

Part I: Politics, Representations and Counter-representations

1 Portugal, colonial aphasia and the public memory of war

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Introduction

On 2 September 2022, during an official visit to Mozambique, the Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa recalled the Wiriyamu massacre, commenting that it was an “inexcusable act that dishonours our history”.¹ He was referring to the events that had taken place on 16 December 1972 in five villages in the province of Tete, when 385 men, women and children were killed by Portuguese soldiers. The world first learned of the massacre in an article written by an English journalist, Peter Pringle, which was published in *The Times* newspaper in 1973 after the story had been exposed by Catholic missionaries working in the Wiriyamu area. Days later, it would even embarrass Marcelo Caetano – the head of government in the final phase of the *Estado Novo* dictatorship – during an official visit to England, when he was confronted with public protestors on the streets of London. Three months after António Costa’s statement – more precisely, on 16 December 2022, the date which marked the 50th anniversary of the massacre – Augusto Santos Silva, the President of the Assembly of the Republic, would describe it as “a fact that shames us, but should not be forgotten”, considering that it was necessary to “ask for forgiveness”. A statement issued by the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, stressed that it was “time for us to fully acknowledge the unacceptable and appalling work of some, for which Portugal, as a whole, has been held responsible”.²

Even though it had quickly become a symbol of the iniquities of colonialism and the colonial war, the Portuguese state always resisted issuing any clear denunciation of the Wiriyamu massacre or other known violent episodes. This was still evident in 2008, during another official visit to Mozambique by Aníbal Cavaco Silva, the President of the Republic at the time. When asked whether it was not time for Portugal to publicly acknowledge the existence of massacres such as this and apologise for them, Cavaco Silva, significantly, replied that one should not “always be looking back to the past”.³ Years later, comments made by leading statesmen in 2022 would indicate how the memory of the war and colonialism had evolved in recent years in Portugal, although it was still subject to aphasia and impasses. The Portuguese Prime Minister’s statements, together with other recent events discussed at the end of this chapter, are a reflection and result of a framework of social representations of the war which has its own historicity.

A history of the memory of the colonial war

Portugal would experience a kind of “Pyrrhic defeat” at the hands of the African liberation movements and the soldiers of the Armed Forces Movement (Movimento das Forças Armadas – MFA) during the “Carnation Revolution”: it suffered a political defeat in the war but gained a revolutionary process that would determine the nature of its democracy. However, within Portugal, the memory of battles fought in Africa to preserve the empire was determined by a process of attrition with regard to the violent aspects of the war and colonialism.

In the initial phase, under the dictatorship, the conflict was essentially erased as a historical phenomenon by the regime, concealing the reasons and the effects from society. However, in an apparently paradoxical fashion, praise was also produced at specific moments for the magnificent endeavours in Africa dedicated to preserving the integrity of this “pluricontinental and multiracial nation”, within the framework of a Lusotropicalist formulation that would come to understand Portuguese colonialism as essentially non-colonial. As the philosopher and essayist Eduardo Lourenço observed in 1976, a mythological image was created for Portugal “inseparable from its existence as a coloniser”, which would gloss over the fact that colonialism, by its very nature, involves the “subordination of the historical, economic, social and cultural reality of the colonised”.⁴

Later, under democracy, the war tended to be shrouded in a process of selective memorialisation and persistent amnesia. The movement to denounce colonialism had already found expression and made some impact.⁵ In the wake of the Carnation Revolution – in a new political context in which censorship had disappeared, groups from the left were calling for an immediate end to the war, the agenda of the liberation movements was affirmed and a timetable drawn up for recognition of independence in their respective countries – this dynamic was effectively accelerated, but only on a conjunctural basis. Manuel Loff emphasises the convergence – which was fragile and to some extent impossible to repeat after 1976 – of the antifascist memory and the anticolonial memory.⁶ In the field of publishing, for example, *Afrontamento*, D. Quixote, Centelha, Ulmeiro, Sá da Costa and Prelo would all intensify the publication or republication of texts critical of the war and colonialism and the dissemination of perspectives originating from what was known at the time as the “Third World”.⁷

In addition, organisations such as the Association for the Disabled of the Armed Forces (Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas – ADFA) would develop into a social movement committed to denouncing both the war and the neglect of former combatants who had been wounded and disabled in action. Although it was created in May 1974, the idea of the need for an organisation of this kind predates 25 April and had first taken root within the Lisbon Military Hospital. It then became active during the revolution, above all in struggles demanding recognition for disabled war veterans and their claims for compensation and rights, materialising in the form of occupations of houses, bridges and streets, and demonstrations organised to bring the war into public space under an unusual banner: “the just cause of the victims of an unjust war”.⁸

