Brazil and the Afro-Asian World: a Decolonial Approach

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Abstract

This paper employs decolonial scholarship to discuss how Brazilian independence did not delink it from Portugal, thus leading Brazilian ruling classes to take their western identity for granted. This non-problematized western identity would later lead to hostile depictions of Afro-Asian anticolonial struggles by Brazilian diplomats and intellectuals during the decolonization process. The paper also proposes a decolonization of Brazilian foreign policy by urging it to delink from its western identity.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to employ decolonial scholarship to critically assess how Brazilian intellectuals and foreign-policymakers portrayed the Afro-Asian world from the 1950's to the 1970's. Two main arguments ought to be developed here. Firstly, we will demonstrate how, given its inability to delink from Portugal, the Brazilian emancipation process did not problematize the country's belonging to the West. Secondly, we will show how this unproblematized belonging to the West was later reproduced by oblivious and even hostile portrayals of Asian and African anticolonial movements by Brazilian intellectuals and diplomats.

The article is divided in five sections, besides this introduction. Section 2 sheds light on decolonial scholarship with special emphasis on the concept of "delinking" and on the interplay between modernity and coloniality. Section 3 discusses how Brazilian independence did not delink the country from Portugal. Section 4 discusses the polysemy of the concept of "West" to shed light on the Brazilian elites' belief in their belonging to the West.

Section 5 discusses how portrayals of the Afro-Asian world by Brazilian diplomats and intellectuals were pervaded by coloniality, thus resonating with the country's inability to delink from its western identity. In order to analyze the depictions the Brazilian diplomacy and intelligentsia made of the Afro-Asian world, we will resort either to their original writings or, whenever that is not possible, to academic works that analyzed their

ideas. Some questions guiding our analysis are: "How do these actors portray Afro-Asian anticolonialism? What kind of foreign policy do they envisage for Brazil in Asia and Africa? To which extent do they believe in the Brazilian belonging to the West?" Finally, the last section summarizes the main arguments and points towards new pathways.

Understanding decolonial thought

By the late 1990s, there was a growing frustration among scholars in the United States on how subaltern studies were being conducted. Ramon Grosfoguel states that, while some scholars understood subaltern studies as an "Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism", others understood subalternity "as a decolonial critique", i.e., "a critique of Eurocentrism from subalternized and silenced knowledges" (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 2). The latter urged scholars to transcend western canons and epistemologies. For them, just including the subaltern (women, indigenous, blacks, workers, etc.) in scholar research without breaking up with western canons was not enough.

Decolonial theorist Walter Mignolo also criticized the reliance of post-colonial scholarship on western authors. Instead of relying on theorists such as Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault, decoloniality privileges Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Amílcar Cabral. By privileging the knowledge produced by the colonized, decolonial scholarship transcended western canons and searched for other epistemologies. In other words: decolonial scholarship proposed a delinking with coloniality (Mignolo, 2007).

Mignolo defines "delinking" as *desprendimiento*, i.e., letting go of the coloniality of knowledge, detaching oneself from western epistemology. Delinking means finding new "Adams and Eves", new beginnings. One can only delink from colonial canons once they open the doors to all forms and principles of knowledge that have been silenced by coloniality (Mignolo, 2007).

Another crucial debate within the decolonial scholarship has to do with the complementarity between coloniality and modernity. Mignolo invites us to see how the brutality of coloniality is inherent to modernity. Coloniality was the fuel that lit the lights of modernity, so much so that the brutality of coloniality and the "beauty" of modernity go hand in hand (Mignolo, 2005):

> From the Caribbean, you see that modernity not only needed coloniality but that coloniality was and continues to be constitutive of modernity. There is no modernity without coloniality. From England, you see only modernity and, in the shadow, the "bad things" like slavery, exploitation, appropriation of land, all of which will

supposedly be "corrected" with the "advance of modernity" (…) (Mignolo, 2007, p. 466).

The discussion on coloniality and modernity will be helpful for the fifth section. The concept of "delinking" will be useful for understanding Brazilian independence, to which we now turn.

1822: rearticulation of coloniality over new institutional bases

The struggles for independence in Latin America were headed by white Portuguese and Spanish-descendent elites who spoke the same languages, practiced the same religions, and shared the same roots of their colonizers. Mignolo categorizes these independences as *emancipation* processes, as opposed to Afro-Asian independences, which were *liberation/decolonization* processes. Emancipations were "led by the European bourgeoisie and the White (…) Creoles from European descent in the Americas as well by some 'native' elites in decolonized Asian and African countries" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 457). Liberation/decolonization, on the other hand, is the revolutionary process led by people of non-Christian faith and non-White colors "against both the European colonizer and the local native elites that used the nation state to link with the political and economic projects of Western Europeans (and in the twentieth century U.S.) states and private corporations" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 457). Hence, Afro-Asian decolonization movements carried the seeds of "delinking" by proposing a complete detachment from coloniality, whereas creole elites, despite breaking up with Iberian *colonialism*, were unwilling to let go of *coloniality* (Mignolo, 2007). Let's now turn to these concepts.

Coloniality refers to an enduring structure of oppression underlying all kinds of dominations throughout history, from Ancient Rome to the United States. Colonialism, on the other hand, refers to specific historical moments of colonial domination (e.g., Portuguese colonialism or French colonialism). Hence, although one can speak of different colonialisms across space and time, there is a logical structure of power (i.e., coloniality) pervading all of them (Mignolo, 2005).

