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### CHAPTER 3 LUSOPHONE SOCIETIES AND SOCIAL FACTS - PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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#### **The Community of Diversity**

If we take "lusophony" to mean the group of men and women in the world who speak Portuguese, there is no doubt that it has very real substance. And even from the geopolitical angle lusophone societies and social facts today go to make up a coherent whole which no-one can deny.

The increasing importance of that giant in Latin America - Brazil, Portugal's recent but very significant entry into the European Union, the fact that five Portuguese-speaking African countries have become members of various regional and sub-regional organisations - in particular the Lomé convention, the key position of two of those countries (Angola and Mozambique) in the conflicts which continue to convulse Central and Southern Africa, the existence of large Portuguese communities in various European and American countries, the presence of Portuguese-speaking African emigrants in Europe and the United States, the emergence of joint organisations of lusophone states, all these are elements which help to make it a palpable reality.

As Carlos Marciel said,

"lusophony is the fifth-largest group of speakers at a world level in demographic terms.. the Portuguese language is the third most spoken European language in the world (with some 170 million speakers).. the territory of lusophone countries is the fifth largest... Portuguese is one of only three languages which have a true presence in three continents (together with French and English)... it is the language which is most spoken in Latin America and ... in economic terms, the group of lusophone nations is in seventh place in the world" (Marciel 1992, p.62)

If we add to this the communities in Asia (Macao, Timor, Goa and even the communities in Malacca and Sri Lanka) we can say that it covers four continents.

The common dimension of the seven states and various communities which make up the world of lusophony has its foundations in colonial history, in the language and in family ties.

However, if we look at things from the point of view of political structures and in the visibility of a number of institutions where those states which have Portuguese as their official language have a seat, lusophony continues to be no more than an idea for the future. Those institutions which exist (CPLP, IILP, etc.) have a very low profile, and the spirit of lusophony, i.e. the sense of belonging and community founded on language, is something which still needs to be consolidated.

Despite being based on a common language and in this sense being something which has tangible unity and is perhaps even indivisible, it is at the same time something which is heterogeneous.

In effect the societies which use Portuguese as their official language are very diverse. Their peoples are different both in their racial and socio-cultural origins and in the geographical contexts in which they live.

There are substantial ethnic and national differences within the group. While some, like Portugal for example, can be regarded as a nation, in spite of the cross-breeding which has taken place throughout its history, in others, particularly the African states, there are many ethnic differences and there is very great ethnic diversity. In others still, like Cape Verde for example, there is such a high degree of inter-racial cross-breeding that they can truly be regarded as Creole societies *par excellence*.

So despite the risks involved in subdividing these societies into different groups - typology is always a delicate matter - I think we can distinguish three groups of countries within the great family of lusophony:

1) Portugal is a European country and is today one of the 15 member-states of the European Union. Economically it is part of an intermediate group of countries which are between the developed and the developing world (with a GNP *per capita* of some 8,400 US dollars). So in sociological terms we are certainly justified in treating it in a different manner to the rest of the lusophone countries.

2) Brazil, although sometimes classed as a developing country, has a level of industrial development which is comparable to that of the main industrialised countries. It has enormous scientific and technological potential. With its GNP per head of US dollars 2,680, we definitely have to regard Brazil as being in a different group from Portugal and from the African countries whose official language is Portuguese.

3) We may regard as a different group those countries which are commonly known as the PALOP (African countries whose official language is Portuguese), despite the fact that within this group there are many significant differences as far as geographical size and strategic geo-political importance are concerned. These are nations still under construction, having strong ethnic characteristics, and per capita GNP levels which range from US dollars 180

(Guinea-Bissau) to 680 (Cape Verde). Politically they owe their origins to the era of the CONCP (Conference of Nationalist Organisations of the Portuguese Colonies). We can certainly regard them as being within a similar economic, social and political group of countries, which in turn is different to both Portugal and Brazil.

In defending lusophony we cannot deny national identities and the cultural elements of national identities. If we make a claim for the notion of diversity we are not denying that there has been, and continues to be, ethnic and cultural interchange and even cross-breeding. Over and above the relations of dominion and pillage which emerged from the 16th century onwards, it is fair to recognise that there were also exchanges between these peoples across the oceans which separate them geographically. The Atlantic-Indian ocean link is just one of the examples of that interplay at global level which marks the birth of world-scale economies and cultures and the meeting-point of great civilisations.