In fact, it was the experience of war and the acceptance of the anticolonial task as a just cause which to a large extent explain proclamations such as the need to engage – in the words of the MFA in June 1975 in the heat of the revolution – in a “process of internal decolonisation” that would ensure “national independence” and the “building of a socialist society”.⁹ Nevertheless, what has actually been constructed is a particular kind of *pacto del olvido*: a political change, in which middle-ranking military clearly played a leading role, that was defined by the idea of putting an end to the war but was unable to offer the conditions for coming to terms with what was still such a very recent past in which atrocities typical of colonial warfare had been committed, including massacres of local people, brutal treatment of prisoners and close links between the army and the PIDE/DGS, the secret police during the dictatorship. These incidents, already known at the time and to some extent made public, were not subjected to any procedure for determining responsibility, far less reconciliation and reparations for the victims. Although the overthrow of the dictatorship was directly related to the refusal to continue the colonial war, Portuguese democracy did not embark on any wider process of reflection on the place, the impact and the legacy of the conflict and colonialism.

In effect, the post-1976 period of “democratic normalisation” would establish a space for mechanisms for “the organisation of forgetting”, illustrated very clearly by three events. In April 1976, a journalist José Amaro published a book which reported on episodes of mass slaughter in Tete (Mozambique), the district in which the Wiryamu massacre had taken place. It presented official documentation on these massacres, which had “always been denied and concealed by the Portuguese Government and the ongoing allegiances of certain figures at different moments in Portuguese life after 25 April”. It also referred to the role, among others, of Kaulza de Arriaga, the Commander of the Armed Forces in Mozambique and one of the leaders of the far right in the years immediately after the revolution.¹⁰ Ten thousand copies of the book sold rapidly and it became the subject of a lawsuit filed by the General Staff of the Armed Forces, headed at the time by Ramalho Eanes, the future President of the Republic (1976–1986), who claimed it had been responsible for “divulging military secrets essential to the defence of the nation and had contributed to undermining discipline and cohesion within the armed forces”. José Amaro and the editor of Ulmeiro, José Antunes Ribeiro, were eventually prosecuted, but pardoned in 1983 at the time of Pope John Paul II’s visit to Portugal.¹¹

The second case concerns an incident which took place in 1977. In late 1966, author Luís de Sstau Monteiro had published *2 Peças em Um Acto: A Guerra Santa e A Estátua*. In his preface to a new edition of the book, written in June 1974, Sstau Monteiro describes his difficulties in finding a publisher and how the second edition had been seized by the PIDE. After being imprisoned in the Caxias Jail, where he remained for several months, the author was taken to the Lisbon military barracks and faced a series of convoluted procedures before he was released. In the June 1974 preface, he stated “I would be lying if I said I had changed my ideas or become a militarist”, but that the book would serve as “a warning which, after 25 April, was no longer needed”.¹²

Nevertheless, on 10 July 1977, a television programme *Fila T*, coordinated by Fernando Midões, decided to show extracts from a performance of *A Guerra*

Santa. The broadcast resulted in a communication from the General Staff of the Armed Forces, claiming that the play had caused “serious offence to the Portuguese Armed Forces, through its hierarchy, as well as to the moral values which, over and above the Armed Forces, belonged to the Nation”. It acknowledged that it had been written in a very different context, but believed that its presentation nowadays could only serve to “tarnish and discredit” the Armed Forces. The Rádio e Televisão Portuguesa (RTP) Administrative Commission also reacted, condemning the “insulting content” of the programme and announcing that it had already taken “the necessary measures required in this situation”.¹³ The President of the Republic, Ramalho Eanes, criticised the broadcast.¹⁴ The television programme was eventually cancelled and the author suspended.¹⁵

The third episode took place in March 1979. After the 11th episode of the documentary series *Os Anos do Século* – directed by José Elyseu and including text by the historian César Oliveira – was broadcast on television, the programme was suspended, as well as the director (who was later reinstated) and others who had collaborated in the making of the documentary. The episode looked back at the violence of the war and complicity with colonialism on the part of significant sectors of the Catholic Church. The RTP Administrative Commission considered the episode, entitled “*A guerra inútil*”, had created a feeling of “deep repulsion among large sectors of the population, presenting passages that were extremely offensive to the feelings of the Portuguese people” and was underscored by “unnecessary cruelty”. Political parties from the right and the left were divided in parliament, with the latter managing to pass a motion condemning this act of censorship. The Cardinal-Patriarch considered the programme “manipulative and dishonest” and the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces described it as an “insult to all the Portuguese who had served in the Armed Forces”.¹⁶

