

# The construction of a web narrative about the Portuguese colonial war: a critical perspective on Wikipedia

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**ABSTRACT:** As part of recent research into the Portuguese colonial war in the sphere of memory studies, this article seeks to fill a gap in the underexplored field of digital memories. It aims, firstly, to explore the processes through which discourses about the Portuguese colonial war are produced in the Portuguese version of Wikipedia, looking at its dynamics and mechanisms of construction, including formal and informal rules; and secondly, to analyse that discourse using theoretical and methodological considerations from critical discourse analysis (CDA), complemented with concepts of absence and silence, which enable a reflection on the relationship between power, knowledge and memory. The article also explores the limits of Wikipedia as regards the formation of collaborative narratives about the past, arguing that they are marked by the reproduction of Eurocentric narratives which circulate in political, educational and media discourses, and also by the memories of more conservative sectors of Portuguese society, such as war veterans and former settlers returning from the colonies (the so-called *retornados*). These narratives mask the colonial violence and resistance to it that preceded the colonial war and depoliticize the struggle of the national liberation movements.

**KEYWORDS:** Digital memory; Wikipedia; Discourses about the past; Portuguese colonial wars; National liberation wars.

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**RESUMEN:** *La construcción de una narrativa web sobre la guerra colonial portuguesa: una perspectiva crítica sobre la Wikipedia.*— Como parte de una investigación reciente sobre la guerra colonial portuguesa en el ámbito de los estudios de memoria, este artículo busca llenar un vacío en el campo de las memorias digitales poco explorado. Pretende, en primer lugar, explorar los procesos mediante los cuales se producen discursos sobre la guerra colonial portuguesa en la versión portuguesa de Wikipedia, analizando los mecanismos de construcción y dinámicas, incluso las reglas formales e informales; y, en segundo lugar, analizar ese discurso utilizando consideraciones teóricas y metodológicas del análisis crítico del discurso (CDA). Esto se complementa con conceptos de ausencia y silencio, que permiten una reflexión sobre la relación entre poder, conocimiento y memoria. El artículo también explora los límites de Wikipedia en lo que respecta a la formación de narrativas colaborativas sobre el pasado, argumentando que están marcadas por la reproducción de narrativas eurocéntricas que circulan en los discursos mediáticos, políticos y educativos, y también por las memorias de sectores más conservadores de la sociedad portuguesa, como los excombatientes y ex colonos que regresaron de las colonias (los llamados "retornados"). Estas narrativas enmascaran la violencia colonial y la resistencia que precedió a la guerra colonial, y despolitizan la lucha de los movimientos de liberación.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Memoria digital; Wikipedia; Discursos sobre el pasado; Guerras coloniales portuguesas; Guerras de liberación nacional.

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## INTRODUCTION

History is the fruit of power, but power itself is never so transparent that its analysis becomes superfluous. The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots (Trouillot, 2015, p. xi).

The colonial war marked the beginning of the end of the Portuguese colonialism in Africa (cf. Jerónimo, 2013; Pinto and Jerónimo, 2014; Rosas, Machaqueiro and Oliveira, 2015; Monteiro, 2018) and had a high impact on the generation of men that fought in it. This “mobilized generation” (Campos, 2017), some forty years after the end of the colonial wars, is now aged between 60 and 80 years old and it is more committed than ever in giving their testimony and inscribing their memory of the war into Portuguese public space (Cardina, 2016b, pp. 69-70).<sup>1</sup>

The inscription is still partial because there is no recognition on the part of the Portuguese state and some sectors of ex-combatants of the violent and racist dimensions of the war (Loff, 2014, pp. 5-9; Cardina, 2016a, p. 39). Furthermore, not all mnemonic narratives have the same degree of visibility in the media circuit. Critical perspectives are not very expressive, tending to be circumscribed to historians and academic circles (Antunes, 2017, p. 363; on the violent and racist dimension of the war, see Dhadha, 2016), while the memory of the ex-combatants is selective and contradictory, with silences and absences (cf. Schröter and Taylor, 2018, p. 7; Winter, 2010).

Notwithstanding, their narratives are becoming materialized through the monumentalization of the conflict and the creation of textual representations of the past (e.g., monuments, *memoirs* and blogs). This vernacular memory (Bodnar, 1994, p. 14) began to be widely disseminated between the end of the nineties and beginning of the “noughties,” as ex-combatants started to produce more narratives about their war experiences. In recent years, these testimonies have often been published in authors’ editions or by publishers sponsored by combatant associations.<sup>2</sup> The growing mnemonic output (Antunes, 2017, p. 348) also coincided with the democratization and massification of internet access in Portugal,<sup>3</sup> resulting in a plethora of online accounts of the colonial war when the blog boom began at the early years of the new millennium. The tendency has since continued on other platforms, such as Wikipedia, and, more recently, on Facebook.

The research into these memory products is also recent (e.g., Campos, 2008, 2017; Ribeiro and Vecchi, 2011, 2012; Antunes, 2015; Martins, 2015; Ribeiro and Ribeiro, 2016; Cardina, 2016a, 2016b; Peralta, 2017; Peralta, Oliveira and Góis, 2017; Cardina and Martins, 2018; Ferreira, 2018; Rodrigues, 2018), and there are as yet no contributions to an analysis of memories produced in digital environments.<sup>4</sup> This article hopes to take a first step towards filling this gap by exploring the processes through which a discourse on the colonial war is produced in Lusophone Wikipedia. The mechanisms of construction, including the formal and informal rules of Wikipedia (Van Dijk, 2013; Tkacz, 2015), are analysed drawing on

critical reflections about the relationship between power, knowledge (Said, 1994; Trouillot, 2015 [1995]) and memory, with a theoretical-methodological contribution from critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Blommaert, 2005; Van Dijk, 2008, 2009, 2014), complemented by concepts of absence and silence (Winter, 2010; Trouillot, 2015 [1995]; Schröter and Taylor, 2018).

On the empirical level, the article focuses on the Portuguese-language entry about the Portuguese colonial war (“*Guerra Colonial Portuguesa*”)<sup>5</sup> and its discussion section, having in mind that any analysis of narratives present on Wikipedia may become obsolete the day after its publication, given the open and editable nature of its content. In this article, I support the general argument that the discourses on this platform, like those circulating in the analogical environment, are dependent on the epistemological structures and institutions of society and are moulded by experience and by the political and/or economic veterans’ needs of the present (Voloshinov, 1986; Trouillet, 2015 [1995]; Blommaert, 2005; Van Dijk, 2008, 2009, 2014; Ferro, 2003 apud Luyt, 2011; Schröter and Taylor, 2018). In this sense, it is important to bear in mind the social and political context that shapes these narratives. Despite certain specificities, as we shall see, Wikipedia tends to reproduce the tensions and conflicts of memory present in Portugal’s existing discourses about the war and decolonization.

## THE COLONIAL WAR

### The historical and social dimension of the war in Portugal

The colonial wars or national liberation wars took place between 1961 and 1974/75. They opposed the *Estado Novo* – a dictatorial regime (1933-1974) led by Oliveira Salazar (1933-1968) and Marcello Caetano (1968-1974) – and the national liberation movements of the then colonies of Angola (MPLA, UPA/FNLA and UNITA), Mozambique (FRELIMO) and Cape Verde/Guinea-Bissau (PAIGC). According to official numbers, around 820,000 young people were sent to the three territories over the thirteen-year.<sup>6</sup> These thirteen years of violence had an enormous impact on Portuguese society. They marked the beginning of the end of the Portuguese colonialism and the end of the *Estado Novo* authoritarian regime, with its ideology of the multi-continental multiracial nation. Paraphrasing Henry Rousso (2016), it was the last catastrophe of Portugal’s recent history (cf. Quintais, 2000).

