

forces in the Americas and create a navy which bound its empire more tightly together than was the case in previous centuries. As for North Africa, the Spaniards built fortresses,⁹⁶ but despite occasional raids into the interior they never really broke out of their isolated coastal enclaves, depended almost entirely on supply from Spain (by the galleys) and were frequently on the backfoot (witness the long siege of Ceuta, 1694-1720), successes like that at Oran (captured in 1732) merely recovering earlier losses. The Spanish authorities were still facing resistance on the colonial periphery in the Americas,⁹⁷ and failing to deal effectively with opponents in north Africa well into the eighteenth century.⁹⁸

Conclusion

The foregoing pages represent one historians' attempt to squeeze into too small a space the multi-faceted experience and performance of Spain as a military power in the early modern era. War, how it was fought and the armies that fought it were very different in 1789 on the eve of the French revolution wars to what they were in 1500 - or, in the case of Spain in 1482 at the start of the Granada War. Bourbon Spain clearly differed from Habsburg Spain in how it waged war, but there had also been change in Habsburg Spain. Spain's military machine was much bigger, more global, more expensive and permanent in 1789 than in 1482. Change, in Spain as elsewhere, was driven by a variety of pressures - cultural, economic, political, social - by the availability/ awareness of alternative models, home grown or foreign, and by the readiness or not to adapt/ change, something - the accompanying debates - we need to pay more attention to in charting change.⁹⁹ Whether the many changes between 1500 and 1800 amounted to a revolution, whether one single over-arching revolution, or even a succession of revolutions is moot. Some changes might even - witness

96 Francisco Javier Bueno Soto, 'Larache y La Mamora: dos fortificaciones españolas en tiempos de Felipe III', *Aldaba*, 34 (2008), pp. 51-96.

97 David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America 1513-1821*, Yale UP, New Haven, 1992; David Weber, *Barbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment*, Yale UP, New Haven, 2005.

98 Agustín Guimerá Ravina, 'Historia de una incompetencia el desembarco de Argel, 1775', *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar*, 5 (2016), pp. 135-156.

99 For resistance to change and related divisions within the officer corps which may have weakened the army after 1789, cf David A. Abian Cubillo, 'Las resistencias a la modernización del ejército borbónico', in Tomas A. Mantecón Movellán, Marina Torres Arce, and Susana Truchuelo García, (eds), *Dimensiones del conflicto; resistencia, violencia y policía en el mundo urbano*, Ediciones Universidad Cantabria, Santander, 2020, pp. 465-85.

the resurgence of the horse in the seventeenth century - be considered (tactical) counter-revolutions, some were clearly responses to specific challenges, for example the reform of the defences of Spanish America which followed the disasters (Havana, Manila) of the Seven Years War.¹⁰⁰ With innovation - reform - a continuous process, how do we decide - and agree - the importance of any single measure? It is a commonplace to say that more work needs to be done, opening up neglected areas of research, but it remains the case that many aspects of early modern warfare remain inadequately explored and understood; we need Annales type total histories of what was far from total war - including "the everyday"- in the early modern era.¹⁰¹ We also need to consider the diplomatic sphere. As for Spain, is Thompson correct to assert that the theory of the Military Revolution (whichever version of the latter we prefer) stands or falls by its applicability to a Spain which was in effect *sui generis*, hardly comparable in important respects with most of its neighbours and competitors? And is it sufficient to deny that there was a Military Revolution in Spain because it did not result in Thompson's version - not universally shared - of a sovereign early modern polity? It may be that there is little point in trying to fit Spain's experience into what might be thought the straitjacket of the Military Revolution, although the latter has on the whole stimulated rather than obstructed the study of the armies and warfare of early modern Spain. Indeed, the framework provided by the concept of the Military Revolution may be too entrenched for the revisionists who would do away with it, not least because of its flexibility and broad interpretative utility. And Spain's distinctive experience might offer new insights to refresh and re- frame the larger debate.

100 Allan J. Kuethe, and Kenneth Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century. War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796*, CUP, Cambridge, 2014.

101 Lorraine White, 'Spain's Early Modern Soldiers: Origins, Motivation and Loyalty', *War and Society*, vol 19 (2001), pp. 19-46, and 'The experience of Spain's early modern soldiers: combat, welfare and violence', *War in History*, 9 (2001), pp. 1-38. For some insights, cf Parker, *Army of Flanders*, cit, pp. 133-56 and Thompson, 'Soldiers of Philip II', cit, pp. 89-110.

Moving Beyond the Military Revolution: The Portuguese case¹

By HÉLDER CARVALHAL², ANDRÉ MURTEIRA³,
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ABSTRACT. This article discusses recent historiographical trends regarding the evolution of warfare in Portugal and its overseas empire in the early modern period. It presents a reassessment of the state of art on the Portuguese case in the early modern world (in the kingdom of Portugal in Europe and its overseas empire), followed by some contributions for an ongoing research agenda. It is divided in three parts, presenting overviews of the situation in Europe, overseas and at sea. It concludes that it is difficult to sustain that the Portuguese case supports the case for a link between an alleged military revolution and unilinear state-formation or Western military exceptionalism

KEYWORDS: WARFARE; EARLY MODERN PORTUGUESE WORLD; NAVAL HISTORY; EMPIRE; STATE BUILDING

This article discusses recent historiographical trends regarding the evolution of warfare in Portugal and its overseas empire in the early modern period. Despite its relative lack of appeal to a substantial part of academia, Portuguese military history has recently attracted increasing attention, in part due to its relationship with economic and social history but also because of its relevance for the history of European overseas empires and, subsequently, to colonial and post-

- 1 The authors would like to express their gratitude to a number of people involved in the current debates about this topic. Acknowledgements are owed to every participant of the two online presentation sessions of the volume *The First World Empire*, which occurred on 21th and 28th May 2021. The ideas debated within this article benefited greatly from these two meetings. In particular, we wish to thank: Cátia Antunes, Christopher Storrs, Fernando Dores Costa, Francisco Bethencourt, Jeremy Black, and Zoltán Biedermann.
- 2 Dep. of Economics, The University of Manchester, The United Kingdom.
- 3 CHAM (FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa). André Murteira's contribution to this article was undertaken as a part of his research project, "Ships and War: Dutch and Iberian War Fleets in the Dutch-Iberian Global Conflict (1600-1669)", funded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, Portugal (reference: 2021.02332.CEECIND).
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colonial history. The publication of the volume *The First World Empire* (Routledge, 2021), coedited by the authors of this article, was one of the outcomes of this rise in interest. However, a set of other works have contributed to the topic, while many loose ends still await further study. It is our intent to readdress what we know thus far to provide a set of considerations for new avenues of research.

