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DANS **HISTOIRE, EUROPE ET RELATIONS INTERNATIONALES** 2022/2 (N° 2), PAGES 53 À 63
ÉDITIONS **UMR SIRICE**

DOI 10.3917/heri.002.0053

Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse

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Between an Old and a New Scramble for Africa? Using the History of Science Diplomacy to Understand the Present

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Abstract

In this article I reflect on my experience as a teacher in the first Warsaw Science Diplomacy School, which was hosted at the European Academy of Diplomacy in 2020. I organized a module on science diplomacy and the relations between Europe and Africa, building on the work I had been developing as a case study author in the context of the H2020 “Inventing a shared Science Diplomacy for Europe” (InsSciDE) project. I discussed the diplomatic role of a Portuguese nineteenth-century zoologist, José Vicente Barbosa du Bocage (1823-1907), who became Portugal’s Minister of Foreign Affairs during a critical period in the Scramble for Africa, in which his country competed with France and Belgium for international recognition of colonial sovereignty over the Congo region. I showed how Bocage’s political career was propelled by his insertion in scientific and colonial networks, and how he deployed them while in power to gain leverage in difficult diplomatic negotiations. The students of the Warsaw Science Diplomacy School 2020 appreciated the extent to which European colonialism in Africa recruited both science and diplomacy for political purposes, its enduring consequences on the diplomatic relations between the two continents, and how this case can illuminate the current race for power in Africa that has now drawn in new contenders, such as China and the United States.

Keywords: Europe-Africa Relations – Colonialism – Lisbon Geographical Society – Berlin Conference 1884-1885 – Cooperation Policies.

Résumé

Entre une ancienne et une nouvelle ruée vers l'Afrique ? Utiliser l'histoire de la diplomatie scientifique pour comprendre le présent

Dans cet article, je reviens sur mon expérience en tant qu'enseignant lors de la première école de diplomatie scientifique de Varsovie, qui s'est tenue à l'Académie européenne de diplomatie en 2020. J'ai organisé un module sur la diplomatie scientifique et les relations entre l'Europe et l'Afrique, en m'appuyant sur le travail que j'avais développé en tant qu'auteur d'études de cas dans le cadre du projet H2020 « Inventer une diplomatie scientifique partagée pour l'Europe » (InsSciDE). J'ai abordé le rôle diplomatique d'un zoologiste portugais du XIX^e siècle, José Vicente Barbosa du Bocage (1823-1907), qui est devenu ministre portugais des affaires étrangères pendant une période critique de la lutte pour l'Afrique, au cours de laquelle son pays était en concurrence avec la France et la Belgique pour la reconnaissance internationale de la souveraineté coloniale sur la région du Congo. J'ai montré comment la carrière politique de Bocage a été propulsée par son insertion dans des réseaux scientifiques et coloniaux, et comment il les a déployés pendant qu'il était au pouvoir pour gagner du poids dans des négociations diplomatiques difficiles. Les étudiants de l'École de diplomatie scientifique de Varsovie 2020 ont apprécié la mesure dans laquelle le colonialisme européen en Afrique a recruté à la fois la science et la diplomatie à des fins politiques, ses conséquences durables sur les relations diplomatiques entre les deux continents, et la façon dont ce cas peut éclairer la course actuelle au pouvoir en Afrique qui a maintenant attiré de nouveaux concurrents, tels que la Chine et les États-Unis.

Mots-clés : Relations Europe-Afrique – Colonialisme – Société géographique de Lisbonne – Conférence de Berlin 1884-1885 – Politiques de coopération.

