

The ‘other Portuguese Flanders’: strategic ambition and operational disaster in the Portuguese Great War in Mozambique

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Introduction

Portugal was a belligerent in the First World War in two continents, Europe and Africa, and in three different theatres of war, France (Flanders), Angola (Southern regions) and Mozambique (North and Eastern regions). Despite fighting in different theatres of war, one strategic goal unified the sending of both these expeditionary forces. Portugal, with its intervention in World War One, was hoping to ensure its position in the world system and improve its standing vis-à-vis its main ally and potentially, most dangerous adversary, Great Britain. For Portugal, an improved status in a new post-war international order was more than enough to justify a significant effort in intervening in the World War both in Europe and in Africa.

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This chapter will try to show that the very demanding intervention was the result of a very ambitious strategic goal for a small power and very young republican regime. The paper will not describe the Portuguese military campaigns in Mozambique in World War One. It will focus on the political aims and the military actions of Portugal in Mozambique with an analysis of the political purposes and strategic impact of the war. First, it looks at the political '*Weltanschauung*' or vision, then, it relates policy decision-making, strategic planning and operational concept, to see, in the end, the real impact of these three factors on the ground: politics, policy and strategy.

This work seeks to connect military and political history and strategic studies. Strategy tells us that war is politically driven, but that political management is very difficult because of the action of the enemy.² Strategy required an understanding of what is war. History tells us that we have to understand the actions of the historical actors in their historical context, without anachronisms. History gives the historical researcher, the capability to understand historical personalities in their own language and reality.³

Firstly, the political vision of the radical wing of the Republican government of Portugal and its place in the role of Portugal in the World War. Then, we will see how these war aims were translated into political action and military strategic conceptions. The paper will close with some remarks on the effects of these actions on the country's international position.

The new Portuguese Republic and the Great War

Portugal became the most recent of only three republics in Europe after a victorious take-over of power in October 1910. On 9 March 1916 Germany declared war on Portugal. The paradox is that, unlike in the case of Belgium, even if it was Germany who formally declared war on Portugal, the Portuguese government did all it could for that to happen. The government was dominated by the more radical wing of the Republican Party—known as Democrats, or *Jovens Turcos* ('Young Turks') in the case of its military wing. They wanted to participate in the war, their political aims—internal as well as

² See for example, Gray, Colin S, *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2010) pp. 7, 25, 131-3

³ Pomian, Krzysztof, *Sur l'Histoire* (Éditions Gallimard, 1999)

external—relied on an active military intervention in the most demanding, and it was hoped, prestigious theatre of war, the Western Front of the conflict in Europe. Portugal was divided about the intervention. This division reflected a broader political fissure between more radical republicans, on the one hand, and monarchists and Catholics and more moderate republicans on the other.⁴ The main focus of division was not between Anglophiles and Francophiles on one side, and Germanophiles on the other. The latter were, if not nonexistent, politically insignificant; even the exiled former King Manuel II, after all, lived in Britain. The division was not on whether to support the Western allies, but how to do it. There was a great deal of opposition—except for the most radical wing of the Republicans to sending an expeditionary force to the Western Front. Where there was consensus, was on the African front of the war—in which Portugal had long felt threatened by Germany, its ambitious colonial neighbour to the north of Mozambique (German East Africa) and to the south of Angola (German South West Africa). No one questioned the need to send forces to deter or counter German aggression against Portuguese territories in Africa.

The main external war aim of the ‘radical wing’ in control of the Portuguese government in 1916 was to achieve a greatly improved international status and a more balanced relationship with its main ally, Great Britain, shaken by the Republican revolution. As General Norton de Matos, the Portuguese war minister of the belligerent governments, said many years after that event, intervention in the World War was aimed at giving Portugal a renewed and heightened ‘sense of national dignity’, and in his mind it had.⁵ This was vital not just for external foreign policy, but also for domestic reasons, of internal prestige of the Republic that would guarantee its consolidation and the political preeminence within the new regime, of its radical wing and their policies.⁶ The voluntaristic show of force in Flanders

