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**Shifting silence, enduring shame,  
ambivalent memories: an oral history of the  
Portuguese colonial war (1961 – 1974)**

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**Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Sussex**

**May 2014**

**WORK NOT SUBMITTED ELSEWHERE FOR EXAMINATION**

I hereby declare that this Thesis has not been and will not be submitted, in whole or in part, to another University for the award of any other degree.

**Signature:**.....

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> May 2014

**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**

ÂNGELA DA CONCEIÇÃO FERREIRA CAMPOS, PhD

**SHIFTING SILENCE, ENDURING SHAME, AMBIVALENT MEMORIES:  
AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE PORTUGUESE COLONIAL WAR (1961-1974)**

**SUMMARY**

This Thesis explores the lived memory of the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974), having at its core an analysis of thirty-six oral history interviews with ex-combatants of this conflict. The meanings that the combatants attributed to their war experiences then and now are its analytical focus. This life history approach is framed by a wide assessment of the public memory of this event from 1974 until the first decade of the new millennium, as well as by a review of the war memory theory field and a methodological reflection on doing oral history interviews with Portuguese war veterans.

Through the historical analysis of the public memory of this war the Thesis offers its general intervention. A methodological intervention occurs through providing an analysis of the colonial war based upon personal narratives of its ex-combatants, typically absent in the Portuguese context. Combined, both facets unravel not only this war's lived experience but also significant insights about the individual and collective impact of the conflict in Portugal.

This Thesis navigates the memorial complexities at play in a post-colonial, post-authoritarian society oscillating between remembrance and forgetting. It highlights not only the challenges faced by historical research on such a sensitive, underexplored topic, but also the vital role to be assumed by history – and particularly by oral history – in expanding our understanding of this colonial war and of the men who fought it.



## Contents

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter One: War memory theory .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Public memory of the Portuguese colonial war .....</b>	<b>39</b>
Introduction to the Portuguese colonial war and its ex-combatants .....	39
Colonial war remembrance in Portugal .....	55
The postwar silence .....	57
Breaking the silence: time for revival .....	68
Conclusions .....	88
<b>Chapter Three: Interviewing ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war .....</b>	<b>93</b>
Significance of the oral history approach .....	93
Methodological reflections .....	95
<b>Chapter Four: Experiences of war .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>I. The soldiers' war .....</b>	<b>108</b>
‘I really have to go to war’ .....	108
‘Will I come back?’ .....	112
‘What am I doing here?’ .....	114
‘One day at a time’ .....	118
‘We were really in a war’ .....	127
‘Sent to command over a hundred men’ .....	136
‘They have no idea’ .....	140
<b>II. Coming home .....</b>	<b>142</b>
‘The happiest man alive’ .....	142
‘It’s over’ .....	146
‘Everybody has already forgotten’ .....	149
‘A man doesn’t cry’ .....	152
‘The marks remain forever’ .....	155
‘Why has this happened to me?’ .....	163

<b>Chapter Five: Living the aftermath</b> .....	164
<b>I. The years of silence</b> .....	164
‘A friendlier skeleton’ .....	164
‘Maybe I’m fine’ .....	167
‘Until the day I die’ .....	174
‘What was this war for?’ .....	177
‘War was war [and] war was that’ .....	181
‘An abnormal situation’ .....	187
<b>II. ‘Don’t let others tell your war for you’: the ex-combatants’ relation with the changing public narrative</b> .....	191
‘I fulfilled my duty’ .....	191
‘A group that also included me’ .....	197
‘Extinguished, forgotten’ .....	205
‘It was a colonial war’ .....	214
The history of ‘the future’ .....	218
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	232
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	247
<b>Appendices</b> .....	270
I. Map of Portugal and African provinces (before 1975) .....	271
II. Biographical information table .....	272
III. Advertisement in daily Portuguese newspapers .....	274
IV. Project protocols (Portuguese originals and English translation) .....	275

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## Introduction

In the early afternoon of the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2007, I found myself in a small Southern Portuguese town sitting in the living room of an average family. Before me, a flustered and angry tattooed war veteran narrated his war experience in Angola from 1967 to 1969, adding the highlights and themes of nearly four decades that had elapsed since his return. Despite subtle suggestions to do otherwise, his wife sat disturbingly in the background, quietly for over an hour, then suddenly interrupted our interview when a question was asked about the consequences of war on the veteran's present daily life. What ensued was the domestic manifestation – clearly often enacted – of a wider socio-historical dysfunctionality. Between mutual accusations, tears and shouts, the state was blamed, the war was cursed, the army was both exalted and denigrated, and plenty of regrets and demands were expressed. The scene was compelling and vital in its pungent authenticity. Like many others in Portugal, decades after the conflict, this family did not know what to do with 'their war', their 'hell'. Yet, they appeared to have found some sort of releasing satisfaction in sharing it with a willing listener, namely this by now somewhat bewildered oral history interviewer. We parted amicably, with the smiling former bazooka handler reiterating that, had he that chance, he would have loved to have said what he had said to me earlier 'live on TV'. I left their flat with yet another example of the long-lasting impact of war on human beings and society.<sup>1</sup>

Alfredo Sousa, the ex-combatant in question, was one of the nearly one million Portuguese conscripted servicemen sent between 1961 to 1974 to defend the African territories of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, then an integral part of Portugal.

Our encounter happened because of my interest in studying the effects of the Portuguese colonial war in Portuguese society through the lived experiences of its ex-combatants. My choice of topic was not in any way random. Being Portuguese, from an early age I could sense the uneasy legacy of a country that had maintained a dictatorship and a colonial empire until 1974, just a few years before my birth. The new democratic era heralded many social and infrastructural improvements. Portugal expectantly looked forward to its future. Perhaps not surprisingly, under such circumstances, silence and

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Alfredo Sousa (Interviewee 19), 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007.

divisiveness quickly descended upon the authoritarian, colonial past, in a long-lasting, far-reaching trend. In particular, the three-front, thirteen-year-long war for the maintenance of the former colonies, even recently described as an ‘event of undefined historiographical placement’, was virtually ‘obliterated’ from Portuguese life from 1974 onwards.<sup>2</sup> This historical, political, social and individual ‘non-inscription’ of such a traumatic event reveals the deep-rooted difficulties of a post-dictatorial, post-colonial society in facing its hurtful past, and, from the historian’s perspective, a war history ‘yet to be told.’<sup>3</sup> The often noted ‘historiographical void’ places the researcher before a community which, like the micro example of the Sousa family, has difficulties in coping with a past that continues to be laden with loss, guilt, shame and trauma.<sup>4</sup> The lack of a consensual public image of a conflict which remains so significantly present in the country’s life paradoxically allows Portuguese society to simultaneously engage in increasing manifestations of war remembrance and continuing instances of forgetting.

If any doubts remained about such national uneasiness in dealing with this past, remarkably in 2011, the year of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the conflict, the Portuguese Minister of Defence publicly stated – speaking broadly for the country and his Ministry – that ‘the truth is that’ ‘thirty seven years later [after its end] we are still ashamed of the war.’ Asserting its deep, widespread historical relevance for Portugal, Aguiar-Branco claimed that ‘we are all the children of the colonial war more than we are willing to admit’, arguing how harmful it is for the country to continue not to address ‘what happened there and consequently those who have been there.’<sup>5</sup>

There has undoubtedly been a revival of interest in the Portuguese colonial conflict since the beginning of the new millennium. For decades entrenched mainly in the literary domain, in psychiatric or psychological studies, journalistic pieces, and veteran association initiatives, the topic is now more widely addressed.<sup>6</sup> And yet the new memorial developments are typically characterised by being factual, descriptive,

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<sup>2</sup> See Ribeiro, M. & Vecchi, R. (org.) ‘Introduction’ in *Antologia da Memória Poética da Guerra Colonial*, Porto, Edições Afrontamento (2011), p. 21; Gil, J. *Portugal, Hoje. O Medo de Existir*, Lisboa, Relógio d’Água Editores (12th edition, 2008), p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> Gil, J., *idem*, p. 17; Lourenço, E. (Velo, C., ed.) *Chaos and Splendor and other essays*, Dartmouth, University of Massachusetts (2002), p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> See Ribeiro, M., quoting E. Lourenço, in *Uma História de Regressos. Império, Guerra Colonial e Pós-colonialismo*, Porto, Edições Afrontamento (2004), p. 248.

<sup>5</sup> Stated by Aguiar-Branco, Portugal’s Minister of National Defence, in a speech evoking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the colonial war given on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2011. See ‘Portugal ainda vive mal com a guerra colonial’, <http://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/os-ministerios/ministerio-da-defesa-nacional/mantenha-se-atualizado/20111219-mdn-guerra-colonial.aspx>, dated 19th December 2011.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Two for further examples and explanation.

fragmentary, decontextualised and often socio-culturally uniform.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Portugal's continuing inability to generate a recognisable, enduring, collective historiographical narrative about the conflict is striking. The majority of historiographical works featuring the war that have emerged since the mid-1990s and earlier are fundamentally structured around facts and statistics, often drawing upon the accounts and frameworks provided by socio-political and military influential figures of Portuguese life.<sup>8</sup> In general, the experiential side of the war and integrative attempts at historical analysis remain significantly absent.

These limitations in focus and breadth have already been recognised in Portugal in the last decade, most notably in the *Nova História Militar de Portugal* (New Military History of Portugal), published in 2004, in several volumes.<sup>9</sup> The acknowledgment of a need for new perspectives and developments in the field sits alongside signs that Portuguese historiography of the colonial war may remain limited due to the unsettled nature of the topic. An illustrating example is a recent major History of Portugal, published in late 2009 by Rui Ramos, a well-respected name of the 'new generation of historians'. Widely acclaimed, this work has been considered by José Mattoso, arguably the most reputable Portuguese historian, as 'almost perfect', one which for a long time will remain as a 'work of reference.'<sup>10</sup> In its Prologue, Ramos states about the Portuguese contemporary period that there are a lot of aspects 'still unstudied and more polemics [entailed]', resulting in 'missing analysis and connections'; the goal, however, was to 'treat with more detail events, situations and processes which immediately had impact in the life of the readers', adding rather cryptically that 'amnesia is not more useful in a society than in an individual.'<sup>11</sup> Encouraged by such statements, many readers would feel frustrated with the lack of depth with which the colonial war is treated in this work. In fact, in *História de Portugal*, the main focus of this period is

<sup>7</sup> See Ribeiro, M., *o.c.* (2004), p. 250.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Estado-Maior do Exército, Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África (CECA) *Resenha histórico-militar das campanhas de África (1961-1974)*, Vol. 1. *Enquadramento Geral*, Lisbon, Estado-Maior do Exército (1988); Antunes, J. (ed.) *A Guerra de África, 1961-1974*, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores, 2 vols. (1995); Mattoso, J. (org.) *História de Portugal*, vols. VII to IX, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores (1993-94); and Medina, J. (org.) *História de Portugal: dos tempos pré-históricos aos nossos dias*, vols. 12-15, Alfragide, Ediclube (1993-1995).

<sup>9</sup> See 'Introduction' to Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (eds.), *Nova História Militar de Portugal*, Vol. 5, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores (2004), p. 9, where it is stated that the volume's main goal is to 'look for that human side of war and rebuild the wars of the Portuguese: experiences, words, images and memories', adding that, in this field, Portuguese historiography is 'relatively incipient'; see also Teixeira, N. 'Portugal e as Guerras da Descolonização', in *o.c.* Vol. 4 (2004), p. 68;

<sup>10</sup> See on-line article at <http://www1.ionline.pt/conteudo/31720-historia-portugal-luta-faccoes-os-salazaristas>, published on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2009; and Mattoso, J. 'Uma História de Portugal para o nosso tempo', in *Ípsilon, Público*, undated [early 2010] on-line article available at <http://ipsilon.publico.pt/livros/critica.aspx?id=252385>.

<sup>11</sup> Prologue of Ramos, R. *História de Portugal*, Lisbon, A Esfera dos Livros (2009), pp. I-IV.

devoted to the country's political evolution, highlighting the passage to democracy in 1974 and the European integration post-1986. Despite remarking that this war was 'the biggest military effort of a Western country since 1945', the brief, superficial references to the colonial war classify it as a relatively cheap, low 'intensity' conflict.<sup>12</sup> According to Ramos, recruitment 'was never a problem' and there was little opposition. The war, he concludes, was 'obscure and little deadly.'<sup>13</sup> According to this perspective, in 1973 the military situation in Africa 'was not dramatic', and although it remained the main unresolved political issue by 1974, Salazar 'had reduced the war to a cheap routine.'<sup>14</sup> On the hundreds of thousands of Portuguese ex-combatants generated by this conflict, or even its long-lasting social impact, no emphasis is placed.

Indeed, when comparing Ramos's *História de Portugal* with earlier studies, significantly differing historiographical interpretations of the colonial war are evident. For instance, in 2000, the renowned *História da Expansão Portuguesa* described the 'very strong political and social impact' of the conflict.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the *Nova História Militar de Portugal* (2004) presented the colonial war as 'the most important historical event of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Portugal.'<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, considering the many thousands of wounded, mutilated and psychologically disturbed ex-combatants living in Portugal, 'it emerges as clear the importance and persistence of its [the] effects' of a war whose history is 'largely undone.'<sup>17</sup>

Such distinctive views of the historical significance of the conflict do not always co-exist harmoniously in Portugal, suggesting a lasting contentiousness associated with the topic. This means that varying approaches may be able to generate intense debates in the country, at least within specialist circles. A case in point is the huge controversy that erupted in 2012 regarding Ramos's *História de Portugal*. On this occasion, a series of newspaper articles authored by Manuel Loff, an historian of acknowledged left-wing political affiliations, accused Ramos of misleading readers with 'unashamed' 'factual errors' and distortions regarding his approach to the Salazarian regime – including his coverage of the colonial war. This episode gave rise to a heated debate in the Portuguese print and on-line media and blogosphere over the 'fascism' or not of this expert-

<sup>12</sup> Ramos, R. *o.c.* (2009), pp. 680-684.

<sup>13</sup> Ramos, R. *o.c.* (2009), pp. 684-685.

<sup>14</sup> *Idem*, p. 704 and p. 706, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> See Pinto, A. 'A Guerra Colonial e o Fim do Império Português', in Bethencourt, F. and Chaudhuri, K. (eds.) *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, vol. 5, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores (2000), p. 75.

<sup>16</sup> See Teixeira, N. 'Portugal e as Guerras da Descolonização', in *o.c.* Vol. 4, (2004), p. 77; Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (eds.), *o.c.* Vol. 5 (2004), p. 197, p. 173.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*, p. 197.



sanctioned history. Readers witnessed fierce quarrelling between left-wing and right-wing historians and intellectuals, each trying to convince the public of the rectitude and accuracy of their view.<sup>18</sup>

This context of historiographical disagreement over the significance of the conflict and inattention to lived war experience suggests that an oral history approach might offer insights into both subjective experiences of war and its impact on Portuguese society. In that sense, perhaps the path that led me to Alfredo Sousa and his family did not necessarily start in 2004 at the University of Sussex when I decided to undertake an oral history doctorate about the Portuguese colonial war. Indeed, it had started years earlier, when, as a very young child in Portugal, I would feel intimidated and puzzled by those aggressive and relatively young men, often covered in war tattoos, whom people did not wish to talk to or about. They were many, and I could see them everywhere. At the time, despite not knowing they were ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war, I could sense these people were shrouded in silence and shame. This impression stayed with me and, years later, some of these men, now retired grandfathers for the most part, narrated their war experiences and explained to me, in their own terms, what it was like to be a war veteran of this conflict.

The ex-combatants interviewed for this project were amongst the hundreds of thousands of Portuguese young men who were conscripted to fulfil their military service in Africa between 1961 and 1974.<sup>19</sup> Being an exploration into personal narratives of the Portuguese colonial war, the oral history interviews conducted with these veterans are the core of this study. The Thesis provides an historical study of the colonial war from the perspective of its Portuguese ex-combatants and their society. Whilst recognising that international perspectives encompassing former territories and combatants of independence movements would constitute a valuable study, that is not the scope of this project.

For me, in general terms, the attraction of this topic was twofold. First, it offered a chance to uncover a history of the colonial war largely untold by Portuguese historiography, namely the frequently neglected standpoint of ordinary combatants, and

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<sup>18</sup> The polemics started with opinion articles published on the 2nd and 16th August 2012 by Loff in *Público* newspaper. Ramos's response was published in the same newspaper on the 21<sup>st</sup> August 2012. It should be added that *História de Portugal* was distributed in the Summer 2012 in instalments with newspaper *Expresso*; see also Loff's reply in *Público*, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

<sup>19</sup> More specifically, nearly one million of the Portuguese male youth of the era, as highlighted by N. Teixeira in *o.c.* Vol. 4 (2004), p. 77.

their personal experiences during and after the war.<sup>20</sup> More broadly, my approach also created a platform from which to assess the memorial complexities of a ‘semiperipheric society’ internally processing a major geo-political shift.<sup>21</sup>

Portugal became a democracy overnight on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974 after forty-eight years of dictatorship. It was also the last European nation to relinquish centuries-old claims to an overseas empire after thirteen years of conflict to maintain it. These are very particular and significant contexts which define the memorial aftermath of this war and its combatants.

Seeking the human lived perspective mostly absent from historiographical approaches to the colonial war, I found the actors of the event years after the conflict living in an uncertain socio-historical position in Portugal, with their country in search of its historical place and identity. For the average fighting men who experienced the war from the inside, this means that the colonial war, and consequently themselves, for decades have remained mostly silent and unrecognised. Their narratives emerge out of paradoxical and uncomfortable negotiations between forgetting and remembrance, where condemnation of social silence and indifference and an awareness of the value of providing testimonials for history co-exist with an acknowledgment of a common reluctance or even refusal to talk.

Irrespective of differing historiographical standpoints regarding the positioning of the colonial war and its impact, what my research shows is that on an individual, experiential level the conflict was extremely significant, frequently assuming centrality in the ex-combatants’ lives. Studying the war from this perspective means focusing on the specificity of individual, everyday experiences of war and its lasting impact for combatants – those who, to quote one of my interviewees – are the thinking and feeling ‘flesh and bone’ behind the military number.<sup>22</sup> Employing the life history approach, my research identifies historical patterns in Portuguese war veterans’ narratives and explores the recurring themes that characterise their war experience and its aftermath. In analysing and contextualising the testimonials gathered, the ex-combatant group emerged, allowing an assessment of the Portuguese colonial war from the privileged perspective of participants. Specifically, I foreground the experience of ordinary servicemen. Whilst there is a growing interest in personal war memories in

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<sup>20</sup> The low incidence of such perspective in Portuguese historiography is assumed in ‘Introduction’ to Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (eds.), *o.c.*, Vol. 5 (2004), p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Boaventura Santos quoted by M. Ribeiro in Introduction to *o.c.* (2004), p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 41.

contemporary Portugal, in general these are often mined for factual information. In contrast, here I focus on the subjective realm of meanings – on what the ex-combatants felt about their individual war experiences and how they interpret them afterwards – and on an understanding of historical frameworks and patterns. This approach offers an original contribution to historiography and public memory of this conflict. The Portuguese example also provides an historical perspective on individual participation in an armed conflict and its long-term personal and social consequences which, beyond its specificities, shows certain commonalities across conflicts, as a close comparison with other contexts has revealed.<sup>23</sup>

The veterans who participated in this project were given a ‘listening space.’<sup>24</sup> The benefits of an oral history approach, however, as outlined by Sean Field and others, are not so much about healing and resolving the past as allowing for the articulation of alternative, complementary narratives, thus contributing to a wider dialogue and historical analysis.<sup>25</sup> In this respect, having listened to these war veterans for years, I am confident that I am equipped to offer a portrait of the Portuguese ex-combatant that overcomes the stereotypes and commonplaces frequently rallied (in varying degree) around the axis ‘cold-blooded murderers serving the fascist regime versus mere drafted victims of that system’ and ‘last warriors of the empire versus the defeated of 1974’. The human experience conveyed in their narratives reminds us that historical reality is not mutually exclusively black or white. On the contrary, it is made up of a rich composite picture, a ‘mosaic’ of individual experiences, to loosely borrow an image conjured by Alessandro Portelli.<sup>26</sup> Only by focusing on this multifaceted picture can we reach a wider, more meaningful and inclusive understanding of this war.

Therefore, my choice of standpoint makes me depart from the theoretical isolationism and predictable shortcomings of political splits so often present in public narratives of the colonial war – normally polarised between left-wing denigrations of the war and its participants, or empire-nostalgic, old-regime-laudatory right-wing excursions to the past. My objective is to offer a reflective historical assessment of personal war narratives. By presenting an analysis of the colonial war from its lived

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<sup>23</sup> See Bibliography for relevant works mainly by Evans, Bourke, Hynes, Hunt, Hutchinson and other cited authors.

<sup>24</sup> Rogers, K. & Leydesdorff, S. (eds.) *Trauma. Life Stories of Survivors*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey (2004), pp. 9-10,

<sup>25</sup> See Field, S. in K. Rogers & S. Leydesdorff, (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), pp. 60-79; and by the same author ‘Beyond “healing”: trauma, oral history and regeneration’, in *Oral History*, 34, 1 (2006), pp. 31-42.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, the concept of ‘quilting’ advanced by A. Portelli in *They say in Harlan County. An Oral History*, New York, Oxford University Press (2011), p. 11.

perspective, I expect to provide an innovative and thought-provoking contribution to Portuguese contemporary history

In framing this research project, the challenges started with the very choice of terminology regarding the name of the war in question. Should it be called the Portuguese colonial war, *Ultramar* war, war of Africa, decolonisation war, independence war? <sup>27</sup> Revealingly, in this respect the authors of *Nova História Militar de Portugal* opted to name the conflict through the ‘theoretically more precise’ terminology of ‘decolonisation wars’, in order to surpass the left-wing/right-wing naming ‘dichotomy, [so] politically and ideologically marked in Portuguese historiography’ about the topic.<sup>28</sup> For this study, and adopting the same stance of Aniceto Afonso and Carlos Gomes, I chose the first option – colonial war – as, and quoting the authors, ‘historically, the dominion of any country over territorial extensions of peoples located beyond its natural borders always integrated itself in movements of colonial expansion.’<sup>29</sup> Despite being the most widely accepted designation of the war in Portugal, for many this option positioned this research from the start as stemming from a left-wing perspective, something that I was aware of during my study.

I would also like to clarify that all translations from Portuguese sources are my responsibility. This includes titles of books and other cultural products, names of institutions, projects and initiatives, specific terminology, citations and similar, and also all extracts from interviews done with the ex-combatants, in the latter case translated from the original transcriptions in Portuguese.<sup>30</sup>

This study is constituted by three main parts: a discussion on war memory theory, a selective assessment of the public memory of the colonial war since 1974, and an account of the oral history material that is at the core of the historical analysis presented here (including a methodological reflection on the practice of oral history with war veterans).

The Thesis begins with a consideration of the available explanatory frameworks of production, circulation and contestation of war memory and commemoration. Chapter One addresses current international trends in war commemoration which place the

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<sup>27</sup> Ultramar is the terminology associated with the previous regime. It is translatable as ‘overseas territories.’ For a lengthier discussion on the conflict’s nomenclature, see Chapter Two, pp. 44-45.

<sup>28</sup> Teixeira, N. in *o.c.*, Vol. 4, (2004), p. 68.

<sup>29</sup> See Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 20.

<sup>30</sup> When not present in the main text, relevant book titles or similar Portuguese sources cited can be found in full in the Bibliography.

actors in war under a new focus instead of favouring politico-military frameworks. In a discussion which includes international comparative examples, several developments and approaches are highlighted, with particular emphasis given to the contributions of Ashplant et al, the Popular Memory Group, Thomson, Evans, Dawson and Roper. In seeking a framework for the emergence and expression of lived experiences of war, this Chapter acknowledges the significance of circulating cultural scripts shaping subjective accounts, whilst also stressing the importance of individual agency (including psychic, unconscious elements) in the narration of personal memories in the intersubjective context of the oral history interview.<sup>31</sup> Here concepts such as the ‘integrated approach’ to war memory theory proposed by Ashplant et al, ‘composure’ (Thomson) and notions of ‘traumatised community’ and ‘transitional’ societies advanced by Dawson are particularly instrumental.<sup>32</sup> In drawing upon such theoretical and methodological foundations, this research builds on the legacy of the narrative turn, embracing a trend that attributes increasing importance to the interpretation of meanings over a predominant focus on objective factual accuracy.<sup>33</sup>

Chapter Two focuses on the public memory of the Portuguese colonial war, identifying two distinct phases: from 1974 to 1999 (the postwar silence), and from 2000 onwards (a time for revival). This Chapter begins with an overview of the Portuguese colonial conflict, presenting its context and characteristics, and reflecting on its wider impact. It explores the political circumstances in which the war ended and a new democratic regime started, which resulted in memorial complexities (of ambivalence, tension and divisiveness) being associated with this past. Chapter Two also provides a characterisation of the Portuguese ex-combatant group and the main themes associated with their identity. However, the primary focus is on the diverse domains, including literature, historiography, audiovisual and printed media, the cyberspace and tangible commemoration, where public memory is crafted.<sup>34</sup> The Chapter shows how the public memory of the war has expanded notably in Portugal in recent years.

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<sup>31</sup> See, for instance, Popular Memory Group, ‘Popular memory. Theories, politics, method.’ in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London, Routledge (2006), pp. 43-53.

<sup>32</sup> See pertinent studies by Ashplant et al cited in the Bibliography; see also Dawson, G. *Making Peace with the Past ? Memories, Trauma and the Irish Troubles*, Manchester, Manchester University Press (2007), p. 62.

<sup>33</sup> See Portelli, A. ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader*, London, Routledge (2006), pp. 32-42.

<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that the aesthetic arena (mainly from the perspective of visual, plastic and performative arts) was not explored in detail.

Whilst demonstrating the limitations of ‘excessive’ commemoration whereby higher interest in the topic does not automatically translate into reflective and wide-reaching historiographical analysis of the event – particularly where the complexity of lived experience is ignored – Chapter Two argues for the importance of applying a forensic lens to the public memory of the colonial war. Having for decades been a sensitive, reasonably absent topic, a detailed consideration of phases of remembrance allows for a more refined sense of developments and the identification of nuances and distinguishing features within each period. In that sense, this Chapter provides a critical, analytical assessment of how remembrance of the Portuguese colonial war has been developing.

Chapter Three is a methodological reflection on doing oral history interviews with ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war. Here I explain the characteristics of this research and its relevance in the Portuguese context, and present the main specificities and issues associated with interviewing the veteran group. Addressed from an oral history perspective, memory is the source and object of this study. With an awareness of the ‘paradox’ of its simultaneous reliability and variability, memory is here employed retrospectively not prioritising the documentation of facts but the assessment of the past in the present.<sup>35</sup> From the servicemen’s perspective, I focus on what happened at the time, and what it meant then and now. Emerging in a national context where the life history approach is not widely embraced from a historiographical standpoint, I emphasise that the lived experience of ex-combatants remains underexplored within Portuguese historiography. Consequently, oral history offers innovative, challenging ways for the colonial war to be considered which seek to surpass omissions, controversies and ‘safer’ composed narratives of public memory.

I argue, therefore, that the significance of this oral history study manifests mainly in a twofold manner. It seeks to contribute to the history of the Portuguese colonial war by uncovering evidence about the past through veteran narratives – their histories often hidden within national history; and also illuminate the nature and development of the conflict’s historical memory and the significance of its evolving meanings.

Chapter Three also provides detailed information about my research methods and specifically my oral history interviews with ex-combatants. Most participants replied to a newspaper advertisement calling for personal veteran testimonies, or heard about the project from other comrades. After an initial submission of written accounts and

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<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Thomson, A. ‘Memory and Remembering in Oral History’ in D. Ritchie (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, New York (2011), pp. 90-91.

biographical information, thirty-six ex-combatants were selected to be interviewed, a group containing people of distinct geographical, class and educational backgrounds, who served in different branches of the Portuguese Armed Forces in the three fronts of the war in Africa. The resulting interviews constitute the source of the oral history material analysed in the Thesis. The interviews were conducted by me in Continental Portugal, in Portuguese, between December 2005 and February 2008, mostly in the interviewees' homes. After being partially transcribed, the sections relevant for this project were then translated into English. Since a reasonable number of respondents requested their testimony to be anonymised, pseudonyms were employed for all the participants.

The interview selection criteria prioritised the creation of a diversified sample and also the ability to convey a narrative. Overall, my interviewees represent people who, in their specific subjective modes, felt ready to speak in an articulate manner about their war experiences. Although diverse, I cannot claim that my sample entails absolute representativeness of the Portuguese war veteran. Oral history can only 'recover' and work with the voices that want to be engaged in this process. Given the sensitive nature of this topic, I was aware of the unavailability of many war veterans to participate in a project of this type. Most of my interviewees appeared to be reasonably socially integrated citizens, and their prevalence in this research might perhaps under-represent the statistical and narrative significance of that section of the war veteran population which is less functional on various levels. The lower presence of a more rural and less educated type of war veteran is also to be noted, a fact which may have stemmed from a limited access to the media dictated by their circumstances (thus not seeing my advertisement or hearing about the project). These aspects were considered when trying to establish interpretive patterns.

It was evident from the start that this contemporary history topic was not a politically neutral one. Overall, the veterans address this topic both with political carefulness and militancy. Marked political cautiousness emerges mainly in the expression of pro-Salazarian regime viewpoints, which in my sample appear only rarely. It might be asked whether this is due to a lower social incidence of those positions, or to the fact that those espousing them did not feel able to express such views within the current socio-cultural context. In any case, the political hesitations, omissions and paradoxes expressed in the interviews are very revealing and noted throughout this study. The political militancy aspect is manifested through the fact that

talking to and about Portuguese war veterans – live historical actors who have felt long-term marginalisation – means many perceive the interview as an opportunity to voice their claims and struggles for recognition and support. Therefore, although not the goal of my study, I became placed in this scenario of political intervention since many interviewees approached me as a representative or mediator towards a resolution of their concerns.

Also in Chapter Three my oral history practice is defined and explained, mainly through practical examples. In this regard, I adopt the professional procedures recommended by international experts in the main textbooks available.<sup>36</sup> I reflect on the interview relationship and dynamics generated by this research. Albeit focused on their lived experiences of military service, my interview approach also encompassed the individual's life story before the war, creating in each interview a holistic, contextualised picture of each ex-combatant. My questions were flexible and sensitive to individual narratives and articulation modes to encourage the expression of subjective experience and the interpretive frameworks individuals create to explain and give meaning to their past experiences in the present.

In Chapter Three I reflect on my general methodological intervention within the oral history practice domain. I also provide a specific assessment of the complexities and challenges of interviewing war veterans. Interviewing war veterans often means addressing traumatic elements which frequently emerged as difficult remembering during the interview. For Portuguese ex-combatants, such aspects appear to be heightened by the divisive nature of the conflict, and the historical neglect its veterans have experienced. I argue that the practice of oral history around painful topics could improve by seeking contributions from therapeutic disciplines.

The ex-combatants' narratives which resulted from my oral history interviews inform Chapters Four and Five of this Thesis. The veterans' words, structures and meanings developed throughout many hours of interviews are at the core of this research and steer its analytical focus. Through passing quotes or longer citations, the veterans' voice is emphasised, in a process which occasionally highlights certain individuals more to show contrasting singularity or reveal a telling example.

Chapter Four analyses the ex-combatants' experiences of war, distinguishing the wartime period and their return to Portugal after fulfilment of military service. Guided

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<sup>36</sup> See Bibliography for a selection of relevant practitioners' manuals. For a full discussion of my oral history methodology refer to Chapter Three.



by their narratives, I begin this Chapter by following the typical military path of the servicemen, their conscription, training, mobilisation, departure to and service in Africa. In the process, a rich, subjective portrait of the era emerges. Taken wholly, war is a collective process, but beneath a common military identity there are competing identities, revealing the distinctiveness of each individual's experience of war. In this approach, I am interested in the veterans' full experience, exploring, amongst other aspects, the memories of their daily life in the barracks, their impressions of the land and its inhabitants, their times of leisure and leave, the reality of combat, death and disability, the importance of comradeship and their perceptions of what they fought for at the time. Aiming at a broader historical understanding of what it was like for these men to have served in Africa between 1961 and 1974, significance is attributed not simply to what they did but also to what they felt, allowing for a diversity of experience and understanding. A second section of this Chapter deals with the ex-combatants' return and how they subsequently dealt with their war experiences. It depicts how for much of the Portuguese male youth of the period fulfilling the compulsory military service was a huge relief and the beginning of a new life phase. With an awareness of existing similarities with processes experienced by veterans of other international conflicts, it focuses on the various levels of initial readjustment required from these men, the early acknowledgement of the consequences of the war experience, and how they structured their lives around such difficulties (an aspect more acute in those significantly affected physically and psychologically), and coped in general with their personal memories of war. It also addresses the men's reflections on their complex and ambiguous socio-political placement in the post-1974 context of end of war and change of regime.

Chapter Five starts by addressing the long-term impact of the colonial war in the life of the ex-combatants, particularly in the context of an unpopular conflict around which silence and shame prevailed for decades. It reveals how the veterans began to assess their war experience and progressively acquire a social awareness of having participated in a divisive war, unable to generate a unified collective remembrance, and how this contributed to feelings of marginalisation, and a weaker public veteran identity. It is observed how this phase is pivotal in the veterans' lives, since often this is when certain reintegration difficulties themes which may have emerged in the initial readjustment period are either reinforced, overcome or begin to develop. A generalised notion emerged of combatants having their lives shaped in the long-term by the war. These

narratives indicate a continuing and frequently contradictory relationship with the war past, and how it has been subjectively reviewed and negotiated, particularly around uncomfortable traumatic memories (of violence witnessed and perpetrated), notions of collaboration with the previous regime and ability to cope with the disappearance of familiar previous socio-cultural reference points. In this process, it is noted how individual and collective war remembrance is impacted by a frequent reluctance to acknowledge the war experience more fully.<sup>37</sup>

Secondly, this Chapter addresses how the ex-combatants simultaneously shape and respond to the changing public memory of the colonial war, in a context of renewed interest and higher commemoration. These developments mean higher veteran visibility, mainly through veteran associations, and the focus on a stronger group identity and common demands. In many instances, this phase is associated with the acquisition of a wider and more critical assessment of the reasons and circumstances of their participation in the conflict. From a rich diversity of interpretive perspectives, sometimes contradictory, emerges a common narrative of belonging to a sacrificed war generation forced to go to Africa, used by the previous regime and essentially left unrecognised and neglected by the current one. In this context, most interviewees highlight lifelong negative consequences of the war, often framed by anger and disappointment, although in some cases positive factors are also considered. Many admit that, for good and bad, the war remains the most central episode of their lives. Alongside the themes evoked by the narratives, I present a critical reflection on the characteristics and limitations of the major current developments of the public commemoration of the colonial war in Portugal. Most veterans perceived themselves as a privileged memorial location, were largely dissatisfied with the public memory of the conflict, and revealed concerns about a historiographical deficit on the war. Conscious of the elapsing of time, most expressed a notion of testimonial ‘duty’ towards historical transmission of that past, valuing their oral history contribution – this latter aspect of seeking meaningful collective remembrance of the war clearly in paradoxical tension with an often acknowledged desire to individually forget the war past. Framed by these insights, I reflect on the central role assumed in this context by history and historians, on the challenges associated to doing this contemporary history in Portugal’s

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<sup>37</sup> Confirming Klemppner’s assertion that some narratives of trauma are never told. See Klemppner, M. ‘Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma’, in *The Oral History Review*, 27/2 (2000), pp. 67-83.

transitional society, and assert the value of inscribing the experiential memory of the Portuguese colonial war into Portuguese historiography. I argue that if attempts at making sense of this sensitive past include a more frequent engagement with its historical participants via the adoption of innovative, dialogic, inclusive ways of doing Portuguese contemporary history, perhaps any persisting silence and shame about the colonial war can be challenged.

Considered in its entirety, the original contribution of this oral history of the Portuguese colonial war is twofold. Firstly, it offers a general intervention through the historical analysis of the public memory of one particular conflict, alongside a methodological reflection on the practice of oral history with war veterans. Secondly, it offers a specific intervention in providing an analysis of the colonial war based upon personal narratives of its ex-combatants, unravelling not only its lived experience but also significant insights about the individual and collective impact of the conflict.

On a more subjective level, this research uncovers, sometimes disturbingly, the broad range of emotions and psychological journeys necessary to effectively fight and kill other human beings in warfare. It shows that in war there is survival instinct and survivor's guilt, there is greed and meanness, but also incredible comradeship and generosity, violent cruelty, and yet altruism. There is the fear of living permanently under threat and there is the boldness of youth. There are endless monotonous days and flashes of deadly, random absurdity. This 'quilting' of human experiences that is the labour of history acquires special intensity when the subject matter framing the narrative is a war.<sup>38</sup>

After learning all this from my interviewees, I finally understood why Alfredo Sousa's wife firmly refused to leave the room on that August afternoon. She was determined to let me know that war is a hell from which nobody is ever safe.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Again borrowing Portelli's image, in *o.c.* (2011), p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> See Interviewee 19, pp. 28-37.

## Chapter One:

### War memory theory

War memory studies have been developing enormously in the last decades, and there are numerous international works that have contributed to this widening of academic research and critical enquiry. Authors such as Ashplant, Dawson, Evans, Lunn, Roper, Sivan, Thomson, and Winter have opened up new perspectives within the field of war memory. Those employing life history data in general – and oral sources in particular – have become increasingly aware of the ways in which history-writing depends on the socio-political context within which the remembering of a specific past takes place. In this sense, the current growth of the social, cultural and political importance of war memories has framed our understanding of how past conflicts are perceived from the standpoint of the present.

Within this context, Ashplant et al in their groundbreaking study demonstrated how these developments in the field are mainly due to an increasing public interest in the phenomenon of war memory and war commemoration, the demands for public recognition of victims or survivors of conflicts, and the importance assumed by war anniversary commemorations.<sup>1</sup> It is under these circumstances that the proliferation of academic research focusing on a new kind of cultural and social history, highlighting memory and meaning, found in war a fertile terrain for reflection and exploration. In the aftermath of the ‘cultural turn’ in the social sciences, and the ‘memory boom’ of the 1980 and 1990s, war memory studies is now a well-established field of interdisciplinary research which foregrounds ‘living memory’ and the ordinary experience of people who participated in military actions or were affected by them.<sup>2</sup> This reflects the trend, increasingly noticeable from the mid-twentieth century onwards, to acknowledge and study war as a socio-cultural phenomenon, seeking understandings of its social impact beyond the military perspective.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of memory that I am going to utilise in my work is closely related to the interpretations of memory developed within the so-called ‘memory studies’ that

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<sup>1</sup> See Ashplant, T., Dawson, G. & Roper, M. (eds.) *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, London, Routledge (2000), particularly ‘Part I – Framing the issues’.

<sup>2</sup> Evans, M. ‘Opening up the battlefield: War studies and the cultural turn’, in *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 1:1, Bristol, Intellect Ltd (2008), pp. 47-51.

<sup>3</sup> See Calder, A. *The People’s War: Britain, 1939-1945*, London, Pimlico (1992), just to quote one groundbreaking example originally published in 1969.

have permeated the humanities and social sciences since the late 1980s. These interpretations highlight the importance of oral history and the existing interrelationship between subjectivity and personal life stories and wider public cultural narratives such as those emanating from civil society and the state.

More simply, I emphasise the role of different interacting forms of remembrance present in the formation of memory. This way of addressing war memory focuses less on what ‘happened’ in the war and more on how war has been remembered, and the meanings and significance attributed to that historical event by a given society from the viewpoint of the present. In this context, memory emerges as a legitimate object and source of historical enquiry, with researchers analysing how the past is remembered, and mapping the steps of that remembrance as the ongoing process of how a society looks back at its past. This scenario reflects how the discipline of history is currently less constrained by traditional boundaries dictated by archival sources and fact-finding methodologies. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, social history has been privileging the idea of ‘lived’ knowledge, focusing particularly on the importance of studying the view from below, and increasingly relying on the oral history methodology. Such developments generated an awareness of the co-existing intersection of history (the academic historicisation of the past) and memory (the living knowledge about a relevant past) in a shared territory, and of how they are able to jointly support and complement each other in the investigation of specific topics or events.<sup>4</sup>

In order to contextualise my oral history of the Portuguese colonial war, it is important to present a theoretical framework for the study of war memory and commemoration. These ‘politics of memory’ – to use the term of Ashplant et al – point, in each specific context, to the ways in which the remembering and commemoration of war are being perceived, organised and contested.<sup>5</sup>

Ashplant et al have identified three principal theoretical approaches to the study of war memory and commemoration: the state-centred approach, the social agency approach and the popular memory approach. The state-centred approach consists of the official dominant narratives and practices of remembrance and commemoration that bind citizens in a collective national identity that seeks unity and often makes use of generalisations that have to apply to a great number of people. These are the ‘invented

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<sup>4</sup> For a reflection on history and memory, see Hynes, S. in Sivan, E. & Winter, J. (eds.) *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1999), p. 206.

<sup>5</sup> See Ashplant, T., Dawson, G. & Roper, M. (eds.) *o.c.* (2000)

traditions' highlighted in Hobsbawm's work, reflecting mainstream, nationwide, establishment-promoted war memory narratives.<sup>6</sup> The social agency approach, in its turn, is related to individuals and groups – not the state – and focuses on their war-associated suffering, responses, personal loss and mourning. This approach, championed by Winter and Sivan, stresses the psychological side of remembrance, and the way it is undertaken individually and by social groups often having healing and reconciliation in view.<sup>7</sup>

At this point, it should be emphasised that these first two approaches represent two paradigms of remembrance that are only apparently separate. In fact, national official remembrance practices demand that individuals subjectively identify with its narratives in order to be effective and maintain the community's national unity, overcoming as much as possible social tensions and divisions. In this sense, it is imperative that those official remembrance practices engage with personal mourning and loss. In many cases, these practices actually develop from unofficial activity, reflecting subjective needs and desires, and being afterwards adopted officially by the state.

Since national unity is not always easy and comfortable to attain – particularly in the cases surrounding the memory of a military conflict that resulted in the separation of colonised territories – the need for official state remembrance narratives to retain some linkage with the concerns and perspectives of its citizens exposes the weak point of the state-centred approach; namely, the overlooking of the inevitable impact individuals and groups exert in the formation of official narratives.

On the other hand, the individuals and social groups who engage in some form of remembrance are setting in motion a politics and are influenced necessarily and in different ways by their national, official context and pre-existing wider war remembrance narratives. Therefore, the social agency approach manifests an immediate fragility: individual narratives will inevitably relate to and become incorporated within a wider cultural memory about a specific conflict.

Indeed, Ashplant et al stress that the existing dichotomies in both approaches are unhelpful and obscure the fact that the processes in motion in both domains are actually interrelated and constitutive of each other. In their extreme positions, both models are flawed. One considers all personal memories and narratives as the irrevocable result of

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<sup>6</sup> See Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T. *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1992)

<sup>7</sup> See Sivan, E. & Winter, J. (eds.) *o.c.* (1999)

belonging to a particular society, and the other treats memories and narratives as uniquely individual and unaffected by other wider narratives. Highlighting both approaches' under-conceptualisation of the complexities of war memory construction and articulation, the authors argue that memory-making results from the mutually-influenced cultural representations originating from individuals, civil society and the state.

Consequently, a more comprehensive model has necessarily to integrate the inter-relational, interactive processes of representation and meaning-making that develop within those arenas. This integration benefits greatly from a third paradigm that also devotes its attention to war memory and uses oral history and life-story methods: the popular memory approach or life-story paradigm.

Despite sharing a common object of study and primary concerns, this approach is not always favoured or acknowledged by researchers working within the state-centred and social-agency paradigms. The popular memory approach operates from a different perspective. The starting point for analysis normally originates from personal memories emerging from oral history interviews or similar forms of life stories, sources often undervalued by researchers adopting the other two approaches. Indeed, as stressed by Ashplant et al, this paradigm privileges 'the meanings about war and its remembrance that people make for themselves and express in their own words and stories.'<sup>8</sup>

A good example of this third paradigm is the work undertaken by the Popular Memory Group and its application subsequently developed by oral historian Alistair Thomson. Thomson's research analyses in depth the interaction and the connections between public representation and private memory.<sup>9</sup> It emphasises the existing relationship between dominant public discourses (those that achieve centrality and appear in the media, for instance) and the individual memories about a certain past (the 'privatised sense of the past'), and the ways in which the latter are affected by the former in a continual two-way process of contestation and negotiation. Similarly, dominant and central memories secure their power through their capacity for connecting with certain popular perceptions, articulating publicly and resonating with existing memories and marginalising others that are not desirable at that moment. This means that all productions of memory emerge and are circulated socially, establishing interactions and structuring themselves in accordance to relations of power that operate

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<sup>8</sup> See Ashplant, T., Dawson, G. & Roper, M. (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> See Thomson, A. *Anzac Memories*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press (1994)

within an elaborate realm of representations of the past, where a struggle between dominant memory and oppositional forms takes place.

In his work *Anzac Memories* (1994), Thomson made use of the popular memory approach to elucidate, through a case study of Australian First World War veterans, how public and private memory are intrinsically entangled, reflecting a formation process of continual negotiation. This work asserted the potential of popular memory theory as a basis for the study of war memory. It revealed how the veterans interviewed composed memories 'they can live with'<sup>10</sup>, selecting aspects of their experience that could be articulated through public narratives; basically, the words, signs and symbols in the public field of representations that translate their perceived identity.

This notion of composure highlights the role played by our culture, society and state in framing and articulating our subjective memories, illuminating how individuals negotiate and are affected by shifting forms, meanings and social priorities expressed in public perception. Memories that cannot be expressed through this process of composure are often displaced and marginalised. In this perspective, public memory necessarily shapes private remembrance, and individuals will compose memories that they feel comfortable with, reflecting the multi-dimensional and situational aspects of their personal lives and identities, and always taking into account their specific audience.

The furthering of the popular memory paradigm through Thomson's research and other similarly-oriented works contributed to overcoming significant weaknesses attributed to the state-centred and social agency approaches. However, the limitations of this paradigm and its notion of composure have been pointed out by several authors. Roper, for instance, argues that remembering includes psychic as well as social components, stressing the importance of unconscious processes, personal motivations and imaginative possibilities stemming from individual subjectivity and emotion in the shaping and structuring of war memory. From this perspective, an individual memory of war is produced combining both the 'overlay' of dominant cultural forms and the 'underlay' of subjectivity, namely the individual's feelings regarding their specific war experience and their life circumstances in the here-and-now of narration.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Thomson, A. *o.c.* (1994), pp. 215-216.

<sup>11</sup> Roper, M. 'Re-remembering the Soldier Hero: the Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War', in *History Workshop Journal*, 50 (2000), pp. 181-205.



Similarly, in her critique of composure, and presenting a gender-specific case, Summerfield highlights how the applicability of this concept is restricted in instances when public discourses are silent or unreceptive about a particular aspect of the past. She concludes that in the face of lost stories, composure often becomes 'discomposure', as individuals struggle to sustain a coherent narrative in the absence of supporting public representations. In fact, the lack of a cultural frame of reference and responsive audiences can often explain the narrative difficulties faced by individuals, and, ultimately, originate or contribute to silence or exclude certain experiences from the cultural circuit and historical discourse. In attempting to overcome these difficulties, narrators seek to justify their deviation, press their memories into alternative frameworks or express their experiences in fragmentary and deflected ways. In this context, Summerfield attributes to oral history a potential 'recovery' role in legitimising experiential memories that have not been 'legendized' or that run counter to public discourse, stressing, however, that this discipline cannot comfortably resolve all complexities surrounding cultural silence. Certain silences are so overreaching that they determine what experiences can be remembered and told. Recuperating such experiences may generate as much discomposure as composure 'unless or until lost histories gain a place within the dominant culture.'<sup>12</sup>

In effect, in recent decades, significant oral history debates concerning the conceptualisation of memory have been developing around notions of cultural scripts or templates into which individual recollections fit, and by which they are shaped, generating a convergence between collective memory studies and oral history interpretive theoretical frameworks.

The very notion of 'collective memory', developed originally by Halbwachs and still pivotal in contemporary memory studies, by emphasising the socially and culturally determined nature of individual memory, incorporates the latter in the former, or relegates it 'to a position of insignificance', as pointed out by Green.<sup>13</sup> In view of this tendency, Green warns oral historians against the dismissal of the individuals' capacity to constructively and critically engage with 'inherited ideas and beliefs'. Indeed, in subsuming individual memory, or attributing it a passive, unarticulated, unconscious

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<sup>12</sup> Summerfield, P. 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews', in *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), pp. 65-93. See p. 93.

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, Halbwachs, M., *On Collective Memory*, Chicago, University of Chicago (1992); Green, A. 'Individual Remembering and "Collective Memory": Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates', in *Oral History*, 32, 2 (2004), pp. 35-44.

role, the potential of the consciously reflective individual becomes greatly diminished. Through her assessment of the three strands of contemporary life narrative and oral history interpretive theory (cultural, social and psychoanalytic), Green concludes that all lean towards a 'culturally determinist and functionalist perspective concerning individual memory', each reinforcing the notion that individuals' memories 'conform to dominant cultural scripts or unconscious psychic templates', and emerge within the boundaries of 'particular publics.'<sup>14</sup>

Arguing against the discarding or minimising of individual memory, Green exhorts researchers to re-assert individual agency, highlighting the creative ability for self-reflection and critique of public and private discourses. The rich and complex variety of individual consciousness allows the emergence of potentially subversive narratives that may unsettle the collective unity. Green argues that it is in the assessment of these points of conflict and rupture, through the ways in which individuals negotiate competing ideas or beliefs, or either confront dominant discourses or explore its boundaries, that historians reach a deeper understanding of both past and present.<sup>15</sup>

Pursuing the notion of the interrelationship between public and private memory broadly, employing the popular memory group paradigm and the concept of 'composure' with an awareness of recent critiques and contributions, it is possible to move beyond the limitations displayed by the state-centred and social-agency approaches. In effect, a wider understanding of war memory appears to reside in balancing the theoretical developments that present individual memory as socio-culturally framed and maintained with a reassessment of individual memory that explores more autonomous possibilities. For instance, authors Gedi and Elam defend a similar stance in arguing that if individual memories are ultimately just a reflection of society's needs and not real events of the past, this would condemn history to utter self-annihilation, subverting its core principles of accuracy and scientific rigour.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, the need for a redefinition of what constitutes the 'politics of war memory and commemoration' led Ashplant et al to advance a more inclusive model, namely the 'integrated approach', which combines insights from the three approaches analysed above. In order to trace the dynamic interactions that occur between the various

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<sup>14</sup> Green, A. *o.c.* (2004), p. 40; Green, A. 'Can memory be collective?', in Ritchie, D. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, New York, Oxford University Press (2011), pp. 96-111.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>16</sup> See Gedi, N. & Elam, Y. 'Collective Memory – what is it?', in *History and Memory*, 8, Bloomington, Indiana University Press (1996), pp. 30-50.

agencies involved in the production, circulation and contestation of war memories (state, civil society, ‘private’ social groups and individuals), the ‘integrated’ approach is a more complex, nuanced and mediated way of theorising war memory. It avoids an easy separation of the elements which have been privileged by each of the competing theoretical models through their dichotomies and polarizations. This theoretical approach emphasises the existing interrelations, transactions and negotiations that link the individual, civil society and the state, taking into consideration the specific and evolving social, cultural, political and individual contexts of representation and meaning-making that mutually shape each other in the production of war memories.

The construction and articulation of war memories occurs in various degrees from the top down or the bottom up: individuals, social groups and nation-states articulate war memories into narratives and seek or affirm recognition of those memories in certain arenas, acting through given agencies. There is a dominant national narrative, normally an expression of the state’s official memory, more contested than not. Let it be stressed that official narratives are not necessarily always dominant, since social actors confirm or contest the meanings of state-centred commemoration. Within this context, different groups struggle to articulate different memories, which manifest shared memories or common experience. These narratives, reflecting shared formulations of the past, range, therefore, from hegemonic official narratives to oppositional or sectional accounts struggling for public recognition, and even to individual memories. Their arenas of articulation are related to the socio-political and cultural spaces in which these actors intend to have their war memories recognised. In their turn, the agencies of articulation refer to those very varied (in power and scope) institutions through which these social actors strive to promote and obtain recognition for their specific war memories, normally displaying numerous tensions, contradictions and conflicts.

Such memory-formation elements are closely interrelated and indistinguishable. In this way, in working with war memory, it is vital for the researcher assessing a particular war memory narrative to identify its genesis: the social group promoting it, the arena of emergence, and the articulation agency. Being a synthesis of paradigms, this model of war memory allows an analysis of the social production of specific representations of the past, taking into account their determining aspects and impact. In explaining the construction of narratives, the breadth of this encompassing model manifests in the recognition of the immense social power of memory, the importance of identity and social interactions, and the role of past and present.

In this context, the politics of memory and commemoration anywhere will reflect a balance of alignment – or lack of it – between personal and collective, revealing a collective identity about a conflict that entails more or less dissent, and echoing societal internal processes, constantly changing, and permeable to various influences – such as current events and other narratives, some even international.<sup>17</sup>

In a given society, different social groups and individuals contend to articulate their memories of war. Their access to political and cultural power is varied, and this will be reflected in the recognition achieved by their narratives – reaching or not certain social arenas and utilising more official or informal agencies. Indeed, the visibility of memories of the many communities of memory existing in a society depends on their mobilisation power, namely whether the memories considered are official, sectional or marginal, what weight they come to bear, and the resonance of their accounts.

War memory, in this perspective, is primarily connected with those individuals, military or civilians, who have experienced war, directly or indirectly; but not excluding many other actors, appearing in subsequent years who may have no such direct experience, but who may engage in memory wars. It is worth emphasising that some of these groups are brought into existence by war itself, as in the case of war veterans and war disabled. Another central element is the role of the nation-state, fundamental in the articulation – or lack of it – of war memories and the mobilization of commemoration. Voluntarily or as conscripts, the individuals who have direct memories of war fought for a certain nation-state which subsequently promotes a given official memory of the conflict in question. This memorialisation aspect can be expressed not only through a dominant or hegemonic war narrative but also through avoidance or denial of the topic.

As soon as they are represented, memories cease to be entirely personal as they start interacting with other narratives. Competing narratives enter a social negotiation process about the past being remembered. Examining this aspect from the bottom up, individual war memories can constitute the shared or common memories of a social group, through which they can reach a public arena, promoting a new sectional or oppositional narrative, adapting to or changing an existing national narrative, and claiming recognition in a process of constant negotiation and contestation with the nation-state and the diverse agencies and narratives that compete within a society. A genealogy of war memory would have to trace the process of transition from individual

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<sup>17</sup> Such as, for instance, the strength acquired by the international human rights frame that is clearly present in the research agenda of many historians worldwide; see Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), pp. 53- 54.

remembering to state commemoration, or, in other words, from direct personal memory to cultural memory – two modes of memory which are interrelated, as emphasised earlier.

In the cases where common or shared memories are blocked and suppressed this could be explained by a personal and community sense of shame, and sometimes fear of repercussions for bringing them out into the open. Also, although not suppressed, some dimensions of war experience may not enter the public arena because their means of articulation do not easily find expression within wider narratives, remaining ‘private memories’. Indeed, in the cases where public remembrance of war has been absent or discouraged, and a strong, official narrative does not exist, many memories are preserved within networks and families, waiting for the best socio-political context to emerge.

The process is one of ongoing dialogue between individual, shared, sectional, oppositional and national narratives. From the top down, the existing elites struggle to maintain dominant national narratives, marginalising or repressing oppositional, sectional, shared and even individual memories. The intention of this procedure is to avoid internal division and conflict. Very often official memory ‘frames’ war memories from below, serving the interests of the nation-state and conditioning more directly or not the meanings attributed to a war. In this selective process, some memories are excluded, others reworked.<sup>18</sup>

The actions of the nation-state impact on all other agencies, even to the point of affecting the process of memory-formation by individuals. However, it is evident that the state cannot exercise total control over war memories. There is contestation within society, and different agencies seek recognition for the experiences of those social groups which inform them. When there are pressures from civil society, the nation-state also has to respond to the challenges and counter-narratives of those who feel excluded from the official, dominant memory. Despite the virtual unattainability of a unified public memory of war, a more democratic state will allow a pluralistic, inclusive debate.

Analysing different dimensions of the politics of war memory allows us to understand the complexity of the interrelationships between competing narratives,

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<sup>18</sup> For a national example, see Lorenz, F. ‘The Unending War. Social myth, individual memory and the Malvinas’, in Rogers, K. & Leydesdorff, S. (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), pp. 95-112; and ‘How does one win a lost war ? Oral history and political memories’, in Ritchie, D. (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), pp. 124-141.

arenas and agencies, between personal and public, collective memories. These narratives are representations socially, historically and culturally determined, interacting in the present and reflecting the expectations and identities of the actors involved. In that sense, cultural memory has a traceable history concerning the processes of formation, articulation and contestation of memories. In short, it demonstrates how and through which agencies and arenas groups and individuals remember, interpret and narrate their pasts and, on a wider plane, their community's past.

When a given society commemorates a certain aspect of the past it is considering that past as meaningful. In the past, war commemoration was seen mainly as manifested in war memorials, monuments, anniversaries, remembrance days and military parades. Modern commemorative culture has developed in the wake of the 'new social history' that emerged since the 1960s and, mainly through oral history (but also aided by a new 'heritage' sensibility), has focused on a more democratised public representation of war: the personal testimony, living memory of a conflict. The emphasis is placed on the experiences of ordinary people, allowing a deeper understanding of any particular war. This becomes a more comprehensive and humanised kind of war history, since, quoting Evans, this approach 'reclaim[s] a more central space for the experience of soldiers and civilians; a space in which they would be viewed as human beings rather than as abstract entities.'<sup>19</sup>

Despite such developments, the validity of memory as a historical source has not been unanimously accepted without some criticisms. In the late 1970s branded unreliable, distorted and biased due to subjectivity and retrospection, memory has now asserted, after three decades of interdisciplinary refinement, its credibility as a respected historical source. Moreover, the ability to transmute the alleged weaknesses singled out by critics into valuable and revealing resources, catapulted memory into becoming a frequent subject of historical enquiry as well as a source, focused on prioritising meanings and interpretations in the writing of history.<sup>20</sup>

Nowadays it is most commonly accepted that – assisted by sound critical interpretation – individual first-hand memory enables a democratisation of the historical

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<sup>19</sup> Evans, *o.c.* (2008), p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Thomson, A. 'Memory and Remembering...' in D. Ritchie (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), pp. 78-82; Portelli, A., 'What Makes ...', in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.) *o.c.* (2006), pp. 32-42

record and often illuminates hidden or less well-known historical aspects, telling us in 'real depth how it felt to *experience* the events which have become history.'<sup>21</sup>

This interest in personal memory situates itself in the 'memorial boom' we have been witnessing since the 1990s. The focus on memory reflects a rapidly changing world that in the absence of a feeling of reassuring temporal continuity acquires an historical sense of the past, in a process described by Nora as 'acceleration of history.'<sup>22</sup> If memory is a society's identity, the current memorialising sensibility reflected in the media and other cultural arenas denotes a period of transition. If there is a shortage of other more immediate means to remember past events, people 'will' remember the past, via images and narratives transmitted through the media.

Nora explains how this historical consciousness of time, constantly evolving, focuses on sites of memory. In fact, remembering the past provides a sense of continuity of the community in an uncertain present, asserting its identity and the plural and social nature of its collective memory through symbolic sites and rituals. However, this collective memory does not signify a mere amalgamation of individual memories. Furthermore, collective remembrance or public recollection is not historical knowledge in itself. It exists beyond the realm of professional history, stemming from a social framework not necessarily concerned with historical accuracy. On the other hand, history practiced mainly as a documentary record of events often departs from private memories, impoverishing the depth and scope of the discipline.<sup>23</sup>

At the crossroads of collective remembrance and history, Hynes argues that memory should emphasise the preservation or recovery of our lived past. Anything else is a social construction, a collective circulated image, or the product of the discipline of history. The author defines this kind of memory as 'vicarious' or 'borrowed' memory, since we cannot literally remember what we have not directly experienced. In this perspective, the collective importance assumed by personal narratives is emphasised, as they express publicly the articulation of individual lived memories with wider historical discourses, and thus contribute to a better knowledge about our past.<sup>24</sup> This articulation

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<sup>21</sup> Thomson, A. 'Memory and Remembering ...' in D. Ritchie (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), p. 80; Edwards, P. *A War Remembered: Commemoration, Battlefield Tourism and British Collective Memory of the Great War*, DPhil Thesis, University of Sussex (2005), p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> See Nora, P. (ed.) *The Construction of the French Past. Realms of memory*. Vol. II: Tradition, New York, Columbia University Press (1997)

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Sivan, E. & Winter, J. (eds.) *o.c.* (1999), p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Hynes, S. 'Personal narratives and commemoration' in Sivan, E. & Winter, J. (eds.) *o.c.* (1999), pp. 205-210.

can also acquire relevance in the shape of intergenerational communication, counteracting, to some extent, the decline of memory announced by Nora.<sup>25</sup>

For any society, a meaningful past worth being remembered connects both with present and future. It reveals society's attempts to make sense of a particular past experience from the selective standpoint of the present. Since 'intense', 'extraordinary' and 'extreme' experiences are more likely to be remembered and recorded, armed conflicts often 'continue to resonate in individual and collective memories.'<sup>26</sup>

The resulting narratives originate from a process of negotiation, construction and revision that reflects the fluctuations of social, political and cultural dynamics. This past actively transmitted is accepted 'as meaningful' by later generations.<sup>27</sup> A collective narrative most individuals in a society can identify with provides a sense of national history, of social cohesion. We remember what we identify with, and this reveals our assumed identity and present needs, having the potential, according to Graham Dawson, to make a society stronger 'in the sense we know who we are and what we have gone through.'<sup>28</sup>

However, in certain contexts, there is no public recognition and official policies have promoted forgetting. Some communal pasts laden with trauma do not seem to find a stable 'listening space' that will enable a community to investigate a given event more thoroughly and ultimately come to terms with it. Defensively preserving a less painful normality, this cultural response gives in to the temptation to 'cast off the chains of history', revealing what Dawson defines as 'traumatised community' – a community that still suffers due to disturbing legacies, and within which the past is remembered incompletely or is the object of amnesia.<sup>29</sup> In either case, there is lack of reflection about an uncomfortable past, a silence 'socially and psychologically determined' that, in the absence of witnesses, nullifies the occurrence of the event itself.<sup>30</sup>

In such instances, Dawson argues that rather than the notion of 'closure' – a closing-off of the traumatic past – the concept of 'reparative remembering' is more useful in the sense that it signifies the active, open and ongoing integration of a painful and

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<sup>25</sup> Embracing the notion of 'collective remembrance', J. Winter highlights the role of social agency in remembering war through focusing on the activity of individuals and social groups as major agents of remembrance. See Sivan, E. & Winter, J. (eds.) *o.c.* (1999), pp. 6-39; pp. 40-60.

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, P. "*Their name liveth for evermore*": *collective memory and the commemoration of the Great War*, MA dissertation, University of Sussex (2000), p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> Ashplant, T., Dawson, G. & Roper, M. (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), Preface, xxii.

<sup>29</sup> Dawson, G. 'Trauma, Memory, Politics. The Irish Troubles', in K. Rogers & S. Leydesdorff (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 188; Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Introduction, in K. Rogers & S. Leydesdorff (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 6, p. 11.



disturbing past, improving our living relationship with it.<sup>31</sup> This public recognition of a traumatic event through its incorporation into the national narrative about the past allows the past event to acquire dignity and meaning.<sup>32</sup>

Although it is arguable that every armed conflict constitutes a traumatic historical event due to the disruptive and destructive nature of warfare, some wars are commemorated and others enveloped in silence. In effect, the nature of the war impacts commemoration. As noted by Ashplant et al:

It is civil wars [...] and metropolitan struggles against liberation movements which have proved especially difficult for nation-states to commemorate in ways which do not require the suppression of sectional memories.<sup>33</sup>

The complexity of liberation struggles, especially when the colonised territory constituted a legal part of the metropolis, is reflected in the ways those societies currently deal with that specific past. Regarding such 'politics of memory', Ashplant et al recommend paying special attention to the historical, political, cultural and social particularities of each national context under study. This aspect is fundamental to my research.

The works of Lorenz and Evans illuminate the difficult questions arising from armed conflicts which are not collectively recognised within their societies. Indeed, the deliberate use of forgetting, the promotion of indifference and sometimes distortion is not exclusive to the Portuguese colonial conflict. The same applies, for instance, to the war fought by the British colonial state against the Mau Mau guerrillas of Kenya during 1952-60, a conflict that is not commemorated and barely remembered at all within the former metropolis.<sup>34</sup> Writing about the Malvinas/Falklands war (1982), Lorenz tells us about a nation which is not comfortable with its veterans.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, Evans states that the Algerian War (1954-1962) 'for many years has been a taboo subject in France', thus stressing his wish as a historian to 'recover a neglected history.'<sup>36</sup> As in Portugal, in the French case the memory of the colonial war is not positive and is profoundly divisive,

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<sup>31</sup> Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), p. 315.

<sup>32</sup> Dawson, G. 'Trauma, Memory, Politics...', in *o.c.* (2004), p. 189.

<sup>33</sup> Ashplant, T., Dawson, G. & Roper, M. (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> See Kershaw, G. *Mau Mau from Below*, Oxford, James Currey Publishers (1997) for an oral history of the conflict; Ashplant, T., Dawson, G. & Roper, M. (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), p. 69.

<sup>35</sup> Lorenz, F. 'The Unending War. Social myth, individual memory and the Malvinas', in Rogers, K. & Leydesdorff, S. (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), pp. 95-112.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander, M., Evans, M. & Keiger, J. (eds.) *The Algerian War and the French Army, 1954-62. Experiences, Images, Testimonies*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan (2002), p. 3, p. 12.

and its veterans are often marginalised and develop a discourse of victimhood: as victims of war and of postwar neglect. No agreed national narrative on the conflict emerged. This virtual silence about the war and lack of commemoration is also explained by the fact that it was a guerrilla war, never officially recognised as a war by the state – another similarity with the Portuguese case. In France, the memories of the veterans have not been systematically affirmed by public rituals of remembrance, with consequences for the individual memories of the war and its expression.

Writing on the complex and most often traumatic process of dealing with memories of colonial conflicts, Dawson et al believe that:

what is occurring in all these societies is an attempt to come to terms with a traumatic past that is collective in its impact and scale, the result of major historical forces and conflicts that have produced ruptures between the society's past and its present. Often, this process of coming-to-terms has to confront institutional amnesia and official denial by the state itself, as forms of social and ideological control.<sup>37</sup>

Subject to these ruptures between past and present – and to apply Plummer's emphasis on memory as a 'socially shared experience' – wars enter people's cultural memory when those who have an individual memory of war want and are able to pass it on to their society.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the political and socio-historical context where individual memories exist is instrumental in this process of integration. In this sense, public amnesia and official marginalisation can silence individual memory due to the fact that there is no context favourable to remembering.

My study of the Portuguese colonial war utilises oral history as a means of challenging and also explaining the silence surrounding this conflict. By focusing on personal testimonies of ex-combatants, my research recognises their wartime past, recovering at the same time taboo and marginalised memories, and assessing the effects of such absence from the historical record.

Given the socio-political specificities of the Portuguese case, the wider social, cultural and political developments which occurred post-1945 in other arenas and which placed emphasis on eliminating official indifference towards voices of survivors (including here war veterans) did not apply, as will be explained in following chapters.<sup>39</sup> The politics of memory operating in Portugal mean that the topic of the colonial war

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<sup>37</sup> See Introduction in Dawson, G., Leydesdorff, S. & Rogers, K. (eds.) *Trauma and Life Stories. International Perspectives*, London, Routledge (1999), p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Plummer, K. *Documents of Life 2: an invitation to a critical humanism*, London, Sage Publications (2001), p. 235.

<sup>39</sup> Introduction, in K. Rogers & S. Leydesdorff (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 9.

needs to be forced into the public domain, the ‘listening space’ having to be won through struggle. An uninterested Portuguese society displayed for decades a reluctance to listen to the war veterans, instigating in the latter a quest for social recognition of having lived that colonial past and a sense of abandonment, ‘of being left to deal with the past alone.’<sup>40</sup>

However, this public silence is, very commonly, sustained by a psychological reluctance to talk on the part of some ex-combatants, meaning that certain types of memories remain private and unassimilated. Nonetheless, through their testimonies, the war veterans participating in this research project contribute to expanding the politics of war memory in Portugal. Engaging in ‘reparative remembering’, these ex-combatants’ narratives become a starting point for a broader reflection on the Portuguese colonial conflict from a first-person standpoint.

For that purpose, in the next Chapter I will contextualise the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974), briefly presenting its historical background and then investigating the development (in various forms and contents) of its public memory. In this respect, I will focus firstly on an initial period of postwar silence, and subsequently on a more recent phase when silence has been broken.

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<sup>40</sup> Dawson, G. ‘Trauma, Memory, Politics...’, in *o.c.* (2004), p. 188.

## Chapter Two:

### The public memory of the Portuguese colonial war

#### Introduction to the Portuguese colonial war and its ex-combatants

Although Portugal was the last European country to maintain a colonial empire, in general there is no widespread international understanding about how this centuries-long sovereignty came to an end.<sup>1</sup> This last empire ended through what has been termed the ‘Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974)’, which consisted of three fighting fronts in Africa: in Angola, in Portuguese Guinea (currently Guinea-Bissau) and in Mozambique. The conflict started in Angola on the 4th February 1961, at a time when colonialism was increasingly condemned internationally, spread to Portuguese Guinea on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1963, and then to Mozambique on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1964. In each case, the war was declared by the respective national liberation movement, which intended to achieve total independence from Portuguese rule.

The conflict ceased in 1974. Its end was brought about by the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1974 Portuguese Revolution, initiated by a coup led by the Portuguese military, dissatisfied with thirteen years of war. This revolution also meant the end of *Estado Novo* (New State), a dictatorial regime that lasted for forty-eight years (1926-1974), virtually incarnated in the figure of António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1969).

In June 1951, during the Portuguese Constitutional Revision, the ‘Colonial Act’ ruled that the terminology ‘colonies’ was officially replaced by the phrase ‘overseas provinces’, retrieving the former 1911 term. The same process was applied to the term ‘Portuguese Colonial Empire’, which was renamed ‘Ultramar Português’, the latter translatable to ‘Portuguese overseas territories’. These ‘revised’ terms were employed in an attempt to deny the colonial nature of the Portuguese presence in Africa.

Indeed, the Portuguese regime at the time failed to acknowledge the post-1945 changing tide of history, asserting its policy of defence of ‘national territory’, and dismissing the principle of self-determination and independence demanded by the

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<sup>1</sup> See ‘Foreword’ in Cann, J. *Counterinsurgency in Africa. The Portuguese Way of War, 1961-1974*, Florida, Hailer Publishing (2005), xi-xii and ‘Preface’ in *o.c.*, xiii.

liberation movements.<sup>2</sup> In an international context that supported the independentist struggle and condemned the maintenance of Portuguese colonial rule, the regime chose to highlight the ‘pluricontinental, multiracial and multicultural’ character of the Portuguese nation.<sup>3</sup>

The Forças Armadas Portuguesas (Portuguese Armed Forces) were responsible for enforcing the colonial policy of the regime and so, during thirteen years of war, about 820,000 men were mobilised and sent to Africa.<sup>4</sup> This was a long and violent guerrilla war – officially called ‘overseas campaigns’ – fought thousands of miles away, in another continent, in a terrain that was both unknown and hostile to the vast majority of Portuguese servicemen.

At the end of the conflict, on the Portuguese side, it was estimated that there had been 8,831 dead, around 30,000 wounded, close to 4,500 mutilated, more than 14,000 physically disabled, and over 100,000 soldiers suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>5</sup> Of the total of casualties on the three fronts, about 70% were conscripts coming from what was then called the ‘Metropolis’ or ‘Mainland Portugal’. Combining the three fighting fronts, between 1961 and 1974, on average 630 Portuguese servicemen died per year, a significant human cost for a country of about 9 million people in 1960.<sup>6</sup> There was also an economic cost with 40% of the national budget channelled to National Defence. Between 1961 and 1973, Portugal maintained an annual average of 105,000 people across the three fighting fronts. The highest number was reached in 1973, with a total of 148,090 men.<sup>7</sup> Given the mobilisation of over 90% of the masculine youth of that period, practically every Portuguese family at the time – and subsequently – was affected by the conflict.<sup>8</sup>

Despite strong oppression of a dictatorial regime, significant sections of Portuguese society were against the colonial war. When the conflict started in Angola in

<sup>2</sup> Just as Algeria was a legal part of France, as noted by Evans, in *Algeria. France’s Undeclared War*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (2012), pp. 113-147, p. 371.

<sup>3</sup> For an example of the mainstream view in 1961, see Vieira, F. *Portugal em Angola*, Lisbon, Editorial Adastral (1961)

<sup>4</sup> The mobilised forces equalled to over 7% of the active population; 40% of the national budget was channelled to National Defence. See Afonso, A. ‘A guerra e o fim do regime ditatorial’ in Medina, J. (ed.) *o.c.* (1994), pp. 333-356.

<sup>5</sup> See Medeiros, P. de ‘Hauntings. Memory, fiction and the Portuguese colonial wars’, in Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), pp. 201-221, citing Guerra, J., *Descolonização Portuguesa* (1996); see also Brandão, J. *Cronologia da Guerra Colonial. Angola, Guiné, Moçambique, 1961-1974*, Lisbon, Editora Prefácio (2008), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> See Brandão, J., *o.c.*, p. 450; ‘Foreword’ by General B. Trainor, in Cann, J., *o.c.*, xi.

<sup>7</sup> See Brandão, J., *o.c.*, p. 450; the war effort implied the mobilisation of increasingly large numbers of conscripts. N. Teixeira notes that during the war the troops’ contingent was increased about 5.5 times; see Teixeira, N. ‘Portugal e as Guerras da Descolonização’ in Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (eds.) *o.c.* (Vol. 4, 2004), pp. 68-92.

<sup>8</sup> Teixeira, R. (org.) *A Guerra Colonial e o Romance Português*. 2nd edition, Editorial Notícias, Lisbon (1998), p. 88; Stubbs, H. ‘A Guerra Colonial à luz da antropologia cultural’, in Teixeira, R. (org.) *A Guerra Colonial. Realidade e ficção. Livro de Actas do I Congresso Internacional*, Lisbon, Editorial Notícias (2001), p. 253.

1961, there appeared to exist a generalised acceptance that Portugal and its colonies formed a political unity: a common motherland. Denying any right to self-determination, the regime used this notion in its propaganda in favour of an immediate defensive armed action against the so-called ‘terrorists’ – the combatants of the liberation movements. ‘*Para Angola, rapidamente e em força*’ (‘To Angola, quickly and massively’) was the motto, anchored on the regime’s much-advertised concept of pluricontinental and multiracial nation.

However, notwithstanding official propaganda, antiwar positions were expressed in Portuguese society. The dissenting voice of the Portuguese Communist Party warned, as early as December 1961, that the colonial wars ahead would be a ‘national disaster for the Portuguese people.’<sup>9</sup> The anti-colonial feeling was also significantly strong among University students. Indeed, after a number of student actions and strikes in 1962, the colonial cause rapidly began to lose adherents. The cost of the war expressed in dead and wounded became more apparent and many chose to leave the country before conscription. A nearly 21% record number of absentees was recorded between 1970-72.<sup>10</sup>

Although the opposition to the colonial war was expressed more systematically by a diversity of non-unified left-wing movements (some more radical than others), particularly in urban areas an increasing interest in political and ideological literature and a greater awareness of the African national movements developed amongst intellectuals, students and conscription-age youths. As the war intensified and increased the number of fighting fronts, opposition to the conflict and questions about its legitimacy became more noticeable. The anti-war resistance was also expressed through cultural outlets – particularly literature and music – that became powerful yet veiled weapons against the regime’s colonial policy.<sup>11</sup>

The repercussions of the May 68 events in France strengthened these anticolonial positions and opposition to the regime, particularly in 1969, when students of the Universities of Lisbon and Coimbra protested more vehemently. The more politicised student movements in Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto, some of them with connections to the working youth, became even more radical after the academic year of 1970-1971. In

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<sup>9</sup> Bebiano, R. ‘A esquerda e a oposição à guerra colonial’ in Teixeira, R. A. (ed.), *A Guerra do Ultramar: Realidade e Ficção. Livro de Actas do II Congresso Internacional sobre a Guerra Colonial*, Lisbon, Editorial Notícias (2002), pp. 293-313.

<sup>10</sup> Estado-Maior do Exército (CECA) *o.c.* (1988), pp. 254-270.

<sup>11</sup> See Bebiano, R. ‘A resistência interna à guerra colonial’, in *História* (Lisbon), XXV, III (2002), p. 47.

1973, the opposition forces grew in strength, and at the *Congresso da Oposição Democrática* (Congress of Democratic Opposition), concerns about the urgent needs to end the war were expressed.<sup>12</sup> Antiwar opinion also included an increasing number of Catholic activists, and many Portuguese émigrés – political exiles, absentees, deserters and economic immigrants – living in countries like France or the United Kingdom, and most notably in Paris.<sup>13</sup>

Opponents of the war exerted some impact on public opinion. However, due to ‘the fascist and censorial character of the regime’ a great number of people in Portugal, perhaps the majority, ‘ignored the contours and [...] real dimension’ of the colonial conflict.<sup>14</sup> It was against this backdrop that the regime attempted to shape people’s values and convictions towards justifying the presence of Portuguese troops in Africa, especially through education, the media and conscript-training.<sup>15</sup>

To a great extent, the feeling that this war had no purpose led to the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974 democratic revolution that put an end to the longest European authoritarian regime, and to thirteen years of fighting in Africa. The end of hostilities had no official winners or a defeated side, although, in 1975, the former colonies were granted the independence they had been fighting for.

Politically, economically, and socially this was the beginning of a new historical cycle for Portugal, marked by decolonisation. This process signified not only the surrender of the African ‘provinces’, but also the ‘return’ of at least half a million people in a very short span of time in 1975.<sup>16</sup> In the following years, the difficulties of a former colonial empire trying to come to terms with its redefined European borders were plentiful.

After the 1974 revolution, the tendency in Portugal was to forget those years of conflict, avoiding as much as possible potential national division. If ‘public memory represents a society’s collective conceptions about the past’, the specificity of the Portuguese case appears to lie in this political contradiction: the Portuguese Armed Forces were simultaneously the democratic liberators of 1974 and the men who were fighting for the maintenance of the Portuguese colonial empire in Africa.<sup>17</sup> From 1974

<sup>12</sup> See Bebiano, R., *o.c.* (2002), p. 296.

<sup>13</sup> See Bebiano, R. ‘A resistência interna à guerra colonial’, in *o.c.* (2002b), pp. 40-47.

<sup>14</sup> Rosário, L. ‘Guerra Colonial versus luta armada de libertação’ in Teixeira, R. (ed.), *o.c.* (2001), pp. 78-79.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, *Regimento de Caçadores Pára-Quedistas, Escola de Recrutas, III Fichas de Instrução (Projecto), 2 – Regulamentos* (1969), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, ‘Retornados de África. A imigração invisível’, in *Diário de Notícias*, 14th August 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Ritchie, D. *Doing Oral History. A Practical Guide*, New York, Oxford University Press (2003), p. 36.

on, their image was almost exclusively associated with the revolution, and not so much with their participation in the colonial conflict.

This political issue remains, pushing the memory of the colonial war into a non-consensual, conflict-laden space in contemporary Portugal. The ex-combatants' mother country was a dictatorial regime in 1961 and a newborn democracy in 1974. This unresolved tension between dictatorship and democracy, right and left, confers complexity and difficulty to the remembering process. For the principles of the old regime, the end of the war was a shameful betrayal causing the loss of national territory. The new democratic Portugal accepted the right to independence of the former colonies, and presented the war as a waste of time, resources and human lives. The official post-1974 discourse tends to follow the latter view and put the colonial war into the dictatorial context, therefore placing a major emphasis on the democratic revolution.

However, these two views are not clearly demarcated and tend to cohabit, revealing a divided society within which there is no real national unity around the cultural memory of the war, and where it is uncomfortable to deal with Portugal's dictatorial past and the collapse of its empire. In this context, former combatants became a source of embarrassment as 'untidy reminders' of that past.<sup>18</sup>

Portrayed variously as dutiful citizens, motherland-loving patriots, criminals serving fascism or inexperienced youths used by the system, the ex-combatants' position is a dubious one, permeated by political contradictions and guilt surrounding participation in the colonial war.<sup>19</sup> A common statement is that they were simply military men fulfilling orders.<sup>20</sup> Whatever the viewpoint, it is evident that the colonial war remains a source of tension and disagreement in Portugal today.

The contradictions and divisions that surround the war include the actual name given to the conflict. What war are we talking about? The answer is not straightforward, as in Portugal there is no entirely consensual term for this conflict.<sup>21</sup> In postwar Portugal a solid, coherent and usable 'national frame of remembrance' for this colonial conflict – able to become an accepted alternative to the discourse previously propagated by the

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<sup>18</sup> Evans, M. 'Rehabilitating the Traumatized War Veteran: The Case of French Conscripts from the Algerian War, 1954-1962' in Evans, M. & Lunn, K. (eds.) *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, Berg (1997), p. 75.

<sup>19</sup> Ribeiro, M. 'Empire, colonial wars and post-colonialism in Portuguese contemporary imagination' in *Portuguese Studies*, 17, London (2002), p. 186.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Teixeira, R. *Angola. (N'Gola). História do Batalhão de Caçadores 109 (1961/63)*, Coimbra, Quarteto Editores (2008), p. 177.

<sup>21</sup> Similar to the case of the public memory of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962); see Evans, M. in Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), p.55; Evans, M. et al *o.c.* (2002), p. 5.



former regime – has been absent.<sup>22</sup> Although the fact that there was a war is widely accepted – the term ‘war’ has been employed freely since the revolution of 1974 – the nature and definition of this conflict is still open to debate in present-day Portugal. Official silence and indifference contributed to the emergence of several alternative and competing terms for naming the war and framing war memory in the public space.

During the last decades there has been ample discussion in Portugal about the accurate designation of this conflict.<sup>23</sup> From the perspective of the national liberation movements, it was the ‘Guerra de Libertação’ (Liberation War). The apparent minority who identify themselves more fully with the view of the former regime – or those adopting a strictly military contemporary perspective – employ the terminology ‘Campanhas de África’ (African Campaigns), often refusing the notion that the conflict was ever a war. Another designation with more right-wing leanings is ‘Guerra do Ultramar’ (Ultramar War), which re-utilises an expression of the previous regime.<sup>24</sup> The designation that seems to be more widespread and accepted, although not without dispute, is the one adopted throughout this study: ‘Guerra Colonial’ (Colonial War). This terminology appears frequently in Portuguese media and literature, in some historiography and school manuals, and reflects the cultural background of a country whose democratic left-wing genesis generally accepts the fact that the Portuguese ‘overseas provinces’ were actually colonial possessions and, thus, the conflict fought there was a colonial war.<sup>25</sup> Those who do not want to make an often politically revealing choice between ‘Colonial’ and ‘Ultramar’ normally opt for the neutral – and geographically accurate – ‘Guerra de África’ (War of Africa) or the ‘distancing’ ‘Guerra da Descolonização’ (Decolonisation War).<sup>26</sup>

Despite the abundance of designations, the more commonly used labels are ‘Colonial War’ and ‘Ultramar War’, with an apparent preponderance of the former. Employed both in public and private arenas, in the Portuguese context the choice

<sup>22</sup> Ribeiro, M. et al ‘The children of the Colonial Wars: post-memory and representations’, in I. Gil & A. Martins (org.) *The (in)visibility of war in modern culture*, New York, Continuum Books (2012), p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Vecchi, R. *Excepção Atlântica. Pensar a Literatura da Guerra Colonial*, Porto, Edições Afrontamento (2010), p. 140, pp. 176-177.

<sup>24</sup> The Portuguese *Ultramar* were the Portuguese overseas provinces. These territories ceased to be called colonies since 1951.