Although there was no official policy of silence, these three incidents show how the political, military and religious bodies reacted to any reminder of acts of violence and complicities that involved living actors and implied a judgement of the colonial presence which they were not willing to accept. Evocations of the conflict would subsequently circulate between a public silence and a series of subaltern memorialisations inscribed in private spaces, involving circles of former combatants, and in the more marginal political spaces, particularly those associated with the political and cultural right. In addition, the publication, in 1979, of two books, *Memória de Elefante* and *Os Cus de Judas*, by the novelist António Lobo Antunes would also highlight the possibility of literature functioning as a powerful anamnestic tool.¹⁷ A number of novels and poems then emerged, particularly from the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s and 1990s, serving as a specific mechanism for problematising the colonial past and the experience of war, and attesting to a gradual shattering of the public silence surrounding this event through art and culture. Presenting bitter portraits of a “violent imperial twilight”,¹⁸ these literary texts helped demonstrate the extent to which the war still remained an uncomfortable experience.

Parallel to this, in the 1980s, the war still occupied a difficult public locus of enunciation within the complex framework for the construction of the democratic, European and post-colonial Portugal. For a long time, the society remained

unwilling to listen to a tragic story that tasted defeat. However, it should be noted that from the mid-1980s onwards, various collective projects based on personal accounts, journalism and historiography were beginning to be published. They included the anthology *Os Anos da Guerra. 1961–1975*, a collection of literary and historical texts, documents and images edited by the writer João de Melo and published in 1988, which circulated widely within the country.¹⁹

At around the same time a version of the conflict produced by the Army was being prepared, leading to the publication, from 1988 onwards, of volumes entitled *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África (1961–1974)*. The expression “Africa campaigns” appeared here as an alternative to the “colonial war” versus “overseas war” debate,²⁰ specifically omitting the fact that it referred to a war and opting instead to use a term that evoked the so-called “pacification campaigns” associated with the partition of Africa that continued in Guinea until the 1930s, resulting in the occupation of the territory and the extermination of colonised peoples.

The memory of the war would acquire greater visibility in Portugal during the 1990s. On 15 January 1994 an imposing “Monument to the Overseas Combatants” was inaugurated in Belém, which became the setting for ceremonies evoking the war and for patriotic celebrations (see [Figure 1.1](#)). The reference to “Overseas” inscribed in the name of the monument refers specifically to the characterisation



Figure 1.1 Monument to the Overseas Combatants, Lisbon.

Photograph by André Caiado.

of the African territories produced during the dictatorship and therefore defines a particular positioning and interpretation of the substance and legitimacy of the conflict: it had been a war to defend the “overseas territories”. Moreover, as Roberto Vecchi stresses, beyond its attempts to harmonise, “striving to conceptualise the wounds, the losses and the scars”, the monument would, in fact, establish an allegorical interplay in a very specific public place – Belém, in Lisbon – defined by the “celebratory rhetoric” of the Discoveries reflected in buildings, such as the Jerónimos Monastery, the Padrão dos Descobrimentos and the Praça do Império.²¹

In the 1990s, in addition to the growing number of meetings, reunions and social events involving former combatants, associations dedicated to presenting their demands in the public arena also came to the fore. Many had been in existence for a considerable time (such as the League of Combatants, founded in 1924) or had been created shortly after 25 April (such as the ADFA). They became spaces for medical support, political pressure, public recognition and socialising with peers, whilst also expressing differing representations of the conflict. In 1994, APOIAR (the Support Group for Former Combatants and Victims of War Stress – *Associação de Apoio aos Ex-Combatentes Vítimas do Stress de Guerra*) was founded, focussing explicitly on the issue of traumatic experiences originating in active service during the war. In 1999, Law 46/99 extended the concept of the “disabled of the Armed Forces” to include individuals suffering from “chronic psychological disorders resulting from exposure to traumatic stress factors during military service” and the state became responsible for creating a national support network for these former soldiers.²²

These years corresponded to a period in which there was some development in terms of the visibility of the war, shaped by the definition of the idea of the soldier-victim of war, but also an appreciation of the heroic or patriotic nature of the soldiers’ involvement in the conflict, which revived feelings of nostalgia or resentment at the “loss of Africa”. Carlos Maurício examined opinion polls published between 1973 and 2004, from which it was possible to assess the evolution of public opinion regarding the war, the empire and decolonisation. He notes that “after a period of relative amnesia and rejection of public debate, the 20th anniversary of 25 April [in 1994] marked a change in the way in which public opinion viewed the colonial war and decolonisation”, reflected in an increasingly expressed “revisionist vision of colonialism that was highly critical of decolonisation”.²³

