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# ENTERING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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Entering the First World War:  
the Experiences of Small and Medium Powers

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	5
<i>Ana Paula Pires, António Paulo Duarte, Bruno Cardoso Reis</i>	
<b>Belgium's Entry into the War: the Political Choice of Belligerency to Defend Neutrality</b>	9
<i>Emmanuel Debruyne and Laurence van Ypersele</i>	
<b>Greece during the First World War</b>	25
<i>Loukianos Hassiotis</i>	
<b>Portuguese Participation in the First World War: Three Historiographic Perspectives</b>	39
<i>António Paulo Duarte</i>	
<b>Entering the War: Portugal in Africa</b>	47
<i>Nuno Lemos Pires</i>	
<b>Organizing a War Economy: the Portuguese Case (1914-1919)</b>	59
<i>Ana Paula Pires</i>	



# Entering the First World War: the Experiences of Small and Medium Powers

Ana Pires, António Paulo Duarte and Bruno Cardoso Reis

## Introduction

This volume is the result of a partnership between the National Defense Institute, the Institute for Contemporary History of Nova University and the Institute of Social Sciences, which supported a multi-year research project titled “Thinking Strategically Portugal: the International Role of Small and Medium Powers in the First World War”<sup>1</sup>. It aims to: provide an analysis of the political and strategic dynamics of the Great War; contribute to a better understanding of Portugal’s geopolitical situation in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; study the role and relevance of small and medium powers in international crises.

With this parameters in mind, the National Defense Institute organized on 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2016 the international seminar “Entering the War: the Entry of Small and Medium Powers in the First World War”.

Its goal was to discuss the causes and dynamics related to the entry in the Great War of small European powers, and compare Portugal’s entry into the conflict with that of other small states.

The seminar was organized around two panels: (1) “Entering the War: Small Powers”; and (2) “Entering the War: Portugal in Africa and in Europe – Diplomacy, Economy and Society”.

The first panel examined the entry of small powers in the Great War, contributing to a better understanding of their role, their differences, and their impact in times of conflict and crisis. The second panel dealt with different arguments employed to justify Portuguese intervention in the First World War. The two panels were conceived as complementary.

Belgium was the first of three small powers to enter the war. As Emmanuel Debruyne and Laurence van Ypersele describe, that decision was consensual, made by the Crown Council with representatives of all the main political forces but it was forced by a German *ultimatum* in the beginning of August 1914. Belgium refused the *ultimatum* and opted for war against Germany. This was seen as indispensable to ensure effective national

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<sup>1</sup> This project is inserted in the celebrations of the centenary of the Great War, supported by the Ministry of Defence and financed by the Coordinating Commission of the Evocation of the Centenary of the First World War (see <http://www.portugalgrandeguerra.defesa.pt/Paginas/default.aspx>).

independence, as the only honorable course of action, but also made resistance more effective due to the military reforms initiated few years before 1914.

Loukianos Hassiotis deals with the complexities of the Greek case. The country was deeply divided between a germanophile King and a Prime Minister favorable to the allied side. This uneasy balance was made untenable by the presence of an allied army in the northern city of Salonika, after the Gallipoli expedition. With support from the allied army of the East the pro-allied faction triumphed, but Greece only entered the war at the end of 1917.

The case of Portugal is analyzed next. The Great War witnessed the most important military operation carried out by Portuguese troops outside the country's borders during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Portugal was the only country involved in the conflict, between 1914 and 1916, that was able to preserve a position of undeclared neutrality in Europe and, simultaneously, wage war against Germany in Africa.

António Paulo Duarte describes three historiographic perspectives of Portuguese participation in the First World War. After the Great War, the initial historiographic studies on the country's participation in the war argued that it was the result of external causes, namely: threats to Portugal's territorial sovereignty (e.g. its colonial possessions) and to its status as an independent nation-state. This traditional view underestimated Portuguese political parties' domestic motivations regarding the country's war entrance.

In late 1990s, a new perspective was put forward (i.e. the "primacy of domestic politics"), presenting Portuguese belligerence as a consequence of the Republican Party radical options aimed at providing national and international legitimacy to the new Republican regime, established in 1910. More recently the "primacy of domestic politics perspective" was combined with the external political dimension. This perspective argues that radical Republicans didn't have only a domestic agenda, the Portuguese international status was also very fragile and to consolidate the Republican regime it was necessary to interlock international and national legitimacy, reinforcing both. Military participation in the First World War was seen as a tool to achieve these goals.

Nuno Lemos Pires, analyse several military dimensions of the Portuguese campaigns in Africa. The conflict started in Angola, even before a German's formal declaration of war, with border clashes with German Southwest Africa in 1914, later in Mozambique in 1916, and again in 1917-1918, when German East-African forces invaded this Portuguese colony.

Ana Pires discusses the organization of Portuguese war economy. Before Germany's declaration of war on Portugal the country was affected by the economic consequences of the outbreak of the conflict in Europe. One of the main problems that emerged shortly after the beginning of hostilities was the difficulty experienced by the vast majority of European countries in purchasing grain (in particular wheat) to produce bread, and animal products (namely meat). Apart from bread, sugar, potatoes and meat were the first foodstuffs to run low in Lisbon. This was due not only to heavy dependence upon maritime imports vulnerable to a shortage in transportation means, but also to the endemic deficiencies that characterized Portuguese productive economic base. Agriculture had



not intensified, the commercial fleet was clearly insufficient to meet the country's needs, and industry remained unable to supply both the mainland and the colonies.

The motivations for Portuguese entrance in the Great war may provide some clarifications of other small powers' belligerence (in this case, Belgium and Greece). Drivers that led other small powers to war, can supply reference points of analysis concerning the dynamics of the Portuguese participation in the First World War, establishing not only its specificity but also some commonalities with other countries. The present volume is a contribution to that effort.



# Belgium's Entry into the War: the Political Choice of Belligerency to Defend Neutrality

## Emmanuel Debruyne

Professor at the Université Catholique de Louvain. He has notably written *La Guerre Secrète des Espions Belges: 1940-1944* (Racine, 2008) and *Le Réseau Edith Cavell: Des Femmes et des Hommes en Résistance* (Racine, 2015).

## Laurence van Ypersele

Full professor at the Université Catholique de Louvain. She has notably published *Le Roi Albert: Histoire d'un Mythe* (Quorum, 1995; Labor, 2006) and co-edited *La Patrie Crie Vengeance! La Répression des «Inciviques» Belges au Sortir de la Guerre 1914-1918* (Le Cri, 2008).

Debruyne and van Ypersele have also written together *De la Guerre de l'Ombre aux Ombres de la Guerre: L'espionnage en Belgique durant la Guerre 1914-1918. Histoire et Mémoire* (Labor, 2004); *Je Serai Fusillé Demain: Les Dernières Lettres des Patriotes Belges et Français Fusillés par l'Occupant. 1914-1918* (Racine, 2011); and, with Chantal Kesteloot, *Brussels: Memory and War (1914-2014)* (La Renaissance du Livre, 2014).

## Abstract

On 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914, the Belgian army resisted vigorously to the German invasion, with no possibility of defeating by itself its adversary but the hope to see its guarantors coming to help. This resistance surprised both France and Great Britain, but also Germany. Other scenarios were admittedly possible. This paper intends to examine the Belgian decision to defend at all costs its neutrality. For this decision was not taken on the spot in August 1914, but was the result of a process initiated in 1911.

After more than 80 years of uninterrupted peace, Belgium, whose neutrality was framed by the treaty which founded its existence, entered an unwanted war on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914. This small power surprised the world by its fierce resistance against the German invasion. France and the United Kingdom, had not expected such a stubborn attitude, and Germany neither. However, Belgium's belligerency in this war was the result of the political choices of the previous years, and other scenarios were conceivable.

This paper will show how the military confrontation of August 1914 was a half-surprise for the Belgian Government. We will first analyze the Belgian political choice of

self-defense, and its roots in the prewar period. We will then mention the way Belgium finally entered the state of war.

### **The Faith in Belgium's Neutrality**

As soon as 1830, the major powers imposed a guaranteed neutrality, as a prerequisite for the recognition of Belgium's independence, a decision finally confirmed by the treaty of 1839. In the eyes of the Belgians, this measure was condescending, as it greatly reduced the foreign policy of the young State<sup>1</sup>. However, with the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, the imposed neutrality turned out to acquire a real prestige in the eyes of the Belgian public. Indeed, neutrality became a kind of talisman that would protect Belgium of any war.

King Leopold II's (1835-1909) analysis of the geopolitical situation of its country was going in the opposite direction. Belgium had escaped this war, but this miracle would not happen again if the Belgians neglected to strengthen their defenses. Furthermore, the mobilization of the army during the Franco-Prussian War, in order to protect the borders against a possible invasion by one of the two parties, had revealed many failures in its organization. The King therefore fought until his death in 1909 for more investment of the country in its army<sup>2</sup>. The King's struggle went all the more against the public opinion that, from 1884, he had to deal with a catholic Government hostile to any military expenditure and totally refractory to widespread military service. Nevertheless, Leopold II obtained the strengthening of the country's fortifications: new forts were established around Liège and Namur since 1892. The third major fortified position was Antwerp, designed as a national redoubt since 1851. Its double fortified belt, making it the largest fortified position in Europe, was modernized in 1906-1912, but the forts were still designed in unreinforced concrete, and the artillery was not complete (Gils, 1992a; 1992b). The King also succeeded to pass a new law on military service, which he signed on his deathbed<sup>3</sup>. The country went from the old system of draft lottery to the principle of a mandatory military service for one son per family. Leopold II also persuaded the crown prince, his nephew Albert (1875-1934), of the need to continue this fight against all odds. However, the King was not alone in advocating a strong defense policy. Such a policy was also supported by the majority of the liberal parliamentarians and, from 1870 to 1914, a vibrant and growing military lobby developed in Belgium, committed against the prevailing anti-war opinion (de Mûelenaere, 2012). This lobby progressively multiplied the contacts among the civil society and moved forward in the Belgian public opinion the ideas that the strengthening of the army was the only possible protection against external threats, but also that the army had a fundamental societal role to play,

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1 On Belgian foreign policy since the country's independence, see Coolsaet and Rik (2015).

2 On military and foreign policy of Leopold II during the last years of his reign, see Balace and Francice (2009).

3 On the controversy surrounding this law, see Bitsch (1994, pp. 405-409). This controversy annoyed Germany, which was sometimes accused of wanting to violate the Belgian neutrality. In contrast, German and French military circles were welcomed quite favorably the reform of the Belgian army.

including in terms of morality and national identity. The Belgian society did thus not entirely escape the process of 'militarization' perceptible in its powerful neighboring countries in the decades preceding First World War. However, the main campaigns led in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by these lobbyists failed at the Parliament, dominated by the very antimilitaristic Catholic Party.

Furthermore, the relative indifference of the parliamentarians and their confidence in the neutrality offers a stark contrast with the vibrancy of the Belgian lawyers who participated actively in the development of international law at the Hague conferences of 1899 and 1907 (Coolsaet, 2000). As early as 1873, in Belgium, more precisely in Ghent, that eleven international lawyers get together and founded the *Institut de Droit International*. This association, composed of lawyers of different nationalities, aimed to progressively codifying international law. With the International Peace Conferences the movement took an unprecedented magnitude, by gathering not just scholars, but the official representatives of the main sovereign States. A first attempt was made in Brussels in 1874, but the final declaration was finally not ratified by the participating States. In 1899, a new conference was convened in The Hague, "with the object of seeking the most effective means of ensuring to all peoples the benefits of a real and lasting peace, and, above all, of limiting the progressive development of existing armaments"<sup>4</sup>. Among the Belgian representatives, one should note the presence of Auguste Beernaert (1829-1912), former head of the Government, which was particularly tied to the issue of prisoners of war and the development of a court of arbitration to resolve conflicts between States. He indeed received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1909 for his efforts. The prevention of conflict was finally embodied by the creation of a Permanent Court of Arbitration. However no agreement was reached on the limitation of armaments. This first conference was complemented by the 1907 one, more binding for the signatory States (including Belgium and its guarantors: France, Germany, Russia, Austrian-Hungary and the United Kingdom). All in all, these conventions mainly focused on the conduct of hostilities on land, on sea and in the air, and then they prohibit "the launching of projectiles and explosives from balloons or by other similar new methods". They contained the prohibition of certain weapons, the definition of neutrality, the status of prisoners of war, the rights and obligations of the occupiers in the event of war occupation<sup>5</sup>. These conferences for peace did thus essentially speak of war, even if it was for humanizing it.

The two conventions were successively presented to the Belgian Parliament to be ratified. Quite disappointed by the results of the conferences, the parliamentarians were not opposed to the Hague conventions and even did not discuss the articles concerning

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4 The integral text of the Final Acts of the 1899 and 1907 conferences can be found on the ICRC's website. The present extract can be found on: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/145?OpenDocument>.

5 With regard to neutrality, the Hague Conventions cover the rights and duties of the neutrals in case of war on land (5<sup>th</sup> Convention of 1907) and in case of naval war (13<sup>th</sup> Convention of 1907). The neutrality of a State implies its non-participation in the war, in any way. With regard to the occupation (4<sup>th</sup> convention of 1907), the occupying power is obliged to take all possible measures to restore and maintain order in public life and to respect the laws of the occupied country (Karagiannis, 2004).

war occupations. They apparently did not take the measure of the progress embodied by these Conventions in the development of international law. Actually, the rare debates revolved mainly around the notion of compulsory arbitration, and some even evoked thereafter the Hague conventions on the rights and duties of neutral States to oppose the budget of war<sup>6</sup>.

That said, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, France and Germany considered Belgium as negligible and ever suspected it to into the hands of their adversary. For Germany, the francophile liberal press fed this vision, by regularly denouncing the pangermanists' annexationist aims. And, while the francophone catholic press clearly distanced itself from anticlerical France, it remained imbued with French culture. For France, Belgium combined the worse qualities. On the economic front, Belgium turned to Germany which gave it commercial advantages despite ambient protectionism. In addition, Belgium was since 1884 in the hands of the clericals. Finally, Belgian sovereigns were of German background. All this merely reinforced the mistrust of the French towards their small neighbor. Anyway, until 1911, relations between Belgium and Germany are by far more positive than with France.

### **The Turning Point of the 1911 Agadir Crisis**

The confidence of the majority of public opinion in the neutrality and indifference to the risk of war were knew, although more or less subjected to significant fluctuations (Bitsch, 1994, pp. 387-421). The Agadir crisis was probably one of those moments where the fear of war was real in Belgium. This crisis between France and Germany about the Moroccan issue, between 1<sup>st</sup> July and 4<sup>th</sup> November 1911, actually instilled fear for setting Europe ablaze. On 1<sup>st</sup> July, Germany sent its gunboat *Panther* anchoring in the port of Agadir to enforce the Algeciras agreements, disputed by France. Actually, Germany could agree to leave Morocco to France, so long as it received significant compensation in Congo. But France hesitated. Tension rose and war could break out (Becker and Krumeich, 2008, pp. 39-42).

On 14<sup>th</sup> August, Belgian Foreign Minister Julien Davignon (1854-1916) calmly described the situation to the Council of Ministers. The Council took security measures to protect the forts of Liège and Namur (as had been done in 1905 during the previous Moroccan crisis). Then, the head of government Charles de Broqueville (1860-1940) and King Albert went on vacation, each on its own. There was no need to panic. The head of government returned from holiday, after seeing Joseph Caillaux, the French President of the Council, on 7<sup>th</sup> September.

However, the Belgian press fussed. As early as 31<sup>st</sup> August, the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* launched a press campaign called "*Sommes-nous Prêts?*" (Are we ready?) to raise the fear of public opinion against Germany and denounce the unpreparedness of the Belgium national defence.

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6 This was the case of the Member of Parliament Colf, on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1907. Cf. *Annales Parlementaires*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1907.

On 10<sup>th</sup> September, the international situation deteriorated. As the Belgian historian Henri Haag wrote: "It was considered prudent to maintain under the flags the class of 1909 and recall the King, still on vacation in Tyrol. A new meeting, chaired by Albert was held on 15<sup>th</sup> September: Hellebaut (1842-1924, Minister of War) received permission to recall, if deemed appropriate, three classes of reservists; a sum of 1,500,000 francs was made available for the purchase of machine guns and ammunition. Three days later, the Moroccan question itself was being resolved". Finally, on 4<sup>th</sup> November, a Franco-German Treaty was signed. Germany conceded to France a total freedom of action in Morocco, in exchange for territories in Equatorial Africa. If most of the Belgians quickly forgot the warning, others were troubled and relations with Germany were damaged.

### **Léon Arendt's Memorandum**

Indeed, in the aftermath of the Agadir crisis, Léon Arendt (1843-1924), director of the political office of Foreign Affairs, wrote a report on the risks of war for Belgium and on attitudes to adopt in such a prospect. This memorandum, which, according to Henri Haag (2008, pp. 167-232), reflected the opinion of the Department, had a crucial influence on the Belgian decision of August 1914. Arendt, as Léopold II before him, assumed that, in the event of a conflict between France and Germany, Belgium could hope to escape the conflagration, as both French and German had strengthened their defense lines at their common border. In addition, aggression would inevitably come from Germany, France being not in position to risk irritating its powerful British ally (Bitsch, 1994, pp. 460-463)<sup>7</sup>. On this basis, Arendt considered two hypotheses of invasion.

The first one was the German wild invasion, without declaration of war or ultimatum. This was the worst case scenario, because France would immediately penetrate on Belgian soil and Germany would accuse France of being entered first. Yet, Belgium was completely unable to fight against two of its guarantors at the same time. Otherwise, choosing one of the two assailants would be risky. It would thus remain only one solution: abandon the invaded part of territory invaded... hoping that it would not be too important.

The second hypothesis was the invasion with warning. According to Arendt, this was the most likely scenario, given the evolution of international law. In this case, the Belgian Government would face four possibilities. The first two immediately ruled out, were to accept the invasion, either frankly, or with a semblance of defense. The third was to call for help the guarantors without restriction. But this would be a danger for Belgium, which would be submitted to the allied aims, appetites and schemes. The fourth solution, advocated by Arendt, was the call to the guarantors with prior signature of a convention that would allow Belgium to remain master of its destiny. This convention would estab-

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7 Signed in 1904 by France and Britain, the "Entente cordial" implied by no mean an automatic entry into war of Britain on the side of France, contrary to what Arendt's analysis supposed and which was a subject of anxiety for France during the July crisis of 1914 (Becker, 2004)

lish the limits of the Belgian participation in hostilities to the sole liberation of its territory. It would also define the terms of the cooperation between the Belgian army and those of the allies, which could not use the Belgian territory to conduct operations against the Germany, and it would ensure that the fortresses remain solely in the hands of the Belgian army. Would the powers called to the rescue accept to sign such an agreement? Arendt strongly hoped it, but others raised doubts, like the Belgian ambassador in Berlin, Baron Jules Greindl (1835-1917).

