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The Globalization Project of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP)

Introduction

Similar to many other regionalisms that aim to build regions and regional communities, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) emerged as an effort to manage the effects of contemporary globalization processes, trying to gain or regain some control, and to favorably (re)position different state and nonstate actors in reordering processes at different interconnected spatial scales. In that sense, regionalisms and globalization processes have been mutually influencing and, in fact, co-constitutive.¹

What makes the CPLP a particularly interesting example is that it forms what some have called a “virtual region,”² based on linguistic, historical, and cultural commonalities, comprising member states (and nonstate actors) from the Global South and the Global North, whose national territories are noncontiguous. As such, it falls into the category of the so-called commonwealths, that is to say fora for multilateral diplomacy and cooperation, bringing together actors of very different resources and positions in global power relations.³ While the British Commonwealth and the International Organisation of the Francophonie (IOF) have received most scholarly attention (see chapters 6 and 18, this volume, respectively), others such as the Russia-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS, see chapter 7, this volume) and the CPLP have remained underresearched. Therefore, this chapter takes a close look at how CPLP actors have perceived their position in contemporary globalization processes and how they have tried to change that position or to influence these processes through joint applications

1 See Shaun Breslin, Richard Higgott, and Ben Rosamond, “Regions in Comparative Perspective,” in *New Regionalisms in the Global Political Economy: Theories and Cases*, eds. Shaun Breslin, Christopher W. Hughes, Nicola Phillips, and Ben Rosamond (London: Routledge, 2002), 1–19; Marianne H. Marchand, Morten Bøås, and Timothy M. Shaw, “The Political Economy of New Regionalisms,” *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 5 (1999): 897–910.

2 See, for example, Bob Jessop, “The Political Economy of Scale and The Construction of Cross-Border Micro-Regions,” in *Theories of New Regionalism: A Palgrave Reader*, eds. Fredrik Söderbaum and Timothy M. Shaw (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 179–196.

3 See Timothy M. Shaw and Lucian M. Ashworth, “Commonwealth Perspectives on International Relations,” *International Affairs* 86, no. 5 (2010): 1149–1165; Timothy M. Shaw, “Comparative Commonwealths: An Overlooked Feature of Global Governance?,” *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2010): 333–346.

for high-level postings, the granting of observer statuses, and partnerships with other international organizations.

The CPLP was established in 1996 by the heads of state of Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, and São Tomé and Príncipe. This makes it a comparatively “young” regional organization (RO). In 2002, after gaining independence from Indonesia, Timor-Leste also became a member, followed by Equatorial Guinea in 2014. Thus, contrary to the British Commonwealth and the IOF, the CPLP is a postcolonial creation. Nevertheless, the process leading up to its creation reaches back to colonial times. Following Brazil’s independence in 1822, efforts to redefine Luso-Brazilian relations led to repeated attempts to instigate a more formal framework. In 1960, a proposal to create a Luso-Brazilian-African community that included Portuguese colonies in Africa was first introduced.⁴ However, the prevalence of the Portuguese colonial empire until 1974 prevented such plans from coming to fruition and became a constant irritant in bilateral relations.⁵ It would take another 22 years for the idea of a lusophone community to become a more realistic possibility.⁶

In order to explore what has become of this rather fragile “community” and how it has related to its external environment, this chapter reflects in more detail on the specific global context in which the CPLP emerged, how its constitutive actors have imagined and actively influenced the organization’s position in contemporary globalization processes, and how the globalization project of the CPLP has changed over time.

4 See Luís F. Lopes and Octávio d. Santos, *Os novos descobrimentos: Do império à CPLP* [The New Discoveries: From the Empire to the CPLP] (Coimbra: Almedina, 2006), 9–14; Juliana S. Santos, “Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP): Gênese e instituições” [Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP): Genesis and Institutions], in *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP)*, ed. José F. S. Saraiva (Brasília: Instituto Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais, 2001), 18–20.

5 Andrés Malamud and Pedro Seabra, “Portugal and Brazil,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Portuguese Politics*, eds. Jorge M. Fernandes, Pedro C. Magalhães, and António C. Pinto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 715–727.

6 See Michel Cahen, “Des caravelles pour le futur? Discours politique et idéologie dans l’institutionnalisation de la communauté des pays de langue portugaise” [Caravels for the Future? Political Discourse and Ideology in the Institutionalization of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries], *Lusotopie* (1997): 391–433; Lopes and Santos, *Os novos descobrimentos*, 9–14. In this regard, it is also important to mention that “Lusophony,” a key concept and rhetorical basis for the coherence of the CPLP as a cultural-linguistic community, is directly linked to a colonial discourse that was developed around the idea of “Lusotropicalism,” introduced by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre in the 1930s, arguing for what he considered a friendly nonracist Portuguese colonialism; see Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39, no. 2 (2002): 4, 24. The idea of “Lusotropicalism” was later used by the Salazar regime to justify its colonial ambitions; see Ana Ribeiro, “Aspects in the Construction of Brazil’s Transcontinental ‘Lusofonia,’” *Journal of Critical Southern Studies* 1, no. 1 (2014): 66–67. Thus, despite being founded as a postcolonial organization, the narrative of certain colonial elements persists, although in a somewhat updated version (see Cahen, “Des caravelles pour le futur?”).