In the case of Portugal for example, it is estimated that over the centuries some 10 to 15% of the population left the country to go to Africa, Asia and the Americas. The historian Luis Filipe Barroso states that this dispersion and multiplication of the people was a factor which led to Portugal, a country of just over a million inhabitants, acquiring a cultural and economic cohesion and significance far greater than it had as a result of its position in a purely Iberian and European context (Barreto 1997, p.14).

Given that the existence of these countries is an undeniable fact and that they display both similarities and differences, what problems and challenges do they face in the next century? Will these challenges be the same for all of them? And if so, will they have to face them collectively, as a group? How do we administer such different worlds? And finally, what are the chances that a collective effort such as this will eventually win out? These another issues will be looked at in the following pages of my text.

However, we can state at the outset the obvious point that as they are societies with varying degrees of development, so too their problems are different and the challenges they face will be different. But one of them will be common to all: globalisation.

### Globalisation: The Common Challenge

If we interpret globalisation as being the result of the multiplying and intensification of relations between economic, political and cultural agents who are situated in the most diverse places in the world, it can certainly be said that globalisation is a challenge which all will have to face.

Globalisation will affect all countries, but not in the same way, nor will very country derive the same benefits from globalisation. Those which will benefit

most are the countries which will have best adapted to it, seeking to derive the greatest advantages possible from the opportunities offered by it.

Even within those countries which we know to have been able to derive benefits from their relative advantages, it is possible to identify two groups: 1) the smaller countries, which are as a general rule also the poorest countries and (2) the geographically larger countries, which in many cases are the most powerful countries in economic terms. And these latter countries will not act in isolation in this context, but within more or less powerful economic groupings.

In tandem with the whole process of globalisation there will be a consolidation of regional integration on a world scale. The trend towards forming economically integrated zones is accentuating, and despite some attempts here or there to bring back protectionism, international economic relations seem to be marked by increasing liberalism. This has inevitably made competition more aggressive.

For these reasons it is understandable that some social scientists work with scenarios which are based on this increasing trend towards regionalisation, and that they regard as a possibility the geographical annexation of poorer countries, or groups of such countries, by the emerging economic regions. In this type of scenario there is a strong likelihood of the poorer countries of Latin America being annexed by NAFTA, those of Africa by the European Union and those of Asia by ASEAN. Within the lusophone group of seven countries, Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique and perhaps Angola are those which are more likely to prevail in a system of economic alliances and communities.

In a single market, the industries of Portugal and Brazil would certainly be at a much greater advantage than those of the other lusophone countries. Brazil's large population, its natural resources, its level of industrialisation, its importance in regional terms and its considerable role as a new industrialised nation give that country legitimate aspirations to playing an outstanding role in the world economy or at regional level.

The World Bank, in its most recent report on the world-wide economic prospects of third world countries, puts Brazil among the 5 countries which will revolutionise the current economic scene in terms of their role in world trade.

It is appropriate to divide the Portuguese-speaking African countries into two groups: in the first category we would place Mozambique and perhaps Angola. Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and S. Tomé and Príncipe would be in the second group. The decisive factor in these groupings is market size. Globalisation obeys certain rules, basically capitalist rules, whose current dominant model is neo-liberalism.

The small countries which at first sight at least are unattractive as markets, will find that they have lower worth. Direct foreign investment in these countries is likely to be a rare sight.

These countries will require a great deal of imagination in order to survive. A small country like Cape Verde, which is able to derive certain advantages from its geographical location and where successive governments have

displayed a degree of imaginative achievement in making the country a part of the world economy, has a good chance of surviving globalisation - for example, through its policy of being economically outward-looking.

In effect Cabo Verde is developing its infra-structure with a view to becoming an international services centre, in particular providing tourism, fishing, telecommunications and transport services as well as international trade services. Contrary to what many people thought, the country has sufficient potential to make it viable in the medium term. The Cape Verdian people are themselves making it possible, by their behaviour, for the country to fulfil this geographical and economic potential, which in turn is also a result of political and social stability, of the consolidation of democracy, and a consistent effort to integrate both regionally and at a global level.

However, for other small states, namely Guinea-Bissau and S. Tomé and Príncipe, which have already taken the formal steps to joining regional economic treaty organisations but whose capacity to integrate effectively and to enjoy a beneficial relationship with other partners in their respective regions is yet to be demonstrated, there will be two alternatives. Either they will become diluted in the group which makes up the regional economic organisation, becoming the poor relations of all the other members or satellites of a more powerful neighbour, or they will have to show tremendous imagination. The first of these alternatives is more likely to materialise, insofar as the economic, social, political and cultural flows which shape the relations between States become ever more self-sufficient.

