

Reflections on the debate about the future of Portuguese expansion: Morocco and India in clash (1495-1578)

Karel Staněk
Biblioteca Nacional da República Checa
kar.stanek@volny.cz
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6723-0017>

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Abstract

The Portuguese Empire started shaping around 1415 in the Atlantic Ocean. It was gradually transformed into a multi-continental empire. Around 1500, it expanded particularly in Asia, at that time known as India, and Morocco, known as Africa or Berberia. At the same time, it possessed other areas in Africa and Brazil. However, too many interests eventually began to manifest negatively. It was so despite the fact that the Crown tried to isolate from the simultaneous European events and Portugal had been engaged exclusively in activities on the world stage. The rationalization of overseas expansion began to be discussed at the domestic political level. A rivalry between Morocco and India as areas of expansion emerged and the possibility of leaving one of those areas began to be considered. This rivalry was present most intensively from the discovery of the sea route to India (1498) to the dismantling of most Moroccan fortresses (1542-1550) and determined the character of Portuguese expansion in general. The question of abandonment of Morocco or India was

Resumo

O Império Português começou a ser criado a partir de 1415 no Oceano Atlântico. Gradualmente, foi transformado no império multicontinental. Por volta de 1500, o império expandia-se particularmente na Índia, conhecida naquele tempo como Índia, e em Marrocos, conhecido como Berberia. Ao mesmo tempo, controlava outras possessões em África e no Brasil. No entanto, muitos interesses eventualmente começaram a se manifestar negativamente. Apesar de que a Coroa ter tentado isolar-se dos simultâneos eventos europeus e de que Portugal se ter dedicado exclusivamente a atividades no cenário mundial, a situação estava a piorar. Aos poucos, Portugal começou a perder o fôlego, embora a Coroa tentasse isolá-lo dos eventos contemporâneos europeus e se dedicasse exclusivamente a atividades no cenário mundial. A racionalização da expansão ultramarina começou a ser discutida no nível político interno. Uma rivalidade entre Marrocos e Índia como áreas de expansão surgiu e a possibilidade de abandonar uma destas áreas começou a ser considerada. Esta rivalidade esteve presente mais intensamente

debated for the last time on the occasion of King Sebastião's campaign to Morocco in 1578.

Keywords: Portugal; Portuguese Empire; Morocco; India; debate.

desde a descoberta do caminho marítimo para a Índia (1498) até ao abandono da maioria de fortalezas marroquinas (1542-1550) e determinou o carácter da expansão portuguesa em geral. A questão do abandono de Marrocos ou da Índia foi debatida pela última vez por ocasião da campanha do rei D. Sebastião ao Marrocos em 1578.

Palavras-chave: Portugal; Império Português; Marrocos; Índia; debate.

Around 1500, the Portuguese Empire spread its sphere of influence from Brazil, via Africa to Asia. Thus, it encompassed metaphorically the whole world. However, as early as the first half of the 16th Century, it became increasingly clear that its ambitions exceeded its capabilities. Therefore the Crown and royal counselors were forced to define more narrowly the areas of national interest. A debate began about whether to evacuate Morocco, known as Africa or Berberia, or Asia, known as India. Was it better to exclude distant India, long sought after for commercial interests, or Morocco, much closer and strategically important for the security of Portugal?

There was a recent attempt to map the Crown's decision-making between India and Brazil in the mid-17th Century. However, the question of choice between India and Morocco has been thoroughly researched only for the period of mid-16th Century and only separately for Morocco and India¹. The intent of this paper is 1) to analyze the origin, development and outcome of this rivalry between followers of expansion to Morocco and India. 2) Further, the study will try to identify the lobby parties, their main lines of argumentation and their motivations. 3) Thirdly, the essay will try to find out if the Portuguese expansion in Morocco could be an alternative to India and if the Portuguese expansionist effort there could have been successful. 4) Finally, the paper will be concluded with a discussion of Sebastião's campaign to Morocco and its setting in a geopolitical context.

The fact that the Portuguese did not make any attempt to subdue Morocco until the King Sebastião's expedition in 1578 does not mean that they could not have conquered it. After all, it is important to analyze not only what happened but also what was expected. The direction of development was often quite complex and unexpected, and people in the past could not predict how the processes would turn out, so even historians should not be influenced by their results known today.

Early debates and the first contest of Morocco and India

A combination of political, military-strategic, economic and religious reasons led to the Portuguese attack on Ceuta in the territory of the Marinid Sultanate in Morocco in 1415. The importance of the city consisted primarily in its strategic

¹ George Davison Winius, "India or Brazil? Priority for Imperial Survival in the Wars of the Restauração" in George Davison Winius (ed.), *Studies on Portuguese Asia 1495-1689*, Aldershot, Routledge, 2001, p. 1-9; Otilia Rodrigues da Costa Fontoura, *Portugal em Marrocos na Época de D. João III. Abandono ou Permanência?*, Funchal, CEHA, 1998; Maria Leonor Garcia da Cruz, "As Controvérsias ao Tempo de D. João III sobre a Política Portuguesa no Norte de África", *Mare Liberum*, 13-14 (1997), p. 5-50; Maria Leonor Garcia da Cruz, *Os "fumos da Índia": Uma leitura da expansão portuguesa*, Lisboa, Cosmos, 1998.

value which enabled the Portuguese to better face the Muslim piracy in the Strait of Gibraltar. However, the port was isolated and therefore offered limited strategic importance. Because of this, it was absolutely necessary to extend to the Strait of Gibraltar. In the 1420s and 1430s, the cost of strategic expansion and defending the city of Ceuta led to a contested discussion between the royal councillors on the future of Ceuta.

This is what led to the start of the discussions regarding the fate of the Portuguese expansion in Morocco and the Portuguese settlements there. During this early phase of discussions, the role of Morocco in the Atlantic Ocean and excluding India at this point was debated. It is important to note that some issues were discussed again later during the rivalry between two central ideas – what area to expand or maintain control of, Morocco or India. The majority of the nobility opposed in its written opinions (*pareceres*) the continuation of the Portuguese expansion in Morocco against the Crown. The most convincing argument against the campaign in Morocco was the lack of people and finances that Portugal could provide². This idea will come up again in the mid-16th Century³. Later, the attitude of the nobility changed radically. It has turned out that Morocco is not only a black hole absorbing finances but also had much to offer. After 100 years, on the contrary, it will be the nobility who will defend the conquests in Morocco against the Crown. What exactly happened?

If resistance to expansion in Morocco appeared shortly after the occupation of Ceuta, it ceased after reaching the Moroccan Atlantic shores and Guinea (the subsaharan West Africa between the Senegal and Kongo rivers) in the 1440s. Two reasons can be identified. First, the Portuguese nobles could participate in raids (*cavalgadas*, *correrias*, *razzias*) into the hostile territory. Second, the Portuguese took advantage of the close commercial ties between Atlantic Moroccan Atlantic shores and Guinea which they further strengthened by building a maritime network. Trade between these two regions has benefited the Portuguese, especially private Portuguese merchants⁴.

When King Manuel I announced in Montemor-o-Novo in 1495 that he would send a fleet to India, some royal counsellors opposed his intention. According to them, “the Kingdom is sufficiently saturated with the peaceful trade with Guinea and the honest conquest of North Africa” which satisfied the

² Maria Dávila, “O conde de Arraiolos e a política expansionista em Marrocos” in *Portugal e o Magrebe. Actas do 4º Colóquio de História Luso-Marroquina*, Lisboa, Braga, CHAM, CITCEM, 2011, p. 69-74.

³ *Documentos sobre a expansão portuguesa*, ed. Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, Lisboa, Gleba, 1945, vol. II, p. 61-63, 70, 120, 128-129.