<sup>25</sup> The choice of title of the first encyclopaedic work on the war is carefully explained by Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) in *Guerra Colonial*, Lisbon, Editorial Notícias (2001), p. 20; see also Gomes, C. (under the pseudonym C. Ferraz) ‘Guerra colonial e expressão literária. Falta de memória? Falta de talento? Ou nós somos mesmo assim?’ in Melo, F. (ed.) *Vértice: Guerra Colonial, Estado Novo e Regime Democrático*, II Série, Lisbon, Editorial Caminho, Jan.-Feb. 1994, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> For António Ferreira, it was a ‘civil war’, in *Morte na Picada*, Lisbon, Via Occidentalis Editora (2008), p. 5; see interview with Nuno Teixeira, in *Visão*, 9th October 2003.

between these terminologies frequently reveals the inclinations, political positions and sometimes even the social background of the narrator or group.<sup>27</sup>

The naming of the conflict remains divisive and controversial in Portugal, where terms are adopted carefully and their use justified.<sup>28</sup> The debate surrounding terminology hints at the complexity that characterises this topic. Infused with political implications, it also reveals a society trying to come to terms with a fractured war memory, and with the role and identity of ex-combatants. However, whatever the choice of terminology, the veterans remain always the same: they are the Portuguese citizens who went to fight in the three African territories between 1961 and 1974.

The Portuguese ex-combatants are a heterogeneous group with disparate backgrounds. The veterans have in common the fact that they are mostly men born in the 1940s and 1950s, and represent a generation whose shared identity was brought into existence by the war experience. For the most part, these men were conscripts doing their military service – which after the legal changes of 1968 included, besides the training period in Portugal, at least two years in the African theatre of operations.<sup>29</sup> In 1971 the age of conscription was lowered from 20 to 18 years old.<sup>30</sup> Fighting was a ‘national mission attributed to them by the political power.’<sup>31</sup> They were ‘the youth [...] forced to go to war.’<sup>32</sup> Believing or not in what they were fighting for, the choice was obedience, insubordination (for instance, by leaving the country before conscription) or desertion. Decades later, for some there is now another rather difficult choice to make: to remain silent or to engage with and share their memories.

In a society which has consistently refused to remember, many war veterans have been trying to bring their memories into the public domain, and have contributed to the creation of a ‘listening space’ where the topic can be talked about more openly.<sup>33</sup> For instance, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1974 revolution in 2004 was a prolific year in terms of bringing the colonial war and the ex-combatants into the open, confirming that this group has progressively managed to reach a wider audience and gain some cultural and

<sup>27</sup> See explanation of Teixeira, R. *o.c.* (2008), pp. 31-32. The author prefers the non-committal ‘War of Africa.’

<sup>28</sup> For a recent example, see backcover of Brandão, J. *o.c.* (2008)

<sup>29</sup> Legal diploma no. 2135 (*Lei do Serviço Militar*), passed on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 1968, determined an increase in the duration of the military service and military obligations; this meant that the two-year period of incorporation was effectively extended to four years, of which two had to be served in Africa; see Cann, J. ‘Um notável feito de armas’ in Teixeira, R. (ed.), *o.c.* (2001), p.133 and Matos, L. ‘A Orgânica das Forças Armadas Portuguesas’ in Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (eds.), *o.c.* (Vol. 4, 2004), p. 184.

<sup>30</sup> Cann, J. ‘Um notável feito de armas’ in *o. c.* (2001), p. 133.

<sup>31</sup> Antunes, J. ‘Introduction’ to *o.c.* (Volume I, 1995), p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Rosa, A. *Memórias de Um Prisioneiro de Guerra*, Porto, Campo das Letras (2003), p. 171.

<sup>33</sup> A term used by Dawson, G., Leydesdorff, S. & Rogers, K. (eds.) in *o.c.* (1999), p. 10.

political visibility. If for some a long absence from public remembrance amplified an individual desire to forget (often associated with the traumatic nature of many war experiences), for others it heightened a need to find alternative forms of group remembrance.<sup>34</sup>

In a context of long-term and widespread public amnesia and indifference, this task is not without difficulties, and the veterans' memories and identities are affected both on a personal and social level by the lack of public acknowledgement of their war experience. The fact that this experience has not been readily recognised also assumes, in the Portuguese case, salience in claims for social justice. For many veterans, lack of recognition translates into inaccessibility to practical benefits such as pensions, disability allowances, health care and other forms of social support.

These sectors are covered by specific legislation. Until 1999 the legislation directly concerning war veterans and their needs was very limited. In 1976, regulation no. 43/76 recognised the right to moral and material compensation for the disabled of the Armed Forces.<sup>35</sup> Other legislation of the 1980s and 1990s reinforced these rights, but in practice the war disabled and war veterans in general remained largely unsupported.<sup>36</sup> In this context, and particularly on the part of war veterans' associations, there has been an unrelenting fight for war pensions and allowances and psychological support for ex-combatants and their families.

These late 1990s and early 2000s campaigns led to political recognition and were a remarkable stimulant to public debate, in an elaborate on-going legal and political battle. The 'political effects' achieved in the process confirm the strength acquired by this narrative of justice-seeking veterans.<sup>37</sup> In fact, the legal issue concerning war veterans has been long and complex. Regulation no. 46/99 (1999) became a landmark in this respect. Originating in civil society and covered attentively by the media, this 1999 legislation was a result of a social movement that reached the Portuguese Assembly of the Republic. This law admits that there are ex-combatants suffering from war stress in Portugal, and that this condition results from the military experience in Africa, and attributes to the Portuguese State the responsibility for compensating, treating and

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<sup>34</sup> Similarly to the veterans of the French colonial conflict; see Evans, M. 'Rehabilitating the Traumatized...' in *o.c.* (1997), pp. 75-76.

<sup>35</sup> Earlier, in May 1974, ADFA, *Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas* was founded. ADFA is a war veterans' association specifically directed to the war disabled, but also open to disabled civilians. From its beginnings, it has fought for the war disabled, their legal rights, social visibility and support.

<sup>36</sup> For further legislation, please see <http://www.mdn.gov.pt/mdn/pt/Defesa/Legislacao/> [Portuguese Ministry of Defence's website].

<sup>37</sup> Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), p. 152.

supporting these ex-combatants through a national support network. However, this legislation has never been efficiently fulfilled, and the ex-combatants' demands in this regard remain largely unanswered.<sup>38</sup>

Another significant legal achievement is law no. 9/2002 (or *Lei dos Antigos Combatentes*, meaning Law of the Former Combatants), passed in early 2002. With this legislation, the war veterans who fought in Africa in periods and areas of 'special danger and difficulty' are entitled to have the years of military service included in the calculation of their state retirement pensions.<sup>39</sup> Its implementation, however, was surrounded by controversy and dissatisfaction, and appeared to serve some political purposes.

In effect, legal diploma no. 9/2002 was only partially brought into force by Paulo Portas, by then Minister of Defence, in October 2004, when 150,000 ex-combatants began to receive a pension complement of about 150 € per annum (c. £130).<sup>40</sup> This initial gesture, on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1974 revolution, was accompanied by a rhetoric which asserted that 'after 28 years of hardcore forgetting, justice has been done.'<sup>41</sup> Finally, Portas asserted, the combatants could not be mistaken for a former regime, and the 'country reconciled itself with the war veterans' and paid its 'historical debt.'<sup>42</sup>

However, this proved to be a highly controversial decision. The reduced amount conceded, and not to all veterans, was perceived as ineffectual. Whilst some accepted that partial justice had been achieved, many felt cheated.<sup>43</sup> This dissatisfaction led to unprecedented protests promoted more famously by APVA – Associação Portuguesa dos Veteranos de Guerra (Portuguese Association of War Veterans) in October 2004. Calling the measure 'the most elaborate lie of this Government', the Association demonstrated before the Portuguese Parliament under the motto 'justice yes, charity

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<sup>38</sup> *Rede Nacional de Apoio*, a government-funded national psychological support network for ex-combatants suffering from war stress was subsequently created (legal diploma no. 50/00, 7th April 2000); operating initially only in Lisbon and Porto, and struggling with insufficient funding, it was later extended to other Portuguese cities; after a decade, its shortcomings were evident; see *Público*, 27th September 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Namely legal diploma no. 9/2002, 11th February 2002; regulated again in 2004 (21/2004, 5<sup>th</sup> June) and 2009 (3/2009, 13<sup>th</sup> January).

<sup>40</sup> See *Correio da Manhã*, on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2004.

<sup>41</sup> See *A Capital*, 28th September 2004; Durão Barroso, then Prime Minister, expressed a similar opinion in *O Independente*, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2004; see also *Público*, 19th April 2004; *Jornal de Notícias*, 24th April 2004; *Diário de Notícias*, 26th April 2004.

<sup>42</sup> See *Jornal da Madeira*, 9th December 2004; Lusa news agency, 3rd February 2005; *Açoriano Oriental*, 2nd May 2005; *O Comércio do Porto* and *24 Horas*, 28th September 2004.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, opinions of J. Oliveira and J. Lopes, in *Correio da Manhã*, 7<sup>th</sup> April and 7<sup>th</sup> May 2004; and of B. da Fonte in *A Voz de Trás-os-Montes*, 28th October 2004.

no’.<sup>44</sup> This action was followed by a nationwide wave of protests.<sup>45</sup> In the extensive media turmoil that followed, Portas and other politicians were accused of utilising veterans for political propaganda.<sup>46</sup> Further accusations of political utilisation emerged in 2008-2009, just before a general election, directed by Portas (by then in the opposition) towards the government.<sup>47</sup> The official response was a refusal to use the ex-combatants for ‘political fights.’<sup>48</sup> In the meantime, the rules on the calculation of the veterans’ retirement pension were still being debated, as some veteran associations continued asking for full application of legal diploma 9/2002.<sup>49</sup> Fulfilling these demands proved increasingly difficult due to the severe budgetary problems faced by the Ministry of Defence towards the end of the decade.<sup>50</sup> The following years were shaped by the struggles surrounding unmet demands. Indeed, the higher political visibility of veteran issues in recent years did not necessarily correlate to achieving the effective support claimed by veterans.

The ineffectiveness of legislation is particularly felt by the war disabled. In its thirteen years, the colonial war produced around 14,000 disabled men. During the dictatorial regime, they were carefully hidden in the annex of the Military Hospital (Hospital Militar Principal), and after 1971 also in the Portuguese Red Cross Military Home (Lar Militar da Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa), both in Lisbon, and in many family homes across the country. For many the situation did not fundamentally change after the democratic revolution, and even up to this day. In 2006, a news report on the Red Cross Military Home denounced it as ‘the house of shame’, a ‘degrading situation’ of

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<sup>44</sup> See *Comércio do Porto*, 19th October 2004.

<sup>45</sup> The protests prompted Portas, of self-declared right-wing leanings and former leader of PP (Partido Popular, Popular Party), in early 2005 and just before the general elections, to send a polemic letter (dated December 2004) to thousands of ex-combatants stating this was a first recognition measure towards the ‘over 400,000 ex-combatants who served their motherland in special conditions of difficulty and danger’; see *Lusa* news agency and *Público*, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005; on the demonstrations, see *A Capital*, *Diário de Coimbra*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Jornal de Notícias*, on 21st October 2004.

<sup>46</sup> See *A Capital*, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2005; *Lusa* news agency, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005; and *Público*, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005; G. Costa and J. Monteiro in *O Comércio do Porto*, 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2004; regarding unfulfilled political promises, amongst other aspects, the veterans had been asking for retirement at 55. Many felt the efforts of the new Government elected in 2005 to improve the national support network for PTSD sufferers were insufficient; see *Diário Digital*, on 20th March 2005 and *Diário de Leiria*, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2004.

<sup>47</sup> See *Público*, 3rd August 2008.

<sup>48</sup> See *Público* and *Correio da Manhã*, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2008.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, *Correio da Manhã*, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008; *Jornal de Notícias*, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2008; *Correio da Manhã*, 11th August 2008 and also 16<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

<sup>50</sup> In late 2008, there were reports the Ministry of Defence was over 100 million Euros indebted due to the pension complements that had begun to be paid in previous years. Difficulties in paying veteran pensions were felt, with an estimated 256,000 ex-combatants experiencing reductions in their pension by the end of 2008. See *Correio da Manhã*, 17th November 2008; *Diário de Notícias*, 18th October 2008; *Correio da Manhã*, 4th September 2008; *Jornal de Notícias*, 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

‘abandoned people living in a storehouse.’<sup>51</sup> The country appeared to ‘condemn to silence’ these ‘uncomfortable’ reminders of the colonial conflict who carried such visible ‘marks of a war, of a regime.’<sup>52</sup>

The creation in 1974 of ADFA – Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas (Association for the Disabled of the Armed Forces), in the aftermath of the revolution, allowed the war disabled to begin fighting for the improvement of their living conditions. Currently with circa 13,500 members, since its foundation ADFA has been striving for legal rights, social integration, rehabilitation, support and against discrimination.<sup>53</sup> It defines itself as the ‘expression of the anger of those who, led to participate in the Colonial War [...] became disabled and then saw themselves abandoned and marginalised, with no perspectives of social reintegration’, the ‘just force of the victims of an unjust war.’<sup>54</sup>

In 2004, on the occasion of ADFA’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the war disabled were considered ‘the main victims of an unfair and pointless war’, although, it was stressed, their condition would only be a ‘misfortune [...] if the motherland forgets them.’<sup>55</sup> A decade later, and judging from current demands, the Portuguese motherland has still not appropriately addressed the difficulties faced by these disabled war veterans, and has failed to provide suitable health care and realistic pensions, and eradicate situations of acute poverty and neglect.<sup>56</sup>

Despite the evident inadequacies, and following extensive public debate, recent Portuguese governments have been more aware of the disabled ex-combatants’ needs.<sup>57</sup> In 2009, the state assumed the coverage of health expenses of disabled ex-servicemen, and tax-exempted their pensions. Some ADFA projects also received extra government-funding.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, as the struggles of the disabled war veterans gain more visibility and Portuguese society becomes more aware of their demands, ex-combatants in general benefit by gradually acquiring their place in the public arena. Demographically, this

<sup>51</sup> See Assor, M., ‘Regresso dos Antigos Combatentes. A Casa da Vergonha’ (The Return of the Former Combatants. The House of Shame), in *Correio da Manhã*, 23rd April 2006.

<sup>52</sup> See Ribeiro, J. *Marcas da Guerra Colonial*, Porto, Campo das Letras (1999), p. 38 and ADFA, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas, *III Congresso ADFA, Participando Construímos o Futuro* (1989), p. 61.

<sup>53</sup> Rodrigues, H. in Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 568.

<sup>54</sup> ADFA’s Regulations at <http://www.adfa-portugal.com/>; ADFA, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas, *o.c.* (1989), p. 44; Gomes, C., ‘Quotidianos da Guerra Colonial’, in Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (eds.) *o.c.* (Vol. 5, 2004), p. 172; Ribeiro, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 41; ADFA, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas (several authors) *As Barreiras Invisíveis da Integração*, Lisbon, Edições ADFA (1995), p. 11, p. 38.

<sup>55</sup> ADFA, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas, *ADFA, 30 anos, 1974-2004* (2004), p. 40 (V. Lourenço) and p. 53 (J. Santos).

<sup>56</sup> *Público* and *Sol*, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2008; *Correio da Manhã*, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

<sup>57</sup> *Jornal de Notícias*, 20th November 2007.

<sup>58</sup> *Público*, 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009; *Diário de Notícias*, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

group is too numerous to be ignored. In 2004, it was estimated there were about 100,000 retired war veterans in Portugal, with another 270,000 still working.<sup>59</sup>

If the physically disabled veterans are obvious reminders of the colonial war, the ones suffering from psychological problems, although prevalent, are socially more invisible. In terms of PTSD (Posttraumatic stress disorder, a condition legally recognised in Portugal in 1999), or war stress, as it is more commonly known, there is no consensus regarding the exact numbers of sufferers.<sup>60</sup> While some authors estimate that 30% of all ex-combatants are affected, and others advance numbers between 57,000 and 140,000, more recent studies point out a much higher percentage.<sup>61</sup> In 2007, psychologist Ângela Maia suggested a total of 300,000 PTSD-sufferers.<sup>62</sup>

Maia's findings generated disagreement about the accuracy of the numbers advanced, exposing the fact that, forty years after the end of the conflict, there are no official figures regarding the exact number of ex-combatants psychologically affected by posttraumatic stress disorder.<sup>63</sup> What is generally known is that the men who are more likely to develop the condition are the ones who suffered injuries, witnessed the death of comrades, were ambushed, made prisoners or deprived of basic needs.<sup>64</sup> Maia's research highlights the country's lack of interest in studying the physical and psychological consequences of the war on the ex-combatants, and illuminates the disturbing and undesirable legacy of 'extreme violence and atrocity.'<sup>65</sup>

In fact, for over twenty years after the end of the war, the war stressed ex-combatants were virtually unknown in terms of research, with the exception of some work done in psychiatric hospitals. From the mid-1990s, however, several studies were published about PTSD in war veterans, accompanying an ascending social movement of

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<sup>59</sup> Lusa news agency, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

<sup>60</sup> PTSD, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, a term which first appeared in the American 1980s' psychiatric literature in the aftermath of the Vietnam war referring to the disturbances experienced by the US military veterans after the conflict.

<sup>61</sup> In Ribeiro, *o.c.* (1999), p. 58; Lusa news agency, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004; legal diploma no. 46/1999 indicates an approximate number of 140,000 war veterans with psychological problems; because there are no specific studies, these numbers were obtained by extrapolation of American data about the Vietnam War and other countries; see Albuquerque et al 'Perturbação Pós-Traumática do Stress (PTSD). Avaliação da taxa de ocorrência na população adulta portuguesa', *Acta Médica Portuguesa*, 16 (2003), pp. 309-320.

<sup>62</sup> See *Notícias Magazine*, 17th July 2007; and afternoon news of TVI Portuguese television channel on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2007.

<sup>63</sup> See 'A contabilidade sem fim das vítimas de uma guerra', by M. Resendes, in *Diário de Notícias*, 6th October 2007.

<sup>64</sup> See non-dated article about war stressed published in December 2005 in [www.saude.sapo.pt](http://www.saude.sapo.pt).

<sup>65</sup> Maia, Â., McIntyre, T., Pereira, G. and Fernandes, E. *Por baixo das pústulas da guerra: Reflexões sobre um estudo com ex-combatentes da guerra colonial*, Braga, Universidade do Minho, Centro de Estudos Lusíadas (2006), pp. 11-28; Maia, Â., et al, *o. c.*, p. 11, quoting Quintais, L. 'Memória e Trauma numa Unidade Psiquiátrica' in *Análise Social*, 34 (2000), pp. 673-684.

the war veteran organisations that culminated in the 1999 legal diploma.<sup>66</sup> Although lacking in concrete results, by declaring PTSD a legitimate cause of disability, this law was a first step in bringing into public discussion the psychological cost of the colonial war, giving its veterans more visibility and generating interest in the topic.<sup>67</sup> The great breakthrough with this law was that for the first time the Portuguese State recognised the existence of chronic psychological conditions among ex-combatants, admitted they were acquired at the service of the state – although under a different political regime – and acknowledged state responsibility towards PTSD veteran sufferers.<sup>68</sup>

In view of the difficulty in processing this event of Portuguese history, the widespread traumatic impact on war stressed veterans and their families remains a social problem that is only now being uncovered.<sup>69</sup> Notwithstanding statistical disagreements, Maia's study pictures the colonial war as having 'high potential' to generate 'long-lasting' PTSD, and calls for further research and the championing of the social and moral responsibility to 'listen to these voices, which for a long time have been socially and politically ignored.'<sup>70</sup>

Bound by their indelible war experience, the ex-combatants are a reasonably identifiable section of Portuguese society, where they emerge and portray themselves in a generational manner. As will be analysed in more depth in the course of this Chapter, recently there has been an increase of fictional and/or autobiographical veteran accounts focusing on their war years. These works characteristically repeat certain phrases and ideas, a brief survey of which will assist greatly in understanding this 'generation who made the war and ended it, [...] [opening up] Portugal to modernity.'<sup>71</sup>

Ex-combatants' testimonies reveal a group in search of a narrative capable of explaining themselves and their past. They are aware that in their lifetime they witnessed – and to a certain degree participated in – momentous events in Portuguese history: the colonial war, the transition from a dictatorship into a democracy, the end of the empire and decolonisation process and the country's readjustment towards European

<sup>66</sup> Legal diploma no. 46/1999; see also Albuquerque et al, *o.c.* (2003)

<sup>67</sup> *Correio da Manhã*, 10th August 2008.

<sup>68</sup> Although this law appears never to have been effectively applied, multiple implementation efforts have been attempted in recent years. In November 2007 the Portuguese Government signed a protocol agreement with war veteran organisations to treat war stress cases more quickly; see *Correio da Manhã*, 17th December 2007, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22nd November 2007.

<sup>69</sup> There is an increasing awareness about the suffering of the wives of war veterans. For instance, APVG (Portuguese War Veterans' Association) offers psychological support to members' wives since 2004. An estimated 80,000 wives of ex-combatants suffer from secondary Posttraumatic stress disorder. See *Correio da Manhã*, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2003, 24th January and 27th March 2006.

<sup>70</sup> Maia, Â., et al, *o. c.*, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> See backcover text in Ferraz, C. *Nó Cego*, Alfragide, Casa das Letras (2008)



integration. Most praise the fact that their generation ended the war and welcomed Portugal into a new socio-political phase. Some feel proud to have fulfilled their military duty, some wish they had never done so, and virtually all regret that there ever was a war. They are happy to be alive, though, and most prize their belonging to the ex-combatant group, feeling simultaneously troubled by what it took to be in that position.<sup>72</sup> In fact, for them to exist as a group there had to be a war.

Now, after ‘more than thirty years of silence’, most believe it is time to speak.<sup>73</sup> These veterans ask for ‘respect’ and for ‘consideration’, emphasising they lived in a ‘different time’, when war was an inevitability dictated by the regime and they had no choice but to go.<sup>74</sup> These men frequently depict the war as a meaningless ‘sacrifice of a generation’, encompassing in the term both survivors and fallen comrades, and presenting themselves as ‘victims of the fascist regime.’<sup>75</sup>

Inevitably, the war deeply ‘changed the life course’ of ‘an entire generation’, the generation whose ‘youth’ was stolen, and inside whom war ‘left deep marks.’<sup>76</sup> Conscious of the historical singularity of their experience, and advancing in years, a strong preoccupation with remembering and transmission emerges among the ex-combatants. It is a ‘duty’ to share their ‘lived experience’, and they hope that what happened to them ‘is not lost in time, that [...] [their] children and grandchildren [...] know what war can make to well-intentioned youths.’<sup>77</sup> Ideally, their accounts could act as an ‘incentive for the next generations to deepen this subject’ and counteract society’s current ‘ignorance’ about it.<sup>78</sup>

This desire to address the past also stems from an overwhelming need to remember, honour and pay ‘heartfelt homage’ to those who died, and to the ‘mutilated and

<sup>72</sup> See Preface to Correia, V. *A Fisga*, Linda-a-Velha, DG Edições (2008), p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Araújo, L. *Os Bravos da Picada. Diário de Guerra da 2.ª Companhia do Batalhão Expedicionário 5014*, Madeira, Author Edition (2003), p. 109; Correia, V. *o.c.* (2008), pp. 11-12.

<sup>74</sup> Araújo, L. *o.c.* (2003), p. 109; see also Mesquita, J. *O Inferno Verde. Moçambique, 1968-1972*, Lisbon, Prefácio (2004).

<sup>75</sup> Bastos, M. *Cacimbados. A Vida por um Fio*, Babel Editores, Vila Nova de Gaia (2008), p. 121; see also Preface to Correia, V. *o.c.* (2008), p. 8; Marques, D. (coord.) *Cabo Delgado. Uma História Trágico-Terrestre. Da Operação «Nó Górdio» ao Fim do Império*, Braga, Authors’ Edition (2008), p. 97 and Estrela, B. *Perigo e Fascínio em África. Angola, 1962-1964*, Lisbon, Prefácio (2007); Rosa, A. *o.c.* (2003), p. 169.

<sup>76</sup> See backcover text of Costa, C. *Morto Por Te Ver. Cartas de um Soldado à Namorada (Angola, 1967-1969)*, Porto, Edições Afrontamento (2007); see front dustjacket of Melo, J. (org.) *Os Anos da Guerra. 1961-1975. Os Portugueses em África. Crónica, Ficção e História*, vols. I & II, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores (1988); Araújo, L. *o.c.* (2003), p. 109.

<sup>77</sup> Carvalho, J. *Era Tempo de Morrer em África. Angola, Guerra e Descolonização, 1961-1975*, Lisbon, Prefácio (2004), p. 37 and p. 40; Machado, A. *Aconteceu no Leste de Angola. A “Batalha” do Lumeje*, Beja, Samarcanda (2003), p. 8; Brito, P. ‘Adeus, até ao meu regresso. 40 anos depois’, in *Domingo, Correio da Manhã*, 27th February 2005.

<sup>78</sup> Teixeira, R. *o.c.* (2008); backcover and p. 19; see Estrela, B. *o.c.* (2007)

psychologically affected.’<sup>79</sup> In fact, the great majority of war novels, autobiographies and similar accounts begin with a dedication to ‘our dead.’<sup>80</sup>

The articulation of this past does not take place without difficulties. Many carry ‘a strong guilt feeling’ for having taken part in the colonial war, and this often results in aspects of silence, echoing a wider silence about the topic in Portugal.<sup>81</sup> This form of selective self-censorship runs deep in veteran narratives, and is normally applied to uncomfortable episodes of extreme violence (such as casualties, injuries, mutilations, massacres).<sup>82</sup>

Such conditions envelop the ex-combatants in ambiguity: they wish to pass on their generation’s testimony, pay homage to the dead and resolve their past, but in the process varying degrees of guilt prove to be disabling. In this respect, in his assessment of the consequences of the Portuguese colonial war, sociologist Luís Quintais highlights how many ex-combatants struggle to attach a meaning to their war experiences capable of pacifying the memories of violence witnessed or perpetrated. The moral puzzle of memory remains unresolved due to the impossibility of identifying the veterans clearly either as victims (of the dictatorial regime) or victimisers (of the enemy in combat).<sup>83</sup>

Obviously, not every ex-combatant was involved in extreme violence, nor became war stressed or afflicted with guilt. However, taking part in an armed conflict was bound to be an impacting experience on many levels of these men’s lives. It may be for this reason that another common veteran concept is the need for a ‘liberating’ temporal distance in dealing with the memory of the war.<sup>84</sup>

This brief survey of frequent notions employed in ex-combatant written narratives illustrates the difficulty that exists in Portugal to bring into the open a fuller account of war experience. Some particularly uncomfortable, painful – and perhaps morally questionable – memories are avoided or totally absent, which contributes to the

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<sup>79</sup> Rosa, A. *o.c.* (2003), p. 171; also Chapter XL of Correia, V. *o.c.* (2008); Marques, D. (coord.) *o.c.* (2008); Santos, M. *Diário da Guiné, 1968-1969. Na Terra dos Soncós*, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores (2008); Garcia, J. *Lugar de Massacre*, 3rd edition, Lisbon, Edições Salamandra (1996); Machado, A. *o.c.* (2003); Pinho, M. *Missão em Moçambique. 25 de Abril de 1970 a 21 de Maio de 1972. Companhia de Caçadores “2729”*, Cortegaça, Crecor (2009); Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (1998); Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001); Brandão, J. *o.c.* (2008), p. 9.

<sup>80</sup> Teixeira, R. *o.c.* (2008), p. 11.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Lopes, F. *O Alferes Eduardo*, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores (2000), p. 7.

<sup>82</sup> See Marques, D. (coord.) *o.c.* (2008), p. 173, p. 179; and Lourenço, V. *No Regresso Vinham Todos. Relato da Companhia n.º 2549*, Lisbon, Editorial Notícias (1997), p. 56.

<sup>83</sup> Quintais, L. ‘Memória e Trauma...’ in *o.c.* (2000), p. 680; ‘Guerra Colonial’. *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24th February 2008.

<sup>84</sup> See backcover of Aranha, E. *Guerra Colonial. Um Barco Fardado*, Lisbon, Roma Editora (2005)

uneasiness surrounding the colonial war in Portugal. In the meantime, critical reflection remains partial, and the public processing of this past event not fully realised.

A safe arena for the expression of this generational war bond materialises in the social support and affirmation found in other comrades and veterans' associations. Currently, there are over ten war veterans' associations in Portugal.<sup>85</sup> In recent years Portuguese war veteran associations have increased in number and reinforced their common goal of improving the ex-combatants' social welfare.<sup>86</sup> Taking direct action when possible, and also campaigning for the fulfilment of long-term veteran demands, such efforts acquire a greater urgency as the veterans' age progresses and their needs increase.<sup>87</sup>

These associations operate alongside countless informal groups and veteran social networks. The periodic gatherings and activities organised through such groups are becoming more popular and better advertised since the last decade. Framed by a shared war experience, and, in opposition to 'social indifference', espousing solidarity, mutual understanding, and strong war-forged friendships, these social contexts constitute a privileged space for group remembering and acquisition of social visibility.<sup>88</sup>

Such spaces are not nostalgia-free, as this past constitutes a memory stronghold for many. Indeed, the colonial war experience acquires a specific generational significance due to the fact that it happened in the early years of adulthood, a pivotal moment in the veteran's lives. It shaped their collective identity and group sensibility, conferring an awareness of belonging to a particular generation moulded by war.<sup>89</sup> In this context, any emerging difficulties in remembering are not just related to the traumatic nature of many war experiences, but also to the sudden disruption of socio-political settings these men experienced post-1974. The inadequacy of the previous socio-cultural frameworks discarded by the democratic regime further complicates the

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<sup>85</sup> A few of the more important are *Liga dos Combatentes* (Combatants' League, f. 1924), *ADFA - Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas* (Association for the Disabled of the Armed Forces, f. 1974), *APOIAR - Associação de Apoio aos Ex-combatentes Vítimas do Stress de Guerra* (Association for the Support of War Stressed Ex-combatants, f. 1994), *APVG - Associação Portuguesa de Veteranos de Guerra* (Portuguese War Veteran Association, f. 1999), and *ACUP - Associação Combatentes do Ultramar Português* (Combatants of the Portuguese *Ultramar* Association, f. 2002). See Bibliography for more information.

<sup>86</sup> In 2006 several main veteran associations constituted a national federation – *Federação Portuguesa das Associações de Combatentes*; see *Correio de Manhã*, 25th July 2006.

<sup>87</sup> Amongst others, the inclusion of military service towards the calculation of veterans' retirement pensions (enforcing legal diploma no. 9/2002), an efficient implementation of the national support network for PTSD sufferers, the rehabilitation of Portuguese military cemeteries in the former colonies and the transference of the fallen servicemen's mortal remains to Portugal, providing care homes and other social support services for ex-combatants.

<sup>88</sup> Lorenz, F. 'The Unending War: Social Myth, Individual Memory, and Malvinas' in Dawson, G., Leydesdorff, S. & Rogers, K. (eds.) *o.c.* (1999), pp. 95-112.

<sup>89</sup> Cubitt, G. *History and Memory*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, (2007, reprinted 2012), p. 216, pp. 234-235; see also Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), pp. 4-6.

attainment of stable structures for autobiographical recollection.<sup>90</sup> In fact, as young men raised in the spirit of the era, the superseded regime for which the veterans fought – and to which some, consciously or not, still feel a sense of continuing commitment – provided the backdrop of a (now lost) imperial world where the security of their upbringing resides. This aspect of nostalgic revisitation of that shared past, reinforced by the need to pay homage to lost comrades and honour solidarities forged during combat, leads to a distinctive generational attachment to this historical period and also to Africa.<sup>91</sup> This potentially explains many ex-combatants' urge to jointly reminisce about the war, very likely in an attempt to make sense of the significant transitional events they experienced in their lifetime. They gather, remember the past and show their society that 'our generation is still alive.'<sup>92</sup>

Perhaps more than ever, Portuguese society is aware that the veterans exist and are alive. The struggles of the last decade for wider public recognition made the country comparatively more sensitive and knowledgeable about many aspects of 'their war', more aware of the importance of their first-hand experience and of the need to question the collective silence on this topic. Also, coming into the foreground there is a sense of chronological distance – both personal and generational – that facilitates the telling of war memories. A shift in the public memory of this conflict can be discerned. In the next sections, an assessment of how the colonial war has been remembered in Portugal in the last decades will assist in understanding developments in its personal and public memory.

### **Colonial war remembrance in Portugal**

The variable level of attention that the colonial war has received in Portugal post-1974 reflects the profound changes the country has been facing since the democratic revolution. As Dawson argues, in transitional societies, where elements of continuity and change are reconfigured via new arrangements and meanings, and new democratic

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<sup>90</sup> See Cubitt, G. *o.c.*, p. 111.

<sup>91</sup> A strong affective connection to Africa is prevalent amongst many war veterans; (see, for example, 'Presentation' by F. Pontes in Teixeira, R. *o.c.* (2008), p. 14; see also author L. Jorge's viewpoint in *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2008); one of its manifestations, particularly from the beginning of the new millennium, is the popularisation of a 'tourism of memory', through which ex-combatants visit the African locations where they were stationed during the conflict, sometimes providing humanitarian aid (see *Correio da Manhã*, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2004 and 28<sup>th</sup> January 2007; *Diário de Notícias*, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2007; *Correio da Manhã*, 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> March 2008).

<sup>92</sup> In 'Irmãos de Armas', *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

practices steer remembrance in different directions, the building of a new, historically-coherent future requires a necessary ‘engagement and reckoning with the past.’<sup>93</sup> In the Portuguese case, fulfilling these ‘obligations’ of memory would mean rethinking the colonial past in its entirety, but also promoting alternative ways of engaging with it.

In Portugal, engaging with the war past often involves the repetition and re-enactment of past divisions and conflicts. In a ‘complex interplay of remembering, forgetting and moving on’, it is possible to discern a delicate balance between a tendency to silence, a need for remembrance, a struggle for veteran recognition (and its associated aspect of material compensation), and the deep-rooted feelings of guilt and shame that also reflect strong political animosities that remain unsettled: for many with a more left-wing perspective, for having participated in the war of a ‘colonial regime’; for those of right-wing disposition for having ‘retreated cowardly’ from what was perceived as national territory; and for countless Portuguese people the acknowledgment of finding themselves in-between such positions.<sup>94</sup>

This interplay often demonstrates that, despite the prevalence of some narratives, there is no truly dominant cultural memory about the colonial war, and this past remains ‘a contested debate’ and potential source of social division.<sup>95</sup> The lack of unity and accepted knowledge around this historical event has eventually led to a resurgence of interest in the conflict in the last decade and a half, denoting that currently the struggle is not so much against total silence, but rather between oppositional, fragmentary memories.

Furthermore, in Portugal transition is also generational. For the generations not chronologically close to the conflict, these memory struggles exist in the form of a contested postmemory; and given the usual absence of the topic in Portuguese life for decades, for them the war memory often becomes rather incomprehensible or even meaningless. This reveals a society attempting to come to terms with a colonial legacy whose memory has been neglected for so long.

The remainder of this Chapter will trace the major directions in which the colonial war has been remembered in Portugal since 1974. The different memory agencies and forms of cultural remembrance assessed are both public and private, and encompass the state, civil society and also ‘private’ groups and individuals. The investigation of

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<sup>93</sup> Dawson, G., *o.c.* (2007), p. 17.

<sup>94</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>95</sup> Dawson, G., *o. c.* (2007), p. 18.

several war memory arenas will include public remembrance formats such as commemorative monuments, television, films, newspapers, exhibitions and similar; the more private ways of remembering will concentrate on fictional and autobiographical ex-combatant literature.

By focusing on how the memory of the Portuguese colonial war has developed and circulated over time, I intend to offer a contribution towards a better understanding of the socio-cultural history of its remembrance. This non-exhaustive analysis will be divided into two phases: firstly, the postwar period from 1974 to the late 1990s, a period characterised by silence; and secondly a period of revival, following the arrival of the new millennium.

### **The postwar silence**

For nearly three decades, the memory of the colonial war was visibly put aside in Portugal, both officially and individually. Representations of the conflict were, particularly in the immediate postwar period, very scarce. In the tense aftermath of the 1974 revolution, socio-political priorities and projects did not include ample reflection about the recent past, favouring instead a massive effort for cohesion, stability and economic development. Since the ‘war scars were still unhealed’, any discussion would require ‘temporal distance’, conducive to the necessary ‘pacification.’<sup>96</sup> The committed focus on Portugal’s democratic and European integration – of which joining the then European Economic Community in 1986 became a major achievement – kept the country geared towards its future.

In 1978, philosopher Eduardo Lourenço was one of the first to raise awareness about this national silence, expressing his astonishment at the way the country quickly ‘integrated’ the colonial war without reflection or public debate, attributing it either to an instance of unparalleled ‘collective unconsciousness’ or to a remarkable ‘realistic adaptation’ to the circumstances.<sup>97</sup> After thirteen years of war to maintain African territories which appeared as ‘co-essential’ to the nature of the country, decolonisation

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<sup>96</sup> This was the conviction of Marshal C. Gomes, President of the Portuguese Republic between October 1974 and July 1976, cited in Ribeiro, J. *o.c.*, (1999), pp. 147-148.

<sup>97</sup> Lourenço, E. *O Labirinto da Saudade. Psicanálise Mítica do Destino Português*, 6th edition, Lisbon, Gradiva (2009), pp. 46-47.

was received with ‘indifference’, as ‘consummated fact’. Perhaps, as Lourenço suggested, this silence was the ‘price to pay’ for democratic ‘liberation.’<sup>98</sup>

If concealment of the war was a trademark of the old regime, the new democratic Portugal also continued the silence. This also meant forgetting those who fought it: the ex-combatants were converted into ‘some sort of refugee[s] of the Empire’s history.’<sup>99</sup> Nonetheless, despite the willingness to ‘make it un-happen’ through indifference, it was impossible to erase the war from within thousands of its veterans.<sup>100</sup> Thus, the colonial war remained as a ‘hidden wound’ afflicting its participants and Portuguese society in general, and manifesting in the sense of *pudor* imposed on its remembrance.<sup>101</sup> The term *pudor* – which can be translated as *shame*, *embarrassment*, *uneasiness* – is employed repeatedly in Portugal to explain the silence on the conflict.<sup>102</sup> Despite the existence of ample documentation and ‘thousands of living beings’ capable of providing first-person accounts about the colonial war, after its end an overpowering *pudor* determined the war should not be talked about in Portugal.<sup>103</sup>

However, as Paulo de Medeiros suggests, one of the first and most important means of accessing war memories and its psychic trauma was through fiction.<sup>104</sup> This is evident in the proliferation of war novels that emerged after 1974. Although confined to the aesthetic sphere and limited to a restricted group which had access to publication, these novels challenged the official silence surrounding the colonial war. Despite lacking a direct political impact, these novelists began a ‘dialogue with other individual, sectional and national narratives of remembrance.’<sup>105</sup>

This ‘first fictionalising wave’, more remarkable in its uniqueness due to the fact that there were not many alternative war narratives circulating, was authored mainly by veterans writing in a fictional and/or testimonial way about their experiences in Africa.<sup>106</sup> These novels usually follow some common templates, focusing on the need to make sense of having survived the war, but not without bearing deep marks from it, and

<sup>98</sup> Lourenço, E. o. c. (2009), p. 63.

<sup>99</sup> Ribeiro, M. *África no Feminino. As Mulheres Portuguesas e a Guerra Colonial*, Porto, Edições Afrontamento (2007), p. 31.

<sup>100</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>101</sup> Lourenço, E. o. c. (2009), pp. 46-47.

<sup>102</sup> See Ribeiro, M. o. c. (2004), p. 249; veteran accounts by Santos, M. o.c. (2008), pp. 7-8; and Pimenta, G. *Memórias. Guerra Colonial*, Viseu, Palimage Editores (2000), backcover.

<sup>103</sup> Santos, M. o.c. (2008), pp. 7-8.

<sup>104</sup> Medeiros, P. de ‘Hauntings...’, in Ashplant et al (eds.) o.c. (2000), pp. 201-221.

<sup>105</sup> Ashplant et al o.c. (2000), pp. 38-39.

<sup>106</sup> To employ the phrase of J. Vieira in Ferreira, A. o.c. (2008), p. 5. It should be noted that female writers who had been in Africa at the time of the conflict also began to narrate their experiences; see Ramos, W. *Percursos (Do Luachimo ao Luena)*, Lisbon, Editorial Presença (1981) and Ruas, J. *Corpo Colonial*, Coimbra, Centelha (1981)

becoming, amongst other approaches, a ‘never-ending exorcism’ of the war experience, a reflection on the ‘interior destruction of a generation’, chronicles of factual events, or a channel to express feelings of injustice and abandonment on the part of the motherland.<sup>107</sup>

*Os Cus de Judas* (South of Nowhere), by António Lobo Antunes, one of the most influential and well-known fictionalisations of the war, was published in 1979 and acquired in time a status of trademark novel for the colonial war. It is in its pages that one of the first public remarks about the national silence on the topic can be found:

Why the hell is this not talked about? I begin to think that the million and five hundred thousand men who have been in Africa have never existed and I am telling you some sort of bad taste novel impossible to believe, a made-up story.<sup>108</sup> [...] Everything is real but the war, which has never happened: there were never either colonies, or fascism, or Salazar, or Tarrafal, or PIDE, or revolution, nothing ever existed, understand, nothing.<sup>109</sup>

From the late 1970s onwards, literature began to assert itself as the field where war could be addressed in different ways. In the 1980s, the emerging stream of novels gave a glimpse of a country torn between forgetting and remembering.<sup>110</sup> The significant 1988 novel *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (The Murmuring Coast), uncharacteristically written by a woman, Lúcia Jorge, and with a backdrop of the colonial war, conjures the evasive climate in Portugal at the time: ‘if nobody photographed nor wrote about, what happened during the night is over at dawn – it has never begun to exist.’<sup>111</sup>

By the end of that decade, literary production in Portugal about the colonial war was so noticeable that João de Melo invokes the existence of a ‘colonial war literary generation’, urged by an ‘undelayable’ need to remember.<sup>112</sup> In remembering the colonial war, fiction appeared to be ‘safer’ in its apparent detachment, and also in the

<sup>107</sup> Guerra, A. *O Capitão Nemo e Eu. Crónica das Horas Aparentes*, 2nd edition, Lisbon, Publicações D. Quixote (2000), pp. 9-10 [first published in 1973]; see backcover comments by A. Machado in Garcia, J. *o.c.* (1996) [first published in 1975]; Lourenço, V. *o.c.* (1997) [first published 1975]; Calvino, A. *O Deus que a Igreja nos Vende*, Lisbon, Author Edition (1977), p. 98.

<sup>108</sup> Antunes, A. L. *Os Cus de Judas*, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores (1984), p. 67.

<sup>109</sup> Antunes, A. L. *o.c.* (1984), p. 208. Tarrafal: the author is referring to the prison camp in Cape Verde to which opponents to the authoritarian regime were sent. PIDE: The Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (International and State Defence Police) was the main tool of repression used by the regime during the Estado Novo period (1933-1974).

<sup>110</sup> If the main character in Antunes’s 1983 novel wishes to forget his war, another fictional character in Melo’s 1984 work declares his fierce need to remember; see Antunes, A. *Fado Alexandrino*, 11th edition, Lisbon, Publicações Dom Quixote (2007), p. 28. [first published in 1983] and Melo, J. *Autópsia de um Mar em Ruínas*, 7th edition, Lisbon, Publicações Dom Quixote (2002), p. 349 [first published 1984]; Oliveira, A. *Até Hoje (Memórias de Cão)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Lisbon, Ulmeiro (2003), p. 188 [first published in 1986]; Faria, A. *Cortes*, Lisbon, Editorial Caminho (1986) and Ferraz, C. V. *Soldado*, 2nd edition, Lisbon, Editorial Notícias (1996) [first published in 1988]

<sup>111</sup> Jorge, L. *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, Lisbon, Publicações D. Quixote (1988), p. 21.

<sup>112</sup> See two-volume literary anthology on the colonial war organised by veteran and literature expert Melo, J. (org.) *o.c.*, (Vol. 1, 1988), p. 2; Ribeiro, M. ‘Empire, colonial wars...’ in *o.c.* (2002), p. 186.



fact that this budding colonial war literary wave did not appear to encounter a widespread audience.<sup>113</sup> However, despite being discriminated against by the *pudor* that ‘the subject seems to have inspired in many readers’, this literature was capable of generating a new public and become ‘perhaps the only domain of Portuguese society to refuse the erasure and taboo of [...] [this] past.’<sup>114</sup> Therefore, in the late 1980s the emergence of further works was anticipated and welcomed.<sup>115</sup> In the following years, through characters and plots, veteran novels reinforced the need for remembrance and articulation of war experiences. By the end of the 1990s, the relative abundance of fictional works about the Portuguese colonial war emphasised the scarcity of a critical, rigorous historical examination of this past. Yet, as an arena for expression, the literary field lacked the reflective analytical depth of historiography on the topic which was still missing in Portugal.<sup>116</sup>

Nonetheless, as this literature developed, its established topics hint significantly at the direction taken by the memory of the Portuguese colonial war. Common themes include strong feelings of guilt about the war, anti-racism standpoints, denial of Portuguese military heroism, defence of pacifism, an awareness of the end of a secular empire, and the assertion of a generational connection between veteran authors.<sup>117</sup> In addition, there is a predominance of politically convenient views, mainly left-wing, along with a fundamental autobiographical weight typically assumed by this literature.<sup>118</sup> The latter aspect, according to Rui Teixeira, is like ‘covering one’s face with a transparent mask’, since often war novelists hide their own experiences in fictional characters, perhaps hoping to attain some distance.<sup>119</sup>

As Ashplant et al remark, the struggles and dilemmas exhibited by these fictional characters ‘represent an internal split between the desire to bury the traumatic past on the one hand, and to connect private memory with historical memory on the other’, a coping-strategy for war experiences which defy ‘containment through remembrance.’<sup>120</sup> This retreat from the historical event into the literary field, and the subsequent

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<sup>113</sup> As noted by Ferraz, C. [pseudonym of C. Gomes] in ‘Guerra colonial e expressão literária...’ in *o.c.* (1994)., pp. 13-16.

<sup>114</sup> See explanation on p. 57. Melo, J. (org.) *o.c.*, p. 17-19, p. 30.

<sup>115</sup> *Idem.*, p. 19.

<sup>116</sup> On the lack of critical analysis, see, for instance, preface of C. de Oliveira to Calvino, A. *Trinta Facadas de Raiva*, Lisbon, Author Edition (1999), pp. 5-6.

<sup>117</sup> Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (1998), p. 103.

<sup>118</sup> Ferraz, C. in Melo, F. (ed.) *o.c.* (1994), p. 15 and Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (1998), pp. 108-109.

<sup>119</sup> Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (1998), p. 108.

<sup>120</sup> Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), p. 42.

crystallisation of war memory in stylised aesthetic interpretations, manifests a ‘collective agony and individual catharsis.’<sup>121</sup>

In effect, the paradoxical remembrance split operating between collective silence and frequent individual fictional and testimonial catharses suggests a ‘displacement’ of war memory from its expected place in history into literature, which distances literary narratives from wider – and potentially more reflective – arenas of collective memory.<sup>122</sup> In this respect, Ribeiro maintains that such abundant colonial war literature exposes an excess of personal memory in detriment of collective memory.<sup>123</sup> In fact, ex-combatant authors were generally unable to convert personal war memories into a collective national memory of the conflict. In most cases, the disconnected and fragmentary character of these novels, focusing on autobiographically located narratives, reduced its impact on an already limited audience, and made the war books practically invisible in a country with traditionally high illiteracy rates. This, combined with the general undesirability of the topic, meant that only a few exceptional war novels became well-known in literary circuits.

Another challenging aspect is the tension, identified by Ashplant et al, around the authority and ‘validity’ of war memories. Perceiving themselves in the privileged position of bearers of autobiographical, empirical war memory, veterans appear to have typically resisted the transformation of war remembrance into a more inclusive process, frequently receiving external contributions with scepticism and suspicion, and sometimes dismissing them as invalid or ‘untrue’.<sup>124</sup> Presenting fictionalised veteran experiences as the bastion of ‘approved war memories may actually promote the ‘forgetting’ of other types of memory, and ultimately ‘block out alternative understandings’ that would be vital to historical analysis.<sup>125</sup>

Furthermore, up to the late 1990s, the majority of war novel ex-combatant authors were educated middle to upper class officers (ranging in military rank), suggesting that these accounts offered a selective retrospection by a social minority limited in its

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<sup>121</sup> Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (1998), p. 110; see also Preface by E. Lisboa in *idem* (1998), p. 17.

<sup>122</sup> Ruas, J. in Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 303.

<sup>123</sup> Ribeiro, M. *o.c.* (2007), p. 31.

<sup>124</sup> For a relevant example, see Wertsch, J. *Voices of Collective Remembering*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (2002), pp. 39-40; Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), p. 45.

<sup>125</sup> *Idem*, p. 51; M. Ribeiro argues that a truly collective memory of the colonial war should include women’s voices, *o.c.* (2007), p. 33.

representativeness.<sup>126</sup> The experiences of veterans originating from other social segments were mostly unexplored in this period.

As regards historiography, during the period under consideration (1974-1999) there were few histories in Portugal about the colonial war. The two major historiographical works published in 1994 – by José Mattoso and José Medina – do not offer a satisfying analysis of the conflict.<sup>127</sup> The first significant academic history of the colonial war – José Antunes's two-volume *A Guerra de África, 1961-1974 (The War of Africa)* – was published in 1995.<sup>128</sup> In its opening pages, the author states that he wants to 'open a space of plurality where the War of Africa could be evoked by numerous protagonists.'<sup>129</sup> Through one hundred and fifty strongly-edited oral and written testimonies compiled over a thousand pages, and framed by a detailed chronology, 'relevant' Portuguese and African 'personalities' (such as ministers, opposition and nationalist leaders, diplomats, politicians, businessmen, military men – mostly high-ranking officers) reminisce about the period. The prominence given to these narratives equates to how politically, socially and economically influential those selected to recount the events were. Factually prolific, but lacking in historical analysis, this history reflects the limitations and perceived lack of 'objectivity' surrounding the topic of the colonial war in the mid-1990s in Portugal. Possibly aware of this fact, Antunes hoped his history could 'be instrumental for the histories of the War of Africa that can be produced in the future.'<sup>130</sup> The approach of simultaneously gathering data and minimising analysis to entrust the next generations with that responsibility appears to have been a well-articulated theme by the end of the decade, indicating that historiography about the war was not 'viable' then.<sup>131</sup>

The colonial war was virtually absent from the history curricula of Portuguese state schools. Only a small number of textbooks included 'a few lines' about the conflict, and 'always at the end of the book, which are the pages the teachers never get to before the academic year is over.'<sup>132</sup> Despite official lack of interest, some schools attempted to compensate for the textbooks' omissions by organising pedagogical and

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<sup>126</sup> Similarly, P. Edwards' study of British memory of the Great War revealed a dominant retrospective narrative of a public-school-educated junior officer class; see Chapter 1 of Edwards, P. "Their name liveth for evermore": collective memory and the commemoration of the Great War, MA dissertation, University of Sussex (2000), pp. 5-18.

<sup>127</sup> Mattoso, J. (dir.) 'Sétimo Volume. O Estado Novo', *o.c.* (Vol. 7, 1994); Medina, J. (dir.), 'A guerra e o fim do regime ditatorial', in *o.c.* (Vol. 13, 1994), pp. 333-371.

<sup>128</sup> Antunes, J. *o.c.* (2 vols., 1995)

<sup>129</sup> Antunes, J. *o.c.*, (Volume I, 1995), p. 6

<sup>130</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>131</sup> See viewpoint of Brigadier M. Pires in Ribeiro, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 197; also Vecchi, R. *o.c.* (2010), p. 27.

<sup>132</sup> Ribeiro, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 8.

research activities on the topic. Such was the case, for instance, of the exceptionally successful school project mentored by José Lages in the academic year 1989/90.<sup>133</sup>

Other initiatives also set out to explore the history of the war. Perhaps the first major assessment of the Portuguese colonial war occurred in late 1993 with the Colloquium ‘Guerra Colonial, Estado Novo e regime democrático’ (Colonial War, New State and democratic regime). Meant to break the ‘conspiracy of silence’ about the war, replacing it with a reflective ‘space of dialogue’, speakers at the event argued that the ‘enormous deficit of national debate about this topic’ should be counteracted by managing ‘to integrate (and not obliterate) individual memory.’<sup>134</sup> As expressed at the time, including this experiential dimension would both weaken silence and add meaning to the otherwise ‘empty’ war imagery and facts which, in their appealing trivialisation, dismissed the significance of the conflict. However, as Manuela Cruzeiro pointed out, addressing the topic was not without difficulties, since this memory was laden with ‘secret guilt’, meaning the Portuguese were ‘ashamed of exposing or even accepting’ their ‘war wounds.’<sup>135</sup> Recognising the Portuguese inability and unwillingness to explore ‘unpleasant’ memories, Carlos Ferraz stressed the cultural indifference of Portuguese society towards the war, manifested in small audiences, relatively little production, and insufficient publicising, involving all cultural agents (writers, readers, teachers, publishers, academics, critics, filmmakers and so forth). In such a context, Ferraz predicted the ‘war generation’ would probably ‘wait for retirement’ to address the topic.<sup>136</sup>

Nonetheless, an exceptional landmark in the public memory of the conflict during this period was the photographic reportage published in 1996 in *Notícias Magazine*, the best-selling Portuguese magazine. Shockingly displaying a brutal image on the cover, and accompanied by never-before-published pictures, it focused on the disturbing issue of massacres perpetrated in Africa by the Portuguese troops. This was arguably the first time mainstream media explicitly addressed one of the most hidden and uncomfortable aspects of the war. The editorial urged readers never to ‘forget what wars [...] do to

<sup>133</sup> This project collected 28 veteran documented testimonies (anonymised) in Braga, Portugal. Establishing partnerships with the local council and ADFA, it resulted in an exhibition and a museum (1999) ; see *Guerra Colonial – Uma História por Contar*, Câmara Municipal de Vila Nova de Famalicão, Braga (1992); *Boletim Informativo, Neps*, No. 20, Universidade do Minho, Guimarães, July 2001; and Teixeira, R., *o.c.* (1998), p. 88.

<sup>134</sup> Attended by 300 participants, mostly researchers, writers, and intellectuals, some of them veterans, it took place in Coimbra, on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 1993, co-organised by magazine *Vértice*, Coimbra Local Council, Coimbra Academic Association and the Teachers’ Union of Central Portugal; see Melo, F. (ed.) *o.c.* (1994)

<sup>135</sup> Cruzeiro, M. ‘Guerra colonial: entre o recalcamento e a denegação’, *Vértice*, 58 (1994), pp. 5-7.

<sup>136</sup> Ferraz, C. [pseudonym of C. Gomes] ‘Guerra colonial...’ in *o.c.* (1994), pp. 13-16.

men', adding that 'in Portugal, the military and political powers and society, in general, have avoided discussing this black page of the country's life.'<sup>137</sup>

Towards the mid- to late 1990s, such avoidance – particularly regarding traumatic aspects – coexisted with an emergent media interest in the colonial conflict. For instance, in 1997-98, the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* attempted to 'capture' a vast topic for a wider audience through the pioneering publication of *Guerra Colonial* (Colonial War), a comprehensive work focused nearly exclusively on a factual description of the war, detailing its military and logistic side.<sup>138</sup>

As for other media arenas, television, for example, for years resisted examination of the war. Teixeira highlights the 'official censoring indifference' for 'the most important Portuguese historical event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century', regretting that, despite the existence of a profuse military war video archive, in democratic Portugal such sources remained unavailable to the public and were not broadcasted on television because of a 'fierce' censorship about the conflict.<sup>139</sup> Film and documentary makers encountered the reluctance of cultural authorities and official institutions, particularly manifested in the withdrawal of financial support which resulted in the abandonment of several film and documentary initiatives on the conflict in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>140</sup> For those involved, it was clear that a silencing strategy was in motion, and that 'institutional conservatism' still deemed the colonial war a topic too disturbing and inconvenient to be broadcasted on public television and in cinemas, depriving the Portuguese public of a wider discussion.<sup>141</sup> Such was the case of João Botelho, who succeeded in filming *Um Adeus Português* (A Portuguese Goodbye, 1985), but not without difficulties:

It disturbed me that, twelve years after the Colonial War, one could not speak about it. One of my greatest worries and arduous task in organising *Um Adeus Português*, which was a first approach, a short line said to break the silence, was the resistance, even by the Ministry of the Army, against talking about the subject. It was not about how to talk, it was about talking. 'Let more years go by, let it sediment', they would say.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>137</sup> *Notícias Magazine* no. 199, 17th March 1996; see also *Notícias Magazine* no. 178, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1995.

<sup>138</sup> Published in instalments between 21st September 1997 and 13th September 1998.

<sup>139</sup> See Teixeira, R. 'A estetização verbal da guerra', in *o.c.* (1998), p.99; as for radio, one of the few exceptions is J. Ribeiro's *Noites de África*, aired on Rádio Press in 1992-93. See [http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/06livros\\_JorgeRibeiro\\_MarcasdaGuerraColonial.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/06livros_JorgeRibeiro_MarcasdaGuerraColonial.htm)

<sup>140</sup> This was the case of A.-P. Vasconcelos's aborted attempts of cinematizing novels *Nó Cego*, in 1985, and *Os Lobos Não Usam Coleira*, in 1994, both by C. Ferraz; see Teixeira, R. 'A estetização verbal...', in *o.c.* (1998), p.98.

<sup>141</sup> For instance, in the late 1990s the Portuguese public television did not support J. Vieira's documentary; see Preface by J. Vieira, in Ferreira, A. *o.c.* (2008), p. 5; Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (eds.), *o.c.* (2004), p. 473.

<sup>142</sup> Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), pp. 493-494.

Teeming with examples of a crumbling traditional Portuguese society unable to resolve its colonial wounds, Botelho's film was made because its author wanted to address this 'collective' 'painful experience', the 'silence' emanating from an 'unresolved' national trauma: the end of a five-century-long empire.<sup>143</sup> In this arena, there were a few other notable exceptions.<sup>144</sup> Common themes of this earlier cinematography are a sense of disenchantment, the loss of the colonial empire and its impact on Portuguese identity, Portuguese veteran immigration and having to face the past upon returning to Portugal, the depiction of challenging war episodes and the mobilisation of servicemen. From the mid to late 1990s, these films appear to focus more on the veterans and how they cope with the consequences of their war experiences.<sup>145</sup> None of these films constitutes, however, a recognisable seminal work of national assessment of the colonial conflict.

These considerations about cinema and television also apply to documentary-production. Up to the late 1990s, the very few examples of war documentaries produced seem to focus on politico-military factual information, relying on descriptions and statistics and rarely including veteran testimonies.<sup>146</sup> Although the two-part documentary *Guerra Colonial* (Colonial War, 1998) suggests a different approach by filming on location in Guinea-Bissau and including interviews with veterans, it disappoints by concentrating mainly on military operations and only offering personal accounts of officers or more prominent individuals, consigning soldiers' presence to a list of names at the end of the documentary.<sup>147</sup> Less typical of the predominant lack of reflection in this period is the award-winning 1999 documentary *Natal 71* (Christmas 71), by Margarida Cardoso.<sup>148</sup> Drawing upon a famous music record given to conscripts in 1971, Cardoso directed a very thoughtful and sensitive approach to her father's

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<sup>143</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>144</sup> Some examples are A.-P. Vasconcelos' *Adeus até ao meu regresso* (1974); F. Silva's *Acto dos Feitos da Guiné* (1980); J. Silva's *Antes a Sorte que tal Morte* (1981); F. Dacosta's *Um Jeep em Segunda Mão* (1984), theatre play broadcasted on RTP2 channel of the public Portuguese television (see Teixeira, R. in *o.c.*, p.98); L. Costa directed *Era Uma Vez um Alferes* (1987) for the public Portuguese television; F. Lopes's *Matar Saudades* (1987); M. de Oliveira's *NON ou a vã glória de mandar* (1990); T. Villaverde's *Idade Maior* (1990); A. Santos' *Paraíso Perdido* (1992); J. Duarte's *Encontros Imperfeitos* (1993). For more titles, please see the Bibliography.

<sup>145</sup> For example, F. Silva's *Ao Sul* (1995); J. Leitão's *Inferno* (1999); R. Guerra's *Monsanto* (2000); see Ribeiro, J. 'Cinema e Guerra colonial: representações da sociedade portuguesa e construção do africano', and Cruz, J. 'Cinema Português e a Guerra colonial', in Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), pp. 285-296 and pp. 487-491, respectively.

<sup>146</sup> For instance, the 30-minute documentaries *Imagens da Guerra Colonial*, by A. Almeida, distributed by newspaper *Diário de Notícias* (1997) and 'Histórias de Campanha' by Q. Simões, *Diário de Notícias* (1998).

<sup>147</sup> 'Guerra Colonial 1. Madina do Boé: A Retirada', *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, VHS (1995) & 'Guerra Colonial 2. De Guilege a Gadamael: o Corredor da Morte', *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, VHS (1996), both directed by J. Saraiva and released in 1998.

<sup>148</sup> Cardoso, M. *Natal 71* (1999)

generation war experience, discovering at the same time her own childhood memories of that era.

Perhaps the clearest manifestation of the tensions surrounding colonial war memory can be seen in the development of the ‘Monumento Nacional aos Combatentes do Ultramar’ (National Monument to the Combatants of the Ultramar), a memorial dedicated to all servicemen fallen in the former overseas territories. Located in a noble, prominent area of the capital city of Lisbon, by the Tagus river, it was unveiled on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1994.<sup>149</sup> Mentored since 1987 by Liga dos Combatentes (Combatants’ League), the project was funded mainly by the Ministry of Defence. The monument, a triangular-shaped portico of geometric simplicity, accented by the *chama da Pátria* (the flame of Motherland, a perpetual flame symbolising continuity in honouring the dead), was designed to invoke ‘unity’ of all sides involved in the war and acknowledge its cultural and historical reality. Moreover, it was meant to nationally remember ‘the memory of those who perished in defence of Portugal in the former Ultramar and pay homage to all those who served Portugal as mere combatants.’ It was an ‘act of justice’, a ‘public and long lasting [...] recognition of Portugal to all those combatants.’<sup>150</sup>

However, from its inception, the monument was surrounded by disputes, sparked to a great extent by the choice of terminology – *Ultramar* – a decision that has remained controversial ever since. For the military and socio-political conservative sectors, this was a sign that the left-wing tone of successive governments (which allegedly viewed the colonial war and its ex-combatants in an unnecessarily negative light) was lifting in 1994. From the left-wing perspective, a monument with such a designation suggested a celebration of the colonial war and a longing for the colonial, dictatorial past. In this context, when the monument was inaugurated in 1994, the then President of the Republic, Mário Soares, found himself simultaneously booed and applauded by an exalted crowd.<sup>151</sup>

Disputed from many angles, the memorial exposed a fractured national unity and a contested reconciliation with the past.<sup>152</sup> Further commemorative ceremonies associated with the monument attempted to avoid political controversies by highlighting more

<sup>149</sup> The monument also includes a ‘museum of the combatant’; see Magalhães, A. de *Monumento aos Combatentes do Ultramar (1961-1974)*, Liga dos Combatentes, Lisbon, (2007). See also:

[http://www.ligacombatentes.org.pt/museu\\_do\\_combatente](http://www.ligacombatentes.org.pt/museu_do_combatente)

[http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/MonumentoNacionalCombatentesUltramar\\_ReptoAntonioAlmeida.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/MonumentoNacionalCombatentesUltramar_ReptoAntonioAlmeida.htm)

[http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/MonumentoNacionalCombatentesUltramar\\_aideiadaconstrucao.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/MonumentoNacionalCombatentesUltramar_aideiadaconstrucao.htm)

<sup>150</sup> [http://www.ligacombatentes.org.pt/museu\\_do\\_combatente](http://www.ligacombatentes.org.pt/museu_do_combatente)

<sup>151</sup> Medeiros, P. *o.c.*(2000), p. 217.

<sup>152</sup> Vecchi, R. *o.c.*(2010), p. 27.

consensual standpoints, such as the grief of ‘the hundreds of thousands’ of bereaved families, who ‘sometimes as if a bit ashamed’, mourn their loved ones, killed fulfilling their duty, irrespective of the ‘fairness of political decisions’ made at the time.<sup>153</sup> In early 2000, a ledger containing the names of all servicemen killed in the war was placed on the walls of the fortress adjacent to the monument.<sup>154</sup> The initiative was presented as a timely, democratic commemoration, since its goal was to be perceived not as homage to the cause of war, but to the sacrifice of all those who perished serving Portugal.<sup>155</sup>

The vicissitudes associated with the creation and development of the national war memorial illustrate how tense and divisive the remembrance of the colonial war remained in 1994 and subsequent years. The colonial nature of the conflict, but also the implications of the 1974 change of political regime, transformed the commemoration of the war dead into a complex exercise. Still searching for a unified commemorative narrative, the nation could not easily resolve the conflictive elements of the public message contained in the national monument.<sup>156</sup> Owing its initial conception to an ex-combatant group who had to seek official involvement to implement it, the choice of nomenclature and the individuals and institutions engaged in its development meant the monument was widely contested by many as unrepresentative and non-consensual, and as an appropriation of the memory of the dead.

Nonetheless, on the twentieth anniversary of the end of the war, Portugal did publicly commemorate the dead, reflecting the increasing media interest, cultural production and social awareness generated by the conflict by the mid-1990s. Despite the disagreements surrounding the memorial, it did officially acknowledge the scale of death and social impact of the colonial war, and, thus, the grief of the bereaved. This type of institutionalised transmission of memory assumes particular importance in the Portuguese case where, for many years, ‘official policies promoted forgetting.’<sup>157</sup>

However, it was soon felt that the official approach to this memory should go beyond the creation of a public national monument in the capital city. Possibly, there was a raising awareness, reflecting concepts stressed by Ashplant et al, that the

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<sup>153</sup> See speech of V. Simão on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1998 at:

[http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/MonumentoNacionalCombatentesUltramar\\_16OUT1998.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/MonumentoNacionalCombatentesUltramar_16OUT1998.htm)

<sup>154</sup> It contains the names that appear on official lists. It is reminiscent of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, inaugurated in 1982 in Washington, D.C., U.S.A, except that it includes no inscription (likely to generate contentiousness), just a list of names; see Mosse, G. *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, New York, Oxford University Press (1991), p. 224.

<sup>155</sup> See ‘Cerimónia de homenagem aos militares falecidos ao serviço de Portugal’, in *Revista da Armada*, no. 329, Lisbon, March 2000, p. 11.

<sup>156</sup> See Cubitt, G., *o.c.*, p. 144, p. 193, pp. 210-211.

<sup>157</sup> Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), p. 45.



memorialisation of war ‘in physical and visual forms may create the illusion that the past will not be forgotten’, whilst also springing from ‘an opposite and equal desire to forget’.<sup>158</sup> Whilst attempting to appease a society becoming more openly demanding about the memory of the colonial war, official channels also had to face the challenging task of preventing their commemorative initiatives from generating further internal conflict over the war memory. In the process, alternative remembrance paths were potentially being neglected and reflective depth avoided. Therefore, the 1994 memorial, in its struggle to achieve a national war memory narrative, became a symbol of how the colonial war debate – fertile in instances of irreconcilable polarisation – was far from providing Portugal with a generally-agreed resolution.

By the late 1990s, discussions around the national memorial and a more significant presence in the media, literature, psychiatry, educational sectors and in the public space in general, transformed the colonial war, despite interpretive disagreements, into an emergent topic. The public silences (official and otherwise) over the memory of the colonial war noticeable in this period – which, as Geoffrey Cubitt argues ‘may sometimes be a necessary (and even to some extent an agreed) condition for the healing of social wounds’ – became punctuated by a more pressing social need to remember the conflict.<sup>159</sup> Feeling unrecognised, and lacking a representative mainstream assessment of the war they participated in, many ex-combatants decided to informally embark on a collective ‘catharsis’, particularly by engaging in the annual veteran gatherings that began to be organised more frequently in Portugal from the late 1990s onwards.<sup>160</sup> Within this context, the biggest Portuguese war veteran association, APVG – Associação Portuguesa dos Veteranos de Guerra (Portuguese War Veteran Association), was founded in 1999, becoming very active ever since, and probably a key contributor to this opening of the public sphere to the reality of the colonial war.<sup>161</sup>

### **Breaking the silence: time for revival**

Since the beginning of the new millennium, but more noticeably from the middle of its first decade onwards, the public memory of the Portuguese colonial war ‘little by

<sup>158</sup> Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), p. 45.

<sup>159</sup> Cubitt, G., *o.c.*, p. 230.

<sup>160</sup> Ribeiro, J. *o.c.* (1999), pp. 272-273; veteran E. Aranha’s company met for the first time in 1998, twenty-five years after being demobilised from Angola; see Aranha, E. *o.c.* (2005), p. 9.

<sup>161</sup> APVG, headquartered in Braga, is the largest war veterans’ association in Portugal with 46,500 associates and 16 delegations across the country.

little' has been dropping its 'taboos', significantly increasing its presence in a diversity of arenas – cultural, social, political – and moving into new approaches.<sup>162</sup> Today, the colonial war is mentioned more often and more directly. The reasons for its wider importance in public discourse in Portugal are also related to the growth of war remembrance internationally. Internally, a greater mobilisation of war veterans' associations, a growing number of retiring ex-combatants in many cases initiating a life review process, a more dynamic media/cultural sector, and even some signs of governmental attention to these matters have recently contributed to a visible shift (quantitative and qualitative) in how the colonial conflict and its ex-combatants are perceived. As the conflict they fought in acquires a new significance in Portuguese socio-cultural life, the ex-combatants' contributions gain a memorial space previously unseen.

From around 2000, an upsurge in writing, in its vast majority by ex-combatants publishing their war accounts in different formats (novels, war memoirs, autobiographies and other types of war narratives) expressed itself in a visible expansion of the war literary space.<sup>163</sup> Generating a 'snowball effect' of published remembrance, this 'emergent torrent of narratives' displayed strong characteristic themes.<sup>164</sup> A major feature was a willingness to fully express the experiential, daily reality of servicemen at war, with less avoidance of painful and disturbing episodes.<sup>165</sup> Emblematic of this trend is António Brito's outstanding novel *Olhos de Caçador* (Hunter's Eyes, 2007), through which the veteran author tries to counteract the recognised lack of knowledge on the average Portuguese combatant – the 'unknown face' of the colonial war – by focusing on 'the experiences and behaviours of the basic soldier, that man who made the war and of whom history seldom speaks.'<sup>166</sup> In this respect, Brito remarks that despite much having been written before about the colonial war, it tended to be 'always a bit hygienic, devoid of smells, blood, roughness,

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<sup>162</sup> See journalist G. de Melo, writing in 2000 in Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 187.

<sup>163</sup> It should be highlighted that recently emerging titles approaching the colonial war have younger, non-combatant authors (some of which were born in the former African territories), denoting an expansion of the fictionalised memory of the conflict into other generational zones; see, for instance, Cardoso, N. (b. 1976) *Impressão Digital* (2005); Faria, P. (n. 1963) *As Sete Estradinhas de Catete* (2007); Magalhães, J. *Um Amor Em Tempos de Guerra* (2009); Santos, J. (n. 1964) *O Anjo Branco* (2010); other literary perspectives are also being explored, such as the poetic memory of the colonial war; see Ribeiro, M. & Vecchi, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2011).

<sup>164</sup> J. Amaral in Correia, V. *o.c.* (2008), p. 7.

<sup>165</sup> See, for example, Machado, A. *o.c.* (2003), p. 3; Rosa, A. *o.c.* (2003), p. 7; Mesquita, J. *o.c.* (2004), p. 10; Cabrita, L. *O Último Inferno. Guerra Colonial, 1971-1973*, Lisbon, Editora Prefácio (2006), p. 9; see also J. Amaral in Correia, V. *o.c.* (2008), p. 7.

<sup>166</sup> Brito, A. *Olhos de Caçador*, Lisbon, Sextante Editora (2007); see article at [http://diariodigital.sapo.pt/news.asp?id\\_news=309520](http://diariodigital.sapo.pt/news.asp?id_news=309520), dated 14th December 2007.

violence.’<sup>167</sup> Perhaps groundbreakingly, Brito acknowledges the men who fought the war by depicting the combatants’ daily life how they really lived it, realistically, without embellishments, echoing their slang, the brutality and sometimes criminal side of war, never hiding how rustic, illiterate and politically unaware many of these men were.

Unlike more fictionally localised earlier works, these narratives are also characterised by a retrospective reflection about the colonial conflict, and the attempt to extract wider meanings from the event.<sup>168</sup> After decades of being ‘haunted’ by war memories, veteran authors appear to perceive their writings as significant contributions to ‘a memory that almost everyone has forgotten’, potentially offering a catharsis which is as social as it is individual.<sup>169</sup> This reflection is also framed by a stronger group consciousness and acknowledgment of the difficulties associated with their re-insertion into civilian life, as well as the long-term negative consequences of their participation in the conflict.<sup>170</sup> These veteran writings also frequently express disappointment at the course taken by Portuguese democracy, particularly regarding the ex-combatants’ social place.<sup>171</sup>

Alongside fiction, there has been an autobiographical boom, bringing into the Portuguese publishing sector a stream of ex-combatant accounts. Veteran Manuel da Silva, for instance, explained the decision to publish his personal testimony as due to his lack of identification with war books he read.<sup>172</sup> In another example, António Abreu justified the 2007 publication of the diary he wrote in Guinea between 1972-74 on the grounds of his duty to pass his experiential knowledge to younger generations, revealing ‘what the war was like from the inside.’<sup>173</sup>

Apart from widening the country’s cultural scope, these publications allow Portuguese society to better understand the circumstances in which the ex-combatants’ war experiences took place. Clearly, a popular demand is present, since there is a growing market in Portugal for this war literature and publishers have acted on that

<sup>167</sup> ‘A minha guerra em África. Mais de 30 anos depois, o conflito escrito na primeira pessoa’, in *Ípsilon*, *Público* 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008, p. 9.

<sup>168</sup> See Andrade, J. *Não Sabes Como Vais Morrer. 7 Mais 1 Histórias de Guerra de Jaime Froufe Andrade e Regresso Atribulado no Vera Cruz*, Porto, Associação dos Jornalistas e Homens de Letras do Porto (2008), p. 25; Mesquita, J. *o.c.* (2004), p. 10; Pinho, M. *o.c.* (2009), p. 13; Bastos, M. *o.c.* (2008); Ferreira, A. *o.c.* (2008); Silva, G. *Deus, Pátria e... a Vida*, Viseu, Palimage Editores (2003) and *A Pátria ou a Vida*, Viseu, Palimage Editores (2005); Vieira, A. *Fim de Império*, Porto, Edições Asa (2008), amongst other examples.

<sup>169</sup> Silveira, N. *Um Outro Lado da Guerra. Zemba, Angola, 1973-1974*, Lisbon, Edições Colibri (2007), p. 9; Cabrita, L. *o.c.* (2006), p. 83; J. Amaral in Correia, V. *o.c.* (2008), p. 7.

<sup>170</sup> Estrela, B. *o.c.* (2007), p. 244; Cabrita, L. *o.c.* (2006), p. 172.

<sup>171</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>172</sup> See television programme *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2008 and Silva, M. *Homem Ferro. Memórias de um Combatente*, Serzedo, Author Edition (2008).

<sup>173</sup> Abreu, A. *Diário da Guiné. Lama, Sangue e Água Pura*, Lisbon, Guerra e Paz Editores (2007), p. 10.

interest.<sup>174</sup> A new editorial vibrancy surrounding the colonial war is noticeable, encompassing not only recent editions of war books, but also reprints of much earlier works.<sup>175</sup>

Some war-themed books have achieved considerable success.<sup>176</sup> There is also a cultural space emerging which allows competing, and often contentious, political perspectives on the topic.<sup>177</sup> In that sense, although recent literary works are not as ideologically marked as in the past, in some instances newly emerging books have been channelling a certain ‘nostalgia for the Empire’ imbued of feelings of patriotic nationalism which voices alternative viewpoints to the predominantly left-wing discourse.<sup>178</sup> This illustrates that the colonial war retains a political complexity played out in an ongoing contest for space in the remembrance arena.

There are diverse reasons why this transformation of war literature has taken place. First of all, enough time has elapsed since the events, and many believe, with Manuel Alegre, that their accounts ‘could only have been written many years later’, ‘as if the filter of temporal distance was compulsory’, as Joaquim Vieira puts it, and conducive to more ‘mature reflections.’<sup>179</sup> For many ex-combatants, now is the time to have the ‘courage’ to speak, to overcome the ‘self-indulgence and safety’ of remaining quiet.<sup>180</sup> This timing also results from an individual need for catharsis, the catharsis of expressing to their society, decades later, after reaching a certain life stage and becoming less fearful of consequences, what the veterans really experienced and felt at war, in short, to ‘pour out their Hell, to leave a testimony or tell the story as it had not been told.’<sup>181</sup> Such catharsis also involves transmission, the willingness to educate Portuguese society on the experience of the colonial war.<sup>182</sup> A positive social response

<sup>174</sup> Since 2008 an annual cycle of conferences about colonial war literature began taking place at Biblioteca Museu República e Resistência, Lisbon. J. Pires, director of the organising institution, noted publishers’ current interest in addressing the colonial war more often; see *Açoriano Oriental*, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

<sup>175</sup> For instance, *Nó Cego* (originally published in 1982 and reprinted in 2008), *Braço Tatuado* (1990, 2008) and *Os Navios Negreiros Não Sobem o Quando* (1993, 2005). Please refer to the Bibliography.

<sup>176</sup> For example, J. Magalhães’s 2009 novel, initially published in September, two months later had reached its sixth reprint after over 22,500 copies sold, a remarkable number in the Portuguese context; the author (b. 1963) is a journalist who lived in Africa until 1975; see Magalhães, J. *Um Amor Em Tempos de Guerra*, Lisbon, A Esfera dos Livros, 6th edition (2009).

<sup>177</sup> E. Pitta notes that about the ‘first wave’ of war novels; see ‘A minha guerra em África...’, *o.c.* (2008), pp. 10-11.

<sup>178</sup> A good example by Editora Prefácio of this ‘patriotism’ is J. Carvalho’s *Era Tempo de Morrer em África. Angola, Guerra e Descolonização*, 1961-1975 (2004). The publishing house felt the need to assert their political ‘impartiality’; see Carvalho, J. *o.c.* (2004), p. 15; see also E. Pitta in ‘A minha guerra...’ *o.c.* (2008), pp. 10-11; see Sanches, M. in *Público*, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

<sup>179</sup> Alegre, M. *Nambuangongo Meu Amor. Os Poemas da Guerra*, 2nd edition, Lisbon, Publicações Dom Quixote (2008); see J. Vieira’s introduction to Ferreira, A. *o.c.* (2008), p. 5; see interview with A. Brito, author of *Olhos de Caçador* (2007) on [www.diariodigital.pt](http://www.diariodigital.pt), dated 14<sup>th</sup> December 2007.

<sup>180</sup> See Correia, V. *o.c.*, p. 13.

<sup>181</sup> See ‘A minha guerra em África...’, *o.c.* (2008), pp. 6-13; see also Correia, V. *o.c.* (2008), p. 7.

<sup>182</sup> Correia, V. *o.c.*, p. 7.

is encouraging the appearance of further veteran narratives. In fact, after decades of forgetting, there is a visible change, and Portuguese society is more available to listen, particularly inquisitive younger generations, revealing a greater maturity of the Portuguese public towards this topic.<sup>183</sup> Perhaps also aided by globalisation and the spread of new technologies which allow easier access to comparative international historical scenarios, this expansion of the cultural landscape means, in general, that Portuguese people are displaying a greater awareness of their past and its significance.<sup>184</sup> A past which, in multiple ways, connects with their lives, their families and individual experiences, thus arousing social interest.<sup>185</sup>

Often feeling their war experiences are not satisfactorily assessed by Portuguese history, ex-combatant authors complement and enlarge the predominantly fact-describing, institutional historiographical approaches to the colonial war available in Portugal. The challenge, as argued by Roberto Vecchi, is to ‘transform’ these personal testimonies into history, so that they can acquire a plural, collective reflective dimension.<sup>186</sup> As they stand, such narratives convey ‘the story of one man in actions involving many’, expressing ‘its own individual voice, which is not the voice of history’, to cite Samuel Hynes.<sup>187</sup> Indeed, this abundance of individual narratives (fragmentary and unrelated) remains unmatched by an equivalent inclusion of the combatants’ war experience in Portuguese historiography. Historians have been slow to incorporate sources perceived as alternative from the standpoint of traditional historiography (such as these literary, autobiographical, life history narratives of ex-combatants). This absence of a solid body of historical research on the colonial war from the lived perspective of the fighting man manifests in a lower incidence of well-founded, wide-reaching historical interpretive analyses of individual war experiences. As veteran author Manuel Bastos puts it, ‘history will describe this war and no name of any soldier will be mentioned there’; their experiences will be lost to history.<sup>188</sup>

As already noted, major historiographical works on the Portuguese colonial conflict are still infrequent. The few exceptions are normally works of historical relevance authored by journalists, military history researchers and novelists, some of them

<sup>183</sup> See article on [www.diariodigital.pt](http://www.diariodigital.pt), dated 14<sup>th</sup> December 2007; see also C. Aguiar, in ‘A minha guerra em África...’, *o.c.* (2008), p. 9.

<sup>184</sup> See J. Arena’s view in *Público*, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

<sup>185</sup> See ‘Introduction’ of Magalhães, J. *o.c.* (2009), pp. 7-9.

<sup>186</sup> Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 389.

<sup>187</sup> See Hynes, S. ‘Personal narrative and commemoration’ in Sivan, E. & Winter, J. (eds.) *o.c.* (1999), p. 205.

<sup>188</sup> Bastos, M. *o.c.* (2008), p. 100.

veterans, an example of which is *Guerra Colonial* (Colonial War, 2000), edited by Aniceto Afonso and Carlos Gomes.<sup>189</sup> Defined as a book for a wider audience which aimed to achieve a better knowledge of the conflict and its consequences, *Guerra Colonial* displays the typical features of such journalistic approaches to the colonial war: overemphasis on detailed factual information accompanied by minimal historical analysis, and the acknowledgement of potentially contentious ideological viewpoints.<sup>190</sup> The authors justify the absence of definite conclusions and broader interpretations with the ‘proximity in time’ of events, which impede history’s ‘dispassionate’ and ‘correct judgement’, adding that the social presence of the generation that participated in the conflict (despite providing a vital opportunity for exploration of sources) constitutes an element of distortion, since attempts at broader interpretative syntheses of the war are constrained by an overabundance of localised personal experiences.<sup>191</sup>

Such stances seem to confirm the impasse surrounding the current cultural memory of the Portuguese colonial war and its uncertain relationship with history, and highlight the inability to generate a recognisably collective historiographical narrative about the conflict that goes beyond an encyclopaedic compilation of facts. Possibly due to the divisiveness associated with the topic, combined with a lack of institutional and individual interest in researching it, it could be argued that the colonial war is generally being avoided by academic historians in Portugal.

There are some notable exceptions. The *Nova História Militar de Portugal* (New Military History of Portugal, 2004), coordinated by historians Manuel Barata and Nuno Teixeira, is a multi-volume work on the Portuguese military institution.<sup>192</sup> Although substantially tackled from a politico-military angle, this work features an interpretive piece covering the war experience from the serviceman’s perspective.<sup>193</sup> Other contributions, mostly privileging factual information, include a chronology, a children’s history book, and a mainstream collection entitled *Os Anos da Guerra Colonial* (The Years of the Colonial War, 2009), authored by Gomes and Afonso.<sup>194</sup> The latter sets out

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<sup>189</sup> The demand was such that in less than a year this book reached its third edition; see Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) *o.c.* (3rd edition, 2001).

<sup>190</sup> See Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 7.

<sup>191</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>192</sup> Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (dir.) *o.c.* (5 vols., 2004); see ‘Introduction’ by N. Teixeira, in Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (dir.) *o.c.* (Volume 5, 2004), p. 9; see also interview with N. Teixeira published in *Visão*, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

<sup>193</sup> See ‘Portugal e as guerras da descolonização’ and ‘A guerra em África (1961-1974)’ in Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (dir.) *o.c.* (Volume 4, 2004), pp. 68-92, pp. 174-188; see Gomes, C. ‘Quotidianos...’, in *o.c.* (2004), pp. 136-173.