Responding to the Global Condition

The main critical juncture that led to the creation of the CPLP can be found in the post-1974 Portuguese decolonization process and the ensuing slow rapprochement between former colonizer and former colonies. Starting from that point, consecutive Portuguese governments struggled to reposition themselves in changing economic and political dynamics at different regional and transregional scales. Caught between increasing integration in Europe and its transatlantic relations, Portuguese politicians tried to position themselves strategically at the intersection of both “worlds” while seeking to highlight a supposedly privileged connection with African partners.⁷ Likewise, in line with their own goals of expanding relations with former Portuguese colonies in Africa, a group of Brazilian state elites wanted to recognize the opportunity of Brazil’s growing status and influence across the Atlantic by means of a rather low-cost endeavor.⁸ In turn, African governments, following their independence, were in need of external support to develop their postcolonial states and at least willing to see what cooperation in the framework of the CPLP would entail.⁹

The later admission of Timor-Leste (2002) and Equatorial Guinea (2014) took place in different international contexts. The former occurred as a direct consequence of the Timorese struggle against Indonesian rule, in which the CPLP collectively took an active stance and promptly offered membership once independence was achieved to consolidate the new country’s role in the international community. The latter came as a recognition that the geographical and linguistic limits of the CPLP were, in fact, not absolute and could be expanded to include new potential member states with only minimal claims to a shared lusophone bond with the other countries belonging to the RO.¹⁰

Regarding mandates, the focus has been unequivocally on internal cooperation since the organization’s early inception. The thematic list is as wide as it is ambitious, although similar to other multilateral arrangements of the sort (see other contributions, this volume): economic and social development, easier transit of citizens, diffusion of the Portuguese language, cultural exchanges, interparliamentary cooperation, business

7 See Luís A. Santos, *Portugal and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP): Heightened Expectations, Unfounded Disillusions* (Braga: Universidade do Minho, 2003), 14; Maria R. Marchueta, *A CPLP e seu Enquadramento* [The CPLP and Its Framework] (Lisbon: Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2003), 129.

8 See Santos, *Portugal and the CPLP*, 9–10; Marchueta, *A CPLP e seu Enquadramento*, 128–29.

9 See, for example, António Monteiro, “A Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa” [The Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries], *Nação e Defesa* 77 (1996): 49–62; Marchueta, *A CPLP e seu Enquadramento*, 133–135.

10 Pedro Seabra, “From Opportunity Seeking to Gap Filling: Reframing Brazil in Lusophone Africa,” in *Brazil-Africa Relations in the 21st Century: From Surge to Downturn and Beyond*, eds. Mathias Alencastro and Pedro Seabra (Cham: Springer, 2021), 25–41.

cooperation, scientific and technological cooperation, shared support in humanitarian and emergency crises, civil society exchanges, cooperation in immigration policies, protection and preservation of the environment and sustainable development, eradication of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, improvement of children's living conditions, promotion of corporate social responsibility, and youth exchanges.¹¹

However, overall external efforts also figure prominently amid this sprawling mandate. In fact, the CPLP's stated purpose includes enhancing the "international affirmation of all Portuguese-speaking countries that constitute a geographically discontinuous space but identified by the common language." Two subdomains stand out in this regard, namely promoting "coordination at the multilateral level to ensure the respect for human rights in the respective countries and around the world" and extending cooperation in "the area of political and diplomatic consultations, particularly within international organizations, in order to give increasing expression to the common interests and needs within the international community."¹² Moreover, the statutes that followed stipulated "political and diplomatic consultation between its members in matters of international relation, namely to reinforce its presence in international fora" as one of the organization's main goals.¹³

The overall institutional setting is established on a regular budget, complemented by a special fund reserved for special projects. Due to the limited and unreliable amounts of the latter, however, officials have constantly had to seek out additional sources of funding.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the decision-making process is based upon the annual CPLP Heads of State and Government Summit and annual meetings of the CPLP Council of Ministers (composed of foreign ministers of all member states), backed by the meagre Executive Secretariat, based in Lisbon. The Executive Secretariat is responsible for representing the CPLP in international fora and for concluding agreements with other international organizations and agencies, upon prior approval by the Permanent Concertation Committee (which comprises ambassadors of member states in Lisbon). In practice, however, the two-year pro tempore presidencies of the RO that rotate between each member

11 On the historical evolution of the official CPLP mandate, see Jens Herpolsheimer, "The Finances of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP)," in *The Finances of Regional Organisations in the Global South: Follow the Money*, eds. Ulf Engel and Frank Mattheis (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 35–50; Herpolsheimer, "(Re-)Defining Lusophone Cooperation: The Role of Non-State Actors in the CPLP" (panel paper, European Conference on African Studies, Paris, July 8–10, 2015).