Anyhow, according to Arendt's memorandum, Belgium had to convince the major powers in general, and more specifically France (viscerally suspicious towards Belgium) that it was ready to defend itself with energy. This required the strengthening of the fortified positions of Liège, Namur and Antwerp; as well as of the army itself. No victory against the aggressor was expected, but a defense sufficient to ensure the intervention of the guarantors, after the signature of the convention and before the Belgian army being completely defeated. Indeed, a Belgian national army had to survive until the return of peace, failing which the future of the country would fall in the hands of the winners, whatever they would be.

### **The Arendt's Memorandum Submitted to the Government**

In February 1912, Arendt's memorandum was presented to Julien Davignon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in order to submit it to the government. As Léon Arendt retired, he was replaced by Edmond de Gaiffier (1866-1935), who shared his analysis. But, the election campaign was in full swing across the country. Liberals and Socialists had joined in a "*cartel des gauches*" (left-wing coalition) intended to finally overthrow the Catholics in power since 1884. In order to counter the cartel, which called for compulsory education and universal and equal suffrage, Catholics wielded again the antimilitarist themes. Most observers predicted a cartel's victory. However, on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1912, against all odds, Catholics prevailed once again. After his victory, Charles de Broqueville took a few days of rest during which, pressed by Davignon, he acquainted himself with Arendt's memorandum. The head of the government, who had not forgotten the recent Agadir crisis, was immediately impressed. Since then, de Broqueville turned his back on his electoral promises and supported the King's desire to strengthen national defense.

A first sign was given as early as November 1912, when a ministerial statement referred to possible threats and risks against Belgium's neutrality if all guarantors became belligerents (Haag, 2008, p. 191). This statement led to a public outcry in the Belgian press (Bitsch, 1994, pp. 470-472), which interpreted in divergent ways the words of de Broqueville: was he suggesting that Belgium would not accept the help of the guarantors? Would the country refuse the help of England? Julien Davignon found appropriate to confidentially address Belgian diplomats abroad: Belgium intended to seriously defend itself in the case of an invasion and would call for help its guarantors, the joint action being previously regulated by a convention (Bitsch, 1994, p. 192). One can note that Davignon's message was not made of simple information, but of confidential instructions ("neutrality oblige"), consistent with the new policy of the Government in this



matter. Moreover, in December 1912, a colleague of de Gaiffier, the Baron Albert de Bassompierre (1873-1956) prepared a draft convention to be signed by the guarantors who would come to the rescue of Belgium. However, this project was not sent to the ambassadors abroad, the government wavering on whether to inform the major powers (Haag, 1990, pp. 160-190).

### **Towards a New National Defense Policy**

The Belgian Government aimed therefore to dissuade anyone from violating the neutrality of the country. To achieve this, it had to opt for the generalized military service that would soon allow a fully mobilized army of 340,000 men that is twice the complement of 1900. However, such a choice was anything but self-evident, since Catholics were traditionally opposed to this idea, and even campaigned on this theme. Charles de Broqueville had therefore to threaten to rely on the opposition to pass the law, in exchange for universal suffrage, to get the support of his own camp.

The head of Government, who brilliantly handled the political staging, submitted his draft bill to the Chamber on 14<sup>th</sup> February, in a thought-provoking closed session (Haag, 1990, p. 131). He justified his proposal by the fact that, in June 1912, Germany passed a law strengthening its military power now far superior to that of France. Above all, he got the support of tenors of the two competing parties: Paul Hymans (1865-1941) among the Liberals, and Emile Vandervelde (1866-1938) among the Socialists. The discussions took place between February and June 1913. The Liberals were aware of the fragility of the treaties, the Socialists believed that any reinforcement would be vain and that generalized service had to be balanced by universal suffrage, and the Catholics remained docile. The gradual spread of militarist ideas also played the role of facilitator of the decision. Finally, the conscription act was passed by the Chamber, and then by the Senate<sup>8</sup>. At the end of August 1913, King Albert had the satisfaction to sign it. In November 1913, a visit of the King in Potsdam convinced him even more of the need to speed up the case. Indeed, his cousin Wilhelm II (1859-1941) did not hide from him that he believed a war against France close, even inevitable, general Helmuth von Moltke (1848-1916) adding the sooner, the better (Stengers, 1993, p. 7-12; Bitsch, 1994, pp. 494-495; and also Becker, 2004, pp. 22-24).

The law passed in Belgium involved a profound reform of the army. And the political line adopted by the Government in national defense implied an implementation of this policy in the military strategy. However, the Belgian army lacked competent men, reforms were badly accepted by professional soldiers, and the staff was divided. The reorganization of the army moved thus slowly and no clear strategy emerged. On the other hand, the mobilization plan was ready when the war broke out (Haag, 1990, pp. 154-166).

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8 In the wake of this decision, other bills were voted, on the use of the languages in the army, the increase of the number of officers and a tax rise.

## Belgium between France and Germany on the Eve of War

The Government of de Broqueville maintained until the end a policy of strict neutrality which, moreover, suggested to France as to Germany that the country could play into the hands of the adversary (Bitsch, 1994, pp. 478-481 and 517)<sup>9</sup>. If the Government feared since 1912 that Germany could violate Belgian neutrality despite the sympathy of the Catholics for this great neighbor, it was afraid as well that France could abuse of its status of guarantor when coming to the rescue of its neutrality. Similarly, the liberal press did not hide its francophilia, but the Catholic newspapers never ceased to remind that the French threat was at least as important as the German one. Nevertheless, the majority of the Belgian public opinion continued to believe that the neutrality would be respected, as far as the efforts of the country went in that direction. Thus, in 1914, during the July crisis, the Belgian press did not take the measure of what was happening. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1863-1914) quickly faded before the Caillaux case (a criminal case involving the wife of the French politician Joseph Caillaux, 1863-1944) in the headlines of the French-speaking newspapers and the results of the *Tour de France* excited the whole Belgian press more than the international situation. On 1<sup>st</sup> August, one could still read in the *Gazette de Liège*, as in other newspapers: "The immediate danger for our country does not exist. In 1870, the Belgian army of 80,000 men prevented the French and German armies from entering into Belgium. In 1914, the Belgian army of 180,000 men, equipped in a modern way, would resist the armies of the same powers which would attempt to cross their borders by using our territory." In fact, since the declaration of war of Austria-Hungary against Serbia on 28<sup>th</sup> July, concern rose in Belgium and became somewhat noticeable when Belgian general mobilization was decreed on 31<sup>st</sup> July. But newspapers still reassured readers, talking about "ridiculous panic"<sup>10</sup> and telling they believe that the crisis would go away soon. In general, unconcern was still dominating the opinion (De Schaepdrijver, 2004, p. 56).

However, at the highest levels, the situation was taken very seriously. Politically, as early as the end of July, the anguish seized the Foreign Affairs: would the country suffer a wild aggression or an assault with warning? Would the guarantors play their part or not? This anxiety was even more justified that, if France had assured Britain that it would honor Belgian neutrality, Germany had not responded. In addition, the British Cabinet was not unanimous on the issue of the assistance to Belgium in case of a violation of its neutrality (Clark, 2013, pp. 484-491, 519-528 and 532-542). Even the personal letter sent by King Albert – and translated by Queen Elisabeth (1876-1965) – to his cousin Wilhelm II remained also unanswered.

At the same time, the Belgian government progressively began to mobilize the army. As of 27<sup>th</sup> July 1914, Charles de Broqueville received general Gérard Leman (1851-1920),

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9 The author shows how Germany this time saw the reform of the Belgian army in 1913 as an act directed against it, whereas France felt that this reform was positive but insufficient to protect it. Paradoxically, neither Germany nor France considered the reform for what it was: a measure aiming to convince Belgium's powerful neighbors to respect its neutrality.

10 *La Meuse*, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1914.

who was vested with plenary powers to prepare the mobilization. The next day, conscripts in small permission were recalled. On 29<sup>th</sup> July, three classes of reservists were recalled and the “*pied de paix renforcé*” (strengthened peace footing, the last step before war footing) was declared. The partial mobilization of the Belgian army on 30<sup>th</sup> July, and then the general mobilization of 31<sup>st</sup> July (i.e. before its neighbors) took place without a hitch.

The Belgian army was therefore ready, insofar as it could be. Theoretically it lined up 234,000 men. Practically, they were less than 200,000, a third in the fortresses, and the others in the field army. In material terms, the units were relatively well equipped, but they lacked machine guns and mobile heavy artillery. On the human level, the reforms leading to the increase of its complement having been very recently undertaken, the army lacked officers.

Furthermore, despite the creation of a General Army staff (EMGA) in 1910, Belgium did not have a war plan (Bechet, 2014). Notes, studies and scenarios existed, but no well-defined war plan, which would indeed have involved the designation of an aggressor. The initiative was thus left to the possible aggressor, the Belgian field army having only the choice to adapt to the circumstances from a more or less appropriate initial deployment. This initial deployment was thus itself a question of debate. While the new Chief of Staff, general Antonin de Selliers de Moranville (1852-1945), close to de Broqueville, advocated an initial concentration of troops, his second, lieutenant-colonel de Ryckel (1857-1922), close to King Albert, advocated a certain dispersion. Finally, the Belgium army under command of the King himself opted for an intermediate solution on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, facilitated by the German ultimatum. The army finally concentrated in a central position, East of Brussels, with the exception of two divisions which remained where they were mobilized, in the fortified positions of Namur and Liege (Haag, 1990, pp. 201-202).

## The War Breaks Out

On 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1914, at 5 p.m., Foreign Minister Davignon received from the Imperial legation in Brussels a telegram from Berlin. Germany asserted that, according to reliable information, France was preparing to invade the Belgian territory and therefore asked to enter preventively into Belgium. In case of refusal, Germany would be obliged to consider the little kingdom as an enemy country. Belgium had 12 hours to respond. It was indeed an ultimatum. The worst scenario of a wild invasion was discarded<sup>11</sup>. Now, “the actions to perform were part of a simple schema. Before the Council of Ministers has taken its decision, de Gaiffier began to draft a negative answer” (Haag, 2008, p. 203). A first Council of Ministers under the chairmanship of the King, which took place at the Royal Palace around 9 p.m., aroused little discussion: everybody agreed that such an ultimatum could not be accepted. Still, the public opinion had to be rallied by a strong gesture.

The first Council was thus followed by a Crown Council which brought together both the members of the Government and “Ministers of State” (an honorary title

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11 De Bassompierre (1916, 13 and 29), quoted in Haag (2008, p. 203).

awarded to prominent politicians) – including the liberal opposition with the newly appointed Paul Hymans and Goblet d'Alviella (1846-1925). This Crown Council had nonetheless no decision-making power. Ministers of State arrived around 10 p.m. Charles de Broqueville informed them that the Government had concluded that it could not accept the German ultimatum. Alone, the old conservative Catholic leader Charles Woeste (1837-1922) dared an objection by proposing a symbolic resistance. The other Ministers of State, starting with the liberal Paul Hymans, instead, supported the decision of the Government to adhere strictly to international law and to existing obligations compelling Belgium to defend. Thus, in a few minutes, the ultimatum was clearly rejected. The answer, prepared by de Gaiffier and refined in a more vigorous way by Jules Van den Heuvel (1854-1926, personal advisor of Davignon), Paul Hymans (Minister of State) and Henry Carton de Wiart (1869-1951, Minister of Justice), was unanimously approved and given to the ambassador of Germany on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, at 7 a.m.

Immediately, the whole press informed the public opinion of both the ultimatum and the refusal by the Belgian Government. This created an explosion of stupor, indignation and anger (Stengers, 1995, pp. 13-33). Even before the real beginning of the hostilities, Germany lost in Belgium a decisive battle on the field of public opinion. "Are they taking us for cowards?" wrote for example a bourgeois woman of Brussels in her intimate diary<sup>12</sup>.

Emotion was all the more strong that Belgians had had faith in the neutrality and that in addition the aggression came from a feared but admired country. In Brussels, as in Liège and Antwerp, the crowd manifested its indignation by targeting perfectly integrated German residents: some windows were broken, some houses were vandalized and, everywhere, a wave of spy mania seized the inhabitants (Majerus, 2005, pp. 3-46). In other words, at the moment when the men of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs found a quiet resolution, the street entered in a state of turmoil and manifested its unanimous support to the Government's decision.

For the Belgian Government, the refusal of the ultimatum was a settled matter, but the question of the appeal to the guarantors remained. A new Council of Ministers was therefore convened on 3<sup>rd</sup> August at 10 a.m. What was the situation at this moment? France had already clearly stated that, in case of attack, it would immediately come to the help of its small neighbor, and even wanted to be allowed to enter immediately. On the other hand, the attitude of Britain remained unclear. Moreover, the putative invasion had not yet taken place. It was therefore decided to deny to Germany the opportunity to accuse Belgium of collusion with France, to wait for the violation of neutrality to initiate the call to the guarantors. Gaiffier, who did not participate in the Council, began drafting a request to France for military assistance. A draft convention was attached: the Belgian and French armies cooperate, the Belgian army participates to operations only to repel the German army outside of its territory, Belgian territory cannot be the basis for conducting French strategic operations against Germany, and the Belgian fortresses remain

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12 «*Pour quels pleutres nous prennent-ils donc?*» (3<sup>rd</sup> August 1914), Giron (2015, p. 46).

exclusively in Belgian hands. Gaiffier also prepared the draft of the speech King Albert decided to deliver the next day<sup>13</sup>.

On 4<sup>th</sup> August, at 6 o'clock in the morning, the legation of Germany warned Belgium of the imminence of the attack. Two hours later, the troops of the Kaiser violated the Belgian border and headed to the fortified position of Liège. The news was not yet known when, at 10 o'clock, the King went to the extraordinary session of the Parliament. On his way, the enthusiasm of the Brussels crowd was indescribable. Never a King of the Belgians had got such a patriotic fervor (van Ypersele, 1995). The reception at the Palace of the Nation (the building hosting the Parliament) was equally warm and even the republican Socialists added their voices to the other ones. The King gave a short speech: Belgium intended to defend itself, but there was still hope that the dreaded events would not occur. If however the border should be violated and the territory invaded, the aggressor would meet a "stubborn resistance" and "find all Belgians gathered around the sovereign who does not betray, who will never betray his constitutional oath, and the absolute trust of the entire nation placed in the government." Albert finished his speech on his famous statement: "I have faith in our destiny. A country that defends itself requires respect for all. This country does not perish. God will be with us in this just cause. Long live independent Belgium". As soon as the invasion was announced, an unofficial sacred union was set up. Leaders of the opposition parties had just received the title of Minister of State: liberal Hymans and Goblet d'Alviella on 2<sup>nd</sup> August and the socialist Vandervelde during a quick Council of Ministers on 4<sup>th</sup> August at 9 a.m.<sup>14</sup>. Still so virulent the days before, the ideological struggles were put on hold for the duration of the conflict. Belgium was suddenly united against the enemy. The King became the symbol of the feelings of amazement and indignation spread among all parts of the Belgian society.

At 2 p.m., a new Crown Council met under the chairmanship of the King. Informed by the British ambassador, Foreign Minister Davignon announced that Britain was ready to go to war if Belgian neutrality was violated. This news brought the relief and the satisfaction of all. Van den Heuvel, expert lawyer and personal adviser of Davignon, took the floor to explain that the helping hand of Britain, like France, should of course be accepted, but after the signing of an agreement that would clarify the nature and extent of cooperation between the allied armies and the Belgian army. This intervention disconcerted the Ministers of State: when Belgium was calling for help, Foreign Affairs only thought to guard against the very ones it had just called. Woeste, Vandervelde, Hymans and even the catholic Frans Schollaert (1851-1917), former head of the government, were literally shocked and required an unconditional acceptance of the allied help. Charles de Broqueville, this time puzzled, did not find the way to appease the spirits and change the shape of the discussion. Davignon, Van den Heuvel and Baron Léon van der Elst

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13 A.E.B., classement B, dossiers 200-201, text of the royal speech prepared by Gaiffier.

14 This sacred union became official after the cabinet reshuffle of 1916, the new governmental team involving liberal and socialist ministers.

(1856-1933), head of the Department of Foreign Affairs, received the mission to translate in diplomatic terms the decision to call the guarantor unconditionally. Far from accepting their defeat, these resumed the terms of the English offer proposing a "joint action" and added the words "and concerted". Then, they wrote that "Belgium called England, France and Russia to co-operate, as guarantors, to the defence of its territory. In this way, the specificity of the Belgian war aims was clarified (Haag, 2008, pp. 218-223). The call to the guarantors was finally launched on the evening of 4<sup>th</sup> August, and none of them took offense of its terms.

In two days, the German aggressive policy had thus created a sacred union in Belgium, both in politics and in the population. While the army had never have been very popular, volunteers flocked to enlist. Among them, one could find catholic bourgeois, socialist militants and supporters of the Flemish cause. There were also different forms of self-mobilization of the civil society, particularly in the bourgeoisie. For example, hundreds of "ambulances" were created all around the country: these small ad hoc structures, created by associations, charity organizations, private firms or individual for humanitarian and patriotic reasons, were designed to receive and heal the war wounded, and were staffed by health professionals and volunteers. While the Belgian army was about to engage the invader, the civic guard, a kind of bourgeois militia, was also mobilized, but in a quite improvised and chaotic way (Veldeman, n.d.). While some units were well-organized, others had no weapons and no uniform. The civic guard was thus primarily used to ensure security and public order in the national territory, as its military value was virtually zero. Accused by the German government to arm the civilians in order to fight a "*Volkskrieg*" against the invading troops, the Belgian government finally disbanded the civic guard in October 1914.

On the contrary, the Belgian Congo was originally not associated with the mobilization of the country. The Congo had become very recently a Belgian colony and, in opposition to France and its policy of the "*force noire*" (black force), it had no place in the manner Belgium conceived its own defense. First, Belgian government even hoped to keep its colony neutral, but the hopes of an African neutrality quickly faced the reality of a war truly waged on a global scale. The *Force publique*, the congolese army, finally turned out to fight the enemy in Africa, mainly on the territory of the German colonies, but was never deployed on the European battleground.

The army remained thus until the end of the war the only Belgian force to fight the invader on the national territory. Most of the foreign observers, most notably in France, Britain and Germany were however very dubious about its real combat capability, as well as about the wish of the Belgian authorities to engage it seriously against an invader. The battle of Liège, between Belgian and German troops on 5<sup>th</sup> August and the following days, was not only the first battle of the Western Front, but had a crucial impact on allied opinion. The vigorous defense of the country by the Belgian army sparked a reversal of British public opinion, so far hesitant, but which quickly convinced itself that the "poor and gallant little Belgium" deserved that Britain entered the war. The British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith (1852-1928), who had justified before the House of Commons

the entry into war by the respect of international law and by the determination to defend the weaker nations, was now supported by the majority of the British. In France, too, the enthusiasm of the public for Belgium was immediate: the Parisian waiters renamed the *café viennois* in *café liégeois*, and the Legion of Honor was granted on 7<sup>th</sup> August to the city of Liège. On the other hand, the *Quai d'Orsay* remained suspicious and wondered if the Belgian defense was nothing else than a futile last stand. On 8<sup>th</sup> August, a senior official of the *Quai d'Orsay*, Philippe Berthelot (1866-1934), was even sent to Belgium to form an opinion, and met de Broqueville in Brussels and the King in Leuven). It was not until his return that the President of the Republic, Raymond Poincaré (1860-1934), changed his mind and agreed to respect the specific status of Belgium within the conflict<sup>15</sup>.

