

Caiado (2021), "The monumentalization of the Portuguese Colonial War (...)"  
Accepted Manuscript version

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Citation for published version:

Caiado, André. "The Monumentalization of the Portuguese Colonial War: Commemorating the Soldier's Efforts amid the Persistence of Imperial Imaginaries." *Memory Studies* 14, no. 6 (2021): 1208–25.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211053983>.

DOI: 10.1177/17506980211053983

Publication date: 2021

Document version: peer reviewed version

Link to publication: <https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211053983>

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### **Abstract**

This article presents an analysis of the monumentalization of the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974) and explores the dynamics that sustain its growth recently, while other symbols and forms of public memorialization associated with the colonial past have increasingly been called into question and contested, nationally and internationally.

Through the semiotic and epigraphic analysis of monuments, observational visits and interviews with some of the people who put them up, the main representational dynamics of the approximately 415 monuments in Portugal are identified. The article examines the (under)-representation in black troops of the Portuguese Army, the boom in monument construction (over 350) from the year 2000 onward and the maintenance (and reinforcement from 2010 onward) of messages and visual narratives projecting a sort of imperial imaginary. This work shows how the vernacular remembering and the public memory of the conflict and the colonial past are reflected on the monuments' representations and images.

**key words:** commemoration; former combatants; memorialization; memory agents; public memory; war monuments;

## **Introduction**

What is the significance of war monuments today? What accounts for the fact that, in a post-colonial society, monuments alluding to colonialism continue to be built at the same time that movements protesting the presence of these symbols in the public arena are growing? What are the motivations of the monument erectors and what power and legitimacy do they have to impose certain images and messages in public thoroughfares?

Starting from this set of driving questions and with reference to the monumentalization of the Portuguese Colonial War (1961–1974),<sup>1</sup> which has experienced strong growth in the last 20 years,<sup>2</sup> this work aims to expand the reflection and understanding on the contemporary dynamics of memorialization and commemoration of the imperial pasts and colonial wars in public spaces.

The article is divided into two parts. In the first, I will begin by presenting an overview of the process of monumentalization. Next, I will examine how imperial imaginaries are sustained in newly built monuments. By illustrating this with case studies, I will seek to contextualize this epiphenomenon within a broader phenomenon of the glorification of the imperial past in contemporary Portuguese society. I will also analyse the dynamics of representing black soldiers in the Portuguese Armed Forces (PAF). In the second part of the article, I explore some recent protests against monuments associated with Portugal's colonial past. To conclude, I will reflect on the role of memory agents and other actors in promoting these processes and how selective uses of certain images and representations of the past in the present connect to memorial objectives, political appropriations and social or associational claims.

This study is based on semiotic and epigraphic analysis of monuments, observational visits, interviews with some of their promoters, as well as an analysis of a range of sources that include speeches given at unveiling ceremonies, architectural projects' descriptive memories, news and media representations.

I argue that these monuments are one of the foundations that support the construction of a 'memoryscape' (Cardina and Rodrigues, 2021; Kappler, 2017) of the conflict and its former combatants that reflects the narratives, images and memorial discourses that those who erect these monuments want to project. I shall argue that the recent boom in monument building is a response by its promoters to what they consider to be an insufficient public commemoration of the Colonial War and of former Portuguese combatants. However, despite being public representations of war, their potential to constitute 'carriers of memory' (Rouso, 1991) – that promote a greater knowledge in Portuguese society about the memory of the conflict they evoke – is reduced. Nevertheless, they emerge as 'memory markers'<sup>3</sup> that arouse feelings of (self) appreciation and (self) recognition in the agents who construct them and in the communities of former combatants who see themselves represented in them. In this sense, they are an important tool in the politics of reparation and recognition that these agents want to see occur. I will also reflect about the potential of those monuments to be catalysts or connectors for other memorial disputes, taking in consideration the raising crisis associated with the representation of these pasts, in the Portuguese context.

By focusing on an analysis of recent monuments that offer a series of imperial representations, I shall enter into dialogue with the proposal of Lorcin (2013) that distinguishes the concept of 'imperial nostalgia' from 'colonial nostalgia'. According to Lorcin (2013), the former is 'associated with the loss of empire' and the 'decline of national grandeur' and the latter 'with the loss of sociocultural standing' or 'the colonial lifestyle' (p. 97). I will argue that this epiphenomenon constitutes a case of 'imperial nostalgia'.