The violence of the war is still overlooked in the public sphere or remembered only in a sanitized official form (cf. Cardina, 2016a). There has been an institutional and political obliteration of the negative aspects of the colonial past so as not to deny the glorified vision of Portugal’s imperial history (cf. Loff, 2014). Accepting it would mean contradicting the national Lusotropicalist myth of the exceptional nature of Portuguese colonization (cf. Bouchard, 2013, p. 277; on Lusotropicalism, see Almeida, 2004; Cardão, 2014)<sup>7</sup> according to which Portugal was a

mild-mannered country that discovered and civilized others with great tolerance (cf. Araújo and Maeso, 2012, p. 1272; Martins, 2015), whose people were able to adapt to the tropics and establish relations with native populations through a benign process of miscegenation.<sup>8</sup> As a result of this representation, institutional racism has been erased from the public debate until recently.

In truth, the difficulties of slotting the colonial war into a national narrative also derive, as Miguel Cardina has suggested (cf. 2016b, pp. 68-69; Cardina and Martins, 2018, p. 15), from the role played by soldiers of the colonial war in the military coup of 1974, which put an end to the dictatorship and launched the period of revolution and the construction of liberal democracy in Portugal (see also Campos, 2017, p. 41). The military coup, which led to the April revolution, was carried out by officers that participated in the theatre of operations in the colonies. Thus, these same soldiers, as a new power, “decree[d], right away on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1974, ‘the amnesty of the essentially military crimes practised before 25<sup>th</sup> April [sic]’” (Ribeiro, 1999, p. 142).

To this is added the fact that the war did not take place on Portuguese territory, which meant that the war is not inscribed onto Portuguese soil.<sup>9</sup> Hence, as Bruno Sena Martins points out, the colonial war has occupied a residual or ghostly place in Portuguese common sense, “[t]hough nuanced by a growing visibility in recent years” (2016, p. 305). This visibility has been made possible partly due to the vernacular memory transmitted by ex-combatants (Bodnar, 1994, pp. 14-15).

### The mists of virtual memory

In this context, the internet represents a whole new space of enunciation for narratives that have no visibility in the official discourse or traditional Portuguese media. More specifically, Web 2.0,<sup>10</sup> a new stage in the development of the internet, has offered great potential for user agency, enabling the creation and sharing of contents *by* and *between* users. Indeed, it creates a space of contact where users can connect in emotional and meaningful ways. Its mnemonic products gather people through connected memories (Garde-Hansen, 2011, pp. 136-140). At the same time, the internet has an immense user-generated archive potential (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 74), something that does not happen with traditional media (cf. Castells, 2007, pp. 257-258; Merrin, 2014, pp. 52, 78). As William Merrin (2014, p. 52) points out:

This empowered individual has become a central part of the digital imaginary, fuelling a consumer dream of freedom and choice. [...] Most obviously whereas the broadcast era was dominated by professional products, the digital era has seen the expansion of personally produced content, an empowerment of individual creation that represents an epochal transformation of the structures of media communication. All professional content now exists in a competitive relationship with the individual’s own content and peer-produced information.

However, the internet has its own limitations. The first being its tendencies to reproduce the hegemonic narratives circulating in society. A “mnemonic hegemony” (Molden, 2015, p. 127) with a concomitant lack of visibility of other more critical viewpoints. It should be noted that archives are controlled and owned by people and/or institutions with particular agendas (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 77). The narratives present in these Wikipedia entries are no different. They are not formed in a vacuum, instead, they are influenced by the various discourses circulating in society, as well as moulded by the platform’s operating mechanisms and their users (Castells, 2007, p. 257), “[i]n the context of digital archives, digital memory and digital cultural heritage, we need to accept that the old-media frameworks of traditional transmission and consumption continue to have authority” (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 83). The second is the loss of weight of these old digital archives to the new social networks that operate according to another, more self-centred, rationale. The third and last are the material, social and economic constraints that restrict internet access to specific groups, meaning that certain communities of memory cannot inscribe their perception of events into digital space, perpetuating the cycle of exclusion and invisibility.

These limitations do not invalidate the process of co-historicity (Svetlana Boym apud Pogačar, 2018, p. 40; see also, Castells, 2007) implied by the collaborative writing of the past on new digital platforms. For instance, in blogs of former combatants, episodes experienced in Africa are decontextualized and transformed into individual affective narratives followed by the community of combatants that composes them (Pogačar, 2018, p. 40).

Blogs are both archives and sites of convergence which attract veterans from various points of the country, forming what Jodi Dean (2010, p. 96) has called affective networks of mnemonic creation. One particular network, blog *Luís Graça & Camaradas da Guiné* (Luís Graça and Guinea Comrades), materializes itself in diverse social groups scattered all over the country – “*Encontros da Tabanca*” (the Tabanca Meetings). In this sense, there is a very significant penetration between the mnemonic activity within the digital space and outside it. Besides, these are spaces of *re-mediation* (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, pp. 14-15) in that they serve as digital vehicles for previously existing mnemonic objects, like photographs, documents, videos, etc. (cf. Van Dijck, 2007 and Hirsch, 2012). As stated in the abovementioned blog, its aim is “to help ex-combatants put back together the jigsaw of memory.”<sup>11</sup> Memory is, in this way, (re)constructed from scattered fragments, like digitalized objects or disordered recollections, which then converge to become collective narratives.

In short, blogs are also digital archives. They preserve re-mediated documents about the past which allow the safeguard of memory for the next generations (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 7; Jenkinson, 1980, pp. 321-323 apud Moss, 2016, p. 71), working as an ‘extension of man[’s]’ memory – an expression by Marshall McLuhan – or as a prosthetic memory (cf. Landsberg, 2004). Although they

are not conventional archives with institutional authority, Cohen and Rosenzweig define them as “‘invented archives’ created by amateurs,” which frame “the way remix and mashup culture exploits [other] media archives [and private archives] to produce new and exciting content” (2005 apud Garde-Hansen, 2011, pp. 78 and 84).

The importance of blogs extends to the influence that they exert upon other platforms through hypertext<sup>12</sup> and cross-referencing, usually via members that write and edit various platforms. Although that link will not be explored at length in this article, it is worth bearing in mind the existence of a connection between these two archives. They share members who produce narratives and upload content. The digitalization and sharing of these mnemonic objects mean that this material connection to the past is no longer restricted to the private space of family archives but can extend its reach and enter into social representations of the war.

Whereas the personal writing and production of memory (scrapbooks, diaries, photographic albums, etc.) of the past were intended for limited consumption, mediatisation has delivered a new self-centred (an immediate) public or semi-public and semi-private, documentation and correspondence, in other words a social network memory (Hoskins, “Mediatisation of Memory” 30 apud Bond, Craps and Vermeulen, 2017, pp. 14-15).

The memory is extended beyond the stable objects to become associated with dynamic processes and chains of interactions between platforms and non-virtual spaces (Bond, Craps and Vermeulen, 2017, pp. 14), which, in turn, bind people together (Hepp et al., 2008 apud Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 140). Some of the narratives in Wikipedia entries are influenced by the cross-referenced collaborations of members of the *Luís Graça & Camaradas da Guiné* blog, as we shall see.

## WIKIPEDIA IN PORTUGUESE

### Rationale and operational mechanisms

The mnemonic potential of Wikipedia has already been amply explored (cf. Pentzold, 2009; Wolff, 2013; Ferron and Massa, 2014; Pentzold et al., 2017). The platform, created in 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, was conceptualized by Christian Pentzold as a *global memory place*, i.e., “[a place] where locally disconnected participants can express and debate divergent points of view and that this leads to the formation and ratification of shared knowledge that constitutes collective memory” (2009, p. 263; cf. Pierre Nora apud Wolff, 2013).<sup>13</sup> As an open digital project, users/Wikipedians can copy and edit its contents; therefore, it is a “dynamic, creative and ever-expanding archive” (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 18). Simultaneously, its ease of use, the tendency to appear in Google as the first result of searches and its growing visibility over the last seventeen years have made it the main gateway to narratives about the past for lay internet audi-

ences, and there is an increasing propensity for students to use it as the first source of information (Rosenzweig, 2006, p. 137). In this sense, it has in some way removed the monopoly over history writing enjoyed by professional historians (cf. Wolff, 2013).