To do so, the article will proceed with a reassessment of the state of art on the Portuguese case in the early modern world (in the kingdom of Portugal in Europe and its overseas empire), followed by some contributions for an ongoing research agenda. More specifically, we shall base these reflections on the contributions of recent literature, as well as in the comments and criticisms on the abovementioned volume in online presentation sessions and in the reviews already published.⁵ The article is divided into three parts, presenting overviews of the situation in Europe, overseas and at sea.

War in Europe

Is the topic of the Military Revolution definitely surpassed, in what concerns the early modern Portuguese world? How can we move on to improve our knowledge about warfare during this period? How does warfare interact with other historical processes, such as state and empire building?

One of the main points of the discussions following the release of *The First World Empire* lies in the relevance of warfare for state building - how and with what means war was conducted. The work of scholars such as Charles Tilly and Jan Glete, among others, has emphasised the symbiosis between the two phenomena.⁶ Early modern European polities progressively required a higher sum of resources to face the increased expenses of numerous armies, naval and land artillery, and fortifications. Such resources would often come through higher taxation or increased debt, which, consequently, led to a gradual and discontinuous development of the state.⁷

If these claims describe most European polities at that time, even with ca-

5 Respectively, by Christopher Storrs in the *Journal of Early Modern History*, 25, 6 (2021), pp. 577-79, and Erik Odegard in *Ler História* 80 (2022).

6 Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*, Cambridge, MA, Blackwell, 1990, pp. 20-28, 67-95; Jan Glete, *War and State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States, 1500-1660*, London-New York, Routledge, 2002, pp. 10-41.

7 See, among others, the essays in Rafael Torres Sánchez (Ed.), *War, State and Development. Fiscal-Military States in the Eighteenth Century*, Pamplona, EUNSA, 2007.

veats on the chronology and intensity of changes, the Portuguese case seems to arguably account for significant differences in many of these indicators. Metropolitan Portugal is presented as a case where a transition from a 'domain' to a 'tax state' happened precociously.⁸ It was estimated that its fiscal capacity c.1500 was comparatively higher than other parts of Europe, such as the Netherlands or England.⁹ However, a major part of the state's set expenditure until the end of the sixteenth century was allocated to the royal household and redistribution to elites rather than to purely military purposes, which only grew in proportion after 1600, with a substantial part being spent on overseas outposts.¹⁰ In turn, the contribution of intercontinental trade to Portuguese income per capita was, at best, one-fifth during the period of 1500-1800.¹¹ Levels of 'public' debt were relatively low in comparative perspective until the end of the early modern period. If we exclude the high levels of indebtedness from the early sixteenth century, provoked by investment in intercontinental trade and fortification in North African outposts, the peaks in the subsequent periods were due to military expenditure, such – as during the War of Restoration (1640-1668) or due to the Napoleonic conflicts since the late 1790s.¹² However, these costs appear to be low when compared with other European case studies. Finally, it must be highlighted that recruitment capacity in mainland Portugal rarely (if ever) surpassed the army size of 20,000 men between the early 1400s and 1800.¹³ If such capacity was relatively high in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries - when compared

8 António Castro Henriques, "The Rise of a Tax State: Portugal, 1371-1401", *E-Journal of Portuguese History*, 12, 1 (2014), pp. 49-66.

9 António Castro Henriques and Nuno Palma, "Comparative European Institutions and the Little Divergence, 1385-1800", *Journal of Economic Growth* (forthcoming).

10 Hélder Carvalho, «Army Size, State Expenditure, and Warfare Culture in Sixteenth-Century Portugal», in Hélder Carvalho, André Murteira, and Roger L. de Jesus (Eds.), *The First World Empire. Portugal, War, and Military Revolution*, London-New York, Routledge, 2021, pp. 69-85. For a recent long run analysis, see Leonor Freire Costa, António Castro Henriques, and Nuno Palma, *Anatomy of a Premodern State*, Manchester Economics Discussion Paper Series 2208, 2022 [online: <https://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/schools/soass/economics/discussionpapers/EDP-2208.pdf>; 25/11/2022; 09h00].

11 Leonor Freire Costa, Nuno Palma, and Jaime Reis, "The Great Escape? The Contribution of the Empire to Portugal's Economic Growth, 1500-1800", *European Review of Economic History*, 19, 1 (2015), pp. 1-22.

12 Leonor Freire Costa, Susana Münch Miranda, and Pilar Nogues-Marco, *Early Modern Financial Development in the Iberian Peninsula*, Geneva, Paul Bairoch Institute of Economic History, 2021.

13 Carvalho, 'cit.', pp. 73-74; Fernando D. Costa, "Was There an Early Modern Military Revolution in Mainland Portugal?", in Carvalho, Murteira, and Jesus, 'cit.', pp. 86-103.

to kingdoms such as France, England, or Sweden - the same cannot be said for later periods. Thus, the integration of the Portuguese case within the pattern of a Military Revolution is far from fitting.