I joined the Horizon 2020 “Inventing a shared Science Diplomacy for Europe” (InsSciDE) project as a postdoctoral researcher in 2018. My personal interest was to explore in more detail the diplomatic responsibilities of José Vicente Barbosa du Bocage (1823-1907), an internationally renowned Portuguese scientific expert whose life and work I had been studying for some years. I knew that Bocage’s case would be of interest for InsSciDE because it addressed the interactions between science and diplomacy in the nineteenth century, a fairly understudied period as most historians of science diplomacy concentrate on the Cold War. This scholarly focus is understandable, since World War II catalyzed important changes in the ensuing decades, such as the spread of nuclear warfare, steep increases in governmental budget for scientific research in various countries, and the creation of formal positions for “science diplomats” or “science attachés¹”. Nevertheless, I and other scholars believe that the links between science and diplomacy extend to periods before 1940, and that a broader history still remains to be told². Such connections were obvious in my case, since Bocage was a scientific expert who acquired formal diplomatic power as Portugal’s Minister of Foreign Affairs in a critical moment of European colonial expansion in Africa.

Thinking about Africa

As the InsSciDE team organized the first Warsaw Science Diplomacy School in 2020 and invited me to prepare one of its teaching modules, I was asked to explore how my case could illuminate current challenges in international relations. Although I was not used to thinking about my historical research in such way, the topic I was pursuing surely resonated with present-day developments. In recent years, some authors have argued that we are witnessing a “New Scramble for Africa”, a new period of heightened competition for control over different African regions, one in which China is emerging as a strong contender³. The expression derives from the historical “Scramble for Africa”, when old and new European colonial powers partitioned the continent in almost its entirety between 1880 and 1914, a process in which Bocage took active part as representative of Portuguese interests. As I thought that we could better understand the consequences of current foreign interest in Africa, which is

¹ John Krige, Kai-Henrik Barth, eds., “Global Power Knowledge: Science and Technology in International Affairs”, *Osiris*, vol. 21 (2006/1), p. 1-309; Ronald E. Doel, “Scientists as Policymakers, Advisors, and Intelligence Agents: Linking Contemporary Diplomatic History with the History of Contemporary Science”, in Thomas Söderqvist, ed., *The Historiography of Contemporary Science and Technology* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), p. 215-244.

² For example, see Simone Turchetti, Matthew Adamson, Giulia Rispoli, Doubravka Olšáková, Sam Robinson, “Introduction: Just Needham to Nixon? On Writing the History of “Science Diplomacy”, *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences*, vol. 50 (2020/4), p. 323-339.

³ Pádraig Carmody, *The New Scramble for Africa* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011); Sören Scholvin (dir.), *A New Scramble for Africa? The Rush for Energy Resources in Sub-Saharan Africa* (London/New York: Routledge, 2015); Lee Wengraf, *Extracting Profit: Imperialism, Neoliberalism, and the New Scramble for Africa* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018).

predominantly directed to control over its natural resources, by exploring the history of colonialism, I accepted the invitation.

One week before the start of the summer school, I had a first three-hour meeting with the seven participants who had applied to my InsSciDE teaching module. I had specifically asked for such preliminary meeting to learn about the initial expectations of the group and ensure that the connection between current issues and my historical case was clearly explained. It was a good opportunity to introduce the theme, since most participants stressed that they knew very little about Africa and its history, despite their interest on the subject⁴. As a way to better introduce my historical case, I had previously sent study materials to the participants so that they could gather some initial information and be ready for a first discussion. I deliberately chose a diversified set of materials, comprising journalistic video pieces, press articles, and academic sources to more easily engage with the students.

We started our first session by analyzing current challenges in African countries as presented in an opinion article by Adekeye Adebajo, a professor at the University of Johannesburg with extensive experience in conflict resolution in Africa⁵. Then, we analyzed current discourses on the “New Scramble for Africa” by comparing two journalistic pieces with contrasting views. A report from *The Economist* presented this renewed interest in Africa as an opportunity that Africans could use to their own benefit since they now lived in independent states, while a reportage in *Al Jazeera* questioned such narrative by showing how current economic investment by countries such as China can rapidly establish dynamics of exploitation⁶. After debating the issues at stake in present-day Africa, we explored one closely connected to my historical case study: conflicts tied to contested borders between neighboring countries, following an article by Gbenga Oduntan, a scholar in critical legal studies at the University of Kent. As Oduntan argues, such conflicts are recurrent in present-day Africa because most colonial borders were maintained after decolonization, and African leaders and social groups see them as illegitimate products of a European colonial past that ignored the expectations of the African peoples living in those territories⁷. Such

⁴ Three of the participants were from Central and Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Czech Republic and Albania), two from Latin America (Argentina and Guatemala), one from Asia (India), and one from Africa (Tunisia).