In his analysis of works published during the second half of the 1970s, Maurício noted the publication of a significant number of books that were critical of decolonisation and the political solution to the war, and public interventions in far-right newspapers – such as *A Rua* or *O Diabo* – which were different from the material presented on television or in most of the press, which was, in fact, tending to abandon the subject. In his interpretation, “it is these repressed views, socially and politically belittled and labelled ‘reactionary chatter’, that surfaced in 1994”, in the context of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the years of the hegemony of the right within the framework of “*cavaquismo*” (an allusion to the prime minister of the time, Aníbal Cavaco Silva) and the emergence of private television companies and competition to win audiences.²⁴

Although the media had paid relatively little attention to the subject until the mid-1990s, shortly afterwards there was an explosion of content on this theme, although it often focussed more on an analysis of the war apparatus and technologies and less on its pluridimensional nature. Marcus Power identifies the same perspective in the fifty supplements and five films on the colonial war issued between 1997 and 1998 as supplements to the *Diário de Notícias*, a widely read newspaper, noting an emphasis on the bravery of the soldiers and a disregard for phenomena such as the role of black troops and the place of violence.²⁵ In addition, although some films and documentaries on the war and colonialism had been made earlier on, the subject acquired a greater and more regular presence, mainly from the start of the new century. In this context, mention should be made of the series *A Guerra*, by Joaquim Furtado, broadcast in 42 episodes on RTP1 between 2007 and 2013 and watched by large numbers of viewers.²⁶ It should also be noted that in the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in accounts written by former combatants published in print or digital format, and monuments to the conflict.²⁷

Memories and counter-memories

Personal recollections are sensitive to the changes at work in the domain of public memory and how they are determined by dominant interests and discourses. In a text which became a classic in the field of oral history, Alistair Thomson notes how accounts of life tend to follow a logic of “composure”, whereby individuals aim to find narrative coherence between the past, present and future, thus repressing memories that are painful and not easily accommodated within their present identity, memories that reveal tensions that are still unresolved, or those that result in silencing because they cannot find a social space willing to accommodate their narratives.²⁸ Hence, the public memory of war, conveyed via certain dominant themes – suffering, duty, camaraderie – inevitably shaped expressions of this past. It did so by mobilising the war as an inseparable component of a national(ist) memory forged from a “geography of belonging” that “implies a large task of suppression and denial of incongruous or undesirable elements”.²⁹ As Joanna Bourke reminds us, in the context of the commemorations for the First and Second World Wars in Great Britain, celebrating war has often been as much a way of talking about “our” dead and wounded as forgetting the dead and wounded it has caused.³⁰

If it is true that a dominant public memory was constructed in Portugal that tended to homogenise the notion of the “combatant”, it is also true that the plurality of experiences and positionings on the war often emerges and becomes the subject of different understandings of the meaning of taking part in the conflict. It should be noted from the outset that for a significant percentage of these men – the few women present in war zones were either accompanying officials or serving as parachute nurses³¹ – going to war was not a matter of choice. It was an obligation imposed by the state, resulting in large contingents of men being sent far away from their birthplace and community to fight in a war that came to an inglorious end.

To this should be added the diverse regional and class origins, life experiences, temperaments and political options of those who fought in the war. Going to war

as a military commander was not the same as serving as an ordinary soldier. Fighting as a commissioned officer was not the same as doing so as a militiaman or, in other words, as one of a vast contingent of young men who had been conscripted. Serving in the special forces, which in many cases were made up of Africans, was different from joining the war from the “metropole”, in the regular forces. Those from a rural background, for whom joining the army could also have been a way of accessing new forms of social interaction and consumer goods, had a different experience to those who joined from an urban environment or had some purchasing power. Those who faced intensive combat and had killed or seen others die had a different experience from those who were able to get through the war without facing extreme situations. Believing that waging war corresponds to a deep moral and political design – becoming a man or defending the pluricontinental fatherland, for example – is different from doing so due to inertia, because it was impossible to find ways to escape one’s fate or participate in the infrapolitical protests against the continuation of the war forged in a military environment. All these elements of experiential diversity are made uniform in public discourse, but also present a continual challenge to the processes of homogenising memory.

In more recent times, this challenge has also been expressed via the debate on desertion. Historiography’s disregard for the rejection of war – and its extent and impact – reveals the subaltern nature of this memory.³² From 2015 onwards, the work of the Association of Portuguese Political Exiles (AEP, *Associação de Exilados Políticos Portugueses*, 61–74) and the attention paid by sectors of academia and civil society to this subject has led to the emergence of books, articles, documentaries, reports and plays about exile and desertion. It has come to constitute an authentic counter-memorial field, to the extent that it provides an alternative mnemonic model that is based on a denunciation of the violence and injustice of war and calls for different ways of considering agency, heroism and personal sacrifice.³³ However, this recent visibility does not mean that desertion has ceased to be what the historian Enzo Traverso describes as a “fragile memory”,³⁴ considered an inadequate gesture and a kind of dishonour to the memory of the war and those who fought in it.