<sup>194</sup> See veteran author Brandão, J. *o.c.* (2008); Ribeiro, J. *Lá Longe Onde o Sol Castiga Mais. A Guerra Colonial Contada aos Mais Novos*, Vila Nova de Gaia, Calendário (2008); and Afonso, A., & Gomes, C. (eds.) *Os Anos da Guerra Colonial* (16 vols.), Matosinhos, QuidNovi (2009).

to understand the period and event in question, and to ‘attempt at its explanation’, being not a ‘final’ history, but rather open to new contributions, clarifications and critiques which will inform future explanations.<sup>195</sup>

Some of these new contributions emerge at school level. Current Ministry of Education’s guidelines detailing ‘essential competences’ in 20<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese history list individual topics like the New State, the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1974 and the democratic regime, but the colonial war is not specifically mentioned.<sup>196</sup> However, this omission is being challenged. For example, a 2007/2008 nationwide contest solicited the best basic and secondary school student work about life in Portugal during the colonial war. Promoted by the Portuguese Association of History Teachers, with the support of the 25<sup>th</sup> April Association and the Ministry of Education, its goal was to develop interest in Portuguese history of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, expanding students’ knowledge about it, and ‘privileging, in particular, the research and collection of memories’ of participants in the colonial war.<sup>197</sup> The driving force of these alternative approaches appears to emerge from extra-official instances which have identified an unproductive disconnection between history writing and teaching and veteran war memory. These difficulties suggest that the official curricular treatment given to the history of the colonial conflict remains insufficient, lacking in depth, inclusiveness of sources and alternative approaches, leading to a stronger emphasis on public memorial activities stimulated by civil society agents.

In this regard, the Portuguese printed press, especially the national newspapers, has been fundamental in the last decade in raising awareness about the Portuguese colonial war and its veterans. An assessment of the main themes and developments since the beginning of the new millennium shows how the conflict has been dealt with by this medium. Recent journalistic pieces have focused on the social neglect and lack of support faced by ex-combatants, especially those suffering from war stress or PTSD. Bringing the issue into the open, these reports typically condone a deeper commitment on the part of the Portuguese State and society towards vulnerable ex-combatants, presented as marginalised ‘instruments’ of an embarrassing historical period and

<sup>195</sup> See Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) *o.c.* (Vol. 1, 2009), p.7, p. 9.

<sup>196</sup> See Portuguese Ministry of Education, National Curriculum of Basic Education. Essential Competences in History and Geography: Portugal in the past and in the present’, p. 99 at <http://www.dgidec.min-edu.pt/ensinobasico/index.php?s=directorio&pid=2>

<sup>197</sup> See interview with H. Veríssimo, President of the Portuguese Association of History Teachers on RTP2 programme ‘Sociedade Civil’, 7th November 2007; see also website of the Portuguese Ministry of Education at: <http://sitio.dgidec.min-edu.pt/cidadania/paginas/concursoguerracolonial.aspx>

subsequently discarded, in a context of forgetting and avoidance. These pieces often illustrate how the war continues impacting veterans and their families negatively and, consequently, society in general.<sup>198</sup> Frequently including the opinion of expert psychiatrists, such approaches advocate a social duty to care for these ‘forgotten men’, many of them unsupported PTSD sufferers struggling with the lack of reinforcement of legal diplomas concerning the assistance owed to that large demographical population touched by such ‘deep trauma.’<sup>199</sup> Similarly, the social consequences of the conflict, namely in terms of criminality and delinquency, alcoholism and homelessness affecting war veterans and their families have increasingly been a focus of the Portuguese media since the beginning of the new millennium.<sup>200</sup>

The visibility of the colonial war has also expanded in the Portuguese press through initiatives focused on ex-combatants’ personal accounts. Such an example was started in January 2008 promoted by best-selling newspaper *Correio da Manhã*. Entitled ‘A minha guerra. Uma Guerra como ainda não foi contada’ (My war. A War as it has not been told before), this series published veteran testimonies and images weekly.<sup>201</sup> The series depicts the impact, past and present, of the conflict, including accounts of violent, traumatic war episodes.<sup>202</sup> By not being clear, however, about the selection criteria adopted for publication, ‘My War’ has generated disagreement amongst veterans, who dispute the factual accuracy of some testimonies and question the representativeness of certain accounts published.<sup>203</sup>

Along with veteran testimony, controversial war-related topics have received more exposure in recent Portuguese printed press, including the fate of the African

<sup>198</sup> See ‘Ex-combatentes contam a sua história. A guerra continua lá dentro’, in *Notícias Magazine*, no. 517, 21st April 2002, pp. 18-30, particularly I. Stilwell’s editorial on p. 6.

<sup>199</sup> Entitled ‘Never-ending war’, see press coverage of Maia’s research on PTSD amongst Portuguese war veterans, in *Notícias Magazine*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2007; Maia advances a number of 300, 000 PTSD sufferers in Portugal, a figure much higher than that obtained in earlier studies; in 1999, the Portuguese Government published legal diploma no. 46/99 which declared PTSD a cause of disability and instituted a support network that over a decade later was felt to be ineffective; see also psychiatrist A. de Albuquerque’s view in *o.c.*, no. 517, 21st April 2002, pp. 32-38 and ‘The Epidemiology...’ in *o.c.* (2003), pp. 309-320; this is the first study of Posttraumatic stress disorder within the adult population in Portugal; see also *Jornal de Notícias*, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2006 and 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2006; about official lack of support and insufficient logistics to address PTSD in Portugal, see *Jornal de Notícias*, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

<sup>200</sup> See ‘Heróis de Guerra Acabam na Cadeia’, in *Tal & Qual*, 6th February 2004; *Público*, 20th July 2008; *Jornal de Notícias*, 21st July 2008; ‘A guerra nunca mais sai do corpo’ in *Pública*, 30th January 2011, pp. 16-29; *Correio da Manhã*, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2013; *Correio da Manhã*, 29th February 2008; interview with R. de Sousa in ‘Tardes da Júlia’, TVI television channel, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2008; *Diário do Sul*, 27th January 2009.

<sup>201</sup> See magazine *Domingo*, published by *Correio da Manhã* newspaper. This series was presented on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2008, and began its publication on the 20<sup>th</sup> January of the same year; it was still being published in June 2009; see also earlier initiatives entitled ‘Memórias de Guerra’ and ‘Rede Nacional de Histórias’ in *Correio da Manhã* 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2007, and on similar dates in June 2006.

<sup>202</sup> A. Gregório described some revenge killings (Angola, 1961-1963) and J. Adelino the murder of innocent civilians (Angola, 1969-1972), in *Correio da Manhã*, 1st and 8th June 2008.

<sup>203</sup> See, for instance, comment by A. dos Santos in March 2009 published on [http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia\\_CM\\_Comentario.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia_CM_Comentario.htm)



servicemen fighting for the Portuguese Army left behind after the independence of the former colonies, violence perpetrated by the Portuguese Army in Africa, homosexuality in the army during the war, and the children fathered by Portuguese military men with local women.<sup>204</sup> Also, this arena has increasingly been providing a meeting point for ex-combatants to reunite with comrades of their former military units via newspaper appeals and announcements of veteran gatherings.<sup>205</sup>

These developments indicate that social conditions and levels of interest coincided in Portugal to increase visibility of the colonial war in newspapers and printed media. These approaches perform a social remembrance function, as shown by the significant veteran response to requests for testimonial participation, and resulting in an unprecedented scale of veteran first-person experiences circulating culturally – this availability certainly contributing to an intergenerational debate about the conflict. However, such expansion does not overrule long-lasting challenges faced by the Portuguese press regarding the topic of the colonial war. The climate described by journalist Sofia Barrocas of ‘fear of talking’ about the war, ‘still hiding from ourselves that ‘we have been there’, and approaching it ‘almost furtively’ so as to try to ‘exorcise our ghosts’, suggests that addressing the conflict directly and consistently in print is still the exceptional occurrence and not an acquired practice.<sup>206</sup> Such ‘evasiveness’ is possibly also heightened by the fact that this memory is informed not only by the controversial, traumatic nature of many war experiences, but also by claims for social justice and support which are not always socially prioritised outside veteran groups.

Cyberspace is another environment where the public memory of the Portuguese colonial war has strongly been emerging, particularly towards the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are now forums, blogs, personal and institutional websites through which veterans establish contact, share relevant information, stories, pictures and contacts, and arrange meetings, group trips to Africa, and other activities.<sup>207</sup> Often after decades without contact, former comrades have found in the Internet a quick and

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<sup>204</sup> See *Diário de Notícias*, 13th March 2003 and 11<sup>th</sup> October 2004, and ‘Os proscritos da guerra’ in *Notícias Magazine* no. 821, 17th February 2008; *Público*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and *Diário de Notícias*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2011; see also ‘Guerra Colonial: Sim, havia maior liberdade sexual, mas um oficial matou-se na parada’, in *Pública*, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2009; the topic of homosexuality had been addressed earlier mainly through fiction, for instance, in the following novels: Garcia, J. *o.c.* (1996) and Lobo, D. *o.c.* (2005); as for children left behind by Portuguese servicemen, see ‘Guiné-Bissau. Os filhos que os militares portugueses deixaram para trás’, in *Magazine 2, Público*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2013 and <http://www.publico.pt/filhos-do-vento>.

<sup>205</sup> See *Correio da Manhã*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2005; 25<sup>th</sup> March 2005; *Jornal de Notícias*, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2003, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004.

<sup>206</sup> See editorial of S. Barrocas in *Notícias Magazine*, no. 821, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2008, p. 4.

<sup>207</sup> See ‘Histórias de guerra, tem uma para contar ?’ in <http://www.tvi24.iol.pt/noticias/guerra-ultramar-guerra-colonial-documentario/866817-291.html> on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

efficient way of communicating non-presentially and developing new forms of association. For those who have access to it, the Internet has revolutionised the ease and frequency of veteran interaction in Portugal. Two good examples are the highly-visited website ‘Guerra do Ultramar: Angola, Guiné e Moçambique’ (Ultramar War: Angola, Guinea and Mozambique), created in 2006 and a real national depository of useful information and contacts for veterans, and the blog ‘Luís Graça e camaradas da Guiné’ (Luís Graça and comrades of Guinea); created in 2004 and directed mainly at ex-combatants who fought in Guinea during the conflict (1963-1974).<sup>208</sup>

The significance of this remembrance arena increased with the launching in 2009 of a site about the colonial war – [www.guerracolonial.org](http://www.guerracolonial.org) – resulting from a joint partnership of RTP (Portuguese public broadcasting corporation) and Associação 25 de Abril (25<sup>th</sup> April Association). Created with an educational purpose of increasing knowledge about the war, especially among school students who faced difficulties finding information about the topic, the site’s contents are nearly exclusively based on the book *Guerra Colonial* (Afonso & Gomes, 2001), and some extra multimedia features.<sup>209</sup> Nonetheless, since the contents do not appear to be updated, and there is no option to interact with users (to accommodate comments and suggested improvements), this site underachieves its potential of becoming a national on-line reference for the study of the Portuguese colonial war.<sup>210</sup>

Echoing a social need to know – and share – more about the colonial war, the Internet is providing an ample and flexible vehicle for that process to take place.<sup>211</sup> Relying on an extended range of options, this conflict has found a suitable, accessible, evolving memorial outlet in the on-line world. Most significantly, this is a democratic space, where veterans and other social agents have the opportunity, often non-existent on an official level and elsewhere, to express themselves in a variety of ways.<sup>212</sup>

Perhaps reflecting political, social and cultural developments in contemporary Portugal, the passage of time and stimuli originating from civil society, one of the most

<sup>208</sup> See <http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/> ; <http://blogueforanadaevaotres.blogspot.com/> (with its expressive motto of ‘Não deixes que sejam os outros a contar a tua guerra’ (Don’t let others tell your war for you), it is defined as an open space of dialogue for all; by April 2013, this blog had 610 registered users and had received over 5 million visits, congregating contributions from over 200 veteran authors from both sides of the war); see also *o.c.* in *Ípsilon*, *Público*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008 and programme *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2008; for further examples, see Bibliography

<sup>209</sup> See *Correio da Manhã*, 5th February 2009; TSF Radio website [www.tsf.sapo.pt](http://www.tsf.sapo.pt), 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009; and [http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/africa/news/story/2009/02/printable/090212\\_colonialwarmt.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/africa/news/story/2009/02/printable/090212_colonialwarmt.shtml)

<sup>210</sup> See [www.guerracolonial.org](http://www.guerracolonial.org)

<sup>211</sup> For instance, feeling unrepresented in a public television debate, some veterans decided to create a forum voicing alternative views; see [http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia\\_RTP\\_ProseContras\\_15OUT2007.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia_RTP_ProseContras_15OUT2007.htm)

<sup>212</sup> Stanley, J. ‘Involuntary commemorations...’ in Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 252.

vibrant public remembrance arenas of the colonial war in Portugal in the last decade has been the audiovisual sector, encompassing Portuguese television programmes, debates, documentary-making, cinema, radio and similar. This ‘abstract site of memory’ is assuming a dynamic remembrance role, generating more frequent cultural representations of the Portuguese colonial war, which display the powerful immediacy and public social hold characteristic of the audiovisual medium. After a long period of absence, this memorial ‘intentionality’ progressively began to appear in the Portuguese context since the beginning of the new millennium, with pioneering audiovisual works in different domains clearly stirring social interest and encouraging further creations.<sup>213</sup>

An emerging alternative approach to the colonial war within Portuguese film-making can be discerned. For example, *Os Imortais* (The Immortals, 2003) by António Vasconcelos, provided a very frank portrait of four socially-unadjusted ex-commandos living a life of delinquency in 1985;<sup>214</sup> also, set in Mozambique in the 1960s with the war in the background, *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (The Murmuring Coast, 2004), by Margarida Cardoso, has been considered one of the ‘deepest and more mature reflections on the Colonial War expressed in images’<sup>215</sup>; *20,13* (2007), by Joaquim Leitão, one of few Portuguese war films, is set in a barracks in 1969 Mozambique and explores the topic through action and suspense; *Deus Não Quis* (It Was Not God’s Will, 2007), a short film by António Ferreira, emphasises the human cost of war, presenting the life-changing impact of disability on one soldier.<sup>216</sup>

Within television, the increasing appearance of programmes devoted to the ex-combatants and the colonial war illustrates a new sensibility towards this subject in Portugal.<sup>217</sup> Arguably, the most remarkable example took place in late 2007, when a three-hour groundbreaking debate on the colonial war was broadcasted by RTP1, the main public Portuguese channel, in prime time. Led by journalist Fátima Ferreira, and acknowledging a need for a national discussion about the war, it began by affirming the public television service’s role in assisting ‘the quest for historical truth [which]

<sup>213</sup> See Edwards, P. *o.c.* (2000), pp. 5-18; see journalist A. Gomes in Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 465.

<sup>214</sup> After being broadcasted on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2005 by Portuguese public television channel RTP1 before 10:30pm, this film was non-unanimously considered by a jury from Alta Autoridade para a Comunicação Social unfit for that timetable due to its violent nature; the opposing arguments employed are representative of the contentious potential commanded by a film focusing on war veterans in the mid-2000s. See ‘Deliberação relativa a transmissão pela RTP do filme “Os Imortais” em contravenção ao disposto no artigo 24º Nº 2 da Lei 32/2003’, dated 1st June 2005.

<sup>215</sup> See L. António’s article in *o.c.* (2005), pp. 58-65.

<sup>216</sup> The director (b.1970) of this international award-winning film stressed its critical, humanistic, and educational purpose towards new generations; see <http://pngpictures.com/deusnaoquiscurta.htm>

<sup>217</sup> A partnership between RTP2 public television channel and Liga dos Combatentes materialised in seven programs (broadcasted between September 2004 and June 2005) focusing on war veterans and the conflict.

strengthens countries and citizenship.’<sup>218</sup> Invited speakers included army officers of different backgrounds and political positions, veteran academics, war disabled and the seldom seen inclusion of representatives of the former enemy, namely the then ambassador of Guinea-Bissau, and a Frelimo (Mozambique independence movement) guerrilla fighter. Surveying the inevitability or not of the war, engaging in lengthy discussions about its designation – colonial or Ultramar war – discussing the maintenance or not of the former colonies, voicing criticisms at the 25<sup>th</sup> April revolution and decolonisation process and the abandonment of native African troops, and briefly mentioning the war disabled needs for ‘material and moral dignity’, this debate exposed the existing division in Portugal about the war.<sup>219</sup> Heated exchanges revealed the disparate ideological positions cohabiting in Portuguese society, offering viewers standpoints which oscillated between a post-1974 left-wing discourse and stances borrowed from the previous authoritarian regime. Despite such difficulties, the debate possibly represented a first national attempt to publicly process the end of a colonial era. It addressed contentious topics, and manifested a new willingness to voice differing and rarely heard perspectives. However, the predominance of the factual, military standpoint and the virtual absence of the average veteran’s experiences weakened this debate and contributed to its inconclusiveness. Many Portuguese ex-combatants felt ‘the majority [...] was not heard.’<sup>220</sup> Ending unresolved, yet welcoming future understandings, the debate demonstrated Portugal’s quest for a nationally consensual ‘historical truth.’<sup>221</sup>

Nonetheless, this debate certainly paved the way for a more frequent presence of the colonial war on Portuguese television, particularly in its immediate aftermath.<sup>222</sup> Programmes such as *Sociedade Civil* and *Câmara Clara* discussed the war from different angles, through military men, veterans, writers, sociologists, psychologists, journalists and, less frequently, historians.<sup>223</sup> Although material issues occupied a lot of these discussions (such as the fate of the mortal remains of Portuguese servicemen in Africa and the need to support vulnerable veterans, particularly those suffering from

<sup>218</sup> *Prós e Contrás*, RTP1 television channel, 15th October 2007.

<sup>219</sup> Ultramar was the term officially given to the ‘overseas territories’ until 1974; the latter citation is by ADFA’s President J. Arruda.

<sup>220</sup> See I. Nogueira, on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2007 at <http://mitoseritos.blogs.sapo.pt/28411.html> ; and the post-debate on-line forum created by a major veteran website to voice ex-combatant opinion at [http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia\\_RTP\\_ProseContrás\\_15OUT2007.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia_RTP_ProseContrás_15OUT2007.htm)

<sup>221</sup> F. Ferreira’s declared during the debate that ‘we are lucky to have a lot of testimonies that the historians of the future can use; see *Prós e Contrás*, RTP1, 15th October 2007’

<sup>222</sup> The series *A Guerra*, by J. Furtado began being broadcast on the following day, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

<sup>223</sup> See *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2007 and *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 27th October 2008; see *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2008; *A Voz da Saudade*, RTP1, 31st August 2008; *Voluntário*, RTP2, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2008.

PTSD), the discussions also sought to understand the colonial war. These televised reflections acknowledge that the conflict reached a memorial 'limelight' in recent years. This is justified by the elapsing of time, conducive to a social maturity which generates new approaches and a reflection on the war's historical meaning. In this context, the increasingly retired veteran group is perceived as being prompted by the sharp 'generational contrast' (their life under the authoritarian regime versus younger people's upbringing in democratic Portugal) to transmit their memorial legacy onto new generations, feared to be living in ignorance and 'forgetting' about the colonial war.<sup>224</sup>

Other developments took place in the field of documentary-making. If until 2000 there was no significant documentary production in Portugal on the colonial war, as the decade advanced alternative documentary narratives began to emerge.<sup>225</sup> In late 2007, the neutrally-titled *A Guerra* (The War), an 18-episode plus documentary by journalist Joaquim Furtado, began being broadcasted in prime-time on RTP1, the main public Portuguese television channel. After decades of attempts to bring the project to life, Furtado captured the nation with his ambitious and comprehensive series.<sup>226</sup> Shot in Portugal and Africa, RTP (Portuguese broadcasting corporation) promoted *A Guerra* as a long-awaited return 'to a painful past', providing a true public service by offering this 'untold history of the war' about which so many Portuguese knew so little.<sup>227</sup>

Controversy and animated discussions followed (mainly amongst veterans) suggesting that, as Furtado pinpointed, Portuguese society was 'finally available' to consider the conflict.<sup>228</sup> Shortly after its beginning, the widespread social reaction this series received in Portugal meant *A Guerra* quickly became a catalyst for the emergence of other cultural productions about the colonial war.<sup>229</sup> Remembering the war became

<sup>224</sup> See *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2008; *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2008, at <http://www.rtp.pt/programa/tv/p23283/e173>; this programme promoted an on-line poll entitled 'Do young people in Portugal know what the colonial war was?' 87% of viewers, answered 'no'; through on-line comments, some regretted Portuguese youngsters remain ignorant about the topic because 'our rulers are more worried about a history without embarrassments'; see comments at: <http://sociedade-civil.blogspot.co.uk/2008/10/irmos-de-armas.html>

<sup>225</sup> As noted by film director C. Santos, in Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 499; J. Ribeiro points out the documentary *Ultramar, Angola, 1961-1963* (2000), by G. Borges as an exception, in Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 293; television documentaries were a prelude to future documentary works; an example is *Fomos Soldados*, by C. Santos & A. Faria, SIC television channel, (2004) and *Combatentes do Ultramar*, by M. Guerra, Canal História/Lua Produções, (2003).

<sup>226</sup> Furtado explains that the project's idea began in the 1980s, but only in the late 1990s he was authorised to proceed by the Portuguese public broadcasting corporation (RTP); earlier, it was believed 'the subject was still very fresh in the Portuguese people's memory'; see *Jornal de Notícias*, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2007; see also 'Preface' by J. Vieira in Ferreira, A. *o.c.* (2008), p. 5; this documentary comprised archival images previously undisclosed and four hundred interviews, ranging from well-known figures (military and civilian) to people unknown to the general public, from disparate socio-political backgrounds and both sides of the conflict.

<sup>227</sup> From RTP's website <http://www.rtp.pt/homepage/> - information accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

<sup>228</sup> See *Correio da Manhã*, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2007 and 'A minha guerra em África...', *o.c.* (2008)

<sup>229</sup> It is worth noting that the first episode of 'A Guerra' was the most-viewed documentary of Portuguese television since 2000, and the programme with the second highest audience on the day it was broadcasted, with an average of

‘fashionable’ and/or timely, with an evident ‘boom in the remembrance of [colonial war] memories due to the documentary.’<sup>230</sup> After decades of absence from the cultural spotlight in Portugal, broadcasting a series about the colonial war on the main public television channel at prime time reminded Portuguese people that ‘there really was a war’, contributing even to war narratives emerging more openly – in a powerful example of how public representations of the past may prompt articulation of personal war memories.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, for many Portuguese war veterans the series also provoked what Jo Stanley termed ‘involuntary commemorations’, which happens when public media commemoration of an armed conflict triggers Posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms in former combatants.<sup>232</sup>

Unquestionably, the series represented a groundbreaking moment in the remembrance of the Portuguese colonial war. Resulting from a vast research effort, it recounts the colonial war in depth and from multiple standpoints. Often questioned, however, about its historical potential, Furtado asserts the series as a journalistic contextualised testimonial collection and not far-reaching analysis. In effect, Furtado comments on the lack of academic historiographical studies on the topic, a visible absence regarding war remembrance in Portugal.<sup>233</sup> Nonetheless, the success and impact of *A Guerra* was indicative of the Portuguese people’s interest in the conflict.<sup>234</sup> The colonial war increased its presence on a variety of audiovisual formats as the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century approached its end and beyond.

The memory of the colonial war has also been commemorated in more tangible ways. Indeed, since 2000, Portugal has witnessed a dramatic nationwide emergence of monuments, memorials, plaques, toponymy and other commemorative initiatives related to the colonial war and its ex-combatants.<sup>235</sup> Typically organised on a local level by

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13.6%, corresponding to 1,286, 300 viewers; see *Diário de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã*, 18th October 2007; the series was subsequently released on DVD in 2008.

<sup>230</sup> See *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

<sup>231</sup> See on-line news website TVI24, at <http://www.tvi24.iol.pt/sociedade/guerra-ultramar-guerra-colonial-documentario/866817-3210.html> and <http://www.tvi24.iol.pt/noticias/guerra-documentario-joaquim-furtado-guerra-colonial-ex-combatentes-ultramar/867301-291.html>, on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

<sup>232</sup> Stanley, J. ‘Involuntary commemorations: post-traumatic stress disorder and its relationship with war commemoration’, in Samuel, R. & Thompson, P. (eds.) *The Myths We Live By*, London, Routledge (1990), pp. 240-259; see also A. Freitas’s view on *Diário de Notícias*, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2007; on the impact of the Iraq war (2003) on Portuguese combatants, see *Correio da Manhã*, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2003.

<sup>233</sup> See on-line interview with J. Furtado, on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2011 at [http://noticias.sapo.pt/especial/guerra\\_colonial/1127082.html#page=1](http://noticias.sapo.pt/especial/guerra_colonial/1127082.html#page=1)

<sup>234</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>235</sup> For data on this increase (including a record of monuments by district), see preliminary results on public narratives of research project ‘Os Filhos da Guerra Colonial...’, developed by CES at <http://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/filhosdaguerracolonial/pages/pt/o-projecto/alguns-resultados/narrativas-publicas.php> and ‘Memórias públicas da guerra colonial’, in *Diário de Notícias*, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2011, p. 4; this study listed 128 monuments; see also [http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Memoriais\\_concelhos.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Memoriais_concelhos.htm) and

municipalities and veterans' groups, such monuments pay homage to the dead of that region and/or acknowledge combatants in general.<sup>236</sup> Among many others, the examples of São Martinho (Madeira, 2003), Maia (2004), Lagoa (Azores, 2004), Leiria (2004), Lourinhã (2005), Coimbra (2005), Ponta Delgada (Azores, 2005), Vila de Ponte (2008), Faro (2009) and Atalaia (2013) could be cited.<sup>237</sup>

However, the public message contained in this commemorative abundance is not always consensual.<sup>238</sup> Often the meaning of such monuments is debated and contested, revealing internal social fissures and illustrating how remembering a recent event (especially one of a colonial nature) is socially problematic.<sup>239</sup> This politically contentious commemoration struggles to find its appropriate narrative framing, with many promoters, in response to criticism, claiming that such monuments do not celebrate the colonial war and the former regime, but rather pay homage to the dead and, in general, to the sacrifice of combatants.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, arising normally under the auspices of local powers (which often organise elaborate unveiling ceremonies), it is not uncommon for these initiatives to be perceived by many as political propaganda, particularly in a context when such occasions frequently serve as a reminder of the plea of unsupported and neglected veterans.<sup>241</sup>

On a national scale, commemorations are also not free from tensions, with the national monument to the combatants in Lisbon (inaugurated in 1994, and mentioned earlier), becoming a stage for competing memorial agendas. Despite representing a governmental effort towards appeasement and unity, successive commemorative additions are indicative of the complex understanding and transmission associated with this memory. Lack of consensus about the monument's remembrance functions emerges particularly strongly during annual celebrations of the 'Day of Portugal' (10<sup>th</sup> June),

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<http://guerracolonial.home.sapo.pt/monumentos/monumentos.htm> ; in some cases, this homage consists in including a plaque on a previous monument to the dead of World War One, a connection to a larger narrative construction (for this subject, see Cubitt, G. *o.c.*, p. 214).

<sup>236</sup> Although not exclusively, since in 2004 a monument dedicated to the women who supported the servicemen during the colonial war was unveiled in Leiria by the Ministry of Defence; see *24 Horas*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

<sup>237</sup> *Jornal da Madeira*, 26th April 2004; *O Comércio do Porto*, 3rd December 2004; *Correio dos Açores*, 14th December 2004; *Jornal da Madeira*, 9th December 2004; *Notícias da Manhã*, 27th June 2005; *Diário de Coimbra*, 21st April 2005; *Açores*, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2005; see edition no. 171 of 2008 [undated] of newspaper *O Pilar*, at <http://www.jornalopilar.com/index.php?que=det&qn=201&dct=Aos%20ex-combatentes%20do%20Ultramar> ; *A Defesa de Faro*, 1st September 2009, at <http://adefesadefaro.blogspot.co.uk/2009/09/inauguracao-do-monumento-ao-combatente.html> ; see report of unveiling monument on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2013, at <http://blogueforanadaevaotres.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/guine-6374-p11718-freguesia-da-atalaia.html>

<sup>238</sup> Cubitt, G. *o.c.*, p. 144, p. 193.

<sup>239</sup> *Idem*, p. 210.

<sup>240</sup> See speech given at Vila de Ponte in 2008 in *O Pilar*, *o. c.* (2008); for an example of opposing views on the meaning (and financial soundness) of such monuments, see comments section of *A Defesa de Faro*, *o.c.* (2009)

<sup>241</sup> See comments to report of unveiling monument in Atalaia on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2013, in *o.c.* (2013); see *O Veterano de Guerra*, no. 40, April-June 2008, p. 22.

which stage an on-site ceremony, including veterans, military and official representatives. For some, this event is a fair homage and acknowledgement of the colonial war and the ex-combatants, for others it is an unrepresentative, nostalgic commemoration echoing the former regime.<sup>242</sup> Revealing Portugal's tense relationship with the memory of the colonial conflict, such official commemorative occasions express a carefully balanced 'reconciliation' discourse which frequently evades historical considerations.<sup>243</sup> Navigating political disagreements, they normally affirm the need of societal recognition towards ex-combatants and the overcoming of shame about their role in the past.<sup>244</sup>

Another arena of remembrance that has been increasing since 2000 concerns exhibitions, colloquiums, congresses and similar events that focus on the colonial war. A pioneer initiative was the itinerant exhibition created in 1998 by the Museu da Guerra Colonial (Colonial War Museum), entitled *Guerra Colonial – uma história por contar* (*Colonial war – an untold story*). Still running, it displays a strong didactic element and a diversified collection.<sup>245</sup> Similarly, in 2000 the Museu Militar do Porto (Military Museum of Porto) inaugurated an itinerant exhibition entitled *Testemunhos de Guerra. Angola. Guiné. Moçambique. 1961-1974* (*Testimonies of War. Angola. Guinea. Mozambique. 1961-1974*), focusing mainly on a military, factual and pictorial perspective.<sup>246</sup> Significantly, two international congresses on the colonial war, organised by Teixeira, took place in Lisbon in 2000 and 2001, assessing the conflict mainly through the fictional angle, and including a broad range of participants.<sup>247</sup> In 2003 an international meeting was held in Coimbra to reflect about the topic through the neglected perspective of 'Women and the Colonial War.'<sup>248</sup> Furthermore, in the last

<sup>242</sup> See APOIAR. *Órgão da Associação de Apoio aos Ex-combatentes vítimas do Stress de Guerra*, Ano XIII, no. 52, May-June 2008, p. 2; the monument to the Combatants of the Ultramar in Lisbon has hosted these 'Day of Portugal' celebrations since 1994.

<sup>243</sup> See comments on the speech of J. Sampaio, then President of the Portuguese Republic, on the 'Day of the Combatant' in 2004, in *Jornal de Notícias*, 10th and 27th April 2004; on 10th June 2004, politician (and veteran) F. do Amaral gave a 'Day of Portugal' speech before circa 5,000 ex-combatants at the Lisbon national memorial, stressing that whilst history takes its time to assess the colonial war, its veterans should not remain marginalised; see *Diário de Notícias*, 11th June 2004; see *Jornal de Notícias* and *Público*, 11th June 2004.

<sup>244</sup> See M. Costa 'Day of Portugal's speech, in *Correio da Manhã*, 11th June 2005.

<sup>245</sup> Resulting from a partnership of several local institutions and ADFA, the Museum (which opened in 1998) is located in Vila Nova de Famalicão. About the itinerant exhibition see: [http://museuguerracolonial.pt/?page\\_id=20](http://museuguerracolonial.pt/?page_id=20) See also: [http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/index\\_museu\\_VNFamalicao.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/index_museu_VNFamalicao.htm).

<sup>246</sup> See Carvalho, M. (ed.) *Testemunhos de Guerra. Angola. Guiné. Moçambique. 1961-1974*, Porto, Liga dos Amigos do Museu Militar do Porto (2000). The exhibition has been visiting several locations in Portugal since then; see *Jornal de Notícias*, 28th July 2008 and <http://www.ligacombatentes.org.pt/upload/lix/noticias/003.htm>

<sup>247</sup> The first international congress, entitled 'A Guerra Colonial: realidade e ficção', was hosted by Instituto Nacional de Defesa, in Lisbon, in April 2000; the second happened in November of the following year; see backcover of Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2002)

<sup>248</sup> Organised by Centro de Estudos Sociais, University of Coimbra, it took place in May 2003; see *Público*, 24th May 2003.



decade, several photographic exhibitions and colloquiums have also been organised nationwide by Associação APOIAR, ADFA, Liga dos Combatentes and other veteran associations.<sup>249</sup> The fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the colonial war in 2011 witnessed the occurrence of notable initiatives.<sup>250</sup> These developments suggest an increasing recognition of the impact of the colonial war in Portugal and the need to address it.<sup>251</sup>

Originating mainly from private agents and groups, and appearing more frequently since the new millennium, another aspect of the memory of the Portuguese colonial war which has been permeating public discussions is the issue of the mortal remains of Portuguese servicemen in Africa.<sup>252</sup> Whilst some advocate that they should remain in Africa, but with suitable funerary structures, others press for official and un-official institutions to organise transport of remains to Portugal. In this regard, civil society's pressure apparently began to generate an official response, with an initial governmental investment, in early 2005, of 600,000 Euros to renovate neglected Portuguese military graves in Africa.<sup>253</sup>

This emotionally-charged social demand unites veterans and bereaved families against the forgetting and 'abandonment' of dead combatants in Africa.<sup>254</sup> Calling for official support in dignifying their burial sites or transferring remains to Portugal, they commonly stress the state's responsibility because the vast majority of these servicemen were conscripted, and subsequently left in what are now independent African countries.<sup>255</sup> Illustrative of how pressing the subject is for countless Portuguese ex-combatants and families, albeit unusual in its early achievement, is the story of António Mota, son of a combatant who died in Angola in 1962. His successful efforts to transfer his father's remains to Portugal and the subsequent visibility this story acquired in the

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<sup>249</sup> For example, Rede Nacional de Apoio – Stress de Guerra Symposium was arranged by ADFA in February 2002; see *Revista da Armada*, no. 353, May 2002; in Madeira, in April 2005, a photographic exhibition was organised by the regional section of Liga dos Combatentes; see *Jornal da Madeira*, 6th March 2005.

<sup>250</sup> For instance, the events organised by Centro de Estudos Sociais of Coimbra University in partnership with ADFA, detailed at [http://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/filhosdaguerracolonia/media/elo\\_site%20filhos.pdf](http://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/filhosdaguerracolonia/media/elo_site%20filhos.pdf) and at [www.cm-feira.pt](http://www.cm-feira.pt), in articles dated 24<sup>th</sup> November and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

<sup>251</sup> See J. Lages's opinion in Carvalho, M. (ed.), *o.c.* (2000), p. 252; see 'Preface' in *idem*, p. 5, p. 8; see also Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 13.

<sup>252</sup> It was only in 1967 that the Portuguese State assumed the responsibility (not always fulfilled) of transporting to Portugal the corpses of fallen servicemen in the three African fronts; before that date, that would happen only if relatives of the deceased could afford the high costs; since not many could, most corpses were buried locally; see Mota, A. *o.c.* (2005), p. 38.

<sup>253</sup> See veteran M. Barbosa's viewpoint in *Jornal de Notícias*, 18th February 2003; *Comércio do Porto*, 9th January 2005.

<sup>254</sup> The urgency of the repatriation of remains of Portuguese servicemen in Africa was further inflamed in late 2008 with news reports covering the profanation of graves and cemeteries; see *Diário de Notícias*, 24th October 2008.

<sup>255</sup> APOIAR. *o.c.* (2008), p. 6; *O Veterano de Guerra*, no. 41, July-September 2008, pp. 10-12.

media helped fuel the national debate and inspired others in similar circumstances, acting as an incentive for other families to recover the mortal remains of their deceased.<sup>256</sup>

This active interest in the subject is evident in the project ‘Conservation of Memories’, promoted by Liga dos Combatentes (Combatants’ League), a veteran institution partially state-funded through the Ministry of Defence.<sup>257</sup> Beginning in 2008, and still running by mid-2013 with significant results, the project’s goal is to locate, identify, concentrate and dignify the remains and, in some cases, assist in their transference to Portugal.<sup>258</sup> Through this plan, the rehabilitation of Portuguese military cemeteries in several African countries has been undertaken.<sup>259</sup>

For some, rehabilitation of cemeteries was not enough. Stimulated by media explorations into the subject, in 2008 ‘Movimento Cívico dos Antigos Combatentes’ (Civic Movement of Former Combatants) organised a petition for the return of soldiers’ remains to Portugal.<sup>260</sup> Reaching the limelight with over 12,000 signatures, by mid-2009 it was granted a parliamentary debate which secured some legal results.<sup>261</sup> Promoted by active war veteran associations and groups and local authorities, several other initiatives have taken place.<sup>262</sup>

In recent years, this subject has made a frequent appearance on Portuguese media.<sup>263</sup> Mainstream television reporting on the topic often focus on its emotional impact, covering the funeral ceremonies and military honours normally associated with re-

<sup>256</sup> After years of persistent attempts, A. Mota (b. 1961) fulfilled his goal in 1996; see Mota, A. *Luta Incessante. Uma História e Alguns Poemas*, Espinho, Elefante Editores (2005).

<sup>257</sup> See [http://www.ligacomatentes.org.pt/conservacao\\_das\\_memorias](http://www.ligacomatentes.org.pt/conservacao_das_memorias) ; *Público*, 12th December 2008.

<sup>258</sup> In early 2008, ten Portuguese soldiers were exhumed in Guinea-Bissau and taken to its capital, Bissau; further burial sites’ renovation missions ensued; relatives of identified individuals interested in transferring the remains to Portugal had the option to do so with help of the Combatants’ League; sixteen requested has been made by early 2008, all fulfilled (except for two) by mid-2013 see *Correio da Manhã*, 1st March 2008; *Jornal de Notícias*, 19th March 2008; *Correio da Manhã*, 8th July 2013.

<sup>259</sup> In *Público*, 12th March 2009.

<sup>260</sup> This movement explains its formation as a response to the television reportage *Dor Adormecida*, by J. Almeida, broadcasted by RTP on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006, and focusing on the neglect of Portuguese military cemeteries in Africa. See [http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Movimento\\_Antigos\\_Combatentes/Proposta\\_de\\_reflexao.pdf](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Movimento_Antigos_Combatentes/Proposta_de_reflexao.pdf) and [http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia\\_ReportagemRTP\\_20SET2006.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia_ReportagemRTP_20SET2006.htm)

<sup>261</sup> Affirming their dead comrades are not forgotten, the goal of the combatants’ movement was to return, by 2012, the mortal remains of all servicemen who died in ‘Guerra do Ultramar/Guerra Colonial’, at an estimated cost of 8 million Euros; in an attempt to sidestep political divergences and secure as many signatures as possible, the petition employed a dual designation; see *Jornal de Notícias*, 28th July 2008; *Diário de Notícias*, 24th October 2008, 27th May 2009; *Expresso*, 22 Janeiro 2009; *Diário Digital*, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009; see ‘Resolução da Assembleia da República, n.º 75/2009’, in *Diário da República*, 1.ª Série, n.º 157, 14<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

<sup>262</sup> *Jornal de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã*, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2008; *Correio da Manhã*, 16th October 2008. These normally consist of transferring servicemen’s mortal remains from Africa to Portugal. see *Jornal de Notícias*, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 12th December 2008.

<sup>263</sup> See *Ciência Hoje*, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010; Special Reportage, SIC television channel, ‘Ex-combatentes: finados sem dia’, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010; *Diário de Notícias*, 2nd November 2010.

interment in Portugal.<sup>264</sup> Rather than engaging in potentially divisive discussions on the nature of the conflict, narratives surrounding these ceremonies typically tend to seek meaning for those deaths through focusing on the ritualisation of funerals, the recognition conferred by posthumous honours and a rhetoric of noble sacrifice for the motherland – yet not always through consensual terms.<sup>265</sup>

Nonetheless, this increasing interest in the mortal remains of Portuguese servicemen in Africa appears to mark the beginning of a new approach to the subject. After decades of silence and avoidance, and encouraged by highly-publicised successful cases, more people in Portugal are willing to challenge indifference and secure real change. Indeed, for many, this ‘unfinished’ colonial cycle can only end by transporting all the corpses back to Portugal.<sup>266</sup> The long time it took to address the matter being ‘the unmistakable sign that Portugal needs to write its contemporary history.’<sup>267</sup> Emerging ‘from within’, from the pressure and determination of veterans, families and other members of society, official authorities are being forced to rethink and take action regarding the issue of mortal remains.

However, due to the high cost and logistic complexity, and the mixed opinions about the subject in contemporary Portugal, the discussion about the mortal remains of combatants killed during the colonial war does not appear to be conclusive.<sup>268</sup> For some, the remains of Portuguese soldiers, in many situations neglected, are in countries that are now independent, and the state should guarantee its transference to Portugal. Others argue that Portugal cannot deny its historical presence in those territories and, for that reason, the corpses should remain in Africa, with an investment in the rehabilitation and subsequent maintenance of their graves. Notwithstanding the different positions, for many engaged in the ongoing debate it appears unlikely that Portugal, a country of limited resources, will be able to fully fulfil all the requests being made regarding the mortal remains of combatants.

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<sup>264</sup> For example, through the voice of the mother of the 19-year-old serviceman who had his remains transferred to Portugal thirty-five years after his death; see ‘Jornal da Noite’, SIC television channel, 26th July 2008; see also *Querida Júlia*, SIC television channel, 11th April 2011.

<sup>265</sup> In a revealing example of memory’s ambivalence as regards different political uses and meanings, a mainstream Portuguese television channel covering such ceremonies described them as celebratory of ‘the heroic feats of the Portuguese people in the Ultramar’; for many in Portugal this statement remains highly debatable; see ‘Jornal da Noite’, SIC television channel, 26th July 2008.

<sup>266</sup> Mota, A. *o.c.* (2005), p. 5; *Jornal de Notícias*, 28th July 2008.

<sup>267</sup> See report written by R. Silva *o.c.*, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

<sup>268</sup> This evokes the debate addressed by Winter in his study of the cultural memory of the First World War about whether the corpses of dead soldiers should be taken home; in Portugal’s case, the discussion is arising decades after the end of a colonial conflict, and it does not seem to be satisfactorily resolved; see Winter, J. *Sites of Memory, sites of mourning. The Great War in European cultural history*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1995), pp. 25–28.

Notwithstanding the higher incidence in Portugal of public memory narratives surrounding the colonial war, this remembrance remains shaped by complex factors which may determine the type of memory being expressed and even a tendency to the perpetuation of silence about specific subjects. That is the case, for instance, regarding the massacres and atrocities committed in Africa by Portuguese troops during the conflict, an emergent issue now that the colonial war is being approached more often and in more detail. Being one of the most sensitive aspects of the conflict, this topic places this war memory in an ambivalent position of acknowledging a need to remember – but not everything.

The propensity to dismiss a deeper investigation of atrocities perpetrated by the Portuguese military has been a long-term feature of the Portuguese national panorama, as noted by Jorge Ribeiro in 1999.<sup>269</sup> As typified by Basil Davidson's view cited in that study, many argue that it is not 'worthwhile to judge the war crimes of the Portuguese.' Such crimes were committed by the Portuguese Army, then serving the authoritarian regime. Being 'too late' for judgement, Davidson believes that now 'our duty' is simply to explain to younger generations in Portugal the complexity of history, 'showing them that the colonial enterprise committed horrible crimes.'<sup>270</sup>

However, this 'duty' clashes with the reality of the ex-combatants' daily life and their social survival. Those war veterans who were in some way involved in massacres and unjustified, excessive violence, refuse to be potentially perceived as murderers rather than common citizens.<sup>271</sup> Consequently, the subject of massacres and atrocities is not easily approached and discussed in Portugal, and a general lack of knowledge about the matter is apparent. Traditionally avoided by Portuguese media, particularly from angles which could morally compromise veterans, the topic, however, is increasingly raising more interest, attesting a certain level of change taking place. Appearing in different contexts, some documentaries, books, news articles and recent research, amongst other examples, contribute to, quoting Felícia Cabrita, conquer 'the veil of silence that hid the massacres committed in the Portuguese colonies during the New

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<sup>269</sup> Ribeiro, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 142; A. Santos, then President of the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic argued that Portugal would gain nothing from recognising the war crimes of colonialism, adding that it was too late and 'wrong' for a judgement of those actions.

<sup>270</sup> Ribeiro, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 177; see also viewpoint of journalist P. Coelho in 'A minha guerra em África...' *o.c.* (2008), p.13.

<sup>271</sup> See veteran novelist A. Brito's remark about the 'excellent company managers, family men' who 'nowadays are around' despite having committed 'very condemnable things there', in 'A minha Guerra em África...', *o.c.* (2008), p.12.

State period.’<sup>272</sup> These first steps appear to be taking place now due to some sense of chronological distance in relation to the events, accompanied by the cathartic need of some of the protagonists – now in a different life stage – to finally leave their accounts, via fiction or documentary, for instance.<sup>273</sup> Furthermore, there are signs that educated, younger Portuguese generations increasingly wish to understand the colonial conflict more fully, including its brutal aspects.<sup>274</sup>

Nonetheless, despite some attempts at evaluating this violent past, the fact that the majority of problematic war acts seem to remain unacknowledged by its protagonists – most likely for fear of moral, ethical and even legal repercussions – means a wider assessment on the Portuguese colonial war is harder to attain.<sup>275</sup> In this context, for many, in face of potential implications, the chronological distance from the events seems to be insufficient and silence on the topic persists, a stance which encumbers broader historical reflection and appears to be a strong motivator of the commonly-held view in Portugal that the history of the colonial war will only be written in the future.

## Conclusions

The emergence of public memory narratives about the Portuguese colonial war is occurring in a specific context. Forty years after the 1974 revolution and the end of the conflict, Portuguese society is the reflection of the many changes of the last decades.<sup>276</sup> The Portuguese people have been living in a democracy, open to the world, subject to capitalism and the laws of the market, and integrated in the European Union economic, cultural and social space. These aspects have familiarised Portuguese society with international remembrance frameworks, broadening the country’s memorial palette. Within Portugal, war remembrance is facilitated by the fact that most war veterans have reached or are reaching retirement age, a time in life that is most propitious to what

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<sup>272</sup> For instance, documentary *Os Soldados Também Choram* (SIC television channel, 2001); Furtado’s *A Guerra* (RTP, 2007-2013) focused on massacres perpetrated by the Portuguese Army, notably the 1972 Massacre of Wiriyamu; see episodes 28 and 29 (season IV), broadcasted by RTP in late 2012; *Massacres em África*, by journalist F. Cabrita appeared in 2008 (Lisbon, A Esfera dos Livros) and its first edition quickly sold out; it focuses on violent acts and not on its perpetrators; see also article about documental evidence of beheadings performed by the Portuguese Army, in *Público*, 16th December 2012; and articles on the Wiriyamu massacre in *Sol Digital*, 12th December 2012 and *Jornal da Madeira*, 16th December 2012; for recent research on this topic, see Reis, B. & Oliveira, P. ‘Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts: Late Colonial Portuguese Counterinsurgency and the Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972’, in *Civil Wars*, 14, 1 (2012), pp. 80-103; see Introduction, in Cabrita, F. *o.c.* (2008), p. 14.

<sup>273</sup> See ‘A minha guerra em África...’, *o.c.* (2008), pp. 12-13; and *Terra de Ninguém*, by S. Lamas, 2012, as a recent example of documentary testimony of violence.

<sup>274</sup> As denoted by the academic research of B. Reis and P. Oliveira mentioned earlier, for instance.

<sup>275</sup> As expressed by veteran author C. Gomes in ‘*Guerra Colonial*’. *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24th February 2008.

<sup>276</sup> For a careful and broad assessment of these processes of change, see seven-part documentary ‘Portugal, Um Retrato Social’, by A. Barreto, J. Pontes, and R. Leão (RTP, 2007).

psychotherapy experts describe by the self-explanatory term ‘life review process.’<sup>277</sup> In addition, a new generation that is less passionate about the colonial war, not having had a lived experience of it, is assuming social control. Furthermore, and reflecting a global trend, the economic crisis of recent years and subsequent instability and uncertainty has tended to produce some backward-looking narratives and identity references from the past, seeking meaning from it, and in some instances favouring nostalgic interpretations. In this context, the geographic landscapes of the past can also become the horizons of the future, as attested by the economically-motivated ‘return to Africa’ (especially to Angola) undertaken by the Portuguese towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century, which prompted a re-establishment of connections and encouraged war-related remembrance.<sup>278</sup>

If a community’s collective memory reflects the ability to adjust to changing socio-historical circumstances, then the increasing attention on the Portuguese colonial war does suggest a change in Portuguese society. However, the increased memorialisation of the war in the media and in other socio-cultural spheres has not seen an equivalent development of reflective historical analysis on the topic in Portugal. There is a wider circulation of representations of war in public memory, but they often lack the interpretive efforts associated with historical inquiry. Despite some exceptions noted throughout this Chapter, much war remembrance occurring in the country is devoid of sound, contextualising structural analysis. Informative, commemorative, descriptive, fragmentary or fictional, in general, approaches to the topic tend to outline facts and not motives and consequences, contributing to produce a partial and superficial narrative about the war. The fact that the subject of the colonial war has been mainly addressed by novelists, journalists, film-makers, psychiatrists and psychologists, amongst others – many of them ex-combatants – and not by professional historians, is revealing.

If the long silence has been broken, now the challenge for Portuguese society is to successfully cope with the weight of ‘excessive commemoration’, which trivialises the event and deprives it of its ‘human and historical density’, as Cruzeiro put it.<sup>279</sup> The proliferation of remembrance activities can become problematic if it takes place without

<sup>277</sup> See Ritchie, D. ‘Introduction: The Evolution of Oral History’, in Ritchie, D. (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), pp. 12-13.

<sup>278</sup> Portuguese emigration to Angola quadruplicated in five years (2004-2009), reaching a total of 100,000 individuals residing in Angola in 2009; these are official numbers: it is believed actual figures are much higher; see *Jornal de Notícias*, 10<sup>th</sup> March and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2009; in early 2009, two daily flights to Angola provided by TAP (national air carrier) were not enough to satisfy customer demand. See *Jornal de Notícias*, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2009 and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

<sup>279</sup> An issue raised early by the author; see Cruzeiro, M. ‘Guerra Colonial...’ in *o.c.* (1994), pp. 5-7.

displaying a significance generally shared and understood. Without a meaningful social engagement with the past, such profuse commemoration becomes a ‘noisy silence’ which continues to impede a broad critical assessment of the conflict, and ultimately induces forgetting rather than remembering.<sup>280</sup> The lack of critical evaluation of the colonial war is also explained by Portuguese society’s resistance to explore the subject in depth. In this regard, Gomes argues that this memorial abundance is paradoxically accompanied by an underdeveloped cultural interest in the topic, resulting, very likely, from its divisive nature.<sup>281</sup>

This excessive commemoration is aided by the technological developments in the media, which, by providing an abundance of images and narratives on the war, become the primary channels of this cultural memory, often subjugating historical meaning to the immediacy and utilisations of the field, and thus presenting ‘recycled memorial images emptied of any historical plenitude.’<sup>282</sup> Nonetheless, although such aspects raise concerns about a certain commercialisation of the past, these arenas also offer new types of mnemonic awareness which can help transform the Portuguese socio-political panorama.<sup>283</sup>

The Portuguese context of remembrance is certainly challenging. After 1974, the country had to cope not only with the end of the empire and the conflict which assured its maintenance, but also a radical shift in political regime. Nearly half a century of authoritarian rule was followed by democracy, and the need to focus on social unity and cohesion conjured a long public silence which was to some extent an agreed condition for the easing of socio-political wounds.<sup>284</sup> Since then, eschewing unrest over such a divisive matter, official remembrance policies have been uncertain and sometimes contradictory, as often they resulted from reactions to different (sometimes opposed) pressures from civil society, increasingly exposed by the media.<sup>285</sup> Preceded and surmounted by a private impulse to remember, the official response has been tardy,

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<sup>280</sup> See Cruzeiro, M. ‘As mulheres e a Guerra Colonial: um silêncio demasiado ruidoso’, in Ribeiro, A. & Ribeiro, M. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais. As mulheres e a Guerra Colonial*, Coimbra, 68 (2004), pp. 31-41; Mendes, J. ‘O lugar do compromisso’, in Melo, F. (ed.) *o.c.* (1994), pp. 11-12; Cruzeiro, M. *o.c.* (2004), pp. 31-41; Edwards, P. *o.c.* (2005), pp. 57-58.

<sup>281</sup> See opinion of M. Gomes in on-line newspaper *O Mirante*, 23rd April 2009, at <http://semanal.omirante.pt/index.asp?idEdicao=388&id=53102&idSeccao=5846&Action=noticia>

<sup>282</sup> Edwards, P. *o.c.* (2005) p. 58.

<sup>283</sup> Cubitt, G. *o.c.*, pp. 248-249, p. 219; for instance, a 2006 RTP documentary on abandoned war graves prompted a widespread rehabilitation civic movement which achieved concrete results on an official level; the beginning of the broadcasting of Furtado’s 2007 documentary provoked a boom in testimonial reactions and discussions, especially on-line.

<sup>284</sup> Cubitt, G. *o.c.*, p. 230.

<sup>285</sup> An illustrative case in hand is the successive discussions regarding the national monument to the combatants inaugurated in Lisbon in 1994.

careful, focused on reconciliation and neglectful of certain memories, denoting, thus, an unresolved national trauma.<sup>286</sup>

The recent dynamics configured mainly by the passage of time and the social ascension of new generations have certainly introduced innovative facets to the remembrance of the Portuguese colonial war, but much is yet to be explored.<sup>287</sup> In Portugal, the rupture produced by this sensitive past runs deep on an official, societal and individual level, making its remembrance highly contested and subject to polarised narrative framings.<sup>288</sup> It appears that many of those who have personal memory of the event are still unable to find adequate instruments for remembering, although, new memorial tools are visibly emerging.<sup>289</sup>

This inability to assess the past is further complicated by the ‘symbolic debris of earlier [New State] conceptions’ – whose repertoire of cultural forms presented Portugal’s identity as one of exemplary colonisation – clashing with the current democratic condemnation of colonial rule.<sup>290</sup> Likewise, the disruptive character of this memory extends to the ex-combatants’ complex, multiple and oppositional identity as perpetrators of colonial violence, brave defenders of the motherland, unwilling victims of a dictatorial regime, or unrecognised patriotic heroes.<sup>291</sup> These tensions, ruptures and continuities reveal a war legacy not assimilated into a unified, stable remembrance of the past, generating persisting conflicts and insecurities in Portuguese society and individuals, and lending itself to political utilisation.<sup>292</sup>

In view of such a socially problematic remembrance, I consider that without the creation of conditions for Portuguese people to face and understand the complexity of their own history – a past they necessarily relate to, irrespective of differing standpoints – no deeper reflection can occur. Instead of a postponement of historical reflection about that crucial period, historiography should embrace the challenge.<sup>293</sup> The idea reiterated by several memory agents in Portugal that the colonial war history will be

<sup>286</sup> It is worth noting the paradigmatic speech given by J. Sampaio, then President of the Portuguese Republic, at the national monument in 2000; see ‘Cerimónia de homenagem...’, in *o. c.* (2000), p. 11; see also Cubitt, G. *o. c.*, pp. 228-229.

<sup>287</sup> Including a wider official response. In the last fifteen years, however, the Portuguese government has made an effort to recognise and support war veterans, albeit not always satisfactorily.

<sup>288</sup> On the framework of such process, see Cubitt, G. *o. c.*, p. 208.

<sup>289</sup> As J. Wertsch noted, quoting P. Fussell, about the collective remembrance of the First World War; see Wertsch, J. *o. c.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>290</sup> See Cubitt, G. *o. c.*, p. 201.

<sup>291</sup> Finding a certain resonance with some elements of the German case mentioned by Cubitt, G. *o. c.*, pp. 235-236; and also echoing Lorenz’s work, in, ‘How does one win a lost war? Oral history and political memories’ in Ritchie, D. (ed.) *o. c.* (2011), p. 132, pp. 136-138.

<sup>292</sup> Cubitt, G. *o. c.*, pp. 223-224.

<sup>293</sup> As stressed by M. Ribeiro, in *Diário de Notícias*, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2011.



written in the future, and that in the meantime we need to compile further raw narratives about the past, nullifies a sense of historical responsibility and suggests a society shunning historical self-reflection.

The analysis of the two remembrance phases considered in this Chapter emphasised critical distinctive aspects, but also evidenced how, in general, memorial developments have been occurring mostly in quantitative rather than qualitative ways. Albeit manifesting on different levels, this assessment has shown how both phases displayed a dearth of interdisciplinary analytical research studies on the conflict and its consequences (particularly from a veteran lived perspective), an insufficient presence of the topic in the national school curriculum, the absence of a comprehensive national debate, the inability to efficiently promote a (still largely-absent) joint remembrance between Portugal and the former African territories, and, internally, a reflective, inclusive public commemoration (beyond the frequent narrative of dutiful army serving the motherland), and a dialogue and effective support of veterans and families affected by the war.<sup>294</sup> These factors indicate that global advances in the context of war memory, as discussed in Chapter One, have not been fully espoused in Portugal.

Evoking the colonial war more often is a step forward in relation to a previous silence, but does not necessarily equate with this past being meaningfully referred to. Because war is not just a description of facts, uncovering meanings and engaging people with their history is critical in the understanding of the Portuguese colonial war, a process in which the historian plays a vital role. The memorial complexities and limitations expounded in this Chapter reinforce the importance of exploring first-person testimonies in a study of the Portuguese colonial war. In this context, the significant ways in which oral history can help illuminate this period of Portuguese contemporary history will be addressed in the following chapters.

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<sup>294</sup> Some of these aspects were noted by H. Stubbe in 2000; see H. Stubbe 'A Guerra Colonial à luz da antropologia cultural' in Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), p. 259.

## Chapter Three:

### Interviewing ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war

#### Significance of the oral history approach

This study seeks a greater understanding of the ways in which the Portuguese colonial war is remembered and understood by those who fought it, focusing critically on the meanings they attribute to their war experiences, and simultaneously documenting their war path. Following the contextualisation of the public memory of the Portuguese colonial conflict in Chapter Two, this Thesis – informed by the oral history methodology – will explore the war memory and identity of its ex-combatants. As addressed in Chapter One, the war memory theory field has witnessed remarkable recent developments, and oral history has been one of its most powerful tools for accessing personal and collective memories of war, violence and trauma, significantly through the lived narratives of former combatants.<sup>1</sup>

In the Portuguese case, analysing the colonial war through an oral history standpoint enables the memory of the conflict to be approached in a two-fold manner: as evidence about the past and as evidence about historical memory. This oral history not only recovers hidden histories within a national history, it also illuminates the nature and development of historical memory and meanings, and can prompt new, challenging ways in which the colonial conflict may be remembered and perceived.

The hidden histories accessed here are the experiences of the average serviceman. These remain largely undocumented by Portuguese historiography, which traditionally favours a military, hierarchical, and factual approach to the conflict, displaying a significant under-representation of the working-class soldier perspective, and of those who became disabled, and of lower rank non-commissioned officers, for instance. These ex-combatants are the people behind history books' generalisations and statistics, whose lives (and very often bodies) were deeply touched by the experience of war. Rarely told in a historical research context, the recorded personal memories of these veterans enable

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Rogers, K. 'Trauma Redeemed: The Narrative Construction of Social Violence', in McMahan, E. & Rogers, K. (eds.) *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*, Hove, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (1994), pp. 31-46.

more innovative and comprehensive understandings on the conflict which are unattainable otherwise.

These veteran accounts illustrate the shifts and complexities in the remembrance of the colonial war, and demonstrate the divisiveness of a topic that never became a truly dominant cultural memory. This event faced decades of official amnesia, pervasive silence and difficult remembering, and much potential public memorial activity occurred in the ‘private sphere’. Since the problematic legacy of the country’s dictatorial and colonial past mean that so much is deemed to be desirably forgotten, the ‘knowledge of the war’ became ‘mainly a private knowledge shared by the mobilised men and their families’ – ‘the people who can tell what happened then.’ The testimony of participants became a ‘privileged location’ to capture the significance of the colonial war, and an ideal starting point of any broad-reaching reflection about its consequences.<sup>2</sup> These aspects highlight the importance of studying the event from the lived war veteran perspective, which, in addition to not being readily considered in Portugal from the historiographical angle, frequently appears in public remembrance only fragmentarily.

Notwithstanding its potential in such a context, oral history has only been developed marginally in Portugal, being often perceived as an auxiliary fact-acquiring methodology, and not from the standpoint – central to the international evolution of the discipline – of critical, interpretive tool.<sup>3</sup> Departing from this notion of oral history, I consider that, in the Portuguese case, beyond collecting more factual information on the war, this methodology can be employed as a way of challenging and interpreting both the previous, long-lasting silence, and the ‘safer’ and more composed prevailing narratives of public memory, paving the way for a deep reflective exercise on the socio-historical meaning of this armed conflict. While this approach offers another national example of how war remembrance develops in a society previously involved in a war, at a national level it emphasises the specificity of the Portuguese case regarding its colonial war and the social position of its ex-combatants.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> As argued by M. Ribeiro in *o.c.* (2007), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> An illustrative example of this perception can be found in an academic study on colonialism and war published in Portugal in 2006 and which employed oral history. Explaining the ‘limitations’ of oral history, its author emphasises the importance of obtaining ‘confirmation of the described facts’, highlighting the ‘informative richness’ of the interviews done. See ‘Presentation’ of Mateus, D. *Memórias do Colonialismo e da Guerra*, Porto, Edições ASA, (2006), pp. 5-8.

<sup>4</sup> See Bibliography for works by authors like Dawson, Evans, Lorenz, Lunn, Roper, Sivan, Thomson and Winter who, amongst others, focused on specific examples of war remembrance.

In Portugal, complex remembrance surrounding the colonial war places the oral historian in an advantageous position to study individual and social traumas<sup>5</sup>. An oral history of the war, by focusing on its lived memory and enabling dialogue, may acquire some beneficial, cathartic properties, both for individuals and their society. In fact, studying traumatic events such as the Portuguese colonial conflict through the collection and interpretation of personal testimonies becomes an important step towards rediscovering history with wider awareness, meaningful remembrance and expanded understanding.<sup>6</sup>

By challenging the frequent indifference of Portuguese historiography to ex-combatant testimonial sources, this study also makes a political intervention in war remembrance. As argued by Paul Thompson, all history has a social purpose and, thus, a political one.<sup>7</sup> By choosing to approach the colonial war via veteran oral testimonies, I found myself, in an implicit complicity, acting as a mediator for a marginalized group's history. Since oral history involves the memories of living people, it became evident that my research connected with underlying issues that only apparently are part of the past.

Through oral history, I explore the ex-combatants' war memory, self-identity and historical position in Portuguese society, and use their personal narratives as dynamic historical sources. Aiming at creating new arenas for this thirteen-year-long armed conflict – one of the longest and perhaps most neglected war of the twentieth century – to be perceived and analysed, this approach is also my contribution towards overcoming individual and national silence and shame about the topic.

### **Methodological reflections**

My research project, initiated in 2005, recruited a sample of seventy ex-combatants. This sample comprises veterans of different age and class groups, location, educational backgrounds, military rank, three different fighting fronts (Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau), areas of fighting and periods of conflict.<sup>8</sup> Special care was taken in gathering a diverse group of respondents with a diverse range of war experiences. The

<sup>5</sup> As argued by Lorenz, F. in 'The unending war...' in *o.c.* (2004), pp. 95-112.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Herman, J. *Trauma and Recovery. The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*, Basic Books, New York (1992), p. 2. For a discussion on the limitations of healing, see Introduction to Rogers, K. et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 17; see also Dawson, G. 'Trauma, Memory, Politics...' in *idem* (2004), pp. 180-204.

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, P. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (2000)

<sup>8</sup> For a Biographical Information Table covering those who were interviewed, see Appendices, pp. 272-273.

majority of the participating individuals heard of this project via the publication in late 2005 of a call for testimonies in the three main Portuguese daily newspapers.<sup>9</sup> Further respondents were included through contacts established with war veteran associations, and also by word of mouth.

Twenty-five participants submitted written accounts on their war experience, in many cases supported by photographs, newspaper cuttings, relevant documents, letters, maps, magazines, books, poetry and even music and sound recordings. From the initial sample of seventy, thirty-six ex-combatants were selected to be interviewed. The selection criteria arose mainly from the biographical relevance to the project of the written testimonies previously provided and, in the cases where a written account had not been submitted, the decision was made based on telephonic, postal or personal contacts. Between December 2005 and February 2008, I conducted thirty-six oral history interviews across continental Portugal, mainly in the interviewees' homes. Most interviews lasted, on average, two hours, and followed a simple but encompassing interview guideline that focused not only on the war experience, but also on the period before and after the conflict, providing ample contextualisation of each individual's life story.<sup>10</sup>

The narratives gathered for this project are employed with an awareness that, in my oral history practice, I am not simply looking to ascertain facts regarding what happened in the colonial war. Like Evans, my interest is not so much in 'how it was, but [in] how the interviewees remember it as having been', transforming their oral testimonies into 'a unique historical source providing powerful insights into [individual] feelings, attitudes and motivations.'<sup>11</sup> I do not claim to offer ultimate representativeness of Portuguese colonial war veteran experience, but it is nonetheless evident that, by reflecting a wide experiential range (biographical, social, chronological, geographical, and so forth), my sample constitutes a rich composite portrait of the diversity of war memories, providing a glimpse of what it meant for individual participants to experience and remember events which became collective history.<sup>12</sup>

Conducting oral history on the Portuguese colonial war proved to be particularly challenging for the researcher. For having participated in this divisive conflict, former

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<sup>9</sup> See *Público*, *Jornal de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã* on the 30th October 2005.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendices, pp. 272-273.

<sup>11</sup> Evans, M. *o.c.* (1997), pp. 231-232.

<sup>12</sup> See Edwards, P. *o.c.* (2005), p. 1; on the focus on meanings, see Portelli, A. 'What makes...', in *o.c.* (2006), p. 36.

combatants felt ambivalently judged and continually unsupported.<sup>13</sup> Although the colonial war is not discerned as a traumatic or embarrassing life event by every ex-combatant, for a large number of veterans it remains a sensitive issue, and one that is not always socially desirable to talk openly about.<sup>14</sup> In contemporary Portugal, this topic is met with reticence by many ex-combatants, mainly due to its traumatic aspects and political implications, and some are not willing to give their testimony about their participation in the conflict. Public silence, therefore, in some instances has been sustained by the ex-combatants' psychological reluctance to talk, determining that certain memories remain private and unassimilated. For the veterans, the delicate choice between talking or remaining silent reveals the split existing in Portugal between a desire to forget about a traumatic past and a need to link personal and historical memory.<sup>15</sup>

Whilst interviewing the war veterans, I noticed some reserve and cautiousness in the way my questions were answered. The interviewees also articulated frustration, anger and resentment at the lack of veteran public recognition, poor social support and understanding, unfulfilled material claims and even personal issues. I also frequently encountered scenarios of family breakdown, violence, depression, unemployment, drug-addiction, alcoholism, a suspected high incidence of PTSD, and other dramatic situations where disability, illness and frustration deeply impact the lives of veterans and their families.<sup>16</sup>

Of course, these aspects affect the nature and contents of the testimonies collected. Throughout the interviewing process, it was obvious that many of these ex-combatants are still trying to come to terms with their past.<sup>17</sup> For some, remembering certain past events proved to be overwhelmingly painful (perhaps because they feel traumatised, ashamed or fear retaliation for past deeds), and they apparently preferred to omit or embellish aspects of their war experience.<sup>18</sup> More broadly, I was aware that the

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<sup>13</sup> A situation similar to the 'intolerable burden of shame and guilt' carried by the war veteran generation involved in the Algerian conflict, as remarked by Evans in 'Rehabilitating ...' in Evans, M. & Lunn, K. (eds.) *o.c.* (1997), p. 83.

<sup>14</sup> This suggests Dawson's concept of 'traumatised community' frequently emerging from war. Amongst other factors, it implies a 'persistence in the present of a harmful social past with disturbing legacies that remain difficult to grasp or acknowledge', sometimes involving that it is forgotten, rendered invisible or unspeakable by a process of cultural (as well as individual) amnesia'; see Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), p.62.

<sup>15</sup> Ashplant et al, *o.c.* (2000), p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> PTSD is more prevalent in the cases where physical injury occurred. See *Australian Guidelines for the Treatment of Adults with Acute Stress Disorder and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Practitioner Guide*, Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, February 2007, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> On the challenges of veteran retrospective remembering, see Hutching, M. 'After Action: Oral History and War', Ritchie, D. (ed.), *o.c.* (2011), pp. 240-241.

<sup>18</sup> See Thomson, A. *o.c.* (1994), p. 8. Some stories are never told because the veteran has never been asked about them, or because the events in question are too traumatic; see Ritchie, D. (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), p. 240; on memory

interviewees' degrees of openness, articulation or reflective skills and circumstantial choice of focus do not necessarily correlate with the depth and variety of their experience. In some instances it was evident that the individual narratives articulated during the interview did not necessarily coincide with a wider memorial range of personal experience. Obviously, irrespective of approach or narrative ease, the ex-combatants cannot express every aspect of their significant experiences on one occasion.<sup>19</sup> These points emphasise awareness of how oral history, although open to endless stories and narrative possibilities, is shaped by the stories actually told by respondents.

These veteran narratives were affected by the shifting memory-making process of 'composure', as argued by Thomson, in which veterans create a 'past ... [they] can live with', conferring sense and meaning to their war experiences.<sup>20</sup> This articulation of individual experience is necessarily interwoven with available public cultural discourses – such as other ex-combatants' memories, books, television, war veterans' political campaigns, and similar.<sup>21</sup> Such contexts of remembering reveal how the time of telling retrospectively mirrors later events and socio-cultural developments in relation to the original experience. In some interviews, a 'safer script' linking to the circulating public war narrative was clearly adopted. This narrative-shaping process also encompasses the ex-combatant's identity at different stages of his life course, in this case reflecting the interviewee's entire personal path spanning three to four decades after participation in the war.<sup>22</sup>

For many of my interviewees, their war participation is perceived as the most important, life-shaping period of their lives.<sup>23</sup> Their age – approaching retirement or already retired – also constitutes a life phase where interest in their youth is renewed. Having agreed to be interviewed, most were eager to talk about their experiences, and in some cases the interview appeared to be helpful in the organisation of memories.<sup>24</sup>

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distortions emerging from PTSD, see Pillemer, D. 'Can the psychology of memory enrich historical analyses of trauma?' in *History and Memory*, 16, 2 (2004), p. 142.

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Roper, M. 'Re-remembering...', in *o.c.* (2000), pp. 181-205. Roper argues for the advantages of comparison by showing how remembering war is an evolving psychological process that could be studied in more depth if oral history is not just done as a 'single-phase' moment in the life course of interviewees.

<sup>20</sup> In Thomson, A. *o.c.* (1994), pp. 8-9; see also Roper, M. *o.c.* (2000), pp. 181-205.

<sup>21</sup> Every narrative being socio-culturally situated, as emphasised by Wertsch, J. in *o.c.* (2002), p. 18; see also Thomson, A. *o.c.* (1994), p. 7-12; Hunt, N. *Memory, War and Trauma*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (2011), p. 145, p. 159, p. 195.

<sup>22</sup> See Evans, M. *o.c.* (1997), pp. 3-23; and Thomson, A. *o.c.* (1994), pp. 9-10.

<sup>23</sup> Echoing Hunt's findings in *o.c.* (2011), p. 148.

<sup>24</sup> As Hunt and Robbins assert, when the veteran talks about the war experience he may have the possibility of dealing with his memories. Hunt, N. & Robbins, I. 'Telling Stories of the War: Ageing Veterans Coping with their Memories through Narrative', in *Oral History*, 26, 2 (1998), pp. 57-63.

Interviewing people whose life was deeply changed by the past event being researched requires sensitivity and consideration for the human being who has agreed to share a story so often painful. My practice revealed how an oral historian should be not just an attentive listener, but also a perceptive person able to deal sensitively with individual accounts which frequently are shocking and traumatic, some emerging quite unexpectedly, often accompanied by nervousness, anger, crying, chain-smoking or laughter, for example.<sup>25</sup> Further challenges emerged when narratives articulated clashed with my personal views and value system (e.g. racist comments, defence of fascism, justification of violence, patronising and sexist remarks, and so forth). I worked hard to maintain the professional, non-judgemental attitude required by this type of research.

In the course of the interviews varying degrees of difficult remembering associated with traumatic war experiences came to the surface, in some instances from ex-combatants diagnosed with PTSD or who are suspected sufferers. Methodologically, this reality faces the researcher with an inevitable reflection on interviewing individuals suffering from trauma or expressing traumatic elements in their testimonies.<sup>26</sup> As Mark Klemptner put it, by hearing these stories and ‘being a witness to them’, I necessarily became part of the traumatic remembrance process.<sup>27</sup> In this process, although not therapeutically-aimed, in some cases the oral history interview apparently represented a beneficial route to the integration of complex personal memories associated with traumatic experiences.<sup>28</sup> As this is not the place to engage in lengthier considerations on the therapeutic value of the oral history interview, I will simply stress how it has been established elsewhere that, despite its challenges, interviewing traumatised respondents (or on painful, traumatic topics) can also be beneficial. No interview brings miraculous healing or sure closure, as noted by Dawson and Field, rather containing in itself the potential to elicit remembering which can become ‘reparative’ and ‘regenerative; and, hopefully, some self-composure and agency that comes with creating a space for trauma to be articulated and recognised, and thus reclaimed from silence and neglect.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> About the coping mechanism of laughter, see Klemptner, M. ‘Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma’, in Perks, R. & Thomson, A. (eds.) *o.c.* (2006), pp. 202-203.

<sup>26</sup> In this regard, and following specialised advice, I endeavoured to build a trusting relationship, develop a willingness to listen and the capacity to tolerate the details of traumatic experiences, maintaining a positive regard for the individual throughout. See Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, *o.c.* (2007), p. 143.

<sup>27</sup> Klemptner, M. ‘Navigating Life Review...’ in *o.c.* (2006), p.208.

<sup>28</sup> See Klemptner, M. *Idem*, p. 208.

<sup>29</sup> Note Dawson’s concept of ‘reparative remembering’, *o.c.* (2007), p. 187, p. 195; Field proposes the constructive potential of oral history (see Field’s articles cited earlier); see also Thompson, P. *o.c.* (1988), p. 159.



Nevertheless, the difficult expression of trauma in a significant number of veteran narratives placed urgent demands on the interviewer to cope with such circumstances in the most effective, pragmatic and ethical manner.<sup>30</sup> Such demands require further consideration and reflection. Traumatic aspects may potentially emerge during any oral history interview. However, this is particularly true in the cases where the interviewees are clearly traumatised, and generally true about doing interviews on a topic that is normally laden with traumatic elements: war. I agree with Klemptner that an interview dealing with trauma is ‘no ordinary interview’, and this implies further responsibilities.<sup>31</sup> In the course of this research, and in a context where unexpected stories, silences and emotional non-containment frequently acquire a sharper significance, it became clear that oral history interviewing with war veterans poses significant challenges and entails specific demands – the ‘inherent risks’ ‘historians need to be aware of.’<sup>32</sup> These claims take into account the insights of some of my interviewees who expressed their difficulties in coping with the impact of our interview and its aftermath.<sup>33</sup>

Despite following at all times the recommended best practices for interviewers (to provide safety, support, empathy, non-intrusive concern, sensitive questioning and attentive listening), I often felt that I could have been able to offer more effective help to interviewees who narrated painful or traumatic events if wider training and discussions around these issues were generally offered to oral historians.<sup>34</sup> Although

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<sup>30</sup> As stressed by Alison Parr, the ethical and social implications of doing oral history with traumatised war veterans need to be considered. See Parr, A, ‘Breaking the silence: traumatized war veterans and oral history’, in *Oral History*, 35, 1 (2007), p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> Although ‘trauma’ covers a huge range of psychological states, from mild discomfort through to acute psychological stress, I am employing Dawson’s broad concept which defines it as the deep-rooted psychological effects of a violent or otherwise shocking event still manifesting in an individual who has not come to terms with that experience, expressions of which often emerge in oral history interviews, regardless of topic. See Dawson, G. ‘Trauma, memory, politics: the Irish Troubles’ in *o.c.* (2004), p. 184.

<sup>32</sup> See ‘Introduction’ to Rogers, K. et al (eds.), *o. c.* (2004), p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> The most significant examples being Sá, Interviewee 36 (ex-commando officer in Angola 1974-1975), who reported the need to get drunk as a coping mechanism; Correia, Interviewee 29 (ex-soldier in Guinea, 1969-1970), who emphasised the certainty of post-interview sleep disturbances, and the dramatic case of Moreira, Interviewee 17 (ex-soldier in Mozambique, 1970-73) who, after the interview, resumed his habit of excessive alcohol intake and, one evening, already intoxicated, rang me threatening to commit suicide. Similarly, the interview with Sousa, Interviewee 19 (ex-bazooka handler in Angola, 1967-1969) prompted fierce domestic discord.

<sup>34</sup> See Clark, M. ‘Case Study: Field Notes on Catastrophe: Reflections on the September 11, 2001, Oral History Memory and Narrative Project’ in D. Ritchie (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), p. 262; Field, S. ‘Interviewing in a culture of violence: moving memories from Windermere to the Cape Flats’, in Rogers, K. et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 65, p. 68; Klemptner, M. ‘Navigating Life Review...’ in *o.c.*, (2006), pp. 198-210; Roper, M. ‘Analysing the analysed: transference and counter-transference in the oral history encounter’, in *Oral History*, 31, 2 (2003), pp. 20-32; Field acknowledges the necessity of ‘appropriate training’ to deal with ‘distressing stories’ without specifying further, in ‘Beyond “healing”: trauma, oral history and regeneration’, in *Oral History*, 34 (2006), p. 37; apart from such articles – most notably by Field and Klemptner, who offer sound advice but no prescriptions – it proved difficult to find specific literature on training oral historians for trauma interviewing. Jessica Wiederhorn, in ‘“Above all, we need the witness”: The Oral History of Holocaust Survivors’, in D. Ritchie (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), pp. 248-249, mentioned without further elaboration the ‘interviewer training sessions’ required by that project. I also came across the workshops on training ‘for

much has been written about similar concerns, my findings suggest that any oral history investigation dealing with war, equally traumatic topics or with traumatised individuals could be greatly advanced by further research into the incorporation of multidisciplinary contributions, especially from the field of psychology and related disciplines.<sup>35</sup> Such interdisciplinary tools would complement and improve oral history practice, ideally via providing efficient and pragmatic training solutions to oral history interviewers dealing with trauma. The usability of such contributions for oral history would necessarily have to extend beyond statements of a desirable multidisciplinary, natural compatibility with such disciplines, or theoretical discussions about the nature of oral history practice in relation to historical trauma.

While it has been acknowledged that in the past researchers would avoid traumatic memories for reasons of perceived lack of clarity and the unwillingness to cause ‘further pain’ to respondents, the rising interest on war and trauma studies in recent years exposed the hesitations of oral history regarding these matters. As these fields develop and oral history as a discipline and methodology matures, its proximity to the psychological/therapeutic domain becomes harder to dismiss simply through the often-repeated assertion that ‘oral history is not therapy.’<sup>36</sup> Undoubtedly, the oral historian’s ‘role and responsibilities differ from those of psychologists and therapists’, but any oral historian with extensive experience interviewing on painful topics will frequently be left wondering where the boundaries between history and psychology truly reside.<sup>37</sup> Klempner argues that ‘as oral historians we are not psychotherapists, yet we hear narratives as miasmic as any that might surface in a therapist’s office. Our interview subjects may never visit a psychiatrist, yet they will talk to us, and, in some cases,

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interviewing vulnerable and traumatized families/communities’ organised by the Columbia University Oral History Research Office in 2008 and subsequent years. See [http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/ccoh/education/summer\\_institute.html](http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/ccoh/education/summer_institute.html).

<sup>35</sup> The importance of interdisciplinarity is often stressed; see, for instance, ‘Introduction’ to Rogers, K. et al (eds.), *o.c.* (2004), p. 13, p. 17; Hunt, N., *o.c.* (2011), p. 201; Pillemer, D. ‘Can the psychology of memory...’, in *o.c.* (2004), pp. 140-55.

<sup>36</sup> See ‘Introduction’ to Rogers, K. et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), pp. 8-9; Hutching, M. in *o.c.* (2011), p. 240; Field, S. ‘Interviewing in a culture of violence...’, in Rogers, K. et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 65; Field, S. ‘Disappointed remains: trauma, testimony and reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa’, in Ritchie, D. (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), pp. 141-158; this uneasiness can also be sensed in the closing chapter of A. Thomson’s *Moving Stories. An intimate history of four women across two countries*, Manchester, Manchester University Press (2011), pp. 322-323.

<sup>37</sup> See ‘Introduction’ to Rogers, K. et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 17; ‘Introduction’ to R. Samuel & P. Thompson (eds.) *o.c.* (1990), p. 7; Roper, M. ‘Analysing the analysed...’, in *o.c.* (2003), p. 22; Rickard, W., ‘Oral History – ‘More dangerous than therapy’: Interviewee’s reflections on recording traumatic or taboo issues’, in *Oral History*, 26, 2 (1998), pp. 34-48; Field states that ‘oral history resembles psychotherapy’, in ‘Beyond “healing”...’, in *o.c.* (2006), p. 37.

disclose things they have never shared with another human being.’<sup>38</sup> In effect, despite clear distinctive features (training, aim, focus, duration, outcome), from the interviewees’ perspective, what is the real difference between being interviewed by an oral historian or a psychologist or trauma researcher?<sup>39</sup> From my own experience, I sense that the individual narrative, its attending concerns and the consequences of its articulation are uncomfortably similar for the respondent. The critical difference is that the oral historian normally exits that relationship after one interview, and, as a rule, is not equipped to effectively guarantee the respondent’s emotional safety during the interview and in its aftermath.<sup>40</sup>

Although most agree that oral history frequently unravels trauma, the majority of discussions on the impact of the interview occur from the standpoint of researchers who, by default, have access to further strategies of coping and support, with very little being said about what happens to respondents after interviews. Merely declaring incapability or unsuitable training to assist interviewees psychologically beyond providing them with contacts for therapists becomes problematic if not somewhat exploitative – an uncomfortable position for a discipline and practice which proudly claims its democratic, inclusive roots and putting the wellbeing of participants at the forefront.<sup>41</sup> Once the interview is in motion, oral historians are the ones responsible for recognising trauma and possessing adequate preparation to provide well-founded safety for interviewees.<sup>42</sup> In addition, closer interdisciplinary cooperation would also be advantageous for interviewers themselves in coping with the ‘practical hazards of

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<sup>38</sup> See Klempner, M. ‘Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma’, in *The Oral History Review*, 27, 2 (2000), pp. 70-71; also, Field stresses that due to social stigma many interviewees will never visit a therapist, in ‘Beyond “healing”’, *o.c.* (2006), p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> Roper stresses that, unlike psychoanalysis, the bringing of distress in an oral history interview is not at the genesis of the encounter, it emerges in the process. See Roper, M., ‘Analysing the analysed...’, in *o.c.* (2003), p. 30; and Rickard, W., *o.c.* (1998), p. 42.

<sup>40</sup> See previously cited articles by Field and Roper, particularly Field’s ‘Interviewing in a culture of violence...’, in Rogers, K. et al (eds.) *idem*, p. 65 and Roper’s ‘Analysing the analysed...’, in *o.c.* (2003), p. 22; The examples of acknowledged dangers are abundant; Roper highlights how emotional states can be re-activated, sometimes involuntarily, during the interview, in *o.c.* (2003), pp. 21-22; Klempner warns against the dangers of re-externalising a traumatic event during the interview, in *o.c.* (2000), p. 72; Rickard suggests an incapability of interviewers to accurately assess the emotional robustness of interviewees, meaning that ‘moving trauma outside the contained, professional spheres of therapy in an oral history context can feel dangerous’ and have unsettling effects, in *o.c.* (1998), p. 42, p. 36. Hutching argues that ‘an oral history interview is not a therapy session, and unlike a counsellor, you will not be available afterwards to console a distraught person’. See ‘After Action...’ in *o.c.* (2011), p. 240; see also BenEzer, G. ‘Trauma signals in life stories’ in Rogers, K. et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 40.

<sup>41</sup> In 1988, Thompson suggested oral historians should deal with the ‘price of the telling’ of traumatic memories via recommending a ‘professional therapist’. As oral history refined its approach, this solution became increasingly unsatisfying; see Thompson, P. *Voice of the Past*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford (1988), pp. 157-159; see also Rickard, W., in *o.c.* (1998), p. 35-36.