Given that Latin American independences were the outcome of emancipation projects that never delinked from coloniality, America was never really decolonized. Aníbal Quijano says that although Spanish and Portuguese colonialisms were over, the coloniality of power remained because those white elites who spearheaded the fight for independence were the new colonial masters. They believed that their interests were closer to the interests of the European superpowers than to the interests of the people over which they ruled:

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> In certain Ibero-American societies, the small white minority in control of the independent states and the colonial societies could have had neither consciousness nor national interests in common with the American Indians, blacks, and mestizos. On the contrary, their social interests were explicitly antagonistic to American Indian serfs and black slaves, given that their privileges were made from precisely the dominance and exploitation of those peoples in such a way that there was no area of common interest between whites and non-whites and, consequently, no common national interest for all of them (Quijano, 2000, pp. 565-566).

Instead of modern states, the new political unities that rose from the ruins of Iberian power were "independent states of colonial societies": they were built on white domination over blacks, indigenous, and mestizos. Rather than decolonization, what happened in these countries was a rearticulation of coloniality over new institutional bases: instead of Iberian powers colonizing the masses, now it was their American offspring carrying out a colonial project (Quijano, 2000, p. 567).

Quijano's remarks on Latin American independences are potentialized when we look at Brazil. The establishment of the Portuguese Royal Family in Brazil in 1808, after fleeing Napoleonic-occupied Portugal set the stage not only for the process of emancipation that culminated in 1822, but also for the Brazilian identification with the West. 1808 was the beginning of the Europeanization of Brazil, as noticed by Gilberto Freyre. As Brazil became the head of the Portuguese Empire and opened its seaports, British traders took over and a large inflow of Portuguese, British, French, Dutch, Germans, and Italians took place. Earlier Asian traces in the landscape faded and Brazil became less colorful and more western (Rodrigues, 1966, p. 112).

Furthermore, Brazilian independence was proclaimed by a Portuguese prince and the country continued under the rule of a branch of the Portuguese Royal Family. Throughout the monarchical period (1822-1889), Brazil built its self-image on the belief that it belonged to the same western civilization of which European powers were part. Its unstable republican neighbors provided the backdrop against which the "tropical monarchy" could portray itself as more civilized (Santos, 2005, pp. 1-2).

Since Brazil's independence, its diplomats praised the fact that the monarchy preserved the territorial integrity of the colony and achieved emancipation without much social unrest. In the first years as an independent country, Brazilian national identity was considered an extension of the Portuguese Empire in the tropics:

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> The legitimation of the Brazilian state was not achieved through rupture or revolution, as seen in Spanish America, but through the continuity of the order and territoriality established by the Portuguese colony (Guimarães, 2020, p. 5).

Right after independence, newspapers in Rio de Janeiro informed that the blue and white of the Portuguese monarchy were replaced by green and yellow, the new national colors which actually represented the royal houses of Bragança – to which emperor D. Pedro I belonged – and Habsburg – to which his wife, Austrian princess Leopoldina, belonged (Neves, 2022, p. 25). Slavery was not abolished, not much changed for the indigenous people and, most important of all for us: the Brazilian belonging to the West was reasserted and not problematized, despite the vast non-western and colonized layers of its society.

The treaty under which Portugal recognized the sovereignty of Brazil in 1825 stated that such sovereignty wasn't conquered by the Brazilian people, but rather transferred from Portuguese king D. João VI to his son, prince regent Pedro. As the official narrative went, D. Pedro I could rule because Portugal allowed him, and not because Brazilians acclaimed him. D. Pedro I "was, after all, Portuguese and an heir to the throne of the Bragança, and thus capable of reuniting, after his father's demise, the two territories (…)" (Neves, 2022, p. 36).

All the above-mentioned provide the full picture of an independent state of a colonial society. Brazil had (and still has) a "West" and a "rest" within it, with the former colonizing the latter. Before understanding how Brazilian relations and perceptions of the Afro-Asian world replicated this unproblematized belonging to the West, let's first discuss the concept of West.

The "West" and the "rest"

Two main points ought to be made here. The first has to do with the polysemy of the term "West", which assumed at least two meanings in the modern world that are relevant to us: the West as opposed to the "rest", i.e., to the colonial or post-colonial societies, and the West as opposed to the communist world. Despite these differences, we will show how these two meanings are intertwined. The second argument is that the opposition between the "West" and the "rest" can be noticed not only at a global level, but also within a country.

Here we are interested in the concept of "West" only as a historical, not a geographical construct. Furthermore, we understand "western" as a "type of society that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern" (Hall, 1992, p. 277). For Stuart Hall, any society that shares these characteristics can be considered westerner, regardless

of geographical location. Hall adds that the concept of "West"

> provides criteria of evaluation against which other societies are ranked and around which powerful positive and negative feelings cluster. (For example, "the West = developed = *good* = desirable; or the "non-West" = under-developed = *bad* = undesirable) (Hall, 1992, p. 277).

Hence, the self-image of the West as distinct and better than the "rest" was produced and enhanced by "Europe's contact and self-comparison with other, non-western societies (the Rest), very different in their histories, ecologies, patterns of development and cultures from the European model" (Hall, 1992, p. 278).

