

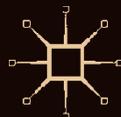


AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE PORTUGUESE COLONIAL WAR

Conscripted Generation

ÂNGELA CAMPOS

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An Oral History of the Portuguese Colonial War

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I dedicate this book about war to all genuine peacemakers of this world.

FOREWORD

War memories are always difficult: difficult for veterans struggling to make a past they can live with; difficult for families living in the shadow of war; and difficult for nations seeking to find commemorative meaning. Those difficulties are worse for the losing side, and when postwar transformations render the war shameful.

Such are the difficulties in memory and history for the Portuguese Colonial Wars fought in Africa between 1961 and 1974. Just under a million young, conscripted Portuguese men fought in the wars to retain Portugal's African colonies, yet when the *Estado Novo* regime was overthrown in 1974, and Portugal gave up its colonies, no one wanted to know about these embarrassing wars. No one wanted to hear the stories of the veterans who had survived but who were now living and fighting their personal battles of the peace.

Ângela Campos's very fine history restores these men's experiences to the historical record. Drawing upon interviews with thirty-six veterans, she details their lives at war and on return, and she explores the impact of war upon the men and their families, and in the wider society.

One of the great strengths of Campos's book is that it connects individual experience and memory with collective representations of the war. She details the changing ways in which Portuguese society both remembered and forgot the colonial wars, from postwar neglect to a revival of interest in the 2000s. She shows how the veterans have been variously represented as "cold-blooded murderers" representing a fascist regime, conscripted victims of that regime, or "the last warriors" of a crumbling empire. She shows how even at the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the wars,

in 2011, the Portuguese Minister of Defense recognized that “we are still ashamed of the war.”

Campos shows how war veterans and their families were affected by this national silence, shame, and ambivalence. She begins with the poignant anecdote of her interview with Carlos Sobral, and of a wife who joined in a tirade of “mutual accusations, tears and shouts” in which “the state was blamed, the war was cursed, the army was both exulted and denigrated, and plenty of regrets and demands were expressed.” We hear the potent consequences of war not only for its combatant survivors, many struggling with physical and mental wounds, but also for families who tend those wounds and manage the fallout.

Recording these stories was difficult, brave work. People are not like the papers that historians consult in an archive. They still bleed as they remember and narrate their story. It is never easy to listen to war stories and to provide a safe “listening space.” As a young woman Ângela Campos grew up alert to the shadowy presence of the veterans on the edges of Portuguese society. Now she was in their living rooms, gaining their trust, recording their stories, hearing their trauma. At times this was challenging work, not only for the men themselves but also for Campos. At times it could be cathartic. The Sobrals appeared to have found some releasing satisfaction in sharing their story “with a willing listener.” In being heard, they were affirmed. More important, in weaving such stories into the history of the colonial wars and their postwar aftermath, Campos is contributing to the public recognition of that history and to a transformation in understanding about the war and its veterans.

So this is a book about memory, individual and collective, neglected and recovered. Yet it is also, importantly, a history book, in which memory is used as an essential and invaluable historical source. Onto the Portuguese historical record Campos inscribes the experience of the soldier, of pride and shame, fear and courage, comradeship and loss. Onto that historical record she inscribes the battles of the aftermath, of a return and readjustment that was especially difficult because Portuguese society wanted to distance itself from the recent wartime past. Historical neglect was echoed in practical neglect, with inadequate support and treatment for damaged veterans and their suffering families.

This is a history that will enter the debate within Portugal about the legacy of its colonial wars, and by adding the voice of the veterans and their families, it should transform the terms of that debate. This is also a history that speaks to the issue of memory and history in any post-conflict

society. Through her recording and analysis of oral history, Campos offers a vital contribution to our understanding of how individuals and societies might make peace with the past.

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This book is the culmination of a long journey encompassing many people who have helped and supported me through the years. My first words of thanks are for my doctoral supervisors at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. My deepest gratitude goes to Alistair Thomson, a major presence at the inception of this project and ever since a true mentor and inspiring teacher on an academic and human level. It has been a privilege to have over a decade of reflective, enriching exchanges which refined and expanded my research immensely. Extra special thanks also to Claire Langhamer, who joined the project at a later stage and since then, and to the very end, supported me via insightful, sound guidance. I am much indebted to her straightforwardness and her ability to uplift me with her unfaltering enthusiasm (and not rarely with a much-needed dose of humor!).

My gratitude also to the financial support from Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (Portugal) that made the doctoral research informing this book possible. Unreserved thanks too to all my interviewees and their families and friends, who welcomed me in their homes and elsewhere. They not only allowed this research project to happen, but also transformed it into the most rewarding experience. Since it would be impractical to list them all, I chose not to mention anyone in particular. Those who in the meantime have sadly passed away remain in my heart and memory.

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dos Ex-Combatentes de Cuba e Residentes, and, very importantly, from the Porto delegation of ADEFA—Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas, where I found in Abel Fortuna and fellow veterans not only interviewees but esteemed friends.

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Acknowledgments made, I emphasize that any errors or omissions in my work are my responsibility. I like to think that their inevitable existence is somewhat compensated by the passion with which I pursued this research and by my willingness to continue improving it in the future.

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Introduction

In the early afternoon of 1 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 interrupting our interview when a question was asked about the consequences of war on the veteran's present everyday 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.¹

Carlos Sobral, the ex-combatant in question, was one of the nearly one million Portuguese conscripted servicemen sent between 1961 and 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 on 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 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 onward.² 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.”³ The often noted “historiographical void” places the researcher before a community which, like the micro example of the Sobral family, has difficulties in coping with a past that continues to be laden with loss, guilt, shame, and trauma.⁴ 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 fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the conflict, the Portuguese Minister of Defense 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.”⁵

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.⁶ And yet the new memorial developments are typically characterized by being factual, descriptive, fragmentary, decontextualized, and often socio-culturally uniform.⁷ Indeed, Portugal's continuing inability to generate a recognizable, 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.⁸ 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 recognized 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.⁹ 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 one of the most reputable Portuguese historians, as "almost perfect," one which for a long time will remain as a "work of reference."¹⁰ In its Prologue, Ramos states there are a lot of aspects about the Portuguese contemporary period that are "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."¹¹ 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 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.¹² According to Ramos, recruitment “was never a problem,” and there was little opposition. The war, he concludes, was “obscure and little deadly.”¹³ 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.”¹⁴ No emphasis is placed on the hundreds of thousands of Portuguese ex-combatants generated by this conflict, or on its long-lasting social impact.

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.¹⁵ Similarly, the *Nova História Militar de Portugal* (2004) presented the colonial war as “the most important historical event of the second half of the twentieth century in Portugal.”¹⁶ 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.”¹⁷

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, a 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 online media and blogosphere over the “fascism” or not of this expert-sanctioned history. Readers witnessed fierce quarreling between left-wing and right-wing historians and intellectuals, each trying to convince the public of the rectitude and accuracy of their view.¹⁸

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 their impact on Portuguese society. In that sense, perhaps the path that led me to Carlos Sobral and his family did not necessarily start

in 2004 at the University of Sussex when I decided to undertake an oral history doctorate on 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 relatively young men, sometimes aggressive and often covered in war tattoos, with whom people did not wish to talk to or even talk 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 among the hundreds of thousands of Portuguese young men who were conscripted to fulfill their military service in Africa between 1961 and 1974.¹⁹ 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 book provides a historical study of the colonial war from the perspective of its Portuguese ex-combatants and their society. While recognizing that international perspectives encompassing former territories and combatants of independence movements would constitute a valuable study, that was 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 their personal experiences during and after the war.²⁰ More broadly, my approach also created a platform from which to assess the memorial complexities of a “semiperipheral society” internally processing a major geo-political shift.²¹

Portugal became a democracy practically overnight on 25 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 unrecognized. 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 on combatants—those who, to quote one of my interviewees, are the thinking and feeling “flesh and bone” behind the military number.²² Employing the life history approach, my research identifies historical patterns in Portuguese war veterans' narratives and explores the recurring themes that characterize their war experience and its aftermath. In analyzing and contextualizing 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. While there is a growing interest in personal war memories in 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 afterward—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 a 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.²³

The veterans who participated in this project were given a “listening space.”²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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 of “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.²⁶ 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 polarized 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 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, Decolonization War, Independence War?²⁷ Revealingly, in this respect the authors of *Nova História Militar de Portugal* opted to name the conflict through the “theoretically more precise” terminology of “decolonization wars,” in order to surpass the left-wing/right-wing naming “dichotomy, [so] politically and ideologically marked in Portuguese historiography” about the topic.²⁸ 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.”²⁹ 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. These include 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.³⁰

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).

Following this Introduction (Chapter 1), the book begins with a consideration of the available explanatory frameworks of production, circulation, and contestation of war memory and commemoration. Chapter 2 addresses current international trends in war commemoration which place the actors in war under a new focus instead of favoring 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, while 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.³¹ 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.³² 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.³³

Chapter 3 focuses on the public memory of the Portuguese Colonial War, identifying two distinct phases: from 1974 to 1999 (the postwar silence), and from 2000 onward (a time for revival). The 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 the past. Chapter 3 also provides a characterization 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.³⁴ The chapter shows how the public memory of the war has expanded notably in recent years in Portugal.

While 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—Chap. 3 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 4 is a methodological reflection on conducting 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 prioritizing the documentation of facts but the assessment of the past in the present.³⁵ 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 emphasize 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 to illuminate the nature and development of the conflict’s historical memory and the significance of its evolving meanings.

Chapter 4 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 biographical information, thirty-six ex-combatants were selected to be interviewed, a group containing people of distinct geographical, class, and educational backgrounds, who had 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 analyzed in the book. I conducted the interviews in Continental Portugal, in Portuguese, between December 2005 and February 2008, mostly at the interviewees' homes. After being partially transcribed, the sections relevant for this project were then translated into English.

The interview selection criteria prioritized 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 underrepresent 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 hesitancies, 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 marginalization—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 toward a resolution of their concerns.

In Chap. 4, 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.³⁶ 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 and after the war, creating in each interview a holistic, contextualized 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 Chap. 4 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 Chaps. 5 and 6 of this book. 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 emphasized, which occasionally highlights certain individuals more to show contrasting singularity or reveal a telling example.

Chapter 5 analyzes the ex-combatants' experiences of war, distinguishing the wartime period and their return to Portugal after fulfillment of military service. Guided by their narratives, I begin the chapter by follow-

ing the typical military path of the servicemen, their conscription, training, mobilization, and 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, among 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 the chapter deals with the ex-combatants' return and how they subsequently dealt with their war experiences. It depicts how for most 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 acknowledgment 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 6 starts by addressing the long-term impact of the colonial war on 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 acquired a social awareness of having participated in a divisive war, unable to generate a unified collective remembrance, and how this contributed to feelings of marginalization 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 generalized notion emerged of combatants having their lives shaped in the long-term by the war. These nar-

ratives 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.³⁷

Secondly, the chapter addresses how the ex-combatants simultaneously shape and respond to the changing public memory of the colonial war, in the 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 unrecognized and neglected by the current one. In this context, most interviewees highlighted life-long negative consequences of the war, often framed by anger and disappointment, although in some cases positive factors are also considered. Many admitted 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 time, most expressed a notion of testimonial “duty” toward 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 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. First, 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. Second, it offers a specific intervention in providing an analysis of the colonial war based upon personal narratives of its ex-combatants, unraveling 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; and there is 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 labor of history acquires special intensity when the subject matter framing the narrative is a war.³⁸

After learning all this from my interviewees, I finally understood why Carlos Sobral'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.³⁹

NOTES

1. Interviewee 19, 1st August 2007.
2. M. Ribeiro and R. Vecchi, eds., "Introduction" in *Antologia da Memória Poética da Guerra Colonial* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2011), 21; J. Gil, *Portugal, Hoje. O Medo de Existir* (Lisboa: Relógio d' Água Editores, 12th edition, 2008), 112.
3. Gil, *Portugal, Hoje*, 17; E. Lourenço (C. Veloso, ed.) *Chaos and Splendor and other essays* (Dartmouth: University of Massachusetts, 2002), 158.

4. M. Ribeiro, quoting E. Lourenço, in *Uma História de Regressos. Império, Guerra Colonial e Pós-colonialismo* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2004), 248.
5. Stated by Aguiar-Branco, Portugal's Minister of National Defense, in a speech evoking the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the colonial war given on 19 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.
6. See Chap. 3 for further examples and explanation.
7. See Ribeiro and Vecchi, *Antologia da Memória*, 250.
8. 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); J. Antunes, ed., *A Guerra de África, 1961–1974* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 2 vols., 1995); J. Mattoso, ed., *História de Portugal*, vols. VII to IX (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1993–94); and J. Medina, ed., *História de Portugal: dos tempos pré-históricos aos nossos dias*, vols. 12–15 (Alfragide: Ediclube, 1993–1995).
9. See "Introduction" to M. Barata and N. Teixeira, eds., *Nova História Militar de Portugal* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, Vol. 5, 2004), 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 N. Teixeira, "Portugal e as Guerras da Descolonização," in *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 4, 2004), 68.
10. See online article at <http://www1.ionline.pt/conteudo/31720-historia-portugal-luta-faccoes-os-salazaristas>, published on 7th November 2009; and J. Mattoso, "Uma História de Portugal para o nosso tempo," in *Ípsilon, Público*, 10th March 2010.
11. Prologue of R. Ramos, *História de Portugal* (Lisbon: A Esfera dos Livros, 2009), I–IV.
12. *Ibid.*, 680–684.
13. *Ibid.*, 684–685.
14. *Ibid.*, 704, 706, respectively.

15. A. Pinto, "A Guerra Colonial e o Fim do Império Português," in F. Bethencourt and K. Chaudhuri, eds., *História da Expansão Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, Vol. 5, 2009), 75.
16. N. Teixeira, "Portugal e as Guerras da Descolonização," in *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 4, 2004), 77; Barata and Teixeira, *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 5, 2004), 197, 173.
17. *Ibid.*, 197.
18. The polemics started with opinion articles published on 2 August and 16 August 2012 by Loff in *Público* newspaper. Ramos's response was published in the same newspaper on 21 August 2012. It should be added that *História de Portugal* was distributed in the summer 2012 in installments with newspaper *Expresso*; see also Loff's reply in *Público*, 30th August 2012.
19. More specifically, nearly one million of the Portuguese male youth of the era, as highlighted by N. Teixeira in *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 4, 2004), 77.
20. The low incidence of such perspective in Portuguese historiography is assumed in the "Introduction" to Barata and Teixeira, *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 5, 2004), 9.
21. Boaventura Santos quoted by M. Ribeiro in "Introduction" to *Uma História de Regressos*, 13.
22. Interviewee 31, p. 41.
23. See Works Cited and Consulted for relevant works mainly by Evans, Bourke, Hynes, Hunt, Hutchinson, and other cited authors.
24. K. Rogers and S. Leydesdorff, eds., *Trauma. Life Stories of Survivors* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 9–10.
25. S. Field in K. Rogers and S. Leydesdorff, eds., *Trauma*, 60–79; and by the same author "Beyond 'healing': trauma, oral history and regeneration," *Oral History*, 34, no. 1 (2006): 31–42.
26. 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), 11.
27. *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 Chap. 3.
28. N. Teixeira, *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 4, 2004), 68.
29. A. Afonso and C. Gomes, eds., *Guerra Colonial* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 2001), 20.

30. When not present in the main text, relevant book titles or similar Portuguese sources cited can be found in full in the Works Cited and Consulted section.
31. See, for instance, Popular Memory Group, "Popular memory. Theories, politics, method," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 2nd edition, 2006), 43–53.
32. See pertinent studies by Ashplant et al. cited in the Works Cited and Consulted section; see also G. Dawson *Making Peace with the Past? Memories, Trauma and the Irish Troubles* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 62.
33. A. Portelli "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 2006), 32–42.
34. It should be noted that the aesthetic arena (mainly from the perspective of visual, plastic, and performative arts) was not explored in detail.
35. See, for example, A. Thomson, "Memory and Remembering in Oral History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. D. Ritchie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 90–91.
36. See Works Cited and Consulted for a selection of relevant practitioners' manuals. For a full discussion of my oral history methodology, refer to Chap. 4.
37. Confirming Klempler's assertion that some narratives of trauma are never told. See M. Klempler "Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma," *The Oral History Review* 27, no.2 (2000): 67–83.
38. Again borrowing Portelli's image, in *They Say in Harlan County*, 11.
39. See Interviewee 19, pp. 28–37.

War Memory Theory

War memory studies have been developing enormously in the past 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.¹ 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 1980s 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.² This reflects the trend, increasingly noticeable from the mid-twentieth-century onward, to acknowledge and study war as a socio-cultural phenomenon, seeking understandings of its social impact beyond the military perspective.³

The concept of memory that I am going to utilize in my work is closely related to the interpretations of memory developed within the so-called memory studies that 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 emphasize 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 analyzing 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 historicization 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.⁴

In order to contextualize 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, organized, and contested.⁵

Ashplant et al. have identified three principal theoretical approaches to the study of war memory and commemoration: the state-centered approach, the social-agency approach, and the popular memory approach. The state-centered 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 generalizations that have to apply to a great number of people. These are the “invented traditions” highlighted in Hobsbawm’s work, reflecting mainstream, nationwide, establishment-promoted war memory narratives.⁶ 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.⁷

At this point, it should be emphasized that the 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 for them to be effective and to maintain the community’s national unity, overcoming, as much as possible, social tensions and divisions. In this sense, it is imperative that the 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 afterward being 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 colonized 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-centered 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 preexisting 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 belonging to a particular society, while the other treats memories and narratives as uniquely individual and unaffected by other wider narratives. Highlighting both approaches' underconceptualization 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 interrelational, 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 favored or acknowledged by researchers working within the state-centered 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.”⁸

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 analyzes in depth the interaction and the connections between public representation and private memory.⁹ It emphasizes 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 marginalizing 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 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 World War I 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,” selecting aspects of their experience that could be articulated through public narratives¹⁰—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 marginalized. In this perspective, public memory necessarily shapes private remembrance, and individuals will compose memories that they feel comfortable with, reflecting the multidimensional 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-centered 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 her/his specific war experience and life circumstances in the here-and-now of narration.¹¹

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 legitimizing 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 overwhelming 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.”¹²

In effect, in recent decades, significant oral history debates concerning the conceptualization 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 emphasizing 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.¹³ 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 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 toward 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.”¹⁴

Arguing against the discarding or minimizing of individual memory, Green exhorts researchers to reassert 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.¹⁵

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-centered 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 rigor.¹⁶

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 analyzed above. In order to trace the dynamic interactions that occur between the various 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 theorizing 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 emphasizes 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 occur 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-centered commemoration. Within this context, different groups struggle to articulate different memories, which manifest shared memories or common experiences. 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 recognized. 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.¹⁷

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 utilizing more official or informal agencies. Indeed, the visibility of the many communities of memory existing in a society depends on their mobilization 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 emphasizing 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 memorialization 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 remembering to state commemoration, or, in other words, from direct personal memory to cultural memory—two modes of memory which are interrelated, as emphasized earlier.

In 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, marginalizing 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.¹⁸

The actions of the nation-state impact 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.

Analyzing different dimensions of the politics of war memory allows us to understand the complexity of the interrelationships between competing narratives, arenas, and agencies, and between personal and public, collective memories. These narratives are representations which are 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 democratized 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 humanized 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.”¹⁹

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 four 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, and focused on prioritizing meanings and interpretations in the writing of history.²⁰

Nowadays it is most commonly accepted that—assisted by sound critical interpretation—individual firsthand memory enables a democratization of the historical 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.”²¹

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 a historical sense of the past, in a process described by Nora as “acceleration of history.”²² If memory is a society’s identity, the current memorializing 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, assert-

ing 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.²³

At the crossroads of collective remembrance and history, Hynes argues that memory should emphasize the preservation or recovery of our lived past. Anything else is a social construction, a collective circulated image, or a 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 emphasized, as they express publicly the articulation of individual lived memories with wider historical discourses, and thus contribute to a better knowledge about our past.²⁴ This articulation can also acquire relevance in the shape of intergenerational communication, counteracting, to some extent, the decline of memory announced by Nora.²⁵

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.”²⁶

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.²⁷ A collective narrative most individuals in a society can identify with provides a sense of national history and 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.”²⁸

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.²⁹ 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.³⁰

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 disturbing past, improving our living relationship with it.³¹ 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.³²

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, while others are 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.³³

The complexity of liberation struggles, especially when the colonized 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 recognized 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

within the former metropolis.³⁴ Writing about the Malvinas/Falklands war (1982), Lorenz tells us about a nation which is not comfortable with its veterans.³⁵ 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.”³⁶ As in Portugal, in the French case the memory of the colonial war is not positive and is profoundly divisive, and its veterans are often marginalized and develop a discourse of victimhood: as victims of war and of postwar neglect. No agreed national narrative on the conflict emerged. The virtual silence about the war and lack of commemoration are also explained by the fact that it was a guerrilla war, never officially recognized 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.³⁷

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.³⁸ 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 marginalization can silence individual memory due to the fact that there is no context favorable to remembering.

My study of the Portuguese Colonial War utilizes oral history as a means of challenging and explaining the silence surrounding this conflict. By focusing on personal testimonies of ex-combatants, my research recognizes their wartime past, recovering at the same time taboo and marginalized 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 toward voices of survivors (including here war veterans) did not apply, as will be explained in following chapters.³⁹ The politics of memory operating in Portugal mean that the topic of the colonial war needs to be forced into the public domain, the “listening space” 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.”⁴⁰

However, this public silence is, very commonly, sustained by a psychological reluctance on the part of some ex-combatants to talk, meaning that certain types of memories remain private and unassimilated. Nonetheless, through their testimonies, the war veterans participating in this research project contributed 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 contextualize 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 first focus on an initial period of postwar silence, and subsequently on a more recent phase when silence has been broken.

NOTES

1. T. Ashplant, G. Dawson and Roper, eds., *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London: Routledge, 2000), particularly “Part I—Framing the issues,” 1–86.
2. M. Evans, “Opening up the battlefield: War studies and the cultural turn,” *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 1, no. 1 (Bristol: Intellect Ltd., 2008): 47–51.
3. A. Calder, *The People’s War: Britain, 1939–1945* (London: Pimlico, 1992), just to quote one groundbreaking example originally published in 1969.
4. For a reflection on history and memory, see S. Hynes in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. E. Sivan and J. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 206.

5. Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, *The Politics of War Memory*, 1–86.
6. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)
7. Sivan and Winter, *War and Remembrance*.
8. Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, *The Politics of War Memory*, 12.
9. Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994)
10. Thomson, *Anzac*, 215–216.
11. M. Roper, “Re-remembering the Soldier Hero: the Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War,” *History Workshop Journal* 50 (2000): 181–205.
12. P. Summerfield “Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews,” *Cultural and Social History*, no. 1 (2004): 65–93.
13. See, for instance, M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992); A. Green, “Individual Remembering and ‘Collective Memory’: Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates,” *Oral History* 32, no. 2 (2004): 35–44.
14. A. Green, “Individual Remembering,” 40; A. Green “Can memory be collective?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. D. Ritchie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 96–111.
15. *Ibid.*
16. N. Gedi and Y. Elam, “Collective Memory—what is it?,” *History and Memory* 8, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 30–50.
17. 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., *The Politics of War Memory*, 53–54.
18. For a national example, see F. Lorenz, “The unending war. Social myth, individual memory and the Malvinas,” in *Trauma*, ed. Rogers and Leydesdorff, 95–112; and “How does one win a lost war? Oral history and political memories,” in *Handbook of Oral History*, 124–141.
19. Evans, “Opening up”, 48.
20. See, for example, Thomson, “Memory and Remembering in Oral History,” 78–82; Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 32–42.

21. Thomson, "Memory and Remembering in Oral History," in *Handbook of Oral History*, 80; P. Edwards, *A War Remembered: Commemoration, Battlefield Tourism and British Collective Memory of the Great War* (University of Sussex: DPhil Thesis, 2005), 1.
22. P. Nora, ed., *The Construction of the French Past. Realms of memory*. Vol. II: Traditions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997)
23. See, for example, Sivan and Winter, *War and Remembrance*, 6.
24. S. Hynes, "Personal narratives and commemoration," in *War and Remembrance*, ed. Sivan and Winter, 205–210.
25. Embracing the notion of "collective remembrance," 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 *War and Remembrance*, 6–39; 40–60.
26. P. Edwards, "*Their name liveth for evermore*": *collective memory and the commemoration of the Great War* (University of Sussex: MA dissertation, 2000), 15.
27. Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, *The Politics of War Memory*, 44.
28. Dawson, *Making Peace*, Preface, xxii.
29. Dawson, "Trauma, Memory, Politics. The Irish Troubles," in *Trauma*, Rogers and Leydesdorff (2004), 188; Dawson, *Making Peace*, 62.
30. Introduction, in *Trauma*, Rogers and Leydesdorff (2004), 6, 11.
31. Dawson, *Making Peace*, 315.
32. Dawson, "Trauma, Memory, Politics...", in *Trauma* (2004), 189.
33. Ashplant, Dawson, Roper, *The Politics of War Memory*, 23.
34. See G. Kershaw, *Mau Mau from Below* (Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 1997) for an oral history of the conflict; Ashplant, Dawson, Roper, *The Politics of War Memory*, 69.
35. Lorenz, "The unending war. Social myth, individual memory and the Malvinas", in *Trauma*, Rogers and Leydesdorff (2004), 95–112.
36. M. Alexander, M. Evans, J. Keiger, eds., *The Algerian War and the French Army, 1954–62. Experiences, Images, Testimonies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 3, 12.
37. See Introduction in Dawson, Leydesdorff, Rogers, eds., *Trauma and Life Stories. International Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1999), 11.

38. K. Plummer, *Documents of Life 2: an invitation to a critical humanism* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 235.
39. Introduction, in Rogers et al., *Trauma* (2004), 9.
40. Dawson, "Trauma, Memory, Politics...", *Trauma* (2004), 188.

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.¹ 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 4 February 1961, at a time when colonialism was increasingly condemned internationally, spread to Portuguese Guinea on 23 January 1963, and then to Mozambique on 25 September 1964. In each case, the war was declared by the respective national liberation movement, which intended to achieve total independence from Portuguese rule (Fig. 3.1).

The conflict ceased in 1974. Its end was brought about by the Portuguese revolution of 25 April 1974, initiated by a coup led by some sectors of the Portuguese military, dissatisfied with thirteen years of war, and organized by the Armed Forces Movement (MFA—*Movimento das Forças Armadas*). The revolutionary process also meant the end of *Estado Novo* (New State), a dictatorial regime that lasted for forty-eight years



Map Data Provided By OpenVectorMaps.com Final Design by Giles Rolleston

Fig. 3.1 Map of Portugal and African provinces (before 1975)

(1926–1974), virtually incarnated in the figure of António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970).

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 defense of “national territory,” and dismissing the principle of self-determination and independence demanded by the liberation movements.² 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.³

The *Forças Armadas Portuguesas* (Portuguese Armed Forces) were responsible for enforcing the colonial policy of the regime and so, during the thirteen years of war, about 820,000 men were mobilized and sent to Africa.⁴ 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 8831 dead, around 30,000 wounded, close to 4500 mutilated, more than 14,000 physically disabled, and over 100,000 soldiers suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁵ Of the total of casualties on the three fronts, about 70 percent 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 nine million people in 1960.⁶ There was also an economic cost, with 40 percent of the national budget channeled to National Defense. 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.⁷ Given the mobilization of over 90 percent of the masculine youth of that period, practically every Portuguese family at the time—and subsequently—was affected by the conflict.⁸

Despite the strong oppression of the dictatorial regime, significant sections of Portuguese society were against the colonial war. When the conflict started in Angola in 1961, there appeared to exist a generalized 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 favor 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, anti-war 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.”⁹ 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 in terms of dead and wounded men became more apparent and many chose to leave the country before conscription. A nearly 21 percent record number of absentees was recorded between 1970–72.¹⁰

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 among 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.¹¹

The repercussions of the May 68 events in France strengthened these anti-colonial positions and opposition to the regime, particularly in 1969, when students of the Universities of Lisbon and Coimbra protested more vehemently. The more politicized 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 1973, the opposition forces grew in strength, and at the *Congresso da Oposição Democrática* (Congress of the Democratic Opposition), concerns about the urgent need to end the war were expressed.¹² Anti-war 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.¹³

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.¹⁴ It was against this backdrop that the regime attempted to shape people’s values and convictions toward justifying the presence of Portuguese troops in Africa, especially through education, the media, and conscript training.¹⁵

To a great extent, the feeling that this war had no purpose led to the 25th April 1974 democratic revolution that put an end to the longest European authoritarian regime, and to the 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 decolonization. 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 1975.¹⁶ In the following years, the difficulties of a former colonial empire trying to come to terms with its redefined European borders were plentiful.

In the aftermath of 1974, the tendency in Portugal was to forget those years of armed 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.¹⁷ From 1974 onward, 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.¹⁸

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.¹⁹ A common statement is that they were simply military men fulfilling orders.²⁰ 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.²¹ 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 former regime—has been absent.²² Although the fact that there was a war is widely accepted—the term "war" has been employed freely since 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 past decades there has been ample discussion in Portugal about the accurate designation of this conflict.²³ 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 reutilizes an expression of the previous regime.²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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” (Decolonization War).²⁶

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

The naming of the conflict remains divisive and controversial in Portugal, where terms are adopted carefully and their use is justified.²⁸ The debate surrounding terminology hints at the complexity that characterizes 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 early 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 theater of operations.²⁹ In 1971, the age of conscription was lowered from twenty to eighteen years.³⁰ Fighting was a “national mission attributed to them by the political power.”³¹ They were “the youth [...] forced to go to war.”³² 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.³³ For instance, the thirtieth 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 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.³⁴

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 acknowledgment of their war experience. The fact that this experience has not been readily recognized 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 recognized the right to moral and material compensation for the disabled of the Armed Forces.³⁵ Other legislation of the 1980s and 1990s reinforced these rights, but in practice the war-disabled and war veterans in general remained largely unsupported.³⁶ 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 ongoing legal and political battle. The "political effects" achieved in the process confirm the strength acquired by this narrative of justice-seeking veterans.³⁷ 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 Assembly of the Portuguese Republic. This law acknowledges that there are ex-combatants suffering from war stress in Portugal and that this condition results from the military experience in Africa, and therefore it attributes to the Portuguese state the responsibility for compensating, treating, and 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.³⁸

Another significant legal achievement is regulation 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.³⁹ 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 the then Minister of Defense, in October 2004, when 150,000 ex-combatants began to receive a pension complement of about € 150 per annum (c. \$160 USD).⁴⁰ This initial gesture, on the thirtieth anniversary of the 1974 revolution, was accompanied by a rhetoric which asserted that “after 28 years of hardcore forgetting, justice has been done.”⁴¹ 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.”⁴²

However, this proved to be a highly controversial decision. The reduced amount conceded, and not to all veterans, was perceived as ineffectual. While some accepted that partial justice had been achieved, many felt cheated.⁴³ This dissatisfaction led to unprecedented protests in October 2004, promoted more famously by APVA—*Associação Portuguesa dos Veteranos de Guerra* (Portuguese Association of War Veterans). Calling the measure “the most elaborate lie of this Government,” the Association demonstrated before the Portuguese Parliament under the motto “justice yes, charity no.”⁴⁴ This action was followed by a nationwide wave of protests.⁴⁵ In the extensive media turmoil that followed, Portas and other politicians were accused of utilizing veterans for political propaganda.⁴⁶ Further accusations of political utilization emerged in 2008–2009, just before the general election, directed by Portas (by then in the opposition) toward the government.⁴⁷ The official response was a refusal to use the ex-combatants for “political fights.”⁴⁸ 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 9/2002.⁴⁹ Fulfilling these demands proved increasingly difficult due to the severe budgetary problems faced by the Ministry of Defense toward the end of the decade.⁵⁰ 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 *Hospital Militar Principal* (Main Military Hospital), and, after 1971, in the *Lar Militar da Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa* (Portuguese Red Cross Military Home), both in Lisbon, and in many family homes across the country. For many the situation did not fundamentally change after the democratic revolution, and remains even 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 “abandoned people living in a storehouse.”⁵¹ 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.”⁵²

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, ADFA, since its foundation, has been striving for legal rights, social integration, rehabilitation, support, and against discrimination.⁵³ 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 marginalized, with no perspectives of social reintegration,” the “just force of the victims of an unjust war.”⁵⁴

In 2004, on the occasion of ADFA’s thirtieth 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.”⁵⁵ Over 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.⁵⁶

Despite the evident inadequacies, and following extensive public debate, recent Portuguese governments have been more aware of the disabled ex-combatants’ needs.⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸

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 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.⁵⁹

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 (a condition legally recognized in Portugal in 1999), or war stress, as it is more commonly known, there is no consensus regarding the exact numbers of sufferers.⁶⁰ While some authors estimate that 30 percent 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.⁶¹ In 2007, psychologist Ângela Maia suggested that a total of 300,000 individuals were suffering from PTSD.⁶²

Maia's findings generated disagreement about the accuracy of the numbers advanced, exposing the fact that, over forty years after the end of the conflict, there are no official figures regarding the exact number of ex-combatants psychologically affected by PTSD.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ 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."⁶⁵

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 the war veteran organizations that culminated in the 1999 legal diploma.⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ The great breakthrough with this law was that for the first time the Portuguese state recognized 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 toward PTSD veteran sufferers.⁶⁸

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.⁶⁹ 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."⁷⁰

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 analyzed in more depth in the course of this chapter, recently there has been an increase in 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."⁷¹

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 to a democracy, the end of the empire and decolonization process, and the country's readjustment toward European 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.⁷² 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.⁷³ These veterans ask for "respect" and for "consideration," emphasizing they lived in a "different time," when war was an inevitability dictated by the regime and they had no choice but to go.⁷⁴ 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."⁷⁵

Inevitably, the war deeply “changed the life course” of “an entire generation,” the generation whose “youth” was stolen, and in whom war “left deep marks.”⁷⁶ Conscious of the historical singularity of their experience, and their advancing age, 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.”⁷⁷ Ideally, their accounts could act as an “incentive for the next generations to deepen this subject” and counteract society’s current “ignorance” about it.⁷⁸

This desire to address the past also stems from an overwhelming need to remember, honor, and pay “heartfelt homage” to those who died, and to the “mutilated and psychologically affected.”⁷⁹ In fact, the great majority of war novels, autobiographies, and similar accounts begin with a dedication to “our dead.”⁸⁰

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.⁸¹ 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).⁸²

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 as victimizers (of the enemy in combat).⁸³

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.⁸⁴

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

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

These associations operate alongside countless informal groups and veteran social networks. The periodic gatherings and activities organized 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.⁸⁸

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 veterans' lives. It shaped their collective identity and group sensibility, conferring an awareness of belonging to a particular generation molded by war.⁸⁹ 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 attainment of stable structures for autobiographical recollection.⁹⁰ 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 an imperial world (now lost)

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 honor solidarities forged during combat, leads to a distinctive generational attachment to this historical period and also to Africa.⁹¹ 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."⁹²

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 firsthand 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 past 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 practices steer remembrance in different directions, the building of a new, historically coherent future requires a necessary "engagement and reckoning with the past."⁹³ In the Portuguese case, fulfilling these "obligations" of memory would mean rethinking the colonial past in its entirety, and 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.⁹⁴

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.⁹⁵ The lack of unity and accepted knowledge around this historical event has eventually led to a resurgence of interest in the conflict in the past 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 many of 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 the 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 several war memory arenas will include public remembrance formats such as commemorative monuments, television, films, newspapers, exhibitions and similar initiatives; 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 toward 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 characterized 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, favoring 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.”⁹⁶ 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 toward 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.⁹⁷ After thirteen years of war to maintain African territories which appeared as “co-essential” to the nature of the country, decolonization was received with “indifference,” as “consummated fact.” Perhaps, as Lourenço suggested, this silence was the “price to pay” for democratic “liberation.”⁹⁸

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.”⁹⁹ Nonetheless, despite the willingness to “make it un-happen” through indifference, it was impossible to erase the war from within thousands of its veterans.¹⁰⁰ 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.¹⁰¹ The term *pudor*—which can be translated as *shame*, *embarrassment*, *uneasiness*—is employed repeatedly in Portugal to explain the silence on the conflict.¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³

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.¹⁰⁴ 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.”¹⁰⁵

This “first fictionalizing 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.¹⁰⁶ 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 becoming, among 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.¹⁰⁷

Os Cus de Judas (South of Nowhere), by António Lobo Antunes, one of the most influential and well-known fictionalizations 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 recounting you some sort of bad taste novel impossible to believe, a made-up story.¹⁰⁸ [...] 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.¹⁰⁹

From the late 1970s onward, literature began to assert itself as the field where the 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.¹¹⁰ The significant 1988 novel *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (The Murmuring Coast), uncharacteristically written by a woman, Lúcia Jorge, 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.”¹¹¹

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.¹¹² In remembering the colonial war, fiction appeared to be “safer” in its apparent detachment, and also in the fact that this budding colonial war literary wave did not appear to encounter a widespread audience.¹¹³ 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.”¹¹⁴ Therefore, in the late 1980s, the emergence of further works was anticipated and welcomed.¹¹⁵ 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 emphasized 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.¹¹⁶

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, defense of pacifism, an awareness of the end of a secular empire, and the assertion of a generational connection between veteran authors.¹¹⁷ In addition, there is a predominance of politically opportune views, mainly left-wing, along with a fundamental autobiographical weight typically assumed by this literature.¹¹⁸ 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.¹¹⁹

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.”¹²⁰ This retreat from the historical event into the literary field, and the subsequent crystallization of war memory in stylized aesthetic interpretations, manifests a “collective agony and individual catharsis.”¹²¹

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 to literature, which distances literary narratives from wider—and potentially more reflective—arenas of collective memory.¹²² In this respect, Ribeiro maintains that such abundant colonial war literature exposes an excess of personal memory in detriment of collective memory.¹²³ 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 skepticism and suspicion, and sometimes dismissing them as invalid or “untrue.”¹²⁴ Presenting fictionalized 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.¹²⁵

Furthermore, up to the late 1990s, the majority of ex-combatant war novel 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 representativeness.¹²⁶ The experiences of veterans originating from other social segments appear to have been 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.¹²⁷ 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 1995.¹²⁸ In its opening pages, the author states that he wanted to “open a space of plurality where the War of Africa could

be evoked by numerous protagonists.”¹²⁹ Through 150 strongly edited oral and written testimonies compiled over a 1000 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.”¹³⁰ The approach of simultaneously gathering data and minimizing 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.¹³¹

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 they were “always at the end of the book, which are the pages the teachers never get to before the academic year is over.”¹³² Despite official lack of interest, some schools attempted to compensate for the textbooks’ omissions by organizing pedagogical and 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 1989/1990.¹³³

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.”¹³⁴ 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 trivialization, 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.”¹³⁵ Recognizing the Portuguese inability and unwillingness to explore “unpleasant” memories, Carlos Ferraz stressed the cultural indifference of Portuguese society toward the war, manifested in small audiences, relatively little production, and insufficient publicizing, 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.¹³⁶

Nonetheless, an exceptional landmark in the public memory of the conflict during this period was the photographic reportage published in 1996 in *Notícias Magazine*, a 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 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.”¹³⁷

Toward the mid- to late 1990s, such avoidance—particularly regarding traumatic aspects—coexisted with an emergent media interest in the colonial conflict. For instance, in 1997–1998, 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 almost exclusively on a factual description of the war, detailing its military and logistic side.¹³⁸

As for other media arenas, television, for example, resisted examination of the war for years. Teixeira highlights the “official censoring indifference” for “the most important Portuguese historical event of the twentieth 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 “fierce” censorship about the conflict.¹³⁹ Filmmakers 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.¹⁴⁰ 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.¹⁴¹ 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 organizing *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.¹⁴²

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.¹⁴³ In this arena, there were a few other notable exceptions.¹⁴⁴ 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 mobilization 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.¹⁴⁵ None of these films constitutes, however, a recognizable 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.¹⁴⁶ 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 offering personal accounts of only officers or more prominent individuals, consigning soldiers' presence to a list of names at the end of the documentary.¹⁴⁷ Less typical of the predominant lack of reflection in this period is the award-winning 1999 documentary *Natal 71* (Christmas 71), by Margarida Cardoso.¹⁴⁸ Drawing upon a famous music record given to conscripts in

1971, Cardoso directed a very thoughtful and sensitive approach to her father's 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 January 1994.¹⁴⁹ Mentored since 1987 by *Liga dos Combatentes* (Combatants' League), the project was funded mainly by the Ministry of Defense. The monument, a triangular-shaped portico of geometric simplicity, accented by the *chama da Pátria* (the flame of Motherland, a perpetual flame symbolizing continuity in honoring 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 defense 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."¹⁵⁰

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 certain 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 a 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.¹⁵¹

Disputed from many angles, the memorial exposed a fractured national unity and a contested reconciliation with the past.¹⁵² Further commemorative ceremonies associated with the monument attempted to avoid political controversies by highlighting more 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.¹⁵³ 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.¹⁵⁴ 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.¹⁵⁵

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, and 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.¹⁵⁶ 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 institutionalized transmission of memory assumes particular importance in the Portuguese case where, for many years, “official policies promoted forgetting.”¹⁵⁷

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 rising awareness, reflecting concepts stressed by Ashplant et al., that the memorialization of war “in physical and visual forms may create the illusion that the past will not be forgotten,” while also springing from “an opposite and equal desire to forget.”¹⁵⁸ While 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 was being 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 polarization—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 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.¹⁵⁹ Feeling unrecognized, 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 organized more frequently in Portugal from the late 1990s onward.¹⁶⁰ Within this context, the biggest Portuguese war veteran association, APVG (*Associação Portuguesa dos Veteranos de Guerra* or 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.¹⁶¹

BREAKING THE SILENCE: TIME FOR REVIVAL

Since the beginning of the new millennium, but more noticeably from the middle of its first decade onward, the public memory of the Portuguese Colonial War “little by little” has been dropping its “taboos,” significantly increasing its presence in a diversity of arenas—cultural, social, political—and moving into new approaches.¹⁶² 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 mobilization 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.¹⁶³ Generating a “snowball effect” of published remembrance, this “emergent torrent of narratives” displayed strong characteristic themes.¹⁶⁴ 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.¹⁶⁵ 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 recognized lack of knowledge on the average Portuguese combatant—the “unknown face” of the colonial war—by focusing on “the experiences and behaviors of the basic soldier, that man who made the war and of whom history seldom speaks.”¹⁶⁶ 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, violence.”¹⁶⁷ 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 the criminal side of war, never hiding how rustic, illiterate, and politically unaware many of these men were.

