



A. Case Study Title and Author information

InsSciDE Work Package 3: <i>Science Diplomats: Fluid Identities and Emergent Practices</i>	
Case Study n°1	Emergence and 21 st century development of international activities of Academies of Science and Academies of Technology Barbosa du Bocage: a scientist with diplomatic responsibilities during the Scramble for Africa (1883–1886)
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B. Abstract

The project InsSciDE addresses the emergence and development of academies of science from a historical perspective, from the 18th century to the present. In addition, it also develops case studies of European actors that have played relevant roles in science diplomacy. These actors have been tied to their country's academies of science and they have used it to sponsor their scientific activities. My research is focused on nineteenth-century personality: José Vicente Barbosa du Bocage (1823–1907). He was a Portuguese zoologist of international reputation that played an important role for the defense of Portuguese colonial claims in diplomatic negotiations during a period of intense competition, in which few European states conquered the African continent in almost its entirety, a period also known as the “Scramble for Africa”.

C. Introduction

Although science diplomacy was formally created only in post-World War II years, the links between technoscientific experts and diplomacy are much earlier. In the late nineteenth century, scientific studies were central to the European colonization of Africa, which entailed diplomatic discussions on the partition of territories of interest and the demarcation of their borders.

Until the 1880s, Africa remained an essentially uncharted continent from a European perspective. The few European settlements that had been previously established were scattered and typically restricted to small regions close to coastal areas. This situation changed in the last decades of the nineteenth century, as economic and political interests coalesced to make the colonization of Africa a desirable undertaking. The demand for raw materials (e.g. rubber) that would fuel new industries and the necessity of securing strategic routes for the transport and commercialization of colonial products were



key motivations, and strong political competition between European powers led the movement towards Africa to develop into a scramble. For these reasons, historians have termed such period the Scramble or Race for Africa.

Such a scramble would have been impossible without important nineteenth-century scientific, technological, and medical advances. The isolation and commercialization of quinine, a compound that protected against the deadly malaria, allowed for the penetration of European troops, who could travel to Africa more rapidly than ever in steamboats. The invention of semi-automatic machine guns put indigenous African peoples at the mercy of smaller European armies. The improvement of cartographic techniques allowed the mapping of the territory and the definition of more effective colonization strategies, as well as the identification of natural resources. As a result, Europeans were able to partition the continent in almost its entirety in little more than three decades (1880–1914). Britain, France and Portugal had a colonial past directly linked to Africa, and wanted to expand their sphere of influence in the continent, but Belgium, Germany, and Italy also decided to join the race, although they had no colonial connections to Africa.

Portugal had first expanded into African territories in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, establishing trading posts along the coast. Reaching India at the end of the fifteenth century, the Portuguese succeeded in controlling the spice trade in the following decades and accumulated great commercial gains. This period of long-distance maritime travels, known as the Age of Expansion, was considered a golden, almost mythical era for Portugal, when an empire was forged under the guidance of ambitious political leaders. In spite of the loss of political and commercial importance in the following centuries, Portugal still maintained some territories in Africa, the largest being Angola and Mozambique. Facing fierce competition from more powerful European states in the late nineteenth century, the Portuguese political elite was forced to act. By 1883, the European powers were engaged in a struggle to reclaim the much coveted lands surrounding the Congo River, in Central Africa. It was in this context that José Vicente Barbosa du Bocage (1823–1907), an internationally renowned Portuguese zoologist and member of the Lisbon Science Academy, became Minister of Foreign Affairs and conducted the necessary negotiations, most notably at the Berlin Conference of 1884–85. The Conference was a defining episode in the Scramble for Africa, since, in practice, it established the primacy of effective colonization over any historical rights a country might possess.

My work seeks to understand why a scientific expert such as Bocage was chosen for an important political position, as well as the role that his scientific background might have played in diplomatic negotiations. It is of great relevance to study the role of actors such as Bocage in the colonization of Africa because their diplomatic negotiations defined borders between colonial areas of interest that were essentially maintained in the postcolonial period, thus being at the root of modern-day African geopolitics and of various conflicts at the borders between different countries.



D. Actors

Bocage only came to diplomacy late in life. He was, first and foremost, a zoologist, who devoted every spare moment to scientific research. At the same time, it was precisely this research that drew him closer to diplomacy.

Bocage had studied medicine at the University of Coimbra, the sole university at that time in Portugal, and he had worked as a physician for a brief period in Lisbon. As he had no great interest in this profession, he applied to a more promising position as substitute professor of zoology at the Lisbon Polytechnic School in 1848. He was chosen and only three years elapsed before his promotion to a full professorship at the young age of 28 years, following the death of the responsible for the zoology chair. In this capacity, Bocage devised a plan to build a career as a naturalist, which was ultimately successful.

In addition to the Lisbon Polytechnic School, he also became a member of the Lisbon Science Academy (1857), and the founder of the National Museum of Lisbon (1862), the first natural history museum in Lisbon, as well as the director of its Zoological Section. Since his greatest collaborator José de Anchieta (c.1832–1897) collected specimens in the then Portuguese colony of Angola, Bocage became interested in colonial affairs, not the least because the maintenance of such overseas territories was essential for his career. He was elected vice-president of the Lisbon Geographical Society in 1875, an institution created to lobby the government for the adoption of expansionist policies in Africa, and then served as its president between 1877 and 1883. In 1877, he was also elected to the Central and Permanent Geographical Commission, a governmental advisory body to plan and implement colonial policies created by another Portuguese personality, João de Andrade Corvo (1824–1890), then the Portuguese Minister of the Navy and Overseas Colonies. By the late 1870s, Bocage was therefore connected to several institutions and he was recognized as an active member of the Portuguese elite.

