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Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts: Late Colonial Portuguese Counterinsurgency and the Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972

BRUNO C. REIS AND PEDRO A. OLIVEIRA

In the early 1970s, Portugal still held on to the oldest European colonial empire, resisting the winds of decolonization in Africa. In this period, the Portuguese were fighting counterinsurgency campaigns in three of its overseas territories: Angola, since 1961; Guinea, since 1963; and Mozambique, since 1964. This article focuses on the counterinsurgency campaign in Mozambique because it was there, in 1972, that the most serious known atrocity took place, at least in terms of its international impact, from these unconventional wars. The appointment of a new commander-in-chief, Kaulza de Arriaga (1970–73), to Mozambique intensified the war. Larger airborne search and destroy operations were carried out in an attempt to win the campaign quickly and decisively. It was in this context that the killing of civilians took place somewhere around the town of Tete in December 1972, which was eventually followed by an international outcry in response to its public denunciation by Catholic missionaries. The exact location, even the existence of Wiriyamu, as well as the extent of the atrocities, remain contentious. This article will use multiple sources to clarify as far as possible: what happened, why it happened, and its implications for the dynamics of counterinsurgency and intra-state wars generically. Furthermore, it will address specifically what it meant for the Portuguese way in counterinsurgency, until the rapid end of multiple campaigns as a result of a military coup in April 1974, in which Mozambique and the stain of Wiriyamu loomed large.

INTRODUCTION

Nearly 40 years later, it remains difficult to establish with accuracy the events that took place around 16 December 1972 in several closely located settlements in Central Mozambique. This is because the Portuguese authorities, both before and after the military coup of 25 April 1974, did not authorize an independent enquiry into Operation *Marosca*. This operation resulted in a significant number of civilian deaths and brought with it unprecedented international scrutiny to the Portuguese counterinsurgency campaign in Mozambique, which had been ongoing since September 1964, against the insurgency led by the Mozambique Liberation Front, the FRELIMO.¹

This article will show that there is sufficient evidence to prove that a massacre occurred, a mass murder of civilians – defined as involving ‘a number of murders (four or more) occurring during the same incident’ – definitely took place as a result of torture and summary executions by a company of Portuguese commandos.²

The atrocities in Tete, in Western Central Mozambique, are part of a larger change in the dynamics of this intra-state colonial war. This included a change in the key area of the war from the northernmost province of Cabo Delgado, bordering Tanzania, where most of the fighting took place until 1970, to the Central area of Mozambique as the main theatre of operations since that date.

What follows is an attempt to reconstruct the atrocities in Tete through the use of multiple sources, including the various missionary reports that were widely (but only partially) publicized in the media in 1973, analysed here in full in their original form; official Portuguese documents; FRELIMO reports; the literature that appeared in the aftermath of the scandal; diplomatic documents from the British and Portuguese archives; recent media coverage; and some historical and memorialistic literature.

Why was there a mass killing of unarmed civilians in the rural area in the immediate vicinity of the town of Tete, in December 1972? Surely there are few subjects more urgently in need of an analysis than the dynamics of the mass killing of civilians in civil wars. Civilians were major targets of violence in the 20th century and this remains true today. Furthermore, wars within states, as opposed to conventional wars between states, have become increasingly important – because they are now the most frequent and deadly form of conflict.³ How then can a structured analysis of such events be conducted?

A fuller understanding of the meaning of these atrocities in Tete will require, first, a more detailed discussion of what was claimed by the different testimonies and reports at the time about these events. Second, it will require placing these atrocities in the context of late colonial Portuguese counterinsurgency and more specifically of the operational plan of general Arriaga, the controversial Portuguese commander-in-chief in Mozambique at the time of the events. Finally, we aim to identify generic patterns with possible parallels in other cases thus giving us a deeper understanding of the occurrence of atrocities in intra-state wars. These will be the key themes addressed in the following sections.