<sup>42</sup> Dawson compares demarcation in interviewing with the similar cultural response of ‘State-organised forgetting’, in ‘Trauma, Memory, Politics...’, *o.c.* (2004), p. 188.

listening' to trauma.<sup>43</sup> During the interview, oral historians are also exposing themselves to pain and psychological damage, and the emotional weight of studying a war or traumatic topic should never be understated.<sup>44</sup>

Clearly, the challenges contained in investigating trauma-laden topics and a recognised need for specific interviewer preparation are issues to pursue through future research and discussion foci around the theory and practice of oral history – applicable to other social science fields which work with sensitive life history material. Although at this point I am unable to offer more than a brief reflection, I argue that this is a direction worth pursuing. Carrying the 'reflexive turn' legacy, valuing meanings and psychological truths, professional oral history, specialised and alert to new developments, would gain from embracing practical contributions from psychology and related therapeutic disciplines – aiming at preventing, as much as possible, unwanted damage in both interview participants, during and after the interview, and increasing the chances that any emerging benefits are sustainable post-interview. In this sense, and as highlighted by Field, the oral historian would be closer to fulfil the role of a true 'facilitator' of 'improved living' for individuals and society, an aim that should never be too alien to any responsible way of doing history.<sup>45</sup>

Leaving wider reflections aside and again focusing on my research experience, despite the limitations identified, above all I prioritised – employing the tools at my disposal – the well-being, integrity and psychological comfort of both interviewee and interviewer. Adopting Ann Parr's stance that a professional oral history practice implies the 'obligation' to strive for the 'safety' of interviewees, especially in the cases where traumatic experiences are expressed, I was attentive to any difficulties emerging during the interview and afterwards for both participants.<sup>46</sup> Whenever necessary, psychological support was recommended to interviewees; and, as a researcher, I benefited from discussing challenging interviewing moments with supervisors, colleagues and those who are close to me. The experience of interviewing ex-combatants revealed to me how empathic the relationship between interviewer and interviewee may become – for

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<sup>43</sup> See Feldman, S. & Laub, D. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York and London, Routledge (1992), p. xvi.

<sup>44</sup> See 'Introduction' to K. Rogers et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 17; BenEzer, G., *o.c.*, p. 40; Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), pp. 45-47; Feldman, S. & Laub, D. *o.c.* (1992), p. 72.; Herman, J. *Trauma and Recovery. The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*. New York, Basic Books (1992), p. 140; Pillemer, D., *o.c.* (2004) pp. 144-147; Roper, M. *o.c.* (2003), p. 21; Klempner maintains that interviewers dealing with such topics require a greater degree of sensitivity and sturdiness, in *o.c.* (2000), p. 82.

<sup>45</sup> Field, S. *o.c.* (2006), p. 41.

<sup>46</sup> Parr, A. *o.c.* (2007), p. 62.

instance, through my recurrent nightmares of warfare and violent episodes narrated to me by interviewees.<sup>47</sup> As stressed by Joanne O' Brien, in these cases 'their grief becomes your grief, their story is yours to tell, and that can be a terrible burden.'<sup>48</sup>

The burdens of the interview relationship become more prominent in interviewing disabled ex-combatants.<sup>49</sup> In this respect, my oral history project was a starting point for uncovering a reality that even to me, a researcher in history reasonably informed about the culture and society in question, was practically unknown: namely, the number of disabled colonial war veterans in Portugal and their current situation, the extent of the suffering experienced by them and their families, and the countless repercussions of an event that took place decades ago.<sup>50</sup> These individuals revealed to me the way their lives become interwoven, sometimes painfully, with historical events. I realised how war is ever present – as a constant, indelible memory visible in the body of a disabled ex-combatant – forcing him, by its life-changing impact, to permanently face his past experience. In the Portuguese case, these disabled men are not 'rightful heroes', they are uneasy reminders of Portugal's colonial past.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the availability of a considerable literature on war, trauma and disability, interviewing a war disabled veteran remains a most challenging experience. Beyond the difficult war topic in itself, the researcher must also consider the often delicate physical and/or psychological condition of some interviewees, and the sight of severe mutilations and various war scars that some disabled veterans are keen on showing (and having photographed), as if to secure their identity and produce proof of their story. It is vital for the researcher interviewing disabled veterans to be self-aware and reflective, and to anticipate potential difficulties and reactions associated with listening to violent narratives of war, death and physical dismemberment.

Disabled veterans often used humour to express uncomfortable experiences related to disability or other traumatic realities. Some spoke movingly about difficulties in terms of affection, relationships and sexuality – as was the case of veterans who were

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<sup>47</sup> See concept of 'secondary witnessing' in Pillemer, D. 'Can the psychology of memory...' in *o.c.* (2004), pp. 145.

<sup>48</sup> Highlighted by Dawson in *o.c.* (2007), p.125; O' Brien interviewed relatives of victims of 'Bloody Sunday' (Derry, Northern Ireland, 1972).

<sup>49</sup> More than one third of my 36 interviewees returned home mutilated or with some kind of physical or (acknowledged) psychological ailment provoked by the war.

<sup>50</sup> Referring to the American context, Karen Hirsch has stressed the historical absence of people with disabilities and their often powerless position in society. See Hirsch, K. 'Culture and disability. The role of oral history', in Perks, R. & Thomson, A. (eds.) *The Oral History Reader*, London, Routledge (1998), p. 214.

<sup>51</sup> Unlike with the First World War disabled British soldiers, the nation did not feel there was a debt to repay; see Bourke, J. *Dismembering the Male. Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, London, Reaktion Books (1996), p. 16, p. 41.

abandoned by their fiancées when they were mutilated, or had trouble finding a marriage partner for that reason. Moreover, during the course of the interviews, problems of identity and social reintegration emerged: being disabled meant for many an incapability to work, or perform an earlier social role. When conscripted, most of these men were young and fit, and with disability came a struggle to shape a new life through a difficult and slow readjustment. I listened to many stories of material deprivation, poor health assistance and lack of social support that still exist to this day, and tend to get worse due to the veteran's ageing process. Many live concerned with their disability, fighting for the right to receive a pension or further support.<sup>52</sup>

Yet most of the disabled veterans interviewed for this project were reasonably adjusted, to varying degrees. Although many Portuguese disabled ex-combatants appear to avoid that past and prefer not to be interviewed, the majority of my disabled respondents were keen to tell me their story – irrespectively of whether this articulation was beneficial, distressing, unsatisfactory or satisfying – and in that they reflect the sample as a whole.

Most of my interviewees were not familiar with the oral history approach to historical research. Some apologised that they had nothing 'important' to say and expressed surprise about being given the opportunity to be interviewed. The underdevelopment of the life history approach in contemporary history research in Portugal meant that I have even been spoken to in insulting terms by prospective interviewees, who classified oral history as 'useless talk' and urged me to do 'real history' through reading 'good' books and listening to the viewpoints of the 'right' people. Such incidents confirmed a common perception in Portugal that the voice of the average war participant is undeserving of academic interest, and that hierarchy and traditional politico-military historiography should be privileged.

Many of my respondents were surprised by the fact that I am a female researcher studying a war topic, an arena mainly addressed by men. On several occasions I was asked if I have particular family reasons for studying this subject – which is not the case. Some ex-combatants who wrote to me without awareness of my full name assumed that I was a man, and when answering telephone calls on several occasions I was requested to pass the call to my (male) 'boss'. These examples illustrate how a

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<sup>52</sup> For an assessment of the impact of disability, see Garton, S. *The Cost of War. Australians Return*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press (1996).

great number of my respondents were initially puzzled about why a female then in her mid- to late twenties could express interest in researching the Portuguese colonial war, one of the most challenging subjects in the country's contemporary history, through talking to veterans.

However, I believe that being female often worked in my favour. Interviewee comments made throughout my oral history practice suggest that my male respondents felt emotionally comfortable and generally more at ease addressing topics they would not normally share with a male interviewer. Also, the age group to which I belong placed me as representative of a younger generation to whom the veterans passed on their experience.<sup>53</sup> In addition, because I was an outsider – I am not a war veteran – I was perceived as someone more objective and dispassionate about the war. A sense of neutrality and safety was also added by the fact that I was doing academic research for a foreign University, namely the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. This combination of factors is not common as far as interviewing Portuguese war veterans is concerned, and I believe this study benefited from it. For some, this resulted in an admission during the interview that they were articulating certain emotionally-charged issues for the first time, expressing narratives they 'don't even tell [...] [to their] children.'<sup>54</sup>

What prompts the veterans to shape their memories by selecting and interpreting meaningful past events through the narrative elicited are the interviewer's questions.<sup>55</sup> My collection of oral testimonies occurred with full awareness of how social attributes (such as age, gender, and status, for instance) and environment always influence the interview relationship and its outcome in multiple ways. Taking such factors into account, during dialogues and interactions with interviewees I endeavoured as much as possible to contribute to a mutual, balanced understanding, particularly in the cases of higher disparity (for example, in adapting to communicate with people with a lower literacy level, poor articulation ability, or of high military, social and academic status).<sup>56</sup>

Through the combination of the 'historical narratives' collected in every interview, the interpretive interconnection of past and present is revealed, showing how, for

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<sup>53</sup> An aspect mentioned by Valerie Yow in *Recording Oral History. A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, New York, Altamira Press (2005, second edition), p. 65.

<sup>54</sup> Interviewee 7, p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> Allison, F. 'Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives over Time', in *The Oral History Review*, 31, 2 (2004), p. 79.

<sup>56</sup> See Ritchie, D. (ed.) 'Introduction: The Evolution of Oral History', in *o.c.* (2011), pp. 3-19; Thomson, A. 'Memory...', in *idem*, pp.77-95.

Portuguese ex-combatants, the bridge between biography and history and social transformation has been built in the last decades.<sup>57</sup> With an underlying awareness of the important issues discussed in this methodological reflection, the following chapters will explore several dimensions of the lived memory of the Portuguese colonial war through the personal narratives of ex-combatants of that conflict.

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<sup>57</sup> See Grele, R. *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, London, Praeger (1991), p. 213; Frisch, M. *Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, Albany, State University of New York Press (1990), p. 188.



## Chapter Four:

### Experiences of War

#### I. The soldiers' war

##### **'I really have to go to war'**<sup>1</sup>

In a country that was not officially at war, for most ex-combatants the path that would lead to Africa started as a civic duty: the fulfilment of military service. For thirteen years after 1961, when the outbreak of the conflict in Angola occurred, Portuguese society became accustomed to seeing youths departing for service overseas, an inevitability looming in their and their families' lives.<sup>2</sup> With the beginning of hostilities also in Portuguese Guinea (1963) and Mozambique (1964), sustaining the three fronts of conflict meant that higher recruitment numbers were necessary. When coming of age, young men from every corner of Portugal, comprising people from all social classes, both urban and rural locations, and different literacy levels had to report to the local authorities to be subjected to a 'military inspection', probably the first time in their lives that the state would claim such a direct hold on their individuality.<sup>3</sup> On that 'strange' and 'different' day, when they had to stand 'naked in front of each other', most young men would be deemed 'apt for military service' by the medical team.<sup>4</sup> On that occasion, some, often unsuccessfully, employed cunning expedients in order to be rejected; others did not report on that date and left the country.<sup>5</sup>

Most young men of military age, however, would then be summoned to join a military unit, where training would be administered, normally lasting three months.<sup>6</sup> Very frequently, these units were distant from the recruits' places of origin. A period of separation from their loved ones would begin, as many, especially those from remote,

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<sup>1</sup> Interviewee 26, p.7 of the transcription. For further information about each interviewee, please refer to the Biographical Information Table provided in the Appendices, pp. 272-273.

<sup>2</sup> Many families did not expect the conflict to last so long, subsequently involving those who were too young to be conscripted in 1961. That was the case of Interviewee 28 (b. 1949), sent to Guinea in 1971. See Interviewee 28, pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Many conscripts were illiterate, mainly those from rural areas. See Interviewee 11, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Interviewee 19 (p. 1); 28 (pp. 5-6).

<sup>5</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Estado-Maior do Exército, CECA *o.c.* (1988), pp. 219-222; pp. 312-335.

impoverished rural areas, had no financial means to visit home during the authorised leaves.<sup>7</sup> This new military life focused on discipline, hierarchy, obedience and patriotic values. Surrounded by hundreds of strangers, and under the army's strict rules, many of these young men suffered 'a brutal shock', finding themselves plagued by 'anguish.'<sup>8</sup> The adaptation process had to begin, simultaneously opening up a platform for exchanging experiences and establishing new friendships.

Following this initial training period, the men would be attributed different army specialities which determined their distribution by military units.<sup>9</sup> Not long after, mobilisation to Africa would happen for the majority, particularly after the late 1960s, when the fighting intensified. In the years after 1961, for young male citizens this was the normal 'course of life': many had gone before them, and it was expected their turn would come – a realisation which did not diminish the impact of mobilisation on their lives.<sup>10</sup>

One of the thousands mobilised was Francisco Fitas (b. 1941), a twenty-one-year-old from a humble background in a village in Southern Portugal who was sent to Angola in 1962. This military driver recalls vividly the moment of being mobilised:

I reckon that – in my entire life I will never forget that moment [...] forty-five years ago, I see myself at roll call – I see the assistant sergeant that asked for the servicemen to form, and stating the numbers of the servicemen who were mobilised – in which he included my number – when he said my number, I felt as if a hole had been dug under me [...] my first thought was not the war, death [...] my thought was the loss of the things that I was leaving behind (brief pause). Socialising with friends – being near my girlfriend – I mean, that which was my daily life – I was going to lose it.<sup>11</sup>

Like Fitas, most regretted the life-changing implications of mobilisation. It meant the certainty of departing for another continent, and the likelihood of engaging in direct combat, leaving many upset, apprehensive and 'very afraid.'<sup>12</sup> For others, it was met

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<sup>7</sup> Interviewees 26 (p.10); 22 (p. 2).

<sup>8</sup> Interviewee 28, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Interviewee 4, p. 2. A great number of interviewees emphasised that this brief training rendered them unprepared for a guerrilla war. It should be noted that often these military specialities were indiscriminately attributed, irrespective of vocational skills or previous professional experience. See, for instance, Interviewees 26 (p. 3) and 28 (p. 7). See Gomes, C., 'Quotidianos da Guerra Colonial' in Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (eds.) *o.c.*, (Vol. 5, 2004), pp.137-138.

<sup>10</sup> Interviewees 36 (p. 3); 30 (p. 3); 18 (p. 2, p. 4); 24 (p. 2); 26 (p. 2); 25 (p. 1). The social impact of this mobilisation can be illustrated by the fact that some Portuguese families had several sons serving in Africa simultaneously. In 1972, Interviewee 26 was in Angola when his brother departed for Guinea (p. 21). Interviewee 29 in 1970 also had a brother overseas (p. 26). See Interviewee 32, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 21); 29 (p. 15); 7 (p. 4); 27 (p. 1).

with a certain relief: since their ‘fate’ was already determined, the sooner that interruption of civilian life was over the better.<sup>13</sup>

Judging from my sample of respondents, a minority felt happy to be mobilised.<sup>14</sup> These ex-combatants mostly justify their feeling of enthusiasm with the naiveté of young age, and their eagerness to see distant lands and pursue new adventures. Ignoring the details of their future stay in Africa, some envisaged some sort of exotic ‘holiday.’<sup>15</sup> For example, Avelino Oliveira (b. 1946), originally from a small mountain village in central Portugal, but recruited in Lisbon in 1968 where he lived and worked from the age of twelve, explains his happiness to be mobilised to Angola, an ‘immense’, ‘fabulous’ territory.<sup>16</sup>

Regardless of their feelings about departing for Africa, understanding how these men perceived the request bequeathed on them by the Portuguese State is fundamental in conjuring a picture of that period. Mostly young and inexperienced – ‘practically children’ – the majority of my interviewees emphasised their political ignorance at the time, interpreting the mobilisation to Africa in conformity with the ideals of selfless devotion to the integrity of the motherland propagated by the Salazarian regime, a duty whose fulfilment likely meant participating in the conflict.<sup>17</sup>

From a seaside town in Northern Portugal, and mobilised at twenty-one, José Carvalho (b. 1946) explains how he believed in the nationalistic ideals which prevailed in his milieu at the time:

We have to refer to the conservatism of ideas [of that period], the love for the motherland, the motherland above everything [...] one thought that really we had all the right to our colonies [...] and maybe we didn’t see that as such an absurdity to go there to defend--- sacrifice oneself [...] for the motherland [...] [it was] a necessary act, a heroic act, an act of citizenship [...] that nowadays certainly is hard to understand, but [...] at the time, I think society was conformed [...] people, in general, thought that was a fair war.<sup>18</sup>

In shaping their perceptions, most of my respondents highlighted the weight of the regime’s values instilled via education and propaganda in discouraging conscripts (and society in general) from any deep political or ideological awareness. This ‘castrating upbringing’, also shaped by the often limited boundaries of their local geographical

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<sup>13</sup> Interviewees 26 (p. 4); 32 (p. 18).

<sup>14</sup> Interviewees 2 (p. 2); 3 (p. 4).

<sup>15</sup> Interviewee 2, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Particularly for those with lower literacy rates, from rural areas or smaller towns. See Interviewees 19 (p. 2); 14 (p. 5); 36 (p. 1); 27 (p. 1).

<sup>18</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 4, pp. 6-7); 24 (p. 1).

territory and the lack of penetration of new ideas, contributed to a widespread environment of accepting social passivity and lack of reflection regarding these young men's departure to Africa.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, those who, at the time, were 'a bit patriotic' were not so unwilling to fulfil their duty. If the motherland was 'in danger', this sacrifice, although personally undesirable due to risk and inconvenience, was perceived as 'necessary'.<sup>20</sup>

However, not every conscript could consider themselves politically aligned with the regime. For instance, Júlio Lobo (b. 1949), born and bred in the Lisbon metropolitan area, stresses his 'anger' and 'discontentment' at being mobilised in 1970 to Mozambique:

I was an anti-fascist – I did not agree with the politics [of that time] – but that [...] in my case, in terms of having to serve in the army, was not going to matter much.<sup>21</sup>

In his social sphere, Lobo believes the majority was against participating in the conflict, reflecting the experience of those who gravitated towards the Portuguese capital, an area of the country renowned for containing politically enlightened youths, with equivalent enclaves in other main cities, particularly Porto, in the North, the second main city, and its surrounding suburbs. By comparison with more interior, rural locations, these urban, heavily-industrialised environments concentrated higher rates of literacy and higher levels of social-political consciousness.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, as Lobo put it, his was a pointless disagreement, since, like everyone who had been called up, he had the obligation to 'defend the motherland'.

Escaping that obligation through absenteeism or desertion – not always for political reasons but, very often, to avoid a situation of personal danger in war – was a possibility entertained by many of those already conscripted to serve in Africa. The serious consequences, however, of eschewing military service were highly discouraging.<sup>23</sup> Those who opted for that route would become absentees and when, or if, caught, punished with imprisonment and a military commission in Africa.<sup>24</sup> In practice, this option required being abroad indefinitely, estranged from country and family (in some cases, from wives and children), unable to visit or communicate in order to avoid

<sup>19</sup> Interviewee 28, p. 2, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Interviewees 26 (p. 2, p. 5); 3 (p. 7); 24 (p.1), amongst others.

<sup>21</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> Recruits from the Lisbon metropolitan area are depicted as more 'politicised'. See Interviewees 32 (p. 20); 4 (p. 14); 29 (pp. 2-3).

<sup>23</sup> Interviewees 28 (p. 13); 26 (p. 2); 16 (p. 10); 4 (p. 3); 31 (p. 1).

<sup>24</sup> In 1969, after passing his military inspection, Interviewee 16 fled to France. Upon his return in 1970, he was arrested and subsequently mobilised to Guinea (p.1). Interviewee 29 escaped to France to avoid conscription. Returning voluntarily in 1969, he was immediately incorporated and sent to Guinea. See Interviewee 29, pp. 2-3.

detection and arrest, and tainted by the social stigma reserved for ‘cowards.’<sup>25</sup> Considering the inability to predict the 1974 democratic turn, this was a difficult and risky journey – France was a preferred destination – which did not herald a quick return, if any. For some, particularly from affluent families who, albeit not always successfully, could employ money and influence to that end, corruption could prevent an undesirable military commission.<sup>26</sup> For most, the lack of alternatives made them feel they had to trust their ‘good fortune’ whilst serving the Armed Forces in Africa.<sup>27</sup>

As a rule, those mobilised to the former overseas provinces were given ten days’ leave to prepare for the journey, often a period during which obedience to army rules was relaxed.<sup>28</sup> Between 1961-1974, as the eve of the departure day approached for thousands of mobilised youths, across the country wild and ‘surreal’ farewell parties were a frequent means of attempting to evade fear and anxiety – because they knew ‘many of us are not going to return’ from war.<sup>29</sup>

### **‘Will I come back?’<sup>30</sup>**

For these conscripts, mostly in their early 20s, the notion of having to spend ‘an eternity’ of twenty-four months in a faraway location in Africa where a guerrilla war was being fought was terrifying.<sup>31</sup> For the majority, this was the first long-term separation from family, friends, and their daily routines – enough to leave one ‘totally destroyed’, as José Carvalho put it.<sup>32</sup> Between 1961 and 1974, several generations of mobilised Portuguese young men experienced an interruption of every aspect of their personal and professional lives. For two years, ‘life would stop’, and every plan had to be postponed – getting married, starting a family, career progression or finding a permanent job, finishing a University degree, and so on – ‘until being discharged.’<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Interviewees 20 (p. 8); 36 (p. 3).

<sup>26</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 23); 32 (p. 19); 29 (p. 26). For instance, Interviewee 21 unsuccessfully tried different expedients to avoid mobilisation to Africa.

<sup>27</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 18); 12 (pp. 3-4); 31 (p. 23); 17 (p. 9); 31 (p. 23).

<sup>28</sup> Interviewee 26 (p. 6) explains this pre-departure leave was the moment, for many, to decide about running away or not. See also Interviewees 29 (p. 3); 26 (p. 8); 19 (p. 15).

<sup>29</sup> Interviewees 26 (pp. 8-9); 28 (p. 4).

<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, Interviewees 13 (p. 1); 10 (p. 1); 27 (p. 2); 29 (p. 4).

<sup>31</sup> That was the average duration of the commission in Africa. Those stationed in Guinea would sometimes serve for around eighteen months since that territory was considered more dangerous. See Interviewees 25 (p. 3) and 26 (p. 17).

<sup>32</sup> Interviewee 21, p. 5. Interviewee 4 left his wife and son when mobilised in 1970, at twenty-one years of age. Interviewee 5, mobilised at thirty-three in 1972, left behind his wife and an established job.

<sup>33</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 19.

For others, in hindsight, serving in the army was a ‘necessary evil’ which transformed them into autonomous adults, particularly in the cases where it meant independence from challenging parental home circumstances.<sup>34</sup> In fact, the lack of familiar environments, the absence of family support, the need to quickly establish connections with strangers and adapt to the lack of comfort of military life were for many the first steps into adulthood.<sup>35</sup>

This ‘hurdle’ in a young man’s life that had to be crossed before the future unfolded entailed many uncertainties.<sup>36</sup> My respondents repeatedly highlighted the most prevalent question crossing their minds before departure: ‘will I come back?’<sup>37</sup> Their departure was haunted by serious concerns: the possibility of having to face life-threatening situations, the fear of dying or of coming back disabled, thus ‘spoiling’ the rest of their lives.<sup>38</sup> Some tried to be optimistic, although apprehensive; others ‘lost all hope’ and ‘expected the worse.’<sup>39</sup>

The actual moment of departure is vividly recalled by most interviewees, being described by several as ‘one of the saddest days of my life’, a ‘dramatic farewell’ that left an indelible memory.<sup>40</sup> Manuel Loureiro (b. 1950), a military administrative leaving Lisbon for Angola in 1972 aboard the ship *Vera Cruz*, details the general feeling on that occasion:

there were those who, I suppose, tried to conceal all their anguish through – screaming and chanting and all that [...] those who appeared to be able to remain more calm – I believe they were not because nobody could remain untroubled in such a situation – and there were those who cried – copiously – as if really everything was over and – and they were many [...] grown men [doing that] – there were those who hid themselves, tried to isolate themselves – to cry on their own [...] in order not to be – seen or heard crying – and there were those who tried to comfort each other [...] we tried to talk with each other, cheering each other up [...] [so that we] could forget – gradually – that moment, that is always a difficult moment – very – painful and the move – slowly – of the boat [...] leaving the harbour, us seeing the people staying behind, all that waving of handkerchiefs, the crying of that crowd – has to – move anybody, that has to really – leave some – some mark.<sup>41</sup>

Not surprisingly, for those who departed by boat, the sight and sound of a harbour crowded with thousands of people waving, crying and screaming could become an

<sup>34</sup> Interviewees 30 (pp. 1-2) and 33 (p. 8).

<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Interviewees 21 (p. 6) and 36 (p. 4).

<sup>36</sup> Interviewee 25, pp. 4-5.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, Interviewees 13 (p. 1); 10 (p. 1); 27 (p. 2); 29 (p. 4).

<sup>38</sup> Interviewees 10 (p. 4); 21 (p. 7); 13 (p. 1); 16 (pp. 1-2). The widespread fear amongst all servicemen of returning home disabled is addressed in J. Bourke’s study of World War One veterans. See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1996), p. 73.

<sup>39</sup> Interviewees 29 (p. 4) and 13 (p. 5).

<sup>40</sup> Interviewee 16, pp. 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Interviewee 25, p. 5.

overwhelming, ‘terrifying’ experience, a ‘Dantesque [...] vision of Hell’, which made some recollect how at the time they wished not ‘to feel this moment.’<sup>42</sup>

For many, this journey was also a fundamental life step as the first time they travelled on a boat, aeroplane, or even left mainland Portugal.<sup>43</sup> From that point onwards these men knew that, directly or not, they were going to participate in a war in Africa, and there was no way back – their departure was ‘actually for real.’<sup>44</sup> Whether ignorant or aware of the conflict’s political context, upset or not, they were ‘forced to go.’<sup>45</sup> Recalling the prevalent feeling, a contained ‘revolt’ is pointed out by some, whilst others like Lobo choose to emphasise the defiance then shown to the regime: in 1970, Lobo’s group, feeling no punishment could be worse than going to Mozambique, showed their displeasure by singing banned ‘anti-fascist’ Zeca Afonso songs on board.<sup>46</sup> These long boat journeys, often in terrible conditions, on overcrowded former cargo ships adapted to the transport of thousands of troops, are remembered by several interviewees as a very negative experience. This was particularly true for those who were basic soldiers, travelling in the hold of the ship without any amenities, in circumstances that, in the words of José Carvalho, reminded one of the ‘darkest stories of slave ships.’<sup>47</sup> For the average conscript soldier or lower rank officer, the path leading to Africa would occur under similar circumstances – a journey which, for the vast majority, marked ‘effectively [...] a departure to the unknown.’<sup>48</sup>

### **‘What am I doing here?’<sup>49</sup>**

Along with apprehension and fear, a great number of the war veterans that took part in this research have also emphasised their initial sense of curiosity and sometimes youthful enthusiasm about going to Africa. The circumstances of mobilisation and of the journey appeared not to be enough to deprive all of an adventurous fascination: they

<sup>42</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 5); 21 (pp. 7-8); 13 (p. 5); 26 (pp. 8-9); 28 (pp. 13-14).

<sup>43</sup> Interviewees 24 (p. 1); 26 (p. 8); 31 (p. 4). It must be stressed that, in the early 1970s, a great number of conscripts would travel by aeroplane, and not by boat, as was the norm until then. For instance, Interviewee 21 travelled to Guinea by boat in 1968 (pp. 7-8), whilst Interviewee 2 went to the same territory by plane in 1972. The significance of overseas travel is highlighted by Hunt, in *o.c.* (2011), pp. 144-145.

<sup>44</sup> Interviewees 15 (p.33); 26 (p. 9).

<sup>45</sup> Interviewees 2 (p. 10); 16 (p. 19).

<sup>46</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 19); 5 (p. 4); 32 (p. 6). Zeca or José Afonso (1929-1987) was a Portuguese composer and singer whose songs, considered interventionist, were adopted by oppositionists of the Salazarian regime during the period under consideration.

<sup>47</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 8); 26 (p. 9); 32 (p. 1); 28 (p. 14).

<sup>48</sup> Interviewee 25, p. 5; see Gomes, C., ‘Quotidianos da Guerra Colonial’ in *o.c.*, (Vol. 5, 2004), pp.136-173; Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) ‘2 X 365 dias. Viver dois anos’ in *o.c.* (2001), pp. 478-480.

<sup>49</sup> See Interviewees 1 (p. 7); 15 (p. 9); 28 (p. 15); 32 (p. 3); 4 (p. 4); 17 (p. 7), just to quote some examples.

were going to actually see Africa and all the ‘things that I knew from films, or descriptions, virgin forests, lions, monkeys, people – different people, blacks, everything.’<sup>50</sup> To these conscripts, everything was a novelty, and they were uncertain as to what they were going to encounter in the African provinces.<sup>51</sup> The actual moment of arrival embodied the generalised feeling of expectation, as detailed by Manuel Loureiro:

as the boat was approaching that African land, with a colour that was strange, a bit reddish – all the eyes searched the horizon to see [...] what it would be like [...] the talks between us were few, it was mainly everybody with that air of – apprehension, trying to look at everything [...] that was approaching us [...] there was [...] that enormous apprehension, what would become of us when we left the boat [...] evidently, it was already hovering over us – the trauma of war.<sup>52</sup>

In effect, these young men could not escape the fact they were in Africa as part of the Portuguese Armed Forces in order to participate in a counterinsurgency war. At the distance of several decades, most ex-combatants interviewed retain a typical perception of their younger selves arriving in another continent: too young (many under twenty), naïve, politically ignorant, unaware of what that conflict was about, and what any war comprises.<sup>53</sup> For many, such lack of understanding about the events involving them led to the reasoning that their presence in the African territories occurred merely because they were compulsorily mobilised and transported there by the army, so as to fulfil their national duty to serve the motherland.<sup>54</sup> An abrupt life contrast awaited these young – ‘not fully formed’ yet – men, transplanted from their civilian lives in many cases straight into an operational war zone.

Irrespective of the variety of circumstances, for newcomers acclimatisation had to be swift. They had to adapt to a different continent and landscape, with new people and a particular type of climate, culture and lifestyle.<sup>55</sup> Many had never seen a person of colour in their life, or at least so many at one time.<sup>56</sup> In certain instances, people of colour were perceived with fear and suspicion, as some newly-arrived wondered who could be a potential ‘terrorist.’<sup>57</sup> As one respondent remarked, facing all this difference simultaneously ‘was like entering another planet!’<sup>58</sup> This initial strangeness was not necessarily experienced as negative by my interviewees. Some enjoyed the novelty of

<sup>50</sup> Interviewees 33 (p. 10); 2 (p. 2); 15 (pp. 1-2); 28 (p. 13); 3 (p. 4); 30 (pp. 1-2).

<sup>51</sup> Interviewees 32 (p. 2); 10 (p. 5); 2 (p. 2).

<sup>52</sup> Interviewee 25, p. 6.

<sup>53</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 19); 22 (p. 5, p. 27).

<sup>54</sup> Interviewee 22 (pp. 16-17); 36 (p. 3).

<sup>55</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 3); 22 (p. 10); 2 (p. 3); 28 (p. 14).

<sup>56</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 4, for instance.

<sup>57</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 9); 16 (p. 19).

<sup>58</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 4.



the environment, particularly in the cases where it meant contact with some of the sizeable cities of those provinces (such as Luanda, in Angola; Bissau, in Guinea; and Lourenço Marques, in Mozambique), a factor of attraction for those arriving from the small and essentially rural ‘metropolis.’<sup>59</sup>

Nonetheless, most of my interviewees (of differing geographical, class and educational backgrounds) highlight how early positive impressions about their deployment to Africa tended to quickly fade – within hours, days or weeks after disembarking in Guinea, Angola or Mozambique. These veterans reinforce their feelings of incredulity, shock and bewilderment at the reality encountered in those territories then considered an integral part of Portugal.<sup>60</sup> For some, it started with the ‘terrible’ sight of crowds of hungry, ragged black people around the harbour where the military personnel were arriving, begging for something to eat and displaying signs of a life of ‘near slavery.’<sup>61</sup> Employing a conceptual framework obviously refined during their life in democracy, the ex-combatants recount how most African natives, especially those without any schooling, from rural areas, lived in extreme poverty, their living conditions and infrastructures being below basic. Most were not able to speak Portuguese, and evidence of social injustice, exploitation, racism and discrimination was ample. The ex-combatants emphasise how disturbing all this was, notably the presence of hungry African children surrounding army barracks asking for leftovers.<sup>62</sup>

These then young servicemen assert how ‘completely stunned’ they felt. The image propagated by the regime of a cohesive Portugal from ‘Minho to Timor’, championing equal citizenship rights, irrespective of colour or birthplace, and proud of its humane five-century empire in Africa and elsewhere, ‘crumbles completely.’<sup>63</sup> In many, such realisation provoked a sense of disillusionment and of having been ‘cheated’ and used as ‘guinea-pigs’ of the regime.<sup>64</sup> By serving in the Portuguese Army, these men were fighting for the continuation of that empire, but, judging from my sample, contact with the former African provinces meant that a great number of them failed to see the

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<sup>59</sup> Interviewees 15 (pp. 8-9); 18 (p. 4). In the old regime’s terminology, ‘metropolis’ designated Portugal, in the sense of ‘mother country’ in relation to the overseas provinces. The same occurred in France regarding Algeria. See Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), p. 371.

<sup>60</sup> Interviewees 28 (pp. 14-17); 33 (pp. 15-16); 13 (p. 5, p. 10); 17 (pp. 6-7); 2 (pp. 2-4); 3 (pp. 27-28); 5 (p. 9); 10 (p. 5); 11 (pp. 6-7); 12 (pp. 4-5-); 14 (pp. 15-16); 21 (pp. 8-9, pp. 13-14); 27 (p. 2).

<sup>61</sup> In this instance, the description relates to the harbour of Lourenço Marques (currently Maputo), in Mozambique, but other accounts about other provinces echo this feeling. Interviewee 13, p. 5, p.10.

<sup>62</sup> Interviewees 33 (p. 15, p. 28), 28 (p. 16); 11 (p. 2); 32 (p. 21); 12 (p. 18).

<sup>63</sup> Interviewees 28 (p. 14, p. 16); 11 (p. 15, p. 2); 33 (p. 15); 12 (p. 15).

<sup>64</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 22.

fairness of such a cause. For most, arrival in Africa appears to have worked as a revelation of the dimension and characteristics of the Portuguese colonial system.<sup>65</sup>

Such was the case of Manuel Figueiredo, a military driver and transmissions operational stationed in Guinea between 1964 and 1966, who pinpointed how he departed with the firm belief of going to defend his motherland and, shortly after arriving, questioned himself, like many others: ‘what am I doing here ?’<sup>66</sup> This awareness-shift highlighted for some the pointlessness of their presence in Africa, particularly in the cases where the men considered themselves initially politically ignorant. Many despaired at finding themselves on the terrain as poorly trained and badly equipped ‘cannon-fodder.’<sup>67</sup> As for the apparent minority who, like Júlio Lobo, stated they were against the conflict pre-departure, they perceive their compulsory participation as confirming long-standing oppositionist viewpoints.<sup>68</sup>

For those who did experience an awareness shift, the newly-found perspective was often accompanied by some political consequences. A narrative repeated by many ex-combatants, is that, paradoxically, despite belonging to the Portuguese military, many began thinking those territories ‘should be independent’ and that the independence fighters were justified in thinking the Portuguese troops were ‘in the wrong.’<sup>69</sup> A great number of soldiers felt like ‘intruders’ in the land of the local populations and their ancestors: they had been ‘forced’ to defend something alien to them, since ‘unlike what they said, I was not defending my motherland [...] my motherland was 10,000 Kms away [...] [in Mainland Portugal].’<sup>70</sup> For some, ‘we were the terrorists – we were taking over what was theirs.’<sup>71</sup>

Frequently, an expanded awareness of the role of the military in safeguarding the businesses established in the former provinces would ensue. It was a common perception that the army was expected to protect these businesses – which often benefitted from formal or informal state protection – from the disruptions and losses of war. In this ‘war of interests’, many felt ‘we were not protecting the motherland, we were protecting the coffee barons (long laughter).’<sup>72</sup> For example, José Carvalho, who

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<sup>65</sup> Interviewees 27 (p. 18); 33 (p. 28).

<sup>66</sup> Interviewees 15 (pp. 8 – 9); 3 (p. 4, p.7); 1 (p. 7); 28 (p. 15); 32 (p. 3); 4 (p. 4); 17 (p. 7), just to quote some examples.

<sup>67</sup> Interviewees 11 (p. 3); 22 (p. 7, p. 19); 4 (p. 6); 19 (3).

<sup>68</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Interviewees 33 (p. 29, p. 31); 12 (p. 6); 14 (p. 2), for instance.

<sup>70</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 22); 11 (p. 14, p. 16); 28 (p. 15); 30 (p. 22).

<sup>71</sup> Interviewee 4, pp. 1-2, p. 6.

<sup>72</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 4, p. 6); 11 (p. 2); 17 (p. 4), amongst others.

had departed to Guinea in 1968 espousing patriotic feelings, recounts how the servicemen had the perception that the military ‘were using us’, the soldiers, who were sacrificing themselves for those ‘shady’ economic interests.<sup>73</sup>

Therefore, alongside incredulity and disappointment, often anger would be present. As Manuel Loureiro asserts, ‘all were there under a certain kind of deceit’, more or less aware that they were maintaining the underlying workings of a war that was structured to be ‘endless’, serving the interests of established businessmen exploiting indigenous resources and certain career officers benefiting from the continuation of the conflict.<sup>74</sup> Their loss of ‘naïveté’ placed many in a difficult moral and psychological position. Like countless others, Francisco Fitas admits about the time served in Africa that he ‘never felt at ease with my conscience while I was there – at least from the time I began to see.’<sup>75</sup> Demotivated – like Vietnam combatants mentioned by Joanna Bourke – many felt they did not ‘have any reason to fight’, they just wanted to ‘save my skin.’<sup>76</sup>

Indeed, whatever their beliefs or political perceptions, these men all knew they had to serve their military commission in Africa for two years in a guerrilla war context and that they wished to survive that experience.

### **‘One day at a time’<sup>77</sup>**

Whether in Angola, Guinea or Mozambique, in a town or in the middle of the ‘jungle’, as a military clerk, a transmissions officer or an artillery soldier, for the duration of their military commission these young men had to adapt to their new African daily life. Passing those ‘long’ two years within the context of an armed conflict proved to be a demanding personal and collective exercise that required diverse strategies.<sup>78</sup> Beyond the military routine of patrols, the transport of supplies and troops, the assigned operations, and the actual episodes of fighting, one has to consider the simultaneous presence of thousands of military personnel in a limited and contained environment, often – or at intervals – with ample spare time.<sup>79</sup> Under these

<sup>73</sup> Interviewees 21 (pp. 13-14); 3 (p. 4 and 7).

<sup>74</sup> Interviewees 25 (pp. 12-15, p. 20); 4 (p. 12); 17 (p. 5).

<sup>75</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 15.

<sup>76</sup> Interviewee 15, pp. 8 – 9. See Bourke, J. *An Intimate History of Killing. Face-to-face killing in twentieth-century warfare*, London, Granta Books (1999), p. 157, pp. 166-170. On the importance of motivations for fighting, see *idem*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>77</sup> Interviewee 13, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup> Interviewee 5, p. 12.

<sup>79</sup> Interviewee 18, p. 5. Hutchings stresses the importance of studying wartime daily life spent out of military action; see ‘After action: oral history and war’, in Ritchie, D. (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), pp. 233-243.

circumstances, leisure activities acquired a deep importance as an ‘outlet’ to the reality of war and their compulsory permanence in Africa.<sup>80</sup> These leisure times greatly shaped the servicemen’s experience in the sense that they potentially meant an opportunity for reflecting on their position and exploring the many physical and psychological possibilities of their environment.

Because the majority of my interviewees declared that they ‘also spent good times there’, the pleasurable nature of these moments makes them more easily remembered and more talked about than other episodes more directly connected with the fighting.<sup>81</sup> Virtually all my respondents, at some point of their narratives, provided vivid accounts of their leisure and socialising activities. Since they were ‘forced’ to be there, many were determined, like Júlio Lobo, ‘to spend as good a time as we can.’<sup>82</sup> Because they were ‘young lads’, they ‘also had fun’<sup>83</sup>; they enjoyed meals together outside the military routine; they talked, partied and told jokes, played card games to kill time, organised ‘fado houses’ and regional singing performances.<sup>84</sup> Professional singers or itinerant cinema would sometimes be available in certain areas.<sup>85</sup> They would ‘celebrate anything’ as an excuse for partying and often ‘drinking until dropping.’<sup>86</sup> Heavy drinking was an aspect mentioned many times by my interviewees as a collective means of ‘enduring’ the harsher aspects of war.<sup>87</sup> Taking into account the testimonials of my respondents, abundant alcohol consumption was not discouraged by the Portuguese Army since alcoholic beverages were readily available in the three fronts, making ‘drunken sprees’ commonplace.<sup>88</sup> Further distractions and activities had to be found to prevent servicemen from ‘going mad.’<sup>89</sup> Some men devoted themselves to reading, writing or to photography.<sup>90</sup> Many were keen on sports, particularly football. Hunting also happened, as well, when accessible, as visits to the beach and rivers.<sup>91</sup> More bizarre

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<sup>80</sup> Interviewee 11, p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> Interviewees 13 (p. 3); 22 (p. 9); 24 (p. 4), amongst others.

<sup>82</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 22.

<sup>83</sup> Interviewees 27 (p. 4); 24 (p. 4);

<sup>84</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 16); 11 (p. 4); 27 (p. 4); 24 (p. 7); 13 (p. 3). ‘Fado’ is a typically Portuguese musical genre (inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011).

<sup>85</sup> Interviewees 3 (p. 19); 12 (p. 8).

<sup>86</sup> Interviewee 34, p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 2, p. 15, p. 24); 28 (p. 22).

<sup>88</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 12); 28 (p. 21); 14 (p. 13); 31 (p. 16); 11 (p. 7).

<sup>89</sup> Interviewees 34 (p. 10); 14 (p. 13).

<sup>90</sup> This conflict was amply documented by photographs taken by conscripts, similarly to what Evans comments about the Algerian conflict, in *o.c.* (2012), p. 171.

<sup>91</sup> Interviewees 9 (p. 13); 11 (p. 4); 22 (p. 9); 28 (p. 21); 3 (p. 12, p. 19); 32 (p. 9); 13 (p. 3).

occupations, like crocodile races and the training of war donkeys, enlivened leisure time.<sup>92</sup>

Military commissions in Africa provided deeper and permanent contact between comrades from every region of Portugal, 'each with their experience and different lifestyle.'<sup>93</sup> Less educated, rural Northerners tended to manifest their 'patriotism' more vehemently, as opposed to those originating from the highly-industrialised, politically-conscious Lisbon metropolitan area and Southern Portugal in general.<sup>94</sup> Bearing in mind the scale, intensity and duration of these social mixings of young men from different geographical provenances (geography often assuming wider implications in terms of class, educational level and cultural background), it could be argued that this was the greatest endogenous social experiment Portugal has witnessed during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>95</sup> In a process similar to the one described by Hunt regarding his study of Second World War veterans, this experience allowed young Portuguese servicemen with very distinct upbringings to socialise with each other, broadening their socio-cultural horizons via sharing ideas, worldviews, cultural products, and reflections on their position.<sup>96</sup> For instance, listening to 'subversive' radio stations (although it meant facing potential punishment from PIDE, the political police who extended its stern and constant surveillance to the African provinces) became a widespread practice.<sup>97</sup> In addition, this was an arena for spreading the message of the so-called interventionist music, with a more or less concealed political tone, notably the ballads of Zeca Afonso. Heard by an infantry lower rank officer for the first time in Guinea, in 1965-66, this music left such an impression that he asserts that 'I left that place a different man.'<sup>98</sup> These exchanges were pivotal in influencing perceptions about the conflict they were taking part in.<sup>99</sup> In a typical example, José Andrade (b. 1948), from Porto, stationed in Angola from 1970 to 1972, recalls that he acquired a new political awareness through the 'Southerners' who made him realise that they were being used to 'sustain an unsustainable', 'unfair' war.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Interviewees 9 (p. 13); 31 (p. 15).

<sup>93</sup> Interviewee 11, pp. 10-11.

<sup>94</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 2); 32 (pp. 21-22).

<sup>95</sup> Interviewees 10 (p. 2); 11 (p. 10); 14 (p. 2).

<sup>96</sup> Interviewee 11, p. 4. See Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), p. 84, pp. 144-145; also Hutching, M. 'After action...', in *o.c.* (2011), p. 240.

<sup>97</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 6, p. 9); 12 (p. 5); 17 (p. 18); 18 (p. 18).

<sup>98</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 6; Interviewee 21, p. 15. See Ribeiro, J. 'As canções da guerra', in *o. c.* (1999), pp. 235-268.

<sup>99</sup> Interviewee 11, p.4.

<sup>100</sup> Interviewee 4, pp. 14-15; Interviewee 21, p. 15.

The inevitable distance from home required considerable psychological discipline. Being homesick became a trademark of the men's stay in Africa. The two-year separation from their homes and families was frequently described to me as a 'profound shock', the most painful side of the military commission.<sup>101</sup> Regular post from home was, therefore, of paramount importance for the troops' morale.<sup>102</sup> Aware of this, the Portuguese State created a system of free postal services to and from the military men stationed in the African provinces.<sup>103</sup> Aided by the lack of organised entertainment, writing to loved ones became a favourite activity, despite censorship – which meant most letters sent (and received) were read beforehand by PIDE. For this reason, many servicemen resorted to saying 'everything was alright', and that 'it was a wonderful life' over there.<sup>104</sup> The distribution of received post was a sensitive moment feared by the military hierarchies. Unpleasant news from home (such as, for instance, learning about wives' or girlfriends' unfaithfulness or the illness or death of a parent) could have terrible consequences on the men's spirit and fighting ability.<sup>105</sup>

The intensity of daily military life, uninterrupted and necessarily lived twenty-four hours per day by all, cemented a solid proximity between the men. This congenial sociability is acknowledged and cherished by the vast majority of my respondents. As perceived by Miguel Almeida (b. 1942), an Infantry officer in Angola between 1965-67:

I believe that if we leave aside isolation, the circumstances of being in that environment – there are actually more good moments than bad ones – the arguments that one has because one is playing cards or something like that – on that day, so and so is on duty or – look, I'm going to check the sentries – he goes, leaves and comes back – and the other had cheated with his cards – that's it, it's all these things--- the soldiers that finish their meal whilst there's still daylight, but suddenly night falls, and then they all go to the casern, some go cheat at card games, others are playing bingo – others are praying the rosary – I mean, in the middle of that mingling – the twenty seven ? – I've got it! – and then the other guy just next to them hail mary full of grace [...] [in such a context] [...] the bad [situations] are nearly an exception.<sup>106</sup>

Many ex-combatants explain how important this closeness was for them, since they could feel contentment 'even in the middle of the jungle [...] by eating iron ration and

<sup>101</sup> Interviewees 34 (p. 10); 26 (pp. 6-7); 13 (p. 5).

<sup>102</sup> Interviewee 34, p. 6, p. 9. Connecting with home was a major psychological resource for combatants, as approached by Roper in his study on British First World War servicemen. See Roper, M. *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War*, New York, Manchester University Press (2009).

<sup>103</sup> The *aerogramas* (aerograms or air letters) were sent free of charge via a system maintained by the SPM Serviço Postal Militar (Military Postal Service) since 1961. See Barreiros, E. & L. *História do Serviço Postal Militar/History of Portuguese Military Postal Service. Aerogramas Militares – Catálogo. Guerra Colonial 1961-1974*. Authors' Edition, Lisbon (2004).

<sup>104</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 17); 9 (p. 8); 18 (p. 6); 4 (p. 16); 10 (p. 18); 16 (p. 10); 28 (p. 18). The servicemen's deep interest in daily lives at home is addressed by Bourke in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 21-22.

<sup>105</sup> Interviewees 9 (p. 8); 30 (p. 21).

<sup>106</sup> Interviewee 8, p. 13.

telling jokes.’<sup>107</sup> Being in the army, united by the same circumstances, and enduring the same hardships, they felt ‘they were one [...] all the same’<sup>108</sup> – a feeling which, echoing a universal combatant experience, generates a deeply-rooted sense of comradeship and the establishment of close male friendships.<sup>109</sup> Within their company, they did not make friends, they became ‘brothers’, developing ties sometimes stronger than family ties. In war, they are ready to ‘spill their blood’ for a comrade because there ‘each one defends the other’s back.’<sup>110</sup>

Their unity manifests also in the emphasis virtually all my respondents place on the physical and material hardships endured by the Portuguese military. A fundamental part of their narratives focuses on the unanimous conviction that the poorly-trained and equipped, ill-educated, unsophisticated average Portuguese soldier stoically resisted multiple adversities during the fulfilment of his African military service, revealing a capacity ‘perhaps like no soldier in the world’ to endure anything and sustain a war in such circumstances.<sup>111</sup> The ex-combatants provide vivid accounts of their privations and suffering whilst in Africa. They reveal how they would go without food, water and sleep for days, experiencing extreme weather conditions and carrying heavy loads, living with total lack of safety, no proper medical assistance and with unsuitable military equipment, weapons and support infrastructures.<sup>112</sup> It was ‘terrifying’ and ‘very difficult’ to survive in these conditions, particularly when missions lasted for some days and they were under attack, or when, as was often the case in the areas where fighting was fiercer and bombardments constant, their life was confined to the boundaries of military quarters.<sup>113</sup> Manuel Figueiredo recalls that ‘the only time I cried in Guinea – I cried of hunger.’<sup>114</sup> Some had to ‘eat roots, cassava and things that appeared in the middle of the jungle’; for water, they ‘had to suck leaves at dawn.’<sup>115</sup> Facing the brutal temperature changes of the African climate, with daytime temperatures over 40° C and freezing cold at night, many desperately felt the inadequacies of their equipment.<sup>116</sup> The

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<sup>107</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 19.

<sup>108</sup> Interviewees 32 (p. 30); 27 (p. 4); 36 (p. 5). As Garton put it about the Australian Anzac experience, a rewarding comradeship erased ‘artificial’ barriers. See Garton, S. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 24-25.

<sup>109</sup> As highlighted by Bourke, bonded together by the gender-specific military experience, servicemen re-created the domestic sphere within an all-male environment. See ‘Bonding’, in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 124-170, pp. 26-29; see also Hynes, S. *The soldiers’ tale: bearing witness to modern war*, London, Pimlico (1998), pp. 8-11; Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), p. 171.

<sup>110</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 31); 16 (p. 13); 22 (pp. 7-8, p. 9); 31 (pp. 10-11).

<sup>111</sup> Interviewees 33 (p. 19, p. 21); 9 (pp. 4-5); 5 (p. 3).

<sup>112</sup> Interviewee 9, pp. 4-5.

<sup>113</sup> Interviewee 1, p. 6.

<sup>114</sup> Interviewees 15 (p. 7); 14 (p. 11).

<sup>115</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 9, p. 4, p. 2); 27 (p. 3).

<sup>116</sup> Interviewees 6 (p. 6), 22 (p. 10), 2 (p. 3).

lack of suitable accommodation and sanitary facilities is highlighted frequently. In certain areas, military infrastructures consisted of army tents and ‘aluminium hut[s]’, without water or electricity.<sup>117</sup> One respondent recalls how, in his barracks, he had to ‘drink rain water for months on end.’<sup>118</sup> Officers tended to have slighter better accommodation, but since in many cases all had to live in the same camp, any difference would often be irrelevant.<sup>119</sup> In addition, accounts about the poor quality and insufficient quantity of food provided by the Portuguese Army repeatedly emerged.<sup>120</sup> Entire units would have to live under such conditions for months, some for the duration of their commission in Africa.

Adverse material and psychological conditions combined with insufficient military training often resulted in a relatively high frequency of non-combat deaths, an aspect stressed by many interviewees. These casualties occurred mainly due to carelessness in the form of ‘stupid accidents’ (such as friendly fire and misuse of equipment), but also through suicides and sometimes murders amongst the troops. Reminiscing about lost comrades, many veterans regretted the deaths they believe could have been avoided.<sup>121</sup>

Another important aspect of the servicemen’s war was the long-term relationship with the native populations. Since a guerrilla war always requires a certain level of support from local inhabitants, this was a somewhat dubious relationship. A great number of Portuguese servicemen mistrusted and feared the indigenous Africans because ‘half of them were for our side, and the other half’ were pro-independence.<sup>122</sup> Some respondents remark how they often noticed a disrespectful attitude from the military towards the African natives in a non-fighting context, presenting examples of exploitation, violence and racism.<sup>123</sup> Due to their Salazarian upbringing, even if not consciously hostile or disrespectful, many young men displayed paternalistic, colonial attitudes, conceding, decades later, for instance, that the indigenous peoples ‘were blacks, but were nice people.’<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Interviewees 12 (p. 9); 19 (p. 18); 29 (p. 5); 21 (p. 9); 27 (p. 3).

<sup>118</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 17.

<sup>119</sup> Interviewee 34, p. 9. On conditions of the Portuguese Army barracks in Africa, see ‘Capelas imperfeitas: Quartéis’ in Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) *o.c.* (2001), pp. 414-421.

<sup>120</sup> Interviewees 32 (p. 17); 13 (p. 1); 29 (p. 5); 21 (p. 9); 10 (p. 7).

<sup>121</sup> Interviewees 21 (pp. 19-20); 22 (pp. 15-16, p. 12); 10 (p. 18); 8 (p. 6); 29 (p. 29); 2 (pp. 4-5); 30 (p. 13); 4 (p. 2); 3 (p. 11); 15 (p. 3, p. 7); 28 (p. 16); 32 (pp. 11-12, p. 17); 35 (p. 20); 34 (p. 9).

<sup>122</sup> Interviewee 16, p. 19.

<sup>123</sup> Interviewees 17 (pp. 14-15); 5 (p. 9); 28 (p. 19). A certain animosity towards natives seemed to be associated to lower rank, less educated conscripts.

<sup>124</sup> Interviewee 10, p. 20.



Yet most ex-combatants recall the existence of a fairly positive interaction with the African peoples.<sup>125</sup> This was strengthened by the ‘psychosocial action’ method developed and implemented by the Portuguese Army, which consisted in providing widespread protection and assistance to local populations in order to ‘conquer’ them for the Portuguese colonial side and avoid further armed action.<sup>126</sup> The army promoted a harmonious and fair coexistence which was not always appreciated by the white local population, with food, diverse infrastructures (such as housing, roads, schools, churches and bridges), health care, fair wages and other types of support offered by the army to the black indigenous peoples.<sup>127</sup>

Along with the length of the commission, such initiatives contributed to an interest and fascination of some servicemen for the native African culture and lifestyle and for establishing rewarding and respectful connections with those ‘good people’, including – albeit with some linguistic and cultural difficulties – locally-conscripted native troops.<sup>128</sup> Moments of leisure provided opportunities for such contacts: parties and dances were organised between the stationed troops and the locals; ‘good times’ Avelino Oliveira remembers with fondness. Being so distant from their own families, their comrades and local populations – including the white Portuguese community – provided the ‘healthy’ socialisation they needed.<sup>129</sup>

The long-term permanence of thousands of young men in the former African provinces, frequently stationed in remote areas miles away from any city, for many created a ‘sexual problem’ never addressed by the Portuguese Army.<sup>130</sup> Echoing similar testimonials given by a few other respondents, one of my interviewees explains how where he was stationed (Mozambique, 1970-72) the native populations, voluntarily or not, seemed to provide the answer:

it is obvious that a man – a company [...] of two-hundred men – has to resolve the sexual problem – therefore it is [...] a most natural thing – and the poor black woman would have two or three kids from this guy and the other, and I don’t know how many more – then another company would come – the same thing – or a battalion [...] What they suffered, poor women!<sup>131</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 10, p. 17); 5 (p. 9); 3 (pp. 14-15).

<sup>126</sup> Interviewees 9 (p. 13); 10 (p. 9); 30 (p. 5). See Cann, *o.c.* (2005), pp. 143-168, p. 188.

<sup>127</sup> Interviewees 25 (pp. 11-12); 2 (pp. 5-6); 8 (p. 9); 3 (p. 17); 5 (p. 10); 1 (p. 15). As happened in Algeria. See Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), pp. 368-370. For more on the Portuguese case, see the Bibliography.

<sup>128</sup> Interviewees 28 (p. 21, p. 19); 21 (p. 11); 15 (p. 14); 30 (p. 15); 17 (p. 16). On the Algerian example, see Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), p. 170.

<sup>129</sup> Interviewees 3 (pp. 14-15); 5 (p. 9); 24 (p. 4); 34 (16).

<sup>130</sup> Interviewees 18 (pp. 7-8); 17 (p. 13). See Melo, L. ‘Amor e sexo em tempo de guerra’ in Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), pp. 187-192.

<sup>131</sup> Interviewee 17, pp. 13-14.

In such circumstances, many men fulfilled their sexual ‘needs’ resorting to a ‘commerce’ in which certain sectors of the local female population engaged seemingly mainly due to economic deprivation, but also for mutual affective reasons.<sup>132</sup> The former motive is evident in the fact that often these women preferred to receive clothing, shoes and food as payment for their sexual services. The unavailability of condoms or other types of effective contraception meant that these relationships – often, but not exclusively, paid and transitory – produced mixed-race children of unknown white fathers in abundance.<sup>133</sup> The vast majority of these children were left behind by the servicemen, often discriminated against by their own community due to their difference, in a situation generating propensity to social and racial tensions – a topic rather uneasily addressed by some interviewees.<sup>134</sup> Often unprotected, many of these encounters also produced a concerning spread of venereal diseases amongst the troops with ‘terrible’ consequences, despite army advice and basic medical care provided.<sup>135</sup> Big cities like Luanda, in Angola, had ‘institutionalised’ prostitution neighbourhoods where ‘many left their money’ while off-duty.<sup>136</sup>

However, the interviews reveal that these connections between the Portuguese troops and the native Africans did not occur exclusively on the basis of consensual ‘commerce’ or affective reasons.<sup>137</sup> Despite official rules advocating the establishment of relationships only with the woman’s agreement, there are reported instances of sexual violence and abuse of natives.<sup>138</sup> Nonetheless, my interviewees emphasise that a substantial amount of respect for local women prevailed and was encouraged amongst servicemen.<sup>139</sup> Such sensitive sexuality-related topics were not always addressed openly by the majority of my respondents. This reserve includes also the virtual absence of mentions of homosexuality in the army, known to exist, albeit experienced discreetly.<sup>140</sup> This was due perhaps to a sense of modesty (potentially highlighted in the presence of a younger female interviewer), embarrassment (of having resorted to paid relationships or engaged in what was perceived as illicit homosexual activity, for instance), and guilt

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<sup>132</sup> Interviewees 17 (p. 14); 31 (p. 13).

<sup>133</sup> Interviewees 30 (p. 18); 17 (pp. 13-14).

<sup>134</sup> Interviewee 17, p. 7, pp. 13-14. See ‘Guiné-Bissau. Os filhos que ...’ in *o.c.*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

<sup>135</sup> Interviewee 9 (pp. 14-15). This officer mentions the case of two infected men who, having lost their sexual organs due to venereal disease committed suicide by jumping off the boat that was transporting them back to Portugal. A similar case is recounted by Interviewee 8, p. 6. See Ribeiro, J. ‘As doenças na guerra’ in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 45-64.

<sup>136</sup> See Interviewee 26, pp. 11-12. An aspect addressed by Bourke, in *o.c.* (1996), p. 161.

<sup>137</sup> Behaviours similar to those of Vietnam combatants, as shown by Bourke in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 354-357.

<sup>138</sup> Interviewee 8, pp. 10-11.

<sup>139</sup> Interviewee 29, p. 37.

<sup>140</sup> Interviewee 18, pp. 7-8. See also ‘Guerra Colonial: Sim, havia maior liberdade sexual...’, in *o.c.*, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

(about possible children left behind, and unacknowledged sexual violence, witnessed or perpetrated). Many ex-combatants would not wish to explore the subject, and this confirms the additional challenges associated with researching sexual relations at war, as pinpointed by Bourke.<sup>141</sup>

Reflecting on how their commission developed, many ex-servicemen explain how, towards the end of the two-year period, and drained by the hardships of military life, a feeling of helplessness and despair would often appear, particularly in those who were in remote locations ‘totally isolated from the world.’<sup>142</sup> The latter felt more acutely their inevitable dependency on the military routine they had to submit to daily. Seeing the same male faces for several months, and sorely lacking further socialisation opportunities, some men would go ‘completely crazy’, often resorting to alcohol and aggressive behaviour.<sup>143</sup> José Carvalho elaborates that:

a certain type of madness would get hold of people [...] people would hang around corners, talking nonsense, others singing, or screaming, or fooling around or being silly – we would call them taken by the elements.<sup>144</sup>

Days and weeks would go by without awareness of the passage of time. Strategies to overcome the most disturbing aspects of their war experience included avoiding talking about the deaths of comrades and ‘trying to forget as quickly as possible.’<sup>145</sup> Some admitted that ‘after a certain point’ their indifference and total lack of interest was overwhelming. Tension and worry would increase, though, towards the end of the commission, with rising fears that ‘something could happen’ at the last moment before their return.<sup>146</sup> According to Albino Torres (Guinea, 1970-72):

Every day gone by, it was one day less – we counted the days till a year was completed [...] the first year we would be terrified with fear, up until five months – after that, we stop having fear – we can hardly remember our girlfriends, the market days in our towns, the festive days, nothing [...] from the year onwards, it was the downward part, it was the most dangerous part – the hardest part to endure, due to the climate, illnesses, anxiety – this is the way it was.<sup>147</sup>

With the end approaching, and having been there long enough to know what serving their military duty in Africa was about, then, as Júlio Lobo recalls, they ‘exaggerated a

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<sup>141</sup> Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 24-27.

<sup>142</sup> Interviewee 21, p. 14 and p. 19.

<sup>143</sup> Interviewees 32 (p. 23); 34 (p. 9); 28 (p. 17); 29 (p. 9).

<sup>144</sup> Interviewee 21, p. 21.

<sup>145</sup> Interviewee 12 (pp. 7-8); 13 (p. 9).

<sup>146</sup> Interviewees 29 (pp. 28-29); 15 (p. 2); 32 (p. 23).

<sup>147</sup> Interviewee 16, pp. 9-10.

little bit' in scaring the newcomers, assuring them that 'they were finished' and that 'hey mate, you don't know what you're getting yourself into!'<sup>148</sup>

**'We were really in a war'**<sup>149</sup>

Along with many others, José Andrade, author of these words, soon realised that he was taking part in a real war. Throughout the thirteen years of the colonial conflict, the Armed Forces perfected counterinsurgency tactics which, according to John Cann, were uniquely Portuguese. The resulting overall 'low-tempo' guerrilla war was an adaptation to Portugal's limited resources and low technology.<sup>150</sup> Unlike conventional warfare, the conflict was sustained by small infantry units routinely performing patrols lasting for some days, normally involving combat groups of thirty men.<sup>151</sup> Compulsorily conscripted, these men were not professional soldiers, lacking the motivations and ambitions of the latter.<sup>152</sup> In addition, from 1966 onwards arriving servicemen were clearly decreasing in quality and enthusiasm.<sup>153</sup> In effect, broadly characterised by military experts as of 'low intensity', in relative terms, however, the colonial war placed a 'powerful burden' on the Portuguese population – regarding high conscription, and numbers of casualties and wounded – leading to, as time elapsed, diminishing public support.<sup>154</sup>

Whilst this war shares similarities with other conflicts, particularly those of a colonial nature, the specificity of the Portuguese case resides in its political complexities: an authoritarian regime at the time which persevered in its colonial intransigency; the lack of open political debate about the conflict; prevalence of participant civilians; and the fact that 1974 marked not only the end of an empire but also the end of a regime, placing the war and its ex-combatants at this pivotal crossroads of socio-political transformation in Portugal.<sup>155</sup> Amongst the veterans, this remains an unpopular, contested war. Most feel that they were betrayed by past and current politicians, and regret the unfairness of having been conscripted to fight for what is now

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<sup>148</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 23.

<sup>149</sup> Interviewee 4, p. 24.

<sup>150</sup> Cann, J. *o.c.* (2005), pp. 73-85; pp. 187-188.

<sup>151</sup> *Idem*, p. 79.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 193.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 77.

<sup>154</sup> Cann, J. *o.c.* (2005), p. 188, pp. 191-194.

<sup>155</sup> In the context of the end of empires as a defining feature of international twentieth-century history, as emphasised by Evans, in 'Preface' to *o.c.* (2012), xi. Unlike in France, in Portugal the war was not publicly discussed for its duration due to the authoritarian nature of the regime. See Evans, *idem* (2012), pp. 210-225.

perceived as a lost cause. In this sense, the ex-combatants' war narratives acquire a dissonant, disappointed and often angry tone.<sup>156</sup> From a military standpoint, the colonial war may be defined as a war of low intensity and reduced budget, and yet, on an individual and national level, many would not classify the conflict other than as intense and costly in countless ways.<sup>157</sup> The veterans' interpretations of what they were fighting for at the time are revealing. The majority of my respondents explain that they were merely fighting for personal survival, not for their 'motherland.'<sup>158</sup> Or, to further quote José Andrade:

I was there defending my skin – not my motherland [...] that was a fight for survival, nothing else – it was not about the poor [African] people who were being enslaved – I was too! At the end of the day, all of us were, that war, you see, was unfair for everybody! That was about – saving ourselves, coming back alive was what mattered.<sup>159</sup>

If my sample is representative of the average experience of a Portuguese combatant in Africa during the conflict, despite the patriotic indoctrination of the era the majority of the military were demotivated, purposeless troops trying to survive their military commission, so that they could 'go back home.'<sup>160</sup> For them, this was 'obviously a pointless war', in which they were 'cannon fodder.'<sup>161</sup>

For those engaging in direct combat action, and taking into account that this conflict assumed mainly a defensive stance, personal survival frequently meant that killing the enemy was impossible to avoid. As said by many respondents, 'we have to kill, because if we don't kill, we die, mate.'<sup>162</sup> The fact that a great number admit to have felt at the time that the independence fighters 'were right!' further complicated their moral conundrum.<sup>163</sup> Many were 'unfairly' fulfilling their military duty against their conscience for fear of punishment for refusing to fight.<sup>164</sup> One of my interviewees

<sup>156</sup> Echoing Hynes's considerations about Vietnam veterans in *o.c.*(1998), pp. 177-222.

<sup>157</sup> Cann, *o.c.* (2005), p.188; Pinto, A. 'A Guerra Colonial e o Fim do Império Português' in Bethencourt, F. & Chaudhuri, K. (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), pp. 65-102.

<sup>158</sup> Interviewees 11 (p. 6); 13 (p. 7, p.10); 15 (p. 9); 28 (p. 24, p. 50); 19 (p. 18, p. 20); 30 (p. 22); 27 (p. 6).

<sup>159</sup> Interviewee 4, p. 26. A feeling strikingly similar to that of French conscripts studied by Evans, in *o. c.* (2012), p. 171. See also Bourke, J. *o. c.* (1999), p. 157, pp. 166-170; on the significance of motivations for fighting, see *idem*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>160</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 15); 32 (p. 24); 30 (p. 22). As reflected in a rather pessimistic July 1968 Portuguese memorandum on the troops' morale; see 'O Moral do Exército' in Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) *o.c., Vol. 9 – 1968: Continuar o regime e o império*, Matosinhos, Quidnovi (2009), pp. 55-57; and similarly to Vietnam 'untrained' troops 'trying to survive' a war to which they felt 'no commitment' mentioned by Hynes, S. *o.c.* (1998), p. 192.

<sup>161</sup> Interviewees 13 (p. 7, p. 10); 17 (p. 3); 27 (p. 6); 16 (p. 9); 32 (p. 8, p. 36).

<sup>162</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 15, p. 20, p. 5); 4 (p. 26); 16 (p. 9, p. 16); 12 (p. 6).

<sup>163</sup> Interviewee 16, p. 9.

<sup>164</sup> Interviewees 27 (p. 10); 19 (p. 15); 4 (p. 26). On numerous cases, they felt 'forced to go'. See Interviewees 20 (p. 13, pp. 16-19); 22 (p. 26); 25 (pp. 15-17); 19 (p. 15); 4 (p. 26).

recalls the concerns worrying him and his comrades while fighting in Portuguese Guinea between 1970-72:

[we] despaired, we cried – and it isn't a shame to say, many times, we cried out of anger, we cried out of – of hatred, of those things, because we – I, and – many of our colleagues knew we were there – doing what? killing people?!<sup>165</sup>

'Killing people' was a duty imposed by the regime on these young men, and most respondents emphasise how meaningless and unnecessary they consider that action.<sup>166</sup> Although often uneasily, the topic of violence was addressed in a rather candid manner by most interviewees. Some ex-combatants described the numbing effect of repetitive killings in a war context, which transformed it, beyond self-defence, into a casual 'routine' for some servicemen.<sup>167</sup> As explained by an ex-bazooka handler, killing could become like 'having a sandwich.'<sup>168</sup>

The occurrence of violence perpetrated by the Portuguese troops in Africa, particularly when not inevitable or justifiable by war, remains an uneasy and painful topic for most veterans. The acknowledgment and reflection on this violence constitutes one of the most hidden pages of contemporary Portuguese history. Stressing that moral and ethical judgements are not the purpose of this research, I note that a few respondents remarked how some were not killing just to stay alive: 'there were some who did that with – with pleasure (brief pause)', and as an 'addiction.'<sup>169</sup> Such insights reveal the complex and often conflicting emotions present in servicemen engaged in the lawful killing of other people during warfare, as studied in depth by Bourke.<sup>170</sup>

Detailing how a guerrilla war often creates circumstances for excesses, some confirmed the occurrence of massacres, and the indiscriminate killing of civilians (including women and children).<sup>171</sup> In this respect, José Andrade explains how 'we ended up giving tit for that, [...] doing exactly the same thing [the independence fighters] had done: [killing civilians].'<sup>172</sup> The custom of collecting trophies of enemy

<sup>165</sup> Interviewees 29 (p. 14); 19 (p. 19).

<sup>166</sup> See, for example, Interviewee 31, p. 25. In the Portuguese case, the 'ethical doubts' mentioned by Bourke are emphasised; see 'The Warrior Myth', in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 44-68.

<sup>167</sup> Interviewee 4, p. 19.

<sup>168</sup> Interviewee 19, p. 18; p. 7, p. 9, p. 16.

<sup>169</sup> Interviewees 15 (p. 16, p. 6); 19 (p. 8). See Bourke, J. 'The Pleasures of War', in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 13-43; Hynes, S. *o.c.* (1998), pp. 193-197; Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), p. 170.

<sup>170</sup> Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999).

<sup>171</sup> As in the case of a Subsergeant (Furriel) who was unable to dissuade his men from killing a group of civilians, recounted by Interviewee 33, pp. 25-26, p. 41.

<sup>172</sup> Interviewee 4, p. 19.

body parts, mainly ears, occurred in some instances, as in the example of the soldier who wore ‘a necklace made of ears.’<sup>173</sup>

Often but not exclusively fulfilling superior orders, those who actually implemented violent acts appear to have done so sometimes reluctantly and with ‘a certain revolt’, sometimes automatically, other times consciously and eagerly. In most cases, however, excessive violence ‘was all kept quiet--- secret.’<sup>174</sup> Enveloped by guilt and shame, this is a sensitive subject for participants and, more broadly, for their country. The examples narrated by the interviewees illustrate the difficulty in remembering cruel and violent acts in war. Portraying themselves mostly as ‘ignorant’ victims ‘forced’ by the regime to behave in questionable ways either through obedience or the extremity of the conditions (psychological and otherwise) in which they were placed, I perceived reluctance in many ex-combatants to admit involvement in such violent acts.<sup>175</sup> One emphasised that after being ‘sent to the jungle’, they became ‘bad’, and ‘were like animals.’<sup>176</sup> In the case of a respondent recounting a planned cold-blooded massacre of twenty-two prisoners that took place in Angola between 1967 and 1969, he stresses that, more than participating, we was ‘just witnessing.’ When describing the torture that one of the prisoners was subjected to, his hesitant pronoun usage betrays feelings of guilt: ‘it was actually us (nervous laughter) – us--- I mean, not us! because I have never done anything – not me!’ In sharp dialogue between past experience and current perceptions, this interviewee adds how ‘at the time I was not sorry.’<sup>177</sup>

Those who acknowledge the practice of violence, often justify it with feelings of anger and revenge.<sup>178</sup> In fact, several interviewees asserted that seeing comrades die and being injured was one of the most disturbing war experiences, in many cases provoking deliberate and random destruction and death.<sup>179</sup> A soldier who served in Guinea between 1969-70 explains how seeing their comrades fall ‘gave us some strength to react, and – of revenge – since they killed my colleagues, I want to get revenge too – to

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<sup>173</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 6. The practice of collecting enemy ‘souvenirs’ to prove active combat is common to other conflicts. See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), pp. 37-43; Hynes, S. *o.c.* (1998), pp. 191-192

<sup>174</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 20); 33 (pp. 25-26).

<sup>175</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 6); 4 (p. 19).

<sup>176</sup> Interviewee 19, p. 8, p. 6, p. 19. Prost remarks on the complexities of ex-soldiers claiming to be victims of war, in ‘The Algerian War in French collective memory’ in Sivan, E. & Winter, J. (eds.) *o.c.* (1999), p. 176.

<sup>177</sup> Interviewee 19 (pp. 5-6, p. 8). On the distancing created by pronoun usage in similar situations, see Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 35; Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), p. 147.

<sup>178</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 7); 20 (p. 14); 35 (p. 13).

<sup>179</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 11); 30 (p. 20).

kill them!<sup>180</sup> From that perspective, a retaliatory notion of the enemy – and a racially different one – became clearer, as explained by another interviewee:

So, it was you who wanted to kill the Portuguese man, the white? There you go! Shot in the head, falls on to the ground, that's it, I would leave, and he would stay there [dead].<sup>181</sup>

This spirit of revenge is reported to have existed even amongst newly arrived 'angry' servicemen determined to avenge brothers or other relatives who had been previously killed in Africa.<sup>182</sup> Paradoxically, through their accounts these men are keen to stress how, in this war atmosphere, such instances of revengeful retaliation coexisted with innumerable daily displays of tenderness towards the native population, especially local children. An insightful example is that the same military men who murdered a civilian mother at point-blank adopted her surviving baby and transformed him into their barracks' mascot.<sup>183</sup>

The majority of these ex-combatants' war narratives transport us to the core of the human experience of war. Their memories retain the vividness and psychological intensity which lies in the often thin divide between life and death. This guerrilla war was abundant in moments of 'dramatic' tension, when one 'begins to imagine' that, in the middle of the African jungle at night, as the animal sounds cease, the 'terrorists' are coming for an attack, and the shooting begins, but 'it is just a tree there' after all.<sup>184</sup> Given the uncertainty about an invisible enemy knowledgeable about the terrain, the sudden attacks, ambushes and prevalence of mines, as José Carvalho put it, mean that this 'was a terrible war – a war of anguish', making combatants nervous and drained.<sup>185</sup>

Many of these men particularly recall how the first time they had to face combat action – 'that fraction of a second' when they hesitate to shoot 'feels like a year.'<sup>186</sup> Some experienced their 'baptism of fire' with a fierce attack on the first day out of barracks, leading them to think from the beginning that 'nobody is going to leave here alive.'<sup>187</sup> Others explained how it was no 'joke' seeing 'a military vehicle going up in the air and killing [everybody] immediately.'<sup>188</sup> Many felt unsupported and left to their fate by higher rank officers who normally would command operations from a

<sup>180</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 20. An aspect highlighted by Bourke, J. 'Love and Hate', in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 139-170.

<sup>181</sup> Interviewee 19, p. 9, p. 16, p. 7. See *idem*, p. 204.

<sup>182</sup> Interviewee 19, p. 20.

<sup>183</sup> Interviewees 33 (p. 25); 19 (p. 7). A paradox stressed by Bourke (1999), pp. 146-148.

<sup>184</sup> Interviewee 11, p. 5.

<sup>185</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 16); 28 (p. 24); 17 (p. 2); 20 (p. 17).

<sup>186</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 5.

<sup>187</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 4); 22 (p. 7); 27 (p. 7).

<sup>188</sup> Interviewee 22, p. 8, p. 20.



distance.<sup>189</sup> On some locations, the attacks were constant, almost daily. From the defence holes where José Carvalho had to frequently find cover during his deployment in Guinea they were ‘always expecting to see when a grenade would fall on our back.’<sup>190</sup> Also, some respondents underlined the striking contrast between the hostilities and the setting, in the heart of an African ‘paradise’ of virgin forests and overwhelming flora and fauna, its natural beauty becoming all the more ‘extraordinary’ and ‘wonderful’ in the war context for making them feel sometimes like ‘being in a safari.’<sup>191</sup> Furthermore, these men pinpoint how death could occur in absurd, unexpected ways. They often narrate their close escape, but also the awe-inspiring clash between death and life, as recalled by a respondent who assisted a local woman giving birth during a military operation:

I’m there armed – with a G3, all that gear – and, all of a sudden, I hear – a baby’s cry (pause) – So, I mean, my shock is – I being there ready to kill – and helping someone coming into life. It was one of the most beautiful things I have ever experienced in my life.<sup>192</sup>

Inevitably, when reminiscing about war, a subject emerges in most veteran narratives: fear and lack of it during combat. Fear’s prominence is due perhaps to circulating notions of masculinity that portray a good fighter as fearless.<sup>193</sup> The ex-combatants explain, with many subtleties, how fear was a prevalent human feeling associated with this war experience. Manuel Figueiredo, for instance, details how the scariest aspect for him was the tense moments of uncertainty preceding a potential attack, not the action itself, the latter actually being ‘a time of relief [...] [because] when the shot sounds, and the firing starts, and there are encounters with the enemy [...] we are already there, we have already found them.’<sup>194</sup> From this perspective, fear manifested only before and after combat. During action, adrenaline makes combatants unaware of ‘danger [...] of what we are worth, where we are [...] there is no fear of absolutely anything.’<sup>195</sup> This insensitivity to fear could sometimes acquire a gripping and addictive element during combat, with one of my respondents stating that on those occasions he felt that he ‘was really made for fighting.’<sup>196</sup> For some, stress and fear

<sup>189</sup> Interviewees 30 (pp. 12-14); 33 (p. 22); 19 (p. 5).

<sup>190</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 12); 19 (p. 4).

<sup>191</sup> Interviewees 30 (pp. 13-14, p. 20); 33 (pp. 50-51).

<sup>192</sup> Interviewees 15 (p. 15); 26 (p. 29); 29 (p. 4). The G3 was the gun more widely employed by the Portuguese Army in Africa during the conflict.

<sup>193</sup> On ‘scared’ combatants, see Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), pp. 84-85, p. 135-36; Hynes, S. *o.c.* (1998), pp. 63-64.

<sup>194</sup> Interviewees 15 (pp. 7-8); 31 (p. 21).

<sup>195</sup> Interviewees 15 (p. 6, p. 20); 18 (p. 9).

<sup>196</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 13.

would emerge after action.<sup>197</sup> Such a complex, subjective topic embraces a myriad of individual interpretations. Indeed, others ascertain fear was ever-present, even during combat, because ‘I was afraid of dying’ – the heart would beat faster between blasts and ‘there are quite a few who stain their pants.’<sup>198</sup> José Andrade, for example, reiterated the idea that ‘there are no heroes there [...] all of us were really very scared’, adding that comrades who claimed to be fearless were dismissed as drunk or insane, in either case dangerous and unfit company during action.<sup>199</sup> Fear could even paralyse, as happened to the shaking comrade who could not shoot during an attack.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, and reflecting the men’s socio-cultural background, fear could give rise to manifestations of religiosity. In a particular instance, for example, when one of my interviewees got lost ‘then one prays – prays – prays.’<sup>201</sup> From the defence holes, during a fierce attack ‘some cried – others screamed – others insulted – others prayed.’<sup>202</sup> Before leaving for a military operation, a respondent would always ‘look towards Heaven and ask Our Lady of Fátima’ for protection.<sup>203</sup> Screaming for their mothers and other relatives was also a common occurrence.<sup>204</sup> Nonetheless, despite fear’s pervasiveness, the veterans were adamant in emphasising how individual fear frequently subsided when the unity of the combat group was threatened. When a comrade was down, most showed a ‘disregard for life’ and ‘subject[ed] themselves to every danger.’<sup>205</sup> Failing in those ‘dark hours’ would put other comrades at risk.<sup>206</sup> This military ethos would also strengthen ties between the officers on the ground and soldiers, because, as explained by an officer stationed in Mozambique in the late 1960s, sharing the fighting equally made them ‘all stick together.’<sup>207</sup>

For some, the long-term consequences of experiencing the brutality of warfare meant that they would not consider themselves as a ‘normal person’ anymore, as in the case of the soldier describing how he and his combat group in Guinea dealt with the effects of a grenade that killed some comrades, leaving them

completely - fragmented, blown up, legs to one side, arms to the other [...] and I and others had to pick up the pieces of the corpses as if it was nothing – pick up heads, arms

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<sup>197</sup> See, for instance, Interviewee 31, p. 21.

<sup>198</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 16); 22 (p. 25); 31 (p. 11).

<sup>199</sup> Interviewee 4, p. 11, p. 24.

<sup>200</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 11.

<sup>201</sup> Interviewee 18, p. 15. See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1996), p. 232-233, on religiosity and ‘visions’ during combat.

<sup>202</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 12); 19 (pp. 9-10).

<sup>203</sup> Interviewees 27 (p. 8); 13 (p. 2).

<sup>204</sup> Interviewees 22 (p. 12), 31 (p. 12), 19 (p. 12).

<sup>205</sup> Interviewee 35, p. 14.

<sup>206</sup> Interviewee 6, p. 7.

<sup>207</sup> Interviewee 34, pp. 6-7.

and legs and put everything together, put everything in plastic bags – bags to bring back – as if nothing had happened to us [...] we did that with such ease – I mean, as if we had always been – done that all our life.<sup>208</sup>

In fact, for a significant number of these servicemen daily life included extreme violence and life-threatening circumstances, such as happened in Guinea – dubbed ‘the Portuguese Vietnam’ by some – and particularly after 1971; it was ‘really hard’, ‘distressing’ and men were plagued by anxiety.<sup>209</sup> In those scenarios, ‘there is violence hovering in the air everywhere, all the time, and there is no rest.’<sup>210</sup> Even for Júlio Lobo, whose military duties in Mozambique never included direct fighting action, everyday ‘there was war from dawn to dusk’, causing him ‘anguish’, ‘anger’ and ‘sadness’ at seeing his comrades die or being mutilated with unsettling frequency, shot or blown up by mines.<sup>211</sup>

Knowing that every operation could be their last, many military men tried to eschew taking part in action or ‘avoid the most dangerous areas.’<sup>212</sup> Some even decided to desert, like two soldiers stationed in Guinea in the summer of 1970 who claimed to go hunting, and crossed the border to Senegal never to be seen again.<sup>213</sup> The personal toll of war could acquire bizarre twists, as in the response of the soldier found by his officer smoking leaning against a tree, weapon on the side, during a fierce attack: ‘Sir – this is how it goes – let those who made the war fuck themselves.’<sup>214</sup>

Some died, others were wounded, including a very significant number of my respondents. Being wounded was one of the men’s biggest fears, although in a war, it is ‘normal – it’s just something that happens’, ‘it is bad luck and good luck.’<sup>215</sup> I listened to many detailed stories about how my interviewees were wounded, the most dramatic of which are those involving the loss of a limb or limbs. Such was the case of the respondent who lost his leg in Mozambique in 1972 due to a mine. He had to wait nearly twenty-four hours to be evacuated by helicopter to the nearest hospital, four-hundred kilometres away:

after 4pm, as I said, there were no evacuations for anybody, my friend – if one had to die, one would die--- another one would be sent from the metropolis – that was the way

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<sup>208</sup> Interviewee 2, p. 9.

<sup>209</sup> Interviewee 28, p. 11, p. 22.

<sup>210</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 10.

<sup>211</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 6, p. 25, p. 12.

<sup>212</sup> Interviewees 32 (p. 23); 18 (p. 13); 33 (p. 18); 17 (p. 18); 29 (p. 5).