## Conclusion

For Belgium, war was not a choice, but the decision to fight, and to fight seriously, was clearly a choice, quickly taken but far from being improvised. And paradoxically, this decision of belligerency was rooted in the political wish to keep the neutrality of the country, because this neutrality was still in 1914 a condition of its very existence as a small but independent power. Originally imposed by the major powers, neutrality progressively became a part of the Belgian national identity, especially after the French-Prussian war of 1870, and acted as a talisman against a possible invasion, feeding the antimilitaristic trend of the majority of the public opinion. However, a minority of the ruling elites were convinced of the necessity of strengthening the army to show the wish of Belgium to defend its neutrality if necessary. The Agadir crisis of 1911 constituted a turning point: it deteriorated the image of Germany in the Belgian public opinion, but also stimulated the redaction of the Arendt's memorandum, which decisively influenced the defense policy of the de Broqueville government. The memorandum showed that in the case of an invasion, opposing seriously to the invader would help Belgium to keep its independence and integrity while calling the intervention of its guarantors.

The military reforms initiated following the memorandum were far from having completely paid off when Belgium received the German ultimatum. However, the thoughts started in 1911-1912 helped the government to make up its mind. The decision to oppose a strong resistance to an invasion and to call the help of the guarantors was immediately taken. The Belgian compliance with international law and the combativeness of its army supported the entry into war of its French and British guarantors, which fought side by side with the Belgian army while respecting the country's specific status.

Paradoxically, the way the Belgian population and rulers perceived this specificity evolved during the war. Belgium entered war as a small and neutral power, but the devastating effects of invasion and occupation, and four years of mobilization and co-belligerence, transformed the perception of its role in international affairs. The country emerged from the war with a largely heroized army and new geopolitical perspectives, including

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15 A.E.B., Guerre 14-18, dossier 10.999, copy of the letter of President Poincaré to King Albert, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1914.



strategic partnerships with foreign powers and territorial ambitions on European border territories in Europe and in Africa. Such a self-perception contrasted with the pre-1914 national identity featuring Belgium as a small, neutral and antimilitaristic country. Furthermore, Belgium also actively participated to the trend to multilateral diplomacy which increased during 1920s. However, the cumulating disillusionments of the interwar period would finally led Belgium to withdraw on a new form of neutrality in 1936, which would not prevent it to endure four years later a new invasion and, again, four years of tough occupation.

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# Greece during the First World War

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## Abstract

Officially, Greece entered the Great War rather belated, in June 1917, even though she had been already involved in it, in various ways, since 1914. Greece’s involvement in the European war was inevitable due to the combination of her geopolitical position and her own irredentist claims. Furthermore, the war divided Greek political elites, conducting, indeed, the whole country to a civil strife which was to last for decades. This paper presents the main aspects of Greece’s involvement in the conflict, its final outcome and its impact on contemporary Greek political life.

## Introduction

The history of Greece during the Great War presents certain peculiarities compared with that of the rest of Europe: although for most of the conflict the country remained officially neutral, her territorial integrity and national sovereignty were repeatedly violated by both sides; in addition, the conflict within the country over which policy ought to be pursued led to the “National Schism”, which determined the course of the country’s political life for many decades after the end of the war. It was natural that the relevant Greek and international historiography should be influenced by these facts.

The works that were written during the war itself or the interwar period are characterised by an attempt to justify the policies and actions of either one political faction or the other, and were produced mainly by protagonists in the conflict, politicians, diplomats and military officials<sup>1</sup>. During the same period the first purely military studies were

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<sup>1</sup> Indicatively, see: Seligman (1920), Nicholas of Greece, Prince (1928), Frangulis (1926), Georgios (1931), Mackenzie (1932).

published, as well as a large number of memoirs and testimonies by French, British, Italian and Serbian veterans of the Salonika Front, who recorded their impressions of Greece, although their accounts were more about the activities and experiences of the Allied armies in Macedonia<sup>2</sup>. In the first few decades after the Second World War interest in the subject declined: Greek historiography evaded the issue of the “National Schism”, probably because after the Civil War (1946-1949) it did not want to rake over old wounds, nor broach the subject of the monarchy, which had been called into question by the Left during the 1940s and once again became an object of criticism from about the mid-1950s onwards. Indeed, the most important historical works on the Great War period were published after the collapse of the Colonels’ dictatorship (1967-1974) and the monarchy in 1974. The most notable of these are the books by George Leontaritis, *Greece and the Great Powers, 1914-1917* (1974) and *Greece and the First World War: From Neutrality to Intervention, 1917-1918* (1990), which served as a point of reference for subsequent studies on the subject. However, studies by non-Greek historians on Greece’s stance during the war or even on the Salonika Front were also limited in number, probably because the importance of these issues was underestimated – one important exception was Alan Palmer’s work *The Gardeners of Salonica* (1965). Over the last forty years, though, there is an increase in the number both of historical works produced on the subject as well as of scientific conferences that have been devoted to it. Research interest is no longer confined to the diplomatic and military aspects of the period but also includes new approaches to the social relationships and cultural life that existed in Greece at the time, the attitudes of the ethnic and religious minorities and the policy adopted by the Greek state towards them, as well as the views and daily life of soldiers in the *Armée d’Orient*, together with the changes that its presence brought in Greek Macedonia. These issues, however, have by no means been fully explored, while many of the questions concerning the crisis of the “National Schism” are still open.

This paper attempts to give an overall picture of Greece during the First World War (WWI), based on a synthesis of the basic findings of historical research to date. The first section focuses on the period of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), which were regarded as a prelude to the First World War. The second section describes Greece’s international position in the first year of the war and the factors that led to the National Schism. The third section deals with the presence of the *Armée d’Orient* on Greek territory and the climax of the internal political crisis. The final section is devoted to Greece’s contribution to the Salonika Front and the consequences of the Allied victory.

## **The Balkan Wars and their Impact on Greece**

For many historians WWI did not begin in 1914 but rather two years earlier: in 1912 Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria formed a common front in order to defeat the Ottoman Empire and implement their national aspirations. The treaties between the Balkan states enabled the countries involved to form a common front, with greater chances

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2 On the issue see Hassiotis (1996).

of success, against the Ottomans, whilst at the same time preventing any intervention by the Great Powers. At the same time, they had many serious flaws: above all, they left open the question of how the conquered territories would finally be distributed, a fact that soon led to the break-up of the Balkan alliance (Hall, 2000). Indeed, even before hostilities against the Ottoman forces had ceased, the Balkan allies had already begun to fall out over the distribution of the conquered territories. Serbia and Greece had won the lion's share of Macedonia, a basic target of Bulgarian expansionism. The first two countries decided to form a common front to counter Bulgaria's claims. On 13 June 1913 they signed a pact of alliance that provided for collaboration between the two countries in the event of an attack by Bulgaria or any other power (a clause that was to test their bilateral relations later on) and a commitment to maintain a common border in Macedonia. At the same time in Sofia the country's political and military leadership, overestimating the capabilities of the Bulgarian army, decided to launch a simultaneous attack on the Serbian and Greek positions in order to strengthen Bulgaria's hand at the negotiating table. This choice was also supported behind the scenes by Austro-Hungary with the evident aim of breaking up the Balkan alliance, which it regarded as a threat to its own interests in the region. This, however, proved to be an erroneous choice, with dramatic consequences for Bulgaria: its attack was repulsed, and the Greek and Serbian forces advanced against it. This was followed by a declaration of war on Bulgaria by Romania and the Ottoman Empire, which effectively put an end to her struggle. Sofia was finally forced to come to terms and on 10<sup>th</sup> August the Treaty of Bucharest was signed in the Romanian capital, a treaty that was to determine the new Balkan borders (Hall, 2000, pp. 107-129).

Greece's gains from the Balkan Wars were truly impressive. Its territory increased by 70% in size and its population swelled from 2,700,000 to 4,800,000. The "new lands" of the Greek kingdom provided new resources and gave the state a demographic boost during a critical period of antagonism with its neighbours. The successes of the wars boosted the country's self-confidence and international prestige and rekindled the expansionist aims of liberating the Greeks who remained in Ottoman territory. On the other hand, the wars also created new problems: Greek refugees from Eastern Thrace, Asia Minor and Bulgaria began to flow into Greek Macedonia, while Moslem and Slav inhabitants of the same region moved in the opposite direction, thus intensifying the hostility between Athens and Sofia and Constantinople. In the "new lands" there were compact populations of Moslems, Slavs and Jews, a new phenomenon for the Greek state, which had hitherto been more or less ethnically homogeneous. Finally, during the wars the relations between Prime Minister Venizelos and (then) Crown Prince Constantine were tested for the first time over military and diplomatic issues, thus providing a foretaste of the rift that was to follow in the country's political regime (Stavrianos, 1958, pp. 537-543; Dakin, 1966, pp. 464-471).

### **Greek Dilemmas and the Indecision of the *Entente***

Austro-Hungary's declaration of war on Serbia on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1914 posed a critical dilemma for Greece: If the country supported Serbia it would become embroiled in a war

that did not directly concern its own interests. In addition, the transfer of Greek troops to the Austro-Serbian border would weaken Greece's ability to defend itself against a Bulgarian or Ottoman assault – a possibility that was still open at that time. If, again, Greece took no action it would remain isolated in the region and would probably have to face Bulgaria's revanchist designs by herself. The transformation of the Austro-Serbian confrontation into a pan-European conflict made things far from easy for Athens. On the one hand, it highlighted the different orientations that existed in the Greek political and military leadership with regard to which stance the country ought to adopt towards the two opposing camps. On the other hand, it upset the balance of power that had been created in the Balkan Peninsula a year earlier, since both the Balkan countries and the Great Powers seemed ready to revise their options in order to deal with the new situation (Leon, 1974, pp. 18-22; Hassiotis, 2004, pp. 70-82).

The Greek government's official position at the beginning of the war was that Greece would maintain a stance of favourable neutrality towards Serbia and would not become involved in a conflict of a non-Balkan character. Venizelos believed that it was inevitable that Greece would side with the *Entente*, as he was convinced that the country's interests were linked with those of the Western naval powers. However, his proposal of joining *Entente* in the autumn of 1914 was rejected, as Britain, France and Russia did not want to alienate Bulgaria, which had so far remained neutral. This insistence proved to be particularly crucial in diplomatic negotiations: For not only did the *Entente* ultimately fail to win Bulgaria over but it also caused Greece and Romania great displeasure and reduced the likelihood of these two countries entering the war on its side (Stavrianos, 1958, pp. 566-567; Curtright, 1986, pp. 18-28; Leon, 1974, pp. 81-97; Mitrakos, 1982, pp. 1-14).

This was especially true in the case of Greece, which would experience the most serious internal political crisis that it had ever known. The "National Schism" had two main protagonists – the Prime Minister Venizelos and King Constantine –, though many more aspects: the conflict over which foreign policy ought to be pursued by the country, the dispute over the constitutional powers of the monarchy, the antagonism within the Greek officer corps, as well as that between the old and new elites over access to and the control of power, and the distinct interests of the traditional elites of southern Greece and the Greek capitalists of the Ottoman Empire or the Diaspora. A particular feature of the "National Schism", which was to characterise later political conflicts in Greece during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was the mass mobilisation of the supporters of both opposing camps.<sup>3</sup>

A factor of central importance in the Greek political crisis was the difference of opinion between Venizelos and Constantine over the war. Venizelos faithfully supported the special bond between Greece and Great Britain. He believed that the Allies would win the war and that in all events Anglo-French naval supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean would determine the settlement of territorial issues in the region after the war. Consequently, once the Ottoman Empire had entered the war on the side of the Central

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3 Perhaps the most comprehensive account on "National Schism" is Mavrogordatos (2015).

Powers and against the Entente, her possible future dismemberment presented Greece with a unique opportunity to realise her vision of the Great Idea (*Megali Idea*) – i.e. of expanding into Thrace and western Anatolia. In contrast, Constantine was convinced that Germany would win the war due to its military supremacy. Therefore Greece, since she was in no position to oppose British naval supremacy, ought to remain neutral. Constantine had studied in Germany and was an admirer of German culture and the German monarchy, while he had also married Princess Sophie of Prussia, sister of the German Kaiser Wilhelm II. His views were shared by the German-educated officers of the General Staff, who believed that Greece ought to adopt a prudent stance in the war in order to preserve her gains from the Balkan Wars. The same officers, moreover, were concerned about the increasing influence of their junior colleagues, who had risen rapidly through the military ranks after the Goudi Coup (1909) and the Balkan Wars, and supported Venizelos's aggressive policy. The King was also supported by the politicians of the traditional parties, whose role had been degraded after Venizelos's rise to power and the electoral supremacy of his party, the Liberals. The King's gradual identification with the anti-Venizelist opposition intensified the political crisis and ultimately led to a complete rift between the two sides (Hering, 1992, pp. 751-773; Veremis and Gardikas-Katsiadakis, 2006, pp. 116-118).

The political conflict involved different sections of the public life, including the press and the Greek-Orthodox Church. The first one participated willingly in the debate over Greece's foreign policy, often overrunning the journalistic ethics and not hesitating to reveal secret negotiations or state secrets in order to damage the opponent's prestige. The debate in the newspapers reflected also the antagonism between French, German and British propaganda, which financed friends and supporters among the political, economic and cultural elite. The Church remained largely devoted to the King throughout the period; indeed, in December 1916 Archbishop of Athens Theoklitos succumbed to pressure from the Royalists and excommunicated Venizelos, though later he was dethroned and bishops well-disposed to the Cretan politician took control of the Church (Papadimitriou, 1989, pp. 389-438, especially pp. 437-438; Nanakis, 2006, pp. 358-363).

The first manifestation of this rift became apparent in early 1915 when Britain and France requested Greek military aid in the Gallipoli campaign, affording vague promises of future concessions in western Asia Minor. Venizelos agreed immediately, even going so far as to accept a limited number of territorial concessions to Bulgaria. The General Staff, however, were opposed to the idea of sending troops to the Dardanelles both because they wanted to avoid weakening the defence of the northern borders and also because they believed that the campaign was unlikely to succeed, a fact that was soon confirmed. Constantine agreed with the General Staff, forcing Venizelos to resign. The new government, with the Royalist Dimitrios Gounaris at its head, pursued a policy of neutrality, although it was in any case short-lived. In June 1915 elections were held in which Venizelos once again emerged victorious. His efforts to get Greece into the war and to provide military aid to Serbia reached a head in September, when Bulgaria declared a general mobilisation in preparation for an attack on Serbia. This move compelled the

Greek government to do the same, although it kept the country in a state of armed neutrality. In a final attempt to present the King with a *fait accompli*, Venizelos entered into an agreement with the envoys of the Entente that permitted the dispatch of Allied troops to Thessaloniki in order to support Serbia in the event of a Bulgarian attack. On 5<sup>th</sup> October he requested and gained the support of Parliament for the dispatch of Greek forces to Serbia. On the same day, however, Constantine, after colluding with Berlin and Vienna, forced him to resign again on the grounds that he believed Germany was bound to win the war and so there was no way that he could agree to a policy that would lead the country to disaster (Dakin, 1972, pp. 98-244).

### **The Salonika Front and its Impact on Greece**

On the day that Venizelos resigned, the first Allied troops were landing in Salonika. The aim of the Macedonia campaign was partly to encourage Greece to enter the war and partly to support the Serbian army in the face of the Bulgarian threat. In actuality, however, none of these things was achieved: the Allied force was too small (initially consisting of only two infantry divisions) and arrived too late to prevent Serbia from collapsing, while it also failed to change Greece's stance after Venizelos's resignation. In addition, the campaign also had no specific military operational plans, there was no prior agreement between the British and French General Staffs, and no decision about a joint command (Leon, 1974, pp. 256-257).

The expected large-scale attack on Serbia by the Central Powers under the command of Field Marshal August von Mackensen began on 7<sup>th</sup> October: three German army corps from the north moved towards the Morava Valley and a similar number of Austro-Hungarian corps from the west crossed the Drina River, heading for Belgrade. A week later two Bulgarian armies crossed the Serbian border with the aim of capturing the Vardar Valley and trapping the Serbian forces. Meanwhile, the first French units that had arrived in Thessaloniki managed temporarily to check the Bulgarian attack at Štip, but were then defeated at Krivolak and forced to retreat. On 5<sup>th</sup> November the Bulgarian army captured Niš and thus came into contact with the forces of Field Marshal Mackensen. In an attempt to escape the tight noose formed by the enemy forces, the Serbian political and military leadership ordered a retreat through Albania to the Adriatic coast. In all, over 150,000 people took part in what later came to be known as the "Albanian Golgotha". Later, despite the protests of the Greek government, they were conveyed by the Allies to the island of Corfu, where the Serbian government was based until the end of the war (Falls, 1933, pp. 32-40; and Mitrović, 2007, pp. 144-161).

The collapse of the Serbian front completely upset the Allies' plans and created a new situation in the region. The conquest of Serbia effectively meant the loss of a faithful ally while at the same time it restored communications between the Central Powers and Constantinople. The position of the Allied forces in Thessaloniki was extremely insecure, given the possibility of an enemy advance into Greek territory. In addition, the dubious stance of King Constantine and the new royalist government in Athens left open the possibility that Greece might abandon her neutrality and move against the



Allied forces. The Allies themselves were divided over the usefulness of a new front: the British wanted to abandon the campaign and to reinforce other fronts, while the French wanted to reinforce their existing army in Thessaloniki so that Greece (and Romania) would not deliver herself into the hands of their opponents. These last political parameters finally led the Entente to decide in favour of maintaining the Salonika Front and to continue exerting diplomatic pressure on Athens to enter the war. However, over the next two years the *Entente's* relations with Athens, as well as those between the exiled Serbian leadership and the latter, underwent a severe crisis as a result of the constant violations of Greek sovereignty by the Allies, the Greek government's threat to disarm the Serbian and Allied troops (in order to prevent Bulgarian forces from invading the country), its refusal to permit the overland transfer of Serbian troops to Macedonia, and its general unwillingness to cooperate with the *Armée d'Orient* (Driault and Lhéritier, 1926, pp. 220-232; Leon, 1974, pp. 257-291; Dutton, 1998, pp. 66-67).

The advance of the Central Powers' troops came to a halt at the Greek border so that Greece would not be provoked and abandon its neutrality. The Allied forces fortified their positions around Thessaloniki: new wharves were constructed in the harbour, new roads and railway lines were built and new buildings erected, around which a network of barbed wire, trenches and machine-gun posts was set up. The Allied forces' defensive role in the region earned them the demeaning title of "Gardeners of Salonika", while German propaganda called the front "the greatest internment camp in the world". In early 1916 new British and French troops arrived in the city after the end of the Gallipoli campaign. Later these were reinforced by a limited number of Italian and Russian forces and the remnants of the Serbian army (approx. 120,000 men), which were reorganised by the French. Thus, by May 1916 the *Armée d'Orient* consisted of over 300,000 men. Opposite them was ranged a force of roughly the same size, consisting mainly of Bulgarian and, to a lesser extent, German troops. The Salonika Front remained more or less stagnant until September 1918. It stretched from Lake Ochrid in the west to the Struma River and the Orfanos Gulf east of Thessaloniki (Palmer, 1965, pp. 72-74; Falls, 1933, pp. 85-118).