In addition to the relationship among taxation, debt, and state building, other scholars have focused on what exactly defines state building from a socio-political perspective. The degree of state building itself in Portugal remains a matter of dispute. Criticising a more traditional historiography, which dated the emergence of the modern centralised state to the Portuguese late-mediaeval period, António M. Hespanha pioneered a school of thought that placed emphasis on the autonomy of the so-called peripheral powers. Consequently, it implied a certain feebleness of the monarchical state - viewed as the 'central' administration - in comparison to the periphery.¹⁴ Acknowledging the autonomy of the peripheral powers, as well as their capacity to negotiate with the political centre, Francisco Bethencourt proposed a different approach that consisted of considering local organisations - such as the municipalities or the confraternities (*Misericórdias*) - as part of the premodern state. According to this perspective, the state would be well connected with local/regional realities and, thus, stronger than has been suggested by other views.¹⁵

A fair share of research questions remain unanswered. Little is known about the procedures and pitfalls regarding military recruitment and how these processes evolved over time. As in other European cases, research on partnerships with private contractors to provide supplies and military personnel has been conducted recently.¹⁶ However, we know little about how other stakeholders - including both municipalities, as well as lay and ecclesiastical houses, and middle-ranked officials with military jurisdiction at the regional level - served as middlemen during the several stages of such processes. It is certain that coercion played an important role in filling the ranks, especially given the high propensity for desertion throughout the early modern period.¹⁷ A higher emphasis on the social and logistical vicissitudes of warfare, especially adopting a bottom-up perspective, would certainly propitiate a more detailed understanding of these

14 António M. Hespanha, *As vésperas do Leviathan. Instituições e poder político: Portugal, século XVII*, Coimbra, Almedina, 1994.

15 Francisco Bethencourt, "Managing Diversity in the Portuguese Empire", *E-Journal of Portuguese History*, 19, 2 (2021), pp. 1-23 (5-6).

16 Edgar Pereira, "A Contractor Empire. Public-Private Partnerships and Overseas Expansion in Habsburg Portugal (1580-1640)", PhD dissertation, University of Leiden, 2020.

17 Fernando Does Costa, *Insubmissão: aversão ao serviço militar no Portugal do século XVIII*, Lisbon, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2010.

issues. At the moment, Edgar Pereira's research shows that the resort to private contractors in this and other fields reached significant proportions.

The available evidence leaves room to ask whether there were two different models of warfare evolution in mainland Portugal and its empire, which were necessarily favoured by different socio-political, military, and economic circumstances. Due to the abovementioned evidence regarding army size, taxation, relatively low levels of public debt, and arguably low overall levels of colonial extraction (and with no direct consequence to war finances in Europe), metropolitan Portugal appears to be, for most of the period, militarily stagnant in relation to other European powers. In turn, such conditions correlate with the relatively few episodes of open war over three centuries (c.1500-c.1800): the Spanish invasion during the succession crisis (1580-1581), the Restoration War (1640-1668), the brief participation in the Seven Years War (1762-1763), and, last, the confrontations related to the Napoleonic invasions in the nineteenth century. A low percentage of time was spent at war, especially when compared with the average of other European polities, which was 71% in the period 1550-1600, two-thirds between 1600 and 1650, and more than 50% until 1700.¹⁸

The Empire

The Portuguese Empire, on the contrary, accounts for a diverse set of realities, in which a quasi-permanent situation of warfare remains as perhaps one of the few common denominators, together with trade and the extraction of resources.

War and violence were the central elements that enabled the construction of colonial empires. In Asia, waging war was the only way that the Portuguese Crown could, at the time, enter the local markets. When Vasco da Gama arrived in India, at the end of the fifteenth century, the commercial routes were already well established, maintaining a connection to Europe through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf that went back thousands of years. Hence, the only way to interfere with existing commercial networks was through war, which, in a certain way, brought a new dynamic since violence and the use of military forces were not commonly associated with commerce in Asian waters at the time. In Africa and Brazil, the reality was different, since the Portuguese developed their commerce to Europe without competition, and the way to impose their presence

18 Philip T. Hoffman, "Why Was It Europeans Who Conquered the World?", *Journal of Economic History*, 72, 3 (2012), pp. 601-33 (603). The participation of Portugal in the Spanish War of Succession (1701-1714) is not accounted for here.

was facilitated by the lack of firepower and cohesive local powers. However, in every location, they developed diplomatic relations to divide and rule, always using local politics in their favour, an old strategy used since the dawn of times and successfully applied by every European power in the colonial context.

In some cases, this broad context provided incentives to improve the ability to gather financial resources to accommodate a gradual increase in military expenditure. European and non-European powers in Asia pursued the development of high-efficiency fiscal states, even if they had to compromise with local legal, socio-political, and cultural constraints.¹⁹ The Portuguese *Estado da Índia* fit within this pattern, as most of its revenue originated from indirect taxation, such as custom duties and sales monopolies.²⁰ Moreover, it is well known that non-Europeans participated in the local tax systems as well as in capital markets, given that the *Estado* often borrowed from these elites to face the expenses of both trade and war.²¹ If the increasing levels of indebtedness resulted from the needs of the colonial administration, it is also noteworthy that the state could hardly accomplish its ends without the participation of private stakeholders. Indeed, most of the empire was ungovernable without the participation of the colonial elites until very late in the period.²² Given the interests and material gains of these elites, some authors have raised questions about whether the Portuguese empire should be seen as a ‘stakeholder’ empire, as in the Spanish case, which is even more relevant for future research.²³ The geography of the *Estado*

19 See, for instance, Patrick K. O’ Brien, “Afterword: Reflections on Fiscal Foundations and Contexts for the Formation of Economically Effective Eurasian States from the Rise of Venice to the Opium War”, in Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla and Patrick K. O’ Brien (Eds.), *The Rise of Fiscal States. A Global History, 1500-1914*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 442-53.

