (Cabral, 1952, p.5). This very debate, concerning the purpose of art and its tight and strict dependence on the socio-economic context, drove heated and radicalized discussions in Portugal, with reciprocal pronouncements of various kinds of

anathema. The adherence to Marxist ideology, with the recognized primacy given to economic factors, is evident in Cabral's train of thought, but there is no place for bitter radicalizations. The text elegantly discusses poetic premises that are, in reality, translated into ideological options.

Cabral draws a dividing line between the period before and after the magazine *Claridade*. Before *Claridade*, poets marked by a strong classical culture dominated, which "detached" ["desprendidos"] them from the archipelago and its people, forgotten in favor of singing about "amor, o sofrimento pessoalíssimo, a exaltação patriótica e o saudosismo" ["love, highly personal suffering, patriotic exaltation, and saudosismo"] (Cabral, 1952, p.6), within a framework where economic reality is neglected in favor of philosophy, religion, and morality. Education, which was elitist, was centred around the seminary in S. Nicolau, and the intellectuals influenced by it alienated themselves from the realities of the people, who expressed themselves through *Mornas*. One should note Cabral's critical sensitivity regarding the poetic diction resulting from this subservience to classical culture, marked by a "sacred respect for meter, the agonizing submission to the handcuffs of rhyme" ["respeito sagrado à métrica, a confrangedora submissão às algemas da rima"], Cabral, 1952, p.6), which he obviously deplores.

Claridade corresponds to the moment when "Cabo Verdean Poetry opens its eyes, discovers itself, — and it is the breaking of a new dawn" ["A Poesia Caboverdiana abre os olhos, descobre-se a si própria, — e é o romper duma nova aurora"] (Cabral, 1952, p. 7) bringing to light the social reality of the islands and their people. Cabral demonstrates a sober eloquence: "The poets, now, are common men walking hand in hand with the People, and with their feet firmly planted on the ground" ["Os poetas, agora, são homens comuns que caminham de mãos dadas com o Povo, e de pés fincados na terra"] (Cabral, 1952, p.7). Intellectuals, whose ranks now include those coming from 'humble folk,' are centered in Mindelo, accompanying the democratization of education.The transformation observed in literature would also show the strong influence of movements such as Portuguese *Presencismo* and Brazilian modernism. From this influence resulted - note the subtlety of Cabral's prose - merely the change in "the guidelines of Cabo Verdean poetry": "The Poet, instead of looking at the clouds, should seek the meaning of his poetry in the reality in which he lives" ["O Poeta, em vez de olhar para as nuvens, devia buscar o sentido da sua poesia na realidade em que vive"] (Cabral, 1952, p. 7). This was followed by the ephemeral magazine *Certeza*, which takes the paths opened by the "*Claridosos*" further, projecting political-social consciousness onto a global scale.

The conclusion of Cabral's article corresponds to the proposal of a clear poetic program: the levels reached by *Claridade* and *Certeza* must be "transcended," rather than fixing the song on the dream of an evasion that mitigates the effects of insularity, drought, and poverty. "The prison is not the Sea" ["A prisão não está no Mar"]. The dream of the Cabo Verdean people, and of the poet who identifies with them, is not "wanting to leave" [«querer partir»); it is a dream of "Another land within our land" [«Outra terra dentro da nossa terra»] (Cabral, 1952, p.8).

Thus, what appears configured as an analysis of the literary landscape of Cabo Verde actually results in the proposal of a political direction that literature must assume, committing itself not only to the representation-denunciation of a situation, but to its effective transformation. Also noteworthy is the serene progression of Cabral's argumentation, the fine elegance of his analytical discourse, and the effectiveness of the two metaphors with which he closes his proposal, which unveil the root of the people's perception of their situation while simultaneously correcting it. With this text published in 1952, Cabral stands out as an insightful literary critic, as well as a brilliant writer.

The intricate question of the use of the Portuguese language

Let us quickly recall the regime formally established by the *Estado Novo* in 1954, through Decree-Law No. 39,666, which determined the conditions for natives (in Guinea, Angola, and Mozambique) to "elevate" themselves from the status of *indígena* (indigenous) to that of *assimilados* (assimilated), thereby becoming Portuguese citizens. These conditions focused on the way of dressing (European style), the religion professed (Christian), exercising a profession, and adopting European-based customs, in addition to speaking the Portuguese language correctly. As it ocurred everytime colonialist projects were to be put in place, Africa, its history, its cultures, and its languages were meant to be erased; its traditions and customs, deemed inferior, were to be abandoned in favor of the *mission civilisatrice* that Europe invented for itself in other continents. It would not be long, already during the years of the war in Africa, before the hallucination proclaimed in the slogan "Portugal, one and indivisible, from Minho to Timor" emerged ("Portugal uno e indivisível do Minho a Timor").

The use of the Portuguese language by writers who denounce colonial oppression in their work has been a topic addressed in literary texts, critical essays on literature, and post-colonial studies. It is felt that for some, it is a burden they carry—the weight of a history in which colonial domination rested upon the suppression of the colonized culture, in a process aimed at the loss of their identity. Cabral has several texts in which he analyzes the fundamental importance of this phenomenon, arguing that political and economic domination necessarily implies the suppression of the culture of oppressed peoples (Cabral, 1974, p. 12). Thus, Creole and indigenous languages were subjected to the contempt and even the repression inherent to the process of acculturation conducted within a colonial context. The use of indigenous languages and Creoles therefore possesses a value of resistance, in the sense that it translates into a form of preserving a cultural identity that others wished to see wither away.

The revered São Toméan poet Alda Espírito Santo refers to the "bitter gap" that exists within her: she wished she could address the women of her country in their natural, "singing" Creole, instead of having to resort to a "borrowed language." ("Irmãs, do meu torrão pequeno/ Que passais pela estrada do meu país de África (…) Há em mim uma lacuna amarga — Eu queria falar convosco no vosso crioulo cantante/ Mas irmãs, vou buscar um idioma emprestado/ Para mostrar-vos a nossa terra/ O nosso grande

continente" ["Sisters of my little native land/ Who pass along the road of my African country (…)/ There is a bitter void inside me — I wanted to speak to you in your sing-song Creole/ But sisters, I am going to borrow a language/ To show you our land/ Our great continent"] (Santo, 1978, p.81). The Guinean author Maria Odete Semedo reveals the same painful perplexity:

Em que língua escrever *As declarações de amor?* *Em que língua cantar* *As histórias que ouvi contar* *Em que língua escrever* *Contando os feitos das mulheres* *E dos homens do meu chão?* *Como falar dos velhos*	*In which language should I write* *Declarations of love?* *In which language should I sing/* *The stories I heard told?* *In what language to write* *Recounting the deeds of the women* *And of the men of my land?* *How to speak of the elders*
Das passadas e cantigas? *Falarei crioulo!* *Mas que sinais deixar* *Aos netos deste século?* *Ou terei que falar* *Nesta língua lusa* *E eu sem arte nem musa* *Mas assim terei palavras para deixar* *Aos herdeiros do nosso século* *Em crioulo gritarei* *A minha mensagem* *Que de boca em boca* *Fará sua viagem* *Deixarei o recado* *Num pergaminho* *Nesta língua lusa* *Que mal entendo* *(Semedo, 1996, p. 12-13)*	*Of the steps and the songs?* *I shall speak Creole!* *But what signs to leave* *To the grandchildren of this century?* *Or will I have to speak* *In this Lusitanian language* *Even without art or muse* *Yet this way I will have words to leave* *To the heirs of our century* *In Creole I will scream* *My message* *Which from mouth to mouth* *Will make its journey* *I will leave the message* *On a parchment* *In this Lusitanian language* *Which I barely understand*

Faced with the duality of choosing ("In which language should I write/ Declarations of love?/ In which language should I sing/ The stories I heard told?") between the Portuguese bequeathed by colonization and her native Creole - the latter being suited to expressing her cultural traditions, to which Portuguese remains foreign ("How should I speak of the elders,/ Of the steps and the songs?/ I shall speak Creole!") - she chooses to express herself orally in one while reserving the other for writing. Semedo underlines her distance from Portuguese, which she feels inevitably forced to resort to, and her estrangement from a language that was imposed upon her ("Or will I have to speak/ In this Lusitanian language, / Even without art or muse,/ Yet this way I will have words to leave/ To the heirs of our century?/ In Creole I will scream/ My message, / Which from mouth to mouth/ Will make its journey. / I will leave the message / On a parchment, /In this Lusitanian language/ Which I barely understand").

The solutions found by writers vary, with the most common and productive being the appropriation of the colonizer's language, which thus becomes creolized and transformed. Inocência Mata (2009, 2019) speaks of a process of reinventing Portuguese —a sentiment that is shared by many African writers.

Amílcar Cabral holds a pragmatic stance toward Portuguese, which currently seems to constitute a solid base for cohesion in the various African nations that have made it an important part of their viability project, as a common expression, an official state language, and educational vehicle - a kind of *lingua franca*- alongside the existence and protection of creoles and indigenous languages that thus do not compete for national prevalence. At the heart of the period of armed struggle, Amílcar Cabral, though lucidly aware of the ways in which imperialism weaves the erasure of indigenous cultures, perceived the value of using Portuguese as a language of communication in territories with multiple dialects.

The forcefulness of Luandino Vieira's declaration that "the Portuguese language is a war trophy" (Mata, 2007, p.16) does not seem to coincide with his own assessment. In a party seminar, Cabral would explain his choice of Portuguese as a privilege vehicular language for education. To his comrades, in that same intervention, later collected in the book *PAIGC: unidade e luta* (Lisboa: Nova Aurora, 1974), Cabral defended the temporary use of Portuguese as the language of science, during a period when the study of Creoles had not yet developed their full potential: "We, the Party, if we want to move our people forward, for a long time to come, to write, to advance in science, our language must be Portuguese. And that is an honor." (Montezinho, 2014). To reinforce his argument, Cabral adds: "for us, it is all the same whether we use Portuguese, Russian, French, or English, as long as it serves us, just as it is all the same to use Russian, English, or American tractors, etc., as long as, upon gaining independence, they serve us to plow the land".

Cabral defends the teaching of Portuguese as an advantage: "the Portuguese (language) is one of the best things the *tugas* [Portuguese] left us, because language is proof of nothing more than an instrument for men to relate to one another: it is an instrument, a means to speak, to express the realities of life and the world." The Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire, an admirer of Cabral as an educator and a revolutionary, lamented what he considered an error on Cabral's part—the failure to recognize the ideological burden involved in the use of a language, which is always a determining factor in what could be done with it. He commented in a note to Cabral's book: "Amílcar's indisputable misconception." (Romão, Gadotti, 2012, p. 69). In a conference held in 1985, Freire felt the need to justify what he perceived as Cabral's lack of judgment with an explanation given to him by Cabral's widow: the historical and social context would have driven Amílcar Cabral to take that stand, to avoid sectarianism and rejection against all things Portuguese, including Portuguese themselves: "...against Portuguese culture, against the Portuguese language, against everything that was Portuguese. And Cabral needed to eliminate the risk of that perspective growing, which for him—and I agree—would weaken the struggle itself." (Freire, Apud Romão, Gadotti, 2012, p. 70-71).

Cabo Verdean Corsino Tolentino considers this as one of Amílcar Cabral's most daring and successful theses. "What seems extraordinary to me is that Amílcar Cabral had the lucidity and courage to defend the Portuguese language, as he did at that time, while simultaneously promoting the Creole of Guinea and Cabo Verde as a lingua franca and an element of national identity. Furthermore, feeling himself a soldier of the United Nations from the very beginning, the protagonist of a struggle that, being political, had a natural vocation for preferring the weapon of theory to the power of weapons, Amílcar Cabral promoted the Creole of Guinea and Cabo Verde, valued African languages, defended the Portuguese language, and cultivated as many languages of European origin as he could" (Montezinho, 2014).

One leans toward agreeing with Tolentino's perspective. In view of the choice made by African Portuguese-speaking countries that opted to have Portuguese as one of their official languages, Cabral's proposal does not seem so wrong or unreasonable today. His lack of prejudice and hatred toward Portuguese culture, Portugal or the Portuguese people may explain the appropriate pragmatism of his proposal. In various interventions, he always made very clear that he distinguished the fascist regime of the *Estado Novo* from the Portuguese people oppressed by that very same regime. As the Portuguese poet Manuel Alegre underscores, the Portuguese language was also the language of those who resisted the Portuguese authoritarian colonialist regime. And Cabral believed that the triumph of the liberation of the Portuguese colonies would undoubtedly affect the fascist regime oppressing Portugal, contributing to its ending.

Graduating in agronomy from the University of Lisbon, the leader of the armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism was also a humanist, a man of culture, profoundly knowledgeable about Portuguese reality, the history of Portugal, and the symbols that defined it, as we will see through the analysis of one of the most beautiful and interesting poems in the Portuguese language that he left us.

Amílcar Cabral's metaphorical "Naus sem rumo" in Portuguese poetry

My inquiry rests on the analysis of a fragment from a very well-known poem by Cabral, "Naus sem rumo" ["Aimless Ships"], an allegory of the Cabo Verdean islands that transforms into a beautiful lyrical interpellation and historical vision. I question the moment in which Cabral crosses the *naus* (vessels) - into which he transforms the islands - with the caravels that docked there, in an encounter that many other poets consider conceptually inseparable from the Atlantic slave route that so shamefully marks a four-century history. To do this, however, we must examine what Eduardo Lourenço termed the "Atlantic exception" that Portugal imagined for itself, and the dark visions projected onto the caravels that emblematically draw the cartography of this "Atlantic exception," leaving cuts and wounds in a history for which reparations are demanded today.

Let us frame the proposed analysis with a brief comment of "Atlantic Exceptionalism" and the need to correct the colonial narrative.

Drawing from the analysis of Eduardo Lourenço (and expanded by other scholars, such as Vecchi and Margarida Calafate Ribeiro), the concept of "Atlantic exceptionalism" (Lourenço, 1999) refers to the historical self-image Portugal constructed. Following its early independence in the Iberian Peninsula, which was viewed through a providential, Christian lens, with the Discoveries Portugal imagined itself as a predestined "glorious imperial island"; after the historical trauma of the Battle of Alcácer Quibir, this identity transformed into a messianic "lost island" (Lourenço, 2018, pp. 18-20). Portugal used the empire—both real and dreamed—as an escape and a "refuge" to maintain an image of grandeur. This resulted in an "onirically imperial" nation (Lourenço, 2018, p. 57) that projected a singular self-image within European colonialism, a myth later exploited by the *Estado Novo* propaganda and reflected in its literature.

In contrast to this European myth-making, Achille Mbembe (2017) highlights the ontological suppression and erasure of pre-colonial African history. Driven by the rise of capitalism and imperialist ambitions during the Atlantic period (15th and 16th centuries), Western thought effectively erased an entire Afrocentric epistemology, replacing it with ideological fantasies that justified domination. This erasure of Africa determines the imperative for repair that is widely advocated in our time. Because of this historical erasure, writing about Africa from an African perspective requires correcting and dismantling the Eurocentric narrative that romanticized the colonial enterprise. To heal the lingering effects of the "colonial wound" (Mignolo, 2011), the colonial narrative must be exposed and rewritten. Ultimately, Mbembe emphasizes that restitution and reparation are absolute necessities (*sine qua non*) to address the deep historical scars left behind (2017, p. 183).

What weight do the symbols that emerge from this puzzle of reconstructing a historical narrative carry? Before we look at Amílcar Cabral's "ships" or caravels, let us see how shifting the geographical orientation modifies the historical perspective and subverts the symbolic-ideological mythmaking or mystification that follows in its wake. Before reaching Africa, the caravels depart from Portugal… more specifically and symbolically, from Sagres.

In many Portuguese poems, Sagres is viewed as a sacred, foundational site—the epic starting point of maritime adventure and discovery. Changing the geographical and cultural perspective transforms the historical meaning of symbols, effectively dismantling the ideological myths associated with them.

In a poem by Cabo Verdean writer Gabriel Mariano, titled *"Promontório de Sagres"* ("Promontory of Sagres"),

Quem te nomeou de sacro promontório
se de ti nos viria luto e opróbrio?
[…]
Aqui o princípio foi de tudo.
E, todavia,
por cada proa que aos ventos irrompia
não era o mar rumoroso que gemia
mas a terra bem amada e africana.
[…]
Oh quem puder adivinhar,
naquela hora,
o insolidário espérmen, a escravidão futura.
(Mariano, 1993, p. 59)

[Who named you a sacred promontory,
If only mourning and reproach came from you?
[…]
Here was the beginning of everything. And, still
For each prow that the winds broke
It wasn't the roaring sea that moaned
But the beloved African land.
[…]
Oh who could guess, in that hour,
the insolidary sperm, the future slavery.]

When looking at Sagres from across the Atlantic, the narrative completely inverts. The text highlights a poem by Cabo Verdean writer Gabriel Mariano, titled *"Promontório de Sagres"* ("Promontory of Sagres"). In this piece, the "sacred" promontory is stripped of its romanticism and exposed as the birthplace of "mourning, reproach, and future slavery." The departure of the ships is not celebrated as a triumph over the sea, but mourned as a violent, forceful violation of the African continent. What some Portuguese poetry frames as a glorious act of discovery and naming, African poetry in Portuguese denounces as brutal appropriation and violence. Ultimately, these opposing poetic voices create contradictory histories where the marginalized perspective works to expose and invalidate the colonial myth.

Now, let us examine Cabral's poem.

Naus sem rumo
Dispersas,
emersas,
sozinhas sôbre o Oceano …
Sequiosas,
rochosas,
pedaços do Africano,
do negro continente,
as engeitadas filhas,
nossas ilhas,
navegam tristemente …
Qual naus da antiguidade,
qual naus
do velho Portugal,
aquelas que as entradas
do imenso mar abriram …

Aimless Ships
Dispersed,
emerged,
alone upon the Ocean …
Thirsty,
rocky,
pieces of the African,
of the black continent,
the disowned daughters,
our islands,
sail sadly …
Like ships of antiquity,
like ships
of old Portugal,
of the black continent …
those that opened the entrances
of the immense sea …

As naus
que as nossas descobriram.

Ao vento, à tempestade,
navegam
de Cabo Verde as ilhas,
as filhas
do ingente
e negro continente …
São dez as caravelas
em busca do Infinito …
São dez as caravelas,
sem velas,
em busca do Infinito …
A tempestade e ao vento,
caminham …
navegam mansamente
as ilhas,
as filhas
do negro continente …

The ships
that discovered ours.
To the wind, to the storm,
sail
the islands of Cape Verde,
the daughters
of the vast
and black continent …
They are ten caravels
in search of the Infinite …
They are ten caravels,
without sails,
in search of the Infinite …
To the storm and to the wind,
they travel …
sail gently
the islands,
the daughters
of the black continent …

- Onde ides naus da Fome,
da Morna,
do Sonho,
e da Desgraça? …
- Onde ides? …
Sem rumo e sem ter fito,
Sozinhas,
dispersas,
emersas,
nós vamos,
sonhando,
sofrendo,
em busca do Infinito! …
(Cabral, 2015)

— Where are you going, ships of Hunger,
of Morna,
of Dreams,
and of Misfortune? …
— Where are you going? …With no direction and no purpose,
Alone,
dispersed,
emerged,
we go,
dreaming,
suffering,
in search of the Infinite! …]

The poem belongs to what critics define as the first phase of Cabral's poetic works, dating from 1943. Critics note that it is an "allegory of the Cabo Verdean islands as an integral part of the African continent." They appear outlined against the waves; their geographical situation subsumed in about 10 words. They are "pieces of the African (continent)", thus an intrinsic part of it. Are they "disowned daughters" because, as islands, they are hopelessly separated from it? Further along, it will be reaffirmed that they are "the daughters of the vast continent" ... Therefore, origin and belonging are unquestionably defined. But their particular condition is also marked: they are "alone", blending their movement with that of the sea, which is their ground. Their condition is in a way tragic; their identity is constructed from this dual insistence: their belonging to Africa; yet, being "loose" upon the waves, their particular destiny or particular condition—or what we might perhaps define as their Atlantic vocation—is also part of the matrix Cabral imagines for them.

Before the mention of ships, the islands already "sail" "sadly", "gently", "Thirsty", "Rocky", the poem somehow sublimates their condition, converting them into 'our ships' (*naus*) that trace a course — "To the wind, to the storm", but "With no direction and no purpose", yet "in search of the Infinite" (3 times). Addressed in the poem, "Where are you going?", they reaffirm their route, as well as the matter or the modalities of which this navigation is made, which are inseparable: "Dreaming, suffering". If the "thirsty, rocky" islands had seen this difficult condition sublimated through their transformation into "our ships" that "sail", the weight of this destiny is also transferred to the metaphorical ships they become: they are "ships of Hunger, of *Morna*, of Dreams, and of Misfortune". That is to say, their tragic inclination or character will remain. This beautiful poem sublimates the tragic condition of the archipelago without canceling it out in that sublimation, but rather managing to find a balance, or a compromise, between what is an elegiac lament (Hunger, misfortune) and what is a hymn, a song of praise and exaltation of the 'aimless ships' that are the homeland.

Let us focus on the moment where the "aimless ships" that are the islands evoke the image of other ships exalted in the past, "Like ships of antiquity" (celebrated in other poems, in other histories), "Like ships of old Portugal", which are "those that opened the entrances of the immense sea... The ships / the caravels / that discovered our / Islands". An ancient symbol—enthroned by a certain historiography and literature—finds another symbol, the islands/ships, invented by the poem. Is one mythology being fought with another mythology?... even more interesting is how, in the continuation of the text, the analogy converts into an assumption of identity: the island-ships are truly—truly—transformed into 10 caravels, "They are 10 caravels without sails" tracing their undefined heroic path, the target of the new song, which thus uses and, in a way, cancels out the symbols of a mythology supplanted by the reality celebrated in the present.

In a time very different from today, and for a mind mobilized by what would be the effective combat, the revolution, and the war to be waged—in minds and on the ground—against colonial oppression, such as Cabral's, the time is not (yet) that of demanding reparations in the terms put forward by Mbembe; but this poem corresponds to a gesture of subtle rewriting or correction of a history, and also of an epistemology, or knowledge about history; it also corresponds to the reversal of the meaning of one of the main symbols of the mythical narrative that on Portugal's side (during the *Estado Novo* period, but not only during that period) was constructed over the historical events to which the text refers.

The Macanese Cecília Jorge, dealing with the empire at its crepuscular, final hour - which was Macau, 1999 - also uses the image of the caravels of the Discoveries to put the mythologization of the empire on trial, from a demystifying perspective:

Pés de barro da lusitanidade
Caravelas de vela solta
Que se vão rasgando
No retorno à Pátria
(1999, Jorge 2020: 33)

[Feet of clay of lusitanidade
Caravels with loose sails
Tearing themselves apart
Upon the return to the Homeland]

Cabral does not tear the sails of the caravels; rather, he transforms what for Gabriel Mariano was a symbol of the violence of the colonial adventure into a new symbol, which thus cancels out the first, inscribing upon it a meaning that corresponds to its reversal. And he does this in what I consider to be one of the most beautiful poems written in the Portuguese language.

Conclusion

Committed to the liberation struggle of his homeland and the African continent from the bonds of colonial oppression, Amílcar Cabral understood the struggle for emancipation as an act of culture, rooted in the reclamation of the cultural identity of the oppressed. In a time very different from today, and for a spirit mobilized by what would become the effective struggle—the revolution and the war to be fought, both in the minds and on the fields—against colonial oppression, as experienced by Cabral, the time is not (yet) one for demanding reparation in the terms proposed by Mbembe.

However, the examined poem subtly but consistently dismantles colonial mythologies, driving a critical reassessment of both historical narratives and the framework of knowledge built around them. By reframing the core symbol of the Portuguese Discoveries ships, the naus or *caravelas*, converting them into Cabo Verdean islands - African sacred ground -, the text connects historical reconstruction with contemporary discourse on the necessity of systemic reparation, establishing it as a foundational pillar for national and cultural identity.

Therefore, in some of Cabral's poetry, one recognizes a subtle but persistent gesture of rewriting or correcting a mythical vision that supports a particular history and the epistemology it entails. We reflected on the significance of the symbols that emerge from this puzzle of reconstructing a historical narrative, articulating it with more recent expressions that elaborate on the theme of the need for reparation as a cornerstone for identity building.

In the documentary "Conakry" directed by Filipa César, Grada kilomba, a Portuguese artist, writer, and theorist of African descent, evokes the role of Amílcar Cabral as a visionary leader, through images that could have been lost during an agitated past. Cabral hosts in Conakry a cultural event, an exhibition visited by remarkable African intellectuals, political leaders, and artists, on the liberation struggle of the Guinean and Cabo Verdean people. A tranquil presence, Cabral is seen showing to Madame Andrée Sékou Touré objects from the Portuguese arsenal, unfolding for her a Portuguese flag confiscated from the Portuguese, without any bitterness, resentment, or hatred in his gestures or words.

Kilomba wonders about the pride she would have felt if the true history of Amílcar Cabral and other Africans had not been suppressed from the history books she learned from when growing up in Lisbon, the former capital of an empire that even today weighs upon the identity of both Portuguese and African people. The film frames restoring the

exhibition hosted by Cabral resurrect an event that in itself functioned as a gesture of presentation and preservation of empirical evidence to counter against intrusive memories of subordination — "the African continent is given a new body, its history is given a new language...", says Kilomba in the documentary (Kilomba, 2016).

The memory of a man of Cabral's moral and intellectual stature, a poem like his beautiful "Naus sem rumo" ([Aimless Caravels]), help us deal with a "past that still consumes us," as said by Ana Paula Tavares, the Angolan writer who in 2025 won the Camões Prize.

References

Andrade, L. (2018). *Toma os meus braços para abraçares o mundo, Amílcar Cabral*. VOA Português. Retrieved from https://www.voaportugues.com/a/amilcar-cabral-poeta/4215763.html

Andresen, S.M.B. (1977). Poesia e revolução. *O nome das coisas.* Moraes Editores.

Cabral, A. (1952). Apontamentos sobre poesia Cabo-verdeana. *Cabo Verde: Boletim de Propaganda e Informação, 3* (28), 5–8.

Cabral, A. (1973). *Allocution prononcée à l'occasion de la Journée Kwame Nkrumah*. Présence Africaine.

Cabral, A. (1974). National liberation and culture. *Transition*, (45), 12–17. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2935020

Cabral, A. (1974). *PAIGC: Unidade e luta*. Nova Aurora.

Cabral, A. (2015). *Naus sem rumo*. Elfikurten. Retrieved from https://www.elfikurten.com.br/2015/09/amilcar-cabral.html

Cabral, A. (2021, July 7). *Poemas selecionados de Amílcar Cabral* (Selected poems of Amílcar Cabral). Traduagindo. Retrieved from https://traduagindo.com/2021/07/07/poemas-selecionados-de-amilcar-cabral/

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. (2024). *Exhibition: Dance not dance*. Retrieved from https://gulbenkian.pt/en/agenda/exhibition-dance-not-dance/

Duarte, V. (2018). *De risos & lágrimas*. Livraria Pedro Cardoso.

Fortes, C. (2010). *Poets of Cabo Verde: A bilingual selection* (F. G. Williams, Trans. & Ed.). BYU Studies; Instituto da Biblioteca Nacional e do Livro; Camões Institute.

Jorge, C. (2020). *Poemas para Macau*. Livros do Oriente.

Kilomba, G., César, F., & McCarty, D. (2016, September 27). *CONAKRY* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExemploID

Lima, C. (2011). *O país de Akendenguê*. Caminho.

Lourenço, E. (1999). *A nau de Ícaro seguido de Imagem e miragem da Lusofonia*. Gradiva.

Lourenço, E. (2018). *Portugal como destino seguido de A mitologia da saudade*. Gradiva.

Mariano, G. (1993). *Ladeira grande: Antologia poética*. Vega.

Mata, I. (2009). A literatura, (ainda) universo da reinvenção da diferença. *Gragoatá, 14* (27), 11–31. Retrieved from https://periodicos.uff.br/gragoata/article/view/33104

Mata, I. (2019). Epistemologias do "colonial" e da descolonização linguística: Uma reflexão a partir de África. *Gragoatá, 24* (48), 208–226. https://doi.org/10.22409/gragoata.v24i48.33649

Mbembe, A. (2017). *Critique of Black reason* (L. Dubois, Trans.). Duke University Press.

Mignolo, W. (2011). Epistemic disobedience and the decolonial option: A manifesto. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, *1* (2), 44–66. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/62j3w283

Montezinho, J. (2014, June 30). Amílcar Cabral: "A língua portuguesa é uma das melhores coisas que os portugueses nos deixaram". *Expresso das Ilhas*. https://expressodasilhas.cv/pais/2014/06/30/amilcar-cabral-a-lingua-portuguesa-e-uma-das-melhores-coisas-que-os-portugueses-nos-deixaram/42398

Paes, R. E. (2026). Dance not dance? Let's dance… *Buala.* https://www.buala.org/en/ill-visit/dance-not-dance-let-s-dance

Ribeiro, W. C. (2024). *Amílcar Cabral: África e revolução*. Terra Sem Amos.

Romão, J. E., & Gadotti, M. (2012). *Paulo Freire e Amílcar Cabral: A descolonização das mentes.* Editora e Livraria Instituto Paulo Freire.

Said, N. (1993). Poesia I. In *Mantenhas para quem luta! A nova poesia da Guiné-Bissau*. Conselho Nacional de Cultura. https://poesiaguineenseemportugues.blogspot.com/2019/05/poesia-i-de-nagib-said.html

Santo, A. E. (1978). *É nosso o solo sagrado desta terra*. Ulmeiro.

Semedo, O. (1996). Em que língua escrever. In Entre o ser e o amar. Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa.

Tcheka, T. (1993). Mantenhas para quem luta! In *Mantenhas para quem luta! A nova poesia da Guiné-Bissau*. Conselho Nacional de Cultura.

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

REVISTA CLARIDADE AND AMÍLCAR CABRAL: POETIC SEEDS OF POLITICAL RESISTANCE

RAQUEL ABI-SÂMARA
raquelabisamara@um.edu.mo
Assistant Professor at the University of Macau (China), where she teaches literature, translation studies, and Portuguese. She holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the State University of Rio de Janeiro. A translator from German into Portuguese, she has translated works by Paul Celan, Franz Kafka, Hans-Georg Gadamer, among other authors. She co-edited the forthcoming volume *Beyond, Belated, and Out of Place? Non-Hegemonic Literary and Aesthetic Moments on a Global Scale* (Brill). https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1300-9392

RIVALDO MENDES FREIRE TAVARES
yc57719@um.edu.mo
PhD student in Literary and Intercultural Studies (Portuguese) at the University of Macau (China). His research focuses on Cabo Verdean Modernist poetry, Portuguese literature in African countries, and Chinese poetry. He co-authored the forthcoming book *Vozes das ilhas: canções de Cabo Verde*, which explores these musical traditions from a pedagogical perspective. He also translated Amílcar Cabral poetry into Chinese, presented at the seminar commemorating Cabral's centenary (University of Macau 2025). https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3979-4231

Abstract

This study examines the poetic-political militancy of Amílcar Cabral through his essay "Apontamentos sobre poesia caboverdiana" (Notes on Cabo Verdean poetry; 1952), in which he undertakes a critical analysis of the new poetry of Claridade, the avant-garde Cabo Verdean magazine published between 1936 and 1960. The magazine, a foundational milestone of the so-called claridosa generation and recognized for circumventing the restrictions of colonial censorship, introduced innovations in poetry that began to address cultural, social, and identity-related issues. It even incorporated poems and mornas in Cabo Verdean Creole, whose publication—given its status as a non-official language—was effectively repressed during the Estado Novo. Although Claridade broke with the classical aesthetics of metropolitan Portuguese poetry and began to thematize local problems—such as drought and famine afflicting the colony—Cabral identifies in its poems an unacceptable tone of resignation and passive hope for better times. In contrast, he proposes that poetry should transcend such limits and be transformed into revolutionary energy. The analysis of Cabral's essay requires, first, a brief contextualization of the Claridade editions that preceded the publication of the essay. In our reading of Cabral's text, we identify and explore four movements that structure the author's argument: the relationship between poetry and social function; the periodization of Cabo Verdean poetry into pre- and post-Claridade phases; the aesthetic inflection introduced by the magazine; and the transition from "resigned" poetry to the affirmation of an autonomous Cabo Verdean voice. We seek to trace, across the first seven issues of Claridade published prior to Cabral's essay, and likely read by him, the sources of his arguments, which are not always explicitly acknowledged. These sources include poetic verses, authors, literary works, and critical essays. We argue that one such essay, published by Osório de Oliveira in Claridade 2 (1936), constitutes a key source for Cabral's notion of "resignation" in Cabo Verdean poetry. This concept, foregrounded by Cabral in his essay, is examined here in dialogue with Oliveira's text in order to show how this intellectual exchange sheds light on Cabral's broader project of transforming poetic sensibility into critical force and a horizon for social change.

Keywords

Claridade, Amílcar Cabral, Osório de Oliveira, seeds of struggle and resistance, Cabo Verdean poetry.

Resumo

Este estudo examina a militância poético-política de Amílcar Cabral a partir de seu ensaio "Apontamentos sobre poesia cabo-verdiana" (1952), no qual empreende uma análise crítica da nova poesia da Claridade, revista vanguardista de Cabo Verde publicada entre 1936 e 1960. A revista, marco inaugural da chamada geração claridosa e reconhecida por contornar as restrições da censura colonial, introduziu inovações na poesia, que passou a abordar questões culturais, sociais e identitárias, incorporando inclusive poemas e mornas em crioulo cabo-verdiano, cuja publicação, por ser uma língua não oficial, era reprimida, na prática, durante o Estado Novo. Embora a Claridade tenha rompido com a estética clássica da poesia metropolitana portuguesa e passado a tematizar os problemas da terra – como a seca e a fome que assolavam a colónia –, Cabral identifica em seus poemas um inaceitável tom de resignação e de esperança passiva por tempos melhores. Em contraposição, propõe que a poesia supere tais limites e se converta em energia revolucionária. A análise do ensaio de Cabral exige, inicialmente, uma breve contextualização das edições da Claridade que precederam a publicação do ensaio. Na nossa leitura do texto de Cabral, identificamos e exploramos quatro movimentos que estruturam o argumento do autor: a relação entre poesia e função social; a periodização da poesia cabo-verdiana em fases pré- e pós-Claridade; a inflexão estética introduzida pela revista; e a passagem da poesia "resignada" para a afirmação de uma voz própria cabo-verdiana. Procuramos traçar, ao longo dos primeiros sete números da Claridade publicados antes do ensaio de Cabral, e provavelmente lidos por ele, as fontes dos seus argumentos, que nem sempre são explicitamente reconhecidas. Essas fontes incluem versos poéticos, autores, obras literárias e ensaios críticos. Argumentamos que um desses ensaios, publicado por Osório de Oliveira no n.º 2 da Claridade (1936), constitui uma fonte fundamental para a noção cabraliana de "resignação" na poesia cabo-verdiana. Este conceito, destacado por Cabral no seu ensaio, é aqui examinado em diálogo com o texto de Oliveira, a fim de mostrar como esse intercâmbio intelectual ilumina o projeto mais amplo de Cabral de converter a sensibilidade poética em força crítica e horizonte de transformação social.

Palavras-chave

Claridade; Amílcar Cabral; Osório de Oliveira; sementes de luta e resistência; poesia cabo-verdiana.

How to cite this article

Abi-Sâmara, Raquel & Tavares, Rivaldo Mendes Freire (2026). *Revista Claridade* and Amílcar Cabral: Poetic Seeds of Political Resistance*. Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 87-110. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.4

Article submitted on 27 June 2026 and accepted on 18 August 2026

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 87-110
Revista Claridade and Amílcar Cabral: Poetic Seeds of Political Resistance
Raquel Abi-Sâmara, Rivaldo Mendes Freire Tavares

REVISTA CLARIDADE AND AMÍLCAR CABRAL: POETIC SEEDS OF POLITICAL RESISTANCE [1,2]

RAQUEL ABI-SÂMARA

RIVALDO MENDES FREIRE TAVARES

Introduction

The historical impact of Amílcar Cabral (1924–1973), widely recognized as one of the foremost revolutionary leaders of the African anticolonial struggle, founder of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde (PAIGC), and a distinguished Pan-African intellectual, contributed to the relative marginalization of his small yet significant literary output. His reflections and poetic incursions, though limited in number, constitute a still underexplored dimension of his multifaceted intellectual trajectory and prove fundamental to a more comprehensive understanding of the formative process of one of the most brilliant political leaders of the twentieth century.

The preferred point of departure for reflection on Amílcar Cabral's poetic-political militancy is his essay "Apontamentos sobre poesia caboverdiana" *(Notes on Cabo Verdean poetry;* 1952; hereafter referred to as "Apontamentos")—published in *Cabo Verde: boletim de propaganda e informação* (*Cabo Verde: Bulletin of propaganda and information)*—in which he undertakes a critical examination of Cabo Verdean poetry, particularly that of the magazine *Claridade*. The *Boletim de Propaganda e Informação*, edited between 1949 and 1963, was the official journal of the colonial government, designed to disseminate state propaganda—though recent scholarship suggests that its editors and collaborators may not have been fully aware of this function, or may have interpreted their work as vindication actions (Milheiro, 2022). Cabral's decision to publish in this official organ was strategically significant: it allowed him to address colonial administrators and the educated elite directly, while simultaneously using the regime's

[1] Declaration of Interest - The authors declare that there are no known financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have appeared to influence this research. The authors have no competing interests to declare.

2 Acknowledgments - This research was supported by the University of Macau through Start-Up Grant SRG2024-00008-FAH "Avant-Garde Movements in Non-hegemonic Portuguese-Speaking Contexts". The authors gratefully acknowledge this support. Furthermore, the authors acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot in assisting with the formatting of references and the standardization of source citations in this work.

own platform to challenge the resignation that characterized much of Cabo Verdean poetry.

Cabral analyzes *Claridade* poetry through a materialist lens: Poetry is a product of its environment and must fulfill a social function, serving the people and contributing to their transformation. For this reason, *Claridade* represented, in Cabral's (1952) words, the "breaking of a new dawn" (p. 7).[3] Published under the constraints of colonial censorship, *Claridade* marked the inaugural moment of aesthetic and thematic innovations that shifted Cabo Verdean poetry away from metropolitan traditions toward the problematization of insular realities—marked by drought, famine, emigration, and the search for cultural identity. Yet the magazine's poetry also remained deeply indebted to Portuguese lyrical conventions, occupying an ambiguous space between rupture and continuity. Cabral, however, observes that despite the formal and thematic rupture, the poems retained a tone of resignation and passive hope, insufficient in the face of historical urgencies. His intervention proposes that poetry transcend this limit and be converted into a revolutionary force, capable of creating, as he envisions, "another land within our land" (p. 8).

This article will examine Cabral's "Apontamentos" from the perspective of his political militancy, as well as the value he attributes to poetry—and, by extension, to culture—for the renewal and liberation of the colonial environment. Since the magazine *Claridade* is the object of discussion in Cabral's essay, we will first provide a brief overview of the magazine and of the possible issues Cabral considers in his essay. Building upon this contextual foundation, our analysis offers a detailed reading of the essay's internal structure, revealing how Cabral's argument unfolds through four distinct movements: The first is a reflection on art and its social function; the second, a mapping of Cabo Verdean poetry into two phases, pre- and post-*Claridade*; the third addresses the abrupt aesthetic shift promoted by *Claridade*; and the fourth calls for Cabo Verdean poetry to evolve beyond passivity and prepare for a decisive action of social transformation.

To deepen the understanding of the motif of "resignation" in Cabo Verdean poetry—an aspect central to Cabral's critique—the article examines the implicit dialogue he establishes with Osório de Oliveira's essay published in Issue 2 of *Claridade* (1936). Published sixteen years before "Apontamentos," Oliveira's text was the first critical essay on the *Claridade* poets to appear in the magazine itself, and it was there that the idea of Cabo Verdean "resignation" was first formulated. Cabral, who approached the subject not as a specialist in poetry but as an intellectual militant engaged in a broader project of liberation, anchored his critique in the existing discourse of respected figures such as Oliveira. By drawing upon—and ultimately surpassing—Oliveira's diagnosis, Cabral transformed a literary observation into the foundation for a political program, converting the aesthetics of passivity into a call for conscious action. Through this interlocution, the aim is to highlight how Cabral articulates his intellectual militancy by proposing the overcoming of the historical passivity of Cabo Verdean poetry, transforming the aesthetics of resignation into political force and symbolizing the passage from the literary

[3] All translations are by the authors unless otherwise indicated.

seed to the blossoming of a voice capable of breaking silence and affirming itself as an instrument of social transformation.

Claridade, an Avant-Garde Cabo Verdean Magazine

In the 1930s, under Portuguese colonial rule and subjected to the repressive policies of António de Oliveira Salazar's *Estado Novo*, Cabo Verde faced a severe economic crisis resulting from prolonged droughts across the archipelago, famine, and a strong wave of emigration. It was in this context, amid strict censorship over the press and local cultural production, that the avant-garde magazine *Claridade* emerged as a literary response to those conditions of oppression, bringing new vitality to Cabo Verdean poetry and culture. The impact of the magazine, however, was not limited to Cabo Verde. According to Norma Lima (2024), *Claridade* is "in aesthetic terms, the magazine that ushered in modern letters not only to the archipelago, but to Portuguese-speaking Africa" (p. 97).[4]

Claridade published nine issues at irregular intervals between 1936 and 1960. The issues appeared in three distinct phases: the first three came out between 1936 and 1937; the next four between 1947 and 1949; and the last two between 1958 and 1960. In analyzing the three distinct historical moments in which the issues of *Claridade* were published, Ellen Sapega (2003) notes:

> *A single coherent project for the publication of Claridade never existed, either in terms of the review's content or of its actual physical layout. While not explicitly identified as belonging to different series, three very different incarnations of the review appeared at three different historical moments* (p. 161).

There was considerable variation in the number of pages across each of these phases: The first three issues had eight to 10 pages each, which expanded to more than 40 pages each in the second phase and approximately 80 pages each in the third phase. Some elements, however, as Sapega observes, remained constant throughout the journal's 24-year history: For example, it was always published in Mindelo, on the island of São Vicente, and each issue consistently featured contributions from two or three of the intellectuals regarded as founders of the *Claridade* movement: Baltazar Lopes, Manuel Lopes, and Jorge Barbosa.

Considering that Amilcar Cabral's essay "Apontamentos sobre poesia caboverdiana" is a text from 1952, it is evident that the poems—as well as works of fiction and essays—from *Claridade* that served as the basis for Cabral's reflections were published in the magazine's first two phases, encompassing issues 1–7, released between 1936 and 1949. The examination of these first seven issues raises an important point to be highlighted: The way the magazine dealt with colonial censorship can help us to frame Cabral's critique regarding what he identifies as passivity and resignation in Cabo Verde's avant-garde poetry. Seven of the nine issues of *Claridade* carry the following phrase on their

[4] Portuguese original: "Em termos estéticos, [*Claridade* é] a revista que instaurará as letras modernas, não somente no arquipélago, mas na África de língua portuguesa."

pages: "Visado pela censura" (approved by the censor). Curiously, issues 1 and 7 are the only ones that do not bear this mark of control. The fact that *Claridade* was launched, as indicated by its subtitle, as a "magazine of art and letters," rather than as a newspaper directly associated with political themes, may have been the reason its first issue did not attract the attention of the censors. From the second issue onward, however, surveillance was imposed, and all subsequent issues—with the exception of the seventh—were explicitly subjected to censorship.[5]

The fact that the first issue was not subjected to censorship explains the publication, right on the opening page, of the transcript of a text in Creole: *"Lantuna & 2 motivos de 'finason' (batuku da Ilha de Santiago)" (Lantuna and two motifs of "finason" [Batuku from the island of Santiago])*,[6] which did not recur in subsequent issues—a circumstance that drew the attention of other critics, as Sapega (2003) highlights:

> *Several critics have called attention to the importance of this cover as presenting a strong statement of the group's project. For Pierre Rivas, "it is a manifesto in act, provocative in its laconic style and revealing of its spirit, at once manifest and concealed."*7 *By presenting these songs without commentary or translation, Claridade begins its publication with a strong and sure affirmation of the importance of the Creole language and of cultural practices that are African in origin. After this moment, however, this gesture is never repeated—while the cover of the following issue also transcribes a text written in Creole, it is a morna [a traditional Cape Verdean form of poetry and music], not a finason. The third issue of Claridade then opens with the "Poema de quem ficou" [Poem by those who stayed] by Manuel Lopes, and the covers of all the following issues, with only two exceptions, also present original poems written in Portuguese rather than Creole* (p. 163).

These early issues of *Claridade*, as Alberto Carvalho (2021) points out, are characterized by an "identity affirmation that unsettled the hegemony of the Portuguese language" (p. 33).[8] Transcribing a Creole *finason*—one of the most traditional forms of Cabo Verdean oral poetry, linked to *batuku* and other African musical practices—is a far more provocative act than transcribing a Creole *morna*, which is a musical genre blending African and European influences. The *morna* that Sapega refers to on the cover of Issue 2 of *Claridade* is not an anonymous text like the *finason*. It is authored by Xavier da Cruz, and its title, *"Venus,"* has nothing to do with African culture. It is worth noting that the *finason* in Issue 1 was not accompanied by a translation. Although *"Venus"* also appears without a Portuguese translation, its lyrics are much closer to metropolitan Portuguese and therefore far easier for Portuguese-speaking readers to understand.

[5] So far, no explanation has been found for why the seventh issue of the magazine escaped censorship.
[6] Finason is a lyrical form of moral and social critique delivered through spontaneous sung poetry within performances of batuku, a female-centered musical performance from Cabo Verde, rooted in West African rhythmic structures.
[7] Portuguese original: "é um manifesto em ato, provocador no seu laconismo e revelador de seu espírito duplamente manifesto e dissimulado" (Rivas, 1989, p. 40).
[8] Portuguese original: "Uma afirmação identitária que desconcertava a hegemonia da língua portuguesa."

According to Sapega (2003), "The choice of a morna for the cover of the second issue is already indicative of a move away from a cultural model inspired by African artistic practices" (p. 163). This editorial oscillation in the early issues of the journal reveals, from the outset, the tension between the affirmation of a radical difference in relation to the prevailing Portuguese colonial culture in Cabo Verde in the 1930s and the proximity to culturally hybrid forms. The *morna*, Sapega adds, is "representative of the cultural politics of miscegenation that would inspire a great deal of the literary and theoretical works produced by the *Claridade* generation" (p. 164). This politics of miscegenation drew heavily on the theories of Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, whose 1933 work *Casa-grande & senzala* celebrated racial mixing as a positive force in the formation of Brazilian society (Freyre, 1933). Freyre's ideas—particularly his later concept of Lusotropicalism, which posited a distinctive Portuguese capacity for harmonious coexistence with tropical peoples—were enthusiastically embraced by the *Claridade* intellectuals as a framework for understanding Cabo Verde's own creole identity (Salla, 2014, pp. 108-110). As Salla (2014) demonstrates, the Freyrean discourse of regionalism and miscegenation provided the *claridosos* with a conceptual vocabulary to affirm Cabo Verde's cultural specificity while simultaneously reinforcing the archipelago's integration within the Portuguese imperial sphere—a strategy of "approximation rather than rupture" with the metropole (p. 114). This apparent paradox is central to understanding the movement's ideological complexity: while the *Claridade* project sought to "rediscover" Cabo Verde's social and psychological reality, it did so within a framework that ultimately reaffirmed the success of Portuguese colonization (Salla, 2014, p. 111). Moreover, as scholars have documented, Freyre's theories were only strategically appropriated by the Estado Novo regime from the 1950s onward, when Lusotropicalism became a diplomatic tool to justify Portugal's continued colonial presence in Africa in the face of international decolonization pressures (Castelo, 1998; Costa, 2005). This chronology complicates any straightforward alignment between the *Claridade* project and Salazarist ideology, suggesting instead that the *claridosos* operated within a field of tension—at once asserting local identity and participating in the broader cultural politics of the Portuguese imperial world. We should note that Osório de Oliveira's essay—which we will analyze later in dialogue with Cabral's "*Apontamentos*"—was also published in Issue 2 of *Claridade* and aligns with the politics of miscegenation highlighted by Sapega.

In the next section, we will examine Cabral's essay and his expectations regarding the expressive and political function attributed to Cabo Verde's avant-garde poetry, outlining how this literary production is called upon to participate in a broader project of social intervention.

Cabral's Notes on the Poetry of Claridade

Cabral begins the essay *"Apontamentos"* with an epigraph that announces his critical perspective on the poetic production of *Claridade*: *"Nothing of my private life pains me. / I suffer the penances of the community. / Water from a sweet river, I entered the sea / And salted myself in the salt of immensity"* (Torga, 1950, as cited in Cabral, 1952, p.

5).[9] These are the opening verses of the poem "Fraternidade" (*Fraternity) by* Miguel Torga (1907–95), taken from the book *Cântico do Homem (Canticle of Humankind)* (1950). In Torga's verses, poetry demands the sacrifice of individual pain in favor of the community; that is, the poet does not suffer for his private life but bears the sorrows of the collective. By leaving the sweet waters of lyricism and entering the sea, the poet metaphorically dissolves himself into the sufferings of the community. The final verses of Torga's poem, which do not appear in the essay's epigraph, reinforce the poet's ethical commitment to his community: *"But I could not, lyrical poet, / Remain, with the reed flute, exercising the ear, / Far from the world and far from the noise."*[10] The uncommon Portuguese expression *"ficar de avena"* (to remain with the reed flute) indicates the aloofness of the pastoral lyrical poet, with his musical instrument, the reed, detached and indifferent to social life. The poet rejects the notion of "art for art's sake," for he understands that he cannot withdraw from the noise of the world and recognizes his duty to be present and to intervene in the life of the community.

Cabral's use of a metropolitan poet like Miguel Torga as an epigraph is strategically revealing and, at first glance, counterintuitive. After all, how to justify resorting to a poet from the colonizing country to ground a critique of an emerging poetry that combined diverse cultural heritages and claimed a differentiated identity? Rather than drawing on a Cabo Verdean voice, Cabral appropriates the authority of the colonizer's own literary tradition to legitimize his call for a socially engaged poetry. What emerges from Cabral's engagement with Torga's verses is the pursuit of a poetic model grounded in commitment and artistic responsibility—the refusal to remain aloof from collective suffering.

In the following subsections, we will concisely examine the four movements that structure Cabral's essay: an initial reflection on art and its social function ("The Social Function of poetry"); the pre- and post-*Claridade* phases of Cabo Verdean poetry ("Pre- and Post-*Claridade* Cabo Verdean Poetry"); an analysis of the aesthetic inflection promoted by the magazine ("The Breaking of a New Daw in Cabo Verdean Poetry"); and finally, the appeal for Cabo Verdean poetry to abandon passivity and orient itself toward transformative intervention ("From Resigned Poetry to the Cabo Verdean's Own Voice").

The Social Function of Poetry

Before reflecting specifically on Cabo Verdean poetry, Cabral (1952) takes a position regarding the role of poetry as an artistic expression:

> *Poetry, like any artistic manifestation and despite all the individual characteristics emanating from the poet's personality, is necessarily a product of the environment in which it finds expression. That is to say, however great the influence of the individual upon the work they produce,*

[9] Portuguese original: "Não me dói nada meu particular. / Peno cilícios da comunidade. / Água dum rio doce, entrei no mar / E salguei-me no sal da imensidade."
[10] Portuguese original: "Mas não podia, lírico poeta,/ Ficar, de avena, a exercitar o ouvido,/ Longe do mundo e longe do ruído."

> *it is always, in the final analysis, a product of the social complex in which it was generated* (p. 5)[11].

Although highlighted as a product of its environment, poetry, for Cabral, carries within itself a great potential to transform that environment, and this is the tone that permeates the entire essay, in a language marked by the use of expressions and vocabulary drawn from the semantic field of political militancy, such as "taking a stand," (p. 5) "voices that rise to defend" (p. 5) a given manifestation, "raising the banner" (p. 5) with regard to the function of art, and "to serve or to betray" (p. 6) the social complex. Subtle linguistic strategies emerge in Cabral's poetic-political critique, such as when, in defense of the social function of poetry, he states: "Dissenting voices that rise to defend the exclusive influence of the individual complex of artistic manifestation are becoming rare" (p. 5).[12] His militant voice, which defends poetry as an art form that is "dependent" on social problems, an "engaged art," gains greater expressiveness when contrasted, in the passage above, with the multiple dissenting voices that are becoming rare and that still defend poetry as a mere expression of a sensitive individual—an "independent" and "disinterested" art—and therefore innocuous for society. Giving even greater emphasis and weight to the way he sees and wishes to make poetry seen, Cabral adds:

> *Thus, while the ranks of those who seek or desire an art with a social function grow day by day, the lines fill up around those who stubbornly raise the tattered banner of "art for art's sake." And, in qualifying as tattered the banner of those who defend a "disinterested" art, one is, even if implicitly, taking a stand* (p. 5)[13].

For Cabral, art—and, by extension, poetry—is produced by a being that is above all social—the human being—and is also moral, philosophical, scientific, religious, and so on. From his perspective, as we have seen, art should not be conceived as a mere externalization of the poet's individual sentimentalism, nor as an aesthetic exercise detached from purpose—art for art's sake. On the contrary, he affirms the social function of poetry, insisting that "what matters is *determining* whether such a work constitutes a good or an evil for that complex, that is, whether it serves it or betrays it" (p. 6, our emphasis).[14] With this established, Cabral moves on to the second part of his reflections, in which he maps the two phases—pre- and post-*Claridade*—of Cabo Verdean poetry,

[11] Portuguese original: "A poesia, como qualquer manifestação artística e apesar de toda a característica individual, emanente da personalidade do Poeta, é necessariamente um produto do meio em que tem expressão. Quer dizer: por maior que seja a influência do próprio indivíduo sobre a obra que produz, esta é sempre, em última análise, um produto do complexo social em que foi gerada."
[12] Portuguese original: "Rareiam as vozes discordantes que se levantam para defender a exclusiva influência do complexo individual da manifestação artística."
[13] Portuguese original: "Assim, enquanto vão crescendo, dia a dia, o conjunto daqueles que pretendem ou querem uma arte com função social, cerram-se as fileiras daqueles que, teimosamente, arvoram a esfarrapada bandeira da chamada "arte pela arte". E, ao qualificar-se de *esfarrapada* a bandeira dos que defendem uma arte "desinteressada", está-se, ainda que de maneira implícita, tomando posição."
[14] Portuguese original: "O que interessa *determinar* é se tal obra constitui um bem ou um mal para aquele complexo, isto é, se o serve ou se o trai."

seeking to "determine" the nature of its social function, as we shall see in the following section.

Pre- and Post-Claridade Cabo Verdean Poetry

The material and human environment experienced by the Cabo Verdean poet defines the way in which their poetry is to be understood. Based on this principle, Cabral seeks to identify the characteristics that underpinned the manifestations of the two poetic strands of the archipelago: the one prior to the advent of *Claridade* and the one brought in by the magazine. The distinction between these two phases of poetry is already presented at the very beginning of his essay: "So distinct are these two phases that Osório de Oliveira does not hesitate to affirm: 'only now (that is, with *Claridade*) can one speak of Cabo Verdean Literature'" (Cabral, 1952, p. 5). [15] This is no mere passing reference. By grounding his periodization in Oliveira's authority, Cabral strategically positions his own critique within the very critical discourse that had first defined Cabo Verdean poetry as a distinct literary phenomenon, while preparing the ground for his eventual departure from Oliveira's framework.

The first stage of Cabo Verdean poetic production, as outlined by Cabral, is distinguished by an almost complete detachment from the environment, revealing itself as alien to the reality "of the land and [of] the people of the archipelago" (p. 6).[16] The poets representative of this phase, according to Cabral, are Eugénio Tavares, José Lopes, Pedro Cardoso, and Januário Leite, although there are some works by Tavares and Cardoso that do not conform to this classification. As for Leite and Lopes, Cabral states:

> *J. Leite, for example, offers in his sonnets the expression of the poet's purely sentimental reaction to phenomena that concern him and him alone, whereas José Lopes conveys, more than any other poet, the stamp of classical culture, detached from its environment, which characterizes the ideological formation of the poets prior to Claridade* (p. 6)[17].

Cabral relies on another statement by Oliveira[18] to reach the conclusion that this mark of classical culture in pre-*Claridade* poetry results from the poets' education at the Seminary of São Nicolau, which was the first institution to offer religious and secondary education in the archipelago and contributed to the formation of Cabo Verde's cultural and political elites. [19] The classical and bookish culture learned at the lycée did not favor the poets' thematic approach to their environment and local problems:

[15] Portuguese original: "Tão distintas são essas duas fases, que Osório de Oliveira não hesita em afirmar: 'só agora (isto é, com a *Claridade*) se pode falar da Literatura Caboverdiana.'" This is one of the two passages in Cabral's essay in which he refers to Osório de Oliveira, without citing a specific work.
[16] Portuguese original: "da terra e [d]o Povo do Arquipélago."
[17] Portuguese original: "Enquanto poesia de J. Leite, por exemplo, oferece, nos seus sonetos, a expressão da reação puramente sentimental, do Poeta, perante fenómenos que a ele e só a ele interessam, a de José Lopes traduz, mais do que qualquer outra, o cunho de cultura clássica, desligada do meio, que caracteriza a formação ideológica dos Poetas anteriores à *Claridade.*"
[18] Again, Cabral does not cite the work in which Osório makes this assertion.
[19] The Seminary-Lyceum of São Nicolau was created by the Decree-Law of September 3, 1866, with the dual objective of training priests for the diocese and cadres for the civil administration (Neves, 2008, p. 24). The

> *With their eyes fixed on what they had learned from books and perhaps supposed to be unsurpassable, they achieve little more than imitating the authors they knew, producing a poetry in which love, intensely personal suffering, patriotic exaltation, and nostalgia are the common traits* (Cabral, 1952, p. 6)[20].

Cabral further reinforces his critique of the elitist influence on the formation of the pre-*Claridade* poets:

> *The seminary in São Nicolau could be attended by only a few. There, a classical culture was imparted, to which those who had the fortune to receive it remained strongly attached. So strong was the bond that seminarians (or talented autodidacts), finding open to them the doors of a life where they could enjoy positions of prominence, ignored or forgot the realities surrounding them. In them, all that was merely philosophical, religious, or moral gained supremacy over the economic. Better yet, it was the very economic conditions in which they lived that facilitated this detachment from Cabo Verdean realities. The land and the people were distant. The latter, in the lyrics of the morna, sang of their sufferings and loves, while the poets composed perfect sonnets to exalt some sentiment, the braids and eyes of the beloved, the beauties of Greece, or a celebrated date in history* (pp. 6–7)[21].

To be considered "perfect," Cabral observes, the sonnets must have "the sacred respect for meter, the distressing submission to the shackles of rhyme" (p. 6).[22] He goes on to contrast this elitist poetry with the morna.[23] It is important to highlight that the author chooses the morna, and not the *finason* (published on the cover of the first issue of the magazine), as a genuinely Cabo Verdean art form. This choice may be interpreted as an

choice of the island of São Nicolau for its establishment was because the seat of the Bishopric of Cabo Verde and Guinea had been located there since the late eighteenth century (p. 24). During its 51 years of uninterrupted operation, the Seminary received students not only from Cabo Verde but also from other Portuguese colonies—Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola, and Mozambique—as well as from mainland Portugal and Madeira (pp. 25, 176). According to Neves, the seminary "was the driving force behind cultural, political, social, and intellectual dynamics, in addition to paving the way for the formation of a schooled stratum that produced extensively, encompassing poetry, fiction, essay, and journalism" (p. 25), which earned it the designation of "cradle of Cabo Verdean intellectuality" (p. 24). Abolished by Law No. 701 of June 13, 1917, the building was later used, in 1931, as a concentration camp for political deportees from the Madeira revolt (p. 27).

[20] Portuguese original: "De olhos fixos no que aprenderam dos livros e que talvez supunham insuperável, pouco mais conseguem do que imitar os autores seus conhecidos, produzindo uma Poesia em que o amor, o sofrimento pessoalíssimo, a exaltação patriótica e o saudosismo, são os traços comuns."

[21] Portuguese original: "O Seminário, em S. Nicolau, por poucos pode ser frequentado. Ministra-se nele uma cultura clássica, à qual se ligam fortemente os que tiveram a felicidade de recebê-la. Tão forte é o elo, que os seminaristas (ou os autodidactas) de talento, encontrando abertas as portas duma vida onde pode desfrutar de posições de relevo, ignoram ou esquecem as realidades que os cercam. Opera-se neles a supremacia de tudo quanto é meramente filosófico, religioso ou moral, sobre o económico. Melhor: é a própria condição económica em que vivem que facilita aquele alheamento das realidades caboverdianas. A terra e o Povo estão distantes. Este, nas letras da Morna, canta os seus sofrimentos e amores, enquanto os Poetas compõem sonetos perfeitos, para exaltar um sentimento qualquer, as tranças e os olhos da hegéria, as belezas da Grécia ou uma data célebre, da História."

[22] Portuguese original: "O respeito sagrado à métrica, a confrangedora submissão às algemas da rima."

[23] The morna, the most emblematic and popular form of lyrical expression in Cabo Verde, was recognized in 2019 by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

indication of a critical predisposition to incorporate into his poetic reflection a cultural policy of miscegenation: a comprehensive perspective that conceives local culture as a dialogical phenomenon, without disregarding the elements inherited from metropolitan traditions.

Cabral's position on miscegenation, however, is more complex than a simple embrace of hybridity. As Mário Pinto de Andrade (1976) observed, Cabral's intellectual trajectory was marked by a process of "reafricanization"—a "reconversion" of the spirits through which colonized intellectuals, having been shaped by colonial education and assimilation, could overcome the limits imposed by that assimilation and reclaim their African identity (Sparemberger, 2011, p. 3). This process was not a rejection of all foreign influences, but rather a critical appropriation: Cabral advocated that from the culture he defines as African, experiences and knowledge from abroad should also form a part, but on African terms. In this sense, his choice of the *morna* over the *finason* is strategically revealing. By privileging a cultural form that already bears the marks of Portuguese influence—rather than a more distinctly African form like the *finason*—Cabral signals that his project was not one of pure nativism or a return to an idealized African past. Instead, he sought to engage critically with the cultural hybridity that defined Cabo Verdean society, transforming the "resignation" that Oliveira had identified into a conscious, critical engagement with culture as a weapon of liberation. Cabral's critique of *Claridade* poetry is thus not a rejection of Portuguese cultural elements, but a call to transcend passive acceptance—to move beyond the mere thematization of local suffering toward a poetry that actively participates in the struggle for social transformation.

The poetry Cabral defines as *claridosa* begins primarily with some compositions by Eugénio Tavares and Pedro Cardoso:

> *In E. Tavares (in singing of the atmosphere of Brava) and P. Cardoso (in translating popular Creole quatrains from Fogo), there is already something of what would later become reality in the poets of the new generation: an intimate communion between the poet and their world* (Cabral, 1952, p. 6)[24].

This intimacy between the poet and the world, however, also involves an intimacy between the poet and the people, as appears clearly in Issue 7 of *Claridade* (p. 28), in the poem "Poeta e Povo" (Poet and people) by Aguinaldo Brito Fonseca, whose verses expose a collective suffering. But instead of naming aspects of a hostile environment, the poet prefers to show solidarity with the people in a collective lament in response to hunger:

> *The people cried out in hunger.*
> *Many heard, but no one wept...*
> *The voice of the poem was not the voice of the poet:*
> *It was the voice of the people, the cry of the people.*
> *The verses of the poem wept like the people...*

[24] Portuguese original: "Em E. Tavares (ao cantar o ambiente bravense) e P. Cardoso (ao traduzir, do crioulo, quadras populares do Fogo) encontra-se já algo do que, mais tarde, se tornaria realidade nos Poetas da nova geração: uma comunhão íntima entre o Poeta e o seu mundo."

and the poet, in writing them,
wept with them as well[25]*.*

The poet gives voice to the suffering of the people, but still does not propose a course of action to overcome this suffering.

The Breaking of a New Dawn in Cabo Verdean Poetry

The magazine *Claridade*, whose advent Cabral (1952) called the breaking of a new dawn, represented a sudden change in Cabo Verdean poetry:

> *It is the clarity that arises, giving form to real things, pointing to the sea, the barren rocks, the people struggling in crises, the fight of the "anonymous" Cabo Verdean—in short, the land and the people of Cabo Verde. Hence the intentional—fortunately so—character of the name of the magazine, which shows this profound transformation in Cabo Verdean poetry: Claridade* (p. 7)[26].

The magazine introduces an innovation by bringing into poetry the natural, social, and human landscape of Cabo Verde, in contrast to the exaggerated individual sentimentalism, the references to Mt. Parnassus, and the idealizations of Greece in pre-*Claridade* poetry, which proved dissociated from the concrete reality of the archipelago—marked by infertile soil, prolonged droughts, and food scarcity that were the daily struggles of the Cabo Verdean people, Cabral's "anonymous Cabo Verdean." This expression is a direct reference to "Poema" (Poem) by Jorge Barbosa (1936), published in the first issue of *Claridade*, which includes the following verses:

You crossed
seas
in the adventure of whaling,
in those voyages to America
from which ships sometimes never return...

On land,
in our poor islands,
you are the man of the hoe,
digging the dry soil in ungrateful regions
where rain seldom comes,
where drought is affliction
and hunger a tragic scene!...
(The morna...
seems like the echo in your soul

[25] Portuguese original: "O povo gritou de fome. / Muitos ouviram mas ninguém chorou.// . . . // A voz do poema não era a voz do poeta: / era a voz do povo, o choro do povo.// Os versos do poema choravam como o povo . . . / e o poeta, ao escrevê-los, / chorava também com eles."
[26] Portuguese original: "É a claridade que surge, dando forma às coisas reais, apontando o mar, as rochas escalvadas, o povo a debater-se nas crises, a luta do caboverdiano "anônimo", enfim, a terra e o Povo de Cabo Verde. Por isso, o caracter intencional—e felizmente intencional—do nome da revista que revela essa profunda modificação na Poesia Caboverdiana: *Claridade*."

of the sea's voice,
of the longed-for rain,
... the passive expression of our drama,
our revolt,
our silent melancholic revolt!)

America...
America has ended for you.
It has closed its doors to your yearning for expansion!
... To live always bent over the land,
our poor,
ungrateful,
beloved land!

O humble,
anonymous Cabo Verdean
—my brother! (p. 10)[27].

This is one of the foundational poems of the *Claridade* movement, and its last verses inspired Cabral to refer to the Cabo Verdean people as "anonymous"—a term we have already encountered in the passage from his essay quoted above, where he describes "the fight of the 'anonymous' Cabo Verdean" (Cabral, 1952, p. 7). The dialogical composition in Barbosa's poem, addressed to a "you" ("tu")—the second person singular indicating an intimate mode of address—is a device that brings the poet closer to his subject of representation, namely the Cabo Verdean people shaped by emigration, the harshness of the land, longing, and silent resistance. Barbosa's choice signifies an ideological stance, placing himself within the reality he describes, as demonstrated by the final verse, laden with the force of affect and identity, in which he calls his anonymous interlocutor "my brother." Beyond its intimacy, the poem takes an anti-evasionist tone when the poet declares that "America has ended for you." We also note the inclusion in the poem of the word "hunger," whose use had been banned in local publications since 1927 by Governor Guedes Vaz (Lopes, 2021, as cited in Lima, 2024, p. 108).[28]

[27] Portuguese original: "Cruzaste / mares / na aventura da pesca da baleia, / nestas viagens para a América / de onde às vezes os navios não voltam mais. // . . . // Em terra / nessas pobres ilhas nossas / és o homem da enxada / abrindo levadas à água das ribeiras férteis / cavando a terra seca / nas regiões ingratas / onde às vezes a chuva mal chega, / onde às vezes a estiagem é uma aflição / e um cenário trágico de fome! // . . . // (A morna . . . / parece que é o eco em tua alma / da voz do Mar / e da nostalgia das terras mais ao longe que o Mar te convida, / o eco / da voz da chuva desejada, / . . . / a expressão passiva do nosso drama, / da nossa revolta, / da nossa silenciosa revolta melancólica!) // A América . . . / A América acabou-se / para ti. / Fechou as portas à tua ânsia de expansão! // . . . // Viver sempre vergado sobre a terra, / a nossa terra / pobre / ingrata / querida! // Ser levado talvez um dia / na onda alta de alguma estiagem / como um desses barquinhos nossos / que andam pelas ilhas / e o Oceano acaba também por levar um dia! // . . . // Oh Caboverdeano humilde / anónimo, /—meu irmão!

[28] Vaz ordered a ban on the word "hunger" in local publications from 1927, and the Estado Novo regime aggravated the situation by confiscating newspapers that reported on the famines (Lopes, 2021, as cited in Lima, 2024, p. 108). *Claridade*, despite censorship, managed to circumvent this prohibition through literary strategies. The reality of hunger, drought, and emigration is also portrayed in *Claridade*'s prose, notably in the novel *Chiquinho* (1947) by Baltasar Lopes. The novel, which follows the protagonist's life from childhood in a village in São Nicolau to youth in Mindelo and eventual emigration to the United States, is considered a foundational work of modern Cabo Verdean literature for its denunciation of living conditions in the archipelago (Lima, 2024, p. 105). The first part of the novel was published under the title "Bibia" in Issue 1 of *Claridade.*

The relevance of the local landscape in this new poetry is highlighted by Artur Augusto (1937) in the essay "O Sentido Heróico do Mar" (The heroic meaning of the sea), published in the third issue of *Claridade*:

> *Human geography has not yet unveiled, and perhaps will never be able to unveil, the intimate spiritual communion that man will always have with the land that was his cradle.*
> *It is up to poets to reveal this hidden meaning that inextricably binds man to the landscape he first beheld. And so powerful is this influence that many preserve it solely through the atavism that holds them* (p. 4)[29].

On this founding moment of *Claridade*, which places poetry in communion with the land, Cabral (1952) states:

> *The poets are now common folk who walk hand-in-hand with the people, with their feet firmly rooted in the land. Cabo Verde is not the dreamed Hesperidean garden, but rather the ARCHIPELAGO and its ENVIRONMENT, where trees die of thirst and people of hunger—but hope never dies. The sea no longer has mermaids, and the waves do not kiss the shore. The sea is the road of liberation and longing, and the murmur of the waves is the constant temptation, the permanent reminder of the "despair of wanting to leave and having to stay"* (p. 7)[30].

The words *Arquipélago (ARCHIPELAGO)* and *Ambiente (ENVIRONMENT)* recall the titles of two books by Barbosa. *Ambiente* (Environment) was published in Cabo Verde in 1941, while *Arquipélago* (Archipelago) was released in 1935, a year before the first issue of *Claridade*. In "The Heroic Meaning of the Sea," published in the third issue of *Claridade*, Augusto (1937) refers to this book: "Jorge Barbosa, in his latest book *Arquipélago*, notes the influence of the sea: Ah, the strange / song / of the Atlantic / that does not fall silent within us! . . . / Ah, the sea / that expands our dreams and suffocates our desires!" (p. 4). Given the relevance of this book for the renewal of Cabo Verdean poetry, Augusto returns to it in the concluding sentence of his essay, not only to refer to Barbosa's poems but, more broadly, to the poetic production emerging with the *Claridade* writers: "In this time of grave crisis for Portuguese letters, I have the greatest faith in the destiny of the new generation of artists I see arising in this *Archipelago*." (p. 4).[31]

In addition to Barbosa, Cabral (1952) also highlights other "pioneers of the *Claridade* event" (p. 7): Oswaldo Alcântara (the literary pseudonym of Baltasar Lopes, one of the

[29] Portuguese original: "A geografia humana ainda não desvendou, e talvez nunca o conseguirá fazer, a íntima comunhão espiritual que o homem há de sempre manter com a terra que lhe foi berço. Cabe aos poetas revelar este sentido oculto que liga indissoluvelmente o homem à paisagem que primeiro viu. E é tão poderosa essa influência, que muitos a mantêm só pelo atavismo que os prende."
[30] Portuguese original: "Os poetas, agora, são homens-comuns que caminham de mãos dadas com o Povo, e de pés fincados na terra. Cabo Verde não é o sonhado jardim hesperitano, mas, sim, o *Arquipélago* e o *Ambiente*, onde as árvores morrem de sede, os homens, de fome—e a esperança nunca morre. O mar já não tem sereias e as ondas não beijam a praia. O mar é a estrada da libertação e da saudade, e o marulhar das vagas é a tentação constante, a lembrança permanente do 'desespero de querer partir e ter de ficar.'"
[31] Portuguese original: "Nesta época de grave crise para as letras portuguesas, eu tenho a maior fé nos destinos da nova geração de artistas que vejo surgir nesse *Arquipélago*."



founders of *Claridade* and author of the preeminent Cabo Verdean novel *Chiquinho*), Corsino de Azevedo, Manuel Lopes, Teixeira de Souza, Jaime de Figueiredo are among the main names.