The "West" as opposed to the "rest" and the "West" as opposed to the communist world can be traced back to two moments. The first one was the Middle Ages, when clashes between Christians and Muslims led different regions of Europe to conceive of themselves as parts of a single civilization titled "the West". Throughout the Age of Exploration, the West continued taking shape through a double process of "growing internal cohesion" and "conflicts and contrasts with external worlds" (Hall, 1992, p. 289). The more Christianity unified western Europe, and the more European colonial powers conquered other civilizations, the more accurate the contours of the West became.

The end of World War II and the growing tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union ascribed new meanings to the "West". Under the Cold War, "West" referred to the capitalist bloc led by the United States, encompassing mainly West Europe and North America. Opposed to the West was the communist world, represented mainly by the Soviet Union and its East European allies. Even though the West as opposed to the rest (i.e., the post-colonial, underdeveloped world) and the West as opposed to the communist world have different meanings, in the context of the Cold War these meanings eventually intertwined. The key to understanding this is coloniality.

In 1955, Indonesia hosted the Bandung Conference, organized by India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and Burma (Myanmar). The nations that gathered in Bandung "wanted to live free from the control or intervention of either of the world's superpowers", thus forging "a third group, which aligned itself independently" from Moscow and Washington (Young, 2006, p. 12). Bandung urged western colonial rule in Africa and Asia to end, reinforced human rights and national sovereignty, and encouraged Afro-Asian solidarity (Phillips, 2016, pp. 335-336). However, not all countries gathered in Bandung had common interests. While countries such as Pakistan, Ceylon, Thailand, and Turkey were

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aligned with the West, others such as India, Indonesia, and Egypt were closer to Moscow and Beijing (Mackie, 2005, pp. 63-66).

Six years after Bandung, Belgrade hosted the First Non-Aligned Summit, which gathered mostly African and Asian countries. Non-alignment had two faces: on the one hand, it allowed third world countries to avoid allegiance to any of the superpowers; on the other hand, it left an open door for an eventual future commitment. Whenever one superpower exerted pressure on weaker countries, the latter could defend themselves by threatening to side with the other superpower (Gaddis, 2006, p. 118).

But Afro-Asian nations soon realized it was almost impossible to avoid alignment in a bipolar world. As the United States realized they needed the support of European colonial powers for the Cold War struggle, they backed off from their initial position to endorse Afro-Asian decolonization. At the same time, Moscow and Beijing provided valuable economic and military support to anticolonial movements (Young, 2006, p. 14, 15). With Washington backing colonial powers and Moscow and Beijing becoming champions of anticolonial causes, the boundaries between anticolonial war and Cold War politics were blurred: "almost all anticolonial organizations became overtly socialist in political identification and communist affiliated in terms of the sources of supplies brought in for their military campaigns", whereas "those resisting anti-colonial struggles were now able to do so in the name of resisting communism" (Young, 2006, p. 15). In other words, the West as opposed to the "rest" and the West as opposed to the communists became one, united by coloniality.

It is equally crucial for the argument of this paper to observe that the opposition between the "West" and the "rest" can also pervade societies. Most people in Western Europe conceive themselves as westerners, but so do white people in South Africa and Australia. Likewise, people of color in the United States and in western Europe are not necessarily recognized as westerners (Morris, Sakai, 2005, p. 373). Today we are more aware of the "'non-Western' aspects of societies in Europe and North America as well as of the 'Western' aspects of life in many societies in the so-called non-Western parts of the world" (Morris, Sakai, 2005, p. 374). As stated by Mignolo and Quijano, Latin American societies also contain a "West" and a "rest" within them. Their independences entailed a colonization of the former over the latter.

As we discuss the impacts that the unproblematized belonging of Brazil to the West had on its foreign policy, we shall consider the West both as a counterpoint to the colonial/post-colonial world and as a counterpoint to the communist world. We will also see how, in the imaginary of Brazilian political and intellectual elites in the Cold War, these

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two conceptions of the West overlapped. For these elites, belonging to the West meant not only belonging to the modern world and Christian civilization, but also to the capitalist world.

Brazil and the Afro-Asian world

The contrast between the western and the colonized layers of Brazilian society was reproduced at the global level. Since Brazilian foreign policy was conducted by the western layers of society (i.e., its political and intellectual elites), and since they believed in the Brazilian belonging to the West, that belief pervaded the way Brazilian intellectuals and foreign policymakers depicted African and Asian societies. The estrangement between Brazilian elites and the subaltern was translated into an estrangement between Brazil and the Afro-Asian world.

As the Cold War unfolded, the Brazilian elites' unproblematized belief in their belonging to the West – understood as the Christian and modern world, i.e., as opposed to the "rest" – was potentialized and intertwined with the belief in their belonging to the West of the Cold War, i.e., the capitalist bloc. In the minds of some of those elites, belonging to the West meant opposing not only the communists, but also Afro-Asian decolonization. As a former Portuguese colony, Brazil is a direct heir to the Portuguese society. The historical and cultural ties binding Brazil and its former colonizer created a "sentimentalism" that pervaded Brazilian foreign policy and stopped Brazil from supporting African independences after 1945 (Penna Filho, Lessa, 2007, p. 8).

The Brazilian pro-colonial attitude in the United Nations (U.N.) was consolidated by foreign minister Raul Fernandes (1946-1951). Thanks to his guidelines, Brazilian votes in the U.N. assemblies were frequently in favor of the colonial powers and against decolonization. Fernandes placed the Brazilian alliance with the United States and the western European countries above any concerns with decolonization. Not surprisingly, in 1946 Brazil's aspirations to join the U.N. Security Council as a temporary member were backed by the colonial powers (Souza, 2011, pp. 186-187).