Unlike more fictionally localized earlier works, these narratives are also characterized by a retrospective reflection about the colonial conflict, and the attempt to extract wider meanings from the event.¹⁶⁸ 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.¹⁶⁹ This reflection is also framed by a stronger group consciousness and acknowledgment of the difficulties associated with their reinsertion into civilian life, as well as the long-term negative consequences of their participation in the conflict.¹⁷⁰ These veteran writings also frequently express disappointment at the course taken by Portuguese democracy, particularly regarding the ex-combatants’ social place.¹⁷¹

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.¹⁷² In another example, António Abreu justified the 2007 publication

of the diary he wrote in Guinea between 1972 and 1974 on the grounds that it was his duty to pass his experiential knowledge to younger generations, revealing “what the war was like from the inside.”¹⁷³

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, there is a popular demand for war literature which has resulted in a growing market in Portugal for such books, and publishers have acted on that interest.¹⁷⁴ 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.¹⁷⁵

Some war-themed books have achieved considerable success.¹⁷⁶ There is also a cultural space emerging which allows competing, and often contentious, political perspectives on the topic.¹⁷⁷ In that sense, although recent literary works are not as ideologically marked as in the past, in some instances newly emerging books have been channeling a certain “nostalgia for the Empire” imbued with feelings of patriotic nationalism which voices alternative viewpoints to the predominantly left-wing discourse.¹⁷⁸ 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 put it, and conducive to more “mature reflections.”¹⁷⁹ For many ex-combatants, now is the time to have the “courage” to speak, to overcome the “self-indulgence and safety” of remaining quiet.¹⁸⁰ 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.”¹⁸¹ Such catharsis also involves transmission, the willingness to educate Portuguese society on the experience of the colonial war.¹⁸² A positive social response 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 toward this topic.¹⁸³ Perhaps also aided by globalization 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 significance¹⁸⁴—a past which, in multiple ways, connects with their lives, their families, and their individual experiences, thus arousing social interest.¹⁸⁵

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, and reflective dimension.¹⁸⁶ 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.¹⁸⁷ 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 put it, “history will describe this war and no name of any soldier will be mentioned there”; their experiences will be lost to history.¹⁸⁸

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 veterans, an example of which is *Guerra Colonial* (Colonial War, 2000), edited by Aniceto Afonso and Carlos Gomes.¹⁸⁹ 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 acknowledgment of potentially contentious ideological viewpoints.¹⁹⁰ 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 judge-

ment,” 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 localized personal experiences.¹⁹¹

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 recognizably collective historiographical narrative about the conflict that goes beyond an encyclopedic 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 has generally been 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 multivolume work on the Portuguese military institution.¹⁹² Although substantially tackled from a politico-military angle, this work features an interpretive piece covering the war experience from the serviceman’s perspective.¹⁹³ 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.¹⁹⁴ The latter sets out 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.¹⁹⁵

Some of these new contributions emerge at school level. Current Ministry of Education’s guidelines detailing “essential competences” in twentieth-century Portuguese history list individual topics such as the New State, the 25th of April 1974, and the democratic regime, but the colonial war is not specifically mentioned.¹⁹⁶ 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 25th April Association and the Ministry of Education, its goal was to develop interest in the Portuguese history of the second half of the twentieth century, expanding students’ knowledge about it, and “privileging, in particular, the research and collection of memories” of participants in the colonial war.¹⁹⁷ 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 toward vulnerable ex-combatants, presented as marginalized “instruments” of an embarrassing historical period and 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.¹⁹⁸ 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.”¹⁹⁹ 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.²⁰⁰

The visibility of the colonial war has also expanded in the Portuguese press through initiatives focused on ex-combatants’ personal accounts. A good example of this 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.²⁰¹ The series depicts the impact, past and present, of the conflict, including accounts of violent, traumatic war episodes.²⁰² By not being clear, however, about the selection criteria adopted for publication, “My War” has generated disagreement

among veterans, who dispute the factual accuracy of some testimonies and question the representativeness of certain accounts published.²⁰³

Along with veteran testimony, sensitive and controversial war-related topics have received more exposure in recent Portuguese printed press, including the fate of the African servicemen who fought for the Portuguese Army and were 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.²⁰⁴ 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.²⁰⁵

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 responses to requests for testimonial participation, 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 an 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.²⁰⁶ 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 prioritized outside veteran groups.

Cyberspace is another environment where the public memory of the Portuguese Colonial War has strongly been emerging, particularly toward the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. There are now forums, blogs, and 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.²⁰⁷ Often after decades without contact, former comrades have found in the Internet a quick and an efficient way of communicating non-presentially and developing new forms of association. For those who have

access to it, the Internet has revolutionized 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, which is 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, directed mainly at ex-combatants who fought in Guinea during the conflict (1963–1974).²⁰⁸

The significance of this remembrance arena increased with the launching in 2009 of a site about the colonial war—www.guerracolonial.org—resulting from a joint partnership of RTP (*Rádio e Televisão de Portugal*, Portuguese public broadcasting corporation) and Associação 25 de Abril (25th 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 and Gomes, 2001), and on some extra multimedia features.²⁰⁹ Nonetheless, since the contents do not appear to be updated, and there is no option for user interaction—which could potentially foster dialogue, as well as accommodating comments and suggested improvements—this site underachieves its potential of becoming a national online reference for the study of the Portuguese Colonial War.²¹⁰

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.²¹¹ Relying on an extended range of options, this conflict has found a suitable, accessible, evolving memorial outlet in the online 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.²¹²

Perhaps reflecting political, social, and cultural developments in contemporary Portugal, the passage of time and stimuli originating from civil society, one of the most vibrant public remembrance arenas of the colonial war in Portugal in the last decade has been the audiovisual sector, encompassing Portuguese television programs, debates, documentary-making, cinema, radio, and so forth. 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.²¹³

An emerging alternative approach to the colonial war within Portuguese filmmaking 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 1985²¹⁴; 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”²¹⁵; *20,13* (2007), by Joaquim Leitão, one of few Portuguese war films, is set in 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, emphasizes the human cost of war, presenting the life-changing impact of disability on one soldier.²¹⁶

Within television, the increasing appearance of programs devoted to the ex-combatants and the colonial war illustrates a new sensibility toward this subject in Portugal.²¹⁷ 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, the debate began by affirming the public television service’s role in assisting “the quest for historical truth [which] strengthens countries and citizenship.”²¹⁸ Invited speakers included army officers from different backgrounds and political positions, veteran academics, war-disabled, and the seldom-seen 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 of the 25th April revolution and decolonization process and the abandonment of native African troops, and briefly mentioning the war-disabled needs for “material and moral dignity,” the debate exposed the existing division in Portugal about the war.²¹⁹ 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 one of the first national attempts 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."²²⁰ Ending unresolved, yet welcoming future understandings, the debate demonstrated Portugal's quest for a nationally consensual "historical truth."²²¹

Nonetheless, this debate certainly paved the way for a more frequent presence of the colonial war on Portuguese television, particularly in its immediate aftermath.²²² Programs 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.²²³ 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 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 retired veteran group is increasingly 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.²²⁴

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.²²⁵ 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.²²⁶ Shot in Portugal and Africa, RTP 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 people knew so little.²²⁷

Controversy and animated discussions followed (mainly among veterans), suggesting that, as Furtado pinpointed, Portuguese society was “finally available” to consider the conflict.²²⁸ 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.²²⁹ Remembering the war became “fashionable” and/or timely, with an evident “boom in the remembrance of [colonial war] memories due to the documentary.”²³⁰ 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.²³¹ 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 PTSD symptoms in former combatants.²³²

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 contextualized 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.²³³ Nonetheless, the success and impact of *A Guerra* was indicative of the Portuguese people’s interest in the conflict.²³⁴ The colonial war increased its presence on a variety of audiovisual formats as the first decade of the twenty-first 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.²³⁵ Typically organized on a local level by municipalities and veterans’ groups, such monuments pay homage to the dead of that region and/or acknowledge combatants in general.²³⁶ 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.²³⁷

However, the public message contained in this commemorative abundance is not always consensual.²³⁸ 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.²³⁹ 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 the combatants.²⁴⁰ Furthermore, arising normally under the auspices of local powers (which often organize 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.²⁴¹

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 toward 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" (10th June), which stage an on-site ceremony, including veterans, military, and official representatives. For some, this event is a fair homage and acknowledgment of the colonial war and the ex-combatants, while for others it is an unrepresentative, nostalgic commemoration echoing the former regime.²⁴² 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.²⁴³ Navigating political disagreements, they normally affirm the need of societal recognition toward ex-combatants and the overcoming of shame about their role in the past.²⁴⁴

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.²⁴⁵ 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.²⁴⁶ Significantly, two international congresses on the colonial war, organized 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.²⁴⁷ In 2003, an international meeting was held in Coimbra to reflect about the topic through the neglected perspective of “Women and the Colonial War.”²⁴⁸ Furthermore, in the last decade, several photographic exhibitions and colloquiums have also been organized nationwide by Associação APOIAR, ADFA, Liga dos Combatentes, and other veteran associations.²⁴⁹ The 50th anniversary of the beginning of the colonial war in 2011 witnessed the occurrence of notable initiatives.²⁵⁰ These developments suggest an increasing recognition of the impact of the colonial war in Portugal and the need to address it.²⁵¹

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.²⁵² While some advocate that they should remain in Africa, but with suitable funerary structures, others press for official and unofficial institutions to organize 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 to renovate neglected Portuguese military graves in Africa.²⁵³

This emotionally charged social demand unites veterans and bereaved families against the forgetting and “abandonment” of dead combatants in Africa.²⁵⁴ 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.²⁵⁵ 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 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 family members.²⁵⁶

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 Defense.²⁵⁷ 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.²⁵⁸ Through this plan, the rehabilitation of Portuguese military cemeteries in several African countries has been undertaken.²⁵⁹

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

In recent years, this subject has made a frequent appearance on Portuguese media.²⁶³ Mainstream television channels reporting on the topic often focus on its emotional impact, covering the funeral ceremonies and military honors normally associated with reinterment in Portugal.²⁶⁴ 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 by focusing on the ritualization of funerals, the recognition conferred by posthumous honors, and rhetoric of noble sacrifice for the motherland, although not always through consensual terms.²⁶⁵

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 publicized 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.²⁶⁶ The long time it took to address the matter being “the unmistakable sign that Portugal needs to write its contemporary history.”²⁶⁷ 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.²⁶⁸ 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 completely fulfill all the requests being made regarding the mortal remains of combatants.

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 1999.²⁶⁹ 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 judgment, 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."²⁷⁰

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.²⁷¹

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, among other examples, contribute to, quoting Felícia Cabrita, conquering “the veil of silence that hid the massacres committed in the Portuguese colonies during the New State period.”²⁷² 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.²⁷³ Furthermore, there are signs that educated, younger Portuguese generations increasingly wish to understand the colonial conflict more fully, including its brutal aspects.²⁷⁴

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.²⁷⁵ 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. Over forty years after the 1974 revolution and the end of the conflict, Portuguese society is the reflection of the many changes of the past decades.²⁷⁶ 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 spaces. These aspects have familiarized 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 psychotherapy experts describe by the self-explanatory term “life review process.”²⁷⁷ 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 have tended to produce some backward-looking narratives and identity references from the past, seeking meaning from it, and, in some instances, favoring 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 toward the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, which prompted a re-establishment of connections and encouraged war-related remembrance.²⁷⁸

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 memorialization 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, contextualizing structural analysis. Informative, commemorative, descriptive, fragmentary, or fictional approaches to the topic, in general, 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, filmmakers, psychiatrists, and psychologists, among others—many of them being 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 trivializes the event and deprives it of its “human and historical density,” as Cruzeiro put it.²⁷⁹ The proliferation of remembrance activities can become problematic if it takes place without 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.²⁸⁰ 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.²⁸¹

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 utilizations of the field, and thus presenting “recycled memorial images emptied of any historical plenitude.”²⁸² Nonetheless, although such aspects raise concerns about a certain commercialization of the past, these arenas also offer new types of mnemonic awareness which can help transform the Portuguese socio-political panorama.²⁸³

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 with 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.²⁸⁴ Since then, eschewing unrest over such a divisive matter, official remembrance policies have been uncertain and sometimes contradictory, as they often resulted from reactions to different (sometimes opposed) pressures from civil society, increasingly exposed by the media.²⁸⁵ Preceded and surmounted by a private impulse to remember, the official response has been tardy, careful, focused on reconciliation, and neglectful of certain memories, denoting, thus, an unresolved national trauma.²⁸⁶

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.²⁸⁷ 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 polarized narrative framings.²⁸⁸ 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.²⁸⁹

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 colonialization—clashing with the current democratic condemnation of colonial rule.²⁹⁰ 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 unrecognized patriotic heroes.²⁹¹ 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 utilization.²⁹²

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.²⁹³ The idea reiterated by several memory agents in Portugal that the colonial war history will be 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 emphasized critical distinctive aspects, but also evidenced how, in general, memorial developments in both phases 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 with an effective support of veterans and families affected by the war.²⁹⁴ These factors indicate that global advances in the context of war memory, as discussed in Chap. 2, 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 a 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.

NOTES

1. See “Foreword” in J. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa. The Portuguese Way of War, 1961–1974* (Florida: Hailer Publishing, 2005), xi–xii and “Preface,” in *Ibid.*, xiii.
2. Just as Algeria was a legal part of France, as noted by Evans, in *Algeria. France’s Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 113–147, 371.
3. For an example of the mainstream view in 1961, see F. Vieira, *Portugal em Angola* (Lisbon: Editorial Aadastra, 1961).
4. The mobilized forces equaled to over 7 percent of the active population; 40 percent of the national budget was channeled to National Defense. See A. Afonso, “A guerra e o fim do regime ditatorial,” in *História de Portugal*, Medina (1994), 333–356.
5. See P. de Medeiros, “Hauntings. Memory, fiction and the Portuguese colonial wars,” in *The Politics of War Memory*, ed. T. Ashplant et al. (2000), 201–221, citing J. Guerra, *Descolonização Portuguesa* (1996); see also J. Brandão, *Cronologia da Guerra Colonial. Angola, Guiné, Moçambique, 1961–1974* (Lisbon: Editora Prefácio, 2008), 8.
6. Brandão, *Cronologia*, 450; “Foreword” by General B. Trainor, in Cann, *Counterinsurgency*, xi.
7. Brandão, *Cronologia*, 450. The war effort implied the mobilization of increasingly large numbers of conscripts. It should be stressed that this annual average includes large contingents of native troops that fought on the colonial side, particularly from 1970 onward. See C. Gomes, “A africanização na Guerra Colonial e as suas sequelas: tropas locais – os vilões nos ventos da história,” in *As guerras de libertação e os sonhos coloniais: alianças secretas*,

- mapas imaginados*, ed. M. Meneses and B. S. Martins (Coimbra: Edições Almedina, 2013), 123–141. N. Teixeira notes that during the war the troops' contingent was increased about 5.5 times; see N. Teixeira, "Portugal e as Guerras da Descolonização," in *Nova História Militar*, (Vol. 4, 2004), 68–92.
8. R. Teixeira, ed., *A Guerra Colonial e o Romance Português* (2nd edition. Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 1998), 88; H. Stubbe, "A Guerra Colonial à luz da antropologia cultural," in *A Guerra Colonial. Realidade e ficção. Livro de Actas do I Congresso Internacional*, ed. R. Teixeira (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 2001), 253.
 9. R. Bebiano, "A esquerda e a oposição, à guerra colonial," in *A Guerra do Ultramar: Realidade e Ficção. Livro de Actas do II Congresso Internacional sobre a Guerra Colonial*, ed. R. Teixeira (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 2002), 293–313.
 10. Estado-Maior do Exército (CECA) *Resenha*, 254–270.
 11. R. Bebiano, "A resistência interna à guerra colonial," *História* XXV, no. III (2002): 47.
 12. Bebiano, "A esquerda e a oposição," 296.
 13. Bebiano, "A resistência interna à guerra colonial," 40–47.
 14. L. Rosário, "Guerra Colonial versus luta armada de libertação," in *A Guerra Colonial*, R. Teixeira (2001), 78–79.
 15. See, for instance, *Regimento de Caçadores Pára-Quedistas, Escola de Recrutadas, III Fichas de Instrução (Projecto), 2—Regulamentos* (1969), 3.
 16. See, for instance, "Retornados de África. A imigração invisível," in *Diário de Notícias*, 14th August 2005.
 17. D. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History. A Practical Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 36.
 18. M. Evans "Rehabilitating the Traumatized War Veteran: The Case of French Conscriptees from the Algerian War, 1954–1962," in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. Evans and K. Lunn (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 75.
 19. M. Ribeiro, "Empire, colonial wars and post-colonialism in Portuguese contemporary imagination," *Portuguese Studies* 17 (2002): 186.
 20. See, for example, R. Teixeira, *Angola. (N'Gola). História do Batalhão de Caçadores 109 (1961/63)* (Coimbra: Quarteto Editores, 2008), 177.

21. Similar to the case of the public memory of the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962); Evans, Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory*, 55; Evans et al., *The Algerian War* (2002), 5.
22. M. Ribeiro et al. “The children of the Colonial Wars: post-memory and representations,” in *The (in)visibility of war in modern culture*, ed. I. Gil and A. Martins (New York: Continuum Books, 2012), 18.
23. R. Vecchi, *Exceção Atlântica. Pensar a Literatura da Guerra Colonial* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2010), 140, 176–177.
24. The Portuguese *Ultramar* were the Portuguese overseas provinces. These territories ceased to be called colonies in 1951.
25. The choice of title of the first encyclopedic work on the war is carefully explained by Afonso and Gomes (eds.) in *Guerra Colonial* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 2001), 20; see also Gomes (under the pseudonym C. Ferraz) “Guerra colonial e expressão literária. Falta de memória? Falta de talento? Ou nós somos mesmo assim?” in *Vértice: Guerra Colonial, Estado Novo e Regime Democrático*, F. Melo, ed., II Série (Jan.–Feb. 1994): 15.
26. For António Ferreira, it was a “civil war,” in *Morte na Picada* (Lisbon: Via Occidentalis Editora, 2008), 5; see interview with Nuno Teixeira, in *Visão*, 9 October 2003.
27. See explanation of Teixeira, *Angola* (2008), 31–32. The author prefers the non-committal “War of Africa.”
28. For a recent example, see back cover of Brandão, *Cronologia* (2008)
29. Legal diploma no. 2135 (*Lei do Serviço Militar*), passed on 11 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, two of which had to be served in Africa; Cann, “Um notável feito de armas” in *A Guerra Colonial*, Teixeira (2001), 133; and L. Matos, “A Orgânica das Forças Armadas Portuguesas,” in *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 4, 2004), 184.
30. Cann, “Um notável feito de armas,” 133.
31. Antunes, “Introduction” to *A Guerra de África* (Volume I, 1995), 7.
32. A. Rosa, *Memórias de Um Prisioneiro de Guerra* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2003), 171.

33. A term used by Dawson, Leydesdorff, and Rogers in *Trauma*. (1999), 10.
34. Similarly to the veterans of the French colonial conflict; see Evans, "Rehabilitating the Traumatized..." 75–76.
35. Earlier, in May 1974, ADEFA, *Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas*, was founded. ADEFA 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.
36. For further legislation, please see <http://www.mdn.gov.pt/mdn/pt/Defesa/Legislacao/> [Portuguese Ministry of Defense's website].
37. Dawson, *Making Peace*, 152.
38. *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, 7 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*, 27 September 2012.
39. Namely legal diploma no. 9/2002, 11 February 2002; regulated again in 2004 (21/2004, 5 June) and 2009 (3/2009, 13 January).
40. See *Correio da Manhã*, on 23 April 2004.
41. See *A Capital*, 28th September 2004; Durão Barroso, the then Prime Minister, expressed a similar opinion in *O Independente*, 23 April 2004; see also *Público*, 19 April 2004; *Jornal de Notícias*, 24 April 2004; *Diário de Notícias*, 26 April 2004.
42. See *Jornal da Madeira*, 9 December 2004; Lusa news agency, 3 February 2005; *Açoriano Oriental*, 2 May 2005; *O Comércio do Porto* and *24 Horas*, 28 September 2004.
43. See, for example, opinions of J. Oliveira and J. Lopes, in *Correio da Manhã*, 7 April and 7 May 2004; and of B. da Fonte in *A Voz de Trás-os-Montes*, 28 October 2004.
44. See *Comércio do Porto*, 19 October 2004.
45. 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 toward the “over 400,000 ex-combatants who served their motherland in special conditions of difficulty and danger”; see *Lusa* news agency and *Público*, 3 February 2005; on the demonstrations, see *A Capital*, *Diário de Coimbra*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Jornal de Notícias*, on 21 October 2004.
46. See *A Capital*, 4 February 2005; *Lusa* news agency, 3 February 2005; and *Público*, 3 February 2005; G. Costa and J. Monteiro in *O Comércio do Porto*, 22 March and 3 December 2004; regarding unfulfilled political promises, among other aspects, the veterans had been asking for retirement at fifty-five years of age. 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*, 11th November 2004.
 47. See *Público*, 3rd August 2008.
 48. See *Público* and *Correio da Manhã*, 3rd August 2008.
 49. See, for example, *Correio da Manhã*, 10th June 2008; *Jornal de Notícias*, 25th July 2008; *Correio da Manhã*, 11th August 2008, and also 16th July 2008.
 50. In late 2008, there were reports the Ministry of Defense was over €100 million 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*, 26th October 2006.
 51. See M. Assor, “*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.
 52. See J. Ribeiro, *Marcas da Guerra Colonial* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 1999), 38; and ADEFA, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas, *III Congresso ADEFA, Participando Construimos o Futuro* (1989), 61.
 53. H. Rodrigues, in *Guerra Colonial*, Afonso and Gomes, (2001), 568.
 54. ADEFA’s Regulations at <http://www.adfa-portugal.com/> ; ADEFA, *III Congresso ADEFA* (1989), 44; Gomes, “Quotidianos

- da Guerra Colonial,” in *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 5, 2004), 172; Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 41; ADEFA, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas (several authors) *As Barreiras Invisíveis da Integração* (Lisbon: Edições ADEFA, 1995), 11, 38.
55. ADEFA, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas, *ADEFA, 30 anos, 1974–2004* (2004), 40 (V. Lourenço), 53 (J. Santos).
 56. *Público* and *Sol*, 15th November 2008; *Correio da Manhã*, 5th November 2008.
 57. *Jornal de Notícias*, 20th November 2007.
 58. *Público*, 20th and 23rd January, 14th May 2009; *Diário de Notícias*, 24th January 2009.
 59. *Lusa* news agency, 18th March 2004.
 60. 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.
 61. In Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 58; *Lusa* news agency, 18th 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): 309–320.
 62. See *Notícias Magazine*, 17th July 2007; and afternoon news of TVI Portuguese television channel on 23rd September 2007.
 63. See “A contabilidade sem fim das vítimas de uma guerra,” by M. Resendes, in *Diário de Notícias*, 6th October 2007.
 64. See non-dated article about war-stressed published in December 2005 in www.saude.sapo.pt.
 65. Â. Maia, T. McIntyre, G. Pereira, and E. Fernandes, *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), 11–28; Â. Maia et al., *Ibid.*, 11, quoting L. Quintais, “Memória e Trauma numa Unidade Psiquiátrica,” *Análise Social* 34 (2000): 673–684.
 66. Legal diploma no. 46/1999; see also Albuquerque et al., “Perturbação Pós-Traumática do Stress” (2003), 309–320.

67. *Correio da Manhã*, 10th August 2008.
68. 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 organizations to treat war-stress cases more quickly; see *Correio da Manhã*, 17th December 2007, 21st and 22nd November 2007.
69. There is an increasing awareness about the suffering of the wives of war veterans. For instance, APVG (*Associação Portuguesa de Veteranos de Guerra*, Portuguese War Veterans' Association) offers psychological support to members' wives since 2004. An estimated 80,000 wives of ex-combatants suffer from secondary post-traumatic stress disorder. See *Correio da Manhã*, 22nd May 2003, 24th January 2006, and 27th March 2006.
70. Maia et al., "Por baixo," 27.
71. See back cover text in C. Ferraz, C. *Nó Cego* (Alfragide: Casa das Letras, 2008)
72. "Preface" to V. Correia, *A Fisga* (Linda-a-Velha: DG Edições, 2008), 8.
73. L. Araújo, *Os Bravos da Picada. Diário de Guerra da 2.^a Companhia do Batalhão Expedicionário 5014* (Madeira: Author's Edition, 2003), 109; Correia, *A Fisga*, 11–12.
74. Araújo, *Os Bravos*, 109; see also J. Mesquita, *O Inferno Verde. Moçambique, 1968–1972* (Lisbon: Prefácio, 2004).
75. M. Bastos, *Cacimbados. A Vida por um Fio* (Vila Nova de Gaia: Babel Editores, 2008), 121; see also "Preface" to Correia, *A Fisga*, 8; D. Marques, ed., *Cabo Delgado. Uma História Trágico-Terrestre. Da Operação «Nó Górdio» ao Fim do Império* (Braga: Authors' Edition, 2008), 97 and B. Estrela, *Perigo e Fascínio em África. Angola, 1962–1964* (Lisbon: Prefácio, 2007); Rosa, *Memórias*, 169.
76. See back cover text of C. Costa, *Morto Por Te Ver. Cartas de um Soldado à Namorada (Angola, 1967–1969)* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2007); see front dust jacket of J. Melo, ed., *Os Anos da Guerra. 1961–1975. Os Portugueses em África. Crónica, Ficção e História*, vols. I and II (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1988); Araújo, *Os Bravos*, 109.
77. J. Carvalho, *Era Tempo de Morrer em África. Angola, Guerra e Descolonização, 1961–1975* (Lisbon: Prefácio, 2004), 37, 40;

- A. Machado, *Aconteceu no Leste de Angola. A “Batalha” do Lumeje* (Beja: Samarcanda, 2003), 8; P. Brito, “Adeus, até ao meu regresso. 40 anos depois,” in *Domingo, Correio da Manhã*, 27th February 2005.
78. Teixeira, *Angola*, backcover, 19; Estrela, *Perigo*.
79. Rosa, *Memórias*, 171; also Chapter XL of Correia, *Fisga*; Marques, ed., *Cabo Delgado*; M. Santos, *Diário da Guiné, 1968–1969. Na Terra dos Soncô* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 2008); J. Garcia, *Lugar de Massacre* (Lisbon: Edições Salamandra, 3rd edition, 1996); Machado, *Aconteceu no Leste*; M. Pinho, *Missão em Moçambique. 25 de Abril de 1970 a 21 de Maio de 1972. Companhia de Caçadores “2729”* (Cortegaça: Crecor, 2009); Teixeira, ed., *A Guerra Colonial e o Romance Português* (1998); Teixeira, ed., *A Guerra Colonial: Realidade e Ficção* (2001); Brandão. *Cronologia*, 9.
80. Teixeira, *Angola*, 11.
81. See, for example, F. Lopes, *O Alferes Eduardo* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 2000), 7.
82. Marques, *Cabo Delgado*, 173, 179; and V. Lourenço, *No Regresso Vinham Todos. Relato da Companhia n.º 2549* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 1997), 56.
83. Quintais, “Memória e Trauma...” 680; “*Guerra Colonial*,” *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24th February 2008.
84. See back cover of E. Aranha, *Guerra Colonial. Um Barco Fardado* (Lisbon: Roma Editora, 2005)
85. A few of the more important are *Liga dos Combatentes* (Combatants’ League, est. 1924), *ADFA—Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas* (Association for the Disabled of the Armed Forces, est. 1974), *APOIAR—Associação de Apoio aos Ex-combatentes Vítimas do Stress de Guerra* (Association for the Support of War Stressed Ex-combatants, est. 1994), *APVG—Associação Portuguesa de Veteranos de Guerra* (Portuguese War Veteran Association, est. 1999), and *ACUP—Associação Combatentes do Ultramar Português* (Combatants of the Portuguese Ultramar Association, est. 2002). See Works Cited and Consulted for more information.
86. In 2006, several main veteran associations constituted a national federation—*Federação Portuguesa das Associações de Combatentes*; see *Correio de Manhã*, 25th July 2006.

87. Among others, the inclusion of military service toward the calculation of the 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, and providing care homes and other social support services for ex-combatants.
88. Lorenz, "The unending war," in *Trauma*, ed. Dawson, Leydesdorff, Rogers (1999), 95–112.
89. G. Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, reprinted 2012), 216, 234–235; see also Dawson, *Making Peace*, 4–6.
90. Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 111.
91. A strong affective connection to Africa is prevalent among many war veterans (see, for example, "Presentation" by F. Pontes in Teixeira, *Angola*, 14; see also author L. Jorge's viewpoint in *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24th February 2008; one of its manifestations, particularly from the beginning of the new millennium, is the popularization 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*, 8th February 2004 and 28th January 2007; *Diário de Notícias*, 17th December 2007; *Correio da Manhã*, 4th and 8th March 2008).
92. In "Irmãos de Armas," *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 27th October 2008.
93. Dawson, *Making Peace*, 17.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., 18.
96. This was the conviction of Marshal C. Gomes, president of the Portuguese Republic between October 1974 and July 1976, cited in Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 147–148.
97. E. Lourenço, *O Labirinto da Saudade. Psicanálise Mítica do Destino Português*, 6th edition (Lisbon: Gradiva, 2009), 46–47.
98. Ibid., 63.
99. M. Ribeiro, *África no Feminino. As Mulheres Portuguesas e a Guerra Colonial* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2007), 31.
100. Ibid.

101. Lourenço, *O Labirinto*, 46–47.
102. Ribeiro, *Uma História de Regressos*, 249; veteran accounts by Santos, *Diário*, 7–8; and G. Pimenta, *Memórias. Guerra Colonial* (Viseu: Palimage Editores, 2000), back cover.
103. Santos, *Diário*, 7–8.
104. Medeiros, “Hauntings...,” (2000), 201–221.
105. Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory*, 38–39.
106. To employ the phrase of J. Vieira in Ferreira, *Morte na Picada*, 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 W. Ramos, *Percursos (Do Luachimo ao Luena)* (Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1981); and J. Ruas, *Corpo Colonial* (Coimbra: Centelha, 1981).
107. A. Guerra, *O Capitão Nemo e Eu. Crónica das Horas Aparentes* (Lisbon: Publicações D. Quixote, 2nd edition, 2000), 9–10 [first published in 1973]; see backcover comments by A. Machado in Garcia, *Lugar* (1996) [first published in 1975]; Lourenço, *No Regresso* [first published 1975]; A. Calvino, *O Deus que a Igreja nos Vende* (Lisbon: Author’s Edition, 1977), 98.
108. A. L. Antunes, *Os Cus de Judas* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1984), 67.
109. Antunes, *Os Cus de Judas*, 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 Defense Police) was the main tool of repression used by the regime during the *Estado Novo* period (1933–1974).
110. 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 A. L. Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino* (Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 11th edition, 2007), 28 [first published in 1983] and J. Melo, *Autópsia de um Mar em Ruínas* (Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 7th edition, 2002), 349 [first published 1984]; A. Oliveira, *Até Hoje (Memórias de Cão)*, (Lisbon: Ulmeiro, 3rd edition, 2003), 188 [first published in 1986]; A. Faria, *Cortes* (Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 1986) and C. V. Ferraz, *Soldado* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 2nd edition, 1996) [first published in 1988].