⁵ Adekeye Adebajo, “The three demons of delayed development, debt and dictatorships”, *The Guardian Nigeria*, 28 January 2020, online: <https://guardian.ng/opinion/the-three-demons-of-delayed-development-debt-and-dictatorships/> [accessed 29 September 2022].

⁶ *The Economist*, “The New Scramble for Africa... and how Africans can win it”, 8 March 2019, online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BV61lqLnds> [accessed 29 September 2022]; *Al Jazeera*, “Empire” episode “The New Scramble for Africa”, 27 July 2014, online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KM06hTeRSY> [accessed 29 September 2022].

⁷ Gbenga Oduntan, “Africa's border disputes are set to rise - but there are ways to stop them”, *The Conversation*, 14 July 2015, online: <https://theconversation.com/africas-border-disputes-are-set-to-rise-but-there-are-ways-to-stop-them-44264> [accessed 29 September 2022]. Oduntan has discussed this topic at length in Gbenga Oduntan, *International Law and Boundary Disputes in Africa* (London/New York: Routledge, 2015).

discussion provided the appropriate context to introduce my case on how scientific experts played a role in the negotiation of borders delimiting European spheres of influence in Africa. I ended the session by presenting my main actor in science diplomacy, Bocage, his scientific work in zoology, and his fast-political rise that culminated in an appointment to lead the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁸.

Barbosa du Bocage: from zoology to diplomacy

At first sight, Bocage may be considered an odd agent of science diplomacy, as he was not a diplomat, he showed little interest in a political career, and he never travelled to Africa. Bocage was a professor of zoology in Lisbon who devoted most of his time to taxonomical research and established the first natural history museum in Lisbon in 1862. He tried to reach people, in Portugal and in its overseas colonies, who were willing to collect and send specimens for him to study. His appeals to the Portuguese colonial administration ultimately put him in contact with a Portuguese naturalist who was living in Angola. This naturalist was persuaded by Bocage to sign a formal agreement and became an official supplier of zoological specimens. Such collaboration developed into Bocage's most important one, spanning decades and allowing him to become an expert on Southern African zoogeography. At the same time, it also made Bocage's research significantly dependent on Portuguese presence in Africa⁹.

In the early 1870s, when Portuguese colonial claims in Africa started to be challenged by Britain, Bocage knew his career could be compromised if these colonial territories were lost. As a part of the Portuguese elite mobilized to found the Lisbon Geographical Society in 1875 to lobby the government for expansionist colonial policies in Africa, Bocage had therefore a strong professional interest in joining it. In fact, since he had devoted so many years to the study of Africa, he was perceived as one of the most knowledgeable Portuguese personalities on the matter, being elected president of the Lisbon Geographical Society in 1877¹⁰. In this way, although he first instrumentalized the Portuguese colonial administration for scientific ends, he got more and more entangled in colonial affairs in subsequent years.

As Bocage actively participated in the discussions on Portuguese colonial policy in the private Lisbon Geographical Society – but also in the governmental Geographical Commission –, he became part of political networks that opened further opportunities for him. João de Andrade Corvo (1824-1890), his personal friend and colleague at the same technoscientific institution in which he

⁸ Daniel Gamito-Marques, "Defending Metropolitan Identity Through Colonial Politics: The role of Portuguese naturalists", *History of Science*, vol. 56 (2018/2), p. 224-253.

⁹ Daniel Gamito-Marques, "A Space of One's Own: Barbosa du Bocage, the Foundation of the National Museum of Lisbon, and the Construction of a Career in Zoology (1851–1907)", *Journal of the History of Biology*, vol. 51 (2018/2), p. 223-257.