In the first decades after 1945, Brazil refrained from supporting the independence of Portuguese colonies in Africa because it didn't want to jeopardize its relations with Portugal. Throughout the 1950s, the belief in the existence of special ties uniting Brazil and its former colonizer played a much larger role in conducting Brazilian foreign policy than any feelings of anticolonial solidarity. Such ties were consolidated by the Friendship and Consult Treaty signed between Brazil and Portugal in 1953, which granted Brazilian support to Portuguese colonialism. Furthermore, Brazil accepted the Portuguese claims that

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the Portuguese territories in Africa and Asia were not colonies, but overseas provinces (Lessa, Penna Filho, 2007, p. 9, 11).

Brazilian unwillingness to upset Portugal hindered a bolder support to African independences and raised suspicions among many governments of newly independent African nations. The Brazilian image in the African countries was also largely compromised by its trade relations with the racist regime of the *Apartheid* in South Africa. Not only Brazil maintained relations with South Africa, but it also endorsed Portuguese colonialism in a moment when Lisbon was tightening its control over the colonies (Lessa, Penna Filho, 2007, p. 1, 4). Other cases of a Brazilian decision to side with the colonial powers include the French colonies in North Africa. Despite voting for the Tunisian independence to be discussed in the U.N. General Assembly in 1951, in 1953, under chancellor Vicente Ráo, Brazil backed off and guided its foreign policy in Africa according to the "traditional French-Brazilian friendship" (Lessa, Penna Filho, 2007, p. 5).

Since 1955, when the Algerian problem was presented in the U.N., Brazil had given its support to France based on the mutual understanding that this was a French internal problem. Brazilian support to French colonialism in the U.N. was built on the belief in cultural and traditional ties between both countries and on the need to secure French investments for the country's fast industrialization (Lessa, Penna Filho, 2007, pp. 5-6):

> After all, Brazil watched the decolonization of Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria just like it would watch the development of the decolonization process in other territories, as a passive spectator, preserving its policy of estrangement and subtle support to colonial powers (Lessa, Penna Filho, 2007, p. 6).

One of the most striking examples of the coloniality pervading Brazilian diplomacy was its reaction to the Bandung Conference. The colonial past shared with Afro-Asian peoples did not stop many Brazilians from seeing anticolonial movements with scorn. Overall, the Brazilian diplomacy portrayed Bandung as an event that was hostile to Brazilian interests. The countries gathered in Bandung were depicted as "the others", "the Orientals", "the non-Christians", "the infidels", the "ungrateful" for all the contribution the West had given them, and, lastly, as either communists or "dangerously close to them". On the other hand, Brazilian interests were uncritically portrayed as identical to western interests and antagonistic to the interests of the countries in Bandung (Souza, 2011, p. 198).

By labeling Bandung both as the "non-Christians" and as "close to communism", we see how, in the imaginary of the western layers of Brazilian society, the West entailed not

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only an opposition to the communist bloc but also to people of color who were achieving their independences. Afro-Asian solidarity was portrayed as a disguise to communist ambitions. It was believed that no third path was possible between the western, capitalist, and Christian world (to which Brazil was assumed to belong) and the eastern, communist, and atheistic world. Brazilian press and diplomats assumed that not joining the former meant joining the latter, and that the attacks on the West entailed a collusion between leftists and anticolonial agitators (Souza, 2011, pp. 199-200).

The Brazilian ambassador to Jakarta Oswaldo Trigueiro accused Indian Prime-Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the organizers of the Bandung Conference, of playing both blocs – communists and capitalists – against each other just to fulfil his personal ambitions. Trigueiro also accused Bandung to be a threat to the West and, hence, to Brazil (Souza, 2011, pp. 126-127, 200-203). Brazilian ambassador to India Ildefonso Falcão hoped that Sir John Kotelawala, the western-aligned Ceylonese prime minister, would tilt the balance of the conference in favor of the Western world by countering anti-imperialist leaders such as Indonesia's Sukarno, India's Nehru, and Egypt's Nasser. Moreover, Falcão and other Brazilian ambassadors placed their hopes in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a U.S.-sponsored anti-communist organization. These Brazilian diplomats believed that the participation of SEATO members (such as Thailand and the Philippines) would protect the "free world" from Bandung (Souza, 2011, p. 130, 132).

Ildefonso Falcão also portrayed Nehru as an "Oriental" leader who did not share western values, was dangerously close to the communists (both Chinese and Soviets), secretly conspired for the independence of Goa (Portuguese enclave in India), and advocated the formation of a group of non-aligned countries. These non-aligned countries were widely depicted by Brazilian diplomats and press as potentially anti-western and anti-Christians (Souza, 2011, p. 165).

There was a widespread notion among the Brazilian diplomacy in the 1950s that Portuguese possessions in India such as Goa, Daman, and Diu were overseas territories, rather than colonies. In fact, this was the argument employed by Portuguese dictator Oliveira Salazar to justify his unwillingness to grant them independence. Again, Ildefonso Falcão gave clear signs of his pro-western convictions by ridiculing Nehru's ambitions to absorb territories which, according to Falcão, rightfully belonged to Portugal for more than four centuries (Souza, 2011, p. 163, 163, 165).