## **War monuments and public narratives**

The study of war monuments and memorials has received considerable scholarly attention in recent decades, resulting in a considerable bibliography on the subject. Different authors have favoured different approaches or analytical criteria, depending on the scope and extent of their work.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the scholarship on monuments and memorials has evolved, alongside the construction of monuments that memorialize recent events, as well as memorials or counter-memorials that present alternative forms of materiality, such as the survivor trees and memorial grove that were planted by civic authorities after the terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid and Brussels (Heath-Kelly, 2018). These studies focus on monuments that remember the victims of terrorist attacks (Heath-Kelly, 2018), neo-nazi xenophobic attacks (Ben-Aroia and Ebbrecht-Hartmann, 2021) or include those built in recent decades to wars of decolonization (Buettner, 2016) fought by some European countries to prevent the independence of their colonies –, namely, the Algerian War (Brazzoduro, 2019). The scope of these studies has also been broadened from a focus on the remembrance of death to include the analysis of public memorials to lived experience of loss and trauma or voluntarism (Atkinson-Phillips, 2020) and temporary memorials (Doss, 2012).

Some authors seem to overestimate the potential for monuments and memorials to interfere in the construction of public memory (Becker, 2011; Bodnar, 1994; Kappler, 2017). Becker (2011) points to the importance of the Heroes' Acre and the Eenhana Shrine, in Namibia, for the production of 'social memory, embedded in narrative', contributing to 'self-reflection and the making of post-colonial futures' in the country (p. 521). In a seminal work on Holocaust memorials, Young (1993) states that monuments and memorials erected by official agencies serve as a tool used by the state to forge awareness of a national memory and identity, creating the illusion of a common memory. Monuments are 'carriers of memory' (Rousso, 1991), which offer a very specific interpretation of war and combatants, with a particular social objective. The function of monuments and memorials, is not to preserve the memory of the past, but to promote

a specific interpretation of the past (Marschall, 2005: 83). By reflecting certain ideological and identity positions and being used as tools for political ends and the transmission of narratives, their appearance in a certain place often gives rise to intense disputes and debates around memory.

Young (1993) had already signalled the emergence of counter-monuments that challenged the commemoration narratives of the 'official' monuments. However, the recent (re)emergence in various countries of protests and the defacing of many statues and monuments as part of the '#Statues Must Fall' movements, because they are considered racist or colonialist symbols by those who carry out or defend these acts, suggests that this potential is manifesting itself at the precise moment when these acts occur (Marschall, 2017; Stanard, 2019).

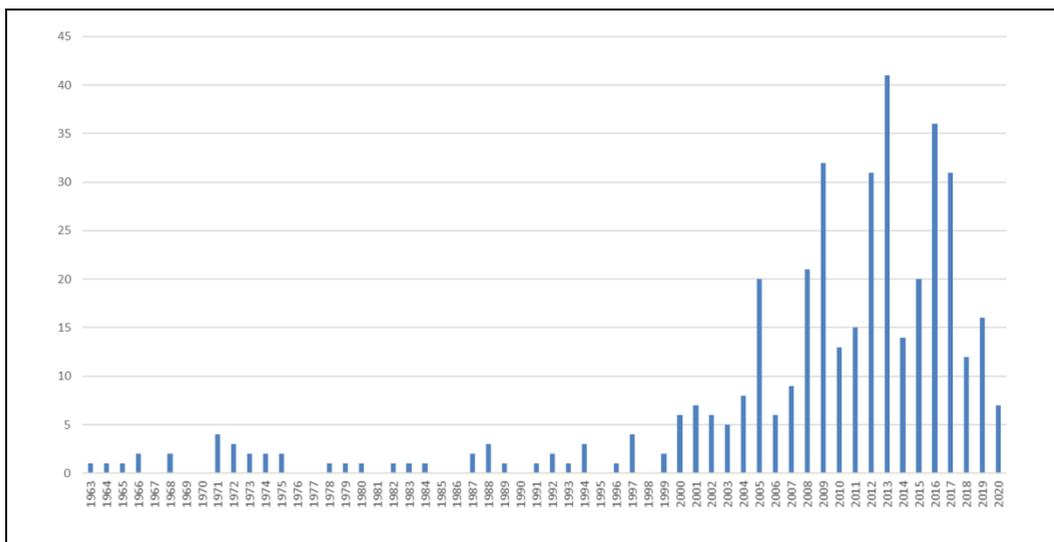
### **The monumentalization of the Colonial War**

The construction of commemorative monuments began in the early 1960s, survived the (interconnected) end of the *Estado Novo*<sup>5</sup>/Colonial War/imperial era, and continues to the present day. It has evolved along with the social and political changes and democratization of the country that have marked Portuguese society in the last six decades and have influenced the ways the war has been commemorated. In a previous work, I have already drawn up an inventory of monuments built in Portugal (Caiado, 2020), which is updated below (Figure 1).

The monuments built until the end of the 1990s show a variety of forms ranging from the classical representation of the soldier, the common tombstone with the inscription of the names of the soldiers, the traditional column, obelisk or pillory or simply a stone with a headstone. From 2000 onward, there has been a change in the dynamics of the monumentalization process, which has seen a multiplication in the number of monuments inaugurated each year throughout Portugal, as well as a growing diversity of sculptural and iconographic forms used. The strong growth in this process since this date has occurred in parallel with the growth of other war memorialization processes, including the organization of reunions (Antunes, 2015; Rodrigues, 2017), the publication

of memoirs and autobiographies or the sharing of testimonies of former combatants, initially in blogs and later on social networks (Ferreira, 2020), along with commemorations held in public.