⁴ David Lopes, *A Expansão em Marrocos*, Lisboa, Teorema, 1989, p. 50-54.

merchants as well as the nobility. In addition, they feared that expansion to India would cause excessive problems and expenses which would lead to a waste of resources. Portugal could be weakened and forced to face new enemies. The disputes with Castile were resolved only a year ago after protracted negotiations in Tordesillas⁵. However, King Manuel I began the expansion to India despite opinions of his counsellors. After the news about hard resistance of the Muslim merchants from the Malabar Coast in India against the claims of Pedro Álvares Cabral reached Lisbon in 1501, some nobles proposed to abandon the Indian Ocean and focus on the Atlantic trade. They feared that the Portuguese would lose their “honor” (*honra*) for profit⁶. “Honor” was, except fame, profit and glory, the most important value or virtue for nobles in accordance with the Chivalric Code⁷. The Portuguese nobles were winning “honor” in a fight with Muslims in Morocco.

At this meeting, supporters of expansion in Morocco and in India faced each other for the first time in history. According to King Manuel’s plan, Morocco and India should not compete but should be part of a wider area into which the Portuguese offensive should be directed. In Morocco, as well as in India, the main objective of King Manuel I was to fight the Muslims. This approachment entailed huge expenses which was to be balanced by trading profits. However, the Portuguese trade interests in overseas mixed with Christian missionary zeal which significantly undermined the level of commercial success that could have been achieved because the overwhelming missionary effort mostly discouraged indigenous trade partners. Moreover, it is not possible to forget that the trade was hampered by the communication limits of its time, and by the abuses by state officials.

Indirect rivalry between Morocco and India in the 1520s to 1540s

Even though King Manuel I planned to make war and to trade in both Morocco and India, in the end India became ideologically a place for trade, while Morocco became associated with war although the reality was not so clear-cut and the *Estado da Índia* constituted the militarized border of the

⁵ Damião de Góis, *Crónica do Sereníssimo Rei D. Manuel*, Lisboa 1749, vol. I, cap. XXIII, p. 23; João de Barros, *Décadas da Ásia*, Lisboa 1777-1778, Déc. I, book IV, cap. I, p. 268-269.

⁶ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The career and legend of Vasco da Gama*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 185.

⁷ Vasco Resende, *A Sociedade da expansão na época de D. Manuel I: Mobilidade, hierarquia e poder entre o Reino, o Norte de África e o Oriente*, Lagos, Câmara Municipal, 2006, s. 20-29.

empire just like Morocco. In any case, the use of military means in India seems to subordinate more clearly to the needs of trade than in Morocco. The nobles adapted themselves to this division. If in Morocco the nobles benefited from organizing marauding raids (*cavalgadas*, *correries*, *razzias*) on the enemy territory which allowed them to achieve personal enrichment and social advancement, in India they preferred to engage in private trade in areas outside the direct influence of the Crown.

Among the leading proponents of the self-assertion of the nobles in India, where the *Estado da Índia* was established, was the Gama family from which the explorer of the maritime route to India Vasco da Gama came. Its members criticized the excessive range of the royal influence. The royal influence was to be concentrated in only a couple of ports on the west coast of India which were important for the functioning of the *Carreira da Índia*, a route along which spices flowed to Lisbon. The other areas were to remain open to free trade, so that no fortresses were to be built in them. This abandonment of the vast areas of India, wherein the tiny Portuguese settlements were literally lost, was to bring about a significant reduction in costs⁸.

In this context, in 1519, Aires da Gama, brother of more famous Vasco da Gama, pressed particularly for preservation of the fortresses in Cochin and Cananor in India, while the remaining possessions did not seem so important to him and only factories should be present in these areas. According to him, “there are more officials in Goa than in two Lisbons”, and “they all chew betel at Your (ie. royal) expense”⁹. Vasco da Gama alone preferred to keep fortresses only in Cochin and Goa¹⁰. The Gama family was the first to come up with the idea of limiting the Portuguese power influence in India, although it did not support Morocco either instead. In fact, if they had to choose between Morocco and India, they would undoubtedly choose India. This attitude, advocating a limitation of influence in India, gained further support during the 1520s because the Portuguese Empire in India had to face many internal problems as well as external enemies. The very foundations of the Portuguese military-commercial structure were shaken by a series of anti-Portuguese revolts, provoked by the

⁸ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “*Making India Gama: the project of Dom Aires da Gama (1519) and its meaning*”, *Mare Liberum*, 16 (1998), p. 33-55; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The career and legend of Vasco da Gama...*, cit., p. 273-275.

⁹ *Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, Lisboa, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1960-1977, vol. IV, p. 213-221.

¹⁰ *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc*, Paris, Paul Geuthner, 1946, vol. II, part 2, p. 443-452.

Portuguese oppressive economic policy¹¹. This development seemed to justify the opinion of some other nobles who believed that reduction in the Crown's activities in India would be necessary.

In 1529, Jaime, the fourth Duke of Bragança, one of the most powerful Portuguese nobles, had a similar opinion as members of the Gama family. This is no surprise, as those men were close friends. In 1519, Jaime ceded part of his territory in Portugal to Vasco da Gama so that Vasco could obtain a manor with the title of Count. According to Jaime, only Goa and Cochin were sufficient to secure the running of the *Carreira da Índia*, the important source of Crown's income¹².

In contrast to India, Jaime of Bragança refused to evacuate completely any possession in the Moroccan territory but he recommended handing over Ceuta and Alcácer Ceguer to the Hospitallers knights or those ports as well as Tangier and Arzila to the Castilian King Charles I. He considered illusory the conquest of Morocco under the unfavourable conditions of the Sharif's expansion from 1520s. Sharif's military successes led to the domination of the whole South-Moroccan regions of Sus and Draa. As a result, the Portuguese influence in Southern Morocco fell off sharply. According to Jaime of Bragança, the king would have to ensure the arrival of at least 50,000 to 60,000 colonists in order to succeed in Morocco. It also assumed that the evangelization of already fully islamized Morocco was virtually infeasible¹³. For the Islamic theocracy, where the Qur'an is the law, apostasy was considered a crime punishable by death which made peaceful evangelization practically impossible.

Here it is necessary to raise a question how well did the authors of the above mentioned opinions (*pareceres*) know the Portuguese Empire and what was the real value of their opinions. They formed part of the wider group of royal councillors, so the king trusted them. However, the question remains, how realistic their opinions were and what interests were hidden behind them.

It cannot be denied that at least some members of the group of nobles, holding the above views, lacked personal experiences from India or Morocco. Vasco and chiefly Aires da Gama were well acquainted with India, Vasco possibly also knew Morocco. As a result, they should be able to realistically assess the situation in those regions. However, this did not happen and we can conclude that their proposals were not so much in favor to the state as they were for

¹¹ João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, Victor Luís Gaspar Rodrigues, *Portugal y Oriente: El Proyecto Indiano del Rey Juan*, Madrid, Mapfre 1992, p. 151-154, 157-158.

¹² *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc...*, cit., vol. II, part 2, p. 443-452.

¹³ *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc...*, cit., vol. II, part 2, p. 443-452.

themselves. They intended to limit royal supervision only to the *Carreira da Índia* while they intended to usurp for themselves the enormous potential of intra-Asian trade. It is no coincidence that the Gama family held a privilege that allowed it to import a certain amount of duty-free cinnamon.