Ildefonso Falcão went as far as accusing Asian people of nurturing resentments against whites:

> We must not delude ourselves by this continent [Asia], where the White does not enjoy any prestige outside the tenuous layers of a *ridiculous and minor aristocracy*, while being only tolerated and respected by a mass still fearful of its [white] past strength (Falcão cited in Souza, 2011, p. 203).

Given all the stated above, there was a shared belief among Brazilian diplomats in the 1950s that Brazilian interests were also the western (i.e., U.S. and western Europe) interests – and henceforth, that the Afro-Asian bloc was a hostile enemy that should be "tamed" by anti-communist, western-aligned actors. Brazil was uncritically assumed to be a western country, both in the cultural-historical sense – as part of the Christian world – and in the geopolitical sense – as part of the capitalist bloc. These are clear signs of how the absence of delinking in Brazilian independence was reproduced by its foreign policy.

In 1957, the Brazilian minister of Foreign Affairs José Carlos de Macedo Soares delivered a speech in Chile about the new paths that the Brazilian foreign policy should follow. One excerpt of this speech was sent by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Brazilian embassies in Africa and Asia. In his speech, Soares made an interesting parallel between Latin American independences and the anticolonial struggles of Afro-Asian people, by stating that the latter were "achieving their place in the heart of the free nations (…) with such an authenticity quite identical to the conquests that we, from this continent, have accomplished over a hundred years ago" (Soares cited in Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1957, p. 1). Soares believed the Latin American countries should "closely follow the entering of these Afro-Asian people in the community of free nations and follow their objectives, their aspirations and their efforts" (Soares cited in Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1957, pp. 1-2). After quoting Soares, the official letter made an addendum that urged Brazilian embassies to spread that message "allowing the largest number of Afro-Asian countries to get to know them" (Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1957, p. 2).

Interestingly, however, in the official document we have consulted in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the aforementioned addendum is scribbled by a pen that suggests that it should be removed from the official text. The sender (perhaps Soares himself?) replaced the addendum with a caveat that mitigates the pro-Asian and pro-African stance of the addendum. We can't think of a better excerpt than this to illustrate the inability and the unwillingness of the Brazilian foreign policy to delink from its western

affiliation and develop closer ties with the Afro-Asian countries. The caveat reads:

> We want the authorities of this country to be aware of these concepts which we acknowledge as an imperative of today's world, even though we aim to preserve our interests, ideological affinities, and political solidarity with the Western bloc (Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1957, p. 2).

By urging a larger involvement in Asia and Africa and, at the same time, emphasizing its belonging to the capitalist bloc, the letter shows us how Brazilian diplomacy feared that a leaning towards the Afro-Asian world could jeopardize Brazilian affiliation to the capitalist world. Once again, we have the correlation between the Afro-Asian world and communism.

In 1961, a new hope emerged for those who expected a stronger Brazilian commitment to the Afro-Asian world. As Jânio Quadros rose to presidency, he announced his government would pursue an Independent Foreign Policy (IFP). With the IFP, Jânio aimed at pursuing more freedom of action for Brazil in the international scenario. Five main principles guided the IFP of Jânio, which were later continued by his vice and successor, president João Goulart (Jango). The first one was the search to broaden the external markets for Brazilian goods and intensify trade relations with all nations, regardless of ideological constraints. Secondly, the IFP proposed autonomy in the formulation of economic development plans. Thirdly, the advocates of the IFP claimed for pacific coexistence and general disarmament to ease the tensions of the Cold War. Fourthly, the IFP condemned foreign interference in internal affairs and advocated the people's right to self-determination. Finally, it urged the complete emancipation of all European colonies (Vizentini, 1995, pp. 195-196).

Jânio addressed the Congress with a speech in which he strongly condemned colonialism and ensured that Brazil would put all efforts to support the independences of all colonies as soon as possible and in the most favorable terms to the colonized subjects. In April 1961, Brazil opened embassies in Senegal, Guinea, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, and Ethiopia, besides consulates in Rhodesia, Congo-Leopoldville (today's Democratic Republic of Congo), and Kenya. The first Brazilian mission to Africa held two meetings with Angolan Marxist guerrilla soldiers fighting Portugal (Vizentini, 1995, p. 223, 225).

However, even after 1961, the main obstacle for a bolder foreign policy in the African continent remained Portugal. The unwillingness to contradict Lisbon, the pressures from the Portuguese community in Brazil, and the pro-Portuguese stances of Brazilian diplomats, intellectuals, and press did not allow the IFP to translate itself into an overt support to

African independences (Lessa, Penna Filho, 2007, p. 12).

Coloniality remained the trademark of Brazilian foreign policy. More than 100 years after achieving independence under a Portuguese monarch, Brazilian politics were still dictated by Portugal. No matter how appalling Jânio's images awarding third world leaders like Sukarno and Fidel Castro were in the eyes of the right-wing and the military, his foreign policy did not show much success in delinking.

Afonso Arinos de Melo Franco, minister of Foreign Affairs in 1961 and 1962, stated that the pursuit of an independent foreign policy did not mean Brazil was willing to join the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). He feared the Brazilian diplomatic demands could not be the same as the Afro-Asian demands, thus believing that the country would hardly achieve prominence in the NAM (Leite, 2011, p. 226). When President Jango replaced Jânio, his government program stated that the Brazilian search for independence in the international scenario meant independence from political-military blocs, and not an identification with non-alignment or neutralism. Hence, the IFP "does not detach us from the democratic and Christian principles on which our political formation was shaped" (Programa de Governo, 2011, p. 22). Brazil sent observers to Bandung and several non-aligned summits but never joined them.

