

PORTUGAL: PARTICIPATION IN PEACE MISSIONS AS A FACTOR OF EXTERNAL CREDIBILITY

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Abstract

In per capita terms, Portugal is one of the most significant European contributors to international peacekeeping operations around the world. It presently ranks 45th in a list of 115 countries contributing to the United Nations (UN) peace operations and 7th in the European Union (EU). The multiplicity of forces used, as well as the diversity of the locations of deployment, reflect the ambition and effort made by the Portuguese governments in the last 20 years. Portuguese participation in peacekeeping missions has been seen as a vehicle for strengthening Portugal's position in the world: the involvement under the flag of international organisations raises the profile of Portuguese foreign policy and diplomacy. In this paper, we argue that Portuguese involvement in peace missions reflects Portugal's pursuit of its national interest and foreign policy. The aim is to bolster Portugal's capacity to influence the decision-making process in major international *fora*, such as the UN, NATO and the EU. The goal established since the late 1980s aims to strengthen the visibility and specific weight of Portugal in the multilateral framework. The country's contribution to peacekeeping operations has increased the bargaining power of Portugal, which has become an active partner with a more audible voice within those organisations. That voice led to gaining a better position when it came to negotiating major international posts and policies.

Keywords

Peace support operations; Portugal; peacekeeping; Armed Forces; United Nations

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"We live in a time of peace when the Armed Forces will increasingly become an instrument of states' foreign policy. We can even say that the specific weight of each country's foreign policy is often measured by the ability to be part of national resources in multinational forces to fulfil the duties legitimized by the Security Council of the United Nations. Those who are not included are not important"¹.

Introduction

Portuguese Armed Forces and security forces have been increasingly required to take part in peace support operations (PSO) (see Pinto, 2007; Pinto, 2010, chap. IV). Portugal currently ranks 45th in the list of 115 countries contributing to the UN PSO², with 315 permanent staff, of whom 189 are military and 126 are police officers ("Ranking", 2012; "Monthly Summary", 2012). In Europe, Portugal is now the 7th largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping operations, which is an important demonstration of the effort of a small country with limited resources. Since 1990, Portugal has engaged over 26 thousand soldiers in peacekeeping missions in over 30 settings in all continents (DGPN, 2012: 9-11). The multiplicity of forces used, as well as the diversity of the locations of deployment, reflects the ambition and effort made by the Portuguese governments in the last twenty years.

The budget for national forces deployed in international missions has nevertheless suffered from significant cuts since 2010. In 2012, the cut will be of 30%, from 75 million to about 52 million Euros, partly due to the abandonment of two operations (Financial Agency, 2011). The current defence minister admitted that after finishing participation in the UN's mission in Lebanon (early withdrawal six months before predicted) and in Somalia, Portugal may have to take part in new operation theatres depending on how the international security situation evolves, especially in terms of the so-called Arab spring (Financial Agency, 2011).

This paper examines the set of circumstances that led Portugal, from the 1990s, to make a strategic choice to participate in PSO, and aims to deepen the relationship

The author thanks the referees' suggestions for improvement.

¹ General Soares Carneiro at a speech made on 8/07/1993 on the occasion of the Armed Forces Celebration Day, *cit.* in Sousa (undated), pp. 10-11.

² It means Peace Support Operations.



between Portugal's foreign and security policy and its participation in PSO: the key argument it advances is that engaging in peace missions reflects Portugal's pursuit of its national interest and foreign policy, with the aim of strengthening the country's prestige and bolster its weight in decision-making processes at main international *fora*.³

Increased international intervention

Portugal only started to participate actively in peace support missions in the early 1990s. With the end of the Cold War and subsequent changes in the international situation, Portugal revised its strategic options, at the same time it realized the importance of having stronger means to intervene in international decision-making fora. Portugal, which had not been involved in conflict in Europe since World War I, was forced by circumstances to change its traditional African and Atlantic-centred defence paradigm (Cordeiro, 2005: 4; Silva, 2008; Vasconcelos, 1999). This paradigm was replaced by a new model based on a global intervention policy (Silva, 2008) legitimized by a set of values such as peacekeeping, respect for human and minority rights, democracy, Rule of Law, reconstruction of post-conflict states, and development.

