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from the 18th century to the present day*

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A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MILITARY INTERVENTIONS IN PORTUGAL

João José Brandão FERREIRA (Portugal)

We have foolishly broken the thread of our history, first by replacing the interest of the homeland with the interest of the party, then the interest of the party with the interest of the group, and finally the interest of the group with the individual interest of each one.

Ramalho Ortigão

Introduction

Military forces have existed since the founding of the nation.

They were the ones who made Portugal, imposing and maintaining by force of arms that first political act, the individualization of the county of Portucale, in 1128.

But it wasn't until October 1817 that the military as such, made its first political intervention. It was led by General Gomes Freire de Andrade. In the background, Continental Portugal was devastated by the three French invasions.⁽¹⁾

1. Although we can go back as far as 24 July 1803, when the Infantry Regiment commanded by Gomes Freire de Andrade and the Legion of Light Troops, commanded by the Marquis of Alorna (who became the Commander of the Portuguese Legion...), mutinied and clashed with the newly created Royal Police Guard.



Gomes Freire de Andrade (Viena de Áustria, 27/1/1757- Oeiras, 18/9/1817.

Why did they do it? I think for three main reasons:

Military reasons: there was a great deal of unease because the Portuguese troops were commanded by the British;

Political reasons: they wanted to remove Marshall Beresford and force the return of the court, which was in Rio de Janeiro;

Ideological reasons: Freire de Andrade was a Grand Master of the Freemasons and a supporter of liberal ideas originating in the French Revolution.

The uprising failed and the 12 main leaders were hanged in Lisbon, in what is now known as the Campo dos Mártires da Pátria.⁽²⁾

The country has never stabilized since then, with the last military intervention taking place on the 25th November 1975 and lasting until 1982.

2. Gomes Freire was hanged (not shot) in S. Julião da Barra on October 18, 1817. In Brazil there was also that year, on March 6, in Pernambuco, the first revolt of a republican nature, which was crushed.

XIX Century

“A collection of unrealizable theories, if they could be called theories, of institutions that were perhaps always impossible, but in a way impossible in a society such as ours and at the time when such institutions were being exhumed from the cemetery of human mistakes”

Alexandre Herculano
(On the Constitution of 1822)

Let's take a fast trip down in History from then to now.

On 24 August 1820 (taking advantage of Beresford's absence in Brazil), a liberal revolution broke out in the city of Porto and this time it was victorious. As a curiosity, the main place where the conspiracy was prepared was in a Masonic lodge called the 'Sanhedrin', which, if you remember, was the name of the court that condemned Jesus Christ.

The main objective (salvation of the Fatherland!) was to approve a Constitution and submit the King to its terms. The latter, inspired by the Spanish Constitution of Cadiz of 1812, was sworn in by the new Parliament on 30 September 1822 and by the King, who had returned the previous year, from Brazil, on 1 October.

The country, which was mostly conservative and a supporter of the previous order, was divided and Brazil's independence made everything worse, because as well as consigning the 'desertion' of the heir to the Crown – Pedro de Bragança - it dealt a very heavy blow to the national economy.

On 27 May 1823, Prince Miguel, at the urging of the nobility and the people, headed for Vila Franca de Xira, followed by all but one of the capital's regiments, and once again proclaimed 'Absolutism' and the meeting of the "Cortes" - an assembly of representatives from the nobility, the Church and the people that came from the beginning of nationality - in the old-fashioned way.⁽³⁾ It was 'Vilafrancada'.

The "Sovereign Congress" - that's what Parliament was called at the time - in despair and without any support in the country, dissolved itself on 2 June.

The monarchists were then divided into traditionalists and liberals. And the latter, into moderates and democrats.

3. Witch did not occur since 1698, when the king was Peter the II. The "Cortes" were an assembly (that came from the beginning of nationality), presided by the King, with representatives from the Church, nobility and, since 1254, the people.

The traditionalists pressured Miguel into a coup in order to rule out any chance of a new constitution being promulgated, albeit a moderate one as João VI had intended, and the “Abrilada” took place on 30 April 1824.



