

From Flanders to Pernambuco: Battleground Perceptions in the Portuguese Early Modern Atlantic World

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Abstract

This article addresses the way the Portuguese experience in the seventeenth-century battlefields of Flanders, during the Iberian Union (1580–1640), reshaped Portuguese military thought and culture. It argues that their traditional martial perceptions – almost exclusively based in imperial experiences, especially against the Muslims in North Africa and in India – were transformed by the direct exposure to Spanish military endeavours in Europe. It also argues that the experience in Flanders resurfaced in the South Atlantic, in all its religious and political dimensions, transforming the prestige of Brazil as a battlefield. Finally, the article revisits the way the Flanders experience poisoned Spanish–Portuguese relations.

Keywords

Portuguese Atlantic, Iberian Union, War of Flanders, martial imaginary, battleground perceptions

Introduction

King Sebastian, in his attempt to go to North Africa, to attack the Moors himself, beyond being moved by the zeal of exalting the Catholic Faith, and spreading the Christian religion, had the example of all of his ancestors, who were always the Generals of their own Arms, and the first ones to attack. King John I went in person to take Ceuta with his four sons in a massive fleet. Afonso V went himself three times...to carry on with the war on the Berber Coast, where he achieved many victories... Manuel I was also determined to go there, carrying on with this

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undertaking, and ordered the seizure of some Strongholds. During the time of John III...this was also continued... And finally the Emperor Charles V, his grandfather, also went there...to subject Tunis.¹

This 1737 justification of a disastrous Portuguese military expedition to North Africa, which ended with the death of Sebastian in the Battle of the Three Kings (1578), shows how important religion was in the early stages of the Portuguese imperial expansion. It expresses a general hostility towards the Muslim world that dates back to the Christian re-conquest, frequently mentioned by Iberian powers eager to avoid European competition in their overseas endeavours. For the Portuguese, mindful of the limitations of their military power, this role in the war against the 'infidel' became a source of political legitimacy for the Portuguese overseas expansion.² An appreciative papacy ought to exert its authority to drive off undesired Christian competitors. However, the conflict with the Muslims was much more than a convenient (albeit sincere) excuse for monopolistic overseas exploration; in fact, the opposition to the 'infidel' became a permanent and operative reference in the Portuguese political culture. Sebastian's desire to follow in his ancestors' footsteps in North Africa shows how decisive the conflict with the Muslims was in the formation of Portuguese military thought and its martial imaginary. North Africa, for Sebastian, was a sacralized battle zone where the Christians had been fighting since the beginning of the fifteenth century. It was perceived as a confronting battleground in which to display religious zeal and military prowess. That is why the ill-fated king could not help himself. That was why he felt the need to expand the Christian faith and to prove himself, even when he was advised to let battle-hardened soldiers do the fighting for him.

Sebastian was undeniably a very enthusiastic and impulsive young man, but he was not alone in his commitment to holy war.³ His approach to warfare, as an expression of a personal and unrestrained desire to spread the Christian faith, was shared by many. It was even openly supported by humanists like Diogo de Teive who praised the Portuguese princes for directing their energies against Islam while others were wasting Christian lives in wars between each other.⁴ The country had been forged in the Christian re-conquest process, just like its more powerful neighbours in Iberia, namely Castile, which eventually became the champion of the Christian cause. The 1499 Revolt of the Alpujarras (a Muslim uprising in the newly conquered kingdom of Granada) propelled the Spaniards,

1 José Pereira Baião, *Portugal cuidadoso, e lastimado com a vida e perda do senhor Rey Dom Sebastião, o desejado de saudosa memoria...* (Lisbon, 1737), pp. 736–7.

2 It has been argued that papal authority was the only source of legitimacy for their overseas expansion. See, for example, Giuseppe Marcocci, 'Conscience and Empire: Politics and Moral Theology in the Early Modern Portuguese World', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 18 (2014), p. 481.

3 This idea was reemphasized by Francisco Contente Domingues, 'A Guerra em Marrocos', in Manuel Themudo Barata and Nuno Severiano Teixeira, eds, *Nova História Militar de Portugal* (5 vols., Lisbon, 2004), II p. 228.

4 Rui Bebiano, *A Pena de Marte: Escrita de guerra em Portugal e na Europa* (secs. XVI–XVIII) (Coimbra, 2000), p. 138.

filled by religious enthusiasm and led by Queen Isabella and Cardinal Cisneros, to embark in their first North African enterprise, conquering Mers-el-Kebir and Oran. Throughout the sixteenth century, the Habsburg monarchs, also called the Catholic Kings, posed the biggest challenge to the Ottoman Empire in the Mediterranean waters until 1572, when things came to a standstill. Soon, the restless Low Countries would require all the monarchy's attention and resources. Spain, as Fernand Braudel famously put it, abandoned the Mediterranean Sea and focused on the maritime powers of the North Atlantic.⁵ Although the Holy War paradigm against the 'infidel' never really disappeared,⁶ a different brand of religious zeal against the Protestants would eventually become a crucial component of Spanish culture.

In the meantime, the Castilian crusading tradition was transposed to the New World, overcoming in the process the merchant-based initiative carried by Christopher Columbus, as John Elliott emphasized several years ago.⁷ For the British historian, the plan of the Genoese to establish a set of commercial bases and outposts could not 'compete with the deeply engrained habits of a crusading society'.⁸ The legendary *conquistadores* were an offshoot of this society where romances of chivalry had become very popular, filling the heads of men with fantastic notions of bravery and with the extraordinary examples of their great heroes of chivalry. As for the Portuguese, their crusading spirit re-emerged in the Indian Ocean, where they arrived in 1498 and found their traditional Muslim foe. In some way, the Portuguese Asiatic adventure resulted from their attempt to outflank the Muslim adversaries. In Asia, they were hoping to find Christian allies, the famous Kingdom of Preste João,⁹ and spread the Christian faith. They quickly asserted themselves as a serious contender in the waters of the Indian Ocean, making great use of artillery in naval confrontations with Asiatic potentates who were clearly unprepared to face these strange but highly aggressive outsiders.¹⁰ The Portuguese also

5 Fernand Braudel, *O Mediterrâneo e o Mundo Mediterrânico na Época de Felipe II* (2 vols, Lisbon, 1995) II (1st edition in French 1949), p. 565.

6 This topic was recently revisited by Philip Williams, who provided an interesting alternative to conventional perspectives about the major geopolitical shifts that occurred in the wake of the Battle of Lepanto (1571). His main observation is that galley-based warfare, had entered into an irredeemable decline. Philip Williams, *Empire and Holy War in the Mediterranean: The Galley and Maritime Conflict between the Habsburgs and Ottomans* (New York, 2014).

7 John Elliott, *Imperial Spain: 1469–1716* (London, 2002) (1st edition 1963), pp. 61–2.

8 Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, p. 62.

9 The Kingdom of Preste João was actually the Empire of Ethiopia, a Christian state that became the object of mythological construction, nurtured by the European Christian imagination during the Middle Ages. The Kingdom of Preste João was supposed to be a rich country that, nevertheless, was always facing Islamic threat. For the Portuguese Kings, Preste João would ally with the newly arrived Portuguese and provide necessary support for the expansion of Christianity in Asia.

10 There are no reasons to question the truthfulness of the Asian accounts. Their reaction to the arrival of Vasco da Gama in India was a combination of terror and surprise and can be seen in several coeval sources. Another interesting thing about the arrival of the Portuguese and their guns in Asia is the way the news travelled. Significantly, the Chinese knew about the capabilities of the Portuguese artillery several years before they

successfully applied the same amphibious tactics that they had been using in North Africa. They drew their ingenuity from previous military experiences in the Empire, which was the base of their religiously charged culture as well as the base of their military know-how, as several scholars have made abundantly clear.¹¹

As a country, Portugal did not take part in the major religious conflicts of sixteenth-century Europe, between Catholics and Protestants, which meant that the Portuguese were largely unfamiliar to the military developments that were happening in Europe. Although effective in North Africa and Asia, the Portuguese military style was essentially disorganized and inorganic, where boldness was frequently accompanied by a complete contempt for a scientific conception of modern warfare.¹² Furthermore, for a long time there was a tremendous shortage of military literature in Portugal, where there was no effort to systematize information or create an organized military doctrine.¹³ According to the leading Portuguese historian António Hespanha, this gradually began to change in the second half of the seventeenth century, as European military doctrines gained new ground in Portugal during the Iberia Union (1580–1640). The imported books on the shelves of noble households testify to the growing taste for military literature and its theoretical developments.¹⁴ Also important was the influence of those who started to serve their new Habsburg rulers in the European battlefields. In a certain way, the integration in the Habsburg Monarchy brought Portugal closer to the core of what has been called Military

anchored in Canton (Guangzhou), in 1517. The classical work of Carlo Cipolla about role of artillery in the European expansion, especially in Asia, remains a must read. Carlo Cipolla, *Canhões e velas na primeira fase da expansão europeia (1400–1700)* (Lisbon, 1989) (1st edition in English 1965). There exists a vast bibliography on the first skirmishes between Portuguese ships and the Asiatic powers. Several years ago, Saturnino Monteiro published *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa* (Lisbon, 1989–1997), in which he tried to provide a roadmap for each one of these naval battles. See, especially, the first six volumes.