If Vasco and Aires da Gama were familiarized with India (and maybe Vasco also with Morocco), Jaime of Bragança only knew Morocco which he included in his proposals alongside India. However, it should be remembered that the Duke had only participated in the conquest of Azamor (1513) and his knowledge of the rest of Morocco was very limited. His opinion about India was undoubtedly influenced by Vasco da Gama. Generally it can be said that his suggestions were aimed at weakening the centralist royal interests overseas. He was thus a threat to the king from within. It is no surprise when we realize that the Bragança family possessed a similar privilege for the importation of cinnamon as the Gama family.

As we can see, no real rivalry between Morocco and India existed during this time. The nobles tried merely to lobby for free trade which was more feasible in India than in Morocco. In fact, the ongoing war with Sharif in Morocco resulted in a significant reduction of the Portuguese trade with the country's interior. The Crown was well aware that India provided much more money to the treasury than Morocco and needed less. The situation soon became insupportable – as early as 1523, the Moroccan settlements absorbed more resources than the whole *Estado da Índia*.

The attempt of King João III to instigate after 1529 a general debate and compel the nobility from among the royal advisers to agree to abandon Moroccan ports Safi and Azamor did not succeed. The majority of the nobles opposed in its written opinions (*pareceres*) from 1534-1535 any form of retreat. The nobles advocated the expansion not only for purely religious and prestigious reasons but also for economic reasons. As João de Melo Barreto wrote, the control of Morocco results “in a very large supply of the things necessary to these kingdoms”¹⁴. For Francisco Pereira, Morocco was “the most fertile land in the world, and its sea and rivers were the richest in fish”¹⁵. Besides that, the nobles would support the expansion in Morocco as long as they benefited from it. This benefit flowed from the raids on the enemy territory which gave them the

¹⁴ *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc...*, cit., vol. II, part 2, p. 668.

¹⁵ *Parecer que Francisco Pereira deu a D. João III sobre os lugares e passagem de África*, Biblioteca da Ajuda (BA, Lisboa), Cód. 51-VI-40, fl. 422. Published in Otilia Rodrigues da Costa Fontoura, *Portugal em Marrocos na Época de D. João III. Abandono ou Permanência?*, Funchal, CEHA, 1998, p. 185-194. Also published in Maria Leonor Garcia da Cruz, “As Controvérsias ao Tempo de D. João III sobre a Política Portuguesa no Norte de África”, *Mare Liberum*, 13-14 (1997), p. 107-115.

opportunity to improve militarily as well as to enrich themselves economically and gain social prestige.

It is questionable to what extent we can take these nobles as a representative sample of the Portuguese nobility of that time. Today it may seem to us that the attitude of the nobility was irrational and unsuitable for the Early Modern period but we must keep in mind that there is no clear boundary between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and strong religious zeal remained present in European society until the 17th Century. The calls for crusades against the Ottomans were then commonplace. In the first half of the 16th Century, the Bohemian kingdom, was imminently threatened by the Ottoman Turks. There was common talk during the Land Assembly of “the tyrant Turks, thirsty of Christian blood”¹⁶, against which it was necessary to defend. It was a similar situation in Germany. It is clear that the Christian rhetoric in countries close to Islamic areas has been similarly sharp. The Portuguese Crown presented itself as the protector of the Christian faith until the 18th Century.

In the meantime, the Portuguese had to face the greatest threat to India since they had defeated the coalition of the Mamluk and the Gujarati fleet in 1509 in the battle of Diu – the Ottoman threat¹⁷. Between 1534 and 1546, the Ottoman Turks subdued Central and Southern Iraq as well as Basra and reached the Persian Gulf which frightened the Portuguese in India¹⁸. In 1538, Diu again played a major role in the events. The Ottoman-Gujarati units held it under siege¹⁹. The city held strong despite disagreements between Muslim allies. In Portugal panic spread and concerns by Captain Henrique de Sousa Chichorro who led a fleet to India in 1539 – believed that he would find the Portuguese only in Sri Lanka²⁰.

¹⁶ *Sněmy české od léta 1526 až po naši dobu*, Praha, Královský český archiv zemský, 1877, vol. I, doc. 292, 1541, p. 509.

¹⁷ Salih Özbaran, *Ottoman Expansion Towards the Indian Ocean in the 16th Century*, Istanbul, İstanbul Bilgi University Press, 2009, p. 85-87.

¹⁸ *Cópia de vários capítulos de uma carta do feitor de Flandres sobre a conquista de Baçorá pelos Turcos e do apercebimento dos ditos para outros portos da Europa*, Torre do Tombo (TT, Lisboa), Corpo Cronológico (CC), part I, packet 79, n. 13; *Carta de Diogo Pereira dando parte ao rei do miserável estado e pouca segurança com que estava a Índia e que receava os Rumes destruissem pela fraqueza das fortalezas...*, TT, CC, part I, packet 64, n. 4.

¹⁹ *Carta de Martim Afonso de Melo dando parte ao rei que a fortaleza de Diu fora atacada pela armada dos Rumes, devido à resistência se retiravam para o Rio de Madrafaba e passando por Adem saquearam a cidade e mataram o rei e os principais e outras notícias*, TT, CC, part I, packet 62, n. 154. Published in Luciano Ribeiro, “Em torno do primeiro cerco de Diu”, *Studia* 13-14 (1964), p. 41-105.

²⁰ Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1858-1864, vol. IV, part I, cap. XXXV, p. 96.

In this situation, without knowledge of the following events, who could have claimed that leaving Morocco was more advantageous than evacuating India? It is true that India provided the Portuguese with a much higher income than Morocco but could anyone dare to say that it would continue to do so in the future as well? If Diu fell into Ottoman hands, the Ottoman Turks would gain the necessary base for their fleet and become a constant threat to Portuguese power in the region. This would have devastating effects for the Portuguese interests in India.

Almeirim debate: India versus Morocco

King João III hesitated for a long time to retreat from Morocco or India. Until the 1540s, the Portuguese refused categorically to retreat elsewhere because they were able to maintain a dominant position overseas. Therefore, they tried to intervene effectively in both regions. However, it soon became clear that in the long run the unflexible Portuguese administration would not be able to lead an active policy and defend both of them at the same time. The main problems were lack of soldiers and funds. In 1534, the royal debt grew to an astronomical two million *cruzados*, while the revenues reached only 700,000 *cruzados*²¹. Moreover, between 1545 and 1552, Portugal found itself in a severe economic crisis.

The Portuguese Crown faced a dilemma, which sphere of interest to give precedence in the future and where, at least partially, to reduce expenses. Portugal was in this situation for the first time in its history, although in reality the first symptoms appeared a little earlier. Mármol Carvajal has already seen in the second decade of the 16th Century the greatest opportunity “to easily control the kingdom of Marrakech, if the Portuguese had not wasted the best time to conquer it by finding a sea route to India and not giving the Sharif the opportunity to become so powerful”²². Now, Portugal had to choose where it would be engaged in local policy and where it would just defend itself – it was at a crossroads. Should a defensive policy be introduced in Morocco, or in India? Morocco and India finally stood against each other. These two areas were

²¹ Otilia Rodrigues da Costa, *Portugal em Marrocos na Época de D. João III. Abandono ou Permanência?...*, cit., p. 62-64.

²² Luis del Mármol Carvajal, *Descripción General de África*, Granada 1573, vol. II, part I, book III, cap. XL, fl. 34.

nominated because they were the areas, which absorbed the largest amounts of money from the royal treasury.