D. João VI, King from 20/3/1816 to 10/3/1826.

The coup was subdued by the monarch with the help of the diplomats accredited in Lisbon and Miguel went on a study trip abroad.

D. João VI died on 10 March 1826. It is now known that he was poisoned with arsenic and there are strong suspicions that his will was forged.

This resulted in a very serious political and succession crisis.

The Infanta D. Isabel (the King's eldest daughter) became Regent. Pedro, Emperor of Brazil, confirmed the regency, granted the Constitutional Charter, abdicated his rights to his daughter Maria da Glória, and tried to marry her with her uncle Miguel, in an attempt to unite the estranged 'family'.

The Charter prepared in the meantime by the future Duke of Palmela, for attempting a middle way between the two tendencies, displeased both.

D. Miguel, having agreed to the terms imposed for his marriage (which he never did), returned to Lisbon on 22 February 1828.

With the traditionalist party being strong, and D. Pedro having abdicated his rights to the throne, and having extensive support in the country, D. Miguel dissolved the Chamber of Deputies, on March 13, 1828, and convened Cortes in the traditional way, where he was proclaimed King of Portugal.

This fact gave rise to the bloodiest civil war that has ever occurred in Portugal. Liberals were persecuted, imprisoned and emigrated. Only Terceira Island, in the Azores, remained a bulwark of the Liberals. They appealed to D. Pedro, who decided to invade Portugal with 7.000 men, most of them mercenaries, recruited in places that were not recommended.



Figure representing the twoBrother D. Pedro and D. Miguel, figthing for the portuguese crown. Honoré Daumier, 1830.

The civil war ended in 1834 with the surprising victory of the liberals which was explained – given the disproportion of forces, 80.000 men for the supporters of D. Miguel and 7.000 men for D. Pedro – by the Leadership: three excellent generals and an admiral, on the Liberal side – Saldanha, Terceira, Sá da Bandeira and Napier - and no figures on the Absolutist side. In addition, there were several unworthy betrayals in this faction.

Once peace was established by the Convention of Évora-Monte, on 26 May 1834, the victors were soon divided into ‘liberals’ (moderates and supporters of the Charter) and ‘democrats’, supporters of direct suffrage. Parliament met on 15 August and a huge uproar ensued. Pedro, now King Peter IV, died on 24 September, not having survived a month of Parliament.

In the meantime, there had already been a revolt in Lisbon on the 9th of the same month, of a leftist nature, which handed power to the ‘democrats’ who restored the Constitution of 1822. This led to more military pronouncements. Talks with the ‘Liberals’ resulted in a constitutional compromise, and a new Constitution was approved on 3 April 1838 (the third in 15 years!).

However, the ‘Liberals’ were not satisfied and, in 1842, a new military revolution inspired by Costa Cabral dissolved the Cortes, revoked the Constitution and re-established the Charter. The reaction to this situation led to the Maria da Fonte revolt in 1846.

General Saldanha, who had in the meantime switched to the moderate side, wouldn't compromise and the civil war dragged on, only ending with a vexatious political and military intervention by England, France and Spain!

Saldanha's new coup led to the Regeneration of 1851 and the Granja Pact of 4 September 1865.

"Rotativism" is installed. In other words, the political and economic oligarchies agreed to put some order into the chaos that had been going on since 1820 and to alternate in power in an attempt to emulate what was happening in England. This gave birth to the Regenerative Party (more to the right) and the Progressive Party (more to the left).



General Fontes Pereira de Melo, Lisboa, 8/9/1819

Lisboa, 22/1/1887

The improvement in finances, to which a sudden investment of Brazilian capital, derived from the prohibition of slavery, gave an important push, allowed for some progress and social peace, whose main laborer was General Fontes Pereira de Melo.

In between, there was the 'Saldanhada', the last coup perpetrated by Saldanha, who was then conveniently removed to the embassy in London. But it was short-lived. A new financial crisis; the 'ultimatum' of 1890 and the emergence of the Republican Party (1875) shook the foundations of the Monarchy. It was now the regime itself that was at stake.

“There must be new facts there, new elements of decomposition that escape me. In any case, I see only one simplistic solution - tyranny. A sabre is needed, with a thought at its side.’