¹⁰ Daniel Gamito-Marques, "Defending Metropolitan Identity Through Colonial Politics", *op. cit.*

lectured, was an important member of the center-right Regenerator Party, one of the main Portuguese parties at that time, and in 1877 he headed the Ministry of the Navy and Overseas Territories while simultaneously serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs since 1871¹¹. The conjunction of a need for people knowledgeable in African matters to redefine colonial policy and a proximity to politicians with influence led to a fast political rise for Bocage. The zoologist also identified with the ideological inclinations of the Regenerator Party, since its main figure had established the country's material development as one of its priorities, a decision that had attracted various personalities with technoscientific expertise to its ranks over the years¹². In any case, Corvo's influence must have been determinant, with Bocage being elected Member of Parliament in 1879 and being made Peer of the Kingdom only two years after, thus gaining a place at the country's upper chamber. In January 1883, when the Regenerator Party had already returned to power, he was appointed as Navy Minister and became the head of the Portuguese colonial administration. Although Bocage occupied this position for less than a year, one of his decisions had a far-reaching effect: he founded the Cartography Commission, a governmental body that coordinated for decades the production of maps of the Portuguese colonial empire for strategic purposes. He thus explicitly put scientific expertise at the service of Portuguese colonial affairs¹³.

After several months as Navy Minister, Bocage was exhausted of the enormous task he had at hand, the reform of the entire Portuguese colonial administration, and of having to deal with internal and external political pressures. In less than one year in power, he was thus prepared to leave politics for good. However, his party members insisted for him to stay. By then, Bocage was too entangled in colonial politics, and he eventually conceded to be transferred to the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. Such change should be read rather as a continuation of his political role, since foreign affairs were dominated in that period by the negotiations of colonial sovereignty over territories in Africa coveted by competing European powers.

¹¹ Valentim Alexandre, « CORVO, João de Andrade (1824-1890) », in Maria Filomena Mónica (dir.), *Dicionário Biográfico Parlamentar, 1834-1910*. Vol. 1, Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais e Assembleia da República, 2005, p. 841-843.

¹² This ideological allegiance of saint-simonian inspiration was actively promoted since 1851 by the charismatic António Maria de Fontes Pereira de Melo (1819-1887). Contrary to most Portuguese politicians, Fontes had a background in military engineering rather than in law, and his plans to prioritize the economic and infrastructural development of the country became attached to his persona, being referred to as "fontismo". He was politically influent in Portugal until the 1880s, and became one of the main figures of the Regenerator Party. Rui Ramos, "A Regeneração e o Fontismo (1851-1890)" in Rui Ramos, Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa, Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, *História de Portugal (Lisboa: A Esfera dos Livros, 2010)*, p. 521-548.

¹³ Daniel Gamito-Marques, "Science for Competition among Powers: Geographical Knowledge, Colonial-Diplomatic Networks, and the Scramble for Africa", *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 43 (2020/4), p. 473-492.

A scientist coordinating formal diplomacy

During the Warsaw Science Diplomacy School 2020, my first role as a teacher was to do a 20-minute presentation to discuss Bocage's strategies in his quality of head of Portugal's diplomacy. Bocage was brought to foreign affairs in October 1883 to conduct the negotiations over the partition of a specific area in Africa that attracted much attention: the Congo region¹⁴. This area comprised the Congo River, one of the largest water bodies in Africa, which connected the center of the continent to its Southwestern coast. Portuguese, French, and Belgian interests competed to annex the river's margins and control access to natural resources further upstream and the lucrative commerce that was expected to flourish from there. As tensions among the European colonial powers mounted, an international conference was convened in Berlin in November 1884 to solve the dispute¹⁵. It was in this context that Bocage's action proved decisive.

When Bocage reached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was already part of a vast network of scientific experts, colonial agents, and politically influent personalities, being therefore in a privileged position to coordinate such complex matters. Since some of the sessions at the Berlin Conference dealt with the negotiation and delimitation of spheres of influence, they demanded expertise in African geography. Thanks to his vast network, Bocage was able to identify and recruit personalities who could best serve the country's colonial interests. He first reached Luciano Cordeiro (1844-1900), the Permanent Secretary of the Lisbon Geographical Society, and appointed him as technical delegate to the Berlin Conference. Cordeiro had been one of the founders and most vocal supporters of the Lisbon Geographical Society, dedicating years to the study of African geography and participating in all major discussions on the organization of Portuguese colonial policy¹⁶. Bocage had worked with him closely in previous years while president of the Society, and he trusted his knowledge on African matters.