Colonial aphasia, mnemonic challenges

In 2011, referring to the colonial past in France, Ann Laura Stoler proposed the notion of “colonial aphasia” to account for the peculiar nature of this ever-present past. According to the author, the notion of aphasia captures this feeling of “occlusion of knowledge”, which consists of “a dismembering, a difficulty speaking, a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things”.³⁵ Portugal is precisely one of the cases that Stoler mentions in passing as an example of this particular type of blocking of memory. Unlike amnesia or ignorance, which refer to something that has been involuntarily erased or blanked out, the notion of aphasia encompasses a broad means of organising forgetting, in which material structures and socially impregnated imaginaries converge.

In fact, despite the aforementioned changes, the specific memorialisation of the war cannot be understood without linking it to the broader colonial memory. If the war was part, albeit a very specific part, of Portuguese colonial rule in Africa, its memorialisation tended to be detached from this framework and from any direct relationship with 25 April. Instead, it was interpreted, particularly in conservative political circles, in association with a “process of decolonisation” which was seen as badly managed or damaging for the so-called “returnees” (*retornados*).³⁶ In Portugal, the regime change was accompanied by the end of colonialism as a political system based on occupation and the exploitation of colonised peoples and territories. At the same time, for significant sectors of the population essential traces of the imagination of the nation would remain tied to mythologies that were still operative and conjugated on the basis of a collective subject: *we were great; we gave new worlds to the world; we were not, and are not, racist*, etc.

Hence, the role of the physical and symbolic violence unquestionably overlying the colonial enterprise and the war itself often remained in the shadows of the unspoken. This attrition of memory is directly related to the importance of the so-called “Discoveries” in the definition of a collective identity with epic traits that remain compellingly operative. The contemporary version takes the form of an enduring and restyled Lusotropicalism which serves as the interpretative model for the Portuguese colonial experience. This singular representation – of Portugal as a good coloniser – influences the way in which the violence of the war and its colonial nature is (not) remembered, essentially because the conflict itself constitutes a clear denial of the principles of harmonious coexistence in the colonies.³⁷

Although colonial aphasia still persists, it is being increasingly questioned. The ways in which it has been challenged by critical perspectives on the national(ist) use of war as virtue and sacrifice and by the emergence of the debate on desertion have already been explained here, although they never became hegemonic within the public debate. In addition, a series of interventions and controversies have breathed new life into the debate on the colonial past, at least from 2017 onwards. Among them, due to its direct link with the colonial war, it is worth highlighting the issue of the official tributes paid to Marcelino da Mata.

In February 2021, it was announced that Marcelino da Mata, a black soldier who became famous during the colonial war for leading a platoon of extremely aggressive African commandos in Guinea, had died from COVID-19. As was the practice in other colonial wars at the time (such as the French war in Algeria, for example), Portugal had introduced a process of Africanisation into the war, particularly in the final years of the conflict, incorporating thousands of black people into its troops. None of them became more famous than Marcelino da Mata, who was known for his singular aggressiveness. He was involved in various campaigns against civilian populations and the PAIGC, including secret missions in neighbouring countries such as Guinea-Conakry and Senegal – condemned at the time by the United Nations – and was responsible for documented atrocities.³⁸ Later, during the Portuguese revolution, Marcelino da Mata was briefly taken captive by individuals associated with the MRPP (Movement for the Reorganisation of the Portuguese Proletariat), a far left Maoist party, then became a symbol of the war

for certain ex-combatant sectors and was involved in various events organised by fringe groups linked to the far right.

The President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, and the military leaders attended his funeral. João Gomes Cravinho, the Minister of Defence in the centre-left Socialist Party (PS) government, praised his “commitment and dedication” to serving Portugal. In the National Assembly, the various right-wing members of parliament and the PS approved a vote of condolence on the death of Marcelino da Mata. The bureaucratic nature of the text that was put to the vote is indicative of its omissions: in referring in abstract terms to the “individual courage and bravery” of the commando, it ignored the fact that this had materialised in the form of certain macabre acts which he himself had reported in various interviews. Several voices then adopted a conventional line of argument, affirming that Marcelino da Mata was the soldier who had received the highest number of decorations during the war, omitting the fact that they had been awarded by the colonialist dictatorship whose overthrow on 25 April 1974, within the context of a political defeat over the war itself, had made it possible to establish democracy in the country.

