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- 42 THE EUROPEAN UNION-CAPE VERDE SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP: THE ROLE OF PORTUGAL

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Articles in journals: Paulo Gorjão, "Japan's Foreign Policy and East Timor, 1975-2002" (*Asian Survey*, Vol. 42, No. 5, September/October 2002), pp. 754-771.

Articles in newspapers: Paulo Gorjão, "UN needs coherent strategy to exit from East Timor" (*Jakarta Post*, 19 May 2004), p. 25.

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The European Union-Cape Verde Special Partnership: The Role of Portugal

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The agreement establishing a Special Partnership between the European Union (EU) and Cape Verde, approved by the Council in November 2007, is clearly one of the most important, tangible results achieved by the third Portuguese Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the EU. It corresponds to an innovative cooperative format that has not, to date, received much attention in the academic literature. It also raises interesting questions such as: what moved the Portuguese Presidency to propose an upgrading of EU relations with Cape Verde along the lines a 'Special Partnership'? This question is indeed the leitmotiv of this article, which concludes that the *rapprochement* between Cape Verde and Brussels was promoted by means of a continued dialogue, held during the second semester of 2007, between the Presidency and the European Commission, and brokered among Member States.

The European Vocation of Cape Verde

Historically, Cape Verde has been a party of the Lomé Conventions since 1977, as well as to their successor, the Cotonou Agreement, in its condition of associated state to the African, Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) Group. Yet, the country has for some time aspired to establish a closer relationship with the EU. According to Cape Verdean high officials, a new form of cooperation, different from that inherent to the contractual arrangement structuring the relationship between the EU and APC Group, would reflect more adequately the natural geographic connection to the EU, the country's historical ties to Europe, its ethnic composition¹ and the existence of large Cape Verdean diasporas in

Portugal, Luxemburg, and the Netherlands. Viewed from the capital of Cape Verde, Praia, the longstanding historical, cultural and linguistic ties shared with the rest of Macaronesia, – specifically, the Azores, Madeira and the Canaries –, provided the authorities with a reason to seek a 'Special Status' within the EU.² This status would allow the archipelago to benefit from EU structural funds in a fashion similar to that of neighbouring Portuguese and Spanish islands.

Furthermore, the European vocation underpinning Cape Verde's foreign policy identity has been related to the country's overall ambition to act as a bridge between Europe, America and the African continent, where Cape Verde is a member of two important organizations: the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Among its African neighbors, Cape Verde has, to a large extent, stood out as a success story due to its economic and human development and democratic progress that further fostered its European aspiration. Over the last few years, Cape Verde, given its exemplar record of good governance and the rule of law, developed an image as a model state in the eyes of international donors. In June 2007, the United Nations elevated Cape Verde from the category of Least Developed Countries (LDC),³ and, in December 2007, the path for Cape Verde's membership in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has been cleared after the approval of agreements stipulating the terms of accession by the General Council. On the other hand, Cape Verde's economic progress caused a decrease of attention on the part the EU, which came to see the country as a 'less problematic' one; and a subsequent change of status in the Union's Generalised System of the Preferences.⁴

In 2005, the European ambition of Cape Verde attracted the attention of some senior Portuguese officials, such as the former President Mário Soares. Along with the renowned academic Adriano Moreira, Soares openly supported the European vocation of Cape Verde and, in March 2005,⁵ launched a petition urging Brussels to start membership talks with the country. The initiative also obtained the support of the Foreign Minister of Portugal, Diogo Freitas do Amaral, but was not followed up since the Cape Verdean leadership did not submit an official membership application. Furthermore, the initiative did not lead to the recognition of Cape Verde as a European country; but, thus far, such status has not been rejected.

In 2006, the European Parliament approved a resolution on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) which carried within it the seeds of a possible participation of Cape Verde in the ENP. Interestingly enough, the resolution recognized both shared "common historic links" and the "geographical proximity, cultural and historical affinity" as preconditions for the Commission "to propose and develop specific policies to extend the ENP where feasible to Atlantic island countries neighbouring EU outermost regions adjacent to the European continent".⁶ While these seeds have been waiting for fertile soil to bear fruit, an important development was to have a significant impact upon the relationship between Praia and Brussels.

Special Partnership: An Innovative Cooperative Format

On November 19, 2007, the Council of the EU approved the Special Partnership between the European Union and the Republic of Cape Verde, understood as a new “framework for strengthening and deepening the Union’s relations with the Republic of Cape Verde”⁷ within the context of the Cotonou Agreement. The new arrangement was conceived to go beyond the “traditional donor-beneficiary relationship”⁸ and, function, as a vehicle for changing the pattern of cooperation towards one based on the promotion of mutual interests which, among other priorities, included the fight against the illegal trafficking of people, drugs, arms, as well as against terrorism.