- 11 António Hespanha, 'Introdução', in Manuel Themudo Barata and Nuno Severiano Teixeira, ed., *Nova História Militar de Portugal* (5 vols, Lisbon, 2004), II, p. 10. The topic is extraordinarily covered by Bebiano, *A Pena de Marte*.
- 12 Although old-fashioned, João Marinho dos Santos study about Portuguese tactics and strategies during the early stage of their expansion remains important. João Marinho dos Santos, *A Guerra e as guerras na expansão portuguesa – séculos XV e XVI* (Lisbon, 1998).
- 13 Bebiano, 'A Guerra: o seu imaginário e a sua deontologia', in Manuel Themudo Barata and Nuno Severiano Teixeira, eds, *Nova História Militar de Portugal* (5 vols, Lisbon, 2004), II, p. 52.
- 14 All Portuguese major libraries that received or bought private collections are very rich in this distinct literature. Among these repositories, we should emphasize the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Biblioteca da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, Biblioteca da Ajuda, Biblioteca do Exército, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra, and Biblioteca Pública de Évora.
- 15 This is a well-known but also much contested concept that puts an emphasis on technological

Revolution,¹⁵ although, it should be said, Portugal was never really on a par with other European countries.¹⁶

In this article, I will go further. I will argue that the *militari perigrinatio* of those men did more than change military doctrine in Portugal. The exposure to the Eurocentric Spanish military experience reshaped the broader mental framework of the Portuguese martial perceptions, adding new political and religious elements to a military culture that was previously completely dominated by the paradigm of Holy War. The article therefore challenges the prevailing idea that the fight against the ‘infidels’ remained largely undisturbed at the centre of the Portuguese military worldview, even after they became more involved in European affairs. This was the idea, most notably, of Rui Bebiano, a specialist in the evolution of military sensibilities who claimed that the integration of Portugal in the Habsburg Monarchy did not affect the Portuguese martial imaginary centred on crusading ideals.¹⁷ I will argue differently. As happened in Castile, the fight against Muslims remained ubiquitous throughout the seventeenth century. It would be impossible to completely discard all the imperial experiences in Africa and Asia that formed the base of the previous Portuguese martial imaginary. However, Portuguese military culture became much more nuanced and rich, with new military references that outshone, at least to a

determinism to explain political and geopolitical, social and economic change. The main argument of Michal Roberts, its original proponent, was that a sudden transformation in military technologies fomented the development of the centralized state, forced to enhance its fiscal reach in order to cope with the new military expenditures. The concept was famously reviewed by Geoffrey Parker, who considered that transformation in military technologies was the main reason behind the rise of the West after 1500. Such theorizations were debated, contested, and reinterpreted by leading military historians. See Michael Roberts, *The Military Revolution, 1560–1660* (Belfast, 1956); Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution – Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1580–1800* (Cambridge, 2008) (1st edition 1988), and Jeremy Black, *A Military Revolution? Military Change and European Society, 1550–1800* (London, 1991). For the broad debate, see Clifford J. Rodgers, ed., *The Military Revolution Debate – Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (Boulder, CO, 1995).

- 16 A more open-minded approach to European developments in military affairs can be traced back to the first part of the seventeenth century. The adoption of a more scientific treatment of warfare was, however, a gradual if not difficult process, led by military engineers like Luís Serrão Pimentel (1613–1679), Azevedo Fortes (1660–1748), or Manuel da Maia (1677–1768). Portugal, just like other European countries, established military academies as early as 1647, but its military administration seemed outdated to foreigners and even to natives. During the Seven Years War (1756–1763), the country was forced to resort to the leading military power of the period – Prussia – in order to update its military institutions. In the last decade of the eighteenth century, a new emphasis was placed in the teaching of military sciences, with the creation of higher education schools for army and naval officers. For this cultural transformation see, for example, Bebiano, *A Pena de Marte*, pp. 395–461; for a different perspective see Fernando Dores Costa, *Insubmissão – Aversão ao serviço militar no Portugal do século XVIII* (Lisbon, 2010).

—17— Bebiano, ‘A Guerra: o seu imaginário e a sua deontologia’, p. 57.

18 See especially Margarita Levisi, *Autobiografías del Siglo de Oro: Alonso de Contreras*,

certain degree, the Holy War paradigm. New battlegrounds like Flanders were added or re-qualified. There were also new adversaries, namely the Dutch, who had different fighting skills and followed another religious confession. They were also rebels who had rejected their king.

This article is particularly interested in demonstrating how important the experience on the Flanders battlefields was for that transformation. It also aims to show the way in which the Portuguese involvement in that Habsburg commitment poisoned Luso–Spanish relations. I will argue that, in spite of its capacity to attract Portuguese servicemen, Flanders remained foreign to Portugal’s general political interests and hence, a point of contention. Finally, this article revisits one of the more interesting developments of the conflict with the Dutch: its geographical unfolding. This conflict, in all its political and confessional import, re-emerged in other parts of the Portuguese Empire, bestowing a new significance to the battlefields where they faced off. My purpose is to show how this development contributed to revamping the military status of Portuguese America, an unparalleled transformation of a territory that, unlike North Africa or Asia – traditional confrontational spaces with Muslims – had been fairly forgotten as a battleground. This shift in Portuguese martial perceptions about Brazil also explains the Atlantic bent of the text. Although the Asiatic and the African developments are not completely forgotten, this text privileges a territory that saw its martial symbolism completely changed through the fight with other Christians.

The proposed reassessment of the Portuguese martial imaginary in times of political turmoil is based in a two-pronged approach. The first is a direct one that relies primarily on coeval writings of war experiences to uncover the ways in which different battlefields were conceived and stacked against each other. This approach draws from a consolidated tradition of literary studies that have been opening new windows to the lives and passions of past warriors and soldiers in the Spanish *Siglo de Oro*.¹⁸ However, there is also an indirect method, which looks for the military status of different territories in the materials of the Portuguese incentive system, rereading these well-known documents in what I believe is a truly innovative way.

Military service and expanding Empire

Portugal, like many other European countries, had a political culture anchored in permanent negotiation between the sovereign and his subjects.¹⁹ An endless and mutually beneficial chain of reciprocal obligations by which the former gained access to levels of

Jerónimo Pasamonte y Miguel de Castro (Madrid, 1984); Antonio Espino López, *Guerra y cultura en la época moderna* (Madrid, 2001); David García Hernán, *La cultura de la guerra y el teatro del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid, 2006); Stephen Rupp, *Heroic Forms: Cervantes and the Literature of War* (Toronto, 2014), and Miguel Martínez, *Front Lines – Soldiers’ Writing in the Early Modern Hispanic World* (Philadelphia, 2016).

19 The subject has been profusely discussed since the days of Marcel Mauss. See Marcell Mauss, ‘Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l’échange dans les sociétés archaïques’, *Année Sociologique*, 1 (1923–1924). António Hespanha, in particular, made contributions and some of his work on the concept of ‘economy of the gift’ remain indispensable. See,

manpower that would otherwise be unachievable by his conscripting ability alone;²⁰ the latter, meanwhile, could justifiably entertain the possibility of being rewarded for his services to the Crown. In Portugal, as Fernanda Olival noted, ‘serving the crown, with the purpose of asking for rewards, became a way of life to different sectors of the Portuguese social space. It was a strategy of material survival’.²¹ Those who served the Crown were not moved by patriotism or even by love for their king. They did it because they wanted to be rewarded with one of the several grants the king had at his disposal. And there was no better place to do that than North Africa, a ‘superb school of Portuguese prowess’, in the words of Francisco Manuel de Melo.²² In fact, the highly desired insignias of the three military orders (Christ, Avis, and Santiago), which were established with the purpose of overthrowing the ‘infidel’ from the Iberian Peninsula, came to be almost exclusively granted in North Africa. Such was the connection between the Christian reconquest process and the early steps of Portuguese expansion. The same thing happened with commanderies, a highly desired form of social recognition that at the same time guaranteed revenues normally based in the collection of tithes. For example, in 1503 Manuel I asked for the pope’s approval to create 37 new commanderies in the territory controlled by the Portuguese in the Barbary Coast. Manuel’s purpose was to institute

for example, António Hespanha, ‘La economía de la gracia’, in *La gracia del derecho – economía de la cultura en la Edad Moderna* (Madrid, 1993), pp. 151–76. The Portuguese reward system was subsequently explored in great detail by Fernanda Olival. In her comprehensive research, she has proposed an alternative and fairly convincing concept: ‘economy of reward’. According to Olival, the original concept, ‘economy of the gift’, was too broad and imperfect to describe what was essentially a transaction. Fernanda Olival, *As Ordens Militares e o Estado Moderno: Honra, Mercê e Venalidade em Portugal – 1641–1789* (Lisbon, 2001).

20 The argument that the royal power knew no limits has been discredited for some time now. The king, who was mainly conceived as the ultimate judge, shared the political space with other powers such as the Church, the aristocracy and the municipalities. He was not an agent for political or social change, and according to historians like António Hespanha, his political power was passive in nature. António Hespanha, *Poder e instituições na Europa do Antigo Regime* (Lisbon, 1984). To be sure, War tended to reinforce the royal power in countries like Spain and France. I.A.A. Thompson, *War and Government in Habsburg Spain* (London, 1976). However, even in those special conditions, the King was often forced to use private contractors. David Parrott, *Richelieu’s Army. War, Government and Society in France, 1624–1642* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 277–87. Regarding Portugal, a state supposedly marked by a premature centralization (or so we were led to believe), Fernando Dores Costa had demonstrated that the mobilizing powers of the monarchy were grossly overestimated by the nationalistic historiography. Costa, *Insubmissão*.