During this period, the war and memories of the conflict gained greater public visibility and began to merit the attention of the visual and performing arts (Ribeiro and Ribeiro, 2018), journalists, historians, and other academics who took it as the subject of their work. Academic projects, media debates, television series and documentaries, films and plays are bringing



**Figure 1.** Number of monuments inaugurated by year.

attention to the subject and making possible not only more diverse manifestations of war memorialization by former combatants and other actors, but also the study and discussion of more critical perspectives on the conflict and how to memorialize it. With the exception of the monuments that were built inside military bases up until the 1990s, the impulse for constructing these memory markers is due, fundamentally, to the efforts of former combatants, acting individually or in groups as *'memory entrepreneurs'* (Jelin, 2003), of municipal bodies (municipalities and parish councils) and of veterans'

associations. The oldest of these associations, the *Liga dos Combatentes* (League of Combatants), which is formally under the tutelage of the Ministry of National Defence, has been the major mobilizing agent for official commemoration of the conflict. This monumentalization boom must also be framed within a contemporary memorialization culture, which highlights a quasi-obsession with history and memory and the need to etch these issues into the public consciousness (Doss, 2012). On the other hand, this process reveals a certain commemorative eagerness and urgency by its promoters, perhaps explained by their advancing years and an awareness that their lives are drawing to a close.

### **The return of the imperial imaginary**

Since the year 2000, monuments including maps of the three countries where the war took place, and sometimes the map of mainland and island Portugal, have frequently appeared. Although less common, when the tribute is extended to the combatants who served in other parts of the so-called 'Portuguese Overseas Territories', maps of these territories also appear. However, the inclusion of maps on about 50 monuments seems to be explained not only as a tool aimed at the passer-by/viewer to help identify the countries where the war was fought. On the monuments that include globes or world maps where the 'overseas territories' have been marked, this can be understood as a device added to underline the territorial dimension and geographical dispersion of the 'overseas' part of the country at the time of the conflict, as in the monument/square (Figure 2) recently built in Calendário (inaugurated on 20/10/2018).



**Figure 2.** Monument/square at Calendário (photo provided by JOPH–Engenharia e Construção, Lda).

Also noteworthy in this process is the degree to which the imaginary of the Portuguese Maritime Expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – referred to as the ‘Discoveries’ – was used as a source of inspiration; from monuments representing caravels, to stone pillars similar in design to those used by Portuguese navigators to mark Portuguese sovereignty over the territories on which they landed. It should be noted that the use of the stone pillar as a construction template is recurrent, since it had already been used in Portugal and the colonies in the second quarter of the twentieth century in some monuments to the Great War (Correia, 2015) and others that were built in the 1930s and 1940s to mark various anniversaries, such as the centenaries of the Discoveries and the founding of the nation (João, 2002).

Another particular feature are the dozens of monuments that bear symbols and constituent elements of national heraldry, such as the armillary sphere<sup>6</sup> and the Order of Christ cross,<sup>7</sup> which are related to this imperial imaginary. The introduction of icons and figurative elements from a nation’s (official and popular) identity and narrative is a common process in war monuments, which are markers of patriotism par excellence, and consequently vary from country to country. In Portugal, this practice had already

been introduced in many monuments to World War I (Correia, 2015), which in turn inspired some Colonial War monuments. Nevertheless, what is unique is the fact that these elements of national heraldry, that are directly related to the imaginary of the Portuguese maritime expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, have survived the end of the imperial era and remain in most of the cases unchallenged.

As an expression of 'banal nationalism' (Billig, 1999), the appearance on monuments of these elements which evoke the country's imperial past has begun to be noticed, especially since the year 2000, what can be seen as a form of 'imperial nostalgia' (Lorcin, 2013). This epiphenomenon finds an echo in the broader phenomenon of revaluing and re-contextualizing a mythologised narrative that reinterprets Portuguese colonial expansion as a process of intercultural and people-to-people exchange and is associated with the ideology of 'Lusophony'.<sup>8</sup>

Special mention should be made of the monument in Tondela (30/6/2002), which partially celebrates the maritime era started by the Portuguese people. On its façades are replicas of maritime navigational charts of the African coast and excerpts of stanzas related to that 'golden age' of Portuguese history, taken from iconic works in the canon of Portuguese literature, such as 'The Lusiads',<sup>9</sup> by Luís de Camões, and 'Mensagem', by Fernando Pessoa. The power of these narratives are especially concentrated in three monuments, inaugurated in the 2010s, which I shall explore in more detail.