As the *Armée d'Orient* extended its control in the city and, more broadly, in Greek Macedonia, friction increased between itself and the Greek authorities. A key player in this crisis was the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces Maurice Sarrail, who was succeeded in December 1917 by Marie Louis Adolphe Guillaumat, and in June 1918 by Louis Félix Marie François Franchet d'Espèrey. Maurice Sarrail demanded, and succeeded in obtaining, the withdrawal of the Greek forces from Thessaloniki, restricted the powers and functions of the Greek authorities and proceeded to arrest and deport from the city the consuls and subjects of the Central Powers. In practice Greek sovereignty in the region and the country's neutrality were abolished (Leon, 1974, pp. 306-323).

At the same time, the presence of both allied and Bulgarian troops in the area led to renewed propagandist activity over the future status of Greek Macedonia and Thessaloniki. Political and military officials from France, Italy and Serbia, who sometimes operated without the consent of their governments and sometimes with their tacit encourage-

ment, took advantage of the limited power of the Greek state in the region to promote their own aims. French and Italian propaganda served mainly as a means of furthering the economic and commercial interests of those two states and rarely extended to purely political designs. Moreover, the desire of certain French officers and diplomats to turn Thessaloniki and Macedonia into a French protectorate after the war did not meet with the approval of the official French government. There was greater propagandist activity on the part of Serbian politicians and military men, who had set their sights on the western part of Greek Macedonia – where there was a large local Slav element, part of which expressed a preference to come under a Slavic state – and Thessaloniki, which was regarded as a natural termination of the Morava Valley and the Vardar, while its harbour was considered essential for Serbian trade. The breakdown in Greco-Serbian relations after Constantine's refusal to provide Serbia with military aid strengthened Serbian propagandist activity. However, this activity diminished after Venizelos's return as Prime Minister and Greece's official entry into the war (Dutton, 1998, pp. 159-161, and Hassiotis, 2004, pp. 255-308).

On the other hand, the presence of thousands of foreign troops (French, British and their colonial troops as well as Serbs, Montenegrins, Russians and Italians) revived economic activity in Thessaloniki, which had suffered after the Balkan Wars and the loss of the city's hinterland. The construction of military works provided the unemployed and refugees (from the Bulgarian occupied areas or from the Ottoman Empire) with work. The great increase in demand caused by the foreign troops led to a sharp increase in profits for local businessmen, though also causing prices to rocket. The music halls, the cabarets, the cinemas, the theatres and the orchestras provided an unprecedented social life, while twelve daily newspapers addressed themselves to seven different linguistic and ethnic groups. It could be said that during the Great War Thessaloniki saw its last great flowering as a multi-ethnic city: to its already mixed population (made up of Greeks, Jews, Muslims, Slavs, Armenians etc.) were added Greek refugees from Eastern Greek Macedonia or Thrace, Serbian civilians that had followed their army, as well as thousands of foreign soldiers who settled in the city centre and its environs. This character was severally limited after the movement of populations that followed the war, especially after the forcible exchange of Muslims and Orthodox Christians between Greece and Turkey respectively, in 1923 (Mazower, 2004, pp. 311-317; Colonas, 2005, pp. 237-250).

While events were unfolding at the front, the Greek political crisis was also evolving. Shortly after Venizelos's resignation the Greek Parliament was dissolved and new elections were announced for December 1915. Venizelos's Liberal Party abstained from the elections, fearing that they would be rigged and that the army would intervene at the expense of its own candidates. In addition, Venizelos knew that he was in an extremely difficult position as he supported the country's entry into the war at a difficult time for the *Entente*. The elections proved to be a farce as the abstention rate reached 68% because of the abnormal conditions prevailing in many parts of the country and because of Venizelos's popularity amongst a large part of the electorate. The new parliament and the governments that were formed up until June 1917 were purely royalist. Venizelos's sup-

porters were ousted from the state machinery and the army. These developments intensified the crisis and created implacable hatred, dividing Greek society into two camps. The Venizelist anti-parliamentary opposition became radicalised, and revolutionary and anti-monarchist tendencies developed within it, particularly amongst the officers who had played a leading role in the Goudi Coup. Venizelos himself, however, did not share these views, although by now he had clearly realised that he could not return to power by constitutional means and that he would need the active intervention of the Entente (Veremis and Gardikas-Katsiadakis, 2006, pp. 121-123; Hering, 1992, pp. 780-796).

The events on the Salonika Front in 1916 hastened such a development. In May 1916 a joint German-Bulgarian offensive was launched against eastern Greek Macedonia, which had remained under the control of the Greek army. King Constantine and his military chiefs of staff were expecting this invasion and hoped that it would drive the *Armée d'Orient* out of Macedonia. Indeed, the new Prime Minister, Stefanos Skouloudis ordered the local Greek garrisons not to resist and so the Bulgarians seized the Rupel Fort, at the Greek-Bulgarian border, near the town of Serres, thus threatening the east wing of the Allied defensive lines. The Allies responded by assuming complete control of Greek Macedonia, dividing it into different military zones of occupation. They also declared martial law in the region, imposed censorship and demanded the complete disbandment of the Greek army, regarding it as a threat to the security of their forces. While they were preparing their own counter-attack with the aim of supporting Romania's entry into the war and tying down as many Bulgarian forces as possible, their opponents launched a surprise attack along the whole length of the front on 17<sup>th</sup> August. The Bulgarian troops broke through the Allied lines and captured Florina to the west, although their attack was subsequently checked. To the east, however, the Greek Fourth Army Corps based at Kavala surrendered without a fight to the Bulgarian army on 11<sup>th</sup> September and was later deported to a prisoner-of-war camp at Görlitz in Germany, where it remained until the end of the war. Part of the Fourth Army Corps managed to escape on British ships and was taken to Thessaloniki (Leon, 1974, pp. 355-382 and 396-400).

In Thessaloniki Venizelist officers, frustrated with Constantine's stance and concerned about the future fate of Greek Macedonia, had already created the "National Defence" organisation, with the aim of challenging the royalist government in Athens and getting Greece into the war. On 30<sup>th</sup> August they tried to gain control over the Greek garrison in the city, which they eventually managed to do with difficulty, thanks to assistance from Sarrail. Venizelos, urged by various French diplomats, left Athens and installed himself in Thessaloniki, where he formed a provisional government. Thus, Greece was divided, with two different governments: the official royalist government in Athens which controlled "Old Greece", and the Venizelist Provisional Government of Thessaloniki, which controlled the islands and Greek Macedonia (the "new lands") with the support of the *Armée d'Orient*. One of the Provisional Government's basic aims was to restore Greece's standing in the eyes of the Allies and also Greek sovereignty in Macedonia. In order to do this, it attempted, though without notable success, to form a creditable

army and to regain at least some administrative control over the region. This endeavour was obstructed by the lack of a unified position and unreserved support on the part of the Allies and also the unwillingness of the Macedonian population to respond to the military call-up. In any case, the *Entente* only gave de facto recognition to the Provisional Government because of objections raised mainly by Italy (which did not want Greece to enter the war so that afterwards she could not lay claim to areas she sought for herself) and Russia (for the same reason and also because the Tsarist government did not agree to supporting any revolutionary action) (Dakin, 1972, pp. 212-215).

At the same time, events were also unfolding rapidly in Athens: The formation of the Provisional Government of Thessaloniki intensified the purges of the Venizelists. Also, the Allies imposed a series of demands on King Constantine in order to protect their rear in Greece. Although the King initially agreed to these demands, he later changed his mind, yielding to pressure from his hard-line supporters. The Allies responded by landing 3,000 Anglo-French marines in Piraeus on 1<sup>st</sup> December in order to make a show of strength and force the Royalists to conform. Brief hostilities ensued, which ended in a disorderly retreat by the marines. Immediately afterwards, a wave of terrorist activity, organised by the associations of reservists, which were loyal to Constantine, was launched against the Venizelists, with murders, looting and arrests. These events caused a tremendous stir in the Entente camp. France decided that there was no longer any possibility of a compromise with Constantine: overcoming the objections of her allies, she proceeded to capture various strategic points in southern Greece and to deliver an ultimatum to the Greek government demanding Constantine's immediate resignation. The latter was forced to accept the French demand and abdicate his throne, declaring his second son Alexander as his successor (Mourellos, 1983, pp. 43-142)<sup>4</sup>.

### **The Greek Contribution to the War and the Victory of the *Entente***

Venizelos returned to Athens and resumed his post as Prime Minister on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1917. The new government proceeded to purge the state machinery and the armed forces of the Royalists. The most eminent members of the monarchist faction who were regarded as particularly pro-German, including the former Prime Ministers Dimitrios Gounaris and Stefanos Skouloudis, were exiled either to Corsica or the Aegean islands. In effect, Venizelos's government replaced Constantine's unconstitutional regime with its own form of dictatorship, which was to last until the elections of 1920. On 28<sup>th</sup> June Greece formally declared war on the Central Powers and gradually proceeded to carry out a general mobilisation. However, the mobilisation of the Greek forces was extremely difficult because of the army purges, pro-monarchist propaganda, revolts by royalist officers and privates, and the lack of resources and credit for equipping and resupplying the army. In spite of all this, a year later ten Greek divisions (approximately 300,000 men) were ready to reinforce the *Armée d'Orient* on the Salonika Front (Leontaritis, 1990, pp. 61-67 and 149-179).

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4 For the Reservists see Mavrogordatos (1983, pp. 72-73).

The situation at the front had not significantly changed since the summer of 1916. The Bulgarian assault launched at that time had been checked and the Allied counter-attack in November had led to the capture of Bitola (Monastir), the first Serbian city to be liberated. The assaults undertaken by Field Marshal Sarrail in the Spring of 1917, in which Greek units of the Provisional Government of Thessaloniki took part for the first time, saw some limited success. Sarrail's replacement, General Guillaumat, undertook the reorganisation of the *Armée d'Orient*, which was suffering from low morale, mutinies and desertions by Russian soldiers and internal rancour in the Serbian army – caused by the controversial trial of Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević in Salonika in March 1917, and the subsequent purge of the army of his supporters. In the Spring of 1918 Guillaumat undertook a series of local offensives with the aim of tying down enemy forces and preventing them from being transferred to the Western Front, where the final German offensive of the war was underway. These offensives involved the participation of three Greek divisions (the Serres, Archipelago and Cretan Divisions), who scored a notable victory in May by taking the strong Bulgarian defensive position at Skra-di-Legen. This success boosted the morale of the Greek army, raised its standing in the eyes of the Allies and showed up the weaknesses and drop in morale of the Bulgarian forces. On 9<sup>th</sup> June the French government recalled Guillaumat to Paris in order to appoint him governor of the city and named General Louis Franchet d'Espèrey as his replacement. The new commander immediately began preparations for a big Allied offensive, with the aim not only of tying down enemy troops but also breaking through the front (Falls, 1933, pp. 61-130; Hellenic Army General Staff, 1999, pp. 175-189).

The Allied offensive began on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1918 with a powerful bombardment of the enemy's defensive line at Dobro Pole, which was captured on the following day by Serbian and French troops assisted by units of the Archipelago Division. On 18<sup>th</sup> September British and Greek forces (the Serres and Cretan Divisions) attacked in the area of Lake Doiran. Although with great sacrifices the Bulgarians managed to repulse the attack, they later retreated under pressure from the Serbo-French advance from the west. At the same time French and Greek units had broken through the lines of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bulgarian Division on Mt. Gena (Kožuf), while the Greek First Army Corps, with three divisions, attacked the Bulgarian positions on the Struma River. The fall of Skopje on 29<sup>th</sup> September marked the end of the Bulgarian resistance. On the same day, under the extra pressure of revolts by peasants and soldiers behind the lines, Bulgaria was forced to capitulate. The *Armée d'Orient* continued its advance both into Serbia and towards Thrace forcing the surrender of the Ottoman (30<sup>th</sup> October) and of the Habsburg Empire (3 November). The war in the Balkans had finally come to an end (Falls, 1933, p. 147 ff.; Hellenic Army General Staff, 1999, pp. 209-237; Hall, 2010, pp. 126-150).

## Conclusions

Thus, Greece found itself on the side of the victors of the Great War. In return, she annexed Western Thrace from Bulgaria under the Treaty of Neuilly (1919) and even greater concessions from the collapsing Ottoman Empire under the Treaty of Sèvres

(1920). For a moment it seemed as if the vision of the *Megali Idea* had finally become fulfilled, although political and military developments soon overturned these expectations. The Greek army continued to fight against the Turkish nationalists (1919-1922) in Anatolia until August 1922, when it was forced into a disorderly retreat. Its withdrawal from Anatolia was followed by the flight of over a million local Greeks, who abandoned their ancestral lands for good. The *Megali Idea* had come to an end and in the most dramatic fashion at that (Stavrianos, 1958, pp. 578-591)<sup>5</sup>.

In Greece's case the First World War did not begin in 1914 (nor even in 1917) but rather in 1912, and did not end in 1918 but in 1922. These years represent a unified period that was particularly eventful, one marked by military conflicts, humanitarian disasters, diplomatic upsets, political antagonisms and a constitutional crisis. The Kingdom of Greece, like the other Balkan states, tried to exploit the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the antagonisms between the Great Powers in order to implement its irredentist programme. For the first time it sought and participated in alliances that helped it to achieve a significant expansion of territory but which also implicated it in broader regional disputes – another characteristic that was shared by many other European countries at the time. Greece's involvement in the European war was inevitable due to the combination of her geopolitical position and her own claims. However, as happened elsewhere, the war caused or highlighted internal disputes: At the end of the period the country emerged twice as big as before both territorially and population-wise, but at the same time divided and deeply wounded, a fact that created the conditions for new internecine conflicts that would characterise the country's history for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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5 On the enormous consequences of the Great War on the post-war expressions of modern Greek ideology, see Hassiotis (2006, pp. 39-48).

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# Portuguese Participation in the First World War: Three Historiographic Perspectives

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## Abstract

This paper analyse three historiographic perspectives concerning the Portuguese participation in the First World War: the classical perspective, based on the external dimension and with two strands (e.g. the defence of colonial possessions and the strategic differentiation from Spain); a 1990s historiographic perspective focused on the domestic political situation; and a recent approach, that interlocks the external and internal political dimensions.

## Introduction

After the First World War (FWW), the first historiographic studies on the country's participation in the war argued that it was the result of external causes, namely: threats to Portugal's territorial sovereignty (e.g. its colonial possessions) and to its status as an independent nation-state. This traditional view underestimated Portuguese political parties' domestic motivations regarding the country's war entrance.

In late 1990s, a new perspective was put forward (i.e. the "primacy of domestic politics"), presenting Portuguese belligerence as a consequence of the Republican Party radical options aimed at providing national and international legitimacy to the new Republican regime, established in 1910.

More recently the "primacy of domestic politics perspective" was combined with the external political dimension. This perspective argues that radical Republicans didn't have only a domestic agenda, the Portuguese international status was also very fragile and to consolidate the Republican regime it was necessary to interlock international and national

legitimacy, reinforcing both. Military participation in the FWW was seen as a tool to achieve these goals.

### **The Classical View on Portuguese Participation in the First World War: the External Dimension**

When the FWW broke out, the Portuguese government sent almost immediately two military expeditions to Africa: one to Angola (battalion size) and another to Mozambique (also battalion size). Lisbon was afraid of what might happen to its colonial possessions in the midst of great powers rivalry (in two occasions – 1898 and 1912-1913 – Germany and Great-Britain negotiated the possible partition of the Portuguese colonial possessions). From Portugal's perspective a war between global powers might represent a menace to the preservation of its territorial possessions in Africa, if it decided to stay out of the conflict (Afonso, 2008, pp. 34-38).

Four incidents in 1914 were interpreted as a confirmation of Germany's ambitions. The first happened in Mozambique, in Maziúá (25<sup>th</sup> August) when a Portuguese frontier post was attacked by a German force. The second occurred on 19<sup>th</sup> October at the frontier between Angola and Germany's West African, when a small military force was intercepted and killed by Portuguese forces (mainly due to miscommunication). As a consequence, on 31<sup>st</sup> October a German force attacked the Cuangar frontier post, killing several soldiers of the Portuguese garrison. The fourth was the battle of Naulila in Angola (18<sup>th</sup> December) ending with the defeat of Portuguese military forces. Thus, Portuguese entrance in war can be explained as a defensive reaction to Germany's expansive territorial ambitions. The defence of colonial possessions in Africa was now defined as a national and patriotic endeavour.

For several years there was a national consensus around this interpretation. But according to the other two historiographical perspectives, this view dissimulated the real reasons behind Portuguese intentions (Teixeira, 1996, pp. 29-31).

In the 1980s another subtle interpretation was put forward, based on the assumption that "small countries are like sponges" under the concept of "exogenous state" (*Estado exógeno*): where a vulnerable state can be influenced by strong international dynamics and great power competition (Moreira, 2013, pp. 197-198).

For many centuries there was a natural geostrategic differentiation between Spain and Portugal, with Spain aligning with France and Portugal with Great Britain. But with the creation of the "*Entente Cordiale*", the traditional rivalry between France and Great-Britain disappeared and Spain started an approximation process to the "*Entente*" (the Cartagena declarations in 1907). As a consequence, Portugal's strategic relevance to Great-Britain declined considerably, as seen by Portuguese diplomatic and political authorities. To become an effective member of the "*Entente Cordiale*", supporting the allied war effort was the tool available to Portugal to differentiate himself from a neutral Spain. This purpose was also convened as a national endeavour (Gómez, 1980, pp. 97-103). The defence of colonial possessions and the strategic differentiation from Spain were external political objectives with international impact.

These explanations were supported by the narrative that was written, still in wartime, by Portuguese politicians and intellectuals like Teixeira de Pascoaes (1916, p. 109).

What was common to both explanations was the national character of the endeavour and the clear distinction between what was internal and external policy and politics. Both objectives – colonial or Iberian – were related to the international environment surrounding Portugal. The urgency of defending its colonial possessions in Africa was natural, due to the rivalry between the Germany and Great Britain or the relations between Spain and the “*Entente*”.

In spite of this national endeavour, Portuguese military participation in the FWW was plagued with enormous challenges, some of them never overcome, and the Portuguese Expeditionary Forces suffered painful defeats against German forces in the European theatre (Arrifes, 2004; Marques, 2008). These defeats were mainly attributed to Portuguese political instability, which was a consequence of factional political struggles, government incompetence and corruption. As a result, it inhibited a correct political and military administration of the war effort. This was the common and generally accepted explanation during the “*Estado Novo*” (Nogueira, 2000, pp. 234-244).

## **Two New Historiographic Perspectives on Portuguese Participation in the First World War**

Currently, Portuguese historians agreed that the country’s political instability contributed to the military difficulties suffered during the FWW. But more than political factions and corruption, they see political instability as a consequence of social and economic transformations that produced a regime crisis which started in late nineteenth century (Rosas, 2003, pp. 11-82).