21 Olival, *As Ordens Militares*, p. 21.

22 Francisco Manuel de Melo, *Epanáforas de vária história portuguesa* (Lisbon, 1660), p. 164. Like Cervantes, who almost lost a hand in Lepanto (1571), Francisco Manuel de Melo was a perfect example of a well-known baroque *topos*: The man who carried a sword in one hand and a pen in the other. He was a soldier who served Habsburgs and Braganças, both in Europe and Brazil. He left a vast literary oeuvre, not unfamiliar to the academy. He will be discussed below in further detail.

favourable conditions for the settlement of Christians with their families and wealth. Not long after, Manuel used papal consent for new commanderies to draw the interest of soldiers willing to serve in the Maghreb. Two years of service would be enough to earn the right to a habit of Christ, such was the commitment of the Crown.²³ As Fernanda Olival wrote, habits and commanderies truly were ‘marks of the political geography of Christianity’.²⁴

In the meantime, as the Empire kept expanding, so too did the incentive system, with new areas being included. From the mid-sixteenth century onwards, someone who had served in Asia or in the galleys of the Algarve could also apply for a royal reward. The common denominator was obviously the Islamic foe. India, in particular, where the Portuguese faced not only Muslims but also the Hindus, found its way into the heights of Portuguese martial thought and the broader Portuguese culture as well. Expansion in the Indian Ocean became the main topic of a literary explosion that included João de Barros’ *Décadas da Ásia* (1552), Fernão Lopes de Castanheda’s *História do Descobrimento e Conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses* (1552), and the *Comentários de Afonso de Albuquerque* (1557). Writers like Diogo do Couto and João Baptista Lavanha would add their extraordinary contribution to that scholarly tradition on the military and political achievements of *Estado da Índia*.²⁵

North Africa’s place at the top of the Portuguese martial imaginary remained intact for a very long time. There was even a special denomination for services rendered there; they would be officially called ‘Services of Africa’, as if to show they were better regarded than the others. The incentive system was also more demanding in other geographies than it was to North Africa. Petitioners had to prove extraordinary feats of bravery in other places; they also had to serve for longer periods. Pope Gregory XIII, in 1575, demanded three years of service in India for a habit of a military order, while in North Africa two years would suffice.²⁶ In the meantime, concession of commanderies remained restricted to the North African service.²⁷

These requirements were favourably revised by the Habsburgs after they had assumed power in Portugal in 1580. They also expanded the incentive system to Angola, where there was no Muslim threat but where the Portuguese had been facing stiff local resistance from as early as 1579.²⁸ This was significant. Rewards for military bravery

23 Fernanda Olival, ‘Mercês, serviços, e circuitos de comunicação no império português’, in Maria Emília Madeira Santos and Manuel Lobato, ed., *Domínio da Distância* (Lisbon, 2006), pp. 60–1.

24 Olival, *As Ordens Militares*, p. 52.

25 About this literary tradition, see Diogo Ramada Curto, ‘Cultura escrita e práticas de identidade’, in Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhury, eds, *História da expansão Portuguesa* (5 vols, Lisbon, 1998) II, pp. 458–531.

26 Olival, *As Ordens Militares*, p. 54.

27 Fernanda Olival, ‘As Ordens Militares Portuguesas sob os Áustrias: as mudanças e as continuidades’, in Pedro Cardim, Leonor F. Costa, and Mafalda Soares da Cunha, eds, *Portugal na Monarquia Hispânica. Dinâmicas de integração e conflito* (Lisbon, 2013), p. 169.

28 Mentioned in the Overseas Council (*Conselho Ultramarino*). Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU), Consultas Mistas, Book 86, 31v–32v. Consulta, 8 July 1688.

were losing their special Islamic stamp, which can be interpreted as a sign of the more diverse martial world of the Habsburgs penetrating the Portuguese worldview. Brazil, however, seems to be left out of this reform, at least initially. Although growing in economic and political importance, the territory was still unappreciated as a battle zone. Throughout the sixteenth century, the territory had been spared from major confrontations, certainly with adversaries whose military strength – or, more precisely, the perception of it – would help to confer a superior military dignity to the colony. There was no overthrow of a great indigenous empire in Brazil, unlike what happened in Spanish America, where the defeat of the Inca and Mexican Empires and the great uprisings of the Mapuche (Arauco War) would become the cornerstones of a grandiose narrative. As Anthony Pagden has noted, ‘the existence of a “heroic” indigenous past was crucial to the military imaginary that made up so large a part of the *criollos* vision of their own history as a self-aware people’.²⁹

Also left out of the Habsburgs’ reformation of the Portuguese incentive system was European territories – that is, Habsburg lands. Considering services in territories that were never part of the Portuguese interests might have seemed suspicious to those who remained disaffected by the Portuguese integration into the Spanish Monarchy, despite all the concessions that Philip II made to the Portuguese national assembly (*Cortes*) in 1581. It might have seemed like a misappropriation of resources that only benefited Madrid and its European official ambitions.

The Iberian Union and the martial dignity of the new European front

In 1580, without a head of state, Portugal seemed destined to join the Castilians, Catalans, Aragonese, Valencians, Milanese, Neapolitans, Sicilians and Flemish in the vast political conglomerate of the Habsburgs. Although a fairly common experience in mediaeval Europe, this was the first time the West European Kingdom had to share its King with other states, a prospect that some resented. The resistance to Philip was organized around Anthony (*Prior do Crato*), another credible heir, but was defeated by a combination of military power (approximately 35,000 men crossed the Portuguese border) and judicious politics. In August of 1580, the Duke of Alba crushed Anthony’s army in the outskirts of Lisbon, and in the following year, Philip II of Habsburg successfully navigated his way through the demands of the Portuguese national assembly (*Cortes*) to become Philip I of Portugal.

In spite of the role played by military force, Portugal kept its political status as an autonomous Kingdom within the Habsburg Monarchy. The country became part of what has been conventionally called a Composite Monarchy, an aggregation of largely autonomous polities by which each kingdom maintained its political autonomy and traditional liberties in spite of losing its de facto independence.³⁰ That would not have been the case

29 Anthony Pagden, ‘Identity formation in Spanish America’, in Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, eds, *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Princeton, 1987), p. 66.

30 The concept of Composite Monarchies was famously developed by John Elliott several years ago. The formation of composite states was a political solution for princes that were looking for new sources of wealth and to enhance their prestige but did not have the

had Philip taken another path; had he considered it a Conquest (*Conquista*), those autonomies and traditional liberties would have been almost certainly slashed.³¹ Being an autonomous Kingdom, however, did not mean living a separate existence or that Madrid was unable to interfere in its affairs. In fact, according to Giuseppe Marcocci, Madrid was intrusive enough to reshape the Portuguese imperial imagination.³² The institutional changes brought by the Habsburgs diminished the centrality of the traditional religious element of the Portuguese imperial policies, with the theologians and the canonical jurists becoming unable to dictate Portuguese's view of the world³³ or define the country's adversaries. Ultimately, this meant that the Portuguese martial imagination became less and less obsessed with the visceral war with Muslims.

At the same time, Spanish military experience in Europe and its brand of religious sectarianism breached the Portuguese cultural universe. Particularly influential seems to have been the war in Flanders. Normally called the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648), it opposed the Protestant Provinces of the Low Countries to the king of Spain and its political and religious hegemony. This was a place that acquired a special symbolism from the very beginning when, in 1567, the Duke of Alba (who would later lead the invasion of Portugal) reorganized his troops around the most effective fighting unit of the time – the Spanish *tercio*.³⁴ Feared by their adversaries, the *tercios* of Flanders were the only military units in a perpetual state of warfare, according to a fearful but also defiant Welsh soldier who fought them in the Low Countries.³⁵ In fact, their number never dropped below 13,000. Their military feats, but also their brutality, would continue to be recorded by chroniclers like Jean Antoine Vincart and by soldiers who inhabited Madrid's criminal underworld,³⁶ even after the setbacks suffered at the hands of Maurice of Nassau (1567–1625).

resources or desire to embark on military campaigns, which would have only alienated the very same territories and peoples they were trying to incorporate. See broader discussion in John Elliott, 'A Europe of Composite Monarchies', *Past & Present*, 137 (1992), pp. 48–71.

31 The discussion about the political status of each territory within the Habsburg Monarchy was masterfully depicted by Pedro Cardim. Being integrated by military submission normally meant a downgraded political status and the loss of political autonomy and traditional liberties. It was, therefore, crucial to prove that the means of integration were based on negotiation, i.e. a concession. See Pedro Cardim, *Portugal Unido y Separado – Felipe II la unión de territorios y el debate sobre la condición política del Reino de Portugal* (Valladolid, 2014).

32 Marcocci, 'Conscience and Empire', p. 492.

33 Op. cit., p. 491.

34 Fernando González de León, *The Road to Rocroi. Class, Culture and Command in the Spanish Army of Flanders, 1567–1659* (Leiden and Boston, 2009), p. 49. See also the classical study of René Quatrefages, *Los tercios españoles, 1567–1577* (Madrid, 1979).

35 Roger Williams, *A briefe discourse of warre. Written by Sir Roger Williams Knight; with his opinion concerning some parts of the martiall discipline* (London, 1590), p. 11.

36 About this underworld, see especially Martínez, *Front Lines*, pp. 178–90.

In spite of the lack of support that the Castilian population sometimes displayed regarding the Habsburgs' expensive anti-heretical campaigns in the Low Countries,³⁷ Flanders became the central feature of Spanish military culture, and nowhere is this more obvious than in the decoration of royal palaces. Motifs allusive to the military achievements of the *tercios* of Flanders were carefully selected by Philip to embellish *El Escorial* whose inspiration came from a military victory: the victory of St Quentin in the Low Countries, achieved over the French in 1557.³⁸ In another royal palace, *El Buen Retiro*, the war in Flanders would become consecrated by the hand of Diego Velázquez, the most famous Spanish baroque painter. The *Rendición de Breda* or *Las Lanzas* (The Surrender of Breda or The Lances) is a perfect expression of a period when military reality was fashioned like an immense theatre of shapes and forms. The painting was part of a broader artistic programme with the clear underlying political purpose of making a political statement.³⁹ It was displayed with twelve other representations of the Habsburg victories in the magnificent *Salón de Reinos* (Hall of Kingdoms) in harmony with a taste for the aesthetics of military operations that we can trace back to Renaissance art.⁴⁰ As time went by, Flanders also acquired significance at a more popular level, projecting a martial aura that everybody knew. For example, the Jesuit Diego Rosales used it in his general history of Chile (written in 1674 but only published in 1877–78).⁴¹ Diego Rosales wanted to stress the importance of the long-lasting conflict with the Mapuche (Arauco War) and, in his view, there was no better way of doing that than by titling his book *Flandes Indiano*.

