Iberism is a polysemic term that has had different meanings over the last two centuries depending on what was meant to be transmitted with it. On the one hand, it refers to a rapprochement, interest and even political union of Spain and Portugal, but within a wide range of chromatic greys that would go from the fusionist proposals to a mere cultural, sports or culinary interest for the neighbouring country. The range of signifiers includes cultural and literary proposals of mutual interest - which we could also call Hispano or Lusophilia - and also more specific political formulae of union and fraternisation that proliferated especially in the periods of greater awareness of the decadence of the Iberian states and their little power of influence in the international sphere.

The different Portuguese political cultures (conservative, liberal, monarchical or republican), fully nationalised towards the end of the 19th century and aware of the danger of this polyphony of meanings, have tried, in order to defend themselves from the Iberist aspirations, to restrict its meaning to a project of political union. Therefore, an Iberist in the Portuguese political language is someone who advocates the union of Portugal and Spain, without any more nuances than the model of state or territorial administration which the union would develop with. On the other hand, its employment and its definitions in the Spanish case have been much more polysemic and open to more cultural interpretations. Its unionist profiles remain marginal in some minority political groups or associations, but the its main use refers to cultural patterns of mutual interest. These differences in definition have been consolidated in the national imaginaries of both States, and reveal two opposing attitudes to what is Iberian.

Today, the term Iberism is used and means different things on either side of the border. The underlying problem is the notion of sharing a common space, the Iberian Peninsula, and an even historical and cultural trajectory, but in the context of two states constituted independently, with their laws, borders, national political structures and imaginaries built on a relationship of enmity or disinterest.

Throughout the contemporary world, both Iberists and anti-Iberists have tried to demonstrate that geography, history, character, language or social habits were mimetic or, on the contrary, were marked by a deep division between two different peoples from their origins. In relation to the space occupied by Spain and Portugal, the debates have revolved around whether the border has been raised artificially or whether it has responded to a natural demarcation of two towns that have their "costas voltadas" -
backs turned -. Depending on how political cultures position themselves in these debates, they foster a different view of the other.

Due to this plurality of meanings, we have opted for the usage of the concept of Iberisms, in plural, allowing for the multiplicity of interpretations and proposals that have been found throughout the Contemporary Age. These Iberisms arose in the heat of the bourgeois liberal revolutions with the purpose of transforming the present of the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies. To do this, they relied on the past – a field of experiences - and in the future - horizons of expectations - according to the terminology employed by Reinhart Koselleck, a German concept historian. The changes brought about by Modernity had the potential to redeem the past, reorder it and rewrite it, while projecting the community towards a better starring future, moved by the teleological force of progress. Nationalisms, which erupted with their modern forms at the beginning of the 19th century and caused the transfer of sacredness from religion to the State, were the scenario in which societies, which articulated no longer in royal heritages but in national groups, proposed reordering the world according to scientific and cultural criteria.

Can we speak of Iberisms before the Contemporary Age? Not in historiographical terms. Pre-modern Iberism’s purpose was to unite the peninsular kingdoms through the marriage of both dynasties, without major cultural or identity pretensions. For its part, modern Iberism burst into the context of nationalism and sought, under various ideological banners, to take advantage of the expectations of transformation opened by the revolution to restructure the European map. These Iberisms cannot be understood without relating them to the awareness of the peninsular decadence that could be overcome by the gradual agglomeration of its peoples. Both in Spain and Portugal, the regenerationist proposals went through the construction of transnational projects and not so much through nationalist introspection. Iberisms centered much of the yearning for peninsular regeneration, and were replaced at the end of the 19th century by Hispanoamericanism in Spain and by Lusotropicalism and Africanism in Portugal. The idea of decadence, far from breaking through the peninsula with the Finisecular colonial crises (1890 and 1898), was inherent in the construction of Spanish and Portuguese nationalism from the beginning of the 19th century.

Iberisms mutated over time as did their supporters and detractors. The term adapted itself to each historical context and to the unstable balance between the idea of decadence and regeneration. We offer a diachronic evolution of how Iberisms were posed as different solutions to changing contexts below.

The first Iberisms: 1814-1840
The first Iberist postulates were nourished by political theories in vogue in the Europe of the late 18th century and not so much by the peninsular geographic fact. We refer to cosmopolitanism of enlightened tradition, to federalist internationalism, to Christian ecumenism, to the ideals of perpetual peace raised by Kant or to economic liberalism. To these political principles that advocated the gradual fusion of peoples, one should add the cultural nationalism and romanticism, which nations organised according to languages, cultures, histories, *Volkgeist*, etc. Iberists were nourished from these sources throughout the 19th century.

After the War of Independence and the return of Ferdinand VII to the throne in 1814, the Spanish liberals went into exile to Paris and London, where they established contact with Portuguese liberals and began to outline a shared Iberian solution to overthrow absolutism. In 1826 they offered the Spanish throne to King Pedro IV of Portugal, whom they considered more akin to liberalism. The proposal was not heeded and the following year the king of Portugal abdicated, starting a civil war between absolutists and liberals, which had its reflection in Spain in 1833, in the Carlist wars. The liberals, whose Iberism was circumstantial and only a means to overthrow absolutism, set aside their peninsular expectations to support the liberal queens: Maria de Braganza and Isabel of Bourbon.