The second historiographic perspective sees Portuguese belligerence as an element to legitimate the Republic and its radical republican policies. An affirmative participation in the war effort would strengthen the political sector defending Portuguese belligerence. The Portuguese Republican Party, known as “democrat” believed that it could achieve a privileged political position through a Portuguese military contribution, thus fortifying its legitimacy both internally and externally. But Portuguese belligerence in the FFW was not consensual: some political sectors and parties were against it. Portugal was a society politically fragmented, but it was the “primacy of internal politics”, as labelled by Pedro Aires Oliveira (2011, p. 185) that propelled Portugal to war, in spite of the inexistence of a national consensus (Teixeira, 1996).

The country had a regime change in 1910: an eight hundred years old monarchy was replaced by the republic. This political change was not consensual. The Portuguese Republican Party and its associated organizations made a violent and armed subversive action to overthrow the monarchy and the new regime born from the revolution was a revolutionary one. They wanted to change the Portuguese society, modernizing it, transforming a rural and very conservative and catholic nation in a secular and patriotic one. But not all the republicans shared the same view on how to materialize this profound transformation. Some sectors wanted to modernize the nation by slowly transforming it,

through education and social and economic development. Others preferred a quick revolutionary process, guaranteeing simultaneously its political hegemony.

They started it by trying to control the Church and secularizing the country through the publication of “separation laws” (i.e. separating the State from the Church). The “separations laws” produced an intense political conflict with the Catholics and the Vatican, exploited by the monarchists which were actively opposing the new Republican regime. As a result, the Portuguese domestic politics became more conflictual and radicalized (Duarte, 2015, pp. 79-85).

When war broke out, the process of political radicalization was intensifying and two opposing political sides emerged. The political battlefield was divided between “warmongers” – “*guerristas*” – and “anti-warmongers” – “*antiguerristas*”: in general, the “warmongers” were radical republicans; the “anti-warmongers” were moderate republicans, Catholics and monarchists, and some members of small socialist and anarchists’ movements (Telo, 2014, p. 11). To radical republicans, war was seen as an opportunity to be closer to the “*Entente Cordiale*” and gain international legitimacy among “liberal” and “democratic” nations, assuring the full international recognition of the Portuguese Republic. This recognition would thus legitimate radical republicans’ domestic political supremacy.

It is important to note that two of the most important states that influenced Portugal’s international position and were part or closer to the “*Entente Cordiale*” had few sympathies for the radical Republican regime: Great Britain and Spain<sup>1</sup>. To the opposition, belligerence was a danger, precisely because of the potential positive effects to the radical Republican regime, and it must be fought accordingly. Their arguments were based on the poverty of country and its limited military capabilities. In sum, belligerence intensified the domestic political conflict (Teixeira, 1996; Telo, 2014; Duarte, 2015).

This polarization was also felt within the armed forces. With the establishment of the Republic, the Portuguese army was divided between republican “young Turks” officers and a majority of conservatives and monarchists officers. Indiscipline grassed in the army due to the infiltration of civilian radical republican elements in the country garrisons, with the support of sergeants and soldiers and officers labelled as anti-republicans or political conservatives (Telo and Sousa, 2016, pp. 23-35). The navy was republican in its majority and more adept of a participation in the war. Indeed, from 1911 to 1913, there was some debate about the acquisition of a dreadnought battleship fleet, to compensate the navy for its support to the establishment of the Republic (Telo, 1999, pp. 232-237).

The mere possibility of the army participation in war intensified its opposition to radical republicans.

The conservative sector of the army tried to stop the mobilization in early 1915. Numerous army officers took part in a demonstration where they gave their swords

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1 It is important to note that two of the most important states that influenced Portugal international position and were part or closer to the “*Entente Cordiale*” had few sympathies for the radical Republican regime (e.g. Great-Britain provided asylum to the last Portuguese King, D. Manuel II). On British viewing of Portugal after the proclamation of the Portuguese Republic, see for example, Telo (2010, pp. 269-273).

to the President of the Republic as an act of protest. The President, Manuel de Arriaga, called an old friend, General Pimenta de Castro, and invited him to form a government capable of creating the proper conditions for free elections and with the sole purpose of assuring the defeat of the Republican Portuguese Party. But a “revolutionary coup” by radical republicans on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1915, supported by the navy, took down the government. The armed forces were heavily divided by now and the elections ended up giving the Republican Portuguese Party a complete majority (Telo and Sousa, 2016, pp. 63-77).

Simultaneously, on the external front, an intense diplomatic effort was conducted by key radical elements of the Portuguese Foreign Policy establishment aimed at gathering the support of France and Great Britain.

Portugal’s entrance into FWW was finally obtained with Germany’s declaration of war on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1916, following the seizure of German merchant ships harboured in several Portuguese ports, which was induced by France. It was a simple diplomatic manoeuvre: France asked Portugal the seizure of the “Triple Alliance” ships harboured in its ports. Great Britain had to follow suit in due respect by its alliance with Portugal. Paris was also the main inductor to creation of the Portuguese military expeditionary force, simply by saying to London that it will be very useful to count with several thousand Portuguese soldiers in French soil (Meneses, 2015, pp. 137-190; Telo and de Sousa, 2016, pp. 81-125).

It was a marriage made in heaven. By manipulating French interests and British needs, the Republican radicals assured the diplomatic and strategic conditions not only to entering the war but also to project a sizable military force to France.

However the army was unprepared. Troops were not properly trained, officers were not up to date with modern military technology and tactics, poor logistics (Portugal was yet a fragile economy and society, feudal and rural), and moral problems due to some defeats in Africa (e.g. in Mozambique<sup>2</sup>) reinforced military opposition to war.

During Portuguese military participation in the FWW several armed clashes occurred (mainly in Lisbon, but also in other parts of the country), as different political factions tried to solve under its own terms and force the political crisis. Instead of reinforcing the national cohesion, the participation in the FFW produced the opposite: a strong political division and generalized social violence (Duarte, 2015, pp. 93-97).

On 5<sup>th</sup> December 1917, the last pro-war government fell, after three days of fighting in Lisbon’s centre under a military “coup” led by a moderate republican military officer (Major Sidónio Pais, a former Portuguese ambassador in Berlin, who tried later to create a new republican regime but without success)<sup>3</sup> with the endorsement of moderate republicans, Catholics, monarchists, socialists and anarchists. But the divisions among

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2 In September 1916, Portugal tried and failed to invade the German colony of Tanganyika, which bordered north of Mozambique. Portuguese troops had to withdraw from Tanganyika in November 1916 (Marques, 2013, pp. 100-160).

3 He was murdered a few days after the end of the FWW, on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1918. The peculiar alliance that supported its regime didn’t survive war’s end and his death.

anti-radical republicans and a last attempt to reestablish the monarchical regime, led to a renovated small civil war in February 1919 followed by the restoration of the “old new Republic”, now with more moderated republicans (Samara, 2004).

The third and more recent historiographic perspective argues that there is a new explanation to Portuguese participation in the FWW. Portugal had global interests with colonial possessions spreading from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean (East Timor and Macau), which were the target, at least in two occasions, of Great Britain and Germany’s territorial expansionism (they didn’t reached an agreement to divide between themselves the Portuguese possessions in Africa).

To avoid that another great power’s bilateral agreement might come into place, revolution and radicalization should be considered as the keywords to understand Portugal’s positioning and diplomatic maneuvering during the conflict: political radicalization was the end result of domestic political extremism and external policy dynamics, each influencing and distorting the other (Telo and de Sousa, 2016).

## Conclusion

After the First World War, Portuguese historiography opted to see the country’s participation in the conflict as a national endeavour, where Portugal ended up on the victorious side. The classical explanation was the defence of Portuguese colonial possessions and around this a national narrative was produced. Only later the “Spanish shadow” explanation was added.

However, Portugal was not a strong state at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was ridden by a profound crisis and intense political conflict, which degenerated occasionally in armed clashes between rival political groups. This fact was disregarded by the classical perspective. The two recent historiographic approaches take this dimension into proper account. The first one, focused on the primacy of the political strategies of radical republicans.

The second, argues that the politics leading to the Portuguese military participation were not a national endeavour, but an internal and politically motivated issue. It was driven by republican radicals who saw the military intervention in France as a tool to legitimate the Republican regime both internal and externally, and within it, the added value of radical republican policies.

This idea reflects small powers’ reality. They are porous and vulnerable to great powers’ rivalry, but it also provides them with opportunities to manipulate the external dynamics according to their self-interests: this was what the radical republicans attempted to do.

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# Entering the War: Portugal in Africa

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## Abstract

Portugal went to war because it wanted to. In Africa, despite all the prudent, experienced and advised assessments provided by Portuguese and allied leaders, Lisbon insisted on impossible offensive operations in German territories, forgot to adapt its forces and prepare for defense. Impossible offensive operations led to an ill prepared defensive of Mozambique. That meant a huge sacrifice of thousands of soldiers and porters that did whatever they could do to endure pain, thirst, famine, illness and almost no help from the Government back in Lisbon during the German offensive in Mozambique.

## The Road to War in Africa: Portugal's Approach

Traditionally, Portugal always tried to keep a neutral stance concerning the existing disputes between major powers but, when needed, it has chosen to side with its oldest allied – Great Britain.

If this was true in many of the conflicts in Europe (especially in the eighteenth century, with Queen Ann's War, the Seven Years War, the Napoleonic Wars, etc.), it was a totally different matter when it came to the continued competition of all the great powers over Africa, in which Portugal took a relevant role. For the purpose of defending what considered being its territories in Africa, the nineteenth century was terrible for the Portuguese ambitions in the continent, where it had virtually no allies.

The nineteenth century was a war period for Portugal because, for the first time, in order to comply with international obligations and demonstrate a strong and ambitious resolve, it had to effectively occupy immense territories inside Africa. One must recall

that the typical policy followed by Portuguese authorities in the preceding four centuries, had been to hold formal authority on the basis of controlling the coastal zones. From there, it ruled together with native authorities, which were given almost complete sovereignty on what they considered to be its territory. But the Berlin Conference in 1884 and 1885 forced a major change in this Portuguese practice and, even worse, it led to a new completely different approach by Portugal, which was not ready to fulfill – one that implied ruling and occupying territories that were twenty times larger than its own. For a small European country, “imposing the flag” and enlarging local allegiances over extensive territories was a huge challenge, due to huge shortage of prepared cadres capable of complementing governance and administration with diplomacy, acceptance, justice and effectiveness<sup>1</sup>.

Portugal was not ready to occupy Africa’s interior. Portugal had neither the population, nor the system, the attitude and the will to do it. For more than four hundred years, all its actions in Africa, Asia or South America had been carried out, mainly, by agreement or by force: through the setting up of practical arrangements with local powers that sustained and allowed the presence of the Portuguese or hiring local combatants. From the shore it was possible to send expeditionary forces in successful campaigns and ensure a continuous presence in critical points that enabled commerce and trade among local, regional and global powers. As time went by, Portuguese local authorities received ever greater signs of loyalty from a diverse set of agents, as these kept a virtual complete autonomy and power to rule their own peoples and territories. It was a formula that worked well for Portugal, which, despite being a small country, had a wide knowledge of its overseas territories.

But now, at the end of the nineteenth century, Portugal occupied immense territories and was imposing its power on local authorities, a *modus operandi* typical of other European powers (Germany, Great Britain, France, Belgium and Italy). It was something that Portugal felt it was forced to, while it knew only too well, that doing so was not in its nature and tradition and it did not have the gigantic number of qualified human resources necessary to accomplish such strategy.

The effective occupation of these territories, which all the great powers aimed at, led to a remarkable change of policy in the administered areas and immensely hurt the reputation of Portuguese authorities<sup>2</sup>. The problem was not whether Portugal had the capability to rule over the provinces or to conduct military campaigns to submit local leaders – in fact, it was capable of it because it had a strong and experienced Army and Navy. The real problem was who would stay behind, district by district, to administer those huge areas after the victorious campaigns.

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1 This happened particularly at the local level, since, at the provincial level, there were also qualified administrators, especially from the Navy and the Army, who took the task of building up the provinces in a reasonable way and receiving international recognition for that.

2 The major European Powers (especially, Germany and Great Britain) tried secretly to make arrangements for the partition of Portuguese Territories in Africa, but after a long diplomatic struggle, in 1913 Great Britain declared that it would recognize Portuguese Colonial possessions.

Portugal did not have either the human resources to do that, in quantity and especially in quality. So, sadly, in many of these interior areas, less capable men were left to administrate and manage. Lacking diplomatic and social skills, they enforced power by force. Even worse, because of cadre's shortage, Portugal decided to rent huge areas to private corporations. This happened mainly in Angola and in the center and north of Mozambique. Almost one third of Mozambique was handed out to private owners. One of them was the Nyassa Company, which was bought initially by the British and later had German partners. Its business was to supply human labor to the mines in the Union of South Africa<sup>3</sup>.

### **The Gradual Destruction of the Armed Forces before the War**

From 1910 to 1914, due to political reasons, the cohesion, prestige, discipline and effectiveness of the Portuguese forces, especially the Army, was lost. More than half of the leadership was forced to retire, all regiments were infiltrated by political groups (such as *Carbonária*, *formiga branca*, and many other ones that were linked to different political parties). Many of the senior officers were removed from command positions, which were taken by young political officers, NCOs, soldiers and even by civilians. All previous modernization programs that had been underway during the previous two decades were frozen and the study and production of new doctrines and strategies stopped. The idea behind this political decision was to replace the experienced and expeditionary Army with a militia kind of Army and, through the substantial increase of militia officers, diminish the influence and prestige of the officers graduated from the Military Academy, who were considered by the most extremist political parties, as being conservative and dangerous (Telo, 2016).

The Military Academy (which was at that time named War School – *Escola de Guerra*), was one of the oldest and most prestigious institutions in Portugal, dating back to 1790 (and created in 1641)<sup>4</sup>. All the senior officers of the Army, Police, Gendarmerie, and, later, of Air Army Core, were formed there with a very high standard of teaching, ethics and proficiency. The fact is that during the Republican Revolution of 1910 (which took place on 5<sup>th</sup> October), almost no Army officer took part – which was true concerning those who were particularly influential (Telo, 2016, pp. 5-10). One must recall that the Portuguese Army was considered, at the beginning of the twentieth century, as a disciplined and very operational service, especially, for the successive campaigns it participated in Africa. This meant that many of the new political parties, who were afraid of the Army's reaction tried to ensure control over the military. This happened across different sectors and political parties, from right to left.

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3 In 1917-1918, when the Cipaies (Indian men who were hired to exercise power) were finally removed from local areas, cooperation and collaboration with the local authorities increased immediately, as one can read in General Deventer's Report of 24<sup>th</sup> June 1918: "Cipaies (or armed native tax collectors) must be withdrawn from operation areas (...) done in Nyassa Province, whose governor has helped us most wholeheartedly, with excellent results" [NA WO 158 474: British Expeditionary Forces East Africa and Mozambique, 1918 (19)].

4 On this, see the official website at <http://academiamilitar.pt/sobre-a-am/historia-e-patrimonio.html>.

Things didn't get worse at the beginning of World War in 1914, simply because some of the most distinguished officers accepted to stay on active duty. It was not an issue of "Monarchy vs. Republic". Even as many of them considered themselves monarchical, they still accepted to serve under consecutive Republican governments<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, the effective modernization and equipping programs – mentioned before – led to the purchase of enough equipment, especially during the first decade of the twentieth century. This allowed the expeditionary Army to sustain, at least, the first impact of war<sup>6</sup>.

### **The Domestic Front: an Intermittent Civil War**

The real situation in Portugal from 1908 until 1926 was an ongoing and increasingly worse, intermittent Civil War (Telo, 2016, pp. 1-43). The political situation was chaotic. There were over 47 governments (two Heads of State were assassinated and five were toppled by revolutions), dramatic political changes (including eight big violent revolutions), riots and fighting on the streets and a disastrous economic situation. This became even worse at the peak of the Portuguese effort in the war in the years of 1917 and 1918. The country witnessed several revolutions, the assassination of a President and thousands of people were killed on the streets of major cities due to civil unrest, uncontrolled plagues and armed organized civilian groups.

To put it briefly, war was the worst situation that could have happened to Portugal but, on the other hand, due to the chaotic situation in the country, it was considered by some politicians as a way forward to unite the people around one external cause. Portugal did not need to go to war and, as is well known, its traditional allies never asked for it, but some politicians in Lisbon needed to create an event (a cause) to force unity among the people – by fighting side by side with the allies.

The problem was, evidently, that going to war when asked was a good thing but all of the allies, especially the traditional and oldest one (Great Britain), was aware of the serious condition of Portugal's Armed Forces and therefore never asked Lisbon to fight. It ultimately suggested that it should not declare neutrality. It should remain ready to help in any way, by concentrating all its efforts on defending the territories in Africa, but, clearly, it should keep short of intervening outside the Portuguese territories.

That was also the main strategic thinking of the majority of Army and Navy senior Officers from all sectors – right to left – but, unfortunately, that was not the opinion of some radicals in the governments that sprang up, especially those that ruled Portugal from late 1915 to late 1917. The decision was to project military forces to the most difficult areas of German's Africa and/or in the toughest zones of the Western Front in Europe. All the prudent military assessments made by the Army senior generals encompassing realistic operational deployments and adequate level of ambition according to

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5 A good example was General Morais Sarmento, one of the best generals at the time – although a monarchical, he was to accept the will of the population and to serve the legitimate government of Portugal, whether republican or monarchical.

6 Amongst the equipment available at the time, one should mention the rifle Mauser Vergueiro, the Maxim machine gun or the artillery gun TR75/Schneider (Telo, 2016, p. 24).

Portuguese capabilities, were intentionally discarded. They were not what some of the politicians wanted to hear and the political level decided against these strategic assessments that were completely in line with all the honest advice from Great Britain. Everyone cautioned Portugal that it should prepare to defend its African possessions and recommend not getting involved in expeditionary operations in German's African territories. If this possibility occurred, under an explicit request by Great Britain or France, Portuguese involvement should be done in tandem with the allies, in accordance with an acceptable level of ambition. After the first two years of war, the African and European experts had a consensus about the real capabilities, morale, discipline and cohesion of the Portuguese Army and considered the proposal realistic. In Africa the plan was to defend and secure borders<sup>7</sup>. On the European theatre, it was to consider the possible participation on the Greek front, calmer sectors, and always under the Divisional Level.

The political decision, even when the first reports came from Africa and France, was completely out of tune with reality because it supported an offensive towards Germany's territories in Africa and sending a Corps Level force to France (Telo, 2016, pp. 81-126). Both forces were to be, completely, commanded by Portuguese commanders discarding, in that way, the British suggestion of repeating the very effective solution followed in the Napoleonic Peninsular Wars (1808-1814) where the Portuguese forces fought brilliantly, side by side, with British forces under a unified chain of command, where British and Portuguese officers shared, almost in equally and proportionally, the burden of command.

In sum, the problem was not the lack of will to participate or to help the allies in the war effort, but was simply a reality check on what Portugal could do, in accordance with the extremely volatile internal political situation, the terrible disciplinary condition of its Armed Forces and the logistic capability to sustain such demanding expeditionary operations. Portugal's allies did not ask for the level of participation which the government determined. On the contrary, they insisted on previous advice but, against even the most basic common sense, political orders were issued.