As for the Portuguese, Flanders also became part of their cultural universe and appears to have become so very quickly, as a 1593 poem written in *ottava rima* by a Portuguese soldier, named Emanuel Antunes, suggests.⁴² The epic poem displays what seems to be a

37 All Spanish leading ministers had to deal with a disgruntled population that probably paid more taxes than any other in the Composite Monarchy of the Habsburgs. Furthermore, and as I.A.A. Thompson stated, the Castilians considered themselves 'less as the protagonists of an anti-heretical crusade' and more as 'victim of a protestant anti-Catholic crusade'. I.A.A. Thompson, 'La respuesta castellana ante la política internacional de Felipe II', in L. Ribot, ed., *La Monarquía de Felipe II a debate* (Madrid, 2000), p. 133. I would like to thank Pedro Cardim for this information about the way the Spaniards saw themselves as the ultimate defenders of Catholicism.

38 González de León, *The Road to Rocroi*, pp. 66–7.

39 About the Hall of Kingdoms, see revised version of Jonathan Brown and John Elliott, *Un Palacio para El Rey – El Buen Retiro y la Corte de Felipe IV* (Kindle edition, 2016) (1st edition 1980).

40 See especially Richard Hale, *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance* (New Haven and London, 1990).

41 Diego Rosales, *Historia general del reino de Chile: Flandes indiano*, Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, ed. (Valparaíso, 1877–78).

42 Emanuel Antunes, *Primera parte de la baxada de los Españoles de Francia en Normandia...* (Rouen, 1593). The book had a second edition, published in Antwerp, in 1622, which suggests that it had some demand in the dynamic editorial market of the Low Countries. The fact that the second edition appeared right after the hostilities were resumed between the Habsburgs and the United Provinces in 1621 might have some relevance. Emanuel Antunes was the brother of the famous Simão Antunes, who would become a Captain-General of Flanders and to whom I will return later.

deep-rooted commitment to the fight with the Protestants,⁴³ as if this religious antagonism had always been an important part of the Portuguese political imaginary. As time went by, the war in the Low Countries also turned into a symbolic yardstick for military activity among Portuguese soldiers. Those who had served there considered themselves to be above those that did not, and they purposely boasted about their tenure in Flanders from the beginning of the seventeenth century. For example, in 1612, during a military expedition to Maranhão, there were some disorders between two groups of soldiers after one of them, a group of overconfident Flanders veterans serving in Brazil, scorned the others who had just arrived.⁴⁴ This clash between foot soldiers over their different military backgrounds shows that martial symbolisms went far beyond the chivalrous aristocratic world. Foot soldiers had a much more complex relation with war than we sometimes are led to believe.⁴⁵ Aversion, fear and the will to desert certainly went hand in hand with an explicit valorization of what was a very intense and unforgettable experience that some of them tried to share in their literary endeavours.⁴⁶

Francisco Manuel de Melo was certainly one of the Portuguese authors that wrote most extensively about the war of Flanders. The prolific writer, commenting on the appointment of the Count of Óbidos for the government of the Kingdom of Algarve, regarded the Count's tenure in 'Flanders' as a 'school [that] was so highly regarded in the World that hours spent there were deemed more reputable than years spent in any other militia'.⁴⁷ As far as battlegrounds were concerned, Flanders had no equal. Manuel de Melo was a cosmopolitan, as was noted by the Portuguese historian António de Oliveira,⁴⁸ and that personal trait certainly manifested in military affairs as well. He positioned himself above parochial political frontiers. He even derisively commented on Portugal and its Empire. According to the Eurocentric project of the Habsburgs, centred in Flanders, these were marginal battlegrounds: 'our wars were in such remote Provinces as Portugal, Asia, Africa and America'.⁴⁹ Francisco Manuel de Melo was, unsurprisingly, a supporter of the mobilization of Portuguese soldiers to the Flanders front during the Iberian Union. He went there himself in 1639 ahead of a *tercio* of 1170 men: 600 Galicians and 570 Portuguese recruited in the provinces of Douro e Minho, Beira, Trás-os-Montes e Alentejo.⁵⁰ Such a mobilization

43 Antunes, *Primera parte*, p. 23.

44 João Paulo Salvado and Susana Münch Miranda, eds, *Livro 1º do Governo do Brasil (1607–1633)* (Lisbon, 2001), p. 98.

45 The resistance to military service was a fundamental component of early modern Europe in general and Portugal, in particular. See, for example, Costa, *Insubmissão*. I would venture to say that this topic has been emphasized to a point where there seems to be no other choices, almost as if no men have ever volunteered.

46 This soldierly experience and their literary outputs, significantly called 'soldierly republic of letters', were recently revisited. See Martínez, *Front Lines*, p. 1.

47 Francisco Manuel de Melo, *Tácito Português, Vida, Morte, Ditos e Feitos de El Rei Dom João IV de Portugal* (Lisbon, 1995), p. 151.

48 António de Oliveira, 'D. Francisco Manuel de Melo, historiador', *Península. Revista de Estudos Ibéricos*, 6 (2009), p. 25.

49 Melo, *Epanáforas*, p. 47.

50 Edgar Prestage, *D. Francisco Manuel de Mello, Esboço Biographico* (Lisbon, 1996) (1st edition 1914), p. 107.

would certainly satisfy his taste for European military orthodoxy, but it would also bring practical benefits that the seasoned officer alluded to figuratively in his *Epanáforas*: ‘our nation transplanted to foreign lands, according to foreigners, it happens to her the same thing that happens to the Persian apples . . . , which remarkably improve themselves in taste and virtue’. In other words, fighting in Flanders was an opportunity to acquire the military skills the Portuguese so badly needed. Flanders ‘would be a school of captains’.⁵¹

Francisco Manuel de Melo or Emanuel Antunes were not alone in this literary hypervalorization of the Flanders battlefields. Francisco Sardinha also wrote positively about the Portuguese involvement in that European front. The organization of the contents of his *Parnaso de Vila Viçosa* is very telling. It shows that Flanders had taken centre stage, while other territories that had played a crucial role in the formation of the Portuguese martial imaginary, such as India, were being downgraded. A survey of remarkable services performed by men born in the ducal town of Vila Viçosa ranks more highly those who had distinguished themselves in the Low Countries than those that did it in Asia,⁵² a much more familiar area to the Portuguese imperial culture. Only North Africa seems to have retained its original status. In the mid-seventeenth century, the historical perception of the military past came to include new political and religious references.

In 1580, the war in Flanders was essentially seen as a distant issue. By the 1630s, however, it was a familiar feature in the Portuguese military culture; it was a frequent reference in books that had clear ambitions to regulate military activity in the country, such as the *Arte Militar* (1612), by Luís Mendes de Vasconcelos, or *Abeceário Militar* (1631), by João de Brito Lemos. Thus, it must have surprised no one when immediately after the Portuguese secession, Luís Marinho de Azevedo published a set of military regulations that were purposely linked to Flanders. They were said to be a replica of the ordinances originally introduced in the Army of Flanders by the Prince of Parma.⁵³ The quest for military credibility that Luís Marinho de Azevedo, himself a veteran from Flanders, could not find anywhere else besides Flanders proves how much this conflict had grown in the Portuguese cultural universe.

The 1640 secession also entailed the return of several Portuguese who were serving the deposed king. According to some authors there were some 4000 Portuguese ‘among captains and soldiers’ who, at any given time, served in the court of Madrid and in Flanders, Italy and the Indies.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, we cannot determine, at least for now, how many were ascribed to each one of those places and how this number evolved in time; the fact that the Portuguese fought alongside other Iberians as ‘*gente Española*’⁵⁵ (Spanish people) does not help this research endeavour. As a commentator noted in 1630, the Portuguese on the several military fronts of the Habsburgs were always considered

51 Melo, *Epanáforas*, p. 183.

52 Sardinha, *O Parnaso de Vila Viçosa*, Christopher Lund, ed. (Rio de Janeiro, 2003), pp. 15–17, 215 *et seq.*

53 Luís Marinho de Azevedo, *Ordenanças militares para disciplina da milícia portuguesa, recopiladas das que instituiu em Flandes o Príncipe de Parma, & das mais que se observão nos exercitos, & armadas* (Lisbon, 1641).

54 Luís Augusto Rebelo da Silva, *História de Portugal nos séculos XVII e XVIII* (6 vols., Lisbon, 1971–1972) (1st edition 1860–1871) IV, p. 382.

55 Antunes, *Primera parte*, p. 17.

full Spaniards: 'In Flanders, in Italy, and all over the World, the Portuguese are natural and loyal vassals of Your Majesty, and equal with the Castilians and other Spaniards'.⁵⁶ However, we can say that those veterans who defected to the Braganças side became the initial core of the Portuguese forces in the War of Restoration (1641–68).⁵⁷ There are at least some signs that suggest that the new dynasty tried to take advantage of their military expertise, revealing a preference for a certain kind of military experience. For example, many of the men who applied for the post of Capitán in a new regiment to be created in the province of Alentejo in the summer of 1645 were seasoned officers, with commissions in Flanders, Italy, and Brazil, where they fought the Dutch.⁵⁸ Apparently, they were no longer interested in men with tenures in North Africa, where they would have faced the traditional Muslim foe. Such was the scale of the change in the Portuguese martial imaginary.