The Special Partnership is all-encompassing and rests on six pillars: good governance, security and stability, regional integration, technology and standard convergence, knowledge-based society, poverty alleviation and development. Whereas on the institutional front it establishes an annual ministerial meeting,⁹ in operational terms it is supported by an Action Plan foreseeing a series of annual work plans subjected to monitoring dynamics. This should be carried out periodically at both political and technical levels, including the meetings of the *Groupe Technique de Suivi* (twice yearly) as well as regular meetings of the *Groupe Locale de Suivi* (every three months).

The Special Partnership introduced a framework of cooperation different from the EU cooperative arrangements in force with the majority of African countries (under the Cotonou Agreement), ENP countries (targeting the neighbouring countries to the East and South of the Union) and the Common Strategies sealed with major global and regional players such as Russia. The concept of a Special Partnership was originally conveyed in the Communication of the Commission entitled “On the future of relations between the European Union and the Republic of Cape Verde”, outlined on October 24, 2007.”¹⁰ On November 16, the Portuguese Presidency prepared the proposal for the Council Conclusions, subsequently approved on November 19. However, Portuguese officials were involved in the dialogue between Praia and Brussels long before the autumn 2007. The Council Conclusions of November 2007 are therefore a product of a long working process and of a continued political impetus fostered by Portuguese representatives that proved to be decisive for the conception of the Special Partnership to become a real cooperative format.

Launching the Special Partnership: Assessing the Strategy of the Portuguese EU Presidency

In early 2006, the notion of the ‘Special Partnership’ firmly established itself in the discourse of both the Cape Verdean and Portuguese senior officials. The term derived from the formation of a special Joint Working Group Cape Verde-Portugal in February 2006,¹¹ entrusted with the task of reflecting on ways of drawing Cape Verde closer to the Union’s

orbit. The term 'Partnership', which substituted the initial word 'Status', added increased clarity to Cape Verde's intentions with respect to the EU, meanwhile becoming less ambitious. One could thus argue that the exchange of ideas between Cape Verdean and Portuguese diplomats resulted in a more pragmatic vision of what could be achieved in cooperative terms between the EU and Cape Verde. At the same time, the notion of 'Special Partnership' did not prescribe *a priori* any specific cooperation format, leaving the outcome of the cooperation open. Nevertheless, representatives of the both countries recognised that even this less ambitious form of cooperation needed to be carefully promoted since there was no historic precedent: that is, no country outside of the European continent had been granted the status of 'Special Partner'.

The hopes within the diplomatic establishments of both countries were directed at the third Portuguese EU Presidency, scheduled for the second half of 2007. The *rapprochement* between the EU and Cape Verde fitted well into the Portugal's major goal of promoting a 'look-South approach' meant to draw its European peers' attention to the African continent.¹² At the same time, there were limitations as to what Portugal's diplomacy could achieve. This was so because the country holding the EU Presidency, although possessing agenda-setting powers in the field of EU relations with third states, should (by definition) act in an impartial and neutral manner. That is, it cannot promote its own national interests. Apart from this limitation, there were also difficulties linked to the condition of Cape Verde as a small country. Previous actions aimed at promoting the *rapprochement* between the EU and Cape Verde (originating within the European Parliament) had been qualified as "fantasy" on these grounds.¹³ Finally, the Portuguese Presidency had to cope with an extremely full agenda which included the critical negotiation and agreement on the Reform Treaty.¹⁴ Despite all of these constraints, the Portuguese Presidency decided to make Cape Verde an external relations priority.

Attracting the Interest of the Commission

When a Member State holding the rotating chair of the Council of the EU attempts to promote a new item on the EU agenda dealing with a third state, it is of enormous importance to establish a fruitful prior dialogue with the Commission. In a Union of 27 Member States, once a key political document is issued by the Commission, it tends to be very difficult to the Presidency to influence its subsequent course. That is why Member States pay so much attention to finding the 'pen' within the Commission or, in other words, to dialogue intensively with the officials drafting the key document.