<sup>213</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 21.

<sup>214</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 12.

<sup>215</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 19); 20 (p. 3).

it was [...] I spent a whole night – losing blood – without a leg – and only those who go through these things know their price.<sup>216</sup>

Another interviewee who returned from Guinea without both legs recounts how from a platoon of forty-eight people only ‘ten or eleven’ arrived in Portugal physically unscathed; the rest either died or came back wounded.<sup>217</sup> A severe injury finished the war for these men. ‘Finally, this is over’ was the thought of a respondent who lost his hands, part of his arms and eyesight in Guinea in 1971.<sup>218</sup> Those combatants who, although injured, managed to escape death, often more than once, call themselves ‘lucky.’<sup>219</sup> ‘Every day’, many of their comrades were severely injured or lost their lives, ‘boys [...] who had been wounded at twenty-two, twenty-three years.’<sup>220</sup> Notwithstanding their loyalty to their comrades, some, like Manuel Figueiredo, acknowledged frankly their survival instincts, relishing being the ones to remain alive:

We have to say things as – as they are. [...] So I was happy because it was not me! – OK? Because we know that’s what’s going to happen, that is X are going to die, X are going to be wounded [...] there are no brave ones, there are no heroes [...] I was shaking from head to toe, I have no problems saying it--- I wasn’t born to – kill and be strong. [...] I was happy! It hadn’t – it hadn’t been me!<sup>221</sup>

Wounded or not, it is important to stress that this Chapter has focused mainly on the experience of those Portuguese colonial war veterans who faced direct combat action while serving in Portuguese Africa between 1961 and 1974.<sup>222</sup> In this case, being a veteran does not necessarily equate with fighting experience. Not every conscript would be in that situation, although my sample of respondents was comprised almost entirely by people who experienced warfare directly. For many attached to certain army specialities, service in Africa could be considered easier since it did not require direct engagement with the enemy. Administrative workers, cooks, cryptography experts and other military personnel maintaining the army barracks were more likely to fall into that group. For fighting ex-combatants like Avelino Oliveira, those people were ‘there having a holiday’ and ‘fortunately did not know what the war was about.’<sup>223</sup> If action

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<sup>216</sup> Interviewee 17, p. 3, p. 16.

<sup>217</sup> Interviewee 31, pp. 6-7.

<sup>218</sup> Interviewee 28, p. 26.

<sup>219</sup> Interviewees 22 (p. 10); 29 (p. 7).

<sup>220</sup> Interviewee 30, pp. 9-10.

<sup>221</sup> Interviewee 15, pp. 27-28.

<sup>222</sup> A thorough overview of the Portuguese ex-combatant experience is given by C. Gomes in ‘Quotidianos...’, *o.c.* (2004), pp. 136-173.

<sup>223</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 20.

was commonplace for most conscripts, it was guaranteed for the minority serving in the special forces, such as the Commandos, the Fusiliers, and the Parachutists.<sup>224</sup>

Whatever the function performed in the army, the overwhelming goal of these servicemen was to leave Africa alive, without damage, and as quickly as possible.<sup>225</sup> For that purpose, the most important thing was to ‘wake up every day with our toes moving [...] that means we’re alive’, and keep wishing ‘that time can go by really fast.’<sup>226</sup>

**‘Sent to command over a hundred men’<sup>227</sup>**

A greater understanding of the dynamics of the Portuguese colonial war experience can be acquired through a reflection on the junior army officers who normally commanded the troops in the field, the majority of whom were *Alferes*, the Portuguese equivalent to a Second lieutenant grade, immediately under the rank of *Tenente* (Lieutenant).<sup>228</sup> Above those junior positions (the next higher rank being that of *Capitão*, Captain), fewer officers were reported to actively participate in combat. The *Alferes* conscripted by the regime to command the bulk of the troops in the three African provinces were mostly civilians, not ‘used to wars or violence’, often not ‘physical people’ and sometimes with a dislike of the army, who ‘all of a sudden got given a G3 and sent to the middle of the jungle to command over a hundred men.’<sup>229</sup>

The typical *Alferes* was a military inexperienced, urban, young university graduate – part of a group perceived by an older career officer interviewee as spoilt ‘little boys.’<sup>230</sup> In a highly illiterate country, the often affluent small minority with access to university education was the regime’s most frequent choice of officer to command men in Africa, the criterion of appointment being their higher educational level.<sup>231</sup> As the war

<sup>224</sup> Cann, *o.c.* (2005), pp. 72-74; for a brief summary of origins, structure and photographic documentation of the Portuguese special forces, see Carvalho, M. (ed.) *o.c.* (2000), pp. 225-247

<sup>225</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 18); 28 (p. 21); 21 (p. 15).

<sup>226</sup> Interviewees 26 (p. 6); 4 (p. 11).

<sup>227</sup> Interviewee 9, p. 1.

<sup>228</sup> Under them, and also operational in the field, the army placed a well-developed hierarchical system, consisting broadly of the ranks of *Sargento* (Sergeant), *Furriel* (Subseargeant), *Cabo* (Corporal) and *Soldado* (Soldier).

<sup>229</sup> Interviewees 9 (p. 1); 33 (p. 3, p. 26). Traditionally, *Alferes* would command a platoon (of up to 50-60 men) and *Capitães* a company (100 plus men). Shortage of officers, particularly from the late 1960s, meant promotions of junior officers to the next rank became commonplace and widespread. See Martelo, D. ‘Pessoal e orçamentos. Esforço de guerra’ in Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) *o.c.* (2001), pp. 518-520; Matos, L. ‘A orgânica das Forças Armadas Portuguesas’ in Barata, M. & Teixeira, N. (eds.), *o.c.*, Vol. 4 (2004), pp. 181-186.

<sup>230</sup> Interviewee 9 (p. 6).

<sup>231</sup> See Benavente et al *A Literacia em Portugal*, Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (1996); Estado-Maior do Exército, CECA *o.c.* (1988), p. 225.

progressed and the shortage of officers became more notorious, within the compulsory military service framework civilian conscription increased and diversified.<sup>232</sup> Amongst teachers, doctors, architects, engineers, and similar professions, older men – many settled in life, married and with children – were also called up and briefly trained to fill junior rank officer posts. Most would be mobilised to the African war fronts normally under a two-year contract, after which they could request an extension, resign, or apply for a permanent officer position.<sup>233</sup> These officers conscripted from the civilian population were designated as *oficiais milicianos* – or militiamen officers, as opposed to career officers who were part of the *quadro permanente*, or permanent cadre, the professional military men trained in the Academia Militar (Military Academy).<sup>234</sup> This distinction, constantly highlighted to me by respondents, is vital to understand the mechanics of the colonial war and subsequent political developments in Portugal. In effect, internal ‘discontentment’ in the Armed Forces was noticeable, particularly in the years leading to 1974. In order to retain the *milicianos*, increasingly needed as the war advanced, special privileges were conceded and promotion to the fast-growing group of *capitães* (captains) was more easily attained. This generated unhappiness amongst career officers of the same rank. Their discontent was at the root of the revolution of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974 initiated by the Armed Forces.<sup>235</sup>

A great number of these unprepared impromptu *milicianos*, often lacking a military vocation and leadership skills, found it difficult to adapt to army life, more so than a regular soldier, who was usually more accustomed to hardships and thus more adaptable to such an environment.<sup>236</sup> Due to their frequent military inadequacy, many of these officers struggled to be obeyed and respected by the men under their command.<sup>237</sup> Of my interviews with seven *Alferes*, around half of them openly acknowledge these problems, about themselves or others.<sup>238</sup> One of them wonders at the ‘utter nonsense’ of someone who hated the army being made into an officer and responsible for a combat group.<sup>239</sup> The *milicianos* ‘would go because they were forced to’, they ‘were the ones

<sup>232</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 3. See Cann, J. *o.c.* (2005), pp. 91-93. Pinto, A. ‘A Guerra Colonial ...’ in *o.c.* (2000), pp. 65-102.

<sup>233</sup> Cann, J. *o.c.* (2005), p. 92.

<sup>234</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 10.

<sup>235</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 7, p. 14. See also Cann, J. *o.c.* (2005), p. 93; Pinto, A. *idem*, pp. 87-90.

<sup>236</sup> Interviewees 28 (pp. 9-10); 9 (p. 6); 33 (pp. 3-4).

<sup>237</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 26, p. 13, p. 4.

<sup>238</sup> Namely, Interviewee 18, Interviewee 28, Interviewee 31, and Interviewee 33.

<sup>239</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 28.

who did not want the war.’<sup>240</sup> Only one of my *Alferes*’ interviewees embraced a military career.

Miguel Almeida (b. 1942) was one of those *milicianos*. He served in Angola between 1965 and 1967. Born in Porto, in an affluent middle-class family, this interviewee remarks on how the education received at school focusing on the regime’s traditional patriotic values defined him. Becoming *Alferes miliciano* for his outstanding military performance, and not through qualifications, as was usual, when mobilised Almeida believed that it was his ‘duty to defend the motherland.’<sup>241</sup> This was a position very different from that of Victor Palma, another *Alferes miliciano* stationed in Angola during the same period. Raised in central Portugal in a seaside town within a strongly oppositionist family, Palma saw himself as an ‘anti-colonialist’ and departed to Africa with an uneasy conscience, feeling that he was going to ‘defend’ a regime he despised through participating in an ‘unfair, colonial war’, something which made him ‘feel ashamed.’<sup>242</sup> To his mortification, the initial uneasiness was further complicated by the fact that he greatly enjoyed military life and being in Africa.<sup>243</sup>

More typical of how the average experience is expressed, however, other *milicianos* reinforced the subjective notion of total pointlessness of their presence in Africa. They were simply ‘fulfilling a duty’ and were certainly not there ‘with the goal of winning the war’, or defending the ‘ideals of the Empire’ but rather of ‘leaving that hole’ as soon as possible – and alive.<sup>244</sup> Another *Alferes* recalls how, hidden at the top of a hill during a shooting, on his twenty-fifth birthday, he realised that the imprisonment reserved for those evading military service could not be worse than his situation.<sup>245</sup> Some officers – like the *Alferes* who ‘vanished’ in 1972 a few days before the appointed date to embark to Angola with his company – preferred not to come to that conclusion *in situ*.<sup>246</sup>

At the distance of decades, these officers rationalise their motivations and actions, frequently highlighting a devotion to the men they commanded and an unwillingness to voluntarily engage in the more violent aspects of war. Because for nearly all of the *miliciano* officers interviewed ‘this was a cause that meant nothing to me [them]’, the goal was to ‘spend these two years – in the best possible manner [...] and bring all the

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<sup>240</sup> Interviewee 4, p. 9.

<sup>241</sup> Interviewee 8, p. 2, p. 7, p. 17.

<sup>242</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 14.

<sup>243</sup> Interviewee 33, pp. 6-7, pp. 10-12, p. 14.

<sup>244</sup> Interviewees 18 (p. 19); 12 (p. 14); 1 (p. 9, p. 13); 31 (p. 10, p. 24, p. 28).

<sup>245</sup> Interviewee 12, p. 14.

<sup>246</sup> Interviewee 12, p. 2.

men [under their command] back alive', and 'if possible, not hurting anybody.'<sup>247</sup> A few of my respondents wished to highlight that, irrespective of personal convictions, during action, ideologies were left aside and survival was paramount. In that sense, their position made them feel responsible for the soldiers under them, and they frequently pinpoint strong comradeship and group cohesion as the main reason and focus of fighting.<sup>248</sup> For instance, despite 'total revulsion' regarding his compulsory presence in Guinea between 1965-66, an *Alferes miliciano* emphasised his loyalty to his combat group, whose welfare, notwithstanding his admitted difficulties with military life, he guaranteed he had at heart at all times.<sup>249</sup> Similarly, Victor Palma explains how, in spite of desertion tempting him as a 'moral solution' for his troubled conscience about participating in an 'unfair colonial war', he felt unable to 'leave all those guys [under his command] behind.'<sup>250</sup>

Sometimes acquiring disconcerting twists, the narratives composed by these men depict how, to increase the chances of returning alive, and with the troops' complicity, superior orders were often circumvented, and all manners of subterfuges were employed to avoid direct action: certain missions on the terrain would not be fulfilled, loose interpretations of regulations adopted, and psychological and physical ailments feigned.<sup>251</sup> Victor Palma was keen on explaining how, along with his soldiers, on several occasions he let prisoners escape, aware that he would be unable to bear a heavy conscience in the future knowing that their detention would very likely result in torture and death.<sup>252</sup> Another *Alferes* stationed in Guinea between 1971-73 manifested his surprise that not even one of the seventy men under his command denounced him for producing a false report stating orders to destroy a native village had been fulfilled.<sup>253</sup>

The closeness between these junior *miliciano* officers and their men is an aspect frequently highlighted by respondents. Clearly, the behaviour of the average Portuguese soldier, humble and illiterate, was strongly influenced and shaped by the officer in command. The troops' faithfulness to their direct superiors meant that even companies geographically close could display very disparate behaviour – while some stole, raped and killed, others' correctness was exemplary. This aspect places emphasis, as noted by

<sup>247</sup> Interviewees 12 (p. 15, p. 4); 1 (p. 9); 33 (p. 31, p. 18, p. 43, p. 33).

<sup>248</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 31.

<sup>249</sup> Interviewees 1 (pp. 6-7); 31 (p. 10, p. 24, p. 28).

<sup>250</sup> Interviewee 33, pp. 16-17.

<sup>251</sup> Interviewees 17 (p. 18); 29 (p. 5); 33 (p. 18, p. 43); 18 (p. 13).

<sup>252</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 18, p. 43, p. 33. For similar examples, see Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), pp. 209-214.

<sup>253</sup> Interviewee 18, p. 8, p. 19, p. 13.



Bourke, on a leadership or ‘father figure’ element able to ‘sway’ the unit by his personality, hinting at the fact that the future of the men’s postwar adjustment would greatly reside in the character and morals of the commander(s) they had during service.<sup>254</sup> Indeed, in practice, in the context of the colonial war in Africa, the Portuguese Army bestowed upon these *oficiais milicianos* an immense power, with potential to be individually exerted more or less arbitrarily. From the standpoint of his present civilian life, Victor Palma, for instance, marvelled at the vast military, territorial, jurisdictional and personal power he was given in Angola as a twenty-four-year-old *Alferes*.<sup>255</sup> Many of these junior officers interpret their position of responsibility as more challenging than that of the soldiers. Having to endure practically the same hardships and dangers, they also had to make decisions and be a role model for their men.<sup>256</sup> Just like the men under their command, the vast majority of *Alferes milicianos* were civilians compulsorily conscripted. This meant that, on the ground, and especially towards 1974, the war was fought almost exclusively by civilians, thousands of the male Portuguese population of the era.<sup>257</sup>

### **‘They have no idea’<sup>258</sup>**

For those who lived through the experience of spending the typical two years in Africa, one day the wished-for moment of ending would arrive. Most had spent their days ‘looking at the calendar’, scrutinising the months going by, ‘the fastest, the better, so that we could leave.’<sup>259</sup> Unlike mobilised servicemen still in the ‘metropolis’ – who had ‘no idea of what they are going to suffer’ – at this point, most had engaged in combat action, undergone countless difficulties, and seen some of their comrades being wounded and return earlier to Portugal. Others had died, and many military men already sensed these deaths would haunt them for the rest of their lives. Looking for meanings to the conflict, some recount they were departing already ‘hopeful’ that ‘one day’ the war ‘would have to end.’<sup>260</sup>

<sup>254</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 21, p. 23, p. 44. See J. Bourke, *o.c.* (1999), p. 99, p. 144-145.

<sup>255</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 22.

<sup>256</sup> Hynes, S. *o.c.* (1998), p. 64.

<sup>257</sup> See Interviewee 33, pp. 21-22, p. 58. See Cann, J. *o.c.* (2005), pp. 91-93.

<sup>258</sup> Interviewee 27, who returned from Guinea in 1965, on his feelings about seeing conscripts leaving for the colonies for the following nine years (p. 11).

<sup>259</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 8.

<sup>260</sup> Interviewees 27 (p.11); 32 (p. 35); 34 (p. 11).

Recalling their feelings upon departure, some veterans emphasise their realisation that, whilst serving in Africa, ‘there was virtually nobody there by conviction’; others assert that they felt at ease with themselves for having tried to ‘give their best’, irrespective of the fairness or unfairness of the conflict.<sup>261</sup> A former commando remarked on their clearer awareness of having been employed to ‘sustain’ the war, since ‘the combatant is a little pawn’ in a wider picture.<sup>262</sup> José Andrade explains the shift operated in him and other comrades, noting that when he arrived in Portugal in 1972 he was not talking anymore about the African territories as ‘overseas provinces’: they returned ‘angry’ that fighting an ‘unfair war’ in the ‘colonies’ had been ‘imposed upon them.’<sup>263</sup>

For those who had thus fulfilled their military duty, fighting in that war would end with their return to Portugal. Most were ‘eager to return’, although sometimes transportation was not immediately available.<sup>264</sup> A minority, however, chose to stay in Africa, mainly in the cities, in the hope of ‘starting a completely different type of life.’<sup>265</sup> In any case, for these men a new phase began here. Very symbolically, in 1968 João Barroso decided to mark the moment of being discharged from the army in Luanda by burning the ‘mortal remains of his military service [...] soaking that with spirits and setting fire’ to his old uniform and boots – a literal act that uncovers a need for a catharsis that spread beyond individuals.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Interviewees 5 (p. 8); 2 (p. 8).

<sup>262</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 7, p. 9.

<sup>263</sup> Interviewee 4, pp. 16 – 18.

<sup>264</sup> Interviewees 29 (p. 19); 26 (pp. 26-27).

<sup>265</sup> Interviewee 25, p. 25. Luanda, in Angola, seemed to have been a favourite location. However, most of these ex-combatants who established themselves in Africa would return in 1975 with the independence of those territories and the exodus of Portuguese people that ensued.

<sup>266</sup> Interviewee 6, p. 7.

## II. Coming Home

### **‘The happiest man alive’<sup>267</sup>**

Coming home was, for the vast majority of Portuguese combatants, the main desire and goal during their time in Africa. Here I will focus on the initial treatment these troops received upon their return to Portugal from their families, the state, and society at large, as well as their own feelings and coping strategies in relation to their war experience and its immediate consequences in their lives. After having served overseas in an armed conflict, these men were now returning as ex-combatants, having to readjust to civilian life after the ‘dislocation’ of military life, to quote Hynes.<sup>268</sup> Regarding this phase of preliminary adaptation, although the veterans’ personal accounts are often steered towards the 1974 political turn and their considerations about subsequent developments, individual perceptions of returning remain pivotal in these men’s lives. Almost unanimously, respondents mentioned immense joy and ‘extraordinary relief’ for being back, ‘mainly for being alive!’<sup>269</sup> Some, like a soldier returning from Guinea in 1970, expressively stated that ‘it felt like I was coming back from Hell!’<sup>270</sup> They could finally be reunited with their families, friends, and loved ones in their homeland.<sup>271</sup>

Returning in 1970 after spending twenty-seven months in Mozambique in an operational zone and being injured in combat, soldier Joaquim Azinheira felt the ‘happiest man alive’. With a broad smile, Azinheira offered a vivid recollection of his arrival:

it was the happiest moment in my life – when I held my parents, my wife – the one who is now my wife [...] it was extraordinary [...] if there are precious moments in life – this was one of those – it was a spectacular moment. Always [thinking] now it is possible to fulfil that dream [...] that I wanted after my return, to find a job, a better workshop, marry my wife, give her happiness – and have children, which was what I wanted the most.<sup>272</sup>

The satisfaction of coming home and being closer to fulfilling the goals and dreams that kept many hopeful during the worst moments spent in Africa is a common trait

<sup>267</sup> Interviewee 13 on what he felt about returning to Portugal after serving in Mozambique (1968-1970), p. 11.

<sup>268</sup> Hynes, S. *o.c.* (1998), p. 8, pp. 145-146; see also Garton, S. ‘Home Fires’ in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 176-207.

<sup>269</sup> Interviewees 5 (pp. 13-14); 4 (p. 23); 25 (p. 26); 16 (pp. 17-18, pp. 20-21).

<sup>270</sup> Interviewee 22, p. 21.

<sup>271</sup> Interviewees 7 (p. 12); 11 (p. 11); 12 (p. 19); 18 (p. 17); 19 (p. 21); 9 (pp. 24-25); 25 (p. 26); 24 (p. 2, p. 4); 27 (p. 9).

<sup>272</sup> Interviewee 13, p. 12; also Interviewee 16, p. 8.

shared by most interviewees, particularly the ones who returned without major physical or psychological problems. That was the case, for example, of Manuel Loureiro, who finally, and with ‘huge relief’ ‘laid aside the military life’. In his instance, his relief was reinforced by the fact that he never participated in direct action, or suffered any type of injury.<sup>273</sup>

These were mostly happy returns, the arrival being a moment of mutual ‘joy’, sometimes accompanied by ‘great celebrations’, a time to ‘hug’ family, friends and members of their communities.<sup>274</sup> Particularly in the first years of the conflict, returning soldiers would frequently be the ‘heroes of the land [...] everybody would kiss us, everybody was happy – that we had returned alive and without problems.’<sup>275</sup> Francisco Fitas narrates how, when he returned in 1964 from Angola, a serviceman’s arrival was an ‘extraordinary’ event. Unlike other less fortunate conscripts, he had survived the war, and was ‘almost a hero’, for ‘having gone and returning.’<sup>276</sup> As in the case of Fitas, such effusive welcome receptions were especially true in small, rural villages and neighbourhoods where the soldiers belonged to close-knit communities.<sup>277</sup> Sometimes the locals would be waiting at the train station, or gathered to receive the returning servicemen in the high street.<sup>278</sup> A then twenty-two year old man returning slightly injured in 1972 from Guinea recounts how ‘there was no one from my village who didn’t cry, and didn’t kiss me’. Aware of his symbolism, the respondent attributed such genuine displays of emotions to the fact that ‘every mother in the village had sons – about to go, [or] others who had already been there [in Africa]. In fact, the ‘hurdle’ of the war was an overarching connector between the male youth and their families.’<sup>279</sup>

Interestingly, having returned from Angola only three years after the beginning of the conflict, Fitas noticed a shift in society’s response to the return of the troops with the passage of time – a view shared by younger respondents, like Júlio Lobo. If initially, up to the mid-1960s, the war ‘was a novelty’ and there was ‘curiosity’ and ‘euphoria’ about soldiers returning from Africa, after a certain point the arriving servicemen ‘were not perceived in the same way.’ In a context of continuous widespread conscription and increasing numbers of casualties and wounded, returning servicemen became ‘almost a

<sup>273</sup> Interviewee 25, p. 26, p. 30, p. 34; also Interviewee 29, p. 19.

<sup>274</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 18); 4 (p. 23); 24 (p. 2, p. 4); 32 (p. 19).

<sup>275</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 25); 32 (p. 19, pp. 33-34); 30 (p. 31); 14 (p. 21).

<sup>276</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 21); 32 (p. 19).

<sup>277</sup> Interviewees 32 (p. 19, pp. 33-34); 14 (p. 21); 16 (p. 11).

<sup>278</sup> See, for example, Interviewees 24 (p. 4); 27 (p. 10).

<sup>279</sup> Interviewee 16, p. 11.

routine' that was socially tolerated – the waning enthusiasm (especially in urban areas) reflecting a heavier burden placed by the conflict on Portuguese society and subsequent lower levels of social support for the war.<sup>280</sup>

For returning servicemen, however, general feelings would not significantly vary with the passage of time. Like Francisco Fitas, most rejoiced at the 'restarting of my [their] life.'<sup>281</sup> Like this respondent, many ex-combatants eagerly stress the 'feeling of freedom' of not being 'under the military yoke anymore'- which some perceive as having 'lost two years of life' in Africa.<sup>282</sup> Nonetheless, Loureiro, Fitas and many other citizens had 'fulfilled their duty', and since most ex-combatants were conscripts and not army professionals, returning to Portugal meant that their military service was completed.<sup>283</sup> In such instances, the happiness of arrival 'was something to make us forget everything we have gone through there.'<sup>284</sup> A new life phase would begin and for most former combatants, the focus shifted to their personal lives. Justifying his feelings upon his return, an *Alferes* in Guinea (1971-1973) explains that:

my mission was fulfilled – and for me the war was over – and one becomes a bit brutish in the war – and, therefore, nothing matters – I didn't care at all at the time – about the issues – of [...] others remaining in the war – to be honest, I reckon I didn't even think about it. What I thought was that I was finally on the other side – and was out of the war, that was what I cared about [...] for me the war was over.<sup>285</sup>

In effect, *their* war was over, bringing forth the challenges of readjustment to civilian life that await every ex-combatant. At the core of this process were the interest and 'a certain curiosity' their experiences raised within the family circle: 'everybody would make us questions' about what they had gone through in Africa.<sup>286</sup> Given the colonial nature of the conflict, and since Portugal was ruled by an authoritarian regime with restricted freedoms and censored information when nearly all of these men returned, these intimate narrative spaces and their dynamics assumed particular reflective importance. As admitted by Júlio Lobo and others, the more difficult aspects of their service in the former African provinces would not normally be approached in the tales told to family and friends. In a trend that would last for decades, mostly

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<sup>280</sup> Interviewees 14 (pp. 21-22); 32 (pp. 33-34). As revealed by higher levels of absenteeism from 1965 (since that year always above 18.8%). See Cann, *o.c.* (2005), p. 89.

<sup>281</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 18.

<sup>282</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 18); 29 (p. 19); 25 (p. 26); 12 (p. 19).

<sup>283</sup> Interviewees 25 (p. 26, p. 30); 4 (p. 23); 29 (p. 19); 27 (p. 9); 18 (p. 21). Only those pursuing a military career would potentially serve in the African territories again until the end of the war in successive commissions. See, for example, Interviewee 35, p. 19.

<sup>284</sup> Interviewee 24, p. 2, p. 4.

<sup>285</sup> Interviewee 18, p. 21.

<sup>286</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 20.

pleasant, humorous, stoical or anecdotal ‘safe’ stories were shared, transforming more unsettling war memories into an almost exclusive veteran remembrance bastion.<sup>287</sup> As noted by Francisco Fitas, afterwards he would only discuss the African experience ‘mainly with those who had lived the same situation.’<sup>288</sup> In this regard, a soldier who returned from Guinea in 1972 recalls that upon return:

immediately that business begins – have you killed many? have you killed a few? I don’t know what more, and such [...] when people talked to me about this, I would say, hey mate, look – please – just forget that – don’t talk to me about that because I saw many things overseas and – and I don’t feel like saying anything about it, no, mate, no-- - because we still arrived – but we didn’t arrive quite ourselves –<sup>289</sup>

The awareness that they arrived as changed men is common to many of these veterans. Some assert they returned ‘100% changed’, harder persons, their ‘different’ military experience setting them apart from their previous civilian existence and from non-combatants and progressively making them closer as a veteran group. As explained by a former combatant who returned from Guinea in 1970:

when I returned from the war – I realised [...] I was a different man – I had become a different man, and maybe – like an astronaut who [...] spends some time in space, and gets back down, already there is a difference, he’ll never be the same that he was before.<sup>290</sup>

The inevitable change in a great number of ex-combatants – the extent of which would only manifest with the passage of time – reinforced the necessity for a new beginning in life.<sup>291</sup> Avelino Oliveira, for instance, felt that his arrival equalled to being ‘born again’ and, consequently, the ‘start [of] a new life.’<sup>292</sup> Although upon resuming their daily lives, memories of their military service were mostly prevalent, afterwards many entered ‘a normal routine.’<sup>293</sup> Francisco Fitas, for example, though acknowledging later adaptation difficulties, mentions that after getting married and settling down he ‘cooled down a bit’ regarding his war experiences.<sup>294</sup> About this period

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<sup>287</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 33.

<sup>288</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 22.

<sup>289</sup> Interviewee 29, p. 20.

<sup>290</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 19); 14 (20); 30 (p. 14). On the impact of war on returning servicemen, see Bourke, J. ‘Return to Civilian Life’, *o.c.* (1999), pp. 345-368; p. 372; Garton, S. *o.c.* (1996), p. 30; Hutching, M. ‘After action...’, in *o.c.* (2011), pp. 240-243.

<sup>291</sup> In determining susceptibility to ‘adverse effects’ upon return, Portuguese ex-combatants shared most circumstances emphasised by Bourke in relation to Vietnam veterans, namely ‘extreme youth, poor battlefield leadership, lack of unit cohesion, the guerrilla nature of the war, and the sense of purposelessness when they returned to the U.S.’, in Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 360.

<sup>292</sup> Interviewees 3 (pp. 20-21); 29 (p. 19); 14 (p.18); 19 (pp. 35-36).

<sup>293</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 22); 3 (p. 17).

<sup>294</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 22.

of their lives, most veterans identify a strong need to forget their participation in the conflict. This is a permanent feature of most men's narratives about their initial social reintegration. An urgency to forget arose virtually as a survival tool. Fitas explained how he 'tried to isolate myself from the situation because I felt that I had to shut down my brain as far as that was concerned. I needed to [...] keep that [war experience] far away, so that I would not remember that.'<sup>295</sup> Similarly, in order to 'erase the past', one ex-soldier decided to burn all the letters he had written to his future wife.<sup>296</sup> They 'began to forget' 'everything', 'laying aside everything that had happened [...] everything we have been through there', 'to try to clean the head of the memories', although 'now and then' they would intimately recall their experiences, as noted by Avelino Oliveira and others.<sup>297</sup> However, most were firmly determined to leave their military selves in the past and 'look ahead, start again' in the future.<sup>298</sup>

### **'It's over'**<sup>299</sup>

From 1974 onwards, the future that these men were facing included a major political change – the democratic revolution started on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April of the same year. From the beginning of the decade, particularly more politically enlightened urban sectors were increasingly aware that the 'war had to end, no matter what' and that a shift was imminent.<sup>300</sup> The end of the authoritarian regime and the ensuing political alteration which determined also the end of the war placed the former – and some then current – combatants in Africa in a complex social position. In a newly-founded democratic era, they had been, albeit involuntarily for the most part, the enforcers of the previous regime's colonial conflict for the maintenance of the empire. With the cessation of the conflict on the three fronts, generally the former enemies were rapidly perceived as representatives of the independent nations strongly linked to Portugal by cultural and friendship ties. Given these circumstances, the ex-combatants generally began to be seen in a less positive manner, often even with open hostility. Portuguese society was undergoing a radical paradigm shift, and the veterans did not fit neatly into the

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<sup>295</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 18.

<sup>296</sup> Interviewee 13, pp. 8-9.

<sup>297</sup> Interviewees 3 (p. 17, pp. 20-21); 25 (p. 26); 24 (p. 2); 9 (p. 25); 11 (pp. 8-9); 14 (p. 18); For interviewee 26 it was harder to forget his war experience since his brother was serving in Guinea when he returned to Portugal (pp. 27-28, p. 32).

<sup>298</sup> Interviewees 29 (p. 19); 26 (p. 28).

<sup>299</sup> Interviewee 13, p. 13.

<sup>300</sup> Interviewee 29, p. 26, p. 35.

emerging values and ideals. Avelino Oliveira, for instance, recalls that in the aftermath of the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1974, when ‘we were badly treated, [...] people would say bad things against us, and that we were criminals, and I don’t know what else.’<sup>301</sup> Regarding the war, a delicate imbalance between a lack of reflective acceptance and increasing avoidance and shame soon began to shape the contours of war memory, even on an individual level, as admitted by José Andrade:

After the 25<sup>th</sup> of April – everybody was ashamed of talking about the war. Even I was too. Perhaps we were ashamed because [...] what I say is, from left to right [political forces], nobody wants to admit it, and in the post-25<sup>th</sup> April – those who had gone to war had been traitors, who betrayed the – the peoples of the colonies [...] who were our brothers.<sup>302</sup>

As this emerging narrative of the war as shameful, imperialistic aggression to the African peoples gained strength in a country consumed by the political turbulence associated with the regime change, the end of the war and the decolonisation process, these men increasingly felt the need to protect themselves from growing antagonism. Officers, for example, particularly career officers, could face some difficulties regarding their real or perceived connection with the previous regime. An officer who had served in Angola between 1967 and 1969 states that ‘I was considered – right after the 25<sup>th</sup> of April – [...] a fascist, do you understand? (bangs the table with his hand) – for having collaborated – because I was a collaborator – and had acquaintances and friends who were arrested because of that.’<sup>303</sup> Illustrating how the political tensions in Portugal at the time could generate unexpected developments, José Pinto, an officer – and also a member of the Portuguese Communist Party whose service in Africa had resulted from having been caught in oppositionist political activity – faced a dramatic return from Angola in the summer of 1974:

I felt a huge rage when I arrived here at the airport [...] when I returned [...] I begin to hear people – calling me – reactionary, fascist, I mean--- (brief pause) – and I – what?!? Yes, at the very airport – and I was like this, who are these people ?!<sup>304</sup>

The nature and depth of this complex divisiveness and uncertainty present in Portuguese society during this period can also be gauged by the awkward position *Alferes* Victor Palma found himself after his return from Angola in 1967, and

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<sup>301</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 21. Similarly to what Vietnam veterans experienced, as emphasised by Bourke in ‘Return to Civilian Life’, in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 349-351, p. 361.

<sup>302</sup> Interviewee 4, pp. 25-26.

<sup>303</sup> Interviewee 20, p. 15.

<sup>304</sup> Interviewee 1, p. 18.



throughout the post-1974 phase. Living with the contradiction that he came from an oppositionist background and that, during his compulsory service in Angola, was decorated (although for acts he did not actively seek to enforce) by the Salazarian regime, Palma dealt with some uneasiness from his Lisbon metropolitan area local community:

I had been overseas [...] as an active element [...] Commander of a combat group in a war considered colonial in this milieu – of factory workers, a milieu highly politicised. [...] I felt ashamed--- I lived – after returning from the war, I lived in the terror – of one day going to Lisbon – and seeing a guy from PIDE coming to greet me all excited, known as a member of PIDE giving me hugs! [...] If one day I am walking down Chiado [neighbourhood in Lisbon] (laughter), and a guy known for being a PIDE hey, great warrior! and comes to give me a few hugs (laughter)! Oh dear – I'm done!<sup>305</sup>

As illustrated by Palma's insights, this postwar, post-revolutionary socio-political climate heralded challenging times for Portuguese society at large, and for the ex-combatants in particular – the latter lacking a clearly defined social space regarding their divisive condition of veterans of the colonial war. These veterans' accounts evoke a pervasive feeling that they began to be conveniently ignored and rejected by their own society, something to which their own reluctance to talk also might have contributed.<sup>306</sup> In most cases, silence and shame descended over their military service in Africa. However, underneath the surface, the feelings of many former combatants and their families were aptly expressed by the recurrent questions: 'what about those who died? and those who were left all broken, and finished--- not just physically, but mainly psychologically?'<sup>307</sup> The veterans' narratives indicate that in private remembrance spheres, mostly amongst ex-comrades and in bereaved families, an awareness existed that silence about the conflict would render meaningless the sacrifice not only of those who risked their lives, but especially of those who died or suffered irreversible consequences from the war, in the name of values which 'disappeared overnight.'<sup>308</sup> Irrespective of the conflict's legitimacy, fallen comrades and loved ones would not be forgotten, a latent remembrance feature that would materialise more visibly in Portugal decades later.<sup>309</sup>

<sup>305</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 38, p. 47. PIDE stands for 'Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado', the old regime's political police. See Chapter Two for more information (p. 59).

<sup>306</sup> For instance, Interviewee 11 chose not to speak about the war for 'years and years' (pp. 8-9).

<sup>307</sup> Interviewees 9 (p. 16); 36 (p. 16).

<sup>308</sup> Bourke emphasises similar feelings experienced by Vietnam veterans, in *o.c.* (1999), p. 362.

<sup>309</sup> This being one of the vectors of attachments to the past operating in transitional societies, as mentioned by G. Dawson; see *o.c.* (2007), pp. 4-6.

Notwithstanding this complex environment surrounding the aftermath of the 1974 shift, there was widespread satisfaction that the war had actually ended after thirteen years. The social impact of this fact was clear for these veterans: future conscripts would not have to face military service in Africa in the context of a military conflict. From their perspective, this was the ‘best thing’ and ‘greatest joy’ brought about by the revolution. Aware of what they had experienced in Africa, the veterans did not wish ‘anybody else to go through it’, especially their children ‘and the children of others’, present or future.<sup>310</sup> For the sake of the latter, an ex-soldier recalled how it felt ‘so good it’s over.’<sup>311</sup>

In any case, having arrived before or after 1974, these men’s war was over, and their country a changed one – strikingly more so, obviously, in the post-revolutionary period when social-political change was fast and immediately evident for those returning from Africa.<sup>312</sup> The task ahead was to successfully readapt to their civilian lives.

### **‘Everybody has already forgotten’<sup>313</sup>**

The immediate goal for veterans was resuming the social, personal and professional aspects of their lives. As recognised in the plural form by Júlio Lobo, an altered social landscape awaited returning servicemen:

I returned a bit out of synch [...] I had been away for two years – and when I arrived [...] I was not settled in [...] the friendships, some had gone away, others [...] got married – others had moved and, therefore, it was two years that we – arrive and stay a bit in the clouds, a bit absent-minded of everything – until we get into the rhythm again – [...] it takes some time [...] because [...] being away for two years, it is – and the life we led during those two years [...] one becomes two years out of synch, and that could perhaps be compared to being in jail for two years [...] one becomes – well, a bit out of place [...] socially, and in terms of friendships and all those things.<sup>314</sup>

As Bourke suggests, feelings of disorientation and disillusionment are common in returning combatants.<sup>315</sup> A combination of personal characteristics and experiences lived during their military service would generate a reintegration with more or less

<sup>310</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 27); 13 (p. 13); 9 (p. 25).

<sup>311</sup> Interviewee 13, p. 13.

<sup>312</sup> Interviewee 5, p. 13.

<sup>313</sup> Interviewee 4, p. 25.

<sup>314</sup> Interviewees 32 (pp. 31-32); 15 (p. 18).

<sup>315</sup> Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 362; see also Hynes, S. *o.c.* (1998), p. 100; Garton, S. ‘Return’ in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 1-30.

difficulty. Most of my interviewees generally adapted well to this new phase. Some consider the reintegration process was relatively swift and successful. Shortly after their return ‘everybody has already forgotten’ that they had been in the war, aided by the fact that most veterans kept quiet about that past experience.<sup>316</sup> They concentrated on the future instead, enjoying their family life, ‘socialising again’ with friends and looking for a job.<sup>317</sup>

Having been young men before fulfilling their military service, for many it was the first time they would have a permanent job. That was the case of Álvaro Lima, who fought in Guinea between 1968-70. From a humble Northern rural background, and not having been ‘born with a silver spoon in my [his] mouth’, this respondent felt a need to find employment as quickly as possible, which he successfully achieved in less than a month in late 1970. Thirty-seven years later, at the time of the interview, he remained employed in the same nearby factory.<sup>318</sup> Others, like Manuel Loureiro in his administrative job, were unhappy that their military service meant an interruption or delayed progression of their pre-existing career, benefiting other colleagues who were not conscripted (particularly female ones).<sup>319</sup> Some interviewees believed that the ‘missing’ years of military service and its consequences resulted in fewer career choices.<sup>320</sup>

A common aspect in these men was the ‘huge desire’ to rapidly transform their lives, sometimes even employing as motivational factor a perceived personal growth acquired whilst in the army, as in the case of José Carvalho. Having fulfilled his professional plans with relative speed, he eventually ‘got married and had children’, ‘released [ing] myself to a great extent’ from his war experience. Amongst others, Carvalho is an example of how many experienced a positive reintegration period.<sup>321</sup>

Amongst the available personal and professional options, emigration was embraced by many. The previous experience of overseas geographical mobility and economic need appear to have predisposed a great number of veterans to leave the country.<sup>322</sup> After recovering from injuries received in Guinea (1969-1970) and experiencing some adjustment difficulties, Mário Amaral, from a less-favoured background in Madeira

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<sup>316</sup> Interviewee 4, p. 25.

<sup>317</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 18); 10 (p. 16).

<sup>318</sup> Interviewee 22, p. 25, p. 26.

<sup>319</sup> Interviewee 25, p. 26.

<sup>320</sup> Interviewees 12 (p. 19); 21 (p. 27); 26 (p. 27, p. 28); 2 (p. 1, pp. 13-14).

<sup>321</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 21, p. 27); 29 (p. 20).

<sup>322</sup> Interviewees 30 (p. 32, p. 36); 2 (p. 1, pp. 13-14); 26 (pp. 27-28). For a wide assessment of Portuguese emigration in this period, see Peixoto, J. ‘A Emigração’ in Bethencourt, F. & Chaudhuri, K. (eds.) *oc.* (2000), pp. 152-181.

Island, left for the United Kingdom. In his account, Amaral attributes his professional success to having decided to focus on a positive outlook in life, determined to 'be a normal person' and leave 'the war behind'. In the decades spent abroad he never mentioned that he was a veteran.<sup>323</sup> Another respondent could not dismiss the war and its impact so easily. Having returned from Angola in 1972 after an injury, he recalled his anger at being refused a working visa at the Consulate of the United States of America, since, because of the Vietnam conflict, this country had plenty of 'men with war problems.'<sup>324</sup>

Returning meant additional difficulties for some combatants. Those who had been entrusted with greater power and responsibility by the army, for instance, appear to have struggled to revert to the civilian status.<sup>325</sup> One of such cases was *Alferes* Miguel Almeida, who served in Angola firmly believing in the task attributed to him and its underlying values. His reinsertion into civilian life occurred amidst deep 'uneasiness' and social 'frustration', with Almeida feeling 'segregated' and 'put aside'. According to the ex-*Alferes*, this was 'what shocked me most' when, after returning, he realised there was 'a whole society that doesn't see in a good light those who fight – and even less those who did it with – with a sense of duty.' Passionate about the military, and despite having often been in life-threatening scenarios, Almeida places his army years amongst 'the happiest periods of my life [...] years of euphoria, happiness, personal satisfaction', in sharp contrast with what followed. In Africa, he was perceived as a 'saviour', a commander, in Portugal he became 'a complete nobody', working as a bank accountant. Almeida considers this 'loss of authority' as the 'most depressing feeling' he ever encountered, leading him to have rated his life as 'useless.' Unseen beneath his civilian persona, the former officer often felt like saying 'look – once I have been a combatant – I am not just any other bloke.'<sup>326</sup> The reintegration difficulties of this *oficial miliciano* were experienced by others, regardless of differing political convictions. Struggling after six months in a job as a bank clerk, another officer had to completely change his career and lifestyle after assaulting a customer.<sup>327</sup> Similarly, Victor Palma addressed the personal and professional obstacles he faced, explaining how afterwards he could never

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<sup>323</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 36.

<sup>324</sup> Interviewee 26, pp. 27-28.

<sup>325</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 50.

<sup>326</sup> Interviewee 8, pp. 18-21.

<sup>327</sup> Interviewee 1, p. 20.

‘find a normal job’, which emphasises how his war experience prominently shaped his future professional life.<sup>328</sup>

**‘A man doesn’t cry’<sup>329</sup>**

Although stories of variable levels of success abound, for many the readjustment period did not happen smoothly – particularly as regards their personal lives – as is common among returning combatants.<sup>330</sup> These men had been away for two years or longer, an absence that would most likely impact their personal relationships. One former soldier returned from Guinea in 1972 to find his girlfriend of several years with another man.<sup>331</sup> For career officers, who had to serve successive commissions in Africa, years away from their families took their toll. Upon his return, one officer realised he ‘had no space’ in his family anymore.<sup>332</sup> Another sadly noted his children would not recognise him and even feared him.<sup>333</sup> A pattern of troubled return appears to be correlated with the level of exposure to direct combat action or to other events that provoked trauma or somehow enduringly affected the individual.<sup>334</sup> Manuel Figueiredo exemplifies someone who had to exert continuing efforts towards readaptation. Returning from Guinea to his wife in 1966, his harshness and his emotional – and even sexual – difficulties soon indicated more severe problems in his personal and professional life. Detailing how at the time he considered his African war experience as a personal existential apex – through which he had been able to excel and surpass himself ‘like a hero’ – Figueiredo admitted he could not find meaning in ‘daily normality’ again. Feeling maladjusted and frustrated, he then embarked on a furious and excessive nightlife in Lisbon’s discos until realising that was not enough. In hindsight, Figueiredo explains that the subsequent decision to quit his job, leaving behind his seven-month pregnant wife to travel to Angola to volunteer for the Commando troops reflected how disturbed he was by ‘the twenty-two months I spent in Guinea’. Craving

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<sup>328</sup> Interviewee 33, pp. 34-37, p. 50.

<sup>329</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 38.

<sup>330</sup> See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), pp. 360-362, p. 374; Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), p. 11; Hutching, M. ‘After action...’, in *o.c.* (2011), pp. 233-243.

<sup>331</sup> Interviewee 29, p. 13.

<sup>332</sup> Interviewees 9, p. 28; Interviewee 34, p. 3. See Hutching, M. *idem*, pp. 241.

<sup>333</sup> Interviewee 34, p. 24. See also Interviewee 9, p. 12.

<sup>334</sup> See Anunciação, C. *Coping e stress traumático em combatentes*, Liga dos Combatentes, Lisbon (2010), p. 43; Carvalho, T. & Regadas, D. ‘Experiências de guerra/combate e sintomatologia associada à perturbação pós-stress traumático, em veteranos da guerra colonial portuguesa’, in *Revista de Psicologia Militar*, 19 (2010), pp. 233-257; ‘Military and emergency service personnel’ in *Australian Guidelines ... o.c.* (2007), pp. 141-143.

isolation, he was addicted to ‘the smell of gunpowder’, military action, danger. After several jobs in Africa, he settled permanently in Portugal a few years later, but not without effort and copious instances of further personal and social maladaptation.<sup>335</sup> In his reflections on this period of his life, Figueiredo denounced the inadequacies of his upbringing’s dictate that ‘a man doesn’t cry’ as ‘a complete lie’. This veteran is now aware how he was unable to suitably channel the many psychological challenges troubling him ‘deep down’ and to request help – a trait shared with many Portuguese men of his generation who associated such acknowledgment with ‘unmanly’ weakness.<sup>336</sup>

Obviously, not every ex-combatant manifests so intensely the impact of having fought in a war. However, the great majority of veterans I interviewed, despite considering their social reintegration an overall success, admitted encountering some difficulties (of varying degrees, duration, and starting periods) in readapting to civilian life due to the physical and psychological health consequences of their war experience.<sup>337</sup> Frequently, the effects were not immediately visible. The men might have been initially too enthusiastic about their return to detect anything unusual. José Andrade, for instance, recounted that ‘you don’t notice it immediately, one thinks it’s all fine’. Then, after a few weeks, months, or even longer, ‘war stress’ would appear. Andrade disturbingly found there was ‘too much calmness’ in civilian life.<sup>338</sup> It made many ex-servicemen feel ‘out of place’ and disorientated.<sup>339</sup> In this respect, most narratives converge in providing a recurrent picture of how Andrade and many veterans would be significantly plagued by sleeping difficulties and vivid nightmares, sometimes for a long time after returning.<sup>340</sup> Through impairing nightmares, these men would experience the terror of having to be mobilised to Africa again, be haunted by the faces of fallen comrades, witness again violence suffered or perpetrated, replaying in dreams

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<sup>335</sup> Interviewee 15, pp. 34-35, pp. 17-19. p.2. Such feelings are mentioned by Hynes, in *o.c.* (1998), pp. 28-29; Garton, S. *o.c.* (1996), p. 18, pp. 176-207, pp. 234-235.

<sup>336</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 2, p. 17, p. 38. An aspect hinted at by Infante, T. ‘As consequências psicológicas da Guerra Colonial nos indivíduos com PTSD’ in Teixeira, R. (org.) *o.c.* (2001), pp. 211-215.

<sup>337</sup> See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), pp. 360-362, p. 374; Ribeiro, J. *o.c.* (1999), pp. 58-64.

<sup>338</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 23); 14 (pp. 26-27).

<sup>339</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 15. Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), p. 11.

<sup>340</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 23); 14 (pp. 26-27); 3 (p. 17); 8 (p. 16); 36 (pp. 21-22), 19 (p. 36), 30 (p. 14), amongst others. In some cases, these difficulties started later; some still persist, with less intensity. Remembrance prompts (such as our interview and TV documentaries, for instance) could lead to further disturbances, as mentioned by Interviewees 17, 29, 32, 36. See Stanley, J. ‘Involuntary commemorations...’ in Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), pp. 240-259; Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), pp. 146-147; Ruskin, P. & Talbot, J. (eds.) *Aging and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*, Washington, American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1996.

and sometimes awake ‘all that film’ of their military service, having to cope with ‘quite a few ghosts one can’t get rid of.’<sup>341</sup>

For many, coping with unsettling memories in this immediate post-return phase led to alcoholism and substance abuse, anti-social, delinquent behaviour and violence.<sup>342</sup> For one ex-soldier it was extreme car racing, others got purposely into fights.<sup>343</sup> The most trivial occurrence could trigger excessive reactions and any annoyance was often met with disproportionate aggression. Public altercations made an ex-commando feel ‘I was still in Africa’, and ready to ‘kill people.’<sup>344</sup> The sound of fireworks, a running car engine, a motorcycle, a helicopter would be enough to make some veterans automatically throw themselves onto the ground.<sup>345</sup> Like Figueiredo, many experienced problems on a personal level. Francisco Fitas believes the seriousness of the war impact made him ‘spoil years and years’ of his personal and family life, especially by ‘destroying’ his children’s childhood, a point stressed by others as the worst impact of war.<sup>346</sup> Despite attempts to ignore traumatic memories of his time in Africa, and describing the years after returning as a hazy phase that he is unable to remember clearly, Fitas recalled how he was then a violent, irate man ‘unable to cohabit either with my wife, or with my children’, regretting one incident when his uncontrollable rage nearly killed his eldest son. Since he was a husband and father who ‘could not support them in the best way because I was not quite myself [at the time]’, the ‘sequels brought from war’ transformed his family life.<sup>347</sup> In other instances, persistent difficulties led to break-ups and divorces.<sup>348</sup> Echoing thousands of others, Fitas’s case illustrates the heavy, often long-term toll placed on the families, especially partners and children, of veterans affected by the war – including domestic violence and the acquisition of vicarious psychological conditions affecting veterans – a widespread reality in Portugal being progressively more acknowledged in recent years.<sup>349</sup>

<sup>341</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 23); 29 (p. 20); 19 (p. 36); as experienced by Vietnam veterans; see Hynes, S. *o.c.* (1998), pp. 219-222.

<sup>342</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 23); 11 (pp. 8-9); 30 (pp. 29-31); 15 (p. 17); 36 (p.28). See Anunciação, C. *o.c.* (2010), pp. 121-123. Veterans display higher degrees of these types of disruption and instability, as pinpointed by Garton about the Australian case, in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 28-30, p. 197-201.

<sup>343</sup> Interviewees 30 (pp. 29-31); 11 (pp. 8-9); 36 (pp. 21-22).

<sup>344</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 9, pp. 17-18.

<sup>345</sup> Interviewee 29, p. 20.

<sup>346</sup> Interviewees 1 (p. 23); 19 (p. 25, p. 31); 36 (p. 28); 4 (p. 23); 14 (pp. 26-27).

<sup>347</sup> Interviewees 14 (pp. 26-27); 4 (p. 23); 15 (p. 2, p. 17); 36 (p. 15); 16 (pp. 23-25); 19 (31).

<sup>348</sup> Interviewee 1, p. 23 (twice divorced); Interviewee 33 (divorced and remarried, pp. 34-35); 19 (pp. 31-32); 15 (p. 2, p. 17); 16 (p. 25).

<sup>349</sup> On the impact of war stress of Portuguese veterans on wives and particularly on children, see *Diário de Notícias*, 24th April 2006; 25<sup>th</sup> April 2011; *P2, Público*, 21th March 2011; Ribeiro, J. ‘A família que sofre’ in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 62-64. See also Pereira, G. & Pedras, S. ‘Grupo de suporte para mulheres de veteranos de guerra: Um estudo qualitativo’, in *Análise Psicológica*, 2, XXVIII (2010), pp. 281-294.

Socially, when the ex-combatants manifested visible signs of being disturbed, they were often marked with a stigma of undesirability. Emerging from the civilian population (including a vast mass of ‘invisible’ former combatants) those whose odd or extreme public behaviour could be associated, accurately or not, with their war experience, became examples of the circulating stereotype of the ‘crazy veteran’, who returned ‘a bit funny’ from Africa, and remains ‘taken by the elements’ and ‘out of order’— throughout the years a figure inspiring as much pity, compassion and understanding as suspicion, fear and repulsion. Frequently, as one ex-soldier explained, ‘people used to give me a discount, because I had been in Africa.’<sup>350</sup>

For a diversity of reasons (logistic, practical, financial, cultural, personal) many of those who needed professional support for psychological difficulties did not seek or receive any. Those who did mostly felt it was vital. A former military nurse who had been stationed in Guinea (1968-1970) explained how treatment allowed him to survive his long-lasting depression and anxiety problems, which lasted for around twenty-five years, until about 1995.<sup>351</sup> A former commando who returned psychologically distressed from Angola in 1975 attributes his long and arduous, but overall successful recovery and social reintegration, to extensive psychiatric treatment. In his case, catharsis was achieved through devoting himself fully to studying.<sup>352</sup>

### **‘The marks remain forever’<sup>353</sup>**

In other cases, the consequences of the war had a more visible and physical side. Most of my respondents describe a plethora of health issues emerging after their return from the conflict, some related to injuries suffered, others to their presence in Africa, the latter manifesting in tropical diseases like malaria that some contracted when already in Portugal, or even a life-threatening parasitic cyst.<sup>354</sup> Francisco Fitas lives with a ‘mortar fragment of one centimetre of diameter, and several smaller ones scattered through the thorax.’<sup>355</sup> A significant number of these men are keen on

<sup>350</sup> Interviewees 11 (p. 12); 30 (pp. 29-31, p. 25); 36 (p. 18); 10 (p. 22); 32 (p. 27). See, for instance, *Pública*, 30th January 2011. A notion similar to the ‘archetypal’ disturbed Vietnam combatant mentioned by Bourke, J., *o.c.* (1999), p. 360; and Garton, S. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 236-237.

<sup>351</sup> Interviewee 10, pp. 13-14.

<sup>352</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 15, p. 22.

<sup>353</sup> Interviewee 17, p. 28.

<sup>354</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 17); 19 (p. 21), 2 (p. 1, pp. 13-14), 29 (p. 21); 30 (p. 14); 16 (p. 23).

<sup>355</sup> Interviewee 14, pp. 8-9.



reinforcing a strong, long-lasting impact on their health of their military service, many stating, like an ex-soldier, they ‘became diminished, physically and mentally’ due to it.<sup>356</sup>

This was obvious for those who had been evacuated to Portugal due to the extent of their injuries. This group comprised the thousands of mutilated, blind or otherwise seriously ill servicemen (physically and psychologically) deemed unable to serve for the duration of their military conscription.<sup>357</sup> For these people, war consequences were more visible, immediate and permanent than for the average conscript. When the injuries were recoverable, this return could be even joyful, as in the case of the ex-soldier who described his arrival in Lisbon in 1972 as ‘the biggest joy’ of his life. Like thousands of others in the same situation, although wounded, at least he ‘hadn’t died there.’<sup>358</sup> The return of an evacuee, in a context of difficult communications and lack of accurate news, was a huge concern for the servicemen’s relatives, often unaware of the exact nature of the injuries. For that reason, prior to his arrival in his remote village, this respondent had posted a photograph of himself convalescing in hospital to his mother and girlfriend. It was fundamental for him to dispel the ‘rumour’ that he had been blinded or lost limbs.<sup>359</sup> In other cases, despite considerable injuries, others chose to stress their loyalty to their combat group upon evacuation, asserting they had wanted to continue in Africa fighting alongside their comrades.<sup>360</sup>

The early return of badly wounded men, who appeared in Portugal at an unprecedented scale due to the conflict, was more dramatic.<sup>361</sup> António Moreira was one of such cases. Moreira is a typical man of his generation and background. Born in 1949 in a small village in the Alentejo, in Southern Portugal, he completed four years of schooling, and after having worked in the agricultural sector with his parents, he left his village at sixteen to settle in Lisbon, where he found a better job and progressed in his studies. Conscripted at nineteen, Moreira embarked in November 1970 to Mozambique, from where he returned in 1972, due to a serious landmine injury, as a lower limb

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<sup>356</sup> Interviewee 2, p.14.

<sup>357</sup> The war produced around 30,000 injured evacuees, and around 14,000 physically disabled servicemen (from a total of over 100,000 sick and injured). See Brandão, J. *o.c.* (2008), pp. 8-9; Anunciação, C. *o.c.* (2010), p. 27; Rodrigues, H. ‘Feridas de guerra: Deficientes’ in Afonso, A. & Gomes, C. (eds.) *o.c.* (2001), pp.566-568.

<sup>358</sup> Interviewee 16, pp. 17-18, pp. 20-21, p. 30. Echoing feelings of First World War combatants described by Hynes, S., *o.c.* (1998), p. 72.

<sup>359</sup> Interviewee 16, p. 21, p. 29.

<sup>360</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 27. See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 131-132.

<sup>361</sup> Out of 30,000 wounded servicemen, it is estimated that nearly 4,500 were mutilated and over 14,000 in some way physically disabled. See Medeiros, P. de ‘Hauntings...’, in Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), pp. 201-221, citing Guerra, J., *o.c.* (1996). See also Brandão, J. *o.c.* (2008), p. 8; and Bourke, J. ‘Mutilating’, in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 31-75.

amputee. Visibly moved, Moreira explained that returning in those circumstances was ‘a real psychological catastrophe’ and as ‘painful’ as being amputated. Having to face family and friends as an amputee, he was overwhelmed by countless ‘terrifying’ questions about ‘what am I going to do? what is going to become of my life?! what job can I have? what support am I going to be given?’<sup>362</sup> Focusing significantly on the ‘delicate’ first meeting with his parents after evacuation, this respondent emotionally recalled how:

[his parents reacted] badly – poor things, with a strained smile on their lips – so, son, and such – so and so – and my mother wanted to uncover me – no matter what, she wanted to see as I was [...] I say – mother, it’s missing only – one leg – and my father smiled it’s missing only one leg! and he [...] became tearful, I see – it’s only – only one leg missing?! That’s all, nothing else [...] rest assured – it’s only missing this--- and then I’ll – be able to walk [...] with a prosthesis.<sup>363</sup>

Struggling to come to terms with the amputation, António Moreira’s subsequent life path was shaped by having to adapt to his physical limitations, and the ensuing impact on his personal, family and social life. Such difficulties, he asserts, make a man ‘cry wholeheartedly’ since they ‘bear a lot of weight in someone’s life.’<sup>364</sup> Indeed, for the rather significant group of those seriously wounded in the conflict, it was impossible to escape not only the physical and psychological consequences of their experience, but also an altered social position. As another interviewee who nearly lost his life and spent months in a coma put it, ‘it was really hard’ to deal with family and friends’ ‘pity’ at seeing him ‘completely destroyed.’<sup>365</sup>

In general hidden both by the military authorities and society, these war amputees and seriously injured ex-combatants would soon feel the shame and uneasiness which they were often treated.<sup>366</sup> The circumstances in which most of these evacuees arrived in Portugal – normally by planes landing discreetly in the early hours of the morning – suggested so. A junior officer who served in Guinea between 1965-66 and lost both legs in action, recalled how he found it ‘very strange’ to arrive in that manner. ‘There was nobody around’ and ‘everything very empty’ and:

I remember that the sheet I was wrapped up in [...] --- had slipped, vanished – I remember that someone very worriedly covered me again [...] where am I? and why is

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<sup>362</sup> Interviewee 17, pp. 20-22.

<sup>363</sup> Interviewee 17, pp. 22-23.

<sup>364</sup> Interviewee 17, p. 22, p. 10.

<sup>365</sup> Interviewee 20, p. 21.

<sup>366</sup> Unlike World War One veterans, these mutilated servicemen were not perceived as heroes displaying ‘badges of courage’ in the form of sacrificed limbs for their country. See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 56-60.

there nobody here? And she [the nurse] says – this is the procedure – I--- I remember that well– this is the procedure. [...] [They would] arrive in darkness like this so that nobody would see.<sup>367</sup>

Normally, these men's destination would be Hospital Militar Principal (Main Military Hospital), in Lisbon, where, along with other military institutions, they would receive treatment and remain as inpatients, sometimes indefinitely. Frequently, these men regret the lack of social awareness about their situation that began upon their return and persisted for decades, their predicament being one of the least well-known of the history of the Portuguese colonial war.<sup>368</sup> Unaware of their existence, most of the population had no knowledge that they were living 'hidden in hospital.'<sup>369</sup> Some express their anger at the 'disgraceful' way they were being treated, as broken 'cannon fodder' who had to 'stay there and rot.'<sup>370</sup> A patronising, insensitive institutional attitude towards their disability hurt many of these men, such as the bi-amputee junior *miliciano* officer who found it all to be 'too much' for him on one occasion. When, during a general's wife visit to hospital, she condescendingly addressed him by asking 'do you know you lost your leggies? [...] don't be too upset, because they're going to give you new ones' he swore at her until 'the lady was gone.'<sup>371</sup>

Many of these patients were so severely disabled (often bi-amputees, quad-amputees, blind and other conditions) that the chances of being discharged were very slim.<sup>372</sup> Even for those whose situation was not that extreme, this phase would normally coincide with the beginning of a long recovery entailing physical and psychological suffering.<sup>373</sup> The process often included a long stay in hospital. About this period, the narratives of most of these disabled men frequently highlight not only the countless painful difficulties encountered, but also tales of personal victory over limitations – sometimes acquiring humorous and bizarre tones. Perhaps because my disabled respondents, unlike vulnerable or maladjusted disabled veterans, had behind them decades of a reasonably adapted life at the time of the interview, they were keen to candidly portray their determination, from the beginning in the hospital, to have a life as

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<sup>367</sup> Interviewee 31, pp. 29-30, p. 37.

<sup>368</sup> See Ribeiro, J. 'Os Estropiados da Guerra', *o.c.* (1999), pp. 25-44; Gomes, C., 'O manto de silêncio e abandono' in 'Quotidianos da Guerra Colonial' in *o.c.*, (Vol. 5, 2004), pp.172-173; 'A guerra nunca mais sai do corpo' in *Pública*, 30th January 2011, pp. 16-29; ADFA, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas (several authors) 'O Esquecimento da História' in *o.c.* (1995), pp. 35-60.

<sup>369</sup> Interviewee 16, p. 30. See Chapter Two, pp. 48-51.

<sup>370</sup> Interviewee 19, p. 13.

<sup>371</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 30.

<sup>372</sup> Interviewee 19, pp. 13-14.

<sup>373</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 18); 20 (p. 9, p. 19, p. 23); 30 (p. 11, p. 28), amongst other examples.

‘normal’ as possible and have some fun in the process. For some, hospital recovery could provide a profusion of ‘weird situations’ through which war disabled veterans cooperated to fulfil their dietary, alcohol, sexual and entertainment needs. From smuggling wine and prostitutes into the hospital, to boycotting official events, and organising séances in the wards, they presented a colourful portrait of daily life at the military hospital. One bi-amputee officer asserts that ‘people can’t understand what it was like to live at that time’: it was fundamental for the war disabled to ‘fool about a bit’ in order to cheer themselves up. United by the same concerns, often the inmates developed close friendships, where humour, pranks and irreverence played a big role towards recovery and meant ‘war stress didn’t linger so much.’<sup>374</sup>

One aspect that disabled interviewees have remarked upon is the outings of those who were mobile enough to leave the hospital. There were restrictions on when and how many interns could leave at the same time – not more than two or three on each occasion.<sup>375</sup> Most were rather fearless of punishment since having been injured or disabled, and the capital’s police authorities were well acquainted with the extravagant behaviour of many of ‘those’ veterans, often acting leniently and escorting them discreetly back to the Hospital.<sup>376</sup> Keen not to hide their disability, some used these opportunities to ‘show themselves’ in Lisbon downtown. Recounting how, in the late 1960s, a passing Colonel considered them to be ‘shaming’ the army’s image for appearing publicly in uniform, the bi-amputee officer recalls with certain humour how his wheelchair was being pushed by a serviceman with no arms, using his body as a propeller. Subsequently, an official order forbade the disabled inmates of the Military Hospital to go out in uniform. In a war not officially recognised as such, the regime sought to conceal its human consequences as much as possible. Having acquired their disabilities at the service of the Portuguese Army, many of these veterans felt alienated and angered by such instances of social and institutional shame.<sup>377</sup>

For seriously wounded and mutilated men, after the initial hospital internment, the lengthy and complex ‘martyrdom of recovery’ began. Moreira recalls that he ‘had to relearn how to walk’ and, like many others, in the process underwent a phase of

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<sup>374</sup> Interviewee 31, pp. 31-35.

<sup>375</sup> Interviewee 16, p. 30.

<sup>376</sup> Interviewee 16, p. 9; also Interviewees 30 (p. 28); 28 (p. 32).

<sup>377</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 37); Interviewee 16 (p. 18); 20 (p. 9, p. 19); 17 (pp. 23-25).

frustration and anger that made him seek refuge in alcohol.<sup>378</sup> He spent his twenties trying to cope with his impairment, and only when he started:

to walk better and driving a car that – well – one begins to integrate more – and – alright – everybody around us accepts one a bit better [...] [but] there's that label – the cripple – the squint-eyed, the one-armed – the one-legged, things like this – and this leaves marks on a person [...] it is painful to speak about these things, but they do happen [...] it's really hard [...] then, well – time – smoothen the edges [...] but there's always the mark, isn't it.<sup>379</sup>

For Moreira and men in similar situations the war experience could never be forgotten, their daily limitations acting as a constant, inevitable reminder.<sup>380</sup> Overcoming those limitations to live 'life as normally as possible' became the long-term goal for my disabled interviewees, requiring a complete restructuring of their future on many levels – materially, professionally, personally.<sup>381</sup>

Another domain where the effects of having participated in the conflict could be felt very noticeably was personal relationships. Particularly for those who had been seriously wounded, resuming their pre-war relationships could prove very difficult or altogether impossible. This is a topic not often addressed when considering the Portuguese colonial war.<sup>382</sup> Like many other war amputees, António Moreira experienced difficulties at the most intimate level: the ability to have a significant personal relationship, get married and start a family. Noting that many are embarrassed to approach the subject, Moreira details how his fiancée declined to marry him after his amputation, adding that he knew of some married men who were left by their wives for the same reason – a 'huge shock', in the words of another seriously injured respondent who underwent the same experience.<sup>383</sup> Moreira and others conjure, in a condemning tone, an unsupportive picture in traditional 1960/70s Portugal of underlying or overt social pressure for girlfriends, fiancées and wives to rethink a long-term relationship with a seriously injured veteran, especially for material reasons (and particularly for someone of a working-class background), since these men's professional options would normally be restricted and their earning ability impaired.<sup>384</sup> In the face of social stigma,

<sup>378</sup> Interviewees 20 (p. 9, p. 19); 17 (p. 22).

<sup>379</sup> Interviewee 17, pp. 21-22, p. 28.

<sup>380</sup> As stressed by Evans about Algerian veterans, in *o.c.* (2012), pp. 362-363.

<sup>381</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 38); 17 (p. 21); 28 (pp. 26-30). It is visible a focus on the comfort and security of domesticity, as emphasised by J. Bourke in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 11-30.

<sup>382</sup> Although aesthetically approached, for instance, in A. Ferreira's short film *Deus Não Quis* (2007).

<sup>383</sup> Interviewee 20, p. 9.

<sup>384</sup> Interviewees 17 (pp. 10-11); 20 (p. 9); 16 (p. 11, p. 18). An aspect noted by Garton, in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 107-108.

Moreira was consumed by ‘huge anger’ and frustration at realising the implications of being ‘a mutilated man’; just because ‘within a fraction of a second, one steps onto a mine – and a man is without a leg’, his life ‘completely destroyed.’<sup>385</sup> After some years, he found a supportive, accepting wife with whom he has a family. Nevertheless, Moreira’s account highlights the psychological ‘trauma’ of a disabled, mutilated person seeking to reintegrate socially, ‘especially as far as finding a partner and starting a family’ is concerned. In his experience, it is ‘not easy’ to find a partner ‘who accepts a mutilated man.’<sup>386</sup> However, people like the double-amputee *miliciano* officer contrast such difficulties with alternative behaviours. In his case, his girlfriend – and current wife – refused not to marry him as planned, and continues supporting him after decades of a ‘normal’ life in common.<sup>387</sup>

A remarkable example of social reintegration by a deeply disabled ex-combatant is Artur Santos (b. 1949), an *Alferes miliciano* who lost both hands and his eyesight in Guinea in 1971. For Santos, his disability marked the beginning of the ‘second part’ of his life and the acquisition of a ‘new life awareness’. First, it consisted of a process of ‘survival’, then a lengthy and painful ‘physical recuperation’ followed by a ‘very complicated’ social reintegration. Santos’s narrative reveals how, notwithstanding the severity of his condition and initial traumatic reactions to it, he soon realised that remaining meaningfully alive would require ‘a lot of hard work and effort.’<sup>388</sup> Taking a stance against the prevailing discrimination, Santos challenged perceptions of disabled people as helpless, pitiful individuals.<sup>389</sup> After 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974, with the democratic change, the war disabled were able to emerge and become more visible. Santos became actively involved in ADFA, an association which has ever since been promoting the rehabilitation and social integration of the war disabled. Unlike other severely disabled war veterans, Santos succeeded in transforming his disability into professional success and social currency towards benefiting other disabled veterans.<sup>390</sup>

One aspect pinpointed by nearly all respondents is the lack of governmental support upon their return and after being discharged. With the conflict absorbing vast resources until 1974, and afterwards with the country focused on internal political and institutional restructuring, in practice, the Portuguese Army did not provide fully

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<sup>385</sup> Interviewee 17, p. 11.

<sup>386</sup> Interviewee 17, pp. 27-28. See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 73-75.

<sup>387</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 38.

<sup>388</sup> Interviewee 28, pp. 26-30.

<sup>389</sup> Comparable to notions highlighted by Garton about the Australian context, in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 105-108.

<sup>390</sup> Interviewee 26, p. 34, pp. 43-45. For further information about ADFA, see Chapter Two, pp. 49-50.

adequate support to ex-combatants. Until 1974, and since the war was not officially recognised as such, the average discharged serviceman was merely a citizen who had completed his military duty. After that date, the combatants of the unpopular colonial conflict were not priorities in the socio-political climate of the time. Despite the state's efforts to provide effective health treatment to the war injured, and the provision of limited pensions to disabled veterans unable to find employment, the issue remained in the absence of widely-implemented support strategies for all veterans (including most significantly the injured and disabled after ending formal treatment in military hospitals) towards readjustment into civilian life.<sup>391</sup> That was the case of amputee António Moreira who, after being discharged from hospital, and still unable to walk, and find a job, became a financial 'burden' to his impoverished parents, more acutely in the twenty months before his small state disability allowance began. Decades later, Moreira rationalises, with visible anger, that his motherland 'used me, exploited me, mutilated and abandoned me', a 'sorrow' echoed by others.<sup>392</sup> These men remained untracked by the army, since no nationwide assessment was undertaken upon discharge of the men's condition and their potential future needs, and no structured social reintegration strategies were employed.<sup>393</sup> In the words of a *miliciano* officer, they were carelessly 'thrown to the beasts'.<sup>394</sup> In addition, in the many cases where 'invisible' psychological problems were present, these men were virtually left to their own agency for decades, with veterans from more affluent, educated backgrounds having more access to alternative professional support (the same principle generally applying to veterans needing treatment for physical conditions). Like many others, Manuel Figueiredo stresses the country's 'unpreparedness' to deal with its veterans, as it was unaware 'of the state' they returned in. These personally-affected veterans explain that 'at the time' the much-needed psychological support was not available, their recovery becoming a long, uncharted personal (and family) journey.<sup>395</sup> To counteract these inadequacies, soon veteran associations began to emerge – such as ADFA in 1974 – which claimed suitable State support for ex-combatants.

<sup>391</sup> Interviewees 4 (pp. 26-27); 17 (p. 28); 20 (pp. 7-9); 30 (pp. 11-12, pp. 28-29); 31 (pp. 35-36); 28 (pp. 27-30). See also Cann, J. *o.c.* (2005), pp. 178-80. See ADFA, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas 'VII – Legislação dos Deficientes' in *o.c.* (1995), pp. 167-207; 'A guerra nunca mais sai do corpo' in *Pública*, 30th January 2011, pp. 16-29.

<sup>392</sup> Interviewees 17 (p. 23, p. 11, p. 28, p. 6); 20 (pp. 7-9, pp. 19-21); 28 (p. 48).

<sup>393</sup> Interviewees emphasise a notorious lack of information about available support. A typical case is Interviewee 29, who for years was unaware of his entitlement to some financial support for having been wounded in combat (p. 21).

<sup>394</sup> Interviewee 1, p. 20. See Cann, J. *o.c.* (2005), p. 191.

<sup>395</sup> Interviewees 15 (p. 2); 22 (p. 21); 20 (pp. 7-9, pp. 19-21); 31 (p. 30, p. 37).

**‘Why has this happened to me?’<sup>396</sup>**

Having analysed the main themes of the immediate war legacy in the ex-combatants’ life, it is clear that the returning experience, albeit significantly diverse, shared important common features, such as a general satisfaction about coming home, the recognition of the war experience’s influential impact, the challenges of readapting to civilian life on a personal, social, and professional level, and a widespread willingness to focus on the future, leaving the war experience in the background. For many, such as the war disabled and injured and those significantly psychologically affected, and in a context of insufficient state support, these challenges acquired a more pressing nature, transforming the war into a more prominent feature of the individual narrative. Sharing a common, generational path, for these men this initial period appears to signify the emergence of an underlying Portuguese colonial war veteran identity. Even if not often expressed, the swift 1974 political change and the ensuing social repositioning of the ex-combatants prompted further personal reflection on the meaning of their war experience. For the most part, for these veterans it meant grasping the future as changed people, in a changing country.

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<sup>396</sup> Interviewee 26, p. 32.



## Chapter Five:

### Living the Aftermath

#### I. The Years of Silence

##### **‘A friendlier skeleton’<sup>1</sup>**

The focus of the first part of this Chapter is veteran experience following the initial period of return to Portugal. For most ex-combatants, it became progressively clear that they had taken part in a divisive, non-consensual war.<sup>2</sup> The Portuguese colonial war did not generate any substantial amount of collective recognition and commemoration, and from 1974 until around 2000, private and public memory negotiations surrounding the conflict were largely characterised by complexity and indifference and dominated by a personal and community sense of shame.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps a necessary condition to easing socio-political wounds, individually and collectively, the memory of this conflict became enveloped in widespread silence.<sup>4</sup> Beyond the very nature of the often traumatic military experience frequently encouraging individual silence, the Portuguese conflict had the added dimension of being an end-of-empire war marking a shift of political regime, circumstances which provided further incentives for participants to remain quiet. Like French veterans of the Algerian war, or Argentinian former combatants of the Malvinas/Falklands conflict, these men’s post-war lives unfolded in an environment of forgetting, marginalisation and lack of support framed by a ‘hypocritical social silence.’<sup>5</sup> In the Portuguese case, the post-revolutionary left-wing tone which defined socio-political interactions for many years after 1974 contributed to a higher emphasis on feelings of guilt and shame over the country’s authoritarian, colonial historical path, discouraging the emergence of narratives more inclusive and less chastising of war

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<sup>1</sup> Interviewee 1, p. 15, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> See Barata, M., ‘Prefácio’ in Estado-Maior do Exército, Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África (CECA) *Resenha histórico-militar das campanhas de África (1961-1974)*, Vol. 1. *Enquadramento Geral* (1988), pp. 5-12. Similarly to Algeria’s case studied by Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), pp. 364-65; see also Ashplant et al, *o.c.* (2000), pp. 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Medeiros’s example of Cruzeiro’s assessments in 1993, in ‘Hauntings...’ in *o.c.* (2000), p. 206.

<sup>4</sup> Cubitt, G. *o.c.* (2007), pp. 230-231.

<sup>5</sup> Quoting Lorenz, F. *Las guerras por Malvinas*, Buenos Aires, Edhasa (2006), pp. 283-284, p. 305; see also Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), pp. 365-367; Ashplant et al, *o.c.* (2000), p. 24; Ribeiro, J. *o.c.* (1999), pp. 8-9; Ribeiro, M. *o.c.* (2004), pp. 248-258; Vecchi, R. *o.c.* (2010), pp. 162-188.

veterans. This complex interconnection between private and public silence and shame illuminates how, unlike the World War One Australian veterans studied by Thomson, these Portuguese ex-combatants lacked (and to a great extent still lacked at the time of the interview) an established public narrative of participation in the war they could relate to or reject.<sup>6</sup> There was no powerful national legend shaping individual memories, and this war did not lend itself to selectively produce a celebratory national history – this was an embarrassing war which pushed the ex-combatant identity into the social margins.<sup>7</sup> Such long-term absence of cohesive cultural war narratives deprived most ex-combatants of effective means to articulate, structure and understand their war experiences, therefore providing, beyond marginalisation and displacement, particularly acute instances of alienation and silencing of individual memory, which might be described as an ‘internalised trauma.’<sup>8</sup>

Responding to this specific historical context, and its characteristic socio-cultural, political concerns, the indifference of official narratives to the war and its former combatants and the lack of public debate blocked the emergence of common individual memories and somehow diluted a visible ex-combatant identity.<sup>9</sup> In the face of virtual silence about the colonial war, in Portugal these conditions meant it took longer than in France after Algeria for veterans’ organisations to develop a public counter-narrative of their war experiences. In this initial phase, the underlying narrative, similar to the French case, of ex-combatants as victims both of ‘the pointless war itself and of post-war neglect’ appears to have mainly formed in private remembrance.<sup>10</sup>

Although certain aspects of private memories will remain impossible to fully assimilate within public discourses, the oral history dialogue established with these ex-combatants over three decades after the end of the conflict allows participants to trace perceptions of personal and collective silence, expanding the social history of the Portuguese colonial war into a more comprehensive, alternative reflective space.<sup>11</sup> In composing the narratives of their experiences, these veterans illuminate a sharp interrelation of past and present. When considering the period until around 2000, most men offer a depiction of a chronologically long and loosely-defined phase of individual

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<sup>6</sup> Although a process not without tensions. See Thomson, A. ‘The Anzac legend. Exploring national myth and memory in Australia’ in Samuel, R. & Thompson, P. (eds.) *o.c.* (1990), pp. 73-82; Ashplant et al, *o.c.* (2000), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> See Thomson, A. *o.c.* (1994), p. 221; Ashplant et al, *o.c.* (2000), p. 49; Ribeiro, M. & Vecchi, R. (org.) ‘Introdução’ in *o.c.* (2011), pp. 21-32; Vecchi, R. *o.c.* (2010), pp. 21-32.

<sup>8</sup> Ashplant et al, *o.c.* (2000), pp. 14-15; Thomson, A. *o.c.* (1994), p. 216.

<sup>9</sup> Ashplant et al, *o.c.* (2000), p. 19-20.

<sup>10</sup> Ashplant et al, *o. c.* (2000), p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Ashplant et al, *o. c.* p. 49, p. 20 ; Thomson, A. *o.c.* (1994), p. 216.

and collective silence about the war often characterised by disorientation and personal struggle. Framed by a contrasting current revival of the topic – and expressed through the interview, which for most is a rare opportunity of critically recounting their past in the present – those years of silence are frequently defined as unpleasant and sometimes wasted.

Such silence, however, is not only socio-cultural but also manifests in a highly subjective manner. Following their return and social reintegration, each ex-combatant's personality, idiosyncrasies and circumstances to a great extent determined the individual adoption or absence of varied war-related remembrance. The individual years of silence become an internal category not necessarily reflecting society's predominant public memory developments. For instance, what remained silent in 1994 for lack of receptive remembrance arenas can remain silent in a more open context in 2004, or even nowadays. For many, silence still persists. For some, it was broken years ago. This multifaceted war veteran silence encompasses the silence of the disabled, and of the many affected by physical and psychological health problems that derived from the war, or even of those who simply cannot come to terms with their war experience. It is impossible to measure their individual pain and the way it visibly erupts into their existence, interplaying with every aspect of their personal, family and social lives. With the view of understanding silence in the first person, this Chapter will assess the continuing impact of war on the ex-combatants, exploring the main themes the men associate with this period (1974-2000) – and often beyond – to probe how veterans make sense of their individual war experience.

Albeit to varying degrees, as the years advanced restructuring their everyday life became a challenge for many ex-combatants. The consequences of having taken part in an armed conflict operated individually on many levels, but what these men had in common was that as the post-war period progressed, the need for personal and social readjustment became more pressing on many fronts: family, professionally, financially, psychologically, physically, and so forth. Frequently, the memory of their war experience constituted the main obstacle to readjustment, since those who 'went to war never return the same.'<sup>12</sup> The conviction of a pilot who saw action in Guinea and Angola (1971-1974) is that the war affected virtually every person who took part in it. In order to function, he and other veterans, he explains figuratively, accept they have to

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<sup>12</sup> Interviewee 28, p. 53.

keep their personal ‘skeleton’ firmly ‘locked up inside the closet’; as the skeleton often emerges out of the closet, the solution is to transform it into a ‘friendlier skeleton’ by picturing that past in ‘the best possible manner.’<sup>13</sup>

Beyond illustrating a need for reworking individual war memories to adjust and function, such imagery suggests the continuing impact of war manifesting in multiple ways, subtle or obvious. Avelino Oliveira, Manuel Figueiredo and most respondents acknowledged that, during the years, their everyday personal and social lives have been greatly influenced by their participation in the war.<sup>14</sup> In the latter case, the interviewee classifies his involvement in the colonial conflict as ‘a total disaster.’<sup>15</sup> This is not simply about recollecting traumatic events experienced: these men emphasise the experience as a whole as ‘marking one forever in many aspects’, despite their attempts to lead a ‘normal life’, at least ‘apparently.’<sup>16</sup>

### **‘Maybe I’m fine’<sup>17</sup>**

Whilst some ex-combatants improved from initial psychological difficulties as the years elapsed, others continued to struggle with them or began to manifest them later – like António Moreira, who explains how his ‘psychological wounds’ are becoming worse with the passage of time.<sup>18</sup> In the cases where these psychological marks became more apparent, posttraumatic war stress is often mentioned by the veterans. Having only been legally recognised in Portugal as an illness in 1999, a notorious lack of information about its characteristics amongst ex-combatants is visible. In Portuguese mainstream media or other socio-cultural arenas, a ‘war stressed’ veteran is someone whose anti-social or otherwise inadequate behaviour receives such a label. However, the decades-long lack of efficient, widespread official support, and the inability or persistent reluctance of many affected veterans to seek help, renders such ready-made categorisations ineffectual as many genuine veteran sufferers (including, secondarily, their families) have remained effectively undiagnosed. For sure, war stress cases found

<sup>13</sup> Interviewee 1, p. 15, p. 19, respectively. This interviewee advances an estimated percentage as high as 95% of participants returning ‘with problems’.

<sup>14</sup> Interviewees 3 (p. 21); 15 (p. 30, p. 35); 1 (pp. 19-20); 4 (pp. 7-8, p. 21, p. 24, p. 28); 26 (pp. 35-36); 27 (p. 12); 10 (pp. 13-14), amongst other examples.

<sup>15</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 36, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> Interviewees 18 (p. 21); 15 (p. 30); 30 (p. 36); 31 (p. 25, p. 39).

<sup>17</sup> Interviewee 32, pp. 13-15, 34-35.