20 Susana Münch Miranda, “Fiscal System and Private Interests in Portuguese Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 60, 3 (2017), pp. 202-32 (207-08).

21 Michael N. Pearson, “Banyas and Brahmins. Their Role in the Portuguese Indian Economy”, in *Coastal Western India. Studies from the Portuguese Records*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1981, pp. 93-115; Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Chris A. Bayly, “Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India”, in Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Ed.), *Merchants, Markets and the State in Early Modern India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 242-65; Miranda, ‘cit.’, pp. 216-24.

22 Miguel Dantas da Cruz, “‘Small Government or Big Government?’ Assessing State Expansion in the War for Colonial Brazil”, in Carvalho, Murteira and Jesus, ‘cit.’, pp. 105-18.

23 As noted by Miranda, ‘cit.’, p. 205, based on the work of Jorge Pedreira. For the Spanish case, see Regina Grafe and Alejandra Irigoin, “A Stakeholder Empire: The Political Economy of Spanish Imperial Rule in America”, *Economic History Review*, 65, 2 (2012), pp. 609-65.

da Índia, stretching from the oriental coast of Africa to Macau and Japan, made it difficult to maintain an efficient economic military structure, as was recently studied for the mid-sixteenth century.²⁴ In any case, the lack of more studies on the financial structure of the Portuguese administration prevents us from fully understanding how war was waged and even its direct impact on the sustainability of the empire.

Scholars have also highlighted the relationship between state centralization and guns as a major breakthrough.²⁵ The development of gunpowder firearms is a central argument in the Military Revolution concept, as it led to architectural and tactical innovations. However, the Portuguese experience may challenge how transformative this was. Regarding military architecture, the increasing expenses to build or adapt fortress *alla moderna*, where the angular bastion was effective, did not have an immediate impact. The first fortresses adapting to these new forms were in North Africa, Ceuta and Mazagão (currently El Jadida), in 1540-1541; in Asia, the new wall of the fortress of Diu was built in 1546-1547, and after that, the fortress of Mozambique Island also gained a *trace italienne* in 1558-1559.²⁶ Brazil and Africa only truly developed this type of architecture later, from the seventeenth century onwards, when European competition forced the Portuguese Crown to defend itself from naval attacks. Despite the dissemination of these new forms, recent studies by Sidh Losa Mendiratta show that in the *Província do Norte* of the *Estado da Índia* (the land between Chaul and Damão, on the northwest coast of India, including Bombay), the development of tower houses (*casas-torre*) and fortified manor houses were key components of the Portuguese defensive system.²⁷ Those kinds of tower houses, which were popular in Portugal between the 13th and fifteenth centuries, reappeared in this context and created a network of small defences in foreign spaces, right along enemy lines. More than adopting bastions, it was essential to settle a presence in the land. Parker's argument that the artillery fortress was 'an engine of European overseas expansion' still needs to be questioned and developed.²⁸ Therefore,

24 Roger Lee de Jesus, "A governação do 'Estado da Índia' por D. João de Castro na estratégia imperial de D. João III", PhD dissertation, University of Coimbra, 2021, pp. 199-211.

25 Tonio Andrade, "The Military Revolution in Global History. East Asian perspectives", in Carvalho, Muteira, e Jesus, 'cit.', pp. 223-238.

26 João Barros Matos, "Do mar contra terra. Mazagão, Ceuta e Diu, primeiras fortalezas abaluartadas da expansão portuguesa", PhD dissertation, University of Seville, 2012.

27 Sidh Mendiratta, *Dispositivos do sistema defensivo da Província do Norte do Estado da Índia*, PhD dissertation, University of Coimbra, 2012.

28 Geoffrey Parker, "The Artillery Fortress as an Engine of European Overseas Expansion,

case studies of sieges are important, and they are frequently forgotten from the historiography related to the Portuguese Empire²⁹ – for example, a more in-depth study of the famous siege of Chaul (1570-1571)³⁰ or the multiple sieges of Melaka by local forces and by the Dutch, or even the fall of Bassein (1738) in India, could provide more novelty on this subject. Even non-European adoption of new architectural forms has been reconsidered, as Eaton and Wagoner's remarkable study on the Deccan Plateau has shown.³¹

The dissemination of firearms can be perceived as innovative, at least, in Asian and African battlefields.³² It is one of the most well accepted ideas that the Portuguese had a significant impact on introducing harquebus and muskets in other parts of the world. It was even common, in Asia, to find Portuguese mercenaries serving local rulers as a specialised and technical group. The image of these men carrying guns is represented in multiple places, from paintings to sculptures and engravings throughout Asia, and even in some of the famous Benin plaques³³, which show their cultural reach.³⁴ However, it was not only the use of firearms that was disseminated but also its production. For instance, recent studies show how the *Estado da Índia* produced them in Sri Lanka during

1480-1750", in James D. Tracy (Ed.), *City Walls: The Urban Enceinte in Global Perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 386–416.

29 For instance, in the global view offered in Anke Fischer-Kattner and Jamel Ostwald (Eds.), *The World of the Siege. Representations of Early Modern Positional Warfare*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2019.

30 R. O. W. Goertz, "Attack and Defense Techniques in the Siege of Chaul, 1570-1571" in Luís de Albuquerque and Inácio Guerreiro (Eds.), *II Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa. Actas*, Lisbon, IICT, 1985, pp. 265-92.

31 Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture. Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300-1600*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2014.

32 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "The Kagemusha Effect. The Portuguese, Firearms and the State in Early Modern South India", *Moyen Orient & Océan Indien*, IV (1987), pp. 97-123. See also the article authored by John K. Thornton in this special issue.