### **Portugal's Entry into War: Five Paths in Africa**

As a result of an unbelievable level of ambition, completely out of proportion, Portugal went to war in Africa, adapting decisions according to the speed of political changes in Lisbon. This paper does not address in detail the operations in Angola in 1914 and 1915 and in Mozambique from 1914 till 1918. In any case, they've occurred. Five possible paths could have been followed to enter the war. None was fully and properly implemented by the political power.

The first path was the adaptation of the approved strategy to the environment and the enemy in Africa. Neither was done. In reality, none of the colonial powers in Africa

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<sup>7</sup> For example, in the North of Mozambique near the river Rovuma, following the plan presented by the first expeditionary commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Massano de Amorim, who was thought to be very realistic by the liaison officers of Great Britain and South African Union.

were prepared to fight against each other in 1914. It doesn't mean that the situation was not anticipated. In fact some comprehensive and complete plans were made in anticipation of a war against Germany's possessions<sup>8</sup>, where all scenarios were anticipated by the United Kingdom but, as we know, the resources never were allocated. Accordingly, all the military and security forces were only prepared to deal with domestic security challenges and, as the most *dangerous course of action*, against local uprisings and insurgencies. So, the first year of operations in Africa led to major adaptations and reinforcements of colonial forces. Amongst these were new strategies and doctrines, and large expeditionary forces sent from India and the South African Union (these were the biggest, but many others came from different places). There was an enormous effort to build logistical sustainment conditions capable of supporting the launch of offensive operations against the Germans.

Only when the logistic conditions were ready – including the building of roads, campaign hospitals and gigantic logistical columns – did General Botha start to move, with more than forty thousand, well prepared and trained soldiers in 1915, towards Germany's South West Africa possessions. Another example was in 1916, when General Smuts only initiated his advance against Lettow-Vorbeck forces in Germany's East Africa, after hundreds of new roads were built, campaign and fixed hospitals, and water and food deposits had been preplaced ahead in the major four main attack directions of the Anglo-Belgian advance<sup>9</sup>. More than one hundred and fifty thousand soldiers, one million porters and a strong air and naval support were gathered for this war effort<sup>10</sup>. Great Britain had learned its lesson in 1914 with a terrible and ill prepared attack in Tanga and Jasmine (Germany's East Africa)<sup>11</sup> and never went back in without the proper conditions to launch offensives.

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8 See the documents retrieved in South Africa – SANDF Diverse 19: Situation in South Africa, 1910.

9 See the map of sanitary support for one of the African British fronts: 1 – first aid post in every regiment; 2 – collection stations to recover wounded at the rear of each two regiments; 3 – advanced dressing stations on the way to the main supply route; 4 – ambulance stations on the supply route (3 or 4 miles away from the front); 5 – clearing hospital at the route; 6 – stationary hospital; 7 – advanced base with another stationary hospital. [NA WO 32 5817: Operations in British East Africa, 1914 1915 (39)].

10 Three main British Divisions: 1<sup>st</sup> (Major-General Hoskins with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> EA Brigades of Brigadier-General Sheppard and Brigadier-General Hannynghton); 2<sup>nd</sup> (Major-General Van Deventer with 1<sup>st</sup> SA Mounted Brigade of Brigadier-General Manie Botha and 3<sup>rd</sup> SA Brigade of Brigadier-General Berrange) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Major-General Coon Brits with 2<sup>nd</sup> SA Mounted Brigade of Brigadier-General Enslyn and 2<sup>nd</sup> SA Infantry Brigade of Brigadier-General Beves), (NA WO 32 5820: Dispatch General Smuts East Africa, 1916); 3<sup>rd</sup> besides the Belgium forces under the command of General Tombeur (the column of Colonel Molitor had 2.400 troops plus two batteries [NA WO 32 5822: Operations in British and German East Africa, 1915-1916 (11)], naval forces commanded by Rear-Admiral Charlton, air forces in reconnaissance and bombing raids [2 aero-planes and Balloons [NA WO: Operations in British and German East Africa, 1915-1916 – 32 5822(29)], Royal Artillery, engineering troops (building bridges and roads), supply and transport services, railway sappers, medical units, ordnance service, signal service [NA WO 32 5822: Operations in British and German East Africa, 1915-1916 (254-55)].

11 Although alerts on a careful preparation were made but previously discarded by Commanding Major-General Aitken: "For the attack in Tanga, a fresh Brigade will be needed, a company of Sappers. The force must be self-contained in every way, medical, supply, signaling – both material and personal (...) supported by two warships (...) railway material for Taveta (...) enough porters and animals" [NA WO 32 5816: General Wapshere and Tighe efforts in Africa, 1915 (10-11)].

Portugal witnessed the operations in the German Southwestern and Eastern territories and prudent planning and adaptations were immediately suggested by Massano de Amorim (the commander of the first expedition in Mozambique) concerning the preparation of future combats. Great Britain's strategy, tactics and logistics changed dramatically to meet the environment and the enemy but Portugal, namely the government in Lisbon, took no heed of Massano's advice. What was worse, further proposals made by Massano were refuted and he was relieved from the command. The political solution was simple: find an inexperienced officer that could accept unacceptable conditions to command expeditionary and offensive operations in Germany's Africa.

From early 1914 until March 1916 Portugal was still a neutral part in the conflict but after this date it ceased to be<sup>12</sup>. The allies had been clear, knowing well the conditions in northern Mozambique in the area controlled by the Nyassa Company, where there was virtually no investment in railways, roads, and communications, adding up to the indiscipline of the forces sent by Lisbon<sup>13</sup> (due to the political instability that spread in all the colonial territories). They asked Portugal to remain on the defensive. In Lisbon, the successive governments did not want to pay attention to this obvious and realistic piece of advice, which was shared by the majority of the experienced officers in the Army, and kept asking for offensive operations against the Germans.

The second path to enter the war was by fighting and sustaining the war effort in such arid and inhospitable areas, depending increasingly on local native forces and less on the European/Indian expeditionary forces. Lettow-Vorbeck and the Germans did exactly that, Great Britain and Belgium quickly adapted their strategy moving also in this direction, but Portugal insisted in sending in small, unprepared, European forces, with almost no preparation, no logistical support, sustainment and health assistance, in order to endure those harsh conditions. Only too late, at the beginning of 1918, did Portugal try effectively to change the forces' composition. Until then, they were an "explosive" mix of police and gendarmerie, militias and native forces (including some from Angola), private Nyassa police, and expeditionary European forces. One could only anticipate disaster in the command and leadership of these forces, given gigantic differences on the preparation and level of support, the existence of subordinate commanders who in some cases had absolutely no experience or military background, and a majority of soldiers who had neither the preparation nor the conditions to endure the terrible African climate and topographic challenges.

Massano de Amorim, was right. Back in 1915, he proposed the exclusive use of native forces and drew a plan to enable logistical support according to a plan based on a strong and flexible defensive as the only possible solution (concentrating the forces at

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12 On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1916, Germany declared war on Portugal.

13 This was an obvious situation for the allies, as one can read in Lieutenant-General Van Deventer's supplementary dispatch of 1<sup>st</sup> October 1918: "A certain number of the Portuguese officers and men were personally brave. But the majority intensely disliked service in East Africa; in fact, some of the white companies were composed entirely of political convicts, sent here for punishment" [NA WO 158 475: Supplementary Dispatch on Portuguese East Africa and Maps, 1918 (14)].



least 100 km south of the Rovuma river, in strategic locations that allowed a rapid movement towards the enemy). Later, in 1916, another very experienced officer, General Garcia Rosado, insisted on these same solutions before taking command. But, as expected, Rosado, one of the best Portuguese generals and one who had a long experience in Africa and Asia, was replaced even before taking command. What he recommended was not what Lisbon wanted to hear. Inevitably he was replaced by an officer with no experience, who found, once on the theatre of operations, enormous difficulties to command the third expedition sent to Mozambique in 1916.

The third path to enter the war was by keeping a constant and coherent political planning. But the political instability led to orders and counter orders whenever a new government took office. For instance, when Pimenta de Castro took office, he decided to downgrade the war effort and prepare the military forces only for defensive operations. But just six months after this order, a new government led by Afonso Costa insisted on sending troops to Europe and force offensive operations in Germany's East Africa possessions. That instability led to huge strategic changes and low morale, hampering expeditionary forces' preparations and, more importantly, to a growing indiscipline among soldiers, who did not understand what the country wanted from them.

The fourth path to enter the war was by trying to achieve a good diplomatic position on the negotiations peace table, to keep and, desirably, expand, territories and influence in Africa. The fact was that in Africa colonial rivalry remained throughout the war<sup>14</sup>. South Africans, especially Boer officers like Smuts or Van Deventer, who came to be in command of the whole campaign in Africa, probably never forgave Portugal for the support during the Anglo-Boer wars and retained the ambition to occupy the South of Mozambique. Great Britain also never sustained the idea of giving up parts of German territories in a future peace conference. Accordingly, in addition to all the difficulties and the ill-preparedness of the Portuguese forces, there was another factor: a lack of cooperation by the major allies, which would, was very present during the whole campaign.

When Lisbon forced General Ferreira Gil, the third commander in Mozambique, to conduct an offensive operation inside Germany's East Africa, he never expected to find that his "oldest ally" would hamper the only possible operation that Portugal could have accomplished. General Ferreira Gil suggested to Lisbon that any offensive in German territory would be very difficult due to the lack of forces and logistic support but, as long as he could be close to the shore, and count on the naval and allied support, maybe he could occupy the littoral cities of Mikandani and Lindi.

Surprisingly, or maybe not, the British occupied Mikandani before the Portuguese completed that operation and were left with no option other than telling Portugal that, if it insisted to move onto Germany's East Africa, the only way would be to get deep into the inhospitable area of Nevala<sup>15</sup>. Surprisingly, or maybe not, Lisbon told Ferreira Gil to

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14 For instance, it was very difficult to have a cooperation between British and Belgians to advance towards Germany's East Africa: "the war office declines to commit themselves to any promise of a general offensive with the Belgians" [NA WO 32 5818: Belgian Congo African Cooperation, 1915 (10)].

15 As one can read in Lieutenant-General Smuts dispatch at NA WO 32 5823: Operations in East Africa, 1916 (20): "The Admiralty is also anxious to have some of my naval guns for the coast between Rovuma



go, take Nevala, and keep going as far north and west as possible. Gil did everything he could to alert to the insanity of the decision. There were no logistics, no forces, no roads, absolutely no health conditions for the soldiers, no naval support of any kind and Nevala/Liwale was very far way. But Lisbon did not care. Go! Go!<sup>16</sup> Portuguese forces were in fact to take Nevala, on a huge sacrifice. But it was, obviously, impossible to maintain and sustain that objective and so the expedition force had to come back after a successful counter-offensive was mounted by the Germans.

The fifth and final path to enter the war was by being able to carry out what was the initial intention of the allied powers and the advices from all Portuguese senior officers – to defend.<sup>17</sup>

Too late. Because of the offensive ambitions, defense was never really taken into consideration, and the ongoing efforts to move into German territories led to an exhaustion of the available forces. The irony is that, when Lettow-Vorbeck decided to invade Mozambique, it was an excellent opportunity, not only for the exhausted German forces, but also for Great Britain, South African Union and Belgium, to reduce their effort in Africa. The Germans knew that they could find a good environment in the Nyassa Company's area because years of German influence drove the population to their side – an important factor if we take into account the considerable number of isolated outposts of its expeditionary forces needing supplies<sup>18</sup>.

The British could have send back to Europe many troops needed in the western front<sup>19</sup>. Belgium was happy because their objectives had been met and now they could rest. The South African Union just needed to ensure that Lettow-Vorbeck would not move far south. This strategic environment and the operational situation of the Portuguese forces mean also a better negotiation situation in the peace agreement and allow, ultimately, the control of the south of Mozambique.

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and Rufiji rivers, which I intend to occupy immediately with communication troops, so as to cut off enemy from sea, and prevent the Portuguese at this stage from occupying enemy territory, that they will claim after". And indeed it was done at "Minkandani" (13<sup>th</sup> September) and "Lindi" (16<sup>th</sup> September) [NA WO 32 5826: Operations in East Africa, 1916-1917 (48)].

16 The allies knew that this was almost an impossible mission, even before it had started, as one can read in a Dispatch by Lieutenant-General Smuts of September 1916: "The Portuguese General Gil states that he will move this month with 5.000 rifles but I do not expect much will result from the move" [NA WO 32 5823: Operations in East Africa, 1916 (12)].

17 Lieutenant-General Smuts met with the Portuguese governor in January 1917 and made clear what he asked the Portuguese to defend. "Prepare a 50 miles belt from Rovuma with no natives, no food, no animals and no supplies; leave scouts near the river Rovuma; prepare to fight only behind the 50 miles belt; keep the Europeans in 'healthiest locality' environments and use them, exclusively, only after knowing where the enemy was coming; train native forces intensely before sending them to the front lines" [NA WO 32 5826: Operations in East Africa, 1916-1917 (27-30)].

18 In 1915 the German activity was noted: "There seems to be a German attempt to incite the natives of German East Africa and Portuguese East Africa against the British, both there and here (Mozambique). The means used are messengers and pamphlets giving the German version of the cause" [NA WO 929 2: Food Supplies and Military Intelligence through Port Amelia and Palma, 1915 (27)].

19 The British intention is very much clear on pushing the Germans towards Mozambique: "compel the Germans either to surrender by indirect pressure or to enter Portuguese territory" [NA WO 106 587: East Africa Correspondence Book, 1916-1917 (35)].

In late 1917 and 1918, as Lisbon suffered from enormous political instability, fueled by famine, uncontrolled plagues and fighting on the streets, the faraway operations in Africa, which never got the better attention and priority, were completely abandoned. The last thing Lisbon authorities wanted to hear was about the disaster of the German invasion of Mozambique. Clearly the priority of the Portuguese politicians was to distribute money and food to the starving population. Second to it was the support of the expeditionary force sent to France and Belgium and, only then, were the increasingly isolated forces in Mozambique. As a result, the last and fifth way to enter the war was in fact by learning to endure, hoping for some kind of support, and trying to recover whatever the Germans were not able to take.

## **Conclusion**

Portugal went to war because it wanted to. In Africa, despite all the prudent and experienced advice and assessments of Portuguese and allied leaders, Lisbon insisted on conducting impossible offensive operations in German territories, forgot to adapt its forces, prepare for defense and, in the end, Mozambique was invaded and the Portuguese were abandoned by its allies.

It was evident for British, South African Union and Belgium troops, just six months after the beginning of the war in Africa that any kind of offensive operations inside Germany's territorial possessions would need huge number of troops and porters, extensive and comprehensive logistical support and a clear step by step strategy. More than forty thousand troops were needed to take Germany's Southwest Africa and, at least, one hundred and fifty thousand troops from the British and Belgium empires, reinforced with over a million of porters, an extensive logistic and sustainment support, were needed to take German East Africa. This was also clear to the most experienced Portuguese officers in Africa, like Massano de Amorim and Garcia Rosado, that the requirements to prepare offensive operations outside Mozambique would need a similar kind of preparation. But, incredibly, with a strong lack of good sense, the orders from Lisbon were to send troops with no preparation and commanders with no experience to carry operations without any previous coordination, enduring exhausting campaigns with, virtually, no logistical support and a tremendous shortfall in native troops.

Mission impossible in the offensive led to an ill prepared defensive of Mozambique's territories. That meant a huge sacrifice of thousands of soldiers and porters that did whatever they could do to endure pain, thirst, famine, illness with almost no help from Lisbon during the German offensive in Mozambique. Those brave men, European and African, deserve our deepest respect for their monumental sacrifice and courage, trying their best to accomplish a mission that everybody knew too well how completely impossible it was.

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# Organizing a War Economy: the Portuguese Case (1914-1919)

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## Introduction

The two world wars had a deep influence in the economic, cultural, and institutional history. They transformed the nature of the institutions and patterns of exchange, affected technologic development but, above all, were great consumers of "wealth" – disturbing the functioning of markets and directly influencing economic growth (Findlay and O'Rourke, 2007, pp. 429-471; Winter and Prost, 2008).

This paper seeks to analyze the organization of the war economy in Portugal, studying some of its main characteristics and specificities, most of them quite demonstrative of the economy's degree of dependence on external trade and served, as happened later, during World War II, to emphasize the set of structural vulnerabilities that characterized the national economic reality in relation to the nature and composition of the productive system (Rollo, 2007).

The importance of the home front as a base of support to armies campaigning was one of the main legacies of World War I. The conclusion that victories or defeats could no longer be built only on the battlefield, but rather as the necessary product of a joint effort, across the whole society, resulted in an unprecedented mobilization, whose impact and consequences were felt too in Portugal. War economies required the design of national strategies whose objectives are comparable to those of military plans, and the state played the role of an economic agent endowed with powers of intervention such as controlling spending and consumption, tax increases, price-fixing or even rationing. The functioning of economic life in situations of conflict implies an adaptation that is almost always associated with the emergence of new methods of social organization. From the theoretical and conceptual point of view, the economies of war can be understood as

alternative power systems, where different political, social or military structures interact. The economic analysis of World War I implies the adoption of a strategy that includes the identification, as clear as possible, of the various actors involved in the political and economic situation in which the war broke out, and requires that we consider, as a starting point, the role of interactions and dependency relations between national realities and global economic networks where countries were involved.

A war economy is always interpreted as an economy which deviates from a "standard" that is only restored by the return to peace.

The analysis of the war economy organization is a theme to which the Portuguese academic community has paid little attention. Recurrently, national researchers draw attention to the fact that until the end of the 1950s, the Portuguese historiography concentrated its attention almost exclusively on the analysis of the political and military motives behind the Portuguese participation in the Great War (Arrifes, 2004, pp. 23-24). In fact, early Portuguese studies on the home front only emerged in mid 1960s by Vasco Pulido Valente (1965, pp. 1201-1215). Pulido Valente was the first Portuguese historian to examine some of the political fractures caused by the beginning of the war and the crisis arising from the Portuguese intervention, but as a whole. The study focused mainly on the year 1918, analyzing the economic changes introduced by the military coup that lead Sidónio Pais (1872-1918) to power, not studying in great detail the economic organization towards the war.

At the end of the 1970s, Manuel Villaverde Cabral (1979, pp. 373-392), in a text on the strategies set out by Prime Minister Afonso Costa and President Sidónio Pais, with the crisis of liberalism as their backdrop, extended the field of analysis to the economic and social domains. However, the first work to specifically study Portugal's war economy would be published only in 2011 (Pires, 2011). One of the explanations suggested to justify this delay is – in addition to the obvious prevalence that political history holds over economic historiography – the difficulty to access the sources, including those of archival nature pertaining to documents that are indispensable for the study of the Portuguese economy during the years of World War I. This shortcoming is suppressed, in part, by the access to foreign sources, including the documentation produced by the British representation in Lisbon, most of which is deposited in London, at the National Archives (Kew). It is worth stressing that the archives of the Ministry of Economy (one of the essential sources for a better understanding of the overall operation of the Portuguese economy before and during the years of the war) remains missing.