In the same period, Gilberto Freyre urged Brazil to "mediate action – or accommodation – between European and non-European cultures, between white and coloured peoples or nations" (Freyre, 1962, p. 460). The author also believed that Brazil was a better model for Portuguese African colonies than their local nationalist leaders:

> Most of the people of Portuguese Africa look to ethnically democratic Brazil as their natural leader – not to some sub-Nehru, of a darker skin than the Hindu liberator of Goa whose ideas often seem to Brazilians racist rather than democratic. Brazil is against not just one kind of racism – the European one – but the African and Asian kinds also (Freyre, 1962, pp. 460-461).

This belief in the Brazilian role as mediator between the West and the post-colonial world and as an anti-racist model to be followed by the post-colonial world, was also present in the writings of Brazilian diplomat Adolpho Justo Bezerra de Menezes. In a 1956 book, Menezes believed football could be a powerful diplomatic tool in Asia and Africa by showing the absence of racism in Brazil:

> An intense exchange with the Orient and Africa would serve not only to display the success of our colored element, but also the material opportunities that they enjoy. It

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would be advisable to spotlight the fortunes made by our blacks and mulattoes on football: the value of their wages, the skyrocketing prices of the registrations of the so-called "craques" (Menezes, 2012, pp. 326-327).

In 1961, Menezes advocated the Brazilian leadership in the third world by stating that, given its colonial past and its lack of imperialist ambitions, Brazil was entitled "to unfurl the flag of a crusade of the weak", and could not allow countries like India, Egypt, Venezuela, Mexico, and Cuba to "steal this honorable task from us" (Menezes, 1961, pp. 70-71).

Despite fully supporting Afro-Asian decolonization, Menezes condemned certain African nationalist movements by denouncing their racist traces. In an article published in 1958, Menezes denounced Arab plans to stir nationalism in Sub-Saharan Africa by claiming that "Afro-Islamism will never be an honest movement to benefit the black, the true master of the Continent", given that Arab expansion South of the Sahara Desert "was always characterized by interest, by plundering", and driven by the desire to capture slaves (Menezes, 1958, p. 64). Finally, Menezes advocated stronger Western presence in Africa to "assist the development of a western-friendly nationalism" in the continent (Menezes, 1958, p. 69).

Menezes advocated the Portuguese right to preserve its territories in India such as Goa, a "land that is in the hands of Portugal for over 450 years and whose tradition the Portuguese, the Catholic Church, the Christian West, are proud of, and certainly we Brazilians also ought to be proud of" (Menezes, 2012, p. 122). The Brazilian diplomat adds that "if Goa is a colony, it radically differs from the [colonies] that the Western powers held or still hold in Africa and Asia" (Menezes, 2012, p. 127). "The Goans", Menezes adds, "despite belonging to the Indian ethnic mosaic, today compose a political unity historically tied to Portugal for over four centuries" (Menezes, 2012, p. 125).

Menezes' belief in the Brazilian leadership of the third world (against other countries' "ambitions"), his belief in a lack of racism in Brazilian society, and his rebuke to non-western-friendly African nationalisms provide us with the full picture of a writer who also took the Brazilian belonging to the West for granted even when he was an enthusiastic anti-colonialist. The author mourned over the fact that Brazilian elites were confounding their white skins and their conservative ideas with those of the average Brazilian. He also rebuked attempts to identify Brazil as a western country by claiming that Brazil should assume its place in the third world (Menezes, 1961, p. 9, 72). However, in the same book we see Menezes urging Brazilian foreign policy in Asia to "translate into actions the postulates and the values of this Christian western civilization which are so often heralded and yet so

seldom practiced" (Menezes, 1961, p. 131).

Not even the foreign minister who embodied the IFP showed much willingness to delink. In a speech delivered in January 1962, Francisco Clementino de San Tiago Dantas, despite urging the world to overcome the tensions between the East and the West, stated that Brazil was expected to fight "for the western civilization and for democracy" (Dantas, 2011, p. 117). In a speech about Angola, Dantas urged Portugal "to take charge of the direction of the movement for the freedom of Angola and for its transformation into an independent country, as friendly to Portugal as it is to Brazil" (Dantas, 2011, p. 194).

Thus, the Brazilian chancellor expected Angolan independence to be guided by Portugal, rather than by the locals, besides urging it to be a friendly and peaceful process. Since there is no decolonization without violence (Fanon, 1963, p. 37), one can conclude that Dantas expected Angolan independence to be an emancipation, rather than a decolonization/delinking process.

Elsewhere, Dantas states even more clearly his disagreement with any project that delinks Angola from Portugal:

> Brazil cannot accept with indifference that the Portuguese language and culture disappear from Africa and expects that the positive elements of Western culture which were transplanted to India and China by the Portuguese, may be respected the same way we, in Brazil, respect the cultural elements brought by the Chinese, Japanese, Jews, blacks, Italians, Germans, Arabs, and so many other people (…) (Dantas, 2011, p. 194).

Not unlike Gilberto Freyre and Bezerra de Menezes, Dantas accused African nationalists of racism. In a private conversation in November 1961, he said one of the Angolan leaders of independence, Holden Roberto, led a racist party and added: "Why should we abandon the idea that Portuguese culture must remain in Angola? We must show interest in the preservation of the focus of European culture in Angola" (Dantas, cited in Fonseca, 2011, p. 325).