⁴ For a general overview on the political situation of the Republic, see, for example, Fernando Rosas, *Portugal no Século XX (1890-1976) – Pensamento e Acção Política* (Editorial Notícias, 2004) pp. 35-51

⁵ Norton de Matos, *Memórias e Trabalhos da Minha Vida*, III Vol. (Tomo V) (Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2005) p. 16

⁶ The belligerency of Portugal in the First World War is highly debated in Portuguese historiography. This perspective is a synthesis between, Teixeira, Nuno Severiano, *O Poder e a Guerra, 1914-1918, Objetivos Nacionais e Estratégias Políticas na*

was meant to elevate the radical Portuguese Republic internally as much as internationally. The problem was this could not be done if the ‘other Flanders’ was lost, if the African front went badly wrong, risking the colonial heritage seen by all Portuguese nationalists as a sacred endowment going back to the Golden Age of the Discoveries.

The Great War was seen by these Republican hawks as an opportunity to pursue one of the main reasons for the Portuguese October revolution of 1910: the new Republic as an end to the period of Portuguese decadence and the return of Portugal to a colonial great power recognised by other great powers, mainly France and Great Britain. To close the gap, Portugal would boldly have to pursue a very ambitious policy.⁷

Entrada de Portugal na Grande Guerra (Estampa, 1996) which stands for the purpose of internal political consolidation, and Fraga, Luís Alves *Do Intervencionismo ao Sidonismo, os Dois segmentos da Política de Guerra da 1ª República, 1916-1918* (Imprensa Universidade de Coimbra, 2010) pp. 79-93, who see the main aim as to get some sort of strategic parity with Great Britain and larger international autonomy. Our argument was defended in a conference some years ago, unfortunately never published, Duarte, António Paulo, ‘O Desejo da Aliança: Os Republicanos Radicais, a Aliança com a Grã-Bretanha e a Intervenção Portuguesa na Grande Guerra’, *Conference in the International Seminar: From the Trenches to Versailles: War and Memory (1914-1919)*, Reitoria da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 22-27 de Junho de 2009, 23 June 2009, 14.00h. For an approximation to our perspective, see: ‘A helvetização do Exército e a intervenção portuguesa na Grande Guerra’, *Congresso Internacional I República e Republicanismo. Atas* (Assembleia da República, 2012) pp. 195-202. Also very interesting, is the article by Rui Ramos, ‘A Revolução Republicana de 1910 e a Política Externa Portuguesa’, in João Marques de Almeida e Rui Ramos, Coord., *Revoluções, Política Externa e Política de Defesa em Portugal, Séc. XIX-XX* (Edições Cosmos/Instituto da Defesa Nacional, 2008) pp. 55-94. More recently in a view highly antagonistic of the radical republican political wing, is the work of Telo, Antonio José & de Sousa, Pedro Marquês, *O CEP. Os militares sacrificados pela má política* (Fronteira do Caos, 2016)

⁷ The idea of decadence is itself related with the concept of power. Decadence means power fall or power decline. The word derives from *fall* in Latin, *cadere, cair* or *queda* in Portuguese. The biggest problem facing Portugal at the beginning of the twentieth century was its power decline that could be regenerated by the new African Empire. Norton de Matos and Pereira da Silva, two of the most preminent officers of the armed forces and active politicians in the First Republic also named the regeneration of Portugal by the African Empire as ‘Portugal Maior’, ‘bigger Portugal’, the restoration of Portugal to a preminent international position by the development of its own colonies, a ‘new Brazil’. Matos, Norton de, Op. Cit., III Vol., pp. 473 e ss. de Oliveira, Maurício, *Pereira da Silva, Oficial-Ministro-Doutrinador* (Editora Marítimo Colonial, 1968) pp. 130 e 135. A vivid demonstration of this idea is a book for school students, titled precisely *Portugal Maior*. Reis, Augusto, & Henriques, António, *Portugal Maior. Livro de Leituras Portuguesas para o Ensino Técnico* (Livraria Popular Francisco Franco, (s/d))

How could the Portuguese Radical Republican hawks believe in this possibility of Portugal as a potential rising power? They believed in this possibility evidently, in part, out of political doctrinaire idealism, but also because Portugal had the fourth largest empire in the world.⁸ This was often mentioned in the Portuguese Republican Parliament. Indeed, it was true in territorial terms. But great territory is not the same as great power.