The Santa Comba Dão monument (Figure 3) (13/05/2010) has a back story connected with the memorialization of the figure of António de Oliveira Salazar,<sup>10</sup> who was born in the municipality. In fact, the monument was built at the exact spot on which a statue of the dictator stood for about ten years. Inaugurated in 1965, this statue of the 'son of the town' was, after the fall of the regime, graffitied several times, decapitated, the scene of clashes between groups who advocated the removal of the statue and others who tried to restore the deposed head, and finally, in 1978, blown up. About 30 years after these events, the mayor decided to go ahead with the construction of a monument to honour the former combatants of the municipality and meet their demands. The place

chosen by the mayor for the monument, the site on which the dictator's statue had once stood, aimed to put an end to countless attempts in previous decades to re-erect a statue of Salazar on the same spot. The monument sits above a floodlit fountain and, as the project description notes, the presence of water harks back to the imaginary of maritime conquests. The central element is a granite block, on the front of which are engraved the names of the 16 young men from the municipality who died in the conflict. The list of names is topped by a quote taken from 'The Lusians'<sup>11</sup> that celebrates the immortality of those who have died, but who will never be forgotten because of their deeds. Converging on this central core are seven vertical elements, with the names and maps of the seven Portuguese colonies formed during the final phase of Portuguese colonialism engraved on them,<sup>12</sup> together with the dates of the beginning and end of the Portuguese presence and governance of these countries. The monument was designed by the municipal architect Manuel Gamito, to whom the mayor gave artistic freedom to draw up his proposal. As the architect himself told me, he wanted to design a monument that would be different in appearance from other monuments around the country. His design was therefore based on the concept of 'Portugal Overseas', as a way of valuing the country's history.



**Figure 3.** Monument at Santa Comba Dão (author's photo).



**Figure 4.** Monument at Ribeirão (author's photo).

In Ribeirão, there is a memorial comprised of a monument (Figure 4) (01/06/2014) that is symbolic in being one of the few that directly evoke women's memories, by paying tribute to mothers, partners or 'wartime godmothers' involved in the war, and two tiled murals. One mural is dedicated to the Colonial War (05/06/2016) and the other to World War I (13/07/2018). The first (Figure 5) is an extended panel which transposes the narrative of the monument's main promoter José Ferreira dos Santos into the hands of the painter of the mural, Fernando Jorge via the medium of tilework. In this memorial, various elements revive the importance of religiosity, patriotism and the overseas (read imperial) dimension of the country.

This is a visual narrative that presents the typical journey of a metropolitan soldier to the war, in which it is possible to identify the work of mnemonic imagination (Pickering and Keightley, 2013a) developed by the narrator as he writes the script. This exercise is the result of a cross between his memories and personal experiences acquired during his active service in Mozambique, episodes shared by many young men who served in the conflict, as well as images and shared places that seamlessly connect the viewer with the imaginary of the War and the 'Overseas Empire'. Between these three levels, the authors weave a narrative structure, containing the elements of storytelling which, in a dramatic crescendo, seek to connect the viewer emotionally with the message of the metanarrative of defending the homeland, of doing one's duty and of the sacrifice made by the combatants and their families. As the main advocate for this memorial told me during an interview, he believes it is a contribution to the historical memory of the period, which he considers to be unknown to the majority of the Portuguese population today.



**Figure 5.** Mural in Ribeirão (author's photo).

The monument at Valado dos Frades (Figure 6) (19/01/2020) is a conical structure, with a globe on top supported by two hands. The monument is divided into 10 triangular tiled panels on which are painted the coats of arms of the 8 overseas territories,<sup>13</sup> the symbol of the League of Combatants and the coat of arms of Portugal.

The iconography of the monument is a reflection of the will of its main promoter and author of the design, Júlio da Luísa Marques, to build a monument different from existing ones around the country, that 'would not revive the memory of war, that would not revive the memory of hatred'.<sup>14</sup> He therefore avoided the use of the military figure, the *Chaimite*<sup>15</sup> or the inclusion of the names of soldiers that are found on most monuments. He asserts that the inclusion of the coats of arms of the eight overseas provinces, whose initial designs were provided by the League of Combatants, are the reason why the Portuguese soldiers were mobilized, for the defence of what was considered the homeland at the time. The dedication on the monument is in line with this intention:

*Here all public consideration shall endure for the fulfilment of their duty to the Homeland. To all those who in the strength of their youth knew how to defend and honour the Empire of their Country.*

These cases should not necessarily be interpreted as an apologia for colonialism as a political project or a form of ‘colonial nostalgia’ (Lorcin, 2013). Rather, they seem to express a form of ‘vernacular remembering’ (Pickering and Keightley, 2013b) of the ‘imperialization of the nation-state’, whose legacy inhabits a certain common sense and feeds public and private narratives about the country’s colonial past. Even today, the mobilization of imperial imagery as a way of projecting the country on the international stage or building identity and cultural discourses about the nation and the Portuguese people<sup>16</sup> is still present in various spheres.