111. L. Jorge, *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (Lisbon: Publicações D. Quixote, 1988), 21.
112. See two-volume literary anthology on the colonial war organized by veteran and literature expert J. Melo, ed., *Os anos da guerra* (Vol. 1), 2; M. Ribeiro, “Empire, colonial wars...,” 186.
113. As noted by Ferraz [pseudonym of C. Gomes] in “Guerra colonial e expressão literária...,” 13–16.
114. See earlier explanation on Chap. 3. Melo, *Os anos da guerra*, 17–19, 30.
115. *Ibid.*, 19.
116. On the lack of critical analysis, see, for instance, preface of C. de Oliveira to A. Calvino, *Trinta Facadas de Raiva* (Lisbon: Author’s Edition, 1999), 5–6.
117. Teixeira, *A Guerra Colonial* (1998), 103.
118. Ferraz, “Guerra colonial e expressão literária...,” 15; and Teixeira, *A Guerra Colonial* (1998), 108–109.
119. *Ibid.*, 108.
120. Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory*, 42.
121. Teixeira, *A Guerra Colonial* (1998), 110 ; see also Preface by E. Lisboa in *Ibid.*, 17.
122. J. Ruas, in *A Guerra Colonial : Realidade e Ficção*, R. Teixeira (2001), 303.
123. Ribeiro, *África no Feminino*, 31.
124. For a relevant example, see J. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 39–40; Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory*, 45.
125. Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory*, 51; M. Ribeiro argues that a truly collective memory of the colonial war should include women’s voices, in *África no Feminino*, 33.
126. 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” (University of Sussex: MA dissertation, 2000), 5–18.
127. Mattoso, *História de Portugal* (“Sétimo Volume. O Estado Novo,” Vol. 7, 1994); Medina, “A guerra e o fim do regime ditatorial,” in *História de Portugal* (Vol. 13, 1994), 333–371.
128. Antunes, *A Guerra de África* (2 vols., 1995).

129. Antunes, *A Guerra de África* (Volume I, 1995), 6.
130. Ibid.
131. See viewpoint of Brigadier M. Pires in Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 197; also Vecchi, *Excepção Atlântica*, 27.
132. Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 8.
133. This project collected 28 veteran testimonies (anonymized) in Braga, Portugal. Establishing partnerships with the local council and ADEFA, 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, *A Guerra Colonial e o Romance Português*, 88.
134. Attended by 300 participants, mostly researchers, writers, and intellectuals, some of them veterans, it took place in Coimbra, on 5 November 1993, co-organized by magazine *Vértice*, Coimbra Local Council, Coimbra Academic Association and the Teachers' Union of Central Portugal; see Melo, ed., *Vértice* (1994).
135. Cruzeiro, M., "Guerra colonial: entre o recalçamento e a denegação," *Vértice* 58 (1994): 5–7.
136. Ferraz [pseudonym of C. Gomes], "Guerra colonial e expressão literária," 13–16.
137. *Notícias Magazine* no. 199, 17th March 1996; see also *Notícias Magazine* no. 178, 22nd October 1995.
138. Published in installments between 21st September 1997 and 13th September 1998.
139. R. Teixeira, "A estetização verbal da guerra," in *A Guerra Colonial e o Romance Português*, 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
140. 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, "A estetização verbal da guerra," 98.
141. For instance, in the late 1990s the Portuguese public television did not support J. Vieira's documentary; see Preface by J. Vieira, in Ferreira, *Morte na Picada*, 5; Barata and Teixeira, *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 5, 2004), 473.

142. Teixeira, *A Guerra Colonial: Realidade e Ficção* (2001), 493–494.
143. Ibid.
144. Some examples are A.P. Vasconcelos's *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), theater play broadcasted on RTP2 channel of the public Portuguese television (see Teixeira, "A estetização verbal da guerra," 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's *Paraíso Perdido* (1992); J. Duarte's *Encontros Imperfeitos* (1993). For more titles, please see Works Cited and Consulted.
145. For example, F. Silva's *Ao Sul* (1995); J. Leitão's *Inferno* (1999); R. Guerra's *Monsanto* (2000); see J. Ribeiro, "Cinema e Guerra colonial: representações da sociedade portuguesa e construção do africano," and J. Cruz, "Cinema Português e a Guerra colonial," in *A Guerra Colonial: Realidade e Ficção*, Teixeira (2001), 285–296; 487–491.
146. 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).
147. "Guerra Colonial 1. Madina do Boé: A Retirada," *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, VHS (1995) and "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.
148. M. Cardoso, *Natal 71* (1999)
149. The monument also includes a "museum of the combatant"; see A. de Magalhães, *Monumento aos Combatentes do Ultramar (1961–1974)* (Lisbon: Liga dos Combatentes, 2007). See also: http://www.ligacombatentes.org.pt/museu_do_combatente
http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/MonumentoNacionalCombatentesUltramar_ReptoAntonioAlmeida.htm http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/MonumentoNacionalCombatentesUltramar_aideiadaconstrucao.htm
150. http://www.ligacombatentes.org.pt/museu_do_combatente
151. Medeiros, "Hauntings," 217.

152. Vecchi, *Excepção Atlântica*, 27.
153. See speech of V. Simão on 16th October 1998 at: http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/MonumentoNacionalCombatentesUltramar_16OUT1998.htm
154. It contains the names that appear on official lists. It is reminiscent of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, inaugurated in 1982 in Washington, DC, USA, except that it includes no inscription (likely to generate contentiousness), just a list of names; see G. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 224.
155. See “Cerimónia de homenagem aos militares falecidos ao serviço de Portugal,” in *Revista da Armada* 329 (March 2000), 11.
156. Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 144, 193, 210–211.
157. Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory*, 45.
158. Ibid.
159. Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 230.
160. Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 272–273; veteran E. Aranha’s company met for the first time in 1998, twenty-five years after being demobilized from Angola; Aranha, *Um Barco Fardado*, 9.
161. APVG, headquartered in Braga, is the largest war veterans’ association in Portugal with 46,500 associates and 16 delegations across the country.
162. See journalist G. de Melo, writing in 2000 in *A Guerra Colonial: Realidade e Ficção*, Teixeira (2001), 187.
163. 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 fictionalized memory of the conflict into other generational zones; see, for instance, N. Cardoso (b. 1976), *Impressão Digital* (2005); P. Faria (b. 1963), *As Sete Estradinhas de Catete* (2007); J. Magalhães, *Um Amor Em Tempos de Guerra* (2009); J. Santos (b. 1964), *O Anjo Branco* (2010); other literary perspectives are also being explored, such as the poetic memory of the colonial war; see Ribeiro and Vecchi, *Antologia da Memória Poética*.
164. J. Amaral in Correia, *A Fisga*, 7.
165. See, for example, Machado, *Aconteceu no Leste de Angola*, 3; Rosa, *Memórias*, 7; Mesquita, *O Inferno Verde*, 10; L. Cabrita, O

- Último Inferno. Guerra Colonial, 1971–1973* (Lisbon: Editora Prefácio, 2006), 9; see also Amaral in Correia, *A Fisga*, 7.
166. A. Brito, *Olhos de Caçador* (Lisbon: Sextante Editora, 2007); see article at http://diariodigital.sapo.pt/news.asp?id_news=309520, dated 14th December 2007.
167. “A minha guerra em África. Mais de 30 anos depois, o conflito escrito na primeira pessoa,” in *Ípsilon, Público*, 4th April 2008, 9.
168. J. Andrade, *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), 25; Mesquita, *O Inferno Verde*, 10; Pinho, *Missão em Moçambique*, 13; Bastos, *Cacimbados*; Ferreira, *Morte na Picada*; G. Silva, *Deus, Pátria e... a Vida* (Viseu: Palimage Editores, 2003) and *A Pátria ou a Vida* (Viseu: Palimage Editores, 2005); A. Vieira, *Fim de Império* (Porto: Edições Asa, 2008), among other examples.
169. N. Silveira, *Um Outro Lado da Guerra. Zemba, Angola, 1973–1974* (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2007), 9; Cabrita, *O Último Inferno*, 83; Amaral in Correia, *A Fisga*, 7.
170. Estrela, *Perigo e Fascínio em África*, 244; Cabrita, *O Último Inferno*, 172.
171. Ibid.
172. See television program *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 27th October 2008, and M. Silva, *Homem Ferro. Memórias de um Combatente* (Serzedo: Author’s Edition, 2008).
173. A. Abreu, *Diário da Guiné. Lama, Sangue e Água Pura* (Lisbon: Guerra e Paz Editores, 2007), 10.
174. 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 organizing institution, noted publishers’ current interest in addressing the colonial war more often; see *Açoriano Oriental*, 12th September 2008.
175. 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 Works Cited and Consulted section.
176. 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 J. Magalhães, *Um Amor Em Tempos de Guerra* (Lisbon: A Esfera dos Livros, 6th edition, 2009).
177. E. Pitta notes that about the “first wave” of war novels; see “A minha guerra em África...,” *Ípsilon*, 10–11.
178. A good example of this “patriotism” is J. Carvalho’s *Era Tempo de Morrer em África. Angola, Guerra e Descolonização, 1961–1975* (2004). Editora Prefácio, the publishing house, felt the need to assert their political “impartiality”; see Carvalho, *Era Tempo de Morrer em África*, 15; see also Pitta in “A minha guerra em África...,” 10–11; see M. Sanches, in *Público*, 11th February 2008.
179. M. Alegre, *Nambuanguongo Meu Amor. Os Poemas da Guerra* (Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 2nd edition, 2008); see J. Vieira’s introduction to Ferreira, *Morte na Picada*, 5; see interview with A. Brito, author of *Olhos de Caçador* (2007) on www.diariodigital.pt, dated 14th December 2007.
180. Correia, *A Fisga*, 13.
181. See “A minha guerra em África...,” 6–13; see also Correia, *A Fisga*, 7.
182. Correia, *A Fisga*, 7.
183. See article on www.diariodigital.pt, dated 14th December 2007; see also C. Aguiar, in “A minha guerra em África...,” 9.
184. See J. Arena’s view in *Público*, 11th February 2008.
185. See “Introduction” of Magalhães, *Um Amor Em Tempos de Guerra*, 7–9.
186. Teixeira, *A Guerra Colonial: Realidade e Ficção* (2001), 389.
187. S. Hynes, “Personal narrative and commemoration,” in *War and Remembrance*, 205.
188. Bastos, *Cacimbados*, 100.
189. Due to high demand, in less than a year this book reached its third edition; Afonso, and Gomes, *Guerra Colonial* (3rd edition, 2001).
190. *Ibid.*, 7.
191. *Ibid.*
192. Barata and Teixeira, *Nova História Militar* (5 vols., 2004); see “Introduction” by Teixeira, in *Ibid.* (Volume 5, 2004), 9; see also interview with N. Teixeira published in *Visão*, 9th October 2003.

193. See “Portugal e as guerras da descolonização” and “A guerra em África (1961–1974)” in Barata and Teixeira, *Nova História Militar* (Volume 4, 2004), 68–92, 174–188; see Gomes, “Quotidianos da Guerra Colonial,” 136–173.
194. See veteran author Brandão, *Cronologia*; J. Ribeiro, *Lá Longe Onde o Sol Castiga Mais. A Guerra Colonial Contada aos Mais Novos* (Vila Nova de Gaia: Calendário, 2008); and A. Afonso and C. Gomes, eds., *Os Anos da Guerra Colonial* (16 vols.) (Matosinhos: QuidNovi, 2009).
195. *Ibid.*, (Vol. 1, 2009), 7, 9.
196. 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.dgicd.min-edu.pt/ensinobasico/index.php?s=directorio&pid=2>
197. See interview with H. Veríssimo, president of the Portuguese Association of History Teachers on RTP2 program “Sociedade Civil,” 7th November 2007; see also website of the Portuguese Ministry of Education at: <http://sitio.dgicd.min-edu.pt/cidadania/paginas/concursoguerracolonial.aspx>
198. See “*Ex-combatentes contam a sua história. A guerra continua lá dentro*,” in *Notícias Magazine*, no. 517, 21st April 2002, 18–30, particularly I. Stilwell’s editorial on p. 6.
199. Entitled “Never-ending war,” see press coverage of Maia’s research on PTSD among Portuguese war veterans, in *Notícias Magazine*, 17 July 2007; Maia advances 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 *Notícias Magazine*, no. 517, 21 April 2002, 32–38 and “Perturbação Pós-Traumática do Stress,” 309–320; this is the first study of PTSD disorder within the adult population in Portugal; see also *Jornal de Notícias*, 18th April 2006 and 3rd September 2006; about official lack of support and insufficient logistics to address PTSD in Portugal, see *Jornal de Notícias*, 28th June 2007.

200. 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, 16–29; *Correio da Manhã*, 8th July 2013; *Correio da Manhã*, 29th February 2008; interview with R. de Sousa in “*Tardes da Júlia*,” TVI television channel, 22nd July 2008; *Diário do Sul*, 27th January 2009.
201. See magazine *Domingo*, published by *Correio da Manhã* newspaper. This series was presented on 6 January 2008, and began its publication on 20 January of the same year; it was still being published in late 2015; see also earlier initiatives entitled “*Memórias de Guerra*” and “*Rede Nacional de Histórias*,” in *Correio da Manhã* 4 June to 7 June 2007, and on similar dates in June 2006.
202. A. Gregório described some revenge killings (Angola, 1961–1963) and J. Adelino the murder of innocent civilians (Angola, 1969–1972), in *Correio da Manhã*, 1 June and 8 June 2008.
203. See, for instance, comment by A. dos Santos in March 2009 published on http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia_CM_Comentario.htm
204. See *Diário de Notícias*, 13th March 2003 and 11th October 2004, and “*Os proscritos da Guerra*” in *Notícias Magazine* no. 821, 17th February 2008; *Público*, 16th December 2012 and *Diário de Notícias*, 12th March 2011; see also “*Guerra Colonial: Sim, havia maior liberdade sexual, mas um oficial matou-se na parade*,” in *Pública*, 12th July 2009; the topic of homosexuality had been addressed earlier mainly through fiction, for instance, in the following novels: Garcia, *Lugar de Massacre* and Lobo, *Os Navios Negreiros*; as for children left behind by Portuguese servicemen, see “*Guiné-Bissau. Os filhos que os militares portugueses deixaram para trás*,” in *Magazine 2*, *Público*, 14th July 2013 and <http://www.publico.pt/filhos-do-vento>.
205. See *Correio da Manhã*, 16th April 2005; 25th March 2005; *Jornal de Notícias*, 23rd February 2003, 6th June 2004.
206. See editorial of S. Barrocas in *Notícias Magazine*, no. 821, 17th February 2008, 4.
207. See “*Histórias de guerra, tem uma para contar?*” in <http://www.tvi24.iol.pt/noticias/guerra-ultramar-guerra-colonial-documentario/866817-291.html> on 16th October 2007.

208. See <http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/>; <http://blogueforanadae-vaotres.blogspot.com/> (with its expressive motto of “*Não deixes que sejam os outros a contar a tua Guerra*” (Do not 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 five million visits, congregating contributions from over 200 veteran authors from both sides of the war); see also “*A minha guerra em África*,” 4th April 2008 and program *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24th February 2008; for further examples, see Works Cited and Consulted.
209. See *Correio da Manhã*, 5th February 2009; TSF Radio website www.tsf.sapo.pt, 4th February 2009; and http://www.bbc.co.uk/portugueseafrica/news/story/2009/02/printable/090212_colonialwarmt.shtml
210. See www.guerracolonial.org
211. 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
212. J. Stanley, “Involuntary commemorations: posttraumatic stress disorder and its relationship to war commemoration,” in *The Politics of Memory. Commemorating War*, ed. Ashplant et al. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 252.
213. Edwards, “Their liveth for evermore,” 5–18; see journalist A. Gomes in Teixeira, *A Guerra Colonial: Realidade e Ficção* (2001), 465.
214. After being broadcasted on 6th May 2005 by Portuguese public television channel RTP1 before 10:30 pm, 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 contração ao disposto no artigo 24º Nº 2 da Lei 32/2003,” dated 1st June 2005.
215. L. António, “A Costa dos Murmúrios,” *História* 72, Ano XXVIII, III Série (January 2005): 58–65.
216. The director (b.1970) of this international award-winning film stressed its critical, humanistic, and educational purpose toward

- new generations; see <http://pngpictures.com/deusnaoquis-curta.htm>
217. A partnership between RTP2 public television channel and Liga dos Combatentes materialized in seven programs (broadcasted between September 2004 and June 2005) focusing on war veterans and the conflict.
218. *Prós e Contras*, RTP1 television channel, 15th October 2007.
219. *Ultramar* was the term officially given to the “overseas territories” until 1974; the latter citation is by ADEFA’s President J. Arruda.
220. See I. Nogueira, on 16th October 2007 at <http://mitoseritos.blogs.sapo.pt/28411.html>; and the post-debate online forum created by a major veteran website to voice ex-combatant opinion at http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia_RTP_ProseContras_15OUT2007.htm
221. 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 Contras*, RTP1, 15th October 2007.
222. The series *A Guerra* by J. Furtado began being broadcast on the following day, 16th October 2007.
223. See *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 7th November 2007 and *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 27th October 2008; see *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24th February 2008; *A Voz da Saudade*, RTP1, 31st August 2008; *Voluntário*, RTP2, 1st November 2008.
224. See *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24th February 2008; *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 27th October 2008, at <http://www.rtp.pt/programa/tv/p23283/e173>; this program promoted an online poll entitled “Do young people in Portugal know what the colonial war was?” 87 percent of viewers, answered “no”; through online 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>
225. As noted by film director C. Santos, in Teixeira, ed., *A Guerra Colonial: Realidade e Ficção* (2001), 499; J. Ribeiro points out the documentary *Ultramar, Angola, 1961–1963* (2000), by G. Borges as an exception, in *Ibid.*, 293. Mainstream and cable television documentaries were a prelude to future documentary works; two examples are *Combatentes do Ultramar* by M. Guerra

- (Canal de História/Lua Produções, 2001), and *Fomos Soldados* by C. Santos and A. Faria (SIC television channel, 2004).
226. Furtado explains that the project's idea began in the 1980s, but only in the late 1990s he was authorized to proceed by the Portuguese public broadcasting corporation (RTP); earlier, it was believed that "the subject was still very fresh in the Portuguese people's memory"; see *Jornal de Notícias*, 16th October 2007; see also "Preface" by J. Vieira in Ferreira, *A Morte na Picada*, 5; this documentary comprised archival images previously undisclosed and 400 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.
 227. From RTP's website <http://www.rtp.pt/homepage/>; information accessed on 18th March 2008.
 228. See *Correio da Manhã*, 16th October 2007 and "A minha guerra em África...", *Ipsilon* (2008).
 229. It is worth noting that the first episode of "A Guerra" was the most viewed documentary of Portuguese television since 2000, and the program with the second highest audience on the day it was broadcasted, with an average of 13.6 percent, 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.
 230. See *Sociedade Civil*, RTP2, 7th November 2007.
 231. See online 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 16th and 17th October 2007.
 232. J. Stanley, "Involuntary commemorations: post-traumatic stress disorder and its relationship with war commemoration," in *The Myths We Live By*, eds. R. Samuel and P. Thompson, P. (London: Routledge, 1990), 240–259; see also A. Freitas's view on *Diário de Notícias*, 18th October 2007; on the impact of the Iraq war (2003) on Portuguese combatants, see *Correio da Manhã*, 30th March 2003.

233. See online interview with J. Furtado, on 4th February 2011 at http://noticias.sapo.pt/especial/guerra_colonial/1,127,082.html#page=1
234. Ibid.
235. 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 (Centro de Estudos Sociais, Universidade de Coimbra) 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*, 25th April 2011, 4; this study listed 128 monuments; see also http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Memoriais_concelhos.htm and <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 I, a connection to a larger narrative construction (for this subject, see Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 214).
236. Although not exclusively, since 2004, a monument dedicated to the women who supported the servicemen during the colonial war was unveiled in Leiria by the Ministry of Defense; see *24 Horas*, 9th December 2004.
237. *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*, 7th 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-a-combatente.html> ; see report of unveiling monument on 16th June 2013, at <http://blogueforanadaevaotres.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/guine-6374-p11718-freguesia-da-atalaia.html>
238. Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 144, 193.
239. Ibid., 210.
240. See speech given at Vila de Ponte in 2008 in *O Pilar* (2008); for an example of opposing views on the meaning (and financial soundness) of such monuments, see comments section of *A Defesa de Faro* (2009).

241. See comments to report of unveiling monument in Atalaia on 16th June 2013, in “blogueforanadaevaotres” (2013); see *O Veterano de Guerra*, no. 40, April–June 2008, 22.
242. See APOIAR. *Órgão da Associação de Apoio aos Ex-combatentes vítimas do Stress de Guerra*, Ano XIII, no. 52 (May–June 2008): 2; the monument dedicated to the “Combatants of the *Ultramar*” in Lisbon has hosted these “Day of Portugal” celebrations since 1994.
243. See comments on the speech of Jorge 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) Ferreira do Amaral gave a “Day of Portugal” speech before circa 5000 ex-combatants at the Lisbon national memorial, stressing that while history takes its time to assess the colonial war, its veterans should not remain marginalized; see *Diário de Notícias*, 11th June 2004; see *Jornal de Notícias* and *Público*, 11th June 2004.
244. See M. Costa, “Day of Portugal”’s speech, in *Correio da Manhã*, 11th June 2005.
245. 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 See also: http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/index_museu_VNFamalicao.htm .
246. 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.ligacomatentes.org.pt/upload/.lix/noticias/003.htm>
247. 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 *A Guerra do Ultramar: Realidade e Ficção*, Teixeira (2002).
248. Organized by Centro de Estudos Sociais, University of Coimbra, it took place in May 2003; see *Público*, 24th May 2003.
249. 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 organized by the regional section of Liga dos Combatentes; see *Jornal da Madeira*, 6th March 2005.
250. For instance, the events organized by Centro de Estudos Sociais of Coimbra University in partnership with ADEFA, detailed at http://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/filhosdaguerracolonial/media/elo_site%20filhos.pdf and at www.cm-feira.pt, in articles dated 24th November and 13th December 2011.
251. See J. Lages's opinion in Carvalho, *Testemunhos de Guerra*, 252; see "Preface" in *Ibid.*, 5, 8; see also Teixeira, *A Guerra Colonial: Realidade e Ficção* (2001), 13.
252. 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 A. Mota, *Luta Incessante. Uma História e Alguns Poemas* (Espinho: Elefante Editores, 2005), 38.
253. See veteran M. Barbosa's viewpoint in *Jornal de Notícias*, 18th February 2003; *Comércio do Porto*, 9th January 2005.
254. 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.
255. *APOIAR, Órgão da Associação* (2008): 6; *O Veterano de Guerra*, no. 41 (July–September 2008): 10–12.
256. After years of persistent attempts, A. Mota (b. 1961) fulfilled his goal in 1996; see Mota, *Luta Incessante* (2005).
257. See http://www.ligacombatentes.org.pt/conservacao_das_memorias; *Público*, 12th December 2008.
258. 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 requests had 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.
259. In *Público*, 12th March 2009.

260. This movement explains its formation as a response to the television reportage *Dor Adormecida* by J. Almeida, broadcasted by RTP on 20th 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 and http://ultramar.terraweb.biz/Noticia_ReportagemRTP_20SET2006.htm
261. Affirming that 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; 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*, 22nd January 2009; *Diário Digital*, 20th January 2009; see "Resolução da Assembleia da República, n.º 75/2009," in *Diário da República*, 1.ª Série, n.º 157, 14th August 2009.
262. *Jornal de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã*, 19th 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*, 21st November, 12th December 2008.
263. See *Ciência Hoje*, 18th February 2010; Special Reportage, SIC television channel, "Ex-combatentes: finados sem dia," 1st November 2010; *Diário de Notícias*, 2nd November 2010.
264. For example, through the voice of the mother of the nineteen-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.
265. 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.
266. Mota, *Luta Incessante*, 5; *Jornal de Notícias*, 28th July 2008.

267. See report written by R. Silva dated 18th November 2008 at: http://ultrammar.terraweb.biz/CTIG_JoseMariaFernandesCarvalho_RuiSilva.htm
268. This evokes the debate addressed by Winter in his study of the cultural memory of World War I 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 J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, sites of mourning. The Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 25–28.
269. Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 142; A. Santos, then president of the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic argued that Portugal would gain nothing from recognizing the war crimes of colonialism, adding that it was too late and “wrong” for a judgment of those actions.
270. Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 177; see also viewpoint of journalist P. Coelho in “A minha guerra em África...” 13.
271. 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...” 12.
272. 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 B. Reis and P. Oliveira, “Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts: Late Colonial Portuguese Counterinsurgency and the Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972,” in *Civil Wars* 14, no. 1 (2012): 80–103; see Introduction, in Cabrita, *Massacres em África*, 14.
273. See “A minha guerra em África...” 12–13; and *Terra de Ninguém*, by S. Lamas, 2012, as a recent example of documentary testimony of violence.

274. As denoted by the academic research of Reis and Oliveira (2012) mentioned earlier, for instance.
275. As expressed by veteran author C. Gomes in “Guerra Colonial.” *Câmara Clara*, RTP2, 24th February 2008.
276. 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).
277. See D. Ritchie, “Introduction: The Evolution of Oral History,” in *Handbook of Oral History*, 12–13.
278. 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*, 10th March and 4th 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*, 8th February 2009 and 13th March 2009.
279. An issue raised early by the author; see Cruzeiro, “Guerra Colonial...” 5–7.
280. M. Cruzeiro, “As mulheres e a Guerra Colonial: um silêncio demasiado ruidoso,” in A. Ribeiro and M. Ribeiro, *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais. As mulheres e a Guerra Colonial* 68 (2004): 31–41; J. Mendes, “O lugar do compromisso,” in Melo, *Vértice* (1994): 11–12; Cruzeiro, “As mulheres e a Guerra Colonial,” 31–41; Edwards, *A War Remembered*, 57–58.
281. See opinion of C. Gomes in online newspaper *O Mirante*, 23rd April 2009, at <http://semanal.omirante.pt/index.asp?idEdicao=388&id=53102&idSeccao=5846&Action=noticia>
282. Edwards, *A War Remembered*, 58.
283. Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 248–249, 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 online.
284. Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 230.
285. An illustrative case in hand is the successive discussions regarding the national monument to the combatants inaugurated in Lisbon in 1994.

286. 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...,” (2000), 11; see also Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 228–229.
287. Including a wider official response. In the last fifteen years, however, the Portuguese government has made an effort to recognize and support war veterans, albeit not always satisfactorily.
288. On the framework of such process, see Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 208.
289. As J. Wertsch noted, quoting P. Fussell, about the collective remembrance of World War I; Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembrance*, 52–53.
290. See Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 201.
291. Finding a certain resonance with some elements of the German case mentioned by Cubitt, *Ibid.*, 235–236; and also echoing Lorenz’s work, in “How does one win a lost war? Oral history and political memories” in Ritchie, *Handbook of Oral History*, 132, 136–138.
292. Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 223–224.
293. As stressed by M. Ribeiro, in *Diário de Notícias*, 25th April 2011.
294. Some of these aspects were noted by Stubbe in 2000; see Stubbe “A Guerra Colonial à luz da antropologia cultural,” in *A Guerra Colonial: Realidade e Ficção*, Teixeira, (2001), 259.

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 contextualization of the public memory of the Portuguese colonial conflict in Chap. 3, this book, informed by the oral history methodology, will explore the war memory and identity of its ex-combatants. As addressed in Chap. 2, 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.¹

In the Portuguese case, analyzing the colonial war through an oral history standpoint enables the memory of the conflict to be approached in a twofold manner: as evidence about the past and as evidence about historical memory. This oral history not only recovers hidden histories within a national history, but 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 favors a military, hierarchical, and factual

approach to the conflict, displaying a significant underrepresentation of the working-class soldier's 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' generalizations 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 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 means that so much is deemed to be desirably forgotten, the "knowledge of the war" became "mainly a private knowledge shared by the mobilized 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.² These aspects highlight the importance of studying the event from the lived war veterans' 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.³ 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 emphasizes the specificity of the Portuguese case regarding its colonial war and the social position of its ex-combatants.⁴

In Portugal, complex remembrance surrounding the colonial war places the oral historian in an advantageous position to study individual and social traumas.⁵ 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 toward rediscovering history with wider awareness, meaningful remembrance, and expanded understanding.⁶

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.⁷ 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 analyzed, this approach is also my contribution toward 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.⁸ Special care was taken in gathering a diverse group of respondents with a diverse range of war experiences. The majority of the participating individuals had heard of this project via the publication in late 2005 of a call for testimonies in the three main Portuguese daily newspapers.⁹ 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, a total of 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 contextualization of each individual's life story.¹⁰

The narratives gathered for this project are employed with an awareness that, in my oral history practice, I am not looking to simply 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."¹¹ 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.¹²

Conducting oral history on the Portuguese Colonial War proved to be particularly challenging for the researcher. For having participated in this divisive conflict, former combatants felt ambivalently judged and continually unsupported.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

While 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.¹⁶

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 were still trying to come to terms with their past.¹⁷ For some, remembering certain past events proved to be overwhelmingly painful (perhaps because they feel traumatized, ashamed, or fear retaliation for past deeds), and they apparently preferred to omit or embellish aspects of their war experience.¹⁸ More broadly, I was aware that the 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.¹⁹ These points emphasize 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.²⁰ This articulation of individual experience is necessarily interwoven with available public cultural discourses, such as other ex-combatants' memories, books, television, and war veterans' political campaigns, among other examples.²¹ 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.²²

For many of my interviewees, their war participation is perceived as the most important, life-shaping period of their lives.²³ 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 organization of memories.²⁴

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 are often shocking and traumatic, some emerging quite unexpectedly, often accompanied by nervousness, anger, crying, chain-smoking, or laughter, for example.²⁵ Further challenges emerged when narratives articulated clashed with my personal views and value system (e.g. racist comments, defense of fascism, justification of violence, patronizing and sexist remarks, and so forth). I worked hard to maintain the professional, non-judgmental 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.²⁶ As Mark Klemperer put it, by hearing these stories and “being a witness to them,” I necessarily became a part of the traumatic remembrance process.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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, inter-

viewing traumatized 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, it has 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 recognized, and thus reclaimed from silence and neglect.²⁹

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.³⁰ 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 traumatized, and generally true when 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.³¹ 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.”³² 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.³³

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.³⁴ Although much has been written about similar concerns, my findings suggest that any oral history investigation dealing with war, with equally traumatic topics, or with traumatized individuals could be greatly advanced by further research into the incorporation of multidisciplinary contributions, especially from the field of psychology and related disciplines.³⁵ 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

multidisciplinarity, 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.”³⁶ 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.³⁷ Klempner argues that “as oral historians we are not psychotherapists, yet we hear narratives as miasmatic 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, disclose things they have never shared with another human being.”³⁸ 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 a trauma researcher?³⁹ 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.⁴⁰

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 well-being of participants at the forefront.⁴¹ Once the interview is in motion, oral historians are the ones responsible for recognizing trauma and possessing

adequate preparation to provide well-founded safety for interviewees.⁴² In addition, closer interdisciplinary cooperation would also be advantageous for interviewers themselves in coping with the “practical hazards of listening” to trauma.⁴³ During the interview, oral historians also expose themselves to pain and psychological damage, and the emotional weight of studying a war or traumatic topic should never be understated.⁴⁴

Clearly, the challenges contained in investigating trauma-laden topics and a recognized 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, specialized 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 fulfill 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.⁴⁵

Leaving wider reflections aside and again focusing on my research experience, despite the limitations identified, above all I prioritized—employing the tools at my disposal—the well-being, integrity, and psychological comfort of both interviewee and interviewer. Adopting Alison 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 afterward for both participants.⁴⁶ 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 instance, through my recurrent nightmares of warfare and violent episodes narrated to me by interviewees.⁴⁷ 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.”⁴⁸

The burdens of the interview relationship become more prominent in interviewing disabled ex-combatants.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ These individuals revealed to me the way their lives become interwoven, sometimes painfully, with historical events. I realized 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,” rather they are uneasy reminders of Portugal’s colonial past.⁵¹

Despite the availability of 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 humor 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 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 exist to this day, and which tend to get worse due to the veteran’s aging process. Many live concerned with their disability, fighting for the right to receive a pension or further support.⁵²

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—irrespective 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 apologized 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 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 favor. 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.⁵³ 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, 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.”⁵⁴

What prompts the veterans to shape their memories by selecting and interpreting meaningful past events through the narrative elicited are the interviewer’s questions.⁵⁵ My collection of oral testimonies occurred with full awareness of how social attributes (such as age, gender, and status) 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 endeavored 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).⁵⁶

Through the combination of the “historical narratives” collected in every interview, the interpretive interconnection of past and present is revealed, showing how, for Portuguese ex-combatants, the bridge between biography and history and social transformation has been built in the past decades.⁵⁷ 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.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, K. Rogers, “Trauma Redeemed: The Narrative Construction of Social Violence,” in *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*, eds. E. McMahan and K. Rogers (Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 31–46.
2. As argued by Ribeiro in *África no Feminino*, 14.
3. An illustrative example of this perception can be found in an academic study on colonialism and war published in Portugal in 2006 which employed oral history. Explaining the “limitations” of oral history, its author emphasizes the importance of obtaining “confirmation of the described facts,” highlighting the “informative richness” of the interviews done. See “Introduction” of D. Mateus,

Memórias do Colonialismo e da Guerra (Porto: Edições ASA, 2006), 5–8.

4. See Works Cited and Consulted section for works by authors like Dawson, Evans, Lorenz, Lunn, Roper, Sivan, Thomson, and Winter who, among others, focused on specific examples of war remembrance.
5. As argued by Lorenz, “The unending war,” in *Trauma*, ed. Dawson, Leydesdorff, Rogers (2004), 95–112.
6. See, for instance, J. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery. The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 2. For a discussion on the limitations of healing, see “Introduction” to Dawson et al., *Trauma* (2004), 17; see also Dawson, “Trauma, Memory, Politics...” in *Ibid.* (2004), 180–204.
7. P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
8. For a “Biographical Information Table” detailing those who were interviewed, see end of this volume.
9. See *Público, Jornal de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã* on the 30th October 2005.
10. See “Biographical Information Table” at the end of this volume.
11. Evans, *The Memory of French Resistance*, 231–232.
12. Edwards, *A War Remembered*, 1; on the focus on meanings, see Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 36.
13. 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 the Traumatized War Veteran,” 83.
14. This suggests Dawson’s concept of “traumatised community” frequently emerging from war. Among 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”; Dawson, *Making Peace*, 62.
15. Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, 42.
16. 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), 9.
17. On the challenges of veteran retrospective remembering, see M. Hutching, "After Action: Oral History and War," ed. D. Ritchie, *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, 240–241.
 18. See Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (1994), 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, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, 240; on memory distortions emerging from PTSD, see D. Pillemer, "Can the psychology of memory enrich historical analyses of trauma?," *History and Memory* 16, no. 2 (2004):142.
 19. See, for instance, Roper, "Re-remembering the Soldier Hero," 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.
 20. In Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (1994), 8–9; see also Roper, "Re-remembering the Soldier Hero," 181–205.
 21. Every narrative being socio-culturally situated, as emphasized by Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, 18; see also Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (1994), 7–12; N. Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 145, 159, 195.
 22. See Evans, *The Memory of French Resistance*, 3–23; and Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (1994), 9–10.
 23. Echoing Hunt's findings in *Memory, War and Trauma*, 148.
 24. As Hunt and Robbins assert, when the veteran talks about the war experience, he may have the possibility of dealing with his memories. N. Hunt and I. Robbins, "Telling Stories of the War: Ageing Veterans Coping with their Memories through Narrative," *Oral History* 26, no. 2 (1998): 57–63.
 25. About the coping mechanism of laughter, see Klempner, "Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma," in R. Perks and A. Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (2nd edition, 2006), 202–203.
 26. In this regard, and following specialist advice, I endeavored 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 (2007), 143.
27. Klempner, "Navigating Life Review Interviews," (2006), 208.
 28. Ibid.
 29. Note Dawson's concept of "reparative remembering," in *Making Peace*, 187, 195; Field proposes the constructive potential of oral history (see Field's articles cited earlier); see also Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (1988), 159.
 30. As stressed by Alison Parr, the ethical and social implications of doing oral history with traumatized war veterans need to be considered. See A. Parr, "Breaking the silence: traumatized war veterans and oral history," *Oral History* 35, no. 1 (2007): 61.
 31. 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. Dawson, "Trauma, memory, politics: the Irish Troubles" (2004), 184.
 32. See "Introduction" to Rogers et al., *Trauma* (2004), 17.
 33. The most significant examples being Almeida (ex-commando officer in Angola 1974–1975), who reported the need to be under the influence of alcohol as a coping mechanism; Gonçalves (ex-soldier in Guinea, 1970–1972), who emphasized the certainty of post-interview sleep disturbances; and the dramatic case of Barroso (ex-soldier in Mozambique, 1970–1973) who, sometime after the interview, admitted to have resumed his habit of excessive alcohol intake and, one evening, already intoxicated, rang me mentioning the possibility of committing suicide. Similarly, the interview with Sobral (ex-bazooka handler in Angola, 1967–1969) prompted fierce domestic discord.
 34. M. Clark, "Case Study: Field Notes on Catastrophe: Reflections on the September 11, 2001, Oral History Memory and Narrative Project" in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. D. Ritchie, 262; S. Field, "Interviewing in a culture of violence: moving memories from Windermere to the Cape Flats," in *Trauma*, ed. Rogers et al. (2004), 65, 68; Klempner, "Navigating Life Review

- Interviews” (2006), 198–210; M. Roper, “Analysing the analysed: transference and counter-transference in the oral history encounter,” *Oral History* 31, no. 2 (2003): 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,” *Oral History* 34, no. 1 (2006): 37; apart from such articles—most notably by Field and Klempner, 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 *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. D. Ritchie, 248–249, mentioned without further elaboration the “interviewer training sessions” required by that project. I also came across the workshops on training “for interviewing vulnerable and traumatized families/communities” organized by the Columbia University Oral History Research Office in 2008 and subsequent years. See http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/ccoh/education/summer_institute.html.
35. The importance of interdisciplinarity is often stressed; see, for instance, “Introduction” to *Trauma* (2004), 13, 17; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 201; Pillemer, “Can the psychology of memory...,” 140–155.
 36. “Introduction” to *Trauma* (2004), 8–9; Hutching, “After action,” 240; Field, “Interviewing in a culture of violence...,” in *Trauma* (2004), 65; Field, “Disappointed remains: trauma, testimony and reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, Ritchie, 141–158; this uneasiness can also be sensed in the closing chapter of Thomson’s *Moving Stories. An intimate history of four women across two countries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 322–323.
 37. See “Introduction” to *Trauma* (2004), 17; “Introduction” to *The Myths We Live By*, Samuel and Thompson, 7; Roper, “Analysing the analysed...,” 22; W. Rickard, “Oral History—‘More dangerous than therapy?’: Interviewee’s reflections on recording traumatic or taboo issues,” *Oral History* 26, no. 2 (1998): 34–48; Field states that “oral history resembles psychotherapy,” in “Beyond ‘healing’...,” 37.
 38. Klempner, “Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma,” (2000), 70–71; also, Field stresses that due to social

- stigma many interviewees will never visit a therapist, in “Beyond ‘healing,’” 36.
39. 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. Roper, “Analysing the analysed...,” 30; and Rickard, “Oral History,” 42.
 40. See previously cited articles by Field and Roper, particularly Field’s “Interviewing in a culture of violence...,” 65; and Roper’s “Analysing the analysed...,” 22. The examples of acknowledged dangers are abundant. Roper highlights how emotional states can be reactivated, sometimes involuntarily, during the interview, in *Ibid.*, 21–22; Klempler warns against the dangers of reexternalizing a traumatic event during the interview, in “Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma” (2000), 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 “Oral History,” 42, 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...” 240; see also G. BenEzer, “Trauma signals in life stories,” in *Trauma* (2004), 40.
 41. 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, *Voice of the Past* (2nd edition, 1988), 157–159; see also Rickard, “Oral History,” 35–36.
 42. Dawson compares demarcation in interviewing with the similar cultural response of “State-organized forgetting,” in “Trauma, Memory, Politics...,” (2004), 188.
 43. See S. Feldman and D. Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), xvi.
 44. “Introduction” to *Trauma* (2004), 17; BenEzer, “Trauma signals,” 40; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 45–47; Feldman

and Laub, “Testimony...,” 72; J. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery. The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 140; Pillemer, “Can the psychology of memory...,” 144–147; Roper, “Analysing the analysed,” 21; Klempner maintains that interviewers dealing with such topics require a greater degree of sensitivity and sturdiness, in “Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma” (2000), 82.