All this happened at a time when peacekeeping missions were also analyzed at the Agency for Peace by the then United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and a UN global doctrine for peacekeeping operations and the role of the Organization in the prevention, containment, resolution, and termination of conflicts was established. The *Agenda* was a key document in making peacekeeping a core theme of the United Nations. Published in 1992, that document initiated, in the post-Cold War, a profound debate on the importance of peacekeeping as an instrument in the process of conflict resolution. In the *Agenda*, Boutros-Ghali defined the so-called instruments for peace and security: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, post-conflict peacebuilding, sanctions, and peace enforcement. Peacekeeping thus emerged as part of a range of instruments used to manage a crisis in its latent stage (pre-conflict) to its escalating stage (conflict) and to the post conflict stage (peacebuilding). Accordingly, this implies using troops not only during a restricted period of the conflict, extending it to its previous and post-violence stages (preventive deployment and peacebuilding). In the post-Cold War, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) started to play a more active role in the regulation of the international order, passing resolutions that justified and legitimized its peacekeeping military interventions and enhanced peace enforcement operations. With this change, the military "remade their doctrine, organization and instruction to be able to adapt to using military force in what some terminology has termed operations other than war" (Espírito Santo, 2006). In 1995, in the *Supplement to the Agenda for Peace*, when analysing the failure of some post-Cold War missions (Angola, Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia), Boutros-Ghali affirmed the need for new forms of action with greater civil and military involvement, new concerns with the security of the military and with the coordination between humanitarian and military missions.

In 1994, the amendment of the National Strategic Concept denoted a new concern about the adaptation of the Armed Forces to the technical and operational parameters of the other allied forces, which was essential to fulfil Portugal's commitments within

³ The author is grateful for these insights from the referees.



these alliances. The challenge of participating in the international mission to the former Yugoslavia with a large-scale military contingent was then taken up:

"In the case of Bosnia, the fact that it chose to send a significant contingent and a combat unit, not a support unit, clearly demonstrated the will to call attention to its involvement in the Implementation Force (IFOR)" (Freire, 2007: 89).

Portugal thus started to contribute with significant contingents to crisis scenarios, initially as part of United Nations missions, then within NATO, and, only in the 2000s, in EU missions.

Portugal remained attentive to the set of changes occurring internationally, which had implications at home and fostered the redefinition of foreign and national defence policies. To that effect, the Armed Forces began to be involved in meeting the international commitments assumed by Portugal within the organizations it belonged to. The military component thus became one of the instruments to reinforce Portugal's position in its foreign policy. This is what some authors have referred to as growing interdependence between internal and external aspect of security, or, to put it more clearly, the external dimensions of internal security (Bigo, 2006; Eriksson and Rhinard, 2009). Nowadays, risks and dangers are considered to have no borders, for which reason the limits to the security measures of states need to be redefined and adjusted to the new freedom and security requirements of citizens (Guedes and Elias, 2010). The emerging debate in Portugal about the need to assign the Armed Forces a more active role in terms of national security depicts an underlying awareness of a new geo-strategic context of threats and risks. Today, states need to win their internal security in remote areas, as illustrated by the example of Afghanistan, an incubator of international terrorism (Noivo, 2009).

A new vision of security

In terms of political rationale, the decision made in the 1990s to participate in missions in Africa and, above all, in the Balkans makes sense in terms of the "extended security" approach adopted by our political elites. The interest of security thus extended well beyond national ones, often materialized away from territorial states. Today, its concept has flexible and extended meaning, which requires states to have a new type of understanding within the international community.

In the words of former Defence Minister Severiano Teixeira:

"The guarantee of national security is increasingly promoted far from our traditional borders, of the traditional geographical boundaries of states. Therefore, the definition of our intervention doctrine can no longer be predominantly determined only by historical factors or geographic proximity. It must include regional



and international security criteria, promoting the values of democracy and the rule of law” (Teixeira, undated: 12).

In this regard, as part of Portugal’s mandate in the UNSC, the effort to highlight issues related to human rights, the protection of civilians and the role of women in national peace and reconciliation processes has become an essential feature of its action. This concern has been recognized as distinctly Portuguese (Monteiro, 86-87;⁴ Seabra, 2011) and has given Portuguese diplomacy as many praises as criticism (interview). Portugal is seen as committed – successfully – to promoting the visibility and the legitimate essence of human rights in the work of the United Nations. This effort legitimizes the action of the UNSC and acts as a catalyst for tangible changes on the ground, albeit slow in time. This is also one of Portugal’s commitments made during the campaign and met throughout the mandate: it is an innovative approach that intervenes in terms of security and its corresponding relationship with human rights and other cross-cutting areas. Portugal takes over the role of defender of these causes that affect developing countries, normally small, which normally do not attract media attention, nor command the international agenda.