A few years later, in 1652, a letter from a Provincial General (*Governador de Armas*) seems to confirm the same impression. João da Costa, while commenting on the unreasonable requests of the Habsburgs in exchange for the release of prisoners of war, claimed 'that almost all the officers of this army... came from the armies of Flanders, Italy and Catalonia'.⁵⁹ In fact, it was more than just the officer class, which tended to be filled by more experienced personnel, if nothing else was considered (such as social origin). In a letter that the Marquis of Alegrete sent to the King in the fall of 1646 it is said 'that two thirds of the people that serve Your Majesty in this Kingdom come from Castile, Italy, Catalonia and Flanders, where they have been serving the King of Castile'.⁶⁰

The Portuguese experience in Flanders was processed in different ways in the decades that followed the 1640 rebellion. On the one hand, it became inconvenient evidence of the Portuguese involvement in the Habsburgs' war effort in Europe. There was a desire to redeem the country from a belligerent effort that played a major part in the development of anti-Spanish propaganda – the Black Legend. The Portuguese secessionist pamphlets quickly denounced the violent nature of the Habsburgs' European policy while also whitewashing the dubious role of the Portuguese.⁶¹ On the other hand, it was a

56 Lourenço de Mendonça, *Suplicacion a Sv Magestad Catolica del Rey nuestro señor... ante sus Reales Consejos de Portugal y de las Indias, en defensa de los portugueses* (Madrid, 1630), fl. 35v. Lourenço de Mendonça, was trying to make a point about the persecution of Portuguese in Spanish America for confessional reasons. About this topic, see Jonathan Israel, 'The Portuguese in Seventeenth-Century Mexico', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, 11 (1974), pp. 12–32, or Studnicki-Gizbert, Daviken, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492–1640* (Oxford, 2009).

57 Silva, *História de Portugal*, IV, pp. 199–200.

58 P. Laranjo Coelho, *Cartas dos Governadores da Província do Alentejo a El-Rei D. João IV e a El-Rei D. Afonso VI* (Lisbon, 1940), pp. 87–92. Letter from Castelo Melhor, 28 June 1645.

59 P. Laranjo Coelho, *Cartas dos Governadores da Província do Alentejo a El-Rei D. João IV* (Lisbon, 1940), pp. 219–20. Letter from João da Costa, 27 April 1652.

60 Coelho, *Cartas... a El-Rei D. João IV e a El-Rei D. Afonso VI*, pp. 122–3. Letter from Alegrete, 4 October 1646.

61 Pedro Cardim, 'História, política e reputação no discurso del duque de Alba al Catolico Felipe IV sobre el consejo, que se dió en Abril passado, para la recuperación de Portugal...

distinguishing factor for those who served there. It was a symbol of military proficiency in a country that seemed to be particularly cognizant of its backwardness in military affairs. It became a valued commodity that apparently coexisted well with the imperial-based political culture of the new Bragança dynasty. Veterans of Flanders, such as Matias de Albuquerque (1580–1647), best known for his tenure in Pernambuco, claimed that his stint in Flanders should grant him additional honours. According to a disdainful letter from the French Ambassador, François Lanier, written on 6 April 1642, Portugal was bursting with aristocrats convinced of their expertise just because they had served in Flanders and in Brazil against the Dutch.⁶² The fascination with the Flanders battlefields lasted for several years after the independence was officialized with Spain (1668). In 1680, it was said that the appointment of the Count of Sabugal to the War Council was due to the military expertise he acquired in Flanders.⁶³ More than twenty years later, an enthusiastic description of a painting of the ‘famous Simão Antunes [brother of Emanuel Antunes]... Captain-General of Flanders’, written in the wake of the Portuguese 1706 invasion of Madrid, proves how ingrained the memory of Flanders was. The men who stormed *El Buen Retiro* could not disguise their admiration for Simão Antunes, exhibited with the other ‘portraits of the greatest men of Spain’.⁶⁴

The power of the past: the Portuguese historical interests and the Habsburg political project

The first official contract for a Portuguese *tercio* to be deployed in Flanders was signed in 1592, although it ultimately did not reach Northern Europe.⁶⁵ It was the 1602–03 military levies (*levas*) that likely interrupted a system dominated by rogue adventurers who had been finding opportunities in Flanders or in any other part of the Habsburg Monarchy since 1580, if not before.⁶⁶ Gaspar de Sousa and Jorge de Mascarenhas,

(1645), de Braz da França’, in David M. Marcos, José M. Iñurritegui, Pedro Cardim, org., *Repensar a Identidade – O mundo ibérico nas margens da crise da consciência europeia* (Lisbon, 2015), pp. 91–130.

62 Paulette Demerson, ed., ‘Correspondance diplomatique de François Lanier, résidant de France à Lisbonne’, *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Calouste Gulbenkian*, 33 (1994), pp. 752–54.

63 Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Estado, legajo 4029. Letter from the Spanish Ambassador, 10 June 1680.

64 Academia das Ciências de Lisboa (ACL), Série Vermelha 45, fls. 17 *et seq.* Entitled *Diario Bellico*, this was a war chronicle of a clergyman named Domingos Conceição, who accompanied the Portuguese troops during these campaigns in Iberia. The text remained in manuscript form until 2013, when it was published in Spanish. See Domingos Conceição (2013), *Diario Bellico – La Guerra de Sucesión en España*, V. Albareda Salvadó and J. León Sanz, introductory study (Alicante, 2013).

65 Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road – 1567–1659, The Logistics of the Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries’ Wars* (London, 1972), p. 45.

66 Although Portugal, as a country, normally refrained itself from participating in major European political events or conflicts, the Portuguese soldiers and mercenaries seemed to have always been attracted by the Spanish military commitments in the Old World.

leaders of those expeditions, would become colonial administrators: the former embarked for Brazil in 1612, while the latter governed the North African presidios of Mazagan (1615–1619) and Tangier (1622–1624) before being nominated the First Viceroy of Brazil (1640). On a related issue, and as was recently noted, there seems to be a circulation pattern here. Madrid might have wanted to reshape the profile of the Portuguese colonial administrators,⁶⁷ to impose a more ‘muscular’ approach to the Portuguese imperial practices through the appointment of men like Diogo Luís de Oliveira, also a veteran from Flanders and commander of a troublesome expedition, which points to a broader pattern of political tension, as I will try to show. In the following pages, we will see how the Portuguese involvement in Flanders, as the focal point of Spanish military commitments in Europe, added new elements of tension to the already strained Luso–Spanish relations.⁶⁸ I will try to illustrate this in two ways. First, by focusing in the individual sphere of the men who went to serve in a land that was not part of the Portuguese official interests; second, considering the national scale, and particularly the issue of appropriation and deviation of resources.

Diogo Luís de Oliveira, who would become Governor-General of Brazil (1626–35) and participate in several expeditions to Flanders, was entrusted by the Habsburgs to raise a *tercio* in Portugal in early 1617.⁶⁹ By that time, he was in Madrid demanding

Francisco de Almeida, for example, who served as the first Viceroy of Portuguese India, had previously fought in the army of Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon against the Emirate of Granada (1481–1492). Others joined the armies that the famous Gran Capitán Gonzalo de Córdoba led to Italy, with several of them embarking afterwards to Portuguese imperial outposts. Another good example of this kind of involvement in Spanish military operations in Europe, before the Iberian Union, was Álvaro da Costa de Morais, who was nominated captain of a presidio in Naples by the Emperor Charles V. About this Álvaro da Costa de Morais, see Francisco de Morais Sardinha, *O Parnaso*, p. 225. Regarding the men who joined Gonzalo de Córdoba, see Francisco Manuel de Melo, *Política Militar en Avisos Generales* (Lisbon, 2000) (1st edition 1638), p. 12.

67 Domingo Centenero de Arce, ‘Soldados portugueses en la monarquía católica, soldados castellanos en la India Lusa’, in Cardim, Costa, Cunha, org., *Portugal na Monarquia Hispânica*, pp. 47–72.

68 As António Hespanha warned us many years ago, one should not look for a single explanation for the Portuguese 1640 secession, and certainly not a nationalistic explanation. Growing fiscal impositions, royal interference with traditional administrative procedures, disrespecting constitutional autonomies, social tensions, factional fights among different groups that competed for a privileged access to the king or a supposed disregard of the Portuguese Empire all played some role in the events. António Hespanha, ‘As Faces de Uma “Revolução”’, *Penélope – Fazer e Desfazer História*, 9/10 (1993), pp. 7–16. Among the several authors that have been exploring the Portuguese secession from several viewpoints, two remained crucial: António de Oliveira, *Poder e Oposição Política em Portugal no Período Filipino – 1580–1640* (Lisboa, 1990) and Jean-Frédéric Schaub, *Le Portugal au temps du comte-duc d’Olivares* (1621–40). *Le conflit de juridictions comme exercice de la politique* (Madrid, 2001).