Many Portuguese public intellectuals and political figures, as did others in Europe, not least in Germany, believed Mahan's navalist equation was fundamentally correct, that empire meant healthy finances and commerce and in the end a strong military (in particular naval) power.⁹ Portugal seemed to the most ambitious to have all the possibilities to regain its status because it had the territorial basis to make this naval agenda come true.¹⁰ All that was needed, the Portuguese 'Young Turks' believed was will power to do what was necessary to enter the war and show Portugal was not another dead man of Europe, by a show of effective martial power. This, Portuguese hawks believed, would imply a visible presence on the key battlefields, that would ensure the relevance of Portugal in international society after the war and strategic parity with Great Britain. For that, however, Portugal would have to turn a great territory into an effective machine to actually mobilize resources and train a reasonably sized expeditionary corps for the battlefield, something that would be very difficult given the poverty of the country and the lack of effective modern military means. The only thing that Portugal undoubtedly had to give was 'canon fodder' and German ships that had taken refuge in its ports, and both were sorely needed by France and Britain in 1916.¹¹

⁸ See, for example, the arguments of Celestino de Almeida, Navy Minister in Parliament 1911. *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, session n° 11, 11 December 1911, p. 4

⁹ For example, in the 'Câmara dos Deputados', the Portuguese Parliament, one of the national representatives, Mr Luís Tavares, would use the Mahan trilogy as a demonstration of the advantages of the development of a merchant navy. *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, session n° 7, 11 December 1911, p. 12

¹⁰ About the idea in general, see Duarte, António Paulo, 'Portugal maior', *Limes* (Rivista Italiana di Giopolitica), n° 5, 2010, pp. 72-73

¹¹ The armed forces were under equipped. The army did not have modern artillery, nor modern military instruction, and the navy was equipped with very old and small ships, the most modern of them, a small 'Contratorpedeiro', 'destroyer' of 700 ton, the first ship of the 'Douro' Class. Regarding the military situation, for ex-

Despite its position, the government of the so-called *União Sagrada* (Sacred Union)—in fact a failed attempt to copy the French political model of a government of national unity—was unable to include all of the Republicans, not to mention Socialists, Catholics or Monarchists¹²—decided not only to force Germany to declare war but to do so with extremely ambitious objectives and setting the level of ambition in terms of resources at an impossibly high level. Moreover, not only did the *União Sagrada* government decide to get the largest army in France that it could mobilise and train, with additional British support, *but* at the same time prepared the most significant military expedition to be sent to Portuguese Africa since the wars of occupation, with the aim not only to defend the north of Mozambique but also, amazingly, to conquer parts of German East Africa.

Portuguese war aims in World War One and the war in Mozambique

Portugal sent two expeditions to Mozambique, in 1914 and in 1915 respectively. The first was sent immediately after the start of the war. It had the military objective of defending Mozambique from German raids from Tanganyika. The first expedition had 1,540 men and 49 officers under the command of Colonel Massano de Amorim.¹³ The second expedition had 1,584 men and 41 officers under the command of Colonel Moura Mendes.¹⁴

Things went badly wrong on both the Western European front and the East African front. The first requires little explanation. But the second is more paradoxical; the German forces in East Africa were small and isolated; and Portugal had a lot of experience fighting overseas. How did this happen?