12 CPLP, "Declaração Constitutiva da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa" [Declaration of the Constituency of the Community of the Portuguese Language] (Lisbon, July 17, 1996), translation by the authors.

13 CPLP, "Estatutos da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (com revisões de São Tomé/2001, Brasília/2002, Luanda/2005, Bissau/2006 e Lisboa/2007)" [Statutes of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (With Revisions from São Tomé/2001, Brasília/2002, Luanda/2005, Bissau/2006, and Lisbon/2007)] (Lisbon, November 2, 2007), Art 3.a, translation by the authors.

14 See Herpolsheimer, "The Finances of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries," 43.

state retain considerable leeway; all the while, the CPLP Council of Ministers provides guidance for any new initiative.¹⁵ However, despite gradual institutionalization and a formal delegation of powers, the existing structures have not undergone an actual empowerment, as the ultimate authority continues to rest with the various member states, which maintain final say.

The CPLP Globalization Project in Practice

Since its very beginning, the organization has claimed a clear aspiration for (near) global relevance. On the one hand, this has been argued in terms of numbers, for example referring to the joint area covered by the territories of its member states (in 2014, 10.8 million square kilometers, 7.2 percent of the Earth's continental surface), the joint area of territorial waters and exclusive economic maritime zones (in 2014, 7.1 million square kilometers, 2 percent of the world's seas), and an alleged 250 million Portuguese speakers (representing 3.7 percent of the world's population).¹⁶ On the other hand, it has been argued that global relevance is also derived from the four continents on which CPLP member states are located: Africa (now, six members), Asia, Europe, and South America (one member each). In this way, CPLP actors have portrayed the organization as both an intermediary between and a connector of these different world regions, enabling mutual access.¹⁷ At the same time, the actors have sought to "globalize" regional CPLP policies, aiming to coordinate and harmonize policies "internally" in order to construct a coherent regional space and to overcome physical distances between member states.¹⁸

15 See Warren E. Hewitt, Sean Burges, and Inês Gomes, "The Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa at 20 Years: An Impact Assessment," *South African Journal of International Affairs* 24, no. 3 (2017), 291–309; Herpolsheimer, "The Finances of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries," 35–50.

16 See, for example, CPLP, "18 Anos Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP): Os Desafios do Futuro" [18 Years Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP): The Challenges of the Future] (Lisbon, 2014), 13, 50–51; see also Observatório da Língua Portuguesa, "Quem Somos" [Who We Are], accessed November 6, 2022, <https://observalinguaportuguesa.org/quem-somos/>. A more definitive tally of Portuguese speaking citizens worldwide is hampered by the number of second languages spoken in many CPLP countries, resulting in a likely inflation of numbers.

17 See, for example, CPLP, "18 Anos CPLP," 52–53.

18 See Jens Herpolsheimer, "Making the CPLP 'Work': Old and New Dynamics in Lusophone Cooperation" (panel paper, International Workshop "Legacies of Empire," London, October 21–22, 2015). In addition, beyond the scope of this chapter, the CPLP has also provided a relevant spatial imaginary and a reference point for a host of nonstate actors, with more or less formal ties with the organization, including other international organizations and various nongovernmental organizations pursuing their objectives in that framework. See Herpolsheimer, "(Re-)Defining Lusophone Cooperation."

In all these endeavors, member states have maintained close control over the organization by providing only a rather modest budget, which has limited the room for maneuver of the Executive Secretariat. Interestingly, the limited financial support from member states has driven efforts to mobilize resources from “external” sources, which in turn has allowed the Executive Secretariat to exercise some degree of autonomous agency.¹⁹

Within the CPLP, political dynamics among member states are chiefly influenced by a lingering centrality by the former colonial power, Portugal, which has occasionally led to an uneasy cohabitation with remaining members.²⁰ The “fact that the organization is sometimes referred to as ‘Lusophony’ hints at the existence of an invisible center/periphery construct, which can seldom be either flattering or beneficial to members other than Portugal.”²¹ This has been best evidenced over the years by disputes concerning, for example, the accession of Equatorial Guinea, which was strongly promoted by Angola and Brazil against the remaining member states that sought to protract such an outcome.²² Another paradigmatic case can be seen in the tensions concerning the choosing of the new executive secretary of the CPLP in 2016. The solution found involved the sharing of the respective mandate (2016–2020) between Portugal and São Tomé and Príncipe.²³

Despite these tensions, CPLP actors have developed a number of practices to pursue their interests and defend their positions in different international settings. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a complete analysis of all of these practices, in the following we highlight three important areas where joint efforts have taken place: coordinated applications for high-level postings, observer status attribution to third parties, and partnerships with other international organizations.

Campaigning for High-Level Postings

A key practice of projecting the CPLP on a global scale has been the coordination and endorsement of national or individual candidacies from member states for institutions and positions within the United Nations (UN) system. This process began in full in 2002, during the 3rd CPLP Heads of State and Government Summit (Brasília), where 3 CPLP candidacies for a nonpermanent seat at the UN Security Council—from Angola (2002–03), Brazil (2003–04), and Portugal (2010–11)—were first collectively endorsed.