45. Field, “Beyond ‘healing,’” 41.
46. Parr, “Breaking the silence,” 62.
47. See concept of “secondary witnessing” in Pillemer, “Can the psychology of memory...,” 145.
48. Highlighted by Dawson in *Making Peace*, 125; O’ Brien interviewed relatives of victims of “Bloody Sunday” (Derry, Northern Ireland, 1972).
49. 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.
50. Referring to the American context, Karen Hirsch has stressed the historical absence of people with disabilities and their often powerless position in society. See K. Hirsch, “Culture and disability. The role of oral history,” in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 214.
51. Unlike with the British soldiers disabled in World War I, the nation did not feel there was a debt to repay; see J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male. Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), 16, 41.
52. For an assessment of the impact of disability, see S. Garton, *The Cost of War. Australians Return* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996).
53. An aspect mentioned by Valerie Yow in *Recording Oral History. A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (New York: Altamira Press, 2nd edition, 2005), 65.
54. Interviewee 7 (12).
55. F. Allison, “Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives over Time,” *The Oral History Review* 31, no. 2 (2004): 79.

56. D. Ritchie, "Introduction: The Evolution of Oral History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, 3–19; Thomson, "Memory...", in *Ibid.*, 77–95.
57. R. Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History* (London: Praeger, 1991), 213; M. Frisch, *Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 188.

Experiences of War

THE SOLDIERS' WAR

“I Really Have to Go to War”¹

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 fulfillment 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 lives and that of their families.² With the hostilities also beginning 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵

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.⁶ 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, impoverished rural areas, had no financial means to visit home during the authorized leaves.⁷ 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."⁸ 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 specialties which determined their distribution by military units.⁹ Not long after, mobilization 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 realization which did not diminish the impact of mobilization on their lives.¹⁰

One of the thousands mobilized was Félix Caixeiro (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 recalled vividly the moment of being mobilized:

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 started saying the numbers of the servicemen who were mobilized—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). Socializing with friends—being near my girlfriend—I mean, that which was my daily life—I was going to lose it.¹¹

Like Caixeiro, most regretted the life-changing implications of mobilization. It meant the certainty of departing for another continent, and the likelihood of engaging in direct combat, leaving many upset, apprehensive, and "very afraid."¹² For others, it was met with a certain relief: since



Fig.5.1 Félix Caixeiro (Angola, 1962/64)

their “fate” was already determined, the sooner that interruption of civilian life was over, the better (Fig. 5.1).¹³

Judging from my sample of respondents, a minority felt happy to be mobilized.¹⁴ 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.”¹⁵ For example, Abílio Silva (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, explained his happiness to be mobilized to Angola, an “immense,” “fabulous” territory.¹⁶

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 emphasized their political ignorance at the time, interpreting the mobilization to Africa in conformity with the ideals of selfless devotion to the integrity of the motherland propagated by the Salazarian regime, a duty whose fulfillment likely meant participating in the conflict.¹⁷

From a seaside town in Northern Portugal, and mobilized at the age of twenty-one, José Lima (b. 1946) explained 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 every 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.¹⁸

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 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.¹⁹ Therefore, those who, at the time, were “a bit patriotic” were not so unwilling to fulfill their duty. If the motherland was “in danger,” this sacrifice, although personally undesirable due to risk and inconvenience, was perceived as “necessary.”²⁰

However, not every conscript could consider themselves politically aligned with the regime. For instance, Orlando Libório (b. 1949), born and bred in the Lisbon metropolitan area, stressed his “anger” and “discontentment” at being mobilized 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.²¹

Libório believed that, in his social sphere, the majority was against participating in the conflict, reflecting the experience of those who gravitated toward 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 industrialized environments concentrated higher rates of literacy and higher levels of social-political consciousness.²² Nonetheless, as Libório 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.²³ Those who opted for that route would become absentees and when, or if, caught, punished with imprisonment and a military commission in Africa.²⁴ 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 detection and arrest, and tainted by the social stigma reserved for “cowards.”²⁵ 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.²⁶ For most, the lack of alternatives made them feel they had to trust their “good fortune” while serving the Armed Forces in Africa.²⁷

As a rule, those mobilized 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.²⁸ Between 1961 and 1974, as the eve of the departure day approached for thousands of mobilized youths, wild and "surreal" farewell parties across the country were a frequent means of attempting to evade fear and anxiety—because they knew "many of us are not going to return" from war.²⁹

*"Will I Come Back?"*³⁰

For these conscripts, mostly in their early twenties, 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.³¹ 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 Lima put it.³² Between 1961 and 1974, several generations of mobilized 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."³³

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.³⁴ In fact, the lack of familiar environments, the absence of family support, and 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.³⁵

This "hurdle" in a young man's life that had to be crossed before the future unfolded entailed many uncertainties.³⁶ My respondents repeatedly highlighted the most prevalent question crossing their minds before departure: "will I come back?"³⁷ 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.³⁸ Some tried to be optimistic, although apprehensive, while others "lost all hope" and "expected the worse."³⁹

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.⁴⁰ Manuel Ferreira

Fig. 5.2 Manuel Ferreira
(Angola, 1972/74)



(b. 1950), a military administrative leaving Lisbon for Angola in 1972 aboard the ship *Vera Cruz*, detailed the general feeling on that occasion (Fig. 5.2):

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 harbor, us see-

ing 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.⁴¹

Not surprisingly, for those who departed by boat, the sight and sound of a harbor crowded with thousands of people waving, crying, and screaming could become an overwhelming, “terrifying” experience, a “Dantesque [...] vision of Hell,” which made some recollect how at the time they wished not “to feel this moment.”⁴²

For many, this journey was also a fundamental life step as it was the first time they had traveled on a boat, airplane, or even left mainland Portugal.⁴³ From that point onward 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.”⁴⁴ Whether ignorant or aware of the conflict’s political context, upset or not, they were “forced to go.”⁴⁵ Recalling the prevalent feeling, a contained “revolt” is pointed out by some, while others like Libório chose to emphasize the defiance then shown to the regime: in 1970, Libório’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.⁴⁶ 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, traveling in the ship’s hold without any amenities, in circumstances that, in the words of José Lima, reminded one of the “darkest stories of slave ships.”⁴⁷ 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.”⁴⁸

“What Am I Doing Here?”⁴⁹

Along with apprehension and fear, a great number of the war veterans that took part in this research have also emphasized their initial sense of curiosity and sometimes youthful enthusiasm about going to Africa. The circumstances of mobilization and of the journey appeared not to be enough to deprive all of an adventurous fascination: they 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.”⁵⁰ To these conscripts, everything was a novelty, and they were uncertain as to what they were going to encounter in the African provinces.⁵¹ The actual moment of arrival embodied the generalized feeling of expectation, as detailed by Manuel Ferreira:

as the boat was approaching that African land, with a color that was strange, a bit reddish—all the eyes searched the horizon to see [...] what it would be like [...] amongst ourselves there was not much talk at that moment, 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.⁵²

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 counter-insurgency war. At the distance of several decades, most ex-combatants interviewed retained a typical perception of their younger selves arriving in another continent: too young (many under twenty years), naïve, politically ignorant, unaware of what that conflict was about, and what any war comprises.⁵³ 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 mobilized and transported there by the army, so as to fulfill their national duty to serve the motherland.⁵⁴ 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, acclimatization had to be swift for newcomers. They had to adapt to a different continent and landscape, with new people and a particular type of climate, culture, and lifestyle.⁵⁵ Many had never seen a person of color in their life, or at least so many at one time.⁵⁶ In certain instances, people of color were perceived with fear and suspicion, as some newly arrived wondered who could be a potential “terrorist.”⁵⁷ As one respondent remarked, facing all this difference simultaneously “was like entering another planet!”⁵⁸ This initial strangeness was not necessarily experienced as negative by my interviewees. Some enjoyed the novelty of 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.”⁵⁹

Nonetheless, most of my interviewees (of differing geographical, class, and educational backgrounds) highlighted 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 reinforced their feelings of incredulity, shock, and bewilderment at the reality encountered in those territories then considered an integral part of Portugal.⁶⁰ For some, it started with the “terrible” sight of crowds of hungry, ragged black people around the harbor where the military personnel were arriving, begging for something to eat and displaying signs of a life of “near slavery.”⁶¹ Employing a conceptual framework obviously refined during their life in democracy, the ex-combatants recounted 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 emphasized how disturbing all this was, notably the presence of hungry African children surrounding army barracks asking for leftovers.⁶²

These then young servicemen asserted 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 color or birthplace, and proud of its humane five-century empire in Africa and elsewhere, “crumbles completely.”⁶³ In many, such realization provoked a sense of disillusionment and of having been “cheated” and used as “guinea-pigs” of the regime.⁶⁴ 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 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.⁶⁵

Such was the case of Manuel Oliveira, 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?”⁶⁶ 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.”⁶⁷ As for the apparent minority who, like Orlando Libório, stated they were against the conflict pre-departure, they perceived their compulsory participation as confirming long-standing oppositionist viewpoints.⁶⁸

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.”⁶⁹ 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].”⁷⁰ For some, “we were the terrorists—we were taking over what was theirs.”⁷¹

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).”⁷² For example, José Lima, who 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.⁷³

Therefore, alongside incredulity and disappointment, often anger would be present. As Manuel Ferreira asserted, “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.⁷⁴ Their loss of “naïveté” placed many in a difficult moral and psychological position. Like countless others, Félix Caixeiro admitted 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.”⁷⁵ 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.”⁷⁶

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”⁷⁷

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.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ Under these circumstances, leisure activities acquired a deep importance as an “outlet” to the reality of war and their compulsory permanence in Africa.⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ Virtually all my respondents, at some point of their narratives, provided vivid accounts of their leisure and socializing activities. Since they were “forced” to be there, many were determined, like Orlando Libório, “to spend as good a time as we can.”⁸² Because they were “young fellas,” they “also had fun”⁸³: they enjoyed meals together outside the military routine; talked, partied, and shared jokes; played card games to kill time; and organized “fado houses” and regional singing performances.⁸⁴ Professional singers or itinerant cinema would sometimes be available in certain areas.⁸⁵ They would “celebrate anything” as an excuse for partying and often “drinking until one hit the ground.”⁸⁶ Heavy drinking was an aspect mentioned many times by my interviewees as a collective means of “enduring” the harsher aspects of war.⁸⁷ 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.⁸⁸ Further distractions and activities had to be found to prevent servicemen from “going mad.”⁸⁹ Some men devoted themselves to reading, writing, or photography.⁹⁰ Many were keen on sports, particularly football. Hunting also happened, as well, when accessible, as visits to the beach and rivers.⁹¹ More bizarre occupations, like crocodile races and the training of war donkeys, enlivened leisure time.⁹²

Military commissions in Africa provided deeper and permanent contact between comrades from every region of Portugal, “each with their experience and different lifestyle.”⁹³ Less educated, rural Northerners tended to manifest their “patriotism” more vehemently, as opposed to those originating from the highly industrialized, politically conscious Lisbon metropolitan area and certain areas of southern Portugal in general.⁹⁴ 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 twentieth century.⁹⁵ In a process similar to the one described by Hunt regarding his study of World War II veterans, this experience allowed young Portuguese servicemen with very distinct upbringings to socialize with each other, broadening their socio-cultural horizons via sharing ideas, worldviews, cultural products, and reflections on their position.⁹⁶ 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.⁹⁷ 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 1965–1966, this music left such an impression that he asserted that “I left that place a different man.”⁹⁸ These exchanges were pivotal in influencing perceptions about the conflict they were taking part in.⁹⁹ In a typical example, José Teixeira (b. 1948), from Porto, stationed in Angola from 1970 to 1972, recalled that he acquired a new political awareness through the “Southerners” who made him realize that they were being used to “sustain an unsustainable,” “unfair” war.¹⁰⁰

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.¹⁰¹ Regular post from home was, therefore, of paramount importance for the troops’ morale.¹⁰² Aware of this, the Portuguese state created a system of free postal services to and from the military men stationed in the African provinces.¹⁰³ Aided by the lack of organized entertainment, writing to loved ones became a favorite 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.¹⁰⁴ The distribution of received post was a sensitive moment feared by the military hierarchies. Unpleasant news from home (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.¹⁰⁵

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 Joaquim Pereira (b. 1942), an infantry officer in Angola between 1965 and 1967 (Fig. 5.3):

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.¹⁰⁶

Many ex-combatants explained how important this closeness was for them, since they could feel contentment “even in the middle of the jungle [...] by eating iron ration and telling jokes.”¹⁰⁷ Being in the army, united by the same circumstances, and enduring the same hardships, they felt “they were one [...] all the same”¹⁰⁸—a feeling which, echoing a universal combatant experience, generates a deep-rooted sense of comradeship and



Fig. 5.3 Joaquim Pereira (Angola, 1965/67)

the establishment of close male friendships.¹⁰⁹ Within their company, they did not make friends, but 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.”¹¹⁰

Their unity manifests also in the emphasis virtually all my respondents placed 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 fulfillment 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.¹¹¹ The ex-combatants provided vivid accounts of their privations and suffering while in Africa. They revealed 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, with no proper medical assistance, and with unsuitable military equipment, weapons, and support infrastructures.¹¹² 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.¹¹³ Manuel Oliveira recalled that “the only time I cried in Guinea—I cried of hunger.”¹¹⁴ 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.”¹¹⁵ Facing the brutal temperature changes of the African climate, with day-time temperatures over 40°C and freezing cold at night, many desperately felt the inadequacies of their equipment.¹¹⁶ The lack of suitable accommodation and sanitary facilities was frequently highlighted. In certain areas, military infrastructures consisted of army tents and “aluminum hut[s],” without water or electricity.¹¹⁷ One respondent recalled how, in his barracks, he had to “drink rain water for months on end.”¹¹⁸ 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.¹¹⁹ In addition, accounts about the poor quality and insufficient quantity of food provided by the Portuguese Army repeatedly emerged.¹²⁰ 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 among the troops. Reminiscing about lost comrades, many veterans regretted the deaths they believe could have been avoided.¹²¹

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.¹²² Some respondents remarked how they often noticed a disrespectful attitude from the military toward the African natives in a non-fighting context, presenting examples of exploitation, violence, and racism.¹²³ 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.”¹²⁴

Yet most ex-combatants recalled the existence of a fairly positive interaction with the African peoples.¹²⁵ They explained 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.¹²⁶ For some, 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.¹²⁷

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.¹²⁸ Moments of leisure provided opportunities for such contacts: parties and dances were organized between the stationed troops and the locals; Abílio Silva remembers those “good times” with fondness. Being so distant from their own families, their comrades and local populations—including the white Portuguese community—provided the “healthy” socialization they needed.¹²⁹

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.¹³⁰ Echoing similar testimonials given by a few other respondents, one of my interviewees explained how where he was stationed (Mozambique, 1970–1972) 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!¹³¹

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.¹³² 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.¹³³ 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.¹³⁴ Often unprotected, many of these encounters also produced a concerning spread of venereal diseases among the troops with “terrible” consequences, despite army advice and basic medical care provided.¹³⁵ Big cities like Luanda, in Angola, had “institutionalized” prostitution neighborhoods where “many left their money” while off-duty.¹³⁶

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.¹³⁷ 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.¹³⁸ Nonetheless, my interviewees emphasize that a substantial amount of respect for local women prevailed and was encouraged among servicemen.¹³⁹ Such sensitive sexuality-related topics were not always addressed openly by the majority of my respondents. This reserve also includes the virtual absence of mentions of homosexuality in the army, known to exist, albeit experienced discreetly.¹⁴⁰ 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 (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.¹⁴¹

Reflecting on how their commission developed, many ex-servicemen explained how, toward 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.”¹⁴² 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 socialization opportunities, some men would go “completely crazy,” often resorting to alcohol and aggressive behavior.¹⁴³ José Lima elaborated 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.¹⁴⁴

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.”¹⁴⁵ Some admitted that “after a certain point” their indifference and total lack of interest were overwhelming. Tension and worry would increase, though, toward the end of the commission, with rising fears that “something could happen” at the last moment before their return.¹⁴⁶ According to Alcino Vaz (Guinea, 1970–1972):

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.¹⁴⁷

With the end approaching, and having been there long enough to know what serving their military duty in Africa was about, then, as Orlando Libório recalled, they “exaggerated a little bit” in scaring the newcomers, assuring them that “they were finished,” and that “hey man, you don’t know what you’re getting yourself into!”¹⁴⁸

“We Were Really in a War”¹⁴⁹

Along with many others, José Teixeira, author of these words, soon realized that he was taking part in a real war. Throughout the thirteen years of the colonial conflict, the Armed Forces perfected counter-insurgency 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.¹⁵⁰ 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.¹⁵¹ Compulsorily conscripted, these men were not professional soldiers, lacking the motivations and ambitions of the latter.¹⁵² In addition, from 1966 onward, arriving servicemen were clearly decreasing in quality and enthusiasm.¹⁵³ In effect, broadly characterized 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.¹⁵⁴

While 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.¹⁵⁵ Among 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 perceived as a lost cause. In this sense, the ex-combatants’ war narratives acquire a dissonant, disappointed, and often angry tone.¹⁵⁶ 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.¹⁵⁷ The veterans’ interpretations of what they were fighting for at the time are revealing. The majority of my respondents explained that they were merely fighting for personal survival, not for their “motherland.”¹⁵⁸ Or, to further quote José Teixeira:

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.¹⁵⁹

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.”¹⁶⁰ For them, this was “obviously a pointless war,” in which they were “cannon fodder.”¹⁶¹

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, man.”¹⁶² The fact that a great number admit to have felt at the time that the independence fighters “were right!” further complicated their moral conundrum.¹⁶³ Many were “unfairly” fulfilling their military duty against their conscience for fear of punishment for refusing to fight.¹⁶⁴ One of my interviewees recalled the concerns worrying him and his comrades while fighting in Portuguese Guinea between 1970 and 1972:

[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?!¹⁶⁵

“Killing people” was a duty imposed by the regime on these young men, and most respondents emphasized how meaningless and unnecessary they consider that action.¹⁶⁶ Although, often uneasily, the topic of violence was addressed in a rather candid manner by most interviewees. Some combatants described the numbing effect of repetitive killings in a war context, which transformed it, beyond self-defense, into a casual “routine” for some servicemen.¹⁶⁷ As explained by an ex-bazooka handler, killing could become like “having a sandwich.”¹⁶⁸

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 judgments are not the purpose of this research, I note that a few respondents remarked how some were killing not just to stay alive: “there were some who did that with—with pleasure (brief pause),” and as an “addiction.”¹⁶⁹ 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.¹⁷⁰

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).¹⁷¹ In this respect, José Teixeira explained how “we ended up giving tit for that, [...] doing exactly the same thing [the independence fighters] had done: [killing civilians].”¹⁷² The custom of collecting trophies of enemy body parts, mainly ears, occurred in some instances, as in the example of the soldier who wore “a necklace made of ears.”¹⁷³

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.”¹⁷⁴ 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 combatants to admit involvement in such violent acts.¹⁷⁵ One emphasized that after being “sent to the jungle,” they became “bad,” and “were like animals.”¹⁷⁶ 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, he was “just witnessing.” When describing the torture that one of the prisoners was subjected to, his hesitant pronoun usage betrayed 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 added how “at the time I was not sorry.”¹⁷⁷

Those who acknowledged the practice of violence often justified it with feelings of anger and revenge.¹⁷⁸ 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.¹⁷⁹ A soldier who served in Guinea between 1969 and 1970 explained 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 kill them!”¹⁸⁰ 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].¹⁸¹

This spirit of revenge is reported to have existed even among newly arrived “angry” servicemen determined to avenge brothers or other relatives who had been previously killed in Africa.¹⁸² Paradoxically, through their accounts these men were keen to stress how, in this war atmosphere, such instances of revengeful retaliation coexisted with innumerable daily displays of tenderness toward 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.¹⁸³

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.¹⁸⁴ Given the uncertainty about an invisible enemy knowledgeable about the terrain, the sudden attacks, ambushes, and prevalence of mines meant, as José Lima put it, that this “was a terrible war—a war of anguish,” making combatants nervous and drained.¹⁸⁵

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.”¹⁸⁶ 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 get out of here alive.”¹⁸⁷ Others explained how it was no “joke” seeing “a military vehicle going up in the air and killing [everybody] immediately.”¹⁸⁸ Many felt unsupported and left to their fate by higher rank officers who normally would command operations from a distance.¹⁸⁹ On some locations, the attacks were constant, almost daily. From the defense holes where José Lima had to frequently find cover during his deployment in Guinea, they were “always expecting to see when a grenade would fall on our back.”¹⁹⁰ 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, making them feel sometimes like “being in a safari.”¹⁹¹ Furthermore, these men pinpointed how death could occur in absurd, unexpected ways. They often narrated 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.¹⁹²

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.¹⁹³ The ex-combatants explained, with many subtleties, how fear was a prevalent human feeling associated with this war experience. Manuel Oliveira, for instance, detailed 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.”¹⁹⁴ 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.”¹⁹⁵ 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.”¹⁹⁶ For some, stress and fear would emerge after action.¹⁹⁷ Such a complex, subjective topic embraces a myriad of individual interpretations. Indeed, others ascertained that 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.”¹⁹⁸ José Teixeira, 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.¹⁹⁹ Fear could even paralyze, as happened to the shaking comrade who could not shoot during an attack.²⁰⁰ 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.”²⁰¹ From the defense holes, during a fierce attack “some cried—others screamed—others insulted—others prayed.”²⁰² Before leaving for a military operation, a respondent would always “look towards Heaven and ask Our Lady of Fátima” for protection.²⁰³ Screaming for their mothers and other relatives was also a common occurrence.²⁰⁴ Nonetheless, despite fear’s pervasiveness, the veterans were adamant in emphasizing 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.”²⁰⁵ Failing in those “dark hours” would put other comrades at risk.²⁰⁶ 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.”²⁰⁷

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 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.²⁰⁸

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” and “distressing” and men were plagued by anxiety.²⁰⁹ In those scenarios, “there is violence hovering in the air everywhere, all the time, and there is no rest.”²¹⁰ Even for Orlando Libório, whose military duties in Mozambique never included direct fighting action, every day “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 (Fig. 5.4).²¹¹

Fig. 5.4 Orlando Libório
(Mozambique, 1970/72)



Knowing that every operation could be their last, many military men tried to eschew taking part in action or “avoid the most dangerous areas.”²¹² 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.²¹³ 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.”²¹⁴

Some died, while 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.”²¹⁵ 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, which was 400 kilometers 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 it was [...] I spent a whole night—losing blood—without a leg—and only those who go through these things know their price.²¹⁶

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.²¹⁷ 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 1971.²¹⁸ Those combatants who, although injured, managed to escape death, often more than once, call themselves “lucky.”²¹⁹ “Every day,” many of their comrades were severely injured or lost their lives, “boys [...] who had been wounded at twenty-two, twenty-three years of age.”²²⁰ Notwithstanding their loyalty to their comrades, some, like Manuel Oliveira, 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!²²¹

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 1974.²²² 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 comprised almost entirely people who experienced warfare directly. For many attached to certain army specialties,

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 Abílio Silva, those people were “there having a holiday,” and “fortunately did not know what the war was about.”²²³ If action 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.²²⁴

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.²²⁵ 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.”²²⁶

“Sent to Command Over a Hundred Men”²²⁷

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).²²⁸ 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.”²²⁹

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.”²³⁰ 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.²³¹ As the war progressed and the shortage of officers became more notorious, within the compulsory military service framework civilian conscription increased and diversified.²³² Among 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 mobilized 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.²³³ 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).²³⁴ 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 among career officers of the same rank. Their discontent was at the root of the 25th April 1974 coup initiated by a section of the Armed Forces.²³⁵

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.²³⁶ Due to their frequent military inadequacy, many of these officers struggled to be obeyed and respected by the men under their command.²³⁷ Of my interviews with seven *alferes*, around half of them openly acknowledged these problems, about themselves or others.²³⁸ 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.²³⁹ The *milicianos* “would go because they were forced to,” and they “were the ones who did not want the war.”²⁴⁰ Only one of my *alferes* interviewees embraced a military career.

Joaquim Pereira (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 remarked 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 mobilized, Pereira believed that it was his “duty to defend the motherland.”²⁴¹ This was a position very different from that of Eduardo Palaio (b. 1942), another *alferes miliciano* stationed in Angola during the same period. Raised in central Portugal in a seaside town in a strongly oppositionist family, Palaio 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.”²⁴² To his mortification, the initial uneasiness was further complicated by the fact that he greatly enjoyed military life and being in Africa (Fig. 5.5).²⁴³

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.²⁴⁴ Another *alferes* recalled how, hidden at the top of a hill during a shooting, on his twenty-fifth birthday, he realized that the imprisonment reserved for those evading military service could not be worse than his situation.²⁴⁵ 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*.²⁴⁶

At the distance of decades, these officers rationalized their motivations and actions, frequently highlighting a devotion to the men they com-



Fig. 5.5 Eduardo Palaio (Angola, 1965/67)

manded 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 men [under their command] back alive,” and “if possible, not hurting anybody.”²⁴⁷ 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 pinpointed strong comradeship and group cohesion as the main reason and focus of fighting.²⁴⁸ For instance, despite “total revulsion” regarding his compulsory presence in Guinea between 1965 and 1966, an *alferes miliciano* emphasized his loyalty to his combat group, whose welfare, notwithstanding his admitted difficulties with military life, he guaranteed he had at heart at all times.²⁴⁹ Similarly, Eduardo Palaio explained 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.”²⁵⁰

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.²⁵¹ Eduardo Palaio 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.²⁵² Another *alferes* stationed in Guinea between 1971 and 1973 manifested his surprise that not even one of the seventy men under his command denounced him for producing a false report stating that the orders to destroy a native village had been fulfilled.²⁵³

The closeness between these junior *miliciano* officers and their men was an aspect frequently highlighted by respondents. Clearly, the behavior of the average Portuguese soldier, humble and barely literate, 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 behavior—while some

stole, raped, and killed, others' correctness was exemplary. This aspect places emphasis, as noted by 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.²⁵⁴ 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 subsequent civilian life, Eduardo Palaio, for instance, marveled at the vast military, territorial, jurisdictional, and personal power he was given in Angola as a twenty-four-year-old *alferes*.²⁵⁵ Many of these junior officers interpreted 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.²⁵⁶ 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 toward 1974, the war was fought almost exclusively by civilians—thousands of the male Portuguese population of the era.²⁵⁷

*"They Have No Idea"*²⁵⁸

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," scrutinizing the months going by, "the fastest, the better, so that we could leave."²⁵⁹ Unlike mobilized 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 recounted they were departing already "hopeful" that "one day" the war "would have to end."²⁶⁰

Recalling their feelings upon departure, some veterans emphasized their realization that, while serving in Africa, "there was virtually nobody there by conviction"; others asserted that they felt at ease with themselves for having tried to "give their best," irrespective of the fairness or unfairness of the conflict.²⁶¹ 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.²⁶² José Teixeira explained the shift that took place 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.”²⁶³

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.²⁶⁴ A minority, however, chose to stay in Africa, mainly in the cities, in the hope of “starting a completely different type of life.”²⁶⁵ In any case, for these men a new phase began here. Very symbolically, in 1968, João Lima 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 (Fig. 5.6).²⁶⁶



Fig. 5.6 João Lima (Angola, 1966/68)

COMING HOME

*“The Happiest Man Alive”*²⁶⁷

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.²⁶⁸ Regarding this phase of preliminary adaptation, although the veterans’ personal accounts are often steered toward 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!”²⁶⁹ Some, like a soldier returning from Guinea in 1970, expressively stated that “it felt like I was coming back from Hell!”²⁷⁰ They could finally be reunited with their families, friends, and loved ones in their homeland.²⁷¹

Returning in 1970 after spending twenty-seven months in Mozambique in an operational zone and being injured in combat, soldier Joaquim Tacão felt he was the “happiest man alive.” With a broad smile, Tacão offered a vivid recollection of his arrival (Fig. 5.7):

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.²⁷²

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 shared by most interviewees, particularly the ones who returned without major physical or psychological problems. That was the case, for example, of Manuel Ferreira, who finally, and with “huge relief,” “laid aside the military life.” In his instance, his relief was rein-



Fig. 5.7 Joaquim Tacão (Mozambique, 1968/70)

forced by the fact that he never participated in direct action, or suffered any type of injury.²⁷³

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.²⁷⁴ 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.”²⁷⁵ Félix Caixeiro narrated 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.”²⁷⁶ As in the case of Caixeiro, such effusive welcome receptions were especially true in small, rural villages and neighborhoods where the soldiers belonged to close-knit communities.²⁷⁷ Sometimes the locals would be waiting at the train station, or gathered to receive the returning servicemen in the high street.²⁷⁸ A then twenty-two-year-old serviceman 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.²⁷⁹

Interestingly, having returned from Angola only three years after the beginning of the conflict, Caixeiro 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 Orlando Libório. 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 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.²⁸⁰

For returning servicemen, however, general feelings would not significantly vary with the passage of time. Like Félix Caixeiro, most rejoiced at the “restarting of my [their] life.”²⁸¹ Like this respondent, many ex-combatants eagerly stressed the “feeling of freedom” of not being “under the military yoke anymore”—which some perceive as having “lost two years of life” in Africa.²⁸² Nonetheless, Ferreira, Caixeiro, 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.²⁸³ In such instances, the happiness of arrival “was something to make us forget everything we have gone through there.”²⁸⁴ 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) explained 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.²⁸⁵

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.²⁸⁶ 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 Orlando Libório 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 pleasant, humorous, stoical, or anecdotal “safe” stories were shared, transforming more unsettling war memories into an almost exclusive veteran remembrance bastion.²⁸⁷ As noted by Félix Caixeiro, afterward he would only discuss the African experience “mainly with those who had lived the same situation.”²⁸⁸ In this regard, a soldier who returned from Guinea in 1972 recalled 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 man, 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, man, no—because we still arrived—but we didn’t arrive quite ourselves.²⁸⁹

The awareness that they arrived as changed men is common to many of these veterans. Some asserted they returned “100 percent 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 realized [...] 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.²⁹⁰

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.²⁹¹ Abílio Silva, for instance, felt that

his arrival equaled to being “born again” and, consequently, the “start [of] a new life.”²⁹² Although upon resuming their daily lives, memories of their military service were mostly prevalent, afterward many entered “a normal routine.”²⁹³ Félix Caixeiro, for example, though acknowledging later the adaptation difficulties, mentioned that after getting married and settling down he “cooled down a bit” regarding his war experiences.²⁹⁴ About this period 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. Caixeiro 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.”²⁹⁵ Similarly, in order to “erase the past,” one ex-soldier decided to burn all the letters he had written to his future wife.²⁹⁶ 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 Abílio Silva and others.²⁹⁷ However, most were firmly determined to leave their military selves in the past and “look ahead, start again” in the future.²⁹⁸

*“It’s Over”*²⁹⁹

From 1974 onward, the future that these men were facing included a major political change—the democratic revolution started on 25 April of the same year. From the beginning of the decade, particularly the more politically enlightened urban sectors were increasingly aware that the “war had to end, no matter what” and that a shift was imminent.³⁰⁰ 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 commonly 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 emerging values and ideals. Abílio Silva, for instance, recalled that in the aftermath of the 25th of April 1974, “we were badly treated, [...] people would say bad things against us, and that we were criminals, and I don’t know what else.”³⁰¹ 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 Teixeira:

After the 25th 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-25th April—those who had gone to war had been traitors, who betrayed the—the peoples of the colonies [...] who were our brothers.³⁰²

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 decolonization 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 stated that “I was considered—right after the 25th 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.”³⁰³ Illustrating how the political tensions in Portugal at the time could generate unexpected developments, José Amaral, 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?!³⁰⁴

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* Eduardo Palaio found himself in after his return from Angola in 1967, and 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, Palaio 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 politicized. [...] 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, a known member of PIDE giving me hugs! [...] If one day I am walking down Chiado [neighborhood in Lisbon] (laughter), and a guy known for being a PIDE hey, great warrior! and comes to give me a few hugs (laughter)! Oh man—I'm done!³⁰⁵

As illustrated by Palaio'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.³⁰⁶ 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?”³⁰⁷ The veterans' narratives indicate that in private remembrance spheres, mostly among 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.”³⁰⁸ Irrespective of the conflict's legitimacy, fallen comrades and loved ones would not be forgotten, a latent remembrance feature that would materialize more visibly in Portugal decades later.³⁰⁹

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.³¹⁰ For the sake of the latter, an ex-soldier recalled how it felt “so good it’s over.”³¹¹

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 socio-political change was fast and immediately evident for those returning from Africa.³¹² The task ahead was to successfully readapt to their civilian lives.