Secondly, security and defence are ensured in the so-called “border security” (Leandro, 1992:6; Garcia, 2005), in the framework of collective security systems. State integration, especially in the European Union (integration organization), but equally in NATO (intergovernmental collective defence alliance) and in the UN (global intergovernmental organization) has attested the importance of collective thinking where states share common interests in variable proportions: “the border of Portuguese security is the border of European security” (Teixeira, 2009: 105); “Defending national interests often means defending the projects in which Portugal is involved” (Mário Soares Foundation, 2006: 651). However, this does not mean that national concerns terminate at the borders of the organizations to which it belongs and in the missions in which it participates.

Thirdly, it must be noted that behind this *global intervention policy* there is the enlargement of the actual concept of national interest, defined not only in its traditional form – defence of territorial integrity and of the nation – but as a promoter of security, international peace and stability, conflict resolution, and human rights. It is this concept of national interest that has guided the definition of Portugal’s priorities with regard to foreign policy, defence and security, and has informed its choice to intervene in particular conflict scenarios.

The participation in PSO has followed this broad concept of security and flexible boundaries. In the twentieth century, Portugal underwent several dramatic border changes (African colonies, Macao, EU integration), which naturally changed the traditional concept of sovereignty. In an increasingly globalized world where the country’s integration is done at various layers, “the problem of the new dimensions of the concept of border” is an issue of paramount importance, as the definition of the “several areas of insertion” where Portugal wishes to have a say depends on it (Garcia, 2005). This question arises in national terms but is also of fundamental importance

⁴ With regard to Portugal’s performance in the UNSC in 1997-1998, Ambassador António Monteiro said: “An area that deserved the particular attention of the Permanent Representation of Portugal in the United Nations was human rights issues” (2003: 86).



within organizations such as the EU or NATO, whose area of intervention has expanded globally. According to Portuguese experts and academics, our security border coincides with that defined by NATO; our economic and political border coincides with that of the EU; the cultural border corresponds to the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Peoples (Moreira, 1996). One could also add the vulnerability border, in the words of General Garcia Leandro (Leandro, 1992; Garcia, 2005).

The PSO as capacity to influence

Over the last twenty years, Portugal has gained a certain visibility in the context of its participation in peacekeeping missions. This profile is part of a "strategy fostering the increasing affirmation and appreciation of the role of Portugal in multilateral issues" within international organizations" (Paixão, 1997: 67). This goal, established in the late 1980s, has served as a beacon to national diplomatic activities ever since. For small countries like Portugal, the only way to make a point of some importance on the international arena, which is the privileged ground of "large" states, like the P-5,⁵ is through what some authors call "diplomacy of opportunities", that is, to whenever possible take the opportunity to establish its presence on the big stages and do it by obviously leaving a positive mark (Coelho, undated).

Participation in PSO cannot be seen as an isolated initiative, but as part of the goal to portray Portugal as a modern country willing to assume its responsibilities in the international arena, thus contradicting the more "reactive and defensive" Portuguese foreign policy inherited from colonial times (Monteiro, 1999: 164). Portugal's efforts to voluntarily increase the national contribution to the UN budget (Monteiro, 1999: 164-5) and its relevant participation in various peacekeeping operations have also contributed to this end. In 1996, Portugal occupied the 26th position in the ranking of countries contributing with forces to the UN (Paixão, 1997: 71). Portuguese contingents in international peace missions are thus an indispensable element in affirming Portugal as a useful ally of the Atlantic Alliance, as an active agent in building a united and effective Europe, and as a responsible member of the family of nations. In the multilateral context, Portugal intends to assert its presence and engagement in the international organizations and alliance systems to which it belongs. Accordingly, it must participate in developing the Common Foreign Policy and Security and be at the forefront of the construction of the Common Security and Defence Policy, including participation in military missions commanded by the EU, as well as involvement in the permanent structured cooperation in matters of defence established by the Treaty of Lisbon. Regarding the UN, Portugal supports the organization's role in maintaining legality, international order and peace, affirming the centrality of its role and the need to strengthen its instruments in peace support and post-conflict reconstruction processes, especially in failed states. Due to its relationship with the former colonies, Portugal should also strengthen its friendship and cooperation ties with Portuguese-speaking countries, particularly within the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, promoting military and technical cooperation.

Portuguese politicians and diplomats have quite often mentioned the role played by the Armed Forces in this type of missions in increasing the visibility of the country

⁵ The five permanent members of the UNSC.



internationally, including among partners and allies, and in strengthening the bargaining power and the political weight of Portugal in international *fora* (Vitorino, 1996: 87-96). The military vector has unquestionably become a valuable instrument of foreign policy and in the promotion of national values and interests, and, linked to other vectors and dimensions, particularly diplomacy, has contributed to enhancing the position and the international visibility of the country.⁶ Portugal's participation in multinational missions has a "multiplying effect on the position of Portugal in the world" (Vitorino, 1998: 165).