Eça de Queiroz

(In a letter to Oliveira Martins expressing his reaction to the revolutionary attempt of 3 January 1891)

The first Republican uprising took place in Porto, on 31 December 1891. On 1 February 1908, the King and the heir to the throne were assassinated and, on 5 October 1910, the Monarchy of almost seven centuries fell in less than 24 hours. In the Rotunda (a place in Lisbon), there was one naval officer left, from the Naval Administration, who had ridden a horse for the first time that day. The bulk of the army, supposedly monarchist, surrendered.⁽⁴⁾

Monarchical liberalism lasted 90 years, from 1820 to 1910. During this time, the nation was dismantled from its ancient matrix. Its legacy was: six monarchs (two assassinated) and three regencies 142 governments (one and a half per year); 42 Parliaments, 35 of which were dissolved by violent means; 31 dictatorships (one third of the time, outside of constitutional normality, and 51 revolutions, pronouncements, coups d'état, seditions, etc.). And three civil wars...

These were the ‘liabilities’ that the Republic inherited.

The 16 years that followed were dreadful anarchy.

The Republic had a Jacobin background and was therefore anti-clerical. Liberalism was dead and direct democracy was beginning. The Republicans were divided into three main groups: the radicals, led by Afonso Costa; and two conservatives, led by António José de Almeida and Brito Camacho, with no major differences in the latter.

The situation had degenerated to such an extent that on 23 January 1915, the President of the Republic, Manuel de Arriaga, wrote to General Pimenta de Castro to help him put the country in order, to which the latter agreed, imposing a non-party government.

But the army was infiltrated by the “Carbonaria” and soon, on 14 May, a bloody revolution broke out that caused more than 200 deaths and 1,000 injured, putting the Democratic Party back in power.

4. Besides this officer, second lieutenant Machado Santos (who was part of the “Alta Venda” – the highest directional organ- of Carbonária (a secret organization that represents, so to speak, the “armed corps” of Masonry, that was founded in Italy around 1810), rest in Rotunda, nine sergeants and about 500 armed civilians.

From then on, the list of robberies, attacks, murders and assaults was terrifying! The crimes against the Catholic Church and Catholics were infamous. The reaction to this whole debacle came with the revolution of 5 December 1917, led by Sidónio Pais.



Caminha 1/5/1872-Lisboa, 14/12/1818.

“One fact is enough to show the unstable nature of the Republic: it was the first government in the world that agreed to govern with bomb and explosive handlers - artefacts only used by enemies of society to this day!”

Fialho de Almeida

The country put her hope on him, but it didn't last even a year: in December 1918, the “President king”, as he was called, was gunned down at Rossio Station. The country was involved in World War I - on four fronts - but even that didn't calm political and ideological passions.

Once the attempt to restore the monarchy, that took place in 1919, was overcome by force, the most baffling governments and party games followed, until on 19 October 1921 the extremist forces carried out an abominable revolution, during which they liquidated in cold blood, the head of government António Granjo and the “founder” of the Republic himself, Machado Santos and many moderate republicans.

This event left the country appalled and ashamed.

What happened over the next five years is beyond description. What was left of the Democratic Party governed with such free rein that it split into the more conservative

supporters of António Maria da Silva - known as the 'Bonzos' - and the more unrelenting and demagogic hordes of Dr João Domingos dos Santos, known as the 'Canhotos'.

The culmination of the unbelievable events of those times is illustrated by what happened on 16 January 1920, when two of the most demagogic democratic elements, known as 'Pintor' and 'Ai-ó-Linda', accompanied by their followers, went to Terreiro do Paço, entered the office of the President of the Government, Dr Fernandes Costa, who had been appointed that morning, with a pistol in hand, and ordered him to resign, which he did, subjecting the Head of State to appoint someone else that same day to take his place.

In a report by the chief of police in 1925, Colonel Ferreira do Amaral, it can be read that in a period of four years there were eight guards murdered and 45 wounded by gunshot and bomb in Lisbon alone, as well as 30 citizens killed by bombs and 92 wounded. The number of bombs set off in the capital alone totaled 325!