These are the poets who, to Cabral (1952), give voice to the land, to the people, and to the reality of Cabo Verde: "The land, 'the martyred land'—is the mother who 'nourishes' her children 'with the tenderness of her entrails'; who has not died, but lies asleep 'in a crumb of land in the middle of the sea'" (p. 7). Cabral is quoting from the poem "Mamãi" (Mother) by Alcântara (1936), published in Issue 2 of *Claridade*, which takes the form of a prayer of a child to Mother Earth:

> *Mamãi—Earth,*
> *I come to pray at your feet,*
> *Your son comes to raise his supplications . . .*
> *for your other children—scattered*
> *across the gray surface of your martyred womb.*
> *Mamãi—Earth, . . .*
> *I searched for your tomb*
> *and did not find it*
> *And then,*
> *in my anguish as a grieving son,*
> *they told me you had been buried*
> *in a crumb of land*
> *in the middle of the sea.*
> *I boarded a sailboat*
> *and went sailing, sailing. . . .*
>
> *You have not died, have you, dear mother?*
> *You are only asleep*
> *so that tomorrow you may rise again. . . .*
> *Dear Mother, move aside a little*
> *and let your son fall asleep at your feet* (p. 7, our emphasis)[32].

Cabral identifies in Alcântara's verses one of the most poignant personifications of Cabo Verdean land, as a suffering mother, weakened and asleep, incapable of feeding her children, yet receiving the profound affection of the child who shelters in her and does not lose hope for better days.

In seeking the reason for such a profound transformation in Cabo Verdean poetry, Cabral (1952) understands that the principal change occurred in culture, which he considered "still the appanage of a restricted sector of Cabo Verdean Society" (p. 7).[33] The democratization of school education, according to Cabral, allowed greater access to

[32] Potuguese original: "Mamãi—Terra,/ venho rezar uma oração ao pé de ti,/ Teu filho vem dirigir suas súplicas . . . / pelos outros teus filhos—espalhados/ na superfície cinzenta do teu ventre mártir,/ Mamãi—Terra,/ . . . Eu procurei o teu túmulo/ e não o encontrei./ E depois,/ na minha dor de filho angustiado,/ me disseram que te haviam sepultado/ numa migalha de terra/ no meio do mar./ Embarquei num veleiro/ e fui navegando, navegando . . . // Não morreste, não, Mamãizinha?/ Estás apenas adormecida/ para amanhã te levantares./ . . . Mamãizinha, afasta-te um bocadinho/ e deixa o teu filho adormecer ao pé de ti . . ."
[33] Portuguese original: "Ainda o apanágio dum setor restrito da sociedade caboverdiana."

culture, forming intellectuals not only from more privileged classes but also "from the so-called humble people"[34] (p. 7):

> *The fulcrum of Cabo Verdean intellectual life, shifting from São Nicolau to the city of Mindelo, on the edge of Porto Grande, came into broader contact with the world, where, day by day, the evolution of the human mentality was unfolding, and the aspirations of humanity were being realized. It is to be admitted that such a transformation resulted mainly from this contact, essentially with metropolitan and Brazilian literature* (p. 7)[35].

It is worth noting that Cabral's defense of a poetry that constitutes itself as the voice of the land and of the Cabo Verdean people does not imply that it is confined within a strictly identity-based horizon. On the contrary, the new poetry of *Claridade*, based in Mindelo, emerges from an intellectuality in broader dialogue with the world, exposed both to the literary trends of the metropolis and to international artistic currents. The hypothesis that the *Claridade* writers may have been influenced by Brazilian literature had already been suggested in Oliveira's essay "Palavras sôbre Cabo Verde para serem lidas no Brasil" (Words on Cabo Verde to be read in Brazil), published in Issue 2 of *Claridade*:

> *The Cabo Verdeans needed an example that Portuguese literature could not provide, but Brazil offered it. The affinities existing between Cabo Verde and the states of Northeastern Brazil predisposed the Cabo Verdeans to understand, feel, and love the new Brazilian literature. Finding examples to follow in the poetry and modern novels of Brazil and feeling supported in the analysis of their case by the new Brazilian essayists, the Cabo Verdeans discovered their path. A group was formed under the name Claridade* (Oliveira, 1936, p. 4)[36].

For Oliveira, there were two reasons why the new writers—"some talented young men . . . modest clerks, or employees" (p. 4)[37]—came to discover and sing freely using the rhythms of their own land: one was the fact that they could not go to Portugal "like the happy men of other generations" (p. 4), and so established more intimate contact with their surroundings; the other reason was the example they found in the new literature emerging in Brazil. By "the new Brazilian essayists," Oliveira is primarily referring to Gilberto Freyre, whose concept of Lusotropicalism strongly influenced the *Claridade* intellectuals in the 1930s. However, the sixteen years separating Oliveira's essay (1936)

[34] Portuguese original: "Da chamada gente humilde."
[35] Portuguese original: "O fulcro da intelectualidade caboverdiana, passando de S. Nicolau para a cidade de Mindelo, à beira do Porto Grande, encontrou-se em contato mais amplo com o Mundo, onde se operava, dia a dia, a evolução da mentalidade humana, concretizando-se as aspirações do Homem. É de admitir-se que tal transformação resultou principalmente desse contacto, em essencial com a literatura metropolitana e brasileira."
[36] Portuguese original: "Os caboverdeanos precisavam dum exemplo que a literatura de Portugal não lhes podia dar, mas que o Brasil lhes forneceu. As afinidades existentes entre Cabo Verde e os estados do Nordeste do Brasil predispunham os caboverdeanos para compreender, sentir e amar a nova literatura brasileira. Encontrando exemplos a seguir na poesia e nos romances modernos do Brasil, sentindo-se apoiados, na análise do seu caso, pelos novos ensaístas brasileiros, os caboverdianos descobriram o seu caminho. Um grupo se formou com o nome de *Claridade*."
[37] Portuguese original: "Alguns rapazes de talento . . . modestos funcionários ou empregados."

from Cabral's "Apontamentos" (1952) are critical: during this period, the Estado Novo strategically appropriated Freyre's theories to justify its colonial presence in Africa, transforming a discourse of cultural affirmation into an instrument of imperial propaganda (Castelo, 1998; Costa, 2005). This temporal gap illuminates the differing positions of the two authors: Oliveira's discourse occupies a frontier space between an appeal to Cabo Verdean resistance and a reaffirmation of colonial ideology, while Cabral, writing in the early 1950s, could draw upon Oliveira's notion of "resignation" only to transcend it, transforming cultural critique into a call for political liberation.

It is also important to recognize the distinct historical contexts in which Oliveira and Cabral were writing. Oliveira's essay was published in 1936, a period when colonial ideologies remained largely unchallenged in the public sphere, and when the Estado Novo was consolidating its imperial mystique. His discourse, while appealing to Cabo Verdean cultural resistance, inevitably operated within the ideological frameworks available at the time—frameworks that were not yet subjected to the anti-colonial pressures that would emerge after the Second World War. Cabral's "Apontamentos," by contrast, appeared in 1952, against a backdrop of progressive decolonization that had begun with the independence of Asian countries such as India (1947) and Indonesia (1949). The political stakes of literary criticism had shifted dramatically: where Oliveira could still invoke the "excellence of Portuguese colonization" without immediate contradiction, Cabral's call for poetry to transcend resignation was already imbued with the language of national liberation. This chronological distance does not diminish the intertextual relationship between the two essays; rather, it illuminates how Cabral appropriated Oliveira's diagnosis of "resignation" and, in a new historical conjuncture, transformed it into a revolutionary call.

Near the end of his essay, Oliveira says: "The high mental level of the Cabo Verdeans has long been one of the greatest proofs of the excellence of Portuguese colonization and of our civilizing capacity" (Oliveira, 1936, p. 4).[38] This statement reveals Oliveira's alignment with the ideological foundations of the Estado Novo, which promoted a self-congratulatory narrative of Portuguese colonialism as a uniquely benevolent and civilizing enterprise. The praise of Cabo Verdean cultural autonomy is immediately appropriated as a justification for colonial presence. In the final paragraph, Oliveira deepens the paternalistic tone, creating a brotherhood between Brazilians and Cabo Verdeans, both "children" (*filhos*) of Portugal: "And may we, Portuguese of the Continent, know how to see in this understanding . . . the best proof of the universality of our spiritual action, our eternal glory."[39] The rhetoric evokes the great navigations and parallel Catholic proselytism—an ideology aligned with the Estado Novo.[40]

Although Cabral refers to Oliveira's statements several times in "Apontamentos," at no point can we see any affinity with Salazarist ideology, as might be expected. Yet Cabral's position is not entirely free from ambiguity. As noted earlier, his choice of the *morna*—a

[38] Portuguese original: "O alto nível mental dos cabo-verdianos é, há muito, uma das maiores provas da excelência da colonização portuguesa e da nossa capacidade civilizadora."
[39] Portuguese original: "E que nós, portugueses do Continente, saibamos ver nesse entendimento . . . a melhor prova da universalidade da nossa acção espiritual, nossa glória eterna."
[40] For further details on the influence of Gilberto Freyre's work on the avant-garde *Claridade* movement, see Salla (2014).

culturally hybrid form—over the *finason* may suggest a subtle alignment with the politics of miscegenation that Oliveira had embraced. However, for Cabral, this choice reflects a pragmatic recognition of Cabo Verde's cultural reality rather than an endorsement of colonial ideology. One of the observations Oliveira presented, on which Cabral strongly relied, was Cabo Verdean "resignation"—an idea Cabral would incisively combat in the fourth and final part of his essay, as we shall see in the following section.

From Resigned Poetry to the Cabo Verdean's Own Voice

In the final part of "Apontamentos," Cabral (1952) defends his position on this new form of poetry, *determining* the following:

> *But the evolution of Cabo Verdean poetry cannot stop. It must transcend "resignation" and "hope." "Total insularity" and droughts are not enough to justify perennial stagnation. The messages of Claridade and Certeza*41 *must be transcended. The dream of escape, the "wanting to leave," cannot be eternalized. The dream must be another, and it is up to the poets—those who continue hand-in-hand with the people, with their feet firmly rooted in the land and participating in the common drama—to sing it. The Cabo Verdean, with eyes wide open, will understand their own dream, will discover their own voice, in the message of the poets* (p. 8)[42].

Cabral's emphasis on "resignation" as a recurring trait in Cabo Verdean poetry highlights the implicit dialogue with Oliveira's essay. Cabral opposes an alternative to this resigned attitude, one that aligns with the critical perspective already announced in his earlier writings, although those did not develop the detailed analysis of poetic production found in "Apontamentos."[43] Before examining how the dialogue between Cabral and Oliveira is established regarding "resignation"—a concept that Oliveira first introduced in his 1936 essay published in Issue 2 of *Claridade*, and which Cabral would later engage with, without direct citation, in his 1952 "Apontamentos"—it is necessary to make explicit the terms of this debate. This is a crucial dimension of our analysis, as it reveals the often-unacknowledged source that Cabral drew upon for his critique of Cabo Verdean poetry.

[41] On *Certeza*, another avant-garde Cabo Verdean magazine that was highly representative, Cabral (1952) says: "Years later, *Certeza* appears, an unfortunately short-lived publication, founded by students of the lycée. In it, Arnaldo França, Nuno Miranda, Tomaz Martins, G. Rocheteau, and other young men attempt to put out a new message and show that they understood that of the *Claridade* poets. But *Certeza* is not merely a comprehension of *Claridade*" (p. 7).

[42] Portuguese original: "Mas a evolução da Poesia Caboverdiana não pode parar. Ela tem de transcender a 'resignação' e a 'esperança.' A 'insularidade total' e as secas, não bastam para justificar uma estagnação perene."

As mensagens da Claridade e da Certeza têm de ser transcendidas. O sonho de evasão, o desejo de 'querer partir,' não pode eternizar-se. O sonho tem de ser outro, e aos Poetas—os que continuam de mãos dadas com o Povo, de pés fincados na terra e participando no drama comum—compete cantá-lo. O caboverdiano, de olhos bem abertos, compreenderá o seu próprio sonho, descobrirá a sua própria voz, na mensagem dos Poetas."

[43] Cabral's critique of resignation echoes in Onésimo Silveira's "Consciencialização na literatura caboverdiana" [Conscientization in Cabo Verdean Literature] (1963), where he argued that the claridosos' focus on emigration "ended up arbitrarily simplifying this complex problem and offering a stereotyped image of the Cabo Verdean man (Silveira, 1963, p. 10, as cited in Sapega, p. 168). Silveira's critique is particularly noteworthy given that he himself published the poem "Saga" in *Claridade* (Issue 8, 1958), a work with strong political connotations—suggesting that his critique emerged from within the movement he would later question.

While Cabral does not cite Oliveira by name in this context, our research demonstrates that his argument is fundamentally shaped by Oliveira's earlier diagnosis of Cabo Verdean "resignation," a diagnosis that Cabral ultimately seeks to transcend by transforming cultural lament into revolutionary action. This strategy of implicit appropriation and transcendence is central to understanding Cabral's poetic-political militancy.

Osório de Oliveira: Resignation as a Defining Trait of the Cabo Verdean

Oliveira's "Palavras sôbre Cabo Verde"—signed in Lisbon on March 29, 1936, and published in *Claridade* that August—is an ideologically hybrid text that calls for Cabo Verdean resistance while simultaneously corroborating a colonialist discourse. Composed of seven paragraphs, the text responds directly to the poem "Écran" (Screen) that Manuel Lopes (1936) had dedicated to him in the first issue of the magazine, in which the poet described the world that his eyes "drink in from outdated newspapers and magazines,"[44] before concluding melancholically: "that here [Cabo Verde] none of this exists: It is all resignation"[45] (p. 4). The editorial epigraph—"We congratulate ourselves on Osório's collaboration, always welcome in this magazine whose explicit aim is to reveal the message of the national soul"[46] (p. 4)—seeks to legitimize in advance a text that flagrantly contradicts the magazine's project of identity affirmation.

Oliveira (1936) highlights the Cabo Verdean's "gentleness of temperament," (*doçura de temperamento*) which makes them "nostalgic, melancholic, and resigned" (*um nostálgico, um melancólico e um resignado*) (p. 4). He adds that "resignation is the word that defines their attitude in life when the harshness of destiny actually demanded revolt, the energetic reaction of the strong" (p. 4).[47] He thus identifies "resignation" as a defining trait of the Cabo Verdean—a resignation that contrasts with what the situation requires. Further on—in the shortest paragraph of the essay, which seems to be a deliberate choice—the core of Oliveira's appeal is revealed:

> *But it is precisely this resignation that educated Cabo Verdeans need to combat in their people. . . . If I could, I would go from island to island, from village to village, from house to house, telling the Cabo Verdeans not to be resigned. There are many things they can achieve if, instead of bowing to implacable destiny, they cry out in a desperate will to live* (p. 4)[48].

Here, Oliveira summons a "cry" against resignation—a call for change from silence to action. However, the "destiny" against which they must cry out is a vague and depoliticized category: not the colonizer, not the regime, but an almost natural force.

[44] Portuguese original: "Sorvem nos jornais e revistas atrasadas."
[45] Portuguese original: "Que aqui [Cabo Verde] nada disso existe: é tudo resignação."
[46] Portuguese original: "Congratulamo-nos com a colaboração de Osório, sempre benvinda nesta revista que, justamente, procura revelar a mensagem da alma patrícia."
[47] Portuguese original: "Resignação é a palavra que define sua atitude na vida quando a inclemência do Destino exatamente exigia a revolta, a enérgica reação dos fortes."
[48] Portuguese original: "Mas é precisamente essa resignação que os cabo-verdianos cultos precisam de combater no seu povo. . . . se eu pudesse, iria de ilha em ilha, de povoação em povoação, de casa em casa, dizer aos cabo-verdianos que não se resignassem. Há muitas coisas que eles podiam conseguir se, em vez de se curvarem sob o Destino implacável, gritassem a sua vontade desesperada de viver."

The call remains on the plane of will, without translating into concrete political action. Oliveira sees in the *Claridade* poets the possibility of this turn but cannot—or does not dare—name the true enemy.

In the sixth and seventh paragraphs, Oliveira's discourse reveals a paternalistic colonial logic: while acknowledging Cabo Verdean cultural autonomy, he appropriates it as proof of the Portuguese civilizing mission. This rhetoric, echoed in his invocation of a spiritual brotherhood between Brazilians and Cabo Verdeans as "children" of Portugal, aligns with the Estado Novo's ideology of imperial universality and its evocation of the great navigations.

Oliveira's essay contains structural contradictions. Although his discourse intends to call the Cabo Verdean to expression—to the cry—it is anchored in markedly ethnocentric and colonial assumptions, reiterating the supposed superiority of Portugal, the idea of a "civilizing miscegenation," and the eternal glory of the Portuguese people. Such internal tensions stem, in part, from the demands imposed by the censorship of the period: In order to obtain approval, the text had to incorporate statements that resonated with the regime's ideology. In this way, the "cry" that the author summons is immediately neutralized by a discursive framework that empties it.

In "Apontamentos," Cabral does not discuss Oliveira's ambiguous political stance—both conservative and anarchic—and it might be precisely because he disagreed with this position and did not wish to propagate it (except occasionally, where it served his critiques and political-poetic militancy) that he intentionally avoided citing his sources. Yet it is clear that his critical vision of Cabo Verdean poetry is grounded in the notion of "resignation" that was first pointed out by Oliveira. At the end of his critique of Cabo Verdean poetry, Cabral (1952) identifies two poets—António Nunes and Aguinaldo Fonseca—who to him "are at the forefront of this new poetry. They do not conform to stagnation. The prison is not in the sea" (p. 8).[49] In his critique, Cabral highlights these poets who expose a "shipwreck on land" (*naufrágio em terra*) and "another land within our land" (*outra terra dentro da nossa terra*).

Final Remarks

The analytical path undertaken in this article highlights the relevance of the essay "Apontamentos sobre poesia caboverdiana" as a fundamental document for understanding Amílcar Cabral's poetic-political militancy and his relationship with the *Claridade* movement. More than a literary critique limited to aesthetic considerations, "Apontamentos" is an intellectual intervention that articulates cultural reflection and a political project, anticipating central categories of Cabral's thought, such as the social function of art, the need to overcome historical passivity, and the role of culture in the anticolonial struggle.

The analysis of the first seven issues of *Claridade* revealed a literary movement marked by significant internal tensions: On the one hand, the magazine broke with the

[49] Portuguese original: "Que estão na vanguarda dessa nova Poesia. Não se conformam com a estagnação. A prisão não está no mar."

metropolitan poetic tradition and introduced insular realities—drought, famine, emigration—into the center of artistic creation; on the other, as Cabral observed, it remained largely imprisoned by a resigned tone and passive hope, which were insufficient in the face of the archipelago's historical urgencies. The editorial oscillation between the affirmation of a radical difference (the transcription of the *finason* in the first issue) and the approximation to culturally mixed forms (such as the morna and Oliveira's essay) highlights the limits and contradictions of a project that, although innovative, did not manage—or did not dare—to fully become a critique of colonialism.

The implicit dialogue that Cabral establishes with Oliveira, especially around the notion of "resignation," illuminates the originality of Cabral's position. Although Oliveira summons the Cabo Verdean to the "cry" against "destiny," he remains entangled in colonial assumptions that neutralize his appeal and also aligns himself with the ideology of the Estado Novo. Cabral, by contrast, takes "resignation" as a political problem to be overcome through conscious action and not as an intrinsic trait to be lamented. His critique of *Claridade* poetry is therefore not a rejection of the movement but a call for its transcendence: Poetry must cease to be a mirror of suffering and become an instrument of transformation.

It is precisely at this point that the most enduring contribution of "Apontamentos" is revealed: the defense that art—and poetry in particular—is not merely the externalization of individual feeling, but also a complex field where collective struggle can find its voice. The "poetic seed" planted by *Claridade*, by shifting the poet's gaze toward the reality of their land, contained within itself the potential to germinate into critical consciousness and political action. By identifying the limits of this seed and pointing out paths for its transcendence, Cabral calls it to blossom into its own voice, capable of breaking the silence imposed by colonial oppression and affirming itself as a force of liberation.

Ultimately, Cabral's essay reveals itself as a seminal text, in which the central concerns that would mark his entire intellectual and political trajectory are announced: the function of culture in the anticolonial struggle, the need to forge a Cabo Verdean identity beyond the colonial legacy, and the conviction that social transformation is the work of the conscious and organized action of the people. By critically examining *Claridade* poetry, Cabral not only contributes to the literary history of Cabo Verde but also offers a key to understanding his own project of national liberation.

References

Alcântara, O. (1936). Mamãi [Mother]. *Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras*, (2), 7.

Andrade, M. P. de. (1976, September 12). Amílcar Cabral e a reafricanização dos espíritos: um depoimento de Mário Pinto de Andrade [Amílcar Cabral and the re-Africanization of spirits: A testimony by Mário Pinto de Andrade]. *Nô Pintcha*, Ano II(225), 8-9.

Augusto, A. (1937). O sentido heróico do mar [The heroic meaning of the sea]. *Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras*, (3), 4.

Barbosa, J. (1936). Poema [Poem]. *Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras*, (1), 10.

Cabral, A. (1952). Apontamentos sobre a Poesia Caboverdiana [Notes on Cape Verdean poetry]. *Cabo Verde—Boletim de Propaganda e Informação*, (28), 5–8.

Carvalho, A. (2021). Claridade: Movimento de emancipação cultural e ideológica cabo-verdianas [*Claridade*: A movement of Cape Verdean cultural and ideological emancipation]. *Língua Lugar*, 2(3), 24–43. https://doi.org/10.34913/journals/lingualugar.2021.e525

Castelo, C. (1998). *O modo português de estar no mundo: O luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933-1961)* [*The Portuguese way of being in the world: Lusotropicalism and Portuguese colonial ideology (1933-1961)*]. Edições Afrontamento.

Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras. (1) (March 1936).

Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras. (2) (August 1936).

Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras. (3) (March 1937).

Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras. (4) (January 1947).

Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras. (5) (September 1947).

Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras. (6) (July 1948).

Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras.(7) (December 1949).

Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras. (8) (May 1958).

Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras. (9) (December 1960).

Costa, C.M. (2005). *Mundo luso-tropical: três estudos de caso* [*Luso-tropical world: Three case studies*]. Editorial Minerva.

Fonseca, A. B. (1949). Poeta e Povo [Poet and people]. *Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras*, (7), 28.

Lima, N. S. R. (2024). Mulheres escritas nos contos da revista Claridade: corpos e ilhas em abandono [Women written in the short stories of *Claridade*: Bodies and islands in abandonment]. In N. S. R. Lima & C. L. T. R. Secco (Eds.), *Cabo Verde: literatura em diálogo* [Cape Verde: Literature in dialogue] (pp. 97–130). Pontes Editores.

Lopes, B. (1936). Bibia (excerto do romance inedito *Chiquinho*) [Bibia (excerpt from the unpublished novel *Chiquinho*)]. *Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras*, (1), 2–3, 7.

Lopes, B. (1947). *Chiquinho*. Edição do Autor.

Lopes, M. (1936). Écran (a Osório de Oliveira) [Screen (to Osorio de Oliveira)]. *Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras*, (1), 4, 7.

Milheiro, A. V. (2022). Cabo Verde Boletim de Propaganda e Informação (1949–1964): From propaganda to the demands for change at the periphery of the Portuguese empire. In A. S. Faria, A. Shelley, & S. A. Lobo (Eds.), *The built environment through the prism of the colonial periodical press* (pp. 261-284). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003333180

Neves, B. S. (2008). *O Seminário-Liceu de S. Nicolau. Contributo para a História do Ensino em Cabo Verde* [The Seminary-High School of S. Nicolau: A contribution to the

history of education in Cape Verde]. Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto.

Oliveira, J. O. de. (1936). Palavras sôbre Cabo Verde para serem lidas no Brasil [Words on Cape Verde to be read in Brazil]. *Claridade: Revista de Arte e Letras*, (2), 4.

Rivas, P. (1989). Claridade. Emergência e diferenciação de uma literatura nacional [Claridade: Emergence and differentiation of a national literature]. *Estudos Portugueses e Africanos*, (14), 39–47.

Salla, T. M. (2014). A revista Claridade e o discurso freyreano: regionalismo e aproximação entre a elite letrada cabo-verdiana e a metrópole portuguesa nos anos 1930 [The journal *Claridade* and the Freyrean discourse: regionalism and the rapprochement between the Cape Verdean educated elite and the Portuguese metropolis in the 1930s]. *Via Atlântica*, (25), 103–117.

Sapega, E. W. (2003). Notes on the historical context of Claridade. In A. M. Leite (Ed.), *Cape Verde: Language, literature & music* (pp. 159–172). University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture.

Sparemberger, A. (2011). A reafricanização dos espíritos na obra de Amílcar Cabral: sobre um depoimento de Mário Pinto de Andrade [The re-Africanization of spirits in the work of Amílcar Cabral: On a testimony by Mário Pinto de Andrade]. *Revista África e Africanidades*, Ano II(12). ISSN 1983-2354.

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

PORTUGUESE OR NOT PORTUGUESE: THE QUESTION BETWEEN AMÍLCAR CABRAL AND PAULO FREIRE AND ITS LESSONS FOR THE TIMORESE BROTHERS

KARIN NOEMI RÜHLE INDART
karin.indart@untl.edu.tl
PhD holds a PhD in Sociology of Education from the University of Minho, Portugal, awarded in 2017, with a thesis entitled "Education Policies, Language Policies, National Identity and State Building in Timor-Leste." She holds a Master's degree in Educational Evaluation from the University of Minho, awarded in 2011, with a dissertation entitled "Policy and Linguistic Planning of the Portuguese Language in Timor-Leste: An Evaluative Study." She obtained a Bachelor's degree in Portuguese and German Languages from the Federal University of Paraná, Brazil, in 2002. She has also completed postdoctoral research in Applied Linguistics at the University of Porto, Portugal, and in Sociolinguistics at Mackenzie Presbyterian University, Brazil. She is currently a Guest Professor in the Postgraduate and Research Program at the National University of Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL), (Timor-Leste). She has lived, worked, and conducted research in Timor-Leste since 2003, developing field research in areas including Education Policy, Educational Evaluation, Educational Management, Sociology of Education, Language Policy, Sociolinguistics, Linguistic Anthropology, and Applied Linguistics. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3320-3376

Abstract

This study analyses Paulo Freire's literacy program in Portuguese-speaking African countries, particularly with regard to the choice of the language of instruction. Its central focus is the linguistic dilemma arising from the differing positions of Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire concerning literacy education in Portuguese within the African Countries of Portuguese Official Language (PALOP). For political reasons, Cabral regarded the Portuguese language as a "gift" and as a unifying force among diverse ethnic and linguistic groups, a position that Freire interpreted as a constraint on his educational intervention. Freire advocated literacy instruction in Creole, arguing that the exclusive use of Portuguese reproduced the elitist character of the educational system, since it was a language detached from the social practices of the people. Following Bowen's (2009) qualitative approach to documentary analysis, which involves skimming, reading, and interpretation, this article examines the sole point of disagreement between Cabral's thought and Freire's literacy program: the use of the colonizer's language in emancipatory education and the implications of this debate for language policy in Timor-Leste. By comparing this experience with the latter case of Timor-Leste's independence, where Tetum was granted co-official status and employed in literacy programs, the article highlights a more open language policy, albeit one marked by new dilemmas of its own.

Keywords

Amílcar Cabral; Paulo Freire; popular literacy campaign; language of instruction; Portuguese language in former colonies.

Resumo

Este estudo analisa o programa de alfabetização de Paulo Freire nos países africanos de língua portuguesa, com particular atenção à escolha da língua de instrução. O seu foco central reside

no dilema linguístico decorrente das posições divergentes de Amílcar Cabral e Paulo Freire relativamente à alfabetização em português nos Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa (PALOP). Por razões políticas, Cabral considerava a língua portuguesa uma "dádiva" e um elemento de unificação entre os diversos grupos étnicos e linguísticos, posição que Freire interpretava como um condicionamento da sua intervenção educativa. Freire defendia a alfabetização em crioulo, argumentando que a utilização exclusiva do português reproduzia o caráter elitista do sistema educativo, uma vez que se tratava de uma língua dissociada das práticas sociais e culturais das populações. Seguindo a abordagem qualitativa de análise documental proposta por Bowen (2009), baseada nas etapas de exame preliminar, leitura aprofundada e interpretação, este artigo analisa o único ponto de divergência entre o pensamento de Cabral e o programa de alfabetização de Freire: o uso da língua do colonizador na educação emancipatória e as implicações deste debate para as políticas linguísticas em Timor-Leste. Ao comparar essa experiência com o caso posterior da independência timorense, em que o tétum adquiriu estatuto de língua cooficial e foi utilizado em programas de alfabetização, o artigo evidencia uma política linguística mais aberta e inclusiva, embora igualmente marcada por novos dilemas e desafios.

Palavras-chave

Amílcar Cabral; Paulo Freire; campanha de alfabetização popular; língua de instrução; língua portuguesa nas ex-colónias.

How to cite this article
Indart, Karin Noemi Rühle (2026). Portuguese or not Portuguese: The Question Between Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire and its Lessons for the Timorese Brothers. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 111-129. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.5

Article submitted on 26 June 2026 and accepted on21 August 2026.

CC BY

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 111-129
Portuguese or not Portuguese: The Question Between Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire and its Lessons for the Timorese Brothers
Karin Noemi Rühle Indart

PORTUGUESE OR NOT PORTUGUESE: THE QUESTION BETWEEN AMÍLCAR CABRAL AND PAULO FREIRE AND ITS LESSONS FOR THE TIMORESE BROTHERS[1,2]

KARIN INDART

Introduction

Amílcar Cabral's writings undeniably influenced Paulo Freire's concepts of education for liberation. Evidence of this influence can be found in Freire's dedication of his book *Letters to Guinea-Bissau* to Cabral, whom he describes as an "educator educating his people." According to Freire (1985), it is difficult to think about the liberation movements of the Portuguese-colonized African countries without referring to Amílcar Cabral. The two never met in person due to Cabral's premature death in 1973, but his works were studied extensively by Freire when, in 1975, he was invited to organize an adult literacy project in Guinea-Bissau. In this regard, "Freire was able to observe that Cabral was not merely theory, but rather a great deal of practice - a practice that transformed the lives of his people, a liberating practice" (Silva & Cassiani, 2022, p. 3). According to Freire's own testimony, it was possible to verify the coherence between Cabral's writings and liberatory concepts and the accounts of those who had fought alongside him. As Freire states: "the reading of Amílcar, the personality of Amílcar as a great revolutionary, was something that fascinated me then and continues to fascinate me completely today" (Freire, 1985, p. 3). Cabral argued that education was an instrument of resistance and of the re-Africanization of colonized peoples. However, local culture, in his view, "must develop on a scientific basis; it must be scientific, that is, people should not believe in imaginary things" (Cabral, 1978, p. 141, cited in Silva & Cassiani, 2022, p. 6). For this reason, the establishment of schools in the rural interior of Guinea was one of the concrete actions of the liberation program.

The educational system implemented by the PAIGC in the liberated zones sought to recover what was most relevant in the experience of traditional Guinean society. The informality and spontaneity of traditional educational practices were revalued, as was the use of the experience of elders. Given the severe material constraints faced by the

[1] Conflict of Interests - The author has identified no conflicts of interest.
[2] Acknowledgment - The content of this study was originally written entirely by the author in Portuguese. Artificial intelligence tools were used exclusively to support the translation process and to enhance the academic language, style, and readability of the English version. The intellectual content, arguments, analysis, and conclusions presented in this work remain solely the responsibility of the author.

movement, efforts were made, whenever possible, to link learning to productive activities associated with community tasks. [...] Education contributed significantly to the emergence of a genuinely national culture rooted in the positive aspects of the various traditional cultures, while also incorporating, and adapting to the country's needs, the achievements of universal scientific culture. (Cá, 2005, pp. 93–94)

This education was, however, essentially practical, focusing on "themes related to work, health, and hygiene," as well as learning "how to make better use of seeds and fertilizers" or "how to monitor soil and water conditions in order to plan the sale of products". The objective was not formal literacy in itself, but rather a feasible and useful literacy through which "it would be possible to establish, through the creative and deliberative capacity of the people, an active influence of the community on the social environment, which signifies cultural action" (Pereira & Vittoria, 2012, p. 303).

The centrality of educational programs in Cabral's struggle led Freire to describe him as a "Pedagogue of the Revolution" (Silva & Cassiani, 2022, p. 9). Nevertheless, Cabral's revolutionary character did not diminish his diplomatic abilities. According to Pereira and Vittoria (2012), he maintained balanced relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, receiving honorary degrees from universities in both superpowers almost simultaneously. Even with regard to the Portuguese colonizers, Cabral stated:

We have never confused "Portuguese colonialism" with the "people of Portugal," and we have done everything within our possibilities to preserve, despite the crimes committed by the Portuguese colonialists, the prospects for cooperation, friendship, solidarity, and effective collaboration with the Portuguese people, on the basis of independence, equality of rights, and reciprocity of benefits, whether for the progress of our land or for the progress of the Portuguese people. (Cabral, 1974a, p. 18, cited in Pereira & Vittoria, 2012, p. 299)

In an interview, one of Freire's sons stated that his father's ideas were largely aligned with Cabral's political and revolutionary proposals (Pereira & Vittoria, 2012, p. 302). The purpose of this article, however, is to examine the sole point of disagreement between Cabral's thought and Freire's literacy program: the use of the colonizer's language in emancipatory education, as the resistance of African political leaders and of the educators themselves to the use of Creole led Freire to acknowledge the political limitations of his intervention. This is a documentary study (Quivy & Campenhoudt, 2008; Bowen, 2009). According to Bowen:

> *Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge* (Bowen, 2009, p. 27).

According to the author, documentary analysis is primarily employed in "qualitative case studies—intensive studies producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon, event,

organization, or program" (Bowen, 2009, 29). This methodology is consistent with the research objective, as the study seeks to analyze the disagreement between Cabral and Freire regarding language policy. Accordingly, we examined Freire's two books - *A Importância do Ato de Ler* (Freire, 2011) e *Alfabetização: Leitura do Mundo, Leitura da Palavra* (Freire & Macedo, 2011), in which he argues in favor of the use of Creole as the language of instruction and explains how this divergence of opinion was interpreted by political leaders in the Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP) where he worked. It is important to emphasize that Cabral and Freire never met in person nor engaged in any direct written exchange concerning these language policies. For this reason, the documentary analysis focuses exclusively on Freire's writings and based on Freire's own testimony as recorded in his published works. For this reason, we frequently cite Freire's direct statements concerning the principal arguments he advanced against the use of the Portuguese language as the medium of instruction in literacy campaigns. According to Bowen "document analysis involves skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation. This iterative process combines elements of content analysis and thematic analysis" (Bowen, 2009, p.32). The analytical process adopted in this study followed this sequence to interpret the documentary evidence on language policy and the language of instruction in former Portuguese colonies. The resulting interpretation was subsequently applied to the case of Timor-Leste to discuss the applicability of these debates to the post-independence educational Timorese context.

Literacy and the Language of Instruction

The discussion on the maintenance of the colonial language after the independence of formerly colonized countries has been a recurring theme in the literature. Regarding African countries, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1994, p. 335) argue that "Language policy is of vital importance for the political stability and legitimacy of the state." However, "the majority of Africans are governed in a language that they do not understand, but few African states have given serious attention to language policy." The authors further argue that the prevailing situation in these countries is one of declaration without implementation. In other words, decolonization discourses are not accompanied by political actions that effectively implement them.

Makoni, Severo, and Abdelhay (2023) have recently revisited this issue, arguing that although the "African Revolution gathered the deep struggles of African peoples for geopolitical, intellectual, and cultural freedom and autonomy, which meant that African institutions, identities, languages, and intellectual production were under (re)construction and legitimation," the need for such legitimation has not been fully addressed. They further observe that the work of revolutionary leaders such as "Frantz Fanon (African diaspora and Algeria), Amílcar Cabral (Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau), Léopold Senghor (Senegal), Samora Machel (Mozambique), and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana)" is rarely cited in Western academic discussions on language policy. According to these authors, "The African language issue during the emergence of African nations was addressed by non-Africans as a problem to be solved and fixed, following a non-African perspective of society, nation, and politics" (Makoni, Severo, & Abdelhay, 2023,

p. 485). They therefore discuss the persistence of the perspective of "language problems" faced by "developing" nations, particularly in Africa and Asia, including within international organizations established to protect cultures and languages, such as UNESCO. This "monoglot ideology of one language–one nation … contributed to shape a school literacy perspective about Africa, and vice versa, turning Africa and illiteracy into synonyms," with the consequence that "multilingual experiences are reduced to ideas of weakness and lackness" (p. 486). For this reason, Makoni, Severo, and Abdelhay conclude that "postcolonial approaches to LPP should consider the problems connected to the management of multilingualism by postcolonial elites or the ways in which former colonial powers have used cultural aspects of language to legitimize continued influence (p. 487)."

It is precisely for this reason that Freire's voice is particularly significant for studies on the decolonization of education, since as early as the 1970s he advocated the use of national languages within formal education as a necessary condition for the completion of the struggle for independence. Likewise, he argued for the immediate valorization of indigenous languages from a perspective of linguistic equality, rejecting the continued hierarchical ordering of languages established under colonial rule. What is particularly intriguing in this article, however, is that Amílcar Cabral's own discourse of national liberation was subsequently invoked by his political successors to justify the maintenance of the colonial language as the only legitimate language of education.

Timorese students in Portugal during the 1970s had access to the revolutionary ideas of Amílcar Cabral. However, since the discussion proposed here concerns the language used in decolonial education, this article takes Paulo Freire's theory and method as its primary framework. His influence likewise extends to Timor-Leste (Urban & Santiago, 2022). One of the major contributions that Freire's writings can offer to the Timorese context lies in his self-assessments of the literacy experiences he conducted and the theories he put into practice in African countries that were former Portuguese colonies.

According to Fernandes (1998) and Saul (1998) these experiences were largely limited to adult literacy and non-formal education: cultural action, cultural animation, popular education, adult education, and informal education. The guiding principle of these programs was that "educational work began within popular culture and sought to innovate pathways of access to scientific and technical knowledge that did not originate from popular culture" (Fernandes, 1998, p. 127), much as Cabral had previously envisioned. Popular culture occupies a central place in Paulo Freire's method, and "the school should also be a centre for the dissemination of popular culture, not in order to consume it, but to recreate it," as Saul (1998, p. 157) explains. In Freire (2011) adult literacy is understood as "the critical and creative participation of the people in the process of reinventing their society," once freed from prolonged colonial domination. Political education, therefore, is the means through which responsibility for the future is placed in the hands of the people themselves. As Freire argues, it is necessary that: "adult literacy and post-literacy programs, at the service of national reconstruction, contribute to enabling the people, increasingly taking their history into their own hands, to remake themselves in the making of History" (Freire, 2011, p. 53). Thus, every literacy program implemented in newly independent countries was conceived not merely as a method for reading words but also for reading the world and the people's history. Adult

literacy, in Freire's view, does not simply teach "ba-be-bi-bo-bu." Nevertheless, Freire was frequently questioned about the modest results of his literacy programs outside Brazil—his own social and cultural context. For this reason, he wrote extensively about his experiences in African countries:

Obviously, not everything is smooth sailing in the development of work such as this in a poor, small country, recently liberated from the colonial yoke, where the people and their leadership must confront countless difficulties (...) among them the shortage of national cadres, which are still quantitatively insufficient for the tasks demanded by national reconstruction. The scarcity of personnel and material resources, necessarily reflected in the field of adult literacy, inevitably constituted an obstacle not only to its planning but also to its implementation. (Freire, 2011, p. 59)

The author does not clarify in his writings what human resources were actually available to implement these programs. What becomes evident from his discussion of the literacy manuals and their use is that there was no intention of producing "intellectuals" through such methods. However, he does not describe who the cultural animators were, what level of formal education they possessed, or the extent of their proficiency in the language of instruction. In our interpretation, the absence of such descriptions may indicate that Freire believed not only that any adult was capable of learning, but also that any adult could become a literacy instructor, provided they had developed a critical political consciousness regarding their social role. In our view, this constitutes a significant gap in his method and deserves further discussion, particularly because a similar issue can be observed in Timor-Leste.

Another reality Freire encountered in his role as coordinator of literacy programs in African countries was the predominance of oral language throughout traditional society. On this matter, he states:

> *If nowhere, is it possible to write without practicing writing, then in a predominantly oral memory culture such as that of São Tomé, a literacy program must, on the one hand, while respecting the culture as it exists at a given moment, encourage learners' oral expression through debate, storytelling, and the analysis of events; on the other hand, it must challenge them to begin writing as well. Reading and writing are inseparable moments of the same process - the process of understanding and mastering language and linguistic expression* (Freire, 2011, p. 62).

This is another important characteristic of the *Popular Education Notebooks,* in our observation: language teaching is always practical, with very little grammatical exposition and even less use of metalinguistic terminology to explain the few structural aspects presented in the manuals. The situation observed in teacher training programs and schools in Timor-Leste is precisely the opposite. Portuguese language teaching is often reduced to lengthy and monotonous grammatical explanations, while literacy instruction involves very little reading and even less writing (Soares, 2010, p. 83; Santos, 2013, p. 38). Timorese teachers themselves would need to become genuinely "literate" in Portuguese in order to work effectively within the educational system, and such literacy

certainly cannot consist merely of the uncritical repetition of grammatical rules (Rosário, 2025).

Several decades after his experiences in Africa, when Freire revisited the weaknesses of these literacy programs and manuals, in the books analysed in this paper, he attributed their limited success largely to the issue of the language of instruction. This discussion is of particular interest to the present article. In an interview with Macedo, Freire reflected at length on this problem in the former Portuguese colonies of Africa:

Guinea-Bissau fulfilled the first basic condition necessary for the success of a literacy campaign: the revolutionary transformation of society (...) However, Guinea-Bissau did not meet the second condition because of its linguistic diversity. The country has approximately thirty distinct languages and dialects spoken by different ethnic groups. In addition, it has Creole, which functions as a lingua franca. Creole gives Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, and São Tomé a tremendous advantage over Angola and Mozambique, for example. Creole, a linguistic creation that combines African languages with Portuguese, developed gradually in Guinea-Bissau (...) Creole is as beautiful, rich, and viable as Portuguese. No linguistic expression or language is born fully developed. (...) One cannot simply decree the inviability of such a development. And that is more or less what I told the education commission (...) By a strange coincidence, the day after I made those remarks, *No Pintcha* published the only text by Amílcar Cabral with which I disagree. In that text he stated that the most beautiful gift the Portuguese had left to the people of Guinea-Bissau was the Portuguese language. (In fact, I later learned that there were political reasons behind Cabral's statement. He was attempting to use Portuguese as a unifying force to ease tensions among rival linguistic and ethnic groups in Guinea-Bissau.) I read that text by Cabral as if it were a message addressed directly to me: 'My comrade Paulo Freire, we like you very much, but do not interfere in this language issue in our country. Amílcar Cabral himself said that the Portuguese language was a beautiful gift from the colonizers.' (...) Eventually, we were able to bring to Guinea-Bissau two linguists (...) The Belgian was a specialist in Creole languages; the African specialist in African languages. (...) I then wrote a letter to Mário Cabral in which I reiterated the impossibility of continuing literacy work in Portuguese. In that letter, I also analysed the consequences of insisting on Portuguese as the sole vehicle of education. One consequence, for example, is that as long as Portuguese functions as the official language, it will also have to assume the role of the national languages (...) I argued that the exclusive use of Portuguese would function as a superstructure that would intensify class divisions, and this in a society that was supposedly recreating itself through the abolition of social classes. Continuing to use Portuguese in Guinea-Bissau as the mediating force in the education of the youth and continuing the practice of selecting students on the basis of their spoken and written knowledge of Portuguese, would ensure that only the children of the elite would be able to advance educationally, thereby reproducing a dominant elitist class. The people of Guinea-Bissau would once again find themselves excluded from the educational system and from the higher economic and political ranks. (Freire & Macedo, 2011, pp. 126–127)

Freire insisted that the major problem affecting the literacy programs he conducted in African countries was the inadequacy of the language of instruction. Repeatedly, he

argued in favour of literacy in Creole in Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, and São Tomé, but encountered similar resistance from political leaders in all three countries:

> *The colonizers spent centuries attempting to impose their language. They did so by decree, creating the impression that the national languages were naturally inferior and amounted to nothing more than tribal dialects. Creole was likewise viewed as a mixed and corrupted jargon and therefore could not be considered a legitimate language. This profile was constructed by the colonizers (only those who hold power can define the profile of others) and imposed upon the people of Guinea-Bissau; and it was never repudiated, not even during the war of liberation* (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 128).

The debate concerning the viability of Portuguese as a vehicle for literacy in Cabo Verde is confined to the technical question of whether Cabo Verdean Creole constitutes a valid rule-governed system. I believe that the issue must be posed in infinitely more political terms. We need to question the resistance to literacy in Creole based on claims that Creole lacks a standardized orthography. Excuses of this kind are used to justify the current policy of Portuguese as the sole medium of instruction. One must ask why Portuguese-speaking Cabo Verdeans rely on the common argument that Portuguese possesses international status and therefore guarantees upward mobility for educated Cabo Verdeans. Such a position, moreover, implies the presumed superiority of the Portuguese language. The sad reality is that although Portuguese may provide access to certain positions of political and economic power for the upper strata of Cabo Verdean society, it keeps the majority of the people behind - those who cannot learn Portuguese well enough to attain the level of literacy necessary for social, political, and economic advancement. In fact, continuing to use the colonizer's language as the sole medium of instruction means continuing to support the manipulative strategies that sustain cultural domination. Thus, what lies hidden beneath the technical debate concerning the language of instruction in Cabo Verde is resistance to re-Africanization or, perhaps, a subtle refusal on the part of assimilated Cabo Verdeans to "commit class suicide." (Freire & Macedo, 2011, pp. 135–136)

As an example of national leaders' resistance to the official use of Creole, Freire recounts the post-independence remarks of a Cabo Verdean authority who had participated in the liberation struggle. When asked which language he used at work, he replied: "Portuguese, of course. It is the only way to keep my subordinates in their place. If I speak Cabo Verdean, they do not respect me" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 196).

Freire further reports that debates concerning the language of instruction were continuous among educators, and that the teaching profession itself expressed similar reservations about the use of Creole as the instructional language within the educational system. These educators repeatedly employed "the lack of orthographic standardization in African languages as an argument to justify their current policy of using Portuguese as the sole medium for teaching reading. The question they raise concerns which dialect such an orthography should be based upon" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 183). Freire countered this argument by drawing upon linguistic theory, according to which all languages constitute valid rule-governed systems, including African tribal languages. In

his view, the real issue was that these languages continued to occupy a stigmatized and subordinate position in relation to Portuguese.

However, it is not our intention to dismiss Freire's extensive arguments in favour of literacy in Creole and its evident advantages. In his own defence, Freire published a lengthy letter addressed to Mário Cabral, the Minister of Education of Guinea-Bissau during the period in which Freire coordinated adult literacy programs and culture circles. The purpose of publishing this correspondence years later was to insist that the so-called failure of the project in Guinea-Bissau "was not due to the 'Freire method.' This failure demonstrated with complete clarity the impracticability of using Portuguese as the sole vehicle of instruction in literacy campaigns. This is a fundamental point" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 132). Nevertheless, in the same letter, Freire acknowledges the difficulty of implementing what he considered the appropriate course of action and demonstrates an understanding of the sensitive circumstances facing education in post-independence Guinea-Bissau. As he states: "We do not mean by this that the Party and the government should have suspended all systematic educational activities in the country until a written form of Creole became available. That would be so absurd that it is not even worth considering". (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 251). Accordingly, he concluded his letter with the following recommendations:

> *While this process of standardizing Creole was underway, we would limit literacy in Portuguese, within the framework of cultural action, to: 1. The area of Bissau, where the population, while fully mastering Creole, is also familiar with Portuguese. There, above all, literacy in Portuguese would take place in workplaces, where reading and writing in that language might represent something important both for learners and for the effort of national reconstruction; 2. Certain rural areas, whenever and if socio-economic development programs require workers to acquire technical skills that, in turn, demand reading and writing in Portuguese. In this case, if Creole is not spoken fluently, as it is in Bissau, the methodological approach to be adopted in the teaching of Portuguese would still need to be determined* (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 252).

When Freire proposes differentiated treatment and differentiated opportunities for different regions of Guinea-Bissau, he is, to some extent, reinforcing existing social and educational inequalities. This is precisely the principal argument advanced by Timorese leaders who oppose multilingual literacy policies. Their concern is that inequalities in access to and mastery of the official languages may become entrenched once the use of mother tongues in the classroom is legalized and extended into higher levels of education (Indart, 2017). This concern is not without foundation. Research based on interviews and classroom observations has shown that teachers frequently justify the continued use of a particular instructional language by arguing that it is the only language through which students can understand their explanations. As a result, the gradual introduction of the official languages is often avoided in everyday educational practice (Cali, 2015, p. 37).

At the same time, Freire's letter to Mário Cabral reveals a fundamental social factor that also hinders the acquisition of Portuguese in Timor-Leste: Portuguese is not part of the

social practice of the popular masses because it is absent from virtually every level of that practice. Equally significant is Freire's recognition that external intervention in the decisions of an independent nation must have limits. Such interventions should remain at the level of suggestions rather than impositions. Thus, we argue, that two issues are involved in the language policies of independent yet formerly colonized nations. The first concerns the interests of liberation leaders themselves in maintaining political authority and demonstrating their superiority as leaders, among other means through the use of the official language. The second concerns external intervention - whether by Freire in Guinea-Bissau or by organizations such as UNICEF or UNESCO in Timor-Leste - which must necessarily respect the autonomy of the country's decisions, even when those decisions are disputed. In his own testimony, Freire states: "What I could not do in Guinea-Bissau was go beyond the political limitations of the moment. As a foreigner, I could not impose my proposals upon the reality of Guinea-Bissau and upon the needs as perceived by its political leaders" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 116). As an example, Freire refers to the disagreement regarding the language to be used in literacy programs, since "the leadership considered it politically advantageous to adopt Portuguese as the principal vehicle of the literacy campaign" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 116).

In Western contexts, Freire consistently argued that mastery of the standard language by socially marginalized or stigmatized groups constitutes a powerful and indispensable instrument of empowerment. The fact that students' linguistic varieties should be respected and valued does not imply that they do not need to learn to "fight with the weapons of the other". Students should not be confined "to their own local language". Genuine empowerment, in Freire's view, "must also be a means of enabling students to examine and selectively appropriate those aspects of the dominant culture that will provide them with the basis for defining and transforming the broader social order, rather than simply serving it". For this reason, "educators must understand the value of mastering the dominant standard language of the wider society" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 186).

The argument above reveals another dimension of Freire's position regarding the maintenance of Portuguese in the former colonies. Although he opposed the use of the colonial language as the primary medium of literacy instruction, he never advocated its complete elimination as a language of education. On the contrary, he argued that positive elements of other cultures should not be ignored in the pursuit of development. As he explains: "In speaking of the impossibility of exporting practices, I am not denying the validity of foreign practices. Nor am I denying the need for exchange. What I am saying is that such practices must be reinvented" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 157). Once again referring to the African context, he observes:

> *It would be very unwise for the people of Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé, and other countries to sever all ties with the Portuguese language simply because it is the language of the colonizer. To renounce entirely the positive aspects of Portuguese culture (for example, refusing to read Portuguese authors) makes no sense whatsoever. In the process of re-establishing relations with these countries, the former colonizers should help demonstrate the benefits that the Portuguese language can offer. The question that must be asked is how to activate and institutionalize the use*

> *of indigenous African languages so that they can gradually replace the language of the colonizers in spheres such as the economy, politics, and finance* (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 214).

In the two books here analysed, Freire also acknowledges that it would be impossible to translate literary works and official documents into Creole "overnight," since such an undertaking would require not only extensive linguistic planning but also economic resources that did not exist. The creolization of the former colonies, therefore, would need to proceed gradually within the educational system so that future generations might "feel free to express themselves in their national language, without fear and without experiencing any elitist constraints" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, pp. 214–215). Freire further recognizes the political and identity-related challenges involved. It is unlikely that the selection of a local language as the language of schooling would not generate "a rupture among different ethnic groups who may feel deprived of their linguistic rights. This could even endanger the revolutionary process itself" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 215), especially in countries where no unifying Creole language exists.

Lessons From Cabral and Freire for Timor-Leste

Having described the dynamics surrounding the choice of literacy languages in Africa, we can now compare them with the process of reintroducing Portuguese in Timor-Leste after independence. It should be emphasized that some of Timor's key political figures lived in the African countries discussed by Freire during the very years in which those companion nations were confronting linguistic challenges similar to those currently faced by Timorese society. For this reason, we can identify both parallels and lessons learned through observation in the Timorese decision-making process. Timor-Leste took care not to repeat certain mistakes made by fellow nations engaged in similar struggles.

Upon achieving independence, the country granted co-official status to Tetum in the Constitution without any prejudice regarding its alleged impurity or corruption as a language. Only as a language of technical instruction is Tetum still considered not fully developed, and for this reason its lexical expansion continues to be supported by Portuguese. As early as 2001, the National Institute of Linguistics was established to undertake lexical development, structural description, and the standardization of Tetum so that it could immediately be used as the language of literacy instruction in schools. These contextual differences in comparison with the African countries demonstrate that Timor-Leste's language policy is considerably more open and less discriminatory, at least at the level of official policy. Language policy for literacy since 2000 has been bilingual, without prejudice to Tetum. The issue currently raised by linguists concerns competition between Tetum and the mother tongues rather than between Tetum and Portuguese. When successive national censuses are examined, it becomes apparent that the Timorese "Creole" is the language threatening other indigenous languages through its rapid acquisition, substitution, and lexical expansion (fuelled by Portuguese) even in rural areas. While the officialization of a "Creole" language is important for the construction of a unified national identity, it is naïve to assume that internal competition among

indigenous languages for status either does not exist or is unimportant for the new social and linguistic order emerging in the country.

Freire was unable to perceive this context in such depth because he did not reside permanently in the countries where he coordinated literacy programs. Rather, he made periodic visits for debates, the training of cultural animators, and the preparation of literacy materials, while actually residing in Geneva and conducting much of his work from a distance. Likewise, concerns regarding the choice of a particular dialect or variety as the basis for orthographic standardization should not be minimized. Beyond its technical dimensions, this is undoubtedly a political decision that privileges one variety over others. This is the case, for example, with the Mambae language in Timor-Leste. Because it is spoken as a mother tongue across several mountainous and geographically isolated regions, it has developed distinct varieties (Carneiro, 2010; Fogaça, 2017). Standardizing only one of these varieties for literacy purposes would constitute an act no less imposing than adopting Tetum or Portuguese as the language of instruction. A political decision that fails to take such issues seriously would certainly not resolve the social, ethnic, and linguistic tensions characteristic of multilingual nations; it would merely relocate a national problem to the local level, where it would be less visible. The question that must be considered is the extent to which ethnolinguistic groups should be subdivided so that all may enjoy the same right to education in their own language or linguistic variety, while at the same time avoiding the fragmentation of the educational system into a multitude of linguistic microsystems in the effort to guarantee equal rights to all groups. Even Tetum - the national unifying language and a point of broad consensus across Timorese political and educational circles - remains surrounded by dilemmas concerning standardization. Portuguese was also granted official status in part to provide lexical and structural support to Tetum. Evidence demonstrates that Indonesian has been replaced within society primarily by Tetum rather than by Portuguese, including at higher levels of education (Almeida & Indart, 2023).

Freire believed in the development of the "Creole" language as the language of education not only for literacy but also for technical and scientific instruction. He argued that: "The principal issue is to enable people to create and develop their own Creole. Creole can only be systematized by the people who speak it and by no one else" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 219). However, in practical contexts, such developments require time and cannot be scheduled or accelerated at will, since linguistic evolution is a natural process. For this reason, the officialization of a "Creole" language and its systematic use in education are particularly complex during the first years or even decades of independence. The Timorese context also differs from the African experience with respect to the use of language as an instrument of liberation. Unlike the African countries discussed by Freire, Timor-Leste experienced a new invasion shortly after its Declaration of Independence. There was a moment in 1974, while still under Portuguese colonial rule, when literacy campaigns aimed at the masses were envisioned exclusively in Tetum (Mendes, 2005, p. 138). Subsequently, however, when Portuguese became a symbolic weapon in the struggle against Indonesian occupation, it acquired an entirely new significance for national liberation, functioning in support of the liberation movement rather than as an obstacle to it.

However, Freire insists that linguistic oppression through the colonial language must be repudiated if the struggle for liberation is to be complete. Otherwise, the liberation leaders themselves would merely be reproducing the colonizer's dominant ideology. After all, these leaders were educated by the colonizer and are often the only members of society who are fully fluent in Portuguese. Consequently, it is the children of this "liberating" elite who alone perform well in examinations and obtain high grades. "They are the only ones who gain access to science and technology. Thus, the majority of children, the sons and daughters of peasants, will remain excluded. Tomorrow, the new generation in power will be composed only of the sons and daughters of those families who are in power today". (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 216) The issue, however, is that the liberation movements in the territories colonized by Portugal did not primarily struggle against traditional social stratification; rather, they fought against foreign colonial domination. The fact that they employed Marxist discourse and methodology does not necessarily make them socialist once in power, at least not in terms of guaranteeing equality among all citizens. Upon returning to their original cultures, these societies often recovered communal traditions, but not necessarily communist principles. Social classes were not abolished; indeed, their divisions frequently became even more visible among the native population once the colonizer withdrew.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that there exists an attachment among the Timorese ruling class to its own interests through the Portuguese language. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that the children of the elite attend the Portuguese School in Dili, where one of the admission criteria is the use of Portuguese in the home environment. This requirement effectively restricts access to European Portuguese and to the Portuguese curriculum to the elite. However, the ruling class's rejection of literacy in mother tongues is presented not as a denial of the rights of subordinate groups, but rather as a defence of those rights. Their argument is that children from rural areas would be further marginalized and once again excluded from access to the official languages if they were educated exclusively in their own local languages. Freire, however, remained convinced that the language of the colonizer could not serve as the primary medium for literacy because it was not part of learners' reading of the world. He repeatedly reaffirmed this conviction. In his view, "the challenging task of reappropriating one's own culture and history cannot be accomplished through the language that denied one's reality and sought to eradicate one's own means of communication". (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 133). To some extent, independent Timor-Leste sought complete emancipation and liberation through detachment from the language of oppression. Yet that language was no longer Portuguese; it was Indonesian. For this reason, schooling in Indonesian was not maintained after independence. For the Timorese elite, it made little sense to fight against Indonesian domination and subsequently continue using Indonesian as an official language. Such a situation would have represented only a partial independence. Moreover, Portuguese colonialism in Timor-Leste was initially more religious and commercial than political and military, and its influence on Timorese culture and identity was gradual and deeply intertwined with local realities. After four centuries, it became impossible to reconstruct a "pure" identity without denying the country's own history. Furthermore, after Portuguese was employed as a language of resistance against Indonesian occupation, memories of Portuguese colonial oppression receded, making it

even more difficult to dismiss Portuguese as part of Timor-Leste's contemporary linguistic identity. Even negative historical legacies of colonialism, such as the disappearance of cultures and languages, are irreversible realities. In the lives of individuals as well as nations, ideal situations do not exist; only concrete realities do. Progress can only be built from those realities. Nevertheless, the construction of a new post-independence identity remains both desirable and necessary, and such an identity inevitably incorporates both indigenous and foreign elements. It is precisely this search for a new identity that is currently underway in Timor-Leste.

Despite Freire's reluctance to employ the colonizer's language in critical education, he himself acknowledged that such a language may remain indispensable for gradual and balanced social transformation. An abrupt break with a linguistic system that has long been used in education carries negative consequences, even when that system is considered undesirable. Both the African Creoles and Tetum have developed in close relationship with Portuguese, and the very survival of these vehicular languages depends upon linguistic partnership and borrowing - not only lexical but also syntactic and semantic—from external languages. The other indigenous languages are generally unable to provide such support at more technical levels of communication. Another difficulty identified by Freire concerns financial and functional constraints. The development of a substantial body of literature and educational materials, as well as the standardization process for either Creole or indigenous languages, requires considerable time and financial investment—resources often unavailable to newly independent countries. Finally, Freire recognizes that the danger of national fragmentation during processes of linguistic valorisation is real. While this risk may be reduced in countries possessing a widely shared Creole language, it nevertheless remains present.

Freire also raises questions concerning the identity implications of the continued use of Portuguese as a language of struggle and development after liberation. According to him, "colonized peoples must preserve their native language. And the more elaborated they make their language, the better, because the colonizer will not understand it, and thus they will be able to use their language to defend themselves against the colonizer" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, pp. 219–220). Freire overlooks, however, the fact that a Creole language, despite being national in character, may not be the mother tongue of many citizens—as is the case with Tetum, which is not the primary language spoken in most Timorese households. Using it in literacy education may address questions of national identity, but it does not necessarily resolve the pedagogical concerns that Freire himself considered so important. This constitutes the central dilemma of literacy and linguistic identity in a multilingual and plurilingual country such as Timor-Leste. Indigenous identities are multiple (Carneiro, 2010, p. 11), while the "colonial" identities are likewise plural, encompassing Indonesian, Portuguese, and, more recently, the persistent efforts of international organizations to promote the significance of English. Furthermore, it was not an indigenous language that played the principal role in resistance against Indonesian occupation. Portuguese was not understood by Indonesian authorities and therefore became an effective instrument of political struggle.

Nevertheless, in confronting this complex linguistic and identity diversity, independent Timor-Leste must also recognize that the aspirations of different groups are not necessarily unanimous. Multilingual literacy is not always the preferred option among

families in rural areas. It is therefore necessary to question who has the authority to speak on behalf of particular groups or of society as a whole, since this too is a field marked by contestation and contradiction. Literacy in the mother tongue is not a universally accepted solution, just as no other language of instruction will be universally accepted. Whether literacy is organized through a bilingual model (Portuguese and Tetum) or through a multilingual model involving mother tongues, it remains necessary to recreate educational contexts in which language and school-based thinking are meaningfully connected to the actual needs of the society concerned.

Conclusion

We contend that, for Freire, authentic emancipatory literacy requires the simultaneous pursuit of two interrelated objectives. First, learners must develop literacy grounded in their own historical experiences, cultural identities, and social realities. Second, they must acquire access to the linguistic and cultural codes of dominant social formations, thereby enabling them to move beyond the limitations imposed by their immediate context and engage critically with broader structures of power. As Freire and Macedo (2011, p. 79) observe, learners must "appropriate the codes and cultures of the dominant spheres so that they may transcend their own environment." It is in this sense that Freire viewed his educational philosophy as convergent with the ideas of Amílcar Cabral:

> *To recognize the cultural nature of education, however, does not mean blessing every cultural expression, but rather recognizing that the struggle to overcome what Amílcar Cabral called the "weaknesses of culture" requires first acknowledging those very weaknesses. Hence, education must take the culture that it seeks, at least in part, to explain as an object of careful understanding, thereby questioning itself in the process. And the more education questions itself within the culture and society in which it takes place, the clearer it becomes that culture is a totality traversed by class interests, class differences, and class tastes* (Freire & Macedo, 2011, pp. 85–86).

Despite the profound respect and admiration that Freire held for Amílcar Cabral, his struggle for liberation in the Portuguese-speaking African countries and his plans for emancipation and education diverged from those of the African leader regarding the role of the Portuguese language in post-independence education. Whereas Cabral viewed the appropriation of the colonial language as a strategy of national unification, Freire regarded the exclusive use of Portuguese as the language of literacy instruction as the principal reason for the failure of his method in several of the countries where he participated in adult literacy programs.

We argue, however, that the partial failure of the Freirean method in these African countries cannot be attributed solely to the issue of the language of instruction, as Freire himself maintained. What the critical theorist failed to identify was the crucial importance of teacher preparation and the training of the cultural animators involved in his literacy programs. Freire himself worked directly as a classroom teacher only during the early

and most successful phase of his career (Furter, 1998, pp. 83–84), and he achieved remarkable results in Angicos precisely because he personally conducted literacy instruction among an adult, working-class, and previously illiterate population, drawing upon a level of education and preparation associated with the social elite. In Africa, however, he delegated the role of implementation to local personnel who did not possess his training, knowledge, or pedagogical flexibility. As a consequence, the "Freire method" came to be implemented by teachers or cultural animators who were insufficiently prepared and who were quite possibly limited in their own mastery of the language of instruction. Under such circumstances, the *Popular Education Notebooks* were transformed into a technique to be applied mechanically, much like any other instructional manual. Freire himself insisted that "experiences and practices cannot be exported or imported. It follows that it is impossible to satisfy the request of anyone seeking to import practices from other contexts" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 157). Yet the very architect of the literacy project was unable to implement it directly in contexts that he did not know in sufficient depth. In this sense, Freire ultimately became another academic specialist operating at a distance from the realities of implementation.

We conclude that this is the most important lesson that Freire offers to Timor-Leste and to its contemporary literacy challenges: the recognition that the preparation and professional training of teachers can never be underestimated in the implementation of any educational theory or policy, regardless of how correct, democratic, or emancipatory that policy may appear to be. In Timor-Leste, multilingual literacy is likely to encounter the same difficulties and limited outcomes as bilingual literacy so long as policymakers fail to acknowledge that the principal and most serious problem within the educational system is the insufficient pedagogical, theoretical, and subject-matter preparation of practicing teachers, regardless of the language in which they are expected to teach. Without such professional preparation, no teacher will be able to educate for emancipation, and no educator will be sufficiently critical to become an agent of transformation.

References

Almeida, A. de, & Indart, K. N. R. (s.d.). A universidade em português: O real uso da língua portuguesa na UNTL. In F. Ilharco, M. Lopes, I. Barros, & R. Caiado (Coords.), *Em português: Identidade, literatura, média, ciência*. (pp. 327-340) Lisboa: CEPCEP.

Cali, S. M. (2015). *A importância do domínio das línguas de instrução no ensino em Timor-Leste no Ensino Básico Filial-2 de Ritabou, Maliana* [Monografia de graduação, Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e]. Díli: Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e.

Carneiro, A. S. R. (2010). As políticas linguísticas e de ensino de línguas em Timor-Leste: Desafios de um contexto multilíngue. *Revista de Filologia e Linguística Portuguesa*. Retrieved from http://www.revistas.usp.br/flp/article/viewFile/59854/62963

Cá, L. O. (2005). *Perspectiva histórica da organização do sistema educacional da Guiné-Bissau* [Tese de doutorado, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Faculdade de Educação]. São Paulo: Universidade Estadual de Campinas.

Fernandes, J. V. (1998). Da alfabetização/educação de adultos à educação popular/comunitária: Relevância do contributo de Paulo Freire. In M. W. Apple & A. Nóvoa (Orgs.), *Paulo Freire: Política e pedagogia* pp. 113–150). Porto: Porto Editora.

Fogaça, H. A. de O. (2017). *O ecossistema fundamental da língua Mambae: Aspectos endoecológicos e exoecológicos de uma língua austronésia de Timor-Leste* (Tese de doutorado), Brasília: Universidade de Brasília.

Freire, P. (1985). *Amílcar Cabral, pedagogo da revolução*. São Paulo: Instituto de Ação Cultural (IDAC).

Freire, P. (2011). *A importância do ato de ler*. São Paulo: Cortez Editora.

Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (2011). *Alfabetização: Leitura do mundo, leitura da palavra*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Furter, P. (1998). Paulo Freire e Ivan Illich: Das utopias pedagógicas às utopias sociais. In M. W. Apple & A. Nóvoa (Orgs.), *Paulo Freire: Política e pedagogia* (pp. 69–90). Porto: Porto Editora.

Indart, K. N. R. (2017). Políticas de educação, políticas de língua, identidade nacional e a construção do Estado em Timor-Leste (Tese de doutorado, Universidade do Minho, Instituto de Educação). RepositóriUM, Universidade do Minho.

Mendes, N. C. (2005). A construção do nacionalismo timorense. In A. M. Guedes & N. C. Mendes (Eds.), *Ensaios sobre nacionalismos em Timor-Leste* (pp. 105–240). Portugal: Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros.

Phillipson, R., & Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1994). Language rights in postcolonial Africa. In T. Skutnabb-Kangas & R. Phillipson (Eds.), Linguistic human rights: Overcoming linguistic discrimination (pp. 335–345). Mouton de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110866391.335

Quivy, R., & Campenhoudt, L. V. (2008). *Manual de investigação em ciências sociais* (5.ª ed.). Lisboa: Gradiva.

Rosário, N. M. da C. do. (2025). A fábrica de jogos: Ensinar oralidade e divertir ao mesmo tempo (Tese de doutorado, Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie).

Santos, I. (2013). *A dificuldade dos alunos do 3.º ciclo na aprendizagem da língua portuguesa na Escola Básica Bidau Akadiru Hun, Díli* [Monografia de graduação, Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e]. Díli: Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e.

Saul, A. M. (1998). Construção do currículo na teoria e prática de Paulo Freire. In M. W. Apple & A. Nóvoa (Orgs.), *Paulo Freire: Política e pedagogia* (pp. 151–166). Porto: Porto Editora.

Silva, M., & Cassiani, S. (2022). Amílcar Cabral, o pedagogo da revolução. *Revista Sergipana de Educação Ambiental (REVISEA), 9*(2). São Cristóvão, Sergipe: Brasil.

Soares, M. L. (2010). *Análise dos métodos de ensino de língua portuguesa aplicados na Escola Pré-secundária Paulo VI* [Monografia de graduação, Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e]. Díli: Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e.

Urban, S. P., & Santiago, J. P. (2022). O pensamento freiriano e o ensino da língua tétum durante a resistência timorense. *Filosofia e Educação, 13*(2), 2323–2337. Campinas, SP: Universidade Estadual de Campinas.

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

FROM CULTURAL LIBERATION TO CREATIVE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES: CABRAL'S LEGACY AND ECONOMIC AUTONOMY IN LUSOPHONE AFRICA

AMÉLIE LU YUQING
amelie.lu@163.com
Postdoctoral researcher at the University of Porto (Portugal), and holds a PhD from the Institute for Research on Portuguese-speaking Countries, City University of Macau. She completed a policy-oriented training course on "China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries in World Trade" at the Faculty of Economics, University of Coimbra, Portugal (2020). She holds a Master's degree in International Relations (French-taught) from the University of Provence Aix-Marseille I, France, and a Bachelor's degree in Political Economy from Jinan University, China. Her research interests include cultural and creative industries, intercultural communication, gender studies, and global consultancy within China's Greater Bay Area. https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7087-6796

Abstract

This research reconceptualizes Amílcar Cabral's theory of "cultural liberation" by situating it within the contemporary emergence of Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI) in Lusophone Africa. Cabral argued that culture constitutes not only the foundation of collective identity but also a driving force for political liberation. This proposition provides a critical theoretical starting point for understanding how culture can be transformed from a resource of resistance into a strategic pillar of post-colonial state building. Drawing on Frantz Fanon's decolonial theory, George Yúdice's framework of the instrumentalization of culture, and Carlos Lopes' discussions on Africa's creative economy, this article conceptualizes culture as a field where legitimacy, autonomy, and development intersect. Building on this perspective, the article proposes an analytical framework that connects cultural identity, CCI, and economic autonomy, extending Cabral's concept of cultural liberation into contemporary post-colonial development practices. Drawing on UNESCO, UNCTAD, ILO, Brookings, and country-level evidence, the study examines Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique and Angola to analyse how CCI function simultaneously as instruments of economic diversification, platforms of identity consolidation, and arenas of geopolitical positioning through language, media, music, and digital creativity. The paper argues that CCI hold potential to contribute to economic autonomy by generating employment, strengthening domestic value chains, expanding exportable symbolic capital, and reducing structural aid dependency. However, adopting Cabral's critical lens, the paper also interrogates whether CCI genuinely advance decolonial transformation or risk integrating African cultural production into new hierarchies of global cultural capitalism. Issues of commodification, dependency on external markets, cultural homogenization, and unequal power dynamics are critically assessed. The study concludes that the legacy of Cabral remains profoundly relevant: cultural sovereignty is inseparable from economic sovereignty. When framed as part of an unfinished liberation project rather than merely an industrial sector, CCI can support long-term autonomy and nation-building in Lusophone Africa. Yet their emancipatory capacity depends on governance choices, equitable infrastructure, and policy frameworks grounded in cultural rights, social justice, and developmental sovereignty.