The episode caused a disturbance in Portuguese political circles, producing remarkable shock waves. The CDS/PP, a conservative right-wing party, proposed a state funeral and national mourning. The far-right Chega party said that it would file a complaint with the Prosecutor General’s Office against Mamadou Ba – a well-known black Portuguese antiracist activist of Senegalese origin – who had questioned the justice of celebrating a “torturer from the colonial regime” as a hero. Following this, the CDS/PP called for the dismissal of Mamadou Ba from a public working party on racism. A petition that received around 30,000 signatures even demanded that he should be “expelled from the country”. At the same time, a broad-based movement emerged in support of the activist, condemning the racism and the ignominy of a proposal that intended to deport a black Portuguese citizen.

Although increasingly contested by academics, engaged citizens and the anti-racist movement, the rationale underlying the nostalgia for a grandiose past and celebrations of nationalism, or the belief in the exceptionalism of Portuguese colonialism still intervene powerfully in debates on the colonial past. In 2016, deploying a metaphor, *Silvia Maeso* observed the general narrative produced on the “Age of the Discoveries” through the image of a continuous loop. In the language of computer programming, this means that when certain circumstances hold, instructions are automatically executed in the same way. This was the case with the theme of the Discoveries: the fragility of the narratives on colonial violence and anticolonial and antiracist resistance enables the “Discoveries” – a kind of code word that often ends up encapsulating the colonial enterprise within the prevailing imaginary – to assume a constant “performativity in the current configuration of an imaginary of the Portuguese nation as a global and intercultural nation”.³⁹

It is the challenge to this memory framework – as well as the international discussions on settling accounts with the colonial past, including debates on material restitution and symbolic and economic reparations – which explains, for example, the statements made by the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, during the official celebrations for the 25 April in 2021. Unexpectedly, he decided

to focus his speech on the war, the colonial past and decolonisation. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa then spoke of the need to avoid “excessive general self-flagellation” that would result in “our moving from an acritical, triumphalist and exclusively grandiose view of our history to an equally acritical total demolition of it all”, deploying the rhetorical device of imagining the two opposite poles of the debate and positioning himself in what would be a sensible balanced position in the centre. However, he also spoke of the need to view this past with “eyes that are not ours”, but those of the colonised and their descendants, and referred to violence, racism, the war and enslavement. Clearly, given that the speech was not followed by any concrete measures to initiate procedures for addressing the challenges he had outlined, it appeared to be less of a starting point and more a move towards refocussing a debate that could no longer be avoided.

For the same reason, the words of the Prime Minister António Costa in Mozambique, referring to Wiriyamu as an “inexcusable act” – and statements to the same effect delivered by the President of the National Assembly, Augusto Santos Silva, and the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa three months later – created certain expectations. Was it now a matter of acknowledging the existence of the most well-known and referenced war massacres and, at the same time, establishing a process for problematising this past? Would there be a willingness to advance with international dialogues, reparations and incentives to develop historiographical knowledge? Since no concrete steps have yet been taken, the debate on the violence of the war, the civilian victims and its link with the colonial order that determines it still needs to be deepened. Within a framework of dominant representations still defined by aphasia, the debate on the war is being increasingly drawn into the wider debate on colonialism – and it is precisely in this way that the future of this memory may be conceived.

Notes

- 1 “António Costa pede desculpa por massacre de Wiriyamu: ‘Acto indesculpável que desonra a nossa História,’” *Público*, no. 11815, September 3, 2022.
- 2 “É tempo de assumirmos Wiriyamu,” Site Oficial de Informação da Presidência da República Portuguesa, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://www.presidencia.pt/atualidade/toda-a-atualidade/2022/12/e-tempo-de-assumirmos-wiriyamu/> and Augusto Santos Silva (@ASantosSilvaPAR), “Passam hoje 50 anos do massacre de Wiriyamu, em Moçambique,” Twitter, December 16, 2022, <https://twitter.com/ASantosSilvaPAR/status/1603667339173662720>.
- 3 Ana Sá Lopes, “O antigo alferes não pede desculpas por Wiriyamu,” *Diário de Notícias*, March 25, 2008. See also: Mustafah Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).
- 4 Eduardo Lourenço, “Situação Africana e Consciência Nacional,” in *Do Colonialismo como Nosso Impensado*, eds. Margarida Calafate Ribeiro and Roberto Vecchi (Lisboa: Gradiva, 2014), 139 and 153. The original text cited here dates from 1976.
- 5 See, for example: Rui Bebiano, “Contestação do regime e tentação da luta armada sob o marcelismo,” *Revista Portuguesa de História* 37 (2005): 65–104; Fernando Rosas, “O anticolonialismo tardio do antifascismo português,” in *O Adeus ao Império: 40 anos de colonização portuguesa*, eds. Fernando Rosas, Mário Machaqueiro and Pedro Aires Oliveira (Lisboa: Nova Vega, 2015), 13–24; Miguel Cardina, *O Atrito da Memória*.