General Gomes da Costa desfila em Lisboa, em 6/6/1926.

It should come as no surprise that the Portuguese army and navy, went deep within themselves to find the moral strength they needed to organize them more adequately to impose a military dictatorship and try to stop the nation falling into the depths of the abyss.

This happened on 28 May 1926.

As a legacy, the 16 years of 'Direct Democracy' of the First Republic left us: eight heads of state, one of whom was assassinated, two exiled, one resigned, two renounced and another was removed from office; 45 governments, giving an average of three

governments a year; eight parliaments, five of which were violently dissolved and 11 dictatorships, leaving us with only five years in which the Constitution approved in 1911 was complied with. ⁽⁵⁾

And when we take stock of a century of liberal and democratic rule, we realize that between 1820 and 1926 the country had 16 heads of state, 189 governments and 50 parliaments, 40 of which were dissolved by violent means. There were 42 dictatorships, almost one every other year.

As has almost become the norm in military revolts, they know what they don't want, but they don't agree on what they do want. The coup d'état of 28 May 1926 was no exception (as was that of 25 April 1974), and it went through many vicissitudes.

With a political impasse and, above all, a very serious financial crisis to deal with, it was decided to appoint a professor from Coimbra who had already distinguished himself for his probity and criticism of the situation that had been dragging on for years.

His name was António de Oliveira Salazar and his prestige was soaring.

On top of this, and also at odds with the majority of notables, he had a global doctrine for the country. From 1932 onwards, through his own merit and the recognition of the majority, he won the right to put it into practice.



Professor António de Oliveira Salazar, Santa Comba Dão, 28/4/1889-Lisboa, 27/7/1970.

From 1933 onwards, a national plebiscite - an act that had never before been practiced in Portugal - confirmed the 1933 Constitution, which had meanwhile been approved by Parliament and which had an additional document, the Colonial Act.

5. There are those who count 52 governments!

What became known as the “Estado Novo” (‘New State’) was institutionalized.

Just 12 years after pulling the state out of the gutter and the nation out of the financial, economic, social and moral swamp in which it found itself, the reborn Portugal presented a splendid spectacle to the world in 1940, ravaged by the worst war in human history, commemorating the double centenary of the foundation and restoration of nationality.

“Forcing the government to make concessions that demean and violence that revolt”
Brito Camacho

This path wasn’t easy: the forces defeated in 1926 insisted on the goodness of their theories, which practice had widely condemned. They were joined by the Portuguese Communist Party when it was founded in 1921.

This led to an attempt to overthrow the dictatorship in 1927, with a revolution that broke out in Porto led by General Sousa Dias; later, in 1931, the revolt in Madeira, which spread to the Azores and Guinea; the revolt of the destroyers Dão and Tejo in 1936, whose garrisons wanted to join the Republican forces in Spain and the anarchist attack on the life of the President of the Council, in 1937.

After this, it wasn’t until 1946 that an unsuccessful attempt was made, which became known as the ‘Mealhada Revolt’ and in the next year a sabotage of the airplanes stationed on Air base N°1, took place.

From then on, the Estado Novo experienced its longest period of civil peace, which lasted until 1958 - 11 years.

This was followed by a period of very intense unrest, which included the “Sé Revolt”, in 1959, which the country hardly noticed and was resolved with half a dozen arrests; the “Abrilada”, in 1961, which was nothing more than behind-the-scenes movements, for a “coup d’état” and the assault on the Beja barracks, on the 1st of January 1962 which, because it involved means on the ground and resulted in deaths and injuries, had a greater impact on public opinion.

It was a period of great upheaval in which the regime trembled, against the backdrop of the unrest arising from the presidential campaign in 1958; the start of terrorism in Angola in March 1961 and the ignominious loss of Goa, Daman and Diu on 18 December of the same year. We should add to this, the hijacking of the TAP Super Constellation, which was travelling from Casablanca to Lisbon, on the 10th of November that year, and the hijacking of the Santa Maria liner, off the Caribbean, on January 22nd - actions that without much effort can be called the inaugurators of modern piracy and terrorism!