“Everybody Has Already Forgotten”³¹³

The immediate goal for veterans was resuming the social, personal, and professional aspects of their lives. As recognized in the plural form by Orlando Libório, 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.³¹⁴

As Bourke suggests, feelings of disorientation and disillusionment are common in returning combatants.³¹⁵ A combination of personal characteristics and experiences lived during their military service would generate a reintegration with more or less difficulty. Most of my interviewees generally adapted well to this new phase. Some considered that 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.³¹⁶ They concentrated on the future instead, enjoying their family life, “socializing again” with friends, and looking for a job.³¹⁷

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 and 1970. 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.³¹⁸ Others, like Manuel Ferreira in his administrative job, were unhappy that their military service meant an interruption or delayed progression of their preexisting career, benefiting other colleagues who were not conscripted (particularly female ones).³¹⁹ Some interviewees believed that the “missing” years of military service and its consequences resulted in fewer career choices.³²⁰

A common aspect in these men was the “huge desire” to rapidly transform their lives, sometimes even employing as a motivational factor a perceived personal growth acquired while in the army, as in the case of José Lima. 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. Among others, Lima is an example of how many experienced a positive reintegration period.³²¹

Among 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.³²² After recovering from injuries received in Guinea (1969–1970) and experiencing some adjustment difficulties, Virgílio Gouveia, from a less-favored background in Madeira Island, left for the United Kingdom. In his account, Gouveia attributed 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.³²³ 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 (Fig. 5.8).”³²⁴

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.³²⁵ One of such cases was *alferes* Joaquim Pereira, who served in Angola

Fig. 5.8 Virgílio
Gouveia
(Guinea,
1969/70)



firmly believing in the task attributed to him and its underlying values. His reinsertion into civilian life occurred amid deep “uneasiness” and social “frustration,” with Pereira feeling “segregated” and “put aside.” According to the ex-*alferes*, this was “what shocked me most” when, after returning, he realized 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, Pereira placed his army years among “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 “savior,” a commander, while in Portugal he became “a complete nobody,” working as a bank accountant. Pereira considered 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 another guy.”³²⁶ 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.³²⁷ Similarly, Eduardo Palaio addressed the personal and professional obstacles he faced, explaining how afterward he could never “find a normal job,” which emphasizes how his war experience prominently shaped his future professional life.³²⁸

*“A Man Doesn’t Cry”*³²⁹

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.³³⁰ 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.³³¹ For career officers, who had to serve successive commissions in Africa, years away from their families took their toll. Upon his return, one officer realized he “had no space” in his family anymore.³³² Another sadly noted his children would not recognize him and even feared him.³³³ 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.³³⁴ Manuel Oliveira exemplified someone who had to exert continuing efforts toward 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,” Oliveira 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 realizing that was not enough. In hindsight, Oliveira explained 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 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.³³⁵ In his reflections on this period of his life, Oliveira denounced the inadequacies of his upbringing’s dictate that “a man doesn’t cry” as “a complete lie.” At the time of the interview, this veteran was aware how he had been unable to suitably navigate 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.³³⁶

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.³³⁷ Frequently, the effects were not immediately visible. The men might have been initially too enthusiastic about their return to detect anything unusual. José Teixeira, 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. Teixeira disturbingly found there was “too much calmness” in civilian life.³³⁸ It made many ex-servicemen feel “out of place” and disorientated.³³⁹ In this respect, most narratives converge in providing a recurrent picture of how Teixeira and many veterans would be significantly plagued by sleeping difficulties and vivid nightmares, sometimes for a long time after returning.³⁴⁰ Through impairing nightmares, these men would experience the terror of having to be mobilized to Africa again, be haunted by the faces of fallen comrades, witness again violence suffered or perpetrated, replaying in dreams and sometimes awake “all that film” of their military service, having to cope with “quite a few ghosts one can’t get rid of.”³⁴¹

For many, coping with unsettling memories in this immediate post-return phase led to alcoholism and substance abuse, anti-social and, delinquent behavior, and violence.³⁴² For one ex-soldier it was extreme car-racing, whereas others got purposely into fights.³⁴³ 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.”³⁴⁴ 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.³⁴⁵ Like Oliveira, many experienced problems on a personal level. Félix Caixeiro 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.³⁴⁶ 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, Caixeiro 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.³⁴⁷ In other instances, persistent difficulties led to breakups and divorces.³⁴⁸ Echoing thousands of others, Caixeiro’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.³⁴⁹

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 behavior 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.”³⁵⁰

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 1995.³⁵¹ 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.³⁵²

*“The Marks Remain Forever”*³⁵³

In other cases, the consequences of the war had a more visible and physical side. Most of my respondents described 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.³⁵⁴ Félix Caixeiro lives with a “mortar fragment of one centimeter of diameter, and several smaller ones scattered through the thorax.”³⁵⁵ A significant number of these men are keen on 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.³⁵⁶

This was obvious for those who had been evacuated to Portugal due to the extent of their injuries. This group comprised thousands of mutilated, blind, or otherwise seriously ill servicemen (physically and psychologically) deemed unable to serve for the duration of their military conscription.³⁵⁷ 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.”³⁵⁸ 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 “rumor” that he had been blinded or lost limbs.³⁵⁹ In other cases, despite considerable injuries, others chose to stress their loyalty to their combat group upon evacuation, asserting they had wanted to continue to stay in Africa, fighting alongside their comrades.³⁶⁰

The early return of badly wounded men, who appeared in Portugal at an unprecedented scale due to the conflict, was more dramatic.³⁶¹ António Barroso was one of such cases. Barroso was 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 the age of sixteen to settle in Lisbon, where he found a better job and progressed in his studies. Conscripted at the age of nineteen, Barroso embarked in November 1970 to Mozambique, from where he returned in 1972, due to a serious landmine injury, as a lower-limb amputee. Visibly moved, Barroso 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?”³⁶² Focusing significantly on the “delicate” first meeting with his parents after evacuation, this respondent emotionally recalled how (Fig. 5.9):

[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.³⁶³

Struggling to come to terms with the amputation, António Barroso’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 asserted, make a man “cry wholeheartedly” since they “bear a lot of weight in someone’s life.”³⁶⁴ 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.”³⁶⁵

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 with which they were often treated.³⁶⁶ 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 and 1966 and lost

Fig. 5.9 António Barroso (Mozambique, 1970/73)



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 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.³⁶⁷

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 regretted 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.³⁶⁸ Unaware of their existence, most of the population had no knowledge that they were living “hidden in hospital.”³⁶⁹ Some expressed their anger at the “disgraceful” way they were being treated, as broken “cannon fodder” who had to “stay there and rot.”³⁷⁰ A patronizing, insensitive institutional attitude toward 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’s 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.”³⁷¹

Many of these patients were so severely disabled (often bi-amputees, quad-amputees, blind, and with other conditions) that the chances of being discharged were very slim.³⁷² 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.³⁷³ The process often included a long stay in hospital. About this period, the narratives of most of these disabled men frequently highlighted 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 por-

tray their determination, which began in the hospital, to have a life as “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 fulfill their dietary, alcohol, sexual, and entertainment needs. From smuggling wine and prostitutes into the hospital, to boycotting official events and organizing séances in the wards, they presented a colorful portrait of daily life at the military hospital. One bi-amputee officer asserted 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, the inmates often developed close friendships, where humor, pranks, and irreverence played a big role toward recovery and meant “war stress didn’t linger so much.”³⁷⁴

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, which was not more than two or three on each occasion.³⁷⁵ Most were rather fearless of punishment since having been injured or disabled, the capital’s police authorities were well acquainted with the extravagant behavior of many of “those” veterans, often acting leniently and escorting them discreetly back to the hospital.³⁷⁶ Keen not to hide their disability, some used these opportunities to “show themselves” in downtown Lisbon. 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 recalled with certain humor 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 recognized as such, the regime sought to conceal its human consequences as much as possible. Having acquired their disabilities while in the service of the Portuguese Army, many of these veterans felt alienated and angered by such instances of social and institutional shame.³⁷⁷

For seriously wounded and mutilated men, after the initial hospital internment, the lengthy and complex “martyrdom of recovery” began. Barroso recalled that he “had to relearn how to walk” and, like many others, in the process underwent a phase of frustration and anger that made him seek refuge in alcohol.³⁷⁸ 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—smoothens the edges [...] but there's always the mark, you know.³⁷⁹

For Barroso and men in similar situations, the war experience could never be forgotten, their daily limitations acting as a constant, inevitable reminder.³⁸⁰ 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.³⁸¹

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.³⁸² Like many other war amputees, António Barroso 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, Barroso detailed 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.³⁸³ Barroso and others conjured, in a condemning tone, an unsupportive picture in traditional 1960s and 1970s 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.³⁸⁴ In the face of social stigma, Barroso was consumed by “huge anger” and frustration at realizing 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.”³⁸⁵ After some years, he found a supportive, accepting wife with whom he had a family. Nevertheless, Barroso'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.”³⁸⁶ However, people like the double-amputee *miliciano* officer contrasted such difficulties with alternative behaviors. In his case, his girlfriend—and future wife—refused to cancel their marriage plans, and continued supporting him for decades of a “normal” life in common.³⁸⁷

A remarkable example of social reintegration by a seriously disabled ex-combatant is Abel Fortuna (b. 1949), an *alferes miliciano* who lost both hands and his eyesight in Guinea in 1971. For Fortuna, his disability marked the beginning of the “second part” of his life and the acquisition of “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. Fortuna’s narrative reveals how, notwithstanding the severity of his condition and initial traumatic reactions to it, he soon realized that remaining meaningfully alive would require “a lot of hard work and effort.”³⁸⁸ Taking a stance against the prevailing discrimination, Fortuna challenged perceptions of disabled people as helpless, pitiful individuals.³⁸⁹ With the democratic change after 25 April 1974, the war-disabled were able to emerge and become more visible. Fortuna 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, Fortuna succeeded in transforming his disability into professional success and social currency toward benefiting other disabled veterans (Fig. 5.10).³⁹⁰

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 afterward with the country focused on internal political and institutional restructuring, in practice, the Portuguese Army did not provide fully adequate support to ex-combatants. Until 1974, and since the war was not officially recognized 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

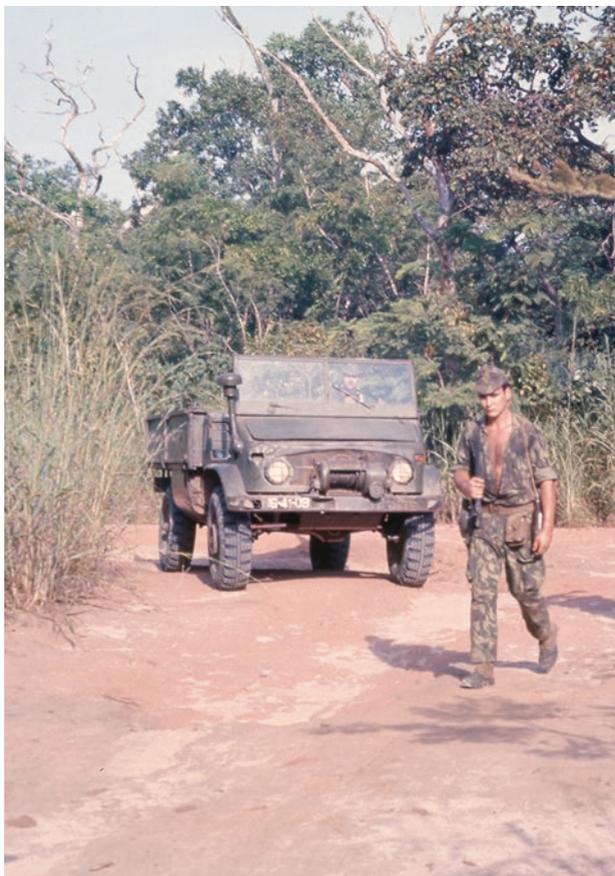


Fig. 5.10 Abel Fortuna (Guinea, 1971)

(including most significantly the injured and disabled after ending formal treatment in military hospitals) toward readjustment into civilian life.³⁹¹ That was the case of amputee António Barroso 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, Barroso rationalized, with visible anger, that his motherland “used me, exploited me, mutilated and abandoned me,” a “sorrow” echoed by

others.³⁹² 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.³⁹³ In the words of a *miliciano* officer, they were carelessly "thrown to the beasts."³⁹⁴ 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 Oliveira stressed the country's "unpreparedness" to deal with its veterans, as it was unaware "of the state" they returned in. These personally affected veterans explained that "at the time" the much-needed psychological support was not available, their recovery becoming a long, uncharted personal (and family) journey.³⁹⁵ To counteract these inadequacies, soon veteran associations began to emerge—such as ADFA in 1974—which claimed suitable state support for ex-combatants.

"Why Has This Happened to Me?"³⁹⁶

Having analyzed 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 war-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.

NOTES

1. Interviewee 26, p. 7 of the transcription. For further information about each interviewee, please refer to the “Biographical Information Table” at the end of this volume.
2. 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 (3–4).
3. Many conscripts were illiterate, mainly those from rural areas. See Interviewee 11 (10).
4. Interviewee 19 (1); 28 (5–6).
5. Interviewee 31 (22).
6. Estado-Maior do Exército, CECA, *Resenha histórico-militar*, 219–222; 312–335.
7. Interviewees 26 (10); 22 (2).
8. Interviewee 28 (8).
9. Interviewee 4 (2). A great number of interviewees emphasized 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 (3) and 28 (7). See Gomes, “Quotidianos da Guerra Colonial,” in *Nova História Militar*, (Vol. 5, 2004), 137–138.
10. Interviewees 36 (3); 30 (3); 18 (2, 4); 24 (2); 26 (2); 25 (1). The social impact of this mobilization 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 (21). Interviewee 29 in 1970 also had a brother overseas (26). See Interviewee 32 (19).
11. Interviewee 14 (5).
12. Interviewees 31 (21); 29 (15); 7 (4); 27 (1).
13. Interviewees 26 (4); 32 (18).
14. Interviewees 2 (2); 3 (4).
15. Interviewee 2 (3).
16. Interviewee 3 (4).
17. Particularly for those with lower literacy rates, from rural areas or smaller towns. See Interviewees 19 (2); 14 (5); 36 (1); 27 (1).
18. Interviewees 21 (4, 6–7); 24 (1).

19. Interviewee 28 (2, 5).
20. Interviewees 26 (2, 5); 3 (7); 24 (1), among others.
21. Interviewee 32 (20).
22. Recruits from the Lisbon metropolitan area are depicted as more “politicized.” See Interviewees 32 (20); 4 (14); 29 (2–3).
23. Interviewees 28 (13); 26 (2); 16 (10); 4 (3); 31 (1).
24. In 1969, after passing his military inspection, Interviewee 16 fled to France. Upon his return in 1970, he was arrested and subsequently mobilized to Guinea (1). Interviewee 29 escaped to France to avoid conscription. Returning voluntarily in 1969, he was immediately incorporated and sent to Guinea. See Interviewee 29 (2–3).
25. Interviewees 20 (8); 36 (3).
26. Interviewees 31 (23); 32 (19); 29 (26). For instance, Interviewee 21 unsuccessfully tried different expedients to avoid mobilization to Africa.
27. Interviewees 21 (18); 12 (3–4); 31 (23); 17 (9); 31 (23).
28. Interviewee 26 (6) explains this pre-departure leave was the moment, for many, to decide about evading service. See also Interviewees 29 (3); 26 (8); 19 (15).
29. Interviewees 26 (8–9); 28 (4).
30. See, for instance, Interviewees 13 (1); 10 (1); 27 (2); 29 (4).
31. That was the average duration of the commission in Africa. Those stationed in Guinea would sometimes serve for around eighteen months since service in that territory was considered more dangerous and strenuous. See Interviewees 25 (3) and 26 (17).
32. Interviewee 21 (5). Interviewee 4 left his wife and son when mobilized in 1970, at twenty-one years of age. Interviewee 5, mobilized at the age of thirty-three in 1972, left behind his wife and an established job.
33. Interviewee 32 (19).
34. Interviewees 30 (1–2) and 33 (8).
35. See, for instance, Interviewees 21 (6) and 36 (4).
36. Interviewee 25 (4–5).
37. See, for instance, Interviewees 13 (1); 10 (1); 27 (2); 29 (4).
38. Interviewees 10 (4); 21 (7); 13 (1); 16 (1–2). The widespread fear among all servicemen of returning home disabled is addressed in Bourke’s study of World War One veterans. See Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 73.

39. Interviewees 29 (4) and 13 (5).
40. Interviewee 16 (1–2).
41. Interviewee 25 (5).
42. Interviewees 16 (5); 21 (7–8); 13 (5); 26 (8–9); 28 (13–14).
43. Interviewees 24 (1); 26 (8); 31 (4). It must be stressed that, in the early 1970s, a great number of conscripts would travel by airplane, and not by boat, as was the norm until then. For instance, Interviewee 21 traveled to Guinea by boat in 1968 (7–8), while Interviewee 2 went to the same territory by plane in 1972. The significance of overseas travel is highlighted by Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 144–145.
44. Interviewees 15 (33); 26 (9).
45. Interviewees 2 (10); 16 (19).
46. Interviewees 16 (19); 5 (4); 32 (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.
47. Interviewees 21 (8); 26 (9); 32 (1); 28 (14).
48. Interviewee 25 (5); see Gomes, “Quotidianos da Guerra Colonial,” 136–173; A. Afonso and C. Gomes (eds.) “2 X 365 dias. Viver dois anos,” in *Guerra Colonial*, 478–480.
49. See Interviewees 1 (7); 15 (9); 28 (15); 32 (3); 4 (4); 17 (7), just to quote some examples.
50. Interviewees 33 (10); 2 (2); 15 (1–2); 28 (13); 3 (4); 30 (1–2).
51. Interviewees 32 (2); 10 (5); 2 (2).
52. Interviewee 25 (6).
53. Interviewees 19 (19); 22 (5, 27).
54. Interviewee 22 (16–17); 36 (3).
55. Interviewees 19 (3); 22 (10); 2 (3); 28 (14).
56. Interviewee 30 (4), for instance.
57. Interviewees 21 (9); 16 (19).
58. Interviewee 30 (4).
59. Interviewees 15 (8–9); 18 (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, *Algeria*, 371.
60. Interviewees 28 (14–17); 33 (15–16); 13 (5, 10); 17 (6–7); 2 (2–4); 3 (27–28); 5 (9); 10 (5); 11 (6–7); 12 (4–5); 14 (15–16); 21 (8–9, 13–14); 27 (2).

61. In this instance, the description relates to the harbor of Lourenço Marques (currently Maputo), in Mozambique, but other accounts about other provinces echo this feeling. Interviewee 13 (5, 10).
62. Interviewees 33 (15, 28), 28 (16); 11 (2); 32 (21); 12 (18).
63. Interviewees 28 (14, 16); 11 (15, 2); 33 (15); 12 (15).
64. Interviewee 30 (22).
65. Interviewees 27 (18); 33 (28).
66. Interviewees 15 (8–9); 3 (4, 7); 1 (7); 28 (15); 32 (3); 4 (4); 17 (7), just to quote some examples.
67. Interviewees 11 (3); 22 (7, 19); 4 (6); 19 (3).
68. Interviewee 32 (3).
69. Interviewees 33 (29, 31); 12 (6); 14 (2), for instance.
70. Interviewees 4 (22); 11 (14, 16); 28 (15); 30 (22).
71. Interviewee 4 (1–2, 6).
72. Interviewees 4 (4, 6); 11 (2); 17 (4), among others.
73. Interviewees 21 (13–14); 3 (4, 7).
74. Interviewees 25 (12–15, 20); 4 (12); 17 (5).
75. Interviewee 14 (15).
76. Interviewee 15 (8–9). See J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing. Face-to-face killing in twentieth-century warfare* (London: Granta Books, 1999), 157, 166–170. On the importance of motivations for fighting, see *Ibid.*, 84–85.
77. Interviewee 13 (5).
78. Interviewee 5 (12).
79. Interviewee 18 (5). Hutching stresses the importance of studying wartime daily life spent out of military action; see “After action...,” 233–243.
80. Interviewee 11 (4).
81. Interviewees 13 (3); 22 (9); 24 (4), among others.
82. Interviewee 32 (22).
83. Interviewees 27 (4); 24 (4).
84. Interviewees 31 (16); 11 (4); 27 (4); 24 (7); 13 (3). “Fado” is a typically Portuguese musical genre (inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists on 27 November 2011).
85. Interviewees 3 (19); 12 (8).
86. Interviewee 34 (7).
87. Interviewees 19 (2, 15, 24); 28 (22).
88. Interviewees 4 (12); 28 (21); 14 (13); 31 (16); 11 (7).
89. Interviewees 34 (10); 14 (13).

90. This conflict was amply documented by photographs taken by conscripts, similarly to what Evans comments about the Algerian conflict, in *Algeria*, 171.
91. Interviewees 9 (13); 11 (4); 22 (9); 28 (21); 3 (12, 19); 32 (9); 13 (3).
92. Interviewees 9 (13); 31 (15).
93. Interviewee 11 (10–11).
94. Interviewees 14 (2); 32 (21–22).
95. Interviewees 10 (2); 11 (10); 14 (2).
96. Interviewee 11 (4). See Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 84, 144–145; also Hutching, “After action...,” 240.
97. Interviewees 16 (6, 9); 12 (5); 17 (18); 18 (18).
98. Interviewee 31 (6); Interviewee 21 (15). See Ribeiro, “As canções da guerra,” in *Marcas*, 235–268.
99. Interviewee 11 (4).
100. Interviewee 4 (14–15); Interviewee 21 (15).
101. Interviewees 34 (10); 26 (6–7); 13 (5).
102. Interviewee 34 (6, 9). Connecting with home was a major psychological resource for combatants, as approached by Roper in his study on British World War I servicemen. See M. Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2009).
103. 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 E. and L. Barreiros, *História do Serviço Postal Militar/History of Portuguese Military Postal Service. Aerogramas Militares – Catálogo. Guerra Colonial 1961–1974*. (Lisbon: Authors’ Edition, 2004).
104. Interviewees 19 (17); 9 (8); 18 (6); 4 (16); 10 (18); 16 (10); 28 (18). The servicemen’s deep interest in daily lives at home is addressed by Bourke in *Dismembering the Male*, 21–22.
105. Interviewees 9 (8); 30 (21).
106. Interviewee 8 (13).
107. Interviewee 3 (19).
108. Interviewees 32 (30); 27 (4); 36 (5). As Garton put it about the Australian Anzac experience, a rewarding comradeship erased “artificial” barriers. Garton, *The Cost of War*, 24–25.
109. 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 *Dismembering the Male*, 124–170, 26–29; see also S. Hynes, *The soldiers’ tale: bearing witness to modern war* (London: Pimlico, 1998), 8–11; Evans, *Algeria*, 171.
110. Interviewees 4 (31); 16 (13); 22 (7–8, 9); 31 (10–11).
 111. Interviewees 33 (19, 21); 9 (4–5); 5 (3).
 112. Interviewee 9 (4–5).
 113. Interviewee 1 (6).
 114. Interviewees 15 (7); 14 (11).
 115. Interviewees 19 (9, 4, 2); 27 (3).
 116. Interviewees 6 (6), 22 (10), 2 (3).
 117. Interviewees 12 (9); 19 (18); 29 (5); 21 (9); 27 (3).
 118. Interviewee 32 (17).
 119. Interviewee 34 (9). On conditions of the Portuguese Army barracks in Africa, see “Capelas imperfeitas: Quartéis,” in *Guerra Colonial*, ed. Afonso and Gomes, 414–421.
 120. Interviewees 32 (17); 13 (1); 29 (5); 21 (9); 10 (7).
 121. Interviewees 21 (19–20); 22 (15–16, 12); 10 (18); 8 (6); 29 (29); 2 (4–5); 30 (13); 4 (2); 3 (11); 15 (3, 7); 28 (16); 32 (11–12, 17); 35 (20); 34 (9).
 122. Interviewee 16 (19).
 123. Interviewees 17 (14–15); 5 (9); 28 (19). A certain animosity toward natives seemed to be associated to lower rank, less-educated conscripts.
 124. Interviewee 10 (20).
 125. Interviewees 21 (10, 17); 5 (9); 3 (14–15).
 126. Interviewees 9 (13); 10 (9); 30 (5). See Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 143–168, 188.
 127. Interviewees 25 (11–12); 2 (5–6); 8 (9); 3 (17); 5 (10); 1 (15). As happened in Algeria. See Evans, *Algeria*, 368–370. For more on the Portuguese case, see “Works Cited and Consulted.”
 128. Interviewees 28 (21, 19); 21 (11); 15 (14); 30 (15); 17 (16). On the Algerian example, see Evans, *Algeria*, 170.
 129. Interviewees 3 (14–15); 5 (9); 24 (4); 34 (16).
 130. Interviewees 18 (7–8); 17 (13). See L. Melo, “Amor e sexo em tempo de guerra,” in *Guerra Colonial*, ed. R. Teixeira (2001), 187–192.
 131. Interviewee 17 (13–14).
 132. Interviewees 17 (14); 31 (13).

133. Interviewees 30 (18); 17 (13–14).
134. Interviewee 17 (7, 13–14). See “Guiné-Bissau. Os filhos que ...,” 14th July 2013.
135. Interviewee 9 (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 (6). See Ribeiro, “As doenças na Guerra,” in *Marcas* (45–64).
136. Interviewee 26 (11–12). An aspect addressed by Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 161.
137. Behaviors similar to those of Vietnam combatants, as shown by Bourke in *An Intimate History of Killing*, 354–357.
138. Interviewee 8 (10–11).
139. Interviewee 29 (37).
140. Interviewee 18 (7–8). See also “Guerra Colonial: Sim, havia maior liberdade sexual...,” 12th July 2009.
141. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 24–27.
142. Interviewee 21 (14, 19).
143. Interviewees 32 (23); 34 (9); 28 (17); 29 (9).
144. Interviewee 21 (21).
145. Interviewee 12 (7–8); 13 (9).
146. Interviewees 29 (28–29); 15 (2); 32 (23).
147. Interviewee 16 (9–10).
148. Interviewee 32 (23).
149. Interviewee 4 (24).
150. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 73–85; 187–188.
151. *Ibid.*, 79.
152. *Ibid.*, 193.
153. *Ibid.*, 77.
154. *Ibid.*, 188, 191–194.
155. In the context of the end of empires as a defining feature of international twentieth-century history, as emphasized by Evans, in “Preface” to *Algeria*, 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, *Ibid.*, 210–225.
156. Echoing Hynes’s considerations about Vietnam veterans in *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 177–222.

157. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 188; A. Pinto, “A Guerra Colonial e o Fim do Império Português,” in *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, Vol. 5, ed. Bethencourt and Chaudhuri, 65–102.
158. Interviewees 11 (6); 13 (7, 10); 15 (9); 28 (24, 50); 19 (18, 20); 30 (22); 27 (6).
159. Interviewee 4 (26). A feeling strikingly similar to that of French conscripts studied by Evans, in *Algeria*, 171. See also Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 157, 166–170; on the significance of motivations for fighting, see *Ibid.*, 84–85.
160. Interviewees 16 (15); 32 (24); 30 (22). As reflected in a rather pessimistic July 1968 Portuguese memorandum on the troops’ morale; see “O Moral do Exército,” *Os Anos da Guerra Colonial*, Vol. 9 – 1968: *Continuar o regime e o império*, ed. Afonso and Gomes (Matosinhos: Quidnovi, 2009), 55–57; and similarly to Vietnam “untrained” troops “trying to survive” a war to which they felt “no commitment” mentioned by Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 192.
161. Interviewees 13 (7, 10); 17 (3); 27 (6); 16 (9); 32 (8, 36).
162. Interviewees 19 (15, 20, 5); 4 (26); 16 (9, 16); 12 (6).
163. Interviewee 16 (9).
164. Interviewees 27 (10); 19 (15); 4 (26). On numerous cases, they felt “forced to go.” See Interviewees 20 (13, 16–19); 22 (26); 25 (15–17); 19 (15); 4 (26).
165. Interviewees 29 (14); 19 (19).
166. See, for example, Interviewee 31 (25). In the Portuguese case, the “ethical doubts” mentioned by Bourke are emphasized; see “The Warrior Myth,” in *Dismembering the Male*, 44–68.
167. Interviewee 4 (19).
168. Interviewee 19 (18, 7, 9, 16).
169. Interviewees 15 (16, 6); 19 (8). See Bourke, “The Pleasures of War,” in *Dismembering the Male*, 13–43; Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 193–197; Evans, *Algeria*, 170.
170. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*.
171. 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 (25–26, 41).
172. Interviewee 4 (19).
173. Interviewee 31 (6). The practice of collecting enemy “souvenirs” to prove active combat is common to other conflicts. See Bourke,

- An Intimate History of Killing*, 37–43; Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, 191–192.
174. Interviewees 4 (20); 33 (25–26).
175. Interviewees 19 (6); 4 (19).
176. Interviewee 19 (8, 6, 19). Prost remarks on the complexities of ex-soldiers claiming to be victims of war, in “The Algerian War in French collective memory,” in *War and Remembrance*, ed. Sivan and Winter, 176.
177. Interviewee 19 (5–6, 8). On the distancing created by pronoun usage in similar situations, see Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 35; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 147.
178. Interviewees 19 (7); 20 (14); 35 (13).
179. Interviewees 31 (11); 30 (20).
180. Interviewee 30 (20). An aspect highlighted by Bourke, “Love and Hate,” *An Intimate History of Killing*, 139–170.
181. Interviewee 19 (9, 16, 7). See *Ibid.*, 204.
182. Interviewee 19 (20).
183. Interviewees 33 (25); 19 (7). A paradox stressed by Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 146–148.
184. Interviewee 11 (5).
185. Interviewees 21 (16); 28 (24); 17 (2); 20 (17).
186. Interviewee 15 (5).
187. Interviewees 19 (4); 22 (7); 27 (7).
188. Interviewee 22 (8, 20).
189. Interviewees 30 (12–14); 33 (22); 19 (5).
190. Interviewees 21 (12); 19 (4).
191. Interviewees 30 (13–14, 20); 33 (50–51).
192. Interviewees 15 (15); 26 (29); 29 (4). The G3 was the gun more widely employed by the Portuguese Army in Africa during the conflict.
193. On “scared” combatants, see Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 84–85, 135–36; Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, 63–64.
194. Interviewees 15 (7–8); 31 (21).
195. Interviewees 15 (6, 20); 18 (9).
196. Interviewee 30 (13).
197. See, for instance, Interviewee 31 (21).
198. Interviewees 16 (16); 22 (25); 31 (11).
199. Interviewee 4 (11, 24).
200. Interviewee 31 (11).

201. Interviewee 18 (15). See Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 232–233, on religiosity and “visions” during combat.
202. Interviewees 21 (12); 19 (9–10).
203. Interviewees 27 (8); 13 (2).
204. Interviewees 22 (12), 31 (12), 19 (12).
205. Interviewee 35 (14).
206. Interviewee 6 (7).
207. Interviewee 34 (6–7).
208. Interviewee 2 (9).
209. Interviewee 28 (11, 22).
210. Interviewee 31 (10).
211. Interviewee 32 (6, 25, 12).
212. Interviewees 32 (23); 18 (13); 33 (18); 17 (18); 29 (5).
213. Interviewee 30 (21).
214. Interviewee 31 (12).
215. Interviewees 16 (19); 20 (3).
216. Interviewee 17 (3, 16).
217. Interviewee 31 (6–7).
218. Interviewee 28 (26).
219. Interviewees 22 (10); 29 (7).
220. Interviewee 30 (9–10).
221. Interviewee 15 (27–28).
222. A thorough overview of the Portuguese ex-combatant experience is given by Gomes in “Quotidianos da Guerra Colonial,” 136–173.
223. Interviewee 3 (20).
224. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 72–74; for a brief summary of origins, structure, and photographic documentation of the Portuguese special forces, see M. Carvalho (ed.), *Testemunhos de Guerra*, 225–247.
225. Interviewees 19 (18); 28 (21); 21 (15).
226. Interviewees 26 (6); 4 (11).
227. Interviewee 9 (1).
228. 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).
229. Interviewees 9 (1); 33 (3, 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 D. Martelo, “Pessoal e orçamentos. Esforço de guerra,” in *Guerra Colonial*, ed. Afonso and Gomes, 518–520; L. Matos, “A orgânica das Forças Armadas Portuguesas,” in *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 4, 2004), 181–186.
230. Interviewee 9 (6).
231. See Benavente et al. *A Literacia em Portugal* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1996); Estado-Maior do Exército, CECA, *Resenha histórico-militar*, 225.
232. Interviewee 33 (3). See Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 91–93. A. Pinto, “A Guerra Colonial ...,” *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, 65–102.
233. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 92.
234. Interviewee 33 (10).
235. Interviewee 32 (7, 14). See also Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 93; Pinto, “A Guerra Colonial...,” *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, 87–90.
236. Interviewees 28 (9–10); 9 (6); 33 (3–4).
237. Interviewee 33 (26, 13, 4).
238. Namely, Interviewees 18, 28, 31, and 33.
239. Interviewee 31 (28).
240. Interviewee 4 (9).
241. Interviewee 8 (2, 7, 17).
242. Interviewee 33 (14).
243. Interviewee 33 (6–7, 10–12, 14).
244. Interviewees 18 (19); 12 (14); 1 (9, 13); 31 (10, 24, 28).
245. Interviewee 12 (14).
246. Interviewee 12 (2).
247. Interviewees 12 (15, 4); 1 (9); 33 (31, 18, 43, 33).
248. Interviewee 33 (31).
249. Interviewees 1 (6–7); 31 (10, 24, 28).
250. Interviewee 33 (16–17).
251. Interviewees 17 (18); 29 (5); 33 (18, 43); 18 (13).
252. Interviewee 33 (18, 43, 33). For similar examples, see Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 209–214.
253. Interviewee 18 (8, 19, 13).
254. Interviewee 33 (21, 23, 44). See Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 99, 144–145.
255. Interviewee 33 (22).

256. Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, 64.
257. See Interviewee 33 (21–22, 58). See Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 91–93.
258. Interviewee 27, who returned from Guinea in 1965, on his feelings about seeing conscripts leaving for the colonies for the following nine years (11).
259. Interviewee 32 (8).
260. Interviewees 27 (11); 32 (35); 34 (11).
261. Interviewees 5 (8); 2 (8).
262. Interviewee 36 (7, 9).
263. Interviewee 4 (16–18).
264. Interviewees 29 (19); 26 (26–27).
265. Interviewee 25 (25). Luanda, in Angola, seemed to have been a favorite 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.
266. Interviewee 6 (7).
267. Interviewee 13 on what he felt about returning to Portugal after serving in Mozambique (1968–1970), (11).
268. Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, 8, 145–146; see also Garton, “Home Fires,” in *The Cost of War*, 176–207.
269. Interviewees 5 (13–14); 4 (23); 25 (26); 16 (17–18, 20–21).
270. Interviewee 22 (21).
271. Interviewees 7 (12); 11 (11); 12 (19); 18 (17); 19 (21); 9 (24–25); 25 (26); 24 (2, 4); 27 (9).
272. Interviewee 13 (12); also Interviewee 16 (8).
273. Interviewee 25 (26, 30, 34); also Interviewee 29 (19).
274. Interviewees 14 (18); 4 (23); 24 (2, 4); 32 (19).
275. Interviewees 4 (25); 32 (19, 33–34); 30 (31); 14 (21).
276. Interviewees 14 (21); 32 (19).
277. Interviewees 32 (19, 33–34); 14 (21); 16 (11).
278. See, for example, Interviewees 24 (4); 27 (10).
279. Interviewee 16 (11).
280. Interviewees 14 (21–22); 32 (33–34). As revealed by higher levels of absenteeism from 1965 (since that year always above 18.8 percent). See Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 89.
281. Interviewee 14 (18).
282. Interviewees 14 (18); 29 (19); 25 (26); 12 (19).

283. Interviewees 25 (26, 30); 4 (23); 29 (19); 27 (9); 18 (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 (19).
284. Interviewee 24 (2, 4).
285. Interviewee 18 (21).
286. Interviewee 3 (20).
287. Interviewee 32 (33).
288. Interviewee 14 (22).
289. Interviewee 29 (20).
290. Interviewees 31 (19); 14 (20); 30 (14). On the impact of war on returning servicemen, see Bourke, "Return to Civilian Life," *An Intimate History of Killing*, 345–368; 372; Garton, *The Cost of War*, 30; Hutching, "After action...", 240–243.
291. In determining susceptibility to "adverse effects" upon return, Portuguese ex-combatants shared most circumstances emphasized by Bourke in relation to Vietnam veterans, namely, "extreme youth, poor battlefield leadership, lack of unit cohesion, the guerilla nature of the war, and the sense of purposelessness when they returned to the U.S.," in Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 360.
292. Interviewees 3 (20–21); 29 (19); 14 (18); 19 (35–36).
293. Interviewees 14 (22); 3 (17).
294. Interviewee 14 (22).
295. Interviewee 14 (18).
296. Interviewee 13 (8–9).
297. Interviewees 3 (17, 20–21); 25 (26); 24 (2); 9 (25); 11 (8–9); 14 (18); For interviewee 26 it was harder to forget his war experience since his brother was serving in Guinea when he returned to Portugal (27–28, 32).
298. Interviewees 29 (19); 26 (28).
299. Interviewee 13 (13).
300. Interviewee 29 (26, 35).
301. Interviewee 3 (21). Similarly to what Vietnam veterans experienced, as emphasized by Bourke in "Return to Civilian Life," *An Intimate History of Killing*, 349–351, 361.
302. Interviewee 4 (25–26).
303. Interviewee 20 (15).
304. Interviewee 1 (18).

305. Interviewee 33 (38, 47). PIDE stands for “Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado,” the old regime’s political police. See Chap. 3 for more information.
306. For instance, Interviewee 11 chose not to speak about the war for “years and years” (8–9).
307. Interviewees 9 (16); 36 (16).
308. Bourke emphasizes similar feelings experienced by Vietnam veterans, in *An Intimate History of Killing*, 362.
309. This being one of the vectors of attachments to the past operating in transitional societies, as mentioned by Dawson; *Making Peace*, 4–6.
310. Interviewees 19 (27); 13 (13); 9 (25).
311. Interviewee 13 (13).
312. Interviewee 5 (13).
313. Interviewee 4 (25).
314. Interviewees 32 (31–32); 15 (18).
315. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 362; see also Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 100; Garton, “Return,” in *The Cost of War*, 1–30.
316. Interviewee 4 (25).
317. Interviewees 14 (18); 10 (16).
318. Interviewee 22 (25, 26).
319. Interviewee 25 (26).
320. Interviewees 12 (19); 21 (27); 26 (27, 28); 2 (1, 13–14).
321. Interviewees 21 (21, 27); 29 (20).
322. Interviewees 30 (32, 36); 2 (1, 13–14); 26 (27–28). For a wide assessment of Portuguese emigration in this period, see J. Peixoto, “A Emigração,” in *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, 152–181.
323. Interviewee 30 (36).
324. Interviewee 26 (27–28).
325. Interviewee 33 (50).
326. Interviewee 8 (18–21).
327. Interviewee 1 (20).
328. Interviewee 33 (34–37, 50).
329. Interviewee 15 (38).
330. See Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 360–362, 374; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 11; Hutching, “After action...,” 233–243.
331. Interviewee 29 (13).