33 Kathryn Wysocki Gunsch, *The Benin Plaques. A 16th Century Imperial Monument*, London-New York, Routledge, 2018.

34 There is yet to be done a study of this type of representation. However, some examples can be found in: Jean Deloche, *A Study in Nayaka-Period Social Life: Tiruppudaimarudur Paintings and Carvings*, Pondichéry, Institut Français de Pondichéry and École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2011, pp. 62-66; Stefan Halikowski Smith, *Creolization and Diaspora in the Portuguese Indies. The Social World of Ayutthaya, 1640–1720*, Leiden-Boston, 2011, pp. 235-276; Pratyay Nath, "Terracotta Tales: Entangled Histories of Bhakti, Violence and Empire from Early Modern Bengal", *The Wire*, 4 September 2016, online: <https://thewire.in/culture/terracotta-ales-entangled-histories-of-bhakti-violence-and-empire-from-early-modern-bengal>, accessed on 30 October 2022.

the seventeenth century, since the high number of iron workers made it possible.³⁵ Far from there, the case of Japan is well known, since the introduction of these weapons had a considerable impact on the political and social order, according to the traditional view. However, recent studies by Nathan H. Ledbetter have also reassessed the famous example of the battle of Nagashino in 1575, showing that it must be re-evaluated according to a better understanding of the real dimension of the use of gunpowder arms. Hence, the question that remains is what was the real impact of these technologies on other societies and what was the role of the Portuguese in their diffusion? If the making of these firearms was so easy, why did local rulers still hire Portuguese mercenaries across Asia? Was it a simple way to use gunpowder weapons? Could it be a form of controlling the spread of these devices? Did the production of gunpowder and the gathering of its ingredients influence these matters?

As in other cases, this issue needs to be developed through more case studies, finding common links between regions and military practices. Looking beyond the Asian context, the Portuguese use of firearms in Brazil and Africa also had quite an impact. Regarding the tactical components of the Military Revolution, the colonial settings are even more difficult to integrate. Pitched battles were so rare that despite the transposition and/or adaptation of European manoeuvres and volley fire recorded in Portuguese sources, it was not very relevant in these extra-European contexts – a characteristic of these peripheral wars felt not only by the Portuguese.³⁶ Nonetheless, it was a slow and gradual process, in which guns gained stable importance across the centuries.

Last, in regard to gunpowder, the effectiveness of cannons, onboard and on land, is still a complex issue. As in Europe, its importance on the battlefield was not a relevant issue. Nonetheless, its use on board, through the use of broadside gunnery, is well documented in Portuguese sources since the beginning of the sixteenth century, as is its relevance in protecting fortresses when stationed on land. On this issue, José Virgílio Pissarra argued that the Portuguese navy already had a considerable stable ordnance, well standardised at the time, which shows how war was at the centre of the construction of the empire.³⁷

35 Cenani Pirani, "The Military Economy of Seventeenth Century Sri Lanka: Rhetoric and Authority in a Time of Conquest", PhD dissertation, University of California, 2016.

36 See other examples of these tactical difficulties in Dierk Walter, *Colonial Violence. European Empires and the Use of Force*, London, Hurst & Company, 2017.

37 José Virgílio Pissarra, "Portugal e o desenvolvimento das marinhas oceânicas. O galeão português, 1518–1550", PhD dissertation, University of Lisbon, 2016.

If we look at the military personnel, the complexity of the colonial world expands. Adaptation to local circumstances and difficulties in mainland conscription also meant that the gross of the military effectives were composed of non-Europeans, as seems to have been the rule throughout most Portuguese colonial territories.³⁸ Again, not all colonial realities and respective periods have been given the same attention. In some cases, we are not aware of the actual composition of such military contingents. Additionally, their origin still raises doubts, as well as the reasons that motivated their military service. In addition to the occasional use of mercenaries, troops could be raised in the territories under Portuguese rule. In Asia, the territorialisation that started in Goa and the *Província do Norte*, in the first half of the sixteenth century, and later in Sri Lanka and Mozambique, provided new subjects to the Crown that could enter into the service of the *Estado* - a reality about which we also know little. Documents from Goa show local soldiers, under local captains, fighting for the Portuguese side since the 1520s.³⁹ The lack of soldiers even led to arming enslaved folks in India, diverging from local practices.⁴⁰

This was also common in Brazil and in African colonies, with the integration of *mestiços* and the native population into the army as auxiliary forces (in Angola the so-called *guerra preta*), especially during the seventeenth century, with known episodes in the Dutch-Portuguese war, such as the reconquest of Luanda (Angola), in 1648, and Pernambuco (Brazil), in 1645-1654.⁴¹ Abstracting our-

38 See, for instance, G. V. Scammell, "Indigenous Assistance in the Establishment of Portuguese Power in Asia in the Sixteenth Century", *Modern Asian Studies*, 14, 1 (1980), pp. 1-11, and "Indigenous Assistance and the Survival of the Estado da Índia", *Studia*, 49 (1989), pp. 95-115; René Barendse, "To Be a Servant of his Catholic Majesty: Indian Troops of the *Estado da Índia* in the Eighteenth Century", in Jos Gommans and Om Prakash (Eds.), *Circumambulations in South Asian History. Essays in Honour of Dirk H. A. Kolff*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, pp. 69-103; Catarina Madeira Santos and Vítor Luís Gaspar Rodrigues, "Fazer a guerra nos Trópicos: aprendizagens e apropriações. *Estado da Índia* e Angola, séculos XVI e XVIII," in *Jornadas Setecentistas*, São Paulo, CEDOP-DEHIS/UFPR, pp. 57-66; Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade. Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595-1674*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2012.

39 Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon), Coleção de cartas, *Núcleo Antigo 876 – Cartas dos Vice-reis e Governadores da Índia*, n.º 35.