69 Before being nominated Governor-General of Brazil in 1626, he served in Flanders and Palatinate from 1619 to 1625. After his return to Europe, in 1635, he was nominated Mestre de Campo in the army that the Prince of Parma led to Flanders, in 1637. Two years later he took part in another expedition that Madrid sent to Flanders, which ended in the disastrous

satisfaction for services he rendered to the Habsburgs since 1599 and also for his father's services to Sebastian in North Africa, where he died in the Battle of the Three Kings (1578).⁷⁰ However, the initiative met several setbacks. First, the future governor of Brazil wanted to be rewarded with a time extension in the assets the Crown had previously conceded to his family (in this case a commandery), claiming it was a customary benefit for military recruiters in Portugal.⁷¹ Such a solution entailed a transfer of Portuguese resources – destined in theory to meet Portuguese imperial demands – to the advantage of the Habsburgs' military effort in Europe. The King rejected Oliveira's claim. 'Those extensions in the commanderies are not appropriate', he noted in the dispatch. However, Philip III assured him an allowance of 2000 ducats to be paid in Lisbon, from where he ought to embark for Flanders with the Portuguese *tercio*. And it was when he tried to collect the allowance in Lisbon that the expedition faced its first problem. The Treasury Council (*Conselho da Fazenda*), despite the royal provision, refused to release any funds to the expedition. Other financial obstacles appeared in the meantime. Such was the financial resistance that Philip III was forced to write four times to the Portuguese authorities to compel them to execute his orders.⁷² Before heading for Flanders in early 1619, the expedition would eventually encounter other setbacks in Lisbon, where, according to the Oliveira, the recruits arrived nearly naked.⁷³

The opposition to the mobilization of Portuguese soldiers to Flanders would eventually resurface in 1619 in the national assembly (*Cortes*). Although some viewed the several European military commitments held by Madrid as worthwhile endeavours against 'heretics', others were far less enthusiastic; they did not identify themselves with the Habsburgs' project. For the Third Estate, 'soldiers should not be taken from this Crown to another Crown'.⁷⁴ In other words, the Third Estate appears to have had a compartmentalized view of the Monarchy, which was completely at odds with the general idea of the Union of Arms put forward by the Count Duke of Olivares a few years later.⁷⁵

The reaction to the divisive mobilization of Portuguese soldiers to Flanders went beyond institutions, which, in any case, would be more likely to assume a more nationalistic bent⁷⁶ (they were certainly more nationalistic than individuals who were essentially moved by

Battle of the Downs – with the Spanish fleet being completely obliterated by the Dutch in October of that same year. The conduct of Oliveira as the commander of part of the fleet was weighed and discussed in a lengthy session by the Council of State, without major consequences to the experienced officer. Diogo Luís de Oliveira was no stranger to the backstage politics of the Habsburg Monarchy. See AGS, Estado, Legajo 2053, n° 36 and 39. See also Azevedo, *Ordenanças militares*.

70 AGS, Estado, legajo 2750. Council of State, 28 January 1618.

71 AGS, Estado, legajo 2750. Council of State, 28 January 1618.

72 AGS, Secretarías Provinciales, Book 1516, fls. 67v, 98v, 129v, 146.

73 AGS, Estado, legajo 2308, folder 910. Report of Diogo Luís de Oliveira, 19 April 1619.

74 Centenero de Arce, 'Soldados portugueses en la monarquía católica', pp. 53–4.

75 The work of John Elliott about this project of Olivares, as anything that concerns the government of the Count Duke, remains essential. John Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares – The Statesman in an Age of Decline* (New Haven and London, 1986), pp. 244–77.

76 This reactionary role that the institutions played during the Iberian Union was recently identified and discussed in several essays of a collective work organized by Pedro Cardim,

their own personal interest). When the issue resurfaced again a few years later, it was by the pen of one individual, João Pinto Ribeiro, a future champion of the Portuguese secessionist cause, and could not have been a more public display of dissatisfaction. The *Discurso sobre os fidalgos e soldados portugueses não militarem em conquistas alheas desta Coroa* (which roughly translates as *Discourse on the Portuguese noblemen and soldiers serving in conquests foreign to this Crown*) published in 1632 in a surprisingly crude tone for a text that had a good chance of getting into the hands of leading ministers, boldly exposed the Iberian misunderstandings in matters of global strategy. It is unsurprising that the book was considered seditious in Madrid, leading, according to one author, to a tighter censorship on Portuguese publications.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, it is unclear how much effort Madrid devoted to this editorial plan – they might have been successful since no other book with similar contentious contents was published before 1640 – but very soon they would face an even bigger challenge with the 1637 popular uprisings in the South of Portugal.

It should be noted that João Pinto Ribeiro was not necessarily hostile to the global ambitions of Madrid, at least not on principle. He openly supported military action against the Protestants. However, at a certain point it seems he suggested that the war in Flanders was imprudent and lacked legitimacy. The Habsburgs had been reckless, insensitive to the ‘humours’ of each kingdom, in particular in ‘Flanders’ where ‘it was known the humour of not being taxed’. Besides the confessional dimension, the Portuguese magistrate seems to have conceived of the war in the Low Countries as a national revolt, whose intensity the Habsburg were underestimating, wrongly believing that ‘all would be resolved by weapons’.⁷⁸

Confronting the Dutch in the Low Countries, or as Pinto Ribeiro called it ‘indoors’,⁷⁹ that is, within Europe, was strategically flawed, causing pernicious effects in the Portuguese world. Flanders was now absorbing the Portuguese resources, historically destined to other military commitments, especially in the Empire. And that implied an inherent devaluation of Portuguese interests. In allegorical language, Pinto Ribeiro stated that ‘to take soldiers to Flanders is [like] to cut forces of the river, un-channelling it, and to embolden the enemy’.⁸⁰ Leaving the Empire vulnerable for the benefit of Spanish commitment in the Low Countries also meant a blatant disrespect for Portuguese history and political imaginary, which was based on a unique view of a past that had nothing to do with the sectarian war against the Protestants. To ‘maintain Kingdoms and Landlords’ it was crucial, Pinto Ribeiro wrote, ‘to be mindful of the principles and means by which each one grew and flourished, and set itself in the augmentation and height of its glories’. Awareness of the Kingdom’s history and traditional areas of expansion was paramount for any councillor or minister, namely for those born in Portugal: ‘poorly satisfy the councillors of this vote (mobilizing Portuguese soldiers to Flanders) the obligation of

Leonor Freire da Costa and Mafalda Soares da Cunha, and entitled *Portugal na Monarquia Hispânica*.

77 Silva, *História de Portugal*, III, pp. 417–18.

78 João Pinto Ribeiro, *Discurso sobre os fidalgos e soldados portugueses não militarem em conquistas alheas desta Coroa* (Lisbon, 1632), pp. 12v–13.

79 Ribeiro, *Discurso*, p. 13.

80 Ribeiro, *Discurso*, p. 5.

their office, which is being well acquainted with the histories of the neighbour Kingdoms, and even more when it is their own and native Kingdom'.⁸¹

The magistrate suggested an 'outdoors' war instead. In other words, he suggested that the war ought to be fought outside Europe in the colonies, towards which the Portuguese soldiers should be mobilized, and where they could therefore replicate the 'glorious achievements of their grandfathers'.⁸² Moreover, he wasted no time in trying to debunk the idea that the Portuguese stopped serving in India for lack of suitable reward. And he was not exactly wrong. Bureaucratic footprints suggest that Madrid kept an obsessive vigilance in the incentive system of the Portuguese Empire. For example, in the early 1620s, and in little less than one year, Philip III wrote at least four times about the need to fulfil the pretensions of those who served in faraway outposts. First, he appealed to the Viceroy Count of Salinas to be diligent in his assessment of petitions that came from India, in particular from 'people who were maimed in war', from 'sons and daughters of men who have served there well, [who were] already deceased and killed in war', and from those who provided 'remarkable services'. Salinas was also instructed to ask for the papers of those who could not afford to petition the king.⁸³ Lastly, he demanded that priority be given to the services performed in Asia. Everything else should wait.⁸⁴

The Portuguese incentive system was still functioning for imperial purposes. The problem lay, according to Pinto Ribeiro, in the unfair distribution of the prize, which was later confirmed in a phrase from the famous Jesuit António Vieira: 'the valiant get the wounds and the fortunate the prizes'.⁸⁵ There was, however, an emerging problem that derived from the rather unrestrained circulation of military personnel within a political and institutional structure that was not prepared to cope with it. Several petitions held by the General Archive of Simancas show that the clauses of the 1581 Iberian Union did not envision the problems created by those Portuguese who served in Europe. The terms of agreement guaranteed, among other things, that all the superior offices and positions in Portugal ought to remain in the hands of native-born Portuguese. They were, however, completely silent about the way to address the claims of Portuguese soldiers who went to territories not under the control of the Portuguese Crown. Those who served in Flanders or in any other territory directly controlled by Castile risked falling into a bureaucratic and jurisdictional vacuum, which exposed them to restrictive interpretations of the Iberian Union. To be sure, there was no formal restriction, as João Pinto Ribeiro admitted when he claimed that the Portuguese 'noblemen and soldiers who went to Flanders' could be 'paid in this Crown, or any other Crown'.⁸⁶ However, there are signs that seem to suggest an unwillingness to reward

81 Ribeiro, *Discurso*, p. 5v.

82 Ribeiro, *Discurso*, p. 7v.

83 AGS, Secretarias Provinciales, Book 1517, fls. 24–24v. Letter to the Viceroy, 12 March 1620.

84 AGS, Secretarias Provinciales, Book 1517, fl. 45. Letter to the Viceroy de 18 November 1620.

85 António Vieira, *Sermam que pregou o P. Antonio Vieira da companhia de Iesus na Misericordia da Bahia de todos os Santos em dia de Visitação de nossa Señora Orago da Casa* (Lisbon, 1655), p. 321.