Bocage, however, resorted to his networks in another important way: he utilized them to directly promote and train people who could help him. The most obvious example is his own son Carlos Roma du Bocage (1853-1918), a young military engineer. Bocage had introduced him to colonial affairs once he had become Portugal's Minister of the Navy and Overseas Territories, first by making his son his secretary, and then by appointing him as one of the first members of the Cartography Commission in April 1883¹⁷. At the start of the Berlin Conference

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Henri Wesseling, *Le Partage de l'Afrique*, Paris, Denoël, 1996, p. 137-220.

¹⁶ Marta Carvalho Santos, « SOUSA, Luciano Baptista Cordeiro de (1844-1900) », in Maria Filomena Mónica (dir.), *Dicionário Biográfico Parlamentar, 1834-1910. Vol. 3*, Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais e Assembleia da República, 2005, p. 844-849; African Committee of the Lisbon Geographical Society, *Portugal and the Congo: A Statement* (London: Edward Stanford, 1883).

¹⁷ Report from the Minister of the Navy and Overseas Territories, 19 April 1883, *Diário do Governo*,

in November 1884, Roma du Bocage was already immersed in colonial affairs, having participated in the discussions for the systematic production of cartography about Africa, including the coordination of a detailed chart of the last hundred kilometers of the Congo River¹⁸. Once an international conference in Berlin became an unavoidable reality, Bocage had full confidence in his son's abilities and appointed him as additional secretary to the Portuguese delegation in Berlin¹⁹. Roma du Bocage joined the Marquess of Penafiel (1819-1891), Portugal's Plenipotentiary Minister at Berlin, António de Serpa Pimentel (1825-1900), Bocage's predecessor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and an important figure in the Regenerator Party, and Cordeiro, the three main members of the official delegation²⁰.

Portugal was in clear disadvantage at the outset of the negotiations, since the politically and economically more powerful France and Germany mounted opposition and had forced Britain to withdraw its initial support to the Portuguese takeover of the Congo. Although the Portuguese delegation was skilful in the technical discussions, by December 1884 it seemed that all claims to territories both north and south of the last segment of the Congo River would be ultimately lost²¹. The experts in African geography that Bocage had placed at the center of discussions in Berlin provided some leverage to Portugal in the diplomatic negotiations, but they were unable to compensate the country's political and economic limitations in the international arena. Aware of such disadvantageous position from the outset, Bocage and his diplomats placed their hopes on diplomatic rather than scientific evidence produced in Africa. To understand how such diplomatic evidence could be used to gain some competitive advantage in high-profile negotiations in Europe, it is necessary to consider how European sovereignty was established in Africa in the early stages of the Scramble.

In the 1880s, most of the European colonial territories in Africa were not tightly controlled by the various colonial administrations. Important as it could be in economic terms, the construction of large infrastructures such as railways was simultaneously understood as a costly and time-consuming investment that would never yield rapid results. European colonialist strategies relied instead on

n° 89, 1883, p. 944.

¹⁸ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU), Lisbon, Box 720-1, Letter from the President of the Cartography Commission to the Director-General of the Portuguese Overseas Territories, [Lisbon], 15 November 1883; AHU, Lisbon, Box 667, Report of the Cartography Commission to the Director-General of the Portuguese Overseas Territories, [Lisbon], 5 June 1884.

¹⁹ Maria Adelaide Marques, « BOCAGE, Carlos Roma du (1853-1918) », in Maria Filomena Mónica (dir.), *Dicionário Biográfico Parlamentar, 1834-1910. Vol. 1*, Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais e Assembleia da República, 2005, p. 393-395.

²⁰ Anonymous, « A Conferencia de Berlim – Os delegados portugueses ». *O Occidente*, n° 228, 1885, p. 91.

