

Portugal — Foreign Policy

Portugal's current foreign policy priority is the successful management of its first presidency of the European Council — from January to June 1992. For Portugal, the challenge is to exercise this leadership efficiently, avoiding controversy, as the European Community (EC) proceeds towards economic and political union.

Portugal's presidency will be dominated by EC budgetary reforms (the "Delors II package"), the completion of the single market, the question of enlarging EC membership, and the challenge of unrest in Yugoslavia. The European Council meeting in Lisbon in June will address these issues and assess the EC's future priorities, notably its common foreign policy and security role.

Another priority of Portuguese foreign policy is the reinforcement of ties with its former colonies in Africa (Angola, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, Cap Verde and Guinea Bissau) and in Latin America (Brazil). In Southern Africa, the Portuguese government mediated a peace accord in Angola in May 1991.

Strengthening its traditional ties with the Arab countries is also very important to Portugal, which is interested in the current Middle East peace process. With respect to its former interests in Indonesia, Portugal continues to defend East Timor's right to independence and self-determination.

Since the 1974 revolution, Portugal's elected governments have maintained a policy of loyalty toward NATO, and a commitment to transatlantic ties. Membership in NATO is a cornerstone of Portuguese defence policy, together with its membership in the Western European Union.

A significant element of the country's foreign policy is supporting the large Portuguese community abroad, which numbers some about four million. Portugal has established a secretary of state for liaison with this community, which is especially prominent in France (900,000) and in South Africa (600,000). Nearly one million Americans and 400,000 Canadians are of Portuguese origin.

Multilaterally, Portugal has demonstrated a strong commitment to achieving progress on human rights, disarmament issues and the environment.