The Portuguese elite did not believe in the martial qualities of the Africans. Part of the answer is simply imperial racial prejudice. The Portuguese elite increasingly adopted, especially

ample, see Fraga, Luís Alves Op. Cit., pp. 148-54, and Telo, António José, & de Sousa, Pedro Marquês, Op. Cit., pp. 187-8. For the navy situation, Telo, António José, *História da Marinha Portuguesa. Homens, Doutrina e Organização, 1824-1974* (tomo I) (Academia da Marinha, 1999) pp. 237-49

¹² Valente, Vasco Pulido, *A 'República Velha' (1910-1917)* (Gradiva 1997) pp. 89-91

¹³ Duarte, António Paulo, Esboço para uma Leitura Estratégica sobre a Campanha de Moçambique (1914-1918), *Revista Militar*, n° 8/9, agosto/setembro 1998, p. 681

¹⁴ Idem, p. 684

the Positivist-inclined radical Republicans, the pseudo-scientific racist views so common in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Many seem to believe that Portugal's decline was due to the mixture of whites (Celtic or Lusitanian)—and blacks (Arab and African). This set of ideas meant that only white Portuguese could have the martial qualities to fight in a European war, even in tropical Africa. The Portuguese government would have to send expeditions of metropolitan soldiers to fight against the Germans in East Africa, instead of using large numbers of locally recruited soldiers like the latter did.

In German East Africa it seems to have been decided that in tropical Africa, only African troops would have the ideal physical conditions to fight, with Europeans in command. Racism was also present in the German policy option, not least in the notion of warrior races in selecting Askaris, but it better fitted the circumstances. In 1914, at the beginning of the war, there were in German East Africa 260 European officers commanding 2,472 African troops. During the war, the total has been estimated at 12,100 Askari troops and 3,007 European German troops.¹⁶

Indeed, the British, at the beginning of the war, had similar prejudices to the Portuguese, regarding the (lack of) quality of African troops. They decided however to use Indian troops instead of European as being better fitted to a tropical climate. They would, however, prove equally ill adapted to local conditions. The lessons learned with African troops recruited by Germany—*Schutztruppe*—led to considerable expansion of the King's African Rifles in 1917.¹⁷

Indeed, even if the fundamental mission of the first Portuguese expeditionary corps was strategic defence, sent in 1914, once the radical wing of the Republicans took full control

¹⁵ See for example, de Matos, Norton, Op. Cit., 1^a vol., pp. 439-46. See also Pélissier, René, *História de Moçambique, Formação e Oposição, 1854-1918*, II Vol. (Estampa, 1998) pp. 438-9

¹⁶ Sibley, JR, *Tanganyika Guerrilla: East African Campaign (1914-1918)* (New York, 1971) pp. 14-5 e 18-9

¹⁷ The KAR mobilised many more troops, 114,000 men with casualties of 62,000, than the German Askari, according to their association site. For information above see the King's African Rifles Association at <http://www.kingsafricanriflesassociation.co.uk/the-history-of-the-kar/>. Accessed 29 Apr 2013

of the government in 1915, they decided that they had to occupy the 'Kionga' region, a small territory, half the size of Luxembourg, in the southeast of the Rovuma River that had long been disputed by Portugal and Germany.¹⁸ The first expedition was incapable of doing so, but the second made the effort to occupy the territory, helped by the withdrawing of the German authorities, before the arrival of the very debilitated Portuguese army. After that, and with war openly declared, the second expedition tried to cross the Rovuma River. The expedition, supported by a small cruiser and a gunboat which fired on German positions, before the amphibious assault, tried to cross the Rovuma River in two large barges. One of them was machine gunned by German troops killing and wounding many of the assaulting troops and that stopped the crossing almost immediately with the retreat of the second barge and the withdrawal of Portuguese forces.¹⁹

The big showdown in Mozambique: Victory and defeat

In 1916, Portugal decided, following the same goals that were being pursued in Europe, to increase its wars aims and to occupy other parts of Tanganyika territory. The third expedition under the command of General Ferreira Gil was 4,642 strong, and would further incorporate the main elements of the second expedition.²⁰ They could rely on the support of ten colonial troop companies, between 1,500 and 2,000 men. In total, General Ferreira Gil would have around 8,000 troops under his command for the offensive.²¹