Keywords

Amílcar Cabral; Cultural Liberation; Creative and Cultural Industries; Lusophone Africa; Cultural Sovereignty.

Resumo

Este estudo reconceptualiza a teoria da "libertação cultural" de Amílcar Cabral, situando-a no contexto da emergência contemporânea das Indústrias Culturais e Criativas (ICC) na África Lusófona. Cabral defendeu que a cultura constitui não apenas a base da identidade coletiva, mas também uma força motriz da libertação política. Esta perspetiva oferece um ponto de partida teórico fundamental para compreender como a cultura pode ser transformada de um recurso de resistência num pilar estratégico da construção do Estado pós-colonial. Recorrendo à teoria decolonial de Frantz Fanon, ao quadro conceptual da instrumentalização da cultura desenvolvido por George Yúdice, e às reflexões de Carlos Lopes sobre a economia criativa africana, este artigo conceptualiza a cultura como um espaço onde se cruzam legitimidade, autonomia e desenvolvimento. Com base nesta perspetiva, o artigo propõe um quadro analítico que estabelece uma ligação entre identidade cultural, Indústrias Culturais e Criativas e autonomia económica, prolongando o conceito de libertação cultural de Cabral para as práticas contemporâneas de desenvolvimento pós-colonial.Com base em dados da UNESCO, UNCTAD, OIT, Brookings e em evidências a nível nacional, este estudo analisa a Guiné-Bissau, Cabo Verde, São Tomé e Príncipe, Moçambique e Angola, procurando compreender como as Indústrias Culturais e Criativas funcionam simultaneamente como instrumentos de diversificação económica, plataformas de consolidação identitária e espaços de posicionamento geopolítico através da língua, dos media, da música e da criatividade digital. O artigo argumenta que as ICC possuem potencial para contribuir para a autonomia económica através da criação de emprego, do reforço das cadeias de valor internas, da expansão do capital simbólico exportável e da redução da dependência estrutural da ajuda externa. Contudo, adotando uma perspetiva crítica inspirada em Cabral, o artigo questiona igualmente se as ICC promovem efetivamente uma transformação decolonial ou se correm o risco de integrar a produção cultural africana em novas hierarquias do capitalismo cultural global. Questões como a mercantilização da cultura, a dependência dos mercados externos, a homogeneização cultural e as dinâmicas desiguais de poder são analisadas criticamente. O estudo conclui que o legado de Cabral permanece profundamente atual: a soberania cultural é inseparável da soberania económica. Quando enquadradas como parte de um projeto de libertação ainda inacabado, e não apenas como um setor industrial, as ICC podem contribuir para a autonomia de longo prazo e para a construção nacional na África Lusófona. Contudo, o seu potencial emancipatório depende das escolhas de governação, da construção de infraestruturas equitativas e de quadros políticos fundamentados nos direitos culturais, na justiça social e na soberania do desenvolvimento.

Palavras-chave

Amílcar Cabral; Libertação Cultural; Indústrias Criativas e Culturais; África Lusófona; Soberania Cultural.

How to cite this article

Yuqing, Amelie Lu (2026). From Cultural Liberation to Creative and Cultural Industries: Cabral's Legacy and Economic Autonomy in Lusophone Africa. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 130-157. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.6

Article submitted on 7 July 2026 and accepted on 20 August 2026.



JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 130-157
From Cultural Liberation to Creative and Cultural Industries: Cabral's Legacy and Economic Autonomy in Lusophone Africa
Amelie Lu Yuqing

FROM CULTURAL LIBERATION TO CREATIVE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES: CABRAL'S LEGACY AND ECONOMIC AUTONOMY IN LUSOPHONE AFRICA[1,2]

AMÉLIE LU YUQING

Introduction: Cultural Liberation, Creative and Cultural Industries, and Economic Autonomy in Lusophone Africa

The year 2025 marks fifty years since the formal independence of the Lusophone African states, providing a historical vantage point from which to reassess the intellectual, political, and cultural foundations of their liberation struggles and post-independence trajectories. Among the leading figures of these processes, Amílcar Cabral remains one of the most profound thinkers of anti-colonial liberation and nation-building in Africa. More than a military strategist, Cabral was a theorist of decolonization who framed liberation not simply as the departure of colonial rulers, but as the restoration of cultural subjectivity, dignity, and agency (Cabral, 1970/1979; Chabal et al., 2002). His writings consistently argued that culture represented both the evidence of a people's existence and the essential resource enabling collective resistance. For Cabral, colonial domination functioned not only through administrative control or economic exploitation, but fundamentally through the attempted destruction, distortion, or subordination of indigenous cultural systems. It is in this sense that he famously linked "cultural resistance" to "political resistance," establishing a conceptual bridge between cultural vitality and political emancipation.

This insight places Cabral firmly within broader currents of decolonial thought. Frantz Fanon similarly emphasized colonialism as a system that produces alienation, self-denial, and dependency, thus requiring a profound cultural and psychological reconstitution as part of the liberation process (Fanon, 1963). More contemporarily, Yúdice (2003) conceptualizes culture as a strategic resource in governance, development, and international relations, rather than a merely symbolic or aesthetic sphere. The

[1] Declaration of Interest - The author declares that there are no known financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have appeared to influence this research. The author has no competing interests to declare.

[2] Acknowledgment - The author acknowledges the use of Microsoft Copilot in assisting with the improvement of English grammar, the formatting of references, and the standardization of citations in this work. All intellectual content, arguments, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the author.

convergence between these perspectives situates culture not as a marginal domain, but as a central terrain on which power, sovereignty, and autonomy are negotiated.

In the Lusophone African world, where language, identity, and political struggle have long been deeply intertwined, Cabral's vision has left a lasting influence on debates concerning postcolonial nation-building, legitimacy, and development trajectories. As Fernando Arenas (2011) argues, Lusophone Africa is not merely a geographic region connected by a shared colonial history, but a transnational cultural space continuously reconfigured through language, media, music, diaspora networks, and cultural flows.

At the same time, the twenty-first century has witnessed a growing international recognition of the economic, social, and geopolitical significance of Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI). International institutions such as UNESCO and UNCTAD have played a central role in articulating culture as both a human right and a strategic pillar of sustainable development. UNESCO's policy frameworks emphasize that creativity is fundamental not only for identity and social cohesion, but also for inclusive growth, innovation, and democratic participation (UNESCO, 2019/2022). UNCTAD's Creative Economy Reports similarly demonstrate that creative industries constitute one of the most dynamic sectors of global trade, contributing to employment, export expansion, and technological capacities, with increasing participation from Global South economies (UNCTAD, 2018/2024). Complementing these perspectives, reports by the International Labour Organization (ILO) increasingly emphasize both the employment-generating potential of the creative economy and the precarious conditions faced by cultural workers, particularly within informal and platform-based sectors (Joffe & Wangusa, 2022). At the same time, Brookings research underscores the strategic implications of cultural production for development planning, soft power, and global influence (Signé, 2025).

Within African scholarship and policy thinking, Carlos Lopes has emerged as one of the most influential voices advocating for the creative economy as a pathway toward structural transformation and economic autonomy. Lopes argues that the creative sector is not a peripheral luxury but a core development asset capable of driving diversification, technological innovation, regional integration, and reduced aid dependency (Lopes, 2014/2015/2024). He highlights the success of sectors such as Nollywood, Afrobeat, digital media, and visual arts as evidence that African creativity is already shaping global cultural flows, while still remaining constrained by weak infrastructure, uneven regulation, and external market asymmetries. In his work, Lopes explicitly links creative capacity to sovereignty, suggesting that economic independence requires control not only over material resources but also over symbolic production, narratives, and imaginaries.

This study situates Lusophone Africa within this nexus between Cabral's intellectual legacy and contemporary debates on culture, economy, and development. It asks how Cabral's theory of cultural liberation may be reinterpreted in light of the current rise of CCI in countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique and Angola. Rather than treating CCI merely as economic sectors, the paper approaches them as spaces in which cultural subjectivity, political autonomy, and economic strategy intersect. The central argument is that Cabral's insistence on culture as the foundation of liberation provides a powerful analytical lens for understanding how CCI can contribute

not only to growth, but to broader agendas of sovereignty, identity consolidation, and postcolonial emancipation.

However, following Cabral's critical spirit, the paper also maintains a cautious and interrogative stance. While CCI hold the potential to generate employment, strengthen domestic value chains, expand exportable symbolic capital, and enhance soft power, they also risk being absorbed into global hierarchies of cultural capitalism. Issues such as unequal market access, dependency on foreign platforms, commodification of identity, and the dominance of external gatekeepers raise important questions regarding whether CCI truly advance decolonial transformation or reproduce new forms of dependency. These tensions echo Cabral's warning that independence without structural transformation risks reproducing colonial logic under new forms.

Framed within the context of the fiftieth anniversary of Lusophone African independence, this paper therefore seeks to contribute to the ongoing reassessment of liberation legacies and development futures. By bringing Cabral into conversation with UNESCO and UNCTAD frameworks, contemporary African policy debates, and empirical developments within Lusophone African creative sectors, it proposes that culture remains not only a memory of struggle, but a decisive arena for twenty-first century sovereignty. In this sense, CCI are approached as potential instruments of what Cabral might have considered the "unfinished project" of liberation: the pursuit of cultural dignity, economic autonomy, and a more equitable position within the global order.

Research Design and Methodology

This article adopts a qualitative comparative research design to examine how Amílcar Cabral's concept of cultural liberation can be reinterpreted in relation to the contemporary development of CCI in Lusophone Africa. Rather than measuring the economic performance of the cultural sector through quantitative indicators, the study seeks to understand how culture functions simultaneously as a source of political legitimacy, economic strategy and postcolonial state-building. The research therefore combines conceptual analysis with comparative case studies in order to explore the relationship between cultural sovereignty, creative industries and economic autonomy across different national contexts.

The study employs a comparative case study approach because the five Portuguese-speaking African countries - share a common historical experience of Portuguese colonialism and anti-colonial struggles, while displaying significantly different political, economic and institutional trajectories after independence. This combination of historical similarity and developmental diversity provides an appropriate basis for comparative analysis. Instead of treating these countries as isolated cases, the article considers them as members of a common Lusophone postcolonial space whose contemporary development reflects both shared historical legacies and divergent national strategies.

The selection of these five countries is guided by three criteria. First, all belong to the group commonly referred to as the Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOP), whose political and cultural identities were profoundly shaped by Portuguese colonial rule and subsequent independence movements. Second, Amílcar Cabral's political thought

has exercised varying degrees of influence across these countries, making them particularly suitable for examining the continuing relevance of his theory of cultural liberation. Third, the five countries represent different models of cultural and creative development. Cabo Verde has achieved relatively high international visibility through music and cultural diplomacy; Angola has developed a more capital-intensive creative economy supported by state investment and media industries; Mozambique illustrates the importance of language politics and literary production; Guinea-Bissau highlights the persistence of community-based cultural practices despite institutional fragility; and São Tomé and Príncipe represents the structural constraints commonly experienced by small island developing states. These differences make it possible to identify broader patterns as well as contrasting pathways of cultural development.

The empirical evidence is derived primarily from documentary analysis and secondary sources. The study draws upon policy reports, international institutional publications, academic literature, and publicly available statistical information. Major sources include UNESCO reports on culture and sustainable development, UNCTAD Creative Economy Reports, publications of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Brookings Institution policy papers, as well as national cultural policy documents and official government publications where available. These materials are complemented by scholarly studies on Lusophone Africa, postcolonial theory, creative economy, and cultural policy. Rather than treating institutional reports as objective representations of reality, the article interprets them critically alongside academic debates concerning cultural sovereignty, postcolonial development, and the political economy of creative industries.

The comparative analysis is organised around several analytical dimensions that emerge from both Cabral's theoretical framework and contemporary discussions of creative economy. These dimensions include: (1) the relationship between cultural identity and nation-building; (2) the institutional development of cultural and creative industries; (3) the contribution of CCIs to economic diversification and employment; (4) the role of language, media and cultural diplomacy in international positioning; and (5) the structural limitations affecting cultural autonomy, including market dependence, unequal global cultural circulation and institutional capacity. Examining each country through these common dimensions allows the article to move beyond descriptive national narratives and develop a systematic comparison of different trajectories of postcolonial cultural development.

Finally, this study does not seek to establish causal relationships in a positivist sense. Instead, it adopts an interpretive comparative perspective that aims to explain how Cabral's concept of cultural liberation can illuminate contemporary debates on CCI in Lusophone Africa. By integrating political thought, cultural policy and comparative analysis, the article proposes a conceptual framework for understanding CCIs not merely as economic sectors but as contested arenas in which questions of cultural sovereignty, development and postcolonial autonomy continue to be negotiated.

Three major contributions to the existing literature

First, it contributes to a renewed interpretation of Amílcar Cabral's intellectual legacy by extending his concept of cultural liberation beyond the traditional domains of anti-colonial struggle and political identity. While Cabral's emphasis on culture as a foundation of national consciousness and liberation has been widely recognized, its implications for contemporary cultural production and economic development remain underexplored. This article argues that cultural liberation should not be understood only as a symbolic process of recovering identity, but also as a productive capacity that enables societies to generate knowledge, creativity, and cultural value.

Second, this article develops a conceptual framework linking Cultural Liberation, Cultural and Creative Industries, and Economic Autonomy. It proposes that cultural production can function as a bridge between historical identity formation and contemporary economic strategies. Through this perspective, CCI are not merely market-oriented sectors or instruments of cultural diplomacy; they represent institutional spaces where cultural knowledge, creative labour, and economic opportunities intersect. This framework provides a new analytical pathway for understanding how post-colonial societies can transform cultural resources into forms of sustainable autonomy.

Third, this article contributes to comparative research on Portuguese-speaking African countries by establishing a cross-national analytical framework for examining the relationship between cultural policies, creative industries, and development trajectories. Rather than treating Lusophone Africa as a homogeneous cultural space, the article highlights the diversity of institutional arrangements, historical experiences, and policy approaches shaping CCI development across different national contexts. By bringing together Cabralian thought, cultural policy studies, and creative economy research, this article offers a theoretical framework that connects historical liberation projects with contemporary debates on cultural sustainability and economic sovereignty.

Part I. Theoretical Foundations: From Cultural Liberation to Cultural Development

Amílcar Cabral's conceptualization of liberation as fundamentally rooted in culture constitutes one of the most original and influential intellectual contributions to African decolonization thought. Unlike approaches that framed national liberation primarily through military struggle or political sovereignty, Cabral articulated a deeper ontological argument: a nation exists first and foremost through culture, and therefore any struggle for independence must begin with the restoration of cultural agency and dignity. As he famously noted, "national liberation is necessarily an act of culture" (Cabral, 1970/1979). For Cabral, culture is not an accessory to politics; it is the foundation upon which political consciousness, collective mobilization, and national legitimacy are constructed. This perspective positioned culture as both epistemological grounding and strategic resource for liberation.

Cabral's analysis of colonialism was thus not limited to economic exploitation or administrative domination. He argued that colonial rule sought to "negate the historical personality of the dominated people," undermining their self-worth, fragmenting their

identities, and eroding the symbolic systems through which communities generate meaning and cohesion (Cabral, 1970/1979; Chabal et al., 2002). Colonial power functioned through an attempt to render colonized societies culturally dependent, psychologically subordinate, and epistemologically disoriented. It is precisely against this process that Cabral placed culture as resistance: the continued production, preservation, and reinvention of indigenous cultural forms constituted a vital terrain of struggle, enabling societies to withstand domination and imagine political alternatives.

In this sense, Cabral's thinking resonates strongly with Frantz Fanon's theorization of colonialism as a system that penetrates the psyche, reshaping subjectivity and internalizing hierarchies of inferiority (Fanon, 1963). For both thinkers, political liberation is inseparable from cultural and psychological transformation. Where Fanon emphasized the violence of colonial dehumanization and the necessity of reclaiming selfhood, Cabral systematized this into a political strategy, making culture not only a site of identity recovery but a foundation for organized collective action. Their shared insight is clear: without cultural reconstitution, formal sovereignty risks remaining hollow, vulnerable to dependency and internal fragmentation.

More contemporary scholarship has further developed this intellectual lineage by demonstrating that culture is not merely symbolic but strategic. Yúdice (2003), for instance, advances the notion of culture as a "resource," integral to governance, development policy, and global diplomacy. Culture, in his framework, becomes instrumental in shaping participation, legitimizing state power, enabling economic innovation, and projecting international presence. This view challenges any dichotomy between the "cultural" and the "economic," emphasizing their mutual embeddedness. It also complements Cabral's position by providing an analytical vocabulary to understand how culture operates institutionally and economically in modern governance systems.

This conceptual trajectory also intersects powerfully with contemporary policy discourse on CCI. International frameworks developed by UNESCO and UNCTAD echo, albeit in technocratic form, many of Cabral's insights about culture's centrality. UNESCO explicitly frames culture as a pillar of sustainable development, human rights, social cohesion, and democratic participation, highlighting its transformative potential in both symbolic and material dimensions (UNESCO, 2019/2022). UNCTAD's Creative Economy Reports similarly demonstrate that creativity has become a key domain of global trade dynamics, generating employment, economic diversification, innovation capabilities, and export advantages, particularly within Global South contexts (UNCTAD, 2018/2024). Together, these frameworks institutionalize the argument that culture is not marginal but structural within development paradigms.

Within African intellectual and policy debates, Carlos Lopes provides an essential bridge between Cabral's decolonial cultural theory and contemporary economic strategy. Lopes (2014, 2015, 2024) insists that African economic transformation requires moving beyond extractive models and aid dependency toward endogenous capacity-building grounded in African knowledge, creativity, and innovation. For Lopes, creative and cultural sectors represent not "luxury industries" but fundamental developmental assets. They foster technological adaptation, stimulate urban economies, enable youth employment, promote regional integration, and reposition African societies within global symbolic

hierarchies. Crucially, Lopes echoes Cabral in linking culture to sovereignty: to control one's future requires controlling not only material resources but also meaning, representation, and narrative.

Bringing these strands together allows for the development of a coherent theoretical framework for this study. Cabral offers the normative and political foundation: culture as the core of liberation, subjectivity, and legitimacy. Fanon and subsequent decolonial thinkers deepen the understanding of cultural emancipation as psychological and epistemological reconstruction. Yúdice provides the conceptual apparatus to understand culture's operational role in governance and development. UNESCO and UNCTAD institutionalize culture within contemporary global development paradigms. Lopes situates these debates within African political economy, transforming culture from symbolic resistance into an economic strategy for autonomy.

This layered framework permits a crucial analytical shift: from understanding culture primarily as resistance to understanding it as development. For Cabral, culture was what allowed societies to resist domination and imagine independence. Today, within Lusophone Africa, culture also becomes what allows societies to consolidate identity, legitimize the state, generate employment, diversify economies, and negotiate their position within the international order. In other words, the trajectory moves from cultural resistance to cultural sovereignty and to cultural development.

Yet, this framework also invites critical reflection. Cabral warned explicitly that political independence without structural transformation risks reproducing colonial hierarchies under new forms (Cabral, 1970/1979). This warning remains pertinent in discussions of the creative economy. While CCI may provide opportunities for autonomy, they may equally be integrated into global market hierarchies characterized by unequal power, external dependency, and commodified identity. Thus, any engagement with CCI through Cabral's legacy must remain attentive to these tensions: whether creative industries advance decolonial empowerment or whether they risk becoming merely another insertion into global capitalist structures. This tension will shape the analytical approach of the subsequent sections.

Part II. Translating Theory into Policy

Building on Amílcar Cabral's foundational insight that "national liberation is necessarily an act of culture" (Cabral, 1970/1979), this section examines how cultural resistance and the assertion of cultural subjectivity have been institutionalized and operationalized in post-independence Lusophone Africa. The transition from cultural liberation to structured cultural development represents a crucial axis along which the ambitions of political sovereignty intersect with economic strategy, social cohesion, and international engagement.

Building upon the theoretical discussion presented in the previous section, this part examines how Cabral's vision of cultural liberation was translated into post-independence policy agendas. As Fernandes (2023) argues, the construction of postcolonial states in Lusophone Africa required mechanisms capable of restoring cultural agency and fostering collective participation in political and economic life. Rather than revisiting Cabral's

theory, the discussion focuses on how cultural sovereignty became institutionalised through education, language planning, cultural governance and, more recently, CCI.

International policy frameworks developed by UNESCO and UNCTAD have provided important reference points for this transition, recognising culture not only as heritage but also as a driver of innovation, employment and sustainable development. Although developed within a different historical context, these frameworks resonate with Cabral's broader emphasis on cultural sovereignty and endogenous development. Carlos Lopes further extends this perspective by arguing that investment in Africa's creative industries can contribute to economic diversification, youth employment and technological innovation, thereby linking cultural production directly to broader development strategies (Lopes, 2014, 2015, 2024).

Davis, Straubhaar, and Ferin Cunha (2016) further argue that a transnational Lusophone media space has gradually emerged among Portuguese-speaking countries. The circulation of television, radio, and digital media has strengthened postcolonial cultural ties while also reshaping the position of Lusophone African countries within global cultural flows. The translation from cultural liberation to cultural development can be understood through several policy dimensions:

1. Institutionalization of Culture: Post-independence Lusophone states established ministries or departments of culture tasked with overseeing artistic production, heritage conservation, and public education. These institutions operationalize Cabral's notion of culture as foundational to national consciousness, enabling states to craft narratives of sovereignty and nationhood (Fernandes, 2023; Mazrui, 1990).
2. Education and Language Policy: Language planning, literacy campaigns, and bilingual education initiatives in countries like Guinea-Bissau, CaboVerde, and Mozambique illustrate the integration of cultural policy into broader social development. By valorising indigenous languages alongside Portuguese, states attempt to restore cultural dignity while facilitating socio-economic participation (Senghor, 1964; Cabral, 1970).
3. Cultural Industries as Economic Strategy: The development of formal creative sectors represents the economic operationalization of cultural liberation. By recognizing culture as an economic asset, Lusophone African states align with UNESCO and UNCTAD's prescriptions, creating spaces for entrepreneurial activity, innovation, and global market participation (UNESCO, 2019; UNCTAD, 2018). The emphasis on local content production and exportable creative goods ensures that culture is not merely symbolic but also materialized as income, employment, and trade opportunities.
4. Cultural Diplomacy and Regional Integration: Engagement in cultural diplomacy—through festivals, exhibitions, and transnational partnerships—allows Lusophone African countries to project soft power, strengthen regional networks, and negotiate a presence in global knowledge economies. These efforts reflect Cabral's enduring emphasis on culture as both a domestic anchor and an international lever (Cabral, 1979; Lopes, 2015).

Despite these policy advances, the institutionalisation of CCI also introduces new tensions concerning market dependence, cultural commodification and unequal participation in global creative industries. These issues are examined in greater detail in Part Four.

Overall, this section has shown how Cabral's philosophy of cultural liberation gradually evolved into concrete policy instruments across education, language planning, cultural governance and creative industries. The following section examines how these policy orientations have been implemented in five Lusophone African countries, revealing both shared trajectories and significant national differences.

Part III. Lusophone Africa Case Studies: Cultural Liberation and Creative & Cultural Industries

In the postcolonial development of Lusophone Africa, cultural expression is no longer confined to processes of national identity formation within individual states, but is increasingly embedded in transnational networks of circulation. Beyond music, broadcasting, and digital media, literature also constitutes a key dimension of cultural connectivity across the Lusophone world. As Helgesson and Stella (2023) argue, Lusophone African literature forms a dynamic postcolonial literary field shaped by circulation, translation, and symbolic recognition across Africa, Portugal, Brazil, and global publishing markets. This transnational cultural space demonstrates that the CCI in Lusophone Africa are not merely products of domestic cultural policy, but are also shaped by the interaction of global cultural capital, linguistic systems, and postcolonial regimes of circulation.

Guinea-Bissau

To understand how Cabral's conception of culture as a form of political resistance evolved within the postcolonial trajectories of Lusophone Africa, it is necessary to begin with Guinea-Bissau, where his anti-colonial thought emerged most directly through the liberation struggle led by the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde). The case of Guinea-Bissau represents not only the revolutionary origins of cultural liberation, but also reveals the enduring tensions between postcolonial sovereignty, fragile state structures, and the uneven institutional development of CCI.

The fragility of the post-independence state has profoundly shaped the trajectory of cultural development in Guinea-Bissau. The liberation struggle was not only a military confrontation, but also a deeply cultural project, relying on oral traditions, poetry, and songs of resistance to construct political consciousness and collective identity (Chabal et al., 2002). In the immediate post-independence period, culture was envisioned as a unifying force and a foundational pillar of national belonging, closely aligned with Cabral's argument that liberation struggles are, at their core, cultural struggles.

However, Guinea-Bissau has long been characterized by political instability and weak institutional capacity, which have significantly constrained the development of formal cultural infrastructure (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; World Bank, 2024). In the context of limited state provision, economic and cultural life is widely embedded in informal systems

of exchange and social networks, which in many instances function as forms of substitute governance (Lourenço-Lindell, 2002; Lundy, 2015).

Within this structural condition, cultural practices such as gumbe music and ritual performance are sustained primarily through community relations and localized practices. Their significance lies not only in aesthetic or artistic expression, but also in their role as embedded mechanisms of collective communication and social reproduction, rather than as components of a formalized or industrialized cultural production system.

In this sense, Guinea-Bissau demonstrates a form of cultural agency that remains deeply embedded in everyday social life: even under structural constraints, cultural vitality continues to be remarkably resilient. However, such cultural agency does not automatically translate into economic autonomy. Due to the lack of sustained investment, coherent cultural policies, and institutional support, these cultural practices have struggled to develop into structured CCI capable of generating large-scale employment, promoting economic diversification, or supporting cultural diplomacy. Therefore, the case of Guinea-Bissau reveals an important distinction between cultural resources and creative industry capacity: rich cultural heritage alone is insufficient to generate economic value; its transformation depends on institutional capacity, infrastructure development, and mechanisms that enable local creators to retain and capture value from cultural production.

This creates a structural paradox: a society with rich and resilient cultural forms lacks the capacity to transform these cultural assets into an institutionalized creative economy and therefore faces difficulties in achieving broader economic autonomy through cultural production in the sense envisioned by Cabral.

Cabo Verde

While Guinea-Bissau reflects the revolutionary foundations of Cabral's cultural liberation project, Cabo Verde demonstrates how postcolonial cultural identity can be transformed into a globally recognized model of cultural export and creative economy development. The international success of Cesária Évora and the globalization of Cabo Verdean music illustrate how cultural expression rooted in creole identity, memory, and saudade entered transnational circuits of cultural consumption, symbolic recognition, and market circulation.

Within the Lusophone African context, Cabo Verde represents one of the clearest cases in which the legacy of cultural liberation has been translated into a structured creative economy. Unlike many resource-rich African states, Cabo Verde's geopolitical condition and limited natural endowments have made culture itself a strategic development resource. In the post-independence nation-building process, national identity was articulated through a fusion of creole consciousness, the affective memory of saudade, and musical expression as a marker of autonomy. From the 1990s onward, Cesária Évora became the symbolic figure of this transformation, as her global recognition elevated morna and coladeira from local expressive forms into internationally recognized cultural exports endowed with both symbolic legitimacy and economic value (Baker, 2024; Curington, 2017; dos Santos, 2023). From a Cabralian perspective, this musical

production can be read as a continuation of cultural resistance in the post-independence era, asserting Cabo Verdean subjectivity within global cultural circulation and challenging epistemic marginalization rooted in colonial histories.

Building on this cultural foundation, the Cabo Verdean state has progressively integrated cultural capacity into formal development policy. Music festivals, diaspora-oriented strategies, and cultural diplomacy have become simultaneously instruments of soft power and economic development. Events such as Baía das Gatas and the Atlantic Music Expo demonstrate how cultural production has been linked to tourism, service-sector employment, and foreign cultural investment. Empirical studies indicate that music tourism contributes measurably to GDP while also supporting employment in hospitality and creative sectors.

At the same time, diplomatic initiatives have mobilized culture to strengthen diaspora ties, attract remittances, and encourage cultural investment. From the perspective of Cabral's intellectual legacy, this incorporation of culture into development strategy can be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim cultural production from purely neo-colonial market logic and to re-anchor it within projects of national autonomy.

However, this cultural development model also generates new forms of structural dependency. Although Cabo Verde is often presented as a successful cultural economy case, its reliance on tourism and international cultural markets creates significant vulnerability to external demand, global consumption patterns, and fluctuations in transnational cultural flows.

Despite its small territorial scale, Cabo Verde has developed a disproportionate cultural presence within the Lusophone world through music and other creative industries. Its youth-oriented creative economy—where approximately 60% of practitioners are under the age of 25—spans music, fashion, design, and crafts, with influence extending into diasporic communities. The Ministry of Culture and Creative Industries has implemented the *National and International Policy for Circulation and Export of Cabo Verdean Creative Industries*, strategically promoting branding initiatives in crafts, fashion, and design to strengthen both domestic and international market visibility (Franco & Njogu, 2020; UNCTAD, 2018).

However, this model remains deeply ambivalent. As critics have noted, the commodification of culture can reshape artistic production in accordance with global market preferences, privileging exportable forms while marginalizing locally embedded practices. Cultural elites and institutional curators also gain disproportionate power in determining which cultural expressions are recognized as nationally representative in international arenas. This tension echoes Yúdice's warning that when culture becomes development infrastructure, it risks being absorbed into capitalist branding regimes and detached from its social and historical foundations (Yúdice, 2003). Consequently, the Cabo Verdean case illustrates both the emancipatory potential and the structural fragility of CCI as a postcolonial development strategy.

São Tomé and Príncipe

In contrast to Cabo Verde's global cultural export model, São Tomé and Príncipe represents a micro-scale cultural economy characterized by small-island dependency, fragile infrastructure, and sustained reliance on transnational cooperation networks.

Within the broader Lusophone African context, São Tomé and Príncipe shares similarities with Cabo Verde in terms of its small territorial scale and limited resource base. However, unlike Cabo Verde's early consolidation of an internationally visible cultural brand, São Tomé and Príncipe's CCI remain at a more fragile stage of development, where cultural production is continuously negotiated between local identity formation and transnational Lusophone connectivity. As Arenas (2011) argues, Lusophone African cultural space should not be understood as a closed national system, but rather as a transnational network continuously reconfigured through colonial history, diasporic circulation, media flows, and Atlantic cultural linkages. In São Tomé and Príncipe, this transnational condition is particularly pronounced: music, oral traditions, festivals, and Creole cultural expressions constitute key components of national identity, while increasingly relying on Lusophone cultural circulation channels, multilateral platforms, and international cooperation frameworks to achieve external visibility.

Building on this dynamic, Leandro, Beja, and Lu (2022) highlight that São Tomé and Príncipe has, in the postcolonial period, increasingly shifted from fragmented bilateral cultural exchanges toward more institutionalized forms of multilateral cooperation, particularly through the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) and partnerships with external actors such as China. In this sense, culture functions not only as a marker of national identity, but also as a strategic medium through which small island states connect to global networks, access development resources, and enhance international presence.

At the same time, São Tomé and Príncipe also exemplifies the structural vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the field of CCI. Limited domestic markets, weak cultural infrastructure, talent outmigration, and dependence on external funding mechanisms significantly constrain the formation of a sustainable cultural economy.

However, cultural recognition alone has not been sufficient to generate sustainable economic opportunities, as the country's small scale and limited institutional capacity continue to constrain the institutionalization of creative industries. As Leandro, Martínez-Galán, and Gonçalves (2019) note that Portuguese-speaking SIDS, including Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste, commonly face structural dependence on international cooperation frameworks and tourism-driven economic models.

Furthermore, Davis, Straubhaar, and Ferin Cunha (2016) show that the emergence of a transnational Lusophone media space, while strengthening cultural connectivity across Portuguese-speaking countries, also risks reinforcing center–periphery hierarchies, whereby smaller African Lusophone states become increasingly dependent on external media platforms and institutional infrastructures. As Moyo (2024) further argues, when cultural policy is progressively embedded within market-oriented development paradigms, creative industries may generate visibility, symbolic capital, and economic

opportunities, yet they simultaneously risk becoming constrained by external funding regimes, global tourism markets, and transnational cultural consumption structures.

From this perspective, São Tomé and Príncipe reveals a fundamental tension at the heart of postcolonial cultural development in Lusophone Africa: while CCI offer pathways for economic diversification and international recognition, they also reproduce structural dependencies that limit cultural sovereignty. In Cabral's theoretical framework, this condition reflects both the ongoing pursuit of post-independence cultural autonomy and the persistent inequalities embedded within the global cultural economy.

Mozambique

In contrast to the small-scale and dependency-oriented cultural economy of São Tomé and Príncipe, the case of Mozambique foregrounds the central role of language politics in shaping literary circulation, where Portuguese operates simultaneously as a postcolonial medium of communication and a gatekeeping structure for cultural visibility, as exemplified in the work of Mia Couto (Bucaioni, 2023).

Mozambique offers a salient example of how language politics is deeply entangled with the development of postcolonial CCI. Although the country is characterized by significant linguistic diversity, including Makhuwa, Tsonga, and Sena, Portuguese remains the official language and continues to function as the dominant medium in education, media, and cultural institutions (Benson, 2000). Post-independence language policies have sought to elevate indigenous languages and cultural traditions as part of broader anti-colonial nation-building efforts. However, as Cabral cautioned, when the colonial language persists as the primary vehicle of knowledge production and public culture, epistemic hierarchies remain intact even after formal political liberation.

Within this context, cultural producers in Mozambique operate within a complex linguistic field. Film, music, and theatre productions frequently rely on Portuguese in order to access regional and Lusophone markets (Davis, Straubhaar, & Ferin Cunha, 2016), while artistic expressions rooted in local languages often gain strong domestic legitimacy but encounter significant barriers in transnational circulation, where Portuguese and other global languages continue to dominate. This tension reflects a broader structural dilemma facing creative industries in postcolonial contexts: whether to prioritize cultural authenticity grounded in linguistic plurality or to pursue market visibility shaped by inherited colonial language economies.

This linguistic configuration not only structures cultural production internally but also determines the visibility and translatability of cultural outputs within transnational circulation systems. In this sense, language functions as a form of "entry structure," shaping which narratives are translated, circulated, and ultimately converted into international cultural capital. Accordingly, language politics extends beyond communication into the broader distribution of symbolic capital and the production of cultural value.

This logic of linguistic circulation is particularly evident in the international reception of Lusophone African literature. Writers such as Mia Couto and José Eduardo Agualusa have

achieved global recognition, with their works translated into multiple languages and incorporated into world literary circuits. However, as Bucaioni (2023) argues, such circulation is also shaped by external publishing markets, processes of canon formation, and transnational gatekeeping structures, raising critical questions about who defines "representative" African literature in Portuguese.

From this perspective, literature is not an autonomous field outside language politics, but rather its institutionalized expression within the global cultural system. Linguistic hierarchies are continuously reproduced and re-encoded through publishing mechanisms, translation regimes, and processes of literary canonization, thereby shaping which cultural voices gain international recognition and which remain marginalized.

Mozambique's efforts to institutionalize cultural production further highlight the challenges involved in transforming cultural vitality into sustainable economic autonomy. Although Mozambique possesses significant cultural resources in music, crafts, and performing arts, this sector remains shaped by international development agendas and external funding structures, raising important questions about the possibilities for long-term cultural autonomy. The country has undertaken policy reforms in cultural governance and intellectual property frameworks to support creators and promote the formalization of artistic production. However, implementation capacity remains highly uneven, particularly affecting cultural practitioners operating within the informal economy, including musicians, artisans, and performers (UNESCO, 2013; Joffe & Wangusa, 2022).

International organizations, including UNESCO, emphasize that in the absence of robust legal and institutional frameworks, creative sectors risk reproducing inequality, disproportionately benefiting established actors with international networks while marginalizing grassroots producers. Consequently, in Mozambique's postcolonial cultural economy, language systems, literary circulation, legal structures, and market dynamics are not isolated domains but interdependent mechanisms that jointly determine the possibility of cultural sovereignty.

Ultimately, Mozambique demonstrates how language, law, and economic structures intersect to shape a fundamental question: whether cultural expression can serve as a foundation for creative sovereignty, or whether it risks remaining an ambiguous extension of colonial cultural economies.

Angola

While Mozambique highlights how language politics and literary circulation structure cultural visibility in Lusophone Africa, the case of Angola shifts the analytical focus toward a more capital-intensive cultural economy, where media industries, audiovisual production, and co-production networks are increasingly shaped by oil-based wealth, state investment, and transnational media circuits. In this context, cultural production becomes deeply intertwined with economic capital, positioning Angola as a key site for understanding the dynamics of a fully capitalized model of CCI in the region.

Emerging from a prolonged civil war (1975–2002), Angola's postwar cultural reconstruction has involved not only the rebuilding of physical infrastructure but also the reconstitution of symbolic frameworks of national belonging. Within a state-led cultural governance system dominated by the MPLA, musical forms such as Semba and Kizomba have been actively mobilized as national cultural symbols. Disseminated through powerful state media infrastructures, these genres are embedded within narratives of unity, resilience, and postwar national rebirth. From a Cabralian perspective, these culturally grounded forms—originally shaped in contexts of struggle—retain traces of resistance, while being reconfigured in the post-independence period as instruments for constructing collective identity and challenging residual colonial hierarchies of cultural value.

At the same time, Angola's economic liberalization in the early 2000s facilitated the rapid expansion of television and creative media industries, opening space for private broadcasters and new media producers. Locally produced soap operas, entertainment programming, and music television have generated new forms of cultural capital that are deeply embedded in market logic. This evolution resonates with Carlos Lopes's argument that African creative industries, when supported by adequate training systems, intellectual property regimes, and distribution infrastructures, can contribute meaningfully to economic diversification and employment creation (Lopes, 2015). However, Ferreira (2012) underscores the ambivalent transnationality of post-independence Luso-African co-productions, which, while enhancing visibility and funding opportunities, often remain dependent on Portuguese institutional frameworks and European cultural financing systems.

Nevertheless, Angola's creative economy remains affected by its continued dependence on extractive industries and unequal access to cultural infrastructure. The expansion of cultural markets has not necessarily translated into broader participation or a more equitable distribution of creative value. Rather, the growth of cultural sectors has often coexisted with persistent economic concentration and uneven opportunities for cultural producers.

Angola thus exemplifies a dual dynamic in which cultural policy is simultaneously part of state-building projects and embedded within capitalist systems that both enable cultural production and reproduce concentrated economic power.

Despite these structural constraints, Angola has developed one of the most institutionally structured creative sectors in Lusophone Africa. Music industries built around Kizomba, Kuduro, and Semba have achieved regional and diasporic influence, particularly in Europe. Institutions such as the Angola Music Awards have contributed to the formalization and professionalization of the sector. In 2017, the Ministry of Culture advanced new strategic objectives aimed at reorganizing the national cultural and creative industries, while biennial cultural events have promoted a broader pan-African discourse of "culture of peace." Angola has also benefited from international capacity-building initiatives, including the EU–UNCTAD *Train for Trade II* programme, which supports training, market access, and institutional development (Franco & Njogu, 2020; UNCTAD, 2018).

Recent UN mapping further indicates that Angola's creative economy spans expanding sectors such as music, audiovisual production, fashion, and digital entrepreneurship, although persistent challenges remain in infrastructure, financing, and institutional coordination (Figueira et al., 2023). Taken together, these dynamics illustrate how Angola's cultural economy is simultaneously driven by state power, oil capital, and transnational media integration, while remaining structurally constrained by uneven development and dependency relations.

Comparative Discussion

The five case studies demonstrate that the evolution of CCI in Lusophone Africa cannot be understood simply through individual national experiences. Although each country has followed a distinct postcolonial trajectory, a cross-case comparison reveals several common patterns as well as important differences in the ways culture has been mobilised as a political, economic and developmental resource. Examining these similarities and divergences makes it possible to move beyond descriptive country narratives and to identify broader implications for understanding the continuing relevance of Amílcar Cabral's theory of cultural liberation.

Culture as a Shared Foundation of Nation-building

The first common pattern concerns the central role of culture in postcolonial nation-building. Across all five countries, cultural policy has extended beyond artistic production to become an instrument for constructing political legitimacy, reinforcing collective identity and consolidating national sovereignty. This finding strongly echoes Cabral's argument that national liberation is fundamentally a cultural act rather than merely the achievement of political independence (Cabral, 1970/1979).

Despite considerable differences in institutional capacity, each country has attempted to transform cultural heritage into a source of national cohesion. Guinea-Bissau continues to preserve the symbolic legacy of the liberation struggle through community-based cultural practices and collective memory. Cabo Verde has institutionalised Creole identity through music, cultural diplomacy and diaspora engagement. Mozambique has emphasised language and literature as mechanisms for negotiating postcolonial identity, while Angola has employed state-supported media, music and audiovisual industries to reinforce narratives of national unity after civil war. São Tomé and Príncipe, although constrained by its small domestic market, has similarly relied on cultural heritage and Lusophone networks to strengthen its international visibility.

Taken together, these experiences demonstrate that Cabral's concept of cultural liberation remains highly relevant. Culture continues to function as an essential source of legitimacy, identity and political cohesion throughout Lusophone Africa, even though the institutional mechanisms through which these objectives are pursued differ considerably.

Creative Industries as a Development Strategy

A second common pattern is the increasing institutional recognition of CCI as instruments of economic development. None of the five countries now approaches culture solely as symbolic heritage. Instead, all have progressively incorporated creative industries into broader national development strategies, reflecting the growing influence of UNESCO, UNCTAD and other international policy frameworks promoting the creative economy.

Nevertheless, the degree of institutionalisation varies substantially. Cabo Verde has developed perhaps the most coherent strategy by integrating music, tourism, cultural diplomacy and diaspora networks into a relatively diversified creative economy. Angola has invested heavily in media industries, audiovisual production and cultural infrastructure, supported by comparatively stronger state capacity and financial resources. Mozambique has focused more selectively on literature, language policy and cultural governance, while São Tomé and Príncipe continues to rely largely on externally supported cultural initiatives. Guinea-Bissau remains characterised by vibrant cultural production but comparatively weak institutional structures capable of transforming cultural activity into a sustainable creative economy.

The comparison therefore suggests that the transition from cultural liberation to cultural development is not automatic. Rather, successful institutionalisation depends upon governance capacity, long-term policy commitment, investment in cultural infrastructure and the ability to integrate cultural production into broader development strategies.

Divergent Models of Creative Economy

Beyond these shared aspirations, the five countries exhibit markedly different models of creative economy development. Cabo Verde represents an export-oriented model in which music, festivals and cultural tourism generate international visibility while simultaneously reinforcing national branding and diaspora connections. Cultural production has become an internationally recognised economic asset.

Angola illustrates a more state-supported and capital-intensive model. Strong public investment, expanding audiovisual industries and commercial media have created a relatively institutionalised cultural sector. However, this model also reflects the broader political economy of an oil-dependent state, where cultural development remains closely linked to government priorities and patterns of capital concentration.

Mozambique represents a language-mediated model in which literature, publishing and linguistic politics occupy a central position. Here, the principal challenge is less the absence of creativity than the unequal linguistic structures governing access to international cultural circulation. Portuguese simultaneously facilitates global visibility while reproducing postcolonial hierarchies that marginalise many local languages.

São Tomé and Príncipe illustrates an aid-dependent small-island model. Cultural production is shaped by international cooperation, Lusophone cultural networks and external development programmes. Although these partnerships expand international visibility, they also expose the country to structural dependence upon foreign funding and institutional support.

Finally, Guinea-Bissau represents a community-based model in which cultural vitality survives largely through local traditions, informal social networks and collective memory rather than through institutionalised creative industries. Cultural resilience remains remarkably strong, yet the absence of sustained policy support has limited the emergence of a formal creative economy.

These contrasting trajectories demonstrate that there is no single pathway through which postcolonial societies transform cultural resources into economic development. Instead, different historical legacies, governance capacities and institutional arrangements have generated multiple models of creative economy across Lusophone Africa.

Unequal Integration into Global Cultural Markets

A further dimension of comparison concerns the relationship between national creative sectors and global cultural circulation. The five countries differ considerably in their capacity to participate in international markets. Cabo Verde has achieved the highest degree of cultural export through globally recognised music and diaspora networks. Angola has expanded its regional influence through commercial media, music industries and audiovisual production, although much of this expansion remains connected to domestic political economy and Portuguese-speaking markets.

Mozambique participates internationally primarily through literature and publishing, where global visibility is strongly mediated by translation, language and external publishing institutions. São Tomé and Príncipe remains highly dependent upon international cultural cooperation and development partnerships to access wider audiences, while Guinea-Bissau has experienced comparatively limited integration into global creative markets despite the richness of its cultural traditions.

These differences illustrate that participation in the global creative economy is shaped not only by cultural resources but also by unequal access to finance, distribution systems, intellectual property regimes, international networks and digital infrastructure. Consequently, cultural sovereignty continues to operate within asymmetrical global structures that reproduce significant disparities between countries.

Broader Theoretical Implications

The comparative analysis offers several broader implications for both Cabral studies and contemporary debates on CCI. First, the findings suggest that Cabral's concept of cultural liberation should not be interpreted solely as a theory of anti-colonial resistance. Rather, it provides a valuable framework for understanding how culture continues to shape economic strategy, institutional development and national sovereignty in the postcolonial era. The transition from cultural resistance to cultural development represents not a departure from Cabral's thought but one possible contemporary extension of it.

Second, the comparison demonstrates that CCI cannot be understood simply as engines of economic growth. Their developmental potential depends upon institutional capacity, governance quality, cultural policy, legal protection and equitable participation in global

cultural markets. Countries with stronger institutions have generally been more successful in transforming cultural assets into sustainable creative industries, whereas countries with weaker institutional structures continue to face significant barriers despite rich cultural resources.

Finally, the comparison reinforces the central tension running throughout this article. Creative industries undoubtedly provide important opportunities for employment, economic diversification and international visibility. At the same time, they remain embedded within unequal global systems of cultural production, market exchange and symbolic recognition. Consequently, the expansion of CCI does not automatically fulfil Cabral's emancipatory vision. Instead, it raises a continuing question that lies at the heart of postcolonial development: can culture become a genuine foundation for economic autonomy and cultural sovereignty, or will it be increasingly incorporated into new forms of global cultural capitalism?

This unresolved tension links the comparative findings presented in this section to the broader critical discussion developed in the following part of the article, where the political and conceptual boundaries of CCI are examined through Cabral's continuing legacy.

Part IV. Critique and Reflection from a Cabralian Perspective

Can Creative and Cultural Industries Truly Continue the Emancipatory Project Envisioned by Cabral? Moyo (2024) argues that cultural policy in Africa is increasingly oscillating between two orientations: treating culture as a commodity and understanding culture as a form of social praxis. This tension is central to evaluating whether the creative industries in Lusophone Africa continue Cabral's emancipatory vision or are gradually being absorbed into global market rationalities and capitalist cultural systems.

The significance of this issue lies in the increasingly prominent role that CCI occupy within contemporary development strategies in Lusophone Africa. Although creative and cultural industries are increasingly regarded in Lusophone African countries as potential drivers of economic growth, employment creation, and international cultural visibility, their expansion does not necessarily imply the realization of the cultural liberation or economic autonomy emphasized by Cabral. Cabral stressed that culture is not merely a symbolic instrument of resistance, but also a source of political subjectivity and a fundamental basis for overcoming colonial domination (Cabral, 1970). However, contemporary creative economy structures often operate within global capitalist logics and market value systems, and these logics are not always compatible with projects of decolonization (Yúdice, 2003; Lopes, 2015).

In Lusophone Africa and across the continent more broadly, the rapid conceptual elevation of CCI within national and international development discourse warrants critical interrogation. The core promise of cultural and creative industries is that they offer a pathway to sustainable employment, innovation, and economic diversification while enhancing cultural identity and global presence (UNCTAD, 2018/2024). Yet, as Carlos Lopes has argued both in *How Can Africa Profit from Its Creative Industries?* and in

Creativity Is the New Money, there exists a risk that these very frameworks may inadvertently reproduce structural inequalities unless grounded in deliberate policy and institutional capacity building. In his 2015 piece *How Can Africa Profit from Its Creative Industries?* Lopes foregrounds the untapped talent and potential across creative sectors, urging that Africa must strengthen ecosystems of training, intellectual property protection, and distribution infrastructure to fully convert creativity into economic value (Lopes, 2014/2015). This argument aligns with broader UNCTAD analysis that CCI can contribute to local development pathways but requires strategic policy integration rather than mere rhetorical celebration (UNCTAD, 2018/2024).

From a Cabralian standpoint, however, the integration of culture into development policy cannot be assessed solely in terms of economic outputs. Cabral's framework conceptualized culture as a foundational force of liberation, a source of collective subjectivity and political legitimacy that must be nurtured beyond market metrics. This poses a central question: in the push to operationalize culture as an economic sector, does the prevailing CCI discourse remain true to the emancipatory potential envisioned in anti-colonial thought, or does it risk folding culture into global capital markets in ways that replicate neo-colonial logic?

This concern is underscored in Lopes' more recent work *The Self-Deception Trap*, in which he critiques longstanding development paradigms, including aid dependency and attendant power asymmetries that undercut African agency and structural transformation. Lopes argues that entrenched narratives—framed in benevolence and charity—obscure deeper systemic issues that perpetuate economic dependency while failing to build endogenous capacity for autonomous development (Lopes, 2024). Although *The Self-Deception Trap* focuses on Africa–Europe relations and aid paradigms, the ethos of this critique extends to the cultural economy: if cultural policies merely mimic global development prescriptions without aligning with locally grounded goals of self-determination and structural empowerment, then CCI may inadvertently reinforce patterns of dependency that Cabral and Fanon contested. Indeed, Fanon's critique of cultural colonization warns against the absorption of colonized cultures into the value systems of a global order that privileges commodification and external validation over internal coherence and autonomy (Fanon, 1963; Cabral, 1970/1979).

One salient feature of the contemporary CCI policy landscape is its alignment with global market logics. International organizations and development agencies increasingly quantify creative industries through contribution to GDP, export revenues, or employment statistics—measures that reflect global economic priorities more readily than social justice or historical redress (UNESCO, 2018/2024). Scholars like Throsby and Cunningham remind us that cultural policy cannot be equated with industrial policy without careful reflection on value systems, cultural rights, and the risk of cultural homogenization under market pressures. Without protections for cultural diversity and equitable access to creative participation, there is potential for CCI growth to concentrate benefits among already advantaged groups, reproducing inequalities that contradict the purported ethos of inclusive cultural development.

In Lusophone contexts, this critique is concrete. The cases examined in Part III reveal varied capacities to harness cultural capital meaningfully. Cabo Verde's integration of

creative sectors into tourism and diaspora engagements offers a promising example of how cultural policy can align with national vision; nevertheless, even here the localization of industry has not fully insulated creative actors from global market demands that shape aesthetic and commercial priorities. Angola's emergent media and entertainment sectors similarly highlight the tensions between political symbolism and market orientation, where cultural production can articulate post-conflict identity while still being embedded within extractive economic structures. Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau underscore the fragility of institutional ecosystems necessary for creative autonomy, where language politics, regulatory gaps, and state capacity deeply shape creative trajectories.

This unevenness cautions against universal prescriptions. A Cabralian critique does not reject the economic utility of CCI; instead, it insists that cultural industries must be framed within a broader analytical field of decolonial strategy, one that prioritizes structural transformation over mere integration into global commodity circuits. Culture's translation into economic agency cannot be a "market first" endeavour; it must simultaneously safeguard cultural sovereignty, address historical imbalances, and create indigenous pathways of innovation that resist extraction and dependency (Lopes, 2014/2015; UNECA, 2018). In this regard, *The Self-Deception Trap* contributes to the critique by challenging Africa's intellectual dependency on external framings and urging a recalibration of both policy discourse and power relations in development practice (Lopes, 2024; UNCTAD, 2024).

In sum, Part IV articulates a dual critique: CCI can be a catalyst for economic and cultural renewal, but without a Cabral-informed critical lens, there is a risk that creative industries will be subsumed under global market logics that valorise output over agency, consumption over meaning, and growth over equity. The challenge for policymakers, scholars, and cultural practitioners in Lusophone Africa is to craft cultural frameworks that leverage creative potential without replicating structures of commodification and dependency that Cabral's legacy sought to dismantle.

This concern is not merely theoretical. Empirical mapping of cultural cooperation programmes demonstrates that many creative industry initiatives in Africa remain shaped by external institutional frameworks. As Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen research indicates, European-led programmes continue to dominate funding structures, application procedures, and evaluative criteria, often privileging actors with access to European languages and networks (Franco & Njogu, 2020). Such asymmetries raise critical questions about local ownership and cultural sovereignty, suggesting that creative industries may, under certain conditions, reproduce rather than dismantle neo-colonial cultural dependencies.

Part V. Conclusion: Reinterpreting Creative and Cultural Industries through Cabral's Legacy — Culture as an Unfinished Liberation Project

Returning to Cabral's intellectual legacy, culture has never been merely an expressive domain or aesthetic dimension of social life; it constitutes the core of political legitimacy, national subjectivity, and historical continuity (Cabral, 1970). In Cabral's framework, liberation is not completed with the achievement of political independence. Rather, it is

a prolonged historical process aimed at restructuring power, reclaiming epistemic agency, and redefining social relations (Cabral, 1979). When this perspective is extended to contemporary Lusophone Africa, the development of CCI emerges not only as an economic strategy, but as the continuation of a much deeper political project.

From a developmental standpoint, creative industries undeniably open new possibilities for African states. They generate employment, foster innovation, and strengthen global visibility, thereby functioning simultaneously as economic capital, symbolic capital, and knowledge capital (UNCTAD, 2024). UNESCO emphasizes that cultural production contributes not only to economic diversification but also to social cohesion and democratic participation (UNESCO, 2022). Similarly, Carlos Lopes argues that creative economies can provide Africa with a "new development narrative," helping it to move beyond structural dependence on commodity exports and vulnerability to external shocks (Lopes, 2014/2015). In this sense, creative industries are not peripheral; they represent a potential pillar in the reconstruction of African economic sovereignty.

Yet, drawing on Cabral's thinking, it is clear that CCI do not automatically advance decolonization. Cabral warns that liberation requires conscious, politically grounded cultural agency rather than passive participation in inherited systems of power (Cabral, 1970). Whether creative industries can sustain this emancipatory role depends on several decisive conditions.

First, culture must remain a foundation of political subjectivity rather than merely an economic commodity. This tension has been clearly articulated by Lorenzo Moyo (2024), who argues that African cultural policy is increasingly caught between "culture as praxis" and "culture as commodity." This implies that CCI policies should not be driven exclusively by GDP metrics, export performance, or investor attractiveness. They must instead address questions of meaning, ownership, and representation: whose culture is being produced, for what audiences, and under which power conditions (UNESCO, 2022; Yúdice, 2003). If culture is reduced to an economic tool, it risks losing the transformative political force Cabral envisioned. If instead it is recognized as a site of agency and identity formation, CCI remain aligned with liberation logics.

Second, creative economies must contribute to reducing inequality and advancing epistemic decolonization. Empirical evidence from African cultural industries further confirms that structural dependency remains a defining feature of the sector. Paulo Alexandre Ivo Franco and Njogu (2020) demonstrate that many cultural initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to rely heavily on externally funded institutional ecosystems, often shaped by donor priorities and transnational gatekeeping structures. Lopes cautions that Africa faces a "self-deception trap" when development narratives celebrate potential while ignoring structural constraints and power asymmetries (Lopes, 2024). Thus, CCI must be supported by institutional reforms encompassing labor protections, fair remuneration, intellectual property enforcement, and inclusive participation mechanisms, particularly for marginalized cultural communities (UNESCO, 2019/2022). Success in creative industries should therefore be evaluated not only through economic indicators, but through their capacity to promote social justice, redistribute opportunity, and democratize cultural knowledge.

Third, creative industries must cultivate historical consciousness and strategic autonomy. For Cabral, the ultimate goal of liberation is not merely replacing colonial actors with national elites, but constructing social systems that break with colonial logic (Cabral, 1979). In the Lusophone African context, this challenge is further complicated by transnational cultural circulation. As Fernando Arenas (2011) shows, post-independence Lusophone African cultural production is deeply embedded in transnational circuits that simultaneously expand visibility and reinforce asymmetrical relations of recognition and access. Following this line of thought, African creative economies must resist becoming simple extensions of global cultural markets. Instead, they should aspire to articulate alternative cultural modernities, build endogenous ecosystems of production and knowledge, and assert interpretive control over African narratives (Lopes, 2015; UNCTAD, 2024).

The trajectories of Lusophone Africa demonstrate both the promise and profound ambivalence embedded in CCI. On the one hand, they offer pathways toward diversification, agency, and global visibility. On the other hand, when inadequately regulated or captured by market-centric paradigms, they risk becoming new channels through which global capitalism reshapes local identities and reproduces hierarchies of value (Lopes, 2024; UNESCO, 2022). The central question, therefore, is not whether African states should pursue creative economy strategies, but how they do so, and under whose terms.

Finally, hen interpreted through Cabral's lens, creative and cultural industries should not be viewed as marginal "post-independence sectors," but as a contemporary arena where the unfinished project of liberation continues to unfold (Cabral, 1970; Lopes, 2015; UNCTAD, 2024). If creatively governed, they can strengthen sovereignty, expand agency, and sustain cultural dignity. If left to the logics of commodification alone, they risk binding postcolonial societies into renewed cycles of dependency and symbolic subordination. The enduring urgency of Cabral's legacy lies precisely here: culture persists not as ornament or entertainment, but as a decisive terrain upon which freedom, autonomy, and future African development will be determined.

References

Arenas, F. (2011). Lusophone Africa: beyond independence. U of Minnesota Press.

Baker, C. (Ed.). (2024). The Routledge Handbook of Popular Music and Politics of the Balkans. Taylor & Francis.

Benson, C. J. (2000). The primary bilingual education experiment in Mozambique, 1993 to 1997. International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 3(3), 149-166.

Bucaioni, M. (2023). A Transnational Canon of African Literatures in Portuguese?: Mia Couto, José Eduardo Agualusa and the Circulation of Lusophone African Literature. Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry, 10(2), 162-177.

Cabral, A. (1970). National liberation and culture. Speech delivered at Syracuse University, February 20, 1970.

Cabral, A. (1979). *Unity and struggle: Speeches and writings of Amílcar Cabral*. Monthly Review Press.

Chabal, P., & Daloz, J. P. (1999). Africa works: Disorder as political instrument.

Chabal, P., Birmingham, D., Forrest, J., & Newitt, M. (2002). *A history of postcolonial Lusophone Africa*. Indiana University Press.

Curington, C. V. (2017). Negotiating Race, Work and Family: Cape Verdean Home Care Workers in Lisbon, Portugal.

Davis, S., Straubhaar, J., & Ferin Cunha, I. (2016). The construction of a transnational Lusophone media space: A historiographic analysis. Popular Communication, 14(4), 212-223.

dos Santos, D. A. (2023). Bisnetos de Cabral, a Viagem de uma Designer: uma Reflexão Sobre Narrativas Gráficas e Visuais de Cabo Verde e Sua Diáspora (Master's thesis, Instituto Politecnico de Leiria (Portugal).

Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. Grove Press.

Fernandes, C. (2023). Intellectual legacies, political morality, and disillusionment: connections between two Mozambique research institutions, 1976–2017. The Journal of African History, 64(1), 112-125.

Ferreira, C. O. (2012). Ambivalent transnationality: Luso-African co-productions after independence (1988–2010). Journal of African cinemas, 3(2), 221-245.

Figueira, C., Ivo Franco, P. A., Martins, C., Fortez, I., Henderson, M., Pegado, G., ... & Quintana, C. (2023). Mapping the cultural and creative industries in Angola. United Nations.

Franco, P. A. I., & Njogu, K. (2020). Cultural and creative industries supporting activities in Sub-Saharan Africa: Mapping and analysis. Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa). https://doi.org/10.17901/AKBP1.07.2020

Helgesson, S., & Stella, M. G. (2023). The Luso-African literary world: introduction. Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry, 10(2), 139-147.

Joffe, A., & Wangusa, A. (2022). Promoting Decent Work in the African Cultural and Creative Economy, prepared for the ILO. Forthcoming September.

Leandro, F. J. B., Martínez-Galán, E., & Gonçalves, P. (2019). Portuguese-speaking Small Island Developing States the Development Journeys of Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste. Environmental Science.

Leandro, F. J., Beja, C., & Lu, Y. (Eds.). (2022). China, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe: From Sporadic Bilateral Exchanges to a Comprehensive Multilateral Platform. City University of Macau.

Lopes, C. (2014). *Creativity is the new money*. United Nations / Africa Renewal Policy Series.

Lopes, C. (2015). *How can Africa profit from its creative industries?* United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

Lopes, C. (2024). *The self-deception trap: How Africa underdevelops Africa*. Tafelberg.

Lourenço-Lindell, I. (2002). Walking the tight rope: Informal livelihoods and social networks in a West African city (Doctoral dissertation, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis).

Lundy, B. D. (2015). Trading on the margins: locating continuities of exchange in Guinea-Bissau. African Identities, 13(2), 111-128.

Mazrui, A. (1990). *Cultural forces in world politics*. James Currey.

Moyo, L. (2024). *Cultural policy and cultural industries in Africa: From culture as commodity to culture as praxis*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Senghor, L. S. (1964). *On African socialism*. Praeger.

Signé, L. (2025). The Outsized Potential of the Cultural and Creative Industries in Africa.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). (2018). *Creative economy outlook: Trends in international trade in creative industries*. United Nations.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). (2024). *Creative economy outlook 2024*. United Nations. Retrieved from https://unctad.org/publication/creative-economy-outlook-2024

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2013). Creative economy report 2013: Special edition, widening local development pathways. UNESCO.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2019). *Culture and public policy for sustainable development*.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2022). *Reshaping policies for creativity: Addressing culture as a global public good*. UNESCO Publishing.

World Bank. (n.d.). *Guinea-Bissau*. World Bank Data. Retrieved from https://data.worldbank.org/country/guinea-bissau

Yúdice, G. (2003). *The expediency of culture: Uses of culture in the global era*. Duke University Press.

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

AMÍLCAR CABRAL ROLE IN THE LINGUISTIC IDENTITY, MULTILINGUALISM AND POST-INDEPENDENCE PROCESS IN CABO VERDE

MIGUEL ROSA DUQUE
miguel.duque@usj.edu.mo
He is a distinguished designer within the design industry with over 30 years of experience. He is an assistant professor at the University of Saint Joseph (China) and has taught previously at Macau University of Science and Technology, Macau Polytechnic University, and Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University in China. He holds a PhD in Communication from the University of Macau, with a focus on virtual reality research, a Master of Design in Virtual Environment Design from the University of Saint Joseph, and a Bachelor of Arts in Multimedia Design from Curtin University in Australia. Renowned for his multidisciplinary education and commitment to fostering student creativity and consistently exceeding expectations, Miguel's pedagogical philosophy emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and inquiry, encouraging students to question and interact with contemporary design paradigms. https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4558-4796

JOSÉ MANUEL SIMÕES
jmsimoes@usj.edu.mo
He received a postdoc in Communication Science from the Portuguese Catholic University (2017) and a PhD in Global Studies from the University of Saint Joseph, Macau-China (2011) with Summa Cum Laude. He has a master of Arts in Communication and Journalism from the Faculty of Letters of Coimbra University, Portugal, and a bachelor's degree in International Journalism from the Superior School of Journalism, Porto, Portugal, where he taught for seven years. He is an associate professor and University of Saint Joseph Head (China) of the Media, Art & Technology Department until 2024 and the coordinator of the Communication and Media Master Programme since 2016. He published worldwide and participated in exhibitions, conferences, and academic committees on three continents. He published 11 books and is the editor, organiser, and co-author of five other books related to journalism and culture. He has also published extensively in international academic journals and media outlets, especially about ethics and communication and media. https://orcid.org./0000-0002-0730-7780

Abstract

This study explores how Amílcar Cabral influenced Cabo Verde's linguistic identity and advanced the idea of multilingualism, especially after the country gained independence. Being one of the main leaders in the liberation struggle against the oppressive Portuguese colonial regime, Cabral was aware of how tightly linked language was to cultural and national identities. Cabral's move to encourage the use of Kriolu, the local creole language, was the highlight of efforts to unify the ethnic groups of Cabo Verde and helped generate a sense of national pride through the nation's cultural identity. Moreover, by emphasizing multilingualism, Cabral was able to strike a balance between Kriolu and Portuguese, thereby creating a linguistic culture that recognizes the colony's past and the future to be shaped by the global community. This research investigates Cabral's language policies and the influence of these policies on the various sectors of education, politics, and cultural expression in post-independence Cabo Verde. We reveal how Cabral's concepts of language policy and identity continue to shape discussions in Cabo Verde today, thereby highlighting the key role linguistic diversity plays in the nation's ongoing socioeconomic progress.

Keywords

Amílcar Cabral, multilingualism, linguistic identity, national identity, decolonization, liberation struggle, cultural expression, language ideologies.

Resumo

Este estudo analisa a influência de Amílcar Cabral na construção da identidade linguística de Cabo Verde e na promoção do multilinguismo, particularmente no período subsequente à independência nacional. Enquanto uma das principais figuras da luta de libertação contra o regime colonial português, Cabral compreendeu profundamente a estreita relação entre a língua, a cultura e a afirmação da identidade nacional. A sua valorização do crioulo cabo-verdiano (kriolu) constituiu um elemento central do projecto de unidade nacional, contribuindo para a coesão social e para o fortalecimento do sentimento de pertença e orgulho identitário entre os cabo-verdianos. Paralelamente, ao defender uma perspectiva multilingue, Cabral procurou estabelecer um equilíbrio entre o crioulo e a língua portuguesa, promovendo uma cultura linguística capaz de reconhecer simultaneamente o legado histórico colonial e as exigências da inserção de Cabo Verde num contexto global. O presente trabalho examina as concepções e orientações de Cabral em matéria de política linguística e discute o impacto dessas ideias nos domínios da educação, da governação e das manifestações culturais no período pós-independência. A análise evidencia que as reflexões de Cabral sobre língua, cultura e identidade continuam a influenciar os debates contemporâneos em Cabo Verde, sublinhando a importância da diversidade linguística como um recurso estratégico para o desenvolvimento social, cultural e económico do país.

Palavras-chave

Amílcar Cabral, multilinguismo, identidade linguística, identidade nacional, descolonização, luta de libertação, expressão cultural, ideologias linguísticas.

How to cite this article

Duque, Miguel Rosa & Simões, José Manuel (2026). Amílcar Cabral Role in the Linguistic Identity, Multilingualism and Post-Independence Process in Cabo Verde*. Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 158-174. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.7

Article submitted on 26 June 2026 and accepted on 21 August 2026.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 158-174
Amílcar Cabral Role in the Linguistic Identity, Multilingualism and Post-Independence Process in Cabo Verde
Miguel Rosa Duque, José Manuel Simões

AMÍLCAR CABRAL ROLE IN THE LINGUISTIC IDENTITY, MULTILINGUALISM AND POST-INDEPENDENCE PROCESS IN CABO VERDE[1,2]

AMÉLIE LU YUQING

Introduction

Born in Guinea-Bissau to Cape Verdean parents, Cabral thus showed a double belonging, which informed his criticism of small, localized nationalisms. Cabral was a strong opponent of any of the exclusive nationalisms of the Cape Verdean or Guinean factions, arguing that structural unity would avoid post-colonial fragmentation. Both legally and historically, Amilcar Cabral is recognized in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde as the founder of the nationality. He advocated binationalism thru PAIGC, convinced that the two regions had a joint struggle for independence and common historical destiny. Amílcar Cabral holds a unique position in the Lusophone African anti-colonial imaginary in that his political practice was inseparable from his conception of culture and identity. For Cabral, liberation was not only a military and administrative transformation of colonial power but also an ideological and cultural reorientation of the colonized society to reverse the cultural alienation imposed by Portuguese rule. In his 1970 address at Syracuse University, Cabral argued that colonial rule was sustained by the creation of a social gap between indigenous elites and the popular masses through the systematic repression of local culture (Carter & Aulette, 2009). In the Cabo Verde context, the legacy of Portuguese rule, as it intersects with creolization, migration, and island-based social formation, and Cabral's ideas about culture and national consciousness together provided a framework for revaluing and reimagining linguistic life (Carter & Aulette, 2009).

This study addresses Cabral's influence on Cabo Verdean culture and linguistic life, focusing especially on how Cabralist ideas, such as culture as a 'common heritage' and as a battleground, influenced discussions of language, identity, and social cohesion. In the past, Cabo Verdean Creole (Kriolu) was a language of communication "shunned and denigrated" by those in power; during colonial times, its use was banned in government buildings and schools (Carter & Aulette, 2009, p. 213). In the modern era, the

[1] Conflict of Interests - The authors have identified no conflicts of interest.
[2] Acknowledgment - The authors acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot in assisting with the improvement of English grammar, the formatting of references, and the standardization of citations in this work. All intellectual content, arguments, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the author.

archipelago exemplifies a typical diglossic speech community, where Portuguese functions as the "High" (H) language for formal authorities, education, and global navigation, and Kriolu functions as the "Low" (L) language, the "language of the heart" or "mother tongue", for daily life, music, and emotional expression (Carter & Aulette, 2009, p. 214). Understanding Cabral's influence, however, demands attention to both policy and lived language practices because this Portuguese–Kriolu relationship differs by island and social class (Cardoso et al., 2025; Carter & Aulette, 2009).

The central idea is that Cabral's approach to culture as rooted yet dynamic contributed to processes of cultural revival and linguistic revaluation in Cabo Verde, particularly by strengthening arguments for the legitimacy of Kriolu and for multilingual coexistence rather than simple replacement (Carter & Aulette, 2009). This legacy can be seen in the current "Total Bilingualism" practice in education, which aims to accord equal respect to both languages to enhance learning outcomes and social equity (Cardoso et al., 2025, p. 3).

This research uses an interdisciplinary approach to draw on historical evidence of Cabral's philosophy and contemporary sociolinguistic data. It reflects on the ways in which cultural forms of music and literature like mornas and the works of poets like Jorge Barbosa have maintained ethnic consciousness (Carter & Aulette, 2009). It also acknowledges that Cabo Verdean culture is not uniform; the regional variation between the Barlavento (Windward) and Sotavento (Leeward) dialects presents ongoing challenges for language standardization (Cardoso et al., 2025). Finally, the paper's organization demonstrates the interplay of cultural theory, political mobilization, and language ideology over time, from the historical background of Portuguese colonialism to present-day attempts to build a bilingual education system that empowers all Cabo Verdeans.

The Intellectual Foundation: Culture as the "Weapon" of Theory

In 1966, Amílcar Cabral delivered his famous speech "The Weapon of Theory", presented during the Tricontinental Conference in Havana, Cuba. The importance of revolutionary ideology and culture in the struggle for national liberation from imperialism is highlighted in his speech (Cabral, 1966). For Cabral, theory was never a speculative or purely academic exercise, but a strategic instrument essential for understanding and transforming the concrete socio-economic reality of a colonized people. Often described as an "innovative and complex organic intellectual-activist" and a "transdisciplinary critical social theorist" (Rabaka, 2014, p. 14), his education as an agricultural engineer provided him with a unique scientific perspective on the Guinean and Cabo Verdean terrain, allowing him to perceive the socio-economic structures of colonial exploitation through the literal soil of the land (el Nabolsy, 2019; Fonseca, 2025). In his landmark 1966 Havana address, Cabral argued that the ideological deficiency of many national liberation movements was one of the greatest weaknesses of the anti-imperialist struggle, asserting that "nobody has yet successfully practiced revolution without a revolutionary theory" (Cabral, 1979, p. 559).

Central to this intellectual foundation was Cabral's materialist understanding of history, where the level of productive forces is the driving force of history. Cabral innovatively

questioned the traditional Marxist primacy of class struggle as the single determinant of human development, arguing instead that class struggle is only the motive force in certain historical periods (Cabral, 1979; van Veen, 2016). He posited that the underlying mode of production dictates the broader trajectory of human evolution, meaning that societies existed in history even before the appearance of social classes (Cabral, 1979; Wick, 2006). By shifting the focus to productive forces, Cabral was able to re-integrate African folk social formations—which colonialists had labeled "stateless" or "a-historical"—into the mainstream of world history (Magubane, 1971, p. 76). This theoretical shift challenged Eurocentric linearity and provided a scientific basis for the dignity and historical agency of the African peasantry (Saraiva, 2022; Wick, 2006).

