

**Veiga, José Tomaz Wahnnon C. 2021. A „Democracia“
Nacional Revolucionária. O Projecto Totalitário do
PAIGC/PAICV, Cabo Verde 1975-1990. [The National
Revolutionary “Democracy”: The Totalitarian Project of
the PAIGC/PAICV, Cape Verde, 1975-1990]. Praia: Pedro
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The decolonisation of the Portuguese overseas dominions was possible only because of the Carnation Revolution in 1974, which happened much later than in the case of the French, British, Belgian and Spanish African empires. Portuguese revolutionary officers resigned from any way of democratic elections and the multiparty political system and handed over power to the hands of military nationalist organisations linked to the superpowers of that time. Cape Verde, until that time closely linked to Portugal, was ironically taken by Cape Verdean guerrillas who from 1963 were fighting outside of the islands alongside combatants against the Portuguese colonial army (to a large extent constituted by Africans) in continental Portuguese Guinea, from 1974 Guinea-Bissau. The leftist character of the revolution and the legacy of guerrilla leader Amílcar Cabral led to a situation in which Cape Verde was ruled by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC – *Partido Africano de Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde*) with a radical leftist programme inspired by the communist model. At the time of the revolution, the party only had a few supporters in the country. Although it had no established organisation in the country, the PAIGC led Cape Verde from the declaration of independence on 5 July 1975.

The single-party system remained in existence from 1975 until 1990 and was already strongly criticised by several Cape Verdean analysts or political scientists, such as Onésimo Silveira (*A Tortura em nome do Partido Único; o PAICV e a sua Polícia Política*, 2nd ed. Mindelo: Ponto e Vírgula, 1992) or Humberto Cardoso (*O Partido Único em Cabo Verde, um Assalto à Esperança*, Praia: INCV, 1992). However, José Veiga analyses the nature of the Cape Verdean non-democratic system in greater detail and takes the analyses even further than his predecessors. He aptly highlights the detrimental beginnings of the system when supporters of the imported Guinean-Cape Verdean PAIGC in December 1974, still under the interim

government, attacked the radio station of *Rádio Barlavento* and imprisoned the leaders of two local political parties, People's Union of the Cape Verde Islands (UPICV – *União do Povo das Ilhas de Cabo Verde*) and the Cape Verde Democratic Union (UDC – *União Democrática de Cabo Verde*), in order to prevent them from taking part in the government.

José Veiga was himself a member of the PAIGC government which heavily persecuted opponents of the regime, among which were also youth who posted pamphlets about the arrogance of power in 1977 in the second largest city, Mindelo. This was the first time the government used torture as a weapon to deal with the “enemies of the nation.” For this reason, the author was in the first wave of dissent criticising the totalitarian character of the government, who left the PAIGC. The system did not change its nature even after the 1980 coup in Guinea-Bissau when the project of a union between Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau was abandoned and the ruling party of Cape Verde changed its name to the African Party of Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV – *Partido Africano de Independência de Cabo Verde*) in 1981. The governing party heavily suppressed the people's protests against insensitive land reforms on the island of Santo Antão in August 1981 that they labelled as “enemy actions.” In 1988 the PAICV tried to change the unproductive maintenance of the totalitarian model with a contradictory declaration of democratisation that aimed at “strengthening the leading role of the party.” The fall of the Soviet model after the unsuccessful “perestroika” was also clearly visible during the third PAICV congress of January 1989. A significant part of the delegates openly showed dissatisfaction with the results of the government and with the violent suppression of alternative ideas. The period of the single-party system ended when the opposition party Movement for Democracy (MpD, *Movimento para a Democracia*) was formed and democracy was established in 1990.

The author illustrates fifteen years of a totalitarian regime with analyses of numerous primary documents. He presents laws and decrees with targets of persecution, analyses the manipulative texts of the period in seditious campaigns against the “Trotskyists” and critics of the regime, and the abuse of justice. Analysing the features of the totalitarian system and presenting these with events taking place on the islands of Cape Verde, he aptly highlights the excuses with which the PAICV during its monopoly of power and later defended its actions, such as the “political illiteracy of the masses.”

Although the work is compositionally unbalanced and not very reader-friendly, it is very complex and argumentatively convincing in comparison

with similar descriptions of totalitarian practice. Its advantage is the use of all available sources, from constitutional documents to minor oral testimonies. It remains a wish that similar analyses complement political science studies of the modern history of African countries in the critical period following the rather rapid or unsuccessful decolonisation.

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