When the army of the Sharif occupied Agadir in 1541, the King João III finally ordered to evacuate Azamor as well as Safi in 1541-1542, so that only Mazagan remained in Portuguese hands in the threatened Southern Morocco. The abandonment of part of the Moroccan stage was not only the consequence of Sharif's military power and economic problems of Portugal and its Empire which made it impossible to renovate and modernize outdated Portuguese coastal fortresses into bastion fortresses in response to the development of artillery. At the same time, it was the manifestation of limited cooperation between Portuguese fortresses and example of tragic failure of Portuguese diplomacy. The royal's preferences were evident as early as 1537, when the king wrote to the Count of Castanheira that he could not intervene in Morocco because India required support²³. In Morocco, the Sharif's expansion drastically reduced the rate of possible profits. In India, by contrast, the Ottoman danger was rather latent after the Portuguese victory in Diu in 1538. The bulk of the Portuguese population began to take an interest in the India at the expense of Morocco. Basically, the decision was obvious. After all, the Portuguese usually preferred immediate profit to a long-range concept.

However, the supporters of the expansion in Morocco did not give up, as it soon turned out. The decisive discussion had occurred at the meeting of the Royal Council (Council of State) in Almeirim in 1542-1543. Under the Royal Council we have to imagine an informal group of nobles and high clergy because it was not yet officially formed. This did not happen until 1562. The title of royal councillor belonged in 1518 to 500 persons and in mid-16th Century to 66 persons and it was in fact just an honorary title. It is a manifestation of the consultative nature of the late medieval and early modern state, in which the Crown had to cooperate with the elite²⁴.

In fact, the decision-making did not occur in any isolated circumstances but it was influenced by many factors. It all depended on the current political situation and social climate. The written opinions (*pareceres*) had been used as instruments of debate, just like several times in the past. They appeared for the first time in the first half of the 15th Century and remained present throughout the 16th Century until the reign of the King Sebastião. Some governors and

²³ Jeremiah D. M. Ford, *Letters of John III, King of Portugal, 1521-1557*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014, p. 352.

²⁴ Maria Luisa Marques da Gama, *O Conselho de Estado no Portugal restaurado – teoretização, orgânica e exercício do poder político na corte brigantina (1640-1706)*, dissertation at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Lisbon, Lisboa 2011, p. 61-65.

viceroy of the *Estado da Índia* also adopted this practice. The king was not obliged to follow the opinion of the majority.

Although it may seem that Morocco must have been at a disadvantage in the ensuing debate because various opinions recommending its evacuation have been voiced since the first half of the 15th Century, this was not the case. As the first area of Portuguese expansion, Morocco had always benefited from a certain privileged position compared to the Portuguese overseas. It was considered almost archetypal for the Portuguese expansion. On the contrary, India was reached after a long time and represented to the Portuguese a new and attractive territory.

From a simplified point of view, the Portuguese political scene was divided into two factions, one of which is referred traditionally to as “liberal” or “commercial” and the other as “centralist”. We can also speak of a “war-territorial” faction and “commercial-naval” faction²⁵. However, these factions were groups of nobles defending their actual interests and preferences rather than the long-term political parties. Moreover, it cannot be said that some specific noble families were equivalent to the factions because even those families that were strongly involved in the expansion in Morocco were involved also in the expansion in India. Equally, the differences of opinion were not based on whether the person had direct personal experiences from Morocco or India. To sum up, it was personal attitudes, relation to clientele networks and lineage solidarity, and personal economic, commercial or social opportunities and interests that led some nobles to vote for Morocco or India.

The supporters of the expansion in Morocco claimed that India caused the depopulation of Portugal and corrupted and effeminated hard warriors by its wealth and luxury. On the contrary, the expansion in Morocco was considered most prestigious because it was the location where the just and holy war for the glory of God was fought. We must not forget that the Portuguese led several crusades to Morocco, while none were ever declared for India. As a result, in contrast to India, “not weak but strong and brave men left Africa, and the Portuguese who conquered India were educated just in Africa”²⁶. If the Portuguese were forced to fight in India, they had to face only “naked blacks”,

²⁵ Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, “A política oriental de D. Manuel I a as suas contracorrentes” in Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, *De Ceuta a Timor*, Lisboa, DIFEL, 1998, p. 189-206.

²⁶ *Parecer que se deu a D. João III em que, perante a impossibilidade de manter a integridade do império, se aconselha o abandono da Índia, para que assim fosse possível não largar os lugares de África*, BA, Cód. 51-VI-36, fl. 181v, 186v, 201. Published in Otilia Rodrigues da Costa Fontoura, *Portugal em Marrocos na Época de D. João III. Abandono ou Permanência?*, Funchal, CEHA, 1998, p. 204-223. Also published in Maria Leonor Garcia da Cruz, “As Controvérsias

according to Moroccan veteran Luís de Meneses²⁷. According to the *vedor da fazenda* (overseer of the treasury) of Algarve, Nuno Rodrigues Barreto, fighting in Morocco formed part of the Portuguese identity. He avered that if we leave Morocco, “we would no longer be the genuine Portuguese”²⁸. Furthermore, the Moroccan Muslims represented an immediate threat to Portugal which cannot be said about the Ottoman Turks in India. Finally, Morocco was seen in the long term as a “military school”. There were so many soldiers with experience from Morocco fighting in India that it is impossible to accurately count their number. Even in the 18th Century, there was an awareness that “from North Africa the kings João II and Manuel I took all members of the Gama, Almeida or Silveira family who conquered the *Estado da Índia* and tame the brave ocean”²⁹. It is true that many Portuguese captains, governors and viceroys, who were sent to India, Africa and Brazil, first had held some official position in Morocco. It was the case in the 16th and 17th Centuries but to a limited extent also in the 18th Century.

The supporters of Moroccan expansion also claimed that Morocco was not only a place of struggle for the faith but also a place of economic development. It was a region rich in various agricultural and handcraft products as metals (gold, silver, copper, iron), cattle, grains and textiles. Grains, primarily wheat, always lacked in Portugal, which had to import it, hence its importance has been indisputable but “without cloves and pepper we could live as our parents lived ... After all, what spice serves us for than that it stimulates our appetite and induces greed, thus shortening our lives”³⁰. When spices would be needed, the Indian spices could be successfully replaced by African spices whose trade was accessible from Morocco and who was limited by the Portuguese Crown in order to not jeopardize the profits from the Indian pepper trade. In addition, Moroccan waters were richer in fish than fisheries at the shores of Portugal. Moreover, Moroccan products (mainly textiles) were exchanged for gold, ivory and slaves in Guinea³¹.

Finally, Morocco was a strategic area, literally “before the gates” (*às portas*) of Portugal, and the control of the Strait of Gibraltar was absolutely essential

ao Tempo de D. João III sobre a Política Portuguesa no Norte de África”, *Mare Liberum*, 13-14 (1997), p. 135-154.

²⁷ Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia...*, cit., vol. II, part II, cap. XI, p. 734.

²⁸ *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc...*, cit., vol. II, part 2, p. 681.

²⁹ Manuel dos Santos, *História Sebástica*, Lisboa, 1735, p. 321.

³⁰ *Parecer que se deu a D. João III*, BA, Cód. 51-VI-36, fl. 176v-178v, 184.

³¹ Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Serviço de Educação, 1991, book II, cap. 4.

to the security of the kingdom³². Luís de Sousa claimed that Morocco offered “a profit and certainty for the neighboring coasts of Andalusia” and Algarve³³. By the aforementioned “certainty”, the chronicler meant the security of sea routes in the Strait of Gibraltar which was easier to achieve due to the fortified positions in Morocco. Above all, Morocco helped to keep the Barbary corsairs away from the Portuguese shores.

In contrast, India should be a source of only unrestrained ambitions to achieve commercial profits and wealth and a symbol of the loss of Christian ideals and moral decline. We must not forget that commercial activities were socially disregarded and commercial revenues uncertain, compared to agricultural and mineral profits. The hot and humid Indian climate, the pernicious tropical sun, and the extraordinary fertility of soil should have caused laziness, instability and turbidity of the human mind, increase lust and ruin human nature itself. Gradually, the Europeans adapted inevitably and under the influence of “luxuries of India” (*delícias da Índia*) became more and more orientalised. However, it was at the expense of their sense of self-control and discipline, combat capabilities and organizational skills. Moreover, they were slowly losing their identity. These opinions influenced the image of India in Europe for a very long time³⁴.