<sup>18</sup> Interviewees 17 (p. 24); 20 (p. 24).

fertile ground to develop in silence, which exerted further damaging and negative psychological impact, as stressed by Pereira et al.<sup>19</sup>

A great number of my sample admit they are unable to determine if the consequences of the war they recognise in their lives indicate psychological impact, past or current.<sup>20</sup> Like many others, Júlio Lobo typifies a common uncertain and non-committal response by stating ‘maybe I’m fine, I don’t know if I’m fine’ when trying to justify his ‘aggressiveness’ and forgetting coping strategies, and comparing it to others displaying more extreme behaviours.<sup>21</sup> Another interviewee refused to be seen by an expert since he was unwilling to pursue any ‘imaginary illnesses.’<sup>22</sup>

Even if some deny such negative personal ‘marks’, choosing to focus on memories of more positive aspects such as comradeship and leisure, most add that they are aware that many fellow veterans became ‘really traumatised.’<sup>23</sup> My interviewees cite their own or others’ examples, recounting chronological variations in psychological turmoil. In fact, living with such psychological difficulties, battling against them or witnessing them became commonplace for many ex-combatants, being an aspect frequently associated with their veteran identity.<sup>24</sup> Significantly, a few respondents believe the ‘real’ post-traumatic war stress sufferers, typically a ‘jungle man’ who served in operational zones, attempt not to exhibit the problem, enduring it privately – which they contrast with attention-seeking veterans, who, sometimes for opportunistic reasons, claim that they are going to ‘smash everything and kill everyone.’<sup>25</sup>

In certain cases, the damage was so deep from the onset that it clearly required professional treatment. That was the case of Francisco Fitas, who admits that he was ‘really in a bad way’ before finally finding some inner balance in recent years. Fitas attributes the impairing stress which plagued him for many years to keeping his war memories to himself, never ‘opening up’, explaining his fears of not knowing if he would ever be able to overcome his problem. Most symptoms disappeared, but he remains unable to drive on his own, for instance.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Pereira et al ‘PTSD, Psicopatologia e Tipo de Família em Veteranos de Guerra Colonial Portuguesa’, in *Revista de Psicologia Militar*, 19 (2010), p. 225; Anunciação, C. o.c. (2010), p. 34; see Chapter Two, pp. 48-51.

<sup>20</sup> Interviewees 22 (p. 17); 2 (p. 6); 32 (pp. 34-35), amongst others.

<sup>21</sup> Interviewee 32, pp.13-15, pp. 34-35. See also Interviewee 12, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> Interviewee 16, p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> Interviewee 11, pp. 14-16.

<sup>24</sup> Interviewees 11 (p. 18); 13 (p. 14); 10 (pp. 13-14); 17 (p. 28); 14 (p. 10); 4 (p. 10, p. 24); 36 (p. 15); 7 (p. 12); 30 (pp. 33-34); 20 (p.24).

<sup>25</sup> Interviewees 29 (p. 36.); 26 (p. 30).

<sup>26</sup> Interviewee 14, pp. 9-10, pp. 25-26.

Fitas is not entirely representative. Supported by recent studies, this research indicates that, throughout the years, most veterans suffering from varied psychological/psychiatric disturbances, or specifically from posttraumatic war stress, appear never to have had their conditions clinically diagnosed or even received any treatment.<sup>27</sup> In this context, a wide range of afflictions, varying in degree and scope, has manifested during the course of time. The interviews reveal how many ex-combatants have developed persistent feelings of inadequacy, alienation, frustration, aggressiveness, fear and anger.<sup>28</sup> Manuel Figueiredo resents his permanent need to avoid externalising aggression, adding that he ‘was made into this’ due to his military service. To this day, he feels ‘permanently angry with someone.’<sup>29</sup> To employ Bourke’s term, nobody ‘unprogrammed’ Figueiredo out of war.<sup>30</sup> Another respondent expressed a continuing ‘anger also for the fact of having been there wasting time, the time of our youth.’<sup>31</sup> A pilot stated that he has always been ‘a bit inconstant’ looking for something undetermined since returning in 1974, and admitting to being ‘a violent bloke.’<sup>32</sup> Luís Sá feels that the war effected a ‘character mutation’ in him, transforming him into a reclusive, life-weary person who feels a failure as a human being.<sup>33</sup> Speaking about themselves or about comrades, respondents mention those veterans who are ‘really in a mess’, those who remain unhealthily obsessed with their military service in Africa, and for years struggled to function on a personal and social basis.<sup>34</sup> Frequently unsupported and facing social maladjustment, some may become ‘potentially dangerous people’, as stressed by an ex-commando. ‘Sort of drifting’ during the years, and with knowledge of guns and bombs, ‘they might explode at any moment.’<sup>35</sup> Although interviewees like this former commando who experienced similar problems after some time overall managed to conquer them, their narratives contemplate those who could never readjust after their return. They know of people like ‘Crazy Joe’, who has been in Guinea and is ‘all messed up’, and ‘is now a rag who just roams the streets.’ Those who were unable to overcome their afflictions during the years sometimes found themselves living at the

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<sup>27</sup> See Maia, A. et al *Por baixo... o.c.* (2006), pp. 11-28. Maia et al ‘s research suggest high levels of PTSD present in Portugal in comparison with war veterans of other conflicts (p. 27).

<sup>28</sup> As noted by Pereira et al ‘PTSD...’, in *o.c.* (2010), p. 213.

<sup>29</sup> Interviewees 15 (pp. 24-26, p. 36, p. 39); 4 (p. 21, 24, p. 28); 17 (p. 24).

<sup>30</sup> Bourke, J. ‘Return to Civilian Life’, in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 352-353.

<sup>31</sup> Interviewee 25, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Interviewee 1, p. 19, p. 22. Also Interviewee 19, p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 30.

<sup>34</sup> Common to other conflicts, as Garton puts it, S. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 246-247.

<sup>35</sup> Interviewees 36 (p. 18, p. 28); 15 (pp. 24-26); 32 (pp. 27-28).

margins of society: homeless or living in extreme conditions of poverty and neglect, or in jail.<sup>36</sup>

In many different ways, the everyday life of most ex-combatants displays repercussions of their involvement in war. The veterans' narratives depict how, throughout the years, they perceive numerous facets of their existence to be affected by the impact of war. Many became limiting, manifesting in avoidance and persistent traumatic responses to the past. For many, it became 'terrible' and practically impossible to watch war films or documentaries. Transported to their military experiences, they relive the past and become deeply unsettled.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, something as vital as sleep is one of the domains more often mentioned by the ex-combatants as an arena for disruption, as during the years these men have been 'tormented' and 'mortified' by vivid and frequent war nightmares.<sup>38</sup> A former bazooka handler mentioned the years of constant nightmares – which sometimes culminated in the destruction of the bedroom itself – he had to endure:

Some years ago, four, five, six years, I don't know, ten years ago – I would wake up at night – guys running after me [...] shooting and chasing me, and I couldn't run – I would wake up – the whole family would wake up [...] I would wake up in that distress.<sup>39</sup>

For many, the sensory triggers so commonly activated after return remained for years, prompting instinctive defensive reactions and remembering. Fireworks, thunder, roaring mechanical sounds, and similar take many veterans back to war bombardment episodes. Feeling that 'pull through the body', some, like José Andrade some time after returning from Angola, would throw themselves onto the ground during a local firework display.<sup>40</sup> Others have retained a continual unsettling memory of the smell of blood and cordite, or the 'indescribable smell of death' which makes all war incidents 'spring up to memory immediately' evoking the 'terrible' smell and noise of warfare, and the harrowing screams of 'despair'.<sup>41</sup> Having these reactions, Manuel Figueiredo explains,

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<sup>36</sup> Interviewees 10 (p. 22); 32 (p. 27); 4 (p. 23). See, for instance article by Neves, H. 'Ex-combatentes viraram sem-abrigo', in *Jornal de Notícias*, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008, and also a listing of recent examples of homelessness and social exclusion of ex-combatants at [http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/index\\_ACUP.htm](http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/index_ACUP.htm); and 'A guerra nunca mais...' in *o.c.*, 30th January 2011, pp. 16-29; see also Chapter Two, p. 75.

<sup>37</sup> Interviewees 22 (p. 19); 32 (p. 24); 10 (p. 8, p. 13, p. 17). See Stanley, J. 'Involuntary commemorations...' in *o.c.* (2004), pp. 240-259.

<sup>38</sup> Interviewees 18 (pp. 21-22); 10 (p. 8, p. 13 and p. 17); 22 (p. 24); 12 (p. 19); 25 (p. 32); 32 (p. 34); 20 (pp. 9-10, p. 24); 11 (p. 14); 30 (p. 14, pp. 33-34).

<sup>39</sup> Interviewee 19, p. 22, p. 36.

<sup>40</sup> Interviewees 22 (p. 24, p. 13); 19 (p. 36); 31 (pp. 19-20); 9 (p. 25); 4 (p. 10).

<sup>41</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 20, p. 24, p. 26); 15 (p. 18). The impact of the smell of death on surviving servicemen is an aspect mentioned by Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1996), p. 214.

is ‘like a virus’, since ‘the self-defence mechanism, of controlling aggressiveness to have to fight, of having to go ahead and fire – it’s all within for the rest of our life – that doesn’t go away!’<sup>42</sup>

In addition, amongst ex-combatants alcoholism sometimes reached severe and destructive levels. In fact, it is not uncommon for these ex-combatants to have resorted to alcohol as a coping strategy (and many still do), in an attempt to alienate themselves from uncomfortable war memories. For some, the addiction started in Africa and they returned from their military service as ‘compulsive drinkers.’<sup>43</sup> Stressing that he is not ashamed to delve into the subject, José Andrade admitted he was one of such cases. His serious alcohol dependency began in Africa, and he ‘nearly hit the bottom with alcohol’. With his professional and personal life on the verge of total collapse, and aware of the gravity of his condition, Andrade underwent a successful treatment, becoming a teetotaler in 1997. Despite his success story, like most respondents Andrade notes how alcoholism is widespread amongst veterans. Many mention examples of comrades they know battling with this addiction. Whilst there are some who managed to ‘balance things out’, others became ‘completely deteriorated’, ‘always drunk – always sinking into alcohol’, and sometimes engaging in violent anti-social behaviour.<sup>44</sup>

Another very significant long-term impact of the war affecting the lives of many Portuguese ex-combatants has unfolded within the family environment.<sup>45</sup> For them, the most private arena of life frequently mirrors the challenging circumstances veterans normally face elsewhere. Observing the types of war veterans’ family dynamics provides clues as to the extension of the war’s presence in their personal lives and, more broadly, its prevalence in Portuguese society. In this context, even when exact causes are not easily identifiable, most respondents mention their belief that their war experience has affected their family life – for some, ‘there were things that were lost that were impossible to recover.’<sup>46</sup> For instance, an ex-soldier explains how his wife and children, in face of his excessive anger, often wonder ‘would you be the way you are if you hadn’t gone there [to Guinea]?’. Like many others, my respondent’s conviction is that he was changed by the war, although, to the disagreement of his family, he considers himself a ‘normal’ person, living a ‘normal’ life. Considering years of

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<sup>42</sup> Interviewee 15, pp. 23-25. See Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), p. 61.

<sup>43</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> Interviewees 4 (pp. 7-8, p. 10, pp. 21-24, p. 28); 13 (p. 14); 11 (p. 18, p. 14); 16 (pp. 25-26); 27 (p. 21).

<sup>45</sup> Interviewees 36 (pp. 29-31); 21 (pp. 24-25); 14 (pp. 26-27); 15 (p. 2), amongst others.

<sup>46</sup> Interviewee 5, p. 16.



difficult interactions, this interviewee does admit the possibility that his family life has been ‘greatly damaged’ by consequences of his participation in the colonial war.<sup>47</sup> This is a typical example of veteran discourse undervaluing years of personal difficulties. A few respondents emphasise how they don’t ‘notice’ anything unusual, it is their families who consider their behaviour ‘weird’, over-preoccupied with their war past, or that ‘most of the times I’m funny in my head.’<sup>48</sup> A wife of one of the respondents interrupted our interview with her quick verdict of ‘they’re all crazy!’. Dismissing similar comments, another veteran does not believe his life is too affected ‘because I’m not crazy, I don’t do silly things.’<sup>49</sup>

In this context, being visibly ‘crazy’ normally relates to those cases where negative war effects also manifest in prolonged domestic violence (physical and psychological) and vicarious psychological health problems of close family members – such as secondary war posttraumatic stress, depressive states and similar – an aspect prevalent amongst veteran families. Those ex-combatants have been unable to adjust to the ‘new reality’ of their lives – many of them suffering from undiagnosed and untreated posttraumatic stress disorder, and frequently resorting to addictions and aggression to cope. In this regard, many Portuguese families have been enduring years of suffering in dealing with challenged veterans. In a veteran’s words ‘generations in a row’ are affected.<sup>50</sup>

Until finding effective professional help, Francisco Fitas was one of these veterans. For some years after his return from Angola in 1964, he underwent a ‘horrible phase’ in his life. The frequent and dangerous violence he employed towards his family was an unconscious outlet for all the repressed anger brought from the war. Particularly regretful of the incident when he almost killed his son in a fit of rage, Fitas recounts how he ‘nearly went mad’ during that period and only after recovery he managed to experience a satisfying family life.<sup>51</sup> In many other instances, however, such problems persisted, an aspect which contributed to widespread conjugal difficulties for Portuguese war veterans and a significant divorce rate amongst this group, although, due to socio-cultural factors, not as high as expected in comparison to veterans of other

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<sup>47</sup> Interviewee 2, p. 6, p. 8, p. 11. See also Interviewee 15, p. 35.

<sup>48</sup> Interviewee 16, pp. 24-25.

<sup>49</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 32); 26 (p. 30).

<sup>50</sup> Interviewees 36 (pp. 26-28); 11 (p. 14); 1 (p. 19); 13 (pp. 14-15); 30 (p. 38); 15 (p. 36, p. 43); 30 (p. 39); 16 (p. 9, p. 23); 2 (p. 18).

<sup>51</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 9.

conflicts such as Vietnam, for instance.<sup>52</sup> In effect, the general well-being and equilibrium of veterans is fundamentally dependent on family support and the level of functionality displayed by their close family unit. Despite many difficulties arising from the war, an ex-soldier in Mozambique (1968-1970) expressed his joy at having fulfilled his dreams of creating a meaningful and loving family life.<sup>53</sup> He attributes his long-term stability to his family's unconditional support, since

I feel tenderness, I feel support, and that's a great start [to be alright]. I feel an amazing family support. And when one has an amazing family support of children, wife – that helps a lot – that overcomes everything and everyone – that's what makes me feel good.<sup>54</sup>

Nonetheless, for a great number of veterans such support has not been enough. Luís Sá (b. 1951) was one of the cases in which successful reintegration only took place after years of strenuous attempts. After marrying his current wife in 1977, two years after his return from Angola, this former commando quickly realised that a thorny personal path lied ahead of him. Sá emphasises that, unlike others who did not even manage that, he did 'build' a family, albeit with 'massive suffering', particularly for his wife. Despite essential family and health professionals' support, Sá explains how, for years, he was 'an arse thinking I would resolve the problems on my own' so that he could become 'a normal citizen in his society.' In a typical example, normally aggressive and distant at home, outside Sá also engaged in 'uncontrollable' alcoholic sprees and violent incidents. Destructive behaviour, alienation and suicidal thoughts were the norm. On those occasions, Sá felt his life had no meaning at all.<sup>55</sup> For many years emotionally and physically unavailable to fully participate in the running of the household and the upbringing of his two children, often requiring psychiatric health care and other forms of deeply involved support, Sá described in detail the many daily challenges which affected his family life mainly during the first two decades after his return from Africa. At points struggling with his painful narrative, Sá explains how 'these crosses [one has to bear] drag themselves throughout life--- (emphatic pause) this is a trauma, it is a drama, that the combatants carry.'<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Namely, the conservatism of Portuguese society, which for long ascribed to wives a carer's role, irrespective of challenging conjugal circumstances. See Interviewees 16 (p. 25); 1 (p. 19); 15 (p. 44). See Pereira, G. & Pedras, S. 'Grupo de suporte ...', in *o.c.* (2010), p. 285; pp. 290-291.

<sup>53</sup> Like veterans of other conflicts, expressing the strong motivation and desire of resume his civilian personal and family life. See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 364.

<sup>54</sup> Interviewees 13 (p. 9, p. 15); 11 (p. 14); 36 (p. 26). On the importance of family's social support, see Hunt, in. *o.c.* (2011), pp. 79-80; pp. 156-160

<sup>55</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 26, p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> Interviewee 36, pp. 15-17.

**‘Until the day I die’<sup>57</sup>**

Such psychological difficulties also manifest in these men’s professional life. Although most interviewees established reasonably stable paths on this level, a great number identified their continuing efforts in holding a rewarding and well-adjusted role in their jobs and occupations. As the years progressed, finding long-term employment has been a common cause of concern for many war veterans, especially those more visibly affected by their war experiences. In a few instances, the war appears to have dictated career choices or developments, and life directions.<sup>58</sup> A commando officer who served in Angola in 1969 admits living with the insurmountable frustration of not having been able to complete his first degree after being severely wounded.<sup>59</sup> Manuel Figueiredo recounts how, a few years after his return, his ‘aggressiveness’ in the workplace made him ‘rightly’ lose his job.<sup>60</sup> For an ex-soldier who emigrated to the United Kingdom a few years after returning from Guinea in 1970, his job – where he remained for over two decades – functioned as the perfect arena ‘to cleanse the traumas of war.’<sup>61</sup> Significantly, perhaps due to a combination of wider international professional options more accessible after the political change of 1974, and, in some cases, no disinclination to be geographically and culturally distant from the country that conscripted them, many ex-combatants left to work and live abroad. Emigration appears to be a solution found by a great number of Portuguese veterans.<sup>62</sup>

The complex interplay between war experience and readaptation to civilian life became particularly challenging for former officers. The sharp contrast between the power and status they had commanded in Africa and the perceived anonymity facing them as civilians gave rise to long-term feelings of anger and frustration that ended up shaping the lives of people like Miguel Almeida and Victor Palma. The latter defines this persistent dissatisfaction as ‘the stress nobody talks about’, a stress which does not stem from having been exposed to brutal war episodes, but to have abruptly lost an ‘immense power’, namely after having been the commander of three-hundred men to having to adapt to ‘work in an office’ ‘enduring’ the orders of someone else. As Palma reflectively remarks, ‘a great majority [of former officers] went ahead to live an

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<sup>57</sup> Interviewee 26, pp. 35-36.

<sup>58</sup> Interviewees 1 (p.33); 33 (pp. 36-37); 15 (pp.17-18, p.25, p. 38, p. 43).

<sup>59</sup> Interviewee 20, pp. 23-24.

<sup>60</sup> Interviewee 15, pp. 24-25.

<sup>61</sup> Interviewee 30, pp. 14-15.

<sup>62</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 25); 36 (p. 18); 2 (p. 1); 26 (pp. 27-28).

unhappy life, almost their entire life, due to lack of power.’ After their war experience, it was ‘impossible’ or ‘very difficult’ for these men to maintain a ‘normal’ job or career, and for years they struggled to recapture their place in civil society. According to him, some ‘were forever unable to return to reality’. In Palma’s instance, the solution was to become self-employed, developing a creative, independent career.<sup>63</sup>

In these ex-combatants’ narratives, another ever-present domain concerning everyday life is the one related to the physical consequences of war – although they coexist with the psychological effects of war. Having taken part in an armed conflict in Africa that demanded from most direct military action, it is not surprising that virtually all my interviewees feel that they have been suffering, in varying degrees, ‘lifelong marks’ of war. In this instance, I am excluding the evident case of amputees, those who lost their eyesight, hearing, and were somehow severely injured, and whose physical and psychological sequels were immediately disabling and/or life-changing and ‘will only go away when one is six feet under.’<sup>64</sup> Some of these men pinpoint how they perceive themselves more as a disabled person above the veteran identity.<sup>65</sup> Significantly, and with the passage of time, these men’s place in society and the choices available to them began to reflect, to some extent, a recycling of traditional notions surrounding disability – which alternated between pity and exclusion – that persisted in Portuguese society until recently.<sup>66</sup> In this respect, a few disabled interviewees noted an improvement if not in material conditions, at least in the social perception of disability, something to which their increasing associative efforts have also contributed.<sup>67</sup> Despite perhaps not being representative of a great number of disabled veterans who were unable to achieve adaptation to such a level, most disabled interviewees managed to experience life as ‘normally’ as possible despite their limitations – Artur Santos, ‘whose hands are missing and is almost blind’, being an outstanding example of a successful life ‘reconversion’ intent on allowing only ‘minimal damage’ to occur.<sup>68</sup> In this respect, several examples were highlighted in the previous Chapter.

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<sup>63</sup> Interviewees 8 (p. 25); 33 (p. 22, pp. 28-31, p. 58); 1 (p. 20).

<sup>64</sup> Interviewee 20, p. 23.

<sup>65</sup> Interviewee 31 (p. 39); 28 (p. 48); 20 (p. 22).

<sup>66</sup> Interviewee 28 (p. 44); 17 (p. 28). Reflecting Bourke’s findings, this aspect shows how in Portugal the experience of the colonial war spread an awareness of disability to wider sections of the population. See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 31-76.

<sup>67</sup> Interviewee 16, p. 22.

<sup>68</sup> Interviewee 28, p. 34. See also article by Campos, Â. ‘Vivendo com a guerra: uma entrevista com o Sr. A. Fortuna’, in *Estudos Históricos*, CPDOC – Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil, 22, 43, *Memória* (2009), pp. 45-64.

Apart from such obvious cases, many veterans emphasise how they ‘went to war healthy’ and subsequently became ‘unwell’ because of it.<sup>69</sup> For some, these physical consequences, although inconvenient and presenting a ‘limitation’, are relatively secondary; others seek to demonstrate that their military conscription effectively ‘ruined’ their long-term health.<sup>70</sup> Certainly, it is expected that some veterans may overemphasise how determining the war was for medical conditions developed later, but the high relevance attributed by many of them to this factor illustrates how during the years veterans have been feeling continuously aggrieved by the conflict. In the words of Victor Palma, ‘I have a wretched health (laughter) because of that [war]’. Palma claims that ‘nearly all’ of his comrades have become ‘physically weakened’, suffering from intestinal, stomach, and kidney conditions due to the insalubrious context in which their military commission took place.<sup>71</sup> In some cases, however, the correlation is more obvious. A Transmissions soldier had to learn to live with shrapnel fragments dangerously lodged near his spinal cord, facing daily the prospect of suddenly becoming paralysed.<sup>72</sup> Another interviewee lost one kidney, had his hearing impaired and retained substantial scarring on his legs and shoulders. Despite being physically ‘diminished’, throughout the years, however, he endeavoured to live as normally as possible.<sup>73</sup>

A case in point is former military driver Daniel Cunha. Born in a seaside Northern town in 1947, Cunha was seriously injured in a vehicle accident in Angola in 1971 in the course of a military operation. Cunha explains how ‘until the day I die’, he will be unable to dismiss the physical scars of his experience. During everyday gestures like shaving and brushing his teeth, ‘there the colonial war springs to mind – I’m like this just because there was the colonial war.’ This interviewee also manifested his uneasiness at the social judgements that are often made about his scars, which sometimes acquire criminal or anti-social connotations in people, mainly belonging to younger generations, unaware of their origin. His scars becoming also psychological, Cunha believes, echoing others, that ‘only death’ will resolve such ‘very deep marks’. In the meantime, he tries to ‘lead life as good as I can’ and ‘ignore all these problems’ as much as possible, and with difficulty. However, as far as he is concerned, thirty-five years after serving in Angola, ‘I still live in the colonial war [...] I haven’t turned away

<sup>69</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 23); 30 (pp. 27-28); 33 (p. 53).

<sup>70</sup> Interviewees 18 (p. 21); 29 (p. 15); 14 (p. 9). Echoing health concerns of Australian Vietnam veterans mentioned by Garton, S. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 228-239.

<sup>71</sup> Interviewees 33 (p. 53); 29 (p. 13, p. 36, p. 22); 10 (p. 23).

<sup>72</sup> Interviewee 29, p. 13, p. 36, p. 22.

<sup>73</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 14, pp. 33-34.

from it yet', a view which illustrates how physical and psychological war consequences remain deeply entangled.<sup>74</sup> In effect, this research indicates how war veterans prioritise the existence of long-term real or perceived debilitating health problems arising from participation in the colonial war. Judging from the sample, there appears to be a prevalence of generalised health problems within this group as a whole, affecting their identity, personal and professional lives.<sup>75</sup>

However, some of the respondents who strongly emphasised the negative influence of the war paradoxically were also able to encounter positive effects of the conflict. That is the case, for example, of Manuel Figueiredo, who, echoing others, believes that such experience transformed him into a 'tough person', 'ready' to face 'anything' and 'overcome it' in civilian life. Quite a few interviewees stress how they 'enriched' themselves psychologically, the intensity and diversity of their experience providing ample and valuable life lessons, including developing their 'own autonomy', 'self-determining' their actions, becoming fearless, more mature in social interactions, and acquiring 'moral strength' and 'capacity for suffering' – characteristics always present afterwards, being intimately felt even if they 'don't speak about it.'<sup>76</sup> For some, it was worthwhile to have 'gone through that hardship' since the war 'made men out of us.'<sup>77</sup>

### **'What was this war for?'**<sup>78</sup>

For many ex-combatants, the advancing years allowed the opportunity to 'more coldly, or more calmly' undertake a personal reflection about their participation in the colonial war and the wider meaning of the conflict.<sup>79</sup> Virtually the entire sample associates the passage of time with reaching the conclusion – or reinforcing a previous perspective now refined at the time of the interview – of the pointlessness of having been a part of the war. In this respect, an ex-soldier mentions that as years elapsed they acquired 'a different mentality', 'understanding the situation better' and considering their compulsory participation as useless, 'in vain', 'a mistake' and 'sheer stupidity',

<sup>74</sup> Interviewees 26 (pp. 35-36, pp. 42-43); 19 (p. 25); 17 (p. 28).

<sup>75</sup> Confirming recent research on the physical impact of war, as per article 'A guerra ...' in *o.c.*, 30th January 2011, pp. 16-29.

<sup>76</sup> Interviewees 15 (15, pp. 40-41); 14 (p. 24, pp. 27-28); 13 (p. 6, p. 10, p. 17); 25 (pp. 33-34); 28 (pp. 28-29); 21 (p.21); 36 (p. 4); 16 (p. 7); 32 (p. 28); 22 (pp.31-32).

<sup>77</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 37, p. 14. See Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 26-28; Hutching, M. 'After action...', in *o.c.* (2011), pp. 240-241.

<sup>78</sup> Interviewee 29, p. 36.

<sup>79</sup> Interviewee 25, p. 14.

especially in view of the heavy cost of war in terms of casualties, injured, disabled, and those physically and psychologically affected.<sup>80</sup> In some cases after some years, they realised that they ‘were cheated, were there wasting time, and at the end of the day did not contribute to anything.’<sup>81</sup> A military nurse focused on this commonly-held veteran sense of pointlessness:

after so many years--- after so many people dying there – what were we there for? For nothing – it was just--- we were just cannon fodder – so many people died there – the [African] countries became poorer – and so did ours.<sup>82</sup>

Retrospectively perceiving the function they played in the war as lacking constructive purpose, several respondents proceed in their reasoning by emphasising, as an *Alferes* put it, the termination of the ‘pointless’ conflict as historically ‘logical.’<sup>83</sup> The awareness that they fought for the maintenance of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, which abruptly ceased to exist in 1974/1975, has been interpreted and personally processed in different ways by interviewees, reflecting their socio-cultural background and political convictions. Someone like Avelino Oliveira, a sympathiser of the previous regime, stresses how ‘I feel ashamed, feel bad [about how the Portuguese colonial war ended]’. In his opinion, echoed by several other interviewees sharing similar perceptions, the decolonisation process meant that the former colonies were given ‘on a tray’ to the independence movements, after such a heavy human and financial effort on the part of Portugal.<sup>84</sup> However, having taken part in such a divisive conflict means that the shame of the former combatants assumes multiple forms. For Victor Palma, who was raised in an oppositionist environment, long-term political convictions determine distinctive understandings. Admitting that he is plagued by shame and guilt, Palma explains how he has always felt how ‘I shouldn’t have been there. At least on that side’. For him, ‘I have been on the wrong side making an unfair war.’<sup>85</sup> Others reached this conclusion years later, becoming burdened by the ‘trauma’ of having participated in such an ‘unfair’ conflict.<sup>86</sup>

The veterans’ post-conflict considerations, imbued by years of socio-political change in Portugal in a context where the memory of the colonial war did not develop comfortably, highlight how much the remembrance of this conflict has been

<sup>80</sup> Interviewees 2 (p. 8); 29 (p. 36); 25 (p. 23); 21 (p. 27, p. 29); 12 (p. 14); 28 (p.55).

<sup>81</sup> Interviewee 25, p. 14.

<sup>82</sup> Interviewee 10, p. 14.

<sup>83</sup> Interviewees 18 (p. 20); 34 (11); 29 (p. 35); 4 (p. 15); 21 (p. 15).

<sup>84</sup> Interviewees 3 (pp. 22-23); 34 (p. 11); 9 (p. 23); 17 (p. 19); 25 (pp. 27-28); 20 (p. 20).

<sup>85</sup> Interviewee 33, pp. 38-39, p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> Interviewee 11, pp. 21-22.

experienced subjectively by its intervenients.<sup>87</sup> With the passage of time, a general notion took shape amongst many of these men that, beyond the abstractions of political concepts, they were the executors of a fundamental chapter of their country's contemporary history. From their perspective, this history, as well as their biographical trajectory, remain filled with a sense of immutability. Portugal irreversibly lost its empire, the ex-combatants irreversibly spent part of their youth serving in Africa. As a former conscript put it, 'it's done [...] time doesn't go back.'<sup>88</sup> However, even if their society remained indifferent, for the ex-servicemen the prevalence of this past in the present continued in their daily, intimate relationship with individual war memories. Francisco Fitas, for instance, after overcoming his psychological disturbances, was able to perceive his war years with newfound lucidity. For years, his memories have constantly been around, presiding over much of the present:

want it or not, my subconscious is always thinking about it – because sometimes in life we have years and years and years that are routine-like – we almost don't even give them a second thought – but then there is a short phase – of our life, but it leaves such marks on one that that it's always – above the others – which is, which is this case [...] of going to Africa. It was a very turbulent period – unforgettable [...] it fills a lot of our life, that – that period. Perhaps – it is the most remarkable of my life [...] and that is the one which frequently is more in the subconscious – because here, this day-to-day life is everyday the same thing [...] On the other hand this war period is different, it is a period which – arrived, is gone – but stayed there [...] and – alright, I'm always remembering it [...] it was, of all phases of my life, the one which left more marks – because it was the most agitated period of my life.<sup>89</sup>

Unusual and intense for civilian conscripts, this experience certainly gained centrality in the ex-combatants' lives.<sup>90</sup> Many 'remember it as if it were today.'<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, findings suggest that during the 'years of silence' (and beyond) this experience's preponderance did not mean that it was frequently and easily expressed. Quite a significant number of respondents affirmed that our interview was the first time they approached that period in such a thorough manner. In the words of an *Alferes* interviewee:

it is the first time – that I am talking deeply about this matter. I never talked with--- even with my family – never talked deeply about this because – I don't like it---

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<sup>87</sup> See, for instance, Ribeiro, M. *o.c.* (2004), pp. 248-258; Vecchi, R. *o.c.* (2010), pp. 162-188; Medeiros, P. 'Hauntings...', in *o.c.* (2000), pp. 201-221.

<sup>88</sup> Interviewee 25, p. 23, p. 15.

<sup>89</sup> Interviewee 14, pp. 24-26.

<sup>90</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 34, pp. 27-28. We remember what is extraordinary, intense, extreme, different. See Edwards, P. *o.c.* (2000), p. 15.

<sup>91</sup> Interviewee 22, p. 17.



naturally – it is an experience that I don't like and I don't – I don't have interest in spending time talking about it.<sup>92</sup>

However, for others this personal silence was not permanent and other options proved to be more healing. Manuel Figueiredo relates how he 'only began to talk about all this [...] in '89' after meeting a veteran of the Algerian war of independence abroad. The latter was 'the one who told me no, you have to talk – you must tell everybody what is going on – because here [in Portugal] nobody gave me that advice.' It was only after this encounter, that, experiencing the benefits of talking, Figueiredo began to feel the need to recount his war years to other people, including – for the first time – his close family.<sup>93</sup> Figueiredo's narrative reflects not only how in Portugal – roughly in the first two and a half decades after the end of the colonial war – there was no socio-cultural context conducive to remembering, but also the fact that this social silence which has enveloped the topic for so long appears to have been strengthened also by a long-term decision of many veterans to remain quiet about their war past. In Figueiredo's case, change emerged by contact with other international socio-cultural contexts, but in that instance he remains exceptional and not the norm.

Joaquim Piteira (b.1943), a native of a less-favoured rural, interior area of the Alentejo Southern region offered perhaps one of the most comprehensive and articulate reflections on the matter. This military driver who served in Guinea between 1965-1967 explained his need to remain silent in candid transparency:

I spent maybe twenty years without talking about the war. [...] Not talking about the war – is a state of mind that is soothing for the soul [...] the memories stay behind – and our mind begins to – calm down [...] as if it was a therapy, it begins to be – alright – with itself – so that I can ask myself if what I did there – what I have done wrong and right – what I saw done wrong [...] [I ponder about what] I shouldn't have done [...] maybe around twenty years ago I wouldn't tell this to anybody [...] for twenty years, I did not tell anything to anybody – nothing – nothing – nothing at all. [...] It is the first time that I [...] am speaking about this.<sup>94</sup>

This intimate personal reflection undertaken by Piteira and many other ex-servicemen pinpoints the root of the subjective and social depth of Portugal's silence about the colonial war. For Joaquim Piteira and countless others, war memories of personal and collective actions remained uncomfortable for years, often to the present

<sup>92</sup> Interviewees 18 (p. 22); 11 (p. 17, p. 19); 21 (p. 27); 36 (p. 16); 31 (p. 26); 14 (p. 23), amongst others. Hunt reflects on the emotionally detached role of the researcher in this process, in *o.c.* (2011), p. 158.

<sup>93</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 25.

<sup>94</sup> Interviewee 11, p. 17.

day. Acknowledging that the topic has been met with avoidance in Portugal for decades, Piteira transposes his personal discomfort into a wider social level, explaining how it becomes a ‘void [...] still rooted in [Portuguese] society’, since:

there is still the trauma of the unfair war [...] and people afterwards do not talk [...] do not express themselves – people just let things go – oh, that was already many years ago – alright, let’s keep going – and things stay as they are – and therefore the problem is not faced [...] straightforwardly.<sup>95</sup>

By focusing on this long-term avoidance of the colonial war, Piteira illustrates how the conflict’s public, social memory has remained largely unresolved throughout the decades. On an individual level, the nature of avoidance can be assessed by exploring some of the main reasons why a sizeable proportion of Portuguese ex-combatants have chosen to keep silent about their war experiences. In many cases, the nature of this remembering, often difficult, appears to underlie the decision.

**‘War was war [and] war was that’<sup>96</sup>**

If for the nation a colonial war was an uncomfortable, shameful conflict, for its participants such feelings frequently acquired sharper contours.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, for a great number of ex-combatants the elapsing of time occurred in parallel with the development of deeply-rooted feelings of shame, guilt, regret, remorse and fear, in a process clearly exacerbated by the conflict’s social undesirability and the veteran anger at feeling unrecognised.<sup>98</sup> Most of my interviewees relate how during the years they have been frequently haunted by painful and distressing memories of witnessing and/or participating in acts of violence, injury and death. For some, such memories became more prominent as they advanced in years and reflected on their war experiences. For others, these memories had remained closely guarded for a long period until they were released during the interview. Some interviewees refused to be recorded when talking openly about their involvement in enemy deaths.<sup>99</sup> Others evaded related questions, or simply refused to answer them. Luís Sá is one of the few who addressed the topic openly, albeit often struggling to retain emotional control, and selecting what can be

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<sup>95</sup> Interviewee 11, pp. 21-22.

<sup>96</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 17

<sup>97</sup> See remark of Lopes, F. in *o.c.* (2000), p. 7.

<sup>98</sup> Interviewees 11 (p. 19); 14 (p. 23). See Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), pp. 146-147.

<sup>99</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 24, p. 26.

told since when ‘the horror is too much, one does not talk’, there are ‘things very dreadful, very horrible, that is better one really does not mess with.’<sup>100</sup> He admits that he ‘killed a lot.’ In his case, disturbing memories began to emerge with greater clarity years later. Labelling himself ‘a tormented man’, he recognises that ‘I deal very badly’ with ‘what I did’, and ‘saw being done.’<sup>101</sup> Aware of his ‘role as agent of death’ (quoting Bourke), and at points choking with emotion, Sá speaks of the moral burden he and others carry – the ‘huge cross’ he bears – and how it appears to increase as the years go by and these men face the prospect of their own mortality. Growing old and becoming ‘more fragile’, ‘terrors assault us’, and some comrades cope by fulfilling the need to ‘do good [...] in quantity’ as if to atone for their war ‘sins’. Condemning such an approach as hypocritical, Sá simply asserts that ‘no human being should have been – subjected – to seeing, neither to par--- to go through – (very disturbed pause, drinks water) – certain things – certain things.’<sup>102</sup>

These ‘things’ normally include, for instance, ‘the remorse of having tortured’ war prisoners, mutilating the enemy, or, more significantly, the uneasy acknowledgement of having killed another human being.<sup>103</sup> At the distance of decades, Sá speaks of the wartime ‘horror’ he had ‘entered’ of committing atrocities and having felt ‘human life has no meaning at all.’ He feels deeply shocked at how he had been able to kill then ‘as easily as one drinks a glass of water.’ Although ‘war was war’ and ‘war was that’, Sá believes that he should not have done that.<sup>104</sup> In this regard, an officer details how the realisation of having killed ‘is the only thing that makes me upset.’ Like other veteran accounts, this interviewee justified his actions with an underlying narrative of self-preservation, since he killed ‘not to be killed.’ A long-term consequence of these acts is that ‘I wake up with this massive anguish, do you know? I killed people! Do you understand? – I killed!’ This respondent admits that ‘say whatever they please, I don’t feel good about myself’ for having killed. Judging his actions from the standpoint of the present, he deeply regrets the ‘revolting’ frame of mind that he had to be in at the time to ‘even feel pride’ in the number of enemy deaths.<sup>105</sup> Aware of the negative social

<sup>100</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 16. 26, pp. 39-40.

<sup>101</sup> Interviewees 36 (pp. 25-26; pp. 14-15); 31 (p.19, p. 25).

<sup>102</sup> Interviewees 36 (pp. 23-24); 21 (pp. 26-27). Sá is a good example of the ‘tortured conscience’ mentioned by Bourke of a combatant who faces moral remorse for having killed; see Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> Interviewees 8 (p. 25); 36 (p. 13, p. 17, pp. 30-31); 1 (p. 20); 31 (p. 6); 4 (p. 19, p. 26, p. 31); 20 (pp. 18-19); 33 (pp. 45-46); 26 (pp. 30-31); 19 (p. 5); 3 (pp. 19-20); 9 (p. 17); See Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), pp. 1-3.

<sup>104</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 13 (pp. 30-31).

<sup>105</sup> Interviewee 20, pp. 13-14, pp. 18-19. Something common in a ‘formless’ guerrilla war, as pinpointed by Hynes, in *o.c.* (1998), pp. 188-189.

connotations of his actions, this respondent tries to ease his remorse and moral discomfort by reflecting on the wider reasons surrounding his participation in the war.<sup>106</sup>

Most interviewees in this situation express how ‘very bad’ it is to live with the knowledge that they killed.<sup>107</sup> For years after the events, the need to find meaning, explanations and justifications for their acts remains vital for these war veterans. Having killed in the war context very often entails the need to assimilate that aspect of their life into their postwar years. Reinforced by the nature of their participation in the conflict (mostly unmotivated civilian conscripts fighting independence movements overseas), these ex-combatants frequently feel that those deaths were ‘needless’, many being haunted by the personal and social equation which attempts to determine to what extent they collaborated with the former authoritarian regime through perpetration of violence (voluntary or not).<sup>108</sup> These interviewees admit that they often reflect about this aspect of their war experience. Echoing Luís Sá and others who experienced similar circumstances, Manuel Figueiredo has ‘struggled’ with having killed a war prisoner at close range his ‘entire life.’<sup>109</sup> Similarly, Avelino Oliveira illustrates well how his present perceptions impinge on his war memories:

if it were today – some things that I did there, I wouldn’t do them today – I wouldn’t [...] – ermm (nervous laughter) – I don’t know (clears throat) – for example – I don’t know – killing (clears throat, sighs) – that – that is one thing that (clears throat) – (long pause) – it is not everybody who – approaches an (very strained voice) – an – an individual and then, that’s it (long pause, very faint voice) – at the time – we – at the time, we didn’t have – such problems, wasn’t it – nowadays I wouldn’t have done it, no.<sup>110</sup>

Considering the focus of my research and the lack of wider sources dealing with this specific topic in Portugal, it is hard to accurately assess how widespread this moral uneasiness is, and how much it has potentially contributed to a sense of individual and social shame in addressing the memory of the colonial war. Articulate and reasonably well-adjusted at the time of the interview, those veterans who agreed to speak openly about killing could perhaps be exceptional in their experiences, candid approach and subsequent interpretation. An extrapolation from Bourke’s research, however, suggests

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<sup>106</sup> Interviewees 20 (pp. 13-14, 18-19); 31 (pp. 25-26); 33 (pp. 45-46); 26 (p. 41). See Bourke, J. ‘The Pleasures of War’ and ‘The Burden of Guilt’ in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 33-35, pp. 215-241. ‘Obeying orders’, self-preservation and fear of punishment are often employed as justifications stemming from ‘killer’s guilt’. See Bourke, J. ‘War Massacres’, in *idem*, pp. 194-203; pp. 215-241.

<sup>107</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 6); 20 (p. 13); 3 (pp. 19-20); 36 (p. 17).

<sup>108</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 6, pp. 25-26.

<sup>109</sup> Interviewees 15 (pp. 28-29); 31 (pp. 25-26); 33 (pp. 45-46).

<sup>110</sup> Interviewees 3 (pp. 19-20); 33 (pp. 45-46).

that the Portuguese ex-combatants' 'moral universe' is not dissimilar to that of combatants of other conflicts who have killed in action.<sup>111</sup> For sure, not every ex-combatant faced this aspect of war during their military service. Others who did may either not feel challenged in the same manner, or choose not to openly disclose that past and its personal effects. When interviewing these veterans, I sensed that this was perhaps the most intimate, sensitive, subjective matter that they shared with me. The topic constitutes the most difficult aspect of their current remembering. Potentially representative of many others who are unwilling or unable to speak, the importance of their testimonies resides in the understanding they provide regarding the individual standpoint of an historical experience of war. Their narratives depict the challenges and daily internal reflection that these war veterans have been facing since the end of the conflict regarding their past actions. It is a 'tremendous' struggle, explains Victor Palma.<sup>112</sup>

As specialist studies suggest, direct exposure to violence in war increases the probability of the emergence of posttraumatic stress disorders.<sup>113</sup> In this context, memories of the 'horrific' violence perpetrated could have greatly contributed to these conditions amongst veterans. The same applies to those involved not only in perpetrating violent acts against the enemy, but also in witnessing violence and death such as their 'comrade dying there, hours on end, losing blood, or unrecognisable from the mine that has blown up', or of having been 'wounded in combat after a week of being there' and seeing the dead accumulating in 'one corner' of the campaign hospital, like Francisco Fitas. The examples are numerous and harrowing. One interviewee is often afflicted by the image of having grabbed from the ground, mixed with soil, the minute 'bits' of his comrade blown up by a landmine. Another lives disturbed by the death of his close companion from his hometown. One respondent has felt a 'coward' for over forty years for not assisting his 'comrade in arms' to commit suicide after being fatally burnt. Manuel Figueiredo had to cope with years of haunting nightmares about the comrade he saw drowning in front of him during a military operation. Another shudders at the image of comrades turning around the guts of enemy corpses with hunting knives. One interviewee anxiously recounts the scene 'engraved' in his memory of the moment he was wounded and stayed behind, 'on his own, unable to move and

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<sup>111</sup> See, for instance, Bourke, J. 'Introduction', in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 7-12.

<sup>112</sup> Interviewee 33, pp. 45-46.

<sup>113</sup> See Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 'Military and emergency service personnel' in *o.c.* (2007), pp. 141-143 and other relevant literature cited in the Bibliography.

unarmed', and his subsequent evacuation on a plane 'full' of wounded, blind and mutilated people.<sup>114</sup> In Avelino Oliveira's case, 'almost every day' he remembers an attack on a church when he narrowly missed killing some comrades. Analysing his military past from a postwar perspective, during the years he has repeatedly reframed the troubling events wondering 'what if' he had killed them.<sup>115</sup> Many ex-combatants often 'even cry' over fallen comrades and wonder about the children they left behind, some of which never met their fathers.<sup>116</sup>

The complexities of living with such personal memories of the colonial conflict are many, with the added aspect that, under such circumstances, the roles of perpetrator, victim, sufferer or witness often become blurred. Throughout the interviews, countless examples of traumatic events were narrated in vivid and disturbing detail. Most of these events described extreme events where the veterans killed, watched people dying, being wounded or were wounded themselves. Very present throughout the years, even within silence, these memories acquired individual dimensions, becoming each veteran's personal 'skeleton in the closet' of memory, the 'darkest parts' of their war.<sup>117</sup> For one of my officer interviewees, the key is not 'to adapt oneself' to them, but to 'forget'.<sup>118</sup> This attitude, manifested by a great number of respondents (at least at some point of their postwar years before the interview), coincides with the general social silence which prevailingly surrounded the topic for decades – 'because nobody understands', as one interviewee put it.<sup>119</sup> Beyond the undesirability associated with levels of violence expected from any armed conflict, veterans and Portuguese society appear to have attached from an early stage further undesirability to the remembrance of this colonial war due to it being perceived as 'unfair' and 'pointless.'

On a personal level, feelings of guilt, fear and uneasiness surrounding violent war episodes can reinforce veteran avoidance and forgetting of war topics. José Andrade believes that the long-term silence in Portugal about the colonial war is 'because we have committed atrocities' in Africa and now are 'playing the saints.' As Daniel Cunha put it, in that type of war 'there are no rules.'<sup>120</sup> The guerrilla nature of the conflict (and the fact that it was not officially recognised as a war by the authoritarian regime),

<sup>114</sup> Interviewee 33 (pp. 45-46, p. 39); 10 (p. 17); 14 (p. 10); 31 (p. 20, p. 24, pp. 17-18); 15 (p. 17); 19 (pp. 12-13).

<sup>115</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 18.

<sup>116</sup> Interviewees 10 (p. 19); 19 (p. 11); 31 (p. 24, p. 16, p. 26).

<sup>117</sup> Interviewees 1 (p. 15, p. 19); 31 (p. 19, p. 25); 36 (p. 27); 20 (pp. 13-14).

<sup>118</sup> Interviewees 9 (pp. 26-29, pp. 33-34); 31 (p. 19, p. 25).

<sup>119</sup> Interviewee 31, p. 25.

<sup>120</sup> Interviewee 4, p. 27, p. 29. Interviewee 26, p. 41.

combined with the swift subsequent political developments towards independence of the African territories, and decolonisation and a new democratic regime in Portugal, generated complex circumstances which made it more challenging to distinguish war crimes from actions arising from the war context, or even to ascertain their occurrence.<sup>121</sup> Such acts live mainly in the memories of participants and witnesses.<sup>122</sup> This unresolved non-definition placed participants and perpetrators in a social and legal void. An underlying concern for unpunished potential war crimes is manifested by some respondents, with some stating (real or feared) legal consequences or social condemnation of unjustified war violence as justifying silence, both on a collective and personal level.<sup>123</sup> In fact, even when not necessarily involved in violent acts, respondents generally stress the social stigma associated with ex-servicemen as perceived collaborators of the previous regime, and suspected enforcers of colonial violence, sometimes being seen as ‘rogues’ and ‘killers’ just for being ex-combatants.<sup>124</sup>

Nonetheless, for this research a few veterans decided to talk about some of the most complex and intense experiences that a human being can undergo during their lifetime. Some interviewees wished to make sure I became aware of the consequences of their decision. Echoing others, Luís Sá articulated the individual cost of sharing these war memories:

What this interviewee of ours is going to originate [...] please don’t have any problem about it [...] I know that [...] things are stirred inside, I am going to for one or two days [...] get hammered out of this world and back – then I feel bad (laughing tone) [...] but [...] those are the costs of collaboration, it’s part of the package.<sup>125</sup>

Such instances of difficult remembering and its direct implications raise concerns addressed in a previous chapter about the role of oral history regarding the eliciting of traumatic memories.<sup>126</sup> In effect, for many ex-combatants interviewed evoking this past is challenging and entails concrete suffering. Like Sá, some implicitly infer the consequences they would face afterwards are worth the fact that they provided a valuable testimony which recognises their historical voice.<sup>127</sup> In this voluntary

<sup>121</sup> In guerrilla warfare circumstances similar to what occurred in Vietnam, as pinpointed by Bourke, J. ‘War Crimes’, in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 171–214. For a lengthy discussion of Portuguese war crimes, see Ribeiro, J. ‘Os crimes de guerra’, in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 137–222; see also Cabrita, F. *o.c.* (2008).

<sup>122</sup> See, for instance, Interviewee 15 (pp. 9–10) and Interviewee 19 (p. 5).

<sup>123</sup> Interviewees 15 (pp. 9–10); 4 (p. 27, p. 31); 28 (p. 39); 33 (p. 54–55); 9 (p. 30); 22 (p. 28). As in the French case; see Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), pp. 169–170.

<sup>124</sup> Interviewees 9 (p. 30); 4 (p. 31); 33 (p. 45); 19 (p. 33).

<sup>125</sup> Interviewees 36 (p. 16); 29 (p. 38); 17 (p. 13); 18 (pp. 24–25); 21 (p. 27).

<sup>126</sup> See Chapter Three, pp. 99–104.

<sup>127</sup> Interviewees 36 (p.16); 20 (p.11); 31 (p.19, p. 25).

‘sacrifice’ for history, there were many occasions when, as an oral historian, I would have liked to have been able to support these veterans more, particularly after the interview.<sup>128</sup>

Notwithstanding this aspect, the fact that many of these ex-combatants made an effort to share their memories with me indicates a shift which can be contrasted to a previously predominant silence. Our interview took place in a new personal and socio-cultural context. For some, it corresponded to a period when through psychiatric/psychological treatment they had to increasingly address their past.<sup>129</sup> As Luís Sá put it, ‘interestingly – I’ve only begun to talk about these things a very short while ago, very very little--- and very sporadically [...] the more often I talk – the easier it gets.’<sup>130</sup> The narratives developed by the veteran group interviewed revealed how breaking the silence brings a new critical – at times contradictory – perspective about their socio-historical position, as exemplified by one ex-soldier:

those two years and so that we spent there, if we had spent them here [Portugal] – we would not have had the traumas we had there, those memories, and maybe we would now live in another way – more comfortable, more – with a saner mind – has that really damaged us? I think so, although I personally think not, for me everything’s alright and – for the most part of the combatants [...] we think everything’s alright, but in reality things are not quite so – in reality we are affected.<sup>131</sup>

Significantly, as the focus shifted from the ‘years of silence’ towards the time of the interview, the interviewees would employ the plural form ‘we’ more often. A new veteran identity appears to have emerged then.

### **‘An abnormal situation’<sup>132</sup>**

Another ever-present topic in these veterans’ narratives is the continuing lack of suitable state support affecting the many ex-combatants who have been struggling to live with the physical and psychological consequences of having fulfilled their military service in Africa in the course of the colonial conflict. My interviewees often strongly condemn the neglect to which many veterans – disabled, in ill health, who have

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<sup>128</sup> See examples in Chapter Three, pp. 100-101.

<sup>129</sup> Interviewees 36 (p. 16); 20 (p. 24).

<sup>130</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 16.

<sup>131</sup> Interviewee 2, p. 12.

<sup>132</sup> Interviewee 26, pp. 30-31.



developed addictions or display diverse forms of social maladjustment – have been facing since their return from the war.<sup>133</sup> These are the many amputees, blind, PTSD sufferers, ill, alcoholic, unemployed veterans who found themselves ignored and largely unsupported.<sup>134</sup> Manuel Figueiredo illustrates this aspect by stressing that despite suffering from incapacitating psychological disturbances for years after his return from Guinea in 1966, he ‘paid [for treatment] at my [his] expense, nobody cared about me at all.’<sup>135</sup>

Since the 1970s, a legal framework of support to ex-combatants has emerged, focusing mainly on providing limited financial and medical support to disabled veterans, and from 1999 onwards to posttraumatic war stress sufferers. In the last decade changes have been made to veteran retirement pension plans and health care.<sup>136</sup> Yet, the ex-combatants continue to ‘blame’ the Portuguese State for not having ‘done anything’ to adequately support these veterans, materially and psychologically, disregarding what these men perceive as its natural attribution and responsibility.<sup>137</sup> Having been cemented over years, these feelings that the Portuguese State ‘used us’, ‘abandoned us’ and ‘stole our youth’ forged a common identity focusing on veterans as the embodiment of uncomfortable ‘unfinished business’ that the state wishes to avoid looking after, promoting dismissal and forgetting for that purpose.<sup>138</sup> As Daniel Cunha puts it, since taking ‘part in a war is an abnormal situation’ it is not fair for veterans to be ‘treated like a normal citizen who did not go through that experience’. For this respondent, that responsibility naturally belongs to the state which ordered ‘our generation’ to be sent to Africa.<sup>139</sup>

For some, there is also the additional awareness that successive Portuguese governments have provided scarce veteran recognition when compared to countries like the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France (regarding the conflicts of Vietnam, the Falklands and Algeria, respectively).<sup>140</sup> In this context, the emerging

<sup>133</sup> Significantly, out of the entire sample only Interviewee 8, non-disabled and a declared sympathiser of the previous regime, believes the Portuguese State has done its best to adequately support disabled veterans (p. 27).

<sup>134</sup> Mentioned by several interviewees, such as 11 (p. 18); 36 (p. 28); 13 (p. 14); 18 (pp. 21-22); 26 (p. 36); 32 (pp. 27-29); 27 (p. 13), amongst others.

<sup>135</sup> Interviewee 15, pp. 15-p. 16.

<sup>136</sup> For a good summary of all legislation related to ex-combatants, see Anunciação, C. *o.c.* (2010), pp. 135-147, and <https://sites.google.com/site/apoiarstress/documentacao/legislacao-ex-combatentes>.

<sup>137</sup> Interviewee 11, p. 19.

<sup>138</sup> Interviewees 11 (pp. 20-21, p. 26); 3 (p. 22); 17 (p. 11, pp. 23-25); 1 (pp. 20-22); 20 (p. 11); 27 (p. 7).

<sup>139</sup> Interviewee 26, pp. 30-31. To employ Bourke’s terminology, war means combatants are ‘ordinary people placed in extraordinary situations’, in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 365-366.

<sup>140</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 22. In Portugal, the demand for public recognition has not generated the results obtained in France where in 1999 the National Assembly officially recognised that the Algerian conflict had been a war and not a ‘police operation’; see Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), pp. 364-365.

importance of formal and informal war veteran associations that have been created in Portugal, particularly since the late 1990s, became increasingly noticeable. Strengthening veteran identity, they became places of mutual recognition, common interests and support, whose benefits were highly emphasised by the many respondents who belong to this type of organisation. Some state that in such institutions they ‘feel like a family’, and welcome such interactions as widely ‘therapeutic’ and as a ‘means of escaping’ social indifference.<sup>141</sup> Their strong bonds are stressed by Daniel Cunha, who explains that there is a ‘solidary network’ of ‘comradeship’ between ex-combatants ‘maybe due to everything we have gone through.’<sup>142</sup>

Reminiscing about the ‘years of silence’, these men’s individual narratives pinpoint an increasing awareness of the diversified impact (psychological, physical and other) that their war experience exerted on themselves and other comrades, emphasising a host of unmet veteran needs and concerns. However, the fact that many respondents chose to focus on the negative consequences of war should not overshadow – despite the serious difficulties faced by many – the successful social reintegration that my interviewees managed to operate in their postwar lives, my sample being constituted nearly in its entirety by veterans adjusted on a personal, family, professional and social level. Nonetheless, for the majority of interviewees, participation in the colonial war is perceived as a deeply disturbing experience, not only because of violent warfare events, but also significantly due to the sense of injustice prevailing regarding their compulsory conscription, and the ensuing indifference and neglect post-1974. As time elapsed, and made them more prone to establish comparisons with other international contexts, towards the late 1990s a greater number of ex-combatants began to organise themselves in associations and claim veteran rights from the state. Since the beginning of the new millennium, as Portugal matured its democracy and expanded socio-cultural horizons, and the war generation aged, a congregation of veteran identity and higher ex-combatant social visibility occurred, resulting in the colonial war beginning to be more openly addressed in Portugal. This shift did not occur unnoticed by ex-military driver Daniel Cunha, who offered his insightful interpretation:

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<sup>141</sup> Interviewees 29 (pp. 32-33); 36 (p. 27); 28 (pp. 45-46); 27 (pp. 14-15). The importance of such social support is emphasised by Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), pp. 79-80; pp. 157-160. Evans notes similar positive roles on French veteran associations assessed, in *o.c.* (1997), pp. 78-79.

<sup>142</sup> Interviewee 26, p. 29. Feelings found amongst Australian Vietnam veterans studied by Garton, S. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 246-247.

it was only from a certain time onwards – that we began to hear about the ex-combatant because – until a certain phase of our life – we wouldn't hear about the combatants – maybe [...] when the first combatants began to realise – they were already entering retirement and all – and began to have the notion of – stop! hey mate – we were there fighting – and we are not recognised by anybody, and because one did not hear about it, then these movements began to be created, and even ex-combatants' associations [...] to revindicate – because there was a long lapse of time when one wouldn't hear [about the colonial war and its veterans].<sup>143</sup>

Embodying the living memory of a past armed conflict, with the passage of time these veterans began to gain deeper group awareness. This new phase of revival of the topic of the colonial war in Portuguese society will constitute the focus of the next section.

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<sup>143</sup> Interviewee 26, p. 29.

## II. ‘Don’t let others tell your war for you’<sup>144</sup>:

### the ex-combatants’ relation with the changing public narrative

#### ‘I fulfilled my duty’<sup>145</sup>

As the new millennium began, a changing public narrative on the colonial war was noticeable in Portugal.<sup>146</sup> If the postwar period up to the late 1990s could be characterised mainly by silence and shame, a re-emergence of the topic from the early 2000s onwards witnessed the ex-combatants playing a wider role in shaping and interacting with the public memory of the conflict, and the development of a firmer collective veteran identity – albeit not without tensions.<sup>147</sup> Their personal memories responding to the articulation shifts of public war remembrance taking place in Portuguese society, veteran counter-narratives began to emerge more from private spheres into the open. This recent revival coincided to a great extent with the reaching of retirement age of many Portuguese ex-combatants, and was accompanied by the burgeoning of veteran organisations and social intervention. As the decades elapsed and they aged, these veterans generally endeavoured to strengthen their common identity and developed a more participative relationship with war memory.<sup>148</sup>

This Chapter will now address how the ex-combatants currently perceive themselves in Portuguese society, focusing on their response to recent change in the approach to the war. Therefore, whilst examining how they currently interpret their military experience in Africa and manifest their group identity, I will assess how their views interact with relevant aspects of the changing public discourse on the colonial war in Portugal in recent years. Drawing upon the veterans’ insights, I will particularly reflect on the emphasis they place on the role of history in ‘settling’ a future social memory of the war they took part in.

<sup>144</sup> See *o.c.*, in *Público*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008; see also Chapter Two, p. 77.

<sup>145</sup> Interviewees 2 (p. 14); 3 (p. 17, pp. 25-26); 4 (p. 22); 6 (p. 13, pp. 22-23); 7 (p. 1, p. 17); 8 (p. 2, p. 8, pp. 17-19, p. 34); 9 (p. 23, p. 32); 12 (pp. 20-23); 13 (p. 7); 14 (p. 14, p. 28, p. 34); 18 (p. 21, pp. 24-26); 19 (p. 15); 22 (p. 17, p. 26); 23 (p. 8); 25 (pp. 15-16; p. 25; p. 30, pp. 34-35); 26 (pp. 2-3; p. 21, p. 24, p. 42); 29 (p. 19); 32 (p. 28); 35 (p. 25, p. 29); 36 (p. 3, p. 33).

<sup>146</sup> See Chapter Two, pp. 68-92.

<sup>147</sup> Similar to those encountered by M. Evans regarding ex-combatants of the Algerian conflict, summarised in Ashplant et al, *o.c.* (2000), p. 24.

<sup>148</sup> See Ashplant et al, *o.c.* (2000), p. 14; Thomson, A. *o.c.* (1994), pp. 216-220; Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), p. 143.

Decades after the end of the Portuguese colonial war, most of its former combatants have acquired a wider picture of their participation in the conflict. Their narratives echo not only the shifting public memory of war, but also their evolving personal identity at a different stage of the life course. Many are able to reflect upon the role they played in the event in a structural manner, often placing it in the historical context of the period, and analysing it according to current values, sensibility and worldviews. Having taken part in one of the longest armed conflicts of the twentieth-century, often these veterans perceive themselves as the individual substance behind the historical event. As my respondents put it aptly, ‘my military number had flesh and bone’ and they were the human ‘pawns’ of war.<sup>149</sup> The personal meanings attributed by these men to their experience do not always translate into a settled, easy notion. One interviewee remarked that ‘even nowadays, despite all these years gone by, it is still a bit difficult to understand what happened.’<sup>150</sup> For some, fighting in a war remains an overpowering, disturbing and confusing memory. However, an overall perspective about the war gathers a significantly unanimous response. For the vast majority, it was a negative experience, ‘a waste of time’, ‘the worst thing that could have ever happened’ in their life, marking ‘the saddest years’ of their youth.<sup>151</sup>

Francisco Fitas describes serving in the war as a very ‘hurtful’ experience. Feeling uneasy about his part in the process, Fitas interprets the Portuguese military intervention as ‘offensive’, an ‘attack to the Africans in their territory.’<sup>152</sup> Attempting to make sense of those thirteen years of ‘costly’ conflict, many veterans pose themselves the question of ‘what for’ and ‘why’ they fought.<sup>153</sup> Believing that the war was politically and militarily ‘a vain effort’ for a ‘lost cause’, most interviewees interpret their role in the conflict as ‘worthless’ – employing similar terms to convey the idea of a pointless participation as ‘cannon-fodder’ in a ‘stupidly null and negative’ process.<sup>154</sup> In the words of a former officer, his participation was a ‘waste of time – pure and simple [...] What did I go there for? Nothing!’<sup>155</sup> The preponderant opinion is that this war was ‘stupid’, ‘a total mistake!’, a ‘disaster for Portugal.’<sup>156</sup> This view is particularly rooted in those who, like Artur Santos, were severely injured during service in Africa. For

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<sup>149</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 41); 36 (p. 32).

<sup>150</sup> Interviewee 2, p. 2.

<sup>151</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 31); 12 (p. 14, p. 23); 18 (p. 23, p. 25); 13 (p. 1, p. 17); 21 (p. 27, p. 29); 15 (p. 43).

<sup>152</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 34); 31 (p. 28).

<sup>153</sup> Interviewees 17 (p. 19, p. 23); 29 (p. 36); 27 (p. 7).

<sup>154</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 44); 17 (p. 29); 22 (p. 27).

<sup>155</sup> Interviewee 20, p. 24.

<sup>156</sup> Interviewees 28 (p. 33); 15 (p. 33); 7 (p. 15).

Santos, this was an ‘unfair war that should never have existed’, it was ‘nonsense’, and it just made him disabled and feeling like ‘a victim of war.’<sup>157</sup> António Moreira questions himself for what purpose he ‘left a leg there [in Mozambique]’ and nearly lost his life.<sup>158</sup> Many reinforced the idea that the conflict resulted from the ‘stubbornness of the regime’, a ‘bad decision’ that provoked ‘huge losses’, costing ‘thousands of lives’ and resulting in social trauma that ‘today one is still actually paying the bill for’ through a wide range of human and material consequences.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, as combatants, they have fought for the ‘biggest foolishness of the century.’<sup>160</sup>

Many veterans associate the pointlessness of the conflict with the manner in which the decolonisation process of the former Portuguese African territories took place. For many interviewees, after having fought strenuously for the maintenance of the Portuguese rule, a swiftly-granted independence to the then provinces meant that many endured hardships and ‘died [or were wounded and disabled] for nothing.’<sup>161</sup> Manuel Figueiredo regards the destruction and loss of life from both sides as unjustifiable in face of the outcomes, making it even harder to personally process the war experience.<sup>162</sup>

Notwithstanding the overwhelming majority of negative perceptions, one of my interviewees approached his experience from a different angle, highlighting an awareness of having taken part in ‘real history’ as a ‘piece of the puzzle of the colonial war’, something that he is ‘very proud of.’<sup>163</sup> In addition, many express their relief at the fact that they survived that experience. ‘Fortunately’, they ‘went and returned’, others did not, or, as one respondent put it, ‘returned inside wooden boxes.’<sup>164</sup> A few interviewees extend that satisfaction to younger generations, relishing the fact that their own sons did not have to participate in the conflict.<sup>165</sup>

The interpretations expressed by the ex-combatants regarding their participation in the colonial war reflect a fragmentation of perspectives emerging from each individual’s social and geographical background, level of education, and other personal circumstances. The war veterans originating from urban locations, with a higher level of schooling, and who tended to have political oppositionist leanings or formed

<sup>157</sup> Interviewees 28 (p.55, p. 48); 29 (p. 34); 22 (p. 19).

<sup>158</sup> Interviewee 17, p. 19.

<sup>159</sup> Interviewees 5 (pp. 15-16); 7 (p. 13, p. 15); 18 (p. 23); 17 (p. 19); 16 (p. 30); 28 (p. 33); 32 (p. 35).

<sup>160</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 27);

<sup>161</sup> Interviewees 24 (p. 6); 20 (p. 24); 22 (p. 12); 17 (p. 19).

<sup>162</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 44.

<sup>163</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 2.

<sup>164</sup> Interviewees 29 (p. 14); 34 (pp. 17-18); 19 (p. 26).

<sup>165</sup> Interviewees 32 (p. 35); 19 (p. 18); 13 (p. 17).

convictions at the time of the events, are nowadays often more critical about their presence as combatants in Africa. Obviously, the passage of time channelled these men's perceptions about the war in different individual ways. More socially and psychologically adjusted respondents tend to place the war as something now 'very far away in the past'. If at the time it was 'revolting' to go, 'time erases everything', and so '[this experience] it's practically gone', '[it's] more two years, less two years [in one's life]'.<sup>166</sup> Other interviewees, particularly those who, like Manuel Figueiredo and António Moreira, were more affected by their experience both physically and psychologically, often express anger 'against the system, against the war that was made, against what I've been through'.<sup>167</sup> However, amputee Artur Santos and others interpret their participation in an armed conflict as determining a personal pedagogy of 'non-violence, against war, against all wars [...] [as] aggressions to Humankind'. From their first-hand knowledge, these veterans argue all wars are simply 'unjustifiable', pointless violence.<sup>168</sup>

These men often express the need to justify and explain their participation in the colonial conflict. The explanations adopted by the majority of conscripted servicemen normally focus on the fact that, as dutiful citizens, they did what 'I was asked to do', and they 'fought' to fulfil their 'mission' and what was forcefully demanded from them due to the policies of the era: the 'obligation' to serve in the war.<sup>169</sup> Statements like 'I am Portuguese, motherland forced me to go' and I 'fulfilled my mission as a Portuguese man' are frequently employed.<sup>170</sup> Some interpret serving in the war as 'an act of citizenship' that they did not evade, the fulfilment of which made them 'even' with their mother country.<sup>171</sup>

Interestingly, when questioned about their feelings about having fought in the colonial conflict, a significant number of interviewees, like the ex-soldier who was in Angola between 1963 and 1965, mention that they feel 'rather proud' for fulfilling their military duty 'during the twenty-four months' spent in Africa.<sup>172</sup> These ex-combatants are not deterred by any apparent contradictions between the generalised opinion on the

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<sup>166</sup> Interviewees 30 (p. 15); 5 (p. 14).

<sup>167</sup> Interviewees 15 (p. 15, p. 38); 17 (p. 8, p. 24); 20 (p. 8, pp. 18-19); 19 (p. 33).

<sup>168</sup> Interviewees 28 (p. 35, p. 50); 36 (p. 33); 10 (p. 23); 4 (p. 18, p. 25); 31 (p. 26); 15 (p. 41, pp. 44-45); 19 (p. 19); 14 (p. 6, p. 34); 33 (p. 12, p. 25). A veteran development highlighted by Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 372; and Stanley, J. 'Involuntary commemorations...' in *o.c.* (2004), p. 253.

<sup>169</sup> Interviewees 3 (p. 25); 9 (p. 33-34); 12 (pp. 20-21); 14 (p. 34); 36 (pp. 32-33); 7 (p. 15); 22 (p. 30); 10 (p. 8); 29 (p. 37); 18 (p. 25).

<sup>170</sup> Interviewees 13 (p. 16); 14 (p. 34); 35 (p. 29).

<sup>171</sup> Interviewees 26 (p. 42); 12 (p. 23).

<sup>172</sup> Interviewees 24 (p. 2); 6 (p. 13).

conflict itself and what they felt about having served in the Portuguese Army. These ex-servicemen appear to associate traditional notions of masculinity to their military experience ascribing to serving in the nation's armed forces a pride-inspiring rite of passage which transforms youths into grown men.<sup>173</sup> From that perspective, their participation in the conflict is seen as 'positive'. Several respondents repeated the idea that they are 'proud' and 'honoured' to have 'served' and fought for 'our motherland', and for 'having belonged to the Armed Forces', or for 'having served the Portuguese Army'.<sup>174</sup>

However, these ex-combatants are sometimes aware that such displays of patriotism clash with contemporary perspectives on the colonial dynamics condoned by the regime of the era. José Carvalho, explains how, since he had been raised in such a cultural environment, the 'values of the Motherland' characteristic of that period did not contradict his 'ideology' at the time. Nowadays holding different views, Carvalho asserts that he does 'not feel guilty for that'.<sup>175</sup> This idea is reinforced by other interviewees, like the former artillery soldier, who – despite believing that he should have never gone to fight – perceives the African territories under Portuguese rule 'for five hundred years' were part of the 'motherland'. In that sense, he and others 'went to defend something that right or wrong, I'm not entitled to judge that [...] belonged to the Portuguese.' Therefore, such intervention gives something to 'feel some pride' about since 'someone had to defend that'.<sup>176</sup> Frequently these feelings are evoked with certain reservations. Manuel Figueiredo provides a good example: 'sometimes I like to say I was a combatant [...] but, on the other hand (sigh) – I would like that to have never happened because it was wrong, because I am uneasy with my conscience'.<sup>177</sup> This uneasy conscience several interviewees mention is normally associated with having participated in or witnessed violent acts and enemy deaths or more generally due to the colonial nature of the conflict.<sup>178</sup> In this respect, evaluating the 'contrast in relation to what we were and what we are', Avelino Oliveira regrets what he has done in the name of 'patriotism'.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>173</sup> Interviewees 30 (p. 37, p. 14); 36 (pp. 4-6); 21 (p. 21). As emphasised by Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1996), pp. 26-28.

<sup>174</sup> Interviewees 34 (p. 23); 24 (p. 6); 18 (p. 25); 6 (pp. 19-20); 26 (p. 19, p. 43); 19 (p. 35); 15 (pp. 40-41).

<sup>175</sup> Interviewees 18 (p. 25); 6 (pp. 19-20); 26 (p. 19); 21 (p. 29).

<sup>176</sup> Interviewee 22, p. 27, p. 18.

<sup>177</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 41. Similar uncertainties were faced by Vietnam veterans, as highlighted by Hynes in 'What Happened in Nam', *o.c.* (1998), pp. 177-222;

<sup>178</sup> Interviewees 15 (p. 41); 19 (p. 35); 29 (p. 38). See also Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), pp. 362-370.

<sup>179</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 20.



The veterans who frame their narratives more strongly through the perspective of contemporary democratic notions often undervalue their participation in the colonial conflict by asserting, like Manuel Loureiro and José Andrade, that they ‘don’t feel proud’ or ‘honoured’ for having taken part in a ‘war like that’: they simply ‘fulfilled my duty.’ These ex-combatants’ narratives often stress how they did not fight for the motherland or any patriotic values, they were forcefully conscripted and simply tried ‘to survive.’ This reasoning is normally accompanied by a concept frequently utilised by these men, and one that appears to be rather common in the Portuguese war veteran discourse: a refusal to be considered ‘heroes’ – although they are ‘no coward[s] either’ – they just fulfilled their compulsory military duty. For José Andrade, along with Artur Santos and others, that is not a reason to feel proud, but, at the same time, he is ‘not ashamed of having been there’ either. Andrade assumes his presence in Angola in an ‘unfair’ war in which he ‘was forced to participate.’<sup>180</sup>

Those who, like Júlio Lobo, Victor Palma, and José Pinto, did not agree with the conflict from the onset openly declare their discomfort in having taken part. For instance, Lobo considers himself ‘a huge victim’ for having to ‘fulfil my role’ in a conflict that was never ‘my war.’<sup>181</sup> Victor Palma explains it was ‘regrettable having been there!, feeling ‘ashamed’ of having fought for the ‘wrong side.’ Since ‘one day history [...] will record that there were colonial wars’, Palma regrets having fought for the maintenance of what he perceives as imperialistic exploitation since by ‘being part of that [colonial] army [...] I was on the side of the bad guys!’<sup>182</sup> Although the majority of interviewees do not embrace this level of abstract thinking, in general merely emphasising they were forcefully conscripted to serve their country, a few respondents – particularly officers like Victor Palma – reflect on their perceived role in the colonial process. For a career officer interviewee, certainly willing to integrate his past function into present dynamics, ‘there are no doubts that we collaborated with a dictatorial regime.’ This view advocates that Portuguese former servicemen ‘should admit straightforwardly [...] that they were greatly responsible for maintaining that regime’. In ‘assuming colonialism’, Portuguese society would benefit from commemorating its potentially positive aspects. Otherwise, a historical ‘leap’ is being generated – emerging

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<sup>180</sup> Interviewees 25 (pp. 34-35); 4 (p. 29, p. 31); 12 (p. 23); 29 (pp. 37-38); 33 (p. 32, p. 52, p. 57); 28 (p. 55, p. 35); 13 (p. 16). Veterans of the Algerian war studied by Evans also insist on not being considered ‘heroes’; see Evans, M., ‘Rehabilitating the Traumatized ...’ in *o.c.* (1997), pp. 78-79.

<sup>181</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 30.

<sup>182</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 57.

from the uneasiness with which many ex-combatants perceive the extent of their effective collaboration with the authoritarian regime.<sup>183</sup>

It is very significant to note how these men's diverse viewpoints manifest the personal identity negotiations that they establish within the relationship between past and present selves. In view of subsequent events, cultural shifts and life choices, the ex-combatants retrospectively compose interpretations often assessing the possibilities and implications of not having fulfilled their military service. A few respondents wonder whether they should have become absentees or deserters. Some, like Victor Palma, believe they should have done so. Others, stressing their genuine conviction of assisting the motherland, consider that they would have repeated their past behaviour by serving in the army.<sup>184</sup> António Moreira provides a particularly acute example of re-assessment of the past. Mutilated whilst serving in Mozambique, this respondent is frequently faced with social comments condemning him for not having 'ran away' to avoid potential undesirable consequences. Stressing that Portuguese society today is unaware of the context of that era, Moreira explains why he did not eschew service. Although aware of possible implications (since, for instance, he had met some war mutilated in Lisbon before leaving for Mozambique in 1970), Moreira explains how he then lived in a country with 'no freedom', in which existing with the stigma of 'coward' and 'traitor' to the motherland was, from the perspective of his milieu, virtually a social impossibility.<sup>185</sup> A great number of these veterans nowadays feel their choices were limited at the time by the authoritarian nature of the regime. As Luís Sá put it, it is pointless 'to blame anybody' for their participation in the war, it was the context of the era.<sup>186</sup>

### **'A group that also included me'<sup>187</sup>**

Sharing with hundreds of thousands of Portuguese men who lived through the same era the experience of having taken part in the colonial war, nowadays ex-combatants constitute a relatively wide societal group united by a common military service

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<sup>183</sup> Interviewee 35, p. 4, pp. 19-24, p. 29.

<sup>184</sup> Interviewees 33 (p. 57); 15 (p. 32); 12 (pp. 23-24); 26 (p. 19).

<sup>185</sup> Interviewee 17, p. 30, p. 25, p. 18, p. 20.

<sup>186</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 12.

<sup>187</sup> Interviewee 13, p. 17.

experience. As time elapsed, veterans aged and changes in public memory of the conflict unfolded, a clearer Portuguese ex-combatant identity began to emerge, with veteran narratives articulating such shifts. The veterans are united by that transformative ‘collective’ experience, since, as reasoned by Manuel Figueiredo, ‘I was part of it [...], I was part of them [combatants], and all the rest is rubbish.’<sup>188</sup> Frequently employing language which emphasises a certain individual powerlessness regarding the role played in the national military process, the ex-combatants highlight their group bonds. Francisco Fitas perceived himself as ‘one more stone’ comprising the military block, Luís Sá described his function as ‘a piece of a larger unit’, another respondent was ‘a little matchstick’ amongst many, whilst another veteran portrayed himself as

just one more – one more to add to those thousands who have been there, one more – who has gone there – amongst so many, from so many villages, mountains, cities – I was just one more who has been in the Ultramar [...] I am part of a group – that also included me.<sup>189</sup>

Most veterans portrayed themselves as members of the ‘war generation’, since ‘any – [Portuguese] man [of a certain age] would have been in the Ultramar.’<sup>190</sup> The concept that their bonds emerge from the hardships jointly endured is frequently repeated. These men often repeat they ‘belong to a sacrificed and misunderstood generation [...] who lost two years of their lives [...] for nothing’, feeling that their war experience confers a socially distinctive factor in relation to younger generations.<sup>191</sup>

The opening up of the national remembrance arena after a long-term silence provided renewed opportunities for the ex-combatants to assess their experience in recent years. Although, as expressed in the interviews, for many the war experience is not outstanding on a daily basis, with some actively remaining silent about it, a great number of respondents socialise in the veteran milieu and a few actively promote veteran visibility.<sup>192</sup> It is within the veteran group that these men feel more comfortable in sharing their war memories. As the decades advance and comrades physically disappear, the ex-combatants become aware, as Francisco Fitas put it, that they ‘are an

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<sup>188</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 37.

<sup>189</sup> Interviewee 13, pp. 16-17.

<sup>190</sup> Interviewees 25 (pp. 29-30); 21 (p. 29). See explanation of ‘Ultramar’ on pages 39, 44 and 79.

<sup>191</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 27, p. 5, pp. 29-30); 34 (p. 24, p. 12); 33 (p. 58); 8 (p. 2, p. 21, p. 32); 13 (p. 16); 17 (p. 12); 25 (p. 36); 26 (p. 24, p. 31); 32 (p. 21, p. 26). A notion interestingly proposed by Rodrigues, F. in ‘Soldadinhos de chumbo’ in Teixeira, R (org.) *o.c.* (2002), pp. 81-84. Bourke highlights a comparable differentiation in relation to World War One veterans in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 26-28.

<sup>192</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 23); 11 (p. 19); 26 (p. 15); 27 (p. 14); 28 (pp. 38-39); 8 (p. 33).

endangered species', feeling the urgency to locate and interact with each other – in one instance, one interviewee located and met another comrade from a different part of the country after forty-two years without contact.<sup>193</sup>

In this context, the more or less formal war veteran gatherings (normally annual) which have become increasingly popular in Portugal since the early 2000s reflect a veteran desire to reconnect with their war past and 'the youth of my time', as one respondent who has been organising such events long before they became commonplace put it.<sup>194</sup> For many veterans, these eagerly-awaited reunions perform a vital cathartic function in their lives.<sup>195</sup> These occasions, normally involving a meal open to family members, reunite servicemen of the same company, battalion or other military unit, or originating from the same geographic region.<sup>196</sup> These gatherings are the occasion to relive their war years 'intensely', becoming a sign 'that we are alive.'<sup>197</sup> Such moments are devoted to veteran remembering. The past is discussed, dead comrades evoked, their company commemorated, and, in general, the men savour a certain nostalgia for the era when they were young.<sup>198</sup> However, and as stressed by several interviewees, normally more traumatic events are not approached in detail, and pleasant memories command the veterans' nearly exclusive attention.<sup>199</sup> These gatherings reinforce the ex-servicemen's perception that they remain strongly bound by the same experience. Because all of them were 'there and suffered the same' at war, a significant number of my interviewees highlight the fact that only a comrade can understand another.<sup>200</sup> Daniel Cunha explained how upon meeting another war veteran, even a stranger, frequently the conversation topic will converge to the colonial war and

we leave relieved [...] what about you, where have you been? In Angola – hey mate, you have been here, isn't it– yes, I mean, that seems to take us back there again – seems to take us back to when we were twenty [...] I leave with a great friendship – and above all with – a burden is lifted off my shoulders.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>193</sup> Interviewees 14 (pp. 29-30); 27 (p. 3); 19 (p. 25).

<sup>194</sup> This 'commission' of former combatants promoted one of the first ex-combatant gatherings organised in Portugal. It started in 1982 and is still held yearly in Cuba, a town in Southern Portugal. See Interviewees 27 (p. 15) and 14 (p. 32). More typical of the emergence of this type of veteran meetings, a respondent regretted his company only began their gatherings in 2001, 'a bit late' (Interviewee 24, p. 2).

<sup>195</sup> Virtually all interviewees have participated or continue to do so. On being 'too painful' to participate for certain comrades, see Interviewee 25 (p. 27). See also Ribeiro, J. *o.c.* (1999), pp. 283-285.

<sup>196</sup> For instance, Interviewee 25 explained that these events operate as socialisation channels for his children (p. 31).

<sup>197</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 25.

<sup>198</sup> Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), pp. 4-6.

<sup>199</sup> Interviewees 27 (p. 15); 26 (p. 16); 14 (p. 23); 29 (p. 31); 31 (pp. 26-27); 8 (p. 15). Stanley addresses these avoidance tactics in 'Involuntary commemorations...' in *o.c.* (2004), p. 252; well rehearsed war stories normally begin here, as noted by Hutching, M. in 'After action...', in *o.c.* (2011), p. 240.

<sup>200</sup> Interviewees 11 (p. 19); 29 (p. 27); 31 (pp. 26-27); 6 (p. 21).

<sup>201</sup> Interviewee 26, p. 15.

As revealed by such instances of mutual recognition – illustrating what Winter terms ‘fictive kinships’ or ‘families of remembrance’ – the veterans display a very clear sense of themselves as a distinct generation.<sup>202</sup> As Cunha pinpointed, it is significant to note that even for veterans who did not fight together a social group proximity can be acquired in relation to the rest of society.<sup>203</sup> That aspect certainly is more prominent for comrades-in-arms. About meeting the men of his combat group, Manuel Figueiredo emphasises:

we know what we have been through – nobody else is able to interpret – no matter how much one talks, how much I say, that we trembled, what we did, we can’t pass this message to anybody – therefore that, on that occasion, this is our family – we will never separate in life – because I cover their back, and they cover mine – they always covered me.<sup>204</sup>

As noted by Figueiredo, their identity bond was also deeply forged ‘to the limit’ in the life-and-death situations the veterans jointly faced at war. Some note this comradeship and deep trust is so enduring that ex-combatant ties surpass family bonds – in a clear reference to the deep-lasting solidarities created by the intensity of armed combat highlighted by Dawson.<sup>205</sup> In fact, for the comrade whose life he saved in Guinea decades ago a former Transmissions soldier remains ‘my brother.’<sup>206</sup> Significantly, some veterans are aware of the ambivalence contained in the fact that such extraordinary friendships, socially fundamental for thousands of ex-combatants, were formed in the context of a war that many wish never happened. Francisco Fitas struggled to express the contradiction:

this is hard to explain (laughs) – it is hard to explain because I didn’t want the war, I wanted the war in another way – I wanted a war without war – but – I mean – regarding – comrades, servicemen and all that, I feel proud to be a part of this family – because it was a family which – has made us much closer.<sup>207</sup>

In effect, despite a certain uneasiness associated with the unpopular nature of the conflict often present in the veterans’ narratives, the men’s accounts normally

<sup>202</sup> Ashplant et al *o.c.* (2004), pp. 29-30.

<sup>203</sup> A private, nostalgic remembrance in the war generation context, as highlighted in Bourke’s study; in *o.c.* (1996), p. 155.

<sup>204</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 11.

<sup>205</sup> See Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), pp. 4-6; Garton, S. *o.c.* (1996), p. 24; Ribeiro, J. ‘Camaradagem’, in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 269-290; Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), p. 11.

<sup>206</sup> Interviewees 29 (p. 14); 10 (p. 10).