86 Ribeiro, *Discurso*, p. 7.

Portuguese soldiers with Castilian resources, irrespective of the place they had served. For example, Diogo Luís de Oliveira complained in 1617 that the *Consejo de Indias* had ignored the decree that allowed him to be considered for the post of General of the New Spain Fleet, loudly claiming it was due to his Portuguese origins.⁸⁷ The obstacles were not only found in Castile. In Portugal, the claims of Portuguese veterans of the European wars were also ignored. According to Diogo Luís de Oliveira, ‘if in Castile he does not get rewarded for being Portuguese, nor in Portugal for having served in Castile, there remains no hope of being recompensed for his services, and time lost and wealth spent’.⁸⁸

Joane Mendes de Vasconcelos, a veteran from the Milan conflicts who later joined the *tercio* that Diogo Luís de Oliveira led to the Low Countries, complained in similar terms when his pretensions about another commandery were snubbed. He then appealed to the king, through the Council of State, referring that ‘for serving in Castile he is not rewarded in Portugal; and in Castile, for being Portuguese, only he will be the unfortunate one, since all the others that served in Castile had been given commanderies’.⁸⁹

This kind of reasoning certainly was part of a negotiating strategy, which, nevertheless, revealed palpable signs of political tension. In this regard, it was with surprising honesty that Diogo Luís de Oliveira alluded to the distrust that was brewing among ‘those of his Nation’. His family members, in particular, had lost hope with an unresponsive King and with the Habsburgs’ incentive system.⁹⁰ References to the role played by the family of Joane Mendes de Vasconcelos in 1580, conceding the Kingdom of Algarve to the Habsburgs’ army, was also part of the same negotiating strategy.⁹¹ However, deliberations in the Council of State suggest that these arguments were more than simple rhetorical solutions to enhance one’s prospects. There are good reasons to believe the complaints about the incentive system were legitimate. For example, in 1617, the supreme Council of the Monarchy recommended that the King should put more pressure on the Council of Portugal (a political body originally designed to represent the Portuguese interests in Madrid), which was defrauding the expectations of men such as Pedro Fernandes de Figueiroa, a Portuguese veteran of Flanders.⁹² There might have been a general concern with the fulfilment of what was one of the Crown’s main functions – redeeming services of their subjects – but the Spanish counsellors could have also been worried about the long-lasting effects of those snubs or delays in the Portuguese contingent, who otherwise seem to have remained keen about serving in Flanders.⁹³

87 AGS, Estado, legajo 2749. Council of State, 28 January 1618.

88 AGS, Estado, legajo 2749. Council of State, 28 February 1617.

89 AGS, Estado, legajo 2749. Council of State, 18 July 1617.

90 AGS, Estado, legajo 2749. Council of State 28 February 1617.

91 AGS, Estado, legajo 2749. Council of State, 18 July 1617.

92 AGS, Estado, legajo 2749. Council of State, 10 October 1617.

93 As is well known, several Portuguese continued serving the Habsburgs after 1640, some of them in the battlefields of Flanders, like the leading commander of the Habsburg forces at the Battle Rocroi (1643), Francisco Manuel de Melo (homonymous of the historian and soldier Francisco Manuel de Melo). However, Francisco Manuel de Melo was certainly not alone. For example, in the fall of 1642 three Portuguese knights of the Order of Christ, Manuel Pinero Botelho, Luís Álvares de Acuna, and Luís Pinero, volunteered to serve in Flanders. AGS, Estado, legajo 2249. Letter from Philip to Luís Montenegro, 22 November 1642.

In summary, the Flanders battlefields were like a poisoned gift for the Portuguese soldiers and officers. Swayed by the martial symbolism of that territory and the expectation of rewards, these men embarked to the Low Countries, eventually to the detriment of the Empire, just to be disappointed by the conflicting bureaucratic world of the Habsburgs. Their disenchantment, which they did not hide, probably provides one more explanation for the multiple suppressions, recreations, and extinctions that the Council of Portugal endured as part of an effort to reorganize the Portuguese communication system within the Monarchy.⁹⁴

The Atlanticization of Flanders' political and confessional conflict

The Dutch imperial expansion recreated the same political and religious dichotomies of Flanders in other parts of the world. The original conflict in Flanders was projected globally, with major developments happening significantly in the Portuguese territories of Asia, Africa, and America, and not on Spanish ones. Fought in four continents by several peoples that allied with one side or the other, this was a truly global conflict. The well-known historian Charles Boxer went so far as to claim that this conflict had more conditions claim to be called a First World War than that of 1914–18.⁹⁵ Ultimately, it reshaped the structure of the Portuguese Empire, which became more Atlantic-based while shrinking massively in Asia. I would argue that the expansion of the war in Flanders also had the consequence of reshaping the military status of territories of the Portuguese world, in particular Brazil, which had been largely ignored by the Portuguese martial imaginary.

Unlike North Africa and India, repositories of a very pronounced martial symbolism, Brazil was never seen as great theatre of military operations. Afonso de Albuquerque or João de Castro, major references of the Portuguese Asiatic military experience, had no equivalents in the South Atlantic. Seen as a less than dignifying battlefield, the New World was not covered by the Portuguese incentive system during the initial stages of colonization, at least not to the same degree as other parts of the Empire. One should remember that the initial colonization was left to private entrepreneurs almost without state support. The Portuguese colonization of the Atlantic, unlike the royal-backed Asiatic expansion, was based in a system of donatary captaincies (*capitanias donatarias*), which would

94 About these changes introduced in the Portuguese political system by the Habsburgs, see António Hespanha, 'O governo dos Áustria e a modernização da constituição portuguesa', *Penélope – Fazer e Desfazer História*, 2 (1989), pp. 50–73. About the *Consejo de Portugal*, see Santiago de Luxan Meléndez, *La Revolución de 1640 en Portugal, sus fundamentos sociales y sus caracteres nacionales: el Consejo de Portugal: 1580–1640* (Madrid, 1988).

95 Charles Boxer, *O Império Marítimo Português, 1415–1825* (Lisbon, 2001), p. 115. About the global dimension of this major conflict, see also Peter C. Emmer, 'The First Global War: The Dutch versus Iberia in Asia, Africa and the New World, 1590–1609', *e-Journal of Portuguese History*, 1:1 (2003), pp. 1–14. Specifically, for Brazil, the conflict was explored in a collective work edited by José Manuel Santos Pérez and George Cabral de Souza. See *El Desafío Holandés al Dominio Ibérico en Brasil en el Siglo XVII* (Salamanca, 2006).

ensure imperial expansion in the Atlantic islands, in some parts of Africa and in the New World without burdening the royal treasury.⁹⁶

The Iberian Union changed a lot of aspects of Portuguese America, as several authors have shown.⁹⁷ The Habsburgs brought major reforms to the previously chaotic legal administration of Brazil, especially by the creation of a high court of appeals in Bahia, 1609, which also made the Portuguese colonial structure in America more similar to the Spanish one.⁹⁸ They also introduced a new civil code, the *Ordenações Filipinas*, which, despite not being exclusively bound to the American territories, would be in force in Brazil up until the twentieth century. As far as the organization of the Brazilian territory was concerned, they choose to divide the large colony in 1621: the Estado do Maranhão, to the North, and the Estado do Brazil, which kept the capital, to the South. Also important was the creation of *Conselho da Índia* (Council of the Indies) in 1604, a Spanish-like solution for the Portuguese Empire that channelled the great majority of the issues into one political body.⁹⁹ Something that seems not to have changed was the martial symbolism attached to the American territory, especially among the nobles, for whom life in the Habsburgs' court or in any European battlefield was more appealing than to embark for a territory they considered inhospitable.¹⁰⁰

96 These territories were donated by the Crown to someone, the donatary, who was required to administer the territory. The donatary had autonomy to establish settlements, collect taxes, administer justice, appoint officials, and grant lands to the settlers. The system was hardly a success in the New World, with the exception of Pernambuco, which facilitated the gradual incorporation of these territories in the official sphere of the Crown. About this system, see António Vasconcelos de Saldanha, *As capitanias do Brasil – Antecedentes, desenvolvimento e extinção de um fenómeno atlântico* (Lisbon, 2001) (1st edition 1992).

97 About the transformations brought by the Hapsburgs, see, among others, Guida Marques, 'L'invention du Brésil entre deux monarchies. Gouvernement et pratiques politiques de l'Amérique portugaise dans l'Union Ibérique (1580–1640)', PhD thesis, École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2009; Francis A. Dutra, 'Centralization vs. Donatarial Privilege: Pernambuco, 1602–1630, in Dauril Alden, ed., *Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1973), pp. 19–60; José Manuel Santos Pérez, 'Brazil and the Politics of the Spanish Hapsburgs in the South Atlantic (1580–1640)', *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies*, 27 (2015), pp. 104–20. For a more circumscribed period, see also Rafael Valladares, 'Las dos guerras de Pernambuco. La armada del conde da Torre y la crisis del Portugal hispánico (1638–1641)', in Santos Pérez and Cabral de Souza, eds, *El Desafío Holandés*, pp. 33–66.

98 Santos Pérez, 'Brazil and the Politics of the Spanish Hapsburgs', p. 114.

99 The Council of the Indies faced enormous resistance from more established political organs, which saw their jurisdictions reduced. António Hespanha, *As vésperas do Leviathan. Instituições e poder político – Portugal séc- XVII* (Coimbra, 1994), p. 255. About the Council of the Indies, see the classic study of Francisco Mendes da Luz, *O Conselho da Índia: contributo ao estudo da administração e do comércio do Ultramar Português nos princípios do século XVII* (Lisbon, 1952).

100 Stuart Schwartz, 'The Voyage of the Vassals: Royal Power, Noble Obligations, and Merchant Capital before the Portuguese Restoration of Independence, 1624–1640', *American Historical Review*, 96, 3 (1991), p. 744.

