

# PORTUGAL'S MILITARY HISTORY IN THE LAST TWO HUNDRED YEARS<sup>1</sup>

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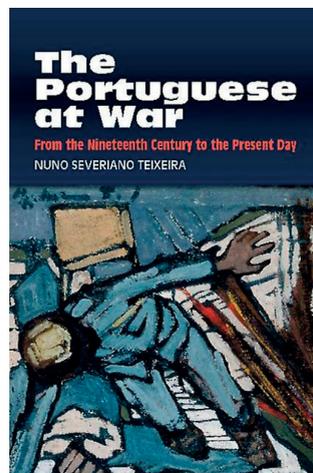
**T**he *Portuguese at War: From the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day* aims to outline an overview of Portugal's military history from the beginning of the 19<sup>TH</sup> century to the present day without, however, embarking on any exercise of controversy with the published works on the subject. On the contrary, Nuno Severiano Teixeira's arguments for each of the periods under analysis are supported by the extensive bibliography used (17 of the 259 pages), which also serves as a list of must-read books. Studying the military institution from a historical perspective, analyzing the international social, political, economic and political context helps us to understand how those factors have influenced each other and how important they are in the history of nations. The dynamics resulting from regime changes, regime consolidation, internal social and political conflicts, international situation and position, national strategy and economic and financial situation of a country directly influence the military *ethos* and the way it expresses itself in politics and campaigns. The link between the military institution and all the factors and circumstances that affect it presented different features in each of the periods, which underlines the importance of the historical analysis undertaken by the author. Even within each political

regime the behavior of the institution was not unvarying, just see the fluctuations during the period of *Estado Novo*, which the author addresses when dwelling on the Civil War of Spain, in the NATO accession and in the wars of decolonization. The book is divided into eight chapters, which correspond to the periods in which the Armed Forces accompanied the unfolding of an international conflict ( chapter 5 – “ *Estado Novo* and the Second World War”, and chapter 6 – “The Cold War and NATO”), were directly or indirectly involved

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in internal conflicts (chapter 1 – “Between Liberal Revolution and Civil Wars”) and in military campaign (chapter 2 – “Building the African Empire”; chapter 3 - “The Republic and the Great War”; chapter 4 - “Portugal and the Spanish Civil War”; chapter 7 – “The End of Empire and the Decolonization Wars”; chapter 8 – “From the War Campaigns to Peacekeeping Operations”). The author provides an excellent framework of the context influencing how politics evolve with direct implication in the military institution. At this point, we have clear evidence of the relationship between politics and war, in line with Clausewitz’s famous aphorism and which gives meaning to the title of the book.

Nuno Severiano Teixeira is Full Professor at NOVA-FCSH and director of the Portuguese Institute of International Relations of NOVA University Lisbon. He is one of the most reputed authors in the area of military history, with extensive published work, having been coordinator of two works of Portuguese military history, the last of which, dated 2017, elaborated together with João Gouveia Monteiro and Francisco Contento Domingues, and encompassing a Portuguese version of this book. The latter is addressed to English-speaking readers and the clear writing, its organization and the questions formulated by the author in each chapter to guide the reader’s focus help us to understand the work’s contribution military history, which for many years was treated as a poor relation of general history.

Of exceptional quality and accuracy, the book presents us with a historical perspective of the military institution in Por-

tugal in the last two hundred years, with emphasis on the recruitment systems, composition, organization and apparatus of the Armed Forces, the evolution of technology and armaments, tactics and military operations. Although the book’s title suggests an analysis of the “grammar of war”, it is, in fact, essentially concerned with carrying out a historical analysis of “war” in its national and international political-strategic, social, economic and even public opinion context. As it is presented, the Severiano Teixeira’s tome is a masterful synthesis of the centrality of the ethos of the military institution in Portugal, which is reason enough for reading it with keen interest.

The book is an excellent contribution to securing a status for military history far beyond a subdivision of history, of the history of battles, commanders, tactics or other piecemeal elements linked to the military institution. It is a broad-spectrum document in which the military institution, historical events, organizational models and human behavior, for example, can be understood, analyzed and framed in an integrated perspective, granting military history the analytical exercise of national and international political dynamics, social phenomena, economy, culture, integrated in an evolutionary scale of military systems in the “long term”. The historical analysis performed lessens the conceptual problem of the historical method, which consists in not possessing methodological instruments that place the facts in the specific situation (experience) of the moment of the event in order to test the hypotheses, reformulate them and present conclusions

that are valid and tendentially universal. Nuno Severiano Teixeira overcomes by providing an excellent framework for each period analyzed, which enables us to discern the uniqueness of each event and how it is linked to the “short term” and the “long term” of the history of Portugal. The author does not put forward an aggregating thesis of the arguments defended in each chapter, but does not steer clear of the two anchors of Portugal’s history in the last two hundred years: the role of the Armed Forces in the change and consolidation of regimes; and the colonial factor, which from the end of the 19TH century becomes the main link between war and politics in Portugal, an exception being only a few moments during World War II. Captured in its colonial dimension, national politics and political-strategic options are a factor of regime reinforcement and change, of an imaginary around national greatness and, above all, a motive for the most varied defense policies. These have translated into policies and systems of recruitment, organization and structure of the Armed Forces, technological development, science and art of war, doctrines, equipment and models of training and instruction, whose maximum expression is reached between 1961 and 1974.

Also worth noting is the fact that the book encompasses the contemporary period of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century and early 21<sup>st</sup>-century. Chapter 8 examines the period of regime change and democratic consolidation, explaining how the subordination of the Armed Forces to political power and the geopolitical changes resulting from the end of the Cold War led the Portuguese Armed Forces to take on a mission of reinforcement and articulation with foreign policy, which changes Portugal from a mere consumer of international security (the case of the 1960s and 1970s), into an active producer of international security, widely recognized and with more international weight than its apparent political and economic power seem to warrant. Just a final remark on the book’s internal structure. It is understandable that Nuno Severiano Teixeira does not propose to us an explanatory thesis of the role of the military institution in the period in assessment; he could, however, have chosen to offer us a conclusion beyond a mere summary of the arguments dealt with in each chapter and that which might give an outline of the constant factors over time and, in that sense, provide a valuable hint at the future of the military institution in Portugal. 

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