

## ***Captured by Elites: The Portuguese Media System in Liberalism (1820-1926)***

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This paper explores the structures of the media system throughout Portuguese Liberalism, 1820-1926. In the context of Portuguese empire and applying the concept of ‘Imperial Public Sphere’, this case study shows how imperial and colonial elites captured media system to exercise and spread its political and ideological power.

### **The Concept of IPS**

The concept of IPS follows the assumption of ‘entangled media history’ developed by Cronqvist and Hilgert. In its definition, the concept includes such ideas as overlapping, convergence, dissemination, imperialism, resistance, adaptation, crossovers, interference and hybridization. With this assumption, the concept of IPS is a requirement for the history of the media in Portugal and in Portuguese colonialism since it is intended to reflect the former’s emergence, convergence and evolution. The effects and impacts of the media on empires also point to such ideas as identity, cohesion and resistance, as well as to the convergence of content and technologies.

Habermas’s public sphere theory contributes to the political theory of democracy in which he shows the process by which public opinion emerges and how the press is its structural platform while also highlighting who the actors are in the discussion and the conditions of the debate and its constraints. The IPS hypothesis follows that of Habermas *a priori* because of the intention here to constitute the public sphere as a dimension of analysis and as an explanation for the socio-political dynamics of the Portuguese colonial empire in the context of political liberalism from 1820–1933. A critical reading of Fraser remains essential to develop the concept of IPS and demonstrate its importance and pertinence for the study of empires.

First, the idea of the public sphere correlates with the modern and sovereign state within a delimited territory, which also applies to the Portuguese colonial empire of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries due to the empire’s well-established borders in Africa and Asia.

Second, the participants in this public sphere were members of the same political community. In the Portuguese empire, this ‘community’ included colonial government

structures, colonial economic sectors (landowners, investors and entrepreneurs) and intellectual groups. Although most of the indigenous population were not citizens and did not have political rights, the native elites participated and intervened in the public sphere, assumed themselves to be 'Portuguese' and claimed political equality in the context of Portuguese colonial modernity.

Third, the *topos* of IPS was precisely its political and economic organization, the capitalist market and state regulation. During the last two centuries, the structures and the manner of exercising power at the imperial, national and colonial levels were the focus of discussion and conflict within the public sphere. Similarly, the central topics of journalists were the struggle for economic power among elites, the conflict between imperial and local governments and the effect of capitalism on the different social classes.

Fourth, associated with the modern press and media, the public sphere requires national (and imperial) infrastructure linking and uniting a dispersed public. The decrees of Queen Maria II in 1836 to install the 'national press' in the colonies and print the 'official bulletins' were the first steps in the construction of this communications network, which was also decisive for the emergence of the independent (non-governmental) press. The connection of the African colonies to the network of European and global submarine cables took place between 1874 and 1883, enhancing communications between the territories and the metropolis while improving the role of the press. Consequently, several information and discussion channels were published in both the metropolis and the colonies and circulated in every way.

Fifth, in every colonial territory, Portuguese was the common language of the press and was used by all social groups. There is also no doubt that in Portugal, the origin of the public sphere lies in the bourgeois literary genres of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as is demonstrated by Alves and Tengarrinha. With this heritage, the Portuguese colonial elite founded the colonial press and reproduced in printed form the ideologies of an 'imagined national community' that was appropriated by the native elites who would later subvert them.

As Barton and Ochs's studies on the media in Africa illustrate, the legacy of European colonialism and its press system, European languages and geography have all been central to the historiography of the press and the media. Resuming the influence of Harold Innis, we can see the growing importance of the imperial context for studying the media. Potter

shows the emergence of an ‘imperial press system’ in the British empire between 1876 and 1922. Kaul’s work brings together a set of studies on the British media in the imperial context that, taken together, indicate a shared public space. In the Portuguese empire, with its imperial approach but not a common public sphere, the studies collected by Garcia are important, as are those by Rahmani, which focus on the resistance to colonial empires through the media.

Sharing theoretical principles and methodological approaches with this seminal research, here I propose the concept of an IPS that recognizes a common public sphere and Media System, which includes Portugal and integrates the territories of the empire, bringing together its media while also assuming its interdependence and discursive and dialogical correlation in the exercise and contestation of colonial power. Thus, the IPS and Portuguese Media System is configured as the geographical area, and public debate within empire has the press and journalism as privileged structures, the imperial and colonial elites as protagonists and the political and economic dynamics derived from the imperial situation as the fundamental issues.

Through the analysis of the paradigmatic newspaper *Gazeta das Colónias* (1924-1926), I show the main structures, actors and political orientations of the Portuguese Media System. Sharing the methodology developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), I describe and discuss the four dimensions of the media system:

First, the development of the press. At the end of the nineteenth century, the mass press was affirmed in Portugal and in the context of empire press and journalism had asserted themselves in colonial territories as the main outlet for information and discussion, as channels for mobilizing political forces and as the stage for conflict among social groups. This press focused on the political situation of Portugal, which included the central government affairs in Lisbon, the governments of the colonies and local administrations. As my previous research shows, it was common for colonial newspapers to have pages set aside for metropolitan, colonial and local topics, in addition to news and features on events in other African and Asia.