Wikipedia is a collaborative, universal multilingual encyclopaedia project established on the internet using the Wiki principle. Its purpose is to provide free, objective and verifiable content, which anyone can edit and improve [sic].

Through the mechanism of entry production – i.e., the anonymous and diffuse production of content, and the discussion of that contents by editors in a special section devoted to that purpose –, we can have access to the dynamics of conflict and strategies of legitimation that characterize the construction of a digital narrative about the colonial war, and we can observe its development over time.

As regards to formal rules, the production of entries is governed by five basic principles (cf. Van Dijck, 2013; Tkacz, 2015, pp. 98-104).<sup>14</sup> The first and second principles derive from its structure as a virtual encyclopaedia (1), which means that it is not possible to include unpublished or original content, just as it is not permitted to publish opinions, theories or personal experiences (2). Under these principles, one should not, in theory, express one specific point of view to the detriment of others, but rather should present all points of view, anchored in verifiable sources. This epistemological approach, which is, in practice, extremely conventional, conservative and positivist, contrasts (according to Rosenzweig, 2006, p. 138) with the originality of the vision of the platform’s creators, who wanted the production and distribution of knowledge to be collaborative and open following the free-content principle (3) (Van Dijck, 2013, pp. 136-137).

The combination of free output and neutrality of viewpoint could lead to the construction of narratives that broaden the, sometimes, incorrect or partial common knowledge circulating in society about a particular topic (Rosenzweig, 2006, p. 136).

Understanding how historical knowledge is produced and disseminated is important because the process often leads to the naturalization of the relations and structures of power. Hence, it is important to question the formulas which produce, consolidate, consummate, and trivialize certain social representations of recent history to the detriment of others (Araújo and Maeso, 2015, p. 4). These “others” are silenced, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot underlines, in the four stages involved in the production of historical knowledge: in the selection and construction of facts/sources (1); in the grouping of facts, during the construction of archives (2); in the creation of narratives (3), and, finally, in the development of meanings/production of history (4) (2015, p. 26). In short, the Eurocentric conception of impartial knowledge, which preponderates on Wikipedia, is problematic and leads to the exclusion of other forms of knowledge, perspectives, and voices (Tk-

acz, 2015, p. 65), or presents them as complementary, as we shall see in the following section.

In this respect, we might recall an analysis of Portuguese 9<sup>th</sup> grade history textbooks undertaken by researchers Sílvia Maeso and Marta Araújo, which could also be applied to Wikipedia, since most Wikipedians have not a degree in history. Therefore, they do not have training on and access to critical historiography. Their knowledge is based on the narratives transmitted in obligatory education. This flaw is noticeable in the very generalist sources used to justify the entry's content. In this sense, the principle of neutrality is compromised. So, according to these authors, there has been a failure to problematize the categories of race and power in the production of historical knowledge in Portugal. And this failure has historically informed the universality of a particular vision of the past (Araújo and Maeso, 2016, p. 147). Therefore, what is presented as universal is, in fact, a partial vision, located geographically and politically in the European West.

Furthermore, as we shall see, “many of the categories deployed in historical narratives (such as political agency, violence, national belonging, and citizenship) continue to reflect specific race/power arrangements” – of the white European (Araújo and Maeso, 2016, p. 148). The discourse reflects the power relations existing in society (cf. Voloshinov, 1986); so, it is crucial to understand, from concrete cases, if the constructed narratives reflect critical views on the liberation struggles or if they adhere to the dominant narratives about the colonial war (cf. Luyt, 2011). Decolonization of thought is still far from being a reality in the production of historical knowledge in Portugal, although some anthropologists, sociologists, and historians have made some effort in this direction. The involvement of African descendants has also helped stimulate public discussion on the subject, though with restricted visibility. This raises the question of whether a more critical historiographic discourse has a significant presence on Wikipedia. However, as I will argue in the next section, the open nature of the platform and the concomitant loss of authority of professional historians have perpetuated a discourse structured by the memories of specific sectors of society. These memories do not sit well alongside a more critical historiographic knowledge of the Portuguese past (cf. Wolff, 2013).

The last two principles dictate that Wikipedia should be governed by cordiality (4) and by the liberality of its rules (5), which, in theory, means that they are not fixed beyond the founding principles. Its content may be edited and altered by anyone that wishes to do so, respecting the hierarchy of the platform editors (Van Dijck, 2013, pp. 136-137). Nevertheless, in practice, the rules of narrative production have not altered much. The arguments presented during editing discussions and justifications revolve around the principle of non-publication of original content and the idea of western positivist knowledge stripped of opinions or particular points of view (and by particular opinions we understand the perspectives of those constructed as “others”). Thus, the value of a position in a dispute is assessed in accordance with its proximity to this framework. The five

principles form what Nathaniel Tkacz calls the “frame.” In the author's words, “[a] frame always sorts things as either belonging or not belonging and this process is mediated by axioms or principles – [...] they are the conditions of its possibility” (Tkacz, 2015, p. 71). They establish the arguments that enable particular information to be incorporated into the body of text and guide debates about the content of the articles presented in Wikipedia.

### **Wikipedia as battleground: “Portuguese Colonial War”<sup>15</sup>**

The main entry about the war in the Portuguese-language version of Wikipedia is entitled “*Guerra Colonial Portuguesa*” (Portuguese Colonial War) and appears first in Google searches done using the combinations “*guerra + colonial*” (colonial + war) or “*guerra + ultramar*” (overseas + war). More specific pages about the wars of independence in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau also derive from this one.

The reading and analysis of the narrative given in this entry are done using a strategy of what Edward Said called *contrapuntal reading*, applied to the narrative about the past, i.e., “take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded” (Said, 1994, pp. 66-67). Processes of resistance are excluded via the two routes mentioned above: firstly, through the formal and informal rules that determine the dynamics of entry construction; and secondly, by the silences produced in the four processes of historical knowledge construction described by Michel-Rolph Trouillot and exemplified by Sílvia Maeso and Marta Araújo. That said, “[d]igital media have their own strategies for censorship. Silence is one of the most powerful means of censorship in the digital era” (Alcántara-Plá and Ruiz-Sánchez, 2018, p. 29). What is not found on the internet or not visible through a search using a search engine effectively does not exist (*ibid.*).

Regarding the absences, as Melani Schröter and Charlotte Taylor point out (2018, p. 10), “absence in discourse arises from orders of discourse that are usually brought about without the intention of producing it in the shape that it takes.” Mediatic, social, educational, and political discourses that form the hegemonic narratives in Portugal impact the narratives that circulate on the internet from developing the structures of thought that condition the discourses constructed on digital platforms. Thus, the discourses available in the official and public sphere – the context – are an important part of the analysis suggested here. As I have mentioned, the colonial past has not been the subject of public questioning, in this sense, the predominant view in the entry echoes this public sanitized view of colonialism through its emphasis on the descriptive and strictly military dimension – the process of management of human resources, and military and technological apparatus (Cardina, 2016b, p. 69) – which gives the narrative an aura of objectivity following the scientific-positivist orientation of military science.

In Angola, at the start of 1961, the operative soldiers included 5000 Africans and 1500 metropolitans, organized into two infantry regiments — one in Luanda and the other in Nova Lisboa (present-day Huambo) — each with two instructional battalions and a third of shooters) and a cavalry group, based in Silva Porto. The average density was, therefore, one soldier per 30 km<sup>2</sup>. Only a thousand European soldiers and 1200 Africans were available to be sent to the affected zone [sic].

This excerpt is only one example. In it, the violence committed by the army and by the Portuguese colonial state is produced as an absence. There is no mention of massacres or other war crimes perpetrated by the Portuguese army and political police (PIDE/DGS) (cf. Ribeiro, 1999, pp. 137-222), and instead, the emphasis is on the violence attributed to the liberation movements. The only two references to the word “massacre,” detectable through the search function in the body of the text, are used to describe the events of 15<sup>th</sup> March 1961 in northern Angola when members of the UPA (the Angolan Peoples’ Union, a movement that gave rise to the FNLA) attacked white farmers and workers (Fig. 1).