Following a trend that was common to most countries in Europe, the Portuguese state was the central player in the war economy organization. One should note that, until then, it had only very shyly intervened in economic affairs, always fearful of any interference with the rights of individual property or of perverting the principles of free competition (Pires, 2011). The strengthening of state's intervention in the economy was an innovative experience that required the political powers to play the role of buyers and suppliers of raw materials and strategic products and to set tables of price control to meet the basic needs of the population. It is worth remembering that

in Portugal, contrary to what happened later during World War II, there was never a body charged with "directing" the war economy. Until 1916, it was the Ministry of Economy which, in conjunction with the Finance Ministry, formally played a "coordination" and steering role.

One of the last initiatives of the President of the "Sacred Union" government, António José de Almeida, was an attempt to counterbalance the weight that the state had been occupying in the economic activity as a whole, creating, as it had happened in all countries in the conflict, in the beginning of 1917, a National Economic Council (Conselho Económico Nacional – CEN) directly dependent of the Presidency of the Government. The establishment of a strong link between the Government and the producing classes to resolve the main economic issues of national life was thus placed at the center of all concerns.

The Council was divided into three committees: supplies, colonies and study of future economic problems, which were entrusted not only with the critical analysis of national issues, but also with the presentation of practical and effective measures to mitigate the effects of the crisis, with a view to preparing the country for peace. Contrary to a trend that had been followed all over Europe, any rapprochement between the unions and political power was once again ruled out – one should recall that the Workers' National Union (União Nacional dos Trabalhadores – UNT) had not been called to join the CEN.

Although António José de Almeida had defined that the functions to be performed by CEN were of a technical consultative nature (Pires, 2011, pp. 4-5), in early March 1917 little more had been added, and the final organization of the National Economic Council and its functions and the latitude of its action were yet to be defined in a clear and accurate manner. It was a reality followed closely by the press, in particular *Jornal do Comércio*, which in a clear statement of the obvious, did not refrain from declaring that without a clear definition of the conditions under which the Council would work, "it cannot produce anything useful" (*Jornal do Comércio e das Colónias*, 1917, p. 1). On April 18<sup>th</sup> the CEN was transformed into an official entity, endowed with an independent secretariat, funds and access to the official gazette, *Diário do Governo*, for the publication of opinion pieces<sup>1</sup>. However, the most indelible mark of the bill was the characterization that it made of the institution, presenting it as a "Council for defense and economic development of the territory of the Portuguese Republic"<sup>2</sup>.

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1917, the suspension of the Decree n°3092 was voted in the Chamber of Deputies, under the proposal of the "Democratic Party" (Partido Republicano Português) deputy António Fonseca. Shortly after, the Government presented its resignation to the President of the Republic<sup>3</sup>.

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1 Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento), Decree n°3092, *Diário do Governo* (Government Diary), I Series, n°61, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1917.

2 *Idem*.

3 *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados* (Chambers' Diary), "Moção contra o Decreto n°3092" (Motion against Decree n°3092), Session 57, 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1917, pp. 26-38.

This article starts by synthesizing what were the main objectives of the wartime economic policies implemented by the Portuguese Republic. It then analyzes the factors behind the organization of the war economy and concludes with some considerations on impacts and reflections of this organization on the Portuguese productive system.

### An Economy for War

The Portuguese Republic adopted, at the request of Britain, nor a stance of neutrality, neither one of belligerence, in the face of the war in Europe, until March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1916 (when the central powers declared war), due to limitations of the national production and because of the effects of chronic external dependence regarding essential goods, fuel and transport (which was felt even more direly as the war would progress). But at the end of 1914 Portugal was forced to design the basic features of a war economy, in order to alleviate the effects of the European conflict in the country's economic and financial activity.

It should be noted that the intentions and objectives inscribed in the economic policies of war set out by Republic were almost always guided by three specific goals: (1) ensuring the supply of essential goods to the daily survival of the population; (2) setting out a price control policy; (3) finding the instruments necessary for the intensification and self-sufficiency in agricultural production.

**Table 1 – Portugal Imports of Goods for Consumption**

Countries	Values in Contos 1913 (a)	Percentage over the total in 1913	Percentage over the total in 1909
Great Britain	23 489	26,40%	26,94%
Germany	15 840	17,80%	17,80%
United States	9 892	11,12%	10,08%
France	7 594	8,53%	8,90%
Spain	3 843	4,52%	6,58%
Colonies	2 850	3,20%	3,29%
Brazil	1 651	1,86%	2,02%

1 *Conto* = 1,000 Escudos

Source: [http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/food\\_and\\_nutrition\\_portugal](http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/food_and_nutrition_portugal).

It was therefore clear that all republican governments from 1914 to 1918 shared a concern for seeking to minimize the effects of "the issue of supplies", aiming at reducing the levels of social conflict that were inevitably associated with it. These options demonstrated, moreover, the extent of the dependency of the national economy in terms of foreign trade and served also to expose several structural vulnerabilities, which widely characterized the nature and composition of the Portuguese productive system. The action of the state in this area, pointed towards a single direction: fighting speculation through the implementation of the following measures: (1) creating central and local



bodies aiming at solving the problem of supplies; (2) fixing the maximum prices and preparation of inventories of production and consumption in the main regions on behalf of the state; (3) creating warehouses to regulate the prices of essential goods.

**Table 2 – Retail Food Prices in Lisbon (Comparison between June and December 1914)**

<b>Products (Kilo)</b>	<b>June 1914 (cents)</b>	<b>December 1914 (cents)</b>
Third-tier sugar	\$24	\$27
Third-tier rice	\$11	\$13
Dry cod	\$14	\$17
Wheat	\$14	\$18
Bacon	\$38	\$40
Sausages	\$68	\$72

Source: [http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/food\\_and\\_nutrition\\_portugal](http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/food_and_nutrition_portugal).

It is thus understandable that, as the food supply difficulties became worse, the need for a rigorous survey of the economic situation of the country grew exceptionally. Only then would be possible to predict the amount of imports needed to halt the degradation of the living conditions of the population. One should note, by the way, the lack of any rigorous statistical survey that could serve as a starting point for the systematic and comprehensive inventory of the domestic economic situation, allowing the republic to count its strategic reserves and to consider the future needs of raw materials.

It also became clear throughout this period that the war alone was not an argument capable of completely justifying the worsening of the national economic situation – this aspect acquires a new centrality when one analyzes the demands addressed to the government by both the workers and the industrial associations for the implementation of measures that condemned speculation over food prices, hence halting its peak. The intensification of the state’s economic intervention showed that in the specific case of supplies it was easy in theory to arrange price lists, but difficulties arose when the government was unable to ensure the regular supply of goods and curb speculation and hoarding. Furthermore, soon it became apparent that the adoption of an economic policy of war aimed at restricting freedom (by adopting price lists) and defending the national supply (export ban) would have few effects on solving the problem of supplies. On the other hand, it was also necessary to find the appropriate tools to promote not only the development of the transportation sector, but also, inevitably, the promotion and encouragement of exports and an increase in agricultural production. Such strategy would have to be managed within a framework where the “state’s hand” was growing increasingly visible.

It should be noted that Portugal lived a scenario of social misery like the one experienced before the conflict, but aggravated by the difficulties around the supply of some basic food products to the poorer classes, such as cereals and cod. In essence, much of

the population continued to draw their means of sustenance from the land, without relying on imports, which would eventually keep, at first, the domestic economy from being so strongly affected by the international situation and the financial position of the country. This reality alone eventually raised some reflection concerning the development of agricultural hydraulics, opening the way to the exploitation of natural resources in large areas of the national territory, particularly in the Alentejo region. However, as a general backdrop, the war was only very shyly viewed by the government as an opportunity for transformation and modernization of the sector. The most interesting idea was the acknowledgement that, after all, the state was obliged to gather the best resources and means necessary to transform an agriculture based on structurally inefficient practices into a sector capable of ensuring the expansion of production and, consequently, the reduction of imports of agricultural goods.

### Control and Supplies

The General Warehouses created under the dependency of the Directorate General for Trade and Industry, under Decree n°766 of August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1914, are a good example of the direct intervention of the government in support of the national trade<sup>4</sup>. The General Industrial Warehouses were set up initially to mitigate the effects of the war in the food industries, particularly the preserved food products, with state's credits functioning as guarantor until return to normal<sup>5</sup>. The goal was to mitigate the effects of war in an industry whose exports were already quite significant, but suffered from the suspension of transactions with the German market and the shortage of raw materials (iron)<sup>6</sup>. It was the General Industrial Warehouses' mission to: (1) "receive as commercial deposits or under the regime of General Warehouse the artifacts produced by the industry intended to assist, or the raw materials necessary for that manufacturing"; (2) "issue goods deposited securities transferable by endorsement over deposits and warrants"<sup>7</sup>.

The *Foreign Office* reacted to the creation of the new body a week later, qualifying the Portuguese government decision as "interesting"<sup>8</sup>. The British diplomacy recognized the positive effects it could have in a closure scenario of European markets, avoiding the layoff of a significant number of workers<sup>9</sup>. The downturn of the markets was starting to

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4 The General Industrial Warehouses were first located in Lisbon, later spreading to the rest of the country. See Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento), Decree n°766, *Diário do Governo* (Government Diary), I Series, n°145, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1914.

5 Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento), Decree n°756, *Diário do Governo*, I Series, n°141, 13<sup>rd</sup> August, 1914.

6 NA UK, FO 368/1383, *Portugal. Report on the Commerce and Finance of Portugal*, London, Foreign Office and Board of Trade, 1915, p. 13.

7 Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento), Decree n°766, *Diário do Governo* (Government Diary) I Series, n°145, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1914. See also its regulation: Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento), Decree n°783, *Diário do Governo* (Government Diary), I Series, n°148, 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1914.

8 NA UK, FO 368/1063, Official note of 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1914 sent by Lancelot Carnegie to Edward Grey, pp. 1-2.

9 It worth remembering that in Sesimbra all the factories of canned sardines had already been shut down, leaving about 700 workers unemployed (*Jornal do Comércio e das Colónias*, 1914, 20<sup>th</sup> August, p. 1).

be felt in all industrial activities more directly connected to export markets, forcing the government to intervene and create new industrial warehouses. Moreover, it was, following a meeting between the Minister and an industrial commission of cork producers, which analyzed the crisis the industry was facing, that the creation of three new industrial warehouses, in the cities of Lisbon, Évora and Faro, was announced, two days later<sup>10</sup>. One realizes that in addition to promoting the implementation of measures to facilitate the supply of first necessity goods, the government sought to adjust the Portuguese exports to the situation of war.

On 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1914, a Committee of Supplies was created, again, under the tutelage of the Ministry of the Economy. This body was put in charge of the study and analysis of the measures necessary to ensure the supply of mainland Portugal and the colonies to "(...) avoid or reduce, as much as possible, disruptions in the industrial works"<sup>11</sup>. The body was handed over to the President of the Commercial Association of Lisbon, Carlos Gomes. The government would end up, however, giving the Committee no more than consultative and research functions, entrusting it with the mission of directly proposing the appropriate measures to curb the price rises and the lack of first necessity goods. The Committee was remodeled on 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1915<sup>12</sup>. It continued to depend on the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Economy, but the concern of the then Minister Lima Basto was to reduce to the minimum the representation of the Ministry of Development, advocating that the Committee should include a broad representation, including, in addition to some representatives of agriculture and retail trade, the presence of a customs official, the director of Military Supplies and the head of the Public Assistance (it is worth mentioning that the body still had no one from the industrial sector).

Lima Basto eventually introduced certain adjustments to some minor details regarding the contents of the functions of the Committee, though it continued to be a consultative body, emptied of any decision-making power. One must stress that only on 13<sup>rd</sup> February, 1915, when the body was again subjected to remodeling, it started to include the presence of the cereal milling and baking industry<sup>13</sup>. In relation to what had been envisaged in August 1914, it became more essential to steer the activities of the Committee into the goal of solving the problem with cereals, which the government deemed a priority. The President of the Committee, Câmara Pestana, had already denounced situations of serious hoarding of maize in various regions of the country.

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Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento), Decree n°808, *Diário do Governo* (Government Diary), I Series, n°154, 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1914.

10 Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento), Decree n° 810, *Diário do Governo* (Government Diary), I Series, n°155, 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1914. NA UK, FO 368/1383, *Portugal. Report on the Commerce and Finance of Portugal*, London, Foreign Office and Board of Trade, 1915, p. 13.

11 Decree n°767, Supplement to *Diário do Governo* (Government Diary), I Series, n°145, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1914.

12 Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento), Decree n°1274, *Diário do Governo* (Government Diary), I Series, n°12, 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1915.

13 Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento), Decree n°1329, *Diário do Governo* (Diário do Governo), I Series, n°31, 13<sup>rd</sup> February, 1915.

Moreover, the guidelines of the body pointed towards greater liberalization of trade, having been proposed to the Development and Finance Ministers, that the export of some foodstuffs (such as eggs) be authorized, as they considered that the government could levy a special and temporary tax upon shipments bound for abroad, whose revenues could help cover the costs of the economic crisis.

**Table 3 – Indexes of Living Costs – Portugal, Great Britain, France and Italy (1913-1916)**

Years	Portugal - Retail prices of 25 alimentary goods, heating and washing, in Lisbon (a)	Great Britain - Retail prices of 23 items, in London (a)	France - Retail prices of 24 alimentary goods, heating and lighting in Paris (a)	Italy - Retail prices of 7 items (b)
1913	100	100	100	100
1914	110,2	116,8	116	113 (July)
1915	122,9	148,6	135 (b)	135
1916	151,1	181,3	159 (c)	151

(a) Considering the consumption rate; (b) Average of the first and third trimester

(c) Average of the first three trimesters

Source: "O custo da vida em Portugal [The cost of living in Portugal]" in *Boletim da Previdência Social*, Ano I, n.º 3, abril a agosto de 1917, p. 197.

On the other hand, the Association of Retail Food Sellers had also voiced its protest before the government, claiming that the prices of foodstuffs, set by tables, did not accompany the market movements, putting "(...) the small business in less favorable conditions before the consumer public (...)"<sup>14</sup>. On 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1915, the Regulatory Commission of Prices of Foodstuffs (Comissão Reguladora dos Preços dos Géneros Alimentícios – CRPGA) was created at the municipal level, to which the Minister of Development was put in charge of designing a table of prices of essential foodstuffs<sup>15</sup>.

In the beginning of January 1916, even before Portugal entered the war in Europe, the Minister of Development, António Maria da Silva, introduced at the Chamber of Deputies a proposal which advocated the need for the government to centralize, through the Ministry, all the arrangements concerning the supply of raw materials and goods of first necessity<sup>16</sup>.

14 Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento) Decree nº1483, *Diário do Governo* (Government Diary), I Series, nº67, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1915.

15 *Idem*.

16 *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados* (Chambers' Diary), "Ministry of Development Bill Proposal", Session nº13, 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1916, pp. 8-14.

The proposal was based on four fundamental points: (1) the pursuit of a centralizing policy giving the government broad powers to intervene; (2) the implementation of all the measures which would enable the government, through the Military Supplies, to buy and sell raw materials and goods of first necessity, as well as to prohibit or authorize the importation or exportation thereof; (3) the creation of a Central Committee of Supplies (CCS) to whom the Ministry of Economy would entrust the studying of all issues relating to the country's supply of essential raw materials; and (4) the commitment to act in line with the Military Supplies, who is charged with implementing the arrangements for the supply<sup>17</sup>.

The government reduced the problem of supplies to the consequences arising from the outbreak of war in Europe, blaming it for the major changes that had been taking place in Portugal, without advancing any deeper explanation to justify the scarcity of food. On 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1916, the government proceeded with the creation of the CCS<sup>18</sup>. Once more, the intervention of the state was considered essential to ensure the regular supply of the country and alleviate the scarcity of living conditions. The new body also evidenced the need that the problem of supplies had to be viewed in an integrated manner in its multiple aspects: economic, financial and legal. Inevitably the Committee sought, without much success, to get the Civil Governors as providers of elements capable to enable a better assessment of the general situation in the country, in particular the markets and the evolution of the price of essential goods.

A commitment was established in order to ensure the supply of major cities and authorize the transit of essential foodstuffs between municipalities, which implied a great effort of coordination and collection of statistical elements regarding agricultural production levels and national consumption, since the data available were practically non-existent.

At this time comments on the rising price of cattle were also recurring and exacerbated by the Army mobilization. Despite the government efforts the butchers of Lisbon had long ceased to sell meat, and to curb its price he had to intervene through the implementation of meat ban exports to Spain<sup>19</sup>. The outcome would be somewhat predictable, especially if we bear in mind the difficulty of importing cattle from Azores islands and the obstacles placed on the acquisition of Argentine meat. In this context, it is important to highlight the creation, in Lisbon, of the Meat Supply Committee, a body established under the Ministry of Labor and Social Assistance, to ensure and manage the supply of meat to the capital<sup>20</sup>.

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17 *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados* (Chambers' Diary), Chambers Bill Proposal Analysis, Session n°23, 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1916, p. 11.

18 Ministry of Development (Ministério do Fomento), Law n°480, *Diário do Governo* (Government Diary), I Series, n°22, 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1916.

19 *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados* (Chambers' Diary), Question from Deputy Costa Júnior to the Ministry of Development, Session 5, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1916, p. 8.

20 Ministry of labor and Social Security (Ministério do Trabalho e Previdência Social), Decree n°2895, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°249, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1916 and *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), II Series, n°30730, December, 1916.

The creation of the Meat Supply Committee turned out to reflect and translate the increased bureaucracy, the weight and the increasing complexity of the public administration, as evidenced by the price lists for the retail sale of meat, which was the responsibility of that Committee, although dependent on the Supplies Committee's approval. On the other hand, and acting in accordance with the general orientation of agricultural development and stimulus to domestic production, the government also passed a bill through which it sought to prevent the depopulation of the country in bovine, ovine and caprine breeds and pigs<sup>21</sup>. Significantly, it was not only the government who took measures to mitigate the effects of the lack of supplies; also, the municipalities, on their own initiative, adopted measures aimed at regulating prices and purchasing and selling food-stuffs to the public. This strategy clearly signaled the intention of the government to strengthen and enhance the capabilities of municipalities, giving them the necessary tools to organize food and fuel supply services, as well as the necessary transportation.

Above all, a supply policy hindered by shortages and deficient transport coordination was apparent – a vulnerability that ultimately determined the creation, under the dependence of the Minister of Labor and Social Assistance, of an Administration of Supplies (AA). The AA was charged with, in addition to the study of the coordination of maritime transport, the compilation of statistical elements relating to the movement of goods, prices, stocks, and availabilities<sup>22</sup>. By the way, we should point out that the AA functioned if the state of war lasted, and up to six months after the signing of the Armistice. Its assignments were based on seven key objectives: (1) studying the issues related to the supply of raw materials and goods of first necessity; (2) compilation of statistical elements relating to the movement of goods, prices, and availability, as well as laws and provisions adopted in various countries; (3) regulation of the implementation of production manifestos; (4) intervention in requisitions; (5) guaranteeing the country's supply of raw materials and goods of first necessity; (6) preservation of goods; and (7) supervision of all services of public supplies.