The above-mentioned excerpts show that not even the IFP overcame the legacy of a country that "turned its back on Africa" (Nascimento, 1980, p. 142). As they reproach anticolonial movements and leaders in Asia and Africa, the authors show that their support to African decolonization was contingent on the preservation of cultural ties with the former colonizers. In other words, it was contingent on the absence of delinking. As Abdias do Nascimento once wrote, "[i]t is the inflexible logic of Brazilian racism never to allow the existence of any liberation movement of the Black majority" (Nascimento, 1980, p. 164). The

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excerpts show us the same reasoning operating at a global level.

Historical ties between Brazil and Portugal were placed above any kind of solidarity with the colonial world. Brazil had also been a colony and it had also fought for independence from Portugal. However, since this independence didn't delink from Portugal, it should come as no surprise that Brazilian political elites expected the decolonization of Portuguese African colonies to take the same path, thus denying blacks in the newly-formed nations the same things that were denied to blacks in Brazil: to perform their "ethnic and cultural affirmation, at once integrating a practice of liberation and assuming command of their own history" (Nascimento, 1980, p. 152). Furthermore, by flaunting Brazilian alleged non-racist character as a model to inspire allegedly racist Afro-Asian societies, these authors reproduce the colonial ethos that portrays whites as the savors and protectors of colonized subjects.[1]

Attempts to conciliate Brazilian western identity with a more sympathetic foreign policy towards the emerging Afro-Asian nations were also present in the writings of historian José Honório Rodrigues. Rodrigues tried to negotiate the meaning of "West" by saying that Brazilian occidentalism "is particular, singular, because we are a mixture of many ethnicities and cultures" that cannot be whitewashed (Rodrigues, 1966, p. 196). In the same page, however, he emphasizes the inaccuracy of the concept of "western" and claims that dividing the world between developed and developing countries makes more sense (Rodrigues, 1966, p. 196).

Although Rodrigues envisaged a broader and non-U.S.-aligned West, when talking about the Brazilian military regime, the author reproduces a notion of "West" that is in line with the official Cold War discourse conveyed by Washington. Rodrigues interprets the Brazilian 1964 military coup as an outcome of the eagerness of the Brazilian military to show their loyalty to the West. But he also claims that, by repudiating the democratic representative system, these military ironically drove Brazil farther from the West and closer to African and Asian countries such as Congo, Nigeria, and Indonesia, all of which were ruled by "liberticide militarism" (Rodrigues, 1966, p. 6).

However, saying that military regimes in third world countries drive them away from the West assumes a contradiction between modernity and coloniality, when there is in fact a complementarity between them. U.S. dreams of modernizing Latin America and saving it from communism in the second half of the 20th century paved the way to military regimes (Mignolo, 2005, p. 98). The Brazilian military regime was no exception. Right in the moment

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[1] See Gayatri Spivak's (1988) discussion on the abolition of widow sacrifices in British India.

when Moscow's and Washington's hegemonies were being replaced by the North-South cleavage, Brazilian elites started adjusting the relations of dependence with the United States (Ianni, 1975, p. 211).

Hence, military regimes of the third world and the Western democracies are two flips of the same coin, just like coloniality and modernity. Nothing is more Westerner than a Suharto, a Mobutu, or an Onganía in power. None of them drove their countries away from the West: they reinforced their dependence and their allegiance to it. As evidenced by the 1966 Tricontinental Conference, both Afro-Asian anticolonialism and Latin American anti-imperialism had the same enemy: coloniality, or the West:

> [T]he American attempt to contain communism in South East Asia, its blockade of Cuba and insistence on controlling the politics of Latin America, together with its support of Israel and South Africa, which actively supported the Salazar regime in neighbouring Angola and Mozambique, meant that after 1955 the remaining anti-colonial struggles merged with resistance to U.S. imperialism (Young, 2005, p. 18).

Rodrigues claims that Brazilian ties to the West entail, among other things, "representative system, public liberties, and individual rights" (Rodrigues, 1966, p. 13). However, this is the same thing as generalizing modernity as a period of tolerance and respect to national sovereignty. Mahmood Mamdani writes that the "regime of tolerance [that] solidified the structure of the nation-state [and which] is seen as defining the liberal character of political modernity" was only valid in Europe. In America, "political modernity and its liberalism meant something else. It meant conquest" (Mamdani, 2020, p. 2). For peace to reign in Europe, much blood had to be shed in the colonies. Likewise, for democracy to thrive in the United States, many presidents had to be ousted in Latin America.

Ten years after the military rose to power, general Ernesto Geisel and his chancellor Azeredo da Silveira broke up with the "spiritual communion with Portugal", gave outright support to Angolan and Mozambican independences, and promptly recognized the new states (Leite, 2011, p. 147). Geisel's stronger engagement in the Afro-Asian area marked the end of the "sentimentalism" that inhibited Brazilian support to African decolonization. Unlike previous governments, Geisel broke up with the ambivalence towards Africa and provided a more overt support to the anticolonial movements that were sweeping the continent, thus paving way for a larger commitment in the region (Penna Filho, Lessa, 1974, p. 14).

However, Azeredo da Silveira was adamant in emphasizing the Brazilian belonging

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to the West, despite providing a plural understanding of the concept. In a conference delivered in 1978, Silveira stated that Brazil was "part of western civilization and the third World. It belongs to the Latin American community and the inter-American system. It is a country with a sharp African influence and of Portuguese language" (Silveira, 2018, pp. 191-192).