The objectives of all these attempts to overthrow the political order in force, failed, and there were no other attempts involving the military until 1974, when Professor Salazar was no longer among the living. The “25th of April” had the particularity of having occurred due to essentially corporate issues, unlike the previous ones, whose substratum was, in some way, ideological.

In summary, during the Military Dictatorship that lasted from 1926 to 1933, we have:

- No Constitution;
- Three Presidents of the Republic;
- Eight Governments (and six Heads of Government);
- Two larger revolutionary attempts and five smaller ones;
- Various conspiracies and seditions.

During the Estado Novo that runs from 1933 to 1974, we have:

- One Constitution;
- Three Presidents of the Republic;
- Several Parliaments elected every four years (none dissolved);
- Three Governments and two Presidents of the Council of Ministers (PCM);
- An attempt on the life of a PCM;
- Six military uprisings
- Two sabotages (involving military personnel);
- Various conspiracies;
- An attempted coup d'état in 1961 (failed);
- An attempted coup d'état in 1974 (victorious);
- From 25/4/74 until 30 September 1982 (end of the Council of the Revolution), the country was under the tutelage of the Armed Forces; during the period between 11 March 1975 and 25 November of the same year, it was at permanent risk of civil war.

Portugal lost 95% of its territory and 60% of population.

The longest period of relative peace and stability since 1817 occurred between 1933 and 1974 – 41 years; the second took place between 1851 and 1890 – 39 years; Years of absolute disaster were those between 1820 and 1851 – 31 years – and between 1910 and 1926 – 16 years – and 1974/5 – – a year and a half; and periods of instability we can consider those from 1890 to 1910 – 20 years – and 1926 to 1933 – seven years.

In a general and very succinct analysis of the military's involvement in violent actions of a political nature, throughout the 19th century, especially in the first 50 years, we have their involvement within political party struggle. In other words, the Army (in the broad sense of the word) ceased to be just a national, supra-party force and became involved in political issues, directly because politics ceased to be unified and became fractioned. In other words, the military divided himself with the division of the royal family; then with the different obedience's of Masonry (namely British and French), and afterwards with the different Political Parties and ideologies that come up on the political arena.

Conclusion

“Falling into a “de facto” oligarchy, cloaked in fictitious formulas and guarantees”

“Democracy, wealth and the army: these are the three cornerstones of the doctrine; oligarchic centralization: this is its process”

Oliveira Martins
(On Regeneration)

The backdrop to most of the military's political interventions was political fragility, the financial crisis between 1817 and 1926 and, above all, ideological issues: Liberals vs. Absolutists; Conservative Liberals vs. Democrats; Regenerators (right) vs. Progressives (left); Monarchists vs. Republicans; Republicans vs. Conservatives; later conservatives vs. communists, etc. In between there was a deep religious crisis that lasted from 1820 to 1940.

We can also observe that a large part of the problems that arose, had their origins in imported ideologies, strange to the matrix and character of the Portuguese people, most of which were disseminated and defended by internationalist forces whose obedience and loyalty surpassed or were juxtaposed to Portuguese national interests.

Finally, in a large number of military interventions (or non-interventions) there are internal reasons, which often result in unrest that is just waiting for an 'ignitor' to explode, such as pay and social injustices; the issue of "remissions"; personnel management problems due to the absorption of a large number of 'militiamen'; attacks on institutional dignity and situations of extreme poverty in terms of equipment, weapons and ammunition.

Once again, attention is drawn to the atypical case of the coup d'état in 1974, when there was no major political or social instability; there was no economic, financial or social crisis and the effect of ideologies foreign to the country was confined to university fringes, artists and intellectuals. There were also political forces, known as the 'Opposition', which were far from having a decisive influence.

However, there was still dissension within the regime, a lack of psychological action in the rearguard and, above all, a poorly thought-out and worse resolved solution to the lack of candidates for the Military Academies, without which it was very difficult to continue military operations in Africa. The situation was aggravated by some unfortunate interventions by the regime's leaders and the white population in Angola and Mozambique, while the specter of India returned to the imagination of some minds.