**Figure 6.** Monument at Valado dos Frades (author’s photo).

**The ‘Africanization of the war’: a latent omission**

The incorporation of locally recruited soldiers in colonial or imperialist wars by colonial powers or foreign forces was not a phenomenon specific to this conflict, nor to the era. In the Portuguese colonies, the use of local forces to man the first line of defence, and the practice of recruiting forces from one colonial territory to maintain order in another, dates back to the mid-nineteenth century (Coelho, 2002), where in Angola and Mozambique a wide range of decentralized locally-recruited military units could be found, under provincial and central government control (Power, 2001: 483). The mass incorporation of Africans into the Portuguese colonial army was not experienced for the first time in the Colonial War; several thousand joined its ranks to fight the German invasions of northern Mozambique and southern Angola during World War I. At the beginning of the Colonial War, and before the African commando companies and other black troop groups were created, African recruits were rarely used in formal combat and served predominantly as auxiliaries. They acted as guides, given their knowledge of the terrain, as counter-insurgency agents and as sources of information on attacks planned by the 'guerrillas' against the Portuguese army (Power, 2001: 484). However, with the spread of hostilities, the demands of maintaining a conflict on three fronts, where the 'enemy' was developing a guerrilla war, and as a way to compensate for the shortfall in military personnel caused by the growing number of defaulters, deserters and draft evaders (Cardina and Martins, 2019), the regime's strategy to bolster the war effort changed to swelling the ranks of the PAF with locally recruited troops.

Despite the significant proportion of black soldiers in the PAF, especially in the final years of the conflict, which boosted the operational capacity of the Portuguese military forces, there is no correspondence between the contribution to the war effort made by black soldiers and the tribute paid to them in this and other memorialization processes.<sup>17</sup> Although monuments are generally dedicated to all the combatants who fought for Portugal, and black PAF soldiers are by extension theoretically included, direct references to black soldiers have only been found in two monuments.<sup>18</sup> Where monuments consist of the statue of a combatant, the type of figure chosen for

representational purposes is that of a white soldier, which reflects the sponsors' image behind these acts of memorialization, the communities of (white) former combatants living in Portugal. From this process of monumentalization, a certain visual narrative of whiteness emerges that omits the role and strong presence of black troops in the PAF. Even though the PAF recruited more than 400,000 black soldiers<sup>19</sup> during the course of the war, few settled in Portugal after the conflict ended and the independence of the countries where they had been born was achieved. As a result of the historical contingencies of the period when the independence of these countries took place, the majority remained in their land of origin. Those who settled in post-colonial Portugal experienced very different and non-linear life paths – often plagued by poverty and unemployment, marked by various ruptures, racism and the war disabilities that some suffered – all of which kept these men in a subaltern position (Rodrigues, 2017). The interruptions in their life projects, the fragility of their socio-economic position and social status and the pervasiveness of structural racism all made these men 'liminal figures' (Rodrigues, 2017), endowed with few resources to empower themselves as 'memory brokers' and intervene to see their war effort recognized and commemorated. In addition, their immediate concerns were, in most cases, to regularize their legal situation in Portugal and to find some means of subsistence; not to embark upon memorial endeavours.



**Figure 7.** Monument in Coimbra (front) (author's photos).



**Figure 8.** Monument in Coimbra (back) (author's photos).

In this area of representation there are four monuments that convey the image of the protection given by the Portuguese military to the African populations, through the appealing use of the 'figure of the fighter protecting the African child'. This paternalistic view of the 'white combatant-saviour' was first tried out in the Coimbra Monument (Figures 7 and 8). Built in 1971, during the course of the conflict, to honour the military, this representation was in line with the regime's propaganda, which aimed to gain public support for the conduct of the war. However, decades after the end of the war and the establishment of democracy, this template reappeared in three other monuments.<sup>20</sup>

### **Protest and counter-monumentalization**

The growth in the process of monument construction and the diversification of the iconographic and sculptural forms adopted was not accompanied, however, by a greater diversity in the types of memorialization exhibited. With the exception of the six monuments that directly or indirectly pay tribute to female memory, monuments are

intended to memorialize the white Portuguese soldiers who fought in the conflict. In this memorial enterprise, which aims to publicly immortalize former combatants, there is no place for those who were once considered the enemy, nor for the black troops who shared the same space-time in the war and the identity of the PAF military. The memory of other groups who contributed to the war effort or the civilian victims that the conflict caused are also excluded from this 'dominant memory' (Rousso, 1991) as captured in monuments.

To date, no process of 'counter-monumentalization' (Ashplant et al., 2009: 26–27; Young, 1993) has emerged to put pressure on this model of war remembrance based on the heroic representation of the figure of the (white) combatant and the safeguarding of patriotic values and military duty. The use of monumentalization as part of a broader 'politics of regret' (Olick, 2007) about the memory of the war that seeks new principles of political legitimation has distanced itself from this process.