Similarly, the processes of violence inherent to the colonial system and the massacres perpetrated by the Portuguese colonial government are absent from the narrative. The massacres perpetrated in the wake of popular resistance to the colonial exploitation of labour, as the massacres of Batepá in São Tomé and Príncipe, 1953, (cf. Rodrigues, 2018), the massacre of Pdjiguiti in Guinea, 1959, and the repression of the workers’ revolt in downtown Cassange in Angola, 1961, are not connected to the entry

via a hyperlink, although there are entries corresponding to the first two (the first created in 2015 and the second in 2018). These absences are not surprising when we take into account the fact that only the massacre of Batepá has been officially recognised (in 2018 by the President of the Portuguese Republic Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, during his official visit to São Tomé and Príncipe).

There are similar lacunas as regards the history of the resistance of the colonized peoples. Though there is mention of “movements of opposition and resistance to the presence of colonial powers” that have “always existed,” the narrative is centred on the Portuguese military perspective, and the other side of the story is not fully explored. For example, the decolonizing impetus is attributed to contextual developments in the West (Araújo and Maeso, 2016, pp. 150-151), such as the decolonizing movements resulting from the first and second world wars, and the influence of the superpowers USA vs. USSR and the UN. The pan-African and blackness (*negritude*) movements are not mentioned, except for a brief reference to the formation of the African Union and the Third-World movement (Conference of Bandung, 1955). Thus, the African political subjects are rendered invisible, and their agency is erased in deference to emancipatory efforts from the West, which reflects a need to provincialize or decentralize the Portuguese perspective present in the entry (cf. Chakrabarty, 2000).

### What is the name of this war?

Moving now to a more detailed analysis of the article. Certain tensions manifested in the narrative concerning

2 resultados < > Q massacre OK

Conflito armado [editar | editar código-fonte]

Angola [editar | editar código-fonte]

Ver artigo principal: Guerra de Independência de Angola

Em Angola, uma sublevação no noroeste foi efectuada pela União das Populações de Angola (UPA) — que passou a designar-se como Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA) em 1962. A 4 de Fevereiro de 1961, ocorreu um ataque à cadeia de Luanda, onde foram mortos sete polícias, ataque mais tarde reivindicado pelo Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola. A 15 de Março de 1961, a UPA, num ataque tribal, deu origem a um massacre de populações brancas e trabalhadores negros naturais de outras regiões de Angola. Esta região seria reocupada mediante operações militares de grande envergadura que, porém, não conseguiram conter o alastramento das acções de guerrilha a outras regiões de Angola, como Cabinda, o Leste, o Sudeste e planalto central. Ao MPLA, que desempenhou um papel fundamental, deve-se acrescentar, a partir de 1966, a acção da União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA).

Com motivações essencialmente tribais, e dirigidos de forma autocrática por Holden Roberto, a actividade da UPA caracterizou-se pela guerrilha rural, realizada por pequenos grupos armados, e pelo massacre de populações, como já se previa na sua primeira acção. Com catanas e algumas espingardas, os canhangulos, procuravam apoderar-se das armas das fazendas e postos administrativos atacados. Não manifestaram interesse em consolidar o domínio territorial, conseguido nos primeiros dias, nem foi apresentado qualquer programa político.

Em Angola, os efectivos militares contavam, no início de 1961, com 5000 militares africanos e 1500 metopolitanos, organizados em dois regimentos de infantaria — um em Luanda e outro em Nova Lisboa (actual Huambo) — cada um com dois batalhões de instrução e outro de atiradores) e um grupo de cavalaria, sediado em Silva Porto. A densidade média era, portanto, de um soldado para cada 30 km<sup>2</sup>. Imediatamente disponíveis para acorrer à zona afectada estavam apenas mil soldados europeus e 1200 africanos.

Soldados portugueses nas matas de Angola.

Guerra Colonial Portuguesa em Angola

Operação Viriato – Rota Agostinho Neto [editar]

FIGURE 1. Screen shot taken by the author when searching, on Safari browser, for the word “massacre” in the entry “Guerra Colonial Portuguesa.” Source: Portuguese speaking Wikipedia. Available at: [https://pt.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Guerra\\_Colonial\\_Portuguesa&oldid=55775593](https://pt.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Guerra_Colonial_Portuguesa&oldid=55775593) [accessed 26 August 2019].

the name of the war reflect disputes or divisions running through Portuguese society. The history is told from a Portuguese viewpoint, and while it alludes to the “war of liberation” in the first paragraph, the conflicts present are those existing within that hegemonic perspective. The Other – the liberation movements – is reified.

The terms *Guerra Colonial* [“Colonial War”], *Guerra do Ultramar* [“Overseas War”] (official Portuguese name for the conflict until the coup or revolution of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974), or *Guerra de Libertação* [“War of Liberation”] (a term more used by the Africans) refer to the period of confrontation between the Portuguese Armed Forces and the forces organized by the liberation movements of the former *overseas provinces* of Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique, between 1961 and 1974. At the time, it was also commonly referred to in Portugal as the *Guerra de África* [“War in Africa”]

The title and first paragraph show how the naming of the war is contested, becoming a “battlefield” (Traverso, 2012). Those that name the war after the campaigns in Africa – adopting the terminology used by the dictatorial regime of the *Estado Novo* and refusing to acknowledge the existence of a war involving two belligerent parties disputing a political idea – and those that adopt the name “overseas” – reproducing the idea of a territorial continuity rather than the existence of a colonial territory (Campos, 2017) –, do not recognise the term “colonial war.” However, it is around this last term that the academic and historiographic consensus coheres, acknowledging the existence of a colonial regime challenged through weapons by the liberation movements. The second term – “overseas war” – is used by some associations of ex-veterans – such as the League of Combatants<sup>16</sup> –, and other conservative sectors of Portuguese society that were more nostalgic for the colonial past.

The League of Combatants, the eldest Portuguese association of war veterans, played an important role in shaping the narrative of former combatants. Its motto, “permanent values” (“*valores permanentes*”), refers to the immutable values of civic duty to perform military service and defend the motherland. Hence, according to the League, the war was fought by men who served their

country but whose sacrifice is not recognized. This discourse reproduces a patriotic ethos. As the most prominent war veterans’ association, the League was able to downgrade other associations with unaligned positions and discourses – more critical, such as the Armed Forces Disabled Association (*Associação dos Deficientes das Forças Armadas*) –, monopolizing the Portuguese former combatants’ memoryscape.

In addition to promoting the publication of books about the colonial war – i.e., *memoirs* and military history – the League played a central role in the monumentalization of the memory of the colonial war. This process was symbolically marked by the construction of the National Monument to Overseas Combatants (*Monumento Nacional aos Combatentes do Ultramar*), Belém, in 1994, led by the League (see Peralta, 2014).<sup>17</sup> The widespread construction of monuments resulted in increased visibility for the League, which was able to assume responsibility for the maintenance and preservation of the over 300 monuments spread across the country (cf. Caiado, 2020) since it has delegations in practically every major city. As noted by Ângela Campos, “the choice between these terminologies frequently reveals the inclinations, political positions, and sometimes even the social background of the narrator or the group” (2017, p. 43).