As Cabral noted, the fundamental characteristic of imperialism is the denial of the historical path followed by the dominated people, through the usurpation of their right to develop their creative potential. (Cabral, 1970; el Nabolsy, 2019). Colonialism acts as a force that impedes natural social evolution, keeping the colonized society linked to the metropole's history like a "wagon of their train" (Wick, 2006, p. 62). Thus, national liberation is fundamentally defined not merely as political sovereignty or a change in the color of the leadership, but as the regaining of a people's historical personality and their return to history through the total destruction of foreign domination (Cabral, 1970; Magubane, 1971). In this framework, culture is not a mere superstructural effect of economics but an essential and determinant element of a people's history (Cabral, 1970; Chabal, 1981). Cabral famously described culture as the "fruit of history", likening its role to a flower that holds the responsibility for forming the "seedling" that generates the continuity of history (Cabral, 1973, p. 50). Culture reflects the dynamic synthesis established by the social conscience to resolve material, spiritual, and social conflicts at every stage of a society's evolution (Cabral, 1970; el Nabolsy, 2019). For Cabral, culture is a social reality independent of the will of individuals, yet it remains the primary vehicle for identifying with fundamental problems and aspirations for progress (Cabral, 1970). Because foreign domination can only be maintained through the permanent, organized repression of a people's cultural life, Cabral posited that "national liberation is necessarily an act of culture" (Hamilton, 2021, p. 95).

He believed that for the liberation movement to succeed, it must base its action on a thorough knowledge of popular culture, distinguishing between the progressive and reactionary elements of tradition (Cabral, 1970). This re-Africanization of the mind or return to the source was not a blind retreat into the past, but a critical retrieval and reinvention of indigenous values intended to support a modern, autonomous society (el Nabolsy, 2019; van Veen, 2016). By weaponizing theory through the lens of culture, Cabral ensured that the struggle for independence was as much about reclaiming the soul as it was about the technical requirements of warfare (Lopes & Barros, 2020)

The "Return to the Source": Critical Re-Africanization of the Mind

For Cabral, this was not a universal requirement for all sectors of society but a specific ideological intervention directed at the native elites and the petty bourgeoisie who had been assimilated into colonial culture (Cabral, 1973). Under the Portuguese system of "ultra-colonialism", a tiny minority of Africans were granted the status of *assimilados*, a

privilege contingent upon disdaining their own African heritage and adopting the language, religion, and social manners of the metropole (Magubane, 1971, p. 72). This created what Cabral described as a "socio-cultural drama" for the petty bourgeoisie: they were cut off from their own people by education and social status, yet they remained marginalized and were never truly accepted by the foreign ruling class (Chabal, 1981, p. 40). This marginalization created a problem that compelled these alienated individuals to seek a new identity by turning back toward the masses (Cabral, 1973).

As the class with the technical knowledge to manipulate the state apparatus inherited from the colonizer, they were the next heirs to power, yet their class interests often aligned with imperialist capital (Chabal, 1981). To lead a true revolution, this elite had to abandon its privileges and identify completely with the working masses, becoming the revolutionary workers (Cabral, 1979; Davidson, 1984). This was not an elitist back to the past, but a critical recovery and reinvention of cultural values to sustain a modern autonomous society (van Veen, 2016). This approach characterized identity as a dynamic synthesis of spiritual and material elements in constant transformation, which permitted Cabo Verdeans to see this as the basis for national solidarity and revolution (Cabral, 1970; el Nabolsy, 2019; Saraiva, 2022).

Crucially, Cabral argued that this return was unnecessary for the popular masses, particularly the rural peasantry who constituted the vast majority of the population (Cabral, 1973). Unlike the westernized elite, the masses had remained the undisputed repository of indigenous culture, keeping their traditions alive in the villages and forests despite centuries of organized colonial repression (Cabral, 1970, 1973). For them, culture remained a strong factor to preserve their identity even when politico-military resistance had been crushed (Carter & Aulette, 2009; Cabral, 1970). Therefore, the return to the origin was specifically an ideological reconversion for the uprooted intellectual and civil servant classes who needed to harmonize their personal reality with the historical reality of their country (Cabral, 1973; el Nabolsy, 2019).

He emphasized that the return did not imply a blind or romantic retreat into the past or a "tabula rasa" rejection of all external influences (Chabal, 1981, p. 56). Instead, it was a critical retrieval and reinvention of indigenous values intended to support a modern, autonomous society (van Veen, 2016; el Nabolsy, 2019). Cabral believed that culture must be analyzed as a "function of the needs of the struggle and progress" (el Nabolsy, 2019, p. 5). Human progress depends on the resolve of people to take on and overcome obstacles. Civilization grows, learns and develops because of hardship and conflict. Without adversity there is no progress, no movement in life. Life without adversity is stagnant.

He famously insisted that while the positive aspects of tradition should be preserved, those that were "antiscientific"—such as belief in magical explanations for natural phenomena—had to be discarded through a process of education and self-criticism (el Nabolsy, 2019, p. 5). This important return aimed not just to restore the past but to use historical knowledge to ensure a future based on justice and dignity (van Veen, 2016). By framing decolonization as an act of culture, Cabral ensured that the struggle for independence was as much about reclaiming the national soul and historical agency as it was about seizing political power (Cabral, 1970; Rabaka, 2014).

Linguistic Resistance: The Power and Status of Cabo Verdean Creole (Kriolu)

Linguistic identity serves as a foundational cornerstone of Cabo Verdean nationhood, with Cabo Verdean Creole (Kriolu) acting as the primary vehicle for cultural resistance and national unity. For nearly the entire population, Kriolu is defined as the "language of the heart" or the "mother tongue", representing the dynamic synthesis of the material and spiritual condition of the archipelago's people, whereas Portuguese remains the formal language of the colonizer. This linguistic situation is characterized by sociolinguists as diglossia, a state in which two languages coexist within a single community but are assigned distinct social functions and prestige levels (Carter & Aulette, 2009, p. 214). In this hierarchy, Portuguese was historically imposed as the "High" (H) language of education, government, and business, while Kriolu was relegated to the "Low" (L) status, reserved for informal settings, family life, and emotional expression (Carter & Aulette, 2009, p. 214). This linguistic structure was part of a larger colonial reality characterized by "cultural subjugation and racial hierarchy" (Santos et al., 2024, p. 2). The preservation of Kriolu allowed Cabo Verdeans to maintain a separate identity from their colonizers, using the language to express solidarity and criticize power structures (Carter & Aulette, 2009).

During the colonial period, Portuguese officials deliberately denigrated Creole as an inferior dialect, often describing it as a corruption of Portuguese and a sign of the return of an old trait or habit (Saraiva, 2022). To maintain a rigid social distance between the colonizer and the colonized, the use of Kriolu was strictly prohibited in schools and government buildings, creating a wall around the indigenous population (Carter & Aulette, 2009). This linguistic pacification was intended to stifle the intellectual development of the African population and ensure that a minimally educated group would prioritize European values and historical narratives over their own heritage (Mendy, 2003, as cited in el Nabolsy, 2019). By presenting Portuguese as the only medium for theoretical thought, science, and progress, the colonial administration sought to instill an inferiority complex in Cabo Verdeans, suggesting that their native tongue was a barrier to civilization and entry into the modern world (el Nabolsy, 2019).

Amílcar Cabral and the PAIGC recognized that reclaiming the national soul required a direct challenge to this linguistic and cultural hegemony. They strategically used Creole as a tool for mobilization and literacy, bridging the critical gap between the revolutionary leadership and the rural masses, who were largely illiterate at the start of the struggle (African Information Service, 1973). In the liberated zones, the party implemented militant education programs that utilized Kriolu to foster a new national consciousness and empower peasants to do it for themselves (Borges, 2019; Fonseca, 2025). This was not merely a functional choice but an ontological reclamation; by elevating the status of Kriolu, Cabral helped Cabo Verdeans recognize their unique linguistic heritage as a source of revolutionary pride rather than a mark of colonial shame (Saraiva, 2022). The struggle itself served as a "cultural crucible," where the use of a common tongue helped forge a unified nation from diverse ethnic groups (Chabal, 1981, p. 55).

Cabral distinguished between colonialist culture and the Portuguese language itself, asserting that the latter could be wielded as a weapon for liberation without

compromising one's African identity (el Nabolsy, 2019). He rejected essentialist views that claimed speaking a European language made one less African, emphasizing instead that the utility of a language in achieving independence and progress was what mattered most (Cabral, 2016; el Nabolsy, 2019).

An example of the nature of Cabo Verdean identities is the different ways people speak Kriolu in Cabo Verde. The country has two sets of islands called Barlavento (Windward) and Sotavento (Leeward). While Barlavento (centered in Mindelo, São Vicente) historically held prominence as an intellectual, literary, and artistic centre, and Sotavento (specifically Santiago) holds political dominance and the largest speaker population (*Badiu* Creole). Every person has their way of speaking. People who in the Northern (Barlavento) islands may sound more like Portuguese but people, from the southern islands keep their West African language traditions. However, Swolkien and Cobbinah (2019) propose that the Cabo Verdean Creole (CVC) from Santo Antão variation is a phonological outlier in the archipelago. Its distinctive character is the result of a specific socio-historical pathway, a settlement in the early 16th century and centuries of great geographic isolation, which permitted separate internal evolution of the original proto-CVC. These advances were further reinforced by extensive interaction with dialectal Portuguese in the 18th and 19th centuries, resulting in a variation which has a perceived Portuguese flavour, but which is not the result of a separate process of re-creolization.

All these different ways of speaking come together to create layers of identity within Cabo Verdean-ness (or Kabuverdianidade). Such conflicts have created a pluricentric linguistic situation for Cabo Verde. Language planners and teachers have had to operate under a two-variety approach (for both Barlavento and Sotavento varieties) instead of choosing a standardized national variety. The advantage of such an approach is the preservation of regional differences; however, it complicates the standardization of Cabo-verdiano within the government, education and legal domains where a uniform orthographic standard is required.

Despite centuries of marginalization and official repression, Creole persists as the most widespread symbol of Cabo Verdean identity, both on the islands and within the global diaspora (Carter & Aulette, 2009). It remains the primary language of music, most notably the *morna*, as well as poetry and oral tradition, serving as the medium through which Cabo Verdeans preserved their ethnic consciousness during the long years of silence (Ludtke, 1989; Carter & Aulette, 2009). The practice of linguistic resistance in contemporary Cabo Verde has evolved from ideological discourse to the practical utilization of the Dual Language Education (DLE) approach, which operates as a vehicle for cognitive justice. New evidence from the Si ka fila tudu, ta fila un ponta initiative (If Everything Is Not Achieved, at Least Something Is), ran between 2013 to 2019, the program created a tremendous influence. The lessons obtained from this initiative provided useful insights into effective approaches that could be deployed in schools in Cabo Verde to foster bilingualism. It indicated that the "linguistic barrier" found in early education programs is particularly significant in areas that can be defined as "remote islands or in schools with poorer families" where very little interaction with Portuguese is evident (Cardoso et al., 2025, p. 15).

The multilingual program succeeded because of the focus on appreciating the importance of the native tongue or Cabo Verdean Creole, just like Portuguese. The first step involved ensuring that the teachers had the competence to use Cabo Verdean Creole as a subject and as a main language in teaching other subjects such as Mathematics and Science. This program was based on a model referred to as Total Bilingualism, also called Dual Language Education. It involved using Cabo Verdean Creole and Portuguese equally in the teaching process. The two languages were considered as subjects and as the languages used to teach other subjects, thus enabling the learners to become literate in the two languages at once. Here, each language was used equally, half of the time, so that the students could develop proficiency in both languages. This balance allowed the students to become competent in speaking, reading, and writing in both languages. As a result, the learners achieved great success academically. The multilingual program also helped the learners develop positive attitudes, gain civic responsibility awareness, and improve their analytical thinking skills. These improvements were reflected in the performance of the students in all areas of the curriculum (Cardoso et al., 2025).

Today, Cabo Verde continues its journey toward balanced bilingualism, with modern educational programs seeking to integrate Kriolu into formal schooling alongside Portuguese to improve learning outcomes and promote social equity (Cardoso et al., 2025). These initiatives respond to calls for education based on the students' first language (L1), acknowledging that including local languages in schools can help students better understand the curriculum and connect with their cultural roots. By decolonizing the mind through the embrace of the Kriolu, the legacy of Cabral ensures that the cultural soul of Cabo Verde remains a dynamic force for dignity, social justice, and progress (van Veen, 2016).

The Instrumental Role of Portuguese: Science, Modernity, and Global Opportunity

In the decades since independence, Portuguese has evolved into a global bridge, linking millions of speakers across several continents as a vital super language (Correia, 2024, p. 366). Cabral was an astute diplomat who recognized that to win international support, the PAIGC had to communicate its cause to the United Nations and the global public in a recognized international language (Mendy, 2019; Lopes & Barros, 2020). His speeches in Lisbon, Paris, and Syracuse demonstrated his ability to master the language of the oppressor to demand its departure (Lopes & Barros, 2020; Cabral, 1970). By maintaining high literacy in Portuguese, the leadership ensured they were at the same literacy level as students in developed countries, preventing them from being marginalized in the global power (Wick, 2006).

While modern educational reforms seek to implement balanced bilingualism by integrating Kriolu into formal schooling, the instrumental value of Portuguese remains unchallenged as the nation's port for opportunity expansion. Cabral's anti-essentialist vision ensured that Cabo Verdeans would not have to choose between their African identity and their participation in the modern world (el Nabolsy, 2019; Wick, 2006).

Mastery of the Portuguese language remains a strategic asset in the ongoing movement toward dignity and progress (Cabral, 1970; el Nabolsy, 2019).

Amílcar Cabral's approach to the linguistic landscape of Cabo Verde was defined by a sophisticated and paradoxical ideology that simultaneously championed the indigenous language (Kriolu) while upholding the colonial language as a vital strategic asset (Hamilton, 2021; Saraiva, 2022). He famously described the Portuguese language as "one of the best things that the tugas [whites/colonialists] left us", a statement reflecting his refusal to allow emotional nationalist sentiments to obscure the technical requirements of a successful revolution (el Nabolsy, 2019, p.5;). For Cabral, the language of the colonizer could be seized as a "spoil of war" and transformed into a powerful "linguistic weapon" to be used against the very system that introduced it (el Nabolsy, 2019, p. 12).

Cabral's defence of Portuguese was deeply rooted in his commitment to the philosophical discourse of modernity, which prioritizes reason, progress, and the principle of subjectivity or autonomy (el Nabolsy, 2019). He argued that national liberation was not merely a return to a romanticized past but a "forced march" toward cultural progress (Cabral, 1970/2009, p. 18; Chabal, 1981, p.55). In this framework, Portuguese was not viewed as a symbol of cultural defeat but as an essential instrument for the assimilation of modern science and technology (el Nabolsy, 2019). Cabral posited that for the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde) to lead the people forward, it required a language capable of expressing the relative and tangible truths of modern scientific discourse (el Nabolsy, 2019; Cabral, 1979).

This instrumentalism was particularly evident in his analysis of the limitations of indigenous languages at that historical juncture. Cabral pointed out that neither Kriolu nor the various ethnic languages of the mainland possessed the specialized technical vocabulary required for modern military coordination or scientific instruction at that time (el Nabolsy, 2019). He noted, for example, that one could not easily express complex physics concepts, such as the "intensity of a force is equal to mass times the acceleration of gravity", in Creole during the 1960s (el Nabolsy, 2019, p. 13). To master the tools of modern development - such as the mechanics of a mortar or the data portraiture of a soil survey - the revolutionary cadre had to be fluent in a language with a standardized orthography and a deep technical lexicon (el Nabolsy, 2019; Saraiva, 2022).

Distinguishing Influence from Domination

Central to Cabral's argument was the distinction between colonialist culture and foreign influence (el Nabolsy, 2019). He argued that colonialism was a crime because it replaced cultural autonomy with foreign domination, negating the historical process of the colonized people (Cabral, 1970; Magubane, 1971). However, he insisted that influence was a neutral, and often positive, phenomenon if adopted through an autonomous act of choice (el Nabolsy, 2019). Cabral rejected the tabula rasa approach to culture, arguing instead for a critical retrieval and reinvention of cultural values (van Veen, 2016). He believed that refusing to use useful tools simply because they were of foreign origin was a sign of a "complex of inferiority" (Nabolsy, 2019, p. 13). By freely deciding to utilize

Portuguese to advance the cause of liberation, the African revolutionary was performing an act of sovereignty (el Nabolsy, 2019). Portuguese became an instrument of liberation once it was no longer enforced by the metropole but autonomously wielded by the liberation movement to communicate directives and conduct diplomacy (el Nabolsy, 2019). Cabral distinguished between the language itself and the political ideology from the colonialist implemented in the society (Cabral, 1979; el Nabolsy, 2019). In his view, using a standardized language from the colonizer did not compromise one's African identity so long as these tools served the project of national reconstruction (Cabral, 1970; el Nabolsy, 2019).

The instrumental role of Portuguese also extended to the strategic and diplomatic needs of the revolution (Lopes & Barros, 2020). Portuguese served as a *lingua franca* that connected the different liberation movements within the Portuguese empire - such as the MPLA in Angola and FRELIMO in Mozambique - through the CONCP (Conference of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies) (el Nabolsy, 2019). This shared linguistic medium allowed for the coordination of military strategies and the circulation of revolutionary ideas, effectively turning the colonizer's language into a bridge for Pan-African solidarity (Lopes & Barros, 2020).

Binationalism and the Forging of a Unified National Identity

Amílcar Cabral's political vision was fundamentally rooted in the principle of binationalism—the strategic and ideological goal of unified independence for both Guinea-Bissau and the Cabo Verde islands (Lopes & Barros, 2020; Parsa, 2017). Founded in 1956, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) was unique among liberation movements for seeking the decolonization of two separate territories under a single, unitary political project (Lopes & Barros, 2020; Fonseca, 2025). This vision was not a mere tactical convenience; it was based on a "radical realism" that recognized the deep historical, blood, and interest-based ties between the mainland and the archipelago that had existed for centuries (Hamilton, 2021, p. 81). Cabral argued that the shared experience of Portuguese "ultra-colonialism" and racist dominance provided a common basis for a unified African identity that could and should transcend local ethnic differences (Magubane, 1971, p. 72).

To understand the depth of Cabral's binational project, one must first examine the colonial structures he sought to dismantle. Portuguese colonial strategy relied heavily on utilizing the archipelago as a base for trade and administration (Chilcote, 1968). In the colonial hierarchy, Cabo Verdeans were often classified as "citizens" or *assimilados*, while the vast majority of mainland Guineans were relegated to the status of "indigenas" (natives) (Chilcote, 1968, p. 380). This system deliberately created a socio-economic and cultural gap, frequently using Cabo Verdeans as intermediary agents of the colonial state to administer Guinea (Wick, 2006). Cabral recognized that these divisions were a form of linguistic and cultural pacification designed to keep the colonized people in a state of permanent atavism and inferiority (Saraiva, 2022).

Central to the construction of this collective identity was Cabral's innovative concept of the "nation-class" (Chabal, 1981, p. 38; Wick, 2006, p. 51). Drawing upon what he

famously termed his weapon of theory, Cabral challenged orthodox Marxist interpretations that regarded class struggle as the sole driving force of history across all social formations (van Veen, 2016). He argued that, within the colonial context, the principal contradiction lay not between social classes within the colonised society, but between the colonised population as a whole, conceived as a nation-class, and the colonial state (Chabal, 1981; Wick, 2006).

Cabral did not conceive of culture as a static repository of traditions; rather, he understood it as a historical and dynamic process that required critical recovery, reinterpretation, and renewal. The liberation struggle thus became a necessary vehicle for cultural transformation, compelling diverse ethnic communities to abandon practices deemed detrimental to social progress while fostering the emergence of a cohesive national consciousness (Cabral, 1970; Wick, 2006). Through the PAIGC, popular assemblies, schools, and healthcare facilities were established, gradually supplanting the colonial administration with institutions grounded in participatory governance and social justice (Borges, 2019; Wick, 2006).

This process contributed to a profound transformation of national consciousness, replacing colonial alienation with a sense of revolutionary dignity and collective self-determination. By emphasising unity in struggle, Cabral sought to forge a nation capable of accommodating cultural diversity while sustaining a shared commitment to anti-colonial resistance and national liberation (Cabral, 1979; Wick, 2006).

Cabral's vision of binationalism was also an exercise in decolonial internationalism (Mendy, 2019; van Veen, 2016). He believed that a liberated Africa must eventually move beyond nationalism to solve the basic problems of post-colonial development (van Veen, 2016; Wick, 2006). Binationalism was a practical step in this direction; if people as different as those in Guinea and Cabo Verde could find common ground, it would reveal the potential for broader Pan-African unity (Mendy, 2019; Wick, 2006). To support this, Cabral promoted a radical decentralization of power. He was against the idea of a capital, arguing that centralized ministries were signs of an emerging elite detached from the peasantry. He proposed that the government should maintain constant dialogue with the social base to avoid the elitist tendencies of the political leadership. This inclusive conception of citizenship invited all to participate in the construction of the new society (Wick, 2006).

Amílcar Cabral's assassination in 1973 was a tragic attempt to destroy the PAIGC and its binationalist vision (Fonseca, 2025). While the political paths of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde eventually diverged in 1980, the foundations Cabral laid for a binationalist decolonial identity proved remarkably resilient (Fonseca, 2025; Wick, 2006). He remains posthumously celebrated as the Fundador da Nacionalidade (Founder of the Nationality), a title that reflects his role in founding the process by which two disparate peoples identified themselves as a unified, historical subject (Davidson, 1984; Wick, 2006).

Through Cabral's notion of "re-conquered history", Cabral guaranteed that Cabo Verdeans' identities would never be essentialist or ahistorical (Magubane, 1971, p. 84;). He opposed the theory of Africanness' trans-historical characteristics and asserted that identity can only be defined as the dynamic synthesis of spiritual and material elements that keep evolving (Cabral, 1970; el Nabolsy, 2019). Through this approach, Cabo

Verdeans could view their mixed identities not as atavism from the colonial past but as the grounds for national solidarity and revolution (Saraiva, 2022). Even today, these ideas persist among Cabo Verdeans who remain internationally connected yet intrinsically connected to the earth beneath their feet.

Binationalism and the "Founder of the Nationality"

Cabral's political vision was rooted in the principle of binationalism - the goal of unified independence for both Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde (Lopes & Barros, 2020). He argued that the shared experience of colonial dominance provided a common basis for a unified African identity that could transcend local ethnic and regional differences (Wick, 2006). Despite his tragic assassination in 1973, his legacy as the founder of the nationality [*Fundador da Nacionalidade]* remains secure. Scholars point out that he was the founder not just of a nation, but of the *process* by which a collectivity identifies itself and begins to build a post-colonial culture (Davidson, 1984; Wick, 2006).

Cabral's vision of the "New Man" and "New Woman"—citizens possessing a revolutionary consciousness that transcends colonial alienation—remains the ultimate goal of the Cabo Verdean project (Wick, 2006, p. 52). This "New Man" is characterized by the practice of democracy, criticism, and social justice, developed through the "cultural crucible" of the liberation struggle (Chabal, 1981, p. 55; Wick, 2006, p. 52). Cabral's insistence that unity is a means toward progress rather than an end in itself ensured that Cabo Verdean identity would remain a dynamic, open-ended project subject to perpetual review (Wick, 2006).

The legacy of Amílcar Cabral in the development of culture in Cabo Verde lies in combining revolutionary theory with practice. He educated a country that culture is not only an ancient heritage to worship but their history lesson to be utilized as a means of survival and development. It was by giving culture the central role in the fight for freedom that Cabral turned it into an endless resource of courage and the main driving force for national reconstruction (Cabral, 1970).

Cabral's linguistic legacy is perhaps the most visible aspect of his influence on modern Cabo Verde. He recognized Cabo Verdean Creole (Kriolu) as the primary vehicle for cultural resistance and the people's language (Carter & Aulette, 2009). During the colonial era, Kriolu was denigrated as an "low-status dialect" and prohibited in official settings to maintain a social distance between the colonizer and the colonized (Carter & Aulette, 2009, p. 217). Cabral and the PAIGC strategically utilized Creole as a weapon for mobilization and literacy, bridging the gap between the revolutionary leadership and the illiterate rural masses (African Information Service, 1973; Fonseca, 2025).

His work continues to influence global anti-colonial strategies and Africana critical theory, offering a powerful critique of neo-colonialism and flag independence (Rabaka, 2014; van Veen, 2016). His legacy ensures that the cultural soul of Cabo Verde remains a dynamic force for social justice, rooted in the lived experiences of its people and its land (el Nabolsy, 2019; Saraiva, 2022). As Cabo Verde continues its journey toward balanced bilingualism and full social realization, Cabral's ideology remains the guiding light for a people who have re-conquered their history and their dignity. He remains, in the words

of his own philosophy, a simple African man whose duty changed the course of history for his people and the world (African Information Service, 1973).

Conclusion

Amílcar Cabral's revolutionary idealism reshaped Cabo Verdean identity as he recognized that the struggle for national liberation should be understood as both a political and a social struggle, of which culture is the main component. He argued that national liberation was not just a military and administrative change but a social and cultural revolution. National liberation required an act of culture to overcome the cultural alienation and the social gap established by the colonial administration. By treating culture as the fruit of history, Cabral was able to turn the independence process into an ontological struggle that allowed Cabo Verdeans to recover their historical personality and thus be protagonists of their own history and no longer mere pawns of the colonizers' game (Cabral, 1970; el Nabolsy, 2019; Magubane, 1971; van Veen, 2016).

The idea of the re-Africanization of the mind, or the return to the source, was a key point in Cabral's legacy and was specifically targeted at the alienated native elites and petty bourgeoisie of colonial assimilation (Cabral, 1973; Davidson, 1984). Cabral urged them to carry out class suicide in order to give up their colonial privileges and status of assimilados and become identified with the dreams of the masses (Cabral, 1973; Chabal, 1981). This was not an elitist back to the past, but a critical recovery and reinvention of cultural values to sustain a modern autonomous society (van Veen, 2016). This approach characterized identity as a dynamic synthesis of spiritual and material elements in constant transformation, which permitted Cabo Verdeans to see their mixed identities not as "atavism" from the colonial past, but as the basis for national solidarity and revolution (Cabral, 1970; el Nabolsy, 2019; Saraiva, 2022).

His most evident and lasting contribution to the contemporary Cabo Verdean society is undoubtedly his view on language which laid out the complexities and challenges inherent in the relationship between Cabo Verdean Creole (Kriolu) and Portuguese (Carter & Aulette, 2009). He dignified Kriolu which he saw as once "shunned and denigrated" by the colonial administration as an element that would facilitate national unity and as an intellectual weapon in the process of mobilization and literacy (Carter & Aulette, 2009, p. 213; Saraiva, 2022; African Information Service, 1973; Fonseca, 2025). But the world reality made him realize also that the Portuguese language represented a fundamental asset, a passage for the global community as well access to vast available scientific knowledge, modernization and international diplomacy (Cabral, 1979; el Nabolsy, 2019; Cabral, 2016). This position gave rise to the present policy of total bilingualism in the formal education system which consists of introducing mother tongue into the formal schooling along with Portuguese to facilitate the learning process and guarantee social equality (Cardoso et al., 2025; van Veen, 2016).

In the end Cabral has been hailed posthumously as the founder of the nationality, a testament to his role as the instigator of a process whereby two peoples came to consider themselves one historical agent (Davidson, 1984; Wick, 2006). His binationalist vision, although later abandoned in the political lives of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, paved

the way to an African solidarity through anti-imperialism and social justice (Lopes & Barros, 2020; Wick, 2006). It is the ideal of the New Man and the New Woman; those who have gained a revolutionary conscience and are thus able to transcend colonial alienation which will become the final goal of the Cabo Verdean endeavour (Chabal, 1981; Cabral, 1970; Fonseca, 2025). His blend of revolutionary thought and action guaranteed that the cultural essence of Cabo Verde would remain a vital force, grounded in its people and soil, forever characterizing him as a 'simple African man' who changed the course of history (African Information Service, 1973; el Nabolsy, 2019; Saraiva, 2022).

Amílcar Cabral's transformative leadership fundamentally redefined Cabo Verdean identity by placing culture at the absolute centre of the political and social struggle for liberation (Cabral, 1970; Wick, 2006). He remains one of the most towering figures in African history, celebrated not merely as a military strategist who led the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) to victory, but as a profound cultural theorist whose ideas regarding radical realism continue to resonate globally (Lopes & Barros, 2020; Hamilton, 2021). For Cabo Verde, a nation forged at the complex and often painful intersection of Portuguese ultra-colonialism and West African heritage, Cabral provided more than a political platform; he provided a crucial roadmap for reclaiming a suppressed soul and a marginalized history (Mendy, 2019).

For Cabral, decolonization was not just a "Changing of the Guards" - replacing a white elite with a black one - but a total social and cultural transformation (Magubane, 1971, p. 72). As Cabral put it, for colonizers to be able to guarantee their supremacy over the colonies, they only have two options. These involve eradicating all members of the populace or ruling over them without losing their culture. However, because history has proved that supremacy and retention of culture cannot go hand-in-hand, colonizers opt for sustained cultural suppression (Cabral, 1970). Thus, the fight for independence was an ontological reclamation, a means for the Cabo Verdeans to bring back their personality root and return to history as subjects and not objects of colonial whim (el Nabolsy, 2019; Magubane, 1971).

His humanist conception of science allowed him to perceive the socio-economic structures of colonial exploitation through the literal land, ensuring that the cultural identity he sought to build was rooted in the lived experiences of the peasantry rather than the abstract ideals of the urban elite (Neves, 2017; Saraiva, 2022). This grounding in reality remains a powerful critique of neo-colonialism, as it emphasizes that true sovereignty requires the liberation of a nation's productive forces and its cultural autonomy (Cabral, 1970; Wick, 2006).

Cabral's influence continues to inspire modern educational programs, such as the Si ka fila tudu, ta fila un ponta project, which seeks to integrate the Kriolu into formal schooling alongside Portuguese (Cardoso et al., 2025). These initiatives respond to Cabral's vision of balanced bilingualism, acknowledging that education in the first language improves learning outcomes and promotes social equity by allowing children to ask questions and learn naturally (Cardoso et al., 2025). Through highlighting the importance of respect for both languages, and the creation of Kriolu as a respectable subject through teaching and grammar, the educational system successfully undermines the dominance of the colonial language hierarchy in culture (Cardoso et al., 2025; Santos et al., 2024).

References

African Information Service. (1973). *Return to the source: Selected speeches of Amilcar Cabral*. Monthly Review Press.

Borges, S. V. (2019). *Militant education, liberation struggle, consciousness: The PAIGC education in Guinea Bissau 1963–1978*. Peter Lang.

Cabral, A. (1966). *The weapon of theory*. Address delivered to the first Tricontinental Conference of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, Havana, Cuba.

Cabral, A. (1970). *National liberation and culture*. Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

Cabral, A. (1973). *Return to the source: Selected speeches of Amílcar Cabral*. Monthly Review Press.

Cabral, A. (1979). *Unity and struggle: Speeches and writings of Amílcar Cabral* (M. Wolfers, Trans.). Monthly Review Press.

Cabral, A. (2009, August 10). (1970) Amilcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture" [Speech transcript]. BlackPast. Retrieved from https://blackpast.org/global-african-history/1970-amilcar-cabral-national-liberation-and-culture/ (Original work published 1970)

Cabral, A. (2016). Analysis of a few types of resistance. In R. Rabaka & D. Wood (Eds.), *Resistance and decolonization* (D. Wood, Trans.). Rowman & Littlefield.

Cardoso, A. J., Bermingham, N., & DePalma, R. (2025). *Building bilingual education in Cabo Verde: A practical guide*. University of Liverpool Repository. https://doi.org/10.17638/03192956

Carter, K., & Aulette, J. (2009). Creole in Cape Verde: Language, identity and power. *Ethnography*, *10*(2), 213–236. https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138108099590

Chabal, P. (1981). The social and political thought of Amílcar Cabral: A reassessment. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 19(1), 31–56.

Chilcote, R. H. (1968). The political thought of Amílcar Cabral. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 6(3), 373–388.

Correia, M. (2024). Fifty years that changed the international status of the Portuguese language. *Revista de Llengua i Dret*, (82), 364–382. https://doi.org/10.58992/rld.i82.2024.4279

Davidson, B. (1984). On revolutionary nationalism: The legacy of Cabral. *Latin American Perspectives*, 11(2), 15–42.

el Nabolsy, Z. (2019). Amílcar Cabral's modernist philosophy of culture and cultural liberation. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. DOI: 10.1080/13696815.2019.1624155.

Fonseca, D. (2025). Underground revolutionaries: The PAIGC, Leninism, and the decolonization of Cabo Verde. *African Studies Review*, 68(3), 557–578.

Hamilton, L. (2021). Amílcar Cabral and Amartya Sen: Freedom, resistance and radical realism. *Theoria*, 68(167), 82–110.

Lopes, R., & Barros, V. (2020). Amílcar Cabral and the liberation of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde: International, transnational, and global dimensions. *The International History Review*. DOI: 10.1080/07075332.2019.1703118.

Magubane, B. (1971). Amílcar Cabral: Evolution of revolutionary thought. *Ufahamu*, 2(2), 71–87.

Mendy, P. K. (2019). *Amílcar Cabral: Nationalist and pan-Africanist revolutionary*. Ohio University Press.

Neves, J. (2017). Ideology, science, and people in Amílcar Cabral. *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos*, 24(2), 333–347.

Parsa, A. (2017). Amílcar Cabral, resistance and decolonization. *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 30, 1031–1037.

Rabaka, R. (2014). *Concepts of Cabralism: Amílcar Cabral and Africana critical theory*. Lexington Books.

Santos, A. A. e, Lopes, C., & Goulart, P. V. (2024). Introduction: Amílcar Cabral: Revolutionary legacy and contemporary resonance. *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos*, (48), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.15847/cea48.43780

Saraiva, T. (2022). Black science: Amílcar Cabral's agricultural survey and the seeds of African decolonization. *Isis*, 113(3), 584–609.

Swolkien, D., & Cobbinah, A. (2019). Cape Verdean Creole – Santo Antão: what we know so far. *Journal of Ibero-Romance Creoles*, *9*(1), 162–193.

van Veen, T. C. (2016). Concepts of Cabralism: A review. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 5(1), 79–89.

Wick, A. (2006). Manifestations of nationhood in the writings of Amilcar Cabral. *African Identities*, 4(1), 45–70.

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

BODY, VOICE, AND ACTION: AMÍLCAR CABRAL'S DISCURSIVE PERFORMANCE IN THE CALL TO ANTICOLONIAL RESISTANCE IN CABO VERDE AND GUINEA BISSAU

RIVALDO MENDES FREIRE TAVARES
yc57719@um.edu.mo
PhD student in Literary and Intercultural Studies (Portuguese) at the University of Macau (China). His research focuses on Cabo Verdean Modernist poetry, Portuguese literature in African countries, and Chinese poetry. He co-authored the forthcoming book *Vozes das ilhas: canções de Cabo Verde*, which explores these musical traditions from a pedagogical perspective. He also translated Amílcar Cabral poetry into Chinese, presented at the seminar commemorating Cabral's centenary (University of Macau 2025). https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3979-4231

RAQUEL ABI-SÂMARA
raquelabisamara@um.edu.mo
Assistant Professor at the University of Macau (China), where she teaches literature, translation studies, and Portuguese. She holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the State University of Rio de Janeiro. A translator from German into Portuguese, she has translated works by Paul Celan, Franz Kafka, Hans-Georg Gadamer, among other authors. She co-edited the forthcoming volume *Beyond, Belated, and Out of Place? Non-Hegemonic Literary and Aesthetic Moments on a Global Scale* (Brill). https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1300-9392

Abstract

This study proposes an original approach to understanding the success of Amílcar Cabral's leadership through an analysis of the performativity of his speeches. In light of the central place of orality in African culture and the power of vocality - the physical presence and embodied dimension of communication - the singularity and effectiveness of Cabral's engagement with his comrades become evident. His interventions simultaneously articulate the call to armed resistance, ethical and moral formation, and the dissemination of scientific knowledge among populations historically deprived of formal education. The corpus of analysis is comprised of two fundamental sources: Análise de alguns tipos de resistência (Analysis of some types of resistance; 1979), a transcription of lectures delivered in Creole at the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) cadre seminar in 1969; and the programming of Rádio Libertação, the party's broadcasting station since 1967. This dual corpus makes it possible to observe different modalities of enunciation and reception—from the live word in the formative context of the seminar to the mediated word transmitted through radio waves. The theoretical framework guiding the study is Paul Zumthor's Performance, recepção, leitura (Performance, reception, lecture; 1990), which argues that the nature of performance directly shapes the knowledge produced and transmitted. Thus, Cabral's vocal performance not only communicates but also aims to transform and inscribe knowledge into the bodies and memories of the combatants, constituting an act of culture and a central instrument of formation and resistance.

Keywords

Amílcar Cabral, anticolonial resistance, discursive performance, Paul Zumthor.

Resumo

Este estudo propõe uma abordagem original para compreender o êxito da liderança de Amílcar Cabral através da análise da performatividade dos seus discursos. À luz do lugar central da oralidade nas culturas africanas e da força da vocalidade, entendida como a presença física e a dimensão corporizada da comunicação, torna-se evidente a singularidade e a eficácia do modo como Cabral se relacionava com os seus camaradas. As suas intervenções articulam simultaneamente o apelo à resistência armada, a formação ética e moral e a difusão de conhecimento científico junto de populações historicamente privadas de acesso à educação formal. O corpus de análise é constituído por duas fontes fundamentais: Análise de alguns tipos de resistência (1979), transcrição de palestras proferidas em crioulo no Seminário de Quadros do Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC), em 1969; e a programação da Rádio Libertação, estação radiofónica do partido em funcionamento desde 1967. Este duplo corpus permite observar diferentes modalidades de enunciação e recepção, desde a palavra viva no contexto formativo do seminário até à palavra mediatizada difundida pelas ondas radiofónicas. O enquadramento teórico que orienta a investigação assenta na obra Performance, recepção, leitura (1990), de Paul Zumthor, segundo a qual a natureza da performance condiciona directamente o conhecimento produzido e transmitido. Nesta perspectiva, a performance vocal de Cabral não se limita a comunicar; procura igualmente transformar e inscrever conhecimentos nos corpos e nas memórias dos combatentes, constituindo-se como um acto de cultura e um instrumento central de formação e resistência.

Palavras-chave

Amílcar Cabral; resistência anticolonial; performance discursiva; Paul Zumthor.

How to cite this article

Tavares, Rivaldo Mendes Freire & Abi-Sâmara, Raquel (2026). Body, Voice, and Action: Amílcar Cabral's Discursive Performance in the Call to Anticolonial Resistance in Cabo Verde and Guinea Bissau. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 175-197. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.8

Article submitted on 27 June 2026 and accepted on 18 August 2026.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 175-197
Body, Voice, and Action: Amílcar Cabral's Discursive Performance in the Call to Anticolonial Resistance in Cabo Verde and Guinea Bissau
Rivaldo Mendes Freire Tavares, Raquel Abi-Sâmara

BODY, VOICE, AND ACTION: AMÍLCAR CABRAL'S DISCURSIVE PERFORMANCE IN THE CALL TO ANTICOLONIAL RESISTANCE IN CABO VERDE AND GUINEA BISSAU[1,2]

RIVALDO MENDES FREIRE TAVARES

RAQUEL ABI-SÂMARA

Introduction

Amílcar Cabral's leadership in the anticolonial struggle in Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau has been widely studied from different perspectives political, military, diplomatic, and pedagogical. However, a fundamental dimension of his activism remains relatively unexplored: discursive performance, understood as the set of *vocal*, bodily, and relational strategies that endowed his words with a singular transformative force. This study proposes an original approach to understanding the success of Cabral's leadership, focusing on an analysis of the performativity of his speeches and his capacity to mobilize, educate, and transform listeners into active subjects of resistance.

In light of the central place of orality in African culture and the power of *vocality* - the physical presence and embodied dimension of communication - the singularity and effectiveness of Cabral's engagement with his comrades become evident. His interventions simultaneously articulated the call to armed resistance, ethical and moral formation, and the dissemination of scientific knowledge among populations historically deprived of formal education. This multiplicity of discursive functions reflects Cabral's conception of the liberation struggle as an integral process of the transformation of consciousness, in which the spoken word played a decisive a role as military action.

[1] Declaration of Interest - The authors declare that there are no known financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have appeared to influence this research. The authores have no competing interests to declare.

[2] Acknowledgments - The authors dedicate this study to the memory of Amélia Sanches Araújo (1933–2026), whose voice became an instrument of liberation. In 1967, she took up a microphone in an improvised studio in Conakry and helped free two peoples. Her voice continues to resonate far beyond the physical space she once inhabited, remaining alive in the histories and memories she helped shape. This research was supported by the University of Macau through Start-Up Grant SRG2024-00008-FAH "Avant-Garde Movements in Non-hegemonic Portuguese-Speaking Contexts". The authors gratefully acknowledge this support. Furthermore, the authors acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot in assisting with the formatting of references and the standardization of source citations in this work.

The corpus of analysis comprises two fundamental sources, corresponding to two distinct modalities of enunciation. The first is *Análise de alguns tipos de resistência* (*Analysis of some types of resistance*; 1979), which gathers the transcripts of lectures delivered in Creole at the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) cadre seminar in 1969, in the Conakry region. Here the context is of copresence, in which Cabral's living word addressed an audience of militants from various fronts of the struggle, with heterogeneous levels of schooling and diverse ethnic origins. The second source is the programming of Rádio Libertação, the party's broadcasting station since 1967, which amplified Cabral's voice beyond geographical and political borders, reaching isolated combatants, populations under colonial occupation, Portuguese soldiers, and listeners in the diaspora. This dual corpus makes it possible to observe different modalities of enunciation and reception - from the live word in the formative context of the seminar to the mediated word transmitted through radio waves - and to reflect on continuities and discontinuities between bodily presence and the ubiquitous presence enabled by technology.

The theoretical framework guiding the study is Paul Zumthor's *Performance, recepção, leitura (Performance, reception, lecture*), which argues that the nature of performance directly shapes the knowledge produced and transmitted. Throughout a career dedicated to the study of medieval poetry and oral traditions, Zumthor developed a set of concepts—performance, vocality, antepredicative knowledge—in light of which Cabral's vocal performance not only communicates but also transforms and inscribes knowledge into the bodies and memories of the combatants, constituting an act of culture and a central instrument of formation and resistance.

The study has three sections: The first presents Zumthor's theoretical foundations, highlighting the notion of performance as an act of presence and the materiality of the voice as an emanation of the body. The second analyzes Cabral's discursive performance at the 1969 seminar, examining his choice of Creole, didactic style and use of agrarian metaphor, provocative tone and direct confrontation with militants, concern with ethical and moral education, dissemination of scientific knowledge, and construction of a culture of work and discipline of time. The third section addresses Rádio Libertação, the PAIGC's broadcasting station since 1967, as a device for amplifying Cabral's voice, discussing its multiple roles—military coordination, countering disinformation, political education, cultural affirmation, psychological warfare, and international dissemination—and the performativity of radio listening. The concluding remarks synthesize the main findings and highlight the relevance of a performative approach to Cabral studies and to a broader understanding of national liberation movements.

With this approach, the study aims to contribute not only to the historiography of the anticolonial struggle but also to the dialogue between performance studies, intellectual history, and postcolonial critique. In this sense, it aligns with recent theoretical proposals that argue that the critical reevaluation of colonial narratives requires a "structural change in institutional epistemologies" (Louwerse, 2025, p. 272), insofar as Cabral's discursive performance does not merely criticize colonialism but constitutes an "act of re-creation… that subverts the traditional separation of past and present, challenging established frameworks and foregrounding the knowledge held within ancestral memories and lived experiences" (p. 272).

The Living Voice and the Present Body as Sites of Knowledge

Paul Zumthor's work offers a particularly suitable conceptual framework for analyzing communication in contexts marked by a strong presence of orality. Over the course of a career dedicated to the study of medieval poetry and oral traditions, Zumthor developed a set of concepts that allow us to think of the word not merely as a vehicle of information, but as an event, as presence, as action.

Performance as an Act of Presence

In the opening chapter of *Performance, réception, lecture*, Zumthor evokes a childhood memory that functions as the primal scene of his theoretical reflection. He recalls the street singers who animated Paris in the 1930s, around whom small groups of listeners—about fifteen to twenty people—would gather to hear songs of elementary melody, purchase broadsheets with the printed lyrics, and, in the final stanza, sing the refrain in chorus. The author emphasizes that the truly mobilizing element was not the song itself, as a textual or musical object, but the spectacle in its entirety: the performer, their gestures, the interaction with the group, and the surrounding urban environment. All these elements—and not only the text or the melody —"were part of the song. They were the song"[3] (Zumthor, 1990, p. 29). What remained from this experience, the author writes, was the perception that the song could not be reduced to text or melody, but included the performer, their gesture, the group, the street, the sky.

The childhood memory illuminates the central concept of Zumthor's reflection on performance as an act (its mode of concrete existence) through which a work is fully realized in a context of the copresence of the emitter and the receiver. Zumthor draws on the tradition of ethnological and linguistic studies of the 1970s to support this perspective, citing "*Breakthrough into Performance*" by folklorist Dell Hymes, for whom the activity of a person within their cultural group can be classified into three types: behavior, defined as everything produced by any action; conduct, which is behavior oriented by sociocultural norms, whether accepted or rejected; and performance, which is conduct in which the subject assumes responsibility for communication (Hymes, 1973, as cited in Zumthor, 1990, p. 31). Performance thus implies the subject's commitment to their act of speech. For Zumthor, performance realizes, concretizes, brings something from virtuality into actuality, appearing as an emergence within a cultural and situational context (p. 31).

This notion is particularly fruitful for understanding Cabral's interventions at the 1969 seminar. Each lecture was a unique moment, an emergence that transformed the seminar space into a site of intensive formation. More than transmitting information, Cabral created, in each intervention, a shared experience in which the word became an act and the listeners were converted into active participants in the process.

[3] All translations from non-English works are by the authors except where other translators are credited.

Vocality and the Materiality of the Voice

One of Zumthor's most original contributions is the distinction between orality and vocality. Orality refers to the fact that a discourse is transmitted through the voice; vocality, broader in scope, involves not only the history and material presence of the voice itself, but also the entire constellation of values, affects, and sensory experiences that are mobilized in the act of listening. For Zumthor (1990), the voice "is a thing. It possesses full materiality" (p. 85). Its traits are describable and interpretable, and upon them multiple symbolisms—personal and mythological—are founded.

This materiality of the voice binds it inseparably to the body. The voice is "an emanation of the body," that which "sonically represents it in its fullness" (p. 27). When we hear a voice, we do not access merely informational content; we establish a relationship with a present body, even if mediated. Therefore, Zumthor insists on the idea that "the poetic text signifies the world. It is through the body that meaning is perceived there" (pp. 77–78). By "poetic," Zumthor means here not a literary genre but a quality of language that mobilizes the body in its totality, summoning sensory and affective energies that everyday, merely informative language tends to attenuate or erase.

This emphasis on the materiality of the voice points to what Zumthor, following Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, designates as "antepredicative knowledge"—a knowledge prior to discursive rationality, accumulated through sensation and constituting the ground upon which all aesthetic experience is built. In dialogue with Merleau-Ponty's notion of an originary perception preceding conceptual reflection, Zumthor considers it "an accumulation of knowledge belonging to the order of sensation and which, for whatever reason, does not surface at the level of rationality, but constitutes a substratum of knowledge upon which the rest is constructed" (p. 78). This knowledge "cannot be reduced to the decoding of analyzable signs; it derives from a process irreducible to particular movements" (p. 79). Poetry, like performance, activates this antepredicative knowledge, making the body the privileged site of perception and meaning-making.

This conception of knowledge emerging from sensation and the body resonates with contemporary approaches to the relationship between aesthetics and decolonization. Louwerse (2025) observes that contemporary Black artists have activated "characteristics of the Baroque—theatricality, illusion, excess and hybridity—[to] construct alternative narratives that challenge the 'false absences' of the European self-narrative and center Black identities" (p. 276). Just as Cabral's vocal performance mobilizes the listeners' "antepredicative knowledge," inscribing knowledge into the body, Black baroque aesthetics operates as a "practice that emerges from and engages traits characterized as baroque but specifically accommodates the experience of New World slavery and its continuing impacts" (Willis, 2023).

Amílcar Cabral's Discursive Performance at the 1969 Seminar

In November 1969, in the Conakry region, a PAIGC cadre seminar was held that brought together militants and party officials from the various fronts of struggle. Over six days, Cabral delivered a series of lectures in Creole, in which he addressed the different dimensions of resistance—political, economic, cultural, and armed—later transcribed into

Portuguese in *Análise de alguns tipos de* resistência. This seminar was part of the broader strategy of political education pursued by the PAIGC, which conceived of the war of liberation not merely as a military confrontation but as a struggle for the transformation of the combatants' consciousness. The audience, heterogeneous in ethnic origins and levels of schooling, posed a considerable pedagogical challenge: to communicate effectively with former sepoys (locally recruited African soldiers who had served under Portuguese colonial command), peasants from the liberated areas, and young students who had joined the struggle. The choice of Creole, instead of Portuguese, as the language of the living voice highlights Cabral's concern with establishing immediate communication with his listeners.

The Choice of Creole: Language of Recognition and of Experience

The decision to speak in Creole is, in itself, a performative act of great significance. Portuguese was the language of the colonizer, of administration, of the schooling to which few had access. Creole, by contrast, was the language of the *tabanca* (village), of the family, of shared experience. By choosing Creole, Cabral was not only ensuring linguistic comprehension but also establishing a relationship of complicity with his comrade-listeners, inscribing his discourse within the cultural and affective universe familiar to them. As Serinaldo Araújo (2024) emphasizes, paraphrasing Paulo Freire, Cabral "did not speak or write in a complicated way that would hinder understanding for the people and his fellow fighters" (p. 243).

This linguistic choice corresponds to what Zumthor designates as *vocality*: It is not merely a matter of using the voice to transmit words, but of mobilizing an entire set of values and affects linked to the experience of listening. Cabral's voice in Creole was not the same voice that spoke Portuguese at international conferences or in the party's official documents. It was a voice that drew closer, that created intimacy, that spoke to the body and not only to reason. This linguistic option is inscribed in what British sociologist John B. Thompson (2011) defines as the ideological *modus operandi* of unification, specifically in the strategy of standardization or symbolization of unity. By speaking in Creole, Cabral forged a collective identity that transcended ethnic divisions—Balantas, Fulas, Mandingas, Manjacos (all ethnic groups native to Guinea-Bissau)—that had historically been exploited by the colonizer to divide and dominate.

It is important to note that Cabral recognized the limitations of Creole as a language incapable, at that time, of expressing all the concepts necessary for political and scientific education. In the seminar, he explicitly addressed this issue, revealing a pragmatic attitude toward language:

> *For us, it makes no difference whether we use Portuguese, Russian, French, or English, as long as it serves us - just as it makes no difference whether we use tractors from the Russians, the English, the Americans, etc., as long as, once we have taken our independence, they serve us to till the land. Because language is an instrument, but it may happen that we already have a language that can serve and that everyone understands. So we are not going to make everyone learn Russian - it is not worth it - especially since*

> *we have a language, Creole, which is similar to Portuguese* (Cabral, 1979, p. 106).

This passage reveals an instrumental conception of language, but also a concern with accessibility. Creole is chosen not on a whim or for linguistic imposition, but because it is the language that "everyone understands," the language that makes it possible to establish immediate communication with the seminar's audience.

Analysis of Discursive Performance in the Transcripts

The transcription of the lectures preserves, albeit imperfectly, significant traces of the discursive performance of 1969. A close reading of the text allows, in part, the reconstruction of Cabral's discursive strategies and the ways in which they were deliberately crafted to generate powerful effects on his listeners.

Didactic Tone and Use of Agrarian Metaphor

Cabral frequently resorts to metaphors drawn from the everyday experience of his peasant listeners in order to explain abstract political concepts. Right at the opening of the first lecture, devoted to political resistance, he establishes an analogy between the resistance of a people and the decision of a peasant family:

> *Our resistance, comrades, can be compared to the following. Take, for example, a family, a tabanca in our land, who needs to cultivate rice. They have two measures of rice. They know that if they take one measure to sow, there will be a shortage, because the rice will not be enough to eat. But they take that measure, sow it, and, if it works well, they may later harvest ten, twenty, or even thirty measures, depending on the land. This is similar to the resistance of a people, comrades* (Cabral, 1979, p. 7).

The image is immediately comprehensible to a rural audience. It translates, in concrete terms, the logic of sacrifice made in the name of a future harvest. Resistance, like sowing, requires an initial investment that seems to contradict immediate necessity, but which is the condition for long-term survival. This ability to translate complex concepts into simple images can be seen throughout the work. In the same lecture, Cabral defines resistance in terms that any peasant would have understood: "Resistance is a natural thing. Every force exerted upon any object gives rise to resistance, that is, to a counterforce. And the counterforce to colonialist and imperialist power is the national liberation movement" (p. 9).

The physical law of action and reaction becomes a political metaphor. Colonial oppression naturally generates resistance. It is not a matter of moral choice, but of a necessity inscribed in the very nature of things.

Provocative Tone and Direct Confrontation

Cabral's speech assumes a provocative tone, confronting militants with their shortcomings and limitations. In the section devoted to economic resistance - where he identifies agriculture as its "main aspect" (p. 48) - he openly criticizes "some leaders and party officials, who at all levels have not given due importance to our economic resistance" (p. 44). In particular, he points out that political commissars and other officials rarely reflected on the country's wealth in livestock (in the case of Guinea-Bissau), and at the same time they neglected to increase agricultural production.

This frankness, far from discouraging, appealed to the need to overcome obstacles. Cabral, who himself shared the same difficulties and demanded of everyone the same level of commitment, spoke from within and to the party. The critique is all the more effective insofar as it is accompanied by concrete examples and proposed solutions, as can be seen in the following passage:

> *There was, for example, a case in which one of our officials wrote asking me to send milk for two newborns because there was no milk to give them. But the children had been born in an area of our land where there were cows that had calved—all of them. In truth, anywhere, in any household where there were cows that had calved, he could have found and obtained milk for the children. I told him to look for cows to get the milk, because I would not send any. And he succeeded* (Cabral, 1979, pp. 51–52).

The anecdote illustrates one of Cabral's central concerns: the need to foster initiative and autonomy among trainees, rather than letting them passively wait for solutions from above. Narrating this episode in vocal performance ensures that the lesson strikes the listeners with an immediacy rooted in their lived reality, making it not only intelligible but also highly memorable, as it is anchored in a concrete story and a recognizable situation.

Ethical and Moral Education

One of the most notable aspects of Cabral's lectures is his constant concern with the ethical formation of militants. The liberation struggle, according to Cabral, aimed, on the one hand, to expel the colonizer from "our land" and, on the other, to construct a new man, capable of building a just and free society. This ethical dimension permeates his entire work. As Jiménez Martínez (2023) observes, "for Amílcar Cabral and his followers it was not only a matter of making the population of the liberated territory literate, but also of ensuring that it became part of the vanguard fighting for independence" (p. 194). In a particularly significant passage, Cabral defines the objectives of resistance in terms that transcend the mere conquest of political power:

> *Our objective cannot be to take over the governor's palace in order to do in our land what that governor intended to do. Nor to occupy the house of the district chief or the administrator. Our objective is to dismantle the colonial state in our land so that we may create a new, different state, founded on*

> *justice, on labor, and on equality of opportunity for all the sons and daughters of our land, in Guinea and in Cabo Verde* (Cabral, 1979, p. 10).

This vision required a profound transformation of behaviors and attitudes. Cabral does not hesitate to denounce practices he considers incompatible with the values of the party, such as theft, corruption, or abuse of power over the population. In a passage that reveals his concern with the integrity of the combatants, he declares:

> *Our combatants are honest, serious, decent, and dignified people - the finest sons of our people. Therefore, when one of our combatants, in the course of war, comes across a watch, a bracelet, a gold chain, or any other item taken from the enemy, he must show it to his commander, to his leadership, and not keep it for himself. Otherwise, he is no longer a combatant for the liberation of his land, but a highway robber* (p. 68).

The distinction between the combatant and the bandit is fundamental. The combatant fights for a collective cause; the bandit exploits war for personal gain. By vocally articulating this distinction with clarity and force, Cabral's performance contributes to shaping the listeners' ethical consciousness, creating a sense of honor and dignity associated with being a combatant. The concern with ethical formation also extends to relations with the population. Cabral repeatedly warns against abuse:

> *In order to advance our struggle within the framework of economic resistance, we must avoid overburdening our people, lest they think that our party also seeks to exploit them.*
>
> *We have always given comrades the directives not to abuse the people's goods - their chickens, their cows. If they offer, we accept, but we must not demand anything, nor should we take anything by force* (p. 60).

This insistence on respect for the population was as much a matter of principle as it was a strategic necessity. The liberation war could only be won with the active support of the masses. Any abuse undermined that support and, with it, the chances of victory.

Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge

Another notable dimension of Cabral's performance is his concern with spreading scientific knowledge in an accessible way. In the section devoted to cultural resistance, we find passages in which he explains natural phenomena traditionally attributed to supernatural forces. Referring to the "iran," a spiritual entity in which many believed, Cabral ironically remarks:

> *Concretely, for example, I am African, and it could be that, like other Africans who still exist, I might convince myself that for certain things to happen in my life, it would be necessary to satisfy the will of the "iran." And the "iran"*

> *says that what I asked of it in our conversation can only be fulfilled if I take alms from a little three-year-old girl, to kill, to make a sacrifice, and then everything I desire can be realized. This still exists in Africa and, if we look closely, perhaps there are still people who believe in it in our land* (pp. 72–73).

Cabral's response to this belief is blunt: "Let us go and look for this 'iran' until we find it, to kill it, because this is an 'iran' of the Tugas [a popular and colloquial designation for the Portuguese, used in various African contexts]; it was the *Tuga* who put it there, it does not belong to our land" (p. 73). Irony and humor function as instruments for dismantling superstitions that, in his view, kept the people in a state of dependence and fear. Yet it is in his explanation of meteorological phenomena that his effort to disseminate scientific knowledge becomes most evident:

> *In our culture, everyone must know, by tomorrow, even if we hold dances when there are thunderstorms, that a thunderstorm is the collision of two clouds—one charged with positive electricity and the other with negative electricity—and when they collide, they produce a spark, which is the lightning, and a noise, which is the thunder. It is like when one takes two electric wires, positive and negative, and touches them together, producing a spark. That is what lightning in the sky is: the electricity of the clouds. The noise is the meeting of two clouds, which is called thunder* (p. 85).

But Cabral does not limit himself to describing the physical phenomenon; he teaches his listeners how to calculate the distance at which a storm is located, thereby demonstrating the practical usefulness of scientific knowledge:

> *So much so that, taking into account the speed of sound in air, when one hears the thunder, one can calculate where one cloud meets the other, because light travels faster than sound. One sees the lightning and after a while hears the noise of the thunder. Between the moment when the lightning is seen and the moment when the noise is heard, if for example it is five seconds, we can calculate where the two clouds meet, at what distance from us, because the speed of sound in air is 340 meters per second. Therefore, if one counts the seconds from the moment the lightning is seen [to the moment the thunder is heard], then in our example, multiplying five by 340, one obtains 1,700 meters. That means that the two clouds met at a distance of 1,700 meters from where we are and produced the thunder and the lightning* (pp. 85–86).

In explaining the relationship between the speed of light and the speed of sound, Cabral not only demystifies the phenomenon of thunder and lightning, but also offers his listeners an instrument of understanding and control over the world around them. This knowledge, accessible to all, stands in contrast to belief in the "iran" - which could only

be accessed through intermediaries and which kept the population in a state of dependence and fear. Science, in this context, is not bookish or elitist knowledge - it is a tool of practical emancipation, returning to people mastery over their environment.

Cabral goes further, projecting this need for scientific knowledge into the future of the nation. In a particularly incisive passage, he confronts his comrades with the deficiency of their own knowledge: "But comrades, tomorrow, to advance seriously, not only the leaders, but all children of nine years of age, must know what the acceleration of gravity is. In Germany, for example, all the children know this" (pp. 104–105). He contrasts the scientific backwardness of his land with the advancement of European countries, not to humiliate his listeners, but to challenge them: Scientific knowledge is not an innate privilege of Europeans; it is a conquest that any people can achieve, provided they organize and discipline themselves. For Cabral, science is a factor in development and autonomy—an indispensable condition to ensure the future nation does not exchange colonial dependence for a new form of subalternity.

These passages on the importance of disseminating scientific knowledge in the construction of a new nation illustrate well Cabral's conception of culture: It is not a matter of preserving traditions intact, but of transforming them in light of scientific knowledge, thereby losing one's identity in the process. Vocal performance is the privileged vehicle of this emancipatory pedagogy. By explaining complex phenomena in accessible language, Cabral affirms above all the possibility of a rational understanding of the world, a necessary condition for the construction of a free and developed society.

The Construction of a Culture of Work and of a Discipline of Time

A recurring theme in Cabral's lectures is the valorization of work, particularly agricultural labor. In a society marked by the colonial hierarchy, which despised manual labor and associated culture with bookish knowledge, Cabral seeks to invert this scale of values:

> *At the same time, we must try, as I have told you, to develop more and more each day respect for those who work, to raise high the value of labor, to convince the children of our land that agricultural work must not be despised; on the contrary, it is the purest, healthiest, and most valuable work in our land today. Unfortunately, in our African minds, working is still considered something of little worth, especially plowing the land—for those who plow the land only get things to eat, because it is the work of the wretched* (p. 46).

This passage reveals a sharp awareness of the symbolic hierarchies inherited from colonialism. Agricultural labor, devalued and associated with "misfortune," needs to be rehabilitated. Cabral does not limit himself to defending this rehabilitation in abstract terms; he proposes concrete measures:

> *What we want tomorrow in our land is the following: that the names of those who are praised be only those who produce the most. Those who produce the most rice in our land—whether a person, a family, or a cooperative—are the ones whose names must be raised high, with prizes. Whoever produces*

> *the most groundnuts, whoever is able to produce the most palm oil, and so on, comrades, are the best people of our land. And we must punish severely, criticize severely those who do not work to produce what is necessary within our land, within the framework of our economic resistance* (p. 61).

The proposal to associate social recognition with agricultural productivity is a way of transforming the culture of work, of creating new values and new models of excellence. Vocal performance, by enunciating this proposal with clarity and conviction, contributes to its dissemination and internalization.

This new culture of work, however, requires a fundamental complement: time discipline. Cabral insists on the need for militants to respect schedules and meet deadlines: "We must have a notion of time, in our culture, in our action. It was not we who invented the clock, but we must have a notion of time, comrades" (p. 91). This critique of unpunctuality is not a mere administrative remark; it is a pedagogical intervention on the very notion of time:

> *If it is necessary to get up at five in the morning, they get up at nine; if it is necessary to make an ambush starting at four in the afternoon, on that day they do not arrive, they only show up the next day and find that the Tugas have already passed… How many times have our commanders failed attacks or ambushes, simply because of delay. Some delays are justifiable, because our conditions are difficult, but others are merely a lack of interest, lack of awareness, lack of order, of decision.*
>
> *Sometimes a comrade is given a mission to deliver a letter quickly to a certain place. On the way, if he finds some form of amusement, he immediately stops for three or four days, and eventually arrives one day. That cannot be. In this way, we cannot even win the war, much less build a country* (p. 92).

In a culture where, as Cabral observes, "we think of an ambush, we are very satisfied, but we take no practical measures to ensure that everything goes well" (p. 93), keeping to schedules is a form of discipline that transforms will into concrete action. Unpunctuality is not a fatality; it is a choice that compromises the effectiveness of the struggle.

The Transcript as a Monument of a Performance

The publication of the lectures in book form raises an interesting theoretical problem. The 1979 book is a trace, a vestige of a performance that we cannot recover in its fullness. The voice, the gesture, the presence, and the reaction of the audience have been lost. Zumthor's *Performance, recepção, leitura* helps us think through this issue. The reading of a poetic text, he writes, is always "the apprehension of an absent-present performance" (Zumthor, 1990, p. 56). The reader strives to restore, through imagination, the lost unity of the original performance. In the case of Cabral's lectures, the reading of the transcribed words summons in us the image of a voice, of a body, of a historical

moment. The transcription is a *monument* that allows us, albeit in mediated form, to access the performative energy carried by the words. This mediation, however, is not neutral. The passage from orality to writing always entails losses and transformations. As Zumthor (1990) notes:

> *In the situation of pure orality, ... "formation" takes place through the voice, which carries the word; the first "transmission" is the work of a figure who, in word, uses his living voice, which is necessarily linked to a gesture. "Reception" is effected through hearing accompanied by sight, both directed toward the discourse thus performed. [...] In the situation of reading, by contrast, formation passes through writing, and reception is a second-degree vision* (pp. 65–66).

Despite these limitations, the transcript preserves precious elements of the original performance. The rhythm of the sentences, the repetitions, the direct addresses to comrades, the changes of tone - all of this, in some way, survives on the written page and can be recovered by an attentive reader. The analysis presented here is, in this sense, an attempt to restore, through critical imagination, the presence of Cabral's voice at the founding moment of the 1969 seminar.

Rádio Libertação and the Mediatized Word

As Amélia Sanches Araújo, the main announcer of Rádio Libertação (Radio Liberation), recalls in a 1998 interview published in Aristides Pereira's (2003) book, the PAIGC began regular broadcasts of the mediatized word, transmitted over the radio waves, from Conakry on July 16, 1967 (p. 330). The first attempts to create a radio station date back to 1965, with a small Soviet short- and medium-wave transmitter, but the experiment failed due to the weak signal power, which did not allow it to reach Bissau (p. 333). It was Cabral who recognized the importance of the idea of a party station and nurtured it, eventually, in 1966, sending Araújo and four other comrades for nine months of training in the Soviet Union (Pereira, 2003, p. 333). The team began by broadcasting for fifteen minutes, three times a day, progressively increasing airtime to half an hour as reception in good conditions was confirmed (p. 333).

The creation of a party radio station was part of a broader phenomenon that spread across Southern Africa, where guerrilla radios established themselves as "a very powerful technology for disseminating insurgent propaganda messages of the liberation movement and for mobilizing African workers, peasants, students, and youth in the struggle against white minority domination in the entire region" (Lekgoathi, et al., 2022, p. 4). This regional development was, in turn, embedded in a global phenomenon in which broadcasting was used as a political weapon, a practice that intensified during the Cold War (Cummings, 2021). Much like the CIA's clandestine broadcasts to Eastern Europe or the resistance radios of World War II (Ribeiro, Wagner, & Morriss, 2020), the PAIGC's station aimed to break the state's information monopoly and win hearts and minds. However, unlike many of those experiences, Rádio Libertação based its effectiveness not

merely on external propaganda, but on the creation of a listening community that, as will be shown, lay at the very heart of the nation-building process (Kind-Kovács, 2019).

Rádio Libertação, which broadcast in Portuguese, Creole, and several Guinean languages—Balanta, Biafada, Mancanha, Manjaco, Fula, and Mandinga—was "a radical experiment in collective cultural production" and "a praxis that is itself a source of anticolonial ideas about culture" (Reza, 2022, p. 859). The reach of the station went far beyond the borders of Guinean territory, extending to "Cabo Verde, Senegal, and even to some European countries, where our emigrants managed to capture the broadcasts" (Pereira, 2003, p. 334). The radio was part of the broader effort to break what Cabral's close comrade Mário Pinto de Andrade called the "obscurantism" of Salazarist propaganda, which isolated the Portuguese colonies on the world stage and turned them into "zones of silence" (Fele, 1957, p. 71).

Rádio Libertação did not replace Cabral's presence, but amplified it, granting him a ubiquity that his body could not have. According to Amélia S. Araújo, Cabral was the most assiduous contributor to the station, writing most of the editorials and texts that unmasked colonial propaganda (Pereira, 2003, p. 335). Cabral himself compared the broadcasts of Rádio Libertação to the "mouth cannon" (canhão de boca) of the national liberation struggle, a warlike metaphor that highlights the understanding of the mediatized word as a front of combat as decisive as military action (Pereira, 2003, p. 333). In the 1969 seminar, when reflecting on the means of propaganda and information at the service of the struggle, Cabral emphasized the strategic importance of Rádio Libertação:

> *For this very reason, one of the greatest victories of our party is our Rádio Libertação, our newspaper, our press, our information, both inside and outside our land. We all know the strength, the value of our party's Station, which makes propaganda for our people and which we must be able to improve every day, because this is an essential element, an essential means of our propaganda for propagating our resistance* (Cabral, 1979, 96).

This approach by the PAIGC stands in stark contrast to the broadcasting policy of the Portuguese colonial regime itself. While Salazar's Estado Novo (New State) demonstrated a chronic disinterest in investing in shortwave broadcasts to its empire, neglecting to create a unified and effective voice for the colonies (Ribeiro, 2014), Cabral recognised in radio a central instrument of struggle. Rádio Libertação, therefore, not only filled an informational void but also exposed the fragility of the colonial propaganda machine, which was never able to compete with the agility and authenticity of the PAIGC's "voice".

Zumthor observes that auditory media and the written word share three fundamental characteristics: They abolish the physical presence of the speaker; they free themselves from chronological time by making the voice reiterable and indefinitely repeatable; and they tend to erase the spatial references of the living voice, creating an artificially composed space (Zumthor, 1990, p. 14). Still, he acknowledges that "what is lost with the media, and thus necessarily remains so, is corporeality, the weight, the warmth, the real volume of the body, of which the voice is only an expansion" (p. 16). He sees auditory

media as "a kind of revenge, a forced return of the voice" (p. 15). The revenge of the voice, in the context of anticolonial struggle, was its capacity to reach where the body could not be. In Zumthor's vision, the proliferation of song from the 1950s onward and the disdain of youth for reading are symptoms of a "resurgence of the vocal energies of humanity, energies that were repressed for centuries in the social discourse of Western societies by the hegemonic course of writing" (p. 15). This reflection proves relevant because it allows us to understand anticolonial radio not as a mere substitute for physical presence, but as a technology that reactivated vocal energies long silenced by the dominance of writing—a phenomenon that, in the context of anticolonial struggle, acquired a political and liberating dimension.

For the PAIGC combatants, hearing Cabral's voice on the radio was a paradoxical experience. It was a form of presence, insofar as the voice carried with it the memory of the body, the familiar intonation, the recognizable rhythm. But it was also a form of absence, for the leader was not there, could not be touched, did not answer questions. This tension between presence and absence is, for Zumthor, constitutive of the experience of the media. The radio allowed Cabral's word to cross borders, overcome blockades, and reach combatants isolated in forests and populations living under occupation. In this sense, technical mediation did not annul presence; rather, it multiplied and diffused it, transforming the leader's voice into a device of ubiquitous presence that operated beyond the geographical and political limitations imposed by colonialism.

The Role of Rádio Libertação

Rádio Libertação assumed multiple roles in the PAIGC's political and cultural strategy. One of its central functions was the coordination and moralization of the fighting forces. According to Amélia S. Araújo, the dissemination of combat actions on the various fronts encouraged and incentivized combatants and militants (Pereira, 2003, p. 334). At the same time, the radio became a central instrument in the fight against colonial disinformation. Amélia S. Araújo emphasizes that the station put an end to the time when the colonialists, including "Spínola and his agents, could freely spread their lies without the PAIGC being able to refute them" (p. 335). Cabral assigned information a central place in the anticolonial strategy, considering it a domain that required constant attention and systematic collection (Reza, 2022, p. 861).

Another decisive role of the radio was the political and ideological formation of its listeners, through the transmission of Cabral's speeches, editorials, and messages, as well as information about the clandestine political struggle in Cabo Verde and programs of encouragement for militants who, "in the midst of the enemy, devoted themselves to mobilizing the people" (Pereira, 2003, p. 335). This formative function is crucial to understanding the PAIGC's political strategy: The liberation struggle was not reduced to military action; it required a profound transformation of consciousness, and the radio was one of the main instruments of that transformation.