Of course, this was still about one-tenth of the Commonwealth forces in Tanganyika territory, 100,000 men strong who faced huge obstacles in their slow offensive.²²

¹⁸ Duarte (1998) p. 686. Marques, Ricardo, *Os Fantasmas do Rovuma. A epopeia dos soldados portugueses em África na I Guerra Mundial* (Oficina do Livro, 2012) pp. 59-64

¹⁹ Duarte (1998) pp. 687-8

²⁰ Duarte (1998) p. 689-90

²¹ Ten native companies were raised in Mozambique to support the military offensive. Martins, Azambuja, *Nevala. Expedição a Moçambique* (Famalicão, 1935) pp. 43, 45. They had, probably, between 150 and 200 men each, giving a total of 1,500 or 2,000 men.

²² Nuno Lemos Pires, conference pronounced in the International Seminar 'Entering the War. The entrance of Small and Medium powers in the First World War', II Panel – 'Entering the War: Africa and Europe – Diplomacy, Economy and Society', 30 March 2016, Lisbon.

Initially, the main objective of the Portuguese offensive was Mikindani and Lindi, the last about 200 kilometres (120 miles) beyond the border line. Crossing the Rovuma was easy this time on 19 September 1916. The Germans did not offer any resistance.²³ The advance was, then, confronted by some resistance, from small groups of German Askari, who set several ambushes, but that did not stop the Portuguese advance towards the first main objective, Newala, about twenty-five kilometres beyond the border line and, more importantly given the importance of naval support, two hundred kilometres from the coast. The village was eventually taken on 28 October 1916.²⁴

This was a consequence of the clash between very ambitious strategic goals and the realities on the ground forcing a change, but one that in line with the 'vanguard' concept of politics of the Radical Republicans almost always was to double down on the level of ambition. More specifically, the main objectives on the coast were already in the hands of the British forces, a situation known to the Portuguese command only a few days before the crossing of the Rovuma. The high Portuguese command in the north of Mozambique, pressed by the Portuguese government, felt forced to advance across the Rovuma, north towards Liwale.²⁵

But after that, the advance started to stall. Further advance to the north was simply stopped by German resistance, now much stronger, given the arrival of reinforcements: about 600 German Askaris were concentrated for the counter-offensive.²⁶

The Portuguese had superior numbers in the battlefield, between 850 to 1,600 men,²⁷ but they were in very poor condition: the result primarily of very poor logistics as well as bad military and physical training of rural conscripts, often already not in very good shape. Disease was also widespread among Portuguese troops. Both logistics and disease were always a major challenge for warfare in Africa and this was true in the First World War in all cases, but in the Portuguese case the

²³ Ricardo Marques, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 106-12

²⁴ *Idem*, pp. 125-126

²⁵ *Idem*, pp. 114-114. René Pélissier, *Op. Cit.*, p. 401

²⁶ Ricardo Marques, *Op. Cit.*, P. 155

²⁷ Ricardo Marques give the number of 1,600 Portuguese troops in and around Newala. Ricardo Marques, *Op. Cit.*, p. 155. René Pélissier says the Newala garrison had about 800 Portuguese troops. René Pélissier, *Op. Cit.*, p. 402

problem was especially acute causing more the 75 per cent casualties. The problem was made worse by poor command and control. The advanced Portuguese HQ was still too far behind, in Mozambique, in Palma, 250 kilometres from Newala, far from the troops, and unable to react quickly to any crisis. All this contributed to a disaster waiting to happen.²⁸

The Germans moved fast to encircle the Portuguese in Newala. Isolated, the Portuguese garrison, which had to accept many of the elements of the retreating columns, was too big to be effectively provisioned by the limited stored supplies, and the supply lines were overextended and disorganised, even in the absence of the German siege. Famine soon started, and the lack of water in the tropical summer was an even bigger problem.