In this sense, the decision to participate in IFOR and SFOR in the 1990s and, after September 11, in ISAF in Afghanistan, strengthened Portugal's presence and credibility with NATO. The contribution that the responsibility assumed by Portugal in the missions in the Balkans in the 1990s, in particular, gave to the country's image in the world was also reflected within the Atlantic Alliance and other international organizations, portraying Portugal as a country that meets its obligations and, as such, deserves recognition for engaging in common causes.

Still, besides being an end in itself, the participation in IFOR and SFOR NATO missions was also a means to win other important victories in terms of foreign policy, notably in the UN. Participating in the Balkans increased the bargaining power of Portugal, which became a more active partner with increased say in NATO. The country's involvement and the good performance of Portuguese forces, whose size was remarkable given national resources, helped reinforcing Portugal's position as a credible partner of the Atlantic Alliance (Mário Soares Foundation, 2006: 648; Vitorino, 2000: 32). Portugal proved its political and operational capacity to the world as it ensured the presence of its forces in the Balkans and in Africa, two operational theatres with totally different characteristics and geographically apart, from each other and from Portugal. It should be recalled that during that same period Portugal deployed around 1200 staff in Angola and Mozambique in the missions ONUMOZ/Mozambique and UNAVEM/Angola (later replaced by MONUA), which were the ones where Portuguese presence was larger in operational and political terms (not to mention Portugal's diplomatic engagement in the peace processes of both countries (Mário Soares Foundation, 2006: 647).

Portugal's participation in NATO operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina deserves special attention and has yielded some important dividends, of which the following stand out: the election of Portugal to the UNSC in the 1997-1998 biennium (Monteiro 1999, 163-164; Gomes, 2000: 58; Vitorino, 2000: 32 and Vitorino 1999) and the maintenance of the NATO Command based in Oeiras and its upgrade to Regional Command within the then new NATO structure in 1999 (Freire, 2007: 90; Vitorino 1999, 94-95; Vitorino 2000, 37-38; Teixeira 1999, 31). Having a more audible and influential voice placed Portugal in a better position with its allies to force the resolution of the East Timor issue in 1999 (v. Vitorino, 1999; Freire, 2007: 94). A few Portuguese diplomats and political leaders testify that during the post-referendum East Timor crisis, Portugal's Prime Minister António Guterres put pressure on U.S. President Bill Clinton, saying that if the international community did not act and crashed genocide in progress, Portugal would cease its participation in the Balkans mission (Freire, 2007: 94). Another way of operationalizing Portugal's involvement has been to demand from international bodies

⁶ The author thanks the referee for this insight.



the country's greater intervention in territories where it had an historical presence (Freitas do Amaral cit. in Mário Soares Foundation, 2006: 645).

In the words of diplomat Alegre Duarte: "Portugal has been a *demandeur* of United Nations' intervention in regard to peacekeeping operations, conflict mediation, political stabilization, and economic and institutional reconstruction (see the cases of Angola, Mozambique, East Timor and Guinea-Bissau)" (Duarte, 2008: 135).

Portugal's policy of active involvement in international peacekeeping operations, which has been consistently followed by various governments since the early 1990s, has clearly been a form of increasing the influence of the Portuguese state through the use of military forces. This participation, which has the objective of contributing to international peace maintenance and security, is part of the global scope of Portuguese foreign policy and aims to:

- "- obtain and maintain influence and visibility within the United Nations, NATO and the European Union;*
- strengthen Portugal's position in the world's most important political decision structures;*
- give increased legitimacy to request the involvement of the international community, particularly the United Nations, in areas that are important for Portugal;*
- encourage candidatures to high level posts in international structures"* (Freire: 2007: 84-85; v. Amaral 2005: 24-5)

The participation of the Portuguese Armed Forces in multinational operations, particularly in PSO, in addition to strengthening the credibility and visibility of Portugal, has also provided arguments for its assertion in international *fora* and contributed to Portuguese diplomats and military being chosen to top positions in the global context:

"Portuguese involvement in international peace missions has indeed contributed to Portugal's affirmation in the world and, according to Freitas do Amaral, 'facilitates the appointment of Portuguese individuals to high posts'" (quoted in Mário Soares Foundation, 2006: 645).