The public sphere was both a demand and a legacy of the 1820s liberal revolution and sociocultural modernity. In the context of the Portuguese colonial empire, the regime change revolutionized the elites and the empire’s administration to bring about an IPS.

News and opinion articles on colonial issues in general and each of the territories in Africa and Asia, in particular, were present in the content of the Portuguese press throughout the nineteenth century, gaining new life after the British Ultimatum of 1890. It is noted that from 1912 the *Jornal do Comércio*, which had been published since 1853, included the designation ‘and the colonies’, while the *Diário de Notícias* started a colonial section. During its second phase, between 1920 and 1926, the *Jornal da Europa* was subtitled ‘Portugal, Colonies and Brazil’.

The *Gazeta das Colónias: Semanário de Propaganda e Defesa das Colónias* (1924–6) was a journalistic landmark that claimed the IPS and insert itself on Portuguese Media System. Advertising had an important role in the newspaper that was associated with the economic interests of the metropolis operating in the colonies, companies like the Banco Nacional Ultramarino (National Overseas Bank), the Sociedade de Angola e do Congo (Angola and Congo Society), Sá Leitão & Co. Import and Export and the Companhia de Moçambique (Mozambique Company). Regarding circulation, *Gazeta* was sold and circulated in Portugal and in colonial territories, but with a low level of issues and limited to elites.

Looking to another variable of this dimension, the nature of newspaper and its relation with publics, the *Gazeta* was published by Oliveira Tavares (a member of the armed forces), António Leite de Magalhães (Governor of Guinea, 1927–31) and José Veloso de Castro. Its regular writers were members of the military, politicians, civil servants, intellectuals and scholars of Africa and Asia with experience in the field who were concerned with colonial issues and who thirsted for intervention in the Portuguese imperial project throughout press system.

The contents were organised along colonial territories and themes in this weekly publication owned by the Colonial Advertising Company. In the letters from the publisher, there was a preference for topics related to the management of the empire, including colonial autonomy *versus* political centralization; colonial public services and workers; finance and economic situation; the religious question; the problem of indigenous labour; and the international image of the empire.

Looking to the role of *Gazeta* in the context of liberalism and colonialism, I underline the ideological propaganda of empire. For instance, in its first issue, published on 19 June 1924, an article by Colonial Minister Mariano Martins noted that ‘the propaganda of our

colonizing action is one of the missions imposed on itself by the *Gazeta das Colónias*'. Through this imperial 'propaganda', the political and cultural ideology of colonialism spread, in which the 'civilizing mission', economic and productive dimension and the religious question were underlined.

Now I pay attention to political parallelism, the second dimension. As I demonstrated, the newspaper has a strong connection with the public and private corporations, for instance *Banco Nacional Ultramarino* and *Mozambique Company*, whose reveals the ties between paper and political and social forces of Portugal and Empire. Illustrative of political parallelism and the power of the imperial and colonial elites exercised through the public sphere and the *Gazeta* was the announcement in issue 21, in April 1925, of the departure of Oliveira Tavares from his position as one of the newspaper's publishers to take over as head of the Companhia de Moçambique. The importance of the press as a structure of the public sphere and as a crucial space for intervention in the political process was then reaffirmed when Leite de Magalhães became a member of the government of Angola in the second half of 1926 (issue 37, September 1926).

Concerning relations with political forces and parties, these becomes transparent when we analyse the journalists and writers of *Gazeta*. For example, contributors included the engineer and politician Alfredo Augusto Freire de Andrade; historian and colonial administrator Armando Cortesão; Artur Tamagnini de Sousa Barbosa, the Governor of Macau; General José Augusto Alves Roçadas; Goan intellectual and politician Luiz de Menezes de Bragança; and Brito Camacho, a physician, republican politician and colonial governor. The newspaper also had journalists working in offices in Angola and Mozambique – even in the interior of these territories – which highlights its connections as a communications company with the press in the colonies.

Analysing the third dimension, the level of the professionalism was low, as the history of Portuguese press have been demonstrating. At this time the journalistic field had not professional norms; the majority of contributours were not exclusively journalists, we can see the instrumentalization of journalism to respond elite interests and, sometimes, personal ambitions. Meanwhile, I would like to highlight the orientation of newspaper contents to public problems of Portugal and its empire, namely economic, political and social challenges.

Finally, looking to the role of the state, through the publication of *Gazeta*, we have not indications of censorship had affected the contents and circulation, but the military coup in 1926 was decisive to impose the irregularity of the numbers and to the end of paper. Of course, the main topics of *Gazeta* were attached with state and public governance, in Portugal and in its colonies, and the analysis reveals a high level of involvement of politicians and public servants with paper. Nevertheless, I do not understand this aspect as an intervention of government on *Gazeta* agenda, but as a feature of journalism and of the press system during political liberalism.