During the night of 28 to 29 of November 1917, Portuguese troops in Newala managed to break the siege and withdraw in considerable disarray back to Mozambique. The retreat was badly organised and the troops soon split into numerous disorganised bands, and there were many individual runaways, many of whom were never accounted for. Some were captured by the Germans, a few were reported to have collapsed under war stress and became insane.²⁹

The defeat of Newala had a large similarity, but is even less known in Portugal and abroad, to the military disaster of the so-called La Lys Battle, in which the CEP—the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps collapsed in the face of the German spring offensive of 1918, in Flanders.

True the Battle of La Lys was a much bigger affair than Newala. It took place for the most part on 9 April 1918, at the beginning of operation *Georgette*, the second major German operation of the 1918 spring offensive (or Fourth Battle of Ypres) with the aim of crushing the will to fight of the Western Allies before the new American troops started to have an impact in the war. Close to 20,000 Portuguese troops were engaged. Four German divisions, including elite storm troops, were launched against the Portuguese expeditionary division that had not been informed by British intelligence of the eminent attack. The Portuguese expeditionary corps was crushed and the main political aim of the intervention collapsed with them.³⁰

²⁸ Ricardo Marques, *Op. Cit.*, p. 137

²⁹ *Idem*, pp. 156-60. René Pélissier, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 402-3

Our main argument is that both La Lys and Newala are decisive in two ways. First, they reflect the unwillingness and inability with existing means of the Portuguese military to carry out the goals set about by the radical republican government and a small faction of the military. As in La Lys, in Newala, the strategic goal of the intervention was defeated. Portugal was incapable of achieving the strategic goal of greater parity vis-à-vis Great Britain, by being an active belligerent. The majority of the professional officer corps of the Portuguese Armed Forces had been hostile from the start to the radical republican goal of creating a mass militia army on the Swiss model, both out of conservatism and of a genuine professional concern with the inability to properly fund and equip a mass army given very limited funding. Most officers were even more hostile to what they saw as overambitious goals in the World War. This was not a good way to start a massive war effort in very demanding theatres of operations, for different reasons, in Flanders and Mozambique.

Newala was, in fact, just the start of Portuguese troubles in Mozambique. After the Portuguese retreat from Tanganyika, German East African troops invaded Mozambique. This invasion would probably have happened, even if Portugal had not gone on the offensive across the Rovuma. But, by giving a priority to invading German East Africa, Portugal failed to better organise its defence and became more of a target in the strategy of survival at all costs of one of the most capable German generals—von Lettow-Vorbeck.

Mozambique was the target of two German invasions; one more limited and restricted to the Northeast Niassa province, between April and September 1917, the other, the bigger one, from November 1917 to September 1918, which cut across almost half of the colony affecting large areas of the Northern and Central provinces. These invasions were catastrophic for Portuguese colonial rule, with the Germans pursuing a well-known strategy of promoting subversion, sparking numerous indigenous rebellions. More than 10,000 additional troops were

³⁰ Concerning the Battle of La Lys, see for example, Henriques, Mendo Castro & Leitão, António Rosas. *La Lys, 1918, Os Soldados Desconhecidos* (Prefácio, 2001) and António José Telo & Pedro Marquês de Sousa, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 381-475. A very acute and precise description of the Lys Battle, with recourse to British sources.

sent in successive expeditions to try to stop the German invasion without success.³¹ The republican government was well aware that the 'moral prestige' of Portugal was in danger but it simply did not have the means to successfully counter the threat.³² To be fair, there was plenty of blame to go around in the East Africa campaign, and the British were no more capable of stopping von Lettow-Vorbeck from invading its own colonial territories, where it only surrendered after he was credibly informed that the First World War had ended. On the other hand, the 20,000 *Force Publique* of the Belgian Congo, under Belgian officers but mostly made up of locally recruited forces, better equipped, trained, supplied and commanded, performed much better and were able not only to defend the Belgian Congo but to perform a successful offensive into German East Africa. It was probably von Lettow-Vorbeck's strategic option at the end of the war to retreat/move into enemy territory less exhausted by the war effort, but it is hard to question the notion that Portugal by presenting a show of military incompetence made it a particularly tempting target for invasion.