This work of cultural valorization through radio resonates with the experience of other guerrilla radios in the region. Akinniyi (2025) highlights that the "inclusion of women's contribution within liberation movements" in various struggles "sheds light on women's

agency in shaping the discourse and direction of Southern Africa's liberation struggles through radio" (p. 678). This is equally applicable in the case of Rádio Libertação, where announcers such as Amélia Sanches Araújo played a central role.

The broadcasting of songs from different ethnic origins contributed to the construction of a national identity that transcended particular ethnic affiliations. The diffusion of songs satirizing Salazar, for example, reveals how popular culture appropriated the political message and transformed it according to its own logics (Reza, 2022, p. 873). As José Linga Nafafé (2013) observes:

> *The sort of national culture that Cabral envisaged appears possible only in the milieu imposed by colonialism, which is characterized by exploitation and domination without distinction, of all the ethnic groups of Guinea-Bissau. In effect colonialism itself becomes the common enemy* (p. 35).

The radio was also an instrument of psychological warfare, particularly through the program dedicated to Portuguese soldiers. The demoralizing impact of Rádio Libertação on the colonial forces fits into a pattern documented in the armed struggles in Mozambique and Angola. "The gravity of this threat is underscored by colonial counter propaganda and particularly a PIDE [the regime's secret police] official's assertion that these broadcasts were 'no less dangerous than the armed war"' (Akinniyi, 2025, p. 679). On this subject, Amélia S. Araújo tells us:

> *There was a special program exclusively dedicated to the Portuguese soldier. It was a program that sought to raise the soldiers' awareness of the absurdity of that war and to mobilize them against the war they were fighting without knowing why. As a consequence, many desertions began to occur. Indeed, many Portuguese soldiers deserted, and those of them who were willing were interviewed on Rádio Libertação. That gesture had a tremendous impact on those who remained. It demoralized them* (Pereira, 2003, p. 334).

This testimony reveals that the effectiveness of the radio was measured not only by its capacity to reach allies, but also by its ability to strike the adversary, sow doubt, and open fissures in the cohesion of the colonial army. The success of the program - attested to by the sheer number of desertions - demonstrates that the word, amplified by the radio, operated as a psychological weapon of great reach. Finally, the radio fulfilled the function of international dissemination of the struggle, making known to the world the reality of the war and the support obtained by the PAIGC (Pereira, 2003). The capacity to produce and broadcast its own programming, without depending on the colonizer's means, was already a form of resistance and an affirmation of sovereignty (Reza, 2022, p. 875).

The Reception of Rádio Libertação

The reception of Rádio Libertação cannot be understood merely as a process of transmission and reception of information. Zumthor's theoretical distinction between reception and performance offers an illuminating conceptual framework for thinking of listening to the radio as a transformative act. This understanding is corroborated by recent studies on guerrilla radios in Southern Africa, which demonstrate how "the invisibility and transience of sound allowed guerrilla radios to have sonic presence 'beyond the jurisdiction of colonial law but within the broadcast range of the colonial state and its territory"' (Akinniyi, 2025, p. 679).

Friederike Kind-Kovács (2019) demonstrates how, Radio Free Europe in the early Cold War, keen to understand the impact of its broadcasts, resorted to interviews with refugees to capture stories of clandestine listening, transforming them into evidence of its effectiveness and into narratives of resistance. Analogously, the collective and clandestine listening practices of Rádio Libertação were recalled by Amélia Sanches Araújo (Pereira, 2003) and documented by Reza (2022), testifying that the word amplified by the radio created communities of listeners who, through shared listening, collectively constructed the meaning of the struggle.

This distinction allows us to understand listening to Rádio Libertação as a performative act. Each moment of listening was not a passive reception of information, but a performance that actualized the virtualities contained in the word, and emitted and transformed them into lived experience. Zumthor (1990), drawing on John Langshaw Austin's theory of speech acts, affirms that "in poetry, 'to say is to act"' (p. 56). According to Austin (1962), certain utterances do not describe reality but produce an action in the very act of their enunciation, conferring upon language a performative dimension that goes beyond its merely constative function.

Applying this framework to Rádio Libertação, we can affirm that listening to the radio was not a passive act, but a performative one that involved the body, emotion, and interpretation. Cabral's voice, as it crossed the radio waves and penetrated the domestic space or the forests where combatants hid, inscribed itself in the bodies and memories of listeners, shaping their sensibility and their political identity. As Zumthor (1990) puts it, "The voice rests in the silence of the body. It emanates from it, then returns" (p. 85). Cabral's word emerged from his body and his conviction; when heard, it penetrated the body of listeners, inscribing itself in their memory and shaping their consciousness. Listening to the radio was thus a moment of political formation that operated beyond the rational content of the discourse, mobilizing the sensory and affective energies of the listeners.

This performative dimension of listening is particularly visible in the collective listening practices that the radio elicited. Stephanie Urdang's testimony about the PAIGC militant Teodora Gomes is illustrative:

> *One of Teodora's treasured possessions... was a small, black, scratched-up short wave radio. It accompanied her everywhere. Each evening a group of cadres would cluster around to listen to the news from Lisbon . . . suddenly the clear voice of the Portuguese announcer cut through the evening air…*

> *when the newscast ended, everyone talked at once. Excitement competed with disbelief and loud voices argued each other down . . . Teodora's radio continued to bring word from outside* (Urdang, 2017, p. 148)

The clandestine listening practices, documented by Reza in the wake of historian Marissa Moorman, reinforce this reading. Moorman (2018) describes "scenes of secret or semi-secret listening" by audiences who tuned in to guerrilla radios in Angola (p. 251). A Portuguese soldier stationed in Guinea confessed that he listened to Radio Libertação's programs "on the sly," without the knowledge of the base officers (Reza, 2022, p. 866). The simple act of tuning in to the forbidden frequency constituted a transgression that anticipated, on the symbolic plane, the political rupture that the armed struggle sought to consummate on the military plane. Clandestine listening was already a form of resistance—an affirmation of autonomy in the face of colonial authority. To quote Akinniyi (2025), "Both broadcasting and listening to guerrilla radio became subversive acts," strategically employed by liberation movements "to challenge the colonial monopoly on information and public discourse" (p. 679).

Among the combatants, the impact of the radio was profound, functioning as a factor of moralization and cohesion. Among the populations, the pleasure of hearing their language and their music on the radio was a form of recognition and affirmation of their dignity. Amélia S. Araújo imagines "the pleasure with which the populations, both from the liberated regions and from Bissau, . . . listened to their songs" (Pereira, 2003, p. 334). This pleasure, which Zumthor (1990) identifies as "the highest value of the spirit" (p. 108), resulted from the capacity of word and music to touch the body and mobilize vital energies—a process that radio performance fully actualized. Among the enemy, the radio provoked demoralization and desertion, to the point that colonial authorities attempted to interfere with the broadcasts.[4]

The reception of Rádio Libertação, in light of Zumthor's theory, thus reveals itself as a performative process that transformed listeners into active participants in the struggle. Listening was not an isolated act, but a collective practice that generated spaces of debate, interpretation, and political formation. The radio, by amplifying Cabral's voice and disseminating Guinean culture, created a community of listeners who, through shared listening, collectively constructed the meaning of the struggle and prepared themselves for the task of building a new nation. The word, amplified by technology and rooted in a community of listeners, operated transformations that physical violence alone could not produce, constituting itself as a device for the production of political subjectivity and the formation of a national consciousness that transcended ethnic and geographical boundaries. This process was not exclusive to Guinea-Bissau: Research on guerrilla radios in Southern Africa also reveals testimonies of listeners "who attribute their political awakening to these broadcasts, demonstrating that guerrilla radio stations not only

[4] On Salazar's singular broadcasting policy in Portugal and its African colonies, which consistently neglected shortwave investments and failed to create a unified imperial voice, see Ribeiro (2014). For a broader context on the use of international radio broadcasting as a political weapon during World War II, which influenced subsequent Cold War strategies, see Ribeiro, Wagner, and Morriss (2020). On CIA clandestine radio operations during the Cold War, including their role in psychological warfare (Cummings, 2021).

disseminated information but also inspired and mobilized individuals to join the liberation struggles" (Akinniyi, 2025, p. 679).

Conclusion

This study sought to demonstrate that the effectiveness of Amílcar Cabral's leadership cannot be explained exclusively by the coherence of his political strategy, the accuracy of his sociological analysis, or the depth of his anticolonial vision. There is a dimension which, although frequently mentioned in the memory of his contemporaries, has been less explored in academic production: the performative dimension of his word. Paul Zumthor's theoretical framework, centered on the notion of performance as an act of presence and on the materiality of the voice as an emanation of the body, proved particularly fruitful in illuminating this dimension, allowing us to understand how Cabral's word—whether spoken in person at the 1969 seminar or amplified through the waves of Rádio Libertação—operated transformations that went far beyond the transmission of information.

At the 1969 seminar, the choice to use Creole as the language of the living voice constituted a performative act of recognition and complicity, inscribing the discourse within the cultural and affective universe of the listeners. The didactic tone, accessible and punctuated by agrarian metaphors, allowed abstract political concepts to be translated into images immediately comprehensible to a rural audience. The provocative tone and direct confrontation of the militants' shortcomings, far from discouraging them, appealed to their overcoming and assumption of responsibilities. The constant concern with ethical formation—the distinction between the combatant and the bandit, respect for the populations, the construction of a "new man"—reveals that Cabral conceived the liberation struggle as a profound moral transformation, for which the word was the privileged instrument. Finally, the dissemination of scientific knowledge, in accessible language and without arrogance, affirmed the possibility of a rational understanding of the world, a necessary condition for emancipation. In all these dimensions, vocal performance aimed to inscribe knowledge into the body and memory of the listeners, mobilizing the "antepredicative knowledge" of which Zumthor speaks and making the word a transformative event.

Rádio Libertação, for its part, did not replace Cabral's presence but amplified it. The mediatized voice shared with the living voice the same intonation, the same rhythm, the same conviction, but operated on a different register: It reached where the body could not be, crossed borders, overcame blockades, and penetrated domestic spaces and the forests where combatants hid. Zumthor's distinction between reception and performance made it possible to understand that listening to the radio was not a passive act, but a performative one that involved the body, emotion, and interpretation. The collective and clandestine listening practices documented in the sources testify that the word amplified by the radio created communities of listeners who, through shared listening, collectively constructed the meaning of the struggle and prepared themselves for the task of building a new nation. The radio, by disseminating Guinean music and languages, affirmed a national identity that transcended ethnic affiliations, while at the same time demoralizing the enemy and opening fissures in the cohesion of the colonial army. The effectiveness

of Rádio Libertação lay in its dual capacity: it served as an effective psychological warfare weapon, following the patterns of Cold War clandestine radios (Cummings, 2021), but, more importantly, it acted as a catalyst for the creation of a shared national identity, filling the void left by the neglect of Salazar's broadcasting policy (Ribeiro, 2014). In doing so, the PAIGC's radio anticipated post-colonial struggles for cultural and media sovereignty.

In synthesis, Cabral's discursive performance - both in the living word and in the mediatized word - constituted a central device for the production of political subjectivity and the formation of a national consciousness. Its effectiveness lay not only in what he said, but also in how he said it, a dimension that forms the primary focus of this article: in the materiality of his voice, in its relation to the listeners' bodies, in its capacity to transform listening into experience and experience into action. This approach, inspired by Zumthor, makes it possible to move beyond a merely instrumental conception of language and to recognize the centrality of performance in the historical processes of social transformation. In this sense, it aligns with contemporary perspectives that understand performance not as mere representation or critique of the past, but as a creative act that actively intervenes in the present and projects possible futures (Louwerse, 2025). Performance, in this vision, goes beyond deconstruction to effect a structural transformation of forms of knowledge and relationships, forging new modes of connection between individuals, communities, and their histories.

References

Akinniyi, O. (2025). Review of the book *Guerrilla radios in Southern Africa: Broadcasters, technology, propaganda wars, and the armed struggle*, edited by Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi, Tshepo Moloi, and Alda Romão Saúte Saíde. *African Studies Review*, *68*(3), 678–679. https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2024.212.

Araújo, S. O. (2024). Trajetória e práxis de Amílcar Cabral: O Pedagogo das Lutas Anticoloniais Africanas em Cabo Verde e Guiné-Bissau [Trajectory and praxis of Amílcar Cabral: The pedagogue of the African anticolonial struggles in Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau]. *Intellèctus*, *23*(1), 241–257. https://doi.org/10.12957/intellectus.2024.81541.

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.

Cabral, A. (1979). *Análise de alguns tipos de resistência* [Analysis of some types of resistance]. Edição do PAIGC.

Cummings, R. H. (2021). *Cold War frequencies: CIA clandestine radio broadcasting to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. McFarland & Company.

Fele, B. (1957). Ghana et les zones de silence en Afrique Noire. [Ghana and the zones of silence in Black Africa]. *Présence Africaine*, *12*, 71–72. https://doi.org/10.3917/presa.9572.0071.

Kind-Kovács, F. (2019). Talking to listeners: Clandestine audiences in the early Cold War. *Media History, 25*(4), 462–478. https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2019.1672526

Lekgoathi, S. P., Moloi, T., & Saíde A. R. S. (2022). Radios of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. In S. P. Lekgoathi, T. Moloi, and A. R. S. Saíde (Eds.), *Guerrilla radios in Southern Africa: Broadcasters, technology, propaganda wars, and the armed struggle* (pp. 1–18). Rowman & Littlefield.

Louwerse, H. (2025). "A bigger story": The poetics of relation in the art and performance of Hew Locke and Raoul de Jong. *Dutch Crossing*, *49*(3), 272–286. https://doi.org/10.1080/03096564.2025.2564032.

Martínez, A. A. J. (2023). La construcción de un sistema educativo durante la guerra de liberación nacional. La labor educativa de los militantes del Partido Africano de Independencia de Guinea-Bissau y Cabo Verde (PAIGC). Reseña del libro: *Militant education, liberation struggle, consciousness: The PAIGC education in Guinea-Bissau 1963–1978* [The construction of an educational system during the war of national liberation: The educational work of the militants of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC). Book review: *Militant education, liberation struggle, consciousness: The PAIGC education in Guinea-Bissau 1963–1978*]. *Revista Mexicana de Historia de la Educación*, *11*(22), 189–195. https://doi.org/10.29351/rmhe.v11i22.499.

Moorman, M. J. (2018). Guerrilla broadcasters and the unnerved colonial state in Angola (1961–74). *Journal of African History*, *59*(2), 241–261. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853718000452.

Nafafé, J. L. (2013). Flora Gomes's Postcolonial Engagement and Redefnition of Amílcar Cabral's politics of national culture in Nha Fala. *Hispanic Research Journal*, *14*(1), 33–48. https://doi.org/10.1179/1468273712Z.00000000032.

Pereira, A. (2003). *O meu Testemunho: uma luta, um partido, dois países* [My testimony: One struggle, one party, two countries]. Notícias.

Reza, A. (2022). Reading the radio-magazine: culture, decolonization and the PAIGC's Rádio Libertação. *Interventions—International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, *24*(6), 857–878. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2021.1972821.

Ribeiro, N. (2014). Broadcasting to the Portuguese Empire in Africa: Salazar's singular broadcasting policy. *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies, 28*(6), 920–937. https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2014.990630

Ribeiro, N., Wagner, H.-U., & Morriss, A. (2020). International radio broadcasting during World War II. In K. Arnold, P. Preston, & S. Kinnebrock (Eds.), *The Handbook of European Communication History* (pp. 173–188). Wiley.

Thompson, J. B. (2011). *Ideologia e cultura moderna: Teoria social crítica na era dos meios de comunicação de massa* [Ideology and modern culture: Critical social theory in the era of mass communication] (9th ed.). Vozes.

Urdang, S. (2017). *Mapping my way home: Activism, nostalgia, and the downfall of apartheid South Africa*. Monthly Review Press.

Willis, R. L. (2023). Interview with Christa Clarke and Adrienne. L. Childs, "Collaborations: A Black Baroque Interview." Black Baroque Project, University of Chicago, https://voices.uchicago.edu/blackbaroque/collaborations.

Zumthor, P. *Performance, recepção, leitura* [Performance, reception, lecture] (J. P. Ferreira and S. Fenerich, Eds.). Educ, 2000. (Original work published 1990).

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

LEGACIES OF PORTUGUESE COLONIAL RULE: POLITICAL VOLATILITY, WELFARE, AND STATE FORMATION IN MOZAMBIQUE AND GOA (INDIA)

ALISHA DHINGRA
alishadhingra@satyawati.du.ac.in
Assistant Professor at Department of Political Science, Satyawati College, University of Delhi (India) since January 2020. She has earlier served as Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Delhi from 2014 to 2016 and 2017 to 2019. She has pursued her graduation and post-graduation from Hindu college and Master of Philosophy and Ph.D. from Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. Her research interests include Gender Studies, Constitutionalism, Federalism and Rule of Law. She has presented papers in National and International seminars and workshops and has participated in the Summer University on Federalism at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland and received diploma on "Federalism, Decentralization and Conflict Resolution". Alisha has published more than ten research papers and three book reviews in reputed national and international journals. She has contributed chapters in books published by Routledge, Sage, Pearson and Orient Blackswan among others. She was part of Leverhulme International Research Network Project titled "Continuity and Change in Indian Federalism" coordinated by Prof. Rekha Saxena, University of Delhi. https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5664-9342

SAURABH RAI
saurabhrai.du@gmail.com
PhD student in the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi (India). He completed his undergraduate studies at St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi, and obtained his Master's degree in Political Science from the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. His research focuses on comparative government, federalism, and Indian political thought. Https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5845-0837

ANANT PRAKASH
anantprakash.kmc@gmail.com
Assistant Professor at Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi (India). Holding a PhD from the University of Delhi with research on bicameralism in Germany and India, his work focuses on federalism, political institutions, and public policy. He has participated in prestigious International academic forums. His scholarly engagements extend to participation in globally renowned academic programmes, including the EURAC Research Winter School (Italy/Austria), the Summer University on Federalism at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, Summer University on Good Governance at University of Passau, Germany and the International Political Science Association (IPSA) World Congress in Seoul. He is also the Founder and Director of the House of Political Empowerment (HoPE) Foundation, an initiative dedicated to fostering political literacy,and civic awareness.In addition to his teaching and research, Dr. Prakash is a frequent contributor to leading national newspapers and scholarly journals, where he writes extensively on public policy, political processes, governance, and contemporary socio-political issues. https://orcid.org/0009-0007-8520-0771

Abstract

Despite of growing body of scholarship on colonial legacies, Portuguese colonialism remains relatively under-theorized in the field of global comparative colonial studies. Moreover, the scholarship on colonialism in India has undermined the colonial past of Goa, alongside Daman and Diu (another Indian state formerly under Portuguese rule). The colonial history of these states has received limited scholarly attention and is often treated as a peripheral case rather

than being situated within broader debates on colonial governance and postcolonial state formation. The research demonstrates the importance of decolonisation in Mozambique and Goa, through the use of the comparative-historical approach and the concept of contingent path dependence. Whereas Mozambique's violent decolonisation resulted in a bureaucratic capacity vacuum associated with decades of political instability, on the other hand Goa's negotiated integration into India produced comparatively stable institutions, due to the continuity of the bureaucratic, legal, and educational systems. This divergence in state formation and welfare provisions is caused by the way in which decolonisation has occurred in these two contexts. The study does not regard decolonization as a single moment of rupture, but rather as an extended and uneven process through which postcolonial states reworked and inherited institutions.

Keywords

Portuguese colonialism; comparative colonial legacies; contingent path dependence; postcolonial state formation; Mozambique; Goa.

Resumo

Apesar do crescente corpo de estudos sobre os legados coloniais, o colonialismo português continua relativamente pouco teorizado no campo dos estudos coloniais comparativos globais. Além disso, os estudos sobre o colonialismo na Índia têm negligenciado o passado colonial de Goa, juntamente com Damão e Diu (outro território indiano anteriormente sob domínio português). A história colonial desses territórios recebeu atenção acadêmica limitada e é frequentemente tratada como um caso periférico, em vez de ser situada nos debates mais amplos sobre a governação colonial e a formação do Estado pós-colonial. O artigo demonstra a importância da descolonização em Moçambique e Goa, através da utilização da abordagem histórico-comparativa e do conceito de dependência contingente da trajetória (contingent path dependence). Enquanto a descolonização violenta de Moçambique resultou num vazio de capacidade burocrática, associado a décadas de instabilidade política, por outro lado, a integração negociada de Goa na Índia produziu instituições comparativamente estáveis, devido à continuidade dos sistemas burocrático, jurídico e educacional. Esta divergência na formação do Estado e na provisão de bem-estar é causada pela forma como a descolonização ocorreu nesses dois contextos. O artigo não considera a descolonização como um único momento de ruptura, mas antes como um processo prolongado e desigual, através do qual os Estados pós-coloniais reformularam e herdaram instituições.

Palavras-chave

Colonialismo português; legados coloniais comparativos; dependência contingente da trajetória; formação do Estado pós-colonial; Moçambique; Goa.

How to cite this article

Dhingra, Alisha, Rai, Saurabh & Prakash, Anant (2026). Legacies of Portuguese Colonial Rule: Political Volatility, Welfare, and State Formation in Mozambique and Goa (India)*. Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 198-219. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.9

Article submitted on 27 July 2026 and accepted on 28 August 2026.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 198-219
Legacies of Portuguese Colonial Rule: Political Volatility, Welfare, and State Formation in Mozambique and Goa (India)
Alisha Dhingra, Saurabh Rai, Anant Prakash

LEGACIES OF PORTUGUESE COLONIAL RULE: POLITICAL VOLATILITY, WELFARE, AND STATE FORMATION IN MOZAMBIQUE AND GOA (INDIA)[1,2]

ALISHA DHINGRA

SAURABH RAI

ANANT PRAKASH

Introduction

> "We base our struggle on the concrete realities of our country. We appreciate the experiences and achievements of other peoples and we study them. But revolution or national liberation is like a dress which must fit to each individual's body. Naturally, there are certain general or universal laws, even scientific laws, for any condition, but the liberation struggle has to be developed according to the specific conditions of each country."
>
> Amilcar Cabral (1973, p. 77)

The words of Amílcar Cabral provide a conceptual core premise for understanding the trajectories of anti-colonial struggles in different parts of the Portuguese empire. Cabral rejected the idea of a universal model of decolonisation, insisting that all liberation struggle

[1] Declaration of Interest - The authors declare that there are no known financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have appeared to influence this research. The authores have no competing interests to declare.

[2] Acknowledgments - The authors dedicate this study to the memory of Amélia Sanches Araújo (1933–2026), whose voice became an instrument of liberation. In 1967, she took up a microphone in an improvised studio in Conakry and helped free two peoples. Her voice continues to resonate far beyond the physical space she once inhabited, remaining alive in the histories and memories she helped shape. This research was supported by the University of Macau through Start-Up Grant SRG2024-00008-FAH "Avant-Garde Movements in Non-hegemonic Portuguese-Speaking Contexts". The authors gratefully acknowledge this support. Furthermore, the authors acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot in assisting with the formatting of references and the standardization of source citations in this work.

must arise from the "concrete realities" of their own country. Although colonial domination frequently exhibited common patterns of exploitation and hegemony, the forms of resistance, the strategies adopted by nationalist movements and the character of post-colonial state formation were heavily conditioned by local historical, social and political circumstances. A comparative study of former Portuguese colonies therefore demands attention not only to the common legacy of Portuguese colonialism but also to the different contexts in which decolonisation occurred. With this point of departure this paper attempts to understand the legacies of Portuguese colonial rule and in light of it the political volatility, welfare, and state formation in Mozambique and Goa (India).

Portugal's colonial empire legacies stand apart from its European counterparts in one decisive respect, that is its sheer longevity. Portugal Maritime expansion began in the fifteenth century, and Portugal was among the very last imperial powers to relinquish colonial territory of Goa (along with Daman and Diu), which became part of India in December 1961. On the other hand, Mozambique gained independence only in June 1975 following the collapse of the Estado Novo regime in Lisbon. This longevity over four centuries of continuous rule in both territories makes Mozambique and Goa as an interesting pair for studying how colonial institutions work their way into the political and developmental fabric of successor states.

The curiosity in the study of colonial legacies has grown substantially since the 1990s, driven by a wave of quantitative and comparative historical scholarship linking colonial-era institutions to present-day governance and economic outcomes. However, within this literature Portugal's empire occupies a peripheral position, often noted in passing references but rarely subjected to sustained comparative analysis. This neglect is especially pronounced in the Indian case: the colonial history of Goa has been largely subsumed within nationalist narratives centred on British India, treated only as an oddity rather than a substantive comparative site.

This study addresses both these gaps simultaneously. By comparing Mozambique and Goa within a shared analytical framework, it situates the Portuguese imperial case more firmly within comparative colonial studies while also recovering the colonial experience of Goa as analytically consequential in its own right. The two cases are fascinating in their combination of deep structural similarity and sharp postcolonial divergence, shared Lusitanian legal, administrative, and religious frameworks on one side and profoundly different decolonization processes, postcolonial ideologies, and developmental outcomes on the other.

Methodology and Limitations of the study

This paper uses a comparative historical method deriving from the tradition of Barrington Moore (1966), Skocpol (1979), and Tilly (1990), and continued more recently in the comparative colonial legacies literature (Mahoney, 2010; Lange, Mahoney and vom Hau, 2006). This approach is not based on statistical analysis of a large population of cases, but on the careful selection of a few cases on theoretical grounds for close, structured comparison, to develop and test causal arguments about how colonial institutions influence postcolonial outcomes. The analysis is based on secondary sources on Mozambique and

Goa, colonial and post-colonial administrative and census data, as reported in the literature, and existing cross-national measures of state capacity, literacy and welfare outcomes.

The African case is Mozambique and the Asian subnational case is Goa. The case selection is based on the fact that both territories had been under the Portuguese for four hundred years. There are two reasons for the case selection. First, it fills a gap in the literature on comparative colonial legacies, which, although longer-lasting than the British, French, or Belgian empires and covering territory in Africa, Asia, and South America, has only received intermittent attention (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson, 2001; Nunn, 2008; Lange, Mahoney and vom Hau, 2006), while the field of comparative colonial and precolonial legacies has expanded greatly (Wilfahrt, 2021; Chlouba, Pierskalla and Wibbels, 2023; Neupert-Wentz and Müller-Crepon, 2024). Second, it brings a South-South comparative perspective that is lacking in the decolonisation literature, comparing an African sovereign state with a South Asian subnational territory, both having a Lusophone colonial past. Along with , this paper adopts the concept of contingent path dependence as an analytical tool. This conception lies somewhere between the strong path dependency accounts which suggest that the colonial past leaves little space for the postcolonial present, and the voluntarist accounts which emphasize that the colonial past did not fix the postcolonial present trajectory, but rather restricted the choice of options for postcolonial actors. This is done through three analytical lenses: bureaucratic capacity, legal continuity, and centre-periphery relations, rather than the one lens found in previous comparative studies (Acemoglu, 2001; Lange, 2006; Mahoney, 2010), which allows for a comparison that includes the various ways in which the same colonial architecture generated different outcomes in the domains of administration, law, and political economy.

Colonial Legacies: Theoretical Frameworks

There has been an enormous amount of literature on the impact of colonialism on postcolonial politics and development, and considerable disagreement over the same. In the mid-twentieth century modernisation theorists (Rostow,1960) tended to see colonial institutions as potential vehicles of development, as they carried over property rights, legal order and infrastructure to the successor states. On the other hand, dependency and world-systems theories saw colonialism as a structural cause of underdevelopment, as they extracted surplus and precluded autonomous industrialisation, continuing into the postcolonial phase (Frank, 1967; Wallerstein, 1974).

Recent scholarship in this area has transcended this two-sided perspective by examining the impact of colonialism in specific institutional terms. The paper by Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2001) rely on the variation in settler mortality across Europe to isolate the long run effect of the type of colonial institutions on income, with inclusive 'settler colonies' versus extractive ones with predatory institutional arrangements set up by Europeans. On the other hand, Lange, Mahoney and Vom Hau (2006) offer a different view, demonstrating that the extent of colonial state-bureaucratisation rather than simply the presence of settlers is a more important determinant of postcolonial development pathways. Herbst (2000) emphasizes the territorial dimension, claiming that the inability to establish control over sparsely populated African territories led to structural weaknesses in postcolonial

states' capacity. While Nunn (2008) has demonstrated that the slave trades in Africa, which were largely pre-colonial were harmful in the long run because they wrought havoc on social trust and political institutions.

Some of these arguments are substantiated by the Portuguese colonial case, and others are complicated. Portuguese colonialism was extractive: the indigenato system, forced labour (chibalo in Mozambique), compulsory cultivation of cash crops, and the use of concessionary companies as agents of economic extraction were all part of the extractive model. The Estado Novo regime under Salazar, meanwhile, added a unique ideological gloss: lusotropicalism, an ideology of Brazilian sociology by Gilberto Freyre (1993), which claimed that Portuguese colonialism was an unprecedentedly humane enterprise, marked by miscegenation, Catholic universalism and a supposed absence of racial hierarchy. This ideological construction has also led to creation of certain institutional structures, including the "assimilado" system and the Catholic missionary educational structure, which were different in significant ways from the French or British colonial models.

This paper focuses on two additional theoretical streams. Young (1994) provides a multi-dimensional analysis of the colonial state as an ideological project, a legal-bureaucratic structure and a security apparatus, positing that the postcolonial states inherited the three legacies in varying amounts. A feature of Portuguese colonial governance, formalised by the indigenato system, is captured by the concept of the bifurcated colonial state developed by Mamdani (1996) between the 'civic' sphere of citizens subject to civil law, and the 'native' sphere of subjects governed through customary authority. The decolonization and re-negotiation of this dichotomy was a central issue in both Mozambique and Goa.

In addition, Mahoney's (2010) comparative historical study of Spanish American colonialism, study, in which he demonstrates the interaction between path-dependent colonial institutional legacies and 'reactive sequences' – a series of contingent political decisions that either amplify or mitigate initial colonial legacies. The framework will help in this paper to explain the Mozambique-Goa divergence, which resulted in divergent outcomes despite the same colonial beginnings and contrasting decolonisation processes and postcolonial political decisions.

Portuguese Colonial Rule: An Overview

Administrative Structures

Portugal's involvement in Mozambique goes back to the early sixteenth century, when trading posts were established along the coast and prazos (lands granted to private individuals) and the gold and ivory business of the Swahili coast were developed. This loose network evolved into a formal colonial state over the course of four centuries, a process that was most pronounced during the Estado Novo regime of the 1930s and 1940s. The Portuguese colonial administration in Mozambique was highly dualistic, with a formal structure based on a metropolitan Portuguese bureaucracy with its headquarters in Lourenço Marques (Maputo) and indirect administration through the régulos (traditional chiefs), who were based in the rural interior and who acted as intermediaries in tax collection, forced labour recruitment and maintenance of order.

In Goa, the Portuguese took over in 1510, when Afonso de Albuquerque conquered the city of Goa and the Estado da India (state of India) – the name given to the Portuguese empire in Asia – was administered with a relatively high degree of administrative centrality. The territory was divided into concelhos (administrative districts) headed by a Governor-General, who had executive powers with the oversight of Lisbon. In the twentieth century, Goa's administration was more directly controlled from the metropole than Mozambique's and civil law was applied more comprehensively to a larger fraction of the population, which was a result of the longer period of Portuguese settlement and missionary activity.

The Indigenato System and Social Policy

Juridically, the indigenato system, enshrined in the Estatuto dos Indígenas (1926, revised in 1954), was the basis of Portuguese colonial social policy. In this system, the colonised majority were considered indígenas and deprived of Portuguese citizenship, forced to work under the Portuguese and limited in their freedom of movement, with their affairs managed by régulos via customary law. A small minority whose Portuguese literacy and economic independence and whose adoption of 'civilised' practices could be proven could petition for "assimilado" status, which meant they would become Portuguese citizens and no longer be subject to indigenous law. The assimilation rates were very low in Mozambique: according to official statistics, in 1950, the number of "assimilados" did not exceed 5,000 in a population of more than five million. In Goa, a slightly larger share of the population had become part of the Portuguese civic order, which had been the case for a longer time due to the Catholic missionary activity and the consolidation of a Lusophone Catholic elite in the Old Conquests territories around the original capital.

The legal frameworks and land tenure

The Portuguese colonial law in both territories established a complicated overlapping of legal systems. In Mozambique there was a split between civil law (applicable to assimilados and Europeans) and customary law (applicable to indígenas). The state's assertion of ultimate sovereignty over all land under the doctrine of terra nullius, which legitimised widespread alienation of land to European settlers, prazo holders, and concessionary companies such as the Mozambique Company and the Zambezia Company, which enjoyed quasi-governmental authority over large tracts of land under royal charter. In Goa, the law was more reflective of the longer colonial presence. Under Portuguese law, the communidades, pre-colonial village-level land commons, were codified and regulated, and a landowning class of Goan Catholics (the bhatcars) has consolidated the control over agricultural land within a legal framework that hybridised Portuguese civil law with pre-existing social arrangements. The communidades system in Goa and the division of customary law and civil law in Mozambique were resilient and contested aspects of the postcolonial legal landscape. In Goa, the "comunidades" have managed to resist the process of integration with India, and continue to be active areas of land tenure conflict and local identity politics. In Mozambique, the land issue emerged as one of the main battlegrounds of postcolonial political struggle, since the nationalisation policy of FRELIMO was challenged by customary rights and the aspirations of the former settlers.

Decolonisation: Contrasting Paths

This section will analyse the processes through which Mozambique and Goa liberated from Portuguese rule. There is excessive divergence, and they are almost different historical phenomena, and this difference was one of the most potent ones to shape the subsequent postcolonial courses.

The quest for freedom was part of the larger wave of anti-colonial Indian nationalism and non-alignment foreign policy in Goa. Following India's independence in 1947, Nehru's government sought the return of Goa, Daman and Diu, but Salazar rejected this demand, claiming the territories were provinces of Portugal and not colonies. After years of peaceful satyagraha protests, transborder marches and rising international pressure, Operation Vijay was launched on 18th December 1961 by India. The Portuguese resistance was quickly defeated in 36 hours. The integration was fast, non-violent and, most importantly, left the existing administrative structure largely intact. Portuguese officials, judges and civil servants stayed in their offices, and were permitted to remain in service of the state of India. Importantly, this was a transition and not a rupture.

Mozambique, however, had taken a different route to independence, having fought an armed struggle for over a decade. The FRELIMO was established in exile in Dar es Salaam in 1962 and its armed struggle began in September 1964. The Portuguese military strategy was to send over 50,000 soldiers, to conduct forced villagisation programmes (aldeamentos) aimed at eliminating civilian support for the guerrillas, and to carry out counter-insurgency operations, including the Wiriyamu massacre in December 1972, where Portuguese forces killed several hundred civilians in Tete Province. With the war in Mozambique and the Angolan and Guinea-Bissauan wars raging at the same time, it became impossible to continue the war financially and politically. On 25 April 1974, the Carnation Revolution, the military coup in Lisbon, led to the end of the Estado Novo and paved the way for a quick decolonisation. Under the Lusaka Accords of September 1974, FRELIMO was acknowledged as the sole negotiating partner and Mozambique was formally independent on 25 June 1975, with Samora Machel as the first President.

The nature of FRELIMO's struggle for liberation had a significant impact on the nature of the postcolonial state that it created. During the war years, the organisation had built up a military-political apparatus and had gained power with a definite Marxist-Leninist ideology of changing the social structures of the colonies, mobilising the peasantry and establishing a one-party state. Shortly after independence FRELIMO nationalised land, housing, education, health services and the banking system, and expelled most of the Portuguese settler population (around 200,000 people left within a year) and embarked on a bold state-led socialist development programme. This represented a deliberate and radical rupture with colonial institutional arrangements a choice that both reflected FRELIMO's political ideology and stored up considerable postcolonial conflict.

Political Stability: Contrasting Trajectories

One of the main concerns of the colonial legacies literature is: whether there is any relationship between colonial rule and postcolonial political instability? Mozambique and Goa provide interesting cases to explore this relationship.

The civil war has been a devastating event in Mozambique's postcolonial political history. FRELIMO's radical transformation programme of forced villagisation (Operação Produção), the repression of religious institutions and the elimination of the chieftaincy system produced significant rural discontent which was exploited by external actors such as Rhodesian state. This governance gap and administrative void directly contributed to the weakness in service delivery systems which is exacerbated by the civil war (Bertelsen ,2016). The ethnographic description of postwar Mozambique by Bertelsen (2016) reveals that in practice, chiefly authority was never completely eradicated, remaining instead in local notions of spiritual and territorial legitimacy, which the postcolonial state could not completely incorporate, and which enabled the reorganisation of RENAMO around complaints of the chiefs' authority decades after independence. Following the end of the Rhodesian state in 1979, the apartheid South African government organised, financed and armed RENAMO (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana), turning what could have been localised unrest into a full-scale proxy war. This conflict, which began around 1977 and ended in 1992, claimed an estimated one million lives, displaced nearly five million people and destroyed a significant portion of the nation's physical and institutional infrastructure. The political situation remains fragile, with RENAMO periodically resorting to armed conflict, including resumption of fighting in 2013-2019 and current instability in Cabo Delgado, following the signing of the General Peace Accord in Rome in October 1992, which ended formal fighting and introduced a multiparty democratic system.

However, the postcolonial political history of Goa is not the same. Goa became a Union Territory in 1962 and was granted full statehood in 1987 and has since been part of the Indian competitive electoral democracy. Political volatility has been significant at the state level, with changes of coalition, high rates of floor-crossing and corruption associated with the mining and tourism industries, but this volatility has been dealt with through constitutional and electoral processes, rather than armed conflict. The mining scandal of 2011-2012, which led to a judicial commission inquiry and temporary suspension of iron ore extraction, showed the strong linkage between the political elites and extractive industry, but this was solved through institutional channels.

The pertinent question is how much colonial legacies accounted for this divergence? There are a number of points which are worth emphasising. The nature of decolonisation is important: the violent nature of the Mozambican independence, which included a decade of armed conflict, and the resulting loss of skilled administration left the state capacity vacuum that made governance very challenging and opened opportunities for external-sponsored destabilisation. The peaceful and rapid military integration in Goa and the subsequent absorption in the administrative framework of India was less traumatic. Second, FRELIMO's ideology (however understandable in the context of the depth of the colonial oppression and the socialist currents in 1970s African politics) alienated large parts of the rural population and gave the material basis for RENAMO's mobilisation. Third, apart from colonial legacy, Cold War geopolitics and regional destabilisation campaigns by Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa bear the burden of responsibility to Mozambique's civil war.

Colonialism, however, did also create structural vulnerabilities. The indigenato system's unbalanced division of society, its failure to allow for autonomous political organisation, and the lack of development of an educated indigenous middle class, as well as the uneven

administrative reach, all rendered Mozambique poorly equipped to face the challenges of postcolonial governance. Contrary in Goa, the presence of a small, but competent, Catholic educated professional class established in the colonial era, that caused social tensions in minority-majority relations, also made it easier to make a transition to institutions in Goa.

Another aspect of the political volatility comparison is the importance of ethnic and regional politics. Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique, which was nominally based on universalist claims of lusotropicalism, was in practice based on ethnic and regional differences: labour recruitment was skewed towards certain groups, missionary work was targeted at particular regions, and administrative appointments were linked to geography and the ethnic makeup of the FRELIMO leadership. Such patterns created fault lines which could be exploited by postcolonial political competition, and RENAMO's approach of regional mobilisation. In Goa, the Old Conquests, predominantly Catholic, and the New Conquests were, predominantly Hindu, have also been the basis for postcolonial identity politics in Goa, albeit without a bloody conflict. The political significance of caste, religion, and sub-regional identity in Goan politics is a result of both the colonial administrative and social policies that transformed pre-existing social hierarchies into stable political categories and the salience of these divisions in pre-colonial Goa.

One of the elements that require special attention in Mozambique is the RENAMO insurgency, which was a way of refracting and magnifying the colonial legacy. RENAMO was not an automatic outgrowth of pre-existing colonial resentments; it was carefully created by Rhodesian and South African intelligence as a destabilising force and its political agenda was largely anti-FRELIMO and not anti-colonial. The civil war is not simply a legacy of colonialism, but it can't be explained without an understanding of the legacy of colonialism in terms of its creation of regional inequalities and the postcolonial government's failure to adequately engage with that legacy.

State Formation: Institutional Legacies and Trajectories

Bureaucratic Capacity

The departure of approximately 200,000 Portuguese settlers, officials, and technicians following Mozambique's independence in 1975 precipitated an immediate and severe crisis of state capacity. Under colonial rule, indigenous Mozambicans had been systematically excluded from senior administrative and bureaucratic positions, leaving a profound shortage of qualified personnel at the moment of transition. While FRELIMO had developed an effective cadre of military and political leaders during the liberation struggle, most lacked experience in public administration, economic governance, and state management. Moreover, the relatively small number of educated Mozambicans from assimilado backgrounds was insufficient to sustain the complex functions of a modern state apparatus. Faced with these constraints, the new government increasingly relied on advisers and technical experts from Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other Eastern Bloc countries, while also drawing upon FRELIMO's party structures. However, these institutions had been designed primarily to support guerrilla warfare and political mobilization rather than the administration of a national economy or the management of a complex bureaucratic system. This governance gap and administrative void directly contributed to

the weakness in service delivery systems which is exacerbated by the civil war. The immediate post-independence vacuum of capacity was exacerbated and in some ways replicated by the international statebuilding interventions that came after the 1992 peace accord. Sabaratnam (2017) maintains that donor-led statebuilding in Mozambique was based on Eurocentric notions of how a 'functioning' postcolonial state should be, and that it tended to marginalise Mozambican political agency, including that of the peasantry, in similar ways to the colonial and one-party eras.

Goa's smaller size, the higher educational level of its population, and its decisions to give a choice to have Portuguese administrators who worked under the Indian state after the integration of Goa, gave it a degree of bureaucratic continuity that was lacking in Mozambique. The integration of Goa into the Indian Union brought its administration under the framework of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), providing access to greater institutional and financial resources while also exposing governance to challenges that have been identified in the literature on Indian public administration, including political interference, patronage networks, bureaucratic rigidity, and corruption (Gupta, 2012; Aiyar & Bhattacharya, 2016).

Legal Continuity

The durability of Portuguese legal legacies has been particularly noticing in Goa. The Goa Civil Code which incorporates the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 and relates to family law, marriage, succession and property continues to be the civil law of Goa for all its inhabitants, irrespective of their religion. This is a special feature of the Indian constitutional order – the state of Goa (and now Uttarakhand) have operational uniform civil code that supersedes the personal laws that apply to India based on religion. The Goa Civil Code has been hailed as a secular uniformity and condemned as a colonial imposition which does not reflect local customary practices. The persistence of it is a direct and inviolate colonial institutional legacy, which has been sustained by successive state governments and confirmed even by the Supreme Court of India.

The fact that the Goa Civil Code survived also brings to light a larger theoretical issue concerning the impact of subnational status on the passing on of colonial legacies. Legal reform in a sovereign postcolonial state depends on political will and capacity, and the colonial legal legacy is pitted against the national political needs to establish legal sovereignty through re-coding. In a subnational unit in a federal system, however, the dynamics are different. The Goa Civil Code's survival after integration was, in part, due to the fact that it was in the interests of the dominant Catholic landowning community, because the Indian judicial system did not have the institutional capacity to immediately enforce a single alternative, and in part because the Code was politically elevated as a symbol of Goa's distinctiveness in the Indian union. It was not only the colonial legal legacy which was preserved, but also through conscious political decisions taken in the postcolonial era, the choices made reflecting the power structure of Goan society and the special relationship between Goa and the Indian state.

In Mozambique, the first idea of the postcolonial government was to eliminate colonial law and its replacement by a socialist legal system in its entirety. In practice, some provisions

of the Portuguese civil code and the Portuguese commercial code continued to exist because of institutional inertia, especially where new laws had not yet been passed. Since the adoption of the post-1990 Constitution, the country has adopted a multiparty democratic system and a formal rule of law, but legal reform has been inconsistent and the relationship between formal state law and customary practice in land tenure and family affairs is still disputed and unresolved. Bertelsen (2016) describes this as a situation of 'multiple sovereignties', in which the state law, customary authority, and other forms of political legitimacy exist in parallel and compete, but never merge into a single hierarchy.

Centre-Periphery Relations

Mozambique's long coastline and an extensive hinterland linked to the coast mainly for extraction purposes left it with a postcolonial state with weak centre-periphery ties and high regional disparities. FRELIMO had been strongest in the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa, and its ethnic and regional strength had been concentrated in the north, while RENAMO had attracted much support from the centre and south, and aligned itself with the regional political divisions of the colonial era. The spatial and regional aspects of political contestation remain in modern Mozambican politics and are a direct, albeit mediated, legacy of colonialism. This territorial imbalance of state authority is not just a historical legacy, but a dynamic feature of the Mozambican state's constitution: Bertelsen (2016) suggests that state power in Mozambique has always been distributed unevenly across territory, and is produced through ongoing negotiation between the centre and local sources of legitimacy.

In the case of Goa, territorial integration into the Indian Union answered one aspect of the centre-periphery question by placing the territory within a working federal structure with a set of mechanisms for the allocation of resources between the centre and the state. However, the integration also created fresh conflicts over the issue of cultural autonomy of the Goans, the inclusion of Konkani as an official language, and the identity issues of the Catholic minority in a Hindu majority republic. The limits of Goan cultural and political identity – and the connections between these and the Portuguese colonial history – have been a constant object of political contestation, as mobilised by regional parties, cultural associations, and occasionally by economic interests defending legal arrangements specific to the state.

Welfare Provision Through an Analytical Lens: (Education Healthcare and Social Protection)

> *"Always remember that the people are not fighting for ideas, nor for what is in men's minds. The people fight and accept the sacrifices demanded by the struggle in order to gain material advantages, to live better and in peace, to benefit from progress, and for the better future of their children. National liberation, the struggle against colonialism, the construction of peace, progress and independence are hollow words devoid of any significance unless they can*

> *be translated into a real improvement of living conditions"* (Amílcar Cabral, 1973, p. 101).

Amílcar Cabral's believed that National liberation was an achievement but it cannot by itself satisfy the aspirations of anti-colonial struggles unless it will be translated into a real improvement of living conditions. Cabral reminds us that the ultimate measure of independence is not just the transfer of power but the state's capacity to deliver better life to its people through accessible, fair and just public services and inclusive development. From this perspective, we have to analyse how the provision of welfare becomes a critical indicator of post-colonial state performance. The institutional instruments by which states translate the promises of independence into improvements in human well-being are education, healthcare and social protection.

Education

One of the Mozambique's legacies from Portuguese colonization was an extreme dearth of education. The Church-state educational partnership had resulted in very low literacy rates at time of independence which was below 10 per cent of the population. In the late 1970s, FRELIMO responded with an ambitious literacy campaign and rapid primary school expansion, and made gains in school enrolment in the early post-independence years. The civil war then set back much of this progress: thousands of rural schools were destroyed or abandoned and millions of children lost access to schooling. The problem was compounded by the introduction of school fees and the restriction of the educational budget as a result of structural adjustment conditionalities imposed since the late 1980s. The process of recovery has been slow and, although there has been considerable improvement in net enrolment rates since the 1992 peace accord, quality and completion rates are still very problematic.

On contrary the educational base of Goa was much stronger when it came out of the Portuguese fold. The longer the Catholic missionary presence, and the smaller the scale of the mission area (smaller territory) had resulted in literacy rates of 35.41 per cent at the time of integration (Indian Budget database, MoF), significantly higher than the Indian national average(28.3%) of the early 1960s. Reflecting the effects of incorporation into the federal system of India, access to national education programmes and central government funding was introduced, and the legacy of colonial-era Catholic educational institutions, many of which remained in operation even after 1961, contributed to the continued infrastructural capacity. Goa has consistently high literacy rates (88.7% per cent) and has a strong network of secondary and tertiary education institutions.

Healthcare

In Mozambique, the provision of healthcare was mainly geared towards the needs of the European and "assimilado" population, while rural Africans received very little healthcare. During the postcolonial period, FRELIMO's government focused on health as a socialist right and created a system of rural health posts, while promoting preventive health care.

Similar to the realm of education, the health infrastructure was ravished by civil war. Access was further reduced for the poorest with the implementation of healthcare fees under structural adjustment. Mozambique faces substantial health-system challenges characterized by elevated maternal mortality, a high burden of HIV infection among adults, and the adverse health consequences of the ongoing conflict in Cabo Delgado, which has displaced populations and disrupted access to essential health services (World Health Organization, 2025*Mozambique: Health data overview)*.

In comparison to Mozambique, Goa's colonial healthcare system was relatively well developed, in that there were functioning hospitals, dispensaries and basic medical training facilities at the time of integration. Post-integration, Goa enjoyed the benefits of Indian national health programmes, central government investments, and the economic benefits accruing from remittance and, subsequently, tourism (Bastos, 2002; Menezes, 2008). The health indicators in Goa today are comparable with the national average of India and close to those of middle-income countries of Southeast Asia.

Social Protection

A significant formal social protection system was lacking during Portuguese colonial rule in Goa and Mozambique. In Mozambique, the doctrine of the Estado Novo, inspired by Catholicism and oriented towards the community, attributed the responsibility for welfare to family and Church, not to the state. As a result, social protection was mostly absent for the indigenous people.

Civil war and structural adjustment stunted FRELIMO's postcolonial project of building a socialist welfare state. Social protection in Mozambique is largely dependent on external development assistance, and some cash transfer programmes have only a small impact on the poor. On the other hand, in Goa, integration with India led to access to the national social protection programmes such as the Public Distribution System, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, and the state pension programmes. Goa's relatively high-income levels, due to mining, tourism and remittances from the diaspora have also allowed for more generous social spending at the state level than most other Indian states.

South- South Comparative Perspective

The principal axis of comparison in colonial legacies scholarship has been dominated by North-South axis, as European countries compared to their African, Asian, and/or with Latin American colonies. Intra-regional comparisons (in Africa or in South Asia) are also well established. De Juan and Pierskalla (2017), highlighted that existing work "has made important contributions to understanding colonialism's long-term effects on political, social, and economic development" but there is need for greater attention to "internal dynamics of colonial intervention" and "non-institutional transmission mechanisms that cross-regional comparison is particularly well placed to illuminate".

While holding the colonial power constant (both regions were ruled by Portugal, under similar legal, administrative, and ideological structures, particularly after the consolidation

of the Estado Novo in the 1930s), and changing the postcolonial institutional setting (an African nation-state versus a subnational region of a South Asian federation), the comparison is close to a controlled analytical experiment. It enables the colonial legacy to be somewhat separated from the postcolonial factors, and what remains the same, even when the postcolonial circumstances are so different, can be confidently attributed to the colonial legacy; where changes illuminate the role of postcolonial choice and context. This can be seen as the comparative logic of "subnational comparison" as described by Snyder (2001) and also as the comparative logic of "cross-regional South-South comparison" where the units of analysis have a shared colonial history.

In a South-South comparison of colonial legacies in higher education between South Africa and Brazil, Majee and Ress (2020) have shown that "internationalization of higher education has been largely theorised from a Euro-American perspective, with less consideration given to the impact of colonial expansion in postcolonial settings". The same is true of the wider colonial legacies' literature: the methodological and theoretical assumptions embedded in North-South comparisons – where the North is the norm and the South is the deviant case and this does not always apply to comparisons between two colonized territories that have been colonized by the same power. A South-South framework is an analytical approach that moves the analytical baseline from the colonizer to the experience of colonialism itself, so that the analyst is able to question not what the colonizer did to these territories but how those territories worked upon and transformed and what the colonizers left behind.

Colonial Memory, Identity and the Lusophone World

The liberation movement FRELIMO has created an official memory of colonialism in Mozambique that portrays the Portuguese colonial past as a period of systematic exploitation and violence (chibalo forced labour, Wiriyamu massacre in 1972, and the humiliations of the indigenato), in which the armed struggle is presented as the founding national myth. In this ongoing conflict between this official state memory and the "insurgent counter-memory practices of civil society", Peralta (2025) has explored how the Portuguese state has been hesitant to recognise the damage inflicted by its colonialism, while civil society actors in Portugal and Mozambique have become more vocal around demands for postcolonial justice. The Portuguese case is one of the elements of the transnational nature of colonial memory, linking the metropole to the former colonies.

Colonial memory is much more complex and ambivalent in Goa. A large portion of the Catholic community has cultural and linguistic ties with Portugal that are still felt today, as seen in the use of Portuguese in Catholic life and interactions with the Portuguese diaspora. As Sertler (2020) as documented, Goa's post-colonial situation involves "a far from straightforward" negotiation of colonial identities, marked by both the persistence of Portuguese cultural identification among the Catholic elite and the assertion of anti-colonial Hindu nationalist narratives by other segments of the population. This religious and caste division of colonial memory is a direct legacy of the Portuguese colonial practice of differential conversion and administrative integration that carved out Goa's social geography over four centuries.

As Penvenne and Macagno (2022) have pointed out, the right to Portuguese citizenship (which has been extended to all Goans born prior to 1961 and their descendants, has become a material force in the context of freedom of movement within the European Union. In the chapter 'Goans in Portugal', India-EU People Mobility (Cambridge University Press, 2015), Katharya Uma and Bhaumik document in detail that around 90 per cent of those who applied for Portuguese citizenship in Goa are Catholic and most of them are from the Old Conquests talukas of Tiswadi, Bardez and Salcete, the very talukas that were first and most intensively colonised and evangelised by the Portuguese. The citizenship path therefore extends the postcolonial privilege for those most fully colonised and thus allows them to continue to enjoy the same privileges as colonials, but in a new form.

Hindu Goan communities and political movements have shaped the colonial past in other ways, focusing on the forced conversions by the Inquisition (which the scholar Teotonio de Souza has documented, and which continued to some extent until the eighteenth century), the destruction of Hindu temples in the Old Conquests, and the long subordination of the majority Hindu population of Goa to a Catholic institutional framework. This contested colonial memory is explored in "Goa: A Post-Colonial Society Between Cultures" by Jackson (2016), who traces how the "problematic yet productive encounter between Europe and India" of Goa's history is continuing to influence identity claims in the postcolonial present.

On the macro level, the CPLP — The Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa), established in Lisbon on 17 July 1996, is the institutional manifestation of the postcolonial ties of the Lusophone world. It has expanded to nine member States across four continents and a total population of around 290 million (IOM, 2023, Migration Governance in the Community of Portuguese Language Countries). However, Nadobnik (2020) has suggested that the CPLP has been limited in its scope, as it has centred on cultural cooperation, and has also pointed out that the CPLP is an "institutional emanation of the idea of Lusophony" with its "enormous economic possibilities" underutilized. Portuguese is also the official language of Mozambique, placing it in this world-wide Lusophone network, but also maintaining the colonial hierarchy between Portuguese literate elites and Bantu language speaking majority. It is less direct in the case of Goa, since it has had a Lusophone relationship since 1961 but the historical Lusophone connection is a thread that ties the two cases together in a wider comparative perspective.

Diaspora and Postcolonial Development

The diaspora networks that developed in Mozambique and Goa are not just demographic; they are institutional products of divergent colonial and decolonising histories and their developmental implications reveal the postcolonial impact of Portuguese rule, not just through domestic processes but also across transnational lines.

The character of the Goan diaspora was influenced by multiple concurrent waves of migration, which were influenced by the legal and cultural heritage of Portuguese colonialism. In the colonial era, Goans went to Portuguese Africa, mostly to Mozambique, Kenya and Tanzania, as clerical workers and administrators in an intermediate position between the blacks and whites in between the colonial hierarchy that were facilitated by

their Catholic education and Portuguese citizenship (Chanda & Ghosh, 2012).After India annexed Goa in 1961, a second wave of migration started to Portugal, and many Portuguese went to the UK, the United States and Canada – a trend Chanda and Ghosh (2012) refer to as Goans having a hard time finding permanent employment in Portugal, and then using Lisbon as a stepping stone to the rest of Europe. A third wave, which is ongoing until today, is based on the right to Portuguese citizenship for those who were born in Goa prior to 1961 and their descendants. At the time of their study, according to a there was a waiting list of 12,000-13,000 persons applying for passports at the Portuguese consulate office in Panaji and about 17,000 Goans who were already holding Portuguese citizenship in the United Kingdom. Importantly, this access to citizenship is not socially homogeneous; as Uma and Bhaumik (2015) show, some 90 per cent of applicants are from the Catholic community, which is concentrated in the Old Conquests talukas of Tiswadi, Bardez and Salcete, the areas of earliest and most intensive Portuguese missionary and administrative settlement (India-EU People Mobility, Cambridge University Press).Citizenship access in the postcolonial period thus reproduces the colonial hierarchy of assimilation, the legal legacy of assimilation is most beneficial for those whose ancestors were the first to be incorporated into the Portuguese civic order.

This diaspora has a substantial impact on development. The funds remitted by the Goans who have migrated to the Gulf states, the United Kingdom, Portugal and North America have been a major source of income for the households in Goa and helped in investment in education, houses etc., which have resulted in the unusually high per capita income in Goa as compared to the Indian average. The diaspora's cosmopolitan professions have also helped Goa become part of the international tourism and service industries, with economic multiplier effects that can be traced, to the cultural capital that has been built under Portuguese colonization.

The Mozambican diaspora is a different case. Labour migration from Mozambique to South Africa has a long history, with pre-independence migration to South Africa driven by the colonial mining economy which systematically recruited labour from southern Mozambique by bilateral contracts with the mines on the Witwatersrand. The massive colonial-era migration of labour from Mozambique to South Africa has been maintained and diversified in the postcolonial era with migrants transitioning from formal employment in the mines to a range of economic activities, many of which are informal, according to study of migration and remittances from Mozambique to South Africa during the post-apartheid era, conducted by Mercandalli, Nshimbi, and Moyo (2017) in the period 2009-2013 (Migration, Cross-Border Trade and Development in Africa, Palgrave Macmillan). The consequences of this change from formalised colonial era labour recruitment to informal post-apartheid labour migration are important: it has lowered the proportion of remittances flowing through formal banking systems, threatened the capacity for deferred remuneration, and lowered the development potential of what is still a structurally significant source of household income in southern Mozambique.

The impact of these remittance transfers on development is real but limited. According to Mercandalli et al. (2017), remittance-receiving households in southern Mozambique are generally better off than non-migrant households, but that migration does not necessarily bring about structural transformation of the sending economy, but rather perpetuates a "dependent relationship" between sending households and the South African labour

market. This is consistent with the existing literature on African remittances, which shows that remittances serve as an important alternative source of development finance that has a positive direct impact on economic growth, but such impact is moderated by the quality of the financial sector, which is still weak in Mozambique due to the legacies of the post-conflict reconstruction and a shallow banking system (International Migration, 60(5), 252–270).

The comparative analysis of both diasporas is analytically relevant to the argument of this paper. The Goan diaspora's EU citizenship advantage, in turn, is a direct result of the legal nature of Portuguese colonialism in Asia, and of Portugal's political choice not to recognize the annexation of 1961 as legitimate (however this was recognized in 1974 after carnation revolution), which has created a developmental divergence between the two territories; not pre-ordained by any aspect of the colonial order. By contrast, the structural embedment of the Mozambican diaspora in the South African mining economy is a legacy of the colonial era, that the postcolonial state has yet to overcome; and which continues to direct Mozambican human resources towards South Africa, instead of directing it to the purpose of domestic development. In both the contexts, colonial legacies are enacted in terms of diaspora formations; although in very different institutional forms: -in Goa through the inheritance of Portuguese citizenship, and in Mozambique through the inheritance of migrant labour's spatial economy

Conclusion

The Portuguese colonial rule which lasted for over four centuries in Mozambique and Goa (India) profoundly altered their political and social structures, leaving enduring legacies. The paper has demonstrated how shared colonial edifice led to diverse political and developmental outcomes in these two regions after decolonization owing to political volatility, postcolonial state formation and bureaucratic capacity, welfare provisions for education, health and social protection. The divergent paths to decolonization are significant: a decade of armed conflict in Mozambique resulted in the loss of skilled administration and created vacuum in state bureaucratic capacity; opening opportunities for external-sponsored destabilisation. On the other hand, Goa witnessed a degree of bureaucratic continuity woing to several factors such as the smaller size of territory of Goa ,the higher educational level of its population, and the decision to continue administrators hired under Portuguese rule to work under the Indian state after the integration of Goa. This eventually led to better state and administrative capacity.

This study has examined the legal, administrative and social policy arrangements put in place under Portuguese rule in Mozambique and Goa and the legal and administrative continuity and disjuncture following the divergent paths of decolonization. As the scholarship on decolonization has demonstrated that decolonization should not be viewed as a single moment of rupture, but regarded as an extended and uneven process through which postcolonial states reworked and inherited institutions. This research has analysed how divergent route to decolonization influenced state capacity, welfare provisions, and political order in different ways in Mozambique and Goa. This perspective allows us to engage more sensibly with ongoing debates about colonial legacies in general and more

specifically, the influence of colonial legacy in generating political instability and/or supporting forms of institutional continuity and postcolonial development.

By examining a Lusophone African nation state alongside a postcolonial subnational state in South Asia, the paper brings a South-South comparative perspective that is essentially absent from existing studies on decolonization.The paper has focussed on the political and institutional realities of both regions, tracing how colonial legacies were shaped by local political agency, distinct paths to decolonization, and postcolonial policy choices over time. This allows us to argue that colonial legacy is not necessarily deterministic of the future processes and outcomes. However, the influence of colonial rule cannot be treated as insignificant and more attention need to be paid to the path and process of decolonization. The comparison of Mozambique and Goa provides evidence for contingent path dependence theory; emphasizing that the effects of colonial legacy are mediated by historical contingencies and actor choices.

References

Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., & Robinson, J. A. (2001). The colonial origins of comparative development: An empirical investigation. American Economic Review, 91(5), 1369–1401. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.91.5.1369

Aiyar, Y., & Bhattacharya, S. (2016). The post office paradox: A case study of the block level education bureaucracy. Economic and Political Weekly, 51(11), 61–69.

Bastos, C. (2002). Ciencia, poder, accao: As respostas a SIDA. Imprensa de Ciencias Sociais. ISBN: 978-972-671-087-5

Bertelsen, B. E. (2016). *Violent Becomings: State Formation, Sociality, and Power in Mozambique*. Berghahn Books.

Borges, C. J., & Feldmann, H. (Eds.). (1997). *Goa and Portugal: Their cultural links*. Concept Publishing Company.

Cabral, Amílcar (1973). Selected Speeches of Amílcar Cabral. Africa Information Service.

Cabaço, J. L. (2009). Moçambique: Identidade, colonialismo e libertação. Editora UNESP. ISBN: 978-85-7139-949-3

Chanda, R., & Ghosh, S. (2012). The Goan diaspora: Its reach and impact. Working Paper No. 369, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER). Retrieved from https://icrier.org/pdf/Working_Paper_369.pdf

Davidson, B. (1992). The Black man's burden: Africa and the curse of the nation-state. Times Books. ISBN: 978-0-8129-2039-3

De Juan, A., & Pierskalla, J. H. (2017). The comparative politics of colonialism and its legacies: An introduction. Politics & Society, 45(2), 159–172. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329217704434

Frank, A. G. (1967). Capitalism and underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical studies of Chile and Brazil. Monthly Review Press. ISBN: 978-0-85345-079-0

Freyre, G. (1933). Casa-grande e senzala: Formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal. Maia & Schmidt.

Giraudy, A. (2015). Democrats and autocrats: Pathways of subnational undemocratic regime continuity within democratic countries. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198706861.001.0001

Gupta, A. (2012). Red tape: Bureaucracy, structural violence, and poverty in India. Duke University Press.

Hanlon, J. (1984). Mozambique: The revolution under fire. Zed Books. ISBN: 978-0-86232-245-8

Herbst, J. (2000). States and power in Africa: Comparative lessons in authority and control. Princeton University Press. ISBN: 978-0-691-01028-1

Isaacman, A., & Isaacman, B. (1983). *Mozambique: From colonialism to revolution, 1900–1982*. Westview Press.

International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2023). Migration governance in the community of Portuguese language countries. IOM. Retrieved from https://publications.iom.int

Jackson, P. A. (2016). Goa: A post-colonial society between cultures. In R. Lobo & S. Mascarenhas (Eds.), Goa: Social and Economic Development. Concept Publishing Company.

Lange, M., Mahoney, J., & vom Hau, M. (2006). Colonialism and development: A comparative analysis of Spanish and British colonies. American Journal of Sociology, 111(5), 1412–1462. https://doi.org/10.1086/499510

Landes, D. S. (1998). The wealth and poverty of nations: Why some are so rich and some so poor. W. W. Norton. ISBN: 978-0-393-04017-3

Lourenço, E. (1978). O labirinto da saudade: Psicanálise mítica do destino português. Publicações Dom Quixote. ISBN: 978-972-20-0009-7

Machel, S. (1974). Mozambique: Sowing the seeds of revolution. Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guiné.

Mahoney, J. (2010). Colonialism and postcolonial development: Spanish America in comparative perspective. Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-0-521-13328-9. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511750328

Majee, U. S., & Ress, S. B. (2020). Colonial legacies in internationalisation of higher education: Racial justice and geopolitical redress in South Africa and Brazil. Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 50(4), 463–481. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1521264

Mamdani, M. (1996). Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism. Princeton University Press. ISBN: 978-0-691-02793-7

Matos, P. F. de (2006). As côres do império: Representações raciais no império colonial português. Imprensa de Ciências Sociais. ISBN: 978-972-671-185-8

Mercandalli, S., Nshimbi, C. C., & Moyo, I. (Eds.). (2017). Migration, cross-border trade and development in Africa: Exploring the role of non-state actors in the SADC region. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-55399-3

Menezes, A. (2008). Health and development in Goa: A retrospective overview. In R. S. Mascarenhas (Ed.), Goa: Development and Planning. Concept Publishing Company.

Mondlane, E. (1969). The struggle for Mozambique. Penguin Books.

Moore, B. (1966). Social origins of dictatorship and democracy: Lord and peasant in the making of the modern world. Beacon Press.

Nadobnik, J. (2020). The CPLP and the idea of Lusophony: Institutional expression and underutilized potential. Lusophone Studies, 8(1), 23–44.

Newitt, M. (2017). *A short history of Mozambique*. Hurst & Company.

Nunn, N. (2008). The long-term effects of Africa's slave trades. Quarterly Journal of Economics, 123(1), 139–176. https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.2008.123.1.139

Penvenne, J. M. (1995). African workers and colonial racism: Mozambican strategies and struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877–1962. James Currey / Heinemann. ISBN: 978-0-85255-614-6

Peralta, E. (2025). Insurgent memory, post-imperial governance, and change: Reassessing the truth about Portugal's colonial history. Rethinking History, 29(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2025.2455868

Rostow, W. W. (1960). The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto. Cambridge University Press

Sabaratnam, M. (2017). *Decolonising Intervention: International Statebuilding in Mozambique*. Rowman & Littlefield International.

Sertler, E. (2020). Epistemic dependence and oppression: A telling relationship. Community Change, 6(1). https://doi.org/10.21061/cc.v6i1.a.65

Skocpol, T. (1979). States and social revolutions: A comparative analysis of France, Russia, and China. Cambridge University Press.

Snyder, R. (2001b). Scaling down: The subnational comparative method. Studies in Comparative International Development, 36(1), 93–110. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02687586

Snyder, R. (2001). After Neoliberalism: The Politics of Reregulation in Mexico**.**Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511510892

Tilly, C. (1990). Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990–1990. Basil Blackwell.

Uma, K., & Bhaumik, S. (2015). Goans in Portugal. In K. Uma (Ed.), India–EU people mobility. Cambridge University Press

Wallerstein, I. (1974). The modern world-system I: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century. Academic Press. ISBN: 978-0-12-785920-0

Young, C. (1994). The African colonial state in comparative perspective. Yale University Press. ISBN: 978-0-300-05802-4

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

AMÍLCAR CABRAL AND THE POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF CLIMATE CHANGE: A CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING AWARENESS

PEDRO ANDRADE MATOS
pedro.matos@us.edu.cv | matooscv@hotmail.com
He is a postdoctoral researcher specializing in Environmental Law and Sustainable Development. He holds a PhD in International Relations and an MSc in Political Science. Matos serves as Professor at the University of Santiago (Cabo Verde), where he is also Director of the Graduate Office and Coordinator of the Centre for Research and Advanced Studies (CEPEA). His academic work focuses on the intersections of environmental governance, sustainable development, international cooperation, and public policy, contributing to scholarly and policy debates on contemporary global challenges. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1949-4138

Abstract

This study recovers the intellectual legacy of Amílcar Cabral, an agronomist and leader of the liberation struggle in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, situating his studies on erosion, soil conservation, and climate (1945-1960) within the contemporary debate on climate change, environmental justice, and political ecology. Starting from Cabral's concept of "soil-life-climate balance", the work argues that Cabral, decades before its scientific recognition, discussed fundamental issues of climate change, such as the distinction between natural and anthropogenic erosion, climate coloniality, and the importance of local knowledge for ecological adaptation. The study articulates Cabral's scientific trajectory with his critique of colonialism and imperialism as structures that produce environmental degradation, analyses the principle of unity and struggle as a foundation for a collective African response to the climate crisis, and examines the relevance of his technical and political proposals for the specific case of Cabo Verde, in light of recent data on soil erosion, water scarcity, and climate vulnerability in the archipelago. It can be concluded that Cabral's thought offers a theoretical and practical framework that remains underexplored in Cabo Verdean academia, one capable of engaging in dialogue with contemporary authors on climate justice and decolonial ecological politics.

Keywords

Amílcar Cabral; Cabo Verde; climate change; climate justice; colonialism, political ecology; soil conservation.

Resumo

Este estudo recupera o legado intelectual de Amílcar Cabral, engenheiro agrónomo e líder da luta de libertação da Guiné-Bissau e de Cabo Verde, situando seus estudos sobre erosão, conservação do solo e clima (1945-1960) no debate contemporâneo sobre mudanças climáticas, justiça ambiental e ecologia política. Partindo do conceito de Cabral de "equilíbrio solo-vida-clima", o trabalho argumenta que Cabral discutia, décadas antes de sua consolidação científica, questões elementares das mudanças climáticas, como a distinção entre erosão natural e antropogénica, a colonialidade climática e a importância dos saberes locais para a adaptação ecológica. O artigo articula a trajetória científica de Cabral com sua crítica ao colonialismo e ao imperialismo como estruturas produtoras de degradação ambiental, analisa o princípio de unidade e luta como fundamento para uma resposta africana coletiva à crise

climática, e examina a atualidade de suas propostas técnicas e políticas para o caso específico de Cabo Verde, à luz de dados recentes sobre erosão do solo, escassez hídrica e vulnerabilidade climática no arquipélago. Conclui-se que o pensamento de Cabral oferece um arcabouço teórico e prático ainda pouco explorado pela academia cabo-verdiana, capaz de dialogar com autores contemporâneos da justiça climática e da política ecológica decolonial.

Palavras-chave

Amílcar Cabral; Cabo Verde; colonialismo; conservação do solo; ecologia política; justiça climática; mudanças climáticas.

How to cite this article
Matos, Pedro Andrade (2026). Amílcar Cabral and the Political Ecology of Climate Change: a Contribution to Raising Awareness. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 220-241. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.10

Article submitted on 26 June 2026 and accepted on 19 August 2026.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 220-241
Amílcar Cabral and the Political Ecology of Climate Change: a Contribution to Raising Awareness
Pedro Andrade Matos

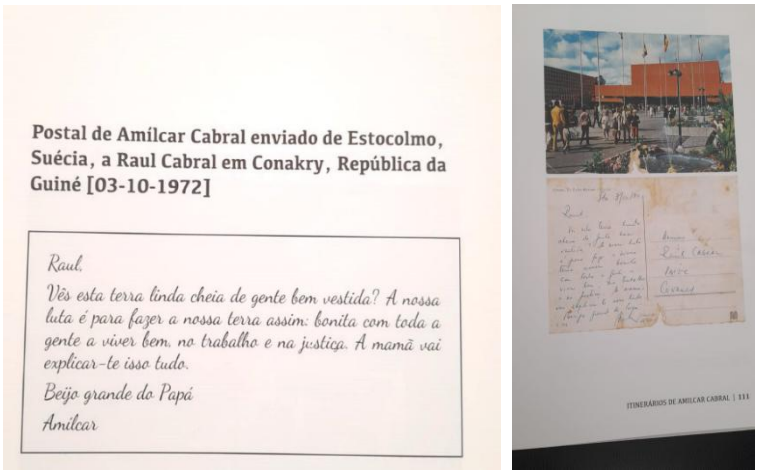
AMÍLCAR CABRAL AND THE POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF CLIMATE CHANGE: A CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING AWARENESS[1]

PEDRO ANDRADE MATOS

Introduction

Four months after the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (1972), Amílcar Cabral visited Sweden. From there, he sent his son, Raul, a postcard from Stockholm (Image 1). In the message, he wrote that, as Stockholm was a beautiful city where people enjoyed a good quality of life, with work and justice, he wished that one day, through struggle, the people of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde would also achieve economic and social development.