In a broad framework of co-operation between Portuguese-speaking countries, the creation of a space where multilateral relations can take place may help to overcome some of the limitations associated with the present world economic and financial system. In order to achieve this, we have to define what kind of economic co-operation can be taken up between lusophone countries, and what mechanisms and means can be used in order to implement it.

In the current state of affairs it is very difficult to define a model for co-operation. Not least of the reasons for this is the fact that the era of models itself seems to be have been overtaken. But even if it impossible to define it, we should at least make an effort to ensure that certain basic principles are adhered to. In this context three of those principles, as set out recently by Carlos Reis, seem to me to be fundamental:

- The principle of globalisation or of inter-disciplinarity. This involves the idea that the problems of lusophony and the assertion of a certain common identity based on language go beyond those problems in themselves and bring in all of us, globally.

- The principle of diversification, which implies the removal of the Portuguese emphasis in analysing and solving those problems which are found in the so-called lusophone sphere. At the same time it involves recognising that in countries of the lusophone community other than Portugal there is a different world and a different set of factors which are different from Portugal

and bear the marks of sources which are not of Portuguese origin. For example, in Brazil there are very strong communities of Italian, Japanese and German origin, above all in the states of São Paulo, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul.

- The principle of relativism. This involves recognition of the fact that those other worlds in other countries require us to speak of a community which lacks internal cohesion and is very uneven.

The principles enumerated above give us some pointers and warnings as to the challenges which the lusophone universe has to face. And to quote the same author,

"there is here a propensity to third-worldism. In a world of powerful interests and economic and political tensions, this certainly holds back the Portuguese language from asserting its role as a great cultural language".

### Challenges for the Lusophone Universe

The challenges confronting the lusophone universe in the next millennium are inseparable from the great problems which the whole of humanity will face. Among the most important of these is the building of a new civilisation. The emerging global civilisation mentioned by Hélio Jaguaribe continues to be just as relevant as it ever was.

With the emergence of such a civilisation, which is perhaps more than just a hypothesis, what contribution can the lusophone world make to the process? Will those peoples likely to be a part of this sub-component of the "Iberian sub-variant" which is lusophony want to be subsumed in the same civilisation? Is it in their interest to be so? Even if it is not in their interest, will the "renegades" be strong enough to resist becoming part of such a sub-group?

Everything points to the overwhelming dominance of economic imperatives over all other dimensions of this process. But if we adopt a purely economic perspective we will not be able to deal with the major problems which the emerging civilisation will have to face. Other aspects of development will also have to be taken into consideration.

At the same time, however, the economic dimension, which today means above all the financial dimension, is the area where we are least able to act to influence events. "Survival of the World Civilisation is not assured until there is a widespread consensus as to a system of transcendental values" (Jaguaribe 1994, p.5). More than in any civilisation which has gone before it in history, the New Civilisation will have to be based on a conscious process, where collective subjectivity plays an important, not to say a decisive, part.

Only a new humanism, in which the conquests of science and technology are adapted to conform to the grand designs of men and women, can form the basis for that new system of transcendental values.

Uncertainty has been the hallmark of human history. Setting aside the practical impossibility of making any accurate forecast as its future course, it is highly probable that the major contribution of the post-modern era will be to bring sensitivity, ethics and spirituality to a world which currently is dominated by the Weberian idea of market efficiency and materialism.

The lusophone peoples have certain cultural characteristics in common, like their ability to be sociable and the importance they attach to people. In this they seem to me to have a decisive contribution to make.

The education of the new generation plays a crucial role here. Education has followed in the footsteps of Economics in becoming transnational. With increasing media globalisation and the spread of information technology, and especially the Internet, the job of educating is no longer just a matter for each nation.

It is true that education systems have become interchangeable, but more than this, in facing the challenges of the New Civilisation we have to look at the education of the new generation as a global process and not merely as the task of national governments.

Co-ordination in the lusophone world is a relevant issue if we look at the challenges facing the School Education system in the African countries as well as in Brazil and Portugal. In the African countries having Portuguese as their official language the percentage of the population which had completed any one of all three levels of the School system was no greater than 64% in Cape Verde, and in some countries like Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique it was around 27% (PNUD 1997). In Portugal the education figures are the worst in the Community of Fifteen at practically all levels, with particular emphasis on the high rate of illiteracy.