19 See Herpolsheimer, “Making the CPLP ‘Work.’”

20 Seabra, “From Opportunity Seeking to Gap Filling,” 25–41.

21 Santos, *Portugal and the CPLP*, 75.

22 Seabra, “From Opportunity Seeking to Gap Filling,” 25–41.

23 Pedro Seabra, “Um produto de tempos passados? Portugal e África no domínio político-diplomático” [A Product of Times Gone By? Portugal and Africa in the Political-Diplomatic Domain], in *Política Externa Portuguesa e África: Tendências e Temas Contemporâneos*, ed. António Raimundo (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Internacionais ISCTE-IUL, 2019), 73–99.

When recalling the latter candidacy, the then Portuguese secretary of state for foreign affairs, João Gomes Cravinho, was emphatic on the dynamics that played out in its country's favor: "The CPLP was not only worth the eight votes of its members; it must have been worth something like fifteen to twenty votes, evident proof of the practical relevance of the diplomatic cooperation foreseen in the [organization's] statutes."²⁴ Indeed, through the CPLP, the Portuguese government was able to gain privileged information on the position of African, Asian, Latin American, Pacific, and Caribbean countries, and at its request, the remaining lusophone partners assumed an almost emissary role, identifying specific needs for high-level consultations (including at the level of heads of state).

This *modus operandi* was to be followed in full in the following years, as 58 additional candidacies were also endorsed at CPLP heads of state and government summits.²⁵ On all these occasions, member states pledged to support such a practice as well as the concertation in world fora regarding matters of common interest on international agenda. This became particularly visible and useful in the joint lusophone support for the high-level candidacies led by Portugal for António Guterres to become the UN secretary-general in 2017 and by Brazil for José Graziano da Silva to head the Food and Agriculture Organization in 2011 and for Roberto Azevedo to helm the World Trade Organization in 2013.

The same networking potential was also put to good use for numerous occasions at other mid-level postings in the UN ecosystem, including, for example, the UN Commission on Human Rights, the International Maritime Organization, the UN Development Program, the UN Commission on International Law, the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Economic and Social Council, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. In all these cases, even if they were not necessarily successful in taking up the post, the CPLP was able to leverage its common position as a voting bloc while mobilizing around common diplomatic objectives.

24 João G. Cravinho, "A campanha portuguesa para o Conselho de Segurança" [The Portuguese Campaign for the Security Council], *Relações Internacionais* 28 (2010), 29.

25 Pedro Seabra and Rafael Mesquita, "Wavering or Privileged Cooperation? Portugal and Lusophone Africa at the UN General Assembly," in *Portugal and the Lusophone World: Law, Geopolitics and Institutional Cooperation*, eds. Rui Albuquerque, António Tavares, and Paulo Duarte (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 493–510.

Attributing Observer Status

Formal arrangements that grant observing privileges in international organizations to nonmember states remain a largely underresearched topic in the literature.²⁶ Yet, they have become an important tool for the CPLP to foster an expanding network with third parties interested in its workload and aims. Indeed, as an indicator that the issue was already in consideration from the outset, only two years after the formation of the CPLP, the 2nd CPLP Heads of State and Government Summit formally established an observer category. However, initially there were no successful applications and such a formal status remained thoroughly unused.²⁷

The underlying conditions would change significantly in July 2005, when—in light of the need to “extend participation in the Organization’s work to other States, international organizations, territorial entities with autonomous administration, as well as civil society organizations”—the 10th Ordinary Meeting of the CPLP Council of Ministers approved a new Resolution on an Observer Status of the CPLP. At the request of any applicant, the CPLP Council of Ministers would then issue a recommendation, pending final approval at a subsequent heads of state and government summit.²⁸ In practice, the content of both the recommendation and the final decision ended up being one and the same, thus implying a procedural fast track and rather flexible requirements for any potential application. Regardless, this was still not enough to kindle further external interest as only three countries came forward: Equatorial Guinea and Mauritius in July 2006, followed two years later by Senegal.

Recognizing that the existing process still required more clarity and regulation, in June 2010 the member states decided to elaborate on which countries should seek to apply and what was to be expected from such formal categorization. Following the 15th Ordinary Meeting of the CPLP Council of Ministers, the 7th CPLP Heads of State and Government Summit adopted a Resolution on the Regulation of Associated Observers. Seven elements were considered key in any future application: (1) a commitment to the CPLP’s objectives, guiding principles, and international law; (2) prior political and diplomatic relations with the CPLP, as well as with its member states; (3) common shared historical links; (4) geographical proximity; (5) common shared cultural links;

26 See A. G. Mower, “Observer Countries: Quasi Members of the United Nations,” *International Organization* 20, no. 2 (1966); Dakshina G. De Silva and Soon-Cheul Lee, “Does the Role of Observer Countries in the Regional Trade Agreement Matter for Intra-Regional Trade?,” *Applied Economics* 50, no. 20 (2018): 2219–2228.