Monumentality is reserved for monuments built in cities. The majority, built in towns and villages which have relied on scarcer resources for their construction, seem more like tombstones. They have proliferated, driven by feelings of belonging and local identity and by the commemorative vigilance of the communities of memory (Atkinson-Phillips, 2020; Pickering and Keightley, 2013a) that promoted them, constituting a field of stelae dispersed throughout the national territory. This process has spread to the entire country, without arousing great public or media attention. Not even the monuments that bear representations of an imperial imaginary have generated any significant protests, which may suggest a general lack of knowledge about this process and a certain depoliticization of most citizens around these issues. In fact, the memory of Portuguese maritime expansion is engraved in the urban landscape of many Portuguese cities and towns (particularly the capital, Lisbon), in monuments, places of worship, statuary or toponymy (Bethencourt, 1998). In Portugal, as in other former colonizing countries, the dissolution of the Empire and the democratization of the country did not lead to the removal of colonial statues or toponymic alterations to

rename streets, monuments and buildings (Buettner, 2016; Stanard, 2019). On the contrary, these processes of symbolic renaming and decolonization of the public arena were often initiated in countries that gained their independence with the end of colonialism, as also happened in the former Portuguese colonies (Cardina and Rodrigues, 2021).

These material memories of a colonial past, associated with an idea of the country's greatness, were not only preserved and valued, but new urban spaces<sup>21</sup> and buildings/museums<sup>22</sup> directly related to these ideas emerged in the meantime. Recently, however, demonstrations against and graffitiing of monuments associated with Portugal's colonial past have gained some visibility on social networks and in the media. This has sparked intense public and private debates about the presence (and in some cases, recent construction) of monuments connected with the long history of colonial violence, exploitation and racism. These demonstrations, against the backdrop of an international movement that has questioned and protested the presence of these symbols and representations in the public sphere, seem to have reignited the debate in Portugal.

This does not include other previous actions that have not had great media prominence, such as the graffiti in 2018 and 2019 on the monument to the Colonizing Effort, located in Porto, or to the statue honouring the so-called 'discoverer of Brazil', Pedro Álvares Cabral, located in the square of the same name in Santarém. However, it was on 11 June 2020 (when the echoes of the '#BlackLivesMatter' and '#Statues Must Fall' movements were most strongly felt), that graffiti on the Lisbon statue of Jesuit priest António Vieira, inaugurated only 3 years earlier, made a major impact in the public arena. A few days later, in the city of Coimbra, a bust of Baden Powell, the founder of the Scout movement, was beheaded.

Colonial War monuments seemed to have escaped these acts of protest until, on the night of 26–27 September, 2020, the monument of Coimbra (Figures 7 and 8) was graffitiied.<sup>23</sup> Although no-one has claimed responsibility for the action, coincidentally a

few hours earlier an anti-fascist demonstration had been organized in the city in response to a meeting/dinner of the *CHEGA* party<sup>24</sup> held there that evening. On 5 October, the monument was again the target of graffiti, with 'CHEGA' painted on one side.<sup>25</sup> The latest episode in this case was the position taken by the President of the Portuguese Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. He visited the city 2 weeks later and went to the monument with the mayor to lay a wreath and through this symbolic gesture pay homage to the former combatants and condemn the act. In late May 2021, the monument was again appropriated politically, when a march by CHEGA through the streets of Coimbra, which marked the beginning of the party's 3rd National Congress, ended near the monument with a speech by its leader, André Ventura.

### **Conclusion**

Monumentalization is one expression of the politics of commemoration and official remembrance of the Colonial War promoted, essentially, by the military community and the communities of former combatants, with the support of the municipal authorities. It is a commemorative vigil by this 'family of remembrance' (Winter and Sivan, 2000), that is restricted to memorializing the dead and the combatants of the communities that promote it and excludes many others who have also been affected, to a greater or lesser degree, by the experience of war. This model of remembrance includes many omissions, denegations and silences. By making a hero out of the figure of the combatant and generalized notions of duty, patriotism and service to the nation, combatants are not held accountable for their participation in a colonial conflict and their role as instigators or bystanders of the violence perpetrated. Creating a disconnect between what the military duties of each of these men were and the conduct of the war, from which they were alienated, avoids any discussion of the political nature and justness of the war. In effect, the depoliticization of the conflict can work for many former combatants as a strategy when faced with the difficulty they feel in accepting and giving meaning to their (mandatory) participation in a conflict that they now understand to have been morally and historically reprehensible (Campos, 2017).

The memorial discourse emanating from this process refuses to portray the combatants as perpetrators and tends, rather, to see them as victims of a war they did not choose and to which they dedicated precious years of their youth, at the cost of countless personal, family, and professional sacrifices, while putting their own lives at risk. As a way of providing a narrative for history and personal experience it may represent another expression of the never-ending struggle waged by former combatants to think well of themselves (Quintais, 2000: 94). However, adopting the narrative of victimization can also be seen as a strategy to gain visibility for their need for psychological assistance, medical attention and medication, and demands for greater social security benefits.