40 Stephanie Hassell, "Religious Identity and Imperial Security: Arming Catholic Slaves in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Portuguese India", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 26, 5 (2022), pp. 1-26

41 Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *Olinda restaurada: guerra e açúcar no Nordeste, 1630-1654*, Rio de Janeiro, Topbooks, 1998; Roquinaldo Ferreira, "O Brasil e a arte da guerra em Angola (sécs. XVII e XVIII)", *Estudos Históricos*, 39 (2007), pp. 3-23.

selves from a Euro-centred perspective, we can examine how the interest of the colonial elites influenced the recruitment process and, consequently, how these processes were negotiated at the bottom level. A more decentralised analysis, from a bottom-up perspective, can answer some of these questions.

Naval Warfare

Between the fifteenth century and the War of Independence or Restoration against the Spanish Monarchy (1640-1669), warfare outside Europe accounted for most of Portuguese military experience.⁴² At peace in Europe, Portugal made war mostly to create and sustain a distant overseas empire. This and the predominantly coastal and maritime nature of this empire during the 1500s favoured the development of a significant standing navy, which operated both in the Atlantic and in Asian waters.

This navy seems to have been an exceptional and pioneering organisation by European sixteenth century standards, both by its permanent, partly state-owned character and by its size and geographic range.⁴³ Comparable in its partly state-owned and permanent nature to Mediterranean galley fleets—the most significant European standing navies of the time—it differed from them in that it was an oceanic force structured around a core of large sailing vessels that had a much larger range than the galleys. It was thus based on what eventually proved to be the main naval innovation of the sixteenth century: the large cannon-armed full-rigged ship that would dominate open sea naval warfare until the advent of steam navigation.

In contrast, Portuguese land forces have seemed less impressive to many historians. They saw service mostly outside Europe, and the still-established historiographical view is that the prevalence of irregular warfare there and social and cultural habits prevented the development of drilling and discipline.⁴⁴ This resulted in Portuguese troops comparing unfavourably with the contemporary

42 Luis Costa e Sousa, “The 16th Century (1495–1600): The War on Land”, in Francisco García Fitz and João Gouveia Monteiro (Eds.), *War in the Iberian Peninsula, 700–1600*, London, Routledge, 2018, pp. 241–56; Vítor Luís Gaspar Rodrigues, “The 16th Century (1495–1600): Naval War”, in Fitz and Monteiro, ‘cit.’, pp. 256–66.

43 Jan Glete, *Warfare at Sea, 1500–1650: Maritime Conflicts and the Transformation of Europe*, London, Routledge, 2000, pp. 76–92; Francisco Contento Domingues (Ed.), *História da marinha portuguesa. Navios, marinheiros e arte de navegar, 1500–1668*, Lisbon, Academia de Marinha, 2012.

44 António Manuel Hespanha (Ed.), *Nova história militar de Portugal*, vol. 2, Lisbon, Circulo de Leitores, 2004.

professional standing Western European armies such as the Spanish Army of Flanders. It must be said that this somewhat Eurocentric view has its roots in the opinions of Portuguese contemporaries such as D. Francisco Manuel de Melo.⁴⁵ Still widely accepted, it reinforces a notion of sixteenth century Portugal as an essentially maritime, “thalassocratic” power, setting it apart in important ways from the Spanish Monarchy.

The comparison with Spain is a good way to frame Portuguese early modern naval history.⁴⁶ The two neighbouring Iberian powers were the first European states to build maritime multicontinental empires after the well-known exploration voyages of Columbus, Vasco da Gama and others in the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, Spanish conquests in America in the early sixteenth century gave the Spanish empire a territorial dimension from the start that its Portuguese counterpart lacked in the beginning. Additionally, unlike Portugal, the Spanish Monarchy was a significant European power, with a developed and sophisticated European army. However, it did not attempt to maintain a proper standing Atlantic navy for most of the 1500s, in contrast to its Portuguese neighbour. Its imperial expansion did not demand a naval effort comparable to that of Portugal in the Indian Ocean (most of its naval activity was concentrated in galley warfare in the closed-sea environment of the Mediterranean).

Mediterranean naval warfare aside, it thus seems that for most of the sixteenth century, Portugal had a more impressive naval record than its Spanish neighbour, which was in turn more proficient at land warfare. This distinction curiously resembles the one traditionally made between the Spanish Monarchy of Philip II (1556-1598) and the England of Elizabeth I (1558-1603). Like Portugal, England, a predominantly naval power with weak land forces (but without a colonial empire yet), would have faced in Spain a more “land-bound” adversary, with Europe’s best troops at its disposal. Of course, one of the obvious objections to this traditional distinction is that by the year of the so-called Spanish Armada, 1588, Portugal was on the Spanish Monarchy’s side, having joined it by 1580 (it remained a part of it until 1640, during the so-called Iberian Union period). Lisbon was the original departure point of the Armada and the core of its best fighting ships consisted of Portuguese galleons, including the flagship

45 André Murteira, ‘The Military Revolution and European Wars Outside of Europe: The Portuguese-Dutch War in Asia in the First Quarter of the Seventeenth Century’, *The Journal of Military History*, 84, 2 (2020), pp. 511–35.

46 Hugo O’Donnell y Duque de Estrada (Ed.), *Historia militar de España, Tomo III: Edad Moderna. I. Ultramar y la Marina*, Madrid, Ministerio de Defensa, 2013.

and vice-flagship.

More importantly, the view of Spain as a land-bound, “thalassophobic” power has been strongly contested in recent decades, although more markedly for the post-Armada period. This does not change the fact that Spanish naval performance at the end of the sixteenth century and in the seventeenth century was ultimately disappointing. A great fleet-building effort designed to challenge at sea first England, then the Dutch Republic, failed to produce the desired results. A 1639 expedition against the Netherlands destroyed by the Dutch fleet in the English Channel sealed the end of the project for good. Spanish naval power declined after that and only began to recover in the eighteenth century.