In truth, the entry was created as “*Guerra do Ultramar*” (“Overseas War”), but the debates about the name only began in 2005 when it became a featured article. Exploring the editing record, we can see that the name was altered continuously over the following years, although the abovementioned academic consensus around the term “colonial war” had led to the stabilization of the title. The various editions and additions have produced a fragmented narrative. This composite of multiple discursive voices has produced segments where the war is “colonial” and the territories “colonies,” and others where the war is “overseas” and the territories “overseas provinces.” Figure 2 is an example of editing using the analysis programme *Contropedia*.<sup>18</sup>

In this segment, the editor *Tuga1143* – a name which suggests nationalist leanings – altered the name “colonial war” to “overseas war” in the 2013 edition. The following day, this was annulled by *Teixant*, who accused

37314667 reverts 37304411	Em Gestos & Fragmentos - Ensaios sobre os Militares e o Poder (1982, [[Alberto Seixas Santos]]). [[Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho]] descreve o percurso, seu e dos seus camaradas do [[Movimento dos Capitães]], que levou o país da Guerra <b>do Ultramar Colonial</b> ao [[golpe de estado]] do 25 de Abril;	Teixant	Tuga1143, você está outra vez a arranjar problemas ao tentar “fascistar” a história recente portuguesa. A história contemporânea considera que eram colónias não interessa tanto para aqui o que foi chamada pelo Salazar .	no cinema	s	2013-11-09 09:39:21
37304411 reverted by 37314667	Em Gestos & Fragmentos - Ensaios sobre os Militares e o Poder (1982, [[Alberto Seixas Santos]]). [[Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho]] descreve o percurso, seu e dos seus camaradas do [[Movimento dos Capitães]], que levou o país da Guerra <b>Colonial do Ultramar</b> ao [[golpe de estado]] do 25 de Abril;	Tuga1143		no cinema	s	2013-11-08 16:38:44

FIGURE 2. Screen shot taken by the author of the chart comparing *Tuga1143*’s revision (8 Nov. 2013, 16h38min44s) with *Teixant*’s revision (9 Nov. 2013, 9h39min21s), based on the entry history of the “*Guerra Colonial Portuguesa*.” Source: Comparison provided by Contropedia. Available at: <http://www.contropedia.net/demo> [accessed 26 August 2019].

*Tuga1143* of giving a fascist slant to recent Portuguese history. *Tuga1143* then justified the decision in the discussion section under the title “what is the name of this war?”

If I know Wikipedia well, it stands out for its impartiality... and for presenting facts, irrespective of opinion, whether of various people, philosophies, governments, factions, etc.

For this reason, I would like to discuss the title of this article.

Anyone that has a negative view of the war called and still calls it the Colonial War. People that fought in that war for the liberation of the overseas regions call it the War of Liberation. However, let us be sincere and look at the concrete facts... the official name for this war was the Overseas War, and whether we like it or not, this was the official term until it ended. Why don't we get rid of the slightly pejorative term that is “colonial” and give the war the official name that it had? (*Tuga1143* 16h57min 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014, UTC) [sic].

This editor justifies the use of the term “overseas war” on the grounds that it was used during the war period and is, therefore, more neutral. However, this is a wrong historical assertion. The regime did not use the term “overseas war” because it refused to acknowledge there was a war in the ‘overseas’ (Cardina, 2016b, p. 64; Campos, 2017, p. 42).<sup>19</sup> And, above all, the name depoliticizes and neutralizes the legal attempt by the *Estado Novo* to dissimulate Portuguese colonialism before the international bodies that had begun to condemn it, when in a 1951s constitutional revision, the territories stopped being referred to as “colonies” and began to be called “overseas provinces” (cf. Jerónimo, 2013; Pinto and Jerónimo, 2014). The legislative change allowed to legally argue that the overseas provinces were an integral part of the national territory, “Portugal, from Minho to Timor.”

On the other hand, the designations “colonial war” and “overseas war” both perpetuate the idea of a lengthy, unique, and homogeneous event (Cardina and Martins, 2018, p. 13). Links to other entries narrating specific events from each liberation struggle reinforce the reification of the struggle’s history from the Portuguese point of view. Indeed, this positioning is assumed by the main creator of the entry, Nuno Tavares:

It’s not surprising that this text is partial, for I am, after all, Portuguese, and I have a great deal of esteem for the decisions made by my compatriots, even if they were not always the best ones – nor easy to take. Here’s the invitation. I’m just sorry that this revision is taking place while the article is being highlighted, it should have been before if it contains any mistake (Nuno Tavares 10:34, 23 December 2005, UTC) [sic].

A final note: it is dangerous to try to make this article strictly impartial. It is about the Overseas War, not about another country’s War of Liberation (Nuno Tavares 23:12, 24<sup>th</sup> December 2005, UTC).

More than echoing the Portuguese perspective, the first version edited by Nuno Tavares is inserted into a mnemonic vision assumed by specific sectors of Portuguese society. In his first draft of the entry, he writes about decolonization:

With bloody effects [the ‘exemplary’ decolonization], with excesses that public opinion thinks could have been avoided, this decolonisation has left sequels, imposed moral and social traumas, caused millions of deaths and provoked the exodus of the white populations (Nuno Tavares, history of his 29<sup>th</sup> January 2005 edition).

The “public opinion” that he refers to in this segment echoes the discourse of some *retornados* – “returnees” or settlers that returned to Portugal, particularly from Angola and Mozambique, during and after the decolonization process (cf. Peralta, Oliveira and Góis, 2017) – and other conservative sectors of Portuguese society (cf. Loff, 2014). It ironizes the idea of an “exemplary decolonization” by pointing out that it was undertaken hurriedly. The excerpt from the fictional work *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* (“Notebook of Colonial Memories,” 2018 [2009]) by Isabela Figueiredo sums this up:

Even today I still see them [the returnees] immersed in the same nostalgia. ‘Independence was badly handled, and it was Mário Soares and Almeida Santos that were to blame, who sold us out and handed everything over to the niggers.’ I translate: ‘everything they handed over to the niggers should have been given to us, we would have sorted out those niggers.’ When they say, with sincere tears in their eyes, ‘I left my heart in Africa’, I translate it as ‘I left everything there, and I had such a good life’ (Figueiredo, 2018, p. 97).

It would be necessary for the development of this hypothesis to understand if Nuno Tavares is part of that sector or only echoes its point of view.

Despite the removal of the above excerpt from the body of the text, there still is a clear depoliticization of the liberation struggles. The use of the noun “*guerrilheiro*” (“guerrilla fighter”), instead of the term “*combatante da liberdade da pátria*” (“fighter for the liberation of the homeland”) or “*combatante dos movimentos de libertação*” (“freedom fighter”), preferred in the post-revolutionary period and in the countries where the liberation movements arose (cf. Blommaert, 2005, p. 129; Araújo and Maeso, 2016, p. 61), or even “*inimigo*” (“enemy”) are examples of depoliticization. The violence of the UPA is interpreted as:

... a tribal attack, it led to a massacre of the white populations and black workers from other regions of Angola [...] motivations that were essentially tribal and directed autocratically by Holden Roberto, the UPA’s activity was characterized by rural guerrilla warfare, carried out by small armed groups, and by the massacre of populations, as if it had been predicted in the first action [sic].

The savage “barbarity” and “brutality” of the movement is emphasised and naturalised. Similarly, the Por-

tuguese colonial state's violent actions are represented as military actions and described using military jargon, e.g., the concept of the subversive war. The forced displacements of populations are called "*aldeamentos estratégicos*" ("strategic villages") in accordance with military slang, and, amongst other absences, the concentration camp Tarrafal in Cape Verde, to where the Portuguese state sent and tortured members of the liberation movements, is never mentioned. The editor *Joaotg* notes this when s/he claims:

We should be as impartial and objective as possible. I haven't read the whole article and I'm not the best person to be doing corrections, but even not being an expert in the matter, it seems to me that it's written from a particular perspective (Portuguese, certainly ☺. [...] I see a note to the massacres of whites, yes. But it would be a good idea to also show the massacres committed by the Portuguese. [...] Today, you have in Germany a lot of information about Nazism and the Holocaust that was not available 30 years ago. I think it's time that the Portuguese began to talk too (Joaotg 11:01, 30 October 2005, UTC) [sic].

In this commentary, in particular, and in the whole discussion that follows, the editor *Joaotg* resorts to the principle of impartiality or of the multiplicity of perspectives to defend a narrative position that encompasses other visions beyond the Portuguese one. However, the discussion did not result in the narrative's reformulation, but only the summary insertions of points that broadened the Portuguese perspective without represent all the points of view.

What is more, even within the Portuguese perspective, the calculation of the number of operatives wounded and dead on the Portuguese side does not include the Africans that fought in the colonial army. Nevertheless, a very significant contingent of men was recruited in the three territories, mostly to solve the shortage of metropolitan men, cut financial costs and support the state façade of "the integrationist ideology of the Empire and its principle of race miscegenation" (Coelho, 2002, p. 138).