Furthermore, India should be a kind of abyss wherein many lives became of nothing. In the opinion of many, the Ten Commandments were not applied in the areas to the south of the equator – simply: there was no sin. Therefore, it is no wonder that could be said: “What else is coming from India than what destroys generosity and corrupts human character?”³⁵. In 1534, Francisco Pereira contrasted the “honor” (*honra*), gained in Africa, and the “greed” which was the driving force for people leaving for India³⁶. In 1537, the *Mesa da Consciência*, the advisory body of the king on religious issues and the tribunal which addresses disputes between the Crown and the Church, forbade the Crown to force the noble sons to go to India in order to fight “the Moors” (*mouros*) because it was primarily a place of trade, while the war with the Muslims took place in Morocco³⁷. Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos wrote in 1542-1543 (published in

³² *Parecer que se deu a D. João III*, BA, Cód. 51-VI-36, fl. 187, 198.

³³ Luís de Sousa, *Anais de D. João III*, Lisboa, Sá de Costa, 1938, vol. I, book I, cap. VII.

³⁴ Maria Leonor Garcia da Cruz, *Os “fumos da Índia”: Uma leitura da expansão portuguesa...*, cit., p. 11-68.

³⁵ *Parecer que se deu a D. João III*, BA, Cód. 51-VI-36, fl. 183v-184.

³⁶ *Parecer que Francisco Pereira deu a D. João III*, BA, Cód. 51-VI-40, fl. 417.

³⁷ Diogo do Couto, *Décadas da Ásia*, Lisboa 1777-1778, Déc. V, book III, cap. VIII, p. 269-280.

1555) in his *Comédia Eufrosina* that the Portuguese were originally “brave knights” but in India became “greedy and sinful merchants”³⁸. According to a Muslim prophecy, recorded by the chronicler Diogo do Couto in his *Soldado Prático* (1564), the Portuguese conquered India as warriors with a sword and a cross in their hands but they should have lost it as merchants because they threw the sword and the cross aside to seize the pepper bales³⁹. According to Manuel Aires de Sousa (1535), those men accustomed to luxury should not have been able to defend Portugal, let alone fight overseas⁴⁰.

On the contrary, the advocates of the Indian enterprise stressed the wealth that flowed from the trade with the Oriental spices, precious stones, pearls, aromatic essences and tropical wood, despite the lower profitability of the *Carreira da Índia* compared with intra-Asian trade. The proceeds from fishing in Moroccan waters and from the vassal tribute of so-called “friendly Moors” (*mouros de pazes*) could not cope with incomes from the intra-Asian trade. More than a century later, the chronicler Manuel Faria e Sousa stated that “after all, Africa did not provide diamonds, pearls, cinnamon nor cloves”, whereas India did⁴¹.

In contrast to Morocco, India was able to produce steady income. Already in 1539, the later Viceroy of the *Estado da Índia* João de Castro complained to him that most of India’s revenues were disappearing in the war campaigns in Morocco without any significant effects⁴². It was nothing new. The same has been mentioned already by the Governor of the *Estado da Índia* Afonso de Albuquerque 25 years earlier. He complained about the considerable costs involved in the defense of fortresses in Morocco. He also reminded that he had never had more than 3000 soldiers at his disposal, while much larger expeditions have been sent to Morocco⁴³. According to another opinion, “the passage through Africa of the Infantes alone used up more people than India has consumed so far”⁴⁴.

³⁸ Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcelos, *Comédia Eufrosina*, Lisboa, 1786, act II, scene V, p. 123.

³⁹ Diogo do Couto, *Primeiro Soldado prático*, Lisboa, CNCDP, 2001, p. 538-539.

⁴⁰ *Les sources inédites de l’histoire du Maroc*, Paris, Paul Geuthner, 1948, vol. III, p. 12.

⁴¹ Manuel Faria e Sousa, *África Portuguesa*, Lisboa, 1681, cap. VII, p. 99.

⁴² Maria Clara Junqueiro, “Política Norte-Africana: Rumos na Expansão Portuguesa”, *Clio* 4 (1982), p. 58.

⁴³ Raymundo António de Bulhão Pato (ed.), *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, Lisboa, Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884-1935, vol. I, p. 33-34, 126.

⁴⁴ *Parecer que se deu a D. João III em que, perante a impossibilidade de manter a integridade do império, se aconselha o abandono da África e a conservação da Índia*, BA, Cód. 51-VI-35, fl. 160. Published in Otilia Rodrigues da Costa Fontoura, *Portugal em Marrocos na Época de D. João III. Abandono ou Permanência?*, Funchal, CEHA, 1998, p. 224-233. Also published

Moreover, India had been searched for so long until it was transformed into a true symbol of national pride, *corpus mysticum* of the Portuguese monarchy, that could not be simply abandoned. Against the complaints of the depopulation of Portugal, they pointed out that the departure to the East actually saved many people from poverty. They also drew attention to the fact that many people were also leaving for Morocco. Moreover, emigration was allegedly not a major problem, because “squadrons of men and women depart from Entre Douro e Minho without leaving a single piece of land that looks like it will bear fruit without being cultivated”. Against the thesis of the effeminacy of those Portuguese who were tempted by the trade with India, they argued that neither the Arabs nor the Persians had a similar problem, despite the fact that they traded there for centuries, ie. much longer than the Portuguese had done. They remarked bitterly that “it seems that the smell of benzoin must be more effeminating than sugar and the shameful delicacies that are made from it”⁴⁵.

All of these arguments have been used purposively in this discussion because it is obvious that men could depart with sordid goals to both India and Morocco. Moreover, the dichotomy Morocco for warriors-India for merchants was only artificially created and did not fully correspond to reality. Trade also played an extremely important role in Morocco and if the Portuguese were able to conquer Morocco, the importance of trade there would increase even more. In India, the Portuguese also waged wars, and not only against the pagans but also against the Muslims, which were most valued in the Portuguese society. Besides that, the question of depopulation of Portugal is overestimated. In fact, it was not such a big problem because, based on current research, the emigration from Portugal had only a secondary effect on the development of the demography in Portugal itself. It began to be a more serious problem only in the second half of the 17th Century, when people began to leave the country primarily for economic reasons and not for settlement and colonization⁴⁶. In addition, during the 16th Century, only 1% of the total Portuguese and *mestiço* population lived in India⁴⁷. Finally, Morocco also required many people to be conquered and settled.

in Maria Leonor Garcia da Cruz, “As Controvérsias ao Tempo de D. João III sobre a Política Portuguesa no Norte de África”, *Mare Liberum*, 13-14 (1997), p. 155-164.

⁴⁵ *Parecer que se deu a D. João III*, BA, Cód. 51-VI-35, fl. 212, 215-218v.

⁴⁶ Susana Münch Miranda, “Coping with Europe and the Empire 1500–1620” in Dulce Freire, Pedro Lains (ed.), *Agrarian History of Portugal 1000–2000*, Leiden, Brill, 2016, p. 74-75.

⁴⁷ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, “Evolution of Empire: The Portuguese in the Indian Ocean during the sixteenth century” in James D. Tracy (ed.), *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 318.