### **The Protagonists of IPS: elites**

The goals and methods of the colonial enterprise were a topic of discussion between the ‘imperial minds’ of the early twentieth century, as Roberts shows.<sup>34</sup> This historian demonstrates how the political, economic and military elite were protagonists in determining the response to imperial problems, highlighting the role of institutions in the colonial territories and the conflicts created between the metropolis and these territories due to the ‘cost’ of the colonial enterprise. Beasley identified the role of the founders of the Colonial Society in the emergence and affirmation of imperial ideology in the United Kingdom from 1870, which depended on flourishing journalism and popular literature.<sup>35</sup> In the Portuguese empire, the imperial and colonial elites also appropriated the press and journalism as favoured channels of affirmation and conflict with the colonial project.

The argument here is that the imperial and colonial elites, fully aware of their condition and power, represented themselves through the press and used journalism as a way to capture the colonial enterprise. The concept of ‘imperial’ and ‘colonial’ elites used here is that used by Xavier and Santos, where the ‘imperial elite’ are those who were engaged in the imperial space as a way to exercise political, economic or cultural functions. On the other hand, the ‘colonial elite’ was composed of groups in the imperial territories in which they owned interests and exercised power. In this respect, the *Gazeta das Colónias* is associated with the imperial elite and the newspapers published in the territories are associated with the colonial elites. The elites used the IPS and Media System to propagate their ideology, defend their political and economic interests, articulate their ambitions and disseminate their cultural practices. These elites interacted and debated with each other, promoting, questioning and fighting metropolitan ideology and directives in accordance with their interests. By integrating an IPS and media Systema, these elites demonstrated

an understanding of the empire as an entity formed by a ‘continuum of local structures’ and, as such, played the role of an ‘ideological device’.<sup>36</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The IPS emerged from the liberal struggles of the nineteenth century and promoted public debate and the press in the colonies belonging to the Portuguese empire. Politics and the economy were the *topos* of public opinion in a scattered but intertwined and interdependent geographical space. The Portuguese language and shared intellectual culture, in addition to regional and local idiosyncrasies, influenced the development and growth of a press that was the stage for all social life, provoked conflict and built consensus. Imperial elites, whether they be based in Lisbon or colonial governments and/or economic enterprises in the territories; colonial elites – those who had emigrated or been exiled to or born in the colonies; and the native elites, were all protagonists in the IPS that emerged in the 1820s and which was then reaffirmed throughout the nineteenth century.

Portugal exercised political, economic, social and military power over its colonies throughout the last two centuries.<sup>37</sup> The imperial project itself and colonial issues were themes that were intrinsic to the life of the country, and this was reflected in the information and opinion content that shaped the press, journalism and public opinion. The continuous resistance to and contestation of the empire in the territories, as well as the permanent disagreements over the direction of the colonies, were also reflected in the IPS and Press System. Thinking on the public space and public opinion, the metropolis and the colonies, while they were an integrated imperial and discursive public sphere, is essential for understanding the press and journalism, or the Media System, as a structure of representation and political conflict in the imperial and colonial context, as well as for problematizing ideology and culture and its representation in the Portuguese empire.<sup>38</sup>

The economic, political, military and ideological forces – the four sources of social power identified by Michael Mann – were protagonists in the discussion and conflict in this IPS.

<sup>40</sup> Following Mackenzie, in the Portuguese empire, the role of the press system in ideological propaganda was also crucial. The colonial and imperial elites took control of the press system and were agents in an IPS that propagated the colonial ideology of that period and developed the Portuguese imaginary of the future. <sup>41</sup>

The conclusion reveals that during Portuguese Liberalism the 1) development of the media market was weak and the press was guided from and to elites; 2) a strong political parallelism between media system and political and economic groups; 3) the professionalisation was in its starts and the political actors performed as journalists; and 4) during Liberalism the state played a moderate role regarding the media system.

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<sup>34</sup> Roberts, "The Imperial Mind", 24-76.

<sup>35</sup> Beasley, *Empire as the Triumph*.

<sup>36</sup> Xavier & Santos, "Cultura Intelectual das Elites Coloniais", 9-33.

<sup>37</sup> For more about the Portuguese empire, see Abshire and Samuels, *Portuguese Africa*; Newitt, *Portugal in Africa*; and Jerónimo, *O Império Colonial em Questão*.

<sup>38</sup> For more about ideology and culture in the colonial empire, see Lourenço, *Do Colonialismo*.

<sup>40</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*.

<sup>41</sup> Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 1986. In the authoritarian period that followed the First Republic, the media was also used to propagandize, as demonstrated by Ribeiro in "Censorship and Scarcity", 74-88.