Throughout this process we cannot just provide our youth with weapons from the technical and scientific armoury. These are no doubt indispensable, but we also have to recover one of the fundamental traditional roles of education, which is to implant in the new generation values and attitudes which give human society its dignity and prepare it for the great challenges ahead.

In this context it seems to me that communication, preceded by better mutual understanding and acquaintance, is fundamental. We not only need to reinforce traditional channels of communication, but also to invent new ones, perhaps involving civil society, for example.

In 1994, even before the CPLP (Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries) was formed, Fernando A. Albuquerque Mourão maintained that a cultural perspective should be adopted in between the regional approach and the - mainly economic - globalised approach. Such a cultural perspective would take into account the use of language, which plays a fundamental part. For him the important role of language is as a binder and approximator of cultures, some of which are three-dimensional, as in the case of Brazil. At the same time language would give substance to cultural elements which are

spatially located in three continents, not to mention those instances of historical presence as well (Mourão 1994, p.8).

Among the many and mostly complex problems which humanity faces at the close of the century, the challenge of culture continues to be one of the most significant - and is perhaps the one which offers the greatest rewards in terms of the future of the men and women of this planet.

In a world where ideological differences seem to be less and less relevant and where there is a trend towards a certain uniformity in political and economic models, culture takes on an ever more important role.

Be that as it may, this fact reinforces the importance of cultural values. It possibly accounts for their overriding significance in explaining conflict, as compared to other types of interests.

Following on along the path of sharing common cultural traits, we should perceive the lusophone community as an inter-relational space in which various regions meet and in which new niches of opportunity may appear, to complement traditional North-South relations. Such opportunities would exist alongside the more obvious initiatives in the areas of economics and co-operation between Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and São Tomé and Príncipe.

#### Possible Scenarios for Lusophony and How to Convert Them Into Reality

From what I have outlined hitherto, it can be seen that lusophony has at least three dimensions: the political, the economic and the cultural. Considerable progress has been made at the cultural level, mainly because lusophony is essentially based on cultural aspects (a common language and history). But even here we should not underestimate the challenges. This caution can be confirmed if we look at some of the facts which prevail today.

Contrary to what is commonly said, Portuguese, which is declared and admitted to be the official language of the lusophone African countries, is not the most spoken language in those countries. In 1980, the percentage of Mozambicans who spoke Portuguese as their mother-tongue was 1.24%. In Guinea-Bissau this percentage is no greater than 10%.

In all the countries involved, lusophony is a very relative thing, an area of culture which crosses with other cultures: Iberian-American and Indian in Brazil, West African in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, Bantu in São Tomé, Angola and Mozambique, Chinese in Macau. On the basis of this rich cultural heritage we should pay particular attention to the cultural aspects of lusophony.

Looked at from the political and economic point of view, lusophony is not yet off the drawing-board. All the figures indicate that the weakest links are above all in the economic field.

Volumes of trade between the lusophone countries are tiny, and are tending to diminish (with the exception of trade between Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau).

If we look at Portugal and Brazil, the two largest amongst the seven, in 1993, Portugal's imports from Brazil were less than PTE 53 billion. In the same year imports from Angola, the lusophone African country which has the greatest economic potential, did not rise above PTE 831 billion. Brazil accounts for 4.9% of Portugal's imports and 0.1% of Angola's. Portugal sends only 1.5% of its exports to Brazil. The African country which takes the most exports from Portugal is Angola: even then, the figure is only 9%.

In Brazil's external trade, Portugal is of little significance, taking merely 0.69% of Brazilian exports. Angola, which ranks eighth amongst African importers from Brazil, took 0.096% of Brazil's exports. Among the Portuguese-speaking African countries Cape Verde is in second place, but accounts for 14% of African countries in total. Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe are not even in the list of the top 20 African nations importing from Brazil (Vasconcelos, 1996, p.78/79).

If we look at the structural weaknesses which affect the economy of each of the lusophone societies, and at the social problems which they have to deal with, we can conclude that the challenges facing the lusophone societies in the 21st century are immense.

Solving these problems may be made more difficult by the constant shifts and contradictions inherent in globalisation, but at the same time globalisation provides an opportunity to solve them. Regional integration is one such solution. But linking it in and making it work in a framework of transitional co-operation based on language is also a substantial challenge and a substantial opportunity for all of us.

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## SECTION TWO LEGACIES AND LANGUAGE OF LUSOPHONE SOCIAL SCIENCES