This process of "africanization" was crucial to "win" the population [and] provid[e] the core of a colonial psycho-social doctrine" (ibid.; see also Gomes, 2016 and, for an ethnographic portrait, Rodrigues, 2012, 2013). After the war these men had to face the consequences of their collaboration with the Portuguese colonial army, a scenario particularly sombre in Guinea-Bissau, where "many of them [...] were arrested and it has been alleged that hundreds, if not thousands, were simply shot after summary trials" (Coelho, 2002, p. 149). There was and still is ambiguity as regards African subjects viewed within the Portuguese political body. Though they are constructed as the "other" by the fact of not being counted among the wounded or dead operatives on the colonial side, the entry does include them in the claims of victim status for ex-combatants on the side of the Portuguese colonial forces in Guinea. The violence of PAIGC is underlined, and the Portuguese state is criticised for its silence in recognising its responsibility for their social and economic

rights<sup>20</sup> – a revindication that does not extend to all theatres of operations.

Here we can see the influence of the blog *Luís Graça & Camaradas da Guiné* created in 2004. We have only to search the blog to notice the indignation manifested by former combatants at the way the postcolonial Portuguese state overlooked the Guineans veterans whom they considered their comrades. Citing only two examples, on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010, a text was published entitled "*Guiné 63/74 - P7198: O Soldado Africano Esquecido / Forgotten African Soldier (1): What can we do for our former Guinean comrades?* (Carlos Silva / Luís Graça / Paulo Santiago)." And, on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2009, Armandino Alves claimed in another text:

... one thing is certain, we Portuguese, patriots and the (politically) exempt cannot hide away; it was the obligation of the overseeing body and the Portuguese Army to offer ALL those called up to provide COMPULSORY military service and who swore loyalty and fidelity to the national flag the chance to flee certain death!<sup>21</sup>

Similar indignation was expressed in some of the interviews I carried out with one of the members of the blog:

Another thing I really cannot excuse is what they did to the African soldiers. For me, it was a horrible crime. How they abandoned them. Those poor sods swore to the flag, said they were Portuguese and then they were abandoned.... shot down (interview with Jorge Cabral, ex-combatant in Guinea between 1969 and 1971).

The relationship between Wikipedia and the *Luís Graça & Camaradas da Guiné* blog is created by the editor and war veteran João Carvalho, after having been contacted by Luís Graça to authorise the publication of his photographs – first published on Wikipedia – on the blog. João Carvalho accepted it and immediately joined the Luís Graça group.<sup>22</sup> It was João Carvalho who, on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2006, inserted the passage about the Guinea former combatants in the section of the Wikipedia entry devoted to the consequences of the war – an edition called "The war veterans: + info = consequences for the ex-militias of Guinea." In his original formulation:

In the former Portuguese Guinea, some of those that fought on the side of the Portuguese government against the PAIGC were soldiers or militias from that territory. After Independence, most of those combatants were simply abandoned to their lot as a consequence of various circumstances, such as the lack of definition of their status in the agreements signed between the belligerent forces, and the incapacity of the new governors of Portugal during the Carnation Revolution to solve so many problems at the same time.

The main result of these facts was that they were persecuted and murdered by their former enemies. Thousands of ex-combatants are estimated to have been summarily killed, and some people even speak of numbers in

the order of eleven thousand [sic] (João Carvalho, in the editing record relating to his insertion of 21<sup>st</sup> June 2006).

The participation of former combatants in Wikipedia explains the tone of personal or community legitimation evident in the discussion section, possibly arising from an awareness that these platforms offer a space where ex-combatants can transmit their message and their memories, in direct contrast to the silence and invisibility to which they have been submitted by the traditional media and public institutions. Their presence, in contrast with the neutrality principle, is also visible in the photographs that accompany the narrative of the article. The first image is of a map showing the territories involved in the conflict, accompanied by the caption “Overseas provinces in Africa in the period of the Overseas War.” The second is a propaganda poster from the *Estado Novo*, which reads, “FRELIMO lied, you suffered,” with the caption “Propaganda has become a kind of psychological warfare contributing to the disorganization of the enemy.” The remaining photographs of the PAIGC troops, as they raised their flag in the post-independence period, were provided by João Carvalho.

The text that follows is located in the discussion section, and from the tone of the writing, we realise that a former combatant wrote it. The author remembers his Guinean comrades and demands that the political aspect of the war be spoken about and discussed.

There should be an exchange of opinions about the overseas war, particularly the political question, I haven’t forgotten the companions who stayed there and couldn’t be rescued [sic] (Discussion section, n.m., undated).

A discourse about the victimization of the soldiers of the Portuguese colonial army is expressed in the following sentence: “the soldiers that participated in the war were also victims of it, becoming one of the most visible faces of the consequences of the conflict” (Fig. 3). This construction denies the veterans’ role in perpetrating violence, particularly in events like the Massacre of Wiriyamu (cf. Dhada, 2016). However, as Joanna Bourke suggests, there is an attempt by the war veterans to confer meaning on the violence experienced and committed. “[T]o survive being a perpetrator may not be a matter of either ‘forgetting’ or ‘remembering,’ but of finding a legitimate narrative that is both coherent and convincing” (Bourke, 2006, p. 36), leading to the erasure of the violence and personal victimization seen here. Underpinning this is the argument that the former combatants were young men compelled by the regime through conscription to fight in a war that they had not chosen and in which they suffered, only to be abandoned by the post-revolutionary state.

This idea is shared by former combatants and disseminated in the veterans’ annual reunions, their communities of belonging. In Judith Butler’s terms, they are communities constituted in opposition to the “other”, defined, in this case, as everyone that did not share the war experience (Butler, 2009, p. 36). For veterans, this community of affect and understanding is found only with other former combatants, which causes them to distance themselves from anyone that did not share the experience and therefore does not understand it. In different contexts, predominates a sense that they have been treated with ingratitude, that they have been forgotten, that their experiences have not been recognised. This situation is aggravated by what

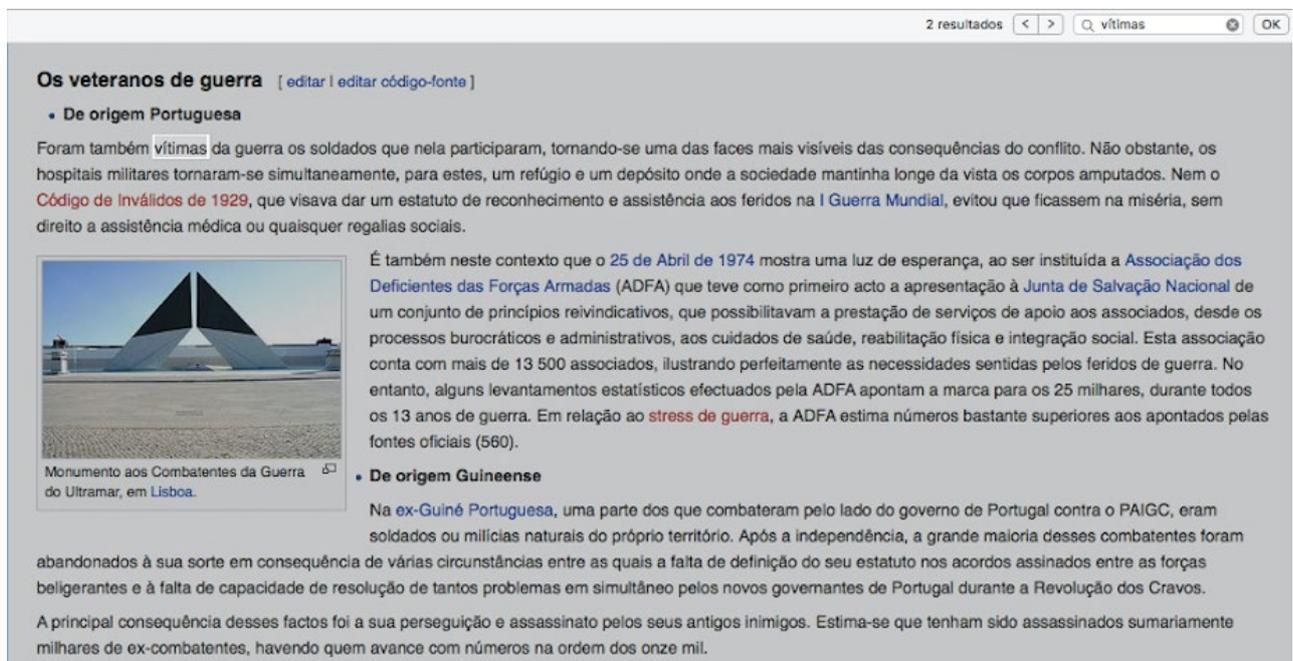


FIGURE 3. Screen shot taken by the author when searching in Safari browser for the word of “vítima” (victim) in the entry “Guerra Colonial Portuguesa.” Source: Portuguese speaking Wikipedia. Available at: [https://pt.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Guerra\\_Colonial\\_Portuguesa&oldid=55775593](https://pt.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Guerra_Colonial_Portuguesa&oldid=55775593) [accessed 26 August 2019].

