

## **Lusophone Sea on a high tide?**

### **The current role of maritime discourse in public governmental speeches from Brazil, Cabo Verde, and Portugal**

**Author:** Lúcio Lopes Hanenberg

**Supervisor:** Prof.<sup>a</sup> Doutora Cátia Miriam Costa

The sea has always had an important impact on international relations. In the last few years, the interest in researching sea-related topics has still been growing, with initiatives such as the oceans decade by the United Nations (United Nations 2020) clearly spearheading an effort that combines sustainable development and the global ocean. Academia itself has been actively researching the importance of the sea on various fields, not only in international relations, but also concerning cultural (e.g. Mathieson 2016) or economic (Marques 2020) activities, the effort in defence policies (Bueger et al. 2020) and ecological terms (Marcondes 2020). These five categories provide not only a good summary on the importance in current politics, but also as a research field in International Studies.

Lusophone countries advocate for a special relationship to the sea and have been promoting national and international initiatives - and that is worth researching on its own. The working paper that accompanies this blog post explores the discourse of public political speeches of the current governments from Brazil, Cabo Verde, and Portugal. While certainly not the only Lusophone countries with an interest in the sea, the cases were chosen for two reasons. The first encompasses them as representative of three continents, from Africa, Europe, and South America, presenting a triangle of international policy. The second reason is a consequence of the methodological analysis.

The analysis has focused on public available speeches of the governments on the internet, the cases selected are the ones that present the biggest online activity. This is not to say that the cases are equivalent in its availability: Over half of the 31 speeches analysed belong to Portugal. However, any other case would only distort further the comparison, and therefore the already limited conclusions. The question of availability is also the reason to limit the discourse analysed to public speeches, as well as the emphasis of current governments: other forms of documents are even more unreliable to find and analyse and former governments speeches tend to be deleted as soon as there is a new one. All these limitations must be understood to better assess what this analysis can, and cannot, answer. Nevertheless, public speeches reflect what the government wishes to transmit most directly, may it be to a national or international audience.

Using the five categories mentioned before (defence, international relations, economy, culture, ecology and research), the paper proceeds to analyse the speeches following a narrative discourse analysis (Wodak 2004). This means each analysed speech is marked by its author, be it the President of the country or a minister, the context of that speech as well as its purpose, alongside exposing the references to each of the categories. For a more complete analysis, including the context of the three cases, the working paper is available, but for an overview, here the last table of summary. For context, the selection criteria were the mentioning of “sea”

or ocean in the speech, totalling for Brazil on seven speeches, Cabo Verde six and Portugal eighteen:

Country	Category				
	International Relations	Ecology and Research	Culture	Defence	Economy
Brazil	1	2	3	2	1
Cabo Verde	6	8	4	1	12
Portugal	6	19	12	9	19
TOTAL	13	29	19	12	32

Table: Summary of the analysed categories by country

The major conclusions are the following: When it comes to actors, they generally stick to their fields. The Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs promotes greater cooperation of international relations, the Cabo Verdean Minister of Maritime Economy speaks of sustainable development and the Brazilian Defence Minister acknowledges the sea as metaphor for strength. Overall, however, the countries differ in their discourse: In Brazil, the current government does not give it much importance. In fact, the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs even uses it to reject international cooperation. Cabo Verde has a coherent discourse focussed on sustainable development. With the Mindelo Declaration (CPLP 2019) of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, which promotes cooperation of the organization regarding the oceans, having been signed in Cabo Verde, there is no wonder the geographic reality of Cabo Verde reflects itself in discourse. Finally, Portugal has an intensive focus on the cultural importance of the sea, especially through its President of the Republic. While also interested in its economic potential and need for ecologic protection, the most striking examples reflect the sea as the symbol of Portuguese history and alleged greatness.

To summarise, while this working paper is only a mirror that highlights current interest on the sea in the three cases, it nevertheless confirms its importance and also shows some differences in current approaches. The sea might be relevant, but not everyone is riding the same wave.

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