Image 1. Postcard sent by Amilcar Cabral from Stockholm



Source: Cabral et al., 2018

[1] Conflict of Interests - The author declares no conflicts of interest.

The Stockholm Conference sought to reconcile environmental protection and development needs, which had previously been seen as contradictory, between developed countries, which began to advocate for environmental protection, and developing countries, which sought to use their natural resources to promote economic development.

However, the impact of human actions on the environment became evident, and it was necessary to recognize that economic and social progress needed to consider the limits of nature and its preservation. Although the Conference did not reach an agreement, discussions began on ecological awareness and sustainable development.

These discussions were not new to African countries and societies, which have always regarded nature as a space for the fulfilment of humankind in its spiritual and cultural dimensions, far beyond the material dimension, which remains the concern of Western societies (Leff, 2001; Vambe & Zegeye, 2008)

Amílcar Cabral was an African who consciously thought and acted strategically to enhance the quality of life of African peoples, working on multiple fronts (Ferrão, 1988; Neves, 2017; el Nabolsy, 2020). Despite this, his involvement with the independence struggles of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, as well as other political commitments, forced him to dedicate himself more to political issues and reduce his scientific activity as an agricultural engineer and researcher of the environmental problems that afflicted Portuguese colonies in the first half of the 20th century.

Between 1945 and 1960, Cabral developed remarkable theoretical and practical studies, as well as recommendations on erosion, soil conservation, climatology, and agricultural systems in Cabo Verde, Portugal (Alentejo), Guinea-Bissau, and Angola. These works, published in academic journals and scientific reports, reveal a thinker who articulated, in original and rigorous parameters, technical knowledge, social analyses, and long-term concerns regarding the relationship between humans and nature.

Regarding the title of this paper, although Amílcar Cabral did not directly address climate change as we understand it today, his agrarian studies of erosion provide insights into processes now associated with climate dynamics. Based on his observations of the soil-life-climate balance, his analysis of erosion as a phenomenon accelerated by human activity, his study of droughts in Cabo Verde, and his advocacy for integrated conservation planning, Cabral anticipated debates and proposals that would only become relevant in environmental science decades later.

This article guides the following research question: To what extent can Amílcar Cabral's agronomic and political thought contribute to contemporary debates on climate change issues, particularly in the context of Cabo Verde?

The study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach that relies on documentary and bibliographic research methods. It analyses Cabral's agronomic writings on soil conservation, erosion, climate, and agriculture, as well as his political texts on colonialism, liberation, and African unity, placing them in dialogue with contemporary literature on political ecology, climate justice, decolonial environmental thought, and climate coloniality.

The following sections analyse Cabral's agronomic trajectory, his systemic vision of nature, the relationship he establishes between colonialism and environmental degradation, the

case of Cabo Verde, the need for African unity in the face of the climate crisis, and finally, the relevance of his thought to contemporary political ecology, especially in the context of Cabo Verde.

Cabral's Agronomic Trajectory

Cabral was born on September 12, 1924, in Bafatá, Guinea-Bissau. He spent his youth in Cabo Verde, where he dedicated himself to primary and secondary studies and met a reality that would shape his academic decisions and search for solutions to transform reality.

He graduated in Agronomic Engineering from the Higher Institute of Agronomy of the Technical University of Lisbon in 1952, with a thesis on soil erosion in the Alentejo, specifically in the region of Cuba. During his studies, he specialised in Pedology and Soil Conservation, areas of scientific development at the time, particularly in the United States, with the work of Hugh Hammond Bennett (1881–1960), considered a pioneer in soil conservation, who highlighted that erosion affects not just small farmers, but the entire economy.

The choice to study agronomy was made in a context marked by food crises, famine, recurring droughts, and profound economic difficulties affecting the Cabo Verde Islands, besides the impact of colonialism on the living conditions of Africans.

Cabral witnessed the droughts that plagued the archipelago, especially the famine of the 1940s. At that time, he was approximately 17 years old and already had a clear understanding of the severity of drought, their consequences, and their natural and unnatural causes. In addition to this personal experience, the Cabo Verdeans have historical memories of even more dramatic periods, such as the famines of 1773–1776 and the crisis of 1831–1833, which caused approximately 30,000 deaths in the archipelago (Lopes, 2021).

Young Cabral also discovered interesting sources at home to raise awareness of the land and insularity. His father, Juvenal Cabral, wrote about droughts, famine, and rain. In a short text about rain, Juvenal writes: "Drought, the habitual cause of our torments; drought, age-old enemy of our progress; drought, cruel generator of black famine, under whose gloomy auspices the poor die, the rich become impoverished, the cattle wither, and the trees dry up" (Juvenal Cabral, 1949).

Cabral, as a son, shared the experience in the poem "The Island" (1945), layering ecological sensitivity that evokes the natural fragilities of the Cabo Verde islands: "sleeping mother / naked and forgotten, /dry, /lashed by the winds". In this passage, Cabral exposes the archipelago's natural vulnerabilities, which become recurrent in the literature and music of the archipelago.

In the poem "Return," there is a hope fed by the rain, which solidifies as an extraordinary event that transforms the lands and the state of mind of the people, revealing, through the verse "the whole island / in a few days has already become a garden," how semi-arid ecosystems, after long periods of drought, spring to life (Cabral, 1990). The poet speaks of a Cabo Verde that, with the arrival of the rain, transforms into a fertile and prosperous

field, revealing a window of opportunity that the countryman must seize with care to sow, tend, harvest, and store.

In this context, choosing agronomy meant pursuing a scientific understanding of the soil conditions, agricultural production, and the survival of populations in a territory heavily influenced by environmental and structural factors. However, in another territory, such as Guinea-Bissau, which had abundant water, the colonial policy of imposing cultural practices for export added another layer to the condition of the colonies as spaces serving the interests of the colonizers.

Cabral was not convinced by natural causes alone (Neves, 2017; el Nabolsy, 2020), because Cabo Verde was not (is not) the only place in the world with these vulnerabilities. However, he questioned why people lived in such extremes: when the rain came, they lost agricultural products, and when drought arrived, they had not even a grain of corn left to feed the poor, even though Guinea-Bissau served as a breadbasket that met Portugal's needs. Therefore, deliberate political (in)action determined the life and death of the people.

He also witnessed the dramatic consequences of the assistance disaster, which occurred on February 20, 1949, in Praia, Cabo Verde. After a long period of drought, hundreds of people were awaiting a hot meal and donations. The collapse of a wall caused the death of 232 people, an episode that reflected the extreme social vulnerability of the population, a result of the economic and political conditions imposed on the archipelago by Portugal (Lopes, 2021), which earned severe internal and international criticism, as people viewed it as the face of a colonial system that used hunger as an instrument of war.

Between 1952 and 1954, Cabral worked as an agronomist in Portuguese Guinea, where he conducted extensive field surveys to study cropping systems, local agricultural practices, and erosion problems. In Lisbon, he worked on soil studies for Angola and researched the storage of agricultural products until 1960. That year, he dedicated himself entirely to the political struggle for the liberation and independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde.

According to José Eduardo Ferrão (1988), Cabral's scientific activity encompasses two complementary dimensions: one eminently technical, linked to agronomic work, the study of soils and scientific knowledge applied to the territory; and another, deeply human, marked by an ethical and political concern for the social utility of his work. Cabral understood that engineers, especially Africans, should not limit their role to producing technical knowledge; they should also commit to contributing to the valorization of the "Afro-Negro" and ensure that the wealth generated by natural resources benefits Africa (Ferrão, 1988, p. 21).

Cabral's scientific work was also characterized by the rigorous use of systematic research methods, employing tools such as demographic statistics, mathematical formulations, field surveys, and the comparative method to analyze diverse agricultural and environmental realities. He adopted a critical stance towards the mere transposition of agricultural models developed in other regions of the world, arguing for the need to carefully analyze African agroclimatic conditions due to their ecological, social, and historical specificities.

However, the agricultural census conducted in Guinea-Bissau (1952–1955) allowed him to develop political awareness, as he studied natural resources, soils, crops, and local agricultural practices in detail (Ferrão, 1988; Neves, 2017). Therefore, Cabral argued that

the research should not be a technical or statistical exercise alone but should also have a clear social purpose, aimed at improving the living conditions of the population. For the young researcher, "a census, if it does not aim at improving the living conditions of the people to whom it refers, is not only a useless task; it is a harmful undertaking" (Silva, 1988; Ferrão, 1988, p. 24).

Through this work, Cabral understood the material structures of peasant life, the relationships between soil, climate, and modes of production, especially the agroecological systems of Guinea-Bissau, and the awareness necessary for political transformation (Neves, 2017). These structures, to which Cabral referred, relate to colonialism and imperialism, as well as their consequences in several areas, including the environment. Therefore, the next task is to grasp the system that caused the environmental crisis.

Colonialism, Imperialism and Environmental Degradation

These three concepts interconnect: colonialism as a political structure dehumanized Africans and created the basis for imperialism to plunder African resources to meet the needs of European metropolises. Therefore, it caused environmental degradation that exacerbated the destruction of traditional land management systems and impoverished the quality of life for Africans.

To understand Cabral's environmental thinking, it is necessary to situate it within the broader context that propelled him towards critical awareness. As the son of two countries subjected to Portuguese colonialism, he was acutely aware of the consequences of colonization not only in the political and economic spheres, but also in the environmental aspect, because it destroyed a harmonious way of life and an African worldview of the natural environment shaped by work and culture. In this sense, colonization represented a violent rupture of this relationship and the imposition of a model that completely ignored the African as both a subject and sovereign in their relations with the surrounding environment (Neves, 2017; el Nabolsy, 2020).

Cabral emphasized that colonization and imperialism were deeply interconnected, insofar as "imperialism is piracy transplanted from the seas to dry land, reorganized, consolidated and adapted to the objective of plundering the material and human resources of our peoples" (Cabral, 1965, p. 78). The colonial system constituted a global structure of economic, social, and political domination aimed at the systematic exploitation of colonized territories, which materialized in the land, agriculture, and living conditions of the peasants (Maddox, 2006; Uzoigwe, 2010; el Nabolsy, 2020)

This materialization places the responsibility for the greatest socio-environmental disasters in modern history on colonialism. More than a political system of domination, it implied profound transformations in territories, economies, and relationships between human societies and nature. The intensive exploitation of natural resources, driven by external interests, produced lasting forms of environmental degradation and social inequality.

The culmination of this destructive process occurred within the framework of the Berlin Conference (1884-85), whose stated aim was "to occupy in depth, colonize Africa and extract from its soil and subsoil all the energy sources sufficient and necessary for the

European machine" (Tenreiro, 1946, p. 159; Uzoigwe, 2010). The specialized literature looks at the political impacts of Africa's partition. However, we should also consider its effects on environmental disasters. These disasters harmed the African population, ruined economies, and increased poverty (Maddox, 2006)

In this regard, Cabral framed colonialism as economic domination of nature, which employs "political domination" by extending "the forces of the imperialist or colonial state into the land it wants to dominate economically" (Cabral, 1969, p. 33). For Cabral, in colonialism and neocolonialism, the essential characteristic of imperialism remains: the denial of the historical process of the dominated people through the violent usurpation of freedom in the development of national productive forces.

Agriculture was the area that suffered the most from the dual process of destruction and replacement and, obviously, did not align with the Schumpeterian logic of 'creative destruction', since innovation mattered less and the reconfiguration of a system to serve only the capitalist interests of the colonising countries mattered more.

Cabral criticized the system of monocultures and intensive agriculture imposed by Portuguese colonization in African territories, arguing that it represented a danger by generating a situation of economic dependence focused on exports to Europe, which replaced family farming while the local population remained in poverty (el Nabolsy, 2020; Maurice Taonezvi, 2008; Taques et al., 2023). As he wrote:

> *Colonialism introduced a new production system to Africa, in which it applied, or attempted to apply, European agricultural practices to the itinerant system, without considering the differences in environmental conditions, based on a presumed logic of superiority of practices, resulting in the devastation of African lands* (Cabral, 1954, p. 413).

This agricultural transformation and the introduction of exotic species generated sociological vulnerabilities and altered local food systems and agrobiodiversity (Havik et al., 2018). Thus, in their analysis, famine emerges as a socially produced phenomenon, resulting from the (dis)articulation between environmental factors and the Portuguese government's political decisions.

Therefore, historical legacies of colonialism and imperialism connect climate change to global patterns of economic exploitation and shape the scientific frameworks through which people study and interpret climate, denying rich countries historical responsibility for climate imbalance (Mercer & Simpson, 2023).

Vulnerability to climate change is structured by imperialist social relations, perpetuating what some authors call "climate coloniality" (Sultana, 2022) by reinforcing economic, social, and racial inequalities stemming from colonization.

DeBoom (2022) defines climate coloniality as "atmospheric violence" that determines who deserves to live and who can be sacrificed, leading to the dehumanization of colonized peoples and revealing that the history of environmental destruction is a historical process, with those affected continuing to be the victims of colonization.

Scientific evidence shows that the average temperature of the Earth has been on a continuous rise since around 1850, with particularly high levels observed at the end of the 20th century. Due to anthropogenic activities, global temperature has increased from +0.66 to +1.00 °C relative to the pre-industrial baseline, and sea level has risen from +0.15 to +0.25 m (IPCC, 2021, p. 45). This process is closely tied to the Industrial Revolution, during which the expansion of machinery and industrial production intensified the use of fossil fuels, thereby linking it directly to colonial accumulation and the current climate crisis.

As early as the 1970s, systematic analyses pointed to the influence of human activities on the warming of the climate system (IPCC, 2021). Even after the scientific confirmation of the problem in the 1960s–1970s, political inaction prevailed due to the economic interests of industrialized countries (Weart, 2008).

Cabral was assassinated in January 1973, leaving a huge void at a time when the limits of economic growth on a finite planet were being discussed, and the first investigations that raised concerns about the global climate were emerging, demanding a series of ideas and proposals on how humankind could relate to the environment. Despite his premature death, his agronomic studies and principles of struggle still help us understand and tackle the climate crisis.

The Soil-Life-Climate Balance and Land Conservation

One of the central concepts in Cabral's agronomic thought is the "soil-life-climate balance," which provides a systemic understanding of nature. According to Cabral, human exploitation of land profoundly alters the natural conditions of the complex soil-life-climate dynamic. Environmental degradation is not just the result of isolated actions but is part of the economic structure of society, which transforms nature to satisfy specific human interests, frequently harming ecological balance. From this concept, Cabral addresses the great dilemma between food and demographic development, warning that when this dilemma is not addressed on an equal basis but is subordinated to particular interests, collective interests are compromised, thereby jeopardizing both socioeconomic and natural systems (Silva, 1988).

Important thinkers, such as the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (2006) and the Mexican economist Enrique Leff (2001), reinforce this perspective by pointing out that the concern is not with the preservation of nature, but with a particular social order, whose economic rationality prioritizes profit to the detriment of common goods and the environment.

In Cabral's analysis, soil is not inert; rather, it maintains a living relationship with human social structures (César, 2023). Therefore, the destruction of the soil translates into the destruction of humankind, as it weakens the natural conditions essential for humankind's survival. This interpretation updates to account for the fact that the weakening of a natural ecosystem also entails weakening human rights (Gibson et al., 2005).

In this equation, climate is one of the central factors conditioning the development of plants that feed people. The essence of agriculture rests on the triad of land-plant-climate, in which "man begins to create his own food." Cabral emphasized that climate contributes to

soil formation and fertility, but it can also function as its destroyer by influencing degradation and erosion processes that directly affect the land's productive capacity. Despite little attention has been paid to the care of climate and nature itself. Even subsequent discussions on sustainable development, starting with the Brundtland Report (1987), have focused more on satisfying human needs than on nature itself, or, at most, on preserving nature to meet material interests.

However, Cabral was already working with an advanced definition of conservation that parallels the concept of sustainable development. For him, "classifying soils, from the point of view of conservation, is to order them into different groups, relative to their possibilities of use, without destruction" (Cabral, 1954a).

This definition links use and conservation, recognizing that soil protection cannot be separated from the subsistence needs of populations, a current perspective known as sustainable development or green economy. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021) recognizes that soil degradation is both a product and an amplifier of climate change, releasing sequestered carbon into the atmosphere and reducing water retention capacity.

Therefore, Cabral's compliment lies in his inversion of logic: instead of worrying about material needs, human beings should first take care of the source that raises all the vital energies they need, and food would come as a natural process, not artificially induced.

This includes understanding the soil as a "natural, independent, historical, and dynamic body" and vegetation as an essential factor for climate balance. Cabral (1954a) perceived that environmental degradation was not simply a technical problem but a matter of disrupting complex balances involving interactions among soil, climate, vegetation, and human actions.

Cabral (1954a) defends the role of natural vegetation in maintaining this balance. From this systemic perspective, Cabral formulates an ethics of the human-land relationship that holds significant relevance to contemporary climate governance. He argues that the naturally asymmetrical human-soil relationship, insofar as the land sustains humankind while humankind destroys it, must become symmetrical for humankind's own subsistence. He notes that human actions, whether collective or individual, need to be controlled for their own benefit (Silva, 1988, p. 25). With this awareness, Cabral was able to distinguish between natural erosion and erosion accelerated by anthropogenic actions:

> *This type of erosion, which occurs slowly and gradually within the soil-life-climate balance, which is integrated into the development process and does not harm it, is called normal or natural erosion. Under natural conditions, soil losses are generally limited to those caused by normal erosion. The ideal of conservation is to ensure that these losses are not significantly exceeded, despite alterations to natural conditions resulting from land exploitation (Cabral, 1954a, p. 165).*

Cabral clearly identified accelerated erosion as a result of human activity.

> *It is precisely the exploitation of the land by man that alters the natural conditions in which the dynamic balance of soil-life-climate has been realized. The exploitation of the land by man requires his interference in this balance. Human needs, such as food, fuel, shelter, and livestock farming, require the destruction of the natural vegetation that covers the soil* (Cabral, 1954a, p. 166).

This typology provides interesting insights for contemporary climate thinking because it allows us to identify where human action is altering systems that, on their own, would maintain a dynamic equilibrium. Thus, Cabral proposes a conservation approach that goes far beyond isolated technical measures and integrates planning that articulates scientific knowledge, local characteristics, and social dimensions.

Cabral notes that every region has limits based on its climate and soil. Planning should take these limits into account. In his analysis of the climate of Black Africa, he highlighted specific characteristics such as "high and nearly continuous temperatures, high atmospheric humidity, and abundant rainfall" (Cabral, 1954b), the intense combination of which contributes to soil degradation.

According to Cabral (1954b), the evolution of agriculture in Black Africa should address fundamental issues: a) the need to utilize all the resources of Black Africa, which will require the progressive transformation of nature; b) the need to apply the wealth derived from these resources to Black Africa itself; c) the need to establish an agrarian structure that prevents disorderly and greedy exploitation of the land; d) the need to provide Black people with access to all means of defence against the adversity of the climate; e) the need to foster the cultural development of Afro-Black people; and f) the need to select and utilize everything useful in Afro-Black farming systems, as well as what, from European techniques, is relevant to Black Africa (Cabral, 1954b, pp. 414–415).

To address poverty and soil fragility in Black Africa, Cabral proposed a system that reconciled agricultural practices without soil destruction, incorporated new techniques through regular updates, and supported the collective use of land, ensuring that the community shared in the benefits. This vision reflects the understanding that individual land ownership became synonymous with wealth, economic, and, consequently, political dominance, which is why the structure of property was inseparable from environmental issues.

Ayompe and Epie (2025) document that sub-Saharan Africa today faces precisely the vulnerabilities that Cabral identified as structurally produced, especially the fact that 60% of the population depends on climate-sensitive sectors, having faced a 20% reduction in crop yields, including maize and sorghum. As a result, it is not only the agricultural sector that is affected; it also shines through in other sensitive sectors, such as education and health, increasing the vulnerability of families, revealing that agriculture is a vital sector for considering issues such as food sovereignty and economic empowerment that allow for increased responsiveness, and nature-based solutions.

Unity and the Fight Against Climate Change

Another concept necessary for resolving climate issues is the principle of unity and struggle, shaped in Cabral's thought as a force to end colonial domination in African lands. In the important document "General Slogans of Our Party" (1965), Cabral defined unity as a dynamic concept that allows for the preservation of everyone´s personality while working together towards a concrete objective. In this vein, unity is an act, a necessary condition for things to happen. The clarity of unity becomes useful when applied to the reality of people facing a problem. If, in the colonial era, Cabral was referring to colonialism, it becomes interesting to understand, within this process of coloniality, the current struggle against climate change.

The need for struggle, as advocated by Cabral and transformed into a force capable of ending colonial domination, remains alive insofar as "the more united we are, the more we will live up to what everyone knows and what it is: unity is strength" (Cabral, 1965, p. 5).

Cabral defines struggle under the normal condition of all beings in the world. Because the colonialists occupied the land and exerted a force that defined the destiny of Africans, sowing war between tribes and leading to violence and destruction, the logic prevails: if there is a force that exerts pressure, there is also one that reacts, which Cabral considers resistance to colonial force (1965, p. 8). In short, Cabral argues that unity and struggle complement each other. Unity is necessary, but to achieve unity, one must also fight.

Cabral's unity and struggle mobilize a meaningful argument for continental solidarity, insofar as awareness must transcend the logic that a benefit for one country should correspond to a benefit for other African countries. Fighting only for national interests reinforces Africa's historical weakness of divide and conquer.

For Cabral, the struggle relies on understanding the concrete reality of the land, which is embedded in a more complex reality: "we are part of a concrete reality that is Africa, fighting against imperialism, against racism, against colonialism" (Cabral, 1965, p. 25). Failure to understand these interconnections can result in errors with high costs for African countries. This is meaningful because an environmental problem is never only an environmental problem, but results from economic, sociological, and political decisions (Le Prestre, 2000).

The environmental degradation described by Cabral in African territories is part of a global structure of exploitation that, as he demonstrated, crosses the borders of colonies and independent states. The response to this structure also required a supranational dimension: African unity. As this strategy was applied to the national liberation struggle, which proved to be the only way to defeat the colonial powers aided by imperialist powers, the activation of this strategy is necessary because Africa loses when its countries act alone and in a disorganized manner, and its countries win when they act together and fight for climate justice.

From this perspective, the climate struggle occupies a place similar to that of the anti-colonial struggle, constituting a condition for humanity to continue to exist and, only then, to coexist. The reinterpretation of the notion of "people" in a political and climate context suggests an awareness that the "people" should be included as those committed to guaranteeing the conditions of existence and, by implication, to preserving present and

future life. Those who deny or sabotage these conditions, like climate change deniers or those blocking necessary actions, should be excluded from this political view.

Cabral argued that the end of colonialism was a historical necessity because the former system denied the existence of colonized peoples. Hence his central idea: "to coexist, one must first exist." In short, there can be no dialogue, democracy, or coexistence when a group is deprived of the minimum conditions for life (Busk, 2025). Today, it is not only colonialism that threatens existence but also its consequences, which have become as lethal as the colonial system. Therefore, the climate crisis has continued the colonial project of reducing the quality of life and causing death for people who continue to face exploitation and suffer from the harmful effects of this process.

The idea of resistance is remarkable because it is an asset that can only be activated by the oppressed and vulnerable people, both to save their own lives and the lives of their enemies and to combat the banalization of life. This asset also highlights a person's desire to live on their land, their way, in harmony with nature. That benefits everyone.

For Cabral, the fight against hunger and drought would become an integral part of the national liberation project, understood not only as formal independence but also as the capacity to manage natural resources, produce food, and guarantee human dignity. Agriculture, as a dimension of economic resistance, emerged as a weapon that strengthened independence and a path to freedom. Cabral (1969) sums up the issue by saying, “A people who can't produce their own food can't have anything else in life”.

Political sovereignty would go hand in hand with food sovereignty; this is fundamental, as hunger continues to be an instrument of the subjugation of African peoples to the powers and interests of the small elite, in collusion with global elites, who condition the immediate resolution of hunger on popular support for the obscure interests of these elites. In this sense, uniting to produce and manage their own food reduces dependence and places the survival of Africans under the management of the continent's wealth through serious institutions committed to food sovereignty at the continental level.

A united Africa in key international climate negotiations will enhance outcomes and defend its interests on this issue. Although Africa's role in international climate negotiations has evolved significantly, moving from marginalization without a unified position to gradual involvement in climate dialogues (Ngono & Noa, 2022), these efforts have not reached their full potential, especially in relation to historical reparations for the impacts of colonialism and the consequences of climate change for major greenhouse gas emitters.

Climate finance needs for Africa are estimated at around US$1.4 trillion over the current decade, equivalent to approximately US$140 billion per year to meet adaptation and resilience requirements. Nonetheless, actual flows have remained far short of this level, averaging around $35 billion annually, less than 25% of the estimated needs (Dryden & Volz, 2025).

However, the outcomes Africa could achieve through negotiations would not rely on the argument of vulnerability, even though African political leaders have shaped their discourse in that direction. Recalling Cabral's observations is necessary since climate improvement would not only benefit Africans. Cabral's discourse always emphasized placing African

interests at an important level within the context of humanity's interests in general (Cabral, 1979). In this logic, defending African interests is defending those of humanity.

The climate crisis, in this sense, provides fertile ground for articulating African unity around an agenda that is both particular, due to the disproportionate impacts on the continent, and universal, due to the global nature of the threat, as well as Africa's own contributions through nature-based technologies and solutions, along with African practices and worldview.

What Cabral identified as structural injustice rooted in colonialism is consolidating as climate injustice (Táíwò, 2022). This reflection is not simply about knowing who emits more CO_2; it focuses on understanding who has been historically deprived of the capacity to adapt, innovate, and make decisions regarding the use of their territories. This casts a critique on the effectiveness of the political sovereignty of countries in the Global South, as decisions on African issues still occur from the perspective of emitting countries, the former colonizing nations.

The historical patterns of inequality produced by colonialism and pointed out by Amílcar Cabral are currently reproduced in global climate relations, in which the most polluted states, by refusing to fulfil their responsibilities, exacerbate the vulnerability of poor countries that are not responsible for the climate crisis (Ogunbode, 2022).

The goal of resistance, according to Cabral (1969, p. 9), is "to break with the colonial State in our land to create a new, different State, based on justice, work, and equal opportunities for all the children of our land." This horizon of building something new, not destroying the old, is also essential for thinking about responses to the climate crisis: it is not enough to denounce injustices; it is necessary to build alternatives based on justice, redistribution, and sovereignty over natural resources.

Cabral's economic resistance implies the creation of autonomous "productive forces" based on local knowledge and the population's work capacity. This perspective anticipates contemporary discussions on "just transition" and low-carbon economies centered on local communities, contrasting with technocratic market solutions that perpetuate structural dependencies. Larry Busk (2025, p. 72), anchored in Cabral's argument, questions whether, if we accept that colonialism is intrinsically anti-democratic and must be combated, why we should not apply the same perspective to other forms of domination, such as capitalism, which sustains the energy model responsible for the climate crisis. The answer leads to unease regarding the fact that capitalism has become entrenched in all regions of the world, and that the current lifestyle depends on the capitalist system, which generates only external criticism, and not the adoption of an economic model that can replace it effectively.

Local Knowledge and Nature-Based Solutions

Cabral's final and fundamental contribution to contemporary environmental thought is the valorization of local knowledge and interdisciplinary practice. In his studies on Guinea-Bissau, he combined pedological analysis with an understanding of traditional cultural systems and social relations of production, aiming to interpret the collected elements and

perceive the human element behind them, accurately evaluating the productive systems and the relationships among the various stakeholders. This gave him a deep understanding of the social reality of the territory where he lived, a knowledge that the stereotypical reports of colonial society failed to capture.

This approach is useful for contemporary responses to climate change, as it highlights the importance of traditional and Indigenous knowledge for understanding local ecosystems and developing adaptation strategies. Cabral recognized that local farmers possess essential knowledge about soil and water management. What later became established as nature-based solutions to combat climate change had already been understood by Cabral when he systematized the knowledge of Guinean rural populations on soil management, crop cycles, and water conservation while working at the Pessubé Agricultural Post (1953–1954).

Cabral's suggestions for improving the agricultural sector included seed selection according to soil type, crop-livestock intercropping, integrating agriculture with livestock farming, and improving agricultural techniques. The agroecological practices of crop diversification, maintenance of vegetation cover, and sustainable soil management, advocated by Cabral, are considered more effective strategies for climate adaptation (Ayompe and Epie, 2025).

According to Cabral, the man who is unaware of the conditions under which the complex soil-life-climate system operates destroys the earth, the foundation upon which the structure of human societies rests. The educational process activates this awareness by promoting critical thinking, interdisciplinary approaches, and behavioural changes necessary for climate resilience (Silva & Guimarães, 2018).

One of the widely advocated solutions to address climate change is environmental education, which should be mandatory in the curricula of all levels of education, especially in vulnerable countries.

In 2021, UNESCO conducted important work to investigate how African countries integrated environmental issues into their curricula, noting that climate change was integrated into teacher training curricula in 28 countries at the primary level and 35 countries at the secondary level. Among the countries cited as examples is Seychelles, an African state, where the approach is mandatory (UNESCO, 2021).

We should not see African traditions as a proposal to return to an idealized past, but as the development of a scientific and popular culture in which science serves an education that liberates. Cabral's idea of "returning to the source" allows us to understand the path that humanity must take to reverse the climate crisis, which requires the revaluation of popular culture and knowledge (Vambe & Zegeye, 2008).

However, the financing logic of adaptation plans and climate mitigation measures by the main funders in the Global North leaves little room for manoeuvre for countries in the Global South. David Harvey (2003) demonstrates how the credit system functions as a "hook" mechanism, inducing economically vulnerable countries into debt to finance infrastructure that primarily supports resource export rather than local development.

It is important to understand that climate adaptation depends much more on local indigenous knowledge systems than on the importation of external technologies and

solutions, although this is not in the interest of the main funders, who aim to profit from climate issues. In this sense, the devaluation of the discourse is also related to the need to keep countries in the Global South dependent on technologies from the North.

Even in the Global South, politicians remain skeptical and reluctant to promote Indigenous knowledge systems, revealing that discourse does not align with practical actions. It is necessary to promote awareness among Global South agents, leading to epistemic disobedience and a break with colonial power structures to recognize the value systems of communities that interact with species and ecosystems.

This is valuable because certain agroecological practices have been presented as scientific discoveries of Northern countries, when in fact they are practices rooted in the great civilizations of the Global South (David, 2024). This integration, however, cannot be seen merely as ethnographic curiosity; it must be viewed as the practical science of ecological adaptation. This responsibility for valuation lies with the academia and politics of African countries, in the sense of decolonizing the curriculum and deciding what should be studied and its usefulness for solving African problems.

Cabral's Contribution of Thought to Climate Issues in Cabo Verde

To discuss the relevance of Cabral's thought and contributions today, it is worth asking: where is Cabral in Cabo Verdean politics and academia? In Cabo Verde, Cabral has been the target of far more attacks than the necessary and valuable dialogue about his contributions to addressing problems, such as environmental ones.

However, it must be admitted that Cabral still bothers an intellectual elite that was more concerned with reproducing Western theoretical models, without anchoring and involving themselves in the real causes and problems of the African people. Cabral was an organic intellectual, in the perspective of Paulo Freire, acting and thinking from two countries (Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde), proposing strategies for the development of Africa and humanity, using science, diplomacy, and a spirit of solidarity to dignify the human being.

Cabral argued for the need for Cabo Verdeans to know their land, the circumstances, and problems of the country to contribute to solving structural problems. Without this deep knowledge, there is no way to transform reality, and this has not happened given the low investment in scientific research and the current debate on the country's history, which involves issues such as drought, famine, water mobilization, and food sovereignty.

Cabral stated that soil erosion is one of the country’s biggest problems, which "presents a grim state," and this issue remains the main one (Costa, 2004; Baptista et al., 2015). Cabral placed the problem at a level that everyone knew about, at least its consequences for agricultural activities, despite the political and scientific negligence over the decades in reversing the erosion situation and empowering this vital sector for the country. Regarding the phenomenon of climate change, more than 85% of the Cabo Verde population is aware of and concerned about its impacts on the well-being of their households and on the rainfall cycle itself. Although the municipalities (Ribeira Grande de Santiago, Santa Cruz and Santa Catarina do Fogo) dedicated to agricultural practice are those where the population has heard the least about climate change (INE, 2025), this reveals that those who work in the

sectors most affected by climate issues do not have a complete understanding of the phenomenon and, therefore, have a low capacity for reaction and adaptation.

Cabral's writings on Cabo Verde are particularly relevant for understanding climate vulnerability. In "Some Considerations on Rain" (1949) and in the series "In Defence of the Land" (1949-1952), he documents a dramatic environmental transformation, identifying the destruction of natural vegetation as the primary cause of the aridity of some islands and the development of erosion.

Cabral (1949, p. 5) documents what falls under "environmental memory" or "ecological baseline": a comparison between a past of greater abundance and a degraded present.

> *Droughts in Cabo Verde have been a long-standing problem, with all the inherent consequences, but it is not uncommon to hear elderly people express nostalgia for the old days of abundance, when singing streams flowed through lush valleys, overlooking hillsides covered in a wide variety of vegetation; references to the good springs that fed the irrigation of crops; mentions of years of plenty, of great production of corn and beans, etc. Well, it is essential to mention that little or nothing of all that remains today.*

Recovering this memory brings with it a valuable point: although irregular, it does rain in Cabo Verde, and sometimes in significant quantities. Nevertheless, the large volume that falls into the ocean and what is lost towards the sea, carrying away a portion of arable land, could be used strategically, especially during periods of drought or when plants require additional water to complete their biological cycle.

Cabral describes phenomena that anticipate the contemporary concept of extreme weather events and their consequences, from floods that previously followed a normal course to rainfall that eroded portions of agricultural land, indicating the low capacity for water retention and infiltration in the soil and springs. Therefore, rains that once fed the springs became destructive events.

Currently, data point to enormous pressure on the land, as only 10% is arable, which is insufficient for agricultural demand, forcing the use of steep slopes for rainfed agriculture, which increases erosion (Baptista, 2013). Due to this type of agriculture, soil loss is estimated at 7.8 t/ha (Ministry of Environment, Housing and Spatial Planning, 2013).

Regarding solutions for Cabo Verde, Cabral had already advised Cabo Verdeans to adopt practical measures, including the use of rainwater with minimal loss. This recommendation has not been implemented in a structured and continuous way in public policies related to major infrastructure in rural and urban areas. It has been more of a governmental policy than a state policy.

In 2006, the Cabo Verdean government invested in the construction of six dams[2] as strategies for retaining and storing rainwater, mostly on the island of Santiago, due to its hydrogeological conditions. In 2010, the government named the construction of the

[2] Poilão Dam; Saquinho Dam; Salineiro Dam; Faveta Dam; Figueira Gorda Dam; Canto Cagarra Dam and Banca Furada Dam

Saquinho dam in the municipality of Santa Catarina after 'Amílcar Cabral', in recognition of his contribution as an agricultural engineer who grew up in the region.

However, when the reservoirs built to retain and store rainwater reach their storage limit, they lose freshwater to the sea, while in other parts of the islands, the population faces water scarcity. Furthermore, the problem of poor rainwater management extends to urban buildings, squares, and paved roads across the country, which lack rainwater harvesting and storage systems. This would be a solution to several problems in large urban centers and a source of irrigation for green areas, which are scarce in cities.

Cabral proposed intervening directly in the movement of water, creating obstacles and forest hydraulic works to reduce the speed of flash floods. The idea is simple but efficient: if the water flows down with less force, it carries away less soil. Therefore, on steep slopes, Cabral advocated the creation of terraces to stop the flow of water and allow agriculture, to reduce the formation of gullies and conserve the soil, a practice that Cabral highlighted at the time was already in effect on some islands, such as the Island of Fogo. This proposal is also important for urban settlements, where unsafe housing exists.

In waterways, he suggested the use of upstream dikes and other structures (of stone or masonry) to control floods, retain sediments, and reduce the impact of strong currents. He spoke of the importance of harnessing rainwater through reservoirs, such as dams, reservoirs, and cisterns, which contribute to both soil conservation and the sustainable use of water. Cisterns are a low-cost technology that can be encouraged in both rural and urban areas. Only 10% of people have cisterns for rainwater. In rural areas, it is 27,4%, but in urban areas, it's only 5% (INE, 2025). (INE, 2025). It is an architectural aspect that should be mandatory in urban construction because cities like Praia have faced enormous pressure on this vital resource in recent years. Although greywater is not used according to the recycling rules, it can help boost urban vegetation.

Cabral emphasized planting species that protect the soil, including shrub and tree vegetation, as well as crops organized according to contour lines. Here, the notion that the soil needs to be "dressed" to prevent it from being washed away by the rain becomes clear.

Nevertheless, Cabral insists that no one should apply a solution generically, as it depends on a detailed study of the specific conditions of each place. This becomes clearer when he analyses the issue of tree planting. For him, the essential thing in Cabo Verde is not simply planting trees, but "creating green" intelligently, which involves selecting species that adapt to local ecological conditions, can withstand drought, and contribute to soil protection and some economic utility.

The shortage of green spaces has been one of the country's main environmental issues for the past15 years. Only 0.2% of the total area corresponds to urban woodlands (INE, 2025). Successive reforestation projects have prioritized species such as acacias, which have become a threat to the fertility of agricultural soil and have spread uncontrollably, also due to the decrease in soil preparation for agricultural activity and the abandonment of the countryside.

Cabral (1949) conditions these structures and solutions on economic viability, also to technical studies, but he emphasizes a determining point: "that there be the will (of the leaders and the led), that is, "a conscious desire to carry out works that, by their scope,

contribute to improving the existence of a People who, through countless generations, have had from life only the bitter gall of suffering, the stigma of hunger."

The proposal addresses not only the technical aspects but also the political and institutional field, advocating for the creation of forestry legislation, the training of technicians, and the education of the population. It recognizes that the relationship between humans and trees represents a structural struggle for survival.

If there is one word that runs through all Cabral's concerns, it is hunger. He aligns with the innovative concept of development as freedom, which Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq proposed in the 1990s. This concept presupposes the removal of the main barriers, especially hunger, so that people become more socially complete and can participate freely in the development process.

Agriculture is the area most affected by climate change in Cabo Verde. For Cabral, defending this sector is rational, as it is the basis of the Cabo Verdean economy; therefore, it is the area that allows for the economic emancipation of the people, but it is also the area where the people can contribute their knowledge and experience of nature-based solutions to climate change.

Small producers face various challenges, and climate change exerts more pressure on already fragile production systems. In Cabral's time, the rainfall regime was common knowledge; he himself stated that it was a fact for which rulers could prepare. Today, things have changed, and it is no longer possible for farmers to prepare during the traditional rainy season. In this sense, a convergence between technology and ancestral practices is needed for more resilient agriculture.

However, there are two characteristics of climate change, in relation to rainfall patterns, that Cabral could not have considered: unpredictability and intensity. Currently, it rains out of season and intensely for a short time, causing many damages and destruction. The tragedies that occurred in Praia in 2021, in São Vicente in 2025, and in Tarrafal reinforce the argument that the country has not prepared for this type of event. Nevertheless, unpredictability itself becomes data: if it is not known when or to what extent climate change will impact, the best course of action is to prepare for any scenario, and in this, Cabral's observations serve as compasses.

Conclusion

The path outlined in this article allows us to affirm that Amílcar Cabral, although he did not live to witness the scientific and political consolidation of the global climate debate, formulated, based on his experience as an agronomist and as a leader of the liberation struggle, a systemic understanding of the relationship between soil, climate, and society that anticipates, in conceptual terms, discussions that would gain traction only decades later. The concept of "soil-life-climate balance," his distinction between natural erosion and erosion accelerated by human action, and his definition of conservation as use without destruction constitute contributions that engage directly with what is now designated as sustainable development, nature-based solutions, and climate justice.

More than a technical anticipation, Cabral's thought offers a key to the political interpretation of the contemporary climate crisis. By situating environmental degradation as a structural consequence of colonialism and imperialism, and not as merely natural or accidental phenomenon, Cabral provides a foundation for what recent literature calls climate coloniality - the realization that the vulnerability of countries in the Global South to climate change is not disconnected from the history of colonial exploitation, but rather its continuation in new forms. His defense of African unity as a condition of strength and struggle finds, in this sense, a direct correspondence with the current need for a cohesive African position in international climate negotiations, marked by persistent imbalances in adaptation financing and a historical reparation that has not yet been realized.

At the local level, applying Cabral's thinking to the case of Cabo Verde reveals both the relevance and urgency of his proposals. Soil erosion, identified by Cabral as the archipelago's greatest problem, remains an unresolved challenge; his recommendations on rainwater harvesting and utilization, the resumption of terraced farming, and afforestation adapted to local ecological conditions continue to offer technically sound solutions to problems exacerbated by the increasing unpredictability and intensity of extreme weather events.

Finally, this study also sought to draw attention to a significant void concerning the relative marginalization of Cabral in contemporary Cabo Verdean academic and political debates, especially regarding his scientific production. Recovering this dimension means recognizing him as an organic intellectual who articulated science, local knowledge, and an ethical commitment to human dignity. In this sense, academically valuing Cabral's environmental thought is not an exercise in historical memory; it represents a concrete contribution to contemporary discussions about climate justice from the perspective of Cabo Verde and Africa.

References

Ayompe, L. M., & Epie, W. N. (2025). Building Africa's climate resilience: Understanding the impacts and future strategies in the face of climate change. Frontiers in Climate, 7, 1619799. https://doi.org/10.3389/fclim.2025.1619799

Baptista, I. (2013). The status of soil resources in Cabo Verde. FAO.

Baptista, I., et al. (2015). Soil and water conservation strategies in Cabo Verde and their impacts on livelihoods: An overview from the Ribeira Seca watershed. Land, 4(1), 22–44.

Busk, L. A. (2025). The people and the population: Cabral, democracy, and climate catastrophe. Philosophy and Global Affairs. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.5840/pga202511369

Cabral, A. ([1969] 1979). Analysis of some types of resistance. Imprensa Nacional/PAIGC.

Cabral, A. (1949a). Some considerations about rainfall. Cabo Verde, 1(1), 5–7.

Cabral, A. (1949b). In defense of the land: Erosion - its causes and effects. Cabo Verde, 1(2), 2–5.

Cabral, A. (1951). The problem of soil erosion: Contribution to the study of the Cuba region (Alentejo) (Final report of the Agronomic Engineering course). Higher Institute of Agronomy.

Cabral, A. (1954a). Towards knowledge of the problem of soil erosion in Guinea: I – On the concept of erosion. Boletim Cultural da Guiné Portuguesa, (33).

Cabral, A. (1954b). Concerning the use of land in Black Africa. Boletim Cultural da Guiné Portuguesa, 9(34), 401–415.

Cabral, A. (1990). Poem. In Poetic Anthology of Guinea-Bissau. Editorial Inquérito.

Cabral, AM, Silva, FE, & Souto, M. (2018). Itineraries of Amílcar Cabral. Rosa de Porcelana Editora.

Cabral, J. (1949). Under the sign of good rains. Bulletin of Propaganda and Information, 1(2), 22.

César, F. (2023). Weathering: Agropoetry of liberation by Amílcar Cabral. digitAR, 9. https://doi.org/10.14195/2182-844X_9_14

Costa, FL (2004). Contributions to the knowledge of erosive processes in Cabo Verde. GeoInova, (15), 215–244.

Da Silva, M. (1988). Amílcar Cabral: The man and his work. IICT.

David, J. O. (2024). Decolonizing climate change response: African indigenous knowledge and sustainable development. Frontiers in Sociology, 9, 1456871. https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2024.1456871

DeBoom, M. J. (2022). Climate coloniality as atmospheric violence: From necropolitics toward planetary mutuality. Political Geography, 99, 102786. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102786

Dryden, A., & Volz, U. (2025). Africa's vicious cycle of debt and climate change. Boston University Global Development Policy Center, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, & SOAS Center for Sustainable Finance.

El Nabolsy, Zeyad. (2020) "Amílcar Cabral's Modernist Philosophy of Culture and Cultural Liberation." Journal of African Cultural Studies 32.2: 231–250.

Ferrão, JE (1988). The agronomic activity of Amílcar Cabral. In Agrarian studies of Amílcar Cabral (pp. 17–30). IICT & INEP.

Gibson, R. B., Hassan, S., Holtz, S., Tansey, J., & Whitelaw, G. (2005). Sustainability assessment: Making the world better, one undertaking at a time. Earthscan.

Harvey, D. (2003). The new imperialism. Oxford University Press.

Havik, P.J., et al. (2018). Agro-economic transitions in Guinea-Bissau (West Africa): Historical trends and current insights. Sustainability, 10(10), 3408.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (2021). Climate change 2021: The physical science basis. Cambridge University Press.

Le Prestre, P. (2000). International Ecopolitics. SENAC.

Leff, E. (2001). Environmental Epistemology (S. Valenzuela, Trans.). Cortez.

Lopes, JV (2021). Cabo Verde: A body that refuses to die: 70 years against hunger, 1949–2019. Spleen Editions.

Maddox, G. H. (2006). Sub-Saharan Africa: An environmental history. ABC-CLIO.

Mercer, H., & Simpson, T. (2023). Imperialism, colonialism, and climate change science. WIREs Climate Change, 14(6), e851.

Ministry of Environment, Housing and Spatial Planning. (2013). Systematic Inventory Evaluation for Risk Assessment (SIERA).

National Institute of Statistics. (2025). Continuous Multi-objective Survey (CMS) Report 2024 – Environment and climate change.

Neves, J. (2017). Ideology, science and people in Amílcar Cabral. History, Sciences, Health – Manguinhos, 24(2), 333–347.

Ngono, L. N., & Noa, M. G. N. (2022). L'Afrique dans les négociations internationales sur le climat: de la défiance à l'implication croissante du continent dans le processus dialogique. *Études internationales, 53*(3), 379–404. https://doi.org/10.7202/1109701ar

Ogunbode, C. A. (2022). Climate justice is social justice in the Global South. Nature Human Behavior, 6, 1443.

Santos, M. (2006). The nature of space: Technique and time, reason and emotion (4th ed.). EDUSP.

Sultana, F. (2022). The unbearable heaviness of climate coloniality. Political Geography. Vol. 99.

Táíwò, OO (2022). Reconsidering reparations: Worldmaking in the case of climate crisis. Oxford University Press.

Taques, RCV, Marques, DKL, & Mise, FT (2023). Approximations between critical environmental education and the decolonial praxis of Amílcar Cabral. REMEA, 40(1), 332–349.

Tenreiro, F. (1946). The island of São Tomé. Overseas Research Board.

UNESCO. (2021). Learn for our planet: A global review of how environmental issues are integrated in education. UNESCO. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377362

Uzoigwe, GN (2010). European partition and conquest of Africa: A general overview. In AA Boahen (Ed.), General History of Africa VII: Africa under colonial domination, 1880–1935 (2nd ed.). UNESCO.

Vambe, M. T., & Zegeye, A. (2008). Amílcar Cabral: National liberation as the basis for Africa's renaissances. Rethinking Marxism, 20(2), 188–200.

Weart, S. R. (2008). The discovery of global warming (Rev. expanded ed.). Harvard University Press.

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

AMÍLCAR CABRAL AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY IN POST-INDEPENDENCE GUINEA-BISSAU AND CABO VERDE

INÊS NASCIMENTO RODRIGUES
nesrodrigues@ces.uc.pt
She is a tenured assistant researcher at the Centre for Social Studies (CES), University of Coimbra (Portugal), and vice-coordinator of the research line Europe and the Global South: Heritage and Dialogues. Her research sits at the intersection of memory studies, postcolonial theory, and the cultural history of forced labour in African archipelagic contexts. She is currently principal investigator of GHOST: The Afterlives of Contract and Enslavement. Narratives on Indentured Labour between Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe, funded by a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Global Fellowship (2024–2027). Her doctoral research on the Batepá Massacre in São Tomé and Príncipe was awarded the CES Prize for Young Portuguese-Speaking Social Scientists. She serves on the editorial boards of Práticas da História and Cadernos de Estudos Africanos.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8088-0201

MIGUEL CARDINA
miguelcardina@ces.uc.pt
He is a historian, professor at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra (Portugal) and researcher at the Centre for Social Studies. He was an European Research Council (ERC) Grantee, with the project «CROME - Crossed Memories, Politics of Silence. The Colonial-Liberation Wars in Postcolonial Times» (2017-2023). He is the author or co-author of several books, book chapters, and articles on the dynamics between history and memory; the processes of historicization related to colonialism, anticolonialism, and the colonial wars; and political ideologies in the 1960s and 1970s. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5428-457X

Abstract

This study examines how Amílcar Cabral's legacy has been constructed, disputed, and reconfigured in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde since independence. Through an analysis of monuments, official commemorations, political speeches, public debates, and youth and artistic mobilisations, it situates Cabral's figure within broader processes of nation-building, political legitimation, and historical narration. It asks why the memorialisation of the same founding figure took such different forms in the two states born of the struggle he led and links these trajectories to the international conjunctures – Cold War alignments, structural adjustment, democratisation – that shaped state formation in both countries. The article argues that Cabral functions as a central mnemonic reference through which state actors legitimise authority and shape narratives of unity, while younger generations and diaspora groups reactivate his legacy as a language of critique in contexts marked by political instability, neoliberal reform, and social inequality. Rather than eroding his symbolic status, these competing appropriations reaffirm Cabral's enduring relevance as a living political framework through which contemporary actors articulate claims for social justice, democratic accountability, and alternative futures.

Keywords

Amílcar Cabral; politics of memory; state formation; Cabo Verde; Guinea-Bissau.

Resumo

Este artigo examina o modo como o legado de Amílcar Cabral tem sido construído, disputado e reconfigurado na Guiné-Bissau e em Cabo Verde desde as independências. Através da análise de monumentos, comemorações oficiais, discursos políticos, debates públicos e mobilizações juvenis e artísticas, situa a figura de Cabral em processos mais amplos de construção nacional, legitimação política e narração histórica. Questiona-se por que razão a memorialização de uma mesma figura fundadora assumiu formas tão distintas nos dois países nascidos da luta que ele liderou, relacionando estas trajetórias com as conjunturas internacionais – alinhamentos da Guerra Fria, ajustamento estrutural, democratização – que moldaram a formação do Estado em ambos os países. O artigo defende que Cabral funciona como referência mnemónica central através da qual os atores estatais legitimam a sua autoridade e moldam narrativas de unidade, ao passo que as gerações mais novas e certos segmentos da diáspora reativam o seu legado como linguagem de crítica em contextos marcados pela instabilidade política, pela reforma neoliberal e pela desigualdade social. Longe de erodirem o seu estatuto simbólico, estas apropriações concorrentes reafirmam a relevância duradoura de Cabral enquanto quadro político vivo a partir do qual atores contemporâneos formulam reivindicações de justiça social, responsabilização democrática e futuros alternativos.

Palavras-chave

Amílcar Cabral; Políticas da Memória; Formação do Estado; Cabo Verde; Guiné-Bissau.

How to cite this article

Rodrigues, Inês Nascimento & Cardina, Miguel (2026). Amílcar Cabral and the Politics of Memory in Post-Independence Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 242-262. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.11

Article submitted on 23 June 2026 and accepted on14 August 2026.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 242-262
Amílcar Cabral and the Politics of Memory in Post-Independence Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde
Inês Nascimento Rodrigues, Miguel Cardina

AMÍLCAR CABRAL AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY IN POST-INDEPENDENCE GUINEA-BISSAU AND CABO VERDE[1,2]

INÊS NASCIMENTO RODRIGUES

MIGUEL CARDINA

Introduction

In one of the most emblematic scenes of *Nha Fala*, directed by Flora Gomes (2002), a bust of Amílcar Cabral is carried through city streets as windows and shutters close against its passage, refusing to shelter it. Through this scene, the Bissau-Guinean director signals the contested memorial terrain that, in both Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau, shapes how Cabral is remembered: the anticolonial leader who led the independence struggle for both territories, and whose legacy remains, more than fifty years later, a site of dispute. The film ends in Mindelo, on the island of São Vicente in Cabo Verde, at the square where a statue of the Portuguese navigator Diogo Afonso, celebrated as the island's 'discoverer', still stands. There, a bust of Cabral not only comes to life and levitates into the air, but it also displaces the navigator from his plinth and stands in a different orientation. As Kelly Mendes Lima (2011) observes, while Diogo Afonso faces the ocean (and, by extension, Portugal), Cabral directs his gaze toward the city and its people. Flora Gomes not only critiques the discomfort that Cabral's image has aroused in both countries but also challenges it: memorial ambiguity, the film suggests, does not diminish his legacy. It keeps it alive and open to reconfiguration.

This tension between official commemoration and popular reappropriation is the article's central concern. By "politics of memory" we mean the State and social processes through which historical events, figures, and narratives are selectively institutionalised, used and contested to serve present political ends. We examine the memorialisation of Amílcar

[1] Conflict of Interests - The authors have identified no conflicts of interest.

[2] Acknowledgements - A preliminary version of this study was translated by Victor Ferreira, to whom we express our gratitude for the exceptional care dedicated to the process. This work draws on data collected within two research projects. The first is CROME. Crossed Memories, Politics of Silence: The Colonial-Liberation War in Postcolonial Times, funded by the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (StG-ERC-715593). The second is GHOST. The Afterlives of Contract and Enslavement: Narratives on Indentured Labour between Cabo Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe, supported by the European Research Executive Agency under the European Union's Horizon Europe Programme, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions - Postdoctoral Fellowships (GA 101105812).

Cabral in both countries – through homage, open contestation, and relative omission – by analysing how his figure has been inscribed in monuments, political discourse, popular evocations, and public performances. We argue that Cabral's symbolic status functions as a central mnemonic reference through which state actors legitimise authority and shape narratives of national unity, while critics and younger generations mobilise it as a language of dissent. Two questions organise the analysis: why did the memorialisation of the same founding figure take such different forms, broadly consensual and dispersed in Guinea-Bissau, openly partisan in Cabo Verde, and what does this divergence reveal about the conditions, domestic and international, under which postcolonial states secure its political-symbolic legitimacy? In answering them, the article makes a twofold contribution. Empirically, it offers a systematic binational comparison of Cabral's post-independence memorialisation. Analytically, it argues that mnemonic change and political change moved together, and that neither can be explained in domestic terms alone: each reconfiguration of Cabral's memory tracked an international conjuncture, from Cold War alignments and structural adjustment to post-1989 democratisation and the global antiracist mobilisations of the present decade.

Amílcar Cabral is not the only postcolonial founding figure whose legacy has been simultaneously institutionalized and contested. The selective memorialization of independence-era leaders is a well-documented feature (e.g. Ahlman, 2017; Angelo, 2020; Fouéré, 2009; Harsch, 2013; Martins, 2021; Werbner, 1998). As Fouéré (2009) demonstrates in her analysis of Tanzania, the production of an official public memory involves the systematic collaboration of media, state actors, and commemorative ritual to fix a single, morally simplified image of the founding leader in the national imaginary while organising silence around everything that complicates it. This dynamic is never politically neutral. As Werbner (1998, p. 15) argued, what appears as historical contestation is always also a dispute over virtue, legitimacy, and the criteria by which leaders are judged. Marschall's analysis of commemorative monuments and statues in post-apartheid South Africa extends this insight into the material sphere: by celebrating heroes through public statues and heroes' acres, postcolonial societies construct "a genealogy, a chosen ancestry – not in biological but in ideological terms" (Marschall, 2006, p. 177). This literature has had little to say, however, about founding leaders assassinated before independence whose postcolonial states subsequently fractured. Monaville (2019, p. 22) states that the dead Lumumba became "a more tractable uniting reference" because he was no longer accountable for governance, yet his afterlife unfolded within a single national framework. Assassination before decolonization, the binational scope of an independence project, and the political rupture between successor states remain untheorized in combination.

It is precisely here that Cabral's case offers comparative leverage. His assassination before independence spared, in part, his memory from direct association with the failures of postcolonial governance. The binational scope of his project, and its subsequent fracture, created two memorial contexts in which his figure was pulled in different directions simultaneously. Yet comparatively little academic attention has been paid to the public evocation and mobilization of Cabral's figure in the specific contexts of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, or to the memory disputes that have attended the re-signification of his image in both countries over the past fifty years (for some exceptions see Barros and Lima, 2012; Barros and Lima, 2021; Barros et al., 2024).

Amílcar Lopes Cabral was born in 1924 in Bafatá, Guinea-Bissau, to Cabo Verdean parents, trained as an agronomist in Lisbon, and became the principal architect of the *Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (PAIGC), one of the most internationally celebrated anticolonial liberation movements of the twentieth century. His assassination in Conakry on 20 January 1973, months before Guinea-Bissau's unilateral declaration of independence, transformed him into a martyr-founder of singular moral authority. In both Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, Cabral was consecrated as "Founder of the Nationality": his effigy appeared on banknotes and coins, his birthday and the date of his assassination were enshrined as national holidays, and his name was attached to youth organizations, training institutes, and public institutions (Cardina and Rodrigues, 2022, pp. 25–26). The early post-independence years confirmed and actively deepened this status, though not without a degree of political management that would have consequences later.

The states that inherited this legacy were formed under tight international constraints. Like most polities born of decolonisation, they entered a world partitioned between rival great powers, in which the solidarities and imaginaries of the so-called "Third World" supplied both resources and limits for nation-building. Frederick Cooper's characterisation of the African state that emerged from this conjuncture is apposite: "the post-colonial gatekeeper state, lacking the external coercive capacity of its predecessor, was a vulnerable state, not a strong one" (Cooper, 2002, p. 5). State formation in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde unfolded within precisely these constraints, and the symbolic economy built around Cabral's memory became one of the few political resources the new states fully controlled.

The PAIGC deployed Cabral's image with deliberate intent: to legitimize the new (binational) State, to construct a narrative of revolutionary continuity, and to conceal the significant tensions that independence had not resolved, namely those between Cabo Verdean and Guinean factions, between the party leadership and the population, and between the ideals of the liberation struggle and the realities of governance (e.g. Chabal, 1983a, 1986; Lopes, 1987; Forrest, 1987; Roque, 2016). These tensions were rooted in a structural asymmetry that preceded independence by decades. Under Portuguese colonial rule, a chronic shortage of trained personnel had led the administration to rely heavily on Cabo Verdeans to staff its bureaucracy in Guinea-Bissau: by 1936, half of all mid-level functionaries and around seventy percent of civil servants were Cabo Verdean (Forrest, 2003, p. 169). For sectors of the Bissau-Guinean society, Cabo Verdean authority was therefore not a novelty introduced by the liberation struggle but a continuation, in a different political register, of a familiar colonial arrangement. The PAIGC's leadership, largely drawn from Cabo Verdean milieux whose educational formation and social networks set them apart from the largely rural, ethnically diverse Guinean population, inherited this association rather than transcended it (Chabal, 1983b, pp. 202–203; Coutinho, 2017, pp. 27, 54-61, 91-3; Forrest, 1987, pp. 100–101; Rudebeck, 1974, pp. 14, 40-1, 115). Little of this was visible from outside. During the liberation war and the first years of independence, Guinea-Bissau attracted considerable international attention and sympathy, the product of a successful anticolonial campaign and of widely admired social and political experiments in which international actors themselves took part. Teresa Almeida Cravo (2023) describes a promising proto-state, and a new country received by the international community with confidence and optimism, representations far removed from the "failed

state" imagery that would attach to it decades later. It was against this backdrop of external goodwill that domestic tensions did their corrosive work. In Guinea-Bissau, a nativist political discourse gave political form to the resentment this generated, positing an authentic Guinean belonging against which the Cabo Verdean leadership of the PAIGC could be cast as foreign, as an internal colonialism substituted for the external one (e.g. Vieira, 1980–81; see also Lopes, 1987). That this discourse served the interests of specific political actors, above all those who would go on to lead the 1980 coup, does not diminish its social traction, or its lasting consequences for how Cabral's legacy was subsequently managed in each country. What matters here is that it set in motion the very backlash it was designed to prevent: the moment when the consensus fractured, and Cabral's legacy became a terrain of contestation rather than a source of uncontested legitimacy.

Understanding why this happened requires attending to the logic of what we term "mnemonic legitimation" in postcolonial states more broadly. Founding figures function as symbolic anchors: when they precede the compromises and failures of actual governance, their authority can be invoked without being tested against a record. In contexts of political instability or contested legitimacy, state and non-state actors reach for these anchors not arbitrarily but because they condense, in a single figure, the moral authority of the independence struggle, the promise of national unity, and the claim to speak for a people rather than a faction. What distinguishes Cabral from comparable founding figures, and what makes the two cases examined here analytically productive, is that this symbolic resource was simultaneously available to competing actors in structurally different political contexts. In Guinea-Bissau, Cabral's status as founding martyr has, at least on the surface, largely retained a consensual character that cuts across political divisions: his figure has rarely been the object of open contestation. In Cabo Verde, by contrast, his figure has become entangled in multiparty competition, making his memorialization a sharper and more openly contested terrain. This structural variation, as much as the intentions of individual actors, explains the divergent trajectories traced in the sections that follow.

Decabralization And Post-Coup Forgetting

The fracture came from two directions almost simultaneously, and in each case the mechanism was instructive. In Guinea-Bissau, the coup d'état of 14 November 1980, led by then-President of the People's National Assembly and Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces João Bernardo 'Nino' Vieira, ended both the PAIGC's political hegemony and the project of binational unity with Cabo Verde. The coup's architects justified their action in explicitly Cabralist terms, invoking his values and objectives as having been betrayed by the existing leadership and framing the military takeover as a restoration of the revolution's original promise. The argument, in its sharpest form, held that the PAIGC had been captured by a Cabo Verdean elite whose interests and cultural formation were alien to the Guinean majority, and that independence had delivered not liberation but a change of masters (Vieira, 1980–81; see also Nóbrega, 2003).

By invoking Cabral while dismantling the institutional structure of binational unity, the coup's architects performed a precise ideological operation: they separated Cabral from the Cabo Verdean leadership that claimed to embody his legacy and repositioned him as a martyr betrayed by that same leadership. This reflects a structural feature of postcolonial

legitimation in which the founding figure's authority is so central that even those dismantling his institutional legacy must claim to act in his name. But it also explains a paradox that would define Guinea-Bissau's memorial landscape for decades: Cabral's symbolic status could remain broadly consensual precisely because this nativist logic had detached his memory from the Cabo Verdean political project and regrounded it in the liberation struggle itself, which no actor could afford to repudiate. Yet the practical effect was the opposite of what the rhetoric suggested. According to Koudawo (2001, pp. 202–3), the coup marked the victory of the military wing over politics, directly contradicting the principles Cabral had advocated, above all his insistence on the primacy of political over military leadership and on the liberation struggle as a project of social transformation rather than mere armed seizure of power. What followed was, as Koudawo (2001, p. 132) terms it, "the disintegration of the heritage of the period of the liberation struggle": Vieira's subsequent assertion of "presidential Bonapartism" (Fernandes, 1994) concentrated power in ways that structurally contradicted Cabral's own political thought, even as his name continued to serve as legitimizing cover. Cabral's image was thus preserved in rhetoric precisely as his legacy was dismantled in practice, a dissociation between name and content that would deepen over the following decades.

In Cabo Verde, the rupture took a different form and proved no less consequential for Cabral's public memory. After the coup, the Cabo Verdean wing of the party reconstituted itself as the PAICV (Partido Africano para a Independência de Cabo Verde), inheriting a fragile position: on certain islands, the PAIGC had never fully taken root, owing to the complex relationship between key social sectors, the project of unity with Guinea-Bissau, and the contested legacy of "Africanity" (Anjos, 2002; Costa and Sarmento, 2014; Fernandes, 2002; Barros, 2008; Trajano Filho, 2009; Almada, 2012). International conjunctures compounded this domestic fragility. Across the decade that followed, the unravelling of the Cold War order dissolved the alignments within which the PAICV's single-party model had been legible, while the ascendancy of neoliberalism and the conditionality attached to multilateral lending redefined what a small, aid-dependent archipelago could plausibly pursue. Liberalisation, moreover, began inside the party itself: from the mid-1980s the PAICV adopted a development model of economic extroversion, and, as Koudawo observed, economic and political liberalisation appeared intertwined, propelled by international pressure, the erosion of single-party authority, and a well-established Catholic Church (Koudawo, 2001, cited in Cardina and Rodrigues, 2022, pp. 61–62). The legislative, presidential, and municipal elections of 1991, all won by the opposition, turned this conjuncture into political and, as the next section shows, mnemonic change (Cardina and Rodrigues, 2023).

Across the archipelago, the PAIGC never related to Cabo Verdean society uniformly, and the mnemonic transition that followed traced pre-existing social and geographical fault lines rather than overwriting them. On Santiago, where the agrarian legacies of slavery and land concentration ran deepest and the party's rural roots ran strongest, popular attachment to Cabral proved most durable and post-independence mobilization in his name most vigorous: the *rabelados* and the *Marxa Kabral*, discussed below, are Santiago phenomena. São Vicente, tied to Portugal by long histories of emigration, kept a more ambivalent distance from the Guinean dimension of the PAIGC's project; it is no accident that Christian Rationalism, with its spiritualist reading of Cabral, flourished precisely there.

The *Movimento para a Democracia* (MpD), after 1991 the principal vehicle of anti-Cabralist politics, drew on a longer current of Cabo Verdean self-understanding that emphasised Creole singularity and kept the PAIGC's Pan-Africanism at arm's length (Anjos, 2002; for a detailed discussion of these disputes, see Cardina and Rodrigues, 2022, pp. 39–42, 132–4). The contested character of Cabral's legacy in Cabo Verde is therefore legible not only in the chronology of political transition but in this uneven social geography: islands, classes, and communities for whom his figure meant different things from the outset.

When the PAICV lost decisively in the multiparty elections of the early 1990s, more changed than the party in office: the terms on which national identity and historical legitimacy could be publicly claimed were themselves recast, in what we have elsewhere called a "mnemonic transition" (Cardina and Rodrigues, 2021). The MpD government did not attack Cabral head-on; his symbolic standing ran too deep for that. Instead, it gradually dismantled the symbolic apparatus surrounding his legacy, removing his effigy from banknotes and coins, abolishing his birthday as a national holiday, and replacing the anthem that carried his lyrics. Taken one by one, each gesture could pass for administrative normalisation or democratic renewal; together, they de-centred the anticolonial past as the primary reference for national identity. What Márcia Rego (2015, p. 77) calls "de-Africanization" worked by substitution rather than erasure, exchanging one set of national symbols and commemorative anchors for another that stressed Cabo Verde's creole particularity and its Atlantic and European connections over its ties to continental Africa. Cabral was not abolished but displaced: from the centre of national memory to one contested figure among several.

Even so, new homages followed: in 1995, a bust of Cabral was inaugurated in Santa Catarina, in the interior of Santiago, near the house where he grew up, and in 1996 a statue was erected at the international airport on Sal, which also bears his name (Cardina and Rodrigues, 2022, pp. 104–105). In Praia, on 5 July 2000, the twenty-fifth anniversary of independence, a memorial offered by the People's Republic of China was inaugurated: a small museum at its base, a bronze statue roughly three metres tall at its summit. The figure wears the iconic *sumbia*, yet it holds a book and is wrapped in a heavy trench coat, stiff in posture and distant from the bearing associated with the liberation struggle; sectors of the population, comparing it to statues of Asian political leaders, found it unsettling (Cardina and Rodrigues, 2022, p. 124). The memorial's location prompted similar reservations. In June 2020, Gilson Varela Lopes, a young Cabo Verdean based in Luxembourg, petitioned online for the removal of the statue of the Portuguese navigator Diogo Gomes, which stood beside the presidential palace in Praia, where the mnemonic transition described above had returned it. Gomes, the petition argued, was "a navigator who also trafficked slaves part-time"; the demand drew explicitly on the international wave of criticism of colonial statues and on the antiracist protests that surged worldwide after the murder of George Floyd in the United States. In place of Diogo Gomes, the petition proposed, should stand a statue of Amílcar Cabral.[3]

Turning to Guinea-Bissau, the coup gave rise to Nino Vieira's growing consolidation of power, against a backdrop of recurring political turbulence, the structural adjustment programme initiated by the World Bank and IMF in 1987, and regional disputes with

[3] Text of the petition retrieved from https://peticaopublica.com/pview.aspx?pi=PT100526.

Senegal and Guinea-Conakry (Temudo, 2008, p. 249). Although Nino Vieira professed a return to Cabral's ideals, substantive change remained limited. The process of commemorating Cabral through monuments in Guinea-Bissau was equally fraught with delays. As José Neves and Leonor Pires Martins (2024) describe in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Amílcar Cabral: uma exposição*, Cuba gifted Guinea-Bissau a statue of Cabral in 1985, sculpted by Lázaro Calvo from memory, drawing on Cabral's stay at a Havana hotel during the Tricontinental Conference. Upon arrival, however, the statue was placed in storage at the Amura Fort, where it remained for two decades, until May 2009, when it was finally installed at a roundabout near the airport in the Bissau-Guinean capital.

Taken together, these two trajectories illuminate something that a focus on either country alone would obscure. In both cases, Cabral's symbolic figure proved simultaneously indispensable and unstable: indispensable because the moral authority of the liberation struggle remained the primary source of political legitimation in the post-independence decades, and unstable because that authority could be claimed by competing actors with opposing agendas. The forms this instability took, however, differed fundamentally according to political context. In Cabo Verde, where the democratic transition produced a functioning multiparty system and institutional continuity, the contestation of Cabral's legacy was largely managed through official channels: electoral politics, state symbolism, and legislative decisions. The "decabralisation" of national memory was, in this sense, a controlled and incremental process. In Guinea-Bissau, where the authority over Cabral's memory was more dispersed across political and social actors, his legacy circulated more freely in non-state spaces: youth movements, music, urban art, and the kind of grassroots political mobilization that the following sections explore. The paradox is that this relative dispersion may have preserved the critical and transformative dimensions of Cabral's legacy more effectively than the managed commemorations of the Cabo Verdean state, precisely because no single actor was able to domesticate it. What the comparison reveals, in other words, is that the relationship between political context and memorial politics is not linear: stronger institutions do not straightforwardly produce more robust or more faithful engagements with the founding figure's legacy. They produce more controlled ones.

Other Representations of Cabral: Between Cult and Fraud

The representations of Cabral examined so far operate largely within the registers of official commemoration and institutional politics: monuments, holidays, party discourse, and the strategic mobilization of his name by state and para-state actors. Yet alongside these, and often in tension with them, a parallel set of memory practices has taken shape that operates below and beyond the state. These vernaculars, syncretic and, at times, millenarian appropriations of Cabral's figure exceed the frameworks of formal political culture. They transform Cabral from a historical actor into a mythological presence – a redeemer, a spirit, even a god – whose power derives precisely from his removal from the compromised terrain of actual governance. What follows traces three distinct but related manifestations of this memorialization in Cabo Verde: the mythological testimonies from

the colonial period, the *rabelados* communities of Santiago, and the Christian Rationalist movement on São Vicente.

One structural condition underlies all three of these vernacular appropriations and helps explain why they took such intense form specifically in Cabo Verde: Cabral never returned to the archipelago after leaving as a student (Tomás, 2021). His adult life was spent in Guinea-Bissau, Lisbon, Conakry, and international diplomatic circuits. In Guinea-Bissau, Cabral was a known physical presence; fighters had met him, heard him speak in the liberated zones, and followed him in combat. His memorialization there remains in some respects tethered to living memory. Mythologising registers were not absent in Guinea-Bissau, where Cabral also entered legend; but in Cabo Verde they assumed a more elaborate form, one his structural absence likely did much to enable: the demigod who appears in disguise, the Messiah glimpsed in rural communities, the astral president who communicates from beyond death are all figures generated by longing for someone who was no longer physically there. His very distance made him available for a kind of imaginative investment that proximity would have complicated.

