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*The role of the military in political transitions:
from the 18th century to the present day*

XLIX International Congress of Military History

1 - 6 September 2024, Lisbon

Volume I





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OPENING SESSION

Speech by the President of the Portuguese Commission of Military History

Major-General João Vieira Borges

Good morning,

General Commandant of the Portuguese Military University Institute, Lieutenant-General Teodoro Maio (thank you very much for the IUM's support to this Congress and for our friendship),

Mr. President of the International Commission of Military History, Professor Massimo de Leonardis (thank you very much for the support of the Commission that you lead and for your personal support since the first day - and on your behalf I greet the Vice-Presidents, the Full Board and the former and honorary presidents)

Distinguished guests (allow me to highlight the personalities and institutions that compose the honor committee and the directors of the ministry of national defense),

Members of Congress (allow me to make a particular mention to Professor António Telo as the keynote speaker of this opening session),

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been a great honour and responsibility for the Portuguese Military History Commission to organise this 49th Congress of the International Military History Commission in collaboration with the Portuguese Military University Institute.

This Congress, whose theme is "The Role of the Military in Political Transitions: from the 18th Century to the Present Day", coincides with the 50th anniversary of the so-called "Carnation Revolution" of 25 April 1974 in Portugal.

Indeed, the case of Portugal and the Captains' Revolution of 25 April 1974 is an excellent example of a peaceful political transition between the military and citizens elected by the people in free and fair elections.

With this in mind, and taking into account the various case studies scattered around the world, and in the spirit of learning from the past, the sub-themes of the Congress were defined as follows:

- Military interventions in the sense of the seizure of established power, in the form of a coup d'état or a military revolution (planning, organisation, support, execution of the military operation...etc.);
- The military in the interventions, organised or not, with or without the support of security forces or militarised forces;
- Peaceful political transitions between the military and civilians elected by the people in free and fair elections;
- The role of international organisations in military to civilian transition processes;
- The consequences of foreign support to military coup leaders.

After the Keynote Speech, we will have seventy more presentations, organized in twenty-one sessions, that will take place in three auditoriums at the same time (for technical reasons, we will only have simultaneous translation in this auditorium).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Scientific Committee for organising the twenty-one sessions. The programme is available on the websites of the Portuguese Commission of Military History and the International Commission of Military History, as well as through the QR code.

In total, we have exceeded 180 participants, whereas our forecast was no more than 150. Unfortunately, with the airport workers' strike, some of the flights were canceled and some of the participants have not yet arrived in Portugal.

But with the careful guidance of the Executive Board, and with the great commitment of the Congress Staff and all the entities that supported us during this holiday period, I believe that we have managed to solve the vast majority of problems and achieve the objectives originally proposed. Our apologies for anything that did not work out.

Although we are a small team, we will spare no effort to solve all your problems and answer all your questions, in line with our motto, derived from the *Os Lusíadas* of Luís de Camões, in this year of the 500th anniversary of his birth: "To see the gestures and manners of strong people".

Military history is much more than battles, much more than the study of great commanders. The political, strategic and military dimensions are important, but they

become orphans if they are separated from other dimensions, such as the economic, the psychological, the communicational and the social. It's one of the reasons why those who lived, to a greater or lesser extent, the events of 25 April 1974, who have lived with the Captains of 25 April, and who adopted a more open approach, now have a better understanding of the military revolt that led to the revolution. If we move from the more factual and political analysis to other perspectives, such as the international context, the social environment, and even the relations that existed among the military, we will certainly have a different understanding of the revolution. And this is what we will see in the seventy communications and in the debates that will follow in this Congress.

Before concluding this speech, allow me to thank the entities and institutions without which it would not be possible to organise this event:

- The President of the Republic, Professor Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, for his high patronage of the event, but also for his support of the visit to the Cascais Citadel Palace, summer residence of the President of the Republic of Portugal, which is a heritage of great importance due to its history, architecture and privileged location in Cascais Bay.

- To the Minister of National Defence, Dr. Nuno Melo (who will join us at 12:15), and his predecessors, Professor Helena Carreiras and João Gomes Cravinho, who approved, encouraged and supported the project of the Portuguese Military History Commission to hold the International Congress in Portugal as part of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the 25 April 1974.

- To the Board of the International Commission of Military History and the three Committees, in the person of our President, Professor Doctor Massimo de Leonardis, for the confidence they have placed in the Portuguese Commission of Military History and in me, and for all the support they have given to the organisation of this 2024 Congress, with a theme that is both innovative and sensitive.

- To the Portuguese Military University Institute, in the person of its Commandant, Lieutenant General Teodoro Maio, for its association with this event, both in terms of support for the facilities and, above all, from an academic point of view, as a recognised military institution of higher military education.

- The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, the Navy, the Army, the Air Force, the Republican National Guard and the Public Security Police for their essential support in terms of transport, visits and dinners. And allow me to highlight a word of solidarity with GNR for the loss of 5 military in a helicopter accident last Friday.

- To the other members of the Committee of Honour, in particular to the various scientific and cultural academies present, as well as to the military history and culture departments of the three branches of the Armed Forces, the "Military Academies" and the Mafra Town Council;

- To the members of the Organising and Scientific Committees, with particular reference to the four universities that have joined this event;

- To the various supporting people, institutions and organizations, like the National Defence Ministry;

- to the few members of the Portuguese Military History Commission, for the intense and professional work carried out in recent months and days, learning from my predecessors, General Themudo Barata, who organised the 1998 Congress in Lisbon, and General Sousa Pinto, who organised the 2009 Congress in Porto.

- To Professor António Telo, Professor at the Military Academy, with a large body of published work, for accepting the challenge of being the keynote speaker at this event.

- And to all of you present here, participants in this event, who honour us with your knowledge, expertise and specificity.

When we made our first proposal to hold this Congress in Lisbon, during the Athens Congress (on September 3, 2021), we were still experiencing the consequences of COVID-19, at a time when the international community was united around a common enemy to the citizens of the world. Today, in addition to common threats, we live in an increasingly divided world, with 59 wars that could change the global geopolitical picture. This is the highest number of armed conflicts since 1946.

In this sense, I hope that this Congress will also serve to exchange ideas and contacts and to bring all of us who represent 33 countries here closer together, in order to contribute to a better world for our children and grandchildren, where historical narratives are used for peace, and knowledge prevails over superstition and ignorance.

I wish the International Military History Commission a long life.

Thank you for your attention.