332. Interviewees 9 (28); 34 (3). See Hutching, “After action...,” 241.
333. Interviewee 34 (24). See also Interviewee 9 (12).
334. See C. Anunciação, *Coping e stress traumático em combatentes* (Lisbon: Liga dos Combatentes, 2010), 43; T. Carvalho and D. Regadas, “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): 233–257; “Military and emergency service personnel,” in *Australian Guidelines*, 141–143.
335. Interviewee 15 (34–35, 17–19, 2). Such feelings are mentioned by Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 28–29; Garton, *The Cost of War*, 18, 176–207, 234–235.
336. Interviewee 15 (2, 17, 38). An aspect hinted at by T. Infante, “As consequências psicológicas da Guerra Colonial nos indivíduos com PTSD,” in *A Guerra Colonial*, ed. Teixeira (2001), 211–215.
337. See Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 360–362, 374; Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 58–64.
338. Interviewees 4 (23); 14 (26–27).
339. Interviewee 36 (15). Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 11.
340. Interviewees 4 (23); 14 (26–27); 3 (17); 8 (16); 36 (21–22), 19 (36), 30 (14), among 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, “Involuntary commemorations...,” 240–259; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 146–147; P. Ruskin and J. Talbott (eds.), *Aging and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder* (Washington: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1996).
341. Interviewees 4 (23); 29 (20); 19 (36); as experienced by Vietnam veterans; see Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 219–222.
342. Interviewees 4 (23); 11 (8–9); 30 (29–31); 15 (17); 36 (28). See Anunciação, *Coping e stress traumático*, 121–123. Veterans display higher degrees of these types of disruption and instability, as pinpointed by Garton about the Australian case, in *The Cost of War*, 28–30, 197–201.
343. Interviewees 30 (29–31); 11 (8–9); 36 (21–22).
344. Interviewee 36 (9, 17–18).

345. Interviewee 29 (20).
346. Interviewees 1 (23); 19 (25, 31); 36 (28); 4 (23); 14 (26–27).
347. Interviewees 14 (26–27); 4 (23); 15 (2, 17); 36 (15); 16 (23–25); 19 (31).
348. Interviewee 1 (23, twice divorced); Interviewee 33 (divorced and remarried, 34–35); 19 (31–32); 15 (2, 17); 16 (25).
349. On the impact of war stress of Portuguese veterans on wives and particularly on children, see *Diário de Notícias*, 24th April 2006; 25th April 2011; *P2, Público*, 21th March 2011; Ribeiro, “A família que sofre,” in *Marcas*, 62–64. See also G. Pereira and S. Pedras, “Grupo de suporte para mulheres de veteranos de guerra: Um estudo qualitativo,” in *Análise Psicológica* 2, XXVIII (2010): 281–294.
350. Interviewees 11 (12); 30 (29–31, 25); 36 (18); 10 (22); 32 (27). See, for instance, *Pública*, 30th January 2011. A notion similar to the “archetypal” disturbed Vietnam combatant mentioned by Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 360; and Garton. *The Cost of War*, 236–237.
351. Interviewee 10 (13–14).
352. Interviewee 36 (15, 22).
353. Interviewee 17 (28).
354. Interviewees 14 (17); 19 (21), 2 (1, 13–14), 29 (21); 30 (14); 16 (23).
355. Interviewee 14 (8–9).
356. Interviewee 2 (14).
357. 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, *Cronologia*, 8–9; Anunciação, *Coping e stress traumático*, 27; H. Rodrigues, “Feridas de guerra: Deficientes,” in *Guerra Colonial*, 566–568.
358. Interviewee 16 (17–18), 20–21 (30). Echoing feelings of World War I combatants described by Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 72.
359. Interviewee 16 (21, 29).
360. Interviewee 30 (27). See Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 131–132.
361. Out of 30,000 wounded servicemen, it is estimated that nearly 4500 were mutilated and over 14,000 in some way physically disabled. See Medeiros, “Hauntings...,” (2000), 201–221, citing J. Guerra, *Descolonização Portuguesa* (1996). See also Brandão,

- Cronologia*, 8; and Bourke, “Mutilating,” in *Dismembering the Male*, 31–75.
362. Interviewee 17 (20–22).
363. Interviewee 17 (22–23).
364. Interviewee 17 (22, 10).
365. Interviewee 20 (21).
366. Unlike World War I veterans, these mutilated servicemen were not perceived as heroes displaying “badges of courage” in the form of sacrificed limbs for their country. See Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 56–60.
367. Interviewee 31 (29–30, 37).
368. See Ribeiro, “Os Estropiados da Guerra,” *Marcas*, 25–44; C. Gomes, “O manto de silêncio e abandono,” in “Quotidianos da Guerra Colonial,” in *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 5, 2004), 172–173; “A guerra nunca mais sai do corpo,” in *Pública*, 30th January 2011, 16–29; ADFa, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas (several authors) “O Esquecimento da História,” in *As Barreiras Invisíveis*, 35–60.
369. Interviewee 16 (30). See also Chap. 3.
370. Interviewee 19 (13).
371. Interviewee 31 (30).
372. Interviewee 19 (13–14).
373. Interviewees 16 (18); 20 (9, 19, 23); 30 (11, 28), among other examples.
374. Interviewee 31 (31–35).
375. Interviewee 16 (30).
376. Interviewee 16 (9); also Interviewees 30 (28); 28 (32).
377. Interviewees 31 (37); Interviewee 16 (18); 20 (9, 19); 17 (23–25).
378. Interviewees 20 (9, 19); 17 (22).
379. Interviewee 17 (21–22, 28).
380. As stressed by Evans about Algerian veterans, in *Algeria*, 362–363.
381. Interviewees 31 (38); 17 (21); 28 (26–30). It is visible focus on the comfort and security of domesticity, as emphasized by Bourke in *Dismembering the Male*, 11–30.
382. Although aesthetically approached, for instance, in A. Ferreira’s short film *Deus Não Quis* (2007).
383. Interviewee 20 (9).

384. Interviewees 17 (10–11); 20 (9); 16 (11, 18). An aspect noted by Garton, *The Cost of War*, 107–108.
385. Interviewee 17 (11).
386. Interviewee 17 (27–28). See Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 73–75.
387. Interviewee 31 (38).
388. Interviewee 28 (26–30).
389. Comparable to notions highlighted by Garton about the Australian context, in *The Cost of War*, 105–108.
390. Interviewee 26 (34, 43–45). For further information about ADFFA, see Chap. 3.
391. Interviewees 4 (26–27); 17 (28); 20 (7–9); 30 (11–12, 28–29); 31 (35–36); 28 (27–30). See also Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 178–80. See ADFFA, Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas “VII – Legislação dos Deficientes,” in *As Barreiras Invisíveis*, 167–207; “A guerra nunca mais sai do corpo,” in *Pública*, 30th January 2011, 16–29.
392. Interviewees 17 (23, 11, 28, 6); 20 (7–9, 19–21); 28 (48).
393. Interviewees emphasized 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 (21).
394. Interviewee 1 (20). See Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 191.
395. Interviewees 15 (2); 22 (21); 20 (7–9, 19–21); 31 (30, 37).
396. Interviewee 26 (32).

Living the Aftermath

THE YEARS OF SILENCE

“A Friendlier Skeleton”¹

The focus of the first part of this chapter is on the 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.² 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 characterized by complexity and indifference and dominated by a personal and community sense of shame.³ Perhaps a necessary condition to easing socio-political wounds, individually and collectively, the memory of this conflict became enveloped in widespread silence.⁴ 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 postwar lives unfolded in an environment of forgetting, marginalization, and lack of support framed by a “hypocritical social silence.”⁵ In the Portuguese case, the immediate

post-revolutionary left-wing tone, which defined socio-political interactions for many years after 1974, contributed to a higher and long-lasting 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 veterans. This complex interconnection between private and public silence and shame illuminates how, unlike the World War I 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.⁶ 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.⁷ 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 marginalization and displacement, particularly acute instances of alienation and silencing of individual memory, which might be described as an “internalised trauma.”⁸

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.⁹ 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' organizations 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.¹⁰

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 allowed 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.¹¹ In composing the narratives of their experiences, these veterans illuminated a sharp interrelation of past and present. When considering the period until around 2000, most men offered a depiction of a chronologically long and loosely

defined phase of individual and collective silence about the war, often characterized 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 now. 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 associated with this period (1974–2000)—and often beyond—in order 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 postwar 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.”¹² 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 explained figuratively, accept they have to 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.”¹³

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. Abílio Silva, Manuel Oliveira, and most respondents acknowledged that, during the years, their everyday personal and social lives have been greatly influenced by their participation in the war.¹⁴ In the latter case, the interviewee classified his involvement in the colonial conflict as “a total disaster.”¹⁵ This is not simply about recollecting traumatic events experienced: these men emphasized the experience as a whole as “marking one forever in many aspects,” despite their attempts to lead a “normal life,” at least “apparently.”¹⁶

“Maybe I’m Fine”¹⁷

While 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 Barroso, who explained how his “psychological wounds” became worse with the passage of time.¹⁸ In the cases where these psychological marks became more apparent, posttraumatic war stress is often mentioned by the veterans. Having only been legally recognized in Portugal as an illness in 1999, a notorious lack of information about its characteristics among 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 behavior 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 render such ready-made categorizations ineffectual as many genuine veteran sufferers (including, secondarily, their families) have remained effectively undiagnosed. For sure, war-stress cases found fertile ground to develop in silence, which exerted further damaging and negative psychological impact, as stressed by Pereira et al.¹⁹

A great number of my sample admitted they are unable to determine if the consequences of the war they recognize in their lives indicate psychological impact, past or current.²⁰ Like many others, Orlando Libório typified 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 behaviors.²¹ Another interviewee refused

to be seen by an expert since he was unwilling to pursue any “imaginary illnesses.”²²

Even if some denied such negative personal “marks,” choosing to focus on memories of more positive aspects such as comradeship and leisure, most added that they are aware that many fellow veterans became “really traumatized.”²³ My interviewees cited 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.²⁴ Significantly, a few respondents believed that the “real” posttraumatic 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 up and kill everyone.”²⁵

In certain cases, the damage was so deep from the onset that it clearly required professional treatment. That was the case of Félix Caixeiro, who admitted that he was “really in a bad way” before finally finding some inner balance in recent years. Caixeiro attributed 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 remained unable to drive on his own at the time of the interview, for instance.²⁶

Caixeiro 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.²⁷ In this context, a wide range of afflictions, varying in degree and scope, has manifested during the course of time. The interviews revealed how many ex-combatants have developed persistent feelings of inadequacy, alienation, frustration, aggressiveness, fear, and anger.²⁸ Manuel Oliveira resented his permanent need to avoid externalizing aggression, adding that he “was made into this” due to his military service. At the time of the interview, Oliveira explained how he felt “permanently angry with someone.”²⁹ To employ Bourke’s term, nobody “unprogrammed” Oliveira out of war.³⁰ Another respondent expressed a continuing “anger also for the fact of having been there wasting time, the time of our youth.”³¹ 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 guy.”³² Alberto Almeida feels that the war effected a “character mutation” in him, transforming him into a reclusive, life-weary person who often feels a failure as a human being.³³ 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.³⁴ 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.”³⁵ Although interviewees like this former commando experienced similar problems but 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 margins of society: homeless or living in extreme conditions of poverty and neglect, or in jail.³⁶

In many different ways, the everyday life of most ex-combatants displays repercussions of their involvement in war. The veterans’ narratives depicted how, throughout the years, they perceived 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.³⁷ 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.³⁸ 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.³⁹

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 so forth take many veterans back to war bombardment episodes. Feeling that “pull through the body,” some, like José Teixeira, after returning from Angola, would sometimes throw themselves onto the ground during a local fireworks display.⁴⁰ 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.”⁴¹ Having these reactions, Manuel Oliveira explained, is “like a virus,” since “the self-defense 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!”⁴²

In addition, alcoholism among ex-combatants 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.”⁴³ Stressing that he is not ashamed to delve into the subject, José Teixeira 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, Teixeira underwent a successful treatment, becoming a teetotaler in 1997. Despite his success story, like most respondents Teixeira too noted how alcoholism is widespread among veterans. Many mentioned examples of comrades they know battling with this addiction. While 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 behavior.⁴⁴

Another very significant long-term impact of the war on the lives of many Portuguese ex-combatants has unfolded within the family environment.⁴⁵ 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 mentioned their belief that

their war experience has affected their family life—for some, “there were things that were lost that were impossible to recover.”⁴⁶ For instance, an ex-soldier explained 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 difficult interactions, this interviewee did admit the possibility that his family life has been “greatly damaged” by consequences of his participation in the colonial war.⁴⁷ This is a typical example of veteran discourse undervaluing years of personal difficulties. A few respondents emphasized how they don’t “notice” anything unusual, but that it is their families who consider their behavior “weird,” overpreoccupied with their war past, or that “most of the times I’m funny in my head.”⁴⁸ One of the respondent’s wife interrupted our interview with her quick verdict of “they’re all crazy!” Dismissing similar comments, another veteran did not believe his life is too affected “because I’m not crazy, I don’t do silly things.”⁴⁹

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 and depressive states—an aspect prevalent among veteran families. Those ex-combatants have been unable to adjust to the “new reality” of their lives, with many of them suffering from undiagnosed and untreated PTSD, 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.⁵⁰

Until finding effective professional help, Félix Caixeiro 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 toward 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, Caixeiro recounted how he “nearly went mad” during that period and only after recovery he managed to experience a satisfying family life.⁵¹ 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 among this group, although, due to socio-cultural factors, not as high as expected in comparison to veterans of other conflicts such as Vietnam, for instance.⁵² 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.⁵³ He attributed 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.⁵⁴

Nonetheless, for a great number of veterans such support has not been enough. Alberto Almeida (b. 1951) was one of the cases in which successful reintegration took place only after years of strenuous attempts. After getting married in 1977, two years after his return from Angola, this former commando quickly realized that a thorny personal path lay ahead of him. Almeida emphasized 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, Almeida explained how, for years, he was “an ass 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 Almeida also engaged in “uncontrollable” alcoholic sprees and violent incidents. Destructive behavior, alienation, and suicidal thoughts were the norm. On those occasions, Almeida felt his life had no meaning at all.⁵⁵ For many years, emotionally and physically unavailable to fully participate in the running of the household and the upbringing of his children, often requiring psychiatric health care and other forms of deeply involved support, Almeida 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, Almeida explained 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 (Fig. 6.1).”⁵⁶



Fig. 6.1 Alberto Almeida (Angola, 1973/74)

“Until the Day I Die”²⁵⁷

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.⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹ Manuel Oliveira recounted how, a few years after his return, his “aggressiveness” in the workplace made him “rightly” lose his job.⁶⁰ 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.”⁶¹ 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.⁶²

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 Joaquim Pereira and Eduardo Palaio. The latter defined this persistent dissatisfaction as “the stress nobody talks about,” a stress which does not stem from having been exposed to brutal war episodes, but from having abruptly lost an “immense power,” namely, after having been the commander of nearly 300 men to having to adapt to “work in an office,” “enduring” the orders of someone else. As Palaio reflectively remarked, “a great majority [of former officers] went ahead to live an 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 Palaio’s instance, the solution was to become self-employed, developing a creative, independent career.⁶³

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.”⁶⁴ Some of these men pinpointed how they perceive themselves more as a disabled person above the veteran identity.⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ 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, Abel Fortuna, “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.⁶⁸ In this respect, several examples were highlighted in the previous chapter.

Apart from such obvious cases, many veterans emphasized how they “went to war healthy” and subsequently became “unwell” because of it.⁶⁹ For some, these physical consequences, although inconvenient and presenting a “limitation,” are relatively secondary; others sought to demonstrate that their military conscription effectively “ruined” their long-term health.⁷⁰ Certainly, it is expected that some veterans may over-emphasize 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 Eduardo Palaio, “I have a wretched health (laughter) because of that [war].” Palaio claimed 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.⁷¹ 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 paralyzed.⁷² 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 endeavored to live as normal a life as possible.⁷³

A case in point is former military driver Daniel Folha. Born in a seaside northern town in 1947, Folha was seriously injured in a vehicle accident in Angola in 1971 in the course of a military operation. Folha explained 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 judgments 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, Folha 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 from it yet,” a view which illustrates how physical and psychological war consequences remain deeply entangled.⁷⁴ In effect, this research indicates how war veterans prioritize 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 generalized health problems within this group as a whole, affecting their identity, personal, and professional lives⁷⁵ (Fig. 6.2).

However, some of the respondents who strongly emphasized the negative influence of the war paradoxically were also able to encounter positive effects of the conflict. That was the case, for example, of Manuel Oliveira, who, echoing others, believed that such experience transformed him into a “tough person,” “ready” to face “anything” and “overcome it” in civilian life. Quite a few interviewees stressed 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 afterward, being intimately felt even if they “don’t speak about it.”⁷⁶ For some, it was worthwhile to have “gone through that hardship” since the war “made men out of us.”⁷⁷

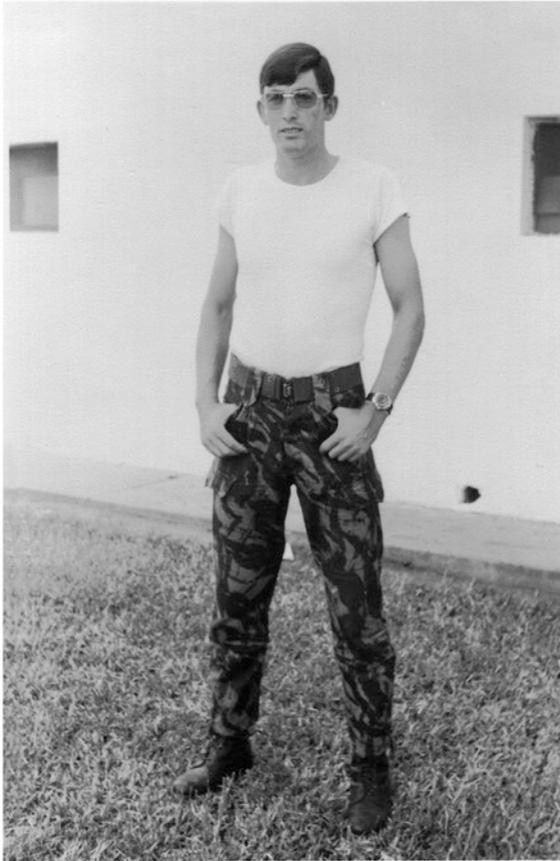


Fig. 6.2 Daniel Folha (Angola, 1969/72)

“What Was This War For?”⁷⁸

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.⁷⁹ Virtually the entire sample associated the passage of time with reaching the conclusion—or reinforcing a previous perspective refined at the time of the interview—of the pointlessness of having been a part of the war. In this respect, an ex-soldier mentioned 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,” especially in view of the heavy cost of war in terms of casualties, injured, disabled, and those physically and psychologically affected.⁸⁰ In some cases after some years, they realized that they “were cheated, were there wasting time, and at the end of the day did not contribute to anything.”⁸¹ 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.⁸²

Retrospectively perceiving the function they played in the war as lacking constructive purpose, several respondents proceeded in their reasoning by emphasizing, as an *alferes* put it, the termination of the “pointless” conflict as historically “logical.”⁸³ 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 Abílio Silva, a sympathizer of the previous regime, stressed 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 decolonization 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.⁸⁴ However, having taken part in such a divisive conflict means that the shame of the former combatants assumes multiple forms. For Eduardo Palaio, who was raised in an oppositionist environment, long-term political convictions determine distinctive understandings. Admitting that he is plagued by shame and guilt, Palaio explained 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.”⁸⁵ Others reached this conclusion years later, becoming burdened by the “trauma” of having participated in such an “unfair” conflict.⁸⁶

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, highlighted how much the remembrance of this conflict has been experienced subjectively by its intervenients.⁸⁷

With the passage of time, a general notion took shape among 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, remains filled with a sense of immutability. Portugal irreversibly lost its empire, and 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."⁸⁸ 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. Félix Caixeiro, 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 every day the same thing [...] On the other hand this war period is different, it is a period which—arrived, is gone—but stayed in me [...] 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.⁸⁹

Unusual and intense for civilian conscripts, this experience certainly gained centrality in the ex-combatants' lives.⁹⁰ Many "remember it as if it were today."⁹¹ 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—naturally—it is an experience that I don't like and I don't—I'm not interested in spending time talking about it.⁹²

However, for others this personal silence was not permanent and other options proved to be more healing. Manuel Oliveira related 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, Oliveira began to feel the need to recount his war years to other people, including—for the first time—his close family.⁹³ Oliveira’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 by a long-term decision of many veterans to remain quiet about their war past. In Oliveira’s case, change emerged by contact with other international socio-cultural contexts, but in that instance he remained an exception and not the norm.

Joaquim Bicho (b.1943), a native of a less-favored 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 and 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.⁹⁴

This intimate personal reflection undertaken by Bicho and many other ex-servicemen pinpoints the root of the subjective and social depth of Portugal’s silence about the colonial war. For Joaquim Bicho, and countless others, war memories of personal and collective actions remained uncomfortable for years, often to the present day. Acknowledging that

the topic has been met with avoidance in Portugal for decades, Bicho transposed his personal discomfort into a wider social level, explaining how it became 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.⁹⁵

By focusing on this long-term avoidance of the colonial war, Bicho illustrated 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 has chosen to keep silent about their war experiences. In many cases, the nature of this remembering, often difficult, appears to underlie the decision (Fig. 6.3).



Fig. 6.3 Joaquim Bicho (Guinea, 1965/67)

*“War Was War [and] War Was That”*⁹⁶

If for the nation a colonial war was an uncomfortable, shameful conflict, for its participants such feelings frequently acquired sharper contours.⁹⁷ Indeed, for a great number of ex-combatants the elapsing of time occurred in parallel with the development of deep-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 unrecognized.⁹⁸ Most of my interviewees related 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.⁹⁹ Others evaded related questions, or simply refused to answer them. Alberto Almeida is one of the few who addressed the topic openly, albeit often struggling to retain emotional control, and selecting what can be 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.”¹⁰⁰ He admitted that he “killed a lot.” In his case, disturbing memories began to emerge with greater clarity years later. Labeling himself “a tormented man,” he recognized that “I deal very badly” with “what I did,” and “saw being done.”¹⁰¹ Aware of his “role as agent of death” (quoting Bourke), and at points choking with emotion, Almeida spoke 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, Almeida simply asserted 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.”¹⁰²

These “things” normally include, for instance, “the remorse of having tortured” war prisoners, mutilating the enemy, or, more significantly, the uneasy acknowledgment of having killed another human being.¹⁰³ At the distance of decades, Almeida has spoken of the wartime “horror” he had “entered” of committing atrocities and having felt “human life has no

meaning at all.” He felt 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,” Almeida believes that he should not have done that.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, an officer detailed how the realization 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 admitted 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 regretted the “revolting” frame of mind that he had to be in at the time to “even feel pride” in the number of enemy deaths.¹⁰⁵ Aware of the negative social connotations of his actions, this respondent tried to ease his remorse and moral discomfort by reflecting on the wider reasons surrounding his participation in the war.¹⁰⁶

Most interviewees in this situation expressed how “very bad” it is to live with the knowledge that they killed.¹⁰⁷ 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 post-war 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).¹⁰⁸ These interviewees admitted that they often reflect about this aspect of their war experience. Echoing Alberto Almeida and others who experienced similar circumstances, Manuel Oliveira “struggled” with having killed a war prisoner at close range his “entire life.”¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Abílio Silva illustrated 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.¹¹⁰

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 that the Portuguese ex-combatants' "moral universe" is not dissimilar to that of combatants of other conflicts who have killed in action.¹¹¹ 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 a 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. Albeit not speaking from personal experience, Eduardo Palaio explained this is a "tremendous" struggle.¹¹²

As specialist studies suggest, direct exposure to violence in war increases the probability of the emergence of PTSD.¹¹³ In this context, memories of the "horrific" violence perpetrated could have greatly contributed to these conditions among 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 unrecognizable 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 Félix Caixeiro. The examples are numerous and harrowing. One interviewee was 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 lived, disturbed by the death of his close companion from his hometown. One respondent felt like a “coward” for over forty years for not assisting his “comrade in arms” to commit suicide after being fatally burnt. Manuel Oliveira had to cope with years of haunting nightmares about the comrade he saw drowning in front of him during a military operation. Another shuddered at the image of comrades turning around the guts of enemy corpses with hunting knives. One interviewee anxiously recounted the scene “engraved” in his memory of the moment he was wounded and stayed behind, “on his own, unable to move and unarmed,” and his subsequent evacuation on a plane “full” of wounded, blind, and mutilated people.¹¹⁴ In Abílio Silva’s case, “almost every day” he remembers an attack on a church when he narrowly missed killing some comrades. Analyzing his military past from a postwar perspective, during the years he has repeatedly reframed the troubling events wondering “what if” he had killed them.¹¹⁵ Many ex-combatants often “even cry” over fallen comrades and wonder about the children they left behind, some of whom never met their fathers.¹¹⁶

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 narrated events described extreme situations where the veterans killed, watched people dying, watched other people 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.¹¹⁷ For one of my officer interviewees, the key is not “to adapt oneself” to them, but to “forget.”¹¹⁸ 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.¹¹⁹ 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 Teixeira 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 Folha put it, in that type of war “there are no rules.”¹²⁰ The guerrilla nature of the conflict (and the fact that it was not officially recognized as a war by the authoritarian regime), combined with the swift subsequent political developments toward independence of the African territories and decolonization, 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.¹²¹ Such acts live mainly in the memories of participants and witnesses.¹²² 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.¹²³ In fact, even when not necessarily involved in violent acts, respondents generally stressed 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.¹²⁴

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 that I became aware of the consequences of their decision. Echoing others, Alberto Almeida 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.¹²⁵

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.¹²⁶ In effect, for many ex-combatants interviewed, evoking this past is challenging and entails concrete suffering. Like Almeida, some implicitly inferred the consequences they would face afterward were worth the fact that they provided a valu-

able testimony which recognizes their historical voice.¹²⁷ In this voluntary “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.¹²⁸

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.¹²⁹ As Alberto Almeida put it, “interestingly—I’ve only began 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.”¹³⁰ 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.¹³¹

Significantly, as the focus shifted from the “years of silence” toward 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”*¹³²

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 condemned the neglect which many veterans—disabled, in ill health, who have developed addictions, or who display diverse forms of social maladjustment—have been facing since their return from the war.¹³³ These include amputees, blind,

PTSD sufferers, ill, alcoholic, unemployed veterans who found themselves ignored and largely unsupported.¹³⁴ Manuel Oliveira illustrated 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.”¹³⁵

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 onward to posttraumatic war-stress sufferers. In the last decade, changes have been made to veteran retirement pension plans and health care.¹³⁶ 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.¹³⁷ 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.¹³⁸ As Daniel Folha put 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.¹³⁹

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).¹⁴⁰ In this context, the emerging 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 emphasized by the many respondents who belonged to this type of organization. Some stated that in such institutions they “feel like a family,” and welcomed such interactions as widely “therapeutic” and as a “means of escaping” social indifference.¹⁴¹ Their strong bonds are stressed by Daniel Folha, who explained that there is a “solidary network” of “comradeship” between ex-combatants “maybe due to everything we have gone through.”¹⁴²

Reminiscing about the “years of silence,” these men’s individual narratives pinpointed an increasing awareness of the diversified impact (psychological, physical, and other) that their war experience exerted on themselves and other comrades, emphasizing 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 personal, family, professional, and social levels. 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, which made them more prone to establish comparisons with other international contexts, toward the late 1990s, a greater number of ex-combatants began to organize 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 Folha, who offered his insightful interpretation:

it was only from a certain time onwards—that we began to hear about the ex-combatants because—until a certain phase of our life—we wouldn’t hear about the combatants—maybe [...] when the first combatants began to realize—they were already entering retirement and all—and began to have the notion of—stop! hey man—we were there fighting—and we are not recognized 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].¹⁴³

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.

“DON’T LET OTHERS TELL YOUR WAR FOR YOU”¹⁴⁴:
THE EX-COMBATANTS’ RELATION WITH THE CHANGING
PUBLIC NARRATIVE

*“I Fulfilled My Duty”*¹⁴⁵

As the new millennium began, a changing public narrative on the colonial war was noticeable in Portugal.¹⁴⁶ If the postwar period up to the late 1990s could be characterized mainly by silence and shame, a re-emergence of the topic from the early 2000s onward 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.¹⁴⁷ 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 organizations and social intervention. As the decades elapsed and they aged, these veterans generally endeavored to strengthen their common identity and developed a more participative relationship with war memory.¹⁴⁸

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, while examining how they interpreted their military experience in Africa and manifested their group identity at the time of the interview, 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.

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 were 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 analyzing it according to current values, sensibility, and worldviews. Having taken part in one of the longest armed conflicts of the twentieth century, these veterans often perceived 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.”¹⁴⁹ 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.”¹⁵⁰ For some, fighting in a war remains an overpowering, disturbing, and confusing memory. However, an overall perspective about the war gathered 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.¹⁵¹

Félix Caixeiro described serving in the war as a very “hurtful” experience. Feeling uneasy about his part in the process, Caixeiro interpreted the Portuguese military intervention as “offensive,” an “attack to the Africans in their territory.”¹⁵² Attempting to make sense of those thirteen years of “costly” conflict, many veterans posed themselves the question of “what for” and “why” they fought.¹⁵³ Believing that the war was politically and militarily “a vain effort” for a “lost cause,” most interviewees interpreted 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.¹⁵⁴ In the words of a former officer, his participation was a “waste of time—pure and simple [...] What did I go there for? Nothing!”¹⁵⁵ The preponderant opinion is that this war was “stupid,” “a total mistake!” and a “disaster for Portugal.”¹⁵⁶ This view is particularly rooted in those who, like Abel Fortuna, were severely injured during service in Africa. For Fortuna, 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.”¹⁵⁷ António Barroso questioned himself for what purpose he “left a leg there [in Mozambique]” and nearly lost his life.¹⁵⁸ 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.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, as combatants, they have fought for the “biggest foolishness of the century.”¹⁶⁰

Many veterans associated the pointlessness of the conflict with the manner in which the decolonization 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.”¹⁶¹ Manuel Oliveira regarded the destruction and loss of life from both sides as unjustifiable in the face of the outcomes, which made it even harder to personally process the war experience.¹⁶²

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.”¹⁶³ In addition, many expressed 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.”¹⁶⁴ A few interviewees extended that satisfaction to younger generations, relishing the fact that their own sons did not have to participate in the conflict.¹⁶⁵

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 convictions at the time of the events, are now often more critical about their presence as combatants in Africa. Obviously, the passage of time channeled 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].”¹⁶⁶ Other interviewees, particularly those who, like Manuel Oliveira and António Barroso, were more affected by their experience both physically and psychologically, often expressed anger “against the system, against the war that was made, against what I’ve been through.”¹⁶⁷ However, amputee Abel Fortuna and others interpreted 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 firsthand knowledge, these veterans argued that all wars are simply “unjustifiable,” pointless violence.¹⁶⁸

These men often expressed the need to justify and explain their participation in the colonial conflict. The explanations adopted by the majority of conscripted servicemen normally focused on the fact that, as

dutiful citizens, they did what “I was asked to do,” and they “fought” to fulfill their “mission” and what was forcefully demanded from them due to the policies of the era: the “obligation” to serve in the war.¹⁶⁹ Statements like “I am Portuguese, motherland forced me to go” and “I fulfilled my mission as a Portuguese man” are frequently employed.¹⁷⁰ Some interpreted serving in the war as “an act of citizenship” that they did not evade, the fulfillment of which made them “even” with their mother country.¹⁷¹

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, mentioned that they feel “rather proud” about fulfilling their military duty “during the twenty-four months” spent in Africa.¹⁷² These ex-combatants were not deterred by any apparent contradictions between the generalized opinion on the conflict itself and what they felt about having served in the Portuguese Army. These ex-servicemen appeared 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.¹⁷³ From that perspective, their participation in the conflict was seen as “positive.” Several respondents repeated the idea that they are “proud” and “honored” to have “served” and fought for “our motherland,” and for “having belonged to the Armed Forces,” or for “having served the Portuguese Army.”¹⁷⁴

However, these ex-combatants were sometimes aware that such displays of patriotism clash with contemporary perspectives on the colonial dynamics condoned by the regime of the era. José Lima, explained 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. Now holding different views, Lima asserted that he does “not feel guilty for that”¹⁷⁵ (Fig. 6.4).

This idea was reinforced by other interviewees, like the former artillery soldier, who, despite believing that he should have never gone to fight, perceived the African territories under Portuguese rule “for five hundred years” as 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.”¹⁷⁶ Frequently these feelings were evoked with certain reservations. Manuel Oliveira provided a good example: “sometimes I like to say I was



Fig. 6.4 José Lima (Guinea, 1968/70)

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.”¹⁷⁷ This uneasy conscience several interviewees mentioned 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.¹⁷⁸ In this respect, evaluating the “contrast in relation to what we were and what we are,” Abílio Silva regretted what he has done in the name of “patriotism.”¹⁷⁹

The veterans who framed their narratives more strongly through the perspective of contemporary democratic notions often undervalued their participation in the colonial conflict by asserting, like Manuel Ferreira and José Teixeira, that they “don’t feel proud” or “honored” for having taken part in a “war like that”: they simply “fulfilled my duty.” These ex-combatants’ narratives often stressed how they did not fight for the motherland or for any patriotic values, but that they were forcefully conscripted and simply tried “to survive.” This reasoning was normally accompanied by a concept frequently utilized 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 Teixeira, along with Abel Fortuna and others, that is not a reason to feel proud, but, at the same

time, he is “not ashamed of having been there” either. Teixeira assumed his presence in Angola in an “unfair” war in which he “was forced to participate.”¹⁸⁰

Those who, like Orlando Libório, Eduardo Palaio, and José Amaral, did not agree with the conflict from the onset openly declared their discomfort in having taken part. For instance, Libório considered himself “a huge victim” for having to “fulfil my role” in a conflict that was never “my war.”¹⁸¹ Eduardo Palaio explained 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,” Palaio regretted 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!”¹⁸² Although the majority of interviewees did not embrace this level of abstract thinking, in general merely emphasizing they were forcefully conscripted to serve their country, a few respondents—particularly officers like Eduardo Palaio—reflected on their perceived role in the colonial process. For a career officer interviewee, who is 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 from the uneasiness with which many ex-combatants perceive the extent of their effective collaboration with the authoritarian regime.¹⁸³

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 composed interpretations often assessing the possibilities and implications of not having fulfilled their military service. A few respondents wondered whether they should have become absentees or deserters. Some, like Eduardo Palaio, believed they should have done so. Others, stressing their genuine conviction of assisting the motherland, considered that they would have repeated their past behavior by serving in the army.¹⁸⁴ António Barroso provided a particularly acute example of reassessment of the past. Mutilated while serving in Mozambique, this respondent was 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, Barroso explained why he did not eschew service. Although aware of possible implications (since, for instance, he had met some war-mutilated men in Lisbon before leaving for Mozambique in 1970), Barroso explained 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.”¹⁸⁵ A great number of these veterans now feel their choices were limited at the time by the authoritarian nature of the regime. As Alberto Almeida put it, it is pointless “to blame anybody” for their participation in the war, it was the context of the era.¹⁸⁶

“A Group That Also Included Me”¹⁸⁷

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 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 Oliveira, “I was part of it [...], I was part of them [combatants], and all the rest is rubbish.”¹⁸⁸ Frequently employing language which emphasizes a certain individual powerlessness regarding the role played in the national military process, the ex-combatants highlighted their group bonds. Félix Caixeiro perceived himself as “one more stone” comprising the military block, Alberto Almeida described his function as “a piece of a larger unit,” another respondent was “a little matchstick” among many, while another veteran portrayed himself as

just one more—one more to add to those thousands who have been there, one more—who went there—among so many, from so many villages, mountains, cities—I was just one more who went to the *Ultramar* [...] I am part of this group [veterans]. I too got drafted.¹⁸⁹

Most veterans portrayed themselves as members of the “war generation,” since “any—[Portuguese] man [of a certain age] would have been in the *Ultramar*.”¹⁹⁰ 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.¹⁹¹

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 socialize in the veteran milieu and a few actively promote veteran visibility.¹⁹² 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 Félix Caixeiro put it, that they “are an 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.¹⁹³

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 organizing such events long before they became commonplace put it.¹⁹⁴ For many veterans, these eagerly-awaited reunions perform a vital cathartic function in their lives.¹⁹⁵ 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.¹⁹⁶ These gatherings are occasions to relive their war years “intensely,” becoming a sign “that we are alive.”¹⁹⁷ Such moments are devoted to veteran remembering. The past is discussed, dead comrades evoked, their company commemorated, and, in general, the men savor a certain nostalgia for the era when they were young.¹⁹⁸ 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.¹⁹⁹ 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 highlighted the fact that only a comrade can understand another.²⁰⁰ Daniel Folha explained how upon meeting another war veteran, even a stranger, the conversation topic will frequently converge to the colonial war and

we leave feeling relieved [...] what about you, where have you been? In Angola—hey man, you have been here, you know— yeah, 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 feeling of friendship—and above all with—a burden is lifted from my shoulders.²⁰¹

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.²⁰² As Folha 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.²⁰³ That aspect certainly is more prominent for comrades-in-arms. About meeting the men of his combat group, Manuel Oliveira emphasized (Fig. 6.5):

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.²⁰⁴

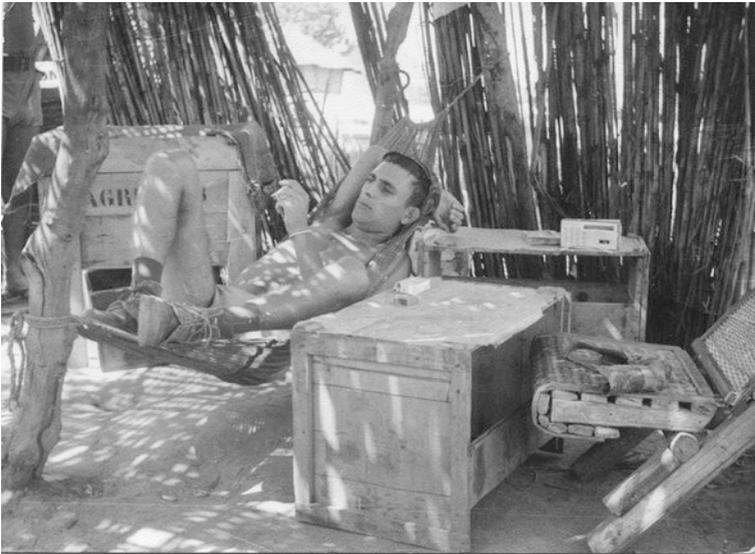


Fig. 6.5 Manuel Oliveira (Guinea, 1964/66)

As noted by Oliveira, 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.²⁰⁵ In fact, for the comrade whose life he saved in Guinea decades ago, a former transmissions soldier remains “my brother.”²⁰⁶ Significantly, some veterans were 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. Félix Caixeiro 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 that—has made us much closer.²⁰⁷

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 overshadowed it through a cohesive group closeness forged during military service, and particularly by having experienced war events with similar intensity.²⁰⁸ 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.”²⁰⁹ 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, and the lack of general knowledge on the war).