27 See CPLP, “II Conferência dos Chefes de Estado e de Governo da CPLP e outros documentos do biénio 1998/1999–1999/2000” [II Conference of Heads of State and Government of the CPLP and Other Documents of Good 1998–99 and 1999–2000] (Lisbon, 2000), 39–40.

28 CPLP, “Resolução sobre o Estatuto de Observador da CPLP” [Resolution of the CPLP Observer Status] (Luanda, July 19–20, 2005).

(6) sizeable migrant communities from the member states living in the applicant's territory; and (7) an action plan and activity plan that each applicant would have to submit in order to substantiate their candidacy.²⁹ Once approved, observers would permanently benefit from the status and would be able to participate, without the right to vote, in heads of state and government summits, as well as in the CPLP Council of Ministers, while being granted access to nonconfidential documentation. These regulations also expressed a preference for concrete cooperation actions, particularly through political and diplomatic consultations, through support for CPLP initiatives within other international organizations, and through voluntary contributions to the special fund.³⁰

With this new framework in place, the dynamic of applications soon increased. In July 2014, Georgia, Namibia, Turkey, and Japan applied for observer status and received full endorsement from the 10th CPLP Heads of State and Government Summit. In November 2016, Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Uruguay would gain observer status. Finally, in July 2018, following the 12th CPLP Heads of State and Government Summit, Chile, Serbia, Argentina, Italy, Andorra, France, Luxembourg, and the UK would also be granted observer status. At the same time, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI) joined the ranks as the first collective entity. As of 2021, a total of 18 states from 4 different continents had deemed it advantageous to establish a formal bond with the CPLP and to accompany its internal proceedings. In culmination of this trend, ten country applications were approved in 2022 by the CPLP heads of state and government, including Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Greece, India, Ireland, Peru, Qatar, Romania, Spain, and the USA. Three other international organizations were also allowed to join as observers: the European Public Law Organization (EPLO), the Group of Seven Plus (G7+), and the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB).³¹

Three assessments can be tentatively offered while drawing parallels with other frail intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) that have warranted similar interest from countries applying to become observers—even though they often are not very interested in the core leitmotifs of these organizations (e. g., advancing the status of the Portuguese language), or do not (intend to) comply with their normative frameworks (e. g., on human rights, democracy, good governance).³² The first assessment concerns why states and other international actors would want to become observers of the CPLP.

29 CPLP, "Resolução sobre o Regulamento dos Observadores Associados" [Resolution on the Regulation of Associated Observers] (Luanda, July 22, 2010), Art. 6.

30 See CPLP, "Resolução sobre o Regulamento dos Observadores Associados."

31 See CPLP, "Observadores Associados" [Associated Observers], accessed November 7, 2022, <https://www.cplp.org/id-2765.aspx>.

32 The case of the Arctic Council is particularly well suited for this discussion, following the application submitted by China and other Asian countries to also obtain observer status of their own in such a forum.

Even though such a role does not necessarily entail automatic influence, it does grant an opportunity to expand contacts and foster policy agendas, both within the multilateral setting and bilaterally with member states perceived as most relevant. The CPLP is therefore easily considered an accelerator platform for external actors that seeks out synergies and dividends with individual member states through a collective format rather than a strictly individual one.

The second assessment deals with why the CPLP would entertain the notion of observers so actively in the first place. The interest in its bureaucratic dealings is first and foremost perceived as a testament to its relevance and the influence it can trigger worldwide. The fact that observers are approved without any burdensome criteria further reinforces the notion that the organization stands to gain the most from adopting a low bar of admission. By demonstrating an expanding gamut of outside partners, the CPLP is able to better substantiate claims of visibility and international relevance without necessarily compromising its internal constitution.

The third assessment concerns what influence, if any, do observers gain. For instance, the fact that there are no records of observers' attendance in official meetings raises significant questions over the regularity and substance of what third parties can contribute. There is also no clear evidence that observers have particularly supported the CPLP's global endeavors. Likewise, a reliance on a "observer-for-pay" rationale, with the aim of potentially helping fund the CPLP's preexisting initiatives, has not necessarily proven particularly fruitful. Instead, the lack of enforceability and/or evaluation over the plans of action presented by each observer has only led to minor joint progress thus far. Finally, providing an observer status as an enticement for a values-based alignment has also proven counterproductive, as the case of Equatorial Guinea illustrates. By using its observer position as a stepping stone for a controversial, yet successful, membership bid in 2014, the country's candidacy exposed the inexistence of blocking clauses for applicants that did not meet any of the criteria to become a full-fledged member but still warranted enough support among key states, such as Brazil and Angola, to push it to the finish line. In other words, opening up to as many observers as possible with the aim not only of gaining additional external clout but also of filling in operational financial gaps are key design flaws within the CPLP's own institutional architecture.