Viability of the conquest of Morocco

Nowadays, one could label the Portuguese expansion in Morocco as the personification of the medieval crusade and the obsolete approach, while Portuguese activities in India could characterize as a harbinger of modern European expansion focused primarily on trade and economic gain. However, this assessment is completely misleading because trade was equally important in Morocco and religious ideology was widely used by the Portuguese in India too. King Manuel I saw the fight against the Muslims as one of the main motives for sending the expedition to India in 1497. The zealous supporters of the conquests in Morocco can be considered religious fanatics but the Renaissance period as a whole retained a number of medieval features, including the Church's extraordinarily strong influence in society. The 16th Century was strongly imbued with religious faith. If two Portuguese bishops were killed in Sebastião's army at Alcácer Quibir (1578) against the Arabs, then a total of seven bishops and one archbishop were killed in the Battle of Mohács (1526) against the Ottoman Turks in Hungary.

Let us now consider whether there was a real chance of the Portuguese subjugation of Morocco. This is a contra-factual excursion that purports to elucidate a hypothetical course of historical events according to the known data about the behavior of people and individuals. This approach allows reflection on what could have happened but did not happen. However, it is necessary to realize that historians are never able to capture all alternatives and eventualities and their causal connection.

It is true that Morocco was abundant in mineral and other natural resources but the Portuguese had difficult access to them. In the face of a self-confident Sharif, they could only succeed if they gathered all available means and did not waste their forces spread over too many regions of the world. Fernão de Queirós expressed it nicely when he said that "it is impossible to have equal forces everywhere", so "by seeking to grasp everything with scanty forces, we shall end by having nothing"⁴⁸. The Portuguese could alleviate the shortage of troops by forcibly integrating members of the Military Orders into expeditionary forces operating in Morocco, where they never really wanted to go. Several nobles recommended a revision of this condition to the king⁴⁹. In addition, the

⁴⁸ Fernão de Queirós, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, New Delhi, Madras, Asian Educational Services, 1992, vol. III, book VI, cap. XIV, p. 1100-1101.

⁴⁹ In 1534, João de Melo Barreto, Rodrigo de Lima, viscount of Vila Nova de Cerveira, and, in 1535, Manuel Aires de Sousa. Cf. *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc*, vol. II, part II, p. 667, 686; vol. III, p. 10.

Portuguese could create effective professional units as early as the early 16th Century. The Marquis of Vila Real, Pedro de Meneses, wrote down in 1534: The army “should not be support by farmers and men who would go there for prey but by soldiers that they would be paid well and would go there voluntarily”⁵⁰.

From the point of view of troop shortage, the complaints about the depopulation of Portugal seem to make sense. Although the population decline was not a problem for Portugal itself, it could have had an adverse effect during the possible offensive in Morocco. This problem has been already referred in 1420s and 1430s, as well as by Jaime, Duke of Bragança, in 1529. Later, Cide Muça, a Muslim living in Portugal, pointed this out in 1577. If Jaime spoke about 50,000 to 60,000 colonists, Cide Muça increased these numbers to 80,000 to 90,000 colonists. Cide Muça even stated that “when there was a river of money, and another of people”, the Portuguese would not have a chance to succeed⁵¹. However, it is difficult to confirm or reject the accuracy of these estimations. It should also be mentioned, that the Portuguese would have been able to direct sailors and soldiers to Morocco instead of to India. Other colonists could come from Castile, France or Italy. The settlement of the colonists could be facilitated by cooperation with a local Muslim ally. In the long term, the colonists in Morocco could themselves become a source of demographic increase. Ultimately, it has to be reiterated that colonists were not necessary to indirect control which was sought by the Portuguese in Morocco.

Morocco was a predominantly Muslim country, and Muslims in the 15th and 16th Centuries were utmost enemies with the Portuguese. The language, customs and way of life of the Muslims were different from those of the Christians that they are not compatible with each other. Although there is evidence of a mutual friendship between Christians and Muslims, this is an exception. In addition, a distinction has to be made between personal friendship and state ideology. However, it should be noted that many examples from India have shown the Portuguese ability to adapt to a cosmopolitan lifestyle and an environment of religious tolerance. It should be keep in mind that the expansion in Morocco was not only a question of finance but also of adaptation. Moreover, economic necessity managed to blunt religious fervor. In the mid-16th Century we can find up to 20,000 Muslim immigrants from Morocco in Portugal where they were baptized, became Moriscos and integrated into the economic structure of the country⁵².

⁵⁰ *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc...*, cit., vol. II, part 2, p. 673.

⁵¹ Diogo Barbosa Machado, *Memorias para a historia de Portugal, que comprehendem o governo del rey D. Sebastião*, Lisboa, 1736-1751, p. 156.

⁵² António de Almeida Mendes, “Sueños e invenciones en el Atlántico en la ocasión arficana e ibérica. Estrategias de unión y desunión de los imperios de España y Portugal en los viejos

To enhance their success, the Portuguese would improve their art of propaganda, to use mutual disputes between Muslims and to find loyal Muslim allies with sufficient authority. In the first case, the last opportunity was offered to the Portuguese by the internal strife between the two Sharif's brothers, Ahmad al-Araj and Muhammad ash-Shaikh, in 1541-1544. In the second case, they could not rely on any strong personality with a sufficient number of followers. The solution for the Portuguese could have been to come to terms with the Ottoman Sultan, who was constantly expanding his power to the West, and with whom they negotiated around 1540 regarding the situation in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

So, it is not right to consider the Portuguese conquest of Morocco as impossible. Nevertheless, even if the Portuguese took advantage of all these leads, their success was not fully guaranteed because the Sharif would never be willing to become the Portuguese vassals and they were very popular among the people. In case of the Portuguese attack, the Sharif could avoid confrontation with the Portuguese army by retreating to the mountains where they could regroup and launch a counterattack. The Portuguese would have to offer a suitable alternative to the Muslim population to the Sharif and reduce their violent behavior against this population. Still, it is quite possible that only a massive campaign, which would be undertaken by several Christian states at the same time, or at least by Portugal and Castile together, and followed by the settlement of the country, could become successful. It never happened because of the ongoing rivalry between them.

Last attempt to revise the position of Morocco after 1550

The radical change in the Portuguese policy from 1542-1550 did not last for a long time because of the changing nature of the Portuguese foreign policy. It wasn't difficult because there was no coherent political line. Moreover, the Moroccan policy still had enough followers on the Portuguese political scene as can be inferred from the statement of Lourenço Pires de Távora. He wrote in 1549 regarding evacuation of Arzila and Alcácer Ceguer which he approved that "the people are not satisfied except for impossibilities or very clear evidence in the determinations"⁵³. The captain of Arzila, Francisco de Coutinho, was not

mundos (siglos XV–XVII)" in Carlos Martínez Shaw, José Antonio Martínez Torres (ed.), *España y Portugal en el mundo (1581-1668)*, Madrid, Polifemo, 2014, p. 210.

⁵³ Lourenço Pires de Távora to infante Luís, BA, Cód. 49-IX-38, fl. 36v-37. Published in Maria Leonor Garcia da Cruz, *Lourenço Pires de Távora e a política portuguesa no Norte de África no século de Quinhentos*, dissertation at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Lisbon, Lisboa 1988, p. 327-328.

consulted on the question of abandoning your city, because the king feared that he would oppose it⁵⁴. Soon, there were arisen statements seeking to reverse withdrawal from Morocco and calling for abandonment from India. In 1549, the jesuit João Nunes Barreto, who was a missionary in Tétouan in 1548-1554, along with the future tutor of the King Sebastião I Luís Gonçalves da Câmara (1548-1550), who redeemed Christian captives, wrote in favor of Morocco: “It is such a rich country that I do not understand what we need India for. There is a lot of gold in the vicinity of Tarudante. The soil is so fertile that vines, wheat and olives grow there. It is said that if only the fields around Tangier were be sown, it would be enough for the whole Portugal”⁵⁵.