However, as is visible in Caixeiro’s and other narratives, and perhaps prompted by public remembrance developments to which they also contributed (particularly through ex-combatant 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.²¹⁰ 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-centered nature of gatherings, the celebration of their military units, and the erection of monuments and other forms of “fashionable” memorialization, alongside an admitted evasiveness toward difficult remembering. Such remembrance manifestations appear to a great extent to be developing in a non-critical, ahistorical 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).²¹¹ 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.

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 was 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 even now. 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.²¹² Their facial expressions often changed 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 Folha guaranteed that he “can still feel the scent of the Angolan soil.”²¹³ In the words of Abel Fortuna, 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.”²¹⁴ Provided that certain financial, health, and security requirements are met, most respondents declared 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.²¹⁵ This common urge which unites many of these former servicemen is frequently misunderstood by their families and non-veterans. Some were aware that the likelihood of their dream remaining unfulfilled is high.²¹⁶

Taking into account the hardships endured by most in Africa, some interpreted this current desire as paradoxical. A former soldier explained how, despite thinking when he was a serviceman in Guinea between 1970 and 1973 that he would never wish to live there “even if I was given the world,” at the time of the interview he felt an overwhelming “anxiety” to visit the place and its inhabitants: he was “dying to go there.”²¹⁷ The paradoxes of this longing to return were manifested more visibly in those veterans who were mutilated or severely wounded in Africa. António Barroso, for instance, remarked that he would like to visit Mozambique, but felt “frightened” about the prospect. Like him, Abel Fortuna pondered 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, Fortuna was convinced that a return could fulfill “a wish to rediscover myself.”²¹⁸

For others, a return would be less complex. In this respect, Félix Caixeiro related 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.”²¹⁹ Others felt 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 highlighted that they daily 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.²²⁰ These veterans “dream about going back” before they “die.” José Teixeira stated that he “fell in love with Africa” and “miss[es] it.” Daniel Folha—who had never left Portugal in 1969—described how “Luanda stayed in my heart.” Another interviewee feels a “lump in my throat” when he longingly remembers Mozambique.²²¹

Nonetheless, it should be stressed that a desire to return to Africa is not shared by all of my interviewees. Some clearly stated 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.²²² This applied 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.²²³

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.²²⁴ A case in point was Manuel Oliveira, who 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 was 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, Oliveira 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, Christmases, Easters, these men stayed” behind. There, he questioned why that happened.²²⁵ Oliveira’s uneasy account focused on his need to go back to Guinea, since, as a former “part of” the Portuguese Army fighting in that territory, he felt strongly responsible and “guilty” for the destruction faced by that country, a feeling shared by others.²²⁶ 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.²²⁷ Like Oliveira, many of these ex-combatants, including those who had not traveled to Africa by the time of our interview, revealed a genuine interest in the fate of the African countries where they served, with such veteran tourism and interest giving a new emphasis to ties between Portugal and the former colonies.²²⁸ Now “friends and brothers,” these independent countries are presented in the veterans’ narratives through a framework prioritizing respect, “equality,” and the ability to “unite” Portuguese and African peoples. In this context, several interviewees regarded a renewed proximity and cultural exchange with the former colonies as a contributory step toward integrating the colonial past.²²⁹

*“Extinguished, Forgotten”*²³⁰

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 onward. 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 generalized notion among ex-combatants that they have been used, abandoned, and neglected by their country after fulfilling their compulsory military service.²³¹ Now, many feel unsupported, “completely disregarded,” and “marginalized by the government,” with their service not adequately acknowledged.²³² To signify that view, predominant in my sample, respondents employed a richness of metaphors, often in the plural form. For one, a soldier was a “matchstick” which was lit when needed and afterward “dumped to one side,” among others, where “bit by bit, there they remained extinguished, forgotten.”²³³ Many others stressed, 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.”²³⁴ The “gun in his [their] hand” for fighting, however, was put there by the Portuguese state.²³⁵

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 stressed 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.²³⁶ It should be stressed that the veterans' demands are not exclusively of a material nature. In this respect, several ex-combatants emphasized 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.”²³⁷ For instance, alluding to the way serving in the war affected his psychological health (and consequently his life path), Manuel Oliveira explained how he desperately desired 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.”²³⁸ Joaquim Pereira stressed that, whatever the circumstances they faced, these men endured their military service for two years and deserved some “honor” for that.²³⁹ For the most part, and deploring the lack of official and public recognition, respondents emphasized the importance of “respect,” “regard,” “recognition,” “justice,” “dignity” for Portuguese ex-combatants. Interviewees often repeated 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.”²⁴⁰ Daniel Folha stated that “my greatest regret is that our country has little recognition for the ex-combatants,” lacking the “courage” to “assume” their presence and needs.²⁴¹ “Frustrated” at the non-recognition, many feel that “we were cannon fodder and [...] forgotten many times [...] very forgotten.”²⁴² 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.”²⁴³

Nonetheless, these men also focused on the material compensation aspect. Manuel Oliveira, despite stressing that his recognition claim was not financially motivated, argued that “I was forced to go there, therefore the state has to look after me.”²⁴⁴ However, official attempts to materially “look after” these ex-combatants in the decades 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) reflect decades of the country’s poor resources, inefficient nationwide organization, uneven access and institutional dispersion (with veteran associations and several government bodies like the Ministry of Defense, 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.

tion.²⁴⁵ 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.²⁴⁶

In this context, most of my respondents firmly believed 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.²⁴⁷ Core demands included having access to free health care (including psychological support), aimed specifically at war veterans and provided in military hospitals²⁴⁸; having the years of military service effectively included in the calculation of an ex-combatant's retirement pension²⁴⁹; 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 unrecognized social role.²⁵⁰ 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.²⁵¹ As pointed out to me by several respondents, some comrades experience poverty and need, in extreme cases leading an unstructured, marginal existence, often fueled 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."²⁵² 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 defended a more robust official response.²⁵³ The majority of interviewees were 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, and in many cases affecting younger generations born after the conflict.²⁵⁴

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 among veterans in general, with postwar support officially offered, suitable or not. Some ex-combatants negatively contrasted 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 perceived those respective conflicts to be more publicly acknowledged and veterans better recognized and supported.²⁵⁵ As Félix Caixeiro 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 Caixeiro, in this respect Portugal could learn a lot from the United States of America.²⁵⁶ 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.²⁵⁷

These concerns over lack of support, acutely expressed by my sample, generated deep-rooted anger and disappointment amid servicemen. Aware that he belonged to a significant section of Portuguese society comprising hundreds of thousands of veterans, Orlando Libório, along with others, stated that “the fact that nobody ever cares about us” made him “angry sometimes.”²⁵⁸ They are “discriminated against.”²⁵⁹ Former military driver Daniel Folha declared himself “angry at being Portuguese [...] a revolted combatant.”²⁶⁰ Folha claimed that he is unable to “leave the war until they recognize me.” Involved in a decades-long bureaucratic battle to obtain war-disabled status, Folha felt let down as a citizen: he was dutifully “available” to serve his country and afterward felt mistreated for not receiving the support he believed “I have the right to.” Despite feeling drained and discouraged by being so “ignored” for years, Folha intended to continue “struggling” for his unfulfilled rights.²⁶¹ However, echoing others, this respondent stressed that, more important than any financial compensation, “I need that they recognize me [...] the effort I made—that which I went through.” Until then, he explained, his “war scars” will not heal, his war will not end.²⁶²

Among these ex-servicemen, a case in point is that of José Raimundo (b. 1946). Born in a lower-middle-class family in a rural town in central Portugal, Raimundo was selected at conscription, in 1966, to train as an officer, on the basis of his schooling. Integrated in the Commando force, Raimundo was subsequently mobilized to Angola in 1967. Due to the life-threatening injuries he suffered there, José Raimundo nearly lost his life. The resulting dramatic life change meant that, decades later, this respondent still had to deal daily with ill-health and significant levels of incapacity. Detailing how “hurtful” it is to feel “ostracized [...] both by society [...] and by politicians,” Raimundo 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 recognized and suitably supported.²⁶³ Taking into account such obvious consequences of war, it is understandable that veterans in similar circumstances (mainly disabled, such as Raimundo, Folha, and Barroso) articulated more strongly a general feeling of non-recognition.²⁶⁴ For them, the country is shunning its responsibilities, and “it takes persistence, a permanent struggle to gain sometimes a few worthless crumbs.”²⁶⁵

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.”²⁶⁶ 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.²⁶⁷ Among these combatants, there was 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” could finally end and the society is able to “get rid of these nuisances here.”²⁶⁸ 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.”²⁶⁹ In such context, my interviewees perceived their physical disappearance as a natural resolution of the issue of the state’s responsibility for providing support. Respondents were convinced that indifference surrounding the topic is conveniently entertained to prevent veteran claims from materializing, and thus avoid further unwanted “expense.”²⁷⁰ 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.²⁷¹

For some respondents, there was awareness that they “served society” through fulfillment of military duty during a different political era, an aspect which they perceived 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.²⁷² Furthermore, as another interviewee noted, 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 commemo-

rated every year on 25 April.²⁷³ 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” between victim or representative of the former regime.²⁷⁴ In this context, the conviction among most veterans interviewed that such a fundamental contemporary event and its protagonists are not sufficiently recognized on an official level was 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 expressed their resentment toward 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.²⁷⁵ For instance, in a discourse tinged with a certain bitterness, Alberto Almeida felt defeated by those who “made the revolution”: the “bearded, long-haired guys” who had never “touched a gun,” and, thus, remain unable to understand the ex-combatants.²⁷⁶ In this respect, the men’s accounts suggested 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.²⁷⁷ 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.²⁷⁸

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 emphasized 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.”²⁷⁹ Mostly, the ex-combatants extended their explanations for official lack of interest into the civil society’s domain. This social indifference, explained by some, was because the 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.²⁸⁰ António Barroso felt 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."²⁸¹ Many found incomprehensible "nowadays" society's "alienation" to their existence and needs.²⁸²

However, most ex-combatants were also aware of the fact that socio-political indifference toward them does not manifest evenly. My respondents noted how in electoral periods their concerns can be addressed rather vehemently. Interpreting those cyclical surges in interest as opportunistic political utilization—or "horrible propaganda" to quote José Lima—led many to feel "used" and "betrayed" and even angrier at such "demagoguery" and political promises aimed at "chasing [veterans'] votes."²⁸³ Expressing a similar point, Manuel Oliveira regretted that some commemorative 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."²⁸⁴

In this context, my respondents' testimonials reflected the weariness of having witnessed—more prominently from the late 1990s onward—the subject of ex-combatant recognition and especially compensation being used as political "bait" in Portugal.²⁸⁵ A particularly polemic topic was the governmental attribution (via the Portuguese Social Security, and legislated in 2004) of an annual retirement pension complement of €150 to retired war veterans.²⁸⁶ 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.²⁸⁷ Like others, Orlando Libório believed that either the government is capable of attributing a "proper" pension and support to veterans in need or it would be more advisable not to initiate such measures.²⁸⁸ Moreover, and as stressed by Félix Caixeiro, 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.²⁸⁹

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 mobi-

lization 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.²⁹⁰ As remarked by some interviewees, the associations they belong to are their "union," operating as their "defense," allowing them to "to put our foot down to the Government, and show that we are still alive."²⁹¹

However, the explosion of war veteran associations that began in Portugal from the late 1990s onward did not appear to find an equivalent match in concrete results, most possibly due to a lack of efficient articulation between organizations. In effect, a significant number of interviewees commented on the "mushrooming of veteran associations," 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.²⁹² Despite the remarkable achievements of many of these organizations, 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 disfavor.²⁹³ As noted by some, a strongly inclusive, consensual, implemented nationwide war veteran association is clearly missing to counteract the negative consequences of such fragmentation.²⁹⁴ If the sizeable veteran group channeled its social presence efficiently in a combined effort, it could "influence society, and would have a great strength."²⁹⁵ 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.²⁹⁶ Importantly, these are spaces where the ex-combatants can talk openly and safely, and remember and debate topics that concern and unite them in a similar experience.²⁹⁷

*"It Was a Colonial War"*²⁹⁸

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 online via social media. Reflecting individual and collective oscillations present in war remembrance, there was consensus among 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 resented 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.²⁹⁹ 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 regretted 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 Joaquim Pereira; or a “generalized tranquility which is synonymous with forgetting,” in the words of Félix Caixeiro. In twenty-first-century democratic Portugal, these men, as the aging executors of the wrong side of a “bad,” socially “condemned” war, held 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.³⁰⁰ For José Lima, 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.”³⁰¹ 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 felt surrounded by “hiding,” and the notion that it was a “crime” to have been a combatant. Lima explained 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 1974.³⁰² Others mentioned 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 neighbors’ dispute.³⁰³ Many of these veterans, as conscript troops, considered themselves victims of the previous regime. They felt 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.³⁰⁴ The reluctance on the part of many veterans to affirm or mention war experiences reflected their fear of appearing laudatory about a conflict that after 25 April 1974 was not “politically correct,” it was something “to forget [...] [about which] everybody—had an uneasy conscience, it was a colonial war.”³⁰⁵

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.³⁰⁶ The coexistence of shame for being associated with fascism and an individual acknowledgment of the inevitable participation in the colonial war provoke identity fractures in the war veterans’ lives.³⁰⁷ Significantly, when justifying the reasons for their avoidance of the topic, interviewees resorted to the use of notions like hiding, avoiding trouble, unpleasantness and shame and, in general, forgetting the past.³⁰⁸ These aspects reflect continuing remembrance struggles around the colonial war which place those who experienced it in the first person somehow under social uncertainty.³⁰⁹

Nonetheless, these veterans remained 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 Ferreira put it, is “the biggest sponge,” “erasing everything.”³¹⁰ The veterans constantly reinforced 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 suggested 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.³¹¹ Mainly, these younger Portuguese citizens’ ignorance on the matter occurs because they “are not taught” about it.³¹² The veterans’ narratives often condemned the relative low-incidence in the public presence of such an impactful event that marked “a milestone in

our history,” their concerns signaling 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].”³¹³

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 Portuguese life that my interviewees focused upon in relation to the conflict, expressing a generalized view of criticism and disappointment. The veterans repeated 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.³¹⁴ From this perspective, such “amorphous” media periodically focus on war veteran parades and gatherings—particularly in times of news’ shortage—favoring superficial approaches instead of a higher presence of established TV and radio programs, documentaries, and debates on the conflict. These, because they would be expected to provoke some tension and disagreement, could perhaps prove to be not the most profitable option for media decision-makers.³¹⁵ When deeper approaches are pursued, my respondents pointed out that they often become media “folklore” and “silliness” dictated by speculation and sensationalism, in which “hypocrisy” and the airing of uncontextualized and exaggerated views are common. In this context, some war veterans (especially some affected by war stress to achieve higher impact) are used as pawns in the battle of audiences, and a less constructive and positive image of veterans and the conflict is formed. The interviewees emphasized 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 25th April democratic change. Therefore, the ex-combatants believe that these processes frequently block alternative “human” perspectives of the events based “on experience,” and 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.³¹⁶

Highlighting the contextual differences between Portugal and other countries, the veterans asserted 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 would welcome the expansion of cinema on the colonial conflict which, unlike most of the few films made, could follow a more socially identifiable direction.³¹⁷

Despite expressing awareness of an increasing relative presence of the subject in Portuguese cultural life, the ex-servicemen saw its treatment as unsuitable or insufficient. Daniel Folha, for instance, suggested 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 [...].³¹⁸

Like Folha, many other veterans placed great emphasis on the educational value of history as regards the national remembrance of the Portuguese colonial war.

The History of “The Future”³¹⁹

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.”³²⁰ The ex-combatants highlighted 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 valued the need for an inclusive history of the Portuguese Colonial War to be written.

Some, like Abílio Silva, noted the lack of reflective historical studies on the colonial war, depriving Portuguese people from the educational

benefit of “studying and rethinking” their past.³²¹ From their perspective, “our history” does not suitably contemplate the colonial war. The scarcity of reflective historiography on the colonial war is described as “one of the great failings of our country.”³²² Manuel Ferreira pinpointed 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 Ferreira, a broader “clear explanation” about “the reasons for that war” and what “really happened” is “already becoming overdue”³²³ (Fig. 6.6).



Fig. 6.6 Abílio Silva (Angola, 1969/71)

Under such circumstances, the veterans expressed 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.³²⁴ 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 afterward. 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.³²⁵ Perceiving this history as unwritten, a number of interviewees placed me in the role of the intermediary between the past and the future they want to reach through their testimonials. José Lima, for instance, considering this research as an “exception” in how the history of the war is approached, emphasized that “maybe many Angelas Camposes should appear doing studies [...] about this.”³²⁶ 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 Folha pointed to the wider social meaning that veteran accounts can assume if given more cultural prominence.³²⁷ These ex-servicemen explained 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].”³²⁸ Nevertheless, the veterans remained 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 the individual lived experience of war and the construction of a veteran-based and approved cultural narrative of the event.³²⁹

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, Eduardo Palaio concluded 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.”³³⁰ Not always identifying with circulating accounts, veterans wished 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 among 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, the ex-combatant group displays, in general, 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 foot [there] like me and my colleagues and those who died, did not spend two years paddling in the mud, going through rivers, and with water up to our chests, didn't suffer—in the flesh, what we suffered [...] we [the] soldiers.³³¹

In this sense, while Orlando Libório 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 beyond” to “see the colonial war in a different way.”³³² When challenged to give their testimony, the ex-combatants provide us with raw materials which offer 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 socialization, entertainment, and a sex life, and facing the possibility and reality of enemy attacks. Their war, the veterans attest, has the “weight” of “emotion” of having been there; it is not like “watching [a war film on] television,” “eating popcorn,” and waiting for the “ads break.”³³³

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 underexplored 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 emphasized by respondents, who believed that “it's almost an obligation that we have to contribute towards this painful period being well recorded and well documented.”³³⁴ These veterans proclaimed 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.”³³⁵ In this regard, Alberto Almeida

stressed their responsibility to speak, reasoning that nobody can “complain” about silence and indifference if they do not personally counteract it with a testimony.³³⁶ Manuel Oliveira believed that people should talk amply and openly about the topic since “the more that is talked about the better.”³³⁷ Conscious of the passage of time, and feeling that “we keep dying and it will be over,” these men stressed 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.³³⁸ By declaring that “I don’t expect anything from you, but I expect a lot from you,” Almeida, in particular, manifested a sharp awareness of the historian’s role as a potential instrument in raising attention to the topic through the veterans’ 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, Almeida 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.”³³⁹

Like Almeida, my interviewees often employed 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: “*me* thank you!” I have been told, for doing the interview.³⁴⁰ 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, you know [...] you were born already after the 25th 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.³⁴¹

However, as noted by Alberto Almeida 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 acknowledgment by many of the infrequency or reluctance in giving accounts or merely talking about the subject.³⁴² Historical inclusion is more difficult to effect when veterans do not share their war experiences. In this respect, a great number of interviewees admitted they do not normally mention the war in their daily life, or do it in a selective way.³⁴³ In fact, a significant number of respondents stated that our interview was “the first time that I speak seriously about what happened with someone.”³⁴⁴

From the veterans’ perspective, the reasons advanced for this behavior reside in social indifference and lack of understanding, particularly on the part of the “youth of nowadays,” and sometimes within their own families.³⁴⁵ José Teixeira explained 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.” Alberto Almeida argued 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.”³⁴⁶ They “bottle up” about the war around “strangers,” people “alien” to the topic, and “don’t say anything.”³⁴⁷ Among the veteran group, the majority of respondents who attend ex-combatant gatherings highlighted 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, and they are “something to forget.”³⁴⁸

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.³⁴⁹ A retired officer typified 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 explained, 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.”³⁵⁰ As José Lima 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.”³⁵¹

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 favor certain narratives authored by individuals possessing higher literacy levels. One of my interviewees who, like many others, only had four years of schooling, declared in the interview that a higher level of education would have enabled him to approach “other things, maybe more important.”³⁵² 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. António Pena (b. 1936), a highly educated, retired career officer from southern Portugal expounded such notions, defending the beneficial consequences of embracing a more positive viewpoint of Portugal’s colonial past. He argued 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 Pena, the history of the colonial war remains a “quiet” history, its balanced generational transmission obscured by attributing it mainly negative connotations.³⁵³ (Fig. 6.7).



Fig. 6.7 António Pena (Angola, 1966/68)

The fact that these ex-combatants volunteered to be interviewed about a topic they mostly declared they do not 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 favorable 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 emphasized the need to have the colonial war inserted more prominently and officially into Portuguese history and regretted the long-term avoidance of the topic, simultaneously a certain culture of silence and erasure among themselves and their milieu was noticeable, especially regarding traumatic aspects of the war experience. As one respondent put it, when the topic is uncomfortable, "we muffle things down and forget about them."³⁵⁴ From this angle, many of these men appeared 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 appeared 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 what I have been through," Félix Caixeiro 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."³⁵⁵ Caixeiro'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*. Félix Caixeiro, for instance, considered 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].³⁵⁶

My interviewees expressed 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.³⁵⁷ 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. Félix Caixeiro meant that the war’s lived experience, what the ex-combatants have to say about what happened to them, is underrepresented in schoolbooks, which normally summarize that the Portuguese military intervened in Africa without mentioning “what the Portuguese young men went through during that period.”³⁵⁸ 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 channeling their past, especially because of their focus on a pacifist, anti-war message.³⁵⁹ 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.³⁶⁰

This perspective reflects a desire for an active social, intergenerational 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 contextualized personal narratives entering Portuguese cultural circuits, in all likelihood ultimately contributing to a more positive approach to the war, one that recognizes and reveals “my life, my story, [the fact that] I am a block that makes up Portuguese history.”³⁶¹ Some respondents specifically highlighted the fact that Portuguese families would benefit from talking more openly about the colonial war. This is the conviction of the ex-soldier who stated 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 close 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 toward a resolution.³⁶²

In stressing its beneficial factors, the war veterans were 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’s veterans, would be able to attribute new and more positive meanings to their war remembrance.³⁶³ However, it would be naïve to assume that remembering translates neatly into healing and closure and the absence of social 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.³⁶⁴ By focusing on the topic, the ex-combatants revealed 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 toward 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 crystalized 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.³⁶⁵

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?"³⁶⁶ From the standpoint of this question mark of memory, this former soldier had 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."³⁶⁷ Alberto Almeida believed that, in the 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."³⁶⁸ 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.³⁶⁹

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 toward a "better" history of the Portuguese Colonial War.³⁷⁰ 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

Orlando Libório put it, at some point “all of us have the need to open up” about the past.³⁷¹ In a similar fashion, an ex-soldier explained how, in his old age, he feels as a part of Portuguese history enlarging itself.³⁷² It is for that reason that he exhorted historians to speak to war veterans:

go to their homes—go to the associations and centers 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 percent and our traces will remain [...] [in order] to enrich history more.³⁷³

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 analyzed 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 put it, the colonial conflict remains one of the most “fracturing points of Portuguese society,” a “ghost war” vacillating in its historiographical placement.³⁷⁴

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 idealized 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.³⁷⁵

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.³⁷⁶ 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, among 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 the elites were the norm. History-writing in a democracy can still be impacted by the limitations emerging from the debris of 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 generally been missing.

In particular, Portugal appears uncertain as to how its war veterans should be approached. This indecision means that many interviewees felt “ignored” and “forgotten,” perceiving their historical voices remain historiographically undervalued and unrepresented. However, although these ex-combatants mostly regretted the pervasive silence and indifference still surrounding the topic (as in Portuguese public memory, the war persists as “something to forget, not to talk about, not to elaborate about”), paradoxically many admitted contributing to it by often refusing to talk about or by undervaluing narratives of their participation in the colonial war.³⁷⁷ 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.³⁷⁸

As analyzed 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 materialize veteran claims, desire for recognition, longing for Africa, and so forth). Affirming themselves as a privileged group for war memory, this research showed that—despite a contradictory coexistence of individual silence and the insistence on social lack of interest—the ex-combatants valued 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, the ex-combatants turned to history in search of stable colonial war remembrance. Many believed it is the historians’ responsibility to unburden them from their war memories and work toward 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.³⁷⁹ 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.

NOTES

1. Interviewee 1 (15, 19).
2. M. Barata, “Prefácio,” in Estado-Maior do Exército, CECA, *Resenha histórico-militar*, 5–12. Similarly to Algeria’s case studied by Evans, *Algeria*, 364–65; see also Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory* (2000), 23–24.
3. See, for instance, Medeiros’s example of Cruzeiro’s assessments in 1993, in “Hauntings...,” (2000), 206.
4. Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 230–231.

5. Quoting Lorenz, *Las guerras por Malvinas* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2006), 283–284, 305; see also Evans, *Algeria*, 365–367; Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory* (2000), 24; Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 8–9; M. Ribeiro, *Uma História de Regressos*, 248–258; Vecchi, *Exceção Atlântica*, 62–188.
6. Although a process not without tensions. See Thomson, “The Anzac legend. Exploring national myth and memory in Australia,” in *The Myths We Live By*, ed. Samuel and Thompson, 73–82; Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory* (2000), 14.
7. Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (1994), 221; Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory* (2000), 49; M. Ribeiro and R. Vecchi, (eds.) “Introdução,” in *Antologia da Memória Poética*, 21–32; Vecchi, *Exceção Atlântica*, 21–32.
8. Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory* (2000), 14–15; Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (1994), 216.
9. Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory* (2000), 19–20.
10. *Ibid.*, 24.
11. Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory* (2000), 49, 20; Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (1994), 216.
12. Interviewee 28 (53).
13. Interviewee 1 (15, 19). This interviewee advances an estimated percentage as high as 95 percent of participants returning “with problems.”
14. Interviewees 3 (21); 15 (30, 35); 1 (19–20); 4 (7–8, 21, 24, 28); 26 (35–36); 27 (12); 10 (13–14), among other examples.
15. Interviewee 15 (36, 39).
16. Interviewees 18 (21); 15 (30); 30 (36); 31 (25, 39).
17. Interviewee 32 (13–15, 34–35).
18. Interviewees 17 (24); 20 (24).
19. See Pereira et al. “PTSD, Psicopatologia e Tipo de Família em Veteranos de Guerra Colonial Portuguesa,” *Revista de Psicologia Militar* 19 (2010): 225; Anunciação, *Coping e stress traumático*, 34; see also Chap. 3.
20. Interviewees 22 (17); 2 (6); 32 (34–35), among others.
21. Interviewee 32 (13–15, 34–35). See also Interviewee 12 (20).
22. Interviewee 16 (25).
23. Interviewee 11 (14–16).
24. Interviewees 11 (18); 13 (14); 10 (13–14); 17 (28); 14 (10); 4 (10, 24); 36 (15); 7 (12); 30 (33–34); 20 (24).

25. Interviewees 29 (36.); 26 (30).
26. Interviewee 14 (9–10, 25–26).
27. See Maia et al. “*Por baixo...*,” 11–28. Maia et al.’s research suggests high levels of PTSD present in Portugal in comparison with war veterans of other conflicts (p. 27).
28. As noted by Pereira et al. “PTSD...,” 213.
29. Interviewees 15 (24–26, 36, 39); 4 (21, 24, 28); 17 (24).
30. Bourke, “Return to Civilian Life,” in *An Intimate History of Killing*, 352–353.
31. Interviewee 25 (15).
32. Interviewee 1 (19, 22). Also Interviewee 19 (30).
33. Interviewee 36 (30).
34. Common to other conflicts, as Garton put it, *The Cost of War*, 246–247.
35. Interviewees 36 (18, 28); 15 (24–26); 32 (27–28).
36. Interviewees 10 (22); 32 (27); 4 (23). See, for instance, article by H. Neves, “Ex-combatentes viraram sem-abrigo,” in *Jornal de Notícias*, 21st 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; and “A guerra nunca mais...,” 30th January 2011, 16–29; see also Chap. 3.
37. Interviewees 22 (19); 32 (24); 10 (8, 13, 17). See Stanley, “Involuntary commemorations...,” 240–259.
38. Interviewees 18 (21–22); 10 (8, 13, 17); 22 (24); 12 (19); 25 (32); 32 (34); 20 (9–10, 24); 11 (14); 30 (14, 33–34).
39. Interviewee 19 (22, 36).
40. Interviewees 22 (24, 13); 19 (36); 31 (19–20); 9 (25); 4 (10).
41. Interviewees 31 (20, 24, 26); 15 (18). The impact of the smell of death on surviving servicemen is an aspect mentioned by Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 214.
42. Interviewee 15 (23–25). See Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 61.
43. Interviewee 32 (13).
44. Interviewees 4 (7–8, 10, 21–24, 28); 13 (14); 11 (18, 14); 16 (25–26); 27 (21).
45. Interviewees 36 (29–31); 21 (24–25); 14 (26–27); 15 (2), among others.
46. Interviewee 5 (16).
47. Interviewee 2 (6, 8, 11). See also Interviewee 15 (35).

48. Interviewee 16 (24–25).
49. Interviewees 19 (32); 26 (30).
50. Interviewees 36 (26–28); 11 (14); 1 (19); 13 (14–15); 30 (38); 15 (36, 43); 30 (39); 16 (9, 23); 2 (18).
51. Interviewee 14 (9).
52. Namely, the conservatism of Portuguese society, which for long ascribed to wives a carer's role, irrespective of challenging conjugal circumstances. See Interviewees 16 (25); 1 (19); 15 (44). See Pereira and Pedras, "Grupo de suporte ...," 285; 290–291.
53. Like veterans of other conflicts, expressing the strong motivation and desire of resuming his civilian personal and family life. See Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 364.
54. Interviewees 13 (9, 15); 11 (14); 36 (26). On the importance of family's social support, see Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 79–80; 156–160.
55. Interviewee 36 (26, 17).
56. Interviewee 36 (15–17).
57. Interviewee 26 (35–36).
58. Interviewees 1 (33); 33 (36–37); 15 (17–18, 25, 38, 43).
59. Interviewee 20 (23–24).
60. Interviewee 15 (24–25).
61. Interviewee 30 (14–15).
62. Interviewees 16 (25); 36 (18); 2 (1); 26 (27–28).
63. Interviewees 8 (25); 33 (22, 28–31, 58); 1 (20).
64. Interviewee 20 (23).
65. Interviewee 31 (39); 28 (48); 20 (22).
66. Interviewee 28 (44); 17 (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. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 31–76.
67. Interviewee 16 (22).
68. Interviewee 28 (34). See also article by Â. Campos, "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, no. 43, *Memória* (2009): 45–64.
69. Interviewees 16 (23); 30 (27–28); 33 (53).
70. Interviewees 18 (21); 29 (15); 14 (9). Echoing health concerns of Australian Vietnam veterans mentioned by Garton, *The Cost of War*, 228–239.

71. Interviewees 33 (53); 29 (13, 36, 22); 10 (23).
72. Interviewee 29 (13, 36, 22).
73. Interviewee 30 (14, 33–34).
74. Interviewees 26 (35–36, 42–43); 19 (25); 17 (28).
75. Confirming recent research on the physical impact of war, as in “A guerra nunca mais ...,” 30th January 2011, 16–29.
76. Interviewees 15 (15, 40–41); 14 (24, 27–28); 13 (6, 10, 17); 25 (33–34); 28 (28–29); 21 (21); 36 (4); 16 (7); 32 (28); 22 (31–32).
77. Interviewee 30 (37, 14). See Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 26–28; Hutching, “After action...,” 240–241.
78. Interviewee 29 (36).
79. Interviewee 25 (14).
80. Interviewees 2 (8); 29 (36); 25 (23); 21 (27, 29); 12 (14); 28 (55).
81. Interviewee 25 (14).
82. Interviewee 10 (14).
83. Interviewees 18 (20); 34 (11); 29 (35); 4 (15); 21 (15).
84. Interviewees 3 (22–23); 34 (11); 9 (23); 17 (19); 25 (27–28); 20 (20).
85. Interviewee 33 (38–39, 32).
86. Interviewee 11 (21–22).
87. See, for instance, M. Ribeiro, *Uma História de Regressos*, 248–258; Vecchi, *Exceção Atlântica*, 162–188; Medeiros, “Hauntings...,” (2000), 201–221.
88. Interviewee 25 (23, 15).
89. Interviewee 14 (24–26).
90. Interviewee 14 (34, 27–28). We remember what is extraordinary, intense, extreme, and different. See Edwards, ““*Their name liveth for evermore*,”” 15.
91. Interviewee 22 (17).
92. Interviewees 18 (22); 11 (17, 19); 21 (27); 36 (16); 31 (26): 14 (23), among others. Hunt reflects on the emotionally detached role of the researcher in this process, in *Memory, War and Trauma*, 158.
93. Interviewee 15 (25).
94. Interviewee 11 (17).
95. Interviewee 11 (21–22).
96. Interviewee 36 (17).

97. See remark of Lopes, *O Alferes Eduardo*, 7.
98. Interviewees 11 (19); 14 (23). See Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 146–147.
99. Interviewee 15 (24, 26).
100. Interviewee 36 (16, 26, 39–40).
101. Interviewees 36 (25–26; 14–15); 31 (19, 25).
102. Interviewees 36 (23–24); 21 (26–27). Almeida is a good example of the “tortured conscience” mentioned by Bourke, of a combatant who faces moral remorse for having killed; Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 7.
103. Interviewees 8 (25); 36 (13, 17, 30–31); 1 (20); 31 (6); 4 (19, 26, 31); 20 (18–19); 33 (45–46); 26 (30–31); 19 (5); 3 (19–20); 9 (17); see Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 1–3.
104. Interviewee 36 (13, 30–31).
105. Interviewee 20 (13–14, 18–19). Something common in a “formless” guerrilla war, as pinpointed by Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 188–189.
106. Interviewees 20 (13–14, 18–19); 31 (25–26); 33 (45–46); 26 (41). See Bourke, “The Pleasures of War” and “The Burden of Guilt,” in *An Intimate History of Killing*, 33–35, 215–241. “Obeying orders,” self-preservation and fear of punishment are often employed as justifications stemming from “killer’s guilt.” See Bourke, “War Massacres,” in *Ibid.*, 194–203; 215–241.
107. Interviewees 31 (6); 20 (13); 3 (19–20); 36 (17).
108. Interviewee 31 (6, 25–26).
109. Interviewees 15 (28–29); 31 (25–26); 33 (45–46).
110. Interviewees 3 (19–20); 33 (45–46).
111. See, for instance, Bourke, “Introduction,” in *An Intimate History of Killing*, 7–12.
112. Interviewee 33 (45–46).
113. See Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, “Military and emergency service personnel,” in *Australian Guidelines...*, 141–143, and other relevant literature cited in the Works Cited and Consulted section.
114. Interviewee 33 (45–46, 39); 10 (17); 14 (10); 31 (20, 24, 17–18); 15 (17); 19 (12–13).
115. Interviewee 3 (18).
116. Interviewees 10 (19); 19 (11); 31 (24, 16, 26).
117. Interviewees 1 (15, 19); 31 (19, 25); 36 (27); 20 (13–14).