Portugal has sought to take advantage of its efforts and did so by obtaining several important victories, such as the election as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1997-98 and again in the 2011-12 biennium, as well as conquering other positions of great international visibility. Examples include the election of Ambassador José Cutileiro as Secretary-General of the WEU in November 1994 (and subsequent re-election in 1997); the appointment, in 1995, of Freitas do Amaral as President of the 50th United Nations General Assembly; the appointment of diplomat Luís de Almeida Sampaio as political adviser to the commander of the SFOR; the OSCE summit held in Lisbon in December 1996; the appointment to important posts in the Department of



Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) of the United Nations; the support given to the candidature of Prof Paula Escameia to the UN International Law Commission; the appointment of Ambassador Seixas da Costa to the Economic and Social Council; the appointment in 2004 of Durão Barroso as President of the European Commission; the choice, in 2005, of António Guterres as UN High Commissioner (Mário Soares Foundation, *op. cit.*, p. 679-80; Sousa, undated: 9).

The Armed Forces as an instrument of foreign policy

It is interesting to note how the Portuguese government became aware it was essential to combine diplomatic activity with the military instrument to ensure the best results, a vision translated into the several revisions of the National Defence Strategic Concept in 1994 and in 2003, in the fourth constitutional revision in 1997, and in the National Defence and Armed Forces Laws. These documents acknowledge the military component as an instrument for affirmation in the field of foreign policy. Accordingly, the Armed Forces, through international cooperation, are one more “vector”, “arm” and “instrument of foreign policy:

“The Armed Forces have thus become a core instrument of the country’s foreign policy – a fact clearly assumed by the political power, and have contributed significantly to the country not becoming an irrelevant entity in terms of international relations in the post-Cold War” (Branco, 2009: 112).

The conflicts where the Portuguese Armed Forces were more significantly engaged were: in the 1990s - Angola, Mozambique, the former Yugoslavia, and East Timor. Currently, the most important theatres of operations are: Afghanistan, Somalia, Kosovo, and Lebanon. The Portuguese Armed Forces now enjoy a prestigious international experience and have made an important contribution to international security in settings as diverse as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, and Guinea-Bissau, among others. Performance at these international missions is a decisive factor not only for the country’s international credibility but also, in parallel, for the modernization of the Armed Forces.

Portugal thus presents itself as a “producer” and not as a mere “consumer” of international security (Freire, 2007: 90; MDN, 2001: 19-20; Pereira and Farinha, 2009; Duque, 1998, 46-47; Teixeira, 2009: 20). Portugal’s commitment to peacekeeping has conferred it an international image that has become increasingly consistent.

In conclusion, it seems possible to assert that the international influence of the Portuguese state was based, alongside several diplomatic vectors, on its participation in PSO⁷. The flexibility that the Armed Forces have often given governments in making policy decisions with regard to cooperation with several international organizations has contributed to this. For the sake of rigour, it is pertinent to note that the size of the forces involved is not the same as a decade ago. Compared to the 1990s, in recent

⁷ The author is grateful to the referee for this insight.



years there has been a perceptible decrease in the country's participation in UN missions. In addition, Portugal has preferred to participate in NATO and EU missions in detriment of UN ones. Currently, the largest share of operations, which is about 19 million Euros, is allocated to national involvement in the NATO mission in Afghanistan, which Portugal has decided to maintain in full until 2014, having been considered a strategic priority intervention area. Portugal will reduce its presence in Lebanon and leave the UN piracy fighting mission in the Indian Ocean, but will continue to participate in EU operations in that region. These decisions are explained, above all, by the context of acute crisis that has forced Portugal to reduce its workforce and pick its contribution carefully. The logic in this context of crisis, as explained by former Defence Minister Severiano Teixeira, is to "avoid geographic dispersion and excessive multiplication of settings in which to carry out the missions, and concentrate our efforts in theatres of operations where Portugal can enhance its effective value. And, finally, have a balanced participation in EU and NATO missions, which are the two multilateral organizations Portugal has privileged when meeting its international commitments" (Teixeira, 2009; 44).

Therefore, Portugal is pursuing a more rational path: without exhausting its participation in settings of greater wearing and risk, it has invested in niches that have enhanced its importance with relative economy of resources. There is no longer the need to increase size to affirm the participation or presence of Portugal; the tendency now is to choose what to do and how to do it to affirm Portuguese presence in settings that policy makers consider a priority, not neglecting the commitment to what is required internationally, and the capacity to meet those requests and simultaneously meet national interests.

Interviews:

Interviews by email (October-November 2011) with a diplomat of the Security Council who does not want to be identified.

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