By 2007, the Portuguese authorities could rely on the accumulated experience of cooperation with the Commission derived from the 1992 and 2000 Presidencies, and certainly recognised the importance of a continuous exchange of ideas with the Commission. Furthermore, the Commission was chaired by a Portuguese citizen, José Manuel

Barroso, possessing a strong sensitivity vis-à-vis the African continent and familiar, from his term in office as Prime Minister of Portugal, with Cape Verde's European aspirations.¹⁵ These facts help to explain the Commission's early interest in the establishment of a Special Partnership with Cape Verde. As early as December 2006, Commissioner Louis Michel, answering a question posed by Portuguese MEP José Ribeiro e Castro on Cape Verde, confirmed the Commission's interest in expanding its relations with the country¹⁶ in the form of a Special Partnership, this time defined as a "strengthened cooperation [...]" in the priority sectors, such as security and relations with the EU outmost regions."¹⁷ The strategy employed by Portuguese diplomats in the run-up to the Presidency led ultimately to an important achievement: not only was the idea of creating a new cooperative format accepted, but, about half a year before the start of Portugal's presidential mandate, Portuguese and Cape Verdean officials were already meeting regularly with the Commission's Task Force, established specifically to discuss the details of the Special Partnership.¹⁸

As the dialogue with the Commission unfolded, Portuguese officials avoided presenting themselves as exclusive communication channels between Praia and Brussels. Rather, their strategy was to support a direct dialogue between Cape Verdean officials and the Commission. This was seen as the best way for the Commission to understand fully Cape Verde's aspirations. Cape Verdean officials managed to convince their counterparts in Brussels that they had a clear understanding of the objectives related to closer cooperation with the EU. These objectives, as viewed from Praia, could not be attained within the previous cooperation format since the latter did not include an active political dialogue; did not recognise the mutual interests of Praia and Brussels in the security field; and did not contain the option of convergence of norms, rules and practices in the economic, administrative and social spheres.¹⁹ In the beginning of June 2007, after several meetings held in Lisbon, Brussels and Cape Verde, the Director-General for Development of the European Commission, Stefano Manservigi, during his visit to Praia, declared that the Commission would present a document on a Special Partnership in November 2007.²⁰

The Commission issued the Communication earlier, on October 24, 2007.²¹ The document was welcomed by Cape Verdean officials since their most important arguments were contained in the text. The Commission, highlighting the high level of governance achieved by Cape Verde as an element that "underpins the special partnership",²² recognised the aspiration of the country's leadership to be seen not just as a beneficiary, but a partner of the EU, especially in the security realm. The position of Cape Verde as part of Macaronesia was also acknowledged as a precondition for the strengthening of the cooperation. Finally, the Commission supported entirely Cape Verde's intention of acting as a bridge between Europe and Africa while confirming that the Special Partnership with the EU did not contradict Cape Verdean integration within the ECOWAS. Commenting on the Communication, the Portuguese MEP Ribeiro e Castro, since 2002 an active advocate of the idea of a closer EU-Cape Verde rapport, noticed that the "the Communication went far beyond what we have dreamed of".²³

Raising Awareness about Cape Verde's Exceptionality among Member States

To obtain Council approval for the Special Partnership, the Presidency needed to persuade Member States that the case of Cape Verde was exceptional enough to justify a new cooperation framework which would create a positive precedent for other African countries. However, Member States, unlike the Commission, did not always exhibit sensitivity towards Cape Verde, or the region as a whole. Indeed, the recurrent indifference towards Africa was a major hurdle that the Portuguese Presidency had to overcome. Moreover, in the specific case of Cape Verde, an important obstacle was the resistance springing from some Eastern European members that did not recognise the necessity of the EU investing time and money in this African country's development.²⁴ Hence, a campaign aimed at raising the awareness of European peers regarding Cape Verde's exceptionality imposed itself as a precondition for a successful launching of the future cooperative format.

Striving to make the Member States rethink existing EU policy towards Cape Verde, Portuguese officials, led by Prime Minister José Sócrates, pursued a strategy involving multiple efforts towards raising the awareness of the case of Cape Verde in formal and informal EU meetings held at different levels.²⁵ The goal was to find new supporters for the EU-Cape Verde *rapprochement* and preserve the interest of older ones. In striving to sustain the interest of those favouring a closer rapport with Cape Verde, namely Spain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France and Germany,²⁶ the Presidency opened the dialogue between the EU and Cape Verde to all interested EU Member States. Further diplomatic endeavour benefited from the political impetus generated by an active dialogue between Praia and the European Commission, and high-level meetings involving the Cape Verdean Prime Minister and the President of the Commission, as well as the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, during October 2007. As a result, some new support for the initiative was obtained from Eastern EU Member States such as the Czech Republic and Bulgaria.²⁷ Additionally, Slovenia, a member of the first trio presidency, became a committed participant in the EU-Cape Verdean dialogue.