118. Interviewees 9 (26–29, 33–34); 31 (19, 25).
119. Interviewee 31 (25).
120. Interviewee 4 (27, 29). Interviewee 26 (41).
121. In guerrilla warfare circumstances similar to what occurred in Vietnam, as pinpointed by Bourke, “War Crimes,” in *An Intimate History of Killing*, 171–214. For a lengthy discussion of Portuguese war crimes, see Ribeiro, “Os crimes de guerra,” in *Marcas*, 137–222; see also Cabrita, *Massacres em África*.
122. See, for instance, Interviewee 15 (9–10) and Interviewee 19 (5).
123. Interviewees 15 (9–10); 4 (27, 31); 28 (39); 33 (54–55); 9 (30); 22 (28). As in the French case; see Evans, *Algeria*, 169–170.
124. Interviewees 9 (30); 4 (31); 33 (45); 19 (33).
125. Interviewees 36 (16); 29 (38); 17 (13); 18 (24–25); 21 (27).
126. See Chap. 4 for a wider discussion.
127. Interviewees 36 (16); 20 (11); 31 (19, 25).
128. See examples in Chap. 4.
129. Interviewees 36 (16); 20 (24).
130. Interviewee 36 (16).
131. Interviewee 2 (12).
132. Interviewee 26 (30–31).
133. Significantly, out of the entire sample, only Interviewee 8, non-disabled and a declared sympathizer of the previous regime, believes the Portuguese state has done its best to adequately support disabled veterans (27).
134. Mentioned by several interviewees, such as 11 (18); 36 (28); 13 (14); 18 (21–22); 26 (36); 32 (27–29); 27 (13), among others.
135. Interviewee 15 (15–16).
136. For a good summary of all legislation related to ex-combatants, see Anunciação, *Coping e stress traumático*, 135–147, and <https://sites.google.com/site/apoiarstress/documentacao/legislacao-ex-combatentes>.
137. Interviewee 11 (19).
138. Interviewees 11 (20–21, 26); 3 (22); 17 (11, 23–25); 1 (20–22); 20 (11); 27 (7).
139. Interviewee 26 (30–31). To employ Bourke’s terminology, war means combatants are “ordinary people placed in extraordinary situations,” in *An Intimate History of Killing*, 365–366.
140. Interviewee 3 (22). In Portugal, the demand for public recognition has not generated the results obtained in France where in

- 1999 the National Assembly officially recognized that the Algerian conflict had been a war and not a “police operation”; see Evans, *Algeria*, 364–365.
141. Interviewees 29 (32–33); 36 (27); 28 (45–46); 27 (14–15). The importance of such social support is emphasized by Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 79–80; 157–160. Evans notes similar positive roles on French veteran associations assessed, in “Rehabilitating the Traumatized War Veteran,” 78–79.
 142. Interviewee 26 (29). Feelings found among Australian Vietnam veterans studied by Garton, *The Cost of War*, 246–247.
 143. Interviewee 26 (29).
 144. See “A minha guerra em África,” 4th April 2008; see also Chap. 3.
 145. Interviewees 2 (14); 3 (17, 25–26); 4 (22); 6 (13, 22–23); 7 (1, 17); 8 (2, 8, 17–19, 34); 9 (23, 32); 12 (20–23); 13 (7); 14 (14, 28, 34); 18 (21, 24–26); 19 (15); 22 (17, 26); 23 (8); 25 (15–16; 25; 30, 34–35); 26 (2–3; 21, 24, 42); 29 (19); 32 (28); 35 (25, 29); 36 (3, 33).
 146. See Chap. 3 for further information.
 147. Similar to those encountered by Evans regarding ex-combatants of the Algerian conflict, summarized in Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory* (2000), 24.
 148. See Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory* (2000), 14; Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (1994), 216–220; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 143.
 149. Interviewees 31 (41); 36 (32).
 150. Interviewee 2 (2).
 151. Interviewees 4 (31); 12 (14, 23); 18 (23, 25); 13 (1, 17); 21 (27, 29); 15 (43).
 152. Interviewees 14 (34); 31 (28).
 153. Interviewees 17 (19, 23); 29 (36); 27 (7).
 154. Interviewees 31 (44); 17 (29); 22 (27).
 155. Interviewee 20 (24).
 156. Interviewees 28 (33); 15 (33); 7 (15).
 157. Interviewees 28 (55, 48); 29 (34); 22 (19).
 158. Interviewee 17 (19).
 159. Interviewees 5 (15–16); 7 (13, 15); 18 (23); 17 (19); 16 (30); 28 (33); 32 (35).
 160. Interviewees 31 (27);

161. Interviewees 24 (6); 20 (24); 22 (12); 17 (19).
162. Interviewee 15 (44).
163. Interviewee 30 (2).
164. Interviewees 29 (14); 34 (17–18); 19 (26).
165. Interviewees 32 (35); 19 (18); 13 (17).
166. Interviewees 30 (15); 5 (14).
167. Interviewees 15 (15, 38); 17 (8, 24); 20 (8, 18–19); 19 (33).
168. Interviewees 28 (35, 50); 36 (33); 10 (23); 4 (18, 25); 31 (26); 15 (41, 44–45); 19 (19); 14 (6, 34); 33 (12, 25). A veteran development highlighted by Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 372; and Stanley, “Involuntary commemorations...,” 253.
169. Interviewees 3 (25); 9 (33–34); 12 (20–21); 14 (34); 36 (32–33); 7 (15); 22 (30); 10 (8); 29 (37); 18 (25).
170. Interviewees 13 (16); 14 (34); 35 (29).
171. Interviewees 26 (42); 12 (23).
172. Interviewees 24 (2); 6 (13).
173. Interviewees 30 (37, 14); 36 (4–6); 21 (21). As emphasized by Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 26–28.
174. Interviewees 34 (23); 24 (6); 18 (25); 6 (19–20); 26 (19, 43); 19 (35); 15 (40–41).
175. Interviewees 18 (25); 6 (19–20); 26 (19); 21 (29).
176. Interviewee 22 (27, 18).
177. Interviewee 15 (41). Similar uncertainties were faced by Vietnam veterans, as highlighted by Hynes in “What Happened in Nam,” *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 177–222.
178. Interviewees 15 (41); 19 (35); 29 (38). See also Evans, *Algeria*, 362–370.
179. Interviewee 3 (20).
180. Interviewees 25 (34–35); 4 (29, 31); 12 (23); 29 (37–38); 33 (32, 52, 57); 28 (55, 35); 13 (16). Veterans of the Algerian war studied by Evans also insisted on not being considered “heroes;” see Evans, “Rehabilitating the Traumatized ...,” 78–79.
181. Interviewee 32 (30).
182. Interviewee 33 (57).
183. Interviewee 35 (4, 19–24, 29).
184. Interviewees 33 (57); 15 (32); 12 (23–24); 26 (19).
185. Interviewee 17 (30, 25, 18, 20).
186. Interviewee 36 (12).

187. Interviewee 13 (17).
188. Interviewee 15 (37).
189. Interviewee 13 (16–17).
190. Interviewees 25 (29–30); 21 (29). See explanation of *Ultramar* on Chapter 3.
191. Interviewees 21 (27, 5, 29–30); 34 (24, 12); 33 (58); 8 (2, 21, 32); 13 (16); 17 (12); 25 (36); 26 (24, 31); 32 (21, 26). A notion interestingly proposed by F. Rodrigues in “Soldadinhos de chumbo,” in *A Guerra do Ultramar: Realidade e Ficção. Livro de Actas do II Congresso Internacional sobre a Guerra Colonial*, ed. R. Teixeira, (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 2002), 81–84. Bourke highlights a comparable differentiation in relation to World War I veterans in *Dismembering the Male*, 26–28.
192. Interviewees 14 (23); 11 (19); 26 (15); 27 (14); 28 (38–39); 8 (33).
193. Interviewees 14 (29–30); 27 (3); 19 (25).
194. This “commission” of former combatants promoted one of the first ex-combatant gatherings organized in Portugal. It started in 1982 and is still held yearly in Cuba, a town in southern Portugal. See Interviewees 27 (15) and 14 (32). More typical of the emergence of this type of veteran meetings, a respondent regretted that his company only began their gatherings in 2001, “a bit late” (Interviewee 24, (2)).
195. Virtually all interviewees have participated or continue to do so. On being “too painful” to participate for certain comrades, see Interviewee 25 (27). See also Ribeiro, *Marcas*, 283–285.
196. For instance, Interviewee 25 explained that these events operate as socialization channels for his children (31).
197. Interviewee 14 (25).
198. Dawson, *Making Peace*, 4–6.
199. Interviewees 27 (15); 26 (16); 14 (23); 29 (31); 31 (26–27); 8 (15). Stanley addresses these avoidance tactics in “Involuntary commemorations...,” 252; well-rehearsed war stories normally begin here, as noted by Hutching in “After action...,” 240.
200. Interviewees 11 (19); 29 (27); 31 (26–27); 6 (21).
201. Interviewee 26 (15).
202. Ashplant et al., *The Politics of Memory: Commemorating War* (2004), 29–30.

203. A private, nostalgic remembrance in the war generation context, as highlighted in Bourke's study; in *Dismembering the Male*, 155.
204. Interviewee 15 (11).
205. See Dawson, *Making Peace*, 4–6; Garton, *The Cost of War*, 24; Ribeiro, “Camaradagem,” in *Marcas*, 269–290; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 11.
206. Interviewees 29 (14); 10 (10).
207. Interviewees 14 (29); 15 (40–41). As expressed by Vietnam veterans mentioned by Garton, *The Cost of War*, 8.
208. Dawson, *Making Peace*, 4–6.
209. See “Introdução,” in *Antologia da Memória Poética*, ed. Ribeiro and Vecchi, 21–32; Vecchi, *Exceção Atlântica*, 7–12.
210. Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (1994), 220; Evans, “Rehabilitating the Traumatized ...,” 78–79.
211. See Chap. 3. See “Memorialisation and commemoration,” in Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 172–185; see, for instance, L. Quintais, *As guerras coloniais portuguesas e a invenção da História* (Lisboa: ICSUL, 2000).
212. Interviewees 16 (15); 36 (8); 28 (19–21, 35); 7 (6); 26 (5–6); 10 (11); 15 (36); 6 (9, 12, 16); 25 (27).
213. Interviewees 7 (14, 6); 26 (10); 28 (35–36).
214. Interviewee 28 (35).
215. Interviewees 10 (12, 23–24); 19 (2–3); 16 (15); 14 (23); 6 (12, 16), among other examples. See Chap. 3 for a lengthier discussion.
216. Interviewees 16 (15); 35 (5); 10 (12); 28 (35–36).
217. Interviewee 16 (14–15).
218. Interviewees 17 (19); 28 (35–36).
219. Interviewee 14 (18, 23).
220. Interviewees 26 (5–6); 7 (14); 10 (12); 14 (23).
221. Interviewees 24 (5); 32 (30–31); 4 (17); 26 (5–6); 7 (6, 14); 19 (2–3); 35 (5); 10 (12).
222. Interviewees 9 (29); 29 (19).
223. Interviewee 18 (24–25).
224. Interviewee 3 (24). See also Chapter 3.
225. Interviewee 15 (24, 36–37).
226. Interviewees 15 (36, 44–45); 1 (22); 10 (12).
227. Interviewee 15 (37).
228. Interviewees 2 (6); 24 (5); 16 (15); 36 (8). See Chap. 3.

229. Interviewees 30 (25); 14 (34); 28 (43); 1 (22); 15 (44–45); 10 (12).
230. Interviewee 11 (26).
231. Akin to Vietnam veterans' feelings. See Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, 178–179.
232. Interviewees 8 (21–22); 27 (14); 22 (22); 5 (15); 17 (12, 23–25, 28–29); 16 (27).
233. Interviewee 11 (26).
234. Interviewees 27 (7); 9 (31); 15 (38, 40); 17 (29); 32 (40); 17 (12, 28–29, 23); 26 (38).
235. Interviewee 31 (42–43). Feelings strikingly similar to those expressed by Algerian and Vietnam veterans, in Evans, *Algerian*, 171; and Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 361.
236. Interviewees 16 (26, 28); 1 (21); 12 (22); 26 (22); 22 (22); 5 (15); 15 (42); 21 (29–30); 27 (14); 8 (21–22); 20 (12, 15); 18 (24); 31 (42–43); 36 (20).
237. Interviewees 20 (23); 9 (33); 6 (23); 36 (31); 31 (39–42).
238. Interviewee 15 (42–43).
239. Interviewees 8 (21–22); 18 (26); 14 (28).
240. Interviewees 14 (31); 4 (28, 31); 7 (15–16); 21 (29–30); 22 (28); 8 (30); 4 (30); 6 (21, 23).
241. Interviewee 26 (36, 43).
242. Interviewees 10 (20–21); 8 (30); 4 (30).
243. Interviewee 19 (36).
244. Interviewees 15 (42, 38); 18 (24).
245. See, for example, Interviewees 4 (30) and 15 (38). See Maia et al., “*Por baixo das pústulas da guerra*,” 14–15, 18; Gomes, “O manto de silêncio e abandono,” in *Nova História Militar* (Vol. 5, 2004), 172–173.
246. Interviewees 14 (28); 16 (7). See Chap. 3 for an overview of veterans' claims.
247. Interviewees 7 (15–16); 6 (20–21); 3 (26); 32 (27, 29); 12 (22); 19 (23); 20 (10); 18 (22), among others.
248. Interviewees 2 (17); 3 (26); 28 (41, 54); 12 (22); 26 (36); 21 (24).
249. Interviewees 3 (26); 4 (30), for instance.
250. Interviewees 33 (53); 26 (36); 28 (54); 31 (43); 36 (29, 31); 21 (24–25); 26 (23).

251. As indicated by recent research in the field of psychology. See Pereira et al. "PTSD...", 225–226.
252. Interviewees 4 (30); 19 (23, 33).
253. Interviewees 32 (28); 22 (21); 21 (24); 19 (36).
254. Interviewees 27 (16, 13); 13 (14–15); 15 (16); 16 (9), 36 (26).
255. Interviewees 8 (22); 2 (17); 14 (28); 8 (23–24).
256. Interviewees 14 (28); 26 (24).
257. Interviewee 7 (14); 15 (41–42); 4 (30); 17 (23–25); 32 (40); 26 (44); 28 (51, 54); 8 (32), among others.
258. Interviewees 32 (40–41, 30, 26, 28); 16 (27); 15 (38); 26 (23–24); 8 (23–24); 27 (16,13); 6 (20).
259. Interviewees 19 (23); 6 (20).
260. Interviewee 26 (39, 43–44, 24).
261. Having been involved in an accident subsequently deemed "in campaign" (and not "in combat"), Folha was not granted war-disabled status and its associated rights, and has been contesting this decision since 1989. Interviewee 26 (45, 22–24, 36).
262. Interviewee 26 (39, 44–45, 21, 25).
263. Interviewee 20 (10, 12, 15–16, 22).
264. An aspect emphasized by Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 143–144.
265. Interviewees 31 (27); 20 (10–11); 17 (1, 24); 26 (37).
266. Interviewees 5 (15); 32 (30).
267. Interviewees 25 (35–37); 31 (42).
268. Interviewees 36 (27); 19 (32); 15 (35); 9 (31–33).
269. Interviewees 4 (27, 28); 8 (30); 36 (27); 9 (31–33).
270. Interviewees 13 (15–16); 14 (28, 33); 32 (28–29, 40); 36 (29); 10 (22).
271. Interviewees 36 (31); 6 (20).
272. Interviewee 3 (26). See "Ageing, trauma and memory," in Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 140–160.
273. Interviewees 34 (21, 24); 18 (24). See A. Afonso, "Guerra Colonial—História e Memória," in *Os Anos da Guerra Colonial*, ed. Afonso and Gomes (Volume 16, 2009), 29–31; Medeiros, "Hauntings...", (2000), 216.
274. M. Ribeiro, *Uma História de Regressos*, 248–249.
275. Interviewees 27 (12–13); 21 (25–26); 35 (25). Comparable to feelings noted by Evans, in *Algeria*, 363–364.
276. Interviewee 36 (20).

277. Interviewees 19 (14); 20 (12); 32 (28–29); 14 (28); 17 (26).
278. See, for instance, Interviewees 10 (21–22); 26 (36).
279. Interviewee 19 (33).
280. Interviewees 1 (21); 14 (29–30); 14 (32); 18 (24); 16 (21).
281. Interviewee 17 (24).
282. See Interviewees 8 (23); 26 (36–37); 14 (33); 16 (21), among others.
283. Interviewees 21 (24–25); 6 (20); 1 (20–21); 4 (27).
284. Interviewee 15 (40).
285. See, for instance, Interviewee 21 (24).
286. Namely in the form of legal diploma no. 160/2004, issued on 2 July 2004, creating a lifelong, special pension complement, paid yearly in a single installment, and calculated according to length of time served in the *Ultramar*. See Chap. 3 for further information.
287. Interviewees 3 (25); 27 (19); 28 (54); 32 (26–29); 21 (25).
288. Interviewee 32 (26–29).
289. Interviewee 14 (30). Reminiscent of Garton’s study of the Australian case, in *The Cost of War*, 86–97.
290. Interviewees 28 (38, 46); 18 (24).
291. Interviewees 17 (12); 16 (7, 26); 6 (21).
292. Interviewees 1 (21); 9 (32), for instance. In the Australian case, this process has been much more successful, See Garton, *The Cost of War*, 244–254.
293. Interviewee 28 (46–48, 41), for instance; see also Chap. 3.
294. Interviewee 17 (26), for example.
295. Interviewee 28 (48).
296. For instance, at the time of our interview, a local veteran association was joining efforts with municipal authorities and the Church toward the construction of a veteran retirement home in a village in Alentejo, southern Portugal. Interviewee 27 (21).
297. Interviewee 26 (16), for instance. As noted by Evans about French veterans of the Algerian war; see Evans, “Rehabilitating the Traumatized ...,” 78–79.
298. Interviewee 33 (56).
299. Interviewees 12 (20–21); 19 (33); 5 (9); 11 (12); 14 (29); 16 (18); 21 (30); 22 (18, 22); 32 (39); 35 (8, 20–21).
300. Interviewees 32 (39); 3 (23); 8 (23–24); 14 (33); 6 (22); 33 (56); 28 (38–39). See Afonso, “Guerra Colonial – História e

- Memória,” in *Os Anos da Guerra Colonial*, 29–31. Similar to perception of Vietnam War. See Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 212–222.
301. The point of a “young democracy” “stained” by the “blood spilt in faraway Africa” is made by M. Ribeiro in *Uma História de Regressos*, 249.
302. Interviewee 21 (24–25, 28).
303. Interviewees 6 (16, 12); 9 (30); 4 (31); 33 (45); 19 (33). See Bourke, “Return to Civilian Life,” in *An Intimate History of Killing*, 349–351, 361.
304. Interviewees 25 (32); 22 (28); 33 (45); 36 (18). Similar to the feeling of having been “fucked over” by the military and civilian society displayed by Vietnam veterans mentioned by Bourke in *An Intimate History of Killing*, 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 *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Ritchie, 132, 137.
305. Interviewees 6 (22); 33 (56).
306. 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 *The Politics of Memory* (2004), 17–32.
307. Interviewee 21 (24, 26).
308. Interviewees 8 (15); 9 (28); 25 (27); 13 (13); 29 (31); 2 (12), for instance.
309. See, for instance, Quintais, “Memória e trauma...,” 680.
310. Interviewees 6 (23); 25 (26); 14 (33).
311. Interviewees 8 (28); 3 (23); 21 (1, 23–24); 26 (14, 24); 36 (24).
312. Interviewees 26 (24); 34 (22); 22 (28); 30 (38). See Chap. 3.
313. Interviewee 34 (17).
314. Interviewees 20 (24); 32 (39); 34 (22); 3 (23–24), among others.
315. Interviewees 34 (22); 1 (20); 27 (16–17).
316. Interviewees 3 (21, 23–24); 4 (30); 28 (40–41, 50–51); 29 (29); 36 (24, 32). See Medeiros, “Hauntings...,” (2000), 216–217.
317. Interviewees 26 (39); 29 (29); 14 (31); 28 (40).
318. Interviewees 26 (36–37); 25 (37–38).
319. This concept is mentioned by several interviewees, such as 26 (40–43); 33 (57); 36 (25); 25 (37–38); 30 (39–42); 28 (40–42, 51–53); 21 (29); 8 (30).

320. Interviewees 2 (18); 21 (25); 28 (40); 20 (21).
321. Interviewee 3 (23).
322. Interviewees 22 (28); 20 (24–25).
323. Interviewees 25 (37–38); 34 (23); 30 (40).
324. Interviewee 13 (16).
325. Interviewee 26 (39–40, 14, 43). Resembling the conclusion highlighted by Fussell about the emergence of cultural tools for “adequate remembering and interpreting” of World War I when its living memory is nearly non-existent, in P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: University Press, New York, 2000), 334–335.
326. Interviewee 21 (25).
327. Interviewees 26 (14); 32 (40–41).
328. Interviewee 31 (26).
329. Interviewees 33 (56); 34 (23). On this process, with some examples, see Ahsplant et al., *The Politics of Memory* (2004), 17–25; 43–52; see also Medeiros, “Hauntings...,” (2000), 201–221.
330. Interviewee 33 (56).
331. Interviewee 30 (12). A “war understood in the flesh,” as Hynes pinpoints, in *The Soldiers’ Tale*, 279–285.
332. Interviewees 32 (40–41); 26 (14); 20 (24–25).
333. Interviewees 9 (32); 30 (37, 40).
334. Interviewees 5 (1); 36 (34).
335. Interviewees 19 (34); 28 (56); 18 (25); 11 (26).
336. Interviewee 36 (34).
337. Interviewee 15 (45).
338. Interviewees 19 (34); 8 (28, 30); 6 (24, 21–22); 36 (34); 11 (26); 26 (39–40).
339. Interviewee 36 (34).
340. Interviewees 16 (30); 6 (22); 20 (24–25).
341. Interviewees 34 (23); 30 (38–39).
342. Interviewees 26 (14); 8 (15); 9 (28); 25 (27); 13 (13); 29 (31); 2 (12), for instance.
343. Regarding my sample, some exceptions seemingly occur in the domestic environment, namely, interviewees 19 (25); 14 (23); 25 (31). Such examples appear not to be the norm.
344. Interviewees 18 (25); 7 (12); 13 (4–5); 2 (12); 21 (27); 29 (29). See Chap. 4.
345. Interviewees 7 (13–14); 32 (39).

346. Interviewee 36 (24).
347. Interviewees 4 (29); 6 (21–22). See Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 158–159.
348. Interviewees 8 (15); 9 (28); 25 (27); 13 (13); 29 (31); 2 (12).
349. Interviewees 18 (25); 22 (24, 19); 29 (38, 29–31); 2 (13, 19, 16); 28 (41); 13 (4–5); 14 (23).
350. Interviewees 9 (33–34, 23–24); 19 (34); 29 (13–14).
351. Interviewees 21 (27); 2 (13, 16, 19).
352. Interviewee 16 (29).
353. Interviewee 35 (26–29); also 21 (25); 30 (41).
354. Interviewee 6 (21–22).
355. Interviewee 14 (23).
356. Interviewee 14 (30–31).
357. Interviewee 28 (51, 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 J. Ribeiro, *Lá Longe Onde o Sol Castiga Mais* (2008).
358. Interviewee 14 (28).
359. An aspect mentioned by Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, 372.
360. Interviewees 26 (24); 28 (1, 38–40); 2 (18); 20 (21–22); 2 (18). A similar perspective is expressed by Evans, in “Rehabilitating the Traumatized ...,” 78–79.
361. Interviewee 30 (38).
362. Interviewee 30 (37–39). See Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 1–6, 127–129, 157–160, 195.
363. See Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 2; Evans, “Rehabilitating the Traumatized ...,” 78–79; Lorenz, “The unending war...,” (2004), 95–112.
364. Field, “Beyond ‘healing’...,” 31–42.
365. Dawson, *Making Peace*, 19, 78, 315; see also Dawson, “Trauma, Memory, Politics. The Irish Troubles,” (2004), 180–204.
366. Interviewee 30 (39).
367. Interviewee 30 (39).
368. Interviewee 36 (20).
369. Interviewee 36 (32).
370. Interviewee 30 (40).
371. Interviewee 32 (40).
372. Interviewee 30 (41).

373. Interviewee 30 (42).
374. As Medeiros concluded, in “Hauntings...,” (2000), 217. See “Preface” by M. Ribeiro, in Vecchi, *Exceção Atlântica*, 10; 140–141, 162.
375. Such notions have been clearly expressed by General Themudo Barata as early as 1988 in his “Prefácio” to a history of the Portuguese “campaigns in Africa” commissioned by the Portuguese Army; see Estado-Maior do Exército, CECA, *Resenha histórico-militar* (Volume 1, 1988), 5–12.
376. See Cruzeiro, “As mulheres e a Guerra Colonial...,” (2004), 31–41.
377. As stressed by Ribeiro and Vecchi in “Introdução,” *Antologia da Memória Poética*, 31–32.
378. Interviewee 26 (24). See M. Ribeiro et al. “The children of the Colonial Wars...,” 21.
379. Dawson, *Making Peace*, 78, 315.

Conclusion

At the end of our interview, Alberto Almeida, at the time 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. Almeida 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.¹

I believe Almeida’s remarks illustrate well the existing relationship between the Portuguese colonial war veterans and contemporary history in Portugal. Almeida 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.

Following the Introduction (Chap. 1), in Chap. 2 this book addressed some of 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, among 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 democratization of the historical record, increasingly allowing the 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), toward 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 past decades which, very simply put, attribute more importance to interpretation of meanings than to objective factual accuracy.² Employing, among others, concepts like "traumatized 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.³

Providing a solid contextual backdrop for the veterans' oral history, Chap. 3 presented an analytical selective overview of the public memory of the Portuguese Colonial War since the postwar period. It emphasized 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.⁴ 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 deeply shaped the veterans and Portuguese society, remaining controversial and manifesting its effects very significantly through the years.⁵ 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 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 analyzed (1974–1999; 2000–) in Chap. 3 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 twenty-first century onward, 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 mobilization, expanding notably the public memory of the conflict and its ex-combatants. This remembrance growth has been evident in the media, cultural outlets, and 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 while 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 over-emphasis 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 book 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, while participants feel an increasing need to transmit their accounts of this past. Such memorial hesitations denote the veterans' complex and problematic social identity, and suggest that there is no stable remembrance of this past, an aspect which highlights the importance of studying the Portuguese Colonial War from a first-person perspective.

Chapter 3 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.⁶ In this sense, forgetting can be reinforced by the saturation and repetition that render the topic irrelevant, often subjugating historical meaning to the acritical power of immediacy, thus allowing for media and political utilizations 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 trivialization and commercialization of media war representations, in tangible commemoration and focalized 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, while 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 polarized narrative framings, and stress the importance of creating or expanding innovative and inclusive dialogic, analytic remembrance tools. Such enrichment of the public memory of this conflict could contribute toward diminishing historiographical uncertainty around the colonial war. In the meantime, we could conclude with Portugal's Minister of Defense in 2011 that, although there is no silence anymore, shame still exists about the colonial war.⁷

Chapter 4 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 and characterized, and its significance was emphasized. Highlighting how the lived experience of ex-combatants is underexplored within Portuguese historiography, this chapter analyzed 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.⁸

Departing from such standpoints, Chap. 4 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 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.⁹ 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 emphasized 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 Chap. 4 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.¹⁰ A revealing asset rather than a debilitating flaw, the interviews’ subjectivity—emerging from social, psychological, and neurological processes of storytelling—shares the partial and retrospective nature of any traditional historical source, in this case mediated and co-created by the researcher.¹¹

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.¹² 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 traumatized 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 emotional endurance. In this context, I prioritized 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 traumatized individuals or on painful topics in general. In short, Chap. 4 was a reflective, methodological exercise on the importance and complexities of exploring the historical meanings of this war via oral history.

Chapter 5 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, emphasizing personal reflections, meanings, and the perceived lifetime consequences of their experiences. In section "The Soldiers' War", 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 onward. This section charted not only the conscripts' apprehension, fear, and inexperience, but also the youthful enthusiasm and political unawareness of many, capturing the environment of the era and pinpointing the regional differences, the reality of compulsory mobilization, 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 depicted 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 felt 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 described 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 veterans' 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 became disabled. Although uneasy and painful, some interviewees addressed the topic of excesses arising from extreme conditions, violence, and killing. These acknowledgments 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 very 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 socialization moments spent in Africa were particularly emphasized, 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 "Coming Home" of Chap. 5 addressed the combatants' return and initial social reintegration, covering the challenges associated with resuming and readjusting to their civilian lives while 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 generalized 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 prewar 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 those 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 emphasized the lack of governmental support, which was criticized 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, these 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 6 addressed the veteran’s long-term relationship with the war’s aftermath. The section, “The Years of Silence” 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 toward easing socio-political wounds present at the end of a regime and empire. As their lives unfolded, and in a context of forgetting, marginalization, 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 the 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 6 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 “The Years of Silence” of Chap. 6 also illustrated how the veterans' accounts generally focused on the long-term impact of their war experiences. They emphasized 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, and 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 “Don't Let Others Tell Your War for You': The Ex-Combatants' Relation with the Changing Public Narrative” of Chap. 6 focused on the revival period happening from the new millennium onward, and being characterized 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 on the verge of retiring, 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 described 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.¹³

The majority of interviewees characterized 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 toward 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 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, acritical, and superficial memorialization and the underexploration 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 utilizations.

Despite a resurgence of the topic, many veterans considered current war remembrance in Portugal as unsuitable and insufficient, and mostly incapable of satisfactorily containing their war experiences, and emphasized 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 a testimony, particularly for younger generations.

In Chap. 6, 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: while veterans condemned silence and indifference and desired social recognition, they often also declared that they would never speak to anybody about their war experiences and wished 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 emphasized the high expectations placed by veterans on historians toward 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 toward 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 6's themes evidenced Portugal's remembrance dilemmas and its tense and cautious relationship with the colonial war, including the

challenges associated with researching it.¹⁴ 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 toward 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.¹⁵ 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's standpoint of the socio-historical experience and memory of war.¹⁶

Having summarized the main findings contained in this book 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 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 emphasizing 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 polarized 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 book is its focus on the less analyzed 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, and 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 book 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 Alberto Almeida to talk to me after years of silence and, why, without expecting anything, he actually expected so much from history.¹⁷

NOTES

1. Interviewee 36 (34). Alberto Almeida, an ex-Commando officer in Angola (1973–1974) was interviewed in Porto, Portugal, on 10 August 2007.
2. See Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 32–42.
3. Ashplant et al., *The Politics of War Memory* (2000), 42; M. Ribeiro, *África no Feminino*, 17; Medeiros, “Hauntings. ...,” 201–221; Dawson, *Making Peace*, 62.
4. Lorenz, “The Unending War...,” (2004), 97.
5. As Evans noted about the French example, in *Algeria*, 362–367.
6. Cruzeiro, “Guerra colonial: entre o recalçamento e a denegação,” (1994), 5–7; and “As mulheres e a Guerra Colonial...,” (2004), 31–41.
7. Stated by Aguiar-Branco on 19 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.
8. 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 R. Ribeiro, “Chegou a vez de dar a voz,” *Ípsilon, Público*, 15th January 2014; see also L. Oliveira, “A História Oral em Portugal,” in *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas* 63 (2010): 139–156, for an overview of oral history in Portugal from the perspective of sociology.
9. See, for instance, Hutchings’s assertion that oral history adds richness and complexity to our understanding of the experience of war, in “After Action...,” 233–243.
10. Thomson, “Memory and Remembering...,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. D. Ritchie, 80.
11. Thomson, *Ibid.*, 90; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 204.
12. Klemptner, “Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma,” (2000), 67–83; “Introduction” to *Trauma*, ed. Rogers

- and Leydesdorff (2004), 17; Dawson. “Trauma, Memory, Politics....,” in *Trauma*, 180–204; Field, “Beyond ‘healing’...,” 34, 41.
13. Interviewee 14 expressed this notion most articulately (24, 27). See Hutching, “After action,” 233–243.
 14. For a similar example related to the representation of the British colonial period, see Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 111.
 15. Ribeiro and Vecchi, *Antologia da Memória Poética*, 26–32.
 16. See Thomson, “Memory and Remembering...,” 86, 80; Green, “Can Memory be Collective?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. D. Ritchie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 108; and a selection of Roper’s articles in the Works Cited and Consulted section.
 17. Interviewee 36 (34).

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 Manuel Dabale (b. 1947), 24/03/2006, Lisbon
 Francisco Rocha (b. 1941), 17/03/2006, Camarate
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 João Vieira (b. 1941), 03/08/2007, Cuba
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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TABLE

<i>Interviewee no.</i>	<i>Date and place of interview</i>	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Rank/Speciality</i>	<i>Date and location of post in Africa</i>
1	20/3/2006, Lisbon	José Amaral	1954	Officer (Air Force)	1971–1973 (Guinea), 1973–1974 (Angola)
2	13/8/2007, Gaia	José Saraiva	1950	Corporal (Infantry)	25/03/1972 to 04/07/1974 Guinea
3	14/3/2006, Lisbon	Abílio Silva	1946	Military Nurse	24/05/1969 to 17/07/1971 Angola
4	21/7/2007, Porto	José Teixeira	1948	Cryptographic Operator	02/1970 to 02/1972 Angola
5	15/3/2006, Lisbon	Jaime Fernandes [pseudonym]	1939	Military Administrator	08/1972 to 08/1974 Mozambique
6	13/12/2005, Viana do Castelo	João Lima	1945	Radiotelegraphist (Transmissions)	1966/1968 Angola
7	22/7/2007, Porto	Joaquim Braz	1952	Soldier, Driver (Military Police)	04/1974 to 04/1975 Mozambique

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<i>Interviewee no.</i>	<i>Date and place of interview</i>	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Rank/Speciality</i>	<i>Date and location of post in Africa</i>
8	5/7/2007, Porto	Joaquim Pereira	1942	<i>Alferes</i> (Infantry)	03/1965 to 03/1967 Angola
9	8/8/2007, Matosinhos	José Duarte	1937	Captain (Artillery)	01/1970 to 10/1971 (Guinea); 05/1974 to 04/1975 (Mozambique)
10	10/12/2005, Cuba	João Candeias	1946	Military nurse	11/1968 to 09/1970 Guinea
11	9/12/2005, Cuba	Joaquim Bicho	1943	Military driver	1965/1967 Guinea
12	29/7/2007, Lisbon	José César	1947	<i>Alferes</i> (Infantry)	01/1972 to 05/1974 Angola
13	18/3/2006, Barreiro	Joaquim Tacão	1946	Soldier	05/1968 to 08/1970 Mozambique
14	3/8/2007, Cuba	Félix Caixeiro	1941	Military driver	12/1962 to 12/1964 Angola
15	16/3/2006, Costa de Caparica	Manuel Oliveira	1942	Military driver and Transmissions operational	07/1964 to 05/1966 Guinea
16	9/7/2007, Alfândega da Fé	Alcino Vaz	1949	Soldier (Artillery)	14/12/1970 to 16/2/1973 Guinea
17	7/7/2007, Campo Maior	António Barroso	1949	Soldier Transmissions (Infantry)	11/1970 to 11/1973 Mozambique
18	11/7/2007, Valença	António Silva [pseudonym]	1950	<i>Alferes</i> (Artillery)	12/1971 to 08/1973 Guinea
19	1/8/2007, Abrantes	Carlos Sobral	1946	Soldier bazooka handler	11/1967 to 11/1969 Angola
20	23/3/2006, Lisbon	José Raimundo	1946	<i>Alferes</i> (Commando troops)	1/1968 to 11/1969 Angola

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<i>Interviewee no.</i>	<i>Date and place of interview</i>	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Rank/Speciality</i>	<i>Date and location of post in Africa</i>
21	13/7/2007, Viana do Castelo	José Lima	1946	Military driver	11/1968 to 10/1970 Guinea
22	23/7/2007, Trofa	Álvaro Lima [pseudonym]	1947	Soldier (Artillery)	10/1968 to 10/1970 Guinea
23	24/3/2006, Lisbon	Manuel Dabale	1947	Soldier (Infantry/ Auxiliary Services)	1968/1970 Mozambique
24	17/3/2006, Camarate	Francisco Rocha	1941	Soldier (Infantry)	21/06/1963 to 27/07/1965 Angola
25	2/8/2007, Caldas da Rainha	Manuel Ferreira	1950	<i>Furriel</i> (administrative services)	01/1972 to 05/1974 Angola
26	14/8/2007, Leça da Palmeira	Daniel Folha	1947	Military driver	05/1969 to 09/1972 Angola
27	3/8/2007, Cuba	João Vieira	1941	Military driver	27/03/1963 to 28/04/1965 Guinea
28	3/7/2007, Porto	Abel Fortuna	1949	<i>Alferes</i>	04/1971 to 11/1971 Guinea
29	20/7/2007, Porto	Viriato Gonçalves	1948	Soldier (Transmissions)	02/1970 to 03/1972 Guinea
30	18/8/2007, Cartaxo	Virgílio Gouveia	1948	Soldier (Infantry)	05/1969 to 12/1970 Guinea
31	25/7/2007, Porto	Henrique Martins [pseudonym]	1943	<i>Alferes</i> (Infantry)	1966/1968 Guinea
32	30/7/2007, Baixa da Banheira	Orlando Libório	1949	Military driver	13/12/1970 to 23/12/1972 Mozambique
33	31/7/2007, Seixal	Eduardo Palaio	1942	<i>Alferes</i>	01/1965 to 03/1967 Angola

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<i>Interviewee no.</i>	<i>Date and place of interview</i>	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Rank/Speciality</i>	<i>Date and location of post in Africa</i>
34	24/7/2007, Vila do Conde	Mário Peniche	1932	Career officer (Artillery)	09/1955 to 03/1964 (Mozambique); 1965–1967 (Angola); 1968–1969 (Mozambique))
35	17/8/2007, Paço de Arcos	António Pena	1936	Lieutenant (Transmissions)	08/1966 to 08/1968 (Angola); 08/1970 to 08/1972 (Guinea)
36	10/8/2007, Porto	Alberto Almeida	1951	<i>Furriel</i> (Commando troops)	01/1973 to 22/12/1974 Angola

Additional Note

All interviews were done by the author 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 author. The interviewees who are identified by a pseudonym instead of their real name are the ones who requested anonymity.

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