**Iberisms and nationalisms: 1840-1868**

When the liberal states of the Iberian Peninsula began, the first works emerged which, taking Italian and German unionism as a mirror and model, raised a wide array of cultural, essentialist, historical and geographical arguments favourable to the formation of an Iberian nation under different political formulae. In this sense, the reference work in the field of monarchical unionism for several decades was *A Ibéria* by Sinibaldo de Mas, published anonymously in Lisbon in 1851 with a prologue by Latino Coelho. It had five editions, in both languages, and a wide dissemination as shown by the arduous debates it generated in the peninsular press. The central idea was to articulate a respectful union with the idiosyncrasies of each territory based on a dynastic union aimed at guaranteeing peace between two peoples that had been historically confronted in order regenerate them.

This work resonated in other similar approaches, either monarchical, or republican, such as those of Fernando Garrido, Andrés Borrego, Sixto Cámara, Carlos José Caldeira, José Félix Henriques Nogueira, etc., and was accompanied by a parallel process of cultural rediscovery of the neighbouring country through the foundation of bilingual Iberian literary magazines or the creation of literary societies whose aims were, in the long term, overcoming identity barriers and building an Iberian union. The dynamics of the times encouraged one to think that Iberism was inevitable. The railroad,
scientific knowledge or capitalism were in favour of the "civilising force of progress", homogenising the world.

Some of these proposals, such as that of Pío Gullón in 1861, broke the trend of mutual respect between both nationalities to demand an integral fusion of the peninsular peoples under the hegemony of Castile. This type of proposals generated an impetuous response in Portuguese public opinion and the creation of the Associação 1º de Dezembro, a company that sought to keep the memory of the "ominous" domination of the Felipes alive and articulate a patriotic response to Iberism, which they identified as a new Spanish expansionist attempt. The Associação played a key role in the nationalisation of the Portuguese with historicist narratives whose identity roots were derived from the Manichaeans memory of "Spanish rule".

The Iberisms that could have been: 1868-1874

The historical period in which Iberims had most drive, was probably during the Spanish Revolutionary Six-Year Period, in which they tried to put all the accumulated baggage during the previous decades into practice. The Iberist expectations, once again circumstantial and subjected to superior political ends, clashed with the instability of the period, the rivalries between the revolutionary factions and, above all, with the transversal rejection of Portuguese political cultures.

Liberal monarchists and progressive Spaniards, in the process of seeking a new king, offered the throne to Ferdinand of Coburg, father of the king of Portugal who also had liberal sympathies. Ángel Fernández de los Ríos led a secret diplomatic expedition to offer him the crown, which he rejected on several occasions. For their part, the Spanish republicans, especially the federals of Pi y Margall, kept their Iberian expectations intact, but subordinated them to a higher purpose: to guarantee the continuity of the I Republic. Both attempts failed but it should be noted that the Six-Year Period was a time where peninsular ties were strengthened.

The Spanish revolutionaries had the sympathy of a group of young Portuguese - Antero de Quental, Oliveira Martins or Eça de Queirós - with regenerationist profiles and who tried to take advantage of the momentum of events in Spain to transform the politics of their country. Under the direction of Antero de Quental, they convened the cycle of Conferências Democráticas do Casino Lisbonense in 1871, in which Antero exposed Causas da decadência dos povos peninsulares, the first historical interpretation in the key of cultural and geographical unity of the Iberian Peninsula. The successive failures of the group would eventually destroy its regenerationist impulses.

Iberisms in the margins: 1874-1898
Faced with the failure of the Revolutionary Six-Year Period and the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy on the basis of a political turno, Iberisms were cornered from the political debate as radical, destabilising or utopian proposals. In Spain, regenerationist expectations had shifted to America, from which a cultural and geostrategic alliance was expected to redeem itself from national ills. In Portugal, where the rejection of Iberism was already transversal to all political cultures, the republicans joined in a gradual process of nationalisation that led them to discard their peninsular remorae to present themselves as patriotic opposition to the Braganza. That is how it was staged in 1880, in the commemoration of the third centenary of the death of Camões. We can only identify brief attempts to articulate new Iberist expectations after the Portuguese colonial crisis of 1890, which encouraged the solidarity responses of Spanish students, intellectuals and politicians with certain Iberian reminiscences. The regenerationist proposals of some Republicans should also be mentioned, as is the case of Magalhães Lima, who imagined a pan-Latin political alliance of the countries of the Mediterranean Southwest (Italy, France, Spain and Portugal), to curb the change of hegemony towards the countries of the north.

This was also the leitmotif of the main Iberian themed work of this period, História da Civilização Ibérica, by the Portuguese Oliveira Martins, published in 1879, in response to Thomas Buckle’s History of Civilization of England, who had pointed out the incapacity of peninsular peoples for science, progress or democracy. The work was a reference for all researchers of the shared peninsular past due to its particular theory of Iberian civilisation. It is significant of the new times then, regarding Iberims, that the reference work of this period was not unionist like that of Sinibaldo de Más, but was a study of cultural links respecting both sovereignties instead. Along these lines, a literary Iberism materialised in publications, magazines, meetings and artistic associations did live on, in which writers such as Clarín, Valera, Galdós and Menéndez Pelayo actively participated.