On the rhetorical front, the strategy of the Portuguese Presidency was based on a two-fold line of argumentation. Firstly, Lisbon stressed that Cape Verde's democratic and economic achievements should be explicitly acknowledged by the EU through a political initiative in the form of a 'Special Partnership'. Secondly, Portuguese authorities highlighted the benefits for Member States resulting from the increase of cooperation with Cape Verde in such strategic domains as security and migration management.

The first argument was used by the Presidency to characterize Cape Verde as a representative of a part of the world (Africa) neglected by the EU. Indeed, Cape Verde exemplified how Africa could change for the better. This perception grew from the close dialogue between Member States' representatives and Cape Verde's well-prepared diplomats,

who did not only have clear goals about the country's engagement within the EU's orbit, but also exhibited a very pragmatic approach towards this cooperation. This attitude of the Cape Verdean representatives easily refuted any simplistic generalization about leadership quality in African states.²⁸ Furthermore, democratic progress and economic achievements in Cape Verde were constantly highlighted by the Presidency to convince the EU peers of the importance of the positive example given by Cape Verde for the rest of the African continent, and especially for West African states.²⁹

In relation to cooperation in the security field, the Presidency emphasised the Cape Verdean government's open approach to the promotion of collective security through closer arrangements with the EU and NATO,³⁰ and the potential benefits arising from further cooperation of Cape Verde with EU "outmost regions", namely the Azores, Madeira and the Canaries. As for migration management, the Presidency intended to improve the political profile of Cape Verde by pointing to this country as the first pilot experience for the Mobility Partnership – an initiative within the EU's Global Approach to Migration.³¹ The Presidency aimed to capture the interest of the EU in Cape Verde by addressing the core concerns of the main supporters of the Brussels-Praia *rapprochement*, namely France, Luxemburg and Spain. According to Portuguese officials, Cape Verde was an optimal choice for the initial phase of the Union's initiative since the country was not only willing to cooperate with the EU, but, as a reliable EU partner, deserved to enjoy the benefits of the new initiative. The Presidency argued that the first pilot partnerships should be concluded with trustworthy, responsible and well-governed countries, so as to avoid a failure of the initiative at its inception.³² Eventually, the Presidency managed to convince its peers and, as a consequence, Cape Verde, along with Moldova, was chosen for the first Mobility Partnership.³³ In the final analysis, the Presidency managed to create a mutually reinforcing dynamic between the launching of the Special Partnership and the negotiations regarding the choice of the first Mobility Partnerships. All of these efforts undertaken by the Portuguese Presidency led the EU to rethink its policy towards Cape Verde and, ultimately, to agree to seal a Special Partnership with this insular country.

Conclusion

This article has examined and assessed the role that Portugal played during its tenure as a Chair of the Council of the EU during the second semester of 2007 in the establishment of a Special Partnership between the EU and Cape Verde. Taking Cape Verde's European vocation as a starting point, the article considered the strategy carried out by Portuguese authorities in tandem with the Cape Verdean officials which eventually resulted in a successful outcome.

Backed by empirical evidence, this study showed that although relying on a continuous dialogue with the Cape Verdean representatives, the Portuguese Presidency exhibited

not only a specific regional competence, but also deep knowledge of the Union's procedures and mechanisms, as well as diplomatic sensitivity in relation to recent developments within and outside the EU. Bearing in mind the shortness of the Presidency's term, a pragmatic recognition of a limited time frame for action was compensated by a clearer definition of the objective and early lobbying in favour of the Cape Verdean cause. The Presidency recognised the Commission as an important player, and managed to attract the attention of its officials while closely cooperating with them and striving to involve the Cape Verdean representatives.

Furthermore, the Presidency successfully managed the task of creating the 'critical mass' – that is, supporters for the initiative –, among Member States and to dispel any serious opposition. This was achieved by opening the discussion on the Special Partnership to interested Member States and by raising awareness of the country among those EU countries not traditionally inclined to look 'South'. In the final analysis, the Presidency managed to generate a consensus within the Council, thereby achieving the initial aim of concluding the Special Partnership. Moreover, the status of Cape Verde as an EU special partner, and the change in the previous pattern of development cooperation and donor-beneficiary relationship, can be said to be part of another objective considered a major priority of the Portuguese Presidency: inducing the re-thinking of EU general policy towards Africa.