MASSACRE, WHAT MASSACRE? WHAT HAPPENED AND ACCORDING TO WHOM

The atrocities that took place in Tete in mid-December 1972 were brought to the attention of the international community by an article that made the front page of the *The Times* on 10 July 1973, a week before the official visit of Marcelo Caetano to Britain, the successor to Salazar as leader of the Portuguese authoritarian regime. The *Times* article, signed by Adrian Hastings, a former Catholic missionary in Africa, was based on a confidential report by two Spanish Catholic missionaries of the so-called Burgos order. Fathers José Sangalo and Vicente Berenguer of São Pedro

Mission claimed that on 16 December 1972 the village of Wiriyamu, some 25 km south of Tete, in the *regulado* (chiefdom) of Gandali, was targeted by Portuguese commandos, assisted by agents of Portuguese Intelligence, DGS.⁴ The airborne assault by the Commandos was preceded by a bombardment by two Portuguese jets.

The Portuguese troops are described as having acted swiftly, ruthlessly and often sadistically: looting and burning huts, raping women and even disembowelling a pregnant woman to ‘determine the sex of the unborn infant’. Some villagers were executed after being instructed to stand up and applaud; others died of suffocation inside their burning huts; still others were beaten to death. Some of these actions apparently were incited by an African agent of DGS, Chico Kachavi, who moved around giving orders and carrying out several executions himself.⁵

In the following weeks, a more precise picture began to emerge. Hastings’ article contained at least one important imprecision regarding the location of the events. This allowed the Portuguese authorities to deny the allegations in the weeks following the breaking of the news. They argued that the village simply did not exist. In fact, the main airborne assault was not only carried out against Wiriyamu – usually spelt in Portuguese sources as ‘Williamo’ – but also against two nearby villages, Juwau and Chawola, located some 25–30 km south of Tete – in a triangle formed by the rivers Zambezi and Luena and the road from Tete to Changara. These settlements were too small to regularly appear on most official maps – another point that the Portuguese used to their advantage. The rough estimate of c.400 victims, of whom about half were named, refers to the total number of dead from the three settlements.⁶

The testimonies for this report by the Burgos Fathers were taken from the survivors who had managed to reach the mission’s hospital at São Pedro, and also from refugees who had abandoned neighbouring settlements after hearing the bombardments and seeing the flames that consumed Wiriyamu, Juwau and Chawola. These survivors were able to escape with minor injuries unnoticed from heaps of bodies to the bush and nearby settlements. The report estimated ‘more than 400 victims’, identifying 120 of them by their names. A great majority of them were women, children and elderly persons. The remaining corpses were reportedly unrecognizable. Fathers Sangalo and Berenguer, who were familiar with other accounts of atrocities in Tete which had been compiled by fellow missionaries, took approximately three days to draft Chawola’s report, and a further three weeks to write Wiriyamu’s, which proved to be more complex on account of the testimonies from unnamed elements of the Portuguese armed forces, who were said to be appalled by the nature of the assault.

According to this report, Operation *Marosca* appears to have been ordered essentially as retaliation for operations conducted by FRELIMO in the area. On 14 December 1972, a civilian plane had been shot at while flying over this region. As a result, a DGS team made inquiries among the inhabitants, but with no success; the same happened when the DGS team returned the next day with an army patrol that, while making its way back from the villages, was ambushed by FRELIMO, suffering six casualties. It was suspected that the villagers might be in collusion with

FRELIMO. It may well have been the Portuguese military's desire to avenge the patrol's casualties that made the commander of Tete's Operational Command order a retaliatory operation by two combat groups of the 6th Commando Company, which consisted both of Portuguese and local volunteer troops, as was usual in these special forces.

In the following months the missionaries' report of the massacre was presented first to the Bishop of Tete, who made arrangements for a team from Tete's hospital to visit the burned settlements. A physician and a Red Cross representative therefore visited the settlements 20 days after the events, confirming the existence of numerous unburied corpses. This other report, by Dr Rodrigues dos Santos, has remained unpublished and unaccounted for to date, but is cited in various accounts; although lowering the estimate of casualties (c.200), it confirmed some of the main allegations made by Sangalo and Berenguer.