The ultimately defective naval performance of the Spanish Monarchy against the rising Northern European powers is a classical historical question that has been approached by several Spanish and non-Spanish historians.⁴⁷ Portugal’s part in the process, however, has not received enough attention, despite it having been a part of the Monarchy during the whole crucial era between the 1588 Spanish Armada and the 1639 expedition against the Netherlands. Recent and still little-known contributions by mostly Portuguese historians shed some light on the subject.⁴⁸ The most striking fact about it is the apparent naval decline of Portugal in the period. If Portuguese galleons were at the forefront of the Armada in 1588, Portuguese participation in the 1639 armada was much less significant. That may have had to do with the parallel dispatch of another great Portuguese-Spanish armada to Brazil, but other signs point to a decrease in Por-

47 There follows a non-exhaustive list: José Alcalá-Zamora y Queipo de Llano, *España, Flandes y el Mar del Norte, 1618-1639*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2001; I.A.A. Thompson, *War and Government in Habsburg Spain, 1560-1620*, London, Athlone Press, 1976; Carla Rahn Phillips, *Six Galleons for the King of Spain: Imperial Defense in the Early Seventeenth Century*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; Robert A. Stradling, *The Armada of Flanders. Spanish Maritime Policy and European War, 1568-1668*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992; David Goodman, *Spanish Naval Power, 1589-1665: Reconstruction and Defeat*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997; Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe*, ‘cit’.

48 Leonor Freire Costa, *Naus e galeões na ribeira de Lisboa. A construção naval no século XVI para a Rota do Cabo*, Cascais, Patrimonia, 1997; Leonor Freire Costa, *O transporte no Atlântico e a Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil, 1580-1663*, Lisbon, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2002; Augusto Salgado, *Os navios de Portugal na Grande Armada: o poder naval português, 1574-1592*, Lisbon, Prefácio, 2004; Augusto Salgado, “Portugal e o Atlântico: organização militar e ações navais durante o período filipino (1580-1640)”, PhD dissertation, University of Lisbon, 2009; Pissarra, ‘cit.’; Koldo Trápaga Monchet, ‘Guerra y deforestación en el reino de Portugal (siglos XVI-XVII)’, *Tiempos Modernos. Revista electrónica de Historia Moderna*, 39 (2019), pp. 396–425.

tuguese naval capacity, including the use of ships made in Spain in Portuguese armadas. For instance, the first quarter of the seventeenth century saw a significant effort to supply Portuguese naval forces in Asia with fleets of galleons from Europe. Although the exact figures are not known, a good part of these galleons seem to have been made in Northern Spain. Similarly, in a group of four great naval relief expeditions to Brazil between 1625 and 1639, Spanish ships were in the majority.⁴⁹

It seems thus that Portugal was clearly overtaken by Spain in fleet-building capacity, despite its initial advance. The great fleet-building effort by Spain seems to have been only a part of the explanation. A parallel crisis in Portuguese shipbuilding capacity would have been a cause as well. A deforestation problem in southern Portugal was among the reasons for this crisis. However, the problem primarily affected the so-called *Carreira da Índia*, the fleet system responsible for the annual sailings that took place between Portugal and Asia by the way of the Cape of Good Hope Route. The *Carreira* also went through a crisis in this period, and deforestation was one of its causes.⁵⁰ It has been suggested that the need to focus on shipbuilding for the *Carreira* was what made Portugal's naval forces dependent on Spanish naval relief.⁵¹ Spanish influence on Portuguese shipbuilding practices would have also adulterated a Portuguese tradition of building specialised warships.⁵²

The link between the state of Portuguese naval forces and the situation of the *Carreira* is vital to the understanding of the peculiar nature of the Portuguese navy. It might have been a precociously permanent, largely state-owned organisation, but it was also kept as a sort of parallel organisation to the royal merchant fleet of Indiamen that served in the *Carreira* (voyage on the route was, in principle, a privilege exclusive to the king's ships, although private ships could also be licensed to join).⁵³ The logistics, as well as the shipbuilding, of both were taken care of by the same organisation, the *Armazéns da Índia*, in a very Lisbon-centred system. It was possible to resort to other shipbuilding centres for the building of both warships and Indiamen, but only in limited numbers.⁵⁴

49 Armando da Silva Saturnino Monteiro, "The Decline and Fall of Portuguese Seapower, 1583-1663", *The Journal of Military History*, 65, 1, 2001, p. 9-20 (12).

50 Costa, *Naus e galeões*, 'cit.', pp. 186-95; Monchet, 'cit.'.

51 Salgado, *Portugal e o Atlântico*, 'cit.', pp. 47-49, 263-67.

52 Salgado, *Portugal e o Atlântico*, 'cit.'; Pissarra, 'cit.'.

53 Salgado, *Portugal e o Atlântico*, 'cit.', pp. 31-32, 267; Pissarra, 'cit.', pp. 41-42, 360.

54 Costa, *Naus e galeões*, 'cit.'.

Spanish naval assistance was not enough to avoid a series of naval and military setbacks that afflicted the Portuguese overseas empire in the period. After Dutch overseas expansion took off in the 1590s, Portugal lost several important positions in Brazil, West Africa and Asia to the recently formed Dutch East India Company, or VOC (1602), and West India Company, or WIC (1621). These losses were far worse than anything suffered by the Spanish overseas domains in America and in the Philippines.

Another obvious link of the Portuguese navy to the *Carreira da Índia* was the importance of Asian waters as a theatre of operations. From the beginning of the sixteenth century, an important part of Portuguese warships was always stationed in Asia. There were moments when the Asian fleet may have surpassed the Atlantic fleet, such as by the end of the 1520s.⁵⁵ From early on, the Portuguese in Asia developed significant shipbuilding capacities in Western India, so part of the ships stationed in the East, including full-rigged ships, were built locally. The transfer of European-built warships from Portugal to Asia remained quantitatively significant during the first half of the sixteenth century but dropped drastically in the second.⁵⁶

The increase in naval self-sufficiency in Asia might have played in Portugal's favour, in light of the late sixteenth century crisis in shipbuilding in Portugal. However, a less known parallel crisis seems to have afflicted Portuguese shipbuilding activity in India around the same time.⁵⁷ This impaired Portuguese ability to rise to the challenge represented by the arrival of the Dutch East India Company in Asia after 1602. The already mentioned resort to the sending of Spanish galleons to Asia is explained by this double crisis of Portuguese shipbuilding in Portugal and India.