Furthermore, Silveira believed in a plural West encompassing "not only the developed, market economy countries (…) but also vast areas of the developing world in Latin America, Africa, and Asia". What distinguished the West for him was "the existence of a community of free and sovereign nations, which wholly accepts the national diversities", and the West was seen as a space "for the affirmation of sovereignties and for the promotion of changes in the current international division of labor" (Silveira, 2018, p. 192).

Brazilian recognition of the emerging African states did not avoid resentments. Mozambique's president Samora Machel bashed the Brazilian tardy support to African independences. During a meeting with Brazilian diplomats in 1974, Machel said he expected much more from a country that had been through the same experiences of Portuguese oppression in the past. When Mozambique hosted an event to celebrate its independence, no official invitation was sent to Brazil. Only distinguished left-wing Brazilian politicians were invited, such as Miguel Arraes and Luís Carlos Prestes (Lessa, Penna Filho, 2007, pp. 16-17).

As Brazil entered the 1980s, things didn't seem to change. During the Non-Aligned Summit in New Delhi in 1983, diplomat Marcos de Azambuja heard Indian foreign minister Narasimha Rao complain it had been nearly thirty years since Brazil was an observer of the non-aligned countries. It seemed to the Indian minister that it was about time for Brazilians to join the NAM. Azambuja, however, answered that the Brazilian position as observer was not a passage ritual, but rather a final decision: "we would continue to be only *founding observers* of the non-aligned" (Azambuja, 2011).

Either in dealing or in representing the Afro-Asian world, Brazilian intellectuals and diplomats in the post-war period insisted in Brazilian western identity, although some of them used the plasticity of the concept of "West" in their favor by exploiting different "shades of occidentality". Some acceded to a "pure West", which was "marred by an unfettered accession to western values and strategic alliance with the U.S." (Mesquita, 2016, p. 14). Some favored a "qualified West", which praised democracy, despised socialism, and proposed an alignment with the United States, despite disagreeing in some matters. But the bolder ones praised an "autonomous West" (Mesquita, 2016, pp. 14-15).

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The "autonomous West" was proposed by Jânio, Jango, and Geisel, consolidated by the IFP, and aimed at overcoming economic dependence through import substitution industrialization (Mesquita, 2016). That this West was not inclusive of the colonized layers of society is clear by Abdias do Nascimento, who rebukes "artificial campaigns of industrialization, on the order of 'economic miracles,'", given how, "Blacks, as 'unskilled' laborers or unclassified laborers, are double victims: of race (white) and of class (the skilled or qualified worker and/or bourgeoisie of any race)" (Nascimento, 1980, p. 164).

Under the IFP, the idea of West was reshaped by Brazil. The country aimed at using its capacity "renovate Western-led international institutions towards a new world order where the East-West rivalry did not entirely determine economic and ideological differences" (Guimarães, 2020, p. 11). Brazil was even called "Another West," as it still belonged to "an essentialized 'West,' although more impoverished and more enigmatic, but that was willingly to represent other poor nations" (Guimarães, 2020, p. 11).

Several shades of West were exploited, different "Wests" were imagined and fantasized. Brazilian belonging to the West was negotiated and renegotiated, but never contested. Delinking was never an option.

Closing remarks

Since Brazilian foreign policy was conducted by the western layers of its society, the country's belonging to the West was never problematized, thus triggering a lukewarm and hostile attitude towards the Afro-Asian world that was widely spread among Brazilian political and intellectual elites. It also showed how this hostility replicated or resonated with the Brazilian process of independence, characterized by a lack of delinking. The initial belief of these elites in their belonging to the West – as opposed to the "rest" – was enhanced, since the 1940s, by their belief in their belonging to the West – as opposed to the communist world.

But underneath this taken-for-granted western identity, there is a wide and plural non-western Brazil that continued being colonized even after 1822. Hence, instead of negotiating meanings for the West, why not delink from the West altogether? Why not decolonize foreign policy?

A decolonized foreign policy acknowledges, as Georges Bataille once stated, that tragedies connect humans (Ginzburg, 2014). It must be inspired by *quilombismo*: an anti-imperialist cause that "articulates itself with Pan-Africanism and sustains a radical solidarity with all peoples of the world who struggle against exploitation, oppression and poverty, as well as inequalities motivated by race, color, religion or ideology" (Nascimento,

1980, p. 155). It recognizes that no colonized people achieve freedom if other colonized do not do so.

Such foreign policy would resonate with the 1966 Tricontinental Conference, which went down in history for bringing together "the two different time-schemes of the postcolonial world: the newly liberated and the about-to-be-liberated, with the long-time liberated nations which were struggling for the second liberation" (Young, 2005, p. 19).

Mignolo and Quijano's gloomy accounts of Latin American states and their colonized societies must never blind us to the fact that Latin America is also an "arena of resistance and conflict, a site for the development of sweeping counterhegemonic strategies, and a space for the creation of new indigenous languages and projects of modernity" (Cusicanqui, 2012, p. 95). The adoption of affirmative actions by the Brazilian diplomatic academy (*Instituto Rio Branco*) points to one possibility of counterhegemonic projects. As long as diplomacy remains out of the reach of the colonized layers of Brazilian society, any projects of delinking will be doomed to failure.

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