The Portuguese merchants and nobles soon adapted to the new situation and began to engage in smuggling with Morocco. The king himself was partly involved in the contraband⁵⁶. Only when King Sebastião I sat on the throne, similar voices were heard again. It was the time when the *Estado da Índia* faced a structural crisis. If, at the beginning of the 16th Century, the royal trade with India was still producing huge profits, the ever-increasing administrative and defensive costs of an oversized Empire began to cast a dark shadow over the whole royal Indian trade. It turned out that trade controlled directly by the Crown did not bring such profits due to the ubiquitous corruption and unwanted competition could not be avoided. The royal revenues continued to decline, while private merchants and bankers were getting richer because they did not have to worry about logistical security, shipbuilding or defense of factories⁵⁷.

An interest in expansion in Morocco remained extremely strong in Portugal even after a partial withdrawal from this country. The king planned to personally make the Sharif's ruler his vassal and express his sovereignty by accepting the imperial title which Manuel I had already considered in relation to India⁵⁸.

⁵⁴ Nuno Vila-Santa, “Between Renaissance and Counter Reformation: Shaping the historical memory of D. Francisco Coutinho, 3rd earl of Redondo (1546-1564)”, *Hispania Sacra LXXI* (2019), p. 468.

⁵⁵ *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc*, ed. Pierre de Cenival, Robert Ricard, Paris, Paul Geuthner, 1951, vol. IV, p. 381-382.

⁵⁶ Francisco Bethencourt, “A administração da Coroa” in Francisco Bethencourt, Kirti N. Chaudhuri (ed.), *História da Expansão Portuguesa: A Formação do Império 1415-1570*, vol. I, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 1998, p. 389-392.

⁵⁷ Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, “A Crise de 1565-1575 na História do *Estado da Índia*”, *Mare Liberum*, 9 (1995), p. 481-519; Nuno Luís Vila-Santa, “Revisitando o *Estado da Índia* nos anos de 1571 a 1577”, *Revista de Cultura*, 36 (2010), p. 88-112.

⁵⁸ Bernardo da Cruz, *Chronica d'el-rei D. Sebastião*, Lisboa, Escriptorio, 1903, part II, cap. XLIII, p. 9; José Pereira Baião, *Portugal cuidadoso e lastimado com a vida e perda do senhor Rei D. Sebastião*, Lisboa, 1737, book V, cap. XXI, p. 652.

According to the *cortes* of 1562-1563, “much more justified and appropriate would be to conquer Africa than India, which lies too far”⁵⁹. The policy of concessions in Morocco was also condemned by those who advocated its implementation in the 1540s and early 1550s, including Lourenço Pires de Távora⁶⁰. The famous Luís de Camões in his *Lusíadas* (Lusiads) in 1572 wrote: “You allow the enemy to ourish at your gates while you go seek another at the other side of the world, at the price of depopulating and weakening this ancient kingdom and squandering its resources”⁶¹. In Portugal, a spirit of aggressiveness towards the Muslims was growing. In this context, King Sebastião I revived after 1573 an expansion to Morocco, into whose service India was to be placed militarily and financially⁶². This can be seen as the culmination of evolutionary development, not as a radical change. What has changed compared to the situation 30 years ago?

In the Mediterranean, there was a growing Muslim danger which began to immediately threaten the Strait of Gibraltar, the control of which was necessary to ensure the defense of the Portuguese shores from attacks by the Barbary corsairs. This was associated with the increasing power of the Ottoman Empire. A strong Ottoman influence was also evident in Morocco. Ottoman ships sailed fearlessly from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, finding peaceful refuge in the ports of Sale and Larache. There were fears of a Ottoman invasion to the Iberian Peninsula. According to the chronicler Jerónimo de Mendonça (1607), King Sebastião I declared: “If we do not put an end to this evil at the very beginning, there will not be such a remote place in all of Spain (meaning the whole Iberian Peninsula) where one can feel safe”⁶³. King Sebastião I wrote extensively about the Ottoman threat in 1576 in a letter to King Philip II of Castile⁶⁴. No one at the time could have expected that the Ottoman interest in

⁵⁹ António Dias Farinha, “O Declínio da Política Africana: De Alcácer Quibir ao Abandono de Mazagão” in Luís de Albuquerque (ed.), *Portugal no Mundo*, vol. I, Lisboa, Alfa, 1989, p. 131.

⁶⁰ Maria Leonor Garcia da Cruz, “Portugal no jogo de poderes no norte de África no segundo quartel do século XVI”, *Cadernos históricos* 4 (1993), p. 126; Maria Leonor Garcia da Cruz, “Portugal e o Norte de África no Século XVI: A Intervenção de Lourenço Pires de Távora, Diplomata e Homem de Guerra, no Problema da Manutenção ou Abandono das Praças Portuguesas”, *Primeiras Jornadas de História Moderna: Actas: 16-19 de Outubro de 1986*, Lisboa, Universidade de Lisboa, 1989, p. 1068.

⁶¹ Luís de Camões, *Lusíadas*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1889, vol. I, canto IV, stanza 101.

⁶² Nuno Luís Vila-Santa, “A Coroa e o *Estado da Índia* nos reinados de D. Sebastião e D. Henrique: política ou políticas?”, *Lusitania Sacra*, 2 (2014), p. 60-62; Diogo Barbosa Machado, *Memórias para a historia de Portugal, que comprehendem o governo del rey D. Sebastião*, p. 192.

⁶³ Jerónimo de Mendonça, *Jornada de África*, Lisboa, Escripatorio, 1904, book I, cap. V, p. 64.

⁶⁴ *Cópia da resposta da mão del-Rei a uma resposta del-Rei de Castela sobre a empresa de África*, BA, Cód. 49-XII-I, fl. 377-388.

the northwestern part of Africa would end with the establishment of its exponent in Morocco. Moreover, the Muslim corsairs threatened trade routes deep in the Atlantic waters from their Moroccan bases. The ideology of the Catholic Reformation, proclaimed by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), also played a role. This Council sought internal reform and revival of the Roman Catholic Church in order to be able to counter Protestant and Muslim expansionism more effectively. Finally, Sebastião's goal was also to achieve a geopolitical balance of power on the Iberian Peninsula in relation to the dominant position of Castile by expanding the power base in Morocco.

Equally important were benefits to be achieved from the re-established foreign policy. The king wanted to gain control of rich mineral and agricultural resources. These resources would allow him to build an alternative power base that would be closer to Portugal (*às portas*), more accessible and easier to control and to defend by the Crown than the distant *Estado da Índia*. The regenerated Portuguese Empire centered in Morocco would undoubtedly be more stable and last longer than an empire centered in India. In addition to, the Portuguese possessions in Morocco would help stabilize financial situation of the Crown and restore its weakened international prestige. It was to help strengthen the Portuguese position in the Iberian peninsula and the Atlantic Ocean towards Castile and facilitate its release from Castilian influence⁶⁵. Finally, they could serve as a welcome safe ground on the maritime route to Brazil where sugar cane production began to rise sharply, making it the world's largest supplier of sugar and dramatically increasing its importance within the Portuguese Empire. Jorge da Silva, one of the members of the Council of State, even suggested to the king (1574) the possibility to colonize the Moroccan hinterland following the example of Brazil which involved the establishment of a colony oriented towards agricultural exploitation⁶⁶.