This proved the Portuguese critics of intervention right—namely some of the most competent military officers—who argued that Portugal did not have the means to put in the field an army capable of fighting alongside the most modern European armies. Expeditionary warfare is always a major challenge, much more so in an impoverished and deeply divided Portugal. The Portuguese expeditionary forces included flawed tactical instruction and command and control, to major problems with crucial logistics and medical support.³³

In the case of Mozambique, Portuguese forces suffered from a mix of lack of competent experienced commanders. When the latter were available their advice was ignored by decision-makers, over-ambitious aims that ignored the enormous distances and logistical challenges that war in Africa required. Also there was arguably, a basic mistake made by the Portu-

³¹ René Pélissier, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 405-36

³² Marques, AH Oliveira, *O Terceiro Governo de Afonso Costa – 1917* (Livros Horizonte, (s/d)), p. 58 (Act of the Government Reunion of 4 May 1917)

³³ Several problems that confronted the Portuguese war effort during the First World War African campaign are very well described in Arrifes, Marco Fortunato, *A Primeira Grande Guerra na África Portuguesa. Angola e Moçambique (1914-1918)* (Edições Cosmos/Instituto da Defesa Nacional, 2004)

guese, but also to a lesser degree by the British and the South Africans, but not by the Germans and the Belgians, of refusing to rely primarily on local African troops. Racial prejudices of the wrong kind arguably had a significant military cost.

Portugal lost 2,000 dead in the Mozambique campaign. Significantly of the 2,000 dead, only about 150 were in combat. This means there can little arguing that Portuguese forces were not adequately prepared and supported to operate effectively in the very demanding conditions of Africa.³⁴

Conclusions

In total, in Mozambique, Portugal engaged 20,000 expeditionary troops and probably about 20,000 local forces mostly in support roles, from 1914 to 1918. The result was a total military operational failure. Ironically the main political objectives ended being achieved—ensuring that in any peace settlement that the Portuguese empire in Africa would not be a bargaining chip, and would remain under Portuguese rule. In the case of Mozambique, there was even a small increase of territory in the north.³⁵ Was this show of commitment a result of the active belligerency of Portugal, or would this have happened because of circumstances beyond Portuguese control—namely British strategic interest in keeping large territories in Africa under a weak but loyal ally? The result was still very far from the affirmation of the new Portuguese Republic as a credible rising power.

Africa was a peripheral theatre in World War One. But for the Portuguese resources, it was potentially an excellent battlefield to have a significant political effect. Belgium managed to conquer parts of German East Africa by making the most of its African forces significantly more numerous than the German troops—but similar to the total number of Portuguese

³⁴ Data from 'O Esforço Militar Português', *O Instituto*, Volº 67, nº3, 1920 give the following elements: 143 deaths by combat, 4,668 deaths by disease or accident, of whom 2,506 were African porters. Other authors give other numbers, similar, but not equal. René Pélissier spoke of 54 deaths by combat and 2,000 by disease and accidents. René Pélissier, *Op. Cit.*, p. 388. Marco Fortunato Arrifes gives a total, extract from the regimental sheets, of 1,898 deaths in Mozambique. Marco Fortunato Arrifes, *Op. Cit.*, p. 331.

³⁵ See, for the total, data from René Pélissier, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 388-390. In general, information about the number of troops engaged in Mozambique gives only the European troops, forgetting the native contribution.

forces involved. A small power could have a large military impact on the African front of World War One given the dispersal of resources and troops of the Great Powers. Portuguese political and military leaders failed to grasp this, and make the most of that possibility by focusing most of its resources in Africa and doing it effectively.

Portuguese war aims were out of all proportion with the military means the country had at its disposal. The result was, predictably, a number of military disasters.

Portuguese leaders wanted international visibility. But they got visibility of the worst kind, by the end of the war the consensus was that Portuguese military forces were too weak and incompetent to be trusted with the defence of any territory on their own. The understandable if ambitious search for greater strategic autonomy by Portugal during World War One had ended by 1918 in a show of greater dependency than ever before.

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