**Intermittent Iberisms: 1898-1936**

At the dawn of the 20th century, Iberisms had lost their halo of political regenerationist project. Since then, they had several upsurges, always linked to specific situations and again as a mechanism of amendment rather than as a central project. The debates between Anglophiles and pan-Germanists during World War I were especially significant. The latter advocated taking advantage of the military context to conquer Portugal and Gibraltar - spaces of English influence - and thus close the Spanish Iberian peninsula. Iberisms were also present in the Renascença of Catalan literature and in its nationalist derivation. Authors such as Joan Maragall or Cases Carbó defended the peninsular restructuring in three major cultural and linguistic groups: Portugal, Castile and Catalonia, where Portugal acted as a counterweight to the Castilian influence.
These proposals were confronted with the disparity of governments on either side of the border, which were cooling peninsular relations and consolidating the topic of "costas voltadas." The I Portuguese Republic, which was proclaimed in 1910 and survived until 1926, remained during the reign of Alfonso XIII. For its part, the II Republic, between 1931-1939, took place during the Estado Novo, under the dictatorship of Oliveira Salazar, who did not hesitate to logistically and diplomatically support the military uprising and the Franco regime in 1936.

**The first "burial" of Iberism: 1936-1975**

Franco and Salazar, who were deeply anti-liberal and nationalist, soon sealed an alliance that slammed the door on Iberian expectations by signing, first, a non-aggression pact, which was later translated into an Iberian Bloc (1942) in the turbulent context of World War II and which would last with its ups and downs until the "Carnation Revolution" and the death of the Spanish dictator. They were two very skilful dictatorships in adapting their ideological profiles to each juncture, which allowed them to survive the defeat of fascism for another thirty years. At the level of expectations of international regeneration, the Franco regime took refuge in the rhetoric of Hispanicity, while the Estado Novo did so in the maintenance of the African possessions at all costs.

However, a civilisational Iberism was at the origin of fascist ideologies and parties in both countries. The rhetoric of the "defense of civilisation" and other narratives of national-spiritual content supported the ideological sources from which dictatorships were nourished: the Lusitanian integralism, proposed by António Sardinha, and the Falangist fascism of Giménez Caballero or Ramiro de Maeztu.

**The second "burial" of Iberism: 1975-2021**

The consolidation of the democratic system in both countries and their accession to the European Union in 1985 opened a new period of regenerationist expectations turned into a transnational, in this case, European model. In this period, peninsular political strategies have not been comprehensively addressed and a large part of their cultural, infrastructure or geostrategic projects continue to be stranded. In academic and artistic terms, progress has been made in the Iberian dialogue, especially in border communities, but they have not materialised in state policies or noteworthy proposals for the creation of a remarkable shared Iberian space. This is what José Saramago perceived, who in his novel *A Jangada de Pedra*, in 1986, metaphorically imagined that the Pyrenees were torn apart and that the peninsula became an island moving towards Ibero-America.

**The multiple faces of failure**
Did Iberisms fail? If we look at their political and unionist meaning, the answer is yes. Today Spain and Portugal are two independent nation-states. However, within the framework of the European Union, most of the Iberian proposals: free movement, the single currency, the system of shared titles, supranational parliaments, etc., have been implemented. It is paradoxical that the two great horizons of Spanish regenerationist expectations of the Contemporary Age, Hispanoamericanism and Iberism, failed while a European political project that has gradually managed to generate a new space of shared expectations for Iberian societies was being consolidated.

Why did the Iberisms fail? As a central hypothesis, perhaps we can point out their origin in specific crisis contexts, as a political and national solution to a specific problem. Once that problem was overcome, or a better regenerationist solution was found, Iberisms began to lose their transforming halo. More than an end in themselves, they were a means to regenerate two states in the process of nationalisation, hence the nationalist imaginaries ended up imposing themselves like a steamroller and relegating Iberisms to the plane of utopias. The process took place during the unification of Germany and Italy, but the difference was that in the peninsula, Iberism was a tool of progress and not an end in itself. As the Portuguese journalist Latino Coelho put it in the prologue to A União Ibérica by Sixto Cámara in 1859, the Iberian union was an "idea", not a "policy."

Furthermore, "Iberist" accusations used as mechanisms of nationalist political opposition: already in the second half of the 19th century, the Portuguese Iberists tried to avoid the use of the term so that they would not be identified as anti-patriotic, which led to its gradual discrediting and disuse. We could also refer to a generational question: the same authors, politicians and intellectuals who in their youth participated in the Iberist expectations began moderating their Iberian momentum until they managed to deny it in the name of realpolitik as they entered the State administration and began to occupy positions of political relevance. The construction of peninsular duality over two sovereign states was unstoppable. Above all, the failure of Iberism is the result of the overwhelming victory of the construction of two nation-states in the peninsular space.

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