- Colonialismo, Guerra e Descolonização no Portugal Contemporâneo* (Lisboa: Tinta-da-china, 2023).
- 6 Manuel Loff, “Estado, democracia e memória: políticas públicas e batalhas pela memória da ditadura portuguesa (1974–2014),” in *Ditaduras e Revolução. Democracia e Políticas da Memória*, eds. Manuel Loff, Luciana Soutelo and Filipe Piedade (Coimbra: Almedina, 2015), 31.
 - 7 For a detailed study of political texts published before and after 25 April 1974, see: Flamarion Maués, *Livros que tomam partido: edição e revolução em Portugal – 1968–1980* (Lisboa: Parsifal/Associação Promotora do Museu do Neo-Realismo, 2019).
 - 8 Bruno Sena Martins, “Violência colonial e testemunho: para uma memória pós-abissal,” *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* 106 (2015): 105–26.
 - 9 Movimento das Forças Armadas, “Plano de Acção Política do CR, 21 June 1975,” in *A Revolução em Ruptura. Textos Históricos da Revolução II*, ed. Orlando Neves (Lisboa: Diabril, 1975), 17.
 - 10 José Amaro, ed., *Massacres na Guerra Colonial (Tete, um exemplo)* (Lisboa: Ulmeiro, 1976).
 - 11 Cited in Maués, *Livros que tomam partido*, 320–21.
 - 12 Luís de Sttau Monteiro, “A ‘Guerra Santa’,” *Diário de Lisboa*, July 13, 1977.
 - 13 “Nota Oficiosa: Fila T Especial,” *Diário de Lisboa*, July 13, 1977.
 - 14 “Eanes critica Fila T,” *A Luta*, July 14, 1977.
 - 15 “A Sociedade Portuguesa de Autores diz que o programa Fila T deverá prosseguir na RTP,” *Diário Popular*, July 16, 1977.
 - 16 Carlos Maurício, “Um longo degelo: a guerra colonial e a decolonisation nos ecrãs portugueses (1974–1994),” *Ler História* 65 (2013): 159–177; Dulce Simões, “Processos de construção da memória nas democracias ibéricas: os casos Os Anos do Século (1979) e Rocio (1980),” *Análise Social* 235 (2020): 244–73.
 - 17 Paulo de Medeiros, “Hauntings: Memory, Fiction, and the Portuguese Colonial Wars,” in *Commemorating War: The Politics of Memory*, eds. Timothy Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper (New York: Routledge, 2000), 47–76.
 - 18 Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, *Uma História de Regressos. Império, guerra colonial e pós-colonialismo* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2004), 429.
 - 19 João de Melo, ed., *Os anos da guerra, 1961–1975. Os portugueses em África, crónica, ficção e história*, 2 vols (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 1988).
 - 20 Sectors associated with the far right or military organisations frequently opt to use the expression “overseas war”, which had been established by the dictatorship, rather than “colonial war”. The latter is nowadays the accepted term in historiography.
 - 21 Roberto Vecchi, *Excepção Atlântica. Pensar a Literatura da Guerra Colonial* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2010), 27. On the Belém district as the epitome of the colonial imaginary, see: Elsa Peralta, “A composição de um complexo de memória imperial: o caso de Belém, Lisboa,” in *Cidade e Império. Dinâmicas Coloniais e Reconfigurações Pós-Coloniais*, eds. Nuno Domingos and Elsa Peralta (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2013), 361–401.
 - 22 Law 46/99, of 16 June. On post-traumatic stress disorder, see also: Afonso Albuquerque and Fani Lopes, “Características de um grupo de 120 ex-combatentes da guerra colonial vítimas de ‘stress de guerra’,” *Vértice* 58 (1994): 28–32.
 - 23 Carlos Maurício, “A Guerra Colonial e a Descolonização vistas pelas Sondagens de Opinião (1973–2004),” *Nação e Defesa* 130 (2011): 291.
 - 24 Maurício, “Um longo degelo,” 161.
 - 25 Marcus Power, “Geo-politics and the Representation of Portugal’s African Colonial Wars: Examining the Limits of ‘Vietnam Syndrome’,” *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 461–91.
 - 26 Ansgar Schaefer emphasises that the first episode had a “an audience rating of 32.9%, equivalent to approximately 1,260,000 viewers”, thus reaching a far wider public than written works on the same subject. From time to time, the series has been repeated on