Endnotes

- * The leading author gratefully acknowledges the support of the *Instituto Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais* during her research stay in Lisbon, in November and December 2008. The article is part of a postdoctoral research project undertaken within the framework of "European Foreign and Security Policy Studies", financed by Compagnia di San Paulo, Volkswagenstiftung, and Riskbankens Jubileumsfond.
- 1 About 71% of the inhabitants are of mixed ethnic descent.
 - 2 The Prime Minister of Cape Verde, José Maria Neves, supported the idea of such a status since 2002. See *Newsline* of the official website of the Government of Cape Verde, 29 October 2007. See also *The Times* 26 August 2005.
 - 3 See *UN News Centre*, 14 July 2007. This is only the second time a country achieved such a significant progress; the first was Botswana in 1994.
 - 4 As a non-LDC, Cape Verde cannot benefit from the Everything But Arms initiative, which offers duty-free quota-free access to the EC market for all products except arms. However, a joint effort by Portugal and France prolonged the three-year transition period by an additional year. See: Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, *Balanço da Presidência Portuguesa 1 de Julho a 31 de Dezembro de 2007* (Lisboa: Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2007), p. 150.
 - 5 See "Portugal assume causa cabo-verdiana" [*A Semana*, 18 March 2005], p. 4.
 - 6 European Parliament Resolution on the European Neighbourhood Policy, 19 January 2006. P6_TA(2006)0028.
 - 7 Council Conclusions on a Communication from the Commission on the Future of Relations between the EU and the Republic of Cape Verde. Brussels, 19 November 2007.
 - 8 Ibid.
 - 9 The first one took place on 28 May 2008, under the Slovenian Presidency.
 - 10 Communication from the Commission of 24 October 2007 on the Future of Relations between the European Union and the Republic of Cape Verde, COM(2007) 641 final.
 - 11 See *Diário de Notícias*, 18 April 2006; *Macauhub Economic Information Service*, 8 February 2006.
 - 12 See Laura C. Ferreira-Pereira, "Portugal and the 2007 EU Presidency: A Case of Constructive Bridge-Building", in Ulrich Sedelmeier and Alasdair R. Young (eds.), *The JCMS Annual Review of the European Union in 2007* (Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, August 2008), pp. 65-67.
 - 13 In particular, MEP José Ribeiro e Castro, promoting the rapprochement between the EU and Cape Verde since 2002, has been confronted with this interpretation of his plans regarding the Special Partnership. See *Newsline* on the official website of MEP Ribeiro e Castro, 17 January 2008.
 - 14 See Laura C. Ferreira-Pereira, op. cit., pp. 61-70.
 - 15 He served as Prime Minister of Portugal from 6 April 2002 to 17 July 2004.
 - 16 Letter of Louis Michel of 18 December 2006 cited in: Written Question E-1058/07 by José Ribeiro e Castro (PPE-DE) to the Commission. See also *Newsline* on the official Website of the MEP Ribeiro e Castro, 2 January 2007.
 - 17 Ibid.
 - 18 See Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Lisbon, Gabinete de Informação e Imprensa, Task Force EU/Cape Verde, 31 January 2007.
 - 19 Fernando Wahnou Ferreira, Ambassador of the Republic of Cape Verde in Belgium. Statement during the conference "Dois Olhares, Uma Visão Comum" at the European Parliament. 10 September 2008.
 - 20 See Panapress, 9 June 2007. Also see: Interview with Arnaldo Andrade, Ambassador of Cape Verde in Portugal. Official website of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Portugal/Cape Verde, 5 November 2007.
 - 21 COM(2007) 641 final, p. 3.
 - 22 Ibid.
 - 23 Ribeiro e Castro, "A parceria especial União Europeia/Cabo Verde." [*Jornal Mundo Lusíada*, 3 November 2007].
 - 24 Interview, Permanent Representation of Portugal to the EU, Brussels, October 2008, and Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Lisbon, December 2008.
 - 25 See Otilia Leitão, "Postal de Lisboa." [*A semana*, 18 September 2008].
 - 26 See Panapress, 9 June 2007.
 - 27 See *A Semana*, 16 August 2007.
 - 28 Interview, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Lisbon, December 2008.
 - 29 "Projecto de conclusões do Conselho e dos Representantes dos Governos dos Estados-Membros reunidos no Conselho sobre uma Comunicação da Comissão ao Conselho e ao Parlamento Europeu sobre o Futuro das Relações entre a União Europeia e a República de Cabo Verde", 16 November 2007.
 - 30 Cape Verde hosted the NATO exercise Steadfast Jaguar in 2006.
 - 31 Global Approach to Migration has been created to manage various forms of legal movement between the EU and third countries that are committed to fighting illegal immigration.
 - 32 Interview, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Lisbon, December 2008.
 - 33 Council Conclusions on Mobility Partnerships and Circular Migration in the Framework of the Global Approach to Migration. Brussels, 10 December 2007.