However, it was not just Morocco. At the same time, King Sebastião I supported the military invasion in Angola and Mozambique. His goal was to build a vast continental empire centered on the African continent. Morocco must be understood in a broad context of the wider Atlantic area which interconnected Europe, West Africa, Central-West Africa (Angola) and the east American coast (Brazil)⁶⁷. Solid trade connections tied Morocco both to Senegambia and to the areas along the Gulf of Guinea. Moroccan products (mainly textiles) were

⁶⁵ Jorge Borges de Macedo, *História Diplomática Portuguesa: Constantes e Linhas de Força. Estudo de Geopolítica*, Lisboa, Instituto da Defesa Nacional, 1987, vol. I, p. 111.

⁶⁶ Francisco de Sales Mascarenhas Loureiro, *D. Sebastião antes e depois de Alcácer Quibir*, Lisboa, Vega, 1978, p. 26.

⁶⁷ Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, *D. Sebastião*, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2006, p. 226.

bartered there from mid-15th Century for ivory, gold and black slaves because they were considered there a luxury item. It is no coincidence that between 1549 and 1554, the smallest volume of gold from São Jorge da Mina was transported to Portugal because of loss of many Moroccan ports and subsequent decline in exportation⁶⁸. Moreover, there were very important maritime routes connecting Portugal with India, Brazil and the Mediterranean Sea near the Moroccan coasts and these routes had to be protected from the threat of the Barbary corsairs.

Thus, Morocco cannot be considered completely separate from the Atlantic area, as is usually done, quite the contrary – it was part of well-working network. It was important for Portugal chiefly for economic and strategic reasons. So, Sebastião cannot be considered a fool as sometimes still happens if he was able to prepare such complex plan. The many nobles whom the king asked for their written opinion (*parecer*) on the campaign to Morocco in 1576 due to the disapproval of the Royal Council did not openly support it, but the reason was their dislike for the creation of the proposed centralized empire, not their lack of interest in Morocco and the war with the Muslims.

In the end, as we well know, the attempt of King Sebastião I failed in the Battle of Alcácer Quibir in 1578 where he disappeared and probably died. However, it was not the result of the campaign *per se*. It is true that the Portuguese had no experience of war in the interior but that does not mean that they could not succeed. The war was an absolutely unpredictable affair in which the chosen tactic was decisive rather than the number of soldiers. On the Portuguese side, there was even a Muslim pretendent of the throne which gave them wide range of options. In addition, there was disunity in the Muslim army which could manifest itself in the outbreak of panic, desertion of unreliable troops to the enemy and the disintegration of the army. The main problem on the Portuguese side was the poor organization and command of the campaign⁶⁹. The jesuit Francisco Rodrigues declared that “if Sebastião won, he would recorded in history as one of the greatest kings of Portugal”⁷⁰, because the uncertainty for Portugal, emanating from Morocco, would definitely end.

⁶⁸ John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast 1469-1682*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1979, p. 78.

⁶⁹ Luís Costa e Sousa, “Alcácer Quibir: O regresso (fatal) a Marrocos” in Paulo M. Dias, Roger Lee de Jesus (ed.), *Atualizar a história: Uma nova visão sobre o passado de Portugal*, Lisboa, Desassossego, 2022, p. 195-208; Luís Costa e Sousa, *Alcácer Quibir, 1578: Visão ou Delírio de um rei?*, Lisboa, Tribuna da História, 2009; Luís Costa e Sousa, “Revisitar a batalha de Alcácer Quibir”, *e-Stratégica*, 1 (2017), p. 111-159.

⁷⁰ Francisco Rodrigues, *História da Companhia de Jesus na Assistência de Portugal*, Porto, Livraria Apostolado da Imprensa, 1939, t. II, vol. II, 359.

Conclusion

The debate on the extent and usefulness of the Portuguese expansion in Morocco began shortly after the conquest of Ceuta (1415) but it was only in 1495 in the Royal Council in Montemor-o-Novo where Morocco and India stood in clash for the first time. There were two main regions of the Crown's interest which absorbed the most funds from the royal treasury. In 1495-1578, they were constantly in opposition. It is possible to say that the expansion in those regions was mutually incompatible. They can be characterized as examples of two different models of expansion. As a result, the Portuguese Empire vacillated between a trading empire and a crusading monarchy. The polarity became clear around 1500 when the Portuguese tried to expand in both areas at the same time. Morocco and India required total attention from the Portuguese Crown but could not give it to both.

In Morocco, as well as in India, the Portuguese had to face an external threat – the Sharif's movement grew stronger in Morocco and the threat of the Ottoman Turks in India. The danger in Morocco materialized more efficiently. However, when the king tried in the 1530s to gain widespread support among the nobles to reduce activities in Morocco, he was abruptly rejected. The connection between the nobility and Morocco, whether ideological, political or economic, was too strong to allow this radical change.

In the debate in Almeirim in 1542-1543, two ideologically different currents of opinion clashed. Their followers extolled the region of their interest and denigrated the other one. It was the height of the Morocco-India rivalry. However, there was no change in Portuguese foreign policy at all. Thus, the abandonment of Morocco was sanctioned. The cause was that the threat in India has become only latent and India generated higher profits than Morocco at the moment.

After 1542-1543, the Portuguese interest should be directed primarily to the East. However, the Almeirim discussions cannot be taken as the ultimate verdict determining the Portuguese policy on a permanent basis, since it was not consistent and every monarch created it *ad hoc*. The voices condemning India's dominance in the Portuguese overseas policy began to emerge as early as the late 1540s and gained in importance from the 1560s onwards. Thus, around 1570, King Sebastião I began to accentuate Morocco again as a replacement for the too remote and fragile *Estado da Índia*. And not only Morocco but also the Atlantic area in general which were inseparably interconnected. Not surprisingly, he again had to face widespread resistance of nobles as well as the kings Manuel I in 1495 and João III in 1542-1550. In the first two cases, the nobility opposed the Crown's plan to reduce the importance of Morocco.

In the latter case, it may seem at first glance that the situation has changed and that the nobility has spoken out against the expansion in Morocco. In reality, however, this is not the case. The nobility only tried to defend their interests in the face of the planned extension of the royal influence in Morocco. The nobles were satisfied with the current situation where they could carry out raids (*cavalgadas*, *correrias*, *razzias*) into the interior of the country and gain prey and social prestige for themselves.

If, in Morocco itself, the Sebastião's initiative was just an ephemeral phenomenon because of the death of the young king in the tragic Battle of Alcácer Quibir in 1578 with the Muslims, in the Atlantic area, it was a completely different story. The advocates of the expansion to India seemingly triumphed after 1578. However, at the same time, it became clear that the whole Indian enterprise was far too big for such a small country like Portugal. The network of so many fortresses and factories scattered over such a large area was too fragile and sensitive to even a minor change in circumstances. Thus, since the 1570s, Lisbon's attention inexorably shifted to the much closer and climatically more favourable Atlantic area where the autonomous economic production developed. In the middle of the 17th Century, this process of the so-called *atlantization* of the Portuguese Empire culminated.

It was the South Atlantic region, not India or Morocco that eventually became the new center of the Portuguese Empire that entered in the second phase of its existence. Although the importance of India for the Portuguese expansion was never questioned in a symbolic way, the reality was different. Morocco ceased to be a significant part of the Portuguese empire. In 1648, the chronicler Jerónimo de Mascarenhas wrote that "due to the new conquests in India, Brazil, Angola and elsewhere, Africa (ie. Morocco) was weakened in the time of King Dom João III that rewards of efforts and courage of our African Portuguese were completely erased from his memory and memory of his successors. The things of Africa were cooled and in a few years put into oblivion"⁷¹.

⁷¹ Jerónimo de Mascarenhas, *Historia de la ciudad de Ceuta. Sus sucessos militares, y politicos; Memorias de sus santos y preladados, y elogios de sus capitanes generales*, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1918, cap. 67, p. 263.