While, on the one hand, the process of building monuments commemorating the combatants has not yet shown signs of exhausting itself, on the other hand, it is difficult to foresee how it will develop and how these monuments will be appropriated in the not too distant future, when the generation of those who witnessed this historical event will be gone. In effect, former combatants are not only the recipients of the tribute, they are also the main promoters of this memorialization process, which is becoming one of the 'arenas of articulation' (Ashplant et al., 2009: 17) used by these social actors to present their claims for the recognition of their memory and war experience, and the social rights and benefits they believe should be granted to them by the state as a result of their service to the Homeland.

The fact that the monuments have so far escaped significant challenge or protest actions can be explained by the following factors. On the one hand, the visual narratives that the monuments project do not convey a warmongering tone, nor do they make a direct apology for the war or for the political reasons for which it was fought. On the other, the memorialization process is funereal in tone and the monuments mirror a certain 'dominant memory' (Rousso, 1991) of the combatant as a servant of the Homeland and a participant in a war he did not choose but faced with courage and selflessness. Nevertheless, its potential to be a catalyst or connector for other memorial

disputes remains open. This is especially true of actions that seek historical justice for unresolved pasts of injustice and violence, the politics of reparation and regret (Olick, 2007) and the transmission of selective narratives about the past for memorial or political purposes, which constitutes a version of the 'politics of history'.

Recently, there has been increasing media attention and polarization of the debates around these issues, caused, on one hand, by the greater visibility that the actions of citizens, engaged academics, anti-racist groups and Afro-descendant movements have brought them<sup>26</sup> and, on the other, by the growing political weight of the extreme right and the actions of nationalist groups that are positioning themselves as players in these disputes. As the current debate and the 'monument issue' in different contexts has shown us, the ability of monuments to influence public narratives about the memorialization of certain historical figures or events and representations of the past is paradoxically fulfilled the moment they are the target of protest actions, graffiti or other appropriations.

These monuments can therefore be seen as 'official carriers of memory' that offer a comprehensive and unified representation of the war, the result of compromise among various contending forces (Rousso, 1991: 219–220). These monuments are mnemonic products that reflect a form of public memory about the colonial war. The 'public memory emerges from the intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions' (Bodnar, 1994: 13) and is the result of a process of political discussion and negotiation. By taking the figure of the combatant, and not the war itself, as the object of reflection and exhibition, a form was found that allows for remembrance without raise discontent voices, taking into account the various tensions and disputes that the memory of the war continues to arouse within Portuguese society.

As a 'commemorative' project, this process of monumentalization involves strategies for active forgetting and selective remembrance, and is the visible face of the 'politics of memory' and 'politics of silence' (Cardina, 2020) which surround the memory of the colonial past and the Colonial War in Portugal. It illustrates how the memorialization of

this past has always been under pressure and foresees a memorial crisis that is threatening to erupt.

Given their material presence and installation in public space, these monuments may find themselves projected into the public arena of memorial debates about Portugal's colonial past and the Colonial War, as recent cases have shown. Especially those that convey imperial representations, which I consider to reflect a form of 'imperial nostalgia' (Lorcin, 2013) that is historically rooted and manifests a long persistence. In the Portuguese context where these debates have been rekindled, and considering the influence of similar international dynamics, the actions taken by populist and conservative groups and the rise of the extreme-right, the intervention of various actors in mobilizing monuments and the (a)historical and memorial narratives they create to address the political and social issues of the present, will create a kind of 'chronopolitics of memory' (Gluck, 2007). In this sense, the validity of these monuments to imbue processes that connect the history, memory and representations of the colonial past and Colonial War with the political claims, identities and collective social aspirations of the present may yet prove to have a long and productive life.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am very grateful to the interviewees who generously talked with me and to the institutions and people who provided data and information. I wish to express my gratitude to Miguel Cardina, Roberto Vecchi and my colleagues of Heritages of Portuguese Influence and CROME for their wise observations in jointed debates and discussions. I wish also to express my special thanks to Richard Sidaway, who translated this article. Finally, I am especially indebted to the anonymous reviewer for the insightful comments and suggestions, to the editors Jeffrey Olick and Hanna Teichler and to Inês Nascimento Rodrigues and Miguel Cardina for their valuable comments on my original submission.

## Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement Nº 715593: 'CROME – Crossed Memories, Politics of Silence: The Colonial-Liberation Wars in Postcolonial Times')

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## Notes

1. I am referring here to the conflict that set the Portuguese State against the independence movements of Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique and led to the end of the Portuguese Colonial Empire in Africa. Considering that the subject of this work is the monumentalization of the memory of this conflict in Portugal, I will use the term 'Colonial War' or simply 'war' to designate this historical event, to the exclusion of other expressions also commonly used.
2. From the 415 monuments (number recorded by this work) erected in Portugal, over 350 were built from 2000 onward.
3. I understand a 'memory marker' to be a tool, code, symbol, object or monument which when viewed or used has the potential to activate the memory of an occurrence, person or historical event to which it is related.
4. See Abousnnouga and Machin (2014) as it presents a good review of the literature on the subject.
5. The *Estado Novo* [New State] was a right-wing dictatorial regime that ruled in Portugal from 1933 – the year when the constitution formally establishing it was approved – until the Carnation Revolution (begun on 25 April 1974). It succeeded the military dictatorship that overthrew the First Republic in a military coup on 28 May 1926.

6. The armillary sphere, evident in more than 25 monuments, is an integral part of the national flag and coat of arms of Portugal. It was a symbol of the royal power of King Manuel I, whose reign is associated with the apogee of the 'Discoveries'. The *sphera mundi* of the mathematicians took on a universal civilizing purpose at the time and still represents the continued projection of empire.
7. The Order of Christ cross is another symbol that appears on many monuments and is similarly linked to Portuguese Maritime Expansion, given its association with Prince Henry the Navigator, governor of the Order of Christ, who led and initiated the expansionist project using the resources of the Order itself. As the symbol par excellence of overseas expansion, which adorned the sails of ships and the stone pillars that the Portuguese placed along the coasts where they landed to mark their sovereignty, it became a symbol of the sovereignty of the King of Portugal and the Order of Christ in overseas territories. In the twentieth century, it was painted on the planes and helicopters used by the PAF during the colonial war and remains today a symbol associated with the Navy and Air Force, in addition to the autonomous region of Madeira which displays it in the centre of its flag.
8. The concept of Lusophony, which has been the subject of extensive discussion, criticism and academic reflection, can be associated in a general way with the community of people who express themselves in the Portuguese language. From an essentially linguistic phenomenon, with the creation of the CPLP – Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries – in 1996, it is now also seen as a social and political phenomenon. The community has established 5 May as the world day of Portuguese Language.
9. This work is traditionally considered to be the greatest epic poem in Portuguese literature, and the country's national day, officially called 'Portugal, Camões and Communities Day', is celebrated annually on 10 June, the day on which it is agreed that Luís de Camões died.

10. The leading figure of the dictatorial *Estado Novo* regime was head of the Portuguese government between 05/07/1932 and 27/9/1968.
11. 'And others whose immortal deeds / Have conquered death's oblivion' (Camões, *The Lusíads*, Canto I, verse 2, lines 5 and 6).
12. Angola, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea-Bissau, the Portuguese India, Timor and Mozambique.
13. This overseas heraldry is the result of the government reform carried out by the Minister of the Colonies Armindo Monteiro in 1935, who created a coat of arms for each colony (Bethencourt, 1998: 459).
14. Interview in August 2020.
15. Portuguese-manufactured armoured personnel carrier used during the war.
16. The way in which the imperialization of the nation-state was forged and an imperial national identity was constructed by being associated with ideologies of historical mission and exceptionality (the mission/the destiny of the Portuguese people to colonize and the mission to civilize), as well as the mechanisms and policies through which these conceptions were promoted, reconfigured and maintained by different political regimes and actors from the third quarter of the nineteenth century to the present day, have been noted by several authors (Bandeira Jerónimo and Costa Pinto, 2015; Cardina, 2020; Peralta, 2011; Sidaway and Power, 2005).
17. Such as the Colonial War supplement series sold with the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* (1998), analysed by Power (2001) or the digital memories shared by former combatants in the blogosphere studied by Ferreira (2020).
18. I am referring to the tile mural located in Ribeirão, inaugurated on 05/06/2016, and the plaques invoking the names of 211 African commandos which were unveiled at the Commandos Garrison on 29/06/2007.
19. Estimates suggest they were around one third of adult males called up (Coelho, 2002).
20. Namely, Oeiras (21/06/1997), Vila Real (01/12/2000) and Leomil (25/04/2009).

21. The Parque das Nações, following the organization of *EXPO'98* – World Exposition 1998, and the Vasco da Gama bridge, in Lisbon.
22. These include the World of Discoveries and the House of Prince Henry, in Porto; the Museum of the Discoveries, in Belmonte or the intention to build a similar museum in Lisbon – this idea, despite not having gone further, has provoked heated debates in the public sphere.
23. On the plinth of the statue, the invocation 'To the Heroes of the Overseas Territories' was partially erased with red spray paint and replaced with the word 'murderers', so that the inscription on the statue now read 'To the murderers of the Overseas Territories'. On one side of the statue the phrase 'Shit fascists' was also added.
24. Chega is a radical right-wing party, created in 2019, with a nationalist, conservative and populist agenda.
25. The word has various meanings as it is the name of the political party mentioned and in Portuguese means 'Enough'.
26. Namely, the memorial to the victims of slavery that is being built in Lisbon. See <https://www.memorialescraavatura.com>

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