²¹ Extract of letter from Portugal's Plenipotentiary Minister in Berlin to Bocage, 24 November 1884 *apud* Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Negocios Externos : Documentos apresentados ás Cortes na Sessão Legislativa de 1885. Questão do Zaire, Volume 2*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional, 1885, p. 95-97. *Ibid.*, 11 December 1884 *apud ibid.*, p. 101-102.

producing as quickly as possible any type of evidence that could serve as proof of their claims to a region, and the fastest way to do it was to resort to local agreements. Under the pretext of scientific explorations or in explicit military missions, colonial agents travelled across Africa and tried to extract treaties from African rulers that ceded their sovereignty rights from Africans who ruled over particular regions²². In Portugal's case, Angola's Governor-General Francisco Ferreira do Amaral (1844-1923) had been sending militaries to areas north of the Congo River since 1883 for that purpose, and when the Berlin Conference started treaties had already been signed with various African rulers²³. Bocage, who had been more closely in contact with Amaral in the quality of Navy Minister and supported his expansionist moves, was aware of such missions and ensured that all diplomats in Berlin would use the existence of these treaties to gain leverage in the negotiations. The strategy ultimately had some positive outcomes for Portugal: instead of losing both margins of the last hundred kilometers of the Congo River to Belgian interests, the southern margin was retained, as well as a small strip to the north, which corresponded to the sovereignty cessions treaties that Portugal's colonial agents had already extracted from African rulers²⁴. Although the Berlin Conference was not organized to solve the complex problem of partitioning the continent, it nevertheless defined the rules that must be obeyed for the recognition of any new takeover: to communicate it to the other colonial powers, and to exercise a form of effective authority on the ground. These were not so important in what they defined, since they were specifically restricted to annexations in coastal areas, which were almost completely occupied by then, but they were relevant in what they signaled: the confirmation of a principle of "effective occupation" that was bound to become the norm for the African hinterland in the near future. The recognition of the Congo Free State in a quite significant area in Central Africa was both the corollary of these dispositions and a clear sign of how they could be henceforth used to vindicate colonial claims²⁵.

Studying the past to understand the present

How can this case help to understand current political and diplomatic challenges? One of the results of the Berlin negotiations was the formation of a Portuguese colonial territory north of the Congo River, devoid of any land connection to its southern margin: the Cabinda exclave. This territory became part of the colony of Angola and it was retained after the colony gained

²² On the utilization of treaties, see Steven Press, *Rogue Empires: Contracts and Conmen in Europe's Scramble for Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).

²³ Report from the Minister of the Navy and Overseas Territories, 17 December 1883 *apud Diario do Governo*, n° 288, 1883, p. 3087.

²⁴ Letter from Portugal's chargé d'affaires in Paris to Bocage, 6 January 1885 *apud* Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Negocios Externos: Documentos ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 106-107; Letter from Portugal's Plenipotentiary Minister in Berlin to Bocage, 16 February 1885 *apud ibid.*, p. 128-134.

²⁵ Henri Wesseling, *Le partage de l'Afrique*, *op. cit.*, p. 223-230.

independence in 1975. However, its relationship with the Angolan central government has been difficult, since the exclave has harbored a secessionist movement that has sometimes resorted to violent actions. Economic reasons have been fundamental to the government's opposition to the separatists because this small territory possesses most of Angola's oil reserves²⁶. Such is one of the various conflicts in present-day African states that are a direct consequence of European colonialism²⁷. Specific negotiation strategies must be developed in order to find peaceful solutions for these conflicts, and the science diplomacy considerations here discussed are necessary to understand their origins.