Partnering with Other International Organizations

Part of the CPLP's original mandate was trying to translate prior cultural affinities among its members into political dividends in other multilateral settings while aiming to stand on an equal playing field with other IGOs on the world stage. The most immediate

See, for example, Andrew Chater, "Explaining Non-Arctic States in the Arctic Council," *Strategic Analysis* 40, no. 3 (2016): 173–184.

route to both ends inevitably went through the UN. Two reasons underline such an option: on the one hand, it grants a measure of international legitimacy unlike any other international organization; on the other hand, it comprises the sole other venue where all lusophone member states stood equally invested in its success, utility, and longevity.

In that sense, in 1999, just three years after its creation, the CPLP applied for and obtained permanent observer status at the UN General Assembly (UNGA).³³ The reasoning provided at the time was straightforward: given the analogous purposes the CPLP shares with the UN and how “mutually advantageous” it would be to establish working cooperation channels, the CPLP would be officially allowed to participate in the sessions and ensuring work of the UN General Assembly, on par with 76 other IGOs.³⁴ Soon afterward, relations between the CPLP and the UN began to be framed under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter as well as under successive UN Security Council resolutions calling for cooperation between the UN and ROs on maintaining international peace and security. The latter point would become increasingly paramount in light of the CPLP’s involvement with successive political-military crises in Guinea-Bissau and ensuing mediation efforts.

The exact aims of the first resolution would be reissued, almost to the letter, in 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019.³⁵ Two explicit requests were also routinely made through such procedures. The first concerned having the UN secretary-general regularly submit a report on the implementation of the state of relations between the two organizations, which has been carried out with increasing regularity in recent years.³⁶ The second request entailed initiating further consultations for the establishment of a formal cooperation agreement between the UNSG and the CPLP but, unfortunately, to no avail.

Possible reasons for this mixed record can be seen when comparing the CPLP with other more significant ROs. Previous research has already shown that “the greater the ability of their members to develop regional positions, the better the opportunities of

33 The UN Charter and the UNGA Rules of Procedure have no provisions related to granting permanent observer status to third parties. However, it has been agreed the UNGA would restrict observer status to states and IGOs whose activities cover matters of interest to the UNGA. Under A/RES/54/195, the UNGA Sixth Committee is bound to consider all applications for observer status before they are considered in plenary session. Permanent observers may participate in the sessions and workings of the UNGA and maintain missions at the UN headquarters.

34 A/RES/54/10 (November 18, 1999).

35 A/RES/59/21 (November 8, 2004); A/RES/61/223 (December 20, 2006); A/RES/63/143 (December 11, 2008); A/RES/65/139 (December 16, 2010); A/RES/67/252 (March 26, 2013); A/RES/69/311 (July 6, 2015); A/RES/71/324 (September 8, 2017); A/RES/73/339 (September 12, 2019).

36 For the UNSG reports on relations with the CPLP, see A/61/256 (August 16, 2006); A/63/228-S/2008/531 (August 8, 2008); A/65/382-S/2010/490 (September 20, 2010); A/67/280-S/2012/614 (August 9, 2012); A/69/228-S/2014/560 (August 4, 2014); A/71/160-S/2016/621 (July 15, 2016); A/73/328-S/2018/592 (August 17, 2018); A/75/345-S/2020/898 (September 11, 2020).

their members to gain access to UNGA negotiations and the stronger the RO members' incentives to voice regional positions in UNGA negotiations," the more vocal those organizations will eventually be.³⁷ However, the case of the CPLP falls outside of these parameters, given that no formal legislative procedures were ever triggered at the UNGA on its behalf, nor were its representatives ever empowered to do so in the first place. The only possible examples of the sort concerned occasional participation in the debates of the UN Security Council and UN Peacebuilding Commission, whenever the situation in Guinea-Bissau called for it. Ultimately, considering that CPLP member states chose to not pursue a collective route on a more sustained way or were only interested in doing so whenever crises emerged, there was also no particular incentive for the UN to move forward with a more formalized arrangement.

An alternative approach to analyze the real weight that the CPLP attributes to the UN goes through the symbolic tokens associated with these developments. This can be best evidenced through the number of sponsors behind each draft UNGA resolution brought forward over the years. Sponsoring is a form of signaling that happens "before [the] efforts by leaders or influential members to persuade members to change their positions and before any potential source of selection bias, including agenda control."³⁸ Given how every UNGA resolution on the CPLP was approved in plenary by consensus and without a tallied vote, sponsoring can thus emerge as a particularly important source to measure variation in external validation. The temporal evolution of these dynamics is depicted in figure 8.1.

In 1999 and 2004, the drafts that generated each subsequent resolution only warranted the sponsoring of CPLP member states, with no further subscribers. By 2006, that outlook had already began to change and had garnered 6 additional cosponsors. The number climbed to 8 in 2008, to 41 in 2010, to 67 in 2013, and to a record of 104 in 2015. They receded back to 52 in 2017 but climbed back again to 82 in 2019. Even if UNGA resolutions are nonbinding instruments and lack the same impact as other international legal arrangements, the fact that the CPLP was able to attract increasing interest and formal support shows that the international community began to perceive the organization as a relevant actor in this context.