Having thus secured confirmation of a serious incident from another reliable source, Mozambique's Episcopal Conference approached governor-general Pimentel dos Santos, urging a full official investigation. Pimentel dos Santos was, however, a secondary figure drawn from the colonial service, incapable of prevailing over the imposing personality of the politically powerful commander-in-chief general Kaúlza de Arriaga, and for months there was no sign of such an enquiry.

Eventually, copies of the Burgos Fathers' report were smuggled out of Mozambique: some reached the head of the Burgos Fathers in Madrid, while others were received in Rome by the head of the White Fathers, another missionary order, which had previously abandoned the colony after conflicts with Portuguese authorities. The latter, Father Cesare Bertulli, fighting the indifference that had prevailed after some initial attempts of publication of the reports, sent the information to the headquarters of Amnesty International in London in June 1973. He thus used the incipient human rights and NGO network that had developed precisely in response to attempts to silence complaints about human rights abuses for institutional, ideological or diplomatic convenience.⁷

But it seems likely that it was Hastings' intervention that was critical; he persuaded the editors of the *Times* of the authenticity of the reports, which he had read while attending a religious meeting in Spain. Caetano's visit to the UK⁸ was surely a factor that contributed to making the report front-page worthy for the *Times*, but it is very likely that other factors were also taken into account, one of them being the reputation for integrity enjoyed by the missionaries. Also, previous reports regarding the war in Mozambique had included references to raids carried out by hardened special troops, some of them acting in tandem with Rhodesian patrols. Moreover, racist regimes in Southern Africa and those that were resisting decolonization had in general a bad reputation. Most importantly from the point of view of this analysis, similar incidents were known to be common in counterinsurgency campaigns, with the example of My Lai in Vietnam being invoked in the editorial that accompanied Hastings' article.

As a result of this media controversy, the British government began monitoring the situation through its diplomatic network. In their internal discussions,

Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) officials were divided, but most had few doubts that something very serious had taken place in Tete, even if the event was clearly not on the scale of genocide. In a brief prepared for the early August 1973 Commonwealth summit in Ottawa, the FCO concluded that although there was no physical evidence of the allegations, it was highly probable that the missionaries' reports had some basis in fact. This opinion was supported by: precedents such as the more limited Mucumbura atrocities of 1971–72; a Portuguese military communiqué of mid-December of 1972 mentioning an unusually high number of casualties suffered by FRELIMO fighters and 'supporters' near Tete; discussions between the Bishop of Tete and several European consuls that corroborated important parts of the story; and, aspects of the counterinsurgency approach followed by the Portuguese in Mozambique, particularly under general Kaúlza, such as the pervasive influence of the DGS, the 'rough methods' used to apply the 'strategic hamlets' programme in Tete, and the difficulties in 'discrimination between military and civilian targets when conducting anti-terrorist operations'.⁹

An important contribution to the validation of Hastings' claims was given by several European and South African journalists who had been authorized to travel to Mozambique in the immediate aftermath of the *Times* revelations. One reporter, Peter Pringle of the *Sunday Times*, although molested by DGS agents and expelled from the colony just three days after his arrival, managed to look at maps and documents that testified to the existence of Wiryamu or Williamo – a transliteration common among the speakers of Bantu languages – and was able to interview one of the survivors of the Chawola massacre, an adolescent named António, as well as other refugees from nearby villages who confirmed the accuracy of the missionaries' reports.¹⁰

If there was any room for doubt that some kind of deliberate and brutal killing of civilians had taken place, it was dispelled by the fact that shortly after the initial denial of the reports in the international media, the Portuguese Ministry of Defense felt forced to issue an official statement on 21 August 1973. In this statement it admitted that 'some elements of the armed forces on detachment had, disregarding standing orders, committed reprehensible acts' in the region of Tete.¹¹

