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Summary

This thesis examines the nature of the relationship that developed between Portugal and South Africa from the end of the Second World War until the 25 of April 1974, the date of the Portuguese revolution that led to Portugal’s disengagement from the African continent. It was during this period that Portugal experienced growing international hostility for wanting to retain control over her Asian and African colonies, as well as increasing internal pressure, which manifested itself in long-term insurgency wars in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. In addition, the Portuguese authorities also experienced strong opposition in mainland Portugal against the continuation of the wars in its African territories.

At the same time, South Africa was also experiencing growing opposition in the international arena as a result of its racially discriminatory legislation. In addition, there was internal pressure from anti-apartheid groups. Moreover, towards the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the South African authorities also had to deal with growing SWAPO activity in the territory that was then known as South West Africa, which is now Namibia.

Although it is widely assumed that there was a straightforward alliance between the governments of both countries, the reality was much more complex than existing perceptions about this issue. The relationship that developed between the governments of both countries grew as a result of several crucial challenges such as the growing mobilization of African nationalism, as well as the acute hostility that the two countries experienced in the international arena. It must be pointed out that both countries viewed their close interaction as something that brought tangible benefits to one another. However, this did not mean that the governments of both countries always had common objectives or a common
vision of how they should tackle their own problems. In fact, the two sides had serious disagreements and they developed different approaches on how to deal with internal and external pressure. In addition, the image that the two countries wanted to portray of themselves in the international arena did not usually coincide. Such different approaches effectively meant that in terms of political relations the two sides had to take into account each other’s peculiarities and way of doing things.

This thesis also investigates the secret links between the two countries and why such links had to remain a secret in order to avoid external scrutiny. It follows a straight chronological order that seeks to highlight most if not all aspects that characterized political relations between the two sides as well as the existing contradictions within such a relationship.

The aim of this thesis is to examine, expose, divulge and clarify what became an important informal alliance during the Cold War, as well as how the joint efforts of such an alliance played themselves out during the long counter-insurgency wars that took place in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. The collapse of Portuguese rule in Angola and Mozambique marked the beginning of a period that led to the collapse of white rule in Rhodesia and increasing pressure on the South African military forces deployed in the former South West Africa. It is thus seen as one of the most important markers during the period that culminated in the end of the apartheid system in South Africa.