The quasi-mythological dimensions of Cabral's presence in the social imaginary predate his assassination and exceed the memorialisation produced by the state, media, and the political sphere. Cláudio Furtado noted the existence of a "mythical memory" associated with the revolutionary, according to which it was common, "in the Cabo Verdean rural world and even during the colonial situation", to "hear that Amílcar Cabral had appeared in such and such localities" (Furtado, 1997, p. 18). Pedro Martins, arrested at the age of nineteen for his underground political activities in Cabo Verde and held at the Tarrafal prison[4] until the release of political prisoners on 1 May 1974, remembers him this way:

> *[Cabral] had achieved a magical and paternalistic stature as a demigod, a defender of the people who, disguised as a priest, a sister of charity, an old man, etc., would appear everywhere in Cabo Verde to see with his own eyes the suffering of the people, in order to encourage them in the fight against Portuguese domination. Any stranger who was not identified was often regarded as 'Amílcar' who again passed in disguise. This protection was not limited to Cabo Verde but also extended to São Tomé and Angola where he would see the suffering of the 'contratados' [workers, often forcibly recruited, who were bound by exploitative labour contracts to work on colonial plantations in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries]. […] The will of the people to free themselves from the yoke of exploitation, and their anxiety to be close to the leader who had already achieved enormous prestige and popularity, but who was hundreds of kilometres away from the islands, led them, in their simplicity, to make him a mystical figure* (Martins, 1995, p. 174).

Cabral thus emerged as a longed-for presence, a spectre who revealed himself to the rural poor most exposed to the violence of colonial exploitation in unexpected and varied disguises, precisely because his physical presence was so distant. His power lay in the

[4] On Tarrafal prison, one of the most potent symbols of political repression under Portuguese rule, see Barros (2009) and Lopes (2010).

ability to transcend his corporeal condition, appearing at unforeseen times and places to alleviate the suffering of the population.

A further manifestation of these dynamics is the distinctive appropriation of Cabral by the *rabelados*, rural communities in the interior of Santiago Island who maintain their own religious practices and a long history of resistance to the state, among whom Cabral is venerated and, at times, deified.[5] Contacts with the PAIGC during the liberation struggle are poorly documented, but appear to have run through the movement's underground militants (Martins, 1995, p. 174; Querido, 2013, pp. 191–2). What makes this appropriation analytically distinctive is not its religious intensity but the social logic it encodes. A community constituted by refusal – of the Catholic Church, of the colonial state, of successive governments' integrationist pressures – the *rabelados* incorporated Cabral into a sacred cosmology not as conventional political loyalty but as an act of sovereign interpretation, taking from his legacy what served their own framework of resistance and discarding the rest. That legacy, this suggests, has never belonged exclusively to the state or the party but circulates in registers that formal political culture neither controls nor fully comprehend.

The testimonies are consistent. Visiting the community of Espinho Branco in 1974, Euclides Fontes found a millenarian group whose leader, Nhô Fernando, saw Cabral as "the Messiah who would join them, the chosen people, to save Cabo Verde after centuries of suffering and oppression of all kinds" (Fontes, 2018, pp. 348–9). At Nhô Fernando's death in 1979, the newspaper *Voz di* Povo wrote that, in "their mystique", the *rabelados* considered Cabral "the black God they always dreamed of opposing to the European religion brought by the colonizers" (*Voz di Povo*, 1979, p. 8). Decades later, Rego (2015, pp. 146, 151) found the same veneration in attenuated form: some consider Cabral divine, others a man of exceptional qualities; asked whether Cabral had been seen in his community, the leader "shrugged, gave a half-smile, and uttered a suspenseful 'who knows'". As a member of the community put it in 1995, "Amílcar Cabral did not die [...] Jesus did a faith-based work and Cabral performs a practical one" (cited in Carvalho, 2020, p. 102).

A very different context produces a structurally similar move. Christian Rationalism, a spiritist current originating in Brazil in the early twentieth century that gained significant presence in Cabo Verde, particularly on the island of São Vicente, regards Cabral as a superior or "light spirit" (Vasconcelos, 2004). In one of its branches in Mindelo, he is considered an "astral president", acting as a kind of spiritual guardian of the centre, where he is said to appear frequently to transmit messages (Cardina and Rodrigues, 2022, p. 141). These representations of Amílcar Cabral reflect the construction of a myth around his figure, elevating him to the status of a deity. This mythologisation contrasts, however, with the critical and often anti-Cabralist perception that some Cabo Verdean intellectual and political sectors hold of his legacy. Amado (2012), addressing the complexity of Cabral's image in Cabo Verde's sociopolitical context, identifies three distinct representations: as a fraud, as an icon, and as a theorist-ideologue.

The first representation constructs Cabral as a 'fraud', articulated primarily by intellectuals linked to the right and shaped by post-1991 party political disputes. The biographical

[5] On the *rabelados*, see e.g., Rego (2015).

dimension of this critique, centring on Cabral's long physical absence from the islands and the resulting claim that his project was fundamentally Guinean rather than Cabo Verdean in orientation, gave it a surface plausibility that purely ideological attacks could not sustain alone. In this view, Cabral bears moral responsibility for the abuses of power committed during the post-independence period: "for some social sectors (including some sections of the archipelago intelligentsia), Cabral represents everything wrong that happened in the post-colonial period", with commentators drawing "a direct causal relationship between Cabral and the evils and political errors committed by the single-party regime" (Amado, 2012). This position draws on a broad range of arguments: his supposed lack of theoretical originality; claims that his biographical trajectory was largely alien to Cabo Verde; allegations of a dictatorial disposition; and the assertion that the prominent place he occupies in the popular imagination is unwarranted. Read in context, the "fraud" representation is not only a reaction to Cabral himself but to the specific uses to which his image was put by the single-party state. The anger directed at Cabral is in significant measure displaced anger at the PAIGC's post-independence record. Acknowledging this does not rehabilitate the anti-Cabralist critique, but it does make it historically intelligible. The second representation, the "icon", circulates widely in Cabo Verde and the diaspora through stylized reproductions of Cabral's image and his most emblematic phrases on clothing, in public space, and on social media, a mediated figure that, for Amado (2012), forecloses critical engagement with his ideas and transforms him into an idolized symbol divorced from his actual thought. The third, the "theorist-ideologue", is the least known but in Amado's view the most important: a substantial, internationally recognised body of theoretical work whose ideas remain underexplored in the Cabo Verdean academic context.

Most recently, on Cabral's centenary on 12 September 2024, anti-Cabralist criticism sharpened notably: the leadership of the MpD parliamentary group resigned collectively to protest their own party government's decision to support the issuance of a commemorative stamp marking the centenary (Santos, 2024). Such controversies confirm that Cabral remains an uncomfortable figure in some quarters, somewhat countercyclical to his consensual international celebration. Yet the anti-Cabralist tendency present in parts of the MpD and Cabo Verdean society is not dominant, as the following section demonstrates.

Cabral Today: Revolutionary Icon

Contestation and partial erasure notwithstanding, Cabral's figure has shown remarkable resilience. In Cabo Verde, the independent nation took symbolic shape around what might be described as a spectral body: absent, because his remains lie buried in Guinea-Bissau; present, because the archipelago owes its independence to the historical process he set in motion. The result is a paradoxical national hero – Cabo Verdean by parentage and adolescent schooling, Bissau-Guinean by birth and by the armed struggle he led, and holder, in formal terms, of no nationality other than that of colonial Portugal.

In Guinea-Bissau, in recent decades, the memory of the successful war of liberation and its leader has served as a redemptive reference, sustaining hope for a more just future. Following the implementation of a structural adjustment programme in 1987, the first multiparty elections in 1994 (won by Nino Vieira, in power since 1980), and the devastating

civil war of 1998–99, a lack of opportunity and widespread social dissatisfaction intensified across the country. Cabral's figure became a significant reference point, mobilized especially by the civic youth movements that emerged in the 1990s and consolidated in the 2000s in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde alike (Barros and Lima, 2012, 2021). Barros and Lima (2021, p. 90) describe the recovery of the liberation struggle's legacy as "a new expression of African awakening". Kohl and Schroven (2014, p. 16) similarly note that, for a significant part of the Bissau-Guinean population, Cabral is now regarded as a martyr, embodying qualities associated with those of a prophet.

This movement finds expression in music, particularly rap and hip-hop, where Cabral is invoked as a "messenger of truth", summoned as an embodiment of pride and a figure of critique directed at political powers accused of ignoring his teachings (Barros and Lima, 2012, pp. 99–101). Barros et al. (2024, p. 51) describe these practices as collective dynamics of *artivism*, functioning "as an alternative mechanism of opposition to political power, but also as a way of revendicating and disputing the structuring memories of Guinean and Cabo Verdean identities". Since 2020, murals on the main streets of Bissau have paid tribute to Cabral and several of the PAIGC's most prominent fighters who died during or shortly after the liberation struggle (Rodrigues, 2023). Figures such as Titina Silá, Pansau Na Isna, Domingos Ramos, Francisco Mendes (Tchico Té), and José Carlos Schwarz are recognized as national heroes in a contemporary appropriation of the liberation struggle's legacy.[6]

Periodic debates arise over to whom Amílcar Cabral "belongs" and who represents the greatest figure of the Bissau-Guinean nation. These surface with intensity at specific political or symbolic moments, such as in November 2020, when Nino Vieira's remains were transferred with state honours from the municipal cemetery in Bissau to the Amura Fortress. The ceremony, presided over by Head of State Umaro Sissoco Embaló, was marked by public controversy (Martins, 2020). Embaló described Vieira as "a courageous, patriotic, and committed fighter, a statesman, a charismatic leader, who gave his life for our country and shaped our history, both during the armed struggle and as President of the Republic" (Cassamá, 2020). Days earlier, Sissoco Embaló had enacted a government decree posthumously awarding Vieira the title of "Hero of the Armed Struggle for National Liberation". The creation of the "Nino *ka muri*" movement, recalling the well-known expression "Cabral *ka muri*" (Cabral did not die) and active since at least 2017, similarly draws a deliberate equivalence between the two figures. The gesture is revealing precisely because it cannot fully succeed. The attempt to elevate Nino Vieira to a status comparable to Cabral's requires borrowing the memorial language that Cabral's own legacy generated, which already signals the asymmetry it tries to overcome. Nino Vieira governed, and governance leaves a record. Cabral did not, and his martyrdom protects him from precisely the kind of accountability that shadows Vieira's legacy. The political disputes that arise in Guinea-Bissau do not, however, challenge Cabral's legacy or the prominent place he occupies among community associations and youth sectors that aspire to social justice, transformation, and local development. His broad consensus is not despite Guinea-Bissau's contested political history but, in a specific sense, because of it.

[6] Barros and Lima (2021, p. 94). For the case of Cabo Verde, see Cardina and Rodrigues (2022).

In Cabo Verde, renewed representations of Cabral also emerge from politicized youth sectors and diaspora-related groups. Redy Wilson Lima (2018) identifies various forms of these actions, including rap music, public petitions, cyber-activism, the resurgence of Afrocentric and Pan-Africanist cultural expressions, and community-based youth activism. This political and cultural landscape is closely connected to *Marxa Kabral*, a demonstration held annually on 20 January, the anniversary of Cabral's assassination, which serves as both a protest and an alternative political performance countering the institutionalized representations of the revolutionary. The evocation of Cabral during the *Marxa* serves not only to honour his political legacy and theoretical teachings but also as an occasion to assert "Africanity", a commitment expressed through choices of clothing, hairstyles, and music, in slogans and in the use of capoeira as a globalized symbol of Black resistance. The event also functions as a platform for challenging the dominant political order in an archipelago where youth unemployment is high and where many consider the ideals of the liberation struggle to have been betrayed by current leaders.

The 2019 edition threw these dynamics into sharp relief. On the morning of every 20 January, senior government figures, foreign representatives, and former combatants gather at the Cabral memorial for the state's official ceremony of wreath-laying and homage, and in earlier years the *Marxa* had kept its distance, march and ceremony occupying separate spaces. In 2019, the march turned, spontaneously and unannounced, toward the monument while the official ceremony was underway; police lines immediately blocked the demonstrators' approach, splitting the space between what participants called the "ceremony of power" and the "demonstration of the youth". Condensed in the episode were the *Marxa*'s defining gestures: the claim to be Cabral's legitimate heirs against those who govern in his name; the crossing of the invisible lines that separate the capital's spaces of power from its popular neighbourhoods; and the insistent chant of *Cabral ka mori* (Cabral did not die), at once memorial affirmation and political critique. Capinero (Adérito Gonçalves Tavares), activist and former president of the *Pilorinhu* association, a driving force behind the *Marxa* since 2013, recalled: "as we climbed to the Plateau, we didn't take half the road; we took the whole road" (interview to the authors, Praia, 20 May 2019).

Cutting across both countries, and increasingly beyond them, the diaspora has emerged as a distinct and significant memorial actor. The Luxembourg petition and the cyber-activism Redy W. Lima identifies among diaspora youth, all point to the same phenomenon: the diaspora does not merely transmit or preserve Cabral's legacy but actively reframes it, often with a freedom from local political constraint that is harder to sustain within the archipelago itself. This dynamic is inseparable from Cabo Verde's own liminal position relative to Africa: a country whose relationship to African identity has been historically contested, whose population abroad has long outnumbered those at home, and whose political culture is shaped as much by European frameworks as by pan-Africanist solidarities. For diaspora actors, Cabral functions as an anchor of African belonging and anticolonial commitment, a figure through whom Cabo Verdean identity can be asserted as unambiguously African, antiracist, and resistant, in contexts such as Lisbon, Luxembourg, and Rotterdam, where those assertions carry their own political charge. The memorial field around Cabral is thus not contained within national borders but is genuinely transnational, shaped by migrations, political conjunctures, and antiracist movements that

connect the archipelago to Portugal, West Africa, Brazil, and beyond (Batalha and Carling, 2008**;** Lima and Robalo, 2023**).**

In 2024, the centenary of Cabral's birth was celebrated worldwide. In Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, academic and associative institutions organized a significant colloquium to mark the occasion, with sessions held simultaneously in person and virtually across both countries. Shortly afterwards, the first *Marxa Cabral* took place in Lisbon, an initiative of the Black movement in Portugal, bringing together several collectives and hundreds of participants to protest fascism, racism, and xenophobia (*Público,* 2024, p. 11). For those who marched, many of them descendants of Cabo Verdean and Guinean migrants, with no direct experience of the liberation struggle, Cabral functioned less as a historical figure than as a living political language through which claims against colonial continuities could be publicly articulated. That a demonstration invoking his name took place in the former colonial metropole was, in this sense, less a departure than a return: a reminder that Cabral's politics were always forged in the intersections between Africa, Europe, and the Atlantic world that his own life traced. The following year, on 13 September 2025, a second *Marxa Cabral* again filled the Avenida da Liberdade, this time marking the fiftieth anniversary of the independences. Its organisers marched, in their own words, "inspired by the vast and rich legacy of Amílcar Cabral's anticolonial thought and practice of struggle" under the motto "Di Povu pa Povu: Libertação, Dignidade, Soberania Popular" (From the People to the People: Liberation, Dignity, Popular Sovereignty), denouncing in the same gesture Umaro Sissoco Embaló's dictatorship in Guinea-Bissau, state violence in Angola, racism in Portugal, and the way the Cabo Verdean state had treated Cabral's figure – "Cabral belongs to the people and to the world" (Segunda Grandi Marxa Cabral, 2025). That the marchers claimed Cabral against the very states founded in his name measures how fully his memory now circulates as a living popular language rather than an official inheritance.

Conclusion

This study opened with *Nha Fala*, and it is fitting to close with it. Gomes uses the bust of Cabral as a recurring comic device: institutions and individuals reject it, exposing how elites have appropriated his image for personal gain, yet as the film advances, the bust grows. Arenas (2011, pp. 128–129) reads this growth as a "return of the repressed", the haunting persistence of Cabral's legacy in societies grappling with present challenges. Sabine (2019) sees the film asking how Cabral's revolutionary path might be revived in a postcolonial nation undermined by deregulation, corruption, and clientelism. For both, the closing scenes stage Gomes's vision of cyclical rebirth and the enduring relevance of Cabral's ideals for future generations in Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, and beyond (Arenas, 2011, p. 129; Sabine, 2019, pp. 161–162). The film's allegory points toward something the comparative analysis in this article has sought to make analytically precise. Cabral shares with other anticolonial founding figures – Nyerere, Sankara, Lumumba – the capacity to be selectively appropriated, mythologised, and detached from the constraints of historical context. What this article has argued, however, is that Cabral's case combines several features that, taken together, answer the two questions that organised the analysis.

The first question asked why memorialisation took broadly consensual and dispersed form in Guinea-Bissau and openly partisan form in Cabo Verde. The divergence is not primarily a matter of different popular attachments to Cabral. It is an effect of the interaction between his specific memorial conditions and the distinct political trajectories each state followed after the 1980 rupture. In Guinea-Bissau, the coup paradoxically preserved broad consensus: by detaching Cabral's memory from the Cabo Verdean leadership while claiming to act in his name, the coup's architects regrounded his legacy in the liberation struggle itself. In Cabo Verde, the democratic transition of 1991 inserted his memory into competitive multiparty politics, transforming it into a resource that different actors had actively to contest, defend, or appropriate. The divergence is, in this sense, institutional as much as ideological.

This divergence is visible in recent developments that confirm rather than complicate the argument. In Guinea-Bissau, Cabral remained widely recognised across political divides as a founding hero whose memory no actor could openly repudiate, yet the regime of Umaro Sissoco Embaló has been accused of progressively downplaying his legacy, an accusation that became particularly visible during the centenary commemorations of 2024, when sectors of civil society and former combatants denounced the absence of official initiatives commensurate with the historical importance of the revolutionary leader. The charge is itself revealing: even in a context of growing authoritarian consolidation, critics reach for Cabral's memory as the standard against which the present government falls short. In Cabo Verde, the divergence takes a different form: the 'decabralisation' process of the 1990s, the anti-Cabralism of sectors of the political right, and the counter-mobilisations by veterans' associations, foundations, and youth movements have made Cabral simultaneously a national symbol and a marker of partisan and ideological divides, present in Cabo Verdean public life not in a consensual but in a specifically contested register.

The second question asked what this divergence reveals about the conditions, both domestic and international, under which postcolonial states secure political-symbolic legitimacy. Three features of Cabral's case illuminate this question in combination. The first is the conjuncture of political sacrifice and bi-nationality. Unlike Nyerere or Nkrumah, who governed and therefore accrued the liabilities of actual power, Cabral was assassinated before independence and before the fracture of the binational project he had built. This double rupture produced not one memorial context but two structurally divergent ones and, in doing so, revealed a more general mechanism: symbolic capital accumulates most durably around figures removed from the compromises of governance. Because Cabral never held power, the moral authority of the liberation struggle, condensed in his figure, remained available to competing actors across decades without being tested against a record. The absence of a single custodian, produced by the binational fracture, multiplied rather than diminished his memorial force: no party, state, or generation could monopolise his legacy, which is why it continued to circulate across such a wide range of political and social registers. That the same figure could generate such different memorial politics in two states emerging from the same liberation project is, moreover, analytically instructive in ways that the existing comparative literature on African political memory, focused as it largely is on single national cases, had almost no occasion to examine.

The second feature – the range and depth of vernacular appropriation documented in Cabo Verde – reveals a further condition of postcolonial symbolic legitimacy. The millenarian

testimonies, the *rabelados*' sacred incorporation of his figure, and the Christian Rationalist "astral president" in Mindelo represent a form of memorial agency that bypasses the state entirely, drawing on Cabral's constitutive absence from the archipelago to generate mythological elaborations that official commemoration neither authorised nor controlled. These appropriations show that the most resilient and often the most transformative dimensions of a founding figure's legacy reside in registers that formal political culture neither controls nor fully comprehend. Whether comparable elaborations exist elsewhere remains underexplored; this dimension of Cabral's memorialisation is rooted in specific biographical and geographical conditions that cannot be reduced to the general mechanisms of founding-figure mythification.

The third feature – the transnational dimension – reveals that political-symbolic legitimacy is never a purely domestic achievement. Each reconfiguration of his memory tracked a political rupture that exceeded national borders. Mnemonic change and political change moved together, and both were shaped by the international conjunctures (Cold War alignments, structural adjustment, post-1989 democratisation, the global antiracist mobilisations of the present decade) within which these two small states have had to operate. Cabral's legacy has always circulated beyond the two states that claim him: forged partly through internationalist networks, it has been reactivated by diaspora communities, by the Black movement in Portugal, and by Pan-Africanist actors for whom his figure anchors a claim to African belonging. The authority of a founding figure, this suggests, is never exhausted by the domestic institutions that claim to manage it: it escapes into diasporic and transnational circuits where it acquires new political content and new constituencies.

As this study has argued, in Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, and Portugal, Cabral continues to function as a living political reference through which significant segments of youth and society articulate claims for social justice, democratic accountability, and alternative futures. His enduring force is inseparable from the specific conditions that produced it: a martyrdom that arrived before the compromises of power, a binational project that fractured and left his legacy without a single custodian, and an absence that proved in many respects more generative than presence might have been.

References

Ahlman, J. (2017). *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism in Ghana*. Ohio University Press.

Almada, J. L. H. (2012). 'Das tragédias históricas do povo caboverdiano e da saga da sua constituição e da sua consolidação como nação crioula soberana' Retrieved from http://www.buala.org/pt/a-ler/das-tragedias-historicas-do-povo-caboverdiano-e-da-saga-da-sua-constituicao-e-da-sua-consolida

Amado, A. D. (2012). 'Os três Cabrais de hoje em Cabo Verde: uma leitura necessária. Retrieved from https://www.buala.org/pt/mukanda/os-tres-cabrais-de-hoje-em-cabo-verde-uma-leitura-necessaria

Angelo, A. (2020). *Power and the Presidency in Kenya. The Jomo Kenyatta Years*. Cambridge University Press.

Anjos, J. C. G. (2002). *Intelectuais, Literatura e Poder em Cabo Verde: lutas de definição da identidade nacional*. Instituto Nacional do Património Cultural.

Arenas, F. (2011). *Lusophone Africa: beyond Independence*. University of Minnesota Press.

Barros, M. and R. W. Lima (2012). 'Rap Kriol(u): o pan-africanismo de Cabral na música de intervenção juvenil na Guiné-Bissau e em Cabo Verde', *Realis – Revista de Estudos Antiutilitaristas e Pós-coloniais* 2 (2): 88–116.

Barros, M. and R. W. Lima (2021). 'RAPensando novos mapeamentos culturais e territórios de emancipação cívica na Guiné-Bissau e em Cabo Verde', *Mundo Crítico* 6: 82–101.

Barros, M., Jaló, S., Lima, R. W. and A. Robalo (2024). 'Social Movements in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde: Dialogues, legacies and reinterpretations of Cabral's thinking about culture', *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 48: 45–70.

Barros, V. (2008). 'As "sombras" da claridade. Entre o discurso de integração regional e a retórica nacionalista', in L. R. Torgal, F. T. Pimenta e J. S. Sousa (eds), *Comunidades Imaginadas. Nação e nacionalismos em África*. Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra.

Barros, V. (2009). *Campos de Concentração em Cabo Verde: as ilhas como espaços de deportação e de prisão no Estado Novo*. Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra.

Batalha, L. and J. Carling (2008). *Transnational Archipelago: Perspectives on Cape Verdean Migration and Diaspora*. Amsterdam University Press.

Cardina, M. and I. N. Rodrigues (2021). 'The mnemonic transition: the rise of an anti-anticolonial memoryscape in Cape Verde', *Memory Studies* 14 (2): 380–394.

Cardina, M. and I. N. Rodrigues (2022). *Remembering the Liberation Struggles in Cape Verde. A mnemohistory*. Routledge.

Cardina, M. and I. N. Rodrigues (2023). 'Memoryscapes of the liberation struggle in Cape Verde', in M. Cardina (ed.), *The Portuguese Colonial War and the African Liberation Struggles*. *Memory, Politics and Uses of the Past.* Routledge.

Carvalho, C. (2020). 'Media e Identidade Cultural de Minorias. Os "rabelados" da comunidade de Espinho Branco, na Ilha de Santiago – Cabo Verde'. MA thesis, Universidade Aberta.

Cassamá, L. (2020). 'Restos mortais de João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira depositados na Fortaleza de Amura', *VOA*, 16 November. Retrieved from https://www.voaportugues.com/a/restos-mortais-de-joão-bernardo-nino-vieira-depositados-na-fortaleza-de-amura/5664542.html

Chabal, P. (1983a). *Amílcar Cabral. Revolutionary leadership and people's war*. Cambridge University Press.

Chabal, P. (1983b). 'Party, State, and Socialism in Guinea-Bissau', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 17 (2): 189–210.

Chabal, P. ed. (1986). *Political Domination in Africa. Reflections on the Limits of Power*. Cambridge University Press.

Cooper, F. (2002). *Africa since 1940: The past of the present*. Cambridge University Press.

Costa, S. and C. M. Sarmento (2014). *Entre África e a Europa. Nação, Estado e Democracia em Cabo Verde*. Almedina.

Coutinho, A. B. (2017). *Os Dirigentes do PAIGC. Da fundação à rutura: 1956–1980*. Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra.

Cravo, T. A. (2023). 'Western representations of the liberation struggle in Guinea-Bissau', in M. Cardina (ed.), *The Portuguese Colonial War and the African Liberation Struggles. Memory, Politics and Uses of the Past*. Routledge, pp. 160–176.

Fernandes, R. (1994). 'Processo democracia na Guiné-Bissau', *Soronda* 17: 31–43.

Fernandes, G. (2002). *A Diluição de África: uma interpretação da saga identitária cabo-verdiana no panorama (pós)colonial*. UFSC.

Fontes, E. (2018). *Uma História Inacabada*. Pedro Cardoso Livraria.

Forrest, J. (1987). 'Guinea-Bissau Since Independence: A Decade of Domestic Power Struggles', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 25 (1): 95–116.

Forrest, J. (2003). *Lineages of State Fragility: rural civil society in Guinea Bissau*. Ohio University Press.

Fouéré, M.-A. (2009). 'J. K. Nyerere entre mythe et histoire: analyse de la production d'une mémoire publique officielle en Tanzanie post-socialiste', *Les Cahiers d'Afrique de l'Est / The East African Review*, 41: 197–224.

Furtado, C. A. (1997). *Génese e (Re)produção da Classe Dirigente em Cabo Verde*. Instituto Caboverdeano do Livro e do Disco.

Gomes, F. (Director) (2002). *Nha Fala* (Film). Fado Filmes (Lisbon), Les Films de Mai (Paris), Samsa Film (Luxembourg).

Harsch, E. (2013). 'The legacies of Thomas Sankara: a revolutionary experience in retrospect', *Review of African Political Economy* 40 (137): 358–74.

Kohl, C. and A. Schroven (2014). 'Suffering for the Nation: bottom-up and top-down conceptualisations of the Nation in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau', *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers* 152: 1–25.

Koudawo, F. (2001). *Cabo Verde e Guiné-Bissau. Da democracia revolucionária à democracia liberal*. INEP.

Lima, K. M. (2011). 'Cinema guineense: referências a Amílcar Cabral' <https://www.buala.org/pt/afroscreen/cinema-guineense-referencias-a-amilcar-cabral>, accessed 22 July 2024.

Lima, R. W. (2018). 'Rap and representation of public space in Praia city', in R. Martins and M. Canevacci (eds), *Lusophone Hip-hop: 'who we are' – 'where we are': identity, urban culture and belonging*. Sean Kingston Publishing.

Lima, R. W. and A. Robalo (2023). 'Disputas de e por espaços político-identitários: o rap e os movimentos sociais em Cabo Verde', *Africa Development* 48 (3): 153–78.

Lopes, C. (1987). *A Transição Histórica na Guiné-Bissau: do movimento de libertação nacional ao Estado.* INEP.

Lopes, J. V. (2010). *Tarrafal: Chão Bom, memórias e verdades*. IIPC.

Marschall, S. (2006). 'Commemorating 'Struggle Heroes': Constructing a Genealogy for the New South Africa', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 12 (2): 176–193.

Martins, P. (1995). *Testemunho de um Combatente*. Instituto Camões and Centro Cultural Português.

Martins, M. (2020). '"Nino" Vieira na Fortaleza da Amura: honras de Estado questionadas por familiares', *RFI*, 16 November, https://www.rfi.fr/pt/guiné-bissau/20201116-nino-vieira-na-fortaleza-da-amura-honras-do-estado-questionadas-por-familiares, accessed 11 November 2024.

Martins, V. (2021). 'A nossa lâmpada não se apaga: The Mnemonic Return of Angola's Jonas Savimbi', *African Studies Review*, 64 (1): 242–265.

Monaville, P. (2019). 'The political life of the dead Lumumba: Cold War histories and the Congolese student left', *Africa*, 89: 15–39.

Neves, J. and L. P. Martins (2024). *Cabral Ka Mori*. Comissão Comemorativa dos 50 anos do 25 de Abril and Tinta-da-China.

Nóbrega, A. (2003). *A luta pelo poder na Guiné-Bissau*. ISCSP-UTL.

Público (2024). 'Avenida de todas as cores na primeira marxa Cabral', 21 September. Retrieved from https://www.publico.pt/2024/09/21/politica/noticia/avenida-liberdade-lisboa-cores-primeira-marxa-cabral-2105025

Querido, J. (2013). *Um Demorado Olhar sobre Cabo Verde. O país, sua génese, seu percurso, suas certezas e ambiguidades*. Self-publishing.

Rego, M. (2015). *The Dialogic Nation of Cape Verde. Slavery, language and ideology*. Lexington Books.

Rodrigues, I. N. (2023). 'Mantenhas para quem luta! Evoking the liberation struggle in postcolonial Guinea-Bissau', in M. Cardina (ed), *The Portuguese Colonial War and the African Liberation Struggles. Memory, politics and uses of the past*. Routledge.

Roque, S. (2016). *Pós-Guerra? Percursos de violência nas margens das relações internacionais*. Almedina.

Rudebeck, L. (1974). *Guinea-Bissau – A Study of Political Mobilisation*. Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.

Sabine, M. (2019). 'Where is Cabral? Culture and Post-national Liberation in *Nha Fala*', in A. M. Leite et al. (eds.), *Post-colonial Nation and Narrative III: Cinema & Fiction: Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé e Príncipe*. Peter Lang.

Santos, O. (2024). 'Cabo Verde: selo em homenagem a Amílcar Cabral leva à demissão do líder parlamentar do MpD', *RFI*, 24 September. Retrieved from

https://www.rfi.fr/pt/áfrica-lusófona/20240924-cabo-verde-selo-em-homenagem-a-amílcar-cabral-leva-à-demissão-do-líder-parlamentar-do-mpd

Segunda Grandi Marxa Cabral em Portugal (2025). 'Di Povu pa Povu: Libertação, Dignidade, Soberania Popular', 19 August. Retrieved from https://www.afrolink.pt/artigos/segunda-grandi-marxa-cabral-em-portugal

Temudo, M. P. (2008). 'From "people's struggle" to "this war today": entanglements of peace and conflict in Guinea-Bissau', *Africa* 78 (2): 245–63.

Tomás, A. (2021). *Amílcar Cabral: the life of a reluctant nationalist*. C. Hurst & Co.

Trajano Filho, W. (2009). 'The conservative aspects of a centripetal diaspora: the case of the Cape Verdean Tabancas', *Africa* 79 (4): 520–42.

Vasconcelos, J. (2004). 'Espíritos lusófonos numa ilha crioula: Língua, poder e identidade em São Vicente de Cabo Verde' in C. Carvalho and J. P. Cabral (eds), *A Persistência da História: passado e contemporaneidade em África*. Imprensa de Ciências Sociais.

Vieira, J. B. N. (1980–81). *'Vamos Construir a Pátria de Cabral' — Discurso do fim de ano proferido pelo presidente do conselho da revolução comandante João Bernardo Vieira*. Edições Nô Pintcha.

Voz di Povo (1979). 'Faleceu o chefe espiritual dos Rabelados', 30 August.

Werbner, R. ed. (1998). *Memory and the Postcolony. African Anthropology and the critique of power*. Zed Books.

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

FROM COLONIAL RULE TO NATIONHOOD: AMÍLCAR CABRAL'S THOUGHT IN THE FACE OF THE MOZAMBIQUE PEACE ACCORDS

RUI MOREIRA DE CARVALHO
Rui.Moreira.Carvalho@iscte-iul.pt
He holds a PhD in Management, with spatialization in Strategy, from ISCTE-IUL (2008), a master's degree in Economics and Management of Science and Technology, from ISEG (1996), and a marine machinery engineer from ENIDH (1994). He is an associate professor at Universidade Lusófona (Portugal) and an invited assistant professor at ISCTE-IUL. He is director of the postgraduate course in Quality Management at ISCTE-IUL. His academic work focuses on development economics, corporate governance, mobile money, financial institutions, cooperative banking. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0808-171X

IVONE SOARES
ivone.selemane@isg.pt
She is a PhD candidate in Political Science and International Relations and a lecturer in the Bachelor's Programme in Political Science at the Catholic University of Mozambique (Mozambique). Alongside her academic career, she has played a prominent role in public life and civil society in Mozambique. She currently serves as a Member of the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique, where she is serving her fourth legislative term. She is also the African Representative of the Business and Professional Women (BPW) network, President of the Union for Student Development (UNDE), a civil society organization, and a member of the Technical Commission for the Implementation of the National Inclusive Dialogue. In addition, she is an active writer and public advocate. Her academic research and public engagement focus on international relations, democratic governance, public policy, management, human rights, women's empowerment, and international cooperation. Particular attention is devoted to issues of sustainable development in Africa, the retention of girls in education, the prevention of femicide and child marriage, and support for victims of terrorism and internally displaced populations, especially in Cabo Delgado Province. Through her academic, political, and civic contributions, she seeks to promote inclusive development, social justice, and democratic participation in Mozambique and beyond. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7076-8934

CARLOS VIEIRA
carlvieira@ucp.pt
He is currently Executive Director for Executive Education at Católica Porto School of Business & Economics (Portugal). He is an effective member of the Order of Economists and the Order of Certified Accountants, Vice-President of ANESPO – Portuguese Association of Professional Schools and member of the Supervisory Board of CCP – Portuguese Confederation of Commerce and Services. Holds a degree in Business Administration and Management from Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics (1996), a postgraduate degree in Management and Industrial Organization from Universidade Lusófona (2000) and in Management from ISG – Instituto Superior de Gestão (2009), and two executive courses in Social Leadership for Managers and of Chief Sustainability Officer, both from Católica Porto (2023 and 2024). https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1606-1356

Abstract

This research investigates, in a critical and interpretative way, how Amílcar Cabral's political thought could dialogue with the Mozambican peace process, culminating in the Peace Accords (Rome, in 1992, and Maputo in 2014 and 2018). Starting from an in-depth analysis of the central categories of Cabralismo - especially liberation as a continuous process, the centrality of political consciousness, revolutionary ethics, and the relationship between popular power and

the state - the study confronts these principles with the historical, social, and political dynamics that shaped the end of the civil war in Mozambique. Through the question "what would Cabral say about the Peace Accords without Mozambique", the research seeks to understand the extent to which the Peace Accords, inserted in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs under the tutelage of multilateral institutions, respond or enter into tension with Cabral's vision of structural transformation and post-colonial emancipation. Through an interdisciplinary approach that combines African political theory, contemporary history, and critical discourse analysis, a hypothetical but grounded reading of what Cabral might have said about national reconciliation, the role of parties, social reintegration, and the challenges of building the Mozambican nation characterized by twenty-one ethnic groups in the post-decolonization period is proposed. The research concludes that Cabral's thought offers relevant conceptual tools to reassess the limits and potentialities of negotiated peace in Mozambique, illuminating contemporary debates on sovereignty, democracy, and social justice in the African context.

Keywords

Peace Agreements, Amílcar Cabral, Frelimo, Independence, Mozambique, Nation, Peace, Renamo.

Resumo

Este trabalho investiga, de forma crítica e interpretativa, como o pensamento político de Amílcar Cabral poderia dialogar com o processo de paz moçambicano, culminando nos Acordos de Paz (Roma, em 1992, e Maputo em 2014 e 2018). Partindo de uma análise aprofundada das categorias centrais do Cabralismo - especialmente a libertação como processo contínuo, a centralidade da consciência política, a ética revolucionária e a relação entre o poder popular e o Estado - o estudo confronta estes princípios com as dinâmicas históricas, sociais e políticas que moldaram o fim da guerra civil em Moçambique. Através da questão "o que diria Cabral sobre os Acordos de Paz sem Moçambique", a investigação procura compreender até que ponto os Acordos de Paz, inseridos nos programas de desarmamento, desmobilização e reintegração (DDR) sob a tutela de instituições multilaterais, respondem ou entram em tensão com a visão de Cabral de transformação estrutural e emancipação pós-colonial. Através de uma abordagem interdisciplinar que combina teoria política africana, história contemporânea e análise crítica do discurso, propõe-se uma leitura hipotética, mas fundamentada do que Cabral poderá ter dito sobre a reconciliação nacional, o papel dos partidos, a reintegração social e os desafios de construir a nação moçambicana caracterizada por vinte e um grupos étnicos no período pós-descolonização. A obra conclui que o pensamento de Cabral oferece ferramentas conceptuais relevantes para reavaliar os limites e potencialidades da paz negociada em Moçambique, iluminando debates contemporâneos sobre soberania, democracia e justiça social no contexto africano.

Palavras-chave

Acordos de Paz, Amílcar Cabral, Frelimo, Independência, Moçambique, Nação, Paz, Renamo.

How to cite this article
Carvalho, Rui Moreira de, Soares, Ivone & Vieira, Carlos (2026). From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral's Thought in the Face of the Mozambique Peace Accords. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 263-285. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.12

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 263-285
From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral's Thought in the Face of the Mozambique Peace Accords
Rui Moreira De Carvalho, Ivone Soares, Carlos Vieira

Article submitted on 27 July 2026 and accepted on 18 August 2026.



JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 263-285
From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral's Thought in the Face of the Mozambique Peace Accords
Rui Moreira De Carvalho, Ivone Soares, Carlos Vieira

FROM COLONIAL RULE TO NATIONHOOD: AMÍLCAR CABRAL'S THOUGHT IN THE FACE OF THE MOZAMBIQUE PEACE ACCORDS[1,2]

RUI MOREIRA DE CARVALHO

IVONE SOARES

CARLOS VIEIRA

Introduction

Amílcar Lopes Cabral was born on September 12, 1924. He was born in the city of Bafatá, Portuguese Guinea (located in present-day Guinea-Bissau), the son of Cabo Verdean parents. In 1956, he was the founder of the PAIGC or African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde. He was also one of the founding members of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) later that same year, along with Agostinho Neto, whom he met in Portugal, and other Angolan nationalists (Tomás, 2021). The goal of the conflict was to achieve the independence of both Portuguese Guinea and Cabo Verde. Throughout the conflict, as the movement conquered territory from the Portuguese, Cabral became the de facto leader of much of what would become Guinea-Bissau.

Lopes & Barros (2019) recall that "The PAIGC stood out as a movement that fights for the liberation of not one, but two colonies (that is, not only Guinea-Bissau, where the war was taking place, but also the nearby archipelago of Cabo Verde), pursuing both the disintegration of imperial ties and a unitary political project that encompasses geographically separated territories. As Colm Foy said: 'Despite the world's concerns about the Vietnam war, tiny Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde have captured the imagination of the international community'.

[1] Declaration of Interests - The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest relating to the research, authorship, or publication of this chapter. For the sake of transparency, co-author Ivone Soares has served as a member of the Mozambican Parliament representing RENAMO since 2010. The views and analyses presented in this chapter are the sole responsibility of the authors and were developed in accordance with academic standards of scholarly independence and research integrity.

[2] Acknowledgment - The authors acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot in assisting with the formatting of references and the standardization of source citations in this work.

Amílcar Cabral proved to be an exceptional diplomat politically (Telepneva, 2017). In addition to the desired political unity with the three main ethnic groups of Guinea-Bissau (Balantas, Fulas and Mandingas), he tried and succeeded in joining the PAIGC movement (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde) in the struggle for Cabo Verdean independence in 1956. The generation that waged the struggle against Portuguese colonization in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde would be known as the "Cabral generation", in recognition of their intellectual leadership and strategy and their personal commitment to the consolidation of unified movements (Cassam, 2014). In 1961, the PAIGC joined with Mozambican FRELIMO and the Angolan MPLA to establish the Conference of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies (CONCP), a common party to coordinate the struggles for independence of the Portuguese colonies throughout Africa. The three groups were frequently represented at international events by the CONCP (Lyon, 1980).

While the international links of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) have been widely recognized by Cold War studies in light of the post-independence war in Angola, the efforts of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) have also received particular attention (Kaiser, 2017; Tornimbeni, 2018), as well as the support provided by Soviet Bloc states (Dallywater, 2019).

Cabral was shot dead on January 20, 1973, about eight months before Guinea-Bissau's unilateral declaration of independence. He was deeply influenced by Marxism, becoming an inspiration for revolutionary socialists and national independence movements around the world (Lopes & Barros, 2019). Cabral did not have the opportunity to celebrate the independence of any of the former Portuguese colonies. And to experience the evolution of their independence processes. But we know their struggle to find solutions supported by coordinated institutions (North, 1990) and the models for reducing tensions between different communities that often end in military confrontations.

This research adopts a qualitative approach of a descriptive and exploratory nature, using documentary analysis of primary and secondary sources, supported by a documentary analysis of a recorded interview, of about 34 minutes, in London, on October 27,1971 with Medeiros Ferreira and Pedro George, revisited and made available in an extensive work of journalistic content in the newspaper Expresso *online* in 2022 (Soares, 2023).

The recommended approach aims to predict, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the strategic line of thought of Amílcar Cabral, supported by his thinking recorded in the context of the war of decolonization in the 1960s and 1970s. We will find several points of convergence to replicate certain problems that triggered the reasons for the war, identified by Amílcar Cabral, in many regions of the world, starting with Guinea-Bissau, as well as in Mozambique. Guinea-Bissau, a territory the size of the Alentejo region of Portugal, was the scene of the most violent war.

From colonial rule to the attempt to create the nation

As Huntington (1999, p. 28) points out, "in the post-Cold War world, the most important differences between peoples are not ideological, political or economic. They are cultural. Peoples and nations are trying to answer the most basic question facing human beings:

Who are we? And they answer this question in the most traditional way, with reference to what matters most to them. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations and, at a broader level, civilizations. People use politics not only to promote their interests, but also to define their identity. We only know who we are when we know who we are not, and often against who we are."

The geographical boundaries of present-day African states do not reflect any African historical development. They are almost all artificial, and their formal appearance did not consider their realities. This differs from the dominant principles in Europe regarding the ideological motivation of nation-states – nationalism. Nationalism can be defined as the political expression of the desire for each nation to have its own state – a nation-state (Gellner, 1983, p. 2).

In the so-called Lusophone Africa, Angola and Mozambique for Carvalho (2010, p. 89), the new holders of power had, as one of their main tasks, the creation of a nation for the geographical space they came to dominate. In other words, it was considered that a national consciousness could be created administratively, "from above". Technically, it was called a "nation-state project." And this process remains centred on a central element linked to life: peace.

Peace was also Amílcar Cabral's goal: negotiated peace

"On July 1, 1970, Pope Paul VI granted an audience to three African poets who spoke Portuguese: Amílcar Cabral, Agostinho Neto and Marcelino dos Santos. Paul VI created an international political fact by receiving the three leaders of the liberation movements of the former Portuguese colonies. The dictatorship of the Estado Novo was taken by surprise by this audience of the Supreme Pontiff and the news would only appear in the Portuguese press on Sunday, July 5th". In these, the evening newspaper The Capital also published the full "commentary" of Agence France-Presse, noting that "for the first time, the highest moral force of the West and the spiritual head of 600 million registered Catholics in the world dared to do what the most important political leaders who call themselves Catholics refused. Pope Paul VI received – and blessed – three revolutionary leaders of colour, banned and persecuted as communists and criminals by a European nation that is a secular pillar of the Church." That nation was Portugal, the country whose dictatorship refused to put an end to the Colonial War" (Soares, 2023).

Peace is the greatest resource for life. There are many reasons to seek power; But their gain through agreement, the result of communication and negotiation, can offer perennial socio-economic development. But this desire has many limitations, starting with the asymmetries that armament and mobilization tend to suggest.

Cabral defended unity as the basis of African liberation. Samora Machel[3], who knew him deeply, said that Cabral had "a broader view of the struggle" and that his death was a

[3] Ten years after Cabral's death, Samora Machel, the leader who proclaimed Mozambique's independence (1975), would also lose his life in a plane crash in Mbuzini, South Africa, the causes of which also raise doubts to this day.

blow to all Portuguese colonies, including Mozambique. Thus, Cabral would probably celebrate any process that reduced internal divisions and strengthened national cohesion.

Led by the United Nations (UN), several multilateral institutions and friendly countries have tried to promote peace-seeking processes embedded in the integration of all stakeholders. The persistence of conflict in many places where peacebuilding has been attempted, especially in contexts of armed or violent conflict, illustrates the pressing need and significant difficulties in establishing conditions for sustainable peace (Knight, 2008, p. 25). The difficulties in removing or eliminating the risk of relapse or recurrence of conflict are high, even in the face of the efforts of the various international actors involved in the field *of peacebuilding.*

Valuing peace as a condition for true liberation

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes have become essential in post-conflict contexts. But they only began to receive due importance from the United Nations in the 1990s and began to be included in the discussions of the Security Council, preparing reports and guidelines on the subject (Peixoto, 2006, p. 3).

From this recognition, the understanding and actions of the United Nations in relation to the DDR evolved. In the Report of the United Nations Panel on Peace Operations (known as the Brahimi Report) released in August 2000, a breakthrough emerges in relation to the DDR. It recognized the link between peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and socio-economic development, as well as a range of peacebuilding tools and strategies that could be part of any peace-support operation (Knight, 2008a, pp. 25-28).

These included the adoption of rapid impact projects, the creation of a fund for the DDR, which includes the European Union, the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Netherlands), Finland, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Canada and Botswana (Zebra, 2021), the adoption of a doctrinal shift from civilian policing to rule of law teams, the creation of a pilot *peacebuilding* unit and the regularization of funding for the Electoral Affairs Division at the United Nations Headquarters in New York (Knight, 2008a, pp. 26-27).

Based on this recognition and the creation of instruments regulating the DDR, the United Nations has given the DDR a significant space. The United Nations considers the DDR to be an integral part of peacebuilding efforts, as it aims to solve a public policy problem, namely the post-conflict security problem that arises when combatants are left without livelihoods and support networks during the period vital to peace, recovery and development conflict. For this reason, from the 1990s onwards, the inclusion of the DDR to contribute to lasting peace has become essential in peace processes, as has the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ).

International efforts for peace and security

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Peace Operations, the *Brahimi Committee,* issued its report in 2004, in which it explicitly linked the peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and

socio-economic development functions of the United Nations system, and recommended the creation of a Global Fund for the DDR (Knight, 2008a).

Barros (2025) draws attention to the fact that the integration of forcibly displaced individuals, such as refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs), is a pressing issue facing low- and middle-income countries. The 2023 United Nations report on global trends in forced displacement reveals that the world has reached a new peak of 108.4 million forcibly displaced individuals, of which 82 million (76%) are housed in low- and middle-income countries (UNHCR, 2023). The relocation of such a large number of individuals imposes a significant burden on host communities, with numerous empirical studies finding evidence of negative effects on local labour and housing markets (Jennifer Alix-Garcia & Saah, 2012; Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2015; Tumen, 2016; Depetris-Chauvin & Santos, 2018; Morales, 2018; Tsuda, 2022), food security (George & Adelaja, 2022) and wealth (Alix-Garcia & Saah, 2010). The shock generated by the arrival of these individuals can also lead to tension and even conflict between hosts and displaced people (Putnam, 2007; Jennings & Sanchez - Pages, 2017; Rozo & Vargas, 2021; Albarosa & Elsner, 2023).

All this evidence highlights the need for effective solutions to integrate forcibly displaced individuals and local hosts, as tension between these two groups can hinder long-term socio-economic development (Knack & Keefer, 1997; Zak & Knack, 2001; Sobel, 2002; Guiso et al. 2004).

Thus, for Barros (2025), the paramount importance of reducing the tension between local hosts and displaced people has led both academics and policymakers to increasingly think about new policies to address this issue. A common approach is one focused on resources; often consists of providing public goods (Assaad et al., 2023) or social and economic incentives to promote the socio-economic self-sufficiency of displaced persons and integrate them into the local labour market (Battisti et al., 2019; Caria et al., 2020; MacPherson & Sterck, 2021; Altindag & O'Connell, 2023; Beltramo et al., 2023).

Emphasis on national unity

Mozambique is what Herbst (2000) calls a "geographically challenged" state, with the capital located in the extreme south and the largest population concentration 1500 km to the north. As in most countries in Africa, it has many ethnic and linguistic groups, with more than 20 languages spoken.

All states have developed after a minimum level of institutional cohesion (identity) that the language tool has been able to provide. And this has always been a long cultural process, which can never be considered finished.

Carvalho & Veiga (2024) recall that the largest ethnolinguistic group in Mozambique (Macua), with about 25% of the population, located in the North, where important gas and coal reserves have been identified, has the worst rates of financial inclusion (Banco

de Moçambique, 2023a, 42). In October 2017, in the coastal part of this region, some young people robbed Mocímboa da Praia (Folha de Maputo, 2017).[4]

According to Barros (2025), since October 2017, Cabo Delgado has been affected by an Islamist insurgency that has led to more than one million internally displaced people — about 40% of the province's total population — with 140,000 currently displaced to Pemba (a city with 200,000 inhabitants before the conflict). This significant increase in Pemba's population has generated significant social friction between local hosts and internally displaced persons, threatening the efforts of local authorities and their international partners to maintain peaceful coexistence.

This conflict persists, and external military support has been requested for the defence of the populations. This suggests that the base of the conflict has local support. What are the causes and possible solutions?

The general population census carried out in 2007 and released in 2010 by INE (2010) of Mozambique indicates that 21 languages are spoken in Mozambique. Table 1 shows that between 2010 and 2017, only two indigenous languages of northern Mozambique (Macua and Cinianja) grew slightly. But the official Portuguese language is the only one with national distribution and the one with the highest increase (INE, 2019, p. 82).

Table 1. Main languages spoken by the population aged 5 years and over, in 2010 and 2017

Nº	Languages	Percentage of speakers (%)				Provinces where they are spoken
		Total 2010	Total 2017	Men	Women	
1	Macua	25,92	26,13	26,14	26,13	Cabo Delgado, Nampula, Niassa, Zambézia, Sofala
2	Português	11,54	16,58	17,76	15,49	All provinces
3	Xichangana	10,62	8,63	8,00	9,20	Gaza, Maputo, Maputo Cidade, Niassa, Inhambane
4	Ci-sena	8,30	7,09	7,02	7,16	Manica, Sofala, Tete, Zambézia
5	Lómue	7,59	7,08	6,95	7,19	Nampula, Niassa, Zambézia
6	Echuabo	6,24	4,72	4,64	4,80	Sofala, Zambézia
7	Cinianja	5,71	8,05	8,12	7,99	Niassa, Tete, Zambézia
8	Xindau	4,43	3,76	3,56	3,94	Manica, Sofala
9	Xitsua	2,96	3,76	3,58	3,93	Gaza, Inhambane, Maputo, Sofala

Source: Adapted from Carvalho & Veiga (2024)

After independence in 1975, the country was ravaged by a civil war between the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) and the Government led by the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO). The causes of conflict can be diverse, whether external or internal. Systematically, externally, the causes of civil war are related to "discontent with the ideologies adopted by the new states" in a context of Cold War geopolitical disputes (Masseko, 2019, p. 126).

[4] https://www.folhademaputo.co.mz/pt/noticias/nacional/mocimboa-da-praia-15-bandidos-mortos-em-confronto-com-a-policia/

Its distribution at national level suggests that the issue was not essentially an ethnic issue; thus, the DDR intended to create political, military and social conditions for the former Renamo guerrillas to lay down their arms, abandon military life and return to civilian life, contributing to a lasting peace in the country. However, the possibility of creating a virtuous cycle also implied the reintegration of the guerrillas through support in the transition to civilian life, including integration of some officers into the Armed and Defense Forces of Mozambique (FADM) and Police of the Republic (PRM); creation of economic and social conditions for reintegration and establishment of pension and social support schemes for ex-combatants.

The case of Mozambique has gained international notoriety for having been addressed by RDA programs in the search for peace and socio-economic inclusion. The first DDR in Mozambique was implemented in 1992, after the signing of the General Peace Agreement of Rome, which ended a civil war that lasted 16 years, between the government (Frelimo) and Renamo (Vines, 2013; Weimer, 2020). And the second and third DDR resulted, in part, from flaws and limitations in the design and implementation of the first DDR (Weimer, 2020), and from the institution's inability, both domestic and international, to monitor and arbitrate subsequent processes.

In Mozambique, the causes of the civil war can be combined with the transformation of Frelimo into a Marxist-Leninist party in 1977, resulting in the abandonment of the practice of participatory democracy at the population level, in favour of the policies adopted by the Frelimo-led government, such as the rebuke of various religious congregations and merchants (Masseko, 2019, p. 127). This resulted in discontent and a sense of exclusion from the people, which contributed to the increase in membership in Renamo. Thus, these factors displeased several international actors, such as the then Rhodesia and South Africa, as well as some groups of Mozambicans, including Frelimo dissidents who did not agree with the way the Mozambican state was managed. It was in this context that Renamo was created in 1976 to challenge the Marxist-Leninist policies and the type of state that Frelimo implemented in Mozambique between 1975 and 1994, a period in which Frelimo proclaimed itself a vanguard movement until the abandonment of this policy and the adoption of the multiparty policy in 1994.

The war has had devastating impacts on the country's population and economy, which has led to pressure from international actors to end the conflict. Due to international pressure, in the 1980s, peace negotiations began that culminated in the signing of the General Peace Agreement (GPA) on October 4, 1992, in the Italian city of Rome. Shortly after the signing of the GPA, the following period was characterised by an atmosphere that was both favourable and tense. The favourable environment was due to the ceasefire and the tension resulted from the climate of mistrust and mutual accusations of non-compliance with the GPA, where Renamo alleged the Government's non-compliance with protocol IV (which deals with military issues), thus continuing with continuous threats to withdraw from the electoral process that would culminate in the holding of the first multiparty elections held in Mozambique in 1994 (Lala, 2005).

The first agreement – Chissano & Dhlakama, Rome, 1992

The first DDR in Mozambique was elaborated in the 1992 Rome General Peace Agreement (GPA), specifically in its Protocol. Based on the GPA, the demobilized Renamo forces and government troops were to form an army of 30,000 troops, split in half between both former belligerents. The GPA is composed of seven protocols, of which IV addresses military issues. It is in this context that the DDR process and the creation of the Armed Defence Forces of Mozambique (FADM) are organised or agreed, composed of 24,000 for the army, 4,000 for the air force and 2,000 for the navy (Boletim da República, 1992, p. 7). Totalling 30,000 people composed of former Renamo and Government combatants, with the intention of creating "an army that was not linked to any political force and that had no role in national politics" (Lundin, 2014, p. 2).

At the end of the process, in February 1995, the FADM was composed of only 12,195 people, of whom 8,533 were from the former government troops and 3,662 from Renamo, which displeased Renamo (Coelho & Macaringue, 2002, p. 67). Several reasons led to this numerical discrepancy, resulting from the exclusion of former Renamo combatants. The poor organization of the new employment conditions, the delays in the demobilization process, the long periods without payment of soldiers, the fatigue of war, as well as the desire not to be associated with what public and international opinion considered a killing machine, led people to opt for exclusion (Lala, 2005, p. 2). In this situation, people were, on their own initiative, demobilizing and reintegrating into society, which was reflected in the low number of former Renamo combatants integrated into the FDM, compromising the success of the peacebuilding process due to their inadequate integration into communities with dignity.

It was later agreed that a United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) force with a maximum of 7,500 personnel would oversee the transition period. Multi-party elections should take place once demobilisation is complete and voters are registered. In addition, the GPA established that the cessation of the armed conflict would consist of four phases: the ceasefire, the separation of forces, the concentration of forces for a new army, and demobilization. Disarmament would also be an integral part of this process (Reppell, Rozen, & Carvalho, 2016, p. 6; Tassi, 2015, p. 25; Vines, 2013, p. 378).

The main objective of ONUMOZ, created in December 1992, was to create the necessary conditions for the successful holding of the 1994 elections. Once this goal was accomplished, the mission withdrew – as planned – leaving a team in the country to support national development and help the people whose lives the conflict destroyed (Reppell, Rozen & Carvalho, 2016).

According to Carvalho et al, (2026), with peace established, the country experienced asymmetric economic growth supported by the cane of international assistance. In 1994, the first multi-party general elections were held, both presidential and legislative. In 1998, the first local or municipal elections were held in a multiparty context (Brito, 2013, p. 28). However, the benefits of this growth were not felt by the majority, and more than half of the population remained below the poverty line, in addition to the fact that electoral processes were always contested, classified as fraudulent, especially by the opposition and RENAMO.

This contributed to Renamo's renegation on the GPA, and in 2013, in defiance of the results of the local elections and the failure to advance its proposals to reform the electoral law, RENAMO launched a military insurgency in central regions of the country (Maputo Accord, 2023).

The second agreement – Guebusa & Dhlakama, Maputo, 2014

As a result of the reality of the armed conflict in Mozambique, the Agreement on the Cessation of Military Hostilities was signed on 5 September 2014 between the late Renamo leader, Afonso Dhlakama, and the former President of the Republic, Armando Guebuza.

This date was negotiated in Nampula, August 31, 2014, by Renamo deputy Ivone Soares and the president of the republic of Mozambique, Armando Guebuza (Lusa, 2014), "marking Dhlakama's departure from Gorongosa, in the centre of the country, where he had been taking refuge for many months to start the electoral campaign".

The agreement was intended to end armed violence and lead to general elections on 15 October 2014. To follow up on the Agreement, the Military Team of International Observers for the Cessation of Military Hostilities (EMOCHM) was created with the aim of ultimately carrying out Renamo's DDR. However, their mission failed, as Renamo did not present the list of combatants that would be covered by the DDR, and in 2015 the conflict was renewed, with Renamo attacking the FADM in Moatize (Nhamuave, 2024, p. 20-22). Thus, the DDR was not implemented due to the failure of the very agreement that provided for the DDR and the prevention of a return to violence.

After the resurgence of the conflict, it was necessary to resume negotiations, which occurred in 2016. The new process had as mediators the Catholic Church, represented by the Apostolic Nuncio Edgar Peña; the European Union, represented by Mario Raffaelli and the Community of Sant'Egidio; South Africa, represented by Ambassadors Mandlenkosi Memela, Thanduyise Chiliza and George Johannes; the former president of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete; former President of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire, and Jonathan Powell (Inter Mediate), both represented by Neha Sanghrajka (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue) (Maputo Accord, 2023). However, there has been no significant progress on the Agreement. Even with the intervention of international actors, the parties only agreed on a constitutional reform that included decentralization and the existence of elected governors.

At the end of 2016, and after several attempts to ensure lasting peace and stability, President Filipe Nyusi and Renamo President Afonso Dhlakama agreed to take a different approach and engage in direct negotiations. These were preceded by non-direct contacts conducted by the Swiss ambassador to Mozambique, Mirko Manzoni, the mediation advisor of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Neha Sanghrajka, and Jonathan Powell, from Inter Mediate, until the establishment of direct contact (Maputo Accord, 2023). This resulted in some breakthrough in the negotiations, represented by Dhlakama's announcement of a week-long ceasefire on 27 December 2016, followed by two subsequent extensions. Although it was a short period of ceasefire, it represented a breakthrough, a hope of establishing an agreement, because it meant that, after so many

discussions, there was beginning to be consensus on some points, because of relative but concrete concessions in the negotiations by the parties.

The negotiation model was adjusted to the profile of the negotiating parties, supported by trust in the mobilizing agents (Carvalho, 2019).

With the death of Afonso Dhlakama on May 3, 2018, negotiations with the charismatic leader ended. And nothing else was the same.

After a period of pause in negotiations, due to the death of Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama, General Ossufo Momade, on January 17, 2019, became the new president of RENAMO, which resulted in the resumption of negotiations. Ossufo Momade held two rounds of direct talks with President Filipe Nyusi, namely in 2019, which resulted in the signing of the Maputo Peace and National Reconciliation Agreement on August 6, 2019. The Agreement focuses on four main objectives: decentralization, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, thematically structured in two provisions or pillars, with a joint working group and international experts in each of them: Pillar I on Decentralization and Pillar 2 on Military Affairs (Weimer & Bueno, 2020, p. 74).

The Maputo Agreement committed both parties to cease political and military hostilities and to implement decentralization. The dialogue was facilitated by Ambassador Mirko Manzoni as the personal envoy of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to Mozambique in 2019 (Maputo Accord, 2023).

The Maputo Agreement includes a Memorandum of Understanding on military issues, signed by Nyusi and Momade in August 2018, and Momade did not yet enjoy the status of president of RENAMO. This Memorandum of Understanding established a set of principles on guiding actions and objectives for the integration of Renamo officers into the structures of FADM and the Police of the Republic of Mozambique (PRM), and for the DDR (Maputo Accord, 2023).

The Memorandum also creates a Military Affairs Commission, composed of representatives of Frelimo and Renamo, supported by three technical subgroups, namely: Joint Technical Staff Group; Joint Technical Group on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration and Monitoring and Verification Group, which includes an international component, composed of senior military advisers, to provide technical assistance and ensure the credibility of the DDR process (Weimer & Bueno, 2020, p. 72-74).

For the implementation of the DDR, Renamo had the mission of presenting the names of the combatants who would be covered by the agreement. Thus, Renamo presented a list of 5,221 names of demobilized demobilizers for two types of support for officially registered combatants: a reintegration package with an estimated value of about US$1,000, consisting of tools, clothing, seeds and other items of personal use to be made available in the 12 months following their demobilization, with monthly payment in cash (Weimer & Bueno, 2020, p. 72-74).

At the same time, for effective monitoring, the DDR would be implemented in the short term, because of the Provision or Pillar II on Military Affairs of the Agreement, under the coordination of a Peace Secretariat. This Secretariat collaborated in the negotiation process between the President of the Republic and Frelimo and the President of Renamo and was

initially managed and financed by the Swiss Embassy in Maputo and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which represents the technical team of the main mediator.

The Secretariat was responsible for convening working group meetings, drafting reports, hiring international experts, among other functions and functions, including reporting to the Contact Group (representatives from Botswana, China, Norway, Switzerland, the UK and the US), which oversees and legitimises the peace process internationally and also manages the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), set up to finance the DDR process (Weimer & Bueno, 2020, p. 72-74).

And a third agreement – Nyusi & Momade, Maputo, 2018

Another agreement later, the Maputo Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, was signed on August 6, 2018, by Mozambican President and Frelimo President Felipe Nyusi and Renamo leader Ossufo Momade. The Agreement focuses on four key objectives: decentralization, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, thematically structured in two provisions or pillars, with a joint working group and international experts on each of them: Pillar I on Decentralization and Pillar 2 on Military Affairs (Weimer & Bueno, 2020, p. 74).

The Maputo Agreement committed both parties to cease political and military hostilities and to implement decentralization, with the support for its implementation and facilitation of dialogue between the two parties given by Ambassador Mirko Manzoni, as personal envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, to Mozambique in 2019 (Maputo Accord, 2023). In this way, the Agreement is essentially based on the DDR, as it was due to the deficiency of the DDR process and the existing political intolerance in Mozambique, with elections without transparency, that space was opened for this moment of post-electoral instability and violence.

According to Weimer & Bueno (2020), the 'Definitive Peace Agreement' or Maputo Agreement focuses mainly on the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration of Renamo's armed wing and defines Renamo's responsibilities in this regard. It also incorporates the Memorandum of Understanding of August 2018, which, among others, formally puts an end to the armed clashes between the two belligerents.

Between 1992 and 2022, although peace was maintained in Mozambique, several electoral processes were held regularly, and their fragility was evident when military clashes broke out in 2012 and again in 2021, with the emergence of the RENAMO Military Junta. Table 1 summarizes the three peace agreements in terms of the type of conflict, their leaders in the negotiation process, the specific objectives of each agreement, and the subsequent political impact.

Table 2. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs in Mozambique

Item	1992	2014	2018/2019
Type of conflict	National Civil War	Localized conflict (Center)	Recurrent low-intensity conflict
Leaders	Chissano & Dhlakama	Guebuza & Dhlakama	Nyusi & Dhlakama/ Momade
Scope	Comprehensive, structuring	Punctual, electoral	Structural (DDR + decentralization)
Immediate result	End of the civil war	End of hostilities 2012–14	Deeper reconciliation process
Political impact	Introduction of multi-party politics	Guarantee of electoral participation	Reconfiguration of provincial power

Despite some differences between the DDR programs implemented in Mozambique, it is clear that, in essence, the common goal is to ensure peace through the silencing of weapons, reorientation and social and economic support in the reintegration of ex-combatants into society, and these seek to function as a public policy for peace, or, in broader terms, as an instrument framed in *peacebuilding efforts* (Reppell, Rozen, & Carvalho, 2016).

The centrality of communities as a political solution

Cabral insisted that liberation is only true when the people actively participate in the construction of the country. I would probably evaluate the Peace Accords by asking:

Q1 – Are the Mozambican people really involved?

The troubled announcement of Mozambique's presidential elections in October 2024 was the epitaph of a process of national reconciliation between political institutions and the Mozambican people. The demonstrations, the reactions of the police to the demonstrations and the use of marginal areas of the population for banditry highlight the fragility of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs promoted in Mozambique from 1975 to 2025.

Q2 – A: Is peace improving the lives of rural and urban populations?

According to INE (2023a, p. 1), the youth population is becoming illiterate, with young women being more illiterate than their male counterparts. A third of the young population is illiterate and, of those who have some education, 18% have a higher education level and only 1.5% have higher education. And provincial inequalities in absolute and relative youth growth persist and tend to worsen, with central and northern regions hosting a large percentage of the youth population and a faster growth trend, but more illiterate and with less access to basic social services such as education and health, especially sexual and reproductive services, than its counterpart in the southern region of the country (Carvalho & Veiga, 2024).

Q3 - Is there social justice and redistribution of resources?

In 2017, the National Institute of Statistics (INE, 2023b) reported 27.9 million inhabitants, of which 51.7% were women, 67% lived in rural areas, with about 52% distributed across the four northern provinces (Niassa, Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Zambezia), and about 25% in the four southern provinces (Maputo, Maputo City, Gaza and Inhambane). About 65% of the population was under 25 years old – they were born after the General Peace Agreement, signed in 1992, that is, they do not have the trauma or the memory of the scourge of a civil war.

Bueno (2019) argues that Mozambique's formula for success lay in its original combination of amnesty at the national level with traditional healing and purification rituals at the community level. For the author, the understanding was that, while the former allowed the past to remain in the past – preventing further political polarization – the latter was fundamental for a new beginning. Through rituals, people affected by the civil war reintegrated into their families and communities and began new lives as civilians (Bueno, 2019, p. 427). The author considers that there was a lack of reconciliation in the design and implementation of post-conflict pacification programs/laws in Mozambique. The DDR analysed its traditional aspects, but did not consider a long-term element, which is reconciliation (Bueno, 2019) and economic empowerment that enable the empowerment of communities (Carvalho & Veiga, 2024) and, subsequently, of society as a pillar of national construction.

The evolution of the Mozambican socio-political structure will therefore reveal these gaps in the pacification of the country. In fact, it is said that the initial accommodation of Renamo and its supporters during the Chissano government (1992-2005) did not evolve into a reconciliation. On the contrary, the initial developments were practically reversed during the term of President Armando Guebuza (2005-2015), deteriorating until the reappearance of the armed conflict in 2012. In their own way, Frelimo and Renamo maintained elements of differentiation between them, keeping the barriers between "us and them" practically intact. This separation can be detected in the socioeconomic, political and military spheres of Mozambican society.

The failures of the process of seeking lasting peace in Mozambique

Lala (2005) also considers that the international community, desperate to avoid the mistakes made in the DDR processes elsewhere, such as Angola, which led to the relapse of the conflict, avoided pressuring the parties to disarm in Mozambique. For example, disarmament was not conducted diligently, as Renamo continued to maintain arms depots and depots throughout the country. Reintegration was the most neglected part of the entire program. Former combatants have not received adequate guidance and support for much broader and long-term integration into society. DDR focused on the short-term objective, which is more inclined towards reinsertion.

Some of the consequences of the DDR's "haste" in Mozambique, for example, are pointed out by Lala (2005) and Knight (2008a), which were the increase in crime and the circulation of light weapons and light weapons in the region, with Mozambique being considered the source of most illegal weapons circulating in countries in the region, such as the South African Republic (RAS), Zambia and Zimbabwe in 1998. Similarly, the high

crime rate in the region in general may be associated with the DDR process in Mozambique, which both the demobilized and the availability of weapons outside the control of the authorities followed (Lala, 2005; Knight, 2008a).

The approach of Alusala & Dye (2010) suggests that reintegration remains a major challenge that requires large resources in post-conflict stabilization processes. For these authors, the short duration and modest funding for many reintegration interventions made it difficult to help ex-combatants acquire employable skills. In addition, the fact that many DDR programmes focus on narrow objectives has meant that little assistance has been provided to the most vulnerable groups involved in conflict, such as women, children and people with disabilities. These groups also need support in learning skills that help them secure a livelihood (Alusala & Dye, 2010; Vines, 2013).

For Alusala & Dye (2010, p. 4), the lessons learned from the collapse of the Angolan peacekeeping operation, which failed to effectively demobilize combatants, leading to the recurrence of war after a contested election, helped shape the approach used in Mozambique. In the Angolan case, Jonas Savimbi, from UNITA, took advantage of a weak UN mandate to reignite the civil war. There was, therefore, a fear that a repeat of the Angolan scenario in Mozambique would further tarnish the image of stakeholders, discrediting *international peacebuilding efforts*.

In turn, Lundin (1998) also reiterates the importance of reintegration and reconciliation in post-conflict pacification processes in contexts such as Mozambique**.** Lundin (1988) argues that two fundamental aspects are often ignored in post-conflict societies. First, social reintegration, a critical component of peacekeeping operations, is often overlooked in signed peace agreements.

Revolutionary ethics and leadership responsibility

Cabral influenced Mozambican liberation mainly through common anti-colonial networks, liberation theory, and the circulation of cadres. Amílcar Cabral's connection to Mozambican national liberation was above all intellectual, political, and organizational, rather than a direct leadership of FRELIMO (Jones, 2020: Garcia-Ponce & Wantchekon, 2023; Lopes & Mendy, 2025; Tomás 2021). The evidence converges that Lisbon was a decisive point in this connection, because there Cabral lived with Mozambican students, including Joaquim Chissano and Marcelino dos Santos, and participated in clandestine organizations that preceded the liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique and other Portuguese colonies (Lopes & Mendy, 2025; Tomás, 2021).

The evidence suggests that Amílcar Cabral's thought offered a central theoretical framework to colonial liberation movements to understand national liberation in the Portuguese colonial space (Tomás, 2016). It also shows that recent Mozambican historiography insists that FRELIMO's struggle was internally contradictory rather than linear, which suggests caution against readings that reduce Mozambique to the mere application of "cabralism" (Darch & Hedges, 2021).

Table 3. Main forms of connection between Amílcar Cabral and Mozambican national liberation.

Dimension	What the evidence shows	
Political networks	Cabral articulated with Mozambicans in Lisbon	Tomás (2021)
Foundation of FRELIMO	Common clandestine organizations preceded the Mozambican movements	Tomás (2021)
Culture and liberation	Amílcar Cabral's theory provided attributes for thinking about Mozambican nationalism	Lopes & Mendy, 2025
Anticolonial War	Mozambique was part of the same escalation of repression and resistance against Portugal	Jones, 2020
International circulation	Cabral's ideas traveled between Lusophone struggles and beyond	Darch & Hedges, 2021

The literature also situates Cabral as a participant in the construction of a new political consciousness in the Portuguese-speaking world, simultaneously involving the liberation struggles in the colonies and the final crisis of the Portuguese regime (Lopes, 2025). This helps explain why its relevance to Mozambique appears less as "bilateral influence" and more as part of a shared revolutionary camp (Lopes & Mendy, 2025).

In short, Cabral was important to Mozambican national liberation because he helped form the networks, political language, and anti-colonial theory that also fuelled Mozambique. His contribution to Mozambican liberation was mainly of a common intellectual horizon, and not of direct command over FRELIMO.

Amílcar Cabral's revolutionary ethic — cantered on truth, responsibility to the people, moral discipline and the struggle against privileges — constitutes one of the most demanding legacies of African political thought of the twentieth century.