- RTP. Ansgar Schaefer, “Imagens de ‘A Guerra’: Interação entre os discursos visual e verbal na série de Joaquim Furtado,” *Práticas da História. Journal on Theory, Historiography and Uses of the Past* 1, no. 1 (2015): 33–60.
- 27 See, in this book, the chapter by André Caiado on monuments to the war and the chapter by Verónica Ferreira on public digital space.
- 28 Alistair Thomson, “Anzac Memories. Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia,” in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 224–54. For an example of how this concept can be applied to Portugal, see Ângela Campos, *An Oral History of the Portuguese Colonial War: Scripted Generation* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
- 29 Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, “Patterning the National Past,” in *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*, eds. Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2006), 169–70.
- 30 Joanna Bourke, *Deep Violence: Military Violence, War Play, and the Social Life of Weapons* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015), 4–5.
- 31 This does not, in any sense, mean that the war had no impact on women. In addition, they were assigned the role of “war godmothers” – a broad-based initiative organised by the National Women’s Movement (*Movimento Nacional Feminino*) which aimed to establish links between the young soldiers and young women who assumed a ghostly eroticised presence as long-distance confidantes – and several had to deal with the departure of sons, grandsons, husbands, brothers, and friends for war. In the post-war period, they were often relegated to the status of informal carers or, in some cases witnessed the transfer of violence from the battlefield to the home.
- 32 A recent study carried out by the author and by Susana Martins indicates the existence of around nine thousand deserters at least, with occasional gaps in certain years and military sectors. To this should be added a number of draft evaders – i.e., those who went to the military examination but did not enlist – amounting to 10–20 thousand young men, and those who missed the examination, totalling approximately 200 thousand, representing almost 20% of those called up in the former metropole, according to data compiled by the General Staff of the Armed Forces. See: Miguel Cardina and Susana Martins, “Evading the War: Deserters and Draft Evaders of the Portuguese Army during the Colonial War,” *E-Journal of Portuguese History* 17, no. 2 (2019): 27–47. It should be noted that the theme of desertion has been referenced in Portugal since the time of the war itself, but nowadays receives much more public attention. On this subject, see Chapter 8 in Cardina, *O atrito da memória*.
- 33 On the notion of “counter-memory”, see the chapter “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139–64.
- 34 Enzo Traverso, *O Passado, Modos de usar* (Lisboa: Unipop, 2012), 71–87.
- 35 Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France,” *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (2011): 125. The brief reference to Portugal only appears in the version published in the book: Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress. Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 128.
- 36 This has also been mentioned by Loff, “Estado, democracia e memória,” 55. During the post-25 April period, a sizeable contingent of Portuguese nationals, numbering approximately 500 thousand, arrived from Africa, specifically from Angola and Mozambique, the former settler colonies. The name “returnees” (*retornados*), which became part of the Portuguese vocabulary, refers to the creation, in 1975, of the Institute for the Support of Returning Nationals (IARN), an organisation founded to provide support for the arrival and integration of this population.
- 37 Various disputes involving memory have emerged in recent years in connection with events such as the following: the installation in Lisbon of a statue to Padre António Vieira, a Jesuit and missionary in the Americas, with indigenous children at his feet; statements made by the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, in Gorée

- (Senegal), a former trading station for enslaved people, praising the pioneering role played by Portugal as the forerunner of human rights; his trip to Batepá, in São Tomé e Príncipe, where hundreds of people were killed in February 1953 in what became known as the “Batepá massacre”; the proposal to build a Museum of the Discoveries in Lisbon; the approval, by means of a Participatory Budget, of plans to construct a Monument to the Enslaved, also in Lisbon; the discussions on the colonial coats of arms in the Praça do Império gardens in Belém; the attention focussed on the Wiriyamu massacre; the homage paid to Marcelino da Mata on the occasion of his death; the award, by the Portuguese state, of the Order of Liberty to Amílcar Cabral. On these debates, see Chapter 4 in Cardina, *O atrito da memória*.
- 38 Led by Alpoim Calvão, in conjunction with António de Spínola, the Commander-in-Chief and Governor of Guinea at the time, Operation Green Sea, which took place in November 1970, involved the invasion of Guinea-Conakry to attack the headquarters of the PAIGC and destroy military supplies, and an attempt to assassinate Amílcar Cabral, free political prisoners and organise a coup d’état to depose Sekou Touré and instal a government favourable to Portuguese colonial policy in the country, which shares a border with Guinea-Bissau. In 1973, Operation Royal Amethyst involved the invasion of Senegalese territory. On Marcelino da Mata, including a description of some of his actions and tactics, see, among others: Nuno Gonçalo Poças, *O Fenómeno Marcelino da Mata* (Alfragide: Casa das Letras, 2022).
- 39 Silvia Rodríguez Maeso, “O Turismo e a Academia da ‘Idade dos Descobrimentos’ em Portugal: o silenciamento/reprodução do racismo no loop pós-colonial,” *Revista Política & Trabalho* 44 (2016): 28.

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