Finally, with regard to the military's political interventions in the 20th century, we must distinguish between those that took place until 1950 and those that followed. The former were still fundamentally influenced by the regime's opponents from the First Republic and the Communist Party. The later reveal an unprecedented fact: their main inspirers and leaders were men who had been adherents of the Estado Novo, if not its extreme defenders.

This is the case with Humberto Delgado, Henrique Galvão, Botelho Moniz and António de Spínola.



General Humberto Delgado



Captain Henrique Galvão



General Botelho Moniz



General António de Spínola

What made them change camp? A serious political and doctrinal evolution or spite stemming from unrealized ambitions?

None of them were socialists, anarchists or communists. There is no evidence that they were members of any Masonic obedience, nor were they affiliated with the so-called Republican opposition.

Humberto Delgado was one of the adherents of 28 May, defended Dr Salazar in words, writings and works and was even punished for having written a radio play entitled 'Da Pulhice do Homo Sapiens', which was considered fascist. He held high posts and positions of political trust, such as Deputy Commandant of the Portuguese Legion and Deputy Commissioner of the Portuguese Youth Organisation. He came to Washington as an attaché, apparently touched by the American experience (the PC even called him 'General Coca-Cola') and aspiring to various positions such as Governor of Angola, Director of CP, etc. He was denied. He was still not considered to succeed Craveiro Lopes. From then on, he started fighting the regime.

Recognized by Salazar as very capable and intelligent, Henrique Galvão was invited to collaborate on several of the regime's works, which he accepted... A convinced overseas activist, he wrote books and became a District Administrator.

Some events linked to weaknesses in human nature made it impossible for him to be appointed Governor of Angola.

He turned to conspiracy, eventually carrying out a coup with great national and international impact: the hijacking of the liner “Santa Maria” and its garrison and passengers; but which ultimately failed in its objectives.

He died in exile.

Botelho Moniz was always linked to the regime. On Santos Costa’s recommendation, he was Minister of the Interior, which was one of his most trusted political positions. He even went so far as to say that ‘the Opposition doesn’t win either by shooting or by voting’. In a ministerial reshuffle, he was removed and apparently hurt. He is also military attaché in the USA. He became Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and later Minister of National Defense, when he considered ousting the President of the Council of Ministers

He took an active part in the extensive reform of the Armed Forces in 1958, in which the priority was no longer NATO, but the defense of overseas territories, particularly those in Africa.

But when this defense moved from theory to practical necessity, he was afraid of the task and pressured by the Kennedy administration through its ambassador in Lisbon, attempted a coup d’état.

His determination wavered, his assessment of the situation was not the right one and he allowed himself to be overtaken by the opponent’s initiative, which neutralized him. He ended up simply going home...

Finally, the 25th of April: General Spínola, progenitor of the regime, observer on the Russian front during the Second World War, half his career in the GNR, volunteer to fight in Angola in 1961; Governor and Commander-in-Chief in Guinea. Good military man; no known sympathy for the democratic regime. He wanted to be a PR candidate for the forces that held power in 1972. The choice was different. He turned to plotting. He managed to become President in 1974. Ephemeral. As bad a politician as Gomes da Costa, he was forced into exile. Common destinies, different destinies.

Little is learnt in Portugal.

Closing Address

“... that is, freedoms matter to the extent that they can be exercised,
and not to the extent that they are promulgated”.
Oliveira Salazar

The main mission of the Armed Forces and the military is, and always has been, the defense of the Nation, to guarantee the integrity of the territory and the security of the

population, against an external threat. As a rule, they protect the country from their “enemies” in times of war and from their “friends” in times of peace.

At the end of this mission – which involves a wide range of activities and capabilities – there remains the mission of being the last support of the unity of the State. And only when this unity is at stake or has been broken, should the military intervene internally, in order to restore it, and allow national cohesion.

Only when the Regime and/or the Political System is weak (or despotic) does this not happen. Since 1820, political authority in the country - except for part of the “Estado Novo” period - has been weak, for reasons that are not within the scope of this lecture to analyze.

It is good to remember all this, because by a strange design of Divine Providence, very little is learned in Portugal.

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