37 Diana Panke, Stefan Lang, and Anke Wiedemann, "Regional Organisations in the UNGA: Who is Most Active and Why?," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 22, no. 3 (2019): 751–52.

38 Scott W. Desposato, Matthew C. Kearney, and Brian F. Crisp, "Using Cosponsorship to Estimate Ideal Points," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2011): 532; see also Daniel Kessler and Keith Krehbiel, "Dynamics of Cosponsorship," *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 3 (1996): 555–566.

39 For the draft resolutions of each approved resolution, see A/54/L.15 (October 22, 1999); A/59/L.14 (October 21, 2004); A/61/L.43/Add.1 (December 20, 2006); A/63/L.41 (November 24, 2008); A/65/L.23/Rev.2/Add.1 (December 16, 2010); A/67/L.54/Add.1 (March 26, 2013); A/69/L.78 (June 30, 2015) and A/69/L.78/Add.1 (July 6, 2015); A/71/L.84 (August 30, 2017); A/73/L.111 (September 3, 2019), and A/73/L.111/Add.1 (September 12, 2019).

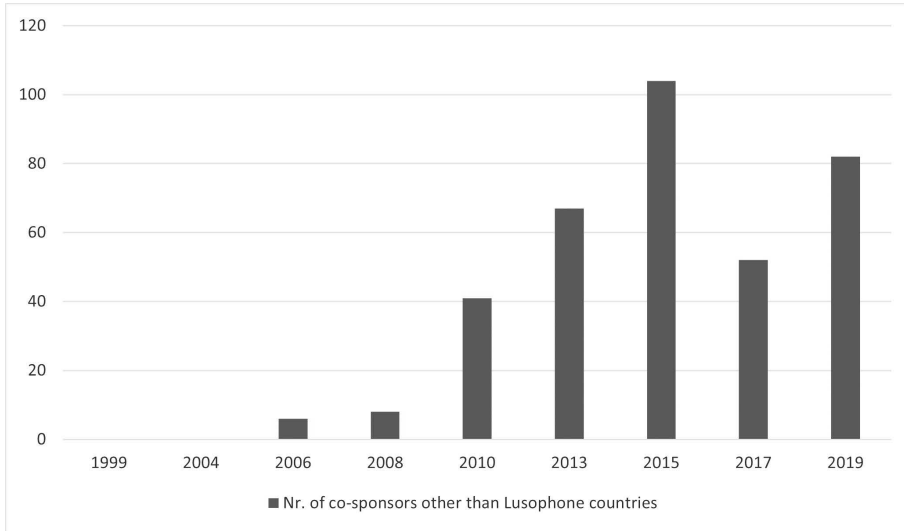


Fig. 8.1 Co-sponsors of UNGA resolutions on the CPLP, 1999–2019

Source: UN Digital Library.³⁹

However, the UN was only the tip of the spear for the CPLP when it came to reaching out to other international organizations and institutions.⁴⁰ The main takeaway from these agreements is the clear functional utility assigned to each and every association with agencies related to the UN universe (i. e., IOM, FAO, UNCTAD, UNESCO, WIPO, ILO, OHCHR, IFAD, UNCDD, UNITAR, UNAIDS, WTO, and UN Women). Partnerships have been pursued, first and foremost, if there is a possibility of additional resources and if these partnerships fulfil the strategic priorities set out in the CPLP’s mandate. Yet, despite the evident emphasis placed on this formalities, outsourcing funding sources has not led to any significant practical outcomes—notably when some of the agreements remain dependent on an equal sharing of the costs associated with any new initiatives. At the same time, the list of partners includes language-based mechanisms and platforms (e. g., the Latin Union and the OEI), ROs (e. g., the European Commission on behalf of the European Union, as well as the West African Economic and Monetary Union [UEMOA]), and the occasional odd choices (e. g., the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes, and of Malta). Hence, much like what the observer status demonstrates, beyond complementing existing shortcomings, most of these part-

40 For a complete listing of every formal agreement reached in this regard, see CPLP, “Acordos entre CPLP e Organizações Internacionais” [Agreements between CPLP and International Organizations], accessed November 7, 2022, <https://www.cplp.org/Default.aspx?ID=3878>.

nerships are mostly sought out with the purpose of substantiating the CPLP's claims of external validity and recognition.

Evolution of the CPLP Globalization Project

CPLP cooperation has been guided by its main legal frameworks, most importantly the CPLP statutes (since 1996, updated repeatedly)⁴¹ and the General Cooperation Agreement (1998). In addition, however, several strategic documents have subsequently come to determine the relations between member states and the world more specifically. The most important in this respect has been the General Cooperation Strategy, adopted by the CPLP Council of Ministers in 2006. In addition to outlining objectives, principles, modes of cooperation, and so on, it also describes strategies aiming to increase the CPLP's international projection. Among other goals—for example, harmonizing practices and procedures of member states, promoting civil society involvement, and increasing economic/entrepreneurial cooperation—it includes consolidating links with international organizations and coordinating member state positions therein. Based on this strategy, the Indicative Cooperation Program (first approved in 2007) spells out further the specific contents of cooperation and operationalizes specific lines of action. Initially, this program was to be updated on an annual basis to reflect changes in the global context. However, due to disagreement over whether an update was required or not and despite extended discussions among the national focal points for CPLP cooperation, dragging on for several years, the program never materialized.⁴²