My 20-minute presentation was followed by a 15-minute period for questions directly related to the case. I was also asked to organize a more extended 45-minute case study breakout later in the day, so that I could discuss with students the historical parallels between the old and new "Scramble for Africa". This breakout was preceded by lectures on power and strategy in science diplomacy, which helped me to reframe questions and explore their more operative potential, while giving all of the summer school participants a more concrete understanding of the current meanings of science diplomacy. Although I considered the similarities between the historical "Scramble for Africa" and its contemporary version, I also stressed three important ways in which the current race diverges from the past one. First, there is now a global competition for power in Africa not restricted to European countries, as China, the United States, India, Japan, Turkey, and Brazil, are also playing a part²⁸. Second, such competition is more directed at controlling the continent's natural resources and a share of the economy, since the political sovereignty of African states remains unquestioned. The European colonial powers were eager to exploit Africa's natural resources in the past, but the race was primarily driven by the desire to secure historical claims to certain territories and/or limit the colonial expansion of adversaries²⁹. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the economic colonization of African countries may lead to the acquisition of significant influence over their political destinies and foster inequalities³⁰. Third, power dynamics are now more complex because of the proliferation of non-state actors, such as transnational companies, international bodies, and non-governmental organizations. This complexity must be considered if initiatives for cooperation and conflict

²⁶ David Birmingham, *A Short History of Modern Angola* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 86-87, 115, 121-122.

²⁷ Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

²⁸ Pádraig Carmody, *The New Scramble ...*, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Lee Wengraf, *Extracting Profit...*, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Historians have termed these phenomena the formation of "informal" or "invisible" empires. For example, see A. G. Hopkins, "Overseas Expansion, Imperialism, and Empire, 1815-1914", in T. C. W. Blanning, eds., *The Nineteenth Century. Europe 1789-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 210-240.

resolution are to be built with African countries³¹. In what concerns the European Union, it must be noted that persistent power dynamics that place African states in a disadvantageous position in joint negotiations have constituted a significant challenge for cooperation³².

After the case study breakout, students were given time to engage in an exercise in which they proposed policies to build cooperation between the European Union and African countries. It was a period of autonomous work that all case study authors did not follow. The students presented their results in the following day and had the opportunity to receive feedback from professionals working in the European Commission. The discussion that ensued allowed for the enumeration of some important aspects. A key one is to first identify the needs of particular African institutions and countries before any programs are designed. Are fundamental infrastructures lacking? Do companies need specific scientific and technological expertise? Could entrepreneurial skills be strengthened? And do they intersect with strategic domains of the European Union's agenda, such as environment, migration policy, or economic development? Exchange programs and fellowships for African students and professionals are a possibility, but joining programs already implemented locally may be more relevant in certain cases. The European Union can also facilitate joint partnerships with other countries, such as the United States. Moreover, global issues may be more successfully addressed at a supranational level, by building partnerships with the African Union. Such effort must be continuously mobilized, since every negotiation has risks and sometimes the implementation of programs can face resistance from local peoples. I followed the discussion with interest, learning from the pragmatic concerns raised by the professionals at the European Commission, and I appreciated how developing strategic thinking skills was crucial to design policies for cooperation. Such present-oriented considerations made me think about the ways in which I communicate my research, and how the questions I ask influence how complex problems are understood by non-specialist audiences, and have a social impact.

Overall, the participants' feedback on the program was quite positive and demonstrated the success of the first Warsaw Science Diplomacy School. The students learned more about the history of Europe-Africa relations, the impact of colonialism, and the challenges it poses for the future, utilizing historical knowledge to better analyze current discourses about Africa from a critical perspective. Although science diplomacy is often heralded as a means to build cooperation, after engaging with my case study the students were able to appreciate how science diplomacy strategies have also been deployed in the past

³¹ For example, see Deborah Avant, "NGOs, Corporations and Security Transformation in Africa", vol. 21 (2007/2), p. 143–161.

³² Niall Duggan, Luis Mah, Toni Haastrup, "Africa's relations with the EU: a reset is possible if Europe changes its attitude", *The Conversation*, 17 February 2022, online: <https://theconversation.com/africas-relations-with-the-eu-a-reset-is-possible-if-europe-changes-its-attitude-177250> [accessed 29 September 2022].

to gain competitive advantage over rivals. The tension between cooperation and competition is fundamental to current international relations, and exploring both dimensions raises awareness to the variety of ways in which science diplomacy is deployed in the present and the possibilities it presents for the future.