In 1879, Bocage formally entered Portuguese politics by being elected to the parliament. He was an unusually important political asset because he was knowledgeable in colonial matters in Africa. He had been receiving first-hand information since 1866 in the correspondence he received from Anchieta. In addition to observations on the climate, geography, and natural history of the regions he explored, Anchieta frequently included in his letters remarks on the colonial administration, the agency of colonial authorities, the characteristics of the peoples he encountered, or the moves of foreign explorers. Bocage's entry in Portuguese politics was facilitated by his personal and professional proximity to Corvo, who had entered politics much earlier, in 1865. Corvo was a professor at the Lisbon Polytechnic School, like Bocage, and the two had a good friendship. It is therefore unsurprising that Bocage joined the Regenerator Party, the same party in which Corvo built his political career. Bocage reached his first important government position in 1883, after the Regenerator Party had regained power. He was first appointed Minister of the Navy in order to reform the Portuguese colonial administration, but the task was so daunting for his health that before the end of the year he already wanted to resign. As a compromise, he agreed to be transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which he then developed his diplomatic activity.

Bocage was exceptional at both national and international levels, since scientists usually performed only advisory roles to governments, and seldom achieved important political positions. Almost no former Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs had a scientific career. Acting officially in this quality, Bocage headed the Portuguese diplomatic administration and was therefore in contact with the representatives of foreign governments in Lisbon. Given that he was involved in diplomatic negotiations over colonial territories in Africa, did he work with his successor at the Ministry of Navy? Did Bocage only rely on official contacts? Did he conduct negotiations unofficially? These questions are important because they clarify Bocage's agency while in office.

The emphasis on science diplomacy in post-WWII may lead us to think that such phenomenon is recent in historical terms. In reality, the connections among science, its practitioners, and diplomacy, are much older. Although there were no formally designated science diplomats before post-WWII years as we understand them today, there is a longer history to be written on the relationship between science and diplomacy, a history of the various ways in which scientists such as Bocage have been engaged in diplomatic negotiations.

E. Fields and disciplines, interfaces with technology

Diplomatic negotiations for the definition of areas of influence in Africa and border demarcation heavily relied on geographical knowledge. Since the African hinterland was still essentially unknown by the Europeans in the early 1870s, expeditions were organized to map and secure various territories. To what extent did Bocage rely on this geographical knowledge? How was it produced and how did it reach him? What was the role of specific institutions, such as the Lisbon Geographical Society, in its production? These are some of the questions to be explored in this case.

F. Networks and communication

In this case, the scientific expertise and diplomatic power were concentrated in the same person, Bocage. He could thus directly pursue the diplomatic strategies he wanted (**strategic interface between science and diplomacy**). Was the use of science for diplomacy seen as something problematic? How did Bocage articulate the two? How was this articulation perceived by the Portuguese elite?

While in office, Bocage responded to two diplomatic challenges: (1) the defense of Portuguese colonial interests in the Congo region (Central Africa), from November 1883 to February 1885, and (2) the demarcation of borders between the Portuguese Guinea and neighboring French colonies, from March 1885 to February 1886. The Congo region was coveted by various states because some explorers claimed that it probably had plenty of natural resources of economic interest, and also due to the fact that it was crossed by a great river, the Congo, which could be used as an access route to the most remote hinterland. The absence of any clear border between the Portuguese Guinea and the neighboring French colonial territories was a problematic situation that could develop into a diplomatic conflict.



G. Politics and policies

The Scramble for Africa was a period of intense competition between European states with colonial interests in Africa. Knowledge of African geography and peoples were valuable assets, much secrecy surrounded it and alliances were only created for specific purposes.

I will analyze the type of diplomatic strategies pursued by Bocage while he was in office. What diplomatic alliances did he forge? Did they materialize in formal treaties? Why did European diplomacy agree to discuss such matters in an international conference in 1884? Who were the Portuguese representatives and why were they chosen? How did they perform their functions? How did the Portuguese elite respond to the outcomes of the conference? Colonial matters had to be carefully managed in domestic politics because they could undermine the political credibility of a candidate. Was Bocage's prestige affected? How did he conduct negotiations on the determination of the border between the Portuguese Guinea and other French colonial territories?

Disciplinary/methodological approach

I have been working as a historian of science for the past ten years, and I am approaching this subject from a historical perspective. My work is focused on the analysis and comparison of primary sources that are directly related to the key figures in Portugal responsible for colonial policies during the Scramble for Africa, most notably Bocage. These documents were produced during the 1870s and 1880s, and can be found at the Historical Archives of the Diplomatic Institute of the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at the Portuguese National Archive – Torre do Tombo. I am analyzing the information present in public diplomatic reports, the official reports exchanged with Portuguese Legations, and Bocage's private correspondence with relevant actors.

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