<sup>207</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 29); 15 (pp. 40-41). As expressed by Vietnam veterans mentioned by Garton, S. *o.c.* (1996), p. 8.

overshadow it through a cohesive group closeness forged during military service and particularly by having experienced war events with similar intensity.<sup>208</sup> In that sense, the ex-combatant group sets itself apart from mainstream Portuguese society as a privileged, experiential milieu for war remembrance associated to a ‘hurtful past.’<sup>209</sup> In many ways, and considering the revival of the colonial war in Portuguese society in the last decade and a half, the topics explored by the veterans concerning their current group identity appear to coincide mainly with those concerning the earlier ‘years of silence’ (namely, for instance, the notion of a generation sacrificed by the authoritarian regime, the feeling of official and social neglect and unrecognition, the lack of general knowledge on the war, and similar).

However, as is visible in Fitas’s and other narratives, and perhaps prompted by public remembrance developments to which they also contributed (particularly through ex-combatants groups), this renaissance seems to have allowed for a clearer articulation of veteran memories and identities focusing on more positive aspects of the war experience. Such narratives highlight comradeship, masculine pride in fulfilling military service, and national identity.<sup>210</sup> In many respects, this makes the Portuguese veterans’ group war commemoration closer to conflicts of a non-colonial nature. The general emphasis is placed on a common fighting experience for the motherland, the family-centred nature of gatherings, the celebration of their military units, the erection of monuments and other forms of ‘fashionable’ memorialisation, alongside an admitted evasiveness towards difficult remembering. Such remembrance manifestations appear to a great extent to be developing in a non-critical, a-historical manner, allowing the less comfortable sides of war to remain significantly unexplored (such as the conflict being an effort to gain independence from a colonial system, the role of the authoritarian regime, and the violence perpetrated and witnessed).<sup>211</sup> Notwithstanding their contradictory position – in that a superficial celebration of their military past risks being perceived as condoning the colonial conflict – as the revival period develops, it has been allowing the creation of a distinctive and evolving group affirmation and recognition for the Portuguese ex-combatants.

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<sup>208</sup> Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), pp. 4-6.

<sup>209</sup> See Ribeiro, M. & Vecchi, R. (org.) ‘Introdução’ in *o.c.*, (2011), pp. 21-32; Vecchi, R. *o.c.* (2010), pp. 7-12.

<sup>210</sup> See Thomson, A. *o.c.* (1994), p. 220; Evans, M., ‘Rehabilitating the Traumatized ...’ in *o.c.* (1997), pp. 78-79.

<sup>211</sup> See Chapter Two, pp. 68-92. See ‘Memorialisation and commemoration’ in Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), pp. 172-185; see, for instance, Quintais, L. *As guerras coloniais portuguesas e a invenção da História*, Lisboa, ICSUL (2000).

A strong distinctive factor also manifests via geographical knowledge. Several decades after the end of the conflict, the Portuguese war veterans are increasingly aware that they share with each other a very significant link manifested in a common passage through Africa. This fact is perceived in multiple ways by my interviewees, but, in general, it is safe to note that most of these ex-combatants feel a strong connection with the African territories where they served in the army. There they gave their ‘best’ and ‘endured the worst’, the intense experiences lived in Africa forging a deep, visceral bond with the land and its people powerfully felt nowadays. The majority of interviewees would love to return and visit, often expressing nostalgia for that period of their lives and ‘longing’ for its geographical backdrop.<sup>212</sup> Their facial expressions often change when talking about ‘that wonderful land’ – mostly in highly emotional and sensory terms – denoting a wish to rediscover their youth spent there. Since ‘it stays inside us’, Daniel Cunha guarantees that he ‘can still feel the scent of the Angolan soil.’<sup>213</sup> In the words of Artur Santos, there is ‘a common feeling to all of us’ of ‘having become fascinated with Africa’ and willing to ‘go back’ to where they ‘had been.’<sup>214</sup> Provided that certain financial, health and security requirements are met, most respondents declare that they would be prepared to visit the former African province (or provinces) that left such a vivid impact on their younger selves, as discussed in a previous Chapter.<sup>215</sup> This common urge which unites many of these former servicemen is frequently misunderstood by their families and non-veterans. Some are aware that the likelihood of their dream remaining unfulfilled is high.<sup>216</sup>

Taking into account the hardships endured by most in Africa, some interpret this current desire as paradoxical. A former soldier explained how, despite thinking, as a serviceman in Guinea between 1970-1973 that he would never wish to live there ‘even if I was given the world’, nowadays he feels an overwhelming ‘anxiety’ to visit the place and its inhabitants: he’s ‘dying to go there.’<sup>217</sup> The paradoxes of this longing to return are manifested more visibly in those veterans who were mutilated or severely wounded in Africa. António Moreira, for instance, remarks that he would like to visit Mozambique but feels ‘frightened’ about the prospect. Like him, Artur Santos pondered

<sup>212</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 15); 36 (p. 8); 28 (pp. 19-21, p. 35); 7 (p. 6); 26 (pp. 5-6); 10 (p. 11); 15 (p. 36); 6 (p. 9, p. 12, p. 16); 25 (p. 27).

<sup>213</sup> Interviewees 7 (p. 14, p. 6); 26 (p. 10); 28 (pp. 35-36).

<sup>214</sup> Interviewee 28, p. 35.

<sup>215</sup> Interviewees 10 (p. 12, pp. 23-24); 19 (pp. 2-3); 16 (p. 15); 14 (p. 23); 6 (p. 12, p. 16), amongst other examples. See Chapter Two, p. 55.

<sup>216</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 15); 35 (p. 5); 10 (p. 12); 28 (pp. 35-36).

<sup>217</sup> Interviewee 16, pp. 14-15.

if a prospective journey to Guinea – and particularly to the exact spot where he suffered severe injuries – would be worthwhile in that it would serve to confront a traumatic past. Struggling to reconcile contradictory feelings, Santos believes a return could fulfil ‘a wish to rediscover myself.’<sup>218</sup>

For others, a return would be less complex. In this respect, Francisco Fitas relates how he would appreciate to go back to Angola as a ‘tourist, not as a serviceman.’ The war aside, it is a ‘wonderful’ place and ‘I’d be very sorry if I never go there again.’<sup>219</sup> Others feel the same need to revisit the source of ‘memories’, some of them of ‘good moments’, that ‘are still’ so present in their daily lives. From that perspective, several respondents highlight that they enjoyed having been in Africa, particularly as far as the relationship with some local populations was concerned. They would like to return and meet these people once again in a peace context.<sup>220</sup> These veterans ‘dream about going back’ before they ‘die.’ José Andrade states that he ‘fell in love with Africa’ and ‘miss[es] it’. Daniel Cunha – who had never left Portugal in 1969 – describes how ‘Luanda stayed in my heart.’ Another interviewee feels a ‘lump in my throat’ when he longingly remembers Mozambique.<sup>221</sup>

Nonetheless, it should be stressed that a desire to return to Africa is not shared by all of my interviewees. Some clearly state that they have no intention of ever visiting the areas where they served. In such instances, they ‘get annoyed’ when invited and refuse further proposals since they ‘don’t miss it at all.’ These cases seem to reflect veterans who associate Africa with unpleasant memories of traumatic events, connecting a visit with reliving an uncomfortable past.<sup>222</sup> This applies to the former artillery officer stationed in Guinea between 1971 and 1973, who, puzzled by the trips undertaken by comrades declared himself ‘terribly shocked to know that there are people who are going to visit a country [Guinea] that has nothing to visit – unfortunately – and that is going to bring them bad memories!’. This respondent saw no ‘pleasure’ and ‘satisfaction’ in such journeys, illustrating further how every individual veteran establishes a very subjective relationship with the geographical memory context of his war past.<sup>223</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Interviewees 17 (p. 19); 28 (pp. 35-36).

<sup>219</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 18, p. 23.

<sup>220</sup> Interviewees 26 (pp. 5-6); 7 (p. 14); 10 (p. 12); 14 (p. 23).

<sup>221</sup> Interviewees 24 (p. 5); 32 (pp. 30-31); 4 (p. 17); 26 (pp. 5-6); 7 (p. 6, p. 14); 19 (pp. 2-3); 35 (p. 5); 10 (p. 12).

<sup>222</sup> Interviewees 9 (p. 29); 29 (p. 19).

<sup>223</sup> Interviewee 18, pp. 24-25.



However, a reasonable number of Portuguese ex-combatants have embarked on that enterprise and have visited Africa. In what has been termed ‘tourism of memory’ or ‘memory trips’, a business has flourished in Portugal in recent years focusing on facilitating war veteran journeys to the African places where they were stationed, frequently linking with local authorities in promoting activities and providing aid.<sup>224</sup> A case in point is Manuel Figueiredo, who has felt the need to return to Guinea for many years, and had made several journeys there in the years preceding our interview. To him, it is vital to be able to visit the places where he suffered ambushes knowing ‘nothing will ever happen to me there again.’ Undertaking a personal assessment of the war prompted by his return to Africa, Figueiredo also recounted the visit to the local cemetery and the difficult encounter with the graves of his fallen comrades, where he ‘stood in front of those crosses and began to see – look, I had two children – thirty plus years that I had of holidays, christmasses, easters, these men stayed’ behind. There, he questioned why that happened.<sup>225</sup> Figueiredo’s uneasy account focuses on his need to go back to Guinea, since, as a former ‘part of’ the Portuguese Army fighting in that territory, he feels strongly responsible and ‘guilty’ for the destruction faced by that country, a feeling shared by others.<sup>226</sup> Perhaps as ‘compensation’ for the past, his trips have served to distribute aid in Guinea and to meet ex-independence fighters, an ‘extraordinary’ moment, when former enemies embraced.<sup>227</sup> Like Figueiredo, many of these ex-combatants – including those who had not travelled to Africa by the time of our interview – reveal a genuine interest in the fate of the African countries where they served, with this veteran tourism and interest giving a new emphasis to ties between Portugal and the former colonies.<sup>228</sup> Now ‘friends and brothers’, these independent countries are presented in the veterans’ narratives through a framework prioritising respect, ‘equality’ and the ability to ‘unite’ Portuguese and African peoples. In this context, several interviewees regard a renewed proximity and cultural exchange with the former colonies as a contributory step towards integrating the colonial past.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 24. See also Chapter Two, p. 55.

<sup>225</sup> Interviewee 15 (p. 24, pp. 36-37).

<sup>226</sup> Interviewees 15 (p. 36, pp. 44-45); 1 (p. 22); 10 (p. 12).

<sup>227</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 37.

<sup>228</sup> Interviewees 2 (p. 6); 24 (p. 5); 16 (p. 15); 36 (p. 8). See Chapter Two, p. 55.

<sup>229</sup> Interviewees 30 (p. 25); 14 (p. 34); 28 (p. 43); 1 (p. 22); 15 (pp. 44-45); 10 (p. 12).

**‘Extinguished, forgotten’<sup>230</sup>**

The Portuguese ex-combatants’ group identity has also been significantly reinforced by common demands concerning compensation and recognition – both a manifestation of the veterans’ collective identity, and a mechanism through which the latter is developed, especially through veteran associations. These demands, essentially the same throughout the postwar period, have become more visible from the late 1990s onwards. In this context, the Portuguese war veterans seek to be socially acknowledged, and demand adequate social welfare rights – such as suitable medical and financial support, and efficient social reintegration strategies for veterans in need. Their demands stem from a generalised notion amongst ex-combatants that they have been used, abandoned and neglected by their country after fulfilling their compulsory military service.<sup>231</sup> Nowadays, many feel unsupported, ‘completely disregarded’ and ‘marginalised by the government’, their service not adequately acknowledged.<sup>232</sup> To signify that view, predominant in my sample, respondents employ a richness of metaphors – often in the plural form. For one, a soldier was a ‘matchstick’ which was lit when needed and afterwards ‘dumped to one side’ amongst others, where ‘bit by bit there they remained extinguished, forgotten.’<sup>233</sup> Many others stress, frequently in angry tones, how they felt ‘kicked away like dogs’, ‘thrown into the rubbish bin’, ‘a used part’, ‘discarded’ after serving their purpose, expendable, ‘cheated.’<sup>234</sup> The ‘gun in his [their] hand’ for fighting, however, was put there by the Portuguese State.<sup>235</sup>

As conscripted troops ‘forced to go’ to Africa and ‘risk losing their lives’ or becoming disabled, and ‘who maybe had to kill’, these men believe that the Portuguese Government has the responsibility to answer their plight for recognition and compensation, a claim increasingly more urgent as time elapses. Often they stress that, irrespective of the fairness or unfairness of the conflict, or diverse political stands, the lack of accountability for former servicemen is to be regretted.<sup>236</sup> It should be stressed that the veterans’ demands are not exclusively of a material nature. In this respect,

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<sup>230</sup> Interviewee 11, p. 26.

<sup>231</sup> Akin to Vietnam veterans’ feelings. See Hynes, S. *o.c.* (1998), pp. 178-179.

<sup>232</sup> Interviewees 8 (pp. 21-22); 27 (p. 14); 22 (p. 22); 5 (p. 15); 17 (p. 12, pp. 23-25, pp. 28-29); 16 (p. 27).

<sup>233</sup> Interviewee 11, p. 26.

<sup>234</sup> Interviewees 27 (p. 7); 9 (p. 31); 15 (p. 38, p. 40); 17 (p. 29); 32 (p. 40); 17 (p. 12, pp. 28-29, p. 23); 26 (p. 38).

<sup>235</sup> Interviewee 31, pp. 42-43. Feelings strikingly similar to those expressed by Algerian and Vietnam veterans, in Evans, M. *o.c.* (2012), p. 171; and Bourke, J. *o.c.* (1999), p. 361.

<sup>236</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 26, p. 28); 1 (p. 21); 12 (p. 22); 26 (p. 22); 5 (p. 15); 15 (p. 42); 21 (pp. 29-30); 27 (p. 14); 8 (pp. 21-22); 20 (p. 12, p. 15); 18 (p. 24); 31 (pp. 42-43); 36 (p. 20).

several ex-combatants emphasise how such vital quest for social and official recognition is not necessarily associated with increasing material benefits (which many understand would divert national resources from other sectors and, therefore, be harder to implement). For these combatants, non-financial recognition is much more important, ‘the recognition that we have given a lot’ and, thus, cannot be ‘swept to under the carpet.’<sup>237</sup> For instance, alluding to the way serving in the war affected his psychological health (and consequently his life path), Manuel Figueiredo explains how he desperately wishes recognition also ‘as a question of principle’, so as to ‘make official that which they made me ill with – so that I can show my mother, my children, my wife, in my job – why all this happened [...] I didn’t even think [...] about money.’<sup>238</sup> Miguel Almeida stresses that, whatever the circumstances they faced, these men endured their military service for two years and deserved some ‘honour’ for that.<sup>239</sup> For the most part, and deploring the lack of official and public recognition, respondents emphasised the importance of ‘respect’, ‘regard’, ‘recognition’, ‘justice’, ‘dignity’ for Portuguese ex-combatants. Interviewees often repeat that they deserved ‘just a little bit more of respect’, and to be perceived with more ‘kindness.’ Many of these veterans feel that ‘our motherland, for whom we have fought, owes us at least our recognition.’<sup>240</sup> Daniel Cunha states that ‘my greatest regret is that our country has little recognition for the ex-combatants’, lacking the ‘courage’ to ‘assume’ their presence and needs.<sup>241</sup> ‘Frustrated’ at the non-recognition, many feel that ‘we were cannon fodder and [...] forgotten many times [...] very forgotten.’<sup>242</sup> In his call for recognition, one of my respondents addressed any potential listeners of our interview directly: ‘look – whoever is listening to this tape may at least have a bit of consideration for the ex-combatants.’<sup>243</sup>

Nonetheless, these men also focus on the material compensation aspect. Manuel Figueiredo, despite stressing that his recognition claim is not financially motivated, argues that ‘I was forced to go there, therefore the state has to look after me.’<sup>244</sup> However, official attempts to materially ‘look after’ these ex-combatants in the decades

<sup>237</sup> Interviewees 20 (p. 23); 9 (p. 33); 6 (p. 23); 36 (p. 31); 31 (pp. 39-42).

<sup>238</sup> Interviewee 15, pp. 42-43.

<sup>239</sup> Interviewees 8 (pp. 21-22); 18 (p. 26); 14 (p. 28).

<sup>240</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 31); 4 (p. 28, p. 31); 7 (pp. 15-16); 21 (pp. 29-30); 22 (p. 28); 8 (p. 30); 4 (p. 30); 6 (p. 21, p. 23).

<sup>241</sup> Interviewee 26, p. 36, p. 43.

<sup>242</sup> Interviewees 10 (pp. 20-21); 8 (p. 30); 4 (p. 30).

<sup>243</sup> Interviewee 19, p. 36.

<sup>244</sup> Interviewees 15 (p. 42, p. 38); 18 (p. 24).

after the end of the conflict, and particularly in recent years, remain unsatisfactory for most veterans. The long-winded legal processes specifically addressing war veteran claims (throughout the years focusing mainly on financial support, health care, disability status criteria, retirement conditions, and retirement pension complements) reflects decades of the country's poor resources, inefficient nationwide organisation, uneven access and institutional dispersion (with veteran associations and several government bodies like the Ministry of Defence, Social Security and the Ministry of Health, for instance, often unable to coordinate efforts efficiently). An aspect particularly noted is the absence of an integrated national veteran database, an apparent legacy of the fact that the Portuguese Army did not, from the onset of these men's discharge, monitor the success of their subsequent social reintegration.<sup>245</sup> Therefore, the implementation of the types of support that the Portuguese ex-combatants have been struggling to obtain with particular emphasis since the late 1990s reflects the advances and setbacks emerging from the Portuguese socio-political path and economic climate of recent years.<sup>246</sup>

In this context, most of my respondents firmly believe that the Portuguese State should support the ex-combatant group in diverse ways, including through adequate subsidies, but also via non-monetary types of assistance.<sup>247</sup> Core demands include having access to free healthcare (including psychological support), aimed specifically at war veterans and provided in military hospitals<sup>248</sup>; having the years of military service effectively included in the calculation of an ex-combatant's retirement pension;<sup>249</sup> early retirement (due to the likelihood of lower life expectancy in veterans); and efficient professional and social veteran reintegration, including support to members of the veteran's household, who often play a vital unpaid and unrecognised social role.<sup>250</sup> In fact, in the face of inadequate official support, many ex-combatants, particularly those lacking family help and financial means, 'drift' more easily into situations of social decline and personal disintegration.<sup>251</sup> As pointed out to me by several respondents, some comrades experience poverty and need, in extreme cases leading an unstructured,

<sup>245</sup> See, for example, Interviewees 4 (p. 30) and 15 (p. 38). See Maia, A. et al *o.c.*(2006), pp. 14-15, p. 18; Gomes, C., 'O manto de silêncio e abandono' in *o.c.*, (Vol. 5, 2004), pp.172-173.

<sup>246</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 28); 16 (p. 7). See Chapter Two (pp. 46-51) for an overview of veterans' claims.

<sup>247</sup> Interviewees 7 (pp. 15-16); 6 (pp- 20-21); 3 (p. 26); 32 (p. 27, p. 29); 12 (p. 22); 19 (p. 23); 20 (p. 10); 18 (p. 22), amongst others.

<sup>248</sup> Interviewees 2 (p. 17); 3 (p. 26); 28 (p. 41, p. 54); 12 (p. 22); 26 (p. 36); 21 (p. 24).

<sup>249</sup> Interviewees 3 (p. 26); 4 (p. 30), for instance.

<sup>250</sup> Interviewees 33 (p. 53); 26 (p. 36); 28 (p. 54); 31 (p. 43); 36 (p. 29, p. 31); 21 (pp. 24-25); 26 (p. 23).

<sup>251</sup> As indicated by recent research in the field of psychology. See Pereira et al 'PTSD...', in *o.c.* (2010), pp. 225-226.

marginal existence, often fuelled by alcoholism and drugs – aspects considerably associated to veteran homelessness, criminality and suicide. Particularly in such stark examples of undervaluation and social exclusion, my interviewees believe that the state should ‘at least give them a dignified end of life.’<sup>252</sup> Similarly, in the cases of the thousands of ex-combatants who became affected by the colonial war in an incapacitating way (physical, psychological or other), my respondents defend a more robust official response.<sup>253</sup> The majority of interviewees are very sensitive to the fate of these fellow veterans, frequently stressing that the passage of time frequently aggravated the life conditions of vulnerable veterans (materially, psychologically and in other ways), sometimes extending it to close family members – in many cases affecting younger generations born after the conflict.<sup>254</sup>

The fact that the colonial war has remained a divisive conflict about which national consensus is hard to congregate has been detrimental to the men’s plight, amplifying in the Portuguese case an expected dissatisfaction amongst veterans in general with postwar support officially offered, suitable or not. Some ex-combatants negatively contrast the Portuguese case with other international examples – such as the United States of America regarding Vietnam veterans, and France in relation to the Algerian war, where they perceive those respective conflicts are more publicly acknowledged and veterans better recognised and supported.<sup>255</sup> As Francisco Fitas pinpointed, respecting veterans also comprises acknowledging, supporting and even educating against discrimination, since veterans are ‘sometimes’ treated ‘ironically and as if they were some kind of joke.’ For Fitas, in this respect Portugal could learn a lot from the United States of America.<sup>256</sup> In effect, throughout the interviews, a substantial part of most war veterans’ narratives focused on their current condemnatory feelings at the lack of support, dismissed responsibility, unfairness and ‘hypocrisy’ of official authorities regarding their situation.<sup>257</sup>

These concerns over lack of support – acutely expressed by my sample – generated deeply-rooted anger and disappointment amidst servicemen. Aware that he belongs to a significant section of Portuguese society comprising hundreds of thousands of veterans,

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<sup>252</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 30); 19 (p. 23, p. 33).

<sup>253</sup> Interviewees 32 (p. 28); 22 (p. 21); 21 (p. 24); 19 (p. 36).

<sup>254</sup> Interviewees 27 (p. 16, p. 13); 13 (pp. 14-15); 15 (p. 16); 16 (p. 9), 36 (p. 26).

<sup>255</sup> Interviewees 8 (p. 22); 2 (p. 17); 14 (p. 28); 8 (pp. 23-24).

<sup>256</sup> Interviewees 14 (p. 28); 26 (p. 24).

<sup>257</sup> Interviewee 7 (p. 14); 15 (pp. 41-42); 4 (p. 30); 17 (pp. 23-25); 32 (p. 40); 26 (p. 44); 28 (p. 51, p. 54); 8 (p. 32), amongst others.

along with others Júlio Lobo states that ‘the fact that nobody ever cares about us’ makes him ‘angry sometimes.’<sup>258</sup> They are ‘discriminated against.’<sup>259</sup> Former military driver Daniel Cunha declares himself ‘angry at being Portuguese [...] a revolted combatant.’<sup>260</sup> Cunha claims that he is unable to ‘leave the war until they recognise me.’ Involved in a decades-long bureaucratic battle to obtain war disabled status, Cunha feels let down as a citizen: he was dutifully ‘available’ to serve his country and now feels mistreated and not receiving the support he believes ‘I have the right to.’ Despite feeling drained and discouraged by being so ‘ignored’ for years, Cunha intends to continue ‘struggling’ for his unfulfilled rights.<sup>261</sup> However, echoing others, this respondent stresses that, more important than any financial compensation, ‘I need that they recognise me [...] the effort I made – that which I went through.’ Until then, he explains, his ‘war scars’ will not heal, his war will not end.<sup>262</sup>

Amongst these ex-servicemen, a case in point is that of José Gouveia (b. 1946). Born in a rural town in central Portugal, to a lower middle class family, due to his level of schooling Gouveia was selected at conscription, in 1966, to train as an officer. Integrated in the Commando force, Gouveia was subsequently mobilised to Angola in 1967. Due to the life-threatening injuries he suffered there, José Gouveia nearly lost his life. The resulting dramatic life change means that, decades later, this respondent still has to deal daily with ill health and significant levels of incapacity. Detailing how ‘hurtful’ it is to feel ‘ostracised [...] both by society [...] and by politicians’, Gouveia believes that he has given ‘a lot’ to his country – he can ‘feel it in my flesh!’ – and that, as a ‘victim’ of war, he should be recognised and suitably supported.<sup>263</sup> Taking into account such obvious consequences of war, it is understandable that veterans in similar circumstances (mainly disabled, such as Gouveia, Cunha and Moreira) articulate more strongly a general feeling of non-recognition.<sup>264</sup> For them, the country is shunning its responsibilities, and ‘it takes persistence, a permanent struggle to gain sometimes a few worthless crumbs.’<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Interviewees 32 (pp. 40-41, p. 30, p. 26, p. 28); 16 (p. 27); 15 (p. 38); 26 (pp. 23-24); 8 (pp. 23-24); 27 (p. 16, p. 13); 6 (p. 20).

<sup>259</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 23); 6 (p. 20).

<sup>260</sup> Interviewee 26, p. 39, pp. 43-44, p. 24.

<sup>261</sup> Having been involved in an accident subsequently deemed ‘in campaign’ (and not ‘in combat’), Cunha was not granted war disabled status and its associated rights, and has been contesting this decision since 1989. Interviewee 26, p. 45, pp. 22-24, p. 36.

<sup>262</sup> Interviewee 26, p. 39, pp. 44-45, p. 21, p. 25.

<sup>263</sup> Interviewee 20, p. 10, p. 12, pp. 15-16, p. 22.

<sup>264</sup> An aspect emphasised by Hunt, N. in *o.c.* (2011), pp. 143-144.

<sup>265</sup> Interviewees 31 (p. 27); 20 (pp. 10-11); 17 (p. 1, p. 24); 26 (p. 37).

The claims for support and further attention to the war veteran issue are nowadays framed by an inescapable reality the majority of the ex-combatants are well aware of, and which confers to the matter a greater urgency: the passage of time. The veterans are approaching the end of their lives and are ‘fading away.’<sup>266</sup> For the ex-combatants, the topic has been approached in an ‘extremely negative’ and ‘shameful’ way by the state, adding that it has been ‘too long’ now and it is getting ‘a bit late’ to resolve their issue.<sup>267</sup> Amongst these combatants, there is a widespread conviction that ‘they’re waiting for all of us to die’, that ‘these guys should be dead already’, so that the uncomfortable colonial war ‘saga’ finally ends and society is able to ‘get rid of these nuisances here.’<sup>268</sup> In this context, ‘the sooner my generation ends, the better.’ The ‘past is then buried’ and the ex-combatants ‘won’t give any more trouble.’<sup>269</sup> In such context, my interviewees perceive their physical disappearance as a natural resolution of the issue of the state’s responsibility for providing support. Respondents are convinced that indifference surrounding the topic is conveniently entertained to prevent veteran claims from materialising, and thus avoid further unwanted ‘expense.’<sup>270</sup> In their view, the Portuguese State ‘washes its hands of’ its material obligations, justifying the impossibility of providing wider support and compensation with lack of resources, and the fact that the colonial conflict happened under a different regime.<sup>271</sup>

For some respondents, there is awareness that they ‘served society’ through fulfilment of military duty during a different political era, an aspect which they perceive may be employed as an argument to discard responsibility for the veterans’ current claims. Nonetheless, as one respondent put it, ‘we are the same people!’, an affirmation that the regime might have changed, but they remain the same Portuguese citizens.<sup>272</sup> Furthermore, as another interviewee notes, the former military were not just the troops of the authoritarian regime, they were also part of the Armed Forces who sustained the 1974 democratic change commemorated every year on the 25<sup>th</sup> April.<sup>273</sup> Indeed, because of the rapid 1974 shift, the servicemen of the previous regime straddle two political Portuguese eras, ‘leaving the ex-combatant in an ambiguous and uncomfortable place’

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<sup>266</sup> Interviewees 5 (p. 15); 32 (p. 30).

<sup>267</sup> Interviewees 25 (pp. 35-37); 31 (p. 42).

<sup>268</sup> Interviewees 36 (p. 27); 19 (p. 32); 15 (p. 35); 9 (pp. 31-33).

<sup>269</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 27, p. 28); 8 (p. 30); 36 (p. 27); 9 (pp. 31-33).

<sup>270</sup> Interviewees 13 (pp. 15-16); 14 (p. 28, p. 33); 32 (pp. 28-29, p. 40); 36 (p. 29); 10 (p. 22).

<sup>271</sup> Interviewees 36 (p. 31); 6 (p. 20).

<sup>272</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 26. See ‘Ageing, trauma and memory’ in Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), pp. 140-160.

<sup>273</sup> Interviewees 34 (p. 21, p. 24); 18 (p. 24). See Afonso, A. ‘Guerra Colonial – História e Memória’, in Afonso, A., Gomes, C. (eds.) *o.c.*, Volume 16, Matosinhos, QuidNovi (2009), pp. 29-31; Medeiros, P. ‘Hauntings...’ in *o.c.* (2000), p. 216.

between victim or representative of the former regime.<sup>274</sup> In this context, the conviction amongst most veterans interviewed that such a fundamental contemporary event and its protagonists are not sufficiently recognised on an official level is explained by many by the fact that younger politicians currently ruling are unaware of the lived realities of the previous regime and the impact of the war. Additionally, some respondents express their resentment towards the political class in general, perceiving it to stem from the legacy of the ‘deserters’ of the colonial conflict, those who, for conviction or convenience, refused to ‘serve’ their country.<sup>275</sup> For instance, in a discourse tinged with a certain bitterness, Luís Sá feels defeated by those who made the ‘revolution: the ‘bearded, long-haired blokes’ who had never ‘touched a gun’, and, thus, remain unable to understand the ex-combatants.<sup>276</sup> In this respect, the men’s accounts suggest a condemnation of a ‘remembrance gap’ surrounding the war – the precarious balance between the initial silence required by post-revolutionary national unity, and the long-term absence of sufficient remembrance affecting mainly the generations chronologically involved in the events.<sup>277</sup> Such factors add to the complexity of the war veterans’ position in Portuguese society, and the lack of political consensus in the resolution of their demands.<sup>278</sup>

Following our analysis of the war veterans’ perception of their treatment by the Portuguese State regarding claims for compensation and recognition, it should be noted that, for some ex-combatants, the concepts of *State* and *society* become blurred and interchangeable. Often the State is portrayed by these men as a reflection of their society, and vice-versa. In that sense, they mean not only the official approach, but also the informal treatment they receive from civil society in Portugal. In general, veterans emphasise that Portuguese society is not fulfilling a ‘duty’ to support and acknowledge them, regretting that ‘forgetting becomes greater’ and former combatants are undervalued and not given adequate respect. As a former soldier in Angola (1967-1969) put it, ‘nobody cares about the combatants of the colonial war [...] we are [...] excluded from society [...] nobody talks about us.’<sup>279</sup> Mostly, the ex-combatants extend their explanations for official lack of interest into the civil society’s domain. This social

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<sup>274</sup> Ribeiro, M. *o.c.* (2004), pp. 248-249.

<sup>275</sup> Interviewees 27 (pp. 12-13); 21 (pp. 25-26); 35 (p. 25). Comparable to feelings noted by Evans, in *o.c.* (2012), pp. 363-364.

<sup>276</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 20.

<sup>277</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 14); 20 (p. 12); 32 (pp. 28-29); 14 (p. 28); 17 (p. 26).

<sup>278</sup> See, for instance, Interviewees 10 (pp. 21-22); 26 (p. 36).

<sup>279</sup> Interviewee 19, p. 33.



indifference is explained by some due to the fact that current Portuguese society for its most part did not experience the war directly, failing to generate meaningful reminders of the ex-combatants' experience despite the resurgence of the topic since the 2000s.<sup>280</sup> António Moreira feels that 'we are completely forgotten [by Portuguese society] not just by the politicians, but also by that people [newer generations] [...] nobody talks about it – it's like something that has never happened.'<sup>281</sup> Many find incomprehensible 'nowadays society's 'alienation' to their existence and needs.'<sup>282</sup>

However, most ex-combatants are also aware of the fact that socio-political indifference towards them does not manifest evenly. My respondents note how in electoral periods their concerns can be addressed rather vehemently. Interpreting those cyclical surges in interest as opportunistic political utilisation – or 'horrible propaganda' to quote José Carvalho – leads many to feel 'used' and 'betrayed' and even angrier at such 'demagogy' and political promises aimed at 'chasing [veterans'] votes.'<sup>283</sup> Expressing a similar point, Manuel Figueiredo regrets that some commemoration events meant to remember fallen comrades and mark the war acquire a political tone and serve some parties' exploitative interests, leaving the ex-combatants 'looking like fools.'<sup>284</sup>

In this context, my respondents' testimonials reflected the weariness of having witnessed – more prominently from the late 1990s onwards – the subject of ex-combatant recognition and especially compensation being used as political 'bait' in Portugal.<sup>285</sup> A particularly polemic topic was the governmental attribution (via the Portuguese Social Security, and legislated in 2004) of an annual retirement pension complement of a hundred-and-fifty Euros to retired war veterans.<sup>286</sup> Although some accept what is given, a great number of my interviewees manifested their dissatisfaction with this measure, condemning it as unsuitably low and unevenly distributed, a 'ridiculous', 'degrading', 'shameful' and 'senseless' effort, mere 'charity' and 'trickery' employed to 'keep them quiet' about their demands.<sup>287</sup> Like others, Júlio Lobo believes that either the Government is capable of attributing a 'proper' pension and support to

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<sup>280</sup> Interviewees 1 (p. 21); 14 (pp. 29-30); 14 (p. 32); 18 (p. 24); 16 (p. 21).

<sup>281</sup> Interviewee 17, p. 24.

<sup>282</sup> See Interviewees 8 (p. 23); 26 (pp. 36-37); 14 (p. 33); 16 (p. 21), amongst others.

<sup>283</sup> Interviewees 21 (pp. 24-25); 6 (p. 20); 1 (pp. 20-21); 4 (p. 27).

<sup>284</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 40.

<sup>285</sup> See, for instance, Interviewee 21, p. 24.

<sup>286</sup> Namely in the form of legal diploma no. 160/2004, issued on the 2nd July 2004, creating a lifelong, special pension complement, paid yearly in a single instalment, and calculated according to length of time served in the 'Ultramar'. See Chapter Two, pp. 46-48.

<sup>287</sup> Interviewees 3 (p. 25); 27 (p. 19); 28 (p. 54); 32 (pp. 26-29); 21 (p. 25).

veterans in need or it would be more advisable not to initiate such measures.<sup>288</sup> Moreover, and as stressed by Francisco Fitas, with these political schemes ‘they are putting the people against the former military’, in that public resources are being deviated from areas that are socially considered to be more urgent and relevant.<sup>289</sup>

In pursuing their desire for respect and compensation, war veterans strengthened their collective identity, expanding their visibility and space within Portuguese society. One of the privileged avenues for veteran mobilisation is through veteran associations. In their moments of vitality, these associations contribute to improve the ex-combatants’ social reintegration and raise awareness in Portugal of their plight. They educate war-ignorant politicians, judges, lawyers, doctors and policy-makers in general about the war experienced by veterans, with a view to generate a fairer social approach to them.<sup>290</sup> As remarked by some interviewees, the associations they belong to are their ‘union’, operating as their ‘defence’, allowing them to ‘to put our foot down to the Government, and show that we are still alive.’<sup>291</sup>

However, the explosion of war veteran associations that began in Portugal from the late 1990s onwards did not appear to find an equivalent match in concrete results, most possibly due to a lack of efficient articulation between organisations. In effect, a significant number of interviewees comment on the existence of ‘more associations than mushrooms’, locally and nationally, regretting the often discordant and uncoordinated nature of their exchanges, with disagreement and divided purposes frequently overruling the general pursuit of the veterans’ common good.<sup>292</sup> Despite the remarkable achievements of many of these organisations, frequently the absence of joint goals and shared perceptions, difficulties in updating themselves, internal divisions and lack of stable funding sources contribute to some inefficiency in adequately representing the interests of former combatants – an aspect which often results in a loss of negotiating power with the official authorities and potential social disfavour.<sup>293</sup> As noted by some, a strongly inclusive, consensual, implemented nationwide war veteran association is clearly missing to counteract the negative consequences of such fragmentation.<sup>294</sup> If the sizeable veteran group channelled their social presence efficiently in a combined effort,

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<sup>288</sup> Interviewee 32, pp. 26-29.

<sup>289</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 30. Reminiscent of Garton’s study of the Australian case, in *o.c.* (1996), pp. 86-97.

<sup>290</sup> Interviewees 28 (p. 38, p. 46); 18 (p. 24).

<sup>291</sup> Interviewees 17 (p. 12); 16 (p. 7, p. 26); 6 (p. 21).

<sup>292</sup> Interviewees 1 (p. 21); 9 (p. 32), for instance. In the Australian case, this process has been much more successful, See Garton, *o.c.* (1996), pp. 244-254.

<sup>293</sup> Interviewee 28 (pp. 46-48, p. 41), for instance; see also Chapter Two, pp. 54-55.

<sup>294</sup> Interviewee 17, p. 26, for example.

it could ‘influence society, and would have a great strength.’<sup>295</sup> Notwithstanding these fragilities, such institutions play a fundamental role, as often they are the main support networks the ex-combatants can rely on, particularly at a local level.<sup>296</sup> Importantly, these are spaces where the ex-combatants can talk openly and safely, remember and debate topics that concern and unite them in a similar experience.<sup>297</sup>

### **‘It was a colonial war’<sup>298</sup>**

The main themes associated with the ex-combatants’ current group identity have been developing alongside the evolving manner in which the colonial war has been publicly approached in Portugal. The increasing presence in Portuguese culture and society of narratives surrounding the war appears to be both stimulating and reflecting a public emergence of ex-combatant remembrance. The latter has been most notably expressed in the last decade in a significant increase in autobiographical war literature, via printed and audiovisual media and also on-line via social media. Reflecting individual and collective oscillations present in war remembrance, there is consensus amongst my interviewees that the Portuguese colonial war is not adequately approached in Portugal on different levels (official, social, cultural).

Reinforcing the compulsory aspect of their participation in the war, veterans often resent the lack of public attention in relation to media coverage and official and other support bestowed upon current professional Portuguese troops engaged in peace missions worldwide.<sup>299</sup> Furthermore, establishing frequent comparisons with the American context – in relation to the public prominence assumed by the Vietnam war in the United States of America – respondents regret social and official indifference to the topic, which has been addressed ‘very superficially, in a very isolated manner’ and remains ‘almost a taboo’, ‘entirely buried’ since the democratic shift in 1974 – a ‘conspiracy of silence [...] of an entire society’, to quote Miguel Almeida; or a ‘generalised tranquillity which is synonymous with forgetting’, in the words of

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<sup>295</sup> Interviewee 28, p. 48.

<sup>296</sup> For instance, at the time of our interview, a local veteran association joined efforts with municipal authorities and the Church towards the construction of a veteran retirement home in a village in Alentejo, Southern Portugal. Interviewee 27, p. 21.

<sup>297</sup> Interviewee 26, p. 16, for instance. As noted by Evans about French veterans of the Algerian war; see Evans, M., ‘Rehabilitating the Traumatized ...’ in *o.c.* (1997), pp. 78-79.

<sup>298</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 56.

<sup>299</sup> Interviewees 12 (pp. 20-21); 19 (p. 33); 5 (p. 9); 11 (p. 12); 14 (p. 29); 16 (p. 18); 21 (p. 30); 22 (p. 18, p. 22); 32 (p. 39); 35 (p. 8, pp. 20-21).

Francisco Fitas. In twenty-first century democratic Portugal, these men, as the aging executors of the wrong side of a ‘bad’, socially ‘condemned’ war, hold the perception that their society is not very interested to learn about what happened to the ex-combatants in Africa, indicating awareness of the political implications of their participation in the colonial conflict.<sup>300</sup> For José Carvalho, despite being ‘an important moment of our history’, the war carries ‘a stigma’ of association with the authoritarian regime, as if its acknowledgment could ‘outshine [Portuguese] democracy.’<sup>301</sup> It is ‘strange’ that the war is not much talked about, or is mainly talked about ‘in a negative way.’ Decades later, rather than witnessing a solid national discussion about the colonial conflict, many of these war veterans feel surrounded by ‘hiding’, and the notion that it was a ‘crime’ to have been a combatant. Carvalho explains how he and others sometimes felt ‘ashamed of saying that we had been to the war’, having even been called ‘a fascist’ for having served before 1974.<sup>302</sup> Others mention the social epithets of ‘colonialist’, ‘exploiter’, ‘traitors of the motherland’ given to ex-servicemen, with a retired officer considering himself ‘lucky’ that ‘the only thing that hasn’t been done’ is ‘people calling us war criminals’. Another interviewee could not state the same, expressing surprise for having been called a ‘murderer, who was in Angola killing black people’ as late as 2006 during a neighbours’ dispute.<sup>303</sup> Many of these veterans, as conscript troops, consider themselves victims of the previous regime. They feel that democratic Portugal denies them a fuller understanding of their circumstances, frequently perceiving them as active, participating, collaborating soldiers of a colonial army engaged in an aggressive, unlawful war.<sup>304</sup> The reluctance on the part of many veterans to affirm or mention war experiences reflects their fear of appearing laudatory about a conflict that after the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974 was not ‘politically correct’, it was something ‘to forget [...] [about which] everybody – had an uneasy conscience, it was a colonial war.’<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Interviewees 32 (p. 39); 3 (p. 23); 8 (pp. 23-24); 14 (p. 33); 6 (p. 22); 33 (p. 56); 28 (pp. 38-39). See Afonso, A. ‘Guerra Colonial – História e Memória’, in *o.c.* (2009), pp. 29-31. Similarly to perception of Vietnam war. See Hynes, S. *o.c.* (1998), pp. 212-222.

<sup>301</sup> The point of a ‘young democracy’ ‘stained’ by the ‘blood spilt in faraway Africa’ is made by M. Ribeiro in *o.c.*, (2004), p. 249.

<sup>302</sup> Interviewee 21, pp. 24-25, p. 28.

<sup>303</sup> Interviewees 6 (p. 16, p. 12); 9 (p. 30); 4 (p. 31); 33 (p. 45); 19 (p. 33). See Bourke, J. ‘Return to Civilian Life’, in *o.c.* (1999), pp. 349-351, p. 361.

<sup>304</sup> Interviewees 25 (p. 32); 22 (p. 28); 33 (p. 45); 36 (p. 18). Similar to the feeling of having been ‘fucked over’ by the military and civilian society displayed by Vietnam veterans mentioned by Bourke in *o.c.* (1999), p. 360. On the ambiguous postwar place of veterans, as remarked by Lorenz on Malvinas/Falklands veterans, see also ‘How does one win a lost war?...’ in Ritchie, D. (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), p. 132, p. 137.

<sup>305</sup> Interviewees 6 (p. 22); 33 (p. 56).

Such a framework of public silence and lack of recognition appears to reinforce individual silence, alienating veteran's personal memories, or keeping them unexpressed for failing to provide wider narratives that the ex-combatants can identify with.<sup>306</sup> The coexistence of shame for being associated with fascism, and an individual acknowledgement of the inevitable participation in the colonial war provokes identity fractures in the war veterans' lives.<sup>307</sup> Significantly, when justifying the reasons for their avoidance of the topic, interviewees resort to the use of notions like hiding, avoiding trouble, unpleasantness and shame and, in general, forgetting the past.<sup>308</sup> These aspects reflect continuing remembrance struggles around the colonial war which place those who experienced it in the first person somehow under social uncertainty.<sup>309</sup>

Nonetheless, these veterans remain concerned that the natural movement of generations will result in wider forgetting about the colonial conflict and the ex-combatants. The passage of time, as Manuel Loureiro put it, is 'the biggest sponge', 'erasing everything.'<sup>310</sup> The veterans constantly reinforce their concern about the ignorance and lack of interest of civil society regarding the colonial war, particularly of the younger postwar generations of Portuguese people of around thirty years of age and younger. They suggest that the country's youth has been – and is being – educated to neglect or perceive the war mainly in a negative light, often illustrating the point with the example of their own children, grandchildren or younger work colleagues, for whom the war 'is meaningless' or virtually unknown.<sup>311</sup> Mainly, these younger Portuguese citizens' ignorance on the matter occurs because they 'are not taught' about it.<sup>312</sup> The veterans' narratives often condemn the relative low-incidence in the public presence of such an impactful event that marked 'a milestone in our history', their concerns signalling the remembrance challenges of a country looking for its post-colonial direction after the end of a centuries-long empire which, to cite a respondent, confined Portugal to 'a little stripe [of land].'<sup>313</sup>

Since in recent years public visibility of the colonial war topic has mainly been associated with the media (and particularly audiovisual media), this is an arena of

<sup>306</sup> On the ways how individual war memories may be suppressed and/or seek and find expression, see Ashplant et al '2.1 Arenas and narratives of articulation' in *o.c.* (2004), pp. 17-32.

<sup>307</sup> Interviewee 21, p. 24, p. 26.

<sup>308</sup> Interviewees 8 (p. 15); 9 (p. 28); 25 (p. 27); 13 (p. 13); 29 (p. 31); 2 (p. 12), for instance.

<sup>309</sup> See, for instance, Quintais, L. 'Memória e trauma...', in *o.c.* (2000), p. 680.

<sup>310</sup> Interviewees 6 (p. 23); 25 (p. 26); 14 (p. 33).

<sup>311</sup> Interviewees 8 (p. 28); 3 (p. 23); 21 (p. 1, pp. 23-24); 26 (p. 14, p. 24); 36 (p. 24).

<sup>312</sup> Interviewees 26 (p. 24); 34 (p. 22); 22 (p. 28); 30 (p. 38). See Chapter Two, pp. 74-75.

<sup>313</sup> Interviewee 34, p. 17.

Portuguese life that my interviewees focus upon in relation to the conflict, expressing a generalised view of criticism and disappointment. The veterans repeat the idea that Portuguese media display an occasional, opportunistic interest in the topic, maintaining an intentional distance from it, and a cultivated ignorance which results not just in forgetting, but also in distortion.<sup>314</sup> From this perspective, such ‘amorphous’ media periodically focus on war veteran parades and gatherings – particularly in times of news’ shortage – favouring superficial approaches instead of a higher presence of established TV and radio programmes, documentaries and debates on the conflict. These, being expected to provoke some tension and disagreement, could perhaps prove to be not the most profitable option for media decision-makers.<sup>315</sup> When deeper approaches are pursued, my respondents point out that they often become media ‘folklore’ and ‘silliness’ dictated by speculation and sensationalism, in which ‘hypocrisy’ and the airing of uncontextualised and exaggerated views are common. In this context, some war veterans (especially some affected by war stress to achieve higher impact) are utilised as pawns in the battle of audiences, and a less constructive and positive image of veterans and the conflict is formed. The veterans emphasise that for both audiovisual and printed media, covering the war often becomes an arena for advocating ‘political views’, contributing to a biased understanding of the conflict; or it manifests in a lateral approach, framed in relation to the 25<sup>th</sup> April democratic change. Therefore, the ex-combatants believe that these processes frequently block alternative ‘human’ perspectives of the events based ‘on experience’, discourage the advancement of wider reflection, and of the debating of adequate solutions for the many widespread consequences of the colonial war that still exist in Portuguese society.<sup>316</sup>

Highlighting the contextual differences between Portugal and other countries, the veterans assert that, generally, printed and audiovisual media in Portugal do not adequately reflect the length and intensity of the conflict and its social impact. This absence keeps the media’s educational and cathartic potential unfulfilled and denies veterans wider recognition – for instance, in the way a certain type of American serviceman who existed in the Vietnam war became more publicly known through the American Vietnam war film genre, guaranteeing that ‘at least people know why that happened [veteran social readjustment difficulties]’. From this perspective, the veterans

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<sup>314</sup> Interviewees 20 (p. 24); 32 (p. 39); 34 (p. 22); 3 (pp. 23-24), amongst others.

<sup>315</sup> Interviewees 34 (p. 22); 1 (p. 20); 27 (pp. 16-17).

<sup>316</sup> Interviewees 3 (p. 21, pp. 23-24); 4 (p. 30); 28 (pp. 40-41, pp. 50-51); 29 (p. 29); 36 (p. 24, p. 32). See Medeiros, P. ‘Hauntings...’ in *o.c.* (2000), pp. 216-217. .

would welcome the expansion of cinema about the colonial conflict which, unlike most of the few films made, could follow a more socially identifiable direction.<sup>317</sup>

Despite expressing awareness of an increasing relative presence of the subject in Portuguese cultural life, the ex-servicemen see its treatment as unsuitable or insufficient. Daniel Cunha, for instance, suggests that the attention received by the topic is not adequate:

we can't say [that the topic is] ignored, because nowadays something is already talked about, but it's not talked as much as the dimension of the colonial war would require. The country we are, such a little country – a thirteen-year long war on three fronts – this should be more present in our life [...] and our life – what does it include ? It includes schools, universities [...].<sup>318</sup>

Like Cunha, many other veterans place great emphasis on the educational value of history as regards the national remembrance of the Portuguese colonial war.

### **The history of 'the future'**<sup>319</sup>

Having, throughout this research, solicited from veteran interviewees reflective contributions on the development of forgetting and remembrance about the colonial war in Portugal, it was also significant to question them about potential ways to generate what they perceive as more adequate commemoration of the conflict. The ex-combatants' solution would be to approach the colonial war in Portugal with 'more openness, more dialogue', to 'talk without complexes' and 'assume' this past, addressing the topic 'more often, with greater depth.'<sup>320</sup> The ex-combatants highlight a common aspect of searching for meaning through history. In this assertion, the tensions between the personal need to forget and a desire for meaningful collective remembering are obvious. Despite significant individual silence, these veterans value the need for an inclusive history of the Portuguese colonial war to be written.

Some, like Avelino Oliveira, note the lack of reflective historical studies on the colonial war, depriving Portuguese people from the educational benefit of 'studying and rethinking' their past.<sup>321</sup> From their perspective, 'our history' does not suitably contemplate the colonial war. The scarcity of reflective historiography on the colonial

<sup>317</sup> Interviewees 26 (p. 39); 29 (p. 29); 14 (p. 31); 28 (p. 40).

<sup>318</sup> Interviewees 26 (pp. 36-37); 25 (pp. 37-38).

<sup>319</sup> This concept is mentioned by several interviewees, such as 26 (pp.40-43); 33 (p. 57); 36 (p. 25); 25 (pp. 37-38); 30 (pp. 39-42); 28 (pp. 40-42, pp. 51-53); 21 (p. 29); 8 (p. 30).

<sup>320</sup> Interviewees 2 (p. 18); 21 (p. 25); 28 (p. 40); 20 (p. 21).

<sup>321</sup> Interviewee 3, p. 23.

war is described as ‘one of the great failings of our country.’<sup>322</sup> Manuel Loureiro pinpoints that ‘after all these decades’, and under a new regime, ‘it’s about time to do history’ about that ‘turbulent period’ and Portuguese people would benefit from discarding any disabling embarrassments when focusing on this past. According to Loureiro, a broader ‘clear explanation’ about ‘the reasons for that war’ and what ‘really happened’ is ‘already becoming overdue.’<sup>323</sup>

Under such circumstances, the veterans express their confidence that in the future history will deal with this subject, including via the lived perspective. In this stance, the ex-combatants implicitly appear to be waiting to be found by historians.<sup>324</sup> To construct a social history that does justice to an event of such significance these men rely on the historian to become the channel for their voices, not only during their lifetime but also afterwards. Some are convinced that ‘the true history’ of the colonial war ‘will only be told after we all have died’, implying that historical distance will be necessary to judge events more dispassionately.<sup>325</sup> Perceiving this history as unwritten, a number of interviewees place me in the role of the intermediary between the past and the future they want to reach through their testimonials. José Carvalho, for instance, considering this research as an ‘exception’ in how the history of the war is approached, emphasised that ‘maybe many Angelas Camposes should appear doing studies [...] about this.’<sup>326</sup> Similarly, by stating that ‘it would be good to have more people like you trying to know what really and indeed the colonial war represented to us’, Daniel Cunha pointed to the wider social meaning that veteran accounts can assume if given more cultural prominence.<sup>327</sup> These ex-servicemen explain their point of how ‘in the hands of a scientist [...] [such studies] could perhaps lead Humankind [and thus Portuguese society] to being more enlightened [about war].’<sup>328</sup> Nevertheless, the veterans remain aware of how their war memories contain ‘personal and non-exchangeable’ aspects, inviting the historian to operate as mediator between the non-transmittable aspects of

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<sup>322</sup> Interviewees 22 (p. 28); 20 (pp. 24-25).

<sup>323</sup> Interviewees 25 (pp. 37-38); 34 (p. 23); 30 (p. 40).

<sup>324</sup> Interviewee 13, p. 16.

<sup>325</sup> Interviewee 26, pp. 39-40, p. 14, p. 43. Resembling the conclusion highlighted by Fussell about the emergence of cultural tools for ‘adequate remembering and interpreting’ of the First World War when its living memory is nearly non-existent, in Fussell, P. *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford University Press, New York, (2000), pp. 334-335.

<sup>326</sup> Interviewee 21, p. 25.

<sup>327</sup> Interviewees 26 (p. 14); 32 (pp. 40-41).

<sup>328</sup> Interviewee 31 (p. 26);



the individual lived experience of war and the construction of a veteran-based and approved cultural narrative of the event.<sup>329</sup>

This would include embracing the route of a new, alternative colonial war history to what is traditionally offered in Portugal. In response to the typical lack of substantial memorial interest on the part of the state, media and various political and socio-cultural decision-makers, and echoing similar views by others, Victor Palma concludes that ‘what remains’ as an option is to ‘leave a testimony for history, with academic works like yours [current research] – which will serve as reference.’<sup>330</sup> Not always identifying with circulating accounts, veterans wish to add to or contest such narratives, contributing to an evolving, dynamic remembrance process. In this context, first-person testimonials are acquiring a new protagonism amongst veterans, with the motto ‘don’t let others tell your war for you’ becoming representative of the significance attributed to individual war memories, particularly after a long absence of the topic from cultural arenas. Having experienced the war directly, in general the ex-combatant group displays a strong sense of being a privileged bastion for the memory of the conflict. Through their accounts, the war fought by the Portuguese Army in Africa can be understood from a human perspective, the preferential domain of war veterans since

the authors of [more traditional] books about the colonial war – did not feel, did not step [there] like me and my colleagues and those who died, did not spend two years paddling in mud, going through rivers, and with water to our chest, didn’t suffer – on the skin, what we suffered [...] we [the] soldiers.<sup>331</sup>

In this sense, whilst Júlio Lobo stressed the importance of transmitting ‘an image of what we felt and of what happened’, a former commando officer explained his decision to give his testimony for this research project as a way for ‘people, civil society and not only’ to ‘see the colonial war in a different way.’<sup>332</sup> When challenged to give their testimony, the ex-combatants provide us with raw materials which provide a glimpse of ‘what happened’ in the conflict. As the respondents put it, ‘nobody has any idea of what happened’, of what it was like being in Africa as a young man, in such an environment and climate, subject to tropical diseases, badly fed, often deprived of further socialisation, entertainment, and a sex life, and facing the possibility of enemy attacks. Their war, the veterans attest, has the ‘weight’ of ‘emotion’ of having been there, it is

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<sup>329</sup> Interviewees 33 (p. 56); 34 (p. 23). On this process, with some examples, see Ahsplant et al *o.c.* (2004), pp. 17-25; pp. 43-52; see also Medeiros, P. ‘Hauntings...’ in *o.c.* (2000), pp. 201-221.

<sup>330</sup> Interviewee 33, p. 56.

<sup>331</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 12. A ‘war understood in the flesh’, as Hynes pinpoints, in *o.c.* (1998), pp. 279-285.

<sup>332</sup> Interviewees 32 (pp. 40-41); 26 (p. 14); 20 (pp. 24-25).

not like ‘watching [a war film on] television’, ‘eating popcorn’ and waiting for the ‘ads break.’<sup>333</sup>

Therefore, a new history of the colonial war missing in Portugal is one that reflectively incorporates first-person narratives of war, a rich historical source under-explored in the country. The increasing number of veteran voices sharing their war memories – including this project’s interviewees – has the potential to integrate the memorial revival process meaningfully. My interviewees’ perceptions on giving their testimony for this history research project confirm this trend. In this context, the centrality of the veteran lived perspective is emphasised by respondents, who believe that ‘it’s almost an obligation that we have to contribute towards this painful period being well recorded and well documented.’<sup>334</sup> These veterans proclaim themselves against forgetting, and ‘that is why I’m here giving this interview’, in order to ‘break the silence, to contribute to that there is no silence.’<sup>335</sup> In this regard, Luís Sá stresses their responsibility to speak, reasoning that nobody can ‘complain’ about silence and indifference if they do not personally counteract it with a testimony.<sup>336</sup> Manuel Figueiredo believes that people should talk amply and openly about the topic since ‘the more that is talked about the better.’<sup>337</sup> Conscious of the passage of time, and feeling that ‘we keep dying and it will be over’, these men stress that they ‘have a lot of interest’ in speaking, expressing satisfaction that their recorded story will potentially continue to ‘posterity’, so that the war – which ‘can’t be forgotten’ – ‘always remains in history’, attributing a future significance to their testimonies.<sup>338</sup> By declaring that ‘I don’t expect anything from you, but I expect a lot from you’, Sá, in particular, manifested a sharp awareness of the historian’s role as a potential instrument in raising attention to the topic through the veteran perspective. For this to happen, ‘we have to produce’ more ‘study material’ – namely veteran testimonials. It is for that reason that, by having participated in my research project, Sá believed that he fulfilled a testimonial ‘obligation’ that he had postponed for years, a decision that is important ‘for history and for myself! And for us! [...] I have produced something for us! [...] I have given a bit of my soul.’<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Interviewees 9 (p. 32); 30 (p. 37, p. 40).

<sup>334</sup> Interviewees 5 (p. 1); 36 (p. 34).

<sup>335</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 34); 28 (p. 56); 18 (p. 25); 11 (p. 26).

<sup>336</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 34.

<sup>337</sup> Interviewee 15, p. 45.

<sup>338</sup> Interviewees 19 (p. 34); 8 (p. 28, p. 30); 6 (p. 24, pp. 21-22); 36 (p. 34); 11 (p. 26); 26 (pp. 39-40).

<sup>339</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 34.

Like Sá, my interviewees often employ plural forms when considering the value of their accounts, placing an emphasis on themselves as a group, not as individuals. In the process, the expectations placed on the historian as a channel to voice veteran experiences and concerns became clearer: ‘*we* thank you!’, I have been told, for doing the interview.<sup>340</sup> These narratives express the notion that through oral history their generation is able to convey a message to younger Portuguese people, including me. This type of research would be beneficial

so that tomorrow that may be a testimony for the future generations, because the current generation [...] you for example, you are twenty something, isn’t it? [...] you were born already after the 25<sup>th</sup> April [1974], you know nothing, nothing, about--- you know something due to the profession you have, because other colleagues of yours from other fields [...] are totally ignorant about what happened.<sup>341</sup>

However, as noted by Luís Sá and other respondents, inscribing this event in Portuguese history from a first-person perspective depends to a great extent on the ex-combatants’ availability to give testimonial contributions. In this regard, the repeated idea that the topic will only be fully approached ‘in the future’ is at odds with the acknowledgement by many of the infrequency or reluctance in giving accounts or merely talking about the subject.<sup>342</sup> Historical inclusion is more difficult to effect when veterans do not share their war experiences. In this respect, a great number of interviewees admit they do not normally mention the war in their daily life, or do it in a selective way.<sup>343</sup> In fact, a significant number of respondents stated that our interview was ‘the first time that I speak seriously about what happened with someone.’<sup>344</sup>

From the veterans’ perspective, the reasons advanced for this behaviour reside in social indifference and lack of understanding, particularly on the part of the ‘youth of nowadays’, and sometimes within their own families.<sup>345</sup> José Andrade explains that ‘I don’t speak to anybody [...] [about] what we’ve been through in Angola because nobody believes [...] it’s not worth speaking [...] we are not listened to, we let go.’ Luís Sá argues that ‘we don’t talk about it with anybody [...] it’s not worthwhile because people don’t understand [...] don’t care, it means nothing to them.’<sup>346</sup> They ‘bottle up’

<sup>340</sup> Interviewees 16 (p. 30); 6 (p. 22); 20 (pp. 24-25).

<sup>341</sup> Interviewees 34 (p. 23); 30 (pp. 38-39).

<sup>342</sup> Interviewees 26 (p. 14); 8 (p. 15); 9 (p. 28); 25 (p. 27); 13 (p. 13); 29 (p. 31); 2 (p. 12), for instance.

<sup>343</sup> Regarding my sample, some exceptions seemingly occur in the domestic environment, namely Interviewees 19 (p. 25); 14 (p. 23); 25 (p. 31). Such examples appear not to be the norm.

<sup>344</sup> Interviewees 18 (p. 25); 7 (p. 12); 13 (pp. 4-5); 2 (p. 12); 21 (p. 27); 29 (p. 29). See Chapter Three, p. 106.

<sup>345</sup> Interviewees 7 (pp. 13-14); 32 (p. 39).

<sup>346</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 24.

about the war around ‘strangers’, people ‘alien’ to the topic and ‘don’t say anything.’<sup>347</sup> Amongst the veteran group, the majority of respondents who attend ex-combatant gatherings highlight how they choose to reminisce exclusively about pleasant occurrences, ‘avoiding’, ‘hiding’ or mentioning ‘as little as possible’ more disturbing memories so as not to ‘create uneasiness.’ These memories are blocked, they are ‘something to forget.’<sup>348</sup>

Taking into account that our interview becomes an act of remembrance in itself, it is very significant that a great number of respondents asserted constant attempts at avoiding and forgetting their war experiences, and showed unwillingness to talk about an uneasy past, especially as far as traumatic memories, particularly of violence and death, are concerned.<sup>349</sup> A retired officer typifies this discourse by stating that ‘the past is forgotten [...] it is over – it’s gone’ and ‘now what I want is to forget that.’ The contents of our interview, he explains, were ‘deeply buried within’ and some ‘very painful’ matters were not even addressed. They have ‘to remain at the bottom of the chest, very hidden.’<sup>350</sup> As José Carvalho put it, he does not like to remember such a ‘bad moment in my life.’ The best for himself and others, another interviewee claimed, ‘is not to talk about it.’<sup>351</sup>

Furthermore, as regards the collection of oral testimonials, some insecurity was expressed by a few ex-combatants who believed their lower schooling equated to a low status for their accounts. Commonly manifested, this aspect contributes to culturally favour certain narratives authored by individuals possessing higher literacy levels. One of my interviewees who, like many others, only had four years of schooling, declared that a higher level of education meant that he could have approached in the interview ‘other things, maybe more important.’<sup>352</sup> Additionally, this research evidenced how an oral history approach to colonial war veteran testimony can assess not only the narratives of those less literate, but also elicit the emergence of a fuller war account – in this case, from the Portuguese perspective – capable of integrating complementary, and potentially contentious, views of the conflict. Ernesto Sampaio (b. 1936), a highly-educated, retired career officer from Southern Portugal expounded such notions,

<sup>347</sup> Interviewees 4 (p. 29); 6 (pp. 21-22). See Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), pp. 158-159.

<sup>348</sup> Interviewees 8 (p. 15); 9 (p. 28); 25 (p. 27); 13 (p. 13); 29 (p. 31); 2 (p. 12).

<sup>349</sup> Interviewees 18 (p. 25); 22 (p. 24, p. 19); 29 (p. 38, pp. 29-31); 2 (p. 13, p. 19, p. 16); 28 (p. 41); 13 (pp. 4-5); 14 (p. 23).

<sup>350</sup> Interviewees 9 (pp. 33-34, pp. 23-24); 19 (p. 34); 29 (pp. 13-14).

<sup>351</sup> Interviewees 21 (p. 27); 2 (p. 13, p. 16, p. 19).

<sup>352</sup> Interviewee 16, p. 29.

defending the beneficial consequences of embracing a more positive viewpoint of Portugal's colonial past. He believes that the country should acknowledge positive aspects of the social, economic and cultural dynamics established between those former territories and Portugal at the time. For Sampaio, the history of the colonial war remains a 'quiet' history, its balanced generational transmission obscured by attributing it mainly negative connotations.<sup>353</sup>

The fact that these ex-combatants volunteered to be interviewed about a topic they mostly declare not to wish to talk about is representative of how memories of the colonial war remain unsettling for many of its veterans and their social environment decades after the conflict. This aspect demands reflection as to the external or internal origin of indifference and forgetting. It is not clear-cut if it emerges from a (perceived or effective) social lack of interest or favourable reception to the ex-combatants' accounts, or from an initial individual unavailability to talk, or a combination of both factors. My analysis points to a contradiction in the ex-combatants' relationship with the narrative of their war past. Although these men repeatedly emphasise the need to have the colonial war inserted more prominently and officially into Portuguese history, and regret the long-term avoidance of the topic, simultaneously it is noticeable a certain culture of silence and erasure amongst themselves and their milieu, especially regarding traumatic aspects of the war experience. As one respondent put it, when the topic is uncomfortable, 'we muffle it and forget things.'<sup>354</sup> From this angle, many of these men appear to be ready to place the responsibility of creating the unwritten veteran history of the Portuguese colonial war solely with historians and other professional researchers of the subject, escaping a personal and social reflection that could subsequently manifest into a greater ease in addressing this event on the part of Portuguese historiography.

In fact, this aspect begs the question as to when, to whom and in which circumstances these ex-combatants choose to talk about their past war experiences, paradoxically sometimes appearing to contribute to the persistence of silence on the topic most regret, revealing that the delicate equilibrium between silence and remembrance exists also within themselves. The underlying contradiction some appear to be unaware of is that without personal involvement and willingness to narrate individual experiences it is harder to do this social history, and silence and indifference are perpetuated. Stressing that it happens not because he is 'ashamed' or 'trying to hide

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<sup>353</sup> Interviewee 35 (pp. 26-29); also 21 (p. 25); 30 (p. 41).

<sup>354</sup> Interviewee 6, pp. 21-22.

what I have been through', Francisco Fitas touched on this paradox when struggling to explain why he and other comrades do not 'speak that much' about the war – 'why can that be? Are we trying to forget? For any other reason? I don't know.'<sup>355</sup> Fitas's rhetorical questions suggest a group looking for stable memorial expression within Portuguese society.

Beyond the complexity of such a paradox, some practical solutions were offered by the ex-combatants. Most respondents who addressed the topic of the need for a new history focused on the pedagogical role of history as expressed by educational and cultural institutions in Portugal, and especially through national school and university *curricula*. Francisco Fitas, for instance, considers this possibility as

maybe the biggest testimonial of regard that could be given was to pass the knowledge at the school level about what the Ultramar war was – so that young people had the knowledge about what happened [...] after all, this is something that, want it or not, had a huge international impact – and was forgotten so easily [...] They should, at least, remember what happened – so that young people have knowledge [of what the veterans went through].<sup>356</sup>

My interviewees express deep concern about the need for the colonial war to feature adequately in the state and private *curricula*, particularly appearing more consistently and prominently in history school textbooks covering Portuguese contemporary history. For many interviewees, the war remains under- and misrepresented or totally absent from such a fundamental remembrance domain.<sup>357</sup> From their perspective, an active dialogue with younger generations needs to be promoted. 'Anything that teaches schoolchildren what happened on the other side of the war' is welcome. Francisco Fitas meant that the war's lived experience, what the ex-combatants have to say about what happened to them, is under-represented in schoolbooks, which normally summarise that the Portuguese military intervened in Africa without mentioning 'what the Portuguese young men went through during that period.'<sup>358</sup> These contributions can be provided by ex-combatants. For instance, some interviewees are committed to raising awareness of younger generations through giving pedagogical talks to schoolchildren. For these veterans, sharing their war experience in this manner is a way of constructively channelling their past, especially because of their focus on a pacifist, anti-war

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<sup>355</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 23.

<sup>356</sup> Interviewee 14, pp. 30-31.

<sup>357</sup> Interviewee 28, p. 51, pp. 38-39. In this context, a book dedicated to 'the children of the children of our children' was published in 2008 with the aim of 'telling' the colonial war to 'younger persons'. See Ribeiro, J. *o.c.* (2008).

<sup>358</sup> Interviewee 14, p. 28.

message.<sup>359</sup> At schools, they are met with ‘a lot of curiosity’, since most textbooks ‘don’t have anything about the colonial war.’ Nonetheless, some believe this should result not from the ex-combatants’ initiatives but out of a concerted institutional effort through which the memorial change in Portuguese society regarding the colonial war could start in the history classroom.<sup>360</sup>

This perspective reflects a desire for an active social, inter-generational dialogue happening also in more informal arenas (beyond school *curricula*, historical studies, the media, and similar cultural initiatives). The process would be assisted by an increasing number of contextualised personal narratives entering Portuguese cultural circuits, in all likelihood ultimately contributing to a more positive approach to the war, one that recognises and reveals ‘my life, my story, [the fact that] I am a block that makes up Portuguese history.’<sup>361</sup> Some respondents specifically highlight the fact that Portuguese families would benefit from talking more openly about the colonial war. This is the conviction of the ex-soldier who states that if the war ‘remains forgotten’ is also the ‘combatants’ fault’, those who are parents and grandparents who do not share their experiences even with their closed ones: they should draw their children more [into the subject] [...] to understand that, in fact, that was not a legend, it was real!’ Indeed, younger people like me, the researcher, need to know ‘what our ex-combatants were, what they are because, after all, you are [their] children and grandchildren.’ Younger generations inherited the war and its sequels, and understanding it could be the first step towards a resolution.<sup>362</sup>

In stressing its beneficial factors, the war veterans are hinting at the perceived healing potential of a wider socio-historical reflection on the past. This potential is affirmed by assuming that remembering and recognition may promote social healing. Through ‘rediscovering’ their history alongside younger members of society, these veterans, echoing findings of Evans’s research on French veterans of the Algerian war and of Lorenz’s on Malvinas’ veterans, would be able to attribute new and more positive meanings to their war remembrance.<sup>363</sup> However, it would be naïve to assume that remembering translates neatly into healing and closure and the absence of social

<sup>359</sup> An aspect mentioned by Bourke, in *o.c.* (1999), p. 372.

<sup>360</sup> Interviewees 26 (p. 24); 28 (p. 1, pp. 38-40); 2 (p. 18); 20 (pp. 21-22); 2 (p. 18). A similar perspective is expressed by Evans, M. in ‘Rehabilitating the Traumatized ...’ in *o.c.* (1997), pp. 78-79.

<sup>361</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 38.

<sup>362</sup> Interviewee 30, pp. 37-39. See Hunt, N. *o.c.* (2011), pp. 1-6, pp. 127-129, pp. 157-160, p. 195.

<sup>363</sup> See Herman, J. *o.c.* (1992), p. 2; Evans, M. *idem*, pp. 78-79; Lorenz, F. ‘The unending war...’ in Rogers, K. & Leydesdorff, S. (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), pp. 95-112.

tensions – particularly in the complex Portuguese context of swift formal transition from empire and dictatorship into modern European, democratic state. In dismissing such myth, as advised by Field, a deeper reflection on how wider remembering may become ‘regenerative’ is due. In the Portuguese veterans’ case, the creation of a space for articulation and recognition of their war experiences could eventually contribute to a greater sense of self-composure, agency and socio-historical participation.<sup>364</sup> By focusing on the topic, the ex-combatants reveal awareness of the social importance of reclaiming their narratives from silence and indifference and the promotion of initiatives able to extend individual and social recognition of a ‘disturbed and painful’ colonial past. Through sharing their voices they not only uncover less known aspects of this past, but also unleash a ‘reparative’ potential towards the personal and public wounds left by the conflict. Therefore, the Portuguese case clearly illustrates what Dawson defines as a vital need for engagement with the past in transitional societies’ reconfiguration process. Such engagement entails embracing a ‘living relationship’ with the past framed by beneficial principles of openness (rather than crystallised notions of closure) presiding over evolving discussions about it. It is in this manner that ‘reparative remembering’ may occur. As suggested by Dawson’s model, in acknowledging the paradoxes and contradictions of this process, including the postmemory of the conflict held by younger generations, new and more inclusive strategies for remembering the colonial war past are able to emerge.<sup>365</sup>

In this context, fostering intergenerational exchanges about the past would potentially stimulate an easier emergence of the new history of the colonial war which many ex-combatants long for. Its innovative approach would be a broader inclusion of the historical path of countless average servicemen who actually made the event happen, about ‘the life they have been through, the reality of what’s happening now [...] where they are [...] what they think [...] [because nowadays] where are the traces of the combatants – of the colonial war – where do we [they] stand?’<sup>366</sup> From the standpoint of this question mark of memory, this former soldier has faith that in the future historical research will be interested in following the traces left by him and his comrades, reflecting on his ‘steps, what I’ve done, what I’ve seen.’<sup>367</sup> Luís Sá believes that, in the

<sup>364</sup> Field, S. ‘Beyond “healing”...’ in *o.c.* (2006), pp. 31-42.

<sup>365</sup> Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), p. 19, p. 78, p. 315; see also Dawson, G. ‘Trauma, Memory, Politics. The Irish Troubles’ in Rogers, K. & Leydesdorff, S. (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), pp. 180-204.

<sup>366</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 39.

<sup>367</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 39.



future, historians will ‘point their finger, and will say how [it happened and they fought] but’, so far veterans have been left ‘talking to ourselves’, or dismissed via the omnipresent phrase ‘it was Salazar’s fault’, that quickly dispels deeper considerations about ‘the effects of a war.’<sup>368</sup> Under such conditions, what really needs immediate historical attention is not necessarily the intrinsic logic of wars, but ‘the pawns, which are us!’, the ‘valuable’ ‘human beings’ who should not ‘be thrown into the rubbish bin’ of historical memory.<sup>369</sup>

This position, expressed in the interviews but also reinforced by my assessment of other memorial signs occurring in Portuguese society, indicates these men’s increasing expectation of the emergence of a space to tell their story to history, as opposed to a decades-long predominantly ‘closed – lazy’ attitude. Accessed via historical research, their stories would contribute towards a ‘better’ history of the Portuguese colonial war.<sup>370</sup> Many, including those who display reluctance to speak socially and within their families about their war experiences, would be ready to talk to an oral historian and reflect on the value of their historical contribution: as Júlio Lobo put it, at some point ‘all of us have the need to open up’ about the past.<sup>371</sup> In a similar fashion, an ex-soldier explains how, in his old age, he feels a part of Portuguese history enlarging itself.<sup>372</sup> It is for that reason that he exhorts historians to speak to war veterans:

go to their homes – go to the associations and centres and try to discover what happened to them – because history will continue so that the history of the colonial war won’t become one day, for our grandchildren, simply a legend, but a reality at 100% and our traces will remain [...] [in order] to enrich history more.<sup>373</sup>

The enrichment of this long-awaited ‘history of the future’, however, is not without difficulties. Stemming from the vicissitudes of the Portuguese context that have been analysed in the course of this study, the paradox of desiring a new future history but often remaining silent about the war becomes particularly revealing not only of the veterans’ remembrance dilemmas, but, more broadly, of Portugal’s tense relationship with this traumatic and divisive event of its contemporary history. As Ribeiro puts it,

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<sup>368</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 20.

<sup>369</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 32.

<sup>370</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 40.

<sup>371</sup> Interviewee 32, p. 40.

<sup>372</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 41.

<sup>373</sup> Interviewee 30, p. 42.

the colonial conflict remains one of the most ‘fracturing points of Portuguese society’, a ‘ghost war’ vacillating in its historiographical placement.<sup>374</sup>

As evidenced by the findings of this research, in Portugal there appears to be a resistance to approach this sensitive topic of recent history before a certain historical distance elapses, a position which tends to push oral history contributions to the margins of mainstream historiography. Such a position suggests the prevailing influence of an outdated and idealised conception of history, one which, in the pursuit of alleged objectivity and consensus, demands temporal and generational distance. By presenting the discipline as an abstract, almost separate entity, virtually possessing internal volition, this notion of contemporary history widely embraced (including by many of my respondents) becomes limiting and alienates historical subjects. It dismisses the fact that chronological distance – and subsequently the physical disappearance of participants – is no guarantee of better reflection and analysis, particularly in this case involving the memory of a colonial conflict – meaning that the remembrance legacy has been weak and problematic from its inception.<sup>375</sup>

There are several circulating and opposed viewpoints regarding this subject of contemporary Portuguese history. These will remain mostly irreconcilable – the ‘noisy silence’ highlighted by Cruzeiro – unless there is an integration of such diversity in wider, inclusive, dialogic cultural narratives.<sup>376</sup> In this context, the abundance of memorial activity of recent years often falls into the category of a more superficial and ‘safer’ commemoration type, focusing on broad, conflict-unspecific war remembrance aspects (the idea of sacrifice for the motherland, an investment in tangible commemoration, military narratives of serving overseas, claims for veteran support, amongst other themes) which frequently opt to dismiss the contentious socio-political context of this conflict. Despite potentially depriving the historical record of depth and further meaning, the predominance of these developments is, however, particularly revealing.

These dynamics evoke a residual permanence of certain socio-cultural frameworks associated with the previous regime, when social oppression, reduced freedom of expression and a traditional vision of history denying historical voice to those outside

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<sup>374</sup> As Medeiros concluded, in ‘Hauntings...’ in *o.c.* (2000), p. 217. See Ribeiro, M. ‘Preface’ in Vecchi, R. *o.c.* (2010), p. 10, pp. 140-141, p. 162.

<sup>375</sup> Such notions have been clearly expressed by General Themudo Barata as early as 1988 in his ‘Prefácio’ to an history of the Portuguese ‘campaigns in Africa’ commissioned by the Portuguese Army; see Estado-Maior do Exército, CECA *o.c.* (Volume 1, 1988), pp. 5-12.

<sup>376</sup> See Cruzeiro, M. ‘As mulheres e a Guerra Colonial...’ in *o.c.* (2004), pp. 31-41

the elites were the norm. History-writing in a democracy can still be impacted by limitations emerging from the debris of a non-consensual past and outdated historiographical notions. My research indicates that, for decades, Portugal has lacked the political, social and even psychological conditions to broadly address its colonial war. The translation of the conflict into an inclusive historiography capable of paving the way to a fuller integration of the event into the country's cultural memory has been missing.

In particular, Portugal appears uncertain as to how its war veterans should be approached. This indecision means that 'many' feel 'ignored' and 'forgotten', perceiving their historical voices remain historiographically undervalued and unrepresented. However, although these ex-combatants mostly regret the pervasive silence and indifference still surrounding the topic nowadays (as in Portuguese public memory the war persists in as 'something to forget, not to talk about, not to elaborate about'), paradoxically many admit contributing to it by often refusing to talk about or by undervaluing narratives of their participation in the colonial war.<sup>377</sup> Such individual and collective memorial hesitations place the country a step away from the full democratic potential it has been striving for in the last four decades, restricting the post-memorial construction of the conflict already underway.<sup>378</sup>

As analysed in the course of this Chapter, the war veteran group simultaneously generated and embraced a recent revival of public remembrance of the Portuguese colonial war. Their group identity has been reflecting the developments of the war's public memory. The elapsing of time (and particularly the fact that their generation is progressively retiring) strengthened the identity of the ex-combatants as a war generation, producing more visible memorial expressions of their war experiences and, in many instances, a newer relationship with the war past (more reflective socio-political interpretations of military service, new associative impetus, struggle to materialise veteran claims, desire for recognition, longing for Africa, and so forth). Affirming themselves as a privileged group for war memory, this research shows that – despite a contradictory coexistence of individual silence and the insistence on social lack of interest – the ex-combatants value highly the historical importance of personal testimonies. Stressing, often by establishing international comparisons, their conviction that the memory of the Portuguese colonial war is not being satisfactorily approached,

<sup>377</sup> As stressed by Ribeiro, M. & Vecchi, R. (org.) 'Introdução' in *o.c.* (2011), pp. 31-32.

<sup>378</sup> Interviewee 26, p. 24. See Ribeiro, M. et al 'The children of the Colonial Wars...', in *o.c.* (2012), p.21.

the ex-combatants turn to history in search of stable colonial war remembrance. Many believe it is the historians' responsibility to unburden them from their war memories and work towards the history of the future.

The oral history approach adopted for this research not only contributes to revealing hidden histories within this national history (the lived war experience of the average serviceman) but also guides an assessment of the complexities contained in the public memory of the colonial war. This standpoint aims at a broader (in depth and diversity) historical understanding of the conflict, and hopefully can also encourage the promotion of 'reparative remembering' strategies (to quote Dawson) able to dispel some of the uneasiness surrounding this past both for veterans and their society.<sup>379</sup> In its effort to integrate individual experience into collective contemporary history, this approach offers innovative and dialogic resources conducive to a more powerfully democratic historiographical practice. I argue, therefore, that through oral history the history of the future may begin to be written now.

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<sup>379</sup> Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), p. 78, p. 315.

## Conclusion

At the end of our interview, Luís Sá, a fifty-five-year-old ex-commando non-commissioned officer, enigmatically declared that he was not expecting anything from me, and yet he expected a lot. The interviewee then expressed his satisfaction at having given his personal testimony for my project. His reasoning was that nobody could then say that he had not played his part in increasing general understanding of the Portuguese colonial war. Sá felt that he had that ‘obligation’, and that his contribution was for ‘history and for myself [himself]! and for us [the war veteran group]!’ This statement acquired a deeper meaning by the fact that I knew he had repeatedly refused to talk about his war experience for decades, including with fellow veterans.<sup>1</sup>

I believe Sá’s remarks illustrate well the existing relationship between Portuguese colonial war veterans and contemporary history in Portugal. Sá and many other ex-combatants, despite having often to be persuaded to talk about their war experiences, nonetheless expect a lot from history. The problem is that even those more readily willing to talk seldom find themselves in a situation where they are historically heard. In the process, expectations remain unfulfilled, a certain type of silence persists, and a full history of this event remains undone. This example provides a good starting point to initiate an overview of the areas explored by this research and findings obtained through it.

In Chapter One, this Thesis addressed the most significant aspects of current thinking around war memory theory, addressing important features of the politics of war memory and commemoration, particularly its frameworks of production, circulation and contestation. Highlighting contributions by Ashplant et al, the Popular Memory Group, Thomson, Evans, Roper and Dawson, amongst other authors, it reviewed ways in which public memory shapes private remembrance, stressing the importance of subjectivity and individual memory, and the complex, shifting, interrelated and often competing articulation between collective and personal narratives and representations and how they reflect a society’s expectations and identities. It observed how a new social history promotes a democratisation of the historical record, increasingly allowing the

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<sup>1</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 34. Luís Sá, an ex-Commando officer in Angola (1973-1974) was interviewed in Porto, Portugal, on the 10th August 2007.

emergence of alternative public representations of war, and focusing on lived, personal war testimonies which normally offer less-known aspects of war experience (most notably via oral history), towards an integration of a painful past. These notions evidenced how this research is embedded in the narrative developments which have been taking place in the social sciences in the last decades which, very simply put, attribute more importance to interpretation of meanings than to objective factual accuracy.<sup>2</sup> Employing, amongst others, concepts like ‘traumatised community’ and ‘transitional society’ advanced by Dawson in relation to an uncomfortable past, it has shown how important it is to trace and understand the development of war commemoration in a national context of tense ruptures and silence (both public and individual) and official indifference, and how Portuguese veterans reflect a split between burying a traumatic past and connecting private memory with historical memory.<sup>3</sup>

Providing a solid contextual backdrop for the veterans’ oral history, Chapter Two presented an analytical overview of the public memory of the Portuguese colonial war since the postwar period. It emphasised the political contradictions and ambivalence associated with this divisive event, traditionally shrouded by silence and shame, its veterans emerging as embarrassing historical actors trapped between the old regime’s notion of heroes of the nation (the last noble defendants of the Portuguese empire) and post-democratic views of them as conscripted victims or obedient thugs of fascism. Easy scapegoats of the past, these veterans suffer the double trauma of having been forced to fight a war and then have their society deny them the acknowledgment of that experience, to employ the notion used by Lorenz in his study of Argentinian veterans of the Falklands/Malvinas war.<sup>4</sup> This approach provided an exploration of the long-lasting impact of political decisions in the lives of a country’s citizens, and how this colonial war was deeply shaping for veterans and Portuguese society, remaining controversial and manifesting its effects very significantly throughout the years.<sup>5</sup> The lack of consensus around national remembrance of this war is perceived in the naming difficulties of the conflict and through the evolving characteristics of the veteran group, who have been strengthening their identity more actively and visibly since the late

<sup>2</sup> See Portelli, A. ‘What Makes...’, in R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.) *o.c.* (2006), pp. 32-42.