What have been updated, however, are the strategic visions of the CPLP. Already in 2009, the CPLP Council of Ministers adopted the Post-Bissau Strategic Vision, which aimed to take stock of an expanding field of regional cooperation in the CPLP, increase “internal” coherence, and improve coordination at different scales. To that end, the Executive Secretariat was supposed to receive more resources, responsibilities, and independence. In 2012, the Cooperation Directorate of the Executive Secretariat initiated further reflection on the need to adjust regional cooperation to changes, both within member states and in the larger international environment, which led to another drawn-out process of drafting a Post-2015 Strategic Vision, which eventually led to the adoption of the New Strategic Vision of the CPLP for 2016 to 2026 by the heads of state and government in November 2016 at their summit in Brasília. This vision aimed to revamp the organization's activities and stake out a new working agenda. In this context, two axes of action are worthy of highlighting: (1) “Broadening the participation of actors, calling for the cooperation of other relevant partners to achieve the programmatic

41 See, for example, CPLP, “Estatutos da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa.”

42 For more details, see Herpolsheimer, “Making the CPLP ‘Work.’”

objectives,” and (2) “Diversification of Partnerships and identification of additional sources of financing, promoting joint work with other actors and seeking to increase the resources available for CPLP cooperation.”⁴³

The evolution of these aims demonstrates a shifting focus from a culturally based project to a business-friendly facilitator, to a resource-driven accelerator, and back to more shared cultural/educational leitmotifs, which has fueled a generalized perception of a structural ambivalence over what its role and purpose ought to be.⁴⁴ Overall, despite repeated efforts to transform and relaunch the organization, continuity rather than change continues to prevail in its overall mandate.

Spatialization Effects of the CPLP Globalization Project

What has been framed as a strength of the RO—connecting different world regions—has also been a limiting factor for the CPLP. The organization has to compete with several other ROs in which its member states also participate, ROs that pursue relatively strong globalization projects. African CPLP members are simultaneously members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS, see chapter 12, this volume) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Brazil is a member of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR, see chapter 5, this volume), and Portugal is a member of the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Council of Europe (CoE, see chapter 9, this volume). Therefore, the CPLP continues to be a project mostly pursued as an additional option for coordination and political projection at regional, transregional, and global scales.

Overall, the CPLP focuses on symbolic interorganizational formalities. However, in parallel, the CPLP continues to see its global ambitions through the lens of a fallback strategy that complements institutional limitations; jeopardizes internal cohesion; and indefinitely masks resource shortcomings, unlikely to be provided by member states alone. More often than not, cultural-historical linkages between member states have translated into a deliberate project of outward projection. By definition, the CPLP has centered its efforts on building up a common denominator platform for inward dialogue among its member states rather than promoting a high-profile endeavor worldwide—especially when placed in comparison with other language-based groupings of the kind, such as the British Commonwealth or the IOF.

Yet, its longevity, legal standing, and regularity of internal workload have also turned it into an institutional fixture difficult to ignore in the broader canvas of ROs. Additionally,

43 CPLP, “Documento Estratégico de Cooperação da CPLP 2020–2026” [CPLP Strategic Cooperation Document 2020–2026] (n.p., July 16, 2019), 9.

44 Hewitt, Burges, and Gomes, “The Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa at 20 Years,” 291–309.

much like other experiments of its kind, the CPLP has been frequently called upon to reinvent itself in order to avoid institutional paralysis in the face of other mechanisms more easily adaptable to the whims of globalization, the fallout of successive economic crises, or the shifting priorities of its own member states. Still, overall evaluations over its effectiveness continue to posit that “while often not spectacular in nature, the CPLP does offer meaningful returns for its members. The organization provides a platform that can be leveraged by members to advance specific agendas if they are willing to devote the necessary resources to coordinating their counterparts and driving their programme forward.”⁴⁵

An additional interesting outcome of the CPLP’s globalization project, not dealt with in this chapter but meriting more detailed research in the future, is the role of the CPLP as a key reference point for various nonstate actors pursuing their respective globalization projects in the framework of “Lusophony,”⁴⁶ contributing to the construction of a “virtual region” and thereby also directly or indirectly influencing the meaning and relevance of the CPLP as an organization. However, the mismatch between potential output and actual resources allocated to the effect raises legitimate doubts over whether stated goals actually match the available toolbox and whether occasional attempts to go global have meant moving away from core internal priorities and the original mandate.

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45 Hewitt, Burges, and Gomes, “The Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa at 20 Years,” 307; see also Edalina R. Sanches, “The Community of Portuguese Language Speaking Countries: The Role of Language in a Globalizing World,” *Atlantic Future Scientific Papers* 14 (2014).

46 See, e. g., Herpolsheimer, “(Re-)Defining Lusophone Cooperation.”

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