The following day, the *Daily Telegraph* ran a piece by Bruce Loudon, a reporter sympathetic to the Portuguese justifications for their continued presence in Africa,¹² in which the Portuguese authorities acknowledged the death of 98 villagers in a raid against Chawola, in mid-December 1972.¹³ In the coming months, a significant number of press revelations, as well as several books and pamphlets, would add details as well as complement or correct some aspects of the case made by Hastings and the Spanish Fathers. The converging reports allow a workable, if imperfect, historical picture of these atrocities. Even more revealing were recent interviews with some of the Portuguese troops involved, including the commanding officer, in which the interviewees admitted to the atrocities.¹⁴

What can also be stated with an equal degree of certainty is that all the parties involved in this bloody event had conflicting interests that made it likely that they would tell different stories about the atrocities – and indeed they did, with the result

that today it is impossible to know with certainty many of the details of the events. Yet, this is not unusual in history in general, and even more so in the history of mass murders, in which the eyewitnesses most interested in denouncing the crime – the victims – are killed or terrorized, and the killers, as well as the bystanders, have strong reasons not to tell the truth (or at least not the entire truth) about what they did or did not do. But enough is known to allow us to pursue a deeper analysis in the following sections, namely by asking how does this fit and how did this affect Portuguese counterinsurgency.

PORTUGUESE COLONIAL POLICY, COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE AND THE WAR IN MOZAMBIQUE (1956–74)

For most of the 20th century, Portugal managed to retain the oldest and third largest colonial empire. In 1972–74, the period of interest to us, Portugal was still holding on to the only large colonial empire in existence. Angola and Mozambique were the largest and most important Portuguese overseas possessions in respect to their size, resources and settler population – c.200,000 in the latter case.¹⁵ This was the case despite enormous international pressure, from both enemies and allies, for Portugal to decolonize. The growing hostility to Portuguese policy, even by Western countries, was naturally deepened by news of the events in the Wiriyamu area.

The aim of this section is to place Wiriyamu in the wider political and military context as a major turning point of the campaign in Mozambique from 1964–74. This is important because some of the international comments on the massacres were extremely damning. Notably, Labor leader Harold Wilson saw this as part of a wider Portuguese policy of ‘genocide’ of local populations ‘with no parallel . . . since Nazi times’.¹⁶ To ascertain whether Wiriyamu actually was part of Portuguese policy of genocide and to fully understand the political and military significance of the massacre requires a broad analytical perspective, necessitating the examination of Portuguese colonial strategy and counterinsurgency doctrine, as well as leadership decision-making.

Wiriyamu in the Wider Political Context

The Portuguese authoritarian regime of the *Estado Novo* (1932–74) was dominated by a nationalistic ideology in which a key dogma was enshrined in the slogan ‘Portugal is not a small country!’ This notion of Greater Portugal meant that the Overseas territories conquered since the time of the Discoveries were perceived as a sacred national heritage. The essence of the regime was an exclusionary dogmatic nationalism where the motto ‘All for the Nation’ meant de facto that the national interest as defined by the leaders of the regime – first Salazar (1928–68), then Caetano (1968–74) – could not be openly questioned.¹⁷

The Portuguese regime was therefore determined to resist decolonization, with force if necessary, but it was not blind to the historical trend towards colonial independence. Since the humiliation of France and Britain in the 1956 Suez crisis, Salazar began to believe that an armed insurgency against Portuguese rule would

eventually emerge. In 1957, anticipating Macmillan, Salazar warned in a speech that ‘one of the winds that dominates the World is anti-colonialism’.¹⁸

Yet, it is difficult, even for authoritarian regimes, to make bureaucracies change their core missions quickly and for the military to adapt quietly to fighting civil wars, especially of an irregular type.¹⁹ When Salazar, in line with his strategic thinking, tried to force the transformation of the Portuguese Armed Forces from conventional NATO duties to a counterinsurgency focus, he faced strong resistance from the military leadership. Initially, all he managed was an agreement by the heads of the military that: ‘new NATO commitments that require extra resources should be carefully avoided’, but existing ones would be ‘honoured’, while at the same time ‘the concern should now be to increase, as much as possible, the defence effort Overseas’.²⁰