<sup>3</sup> Ashplant et al (eds.) *o.c.* (2000), p. 42; Ribeiro, M. *o.c.* (2007), p. 17; Medeiros, P. de ‘Hauntings. ...’, in *o.c.* (2000), pp. 201-221; Dawson, G. *o.c.* (2007), p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Lorenz, F. ‘The Unending War...’ in *o.c.* (2004), p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> As Evans noted about the French example, in *o.c.* (2012), pp. 362-367.

1990s. In this process, veterans emerged as a clearly distinguishable war generation bonded by a similar individual path and claims to recognition and support, particularly vehement when coming from physically or psychologically affected veterans. This Chapter also presented the most current tropes associated with the veteran group (such as generational bond, victimhood, guilt, neglect, historical duty).

The two stages analysed (1974-1999) and (2000 –) in Chapter Two reflect two distinct phases of commemorative activity. Until the late 1990s, representations of the colonial war were reasonably scarce, with a predominant silence appearing as fundamental for national unity in a recent democracy. In the instances when silence was significantly broken – for instance, with the unveiling in 1994 of the national monument to war combatants – disputes and controversy were apparent, revealing Portuguese society's complex and fractured memorial relationship with the conflict. Since the late 1990s, and particularly from the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century onwards, the colonial war as a topic has been the focus of a new remembrance impetus, and the veteran group (increasingly of retirement age) has acquired higher visibility and social mobilisation, expanding notably the public memory of the conflict and its ex-combatants. This remembrance growth has been evident in the media, cultural outlets, different disciplines, through more noticeable governmental attention to the topic and in more tangible forms of commemoration. Being interconnected and mutual processes, it is hard to determine the exact origins for these memorial articulations and shifts. However, I have suggested that the impulse to remember stemmed from civil society and extended to official and legal developments whilst being simultaneously affected by them.

Nonetheless, despite the impressive advancements in memorial incidence – when compared to the earlier period – this has not been matched by a critical and comprehensive historiographical analysis of the colonial war. Although the importance of the event is acknowledged, the persistent deficit of reflective and inclusive historical knowledge on this conflict is noticeable, with a marked tendency for Portuguese academic historiography to avoid this topic, and noted insufficiencies as regards teaching the history of this event. In history and related disciplines, examples abound of an overemphasis of factual information, the privileging of top-down accounts, of historical analysis which cautiously avoids ideologically problematic angles, and a visible silence about sensitive topics like the violence perpetrated by the Portuguese Army in Africa. Such findings indicate a context of self-perpetuating circle of historiographical dismissal and postponement. In this context, personal war testimonies

remain predominantly contained in certain sectors of Portuguese cultural life, concurring with a common veteran assertion that the past is not meaningfully referred to. In this regard, there was a preponderant notion throughout the Thesis that this lived history of the colonial war will only be made in the future. This paradoxically places in the hands of younger generations who did not experience the event the responsibility of producing its history whilst participants feel an increasing need to transmit their accounts of this past. Such memorial hesitations denote the veterans' complex and problematic social identity, and suggested that there is no stable remembrance of this past, an aspect which highlights the importance of studying the Portugal colonial war from a first-person perspective.

Chapter Two also reflected on how the evolving growth in war remembrance transformed a previous silence into a 'fashionable' war evocation, increasingly witnessing the emergence of competing, oppositional or more 'appeasing' memories, and bringing forth the challenges of 'excessive' commemoration. Higher visibility of the Portuguese colonial war conveys the impression that the conflict is being remembered 'enough' and widely. However, and as remarked early by Cruzeiro, in such a 'noisy silence' negation of this historical event is taking place.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, forgetting can be reinforced by the saturation and repetition that renders the topic irrelevant, often subjugating historical meaning to the a-critical power of immediacy, thus allowing for media and political utilisations of the conflict and its veterans. Since the focus has mainly been factual and descriptive, often lacking wider interpretive angles, the abundance of war images and narratives in recent years is not equivalent to reflective historical analysis in Portugal. These aspects frequently manifest in a trivialisation and commercialisation of media war representations, in tangible commemoration and focalised discussions.

Furthermore, from the veterans' perspective, despite higher memorial incidence and a reconciling discourse, the ex-combatant group still longs for societal recognition and the overcoming of shame about the conflict, further indicators that a meaningful engagement with the past – capable of inducing more inclusive and wide-reaching forms of remembrance – is lacking. These factors indicate that the cultural interest devoted to the war in the last decade and a half is very significant and comprises innovative features, particularly when compared to a previous phase. However, whilst

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<sup>6</sup> Cruzeiro, M. 'Guerra colonial...', in *o.c.* (1994), pp. 5-7; and 'As mulheres e a Guerra Colonial...' in *o.c.* (2004), pp. 31-41.



subject to complex and often contradictory remembrance processes, this cultural interest remains insufficient and rather underdeveloped. The veteran group often feels unheard, there is a noticeable lack of interest in the topic in the academic setting, history curricula often do not feature the war satisfactorily, assessments of the conflict frequently evade more uncomfortable aspects, and, in general, the colonial war is an intermittent and fragmentary cultural presence in the country. Recent dynamics indicate the need to acknowledge the impact of earlier socio-political conceptions, overcome ruptures and polarised narrative framings, and the importance of creating or expanding innovative and inclusive dialogic, analytic remembrance tools. Such enrichment of the public memory of this conflict could contribute towards diminishing historiographical uncertainty around the colonial war. In the meantime, we could conclude with Portugal's Minister of Defence in 2011 that, although there is no silence anymore, shame still exists about the colonial war.<sup>7</sup>

Chapter Three provided a methodological reflection on doing oral history with ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war. In this Chapter, my oral history practice was framed, characterised and its significance emphasised. Highlighting how the lived experience of ex-combatants is underexplored within Portuguese historiography, this Chapter analysed oral history's contributions to the study of the Portuguese colonial war. This former aspect can be linked to the fact that, for decades, the country lacked conditions for historiographical renewal to take place, resulting typically in academic conservatism and the slow acceptance of the oral history approach.<sup>8</sup>

Departing from such standpoints, Chapter Three revealed how oral history presented a portrait of the war memory and identity of Portuguese veterans, thus acknowledging their socio-historical placement in Portugal. It explained how this approach is founded on how the colonial war is remembered and understood by those who fought it – the real people behind the event, for most of whom it retains significant life centrality – highlighting the servicemen's meanings, feelings, attitudes and motivations in relation to the conflict. This Chapter asserted that employing memory in this manner to uncover evidence about the past (namely hidden war narratives within a national history), and to

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<sup>7</sup> Stated by Aguiar-Branco on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2011. See 'Portugal ainda vive mal com a guerra colonial', <http://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/os-ministerios/ministerio-da-defesa-nacional/mantenha-se-atualizado/20111219-mdn-guerra-colonial.aspx> 19th December 2011.

<sup>8</sup> A recent newspaper article about oral history in Portugal reflected the discipline being perceived through existing tensions between 'suspicion' and an inevitable usefulness for contemporary history. See Ribeiro, R. 'Chegou a vez de dar a voz', *Ípsilon, Público*, 15th January 2014; see also Oliveira, L. 'A História Oral em Portugal', in *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas*, 63, 2010, pp. 139-156 for an overview of oral history in Portugal from the standpoint of sociology.

illuminate the nature and development of its historical memory and meaning, results in innovative, challenging ways for the colonial conflict to be considered, beyond omissions and ‘safer’ composed narratives of public memory.<sup>9</sup> In this case, the hidden histories are the experiences of the average serviceman, the fighting soldier, the injured and disabled combatant, the lower-rank non-commissioned officer – mostly historiographically undocumented and normally appearing only fragmentarily in public remembrance. Here I emphasised that the distinctiveness of my life history material resides in the fact that it was framed into a historiographical narrative which looked for meanings, patterns and change, capturing individual accounts and outlining a broader historical significance.

Underlying Chapter Three was a broad understanding of the challenges of working with memory. Acknowledging the principle of the subjectivity of memory informing this type of historiographical enquiry (memory as its object, subject and source), I stressed how this research’s objective was to explore the memory of the past in the present through the war veterans’ accounts.<sup>10</sup> A revealing asset rather than a debilitating flaw, the interviews’ subjectivity – emerging from social, psychological and neurological processes of storytelling – share the partial and retrospective nature of any traditional historical source, in this case mediated and co-created by the researcher.<sup>11</sup>

Methodologically, I also offered an exploration of the interview relationship, including insights on the challenges and complexities of doing oral history with veterans on war, a topic encompassing painful, traumatic aspects. I add that, in rediscovering history in this manner, it was evident that certain traumatic aspects of the past remain impossible to recover from amnesia and dissociation.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, I acknowledged how reticence emerges, how some memories remain inaccessible, how public remembrance frameworks impact the men’s narratives, and how difficult remembering unfolds (particularly for traumatised and disabled veterans, or on contentious topics). These processes place multiple demands not only on interviewees, but also on interviewers, requiring significant levels of interpersonal sophistication and

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<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, M. Hutching’s assertion that oral history adds richness and complexity to our understanding of the experience of war, in ‘After Action...’, in *o.c.* (2011), pp. 233-243.

<sup>10</sup> Thomson, A. ‘Memory and Remembering...’ in D. Ritchie (ed.) *o.c.* (2011), p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> Thomson, A., *idem*, p.90; Hunt, N., *o.c.* (2011), p. 204.

<sup>12</sup> Klemptner, M. ‘Navigating...’, in *o.c.* (2000), pp. 67-83; ‘Introduction’ to Rogers, K. & Leydesdorff, S. (eds.) *o.c.* (2004), p. 17; Dawson, G. ‘Trauma, Memory, Politics....’ in *idem*, pp. 180-204; Field, S. ‘Beyond “healing”...’, in *o.c.* (2006), p. 34, p. 41. .

emotional endurance. In this context, I prioritised the safety and well-being of both participants, reflecting on the challenges to achieve that.

My experience of doing oral history interviews with ex-combatants revealed its difficulties in terms of emotional weight, psychological complexities and having to navigate traumatic elements during and after the interview – aspects which suggest further responsibilities and a need for oral history to seek wider refinement via external contributions and articulations with other domains. Consequently, my methodological reflection on oral history interviewing with war veterans also argued the benefits of an incorporation of interdisciplinary tools (including specific training) from the therapeutic field aimed at oral historians interviewing traumatised individuals or on painful topics in general. In short, Chapter Three was a reflective, methodological exercise on the importance and complexities of exploring the historical meanings of this war via oral history.

Chapter Four focused on the lived memory of the Portuguese colonial war through personal narratives of ex-combatants. In examining retrospectively how these men recall what they experienced in Africa and in the initial phase after their return, this Chapter employed the veterans' subjective interpretive frameworks, emphasising personal reflections, meanings and the perceived lifetime consequences of their experiences. In Section One, and reflecting the country's developments and the men's life path, we approached the rich diversity – and also uniformity – present in experiences of war through following the typical military path and its impact on the average serviceman, from conscription onwards. This section charted the conscripts' apprehension, fear and inexperience, but also the youthful enthusiasm and political unawareness of many, capturing the environment of the era, pinpointing the regional differences, the reality of compulsory mobilisation, the interruption in the young men's lives, and the fear of dying and of disability. It revealed the men's feelings regarding the departure to a different continent, its novelty and, for many, disappointment in the revelation of colonial realities, the sense of abandonment, the discovery of geographical distance and feelings of homesickness. The ex-combatants' narratives frequently depict their anger and frustration at the fact that many felt that they were being employed as cannon-fodder and merely fighting for personal survival in an increasingly unpopular war. Most feel that they were unfairly forced to participate in this intense experience, and were, thus, betrayed by the politicians of the period, an aspect which often means personal war memories remain tinged by contestation and divisiveness.

Regarding combat, many describe in detail – sometimes avoiding particularly painful aspects – the harsh reality on the terrain of a guerrilla war fought compulsorily by largely unmotivated conscripted civilians. These veteran narratives conveyed, with vividness and psychological intensity, the core human experience of war, encompassing the brutality of combat, the randomness of attacks, the presence of fear, and also the significance of the junior officers fighting alongside the troops in the field. Not always comfortably, a great number of narratives focused on mutilation, death of comrades, and diverse scenarios of material deprivation and hunger, often reflecting on the impact of having survived life-threatening circumstances – particularly when the narrators had been wounded or become disabled. Although uneasy and painful, some interviewees addressed the topic of excesses arising from extreme conditions, violence and killing. These acknowledgements and their attending difficulties are historically revealing, suggesting that reflection on this violence remains one of the most hidden pages of Portuguese contemporary history also because of individual and collective guilt and shame. In that regard, my research confirmed that such violence is a sensitive topic for participants and their country.

Frequently remembered with more ease is the veterans' connection with Africa and the local populations, a discourse often highlighting the discovery of new landscapes, people, interests and opportunities. Pleasant socialisation moments spent in Africa were particularly emphasised, as were the continent's natural beauty and the meaningful exchanges with local inhabitants. Their accounts showed how, united by the same military experience and hardships, a strong comradeship and long-lasting bonds were formed between the men. In short, these men's narratives pinpointed what they retain more vividly of their presence in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, defined by some as a combination of the best and the worst of their youth years – and what made them into men – with the war maintaining a significant centrality in many interviewees' lives.

Section Two of Chapter Four addressed the combatants' return and initial social reintegration, covering the challenges associated with resuming and readjusting to their civilian lives whilst coping with the war experience and its immediate consequences. It evidenced how, for various reasons, the return was a pivotal moment in the men's lives, being, in most cases, one of joy and relief. Covering a diversity of returning experiences, this section also revealed a generalised satisfaction about returning home, permeated by a sense of the beginning of a new life phase where military duty was fulfilled.

Many narratives presented the veterans as changed men, focusing on a postwar awareness of the war experience's influential impact. For some, this meant a strong need to, as a survival tool, forget the war and leave that experience in the background while focusing on their future – namely their unfolding personal, social and professional lives. At differing degrees, but true about men of every rank and background, many ex-combatants encountered difficulties in resuming their pre-war civilian lives. The challenges experienced in this initial period hinted, in many cases, at a long-lasting impact of the war experiences. Such troubled return often encompassed physical and psychological difficulties, especially as experienced by the injured, disabled, mutilated and psychologically affected. It was noticeable that the war experience and its consequences feature more decisively in the accounts of veterans in such circumstances.

This Chapter also reflected on the wider impact of such challenges on families and society, and how it contributed to emerging stereotypes of 'crazy' veterans. It also emphasised the lack of governmental support, which was criticised by the veterans from the beginning of the readjustment period, particularly as far as more vulnerable veterans were concerned. Additionally, it evidenced how after the end of the war in 1974 the ex-combatants' social position gained complexity and ambiguity, and how in face of divisiveness, shifting values and social rejection and indifference, men generally embraced shame and avoidance tactics as self-protection. Such an attitude manifested in a reluctance to talk, pushing many narratives to private remembrance spheres – this widespread veteran silence often generating tensions with veteran attachments to the past and the notion of meaningless sacrifices. Despite the emergence of chastising elements, most veterans welcomed the 1974 democratic change. In this first phase, it was possible to discover a latent Portuguese colonial war veteran identity, as well as signs that a further personal reflection occurred after the country's repositioning in 1974, emerging from having witnessed a country torn by political change and turmoil in the immediate years after 1974.

Chapter Five addressed the veteran's long-term relationship with the war's aftermath. Section One covered the so-called 'years of silence', coinciding with the phase when the public memory of the conflict was not very developed. Focusing on the interviewees' frameworks, it demonstrated how, as time elapsed, it became increasingly clear that the veterans had participated in a divisive war, surrounded by complexity and indifference and unable to generate unified collective recognition and commemoration. It evidenced how a personal and community sense of shame and guilt and a need for

silence were in operation towards easing socio-political wounds present at the end of a regime and empire. As their lives unfolded, and in a context of forgetting, marginalisation and silencing of individual war memory, participants remained mostly quiet for the first postwar decades. It was argued that the lack of established and cohesive public narratives of participation in the war deprived most veterans of effective means to articulate and understand their war experiences, blocking wider emergence of individual memories and diluting a visible ex-combatant identity, placing it on the social margins instead. Therefore, this oral history practice allowed an assessment of personal and collective silence, with many interviewees reflectively identifying this period until the revival of topic in the early millennium as a negative and wasted phase. The latter often manifested further difficulties in relation to the initial years of reintegration (perceived as instrumental in forging a final outcome of social adjustment or failure), requiring a focus on the daily life restructuring challenges dictated by the continuing and wide impact of war – albeit of varying intensity and manifestations – on veterans.

Chapter Five showed how such war memories are associated by many with shame, guilt and remorse, generating concerns about social condemnation, moral burdens and a need to provide reflective justifications about participation in the war. This Chapter assessed different ways of coping with these concerns, and common abstract frameworks employed. These included perceptions of having collaborated with the former regime, and the long-term (and currently more acute) struggle to explain and assimilate aspects of the past conflicting with civilian identities. It also provided a reflection on how much of Portugal's individual and collective silence on the war could stem also from a sense of shame related to uncomfortable memories, hinting at many aspects of difficult remembering remaining undisclosed in untapped personal memory.

Section one of Chapter Five also illustrated how the veterans' accounts generally focused on the long-term impact of their war experiences. They emphasised how, throughout their postwar years and in different ways, the war shaped their personal (physical and psychological health included), social and professional lives, mainly – but not exclusively – in negative ways. This Chapter stressed how, with the elapsing of time, most veterans began to reflect on their participation in the war. In seeking a wider meaning of the conflict and to make sense of their experience, many progressively acquired the notion of their historical significance as actors in the country's contemporary history. The prevalent issue of lack of effective and fuller official and

social involvement stressed the widespread notion – despite variations dictated by socio-cultural background and political convictions – of having been used as cannon fodder by the former regime. Such a viewpoint highlights this war experience as pointless, a waste of time, an instance of veterans being used and subsequently enveloped in social stigma – resulting in them being currently forgotten and the social memory of the conflict still unresolved. Occurring in a different remembrance context which includes evolving memorial articulations, the ex-combatants' reflection on their participation often acquired new critical dimensions, sometimes contradictory. For most, taking part in the conflict was a significantly disturbing experience, not just due to the violence of warfare, but particularly due to a sense of injustice regarding their compulsory conscription, and subsequent social indifference and neglect.

Section two of Chapter Five focused on the revival period happening from the new millennium onwards, and being characterised by an increase of public remembrance of the war. It showed how the ex-combatants have been playing a wider role in recent years in shaping and interacting with the changing public narrative of the conflict. Mostly retired or about to, this war generation has aged and is embarking on a life review phase. In this process, veterans acquired higher visibility, deeper group awareness and developed a firmer collective identity, reinforced by common demands. Drawing upon the themes expressed in the interviews, this section addressed how the ex-combatants retrospectively interpret their military experience in Africa. Their narratives reflected the subjective richness of perspectives about having fought in the colonial war, manifesting the identity negotiations established by the veterans between their past and present selves. A great number describe their military commission in Africa as the most important event of their lives, and one that shaped the course of their path and forged a common generational identity.<sup>13</sup>

The majority of interviewees characterised their participation in the conflict as negative, with the challenges of difficult remembering and the war's long-term consequences, as well as anger and disappointment at the country's perceived socio-historical neglect and lack of recognition towards veterans being frequently expressed. My analysis also showed how their collective identity interacts with the evolving public discourse on the colonial war in Portugal, and how, with the passage of time, the

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<sup>13</sup> Interviewee 14 expressed this notion most articulately (p. 24, p. 27). See Hutching, M., in *o.c.* (2011), pp. 233-243.

veterans acquired a wider picture of their participation in the conflict and of its historical context and implications.

I also noted how a commemorative focus on mainly ‘positive’ aspects of the war experience (such as comradeship, masculine pride, national identity) can be problematic and develop into fashionable, a-critical, superficial memorialisation and the under-exploration of challenging aspects of war (for instance, the conflict as a struggle for independence from the colonial system, the role of the authoritarian regime and violence perpetrated). I highlighted how this approach often enables contentious associations with the condoning of the conflict and the previous regime, and frequently informs political utilisations.

Despite a resurgence of the topic, many veterans consider current war remembrance in Portugal as unsuitable and insufficient, and mostly incapable of satisfactorily containing their war experiences and emphasise the significance of personal veteran narratives emerging as alternative to public discourses. In this respect, most respondents expressed concerns about the need to urgently leave testimony, particularly for younger generations.

In Chapter Five, the tension between a personal need to forget and the desire for a meaningful collective remembrance of the war was also identified. Perhaps one of the most striking finds is the paradoxical duality of remembrance expressed by most interviewees: whilst veterans condemn silence and indifference and desire social recognition, often also declare they never speak to anybody about their war experiences and wish they could forget them. This contradiction uncovers the complexities surrounding the expression of the lived memory of this war.

This Chapter explored the veterans’ viewpoints on how to overcome identified shortcomings in the memorial field. They stressed the pedagogical value of history and the promotion of an intergenerational dialogue in Portugal, aspects potentially containing beneficial results as spaces of social recognition of the colonial war and its participants. This assessment emphasised the high expectations placed by veterans on historians towards the creation of a ‘future’ history of the colonial war, the latter focusing on the war’s social meaning and consequences and valuing the reflective incorporation of personal war testimonies as rich historical sources underexplored in Portugal. Focusing on what they felt and experienced, and framed by an evolving dynamic remembrance process, they affirmed themselves as a privileged bastion of war memory. The ex-combatants’ insights revealed their perception of contributing towards



a complementary and innovative history of the colonial war through participation in this project, suggesting their belief in leaving testimonies for the ‘history of the future’. However, I argued that doing an oral history of the colonial war is writing this history now.

Chapter Five’s themes evidenced Portugal’s remembrance dilemmas and its tense and cautious relationship with the colonial war, including the challenges associated with researching it.<sup>14</sup> My final remarks included a reflection on how academic Portuguese historiography, manifesting limitations of previous socio-cultural frameworks and a visible resistance to address the topic without further chronological distance, has been pushing oral history contributions mainly to its margins. I argued that adopting such traditional conceptions alienates a diversity of historical subjects and, thus, by not placing enough emphasis on inclusiveness and dialogue, potentially deprives the historical record of depth, further meaning and democratic potential. On the other hand, I have shown how reflective historical research incorporating life history sources, particularly oral history, can offer innovative contributions towards a richer social history of this event and period.

As for the ex-combatants, privileged memorial depositaries of this war’s experience, it became evident how new dialogic engagements shaped in today’s Portuguese transitional society – such as the one promoted by this research – could help this group’s repositioning within national history after decades of unrecognition, media and political opportunism and social stereotyping.<sup>15</sup> These interviews provided illuminating examples of individual critical reflectivity about the past, offering many instances of active human agency and subjectivity in interpreting past experiences. The importance of these testimonies resides in the understandings they contain regarding the individual combatant standpoint of the socio-historical experience and memory of war.<sup>16</sup>

Having summarising the main findings of the Thesis by chapter, I will now present some final conclusions. This research demonstrates how an oral history study can guide an assessment of the complexities contained in the public memory of a colonial conflict. It provides empirical contributions to the knowledge of the Portuguese colonial war through exploring hidden histories within national history, namely by telling the largely untold story of the average serviceman, thus increasing historical knowledge on the

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<sup>14</sup> For a similar example related to the representation of the British colonial period, see Hunt, N., *o.c.* (2011), p. 111.

<sup>15</sup> Ribeiro, M. & Vecchi, R. (org) *o.c.* (2011), pp. 26-32.

<sup>16</sup> See Thomson, A. ‘Memory and Remembering...’ in *o.c.* (2011), p. 86, p. 80; Green, A. ‘Can Memory be Collective?’ in *o.c.* (2011), p. 108, and a selection of Roper’s articles in the Bibliography.

veteran group in general. As an oral history interviewer dealing with veterans and a traumatic war topic, my methodological intervention uncovers the need for oral history to refine practices and approaches and pay particular attention to contributions from the therapeutic fields. Also, and departing from traditional standpoints of Portuguese historiography, I offer a methodological intervention in the practice of history by emphasising the historiographical importance of employing the lived perspective via oral history sources in the study of a colonial conflict in a transitional, post-authoritarian country. Consequently, this research provides not only a broader understanding of the conflict through highlighting the significance of the individual perspective often missing from Portuguese historiography, but also promotes a more democratic historiographical practice. In the process, it illustrates the advantages and potentialities of adopting more open, inclusive and flexible research practices in contemporary history in Portugal and beyond. It argues that such broadening of perspectives, contributions, sources and methodologies may lead to a fuller and more balanced assessment of this conflict and its participants. Such change of focus means that this study moves away from polarised and circumscribed historical narratives (often politically and ideologically entangled), and from the typical war history focusing on influential individuals, groups and institutions. For the reasons expounded above, this research constitutes an original contribution to knowledge.

The core intervention of this Thesis is its focus on the less analysed view of the Portuguese colonial war from the perspective of the combatant, addressing what war was like for them then and what it means now, in the process deepening our understanding of this conflict and of the men who fought it. In this arena, much remains to be done. A huge ‘memory bank’ of this conflict remains untapped. Thousands of voices who compose the wider mosaic of those who lived this war have not been heard. We are urged to study the conflict more often from the perspective of participants, and much further work is needed on this topic in Portugal, ideally incorporating perspectives from both combatant sides, and also civilians. In this sense, future life history work in Portugal on the subject of the colonial war and similar contemporary history topics is urgent not only for reasons of expansion of knowledge and methodological renewal but also for practical reasons related to the increasing physical disappearance of respondents.

The developments suggested in this Thesis encourage a greater use of life history sources in this particular context and beyond. Therefore, I hope my oral history of

Portuguese ex-combatants can be inspiring in promoting further improvements within a type of historical research which acknowledges that doing history is not simply about chronicling past experience, but rather sensitively recovering what is human and meaningful about it. I believe that by tracing how individual, personal paths intersect and continuously conjunct with the collective events they are part of we become closer to the history my interviewees believe will be done in the future. Not discouraged by ‘silence’ and ‘shame’, we are actually writing that history jointly now. I suspect this is what led Luís Sá to talk to me after years of silence and, why without expecting anything, he actually expected so much from history.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Interviewee 36, p. 34.

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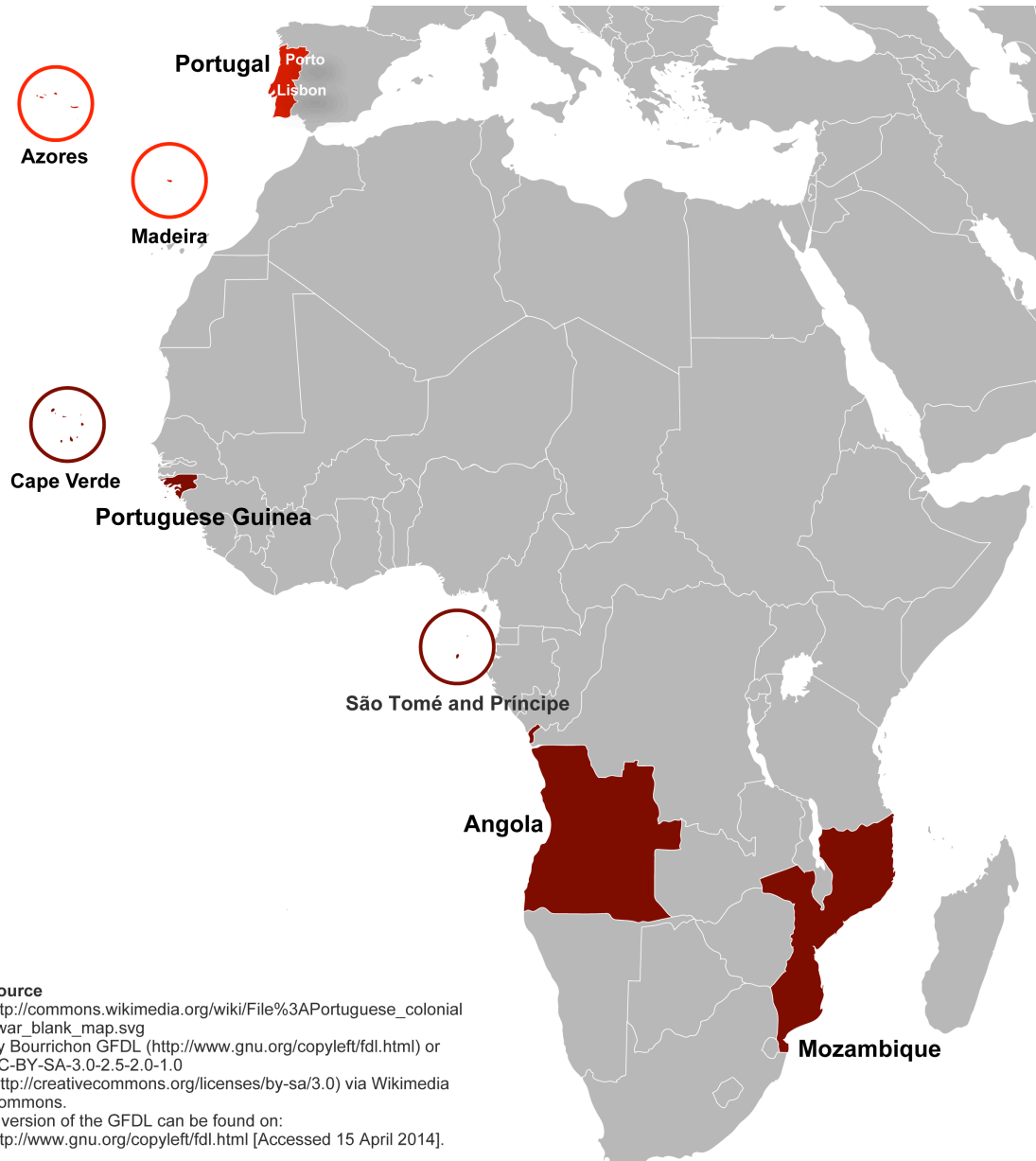
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## **Appendices**

## I. Map of Portugal and African provinces (before 1975)



## II. Biographical information table

INTERVIEWEE NO.	DATE AND PLACE OF INTERVIEW	PSEUDONYM	YEAR OF BIRTH	RANK/SPECIALITY	DATE AND LOCATION OF POST IN AFRICA
1	20/3/2006, Lisbon	José Pinto	1954	Officer ( Air Force)	1971-1973 (Guinea), 1973-1974 (Angola)
2	13/8/2007, Gaia	José Marques	1950	Corporal (Infantry)	25/3/1972 to 4/7/1974 Guinea
3	14/3/2006, Lisbon	Avelino Oliveira	1946	Military Nurse	24/5/1969 to 17/7/1971 Angola
4	21/7/2007, Porto	José Andrade	1948	Cryptographic Operator	2/1970 to 2/1972 Angola
5	15/3/2006, Lisbon	Jaime Fernandes	1939	Military Secretary	8/1972 to 8/1974 Mozambique
6	13/12/2005, Viana do Castelo	João Barroso	1945	Radiotelegraphist (Transmissions)	1966/1968 Angola
7	22/7/2007, Porto	Amadeu Barbosa	1952	Soldier, Driver (Military Police)	4/1974 to 4/1975 Mozambique
8	5/7/2007, Porto	Miguel Almeida	1942	<i>Alferes</i> (Infantry)	3/1965 to 3/1967 Angola
9	8/8/2007, Matosinhos	José Vaz	1937	Captain (Artillery)	1/1970 to 10/1971 (Guinea); 5/1974 to 4/1975 (Mozambique)
10	10/12/2005, Cuba	João Cancela	1946	Military nurse	11/1968 to 9/1970 Guinea
11	9/12/2005, Cuba	Joaquim Piteira	1943	Military driver	1965/1967 Guinea
12	29/7/2007, Lisbon	José Fialho	1947	<i>Alferes</i> (Infantry)	1/1972 to 5/1974 Angola
13	18/3/2006, Barreiro	Joaquim Azinheira	1946	Soldier	5/1968 to 8/1970 Mozambique
14	3/8/2007, Cuba	Francisco Fitas	1941	Military driver	12/1962 to 12/1964 Angola
15	16/3/2006, Costa de Caparica	Manuel Figueiredo	1942	Military driver and Transmissions operational	7/1964 to 5/1966 Guinea
16	9/7/2007, Alfândega da Fé	Albino Torres	1949	Soldier (Artillery)	14/12/1970 to 16/2/1973 Guinea
17	7/7/2007, Campo Maior	António Moreira	1949	Soldier Transmissions (Infantry)	11/1970 to 11/1973 Mozambique
18	11/7/2007, Valença	António Silva	1950	<i>Alferes</i> (Artillery)	12/1971 to 8/1973 Guinea
19	1/8/2007, Abrantes	Alfredo Sousa	1946	Soldier bazooka handler	11/1967 to 11/1969 Angola
20	23/3/2006, Lisbon	José Gouveia	1946	<i>Alferes</i> (Commando troops)	1/1968 to 11/1969 Angola
21	13/7/2007,	José Carvalho	1946	Military driver	11/1968 to

	Viana do Castelo				10/1970 Guinea
22	23/7/2007, Trofa	Álvaro Lima	1947	Soldier (Artillery)	10/1968 to 10/1970 Guinea
23	24/3/2006, Lisbon	Manuel Nhancale	1947	Soldier (Infantry/Auxiliary Services)	1968/1970 Mozambique
24	17/3/2006, Camarate	Jacinto Rosado	1941	Soldier (Infantry)	21/6/1963 to 27/7/1965 Angola
25	2/8/2007, Caldas da Rainha	Manuel Loureiro	1950	<i>Furriel</i> (administrative services)	1/1972 to 5/1974 Angola
26	14/8/2007, Leça da Palmeira	Daniel Cunha	1947	Military driver	5/1969 to 9/1972 Angola
27	3/8/2007, Cuba	João Alves	1941	Military driver	27/3/1963 to 28/4/1965 Guinea
28	3/7/2007, Porto	Artur Santos	1949	<i>Alferes</i>	4/1971 to 11/1971 Guinea
29	20/7/2007, Porto	Serafim Correia	1948	Soldier (Transmissions)	2/1970 to 3/1972 Guinea
30	18/8/2007, Cartaxo	Mário Amaral	1948	Soldier (Infantry)	5/1969 to 12/1970 Guinea
31	25/7/2007, Porto	Henrique Martins	1943	<i>Alferes</i> (Infantry)	1966/1968 Guinea
32	30/7/2007, Baixa da Banheira	Júlio Lobo	1949	Military driver	13/12/1970 to 23/12/1972 Mozambique
33	31/7/2007, Seixal	Victor Palma	1942	<i>Alferes</i>	1/1965 to 3/1967 Angola
34	24/7/2007, Vila do Conde	Joaquim Viana	1932	Career officer (Artillery)	9/1955 to 3/1964 (Mozambique); 1965-1967 (Angola); 1968- 1969 (Mozambique))
35	17/8/2007, Paço de Arcos	Ernesto Sampaio	1936	Lieutenant (Transmissions)	8/1966 to 8/1968 (Angola); 8/1970 to 8/1972 (Guinea)
36	10/8/2007, Porto	Luís Sá	1951	<i>Furriel</i> (Commando troops)	1/1973 to 22/12/1974 Angola

**Additional note:**

All interviews were done by me, Ângela Campos, in Continental Portugal between December 2005 and February 2008. The interviews were conducted in Portuguese. They were transcribed and the extracts relevant for this research subsequently translated into English by the researcher. The interviewees were all anonymised, and a pseudonym employed as replacement for their real names.

**III. Advertisement in daily Portuguese newspapers *Público*, *Jornal de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã*, on the 30th October 2005.**

**TESTEMUNHOS DA GUERRA COLONIAL PORTUGUESA**  
**A História vivida e contada na primeira pessoa**

Se é ex-combatente da Guerra Colonial em África e gostaria de participar com o seu testemunho escrito e/ou oral num projecto de investigação de Doutoramento para a University of Sussex (Reino Unido), por favor, telefone para 912411251, ou escreva para Apartado 6189, 4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA ou a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk, de modo a receber toda a informação necessária pelo correio. Todos os testemunhos serão devidamente catalogados e arquivados. Participe, conte a sua história!

**English translation:**

**TESTEMONIES OF THE PORTUGUESE COLONIAL WAR**  
**History lived and told in the first person**

If you are an ex-combatant of the Portuguese Colonial war in Africa and would like to take part with your written and/or oral testimony in a DPhil research project for the University of Sussex (U.K.), please call 912411251 or write to P.O. Box 6189, 4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA or a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk, in order to receive all necessary information by post. All testimonies will be duly catalogued and archived. Please participate, tell your story!

#### IV. Project protocols (Portuguese originals and English translation)



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##### *Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974): uma História Oral*

Muito obrigada pelo interesse manifestado em participar neste projecto de investigação acerca das memórias de ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974). Esta carta tem como principal objectivo solicitar-lhe a redacção de um testemunho escrito acerca da sua experiência enquanto combatente e ex-combatente.

O conflito colonial português, nas suas várias frentes, desenrolou-se durante cerca de treze anos, tendo para o mesmo sido mobilizados mais de 820 000 homens. Indubitavelmente, a Guerra Colonial é um acontecimento marcante da História Contemporânea de Portugal. No entanto, mais de trinta anos passados sobre o fim do conflito, verifica-se que a historiografia portuguesa não tem abordado este tema com muita frequência e em profundidade.

O projecto de investigação *Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974): uma História Oral* visa a recolha de testemunhos escritos e orais de veteranos de guerra que tenham combatido em África entre 1961 e 1974. Esta investigação, a cargo de Ângela Ferreira Campos, surge no âmbito de um programa de Doutoramento da University of Sussex (Brighton, Reino Unido) que será levado a cabo no decurso dos próximos três anos. Fundamentalmente, pretende-se com este projecto adquirir um maior conhecimento sobre as representações e interpretações do conflito que são feitas individualmente pelos ex-combatentes. Nesse sentido, a investigação centrar-se-á nas memórias pessoais relativas à Guerra Colonial, e apenas focará de uma forma indirecta o conflito militar e os acontecimentos políticos que ao mesmo se encontram associados. Assim, a partir das suas memórias de guerra, pretende-se traçar um quadro identitário dos veteranos portugueses. Numa fase inicial, o projecto consistirá na recolha de testemunhos pessoais escritos acerca da experiência de guerra. No entanto, posteriormente, um número limitado dos ex-combatentes que responderem a este apelo será contactado para efectuar uma entrevista de história oral acerca do tópico em questão. O objectivo principal desta investigação consistirá na elaboração de uma tese de Doutoramento.

Actualmente, é fundamental que uma abordagem à História Contemporânea contemple as histórias de vida e fontes biográficas semelhantes. Este projecto colocará a História Oral em destaque. Apenas como breve nota introdutória, refira-se que esta



metodologia consiste na recolha de memórias ‘vivas’ através de entrevistas gravadas, sobretudo em formato áudio. Fundamental para a compreensão do passado mais recente, é a História ‘viva’ das experiências de vida únicas de cada indivíduo. Desta forma, a História Oral permite traçar uma imagem mais rica e completa do passado, e não tão dependente das fontes escritas, explorando aspectos da realidade histórica que não são normalmente documentados. Uma História vivida e contada na primeira pessoa.

Neste contexto, é-lhe pedido que escreva um testemunho acerca da sua experiência enquanto combatente e ex-combatente da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa. Em anexo, encontrará os seguintes documentos: Algumas Linhas de Orientação para a Redacção do Testemunho Pessoal, uma Declaração de Consentimento, e uma Ficha de Informações Biográficas. Poderá enviar o seu testemunho por correio ou por e-mail. Se proceder ao seu envio por correio, o testemunho poderá ser dactilografado, manuscrito ou gravado em formato áudio, e deverá ser sempre acompanhado da Declaração de Consentimento e Ficha de Informações Biográficas devidamente preenchidas. Foi também incluído um envelope RSF para que possa remeter o seu testemunho e/ou outra documentação sem qualquer custo para si. Se pretender, poderá usar o seu próprio envelope remetendo-o para o apartado que acima se indica. Poderá igualmente enviar o seu testemunho em formato electrónico: ou por e-mail, ou anexado a um e-mail, ou em disquete ou CD (de preferência como documento do Microsoft Word). No entanto, se optar por um envio através de correio electrónico, será sempre necessário o envio por correio normal da Declaração de Consentimento e Ficha de Informações Biográficas devidamente preenchidas. A ausência destes documentos inviabiliza a utilização do seu testemunho para este projecto. De facto, este projecto de investigação aplicará com todo o rigor os procedimentos éticos e legais imprescindíveis à situação em causa. Assim, nenhum testemunho poderá ser usado sem a respectiva cedência de direitos de autor. Esta Declaração de Consentimento inclui a possibilidade de colocar condições ou restrições ao uso do seu testemunho. Por exemplo, se assim o desejar, poderá permanecer anónimo. De igual modo, saliente-se que todos os dados constantes na Ficha de Informações Biográficas serão processados com total confidencialidade; não serão fornecidos a terceiros ou usados para quaisquer outros fins que não a identificação dos participantes na presente investigação. Por outro lado, todos os testemunhos, independentemente do seu formato, serão catalogados e depositados em arquivo na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto.

Mais uma vez, muito obrigada por aceder a participar neste projecto. Se pretender quaisquer esclarecimentos ou informações adicionais, não hesite em contactar-me para o número de telefone, morada ou endereço de correio electrónico que se encontram no verso, no canto superior direito desta carta. Espero receber o seu testemunho muito em breve!

Melhores cumprimentos,

Ângela Campos

Ângela Campos  
DPhil Research Student  
School of Humanities  
University of Sussex  
Falmer, Brighton  
BN1 9QN  
United Kingdom

Projecto de Investigação  
Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial  
Portuguesa  
Apartado 6189  
4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA  
Telm. 91 241 12 51  
a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk

*An oral history of ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974)*

Thank you very much for your interest in participating in this research project about the memories of ex-combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974). The main purpose of this letter is to request from you a written personal account of your experience as a combatant and ex-combatant.

The Portuguese colonial conflict, in its several fighting fronts, lasted for about thirteen years, and for it 820,000 men were mobilized. Undoubtedly, the Colonial War is a very significant event in Portuguese Contemporary History. However, about thirty years after the end of the conflict, it is manifestly evident that Portuguese historiography has not addressed this topic very often and in depth.

The *An oral History of ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974)* research project aims at collecting written and oral testimonies from war veterans who fought in Africa between 1961 and 1974. This research that will be undertaken by Angela Ferreira Campos appears in the context of a DPhil programme for the University of Sussex (Brighton, UK) that will be developed in the next three years. Fundamentally, the purpose of this project is to acquire a greater knowledge on the representations and interpretations of the conflict that are made individually by ex-combatants. In that sense, the research will be focused on the personal memories concerning the Colonial War, and will only address the military conflict and its related political events in an indirect way. Therefore, drawing upon their war memories, the project intends to present an identity portrait of the Portuguese war veterans. At an earlier stage, the project will consist in collecting personal written testimonies about the war experience. However, subsequently, a limited number of the ex-combatants who answer this call for testimonies will be contacted so that an oral history interview about the topic in question can be done. The main purpose of this research will consist in the writing of a DPhil thesis.

Nowadays, it is vital that any approach to Contemporary History includes life stories and similar biographical sources. This project will place particular emphasis on Oral History. Only as a brief introductory note, it must be said that this methodology consists in collecting 'living' memories through recorded interviews, especially in audio format. Fundamental to an understanding of the recent past, it is the 'living' History of the unique life experiences of each individual. Therefore, Oral History allows the creation of a more vivid and complex picture of the past, no longer that dependent on the written sources, and exploring aspects of historical reality that are not normally documented. It is History lived and told in the first person.

In this context, you are asked to provide an account of your experience as a combatant and ex-combatant of the Portuguese Colonial War. Enclosed you will find the following items: Guidelines for Writing, Consent Form, and a Biographical Information Sheet. You can send your account by post or by e-mail. If you send your testimony by post, it can be typed, handwritten or audio-taped, and it should always be sent with your completed Consent Form and Biographical Information Sheet. A Freepost envelope was also enclosed so that you can send your account and/or any other documentation at no cost to you. If you prefer, you can also use your own envelope addressing it to the P.O. Box indicated above. Another way to send your account is in electronic format: either by e-mail or as an attachment to an e-mail or on a floppy disk or CD (preferentially as a Microsoft Word document). However, if you choose to send your account electronically it is still necessary that you send by post the completed Consent Form and Biographical Information Sheet. The lack of these documents will result in your account not being used for this project. Indeed, this research project will strictly follow all ethical and legal procedures indispensable to the situation in question. Therefore, no account can be used without its respective copyrights' cession. This Consent Form includes the possibility of placing conditions or restrictions on the use of your account. For example, if you wish so, you may remain anonymous. Also, it must be stressed that all data provided through the Biographical Information Sheet will be processed with total confidentiality, and will not be passed on to third parties or used for any other purpose other than the identification of the participants in the current research. On the other hand, all testimonies, no matter their format, will be catalogued and archivally stored in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto.

Once again, thank you very much for your willingness in participating in this project. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the telephone number, postal address, or e-mail address that you can find overleaf, on the top right corner of this letter. I am looking forward to receiving your account very soon!

Best regards,

Ângela Campos

Senhora da Hora, ... de 200...

Exm.ºs Srs.,

Serve a presente para dar a conhecer o projecto de investigação ‘Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974): uma História Oral’.

Como é comumente sabido, o conflito colonial português, nas suas várias frentes, desenrolou-se durante cerca de treze anos, tendo para o mesmo sido mobilizados mais de 820 000 homens. Indubitavelmente, a Guerra Colonial é um acontecimento marcante da História Contemporânea de Portugal. No entanto, mais de trinta anos passados sobre o fim do conflito, verifica-se que a historiografia portuguesa não tem abordado este tema com muita frequência e em profundidade.

O projecto de investigação ‘Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974): uma História Oral’ visa a recolha de testemunhos escritos e orais de veteranos de guerra que tenham combatido em África entre 1961 e 1974. Esta investigação, a cargo de Ângela Ferreira Campos, surge no âmbito de um programa de Doutoramento da University of Sussex (Brighton, Reino Unido) que será levado a cabo ao longo dos próximos três anos. Fundamentalmente, pretende-se com este projecto adquirir um maior conhecimento sobre as representações e interpretações do conflito que são feitas individualmente pelos ex-combatentes. Nesse sentido, a investigação centrar-se-á nas memórias pessoais relativas à Guerra Colonial, e apenas focará de uma forma indirecta o conflito militar e os acontecimentos políticos que ao mesmo se encontram associados. Assim, a partir das suas memórias de guerra, pretende-se traçar um quadro identitário dos veteranos portugueses. Numa fase inicial, o projecto consistirá na recolha de testemunhos pessoais escritos acerca da experiência de guerra. No entanto, posteriormente, um número limitado dos ex-combatentes que responderem a este apelo

será contactado para efectuar uma entrevista de história oral acerca do tópico em questão. O objectivo principal desta investigação consistirá na redacção de uma tese de Doutoramento.

Actualmente, é fundamental que uma abordagem à História Contemporânea contemple as histórias de vida e fontes biográficas semelhantes. Este projecto colocará a História Oral em destaque. Apenas como breve nota introdutória, refira-se que esta metodologia consiste na recolha de memórias ‘vivas’ através de entrevistas gravadas, sobretudo em formato áudio. Fundamental para a compreensão do passado mais recente, é a História ‘viva’ das experiências de vida únicas de cada indivíduo. Desta forma, a História Oral permite traçar uma imagem mais rica e completa do passado, e não tão dependente das fontes escritas, explorando aspectos da realidade histórica que não são normalmente documentados. Uma História vivida e contada na primeira pessoa.

Neste âmbito, apelo à compreensão de V.<sup>as</sup> Ex.<sup>as</sup> no sentido de uma divulgação deste projecto entre os associados da V/ instituição e/ou outros ex-combatentes interessados em participar neste projecto de investigação que incide sobre as suas memórias da Guerra Colonial. Para o efeito, anexo cópia de anúncio publicado na imprensa portuguesa que certamente será útil aos ex-combatentes que pretendam contribuir com o seu testemunho para este projecto. Se V.<sup>as</sup> Ex.<sup>as</sup> pretenderem quaisquer esclarecimentos ou informações adicionais, coloco-me à V/ inteira disposição para futuro contacto através do número de telefone, morada ou endereço de correio electrónico que se encontram no verso, no canto superior direito desta carta.

Sem outro assunto de momento, e antecipadamente grata pela atenção dispensada, subscrevo-me com os meus melhores cumprimentos,

Ângela Campos

**Anexo:** anúncio de divulgação do projecto ‘Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974): uma História Oral’.



Ângela Campos  
DPhil Research Student  
School of Humanities  
University of Sussex  
Falmer, Brighton  
BN1 9QN  
United Kingdom

**Projecto de Investigação**  
**Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa**  
**(1961-1974): uma História Oral**  
**Apartado 6189**  
**4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA**  
**Telm. 91 241 12 51**  
**[a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk)**

Senhora da Hora, ..., 200...

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to let you know about the *An oral History of ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974)* research project.

It is widely known that the Portuguese colonial conflict, in its several fighting fronts, lasted for about thirteen years, and for it 820,000 men were mobilized. Undoubtedly, the Colonial War is a very significant event in Portuguese Contemporary History. However, about thirty years after the end of the conflict, it is manifestedly evident that Portuguese historiography has not addressed this topic very often and in depth.

The *An oral History of ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974)* research project aims at collecting written and oral testimonies from war veterans who fought in Africa between 1961 and 1974. This research that will be undertaken by Angela Ferreira Campos appears in the context of a DPhil programme for the University of Sussex (Brighton, UK) that will be developed in the next three years. Fundamentally, the purpose of this project is to acquire a greater knowledge on the representations and interpretations of the conflict that are made individually by ex-combatants. In that sense, the research will be focused on the personal memories concerning the Colonial War, and will only address the military conflict and its related political events in an indirect way. Therefore, drawing upon their war memories, the project intends to present an identity portrait of the Portuguese war veterans. At an earlier stage, the project will consist in collecting personal written testimonies about the war experience. However, subsequently, a limited number of the ex-combatants who answer this call for testimonies will be contacted so that an oral history interview about the topic in

question can be done. The main purpose of this research will consist in the writing of a DPhil thesis.

Nowadays, it is vital that any approach to Contemporary History includes life stories and similar biographical sources. This project will place particular emphasis on Oral History. Only as a brief introductory note, it must be said that this methodology consists in collecting 'living' memories through recorded interviews, especially in audio format. Fundamental to an understanding of the recent past, it is the 'living' History of the unique life experiences of each individual. Therefore, Oral History allows the creation of a more vivid and complex picture of the past, no longer that dependent on the written sources, and exploring aspects of historical reality that are not normally documented. It is History lived and told in the first person.

Therefore, I would be most grateful if you could publicise this project among your associates and/or other ex-combatants interested in participating in this research project about their memories of the Colonial War. For that purpose, I enclose a copy of an advertisement published in the Portuguese press that will certainly be useful for those ex-combatants who wish to contribute with their testimony for this project. If you have any questions or require further information, I am at your disposal for a future contact at the telephone number, postal address, or e-mail address that you can find overleaf, on the top right corner of this letter.

Thank you in advance for your help.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With my best regards,

Ângela Campos

**In attachment:** advertisement for 'An oral History of ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974)' Research Project.

*Ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974): uma História Oral***FICHA DE INFORMAÇÕES BIOGRÁFICAS**

*Por favor, preencha esta ficha com o maior detalhe possível, procedendo ao seu envio, juntamente com o seu testemunho pessoal e a respectiva Declaração de Consentimento, através do envelope RSF fornecido.*

**Nome (e título):** .....

**Morada:** .....

.....

.....

.....

**Número de telefone fixo:** ..... **Fax:** .....

**Número de telemóvel:** ..... **E-mail:** .....

**Data de nascimento:** ...../...../..... (d/m/a) **Local de nascimento:**.....

**Nacionalidade:**.....

**Estado Civil:** (por favor, assinale a opção correcta com ☒)

**Casado** ☐ **União de facto** ☐ **Solteiro** ☐ **Divorciado** ☐ **Separado** ☐ **Viúvo**  
☐

**Se é/foi casado, ou vive/viveu em união de facto, por favor, indique:**

**Data do casamento/união:**.....

**Nome do cônjuge/companheira:** .....

**Local de nascimento e nacionalidade do cônjuge/companheira:**

.....



**Prestou Serviço Militar desde o ano de 19..... até ao ano de 19.... Foi mobilizado no âmbito de:** (por favor, assinale a opção correcta)

**Recrutamento local** ☐      **Quadro permanente** ☐      **Voluntário** ☐      **Outro** ☐ ?

.....

**Permaneceu na então Província Ultramarina de**.....

**de**.....(mês) **de 19**..... (ano) **a**.....(mês) **de 19**..... (ano).

**Período e área(s) de combate:** .....

.....

**Por favor, assinale as opções correctas com ☒:**

**Ramo:**      **Exército** ☐      **Força Aérea** ☐      **Armada** ☐

**Especialidade:** ..... **Batalhão:** .....

**Ferimentos:**      **Sim** ☐      **Não** ☐      **Diminuição Física:**      **Sim** ☐      **Não** ☐

**Alguma vez recorreu a apoio psicológico (estatal e/ou privado) relativamente à sua experiência de guerra?**      **Sim** ☐      **Não** ☐

**Que idade tinha quando foi para África ?** .....

**Onde residia quando partiu ?** .....

**Qual era a sua actividade profissional (ou outra) na altura ?** .....

.....

**Qual era o seu estado civil ?** .....

**Tinha elementos do agregado familiar/dependentes a seu cargo ? Se sim, quem ?**

.....

**Qual foi o local e data de partida para África (porto, aeroporto, etc.) ?**

.....

**Onde e quando aportou ?** .....

**Refira os locais e datas de combate e/ou permanência em África: .....**

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**Exceptuando as missões de combate, desempenhou outra actividade durante a sua permanência em território africano ? Se sim, qual ?**

.....  
 .....

**Qual foi a data e local do seu regresso a Portugal ? .....**

.....

**Alguma vez voltou ao local onde combateu ? Se sim, quando, e em que circunstâncias ?**

.....  
 .....

**Qual/quais é/foi/foram/são a(s) sua(s) actividade(s) profissional(ais) ou outras desde o seu regresso a Portugal ?**

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

**Pertence a alguma associação de veteranos de guerra ? Se sim, qual ?**

.....

**Como tomou conhecimento deste projecto ?**

.....

Vire, s.f.f. ---- >

**Por favor, indique nomes e contactos de amigos, familiares ou camaradas de armas que possam estar interessados em participar neste projecto:**

.....

.....

.....

**Gostaria de ser entrevistado no âmbito deste projecto ?    Sim ☐            Não ☐**  
**(Refira-se, no entanto, que as características deste projecto não permitirão um número de entrevistas muito superior a trinta).**

***Muito obrigada pela sua participação! Por favor, preencha e assine também a Declaração de Consentimento e envie-a, juntamente com esta Ficha de Informações Biográficas e o seu testemunho escrito, para: Projecto de Investigação Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa, Apartado 6189, 4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA.***

*An oral history of ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974)***BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET**

*Please fill out as many of the details on this form as you can, and return it, together with your personal testimony and its respective Consent Form, in the Freepost envelope provided.*

**Name (and title):** .....

**Address:** .....

.....

.....

.....

**Telephone number:** ..... **Fax:** .....

**Mobile phone number:** ..... **E-mail:** .....

**Date of birth :** ...../...../..... (d/m/y) **Place of birth:**.....

**Citizenship:**.....

**Marital Status:** (Please tick the appropriate box)

**Married** ☐ **Co-habiting** ☐ **Single** ☐ **Divorced** ☐ **Separated** ☐ **Widowed**  
☐

**If you are/were married, or are co-habiting, please, state:**

**Date of marriage/union :**.....

**Name of partner/spouse:** .....

**Birthplace, nationality of partner/spouse:**

.....

**Did military service from 19..... until 19.... Was mobilised according to a scheme of :** (please tick the appropriate box)

**Local recruitment** ☐ **Permanent Staff** ☐ **Volunteer** ☐ **Other** ☐ **What?**

.....

Stayed at the (then) Overseas Province of .....

from.....(month) 19..... (year) until.....(month) 19.....  
(year).

Period and area(s) of fighting: .....

.....

Please indicate below, by ticking the appropriate boxes:

Military branch:    Army ☐                    Air Force ☐                    Navy ☐

Speciality: ..... Battalion: .....

Injured:    Yes ☐    No ☐                    Physical impairment:    Yes ☐    No ☐

Have you ever resorted to psychological treatment (state-funded and/or private)  
concerning your war experience ?    Yes ☐    No ☐

How old were you when you went to Africa ? .....

Where did you live before your departure ? .....

If you were employed, what was your job (or occupation) at the time ? .....

.....

What was your marital status ? .....

Were your supporting any family household members/other dependents ? If so,  
whom ?

.....

What was the departure point and departure date for Africa (port, airport, etc.) ?

.....

Where and when did you disembark ? .....

Please state the areas and periods of fighting and/or stay in Africa:

.....

.....

.....

**Apart from the combat missions, have you ever had any other occupation during your stay in African territory ? If so, which ?**

.....

.....

**What was the date and place of your return to Portugal ?.....**

.....

**Have you ever returned to the place(s) where you fought ? If so, when, and under what circumstances ?**

.....

**What is/was/are/were your professional activity(ies) (or other occupation(s)) since your return to Portugal ?.....**

.....

**Do you belong to any war veterans' association ? If so, which ?**

.....

**How did you hear about this project ?**

.....

**Please list names and contact details of friends, family or other comrades who might be interested in participating in this project:**

.....

.....

**Would you like to be interviewed for this project ?    Yes ☐                      No ☐**  
**(However, please note that this project's characteristics will limit the number of interviews to around thirty).**

***Thank you very much for your participation! Please also complete and sign the Consent Form and return it together with this Biographical Information Sheet and your written testimony to Ex-Combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War Research Project, PO Box 6189, 4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA.***

## ALGUMAS LINHAS DE ORIENTAÇÃO PARA A REDACÇÃO DO TESTEMUNHO PESSOAL

No âmbito deste projecto de investigação, é extremamente importante que proceda ao envio do seu testemunho pessoal acerca da sua experiência enquanto combatente e ex-combatente da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa. Esse testemunho poderá ser manuscrito, dactilografado ou apresentado em versão electrónica (enviado por e-mail, em disquete ou CD). Não são impostos quaisquer limites. O seu testemunho poderá ter a extensão que desejar, e poderá abordar a fundo e com todo o pormenor qualquer tópico relacionado com esta experiência. Lembre-se de que se trata da *sua* história e, como tal, deverá basear-se naquilo que *você* considera mais significativo.

De modo a auxiliá-lo na redacção do seu testemunho pessoal, segue-se uma lista de alguns assuntos que poderá abordar (tenha em atenção, contudo, que esta listagem fornece simplesmente linhas de orientação, e, portanto, deverá escrever à vontade acerca daquilo que *você* considera importante):

- O seu background familiar e local de origem
- A sua infância e formação
- As suas primeiras percepções/memórias da Guerra Colonial
- A sua reacção ao conflito, na altura
- O como e o porquê da sua participação no conflito
- O que sentiu na altura em que foi mobilizado
- O que sentiu aquando da partida
- A preparação e a viagem para África
- A vida em África enquanto combatente
- A realidade da guerra e do combate
- Aquilo por que lutou na altura
- A sua percepção do fim da guerra e do regresso a Portugal
- O modo como a família, amigos, colegas de trabalho e restante sociedade civil reagiram/reagem ao facto de ser ex-combatente
- Eventuais consequências/marcas deixadas pela guerra, e como lida com elas diariamente
- Como se sente enquanto ex-combatente em Portugal, cerca de trinta anos depois do fim do conflito
- Pessoalmente, como se sente relativamente às formas como a experiência do ex-combatente tem sido publicamente abordada pelo Estado, pelos meios de comunicação social e pela sociedade civil em geral
- Retrospectivamente, a sua opinião global acerca da sua participação no conflito colonial



Paralelamente, poderá auxiliar o projecto facultando, para o efeito, cópias ou originais de cartas, diários, memórias, fotografias, cassetes, poesia, ilustrações, etc. referentes à sua experiência enquanto combatente e ex-combatente da Guerra Colonial. No caso de fornecer os originais, serão feitas cópias e todo o material desse modo facultado será devolvido com a maior brevidade possível. O seu testemunho pessoal e quaisquer cópias ou originais de outros elementos fornecidos serão usados para esta investigação e posteriormente conservados em arquivo na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto.

Por favor, não se esqueça de devolver a **Declaração de Consentimento** devidamente preenchida e assinada, de modo a que seja possível usar e depositar em arquivo todo o material facultado estritamente de acordo com as suas determinações. Lembre-se de que, se desejar, poderá manter no anonimato toda a informação que forneceu, para que os investigadores que futuramente possam ler o seu testemunho desconheçam a sua identidade. De igual modo, agradece-se encarecidamente o envio da **Ficha de Informações Biográficas**. A informação nela constante será guardada na base de dados confidencial do projecto. Mais uma vez, muito obrigada pela sua participação!

*Se pretender mais esclarecimentos, por favor, contacte Ângela Campos, por telefone: 91 241 12 51, e-mail: [a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk) , ou por escrito para: Projecto de Investigação Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa, Apartado 6189, 4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA.*

*An oral history of ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974)*

## GUIDELINES FOR WRITING

**It is very important for this research project that you send us your personal testimony about your experience as a combatant and ex-combatant of the Portuguese Colonial War.** The testimony may be handwritten, typed or presented in electronic format (sent by e-mail, on floppy disk or CD). There are no set limits. Your testimony may be as long as you wish, and you can address any topic related to your experience in as much detail and depth as possible. Please bear in mind that this is *your* story, and thus it should be based upon what *you* consider most significant.

To help you write your personal account, listed below are some subjects that you might cover (but note that this list is only a guide, and you should feel free to write about what *you* think is important):

- Your family background and where you're from
- Your childhood and upbringing
- Your first perceptions/memories of the Colonial War
- Your reaction to the conflict at the time
- How and why you happened to participate in the conflict
- What you felt at the time you were mobilised
- How you felt when leaving
- Preparation and journey to Africa
- Life in Africa as a combatant
- The reality of war and fighting
- What you fought for at the time
- Your perception of the end of the war and your return to Portugal
- The way your family, friends, workmates and civil society in general reacted/react to the fact that you are an ex-combatant
- Possible consequences/marks of the war, and how you deal with them in your daily life
- How you feel as an ex-combatant in Portugal, around thirty years after the conflict
- Personally, how you feel about the ways your war veteran experience has been publicly represented by the State, the media and civil society in general
- Retrospectively, your global opinion about your participation in the colonial conflict

You can also help this project by providing copies or originals of letters, diaries, memoirs, photographs, tapes, poetry, artworks, etc. concerned with your experience as a combatant and ex-combatant of the Colonial War. In case you lend the originals, copies can be made and any material provided that way will be returned as soon as possible. Your personal account and copies or originals of any other materials provided will be

used in this research and then archivally stored at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto.

Please do not forget to return the **Consent Form** fully completed and signed so that it is possible to use and store the material provided strictly according to your wishes. Please remember that, if you wish, you can anonymise the information provided, so that researchers who might read your account in the future will not know who you are. Likewise, I would be most grateful if you could also complete and return the **Biographical Information Sheet**. This information will be stored on a confidential project database. Once again, thank you very much for your participation!

*For further information about this project, please contact Ângela Campos, by phone: 91 241 12 51, e-mail: [a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk) , or in writing to: Ex-Combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War Research Project, PO Box 6189, 4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA.*

Ângela Campos  
DPhil Research Student  
School of Humanities  
University of Sussex  
Falmer, Brighton  
BN1 9QN  
United Kingdom

**Projecto de Investigação**  
**Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa**  
**(1961-1974): uma História Oral**  
***Apartado 6189***  
***4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA***  
***Telm. 91 241 12 51***  
***a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk***

Senhora da Hora, ... 200...

Exm.º Sr. ...,

Através da presente, gostaria de endereçar-lhe os meus mais calorosos agradecimentos por ter acedido a participar com o seu testemunho escrito neste projecto de investigação acerca das memórias de ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974). Para além da importância que adquire no contexto específico desta investigação de Doutoramento, o seu testemunho pessoal constitui um importante contributo para a História Portuguesa Contemporânea. Anexo igualmente uma fotocópia da Declaração de Consentimento relativa ao seu testemunho escrito.

Após a fase inicial de recolha de testemunhos escritos, um número limitado dos ex-combatentes que responderem a este apelo será contactado para efectuar uma entrevista acerca do tópico em questão, gravada em formato áudio. Deste modo, se demonstrou interesse em ser entrevistado, poderá vir a ser contactado futuramente para efectuar marcação da entrevista. Tal como já foi referido, todos os testemunhos recolhidos, independentemente do seu formato, serão catalogados e arquivados na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto. Por outro lado, o Sr. ... será mantido ao corrente de eventuais projectos neste âmbito que possam surgir a partir desta investigação.

Mais uma vez, muito obrigada pela sua participação neste projecto de investigação com o seu testemunho escrito sobre a sua experiência enquanto combatente e ex-combatente da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa. Se pretender quaisquer esclarecimentos ou informações adicionais, não hesite em contactar-me para o número de telefone, morada ou endereço de correio electrónico que se encontram no canto superior direito desta carta.

Muito obrigada.

Melhores cumprimentos,

Ângela Campos



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*a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk*

Senhora da Hora, .... 200...

Dear Mr.....,

I am writing to express my heartfelt thanks for having agreed to participate with your written account in this research project about the memories of ex-combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974). Besides being invaluable within the specific framework of this DPhil research, your personal account will make an important contribution to Portuguese Contemporary History. I have also enclosed a copy of the Consent Form concerning your written account.

After an initial stage of written testimonies' collection, a limited number of the ex-combatants who answer this call for testimonies will be contacted so that an oral history interview about the topic in question can be done, recorded in audio format. Therefore, if you have shown interest in being interviewed, you might be contacted subsequently in order to make the necessary arrangements. As previously mentioned, all testimonies, no matter their format, will be catalogued and archivally stored in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto. On the other hand, you will be informed about any future projects on this topic that might arise from this research.

Once again, thank you very much for your participation in this research project with your written account about your experience as a combatant and ex-combatant of the Portuguese Colonial War. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the telephone number, postal address, or e-mail address that you can find on the top right corner of this letter.

Thank you very much.

Best regards,

Ângela Campos



Ângela Campos  
DPhil Research Student  
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University of Sussex  
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United Kingdom

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Senhora da Hora, ... 200...

Exm.º Sr. ...,

No seguimento do nosso anterior contacto por via telefónica, venho por este meio confirmar a marcação da entrevista a realizar no dia ..., por volta das ... horas, na sua residência.

Tal como foi referido ao telefone, procederei à gravação áudio da entrevista, sendo que uma sessão de gravação desta natureza costuma durar, em média, de duas a três horas. Durante esta entrevista, terá oportunidade de discorrer mais detalhadamente sobre a sua experiência enquanto combatente e ex-combatente da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974), enquadrando-a no contexto mais alargado do seu percurso de vida até ao presente.

Após a entrevista, ser-lhe-á oportunamente enviada uma cópia da gravação efectuada em formato CD áudio. Na eventualidade de ser realizada uma transcrição da entrevista, receberá posteriormente uma cópia da mesma. Assim, poderá proceder às correcções que julgar necessárias, ou acrescentar algo ao seu testemunho transcrito.

Muito obrigada pelo interesse manifestado em ser entrevistado para este projecto de investigação acerca das memórias de ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa. Terei todo o gosto em entrevistar o Sr. ... e gravar a sua história acerca do conflito colonial. O seu testemunho pessoal constituirá um importante contributo para a História Portuguesa Contemporânea, para além do valor inestimável que adquirirá no âmbito mais específico desta investigação de Doutoramento.

Se, por qualquer motivo, for impossível realizar a entrevista na data e hora marcadas, pedia-lhe encarecidamente o favor de avisar-me com a devida antecedência, para que possamos arranjar outra data mais conveniente. Se pretender quaisquer esclarecimentos ou informações adicionais, não hesite em contactar-me para o número de telefone, morada ou endereço de correio electrónico que se encontram no canto superior direito desta carta.

Muito obrigada.

Com os meus melhores cumprimentos,

Ângela Campos



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Senhora da Hora, .....200...

Dear Mr.....,

I am writing to confirm the details of our recent telephone conversation and, thus, the interview was scheduled for the..... at ....., at your house.

As explained on the telephone, I will tape the interview which on average takes between two and three hours. During the interview, you will have the opportunity to talk in more depth and detail about your experience as a combatant and ex-combatant of the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1975), placing it into the wider context of your life course until present.

After the interview, you will be sent a copy of the recorded interview in audio CD format. Also, in case a transcript of your interview is done, you will be subsequently sent a copy of it. Therefore, you will have an opportunity to make any corrections or additions if necessary.

Thank so much for your interest in being interviewed for this research project about the memories of ex-combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War. I will be very pleased to interview you and record your story on the colonial conflict. Your personal account will make an important contribution to Portuguese Contemporary History, besides being invaluable, more specifically, within the framework of this DPhil research.

If for any reason the arranged interview time and date become inconvenient, I would be most grateful if you could let me know beforehand, so that we can make another time. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the telephone number, postal address, or e-mail address that you can find on the top right corner of this letter.

Thank you very much.

With my best regards,

Ângela Campos

## ***An Oral History of Ex-combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974)***

### **🗣 Interview Action Sheet**

📁 Interviewee's File no.: ..... 🧑 Interviewee's Name:.....

🏠 Contact Address .....

.....

.....

.....

☎ Phone: .....



E-mail: .....

✍ Written account :



📅 Date: .....

📄 Written account summary: ☐

.....

📄 Letter proposing interview: .....

✉ Reply: .....

☎ Phone

contact:.....

🏠 Place and Date of Interview:

.....

📷 Photographs taken at Interview:

.....

📄 Material donated/loaned at interview:

.....

📄 Consent Form sent/delivered: ..... Signed: ☐ ✉ Counter-signed and returned:

.....

📄 Interview Summary: ☐

⦿ Back Up Copies of CD + 2: ☐

⦿ 📄 Copy CD & thank you letter to interviewee (and any material to return):.....




📄 Transcript/partial transcript ☐


👉 📄 First draft sent to interviewee and cover letter: .....

👉 ✉ Draft with interviewees corrections returned: .....

📄 Final version of transcript 📄 to interviewee: .....



-  to interviewee's file: ☐
-  in transcript masterfile ☐
-  computer back-ups/filename ☐

 Filenames for: summary .....  
transcript .....

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***a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk***

Senhora da Hora, ... 200...

Exm.º Sr. ...,

Através da presente, procedo ao envio de uma cópia em formato CD áudio da entrevista realizada a ..., n..., sobre a sua experiência enquanto combatente e ex-combatente da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974). Volto a referir que, na eventualidade de ser realizada uma transcrição da entrevista, receberá posteriormente uma cópia da mesma. Deste modo, poderá proceder às correcções que considerar necessárias, ou acrescentar algo ao seu testemunho transcrito. Em anexo, encontrará igualmente uma fotocópia da Declaração de Consentimento relativa ao seu testemunho oral.

Mais uma vez, muito obrigada pela sua participação neste projecto de investigação acerca das memórias de ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa. Foi um prazer entrevistar o Sr. ... e gravar a sua história acerca do conflito colonial. Para além da importância que adquire no contexto específico desta investigação de Doutoramento, o seu testemunho pessoal constitui um importante contributo para a História Portuguesa Contemporânea.

Todos os testemunhos recolhidos, independentemente do seu formato, serão catalogados e arquivados na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto. Por outro lado, o Sr. ... será mantido ao corrente de eventuais projectos neste âmbito que possam surgir a partir desta investigação.

Resta-me agradecer novamente pelo seu inestimável contributo e participação. Se pretender quaisquer esclarecimentos ou informações adicionais, não hesite em contactar-me para o número de telefone, morada ou endereço de correio electrónico que se encontram no canto superior direito desta carta.

Muito obrigada.

Com os meus melhores cumprimentos,

Ângela Campos

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Senhora da Hora, .... 2005

Dear Mr.....,

Please find enclosed a copy in audio CD format of the interview which we conducted on the... .. in your home about your experience as a combatant and ex-combatant of the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974). As I explained previously, in case a transcript of your interview is done, you will be subsequently sent a copy of it. Therefore, you will have an opportunity to make any corrections or additions if necessary. I have also enclosed a copy of the Consent Form concerning your oral account.

Once again, thank you very much for your participation in this research project about the memories of ex-combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War. It was a pleasure interviewing you and recording your story on the colonial conflict. Besides being invaluable within the specific framework of this DPhil research, your personal account will make an important contribution to Portuguese Contemporary History.

All testimonies, no matter their format, will be catalogued and archivally stored in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto. On the other hand, you will be informed about any future projects on this topic that might arise from this research.

Thank you once again for your invaluable support and participation. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the telephone number, postal address, or e-mail address that you can find on the top right corner of this letter.

Thank you very much.

With my best regards,

Ângela Campos

Senhora da Hora, .... 200...

Exm.º Sr.....,

Através da presente, procedo ao envio de uma cópia da transcrição parcial da entrevista realizada com o Sr....., em sua casa, no dia ... de... .., às ... horas.

Como certamente notará, a transcrição assemelha-se mais a um testemunho falado do que escrito, evidenciando toda a riqueza e complexidade inerentes ao discurso oral, e incluindo todas as pausas e mudanças de assunto que ocorrem sempre que falamos acerca das nossas vidas. Deste modo, a pontuação e gramática não corresponderão necessariamente às usadas num texto escrito. De facto, os procedimentos da História Oral privilegiam a palavra falada, e foi com o maior agrado que gravei o testemunho do Sr..... nesse suporte. Juntamente com os testemunhos escritos recolhidos, estas histórias orais constituem um importante contributo para a História Portuguesa Contemporânea, para além do valor inestimável que adquirem no âmbito mais específico desta investigação de Doutoramento.

Contudo, se, aquando da leitura da transcrição, detectar alguns erros significativos (por exemplo, nomes mal escritos, ou datas incorrectas) agradecia que mos indicasse, de modo a que possam ser efectuadas as correcções necessárias. De igual modo, se considera que se esqueceu de mencionar na entrevista um qualquer aspecto das suas memórias da Guerra Colonial que gostaria de incluir no âmbito deste projecto, por favor, redija um testemunho escrito e proceda ao seu envio. **Relativamente à transcrição, no caso de haver quaisquer correcções, peço-lhe encarecidamente que mas envie no prazo de um mês a partir da data da recepção desta carta.** Se não houver qualquer contacto da parte do Sr....., partirei do princípio de que está satisfeito com esta versão da transcrição, passando então a ser a versão final da transcrição a ser arquivada juntamente com a sua entrevista.

Mais uma vez, muito obrigada pela sua participação neste projecto de investigação acerca das memórias de ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa. Foi um prazer entrevistar o Sr. ... e gravar a sua história acerca do conflito colonial. Todos os testemunhos recolhidos, independentemente do seu formato, serão catalogados e arquivados na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto. Por outro lado, o Sr. ...será mantido ao corrente de eventuais projectos neste âmbito que possam surgir a partir desta investigação.

Resta-me agradecer novamente pelo seu inestimável contributo e participação. Se pretender quaisquer esclarecimentos ou informações adicionais, não hesite em contactar-me para o número de telefone, morada ou endereço de correio electrónico que se encontram no canto superior direito desta carta.

Muito obrigada.

Com os meus melhores cumprimentos,

Ângela Campos

Senhora da Hora, .... 200...

Dear Mr.....,

Please find enclosed a copy of the transcript of the interview which I conducted with you on.... at .... in your home. As you will certainly notice, the transcript reads very much as a spoken rather than a written account, highlighting all the richness and complexity inherent in the oral discourse, and including all the pauses and changes of direction which occur when we speak about our lives. Therefore, the punctuation and grammar will not necessarily correspond to those used in a written account. Indeed, Oral History places high emphasis on the spoken word, and I am delighted to have recorded your story in this form. Together with the written accounts also collected, these oral histories make an important contribution to Portuguese Contemporary History, besides being invaluable, more specifically, within the framework of this DPhil research.

However, if you find any significant errors when you read the transcript (for example, misspelt names or incorrect dates) I would be most grateful if you could let me know so that the necessary corrections can be made. Likewise, if you think that you have forgotten to mention in the interview an aspect of your memories of the Colonial War that you would like to include for this project, please write your account and send it to me. **Regarding the transcript, in case there are any corrections, I would be most grateful if you could let me have them within a month of your receipt of this letter.** If I do not hear from you I shall assume that you are happy for this version of the transcript to become the final, archive copy of the interview.

Once again, thank you very much for your participation in this research project about the memories of ex-combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War. It was a pleasure interviewing you and recording your story on the colonial conflict. All testimonies, no matter their format, will be catalogued and archivally stored in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto. On the other hand, you will be informed about any future projects on this topic that might arise from this research.

Thank you once again for your invaluable support and participation. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the telephone number, postal address, or e-mail address that you can find on the top right corner of this letter.

Thank you very much.

With my best regards,

Ângela Campos

*Ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974): uma História Oral***DECLARAÇÃO DE CONSENTIMENTO**

Eu, ....., tendo lido e compreendido o teor da carta de apresentação e esclarecimento acerca da investigação de Ângela da Conceição Ferreira Campos, aluna de Doutoramento em História da University of Sussex (Reino Unido), relativa a uma história oral de ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974), autorizo o uso do meu testemunho pessoal escrito para este projecto de investigação, assim como a sua posterior conservação arquivística na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, onde poderá ser usado para futuros projectos de investigação e publicações.

Pretendo colocar as seguintes restrições ou condições ao uso do meu testemunho pessoal (por favor, assinale a opção pretendida com ☒):

☐ Não tenho quaisquer restrições/condições a colocar. O meu nome ou outras informações que permitam identificar-me podem ser usados para esta investigação e outros projectos futuros.

☐ Desejo permanecer no anonimato. O meu testemunho será associado a um pseudónimo. Não pretendo que o meu nome ou outras informações que permitam identificar-me sejam usados para esta investigação e outros projectos futuros.

☐ O meu nome ou outras informações que permitam identificar-me podem ser usados para esta investigação e outros projectos futuros, mas apenas mediante as seguintes condições:.....

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**Apenas** nos **casos** em que se verifique a **cedência** de **outros materiais** (por ex., cartas, fotografias, documentos, etc.), por favor, assinale a opção pretendida com um ☒:

☐ Autorizo que estes materiais fiquem na posse da pessoa responsável pelo projecto de investigação em causa, de acordo com quaisquer condições acima descritas.

☐ Autorizo a pessoa responsável pelo projecto de investigação em causa a fazer e a guardar cópias dos materiais por mim fornecidos, de acordo com quaisquer condições acima descritas, contanto que os originais me sejam devolvidos.

Através da presente declaração, e de acordo com quaisquer condições acima mencionadas, cedo os direitos de autor do meu testemunho pessoal escrito ao projecto de investigação ‘Ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974): uma História Oral’, da University of Sussex (Reino Unido).

**Assinatura do participante:**.....**Data:**.....

**Assinatura da investigadora:**.....**Data:**.....

(Esta Declaração de Consentimento será posteriormente assinada pela investigadora responsável. Será enviada uma **cópia** deste **documento** ao participante).

*Por favor, através do envelope RSF fornecido, queira proceder ao envio desta Declaração de Consentimento, do seu testemunho pessoal e da Ficha de Informações Biográficas. Se tem alguma dúvida relativamente ao preenchimento desta Declaração, por favor, contacte Ângela Campos, por telefone: 91 241 12 51, e-mail: a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk, ou por escrito para: Projecto de Investigação Ex-Combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa, Apartado 6189, 4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA.*

**MUITO OBRIGADA PELA SUA PARTICIPAÇÃO!**

*An oral history of ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974)***CONSENT FORM**

I, ....., having read and understood the letter of presentation and information about the research being conducted by Ângela da Conceição Ferreira Campos, DPhil Research student in History at the University of Sussex (United Kingdom), concerning an oral history of ex-combatants of the Portuguese Colonial war (1961-1974), authorise the use of my written personal account for this research project, as well as its subsequent archival storage in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto, where it may be used for future research projects and publications.

I wish to place the following restrictions or conditions on the use of my personal testimony (please tick the appropriate box):

☐ I do not have any restrictions/conditions to place. My name or other identifying descriptions may be used for this research and other future projects.

☐ I wish to remain anonymous. My testimony will be associated with a pseudonym. Neither my name or other identifying descriptions may be used for this research and other future projects.

☐ My name or other identifying descriptions may be used for this research and other future projects but only with the following restrictions:.....

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....



**Only** in the cases where **other materials** were supplied (e.g., letters, photographs, personal documents, etc), please tick one of the following:

☐ I consent to this material being retained by the person responsible for the research project in question on the terms agreed above.

☐ I consent for the person responsible for this research project to make and retain a copy of the materials supplied by me on any terms agreed above providing that the originals are returned to me.

By means of this consent form, and according to any conditions mentioned above, I concede the copyrights of my personal written account to the ‘An oral History of ex-Combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974)’ Research Project, of the University of Sussex (United Kingdom).

**Signature of participant:**.....**Date:**.....

**Signature of researcher:**.....**Date:**.....

(This Consent Form will be signed later by the researcher responsible for this project. The participant will be sent a **copy** of this **document**).

*Please return this Consent Form, your personal account and your Biographical Information Sheet in the enclosed Freepost envelope. If you have any doubts regarding the completion of this form, please contact Ângela Campos, by phone: 91 241 12 51, e-mail: a.d.c.ferreira-campos@sussex.ac.uk , or in writing to: Ex-Combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War Research Project, PO Box 6189, 4460-803 SENHORA DA HORA.*

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

*Ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974): uma História Oral***DECLARAÇÃO DE CONSENTIMENTO**

Eu, ....., tendo lido e compreendido o teor da carta de apresentação e esclarecimento acerca da investigação de Ângela da Conceição Ferreira Campos, aluna de Doutoramento em História da University of Sussex (Reino Unido), relativa a uma história oral de ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974), autorizo o uso da minha entrevista áudio para este projecto de investigação, assim como a sua posterior conservação arquivística na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, onde poderá ser usada para futuros projectos de investigação e publicações.

Pretendo colocar as seguintes restrições ou condições ao uso do meu testemunho oral (por favor, assinale a opção pretendida com ☒):

☐ Não tenho quaisquer restrições/condições a colocar. O meu nome ou outras informações que permitam identificar-me podem ser usados para esta investigação e outros projectos futuros.

☐ Desejo permanecer no anonimato. O meu testemunho será associado a um pseudónimo. Não pretendo que o meu nome ou outras informações que permitam identificar-me sejam usados para esta investigação e outros projectos futuros.

☐ O meu nome ou outras informações que permitam identificar-me podem ser usados para esta investigação e outros projectos futuros, mas apenas mediante as seguintes condições:.....

.....

.....

.....

Através da presente declaração, e de acordo com quaisquer condições acima mencionadas, cedo os direitos de autor do meu testemunho pessoal oral ao projecto de investigação 'Ex-combatentes da Guerra Colonial Portuguesa (1961-1974): uma História Oral', da University of Sussex (Reino Unido).

**Assinatura do participante:**.....**Data:**.....

**Local:**.....

**Assinado na presença da investigadora:** Sim ☐ Não ☐

**Assinatura da investigadora:**.....**Data:**.....

**Local:**.....

**NOTA:** Ao **participante** será entregue uma **cópia** desta Declaração de Consentimento.

*An oral history of ex-combatants of the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974)***CONSENT FORM**

I, ....., having read and understood the letter of presentation and information about the research being conducted by Ângela da Conceição Ferreira Campos, DPhil Research student in History at the University of Sussex (United Kingdom), concerning an oral history of ex-combatants of the Portuguese Colonial war (1961-1974), authorise the use of my audio interview for this research project, as well as its subsequent archival storage in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto, where it may be used for future research projects and publications.

I wish to place the following restrictions or conditions on the use of my personal testimony (please tick the appropriate box):

☐ I do not have any restrictions/conditions to place. My name or other identifying descriptions may be used for this research and other future projects.

☐ I wish to remain anonymous. My testimony will be associated with a pseudonym. Neither my name or other identifying descriptions may be used for this research and other future projects.

☐ My name or other identifying descriptions may be used for this research and other future projects but only with the following restrictions:.....

.....  
 .....  
 .....

.....  
 .....  
 By means of this consent form, and according to any conditions mentioned above, I  
 concede the copyrights of my personal oral testimony to the 'An oral History of ex-  
 Combatants of the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974)' Research Project, of the  
 University of Sussex (United Kingdom).

**Signature of participant:**.....**Date:**.....

**Signed in the presence of the researcher:** Yes ☐ No ☐

**Signature of researcher:**.....**Date:**.....

**Place:** .....

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** The **participant** will be given a **copy** of this Consent Form.