It proved not to be a solution, however. A structural aspect of the crisis was the worsening situation of the *Carreira da Índia*, with an increase in shipwrecks and otherwise aborted voyages of ships on the route. However, this also affected ships built outside Portugal and its empire. A series of eleven relief fleets of galleons sent east between 1601 and 1629 failed to produce many results, since many of the relief ships - including galleons made in Spain - foundered

55 Pissarra, 'cit.', p. 407.

56 Paulo Guinote, Eduardo Frutuoso, and António Lopes, *As armadas da Índia: 1497-1835*, Lisbon, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2002.

57 André Murteira, "A navegação portuguesa na Ásia e na Rota do Cabo e o curso neerlandês, 1595-1625", PhD dissertation, New University of Lisbon, 2016, pp. 255-58.

on the way or aborted their voyages, returning to Portugal.⁵⁸ The resultant lack of proper naval means was an important factor behind a series of Portuguese defeats to the VOC, its Asian allies and other Asian powers between 1638 and 1663. Many positions were lost, and the Portuguese empire in Asia was reduced to a marginal affair.

It seemed for a time that something similar was at risk of happening in the Atlantic, where large parts of North-eastern Brazil and important West African positions were also lost to the Dutch West India Company after 1630. However, a successful rebellion by Portuguese settlers in Dutch Brazil against the Company in 1645 led to the retaking of most lost positions. Unlike what happened on land, there were no important Portuguese naval victories over the Dutch, but successful mobilisation of naval resources was essential, both for the carrying of expeditionary forces and for the organisation of escorted convoys against Dutch privateering.⁵⁹ This suggests that naval resources were still available despite deforestation problems. Explanations of the crisis of the *Carreira* and the navy that focus exclusively on deforestation may therefore be too monocausal.

If there is a conclusion to be drawn from this brief historiographical summary, it is that the existing state of the art does not yet seem to satisfactorily answer one important question raised by Portuguese naval history in the period: why did Portuguese naval power seem to have declined relatively vis-à-vis that of its Spanish neighbour during the Iberian Union period? This Iberian “little divergence” has been obscured by the attention traditionally paid to the larger question of general Iberian decline vis-à-vis the new Northern European naval powers. However, this deserves further study. If we accept the established view that there was an opposition between a thalassocratic Portugal and a more land-bound Spanish Monarchy in the sixteenth century, then the subsequent divergence may make us question views that see naval expansion as a prerequisite for state formation and the development of “fiscal-military states” or “fiscal-naval states” such as the Dutch Republic and England in the seventeenth century and eighteenth centuries.⁶⁰ That may have been true, but Portugal’s divergent trajectory offers a counterexample that should also be taken into account. This is especially important in view of the fact that Portuguese historiography has long argued that Portuguese imperial—and consequently naval—expansion worked

58 Murteira, *The Military Revolution*, ‘cit.’, pp. 527–31.

59 Mello, *Olinda restaurada*, ‘cit.’; Costa, *O transporte no Atlântico*, ‘cit.’.

60 Glete, *Warfare at Sea*, ‘cit.’, pp. 60–65; N.A.M. Rodger, “From the ‘Military Revolution’ to the ‘Fiscal-Naval State’”, *Journal for Maritime Research*, 13, 2 (2011), pp. 119–28.

as a conservative factor in Portugal by preventing social and fiscal change and thereby inhibiting state-formation in general.⁶¹

Afterthoughts

If we attempt to sum up these three different overviews, we can conclude that it is difficult to sustain that the Portuguese case supports the case for a link between an alleged military revolution and unilinear state formation, since state formation does not seem to have been very developed, either in Portugal or in its empire. While it is possible to argue that the scale of Portuguese land forces, even in its overseas empire, was not comparable to that of other European powers, the same can no longer be said of its naval forces, a highly extensive and developed organisation by the standards of the time - but which failed to produce a “fiscal military state” or a “fiscal naval state” comparable to the later English and Dutch cases. Having said that, however, it should be added that the weakness of state formation in Portugal, widely accepted until recently by the most relevant historiography on the subject, has been questioned of late. Nevertheless, the most promising fields of research, such as the collaboration on the Portuguese military effort of private contractors or of colonial elites, clearly go against simplistic notions of state formation, stressing instead the continuing dependence of states on the cooperation of private agents.

Similar caution should apply to claims for a link between a military revolution and alleged Western military superiority. The early development of the Iberian overseas empires makes the Portuguese (and Spanish) case especially relevant for this discussion. Regarding fortresses, individual firearms, artillery, battle tactics and the use of local forces, qualifications abound, and a more nuanced picture emerges, suggesting limitations to Western exceptionalist views. Naval history, of course, is the field where the Portuguese case is still deemed more significant. Even there, however, the current state of the art paints an increasingly complicated picture, which does not corroborate pre-existing models, such as those that posit a clear link between the growth of naval power and the development of fiscal-military states.

61 Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, “Finanças públicas e estrutura do Estado”, in *Ensaio*, vol. 2, Lisbon, Livraria Sá da Costa Editora, 1978, pp. 29–74; Pedro Lains, Leonor Freire Costa, and Susana Münch Miranda, *An Economic History of Portugal, 1143–2010*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 94–100.



Mattäus Merian (1593-1650), Siege and capture of Bautzen by the Elector of Saxony, John George I (1585-1656). Source: Wikimedia Commons