they consider to be a lack of state support for combatants in more vulnerable situations.

Now, I doubt that people understand what the war was. In war like in love, you don't know it unless you've experienced it. It's really impossible to describe what the war was like. The effects of the war, the women in the war, the women that stayed here. The alcohol habits that people developed. The post-traumatic stress. The domestic violence that is also very connected... (Interview with Jorge Cabral).

Such an identity or feeling of belonging influences the members' capacity for affection, and the direction of it. In other words, their ability to understand and take responsibility for each other's suffering (Butler, 2009, 36 and 46). This feeling of belonging explains the companionship and camaraderie shown by the ex-combatants from the Guinea theatre of war towards their Guinean counterparts, despite the structural racism prevailing in Portuguese society.

Having that said, as Miguel Cardina recalls "recognition of one's past – and especially the pasts of those that were involved in injustice and suffering – depends on the power that social groups have to socially inscribe their narratives and challenge the dominant representations in society" (2016a, p. 33). Thus, it is important to be aware of the limitations that certain groups face when discussing the inscription of their perspectives into digital narratives. The possibility of editing online contents depends on factors such as internet access and literacy.<sup>23</sup>

Some former combatants have the chance to do this if they are literate and have minimal computer tools mastery. However, this is not the case with all veterans. Many were and continue to be illiterate or semi-literate, having come from low-class farming communities in rural areas. Some of these men are today info-excluded.

The vast majority of those ex-combatants that participate in blogs and Wikipedia are or were officers or sergeants – mostly conscripted, the so-called "*oficiais e sargentos milicianos*" ("militia officers and sergeants"). Once again, as Jorge Cabral points out:

Deep down it's a bit elitist, isn't it? Deep down, who have we got there? *Alferes* and *furriéis*. Not many real soldiers, are there? [...] It's a bit elitist, that is. There are people that don't even know what the internet is, aren't there? I once asked one chap: [...] 'have you got net?', I asked and he replied, 'yes, I have, I've got a boy and a girl' [in Portuguese "netos" means "grandchildren"] (Interview with Jorge Cabral).

The scenario becomes even more restricted in Africa. Here there is very little internet penetration, around 36.1% compared to 85.2% in Europe. Guinea, for example, has the lowest rate amongst the three territories where the war took place, with around 6.3%.<sup>24</sup> This limits the representation of some populations in the digital environment, not only because they do not have access to an internet connection, but also because they do not speak the dominant language in virtual contexts. In Guinea-Bissau, only 27.1% of the population speak Portuguese as a sec-

ond language. The vast majority speak various forms of Creole (90.4%)<sup>25</sup> as a lingua franca, and there is no Wikipedia in Creole. It is not surprising that certain narratives are under-explored or even non-existent on this and other digital platforms, and Lusophone Wikipedia continues to be dominated by Brazilians and Portuguese people.

Finally, it is important to note that the mechanisms that structure Wikipedia derive from a concept of open knowledge, which is itself the product of neoliberalism, as Nathaniel Tkacz (cf. 2015) has pointed out. This structure is problematic because it universalizes and depoliticizes a hegemonic knowledge geographically and politically located in the white West, rendering invisible the conflicts inherent to power relations as we have seen.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It's also easier to construct what we agree to remember. That narrative becomes reality, the only one we believe in and defend (Figueiredo, 2018, p. 8).

To the Portuguese state, the colonial war was the beginning of the end of colonialism. After more than forty years, the mobilized generation had reached their retirement years and wishes to bear witness of their war experiences, a feeling that seems more powerful than their previous pact of silence.

Their narratives are becoming materialized through the monumentalization of the conflict and the creation of textual representations of the past. This vernacular memory (Bodnar, 1994, p. 14) began to be widely disseminated between the end of the nineties and beginning of the new millennium, as former combatants started to produce more narratives about their war experiences. In recent years, these testimonies have often been published in authors' editions or by publishers sponsored by combatant associations. The growing mnemonic output (Antunes, 2017, p. 348) also coincided with the democratization and massification of internet access in Portugal, resulting in a plethora of online accounts of the colonial war when the blog boom began at the early years of 2000. However, the public inscription of a colonial war memory is still partial since there is no recognition on the part of the Portuguese state, some former combatants and more conservative sectors, of the violent and racist dimensions of the war. Moreover, some narratives have more visibility in the media circuit than others. Critical perspectives tend to be circumscribed to academic or activist circles, while the memory of the ex-combatants is selective and sometimes contradictory.

The analysis was focused on Wikipedia, which claims to be an authoritative historical resource made by non-professional users or amateur historians. As a digital archive, it works as a memory aid. Ultimately as an archive of prosthetic memories (Landsberg, 2004) for the generations who did not experience the war. This platform functions as a collaborative platform for knowledge sharing and is marked by the reproduction of Eurocentric

narratives circulating in social and political media discourses in Portugal. These narratives render the colonial violence invisible, as well as the colonized peoples' resistance, and it depoliticizes the anti-colonial struggle of the liberation movements and the *Estado Novo's* policy of domination. In short, it universalizes the knowledge produced in Portugal and the memories of some conservative sectors of Portuguese society about the colonial past. Furthermore, despite the existence of dissonant voices in historiography, which are critical of the dominant narrative, the truth is that these positions are not reflected in the entry. The absences are mentioned in the discussion but relegated by the main editors to other pages, such as the ones entitled "*Guerra de Independência de Angola*," "*de Moçambique*" e "*da Guiné*" ("War of Independence in Angola/...Mozambique/...Guinea"). These voices exist, but they are too fragmented by diverse virtual spaces to compose a whole coherent narrative. There continues to be an important distinction between availability and visibility. This invisibility hinders the creation of a narrative that deconstructs and decolonises historical knowledge of the Portuguese past.

Finally, the tone that transpires in the entry as a whole is a depoliticized narrative of Portuguese military history, dominated by military jargon and the victimization of the Portuguese war veterans. The promise of a digital history that could accommodate a critical counter-hegemonic knowledge has yet to be achieved (Luyt, 2011). The solution is not the simple addition of content or perspectives, as the creators of Wikipedia advocate. It should involve, as suggested by Maeso and Araújo, "substantially reconstructing narratives about the past in the light of an approach that makes evident the connections between certain processes and events, thereby challenging master narratives" (Araújo and Maeso, 2016, p. 267) about the Portuguese colonial past.

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## NOTES

1 The colonial war was visibly inscribed into the colonial public space with the patrimonialization of memory, under the auspices of the League of Combatants (*Liga dos Combatentes*), an association formed by veterans of the First World War and currently made up of veterans of the colonial war, with delegations all over the country. The number of monuments has gone up from 52 (built between 1974 and 2003) to 250 (constructed between 2003 and 2016), according to data supplied by the League of Combatants and reported in the news report "*Já são 300 os monumentos de homenagem aos combatants*," *Diário de Notícias* Available at: <https://www.dn.pt/portugal/>

interior/ja-sao-300-os-monumentos-de-homenagem-aos-combatants-5334653.html.