As far as warfare is concerned, it is important to note that the war in Brazil was shaped by a very different set of ecological conditions, certainly different from those found in Europe.¹⁰¹ The well-known Jesuit António Vieira, commenting on the military needs of Brazil, stated that ‘this State, having so many miles of coast and islands and rivers, will not be defended, nor can be, with fortresses or with armies, but with ambushes, with canoes and especially with Indians’.¹⁰² He was talking about the skulking way of war, an unrestrained and oft-considered barbarous way of war that occurred on the fringes of all European empires in the New World.¹⁰³ According to Vieira, Brazil was no place for military orthodoxies or professional soldiers from Flanders or Elvas (an important Portuguese fortress on the border with Castile). Hence Vieira’s consideration about the defence of the New World: ‘this war, only the settlers know how to do it, and not those that come from the mother country’.¹⁰⁴

The feeling was to some extent reciprocal, though. If Vieira did not want veterans from Flanders, some European veterans remained reluctant to serve in Portuguese America, before or after the Dutch expansion. In 1631, while preparing the trip to Pernambuco, the Count of Bagnuolo wrote to Philip IV detailing his misery for being appointed General of the expedition: ‘I know I am going on a journey that is in no way convenient to me, because I am going to a place where one could gain little reputation, to a climate so distempered’.¹⁰⁵ For those accustomed to the linear formations of the Low Countries and Italy, the guerrilla tactics used in the Brazilian cane fields and scrublands were perceived to be beneath their knowledge and military status. The disdain of the professional soldier towards guerrilla warfare (called *Guerra Brasileira* in Portuguese America) was brashly expressed by Luís de Rojas e Borja, another seasoned officer with commissions in Flanders, Milan, and Naples. Rojas e Borja, the Duke of Lerma’s protégé, appears to have said ‘that he was no monkey to march through the bushes’.¹⁰⁶ This disdainful approach to the American battlefield was no accident. Colonial representations, which are always structured through hierarchical difference, devalued the American warfare practices mainly because they were different, not because they were less effective. Much like other New World things that were considered different by Europeans, American warfare was not characterized as such, but always in relation to

101 Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *Olinda Restaurada – Guerra e Açúcar no Nordeste, 1630–1654* (Rio de Janeiro, 1998) (1st edition 1975), p. 318.

102 António Vieira, *Cartas do P. Antonio Vieyra da Companhia de Jesus* (2 vols, Lisbon, 1735), I, pp. 49–56. Letter from António Vieira to the King, 4 April 1654.

103 Harold Selesky, ‘Colonial America’, in Michael Howard, G. Andreopoulos, and M. Shulman, eds, *The Laws of War – Constraints on Warfare in the Western World* (London and Yale, 1994), pp. 59–85.

104 Vieira, *Cartas*, I, pp. 49–56. It is important to note that others defended the use of veterans from Flanders in the confrontations of Brazil. See, for example, the plain request of Diogo Luís de Oliveira, who invited the Count of Óbidos precisely because of the Count’s experience in Flanders. AHU, Bahia-Luís da Fonseca, Box 34, doc. 4382. Requisition from Diogo Luís de Oliveira.

105 Referred by Mello, *Olinda Restaurada*, p. 365.

106 Referred by Mello, *Olinda Restaurada*, p. 360.

the European experience and partly with the purpose of proving ‘civilizational superiority’.¹⁰⁷

There are, nevertheless, strong signs that point to the revalorization of military status in Brazil in the aftermath of the Dutch attack, in spite of the prevalent lack of formality in combat. The territory remained hardly suitable for sieges or for open field battles, which seldom happened. It was the perceived military reputation of a ‘heretic’ enemy that for several decades successfully held up against the might of the Habsburgs that made all the difference, bestowing upon the South Atlantic conflict an indisputable prestige. Brazil, which always had a great strategic value for Madrid as a way to protect Spanish America,¹⁰⁸ was now involved in political and religious challenges that the Habsburgs were quick to address, especially when they learned of the successful Dutch attack on Salvador da Bahia in 1624. To recover the capital of Brazil, the Habsburg government organized what was then the largest naval force to have crossed the Atlantic.¹⁰⁹ A fleet of 56 ships, 1185 guns, and 12,463 troops proved the Habsburgs’ commitment to the defence of Brazil. However, the sheer size of that expedition also testifies to the drastic change in the status of the New World as a battle zone. In the words of Stuart Schwartz, it was the ‘last great enterprise in the Iberian world in which the traditional feudal obligations and military values of the nobility were effectively mobilised by the Crown’.¹¹⁰ The Portuguese high nobility, just like Bagnuolo and Rojas e Borja, who had traditionally been unenthusiastic about serving in the New World, were, in this case, successfully mobilized by the Crown, which promised several royal grants, a sign that the incentive system was adapting to what was rapidly becoming the economic core of the Empire.¹¹¹

The victory in Bahia in 1625 accomplished by Castilian, Portuguese, and Neapolitan forces also became an immediate topic in the Iberian literary universe. In addition to the official and semi-official chronicles, dozens of exhortations and accounts were written. The literary production was accompanied by other artistic outputs such as Juan Bautista Maino’s painting entitled *La recuperación de Bahía de Todos los Santos*. And the fact that this painting ought to be exhibited in the extraordinary company of the already mentioned *La rendición de Breda* and other representations of the Habsburgs’ military power in the Hall of Kingdoms, shows how important Brazil had become not only politically but also as a battle zone. Unlike other Iberian military successes in Asia, namely Macao (1627) and Goa (several times during the 1630s), the victory over the Dutch in Bahia was

107 Battlefield perceptions in the general framework of colonial encounters in Spanish America were masterfully explored by Rolena Adorno. See, for example, Rolena Adorno, *Polemics of Possession in Spanish America* (New Haven, CT, 2007), pp. 113–47.

108 Santos Pérez, ‘Brazil and the Politics of the Spanish Hapsburgs’, p. 108.

109 Schwartz, ‘The Voyage of the Vassals’, p. 735.

110 Schwartz, ‘The Voyage of the Vassals’, p. 748.

111 Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *O Trato dos Videntes. Formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul* (São Paulo, 2000). The financial situation of other territories in the Portuguese Empire were getting desperate, namely, the fast-receding Asian outposts. Some even started to question the benefits of these expensive Asian settlements. See Jorge M. Pedreira, ‘Costs and Financial Trends in the Portuguese Empire, 1415–1822’, in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, eds, *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400–1800* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 61–2.

inducted into the Habsburgs' pantheon of great victories. It is possible that those successes in Asia remained unexplored for artistic or literary purposes because Madrid was unaware of the part played by Asia, namely the military achievements of Estado da Índia, in the formation of Portuguese historical memory. Otherwise, the Habsburgs might have felt compelled to provide a sequel of 'heroic' deeds designed to match the sixteenth-century examples of Vasco da Gama, Afonso de Albuquerque, or João de Barros. Instead, Madrid chose to consecrate the enterprise in a territory that lacked the same historical credentials but whose martial symbolism had just been recently enhanced.

The Iberian success, however, was not to be repeated. The Journey of the Vassals became a political hallmark, a symbol of an elusive collaboration between Portuguese, Castilians, and Neapolitans, which immediately prompted Olivares's plans for the abortive Union of Arms. Brazil nevertheless continued to grow in the Portuguese martial imaginary. Its new military status was unaffected by the string of military setbacks. Expeditions organized to recover Pernambuco from the Dutch in 1631, 1635, and 1638–39, despite failing in their objectives, became a constant reference in the papers of men that asked for rewards for years to come.¹¹² Francisco de Brito Freire, the governor of Pernambuco who wrote a history of the war with the Dutch in Brazil, even contended that the New World scuffles supplanted the highly praised Flanders combats.¹¹³ The incentive system was again a great sign of the increasing martial reputation of Brazil, leading António Vieira to claim that 'no services Your Majesty pays with a more liberal hand than those of Brazil'.¹¹⁴

The fight with Protestants in Brazil also fulfilled propaganda purposes. For the new independent Portuguese state, it was perceived as an extraordinary endeavour, so much so that they used it as a tool for their international rehabilitation after the controversial deposition of Philip IV. It was important to underline the zeal of the Portuguese, who, according to Francisco Manuel de Melo, were recovering lost lands in the New World, while others – the armies of the deposed King – were losing ground to the 'heretics' in Europe:

what pleases Portugal... is that Rome knows that, while, a more favoured Catholic Prince, is handing over Provinces and Temples to the enemies of the Church; the Vassals of the Portuguese King (although less favoured by the Supreme Pontiff) are freeing other Provinces and clearing other Temples from heretic yoke and corruption, offering them to the obedience of the Apostolic See.¹¹⁵

112 The papers show how these men praised their participation in what was in reality military failures. Miguel Dantas da Cruz has recently argued that for some of these men, the ones that participated in conflicts in both sides of the Atlantic (against the Dutch and in Iberia against the Habsburgs), the participation in the march of 400 leagues throughout Brazilian territory in 1639 was as praised as was the participation in any of the major battles of the Portuguese secession war. See Miguel Dantas da Cruz, 'Imperial Perceptions and Circulation in the Portuguese Atlantic World (1620s–1660s)', *Itinerario*, 41:2 (2017), p. 391.

113 Francisco de Brito Freire, *Nova Lusitania, historia da guerra brasilica: a purissima alma e savdosa memoria do serenissimo principe dom Theodosio principe de Portugal, e principe do Brasil* (Lisbon, 1675), initial note to the reader.

114 Vieira, *Sermam*, p. 320.

115 Melo, *Epanáforas*, pp. 528–9.

The words of Francisco Manuel de Melo show how interrelated were the European military scenery and the South American offshoot in the mind of the Portuguese writer. For him, the progresses in one territory and the retreats in the other ought to be seen as developments of the same confessional clash. The protagonists of the war with the Dutch in Brazil, just like the men that had previously served in Flanders, became reference points for martial bravery and military expertise in the Portuguese world for several decades. For example, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Overseas Council, while facing what it considered to be the unreasonable demands of a *Mestre de Campo* of Minas Gerais, burst into a vitriol rant, claiming that ‘not even the heroes that honour the nation, not even the great João Fernandes Vieira, who expelled the Dutch from Brazil, could have had such an outrageous imagination’.¹¹⁶ Ultimately, the protagonists of the war against the Dutch in the New World became key elements of the political culture of Pernambuco, where a nativism deeply linked to the expulsion of the Dutch flourished.¹¹⁷

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116 I would like to thank Roberta Stumpf for this information. Roberta Stumpf, *Os Cavaleiros do Ouro e outras trajetórias nobilitantes nas Minas Setecentistas* (Belo Horizonte, 2014), pp. 240–1.

117 Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *Rubro Veio – O imaginário da restauração pernambucana* (São Paulo, 2008) (3rd edition).