Indeed, the aim of the government was that the following institutions may work along with the Administration of Supplies: The Supplies Committee, the Committee of Distribution of Cereals and Flours, and the Meat Supply Committee<sup>23</sup>. This way, it was made explicit the concern, but above all the defense of the goal in creating a central body, able to concentrate and follow the various supply operations (one should recall that through the AA the Ministry of Labor could buy and sell goods, especially raw materials and essential goods, in order to supply the country and normalize the domestic markets).

The Administration of Supply was extinguished in December 1917, following Sidónio Pais' military coup. By this time, though temporarily, the state ceased to hold an

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21 Ministry of Labor and Social Security (Ministro do Trabalho e Previdência Social), Decree nº2921, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, nº25730, December, 1916.

22 Ministry of Labor and Social Security (Ministro do Trabalho e Previdência Social), Decree nº3174, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, nº87, 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1917.

23 *Idem*.

exclusive right to buy and sell wheat and maize<sup>24</sup>. Only on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1918, would a Directorate of Public Supplies Services (DSSP) be created, under the Ministry of Labor, with two main missions: (1) organizing the services relating to the supply of raw materials and essential foodstuffs; and (2) making all the arrangements essential to the internal market normalization<sup>25</sup>.

The Ministry of Labor, through the DSSP, could buy or sell any raw materials and foodstuffs. The Civil Governors were in charge of promoting the organization, in each district, of a local Supplies Committee made up by town council members, farmers and industrialists. The Meat Supply Commission was extinguished by the same decree-law<sup>26</sup>.

The government now sought to act centrally, so that instructions issued by the central organs were carried out throughout the country. This orientation was, as Vasco Pulido Valente mentions, "an effort toward autonomy, centralization and expansion of powers, which prepares the policy of concentrating in the state the exclusive distribution of the main foodstuffs" (Valente, 1968, p. 11). The state now controlled directly the issues relating to cross-border trade.

The DSSP was extinguished before the end of the war and in its place, was created the Ministry of Supplies and Transport<sup>27</sup>, on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1918. The new Ministry, which was granted wider powers and larger means of action than any of its previous counterpart bodies, guaranteed to the state the exclusive distribution of foodstuffs. Similarly, it was the only one issuing import and export licenses and, as such, it held the exclusive power to prohibit the export of certain products. It is needless to underline the impact and the importance of that measure; one should recall that, until the advent of Sidonismo, no Ministry or state department dedicated exclusively to the study of the problem of supplies had ever existed in Portugal. The Ministry should become extinct as soon as the circumstances arising from war allowed, and its services should then be scattered between the Ministries of Commerce, Labor and Agriculture<sup>28</sup>.

In general, the main objective of Sidónio Pais was to reduce the animosity and generate consensus favoring the representation of producers and consumers interests. This entire complex structure involved heavy bureaucracy that acquired its maximum expression with the organization of the Directorate General of Supplies' services.

The institutional reform under way reflected an effort to centralize and enlarge authoritarian powers, whose aim was to prepare the concentration under the state of the exclusive power to carry out the distribution of main foodstuffs (Valente, 1968, p. 11).

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24 Ministry of Labor (Ministério do Trabalho), Decree n°3670, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary) I Series, n°220, 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1917.

25 Ministry of Labor (Ministério do Trabalho), Decree n°3810, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°24, 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1918.

26 *Idem*.

27 Presidency of Republic (Presidência da República), Decree n°3902, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°46, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1918.

28 *Idem*.



Therefore, it is worth stressing that, in this area, the competences of the General Directorate of Supplies (DGS), as defined under Decree n°3936 and compared with the powers of the old Directorate General of Public Supply Services, from which the new Ministry had been structured, suffered a considerable increase, as its powers included: (1) seizing raw materials, first necessity goods or any other goods within the territory of the Republic essential to the national economy; (2) authorizing the sale of foodstuffs to the public; and (3) adopting the measures deemed necessary to prevent or remedy the worsening of any crisis of supplies and of goods of first necessity<sup>29</sup>.

It was in the same way that the state sought to ensure a more equitable distribution of imported goods. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, the concession to the Ministry of Supplies and Transport of the exclusive power to issue export licenses was formalized<sup>30</sup>. It is worth recalling in this context the famous "*varejos*"<sup>31</sup>, but also the evolution occurred on the first days of April 1918, with the staff of the Civic Police being assigned the same fiscal powers of the supervisory body of the Directorate General of Supplies regarding the monitoring of prices and combating hoarding of essential foodstuffs<sup>32</sup>. Considering this reality it was for the first time published in Portugal an Ordinance forcing industries and their respective associations to state the actual quantities of raw materials necessary to meet their annual needs.

An additional reference should be made also to the municipal barns, instituted by Decree of April 22<sup>nd</sup><sup>33</sup>, which embodied the essence of the supplies policy under the *Sidonismo* or at least its two main objectives: to control and reduce to a minimum the levels of speculation; and to monitor the distribution of the goods available between city and countryside. In fact, the municipal barns had been created with the objective of purchasing, storing and distributing cereals (wheat, maize and barley) throughout the country. That was how the Minister of Supplies justified the prohibition of direct sale from producer to consumer, and assigned to the state the role of intermediary in agricultural transactions, in line with the will expressed by the Government to operate an increasing transfer of power to local authorities; in practice, the barns would never become more than instruments of the cereal industry, showing no great concern for the fulfillment of the aspirations of consumers (Pires, 2004, pp. 100-101).

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29 Ministry of Food and Transportation (Ministério das Subsistências e Transportes), Decree n°3936, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°54, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1918.

30 Ministry of Food and Transportation (Ministério das Subsistências e Transportes), Decree n°3995, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°63, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1918.

31 Sale of products in small quantities.

32 Ministry of Food and Transportation (Ministério das Subsistências e Transportes), Administrative regulation n°1279, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°67, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1918, and Administrative Regulation n°1384.

33 Ministry of Food and Transportation (Ministério das Subsistências e Transportes), see Decree n°4125, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series n°84, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1918, Administrative regulation n°1345, *Diário do Governo*, (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°97, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1918, and, Secretary of State of Food and Transportation (Secretaria de Estado das Subsistências e Transportes), Decree n°4637 *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°157, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1918.



The Ministry of Supplies was extinguished on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1918<sup>34</sup>. Under the same bill that extinguished it, the Government was authorized to rearrange the supply services: the General Directorate of Supplies transitioned to the Secretariat of State of the Interior, which in turn was divided into two services: supplies and exports (O Economista Português, 20<sup>th</sup> July 1918, p. 503). However, the need to directly centralize and supervise the supplies and maritime transport services eventually dictated the creation, on the last days of August, of a General Commissariat of supplies (CGA) which the Secretary of the Interior, Forbes da Bessa, organized into four Directorates-General: Supplies; External Trade; Land transport and Sea transport (Boletim da Previdência Social, 1918, pp. 217-220)<sup>35</sup>. The CGA had a small duration. On October 10<sup>th</sup>, a new Secretariat of State appeared in the governmental organisation, which was a formal recreation of that of the Supplies, now renamed Provisions<sup>36</sup>. Ten days later, the land transport was reorganized<sup>37</sup>. In a short period, the number of authorities enforcing economic legislation also increased significantly.

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1919, the Ministry of Provisions and Transport emerged<sup>38</sup>, to which the Government assigned the power of fixing the price of first necessity goods<sup>39</sup>. The effects of the war determined that transitional agencies, created during the conflict, could hardly be considered unnecessary, as the economic crisis showed no signs of slowing down. The Ministry of Provisions and Transport was extinguished on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1919. Its services were distributed between the Ministry of Commerce and Communications and the Ministry of Agriculture.

## Development Promotion and Production

The third Government led by Afonso Costa (25/4/1917 – 10/12/1917) ordered the intensification of national agricultural production, creating at the Ministry of Labor, under the General Directorate of Agriculture, a provisional service named the Service of Agricultural Mobilization<sup>40</sup>. In general terms, the Decree n°3619 envisaged, in addition to easy access to seeds, machinery and engines, the promotion of the use of uncultivated lands and the distribution of prizes to farmers who proved to have made formerly

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34 Presidency of the Republic (Presidência da República), Decree n°4639, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, Supplement to n°157, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1918.

35 Secretary of State Interior (Secretaria de Estado do Interior), *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°188, 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1918.

36 Presidency of the Republic (Presidência da República), Decree n°4879, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°221, 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1918. NA UK, FO 371/3369, official note of 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1918 sent by Lancelot Carnegie to A.J. Balfour, p. 1.

37 Secretary of State of Supplies (Secretaria de Estado dos Abastecimentos), Decree n°4903, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°229, 21<sup>st</sup> October, 1918.

38 Ministry of Supplies (Ministério dos Abastecimentos), Decree n°5787G, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, 18<sup>th</sup> Supplement to n°98, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1919.

39 Ministry of Supplies (Ministério dos Abastecimentos), Decree n°5565, *Diário do Governo*, (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°98, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1919.

40 Ministry of Labor (Ministério do Trabalho), Decree n°3619, *Diário do Governo*, (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°208, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 1917.

unproductive lands produce. In fact, the philosophy behind the bill enabled one to foresee, with some precision, different methods of action not only in relation to agriculture, but also for the State and for the administrative corporations. The bill established the lease or requisition of properties necessary for the installation of the Service of Agricultural Mobilization and for the storage of agricultural or forestry products<sup>41</sup>.

Moreover, an increasing number of people, all over the country, suggested the appointment of a commission to oversee daily monitoring of the eternal national external dependence from supplies, something like the *Association Nationale d'Expansion Economique* (ANEE), created in Paris in the previous year. Therefore, one also should not underestimate the initiatives proposed by the Portuguese Industrial Association, during the general meeting held in July, envisaging to promote the study, the defense and national economic progress: "(...) the divorce between the action of the state and the economic interest of nations should not and must not continue (...) and the state, in order not to become isolated and weak, will not be able to alienate the support of these communities, because it will be based on them, rather than on the current sterile partisanship, that it will establish its prestige (O Trabalho Nacional, 1917, p. 112).

We should also point out the way in which the establishment of a body with similar features to those of *Association Nationale* was presented as a fundamental condition to ensure the defense of the legitimate interests of our country, especially at the international level. It was this reality that Member of Parliament Antonio Macieira exposed in Parliament, drawing attention to the need "not to be taken by surprise, without preparation", when faced with the desires and ambitions of the remaining Allies<sup>42</sup>.

The encouragement of agricultural production was advocated as a fundamental doctrine, assuming as criterion the need to enable the gaining of higher profits for producers, which was expected to contribute to harm the middlemen who had speculated and profited at the expense of the population over the years of war. One should remember that many farmers, faced with the increase in the price of fertilizers, machinery, tools and agricultural wages, had chosen to abandon the fields or to raise cattle, using agricultural land for pastures, an option that, in addition to requiring less industrial products and less manpower, allowed them to obtain higher sales revenues. To this reality one should also add the acknowledgement by some lines of thought that it was up to the Ministry of Labor to promote the expansion in farming of foodstuffs of first necessity, by decreeing it as mandatory, if necessary, whenever private initiative failed to correspond with the conditions and incentives offered: "In the situation that we find ourselves in due to the war, the production of corn, rye, rice, potatoes and even perhaps other supplies is a role that may be imposed on agriculture in the name of public safety" (O Trabalho Nacional, 1918, pp. 17-19).

The Ministry of Labor eventually assumed, directly, the issues related to the intensification of agricultural production, making them depend on the use of dams, reservoirs and canals, streams and waterfalls within rivers, and rain water. Therefore, the most inter-

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41 *Idem*.

42 *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados* (Chambers' Diary), Session nº116, of 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1917, p. 16.

esting thing was the acknowledgement that, despite everything, it was still the state who had the best resources and means necessary to transform an agriculture rooted in structurally inefficient practices into a sector capable of ensuring the expansion of production and, consequently, the reduction in levels of imports of agricultural goods. Ultimately, the effort to be carried out by the private sector was thought to be very slow, and not very intense, in a situation where speed was essential to the planned enlargement and intensification of agricultural production.

On 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1918, Cunha Coutinho (1885-1949) spoke at a conference at the Geographical Society of Lisbon on the role and functions of the agronomic and agricultural education in intensification of production. It was now that the need for the "national crisis", which had long been affecting the country, to be solved or mitigated by entirely new processes began to be considered more seriously. This task should be based on four fundamental assumptions: (1) the preparation of a plan of agricultural promotion; (2) the completion of a large, deep and thorough survey on the agricultural situation of the country; (3) the establishment of moveable agricultural schools; and (4) the reorganization of credit (O Economista Portuguez, 1918, p. 251).

We must also emphasize the creation of the Ministry of Agriculture<sup>43</sup>, a body whose direction would be entrusted to the President of the Central Association of Portuguese Agriculture, Fernandes Oliveira. Indeed, right after 1<sup>st</sup> April, the newly created Ministry of Agriculture legislated with a view to the establishment of agricultural cooperatives and mutual and livestock insurance, as well as on the development of all means of intensification of agricultural production, through access to credit<sup>44</sup>. On 12<sup>th</sup> June, the Secretariat of State of Supplies and Transport raised to 5 million escudos the special agricultural credit fund<sup>45</sup>. Amidst the authorized funding, the largest part was destined for technological-agricultural development of farms, a very vast domain, as it included such diverse operations as the purchase of fertilizers, plants, seeds, pesticides and fungicides, but also machines, utensils, tools, vaccines and serums for the treatment of cattle<sup>46</sup>.

## Conclusions

The war was a turning point in relation to the role of the state, opening the way for a redefinition of its functions at the level of organization and management of economic activities and of the productive system. The state began to intervene more and more, creating new administrative bodies (Ministry of Supplies and Transport), which enabled it to control foreign trade directly to prevent the shortage of raw materials in the market; however, the organization of Portuguese war economy did not translate into an intense

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43 Presidency of the Republic (Presidência da República), Decree n°3902, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°46, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1918.

44 Ministry of the Agriculture (Ministério da Agricultura), Decree n°4022, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°65, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1918.

45 Secretary of State of the Agriculture (Secretaria de Estado da Agricultura), Decree n°4396, *Diário do Governo*, (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°128, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1918.

46 Ministry of the Agriculture (Ministério da Agricultura), Decree n°4022, *Diário do Governo* (Chambers' Diary), I Series, n°65, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1918.

mobilization of resources. On the other hand, it is also clear that any attempt to define a supply policy would necessarily be impaired by the effects of shortages and inadequate coordination of transport.

The situation of war did not allow for agriculture, except for the brief period of *Sidonismo*, to reverse the production downfall for most goods, which corresponded to an old trend. The sector was broadly affected not only by the difficulties of access to certain inputs (seeds, fertilizers), but also by the decrease in the exports of some basic products of agricultural economy, notably Port wine, and by unfavorable climate conditions. On the other hand, some of the measures adopted, price-fixing and the farmers' obligation to state production numbers, also had negative reflexes, generating discontent amongst the agrarians. In fact, the Portuguese industry, where the State intervention was only felt shyly, managed to take advantage of the situation. It is worth remembering that the impossibility of importing goods gave space and arguments for the sector to develop industries that under different conditions would have hardly been profitable. One must therefore highlight the way in which this survival "strategy" was inseparable from the existence of three major factors: (1) high prices; (2) low wages; and (3) almost total absence of competition in the international field. For the most part, renovation or modernization of production structures was absent.

The country's economic reorganization would inevitably go through a concerted development strategy, as the only way to counteract the low levels of production and, consequently, the growing difficulties in terms of supplies and provisions. Actually, as French politician André Tardieu recalled: "the economic organizations of the war will remain as powerful instruments of economic action after the return to times of peace"<sup>47</sup>.

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47 *Diário do Senado* (Senate Diary), quoted in Session n°22, 12<sup>th</sup> Februray, 1919, p. 16.

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## Índice de IDN Cadernos Publicados

III SÉRIE		
2016	21	Os Parlamentos Nacionais como Atores Dessecuritizadores do Espaço de Liberdade, Segurança e Justiça da União Europeia: O Caso da Proteção de Dados
	20	América do Sul: uma Visão Geopolítica
2015	19	A Centralidade do Atlântico: Portugal e o Futuro da Ordem Internacional
	18	Uma Pequena Potência é uma Potência? O Papel e a Resiliência das Pequenas e Médias Potências na Grande Guerra de 1914-1918
	17	As Ásias, a Europa e os Atlânticos sob o Signo da Energia: Horizonte 2030
	16	O Referencial Energético de Gás Natural Euro-Russo e a Anunciada Revolução do <i>Shale Gas</i>
2014	15	A Diplomacia Militar da China: Tipologia, Objetivos e Desafios
	14	Geopolítica e Geoestratégia da Federação Russa: a Força da Vontade, a Arte do Possível
	13	Memória do IDN
2013	12	Estratégia da Informação e Segurança no Ciberespaço
	11	Gender Violence in Armed Conflicts
	10	As Revoltas Árabes e a Democracia no Mundo
	9	Uma Estratégia Global para Portugal numa Europa em Crise
2012	8	Contributo para uma "Estratégia Abrangente" de Gestão de Crises
	7	Os Livros Brancos da Defesa da República Popular da China, 1998-2010: Uma desconstrução do Discurso e das Perceções de (in)Segurança
2011	6	A Arquitetura de Segurança e Defesa da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa
	5	O Futuro da Comunidade de Segurança Transatlântica
	4	Segurança Nacional e Estratégias Energéticas de Portugal e de Espanha
	3	As Relações Energéticas entre Portugal e a Nigéria: Riscos e Oportunidades
2010	2	Dinâmicas Migratórias e Riscos de Segurança em Portugal
	1	Acerca de "Terrorismo" e de "Terrorismos"

## II SÉRIE

2009	4	O Poder Aéreo na Transformação da Defesa O Programa de Investigação e Tecnologia em Veículos Aéreos Autónomos Não-Tripulados da Academia da Força Aérea
	3	Conhecer o Islão
2008	2	Cibersegurança Segurança e Insegurança das Infra-Estruturas de Informação e Comunicação Organizacionais
	1	Conflito e Transformação da Defesa A OTAN no Afeganistão e os Desafios de uma Organização Internacional na Contra-subversão
		O Conflito na Geórgia

## I SÉRIE

2007	5	Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas Modelos de Reforma Institucional
	4	A Estratégia face aos Estudos para a Paz e aos Estudos de Segurança. Um Ensaio desde a Escola Estratégica Portuguesa
2006	3	Fronteiras Prescritivas da Aliança Atlântica Entre o Normativo e o Funcional
	2	Os Casos do Kosovo e do Iraque na Política Externa de Tony Blair
	1	O Crime Organizado Transnacional na Europa: Origens, Práticas e Consequências

## ENTERING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

This volume is the result of a partnership between the National Defense Institute, the Institute for Contemporary History of Nova University and the Institute of Social Sciences, which supported a research project titled “Thinking Strategically Portugal: the International Role of Small and Medium Powers in the First World War. It aims to: provide an analysis of the political and strategic dynamics surrounding the Great War; contribute to a better comprehension of Portugal’s geopolitical situation in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and study the role and relevance of small and medium powers in international crises.