- 2 In this sphere, too, the role of the League of Combatants should be stressed, as they, in association with the publishing house Editora Âncora have published books of memoirs, amongst other things, in the collection "*Fim do Império*" ("End of the Empire").
- 3 Between 2000 and 2010, there was a 530.9% increase in the number of internet subscribers in Portugal, according to data supplied by ANACOM and the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics available at: <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Assinantes+do+acesso+à+Internet-2093>. The rate of Internet penetration in Portugal in 2000 was 16.43%, going up to 53.3% in 2010. More recent data points to the penetration of 73.79% in 2017 (Data from the International Telecommunication Union from Eurostat and the Portuguese National Institute for Statistics, available at: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>).
- 4 There exists a comparative reference with the Brazilian military regime, cf. Pereira. 2015.
- 5 Available at: [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerra\\_Colonial\\_Portuguesa](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerra_Colonial_Portuguesa)
- 6 According to data from John P. Cann, Portugal was globally the western state with the most men at arms, except for Israel. In the three theatres of war, it deployed a human effort five times larger than the USA in Vietnam (Cann, 1997, p. 106 apud Cardina and Martins, 2018, p. 11). This number is without counting the often ignored "Africanization" of the war, which means the increasing recruitment of Africans into the ranks of the armed forces, peaking at 40% of the total number of recruits in 1970 (Coelho, 2002; Gomes, 2016; Cardina and Martins, 2018: 11). Of these, official figures record 8831 killed, around 4500 mutilated, 30,000 wounded, 14,000 left physically disabled and over 100,000 estimated as suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (Campos, 2008; 2017, pp. 39-43, 2018, p. 70; for a critical perspective on post-traumatic stress, cf. Quintais, 2000).
- 7 In the last two years, there has been a resurgence of groups employing Lusotropicalist rhetoric. *Facebook* has been the platform used by this new generation of young people (e.g., *Nova Portugalidade*).
- 8 In the lyrics of the song "O Conquistador" ["The conqueror"] by the Portuguese band Da Vinci, "they took the light of culture/sowed bonds of tenderness/made a thousand epic journeys/lives so full/ they were oceans of love." This song won the Portuguese Song Festival and was taken to the Eurovision Song Contest in 1989 (cf. Cardão, 2014, pp. 11-14).
- 9 The fact that the war was not inscribed on Portuguese soil (given that it took place in the colonial territories) explains, in part, the need for it to be inscribed through massive monumentalization.
- 10 The term, coined by Tim O'Reilly in 2004, is used to describe the internet that appeared with the development and expansion of platforms designed to permit the participation and creation of contents by users and sharing of information in a network with other users (Merrin, 2014, p. 31). This type of digital environment emerged with the development of social networks, microblogging platforms, and dynamic, collaborative spaces (marked by dynamics of tension and conflict) enclosed in ecosystems dominated by large companies (e.g., Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft).
- 11 Available at: <https://blogueforanadaevotres.blogspot.com>
- 12 It is a technological concept and characteristic of internet writing used to name a network of texts or words that are interconnected through a link.
- 13 Christian Pentzold's concept of 'global collective memory' is not without criticism, since most of the articles on Wikipedia in 2009, the year he signed his essay, were written in English (Graham, 2009 apud Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 82). On the other hand, we could consider that the concept applied particularly well to historical entries, and especially to those with less participation in historiographic discourse. The tension between discourses of memory and historiographic discourses varies

- from language to language and subject to subject. There are fields of knowledge in Wikipedia, particularly in English, in which the technical discourse of specialists predominates, and to which the notion of “memory” cannot be directly applied; therefore, the abovementioned concept applies to collaborative narrations of collective events like the colonial war.
- 14 Available at: [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipédia:Cinco\\_pilares](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipédia:Cinco_pilares)
  - 15 The analysis was conducted on the editions created until December 2019. All the data is available on Wikipedia.
  - 16 See note 1 and 2.
  - 17 The construction of the National Monument to Overseas Combatants was the result of the initiative taken in 1985 by the Commandos Association, the Overseas Commandos Association, and, later in 1986, the League of Combatants. The purpose of the monument was to honor those who served in the war. The League of Combatants ended up taking the lead in the project, imposing its vision and overcoming more critical views. It imposed a glorifying representation of the figure of the combatant. The national monument was inaugurated in 1994 with the presence of Prime Minister Mário Soares in Belém, Lisbon (for a more in-depth analysis of this process see Peralta, 2014, pp. 216-221).
  - 18 Contropedia is a platform in demo format which automatically compares different editions of Wikipedia entries, enabling the analysis and visualization of editorial controversies. It was developed by a partnership between SciencesPo, EMAPS, Barcelona Media and Digital Methods Initiative and, in accordance with the summary of the website “aims to provide a better understanding of socio-technical phenomena that take place on the Internet and to equip citizens with tools to fully deploy the complexity of controversies.” Available at: <http://contropedia.net>. The results relating to the entries “Guerra Colonial Portuguesa” and “Portuguese Colonial War” were requested by me. They may be consulted at <http://www.contropedia.net/demo/>
  - 19 The *Estado Novo* regime called every uprising act a terrorist act and justified the military intervention in that terms: “La Guerra no fue asumida públicamente como tal por el Estado Novo. Según la lectura que difundía el régimen, lo que sucedía en África eran más bien acciones armadas en un espacio nacional que se extendía ‘desde el Miño hasta Timor’ y que eran llevadas a cabo por ‘terroristas’. Como dijo Marcelo Caetano tras la Revolución de los Claveles, y reportándose al movimiento en que tomó posesión en septiembre de 1968, dominar los ‘bandos guerrilleros [que] eran relativamente poco numerosos y sin representatividad’ era ‘una cuestión de seguridad interna’” (Caetano, 1975, p. 30 apud Cardina, 2016b, p. 64; see also Curto and Pinto da Cruz, 2013, p. 25 ss.). According to the historian Ângela Campos, even today “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” (2018, p. 42). Manuel Loff gives one paradigmatic example, “[t]he first Portuguese right-wing government after 1974 appointed a *Commission for the Study of African Campaigns (1961-1974)*, headed by General Themudo Barata, instruct[ed] to ‘collect systematically and thoroughly all documentation of potential historical and military interest’ on the study of ‘the African Campaigns’ (CECA, 1988, p.16), deliberately avoiding the adjective *colonial*. Its publications would become the most substantial official version of the 1961-1974 war prepared by a Portuguese State agency” (2014, p. 4).
  - 20 The colonization of Angola and Mozambique was fundamentally different from the colonization of Guinea. While the first two were settlement colonies, the last was only for exploitation. In Guinea, administrative positions were occupied principally by Cape Verdeans. As they lived amongst the local populations, the ex-combatants of this last theatre of operations describe having had a closer relationship with the natives than the displaced ex-combatants in the theatres of operations in Angola and Mozambique.
  - 21 Available at: <https://blogueforanadaevaotres.blogspot.com/search?q=combatants+guineenses>
  - 22 See history at: <https://blogueforanadaevaotres.blogspot.com/2006/01/guine-6374-cdlxxiv-o-nosso-fotografo-em.html>
  - 23 Also, as Joanne Garde-Hansen states, the number of publishers is reduced. They are a minority, almost 90% are passive readers, and about 9% of them only modify or add non-substantial content. The 1% that creates substantial content drives the “vast percentage of the site’s new content, threads, and activity” (<http://www.90-9-1.com> apud Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 84).
  - 24 Internet World Stats, data relating to 2018. Available at: <https://www.internetworldstats.com/>
  - 25 The data was taken from the National Institute of Statistics of Guinea-Bissau. *Características Socioculturais III RGP/2009*, Available at: [http://www.stat-guinebissau.com/publicacao/caracteristicas\\_socio\\_cultural.pdf](http://www.stat-guinebissau.com/publicacao/caracteristicas_socio_cultural.pdf). There is no recent data.

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