Conclusions

The analysis developed suggests that Amílcar Cabral's political thought remains a powerful conceptual tool to understand both the limits and potentialities of peace processes in Mozambique between 1992 and 2018. Although Cabral was assassinated before Mozambican independence, his principles — liberation as a continuous process, revolutionary ethics, people-centricity, national unity, and structural transformation—offer sound criteria for critically evaluating peace agreements and subsequent political dynamics.

First, the study confirms that Cabral valued peace as a condition for real liberation, understanding it not as the mere absence of war, but as the construction of material, political, and moral conditions that allow postcolonial emancipation. The text recalls that "Cabral defended unity as the basis of African liberation", stressing that any pacification process that does not address structural inequalities runs the risk of producing only a formal, and not a substantial, peace.

Second, research shows that the 1992, 2014 and 2018 agreements incorporated important elements of reconciliation and demobilisation, but repeatedly failed to fully reintegrate ex-combatants, effectively decentralise, include local communities and build trust between state and opposition. The absence of deep reconciliation — replaced by amnesties and

episodic negotiations — confirms that Mozambican peace was often treated as a technical process rather than as a social transformation, contrary to Cabral's vision of continued liberation.

Thirdly, the study shows that the ethnic and linguistic diversity of Mozambique, with twenty-one groups identified, requires an approach to national unity that goes beyond rhetoric. The persistence of regional inequalities, especially in the North, and the emergence of new conflicts — such as the insurgency in Cabo Delgado — in the early 2020s, reveal that nation-building remains incomplete. As the document states, "peace is the greatest resource for life", but it only becomes sustainable when accompanied by inclusion, social justice and popular participation.

Finally, the work concludes that Cabral's revolutionary ethics — based on truth, moral discipline, responsibility to the people and the fight against privilege — constitutes a critical reference for evaluating contemporary Mozambican political leadership. The distance between this ethical ideal and certain governmental practices highlights tensions between the liberation project and the post-independence reality. Thus, Cabralian thought not only illuminates the past, but also offers a normative framework for rethinking sovereignty, democracy, and social justice in Mozambique in the twenty-first century.

At this point, it is important to remember that "Are the Mozambican people really involved" with the development trajectory of Mozambique. The recent episodes of urban conflict in December 2024, after the last presidential elections, suggest the need to change what was wrong, identified and widely debated in Mozambique.

In summary, the work demonstrates that the Mozambican peace agreements represent significant advances, but insufficient, when confronted with Cabral's vision. Negotiated peace was necessary, but not sufficient: without structural transformation, social inclusion, and political ethics, peace remains vulnerable. Cabral therefore provides not definitive answers, but critical demands that continue to question the Mozambican state and its political actors.

References

Albarosa, E., Elsner, B., 2023. Forced migration and social cohesion: Evidence from the2015/16 mass inflow in Germany. World Dev. 167, 106228.

Alix-Garcia, J., Saah, D., 2010. The effect of refugee inflows on host communities:Evidence from Tanzania. World Bank Econ. Rev. 24, 148–170. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/WBER/LHP014.

Altindag, O., O'Connell, S.D., 2023. The short-lived effects of unconditional cashtransfers to refugees. J. Dev. Econ. 160, 102942.

Alusala, N., & Dye, D. (2010). *Reintegration in Mozambique. An unresolved affair*. ISS Paper 217.

Battisti, M., Giesing, Y., Laurentsyeva, N., 2019. *Can job search assistance improve thelabour market integration of refugees?* Evidence from a field experiment. LabourEcon. 61, 101745.

Beltramo, T., Nimoh, F., Obrien, M., Sequeira, S., 2023. *Financial security, climateshocks and social cohesion.*

Boletim da República (1992). Lei n.º 13/92, aprova o Acordo Geral de Paz, 14 de outubro, Série I, Edição 42, pp. 1-22.

Bueno, N. (2019) Reconciliation in Mozambique: was it ever achieved? *Conflict, Security & Development,* 19:5, pp 427-452. DOI: 10.1080/14678802.2019.1663037.

Carvalho, R. M. & P. Veiga (2024). *Instinto Feminino – O uso da língua oficial no empoderamento da mulher moçambicana.* Lidel – Edições Técnicas.

Carvalho, R. M. (2010). *Compreender + África - fundamentos para competir no mundo.* Círculo de Leitores, Temas e Debates.

Carvalho, R. M., Esperança, J.P., Júnior, B. M., & Agostinho, K. (2026). Challenges of Gender and Financial Inclusion in Mozambique *in* Leandro, F. J. B. S., Oberoi, R., Li, Y., & Garcia, F. P. (Eds.). (2026). The Palgrave handbook on politics of gender and identity in the Lusophone world. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-95-7722-4

Carvalho, R.M. & Veiga, P. (2024), *Instinto Feminino, O Uso da Língua Oficial no Empoderamento da Mulher Moçambicana*, Editora Lídel.

Cassam, Q. (2014). *Self-knowledge for humans*. Oxford University Press.

Coelho, J. P. & Macaringue, P. (2002). Da paz negativa a paz positiva: Uma perspectiva histórica sobre o papel das Forcas Armadas Moçambicanas num Contexto de Segurança em Transformação. *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 20, pp. 67.

Dallywater, L., Saunders, C. & Helder Adegar Fonseca (eds), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War "East": Transnational Activism 1960-1990*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH.

Darch, C., & Hedges, D. (2021). *Liberation and Biographical Narrative in Mozambican Historiography: The Struggle in Cabo Delgado*, 1962–1974. Journal of Southern African Studies, 47(4), 605–625. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2021.1957621

García-Ponce, O., & Wantchekon, L. (2023). Critical junctures: Independence movements and democracy in Africa. American Journal of Political Science, 68(4), 1266-1285. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12798

Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and Nationalism*. Blackwell (Oxford).

George, J., Adelaja, A., 2022. Armed conflicts, forced displacement and food securityin host communities. World Dev. 158, 105991.

Guiso, L., Sapienza, P., Zingales, L., 2004. *The role of social capital in financial development*. Amer. Econ. Rev. 94 (3), 526–556.

Herbst, J. (2000). *States and Power in Africa: Comparative lessons in authority and control*. Princeton University Press

Huntington, S. (1999), Choque de civilizações e a mudança da ordem mundial, Editora Gradiva

Instituto Nacional de Estatística [INE] (2023b). *Dimensões de Género em Moçambique*.

Instituto Nacional de Estatística – Moçambique. https://www.ine.gov.mz/web/guest/d/genero-mario-20-07.

Instituto Nacional de Estatística [INE]. (2010). *Dados do Recenseamento Geral da População*. Instituto Nacional de Estatística – Moçambique.

Instituto Nacional de Estatística [INE]. (2019). *IV Recenseamento Geral da População e Habitação 2017 – Resultados Definitivos Moçambique*. Instituto Nacional de Estatística. https://www.ine.gov.mz/web/guest/d/censo-2017-brochura-dos-resultados-definitivos-do-iv-rgph-nacional.

Instituto Nacional de Estatística [INE]. (2023a). *A Situação Socioeconómica da Juventude em Moçambique*. Instituto Nacional de Estatística – Moçambique. https://mozambique.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/condicoes_socioeconomicas_da_juventude_-_mario-22-06-23_0_0.pdf.

Jennifer Alix-Garcia, A.B., Saah, D., 2012. Displaced populations, humanitarian assis-tance and hosts: A framework for analyzing impacts on semi-urban households.World Dev. 40, 373–386.

Jennings, C., Sanchez-Pages, S., 2017. Social capital, conflict and welfare. J. Dev. Econ.124, 157–167.

Jones, B. (2020). Race, Culture and Liberation: African Anticolonial Thought and Practice in the Time of Decolonisation. The International History Review, 42(6), 1238–1256. https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2019.1695138

Kaiser, D. (2019). *Makers of the Bonds and Ties: Transnational Socialisation and National Liberation in Mozambique*, Journal of Southern African Studies, 43:1, 29-48

Knack, S., Keefer, P., 1997. *Does social capital have an economic payoff*? Across-country investigation. Q. J. Econ. 112 (4), 1251–1288.

Knight, M. (2008). Expanding the DDR Model: Politics and Organisations. *Journal of Security Sector Management,* Volume 6, Number 1. http://www.jofssm.org/issues/jofssm_0601_Knight.doc.

Knight, W. A. (2008a). Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: An Overview. *African Security*, 1(1).

Lala, A. (2005). DDR in Mozambique: The Borderlines of the Success Story. In Fitz-Gerald, Ann; Mason, Hilary (eds) *From conflict to community: a combatant's return to citizenship*. GFN-SSR.

Lopes, C., & Mendy, P. K. (2025). Reimagining African narratives: Amílcar Cabral's revolutionary contributions. Cadernos de Estudos Africanos.

Lopes, R. & Barros, V. (2019). *Amílcar Cabral and the Liberation of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde: International, Transnational, and Global Dimensions.* The International History Review. 42 (6): 1230–1237.

Lundin, I. B. (1998). Mechanisms of community reception of demobilised soldiers in Mozambique, *African Journal of Political Science,* 3 (I) (1998) 104–118.

Lusa (2014). Anúncio de encontro entre Guebuza e Dhlakama marca arranque da campanha eleitoral em Moçambique, 31 agosto Obtido em 06 de agosto de 2024 em: https://www.correiodamanhacanada.com/anuncio-de-encontro-entre-guebuza-e-dhlakama-marca-arranque-da-campanha-eleitoral-em-mocambique/

Lusa (2014). Anúncio de encontro entre Guebuza e Dhlakama marca arranque da campanha eleitoral em Moçambique, 31 agosto Obtido em 06 de agosto de 2024 em: https://www.correiodamanhacanada.com/anuncio-de-encontro-entre-guebuza-e-dhlakama-marca-arranque-da-campanha-eleitoral-em-mocambique/

Lyon, J. M. (1980). Marxism and ethno-nationalism in Guinea-Bissau, 1956–76. Ethnic and Racial Studies. 3 (2): 156–168. doi:10.1080/01419870.1980.9993297.

Lyon, J. M. (1980). Marxism and ethno-nationalism in Guinea-Bissau, 1956–76. Ethnic and Racial Studies. 3 (2): 156–168. doi:10.1080/01419870.1980.9993297.

MacPherson, C., Sterck, O., 2021. Empowering refugees through cash and agriculture:A regression discontinuity design. J. Dev. Econ. 149, 102614.

Maputo Accord. (2020). *Desarmamento, Desmobilização e Reintegração. Secretariado para o Processo de Paz.* Obtido em 04 de agosto de 2024 em: https://maputoaccord.org/ddr/

Maputo Accord. (2023). *The Maputo Accord for Peace and National Reconciliation, signed in August 2019, facilitated the end of years of conflict, seeking to bring definitive peace to Mozambique*. Peace Process Support – The Secretariat. Obtido em 04 de agosto de 2024 em: https://maputoaccord.org/en/home/

Masseko, F. G. (2019). A Guerra dos 16 Anos em Moçambique: Causas Nacionais ou Internacionais? *Revista Nordestina de História do Brasil.* 2(3), 120-136;

Morales, J.S., 2018. The impact of internal displacement on destination communities:Evidence from the Colombian conflict. J. Dev. Econ. 131, 132–150.

Nhamuave, R. L. (2024). *Processo de Desarmamento, Desmobilização e Reintegração (DDR) em Moçambique: Um enfoque na Racionalidade da Renamo* (Monografia, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane). Universidade Eduardo Mondlane.

North, D. C. (1990). *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*. Cambridge University Press.

Peixoto, A. (2006). Desarmamento, Desmobilização e Reintegração de Ex Combatentes no Âmbito das Nações Unidas*. Universitas Relações Internacionais.* 4(1).

Putnam, R.D., 2007. E pluribus unum: Diversity and community in the twenty-firstcentury the 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture. Scand. Political Stud. 30 (2), 137–174.

Reppell, L., Rozen, J. & Carvalho, G. (2016). Planning for peace Lessons from Mozambique's peacebuilding process. ISS Paper 291.

Rozo, S.V., Vargas, J.F., 2021. Brothers or invaders? How crisis-driven migrants shapevoting behavior. J. Dev. Econ. 150, 102636.

RTP. (2024). *PR de Moçambique diz que 90% dos antigos guerrilheiros da Renamo já recebem pensões*.: https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/pr-de-mocambique-diz-que-90-dos-antigos-guerrilheiros-da-Renamo-ja-recebem-pensoes_n1589989 Acedido a 5 agosto 2024.

Ruiz, I., Vargas-Silva, C., 2015. The labor market impacts of forced migration. Amer.Econ. Rev. 105 (5), 581–586.

Soares, M. (2023). A entrevista perdida do poeta que foi um grande líder africano in Jornal Expresso. Disponível https://multimedia.expresso.pt/Amilcarcabral/ Acesso a 8 outubro de 2026

Sobel, J., 2002. *Can we trust social capital*? J. Econ. Lit. 40 (1), 139–154.

Tassi, A. (2015). *On the way to a new life. Comparative analysis on DDR post-war reconstruction processes*. Dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences, University of Konstanz.

Telepneva, N. (2017). *Mediators of Liberation: Eastern-Bloc Officials, Mozambican Diplomacy and the Origins of Soviet Support for Frelimo, 1958-1965*, Journal of Southern African Studies, 43:1, 67-81.

Tomás, A. (2016). Cabral and the Postcolony: Postcolonial Readings of Revolutionary Hopes. Postcolonial Studies, 19(1), 22–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2016.1228132

Tomás, A. (2021). *Amílcar Cabral: The Life of a Reluctant Nationalist. Oxford, Oxfordshire, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. 44.* https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197525579.001.0001

Tornimbeni, C. (2018). *Nationalism and Internationalism in the Liberation Struggle in Mozambique: The Role of the FRELIMO's Solidarity Network in Italy*, South African Historical Journal, 70:1, 194-214

Tsuda, S., 2022. Refugee inflows, surplus farm labor, and crop marketization in ruralafrica. J. Dev. Econ. 155, 102805.

Tumen, S., 2016. The economic impact of Syrian refugees on host countries:Quasi-experimental evidence from Turkey. Amer. Econ. Rev. 106 (5), 456–460.

Vines, A. (2013) Renamo's Rise and Decline: The Politics of Reintegration in Mozambique, *International Peacekeeping*, 20:3, 375-393, DOI:10.1080/13533312.2013.840087.

Weimer, B., & Bueno, N. (2020). Paz e reconciliação em Moçambique: conjunturas críticas e dependência da trajectória. In E. Sitoe (Ed.) *Desafios para Moçambique.* Pp. 65-95. Kapicua

Zak, P.J., Knack, S., 2001. *Trust and growth*. Econ. J. 111 (470), 295–321.

Zebra. (2021). Segundo o IMD: Processo de DDR deve respeitar os interesses particulares das mulheres. Obtido em 03 de Agosto de 2024, em: https://zebrando.co.mz/resumo-da-semana/segundo-o-imd-processo-de-ddr-deve-respeitar-os-interesses-particulares-das-mulheres/#:~:text=%EE%80%80De%20acordo%20com%20o%20relat%C3%B3rio

OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº.1, TD4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

SOVEREIGNTY UNDER CONSTRUCTION: AMÍLCAR CABRAL AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF LUSOPHONE COUNTRIES IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

EUGÉNIO COSTA ALMEIDA
eugenio.luis.almeida@iscte-iul.pt | elcalmeida@gmail.com
He holds a PhD in Social Sciences, specializing in International Relations from the Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas of the Technical University of Lisbon (ISCSP-UTL). He is affiliated with the University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL) and serves as a Collaborating Researcher at the Centre for International Studies (CEI-IUL, Portugal). He is also a Senior Associate Researcher at CEDESA (Centre for Studies on the Economic and Social Development of Africa) and the Angola Research Network (ARN), as well as an Associate Researcher at the Research, Development and Innovation Centre of the Portuguese Military Academy (CINAMIL), within the Military University Institute, Lisbon. His research focuses on International Relations, African politics and security, Lusophone Africa, geopolitics, and strategic studies. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1259-5764

Abstract

Under the title "Sovereignty under Construction: Amílcar Cabral and the Reconfiguration of Lusophone Countries in the International System", this article examines the theoretical evolution and contemporary applications of sovereignty in the Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP), focusing on the intellectual and political legacy of Amílcar Cabral. It analyses how classical Western notions of sovereignty - from popular sovereignty theories to the Westphalian state-centric model - were reinterpreted by anti-colonial thought to construct an endogenous framework of national liberation. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative, historical-analytical approach anchored in critical conceptual reconstruction, thematic content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis across Cabral's core primary texts and contemporary diplomatic literature. Mobilizing Samir Amin's structural critique of unequal development, the paper demonstrates that political independence without economic "delinking" resulted in an "unfinished sovereignty" marked by peripheral integration into the global capitalist system. Finally, it explores how PALOP states currently navigate this structural tension, leveraging variable geometry and strategic autonomy across multilateral arenas (CPLP, ECOWAS, SADC, UN) to assert their agency in an emerging multipolar order.

Keywords

Amílcar Cabral; CONCP; Sovereignty; Self-Determination; PALOP; Decolonization.

Resumo

Sob o título " Soberania em Construção: Amílcar Cabral e a Reconfiguração dos Países Lusófonos no Sistema Internacional", este estudo examina a evolução teórica e as aplicações contemporâneas do conceito de soberania nos Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa (PALOP), articuladas com o legado intelectual e político de Amílcar Cabral. Analisa-se como as noções ocidentais clássicas de soberania - das teorias da soberania popular ao modelo estatocêntrico de Vestfália - foram reinterpretadas pelo pensamento anticolonial para refundar uma práxis endógena de libertação nacional. Metodologicamente, o estudo adota uma abordagem qualitativa e histórico-analítica fundamentada na reconstrução concetual crítica, na

análise temática de conteúdo e na Análise Crítica do Discurso do corpus documental de Cabral e da literatura diplomática contemporânea. Recorrendo à crítica estrutural de Samir Amin sobre o desenvolvimento desigual, o trabalho demonstra que a independência política formal sem "desconexão" económica gerou uma "soberania inacabada", marcada pela integração periférica no sistema capitalista global. Por fim, investiga-se como os estados dos PALOP negoceiam atualmente esta tensão estrutural, mobilizando a geometria variável e a autonomia estratégica em fóruns multilaterais (CPLP, CEDEAO, SADC, ONU) para afirmar a sua agência num sistema internacional crescentemente multipolar.

Palavras-chave

Amílcar Cabral; CONCP; Soberania; Autodeterminação; PALOP; Descolonização.

How to cite this article
Almeida, Eugénio Costa (2026). Sovereignty Under Construction: Amílcar Cabral and the Reconfiguration of Lusophone Countries In The International System. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* Thematic Dossier – Geopolitics of Anxiety: Ideology, Identity, and (Un)Bordering in Contemporary Europe and Asia, VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD4, October 2026, pp. 286-308. DOI https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0726.13

Article submitted on 29 July 2026 and accepted on 14 August 2026.

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL. 17 Nº. 1, TD 4
Thematic Dossier – From Colonial Rule to Nationhood: Amílcar Cabral and the Birth of Lusophone Africa
October 2026, pp. 286-308
Sovereignty Under Construction: Amílcar Cabral and the Reconfiguration of Lusophone Countries In The International System
Eugénio Costa Almeida

SOVEREIGNTY UNDER CONSTRUCTION: AMÍLCAR CABRAL AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF LUSOPHONE COUNTRIES IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM[1,2]

EUGÉNIO COSTA ALMEIDA

Introduction

African decolonization constituted one of the most transformative processes of the twentieth-century international order. The downfall of European colonial empires profoundly altered the configuration of the international system, enabling the emergence of new sovereign states and expanding the number of actors within multilateral institutions. Among the various national liberation movements of this period, those in the Portuguese colonies stand out due to the longevity of their armed conflicts, Portugal's fierce resistance to decolonization, and the intellectual depth of the leadership guiding the anticolonial struggle. Within this context, Amílcar Cabral occupies a unique position. Recognized as a revolutionary leader, political strategist, and theorist, Cabral developed an original reflection on national liberation, culture, sovereignty, and development that extended far beyond the immediate context of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde. His influence resonated across other African liberation movements - notably in Angola and Mozambique - and remains a key reference point for understanding the challenges faced by post-colonial African states (Chabal, 2002; Mendy, 2019). The literature on Cabral highlights distinct dimensions of his legacy: Patrick Chabal (2002) underscores his ability to articulate revolutionary theory with political practice; António Tomás (2007) emphasizes his intellectual trajectory and strategic vision; and Peter Mendy (2019) frames him as one of the most significant Pan-African thinkers of the twentieth century. These interpretations converge on a central insight: Cabral's originality lies in his seamless integration of cultural identity, political emancipation, and economic transformation.

This study builds upon the premise that Cabral's paradigm of "unity and struggle" extended well beyond the military dimension of liberation. It posits that Cabral formulated a conceptual framework of sovereignty understood as an ongoing process of political, economic, and cultural assertion. This perspective is crucial for analysing the trajectory of

[1] Declaration of Interest - The author declares that there are no known financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have appeared to influence this research. The author has no competing interests to declare.
[2] Acknowledgment - The author acknowledges the use of Microsoft Copilot in assisting with the formatting of references and the standardization of source citations in this work.

the Portuguese-Speaking African Countries (PALOP) and their persistent challenges within a contemporary international system marked by power asymmetries, economic interdependence, and shifting multipolarity.

Accordingly, this analysis addresses two interconnected questions: to what extent did Cabral's thought and political action shape the state-building processes and international standing of Lusophone African nations? And do the contemporary structural challenges of the PALOP reflect an incomplete sovereignty, or are they manifestations of global dynamics affecting post-colonial states universally? This article argues that Cabral was not merely a liberation leader, but the conceptual architect of a distinct African model of sovereignty. The obstacles these states face today do not signal the failure of the Cabralian project; rather, they reflect enduring international structures of dependency that render sovereignty a continuous process of negotiation.

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative, historical-analytical approach anchored in critical conceptual reconstruction and contextual political theory (Skinner, 2002; Koselleck, 2004). Rather than treating Amílcar Cabral's writings as a static or formal academic construct, the research subjects his core primary corpus—encompassing political speeches, programmatic pamphlets, and strategic essays—to systematic thematic analysis (Bardin, 2018) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2013). This methodological framework allows for the interrogation of how Cabral's strategic discourse was operationalized during the anti-colonial liberation struggle and how its ideological imperatives continue to project onto contemporary post-colonial state-building, regional integration, and foreign policy architectures in Lusophone Africa (Yin, 2018).

Additionally, the author wishes to express his sincere gratitude to master's student Nicolai R. (Boston University) for his valuable bibliographical assistance, particularly in facilitating online access to copies of key works and reference materials that were essential to the consolidation of this study.

Theoretical Framework: Sovereignty, Post-Colonialism, and African Agency

Analysing Amílcar Cabral's contributions requires an interdisciplinary conceptual framework situated at the intersection of History, Political Science, and International Relations. This study anchors its analysis in three core concepts: Westphalian vs. substantive sovereignty, post-colonial structural continuity, and African agency.

Traditionally conceptualized since the Peace of Westphalia (1648)[3], as absolute, supreme authority exercised within a bounded territory, sovereignty has long functioned as the foundational pillar of the modern international system. However, international relations scholars, such as Krasner (1999, cited in Gonçalves, 2017), have demonstrated that "Westphalian sovereignty" rarely manifests in absolute terms, being continuously compromised by economic, military, and political interdependencies. In post-colonial

[3] The "*Peace of Westphalia*" refers to the treaties signed in 1648 in Münster and Osnabrück, which concluded the Thirty Years' War in Europe. It established the foundational principles of the modern international order, centered on territorial sovereignty, non-intervention in internal affairs, and formal legal equality among states.

Africa, this dichotomy between *de jure* statehood and *de facto* autonomy acquired severe systemic dimensions. Inheriting arbitrary colonial frontiers, extractive economic structures, and bureaucratic apparatuses designed for subjugation rather than governance, newly independent states achieved legal recognition without proportional decision-making autonomy. This structural contradiction prompted foundational critiques of formal sovereignty by thinkers such as Kwame Nkrumah and Samir Amin, who posited those neocolonial mechanisms — ranging from monetary dependency to asymmetrical trade patterns - covertly constrained post-colonial states from charting self-determined developmental trajectories (Mango, 2023; Paulo, 2026).

Post-colonial theory further complicates this landscape by analyzing how colonial power structures endure within state-building processes. Achille Mbembe (2001) argues that the post-colonial condition rarely marks a clean historical rupture; rather, it represents a complex entanglement of colonial continuities and institutional transformations. In Lusophone Africa, scholars such as José Luís Cabaço (2007), Severino Ngoenha (2004), and Carlos Lopes (2019) have extended these debates by linking identity formation, political economy, and state legitimacy. Lopes (2019), in particular, stresses that overcoming inherited structural vulnerabilities requires African nations to systematically convert their indigenous political and material assets into leverage within the international political economy.

Concurrently, the analytical shift toward "African agency" in contemporary International Relations challenges orthodox perspectives that reduce post-colonial states to passive objects of Great Power competition. As Chipaike and Knowledge (2018) observe, agency emphasizes the capacity of African actors to negotiate international constraints, shape multilateral agendas, and assert strategic autonomy. It is precisely within this framework that Amílcar Cabral's intellectual and diplomatic legacy proves visionary. Decades prior to the formalization of "African agency" in international relations discourse, Cabral demonstrated how a subaltern liberation movement could systematically mobilize transnational solidarity, influence multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, and alter global normative frameworks regarding anti-colonial resistance. Consequently, analysing the Cabralian project requires an approach that balances structural constraints with transformative agency, framing sovereignty not as a static legal grant, but as an ongoing process of political assertion and negotiation.

"Unity and Struggle": The Cabralian Theory of Sovereignty

The political thought of Amílcar Cabral stems from a foundational imperative: establishing the theoretical and material conditions that allow colonized peoples to reclaim their historical agency. Although literature frequently emphasizes his leadership of the armed struggle conducted by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC)[4] (Comitini, 1980), his conceptual contribution extends far beyond military

[4] The origins of the PAIGC (*Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde*) can be traced to the African Independence Party and Liberation Front of Guinea and Cabo Verde (*Frente de Libertação da Guiné e Cabo Verde* – FLGCV). The founding charter of the FLGCV was signed on 19 September 1959 by Abel Djassi (Amílcar Cabral's *nom de guerre*) and Zain Lopes (also known as Rafael Barbosa), among others; see *Casa*

strategy. Rather than presenting a formal, codified academic doctrine, Cabral's political writings implicitly challenge the classical Westphalian paradigm of sovereignty (Krasner, 1999, cited in Gonçalves, 2017). Through an analytical reconstruction of his primary works, his framework can be understood as resting upon four interwoven pillars: historical agency, political emancipation, economic autonomy, and cultural assertion (AHS, n.d.; Vecchi, 2020). While Cabral did not formalize this taxonomy into a rigid system, these dimensions articulate a holistic vision of self-determination.

The foundational concept of "unity and struggle" - which served as the central principle of the PAIGC - synthesizes this broader paradigm. Cabral maintained that no anti-colonial movement could achieve meaningful liberation without constructing political cohesion capable of transcending ethnic, regional, and socio-economic divisions (Cabral, 1984, pp. 19, 46). This formulation departed significantly from romanticized nationalist currents that posited the nation as a pre-existing, static entity. Conversely, Cabral conceptualized the nation as a dynamic political project under continuous construction, forged through collective mobilization against colonial subjugation. As Patrick Chabal (2002) observes, this position reflected a sophisticated understanding of the socio-cultural fabric of Portuguese Guinea. Recognizing that colonial governance relied heavily on instrumentalizing ethnolinguistic fractures to suppress collective resistance, Cabral argued that national unity could not be administratively decreed; it had to develop organically through political conscientization and popular participation.

The centrality of culture constitutes a cornerstone of Cabralian political thought. In his seminal 1970 address at Syracuse University, Cabral famously asserted that "national liberation is necessarily an act of culture" (Cabral, 2020; Santos, 2020). This proposition marked a major shift within post-colonial studies by expanding the scope of liberation beyond state-centric and military parameters. As Maria do Carmo Santos (2020) highlights, Cabral recognized that colonial domination functioned not merely through territorial annexation or economic extraction, but through the systematic erosion of indigenous cultural matrices. Consequently, cultural resistance represented far more than a defensive preservation of tradition; it functioned as an active, strategic reinterpretation of history to construct autonomous futures. Expanding on this point, António Tomás (2007) argues that Cabral's cultural thesis avoided both essentialist nostalgia and abstract universalism. Rather than conceptualizing African culture as homogeneous or immutable, Cabral understood it as a dynamic product of historical conditions, emphasizing that revolutionary political strategies had to adapt continuously to localized material realities.

Crucial to the Cabralian theory of sovereignty is its critique of post-colonial elite formation. Cabral harboured deep concern that newly emerging ruling classes would replicate colonial modes of exploitation upon inheriting the state apparatus. In his landmark 1966 address at the Tricontinental Conference in Havana, he famously called upon the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie to commit "class suicide" - to renounce its structural privileges and align its material interests directly with the popular masses (Almada, 2023). As Peter Mendy (2019) observes, this imperative sought to prevent the institutionalization of post-colonial oligarchies and ensure that formal independence translated into substantive socio-

Comum, Folder 07056.003.004, Title: "Carta da FLGCV" (http://casacomum.org/cc/arquivos?set=e_2617#!e_2774).

economic transformation. While contemporary scholars acknowledge the idealistic dimensions of this expectation, its diagnostic relevance remains acute in light of the governance crises and elite capture that affected numerous African states in subsequent decades.

Finally, Cabral's reflection incorporates an international dimension that directly informs modern foreign policy studies. Rejecting narrow autarkic nationalism, Cabral recognized that liberation unfolded within a global political economy structured by asymmetrical power relations (Goulart, 2024). Liberation was therefore simultaneously a domestic imperative and an international negotiation. The strategic alliances constructed by the PAIGC with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations, and Third World solidarity networks demonstrated the practical deployment of this vision. Sovereignty, in Cabral's formulation, was not synonymous with isolationism; rather, it signified the capacity to engage the international system autonomously while safeguarding national strategic interests. By synthesizing culture, political economy, institutional legitimacy, and foreign policy, the Cabralian paradigm provides a comprehensive framework for examining the ongoing state-building trajectories and international assertion of the PALOP in the twenty-first century.

Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde: From Liberation to State-Building

The liberation struggle led by the PAIGC represents one of the most comprehensively examined historical instances of anti-colonial resistance in twentieth-century Africa. Nevertheless, conceptualizing the Guinean experience solely through a military lens obscures the analytical depth of the state-building model crafted by Amílcar Cabral and his leadership. Founded in 1956, the PAIGC emerged within an international and domestic context defined by the Portuguese *Estado Novo* regime's rigid refusal to concede self-determination to its overseas territories. Grounded in the official doctrine of a "pluricontinental and multiracial nation," the colonial state explicitly denied the legitimacy of African nationalist claims, systematically closing constitutional avenues for political emancipation and driving anti-colonial movements toward armed resistance.

The Pidjiguiti massacre of August 1959 - in which colonial authorities violently suppressed striking dockworkers in Bissau - marked a decisive turning point in this trajectory. The incident demonstrated to the PAIGC leadership the impossibility of securing self-determination through exclusive peaceful protest (Cabral, 1984). Consequently, the movement systematically mobilized for armed resistance, formally initiating military operations in 1963 (Comitini, 1980). However, the movement's strategic effectiveness stemmed less from military superiority than from its premature institutionalization of state functions within the "liberated zones." Under PAIGC administration, these areas established schools, primary healthcare centers, agricultural production cooperatives, and popular tribunals (Cabral, 1984; Cabral, 2016, pp. 99–100; Chabal, 2002). Unlike contemporary insurgencies that focused resources predominantly on guerrilla warfare, the PAIGC constructed an operational alternative state apparatus that generated domestic political legitimacy long before de jure independence was attained.

Crucial to this institutionalization process was the strategic prioritization of education. Cabral maintained that genuine sovereignty required an educated citizenry capable of driving socio-economic transformation and executing state functions (Cabral, 1984, pp. 255–257). Schools within the liberated zones served dual purposes: providing basic literacy and fostering national consciousness that transcended ethnic identities. This structural preparation culminated in the unilateral proclamation of the independence of Guinea-Bissau in September 1973 at Madina do Boé (Caldeira, 2024). Although Portugal recognized Guinean independence only following the Carnation Revolution of April 1974, the PAIGC had already secured substantial international recognition. On November 2, 1973, United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/3061 (XXVIII) formally recognized the sovereign state of Guinea-Bissau (UN, 1973), representing a major diplomatic triumph that validated Cabral's doctrine of linking military control to multilateral legitimization.

Concurrently, the Cabo Verdean trajectory exhibited distinct socio-geographical characteristics. The archipelago's insular geography and demographic specificities precluded the replication of mainland guerrilla warfare strategies. Nevertheless, Cabral's overarching political framework guided nationalist mobilization across the islands. The attainment of Cabo Verdean independence in July 1975 reflected the strength of the clandestine political networks established over preceding decades, combined with international diplomatic pressure favoring decolonization.

The initial post-independence era exposed the acute structural challenges inherent to post-colonial state-building. Severe resource scarcity, administrative deficits inherited from colonial rule, and hostile international economic conditions constrained the immediate realization of the PAIGC's socio-economic agenda. Despite these impediments, the governance frameworks of both Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde remained deeply shaped by the Cabralian intellectual lineage. As Julião Soares Sousa (2007) argues, the endurance of the Cabralian legacy resides in its integration of pragmatic political strategy with a long-term vision of structural transformation. Rather than providing transient tactical guidelines, Cabral's political thought articulated a comprehensive doctrine of nation-building that continues to frame governance debates across Lusophone Africa.

The Systemic Impact on Lusophony: The Spillover Effect in Angola and Mozambique and the Fall of the "Estado Novo"

The victorious insurrection and subsequent state consolidation in Guinea-Bissau under the intellectual aegis of Amílcar Cabral did not unfold in isolation, nor did its implications remain confined to the West African theatre. On the contrary, the Guinean experience functioned as the strategic fulcrum and catalyst for a systemic process of attrition that irreversibly undermined the political, economic, and military foundations of the Portuguese colonial empire (Gomes, 2020). The internationalist coordination among national liberation movements across Portuguese colonies achieved institutional form with the founding of

the Conference of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies (CONCP)[5], established during a historic summit in Casablanca in 1961 (BNP, 2016).

Under Cabral's theoretical and diplomatic leadership - as its primary conceptual formulator—the CONCP developed into a permanent platform for transcontinental political-diplomatic coordination and strategic intelligence sharing. This alliance unified the programmatic agendas of the PAIGC, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), and the Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe (MLSTP). Through this collective framework, these movements projected a unified voice in international forums, effectively neutralizing Lisbon's diplomatic attempts to isolate the various combat fronts or portray anti-colonial forces as fragmented transnational insurgencies. While the ultimate collapse of the Portuguese colonial regime resulted from a complex convergence of economic exhaustion, international isolation, and military fatigue, Cabral's strategic direction of the CONCP served a pivotal catalytic role. This influence was notably highlighted during the landmark Dar-es-Salaam meeting in October 1965, documented in the *"CONCP – 2ème Conférence des Organisations Nationalistes des Colonies Portugaises – Résolutions"* (CONCP, 1965), which concretely demonstrated the collective political and military alignment led by Cabral, as synthesized below.

Through the institutional mechanism of the CONCP, Cabral succeeded in universalizing his revolutionary methodology, generating a profound spillover effect, strategic emulation, and mutual solidarity across the Angolan and Mozambican fronts. The influence of his framework on prominent leaders—most notably António Agostinho Neto in Angola and Samora Moisés Machel in Mozambique—was structured around three core doctrinal and operational vectors that reconfigured the nature of Lusophone African nationalism:

i. Liberation as a Total Social Revolution: Decolonization was conceptualized not as the mere "Africanization" or administrative replacement of colonial personnel, but as the structural transformation of inherited socio-economic relations. It demanded the dismantling of feudal, colonial, and capitalist modes of production that sustained human exploitation in both agrarian and urban spheres.

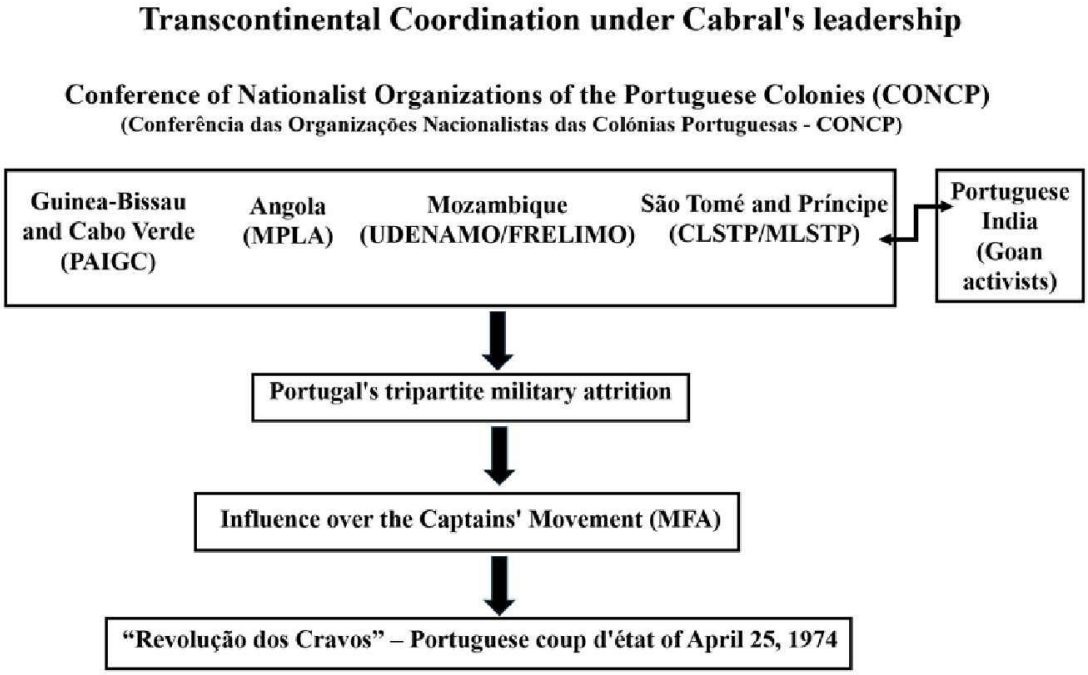
ii. Subordination of the Military Wing to Political Leadership: The armed struggle and tactical operations were strictly subordinated to the ideological direction and programmatic objectives of the political party. This principle reflected Cabral's explicit

[5] The Conference of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies (*Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas* – CONCP) was founded on April 18, 1961, in Casablanca, Morocco. It had its roots in the African Revolutionary Front for the National Independence of the Portuguese Colonies (*Frente Revolucionária Africana para a Independência Nacional das Colónias Portuguesa*s – FRAIN), established in 1960 in Tunisia. The CONCP represented Angola, through the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* – MPLA); Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, through the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC); Mozambique, initially through the National Democratic Union of Mozambique (*União Democrática Nacional de Moçambique* – UDENAMO) ad later through the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique – FRELIMO); São Tomé and Príncipe, through the Committee for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe (*Comité de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe* – CLSTP), subsequently the Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe (*Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe* – MLSTP); and Portuguese India (Goa), with representation and support from Goan nationalists, particularly prior to the territory's integration into the Indian Union.

directive to "combat the craze for militarism and make every combatant an exemplary militant of our Party" (PAIGC, 1969, p. 5).

Civic, Trans-Ethnic, and Anti-Racist Nationalism: Cabralian doctrine rejected ethnolinguistic, regional, or racialized divisions, promoting instead the historical forge of an anti-colonial civic identity—the political and anthropological emergence of the African "New Man" (Neto, 1975; Machel, 1974)[6].

Table 1. Cabral's leadership within the CONCP and Its contribution to the collapse of Portuguese Colonialism (1961–1974)



Source: Author based on CONCP (1961), Cabral (1973), and Chabal (2002)

This Cabralian paradigm generated an internal ideological friction between "modernizers" and "traditionalists" within Afro-Lusophone liberation movements (Pinto, 2001, p. 87). While the "modernizers" endorsed a universalist, progressive political vision—as formulated by Cabral—the "traditionalists" remained tied to localized traditional authority structures. Both the PAIGC and FRELIMO successfully integrated or marginalized traditionalist factions early in their struggles. In contrast, the MPLA faced a more precarious dynamic in Angola due to acute internal factionalism. Nevertheless, all three dominant movements ultimately aligned under the leadership of the "modernizers," who increasingly adopted progressive, anti-imperialist, and Marxist-Leninist organizational frameworks during the conflict (Pinto, 2001, p. 87).

[6] This perspective was articulated by Agostinho Neto during the proclamation of Angolan independence on 11 November 1975 (Neto, 1975), and was similarly emphasized by Samora Machel during the swearing-in of Mozambique's Transitional Government in 1974 (Machel, 1974).

In Mozambique, FRELIMO operationalized the Guinean model of "Liberated Zones" with remarkable structural rigor across the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa. These regions were converted into social laboratories for popular self-governance, women's emancipation, and collective agricultural production, effectively dismantling Portuguese administrative and fiscal control (Machel, 1977, p. 54). In Angola, despite severe internal fractures—exemplified by the rivalry between the MPLA, Holden Roberto's National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), and Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which was exacerbated by Cold War geopolitics—the MPLA's intellectual leadership consistently drew upon Cabral's theoretical corpus to assert its political legitimacy and formulate its vision of a secular, progressive state.

The systemic impact of Cabralian praxis extended fundamentally to the metropole itself. Portugal's prolonged engagement in asymmetric counter-insurgency operations across three simultaneous theatres devoid of military resolution precipitated severe economic strain, societal destabilization (manifested through mass draft evasion and emigration), and the moral erosion of the *Estado Novo* regime. Young officers within the Portuguese armed forces, confronted daily with the tactical resilience, logistical sophistication, and political coherence of the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, increasingly engaged with anti-colonial literature and political manifestos within their garrisons (Almada, 2019).

The *Movimento dos Capitães* (Captains' Movement), which orchestrated the revolutionary coup of April 25, 1974, in Lisbon—overthrowing the dictatorship of Marcello Caetano and establishing Portuguese democracy—was directly catalyzed by this epistemological shift. The explicit acknowledgment by senior military figures, such as General António de Spínola in his seminal work *Portugal e o Futuro* (Spínola, 1974), that the colonial crisis admitted only a political and democratic resolution, derived directly from the strategic stalemate imposed by the PAIGC on the ground. Consequently, within the framework of interconnected global history, the restoration of democracy in Portugal and the sovereign emancipation of Lusophone African nations emerge not as isolated events, but as twin dimensions of a single historical process of universal liberation (Almada, 2019).

The Reconfiguration of the Lusophone Space after Decolonization

The independence of the Portuguese colonies in Africa catalysed a profound transformation in the political configuration of the Lusophone world. Prior to 1974, the official doctrine of *portugalidade* (Portuguese identity) was intrinsically tied to imperial discourse, projecting a political community hierarchy centred upon the metropole. Decolonization rendered this imperial logic entirely unsustainable, compelling a fundamental redefinition of bilateral and multilateral relations between Portugal and the newly emerging African states. This transition did not proceed in a linear fashion; rather, it was marked by structural tensions, historical ambiguities, and complex negotiations that reflected both the heavy weight of colonial legacies and the imperatives of the post-colonial international order.

This post-imperial reconfiguration unfolded within a highly volatile global environment. Achieving statehood during the height of Cold War geopolitical rivalries, the newly independent Portuguese-Speaking African Countries (PALOP) - Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Cabo Verde, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe - frequently found themselves

transformed into arenas of superpower competition. Despite these systemic constraints, the PALOP systematically sought to assert their strategic autonomy. Admission to the United Nations represented a pivotal threshold in this trajectory, providing these states with *de jure* legal recognition and formal access to multilateral decision-making bodies. As post-colonial scholars such as Achille Mbembe (2001) observe, independence represented a dual reality of structural rupture and institutional continuity: while colonial political apparatuses were formally dismantled, inherited vulnerabilities - including mono-crop economic dependency, fragile administrative structures, and external geopolitical pressure - persisted under new post-colonial dynamics, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Macroeconomic Insertion Matrix and Structural Indicators in the PALOP and an Additional CPLP State

Structural Indicators and Macroeconomic Insertion in the PALOP (and CPLP)

Country	Type of Global Integration	Primary Product or Asset	Dependence / Critical Fragility
Angola	Rent-Dependent Commodity Export Economy	Crude Oil (90%)	High / Bilateral External Debt
Cabo Verde	Advanced Tertiarized and High-Value Services Economy	Governance and Stability	Low / Moderate
Guinea-Bissau	Export Monoculture (*Assetization*) and Transit Economy	Cashew Nuts (85%)	Extreme / Institutional Fragility and Drug Trafficking
Mozambique	Global Energy Integration Hub	Electricity, Natural Gas (LNG), and Coal	High / Insurgency and Security Vulnerability
São Tome and Príncipe	Rent-Dependent Island Economy and Maritime Transit	International Aid (± 18%) Tourism (± 11%), and Cocoa ⩽ 80%)	High / Fiscal and Exchange Rate Vulnerability
Equatorial Guinea (CPLP)	Primary-Based Oil Enclave Economy	Crude Oil and Natural Gas (LNG)	Extreme / Energy Price Volatility

Source: Author based IMF (2026), UNCTAD (2025), and Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2024)

Concurrently, this structural transition created new avenues for regional and international cooperation. The Portuguese language - historically deployed as an instrument of colonial administration - was progressively reinterpreted and reclaimed by African states as a medium for sovereign dialogue, diplomatic concertation, and multilateral engagement. This evolution culminated in 1996 with the establishment of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). The creation of the CPLP represents one of the most visible expressions of the post-colonial reconfiguration of Lusophone international relations, establishing an intergovernmental platform explicitly founded upon principles of sovereign equality, non-interference, and mutual cooperation.

Although the CPLP is frequently subjected to academic scrutiny regarding its institutional limitations and execution capacities, the organization plays a meaningful role in consolidating mechanisms for political consultation and enhancing the collective diplomatic leverage of its member states. For the PALOP, the platform provides an additional institutional mechanism to amplify their international visibility and exercise collective agency within broader multilateral forums. Evaluated through the lens of the Cabralian

legacy, this evolutionary trajectory is of notable conceptual interest: Cabral consistently advocated for a sovereignty that was outward-looking and integrated into global dynamics, yet firmly grounded in the political autonomy and self-determination of African peoples. The construction of collaborative frameworks among equal, sovereign states stands fully aligned with this original vision.

The PALOP in the Contemporary International System: Between Multilateralism and Strategic Assertion

The international integration of the PALOP constitutes one of the most significant dimensions of the post-colonial evolution of the Lusophone space. Upon achieving independence, these states confronted a structural challenge extending far beyond domestic institutional consolidation: asserting their sovereignty within an international system characterized by acute economic, technological, and military asymmetries. While political independence secured formal international legal recognition, it did not automatically dismantle the structural constraints inherited from colonial rule. As conceptualized by Samir Amin (1974, *apud* Chambisso, 2025), the historical integration of African economies into the capitalist world-system occurred from peripheral positions, structurally conditioning their pathways for autonomous development. This vulnerability became acutely evident across the PALOP, whose national economies remained heavily reliant on primary commodity exports and external development assistance.

To navigate these structural limitations, the PALOP developed diversified strategies of international insertion, prioritizing active engagement within multilateral institutions. Participation in the United Nations system proved vital from the outset. Multilateralism provided new post-colonial states with an institutional framework where the principle of sovereign equality partially counterbalanced material power asymmetries. Within the UN, the PALOP have consistently advocated for multilateral governance reform, self-determination, and equitable sustainable development—a diplomatic orientation deeply rooted in their anti-colonial liberation struggles, during which international solidarity proved indispensable for legitimizing claims to self-determination. Key historical milestones within this framework included UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 ("*Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*") and the establishment of the Special Committee on Decolonization (Committee of 24) via Resolution 1654 (XVI) of 27 November 1961 (Santos, 2009).

Crucially, diplomatic support was mobilized through the Organization of African Unity (OAU, now the African Union) alongside an extensive transnational network of non-governmental, political, and solidarity organizations. These included Portuguese anti-fascist and anti-colonial opposition channels—such as the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império* (CEI); the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP); the Patriotic Front for National Liberation (*Frente Patriótica de Libertação Nacional* – FPLN), founded in Rome in 1962 and headquartered in Algiers; and the Portuguese Socialist Action (*Acção Socialista Portuguesa* – ASP), founded in 1964 by figures such as Mário Soares. Institutional and humanitarian assistance was further channelled through official bodies—such as the Development Assistance Committee of the Council of Europe (indirectly via Swedish development aid)—

and multilateral agencies like UNICEF, which executed direct assistance programs in PAIGC-controlled liberated zones. Furthermore, a wide array of international non-governmental organizations actively supported the cause, including *The Angola Comité* in the Netherlands; the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea (CFMAG) in the United Kingdom, closely affiliated with the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM); and the Organization of Solidarity of the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL), based in Havana.

In the post-colonial era, active participation in African regional integration mechanisms represents a foundational pillar of the PALOP's foreign policy architectures. Angola and Mozambique play strategic roles within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), contributing to regional security and economic integration. Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde participate in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with Cabo Verde simultaneously leveraging its geographic positioning to strengthen transatlantic partnerships with both West African and Atlantic structures. This multi-layered institutional integration illustrates a defining feature of contemporary global politics: overlapping regionalism and diplomatic multi-alignment. Rather than operating exclusively within a single institutional domain—whether the CPLP, the African Union, or the United Nations—the PALOP strategically articulate distinct diplomatic identities tailored to their national security and economic priorities.

The establishment and expansion of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) in 1996 must be conceptualized within this broader framework of diplomatic multi-alignment. Although the organization possesses modest resource capacities compared to traditional regional blocks, it serves as an indispensable forum for political concertation, normative consensus-building, and South-South technical cooperation. Scholarly literature emphasizes that the geopolitical value of the CPLP derives not merely from its policy outputs, but from its unique capacity to bridge sovereign states across four continents. For the PALOP, the platform provides an additional diplomatic arena to project their strategic interests, expand bilateral partnerships, and amplify their operational leverage within the wider multilateral architecture.

Evaluated through a Cabralian theoretical lens, the engagement of the PALOP in contemporary multilateral organizations represents the structural continuation of the struggle for sovereignty through diplomatic instruments. If the primary objective during the anti-colonial struggle was securing international recognition for national self-determination, the post-colonial imperative has shifted to converting that formal statehood into substantive strategic autonomy. In this sense, Cabralian praxis demonstrates that sovereignty must never be conflated with autarkic isolation or passive non-alignment; rather, it consists of the capacity to navigate complex global interdependencies autonomously while safeguarding the national margin of political decision-making.

Unfinished Sovereignty? Dependence, Neocolonialism, and Multipolarity

Reflecting upon the sovereign trajectories of the PALOP requires a critical examination of the structural challenges confronting these states within the contemporary global political economy. Although political independence was secured half a century ago, persistent

vulnerabilities continue to evoke central debates articulated within the theoretical corpus of Amílcar Cabral. Chief among these issues is the persistence of structural economic dependence. Most African nations continue to occupy peripheral positions within the international division of labor, remaining specialized in the extraction and export of primary commodities while relying heavily on imported high-value-added manufactures. In his seminal trilogy published between 1970 and 1990—*Accumulation on a World Scale*, *Imperialism and Unequal Development*, and *Maldevelopment: Anatomy of a Global Failure*—Samir Amin demonstrated that the core structural dilemma for former European colonies lay in their merely "formal" independence. In practice, post-independence Africa was subordinately integrated into the global capitalist system through a model of dependent peripheral accumulation, wherein domestic industrialization—the essential catalyst for any autonomous development project—was systematically marginalized (Chambisso, 2025).

Citing Amin's (1990, *apud* Chambisso, 2025) analysis in *Maldevelopment*, Chambisso (2025) underscores the foundational thesis that 'political independence without economic delinking is an illusion.' This formulation explains why numerous post-colonial African states, despite winning legal statehood, rapidly confronted structural growth crises, acute external dependence, and extreme vulnerability to international commodity price volatility. What these political economies fundamentally lacked was what Amin (1990, *apud* Chambisso, 2025) conceptualized as economic 'delinking' (*déconnexion*) to complement formal political sovereignty. Within the PALOP context, this structural dynamic manifests through distinct empirical vulnerabilities

- Angola: Represents a paradigmatic case of resource concentration, where historical over-reliance on petroleum exports has dominated public revenues and foreign exchange earnings. While oil revenues underwrote post-war national infrastructure reconstruction, they simultaneously exposed the national economy to severe international market shocks and hindered industrial diversification.
- Mozambique: Faces analogous structural pressures regarding massive offshore natural gas reserves in the Rovuma Basin. While generating expectations of accelerated macroeconomic growth, these discoveries have triggered intense scholarly concern surrounding the "resource curse"—a dynamic wherein capital-intensive extractive abundance fails to translate into inclusive socio-economic development or broad-based institutional strengthening.
- Guinea-Bissau & Cabo Verde: Guinea-Bissau remains acutely dependent on mono-crop cashew nut exports, leaving its fiscal stability subject to global market fluctuations, while Cabo Verde confronts structural constraints inherent to small island developing states (SIDS), including resource scarcity and high exposure to external economic and environmental shocks.

Across these diverse national trajectories, the concept of neocolonialism retains profound analytical purchase, capturing the continued capacity of external actors to condition domestic political and economic policy horizons. Nevertheless, the twenty-first-century international system exhibits structural dynamics markedly distinct from those of the mid-

twentieth-century anti-colonial struggle. The rise of emerging powers—most prominently the People's Republic of China—has fundamentally altered the global distribution of power and financial capital. The expanding Chinese footprint across Africa constitutes one of the most intensely debated phenomena in contemporary international relations. Scholars such as Alden (2005) argue that Chinese engagement offers African states unprecedented strategic flexibility to diversify bilateral partnerships and mitigate historical dependencies on former Western colonial powers. Conversely, critics caution against emerging modalities of dependency associated with external debt sustainability and external control over strategic physical infrastructure.

Simultaneously, alternative scholarly perspectives highlight the operational framework of "co-evolutionary pragmatism" - a defining feature of China's contemporary African policy - which fosters sectoral convergence across agriculture, physical infrastructure, and environmental management. Under this pragmatic model, localized coordination mechanisms deployed within one sector can generate positive cross-sectoral externalities and alleviate systemic operational constraints in others (De, 2025). Parallel to this Asian driver, the European Union maintains substantial engagement through development cooperation, trade frameworks, and foreign direct investment, while non-traditional actors - including the United States, India, Turkey, Brazil, and various Gulf states - have systematically intensified their diplomatic and economic presence across the continent. This burgeoning multipolarity creates simultaneous strategic opportunities and complex policy trade-offs: while expanding foreign policy options for African decision-makers, it exponentially increases diplomatic complexity and demands heightened national negotiating capacity.

In this transformed geopolitical landscape, Cabralian theoretical reflections acquire renewed analytical urgency. Cabral’s uncompromising emphasis on national political autonomy, endogenous socio-economic development, and the expansion of the sovereign decision-making capacity of African peoples provides an essential critical lens for evaluating contemporary global power configurations. Rather than representing a static historical threshold achieved once and for all in 1973 or 1975, sovereignty emerges in Cabralian thought as an unceasing, dynamic process of political and economic construction. To avoid an idealized or teleological reading of Cabral, however, it is necessary to acknowledge that his normative framework encountered severe structural frictions in historical practice. The post-colonial trajectories of the PALOP demonstrated that anti-colonial revolutionary solidarity frequently fractured into authoritarian centralism, acute institutional fragility, and persistent extra-regional dependencies, revealing a profound historical gap between Cabral’s emancipatory projections and post-colonial *realpolitik*.

The Contemporary Relevance of Amílcar Cabral's Thought in the Twenty-First Century

More than five decades after Amílcar Cabral's tragic assassination[7], his theoretical and programmatic legacy continues to occupy a central place in contemporary debates surrounding state sovereignty, sustainable development, culture, and political emancipation. This enduring presence results not merely from the historical significance of his leadership during the anti-colonial war, but primarily from the remarkable capacity of his theoretical corpus to provide analytical instruments for deciphering twenty-first-century challenges. Fundamental to this lasting relevance is the multidimensional nature of Cabralian reflection: Cabral never conceptualized national liberation as a single historical event or a simple administrative transfer of power. Rather, liberation was formulated as a continuous, multidimensional emancipatory continuum wherein formal political independence constituted merely the prerequisite stage for structural economic transformation, cultural re-grounding, and the active democratic participation of popular masses in shaping their national Destiny.

This holistic perspective proves particularly incisive within contemporary debates on African economic development. Over recent decades, numerous states across the continent have recorded robust macroeconomic growth rates alongside deeper integration into global markets. However, persistent structural deficits endure regarding severe socio-economic inequalities, technological vulnerabilities, fiscal fragility, and institutional weakness. As Carlos Lopes convincingly argues, the primary contemporary challenge for African states consists of translating raw economic growth into sustainable, high-value-added structural transformation (Lopes, 2019). This imperative display profound conceptual affinities with Cabral's insistence on binding economic development to the internal buildup of technological capabilities, institutional consolidation, and national productive autonomy.

Furthermore, Cabralian thought retains exceptional analytical purchase in addressing contemporary crisis modalities of political governance. Throughout his writings, Cabral maintained a vigilant critique of power concentration and the systemic risk of post-independence ruling elites detaching themselves from the material interests of the popular base. His rigorous critique of the national *petite bourgeoisie* remains strikingly prescient in an era where multiple post-colonial polities navigate challenges associated with neo-patrimonialism, systemic corruption, clientelism, and institutional fragility. In this context, scholars emphasize the necessity of reclaiming indigenous African traditions of civic participation and institutional accountability to fortify the democratic legitimacy of contemporary state structures (Ngoenha, 2004, pp. 81–82). Although articulated within a distinct historical moment, this normative reflection directly intersects with Cabral's core imperative: ensuring that sovereign statehood yields concrete socio-economic benefits for the majority of the population.

In the realm of globalized culture and knowledge production, the Cabralian doctrine of "returning to the source" and culture as an instrument of liberation has acquired renewed

[7] Amílcar Cabral was assassinated on 20 January 1973 in Conakry, the capital of the Republic of Guinea (Guinea-Conakry), directly outside his official residence within the PAIGC administrative complex in the city (Cabral, 1984, pp. 437–438).

theoretical urgency. While the intensification of global flows of information, capital, and people have broadened avenues for intercultural exchange, it has simultaneously heightened anxieties surrounding cultural homogenization, western hegemony, and the peripheralization of local identities. Cabral's defence of culture as the foundational matrix of historical resistance continues to inspire contemporary discourse on cultural pluralism, indigenous knowledge systems, and epistemological decolonization. As Achille Mbembe observes, a central imperative for contemporary African thought consists of dismantling representations inherited from the colonial episteme and asserting autonomous modes of interpreting the world (Mbembe, 2001). This task directly echoes Cabral's core premise: asserting the historical capacity of African societies to produce critical knowledge and formulate their own development paradigms.

Finally, the expanding scholarly focus on *African agency* in International Relations mirrors the operational essence of Cabral's political trajectory. For decades, traditional international relations literature depicted African states as passive subjects, structurally overdetermined by external superpower dynamics. Contemporary scholarship has vigorously challenged this subaltern framing, demonstrating that African states, regional institutions, and transnational movements actively shape global governance agendas. Cabral's diplomatic and revolutionary praxis stands as an exemplary historical model of this agency. Through a sophisticated integration of grassroots mobilization, rigorous intellectual production, and strategic international diplomacy, Cabral elevated a localized liberation struggle into a globally recognized cause for human emancipation. In an emerging multipolar order characterized by intense major-power competition, his uncompromising insistence on both political self-determination and intellectual independence offers an indispensable strategic compass for post-colonial states seeking to navigate global interdependencies without surrendering their sovereign decision-making power.

Conclusion

The comprehensive analysis developed throughout this study demonstrates that the intellectual and political legacy of Amílcar Cabral extends far beyond the historical boundaries of the anti-colonial liberation struggle that culminated in the independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde. While Cabral's historical stature remains inextricably bound to his strategic leadership of the PAIGC and the operational prosecution of the national liberation war, the enduring significance of his work lies primarily in his formulation of a holistic, multidimensional conception of state sovereignty—one capable of integrating political, economic, cultural, and international systemic vectors. Grounded in the fundamental premise that formal statehood does not exhaust the imperative of national emancipation, Cabral constructed a dynamic theoretical corpus that continues to offer vital analytical instruments for evaluating the post-colonial trajectories of the PALOP and the structural challenges confronting African states within the contemporary global order.

Central to this theoretical contribution is Cabral's conceptualization of "unity and struggle," which operated not merely as a tactical slogan for military mobilization, but as an integrated paradigm designed to solve the twin dilemmas of anti-colonial resistance and

post-colonial nation-building. By explicitly linking popular grassroots mobilization with cultural re-grounding, agricultural diagnostic rigor, and institutional development, Cabral established that true liberation demands the transformation of domestic productive structures and the democratization of sovereign decision-making. Furthermore, as this study has highlighted, Cabral's ideational influence was never geographically confined to Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde. His programmatic formulations and personal diplomacy exerted a profound catalytic effect on the liberation movements of Angola (MPLA) and Mozambique (FRELIMO), fostering a shared anti-colonial political culture across the African Lusophone space. This transnational circulation of revolutionary theory and administrative experience played a decisive role in shaping post-colonial state structures and laying the groundwork for durable inter-state solidarity across the PALOP.

The examination of the international integration of the PALOP reveals that the attainment of legal independence inaugurated an entirely new and complex phase in the struggle for sovereign autonomy. If the primary objective during the anti-colonial era consisted of securing international legal recognition for the right to self-determination, the post-colonial imperative shifted toward asserting political and economic agency within a global architecture characterized by acute structural asymmetries and peripheral capitalist accumulation. Within this international setting, persistent challenges—such as primary commodity dependence, fiscal vulnerability, institutional fragility, and major-power geopolitical competition—continue to condition the practical exercise of national sovereignty. The emerging multipolarity of the twenty-first-century international system presents a double-edged reality: while expanding the spectrum of strategic partnerships available to post-colonial states, it simultaneously heightens foreign policy complexity, requiring increasingly sophisticated diplomatic strategies to safeguard national autonomy.

It is precisely within this contemporary geopolitical landscape that Cabralian thought reasserts its profound theoretical urgency. Cabral's uncompromising emphasis on national political autonomy, endogenous socio-economic transformation, and epistemological self-determination provides an essential conceptual compass for interpreting the structural dilemmas facing the PALOP in the modern era. Far from representing a static historical milestone sealed at the moment of decolonization, sovereignty emerges in Cabralian praxis as an unceasing, dialectical process of political construction, institutional adaptation, and strategic negotiation against both external structural constraints and internal post-colonial frictions.

In the final analysis, the legacy of Amílcar Cabral remains exceptionally vital because it serves as an unyielding reminder that the true emancipation of post-colonial societies depends not merely on the capture of formal state apparatuses, but on the capacity to erect legitimate democratic institutions, foster inclusive structural development, and project autonomous agency within global power structures. His theoretical and practical work therefore continues to constitute an indispensable reference point for understanding contemporary *African agency*, the evolving geometry of South-South cooperation, and the strategic positioning of Portuguese-speaking African states within the contemporary international system.

References

African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC). (1969). Palavras de Ordem Gerais do camarada AMILCAR CABRAL aos responsáveis do Partido (Novembro de 1965). Edição da Comissão de Organização, Formação Política e Ideológica, Setembro-1969. Retrieved from https://www.marxists.org/portugues/cabral/1965/11/40.pdf

Alden, Chris. (2005). China in Africa. Survival, 47(3): 147–164. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330500248086

Almada, José Luís Hopffer. (2023). O caso Amílcar Cabral. Apontamentos críticos a propósito do princípio e do projecto da unidade Guiné-Cabo Verde. PARTE 1. Buala, 22 Janeiro 2023. Retrieved from https://www.buala.org/pt/a-ler/o-caso-amilcar-cabral-apontamentos-criticos-a-proposito-do-principio-e-do-projecto-da-unidade-

Almada, Pablo. (2019). Uma transição pós-colonial? Aproximações do discurso do Movimento das Forças Armadas (MFA) de Portugal aos movimentos de libertação colonial. Revista Espacialidades. 2019.1, v. 15, n. 1: 206-205. Retrieved from https://periodicos.ufrn.br/espacialidades/article/download/19198/12220/61140

Amílcar Cabral's life, legacy and reluctant nationalism – An interview with António Tomás. (2025, 12 September). Review of African Political Economy. Retrieved from https://roape.net/2025/09/12/amilcar-cabrals-life-legacy-and-reluctant-nationalism-an-interview-with-antonio-tomas-2/

Arquivo Histórico Social. (s.d.). Amílcar Cabral: Textos políticos (compilação). Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa. Retrieved from https://www.marxists.org/portugues/cabral/ano/mes/51.pdf

Bardin, Laurence. (2018). Análise de Conteúdo. Lisboa: Lisboa. Edições 70.

BNP. (2016). A CONCP – a internacionalização da luta pela independência das colónias portuguesas. (Conferência), Biblioteca Nacional Portuguesa. Retrieved from https://www.bnportugal.gov.pt/index.php?view=article&id=1175

Cabaço, Jose Luis de Oliveira. (2007). Moçambique: identidades, colonialismo e libertação. (PhD Dissertation) – Universidade de São Paulo. Repositório: https://teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/8/8134/tde-05122007-151059/

Cabral, Amílcar. (1973). Return to the Source: Selected Speeches. New York: Africa Information Service & Monthly Review Press. Retrieved from https://abahlali.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/amilcar_cabral_return_to_the_source-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf

Cabral, Amílcar. (1973). Return to the Source: Selected Speeches. New York: Monthly Review Press

Cabral, Amílcar. (2016). Resistance and Decolonization. London. Rowman & Littlefield International

Cabral, Luís. (1984). Crónica da Libertação (1ª ed.). Lisboa. Edições "O Jornal".

Caldeira, Alfredo. (2024). Proclamação de independência da Guiné-Bissau. Comissão Comemorativa 50 anos 25 Abril. Retrieved from https://50anos25abril.pt/historia/proclamacao-da-independencia-da-guine-bissau/

Chabal, Patrick. (2002). Amílcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War. London. Hurst & Co. Retrieved from https://books.google.pt/books/about/Amilcar_Cabral.html?id=dpKndP09YjYC&redir_esc=y

Chambisso, Celso. (2025). África: Independências Sem Emancipação Económica. Diário Económico, 02/07/25. Retrieved from https://www.diarioeconomico.co.mz/2025/07/02/economia/africa-independencias-sem-emancipacao-economica/

Chipaike, Ronald & Knowledge, Matarutse H. (2018). The question of African agency in international relations. Cogent Social Sciences, Volume 4, 2018 - Issue 1. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2018.1487257

Comitini, Carlos. (1980). Amílcar Cabral – A Arma da Teoria. Rio de Janeiro. Editora Codecri. Retrieved from https://afreekasite.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/a-arma-da-teoria-amilcar-cabral.pdf

CONCP. (1965). 2eme. Conference des Organizations Nationalistes des Colonies Portugaises – Resolutions. Dar-es-Salaam, 3-9 Octobre 1965. Retrieved from https://www.marxists.org/ubject/africa/paigc/concp-2nd.pdf

Fairclough, Norman. (2013). Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language. London: Routledge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315834368

Gomes, Patrícia G. (2020). Peter Karibe Mendy, Amílcar Cabral. Nationalist and Pan-Africanist Revolutionary. H-Luso-Africa (July, 2020). https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=55386

Gonçalves, Isabela. (2017). O conceito de soberania: constantes e contradições. O Cosmopolítico - v. 4 n.2 junho 2017. Retrieved from https://periodicos.uff.br/ocosmopolitico/article/download/53755/31607/187069

Goulart, Pedro Vaz. (2024). Participation and Social Policies in Portugal under the Spectre of Amílcar Cabral. Cadernos de Estudos Africanos (2024) 48: 71-81. Retrieved from https://revistas.rcaap.pt/cea/article/view/40197

IMF. (2026). Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa. International Monetary Fund, April 2026. Retrieved from https://www.imf.org/en/publications/reo/ssa/issues/2026/04/16/regional-economic-outlook-for-sub-saharan-africa-april-2026

Koselleck, Reinhart. (2004). Futures past: On the semantics of historical time. Columbia. New York. University Press

Lopes, Carlos. (209). Africa in Transformation: Economic Development in the Age of Doubt. London. Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01291-5

Machel, Samora. (1974).Mensagem ao Povo de Moçambique – por ocasião da tomada de posse do Governo de Transição em 20 de Setembro de 1974. Porto. Edições Afreontamento. Retrieved from https://www.marxists.org/portugues/machel/1974/09/20.pdf

Machel, Samora. (1977). A Luta Continua: Antologia de Discursos. Maputo. Imprensa Nacional de Moçambique.

Mango, Calido. (2023). Neocolonialism and Capitalism: a Sociopolitical Analysis of its Impact on Third World's Development, Economy and Environment. Revista Cedepem, Volume 2, No 2, ago./dez., 2022. Retrieved from https://periodicos.ufpel.edu.br/index.php/cedepem/article/view/30905/21830

Mbembe, Achille. (2001). On the Postcolony. Berkeley, University of California Press. https://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/news-and-events/events/phd/2022/mbembe-on-the-postcolony.pdf

Mendy, Peter Karibe. (2019). Amílcar Cabral: A Nationalist and Pan-Africanist Revolutionary. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Mo Ibrahim Foundation. (2024). 2024 Ibrahim Index of African Governance – Index Report. Mo Ibrahim Foundation, October 2024. Retrieved from https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024-index-report.pdf

Neto, Agostinho. (1975). "Discurso de Agostinho Neto na Proclamação da independência de Angola". Retrieved from https://jornadas50anos.tribunalconstitucional.ao/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DISCURSO-DE-AGOSTINHO-NETO-NA-PROCLAMACAO-DA-INDEPENDENCIA-DE-ANGOLA.pdf

Ngoenha, Severino Elias. (2004). Os Tempos da Filosofia; filosofia e democracia moçambicana. Maputo. UEM-Imprensa Universitária.

Paulo, Márcio. (2026). Kwame Nkrumah: Para pensar as lutas do Sul Global. OutrasPalavras, 20/05/2026. Retrieved from https://outraspalavras.net/descolonizacoes/kwame-nkrumah-para-pensar-as-lutas-do-sul-global/

Pinto, António Costa. (2001). O Fim do Império Português: A Cena Internacional, a Guerra Colonial, e a Descolonização, 1961-1975. Lisboa. Livros Horizonte

Santos, Aurora Almada e. (2009). O Comité de Descolonização das Nações Unidas e a Legitimação da Luta Armada nas Colónias Portuguesas: 1965-1974. Associação Nacional de História (ANPUH) – XXV Simpósio Nacional de História – Fortaleza, 2009. Retrieved from https://anpuh.org.br/uploads/anais-simposios/pdf/2019-01/1548772005_697ce39d0788e28863844d0e4f3f5197.pdf

Santos, M. do Carmo R. (2020). Amílcar Cabral: o pedagogo político-cultural das lutas anticoloniais africanas. Portal Geledés, 08/03/20. Retrieved from https://www.geledes.org.br/amilcar-cabral-o-pedagogo-politico-cultural-das-lutas-anticoloniais-africanas/

Skinner, Quentin. (2002). Visions of Politics: Volume 1, Regarding Method. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511790812

Sousa, Julião Soares. (2007). Amílcar Cabra e a luta pela independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde:1924-1973 (PhD Dissertation). Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Coimbra. Repositório: https://hdl.handle.net/10316/7382

Sousa, Julião Soares. (2016). Amílcar Cabral (1924–1973): Vida e Morte de um Revolucionário Africano. Lisboa. Vega.

Tomás, António. O Fazedor de Utopias: Uma Biografia de Amílcar Cabral. Lisboa: Spleen Edições, 2007.

UNCTAD. (2025). Technical and statistical report: The State of Commodity Dependence 2025. United Nations, 2025. Retrieved from https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditccom2025d3_en.pdf

Vecchi, Roberto. (2020). A arma da teoria: pensamento africano e literatura. Veredas: Revista da Associação Internacional de Lusitanistas, n. 33: 5–15, jan./jun. 2020. Retrieved from https://revistaveredas.org/index.php/ver/article/view/587/477

Yin, R. K. (2018). Case study research and applications: Design and methods (6th ed., (1984). Thousand Oaks. SAGE Publications.