However, when an insurgency started in Angola, in February–March 1961, this *modus vivendi* became unsustainable. Salazar insisted that, ‘All [troops must be sent] to Angola rapidly and in [full] force’. The top Portuguese military leaders then attempted to bring about regime change rather than fundamentally change their mission and doctrine.²¹ Most analysts believe the 13 April 1961 palace coup led by defence minister general Botelho Moniz failed because the plotters were so strong that their excessive confidence led them to fatal delays which gave Salazar time to react.²² But, crucially for our story, Salazar could not have triumphed without the decisive support of the Air Force minister, Colonel (and future general) Kaúlza de Arriaga, who mobilized ‘his’ paratroopers. These new units, which he had struggled to create against opposition from the other military leaders, provided an elite force to support Salazar *manu militari*.²³

Why is this important when thinking about Wiriyamu? First, because paratroopers and other special commando forces played a central role in Arriaga’s operational plans as commander-in-chief in Mozambique (1970–73); second, because the general’s more aggressive approach to counterinsurgency, which had its out-of-control climax in the killings around Tete in mid-December 1972, reflected a strong personal commitment to keeping the African territories Portuguese at all costs. Arriaga was not an ordinary general, and this was not a war that he was fighting merely as a professional soldier; he was deeply committed to making Portuguese counterinsurgency overseas a success, thus proving that he had been right in supporting Salazar in 1961.

In fact, Arriaga harboured great political ambitions and was seen as a potential hardliner candidate for the Presidency. He made no secret of his resentment at not being appointed to Mozambique with full civil as well as military powers. This is of some relevance to the atrocities in Tete for two reasons. First, because Arriaga insisted that the concentration of all powers in the military commander that he had not achieved for all of Mozambique had to take place at least in the most problematic district, Tete. Significantly, after the Wiriyamu atrocities became known to Caetano, the civil-military *supremo* that Arriaga had indeed managed to appoint to Tete was summarily dismissed and replaced by distinct civil and military top district authorities. This is significant because the argument used for this decision was the

need for greater civilian control over military operations, implicitly conceding that this had been missing during the time of the atrocities.²⁴ Second, a decisive military triumph in Mozambique would help Arriaga in his political aims. These political ambitions were not only attacked by his enemies, but were also known to allies like Ken Flower, who headed the Rhodesian secret service; the latter describes Arriaga as 'a political general who used the war in Mozambique to further his ambitions'.²⁵ Indeed, Arriaga's return to Portugal in August 1973 led to increasing speculation that he was trying to organize a coup; the alleged plot was even denounced in a public session at the Defence College in December 1973.²⁶

Wiryamu in the Context of Counterinsurgency in Mozambique (1964–74)

Certainly, Arriaga's takeover of the war marked a very significant change in Portuguese counterinsurgency in Mozambique. The war in Mozambique had started in 1964. From the point of view of operational approaches, the campaign in Mozambique can be divided into three main periods. Initially, under general Carrasco, there was a traditional show of force. As one of his successors explained, he was a 'very unprepared officer, particularly in subversive warfare', believing that what he saw as 'tribal' incidents could be solved 'with a box of matches', i.e. by burning villages and forcing the population to resettle and choose sides.²⁷ Unsurprisingly, given this coercive approach and the international context, a large part of the population chose FRELIMO; in the main theatre of war, Cabo Delgado province, the Portuguese were able to control around 80,000 members of the Maconde tribe, while FRELIMO is believed to have controlled 120,000.²⁸

From 1966 to 1969, general Augusto dos Santos as commander-in-chief and general Costa Gomes as GCO of the Army, defined a strategy in which low-intensity population-centric counterinsurgency and psychological warfare were preferred to more aggressive counter-guerrilla operations. Gomes also pursued a policy of making small material improvements and of attracting traditional tribal elites, particularly among the Macua, who were traditional enemies of the Maconde, the northernmost tribe and the one providing the backbone of the FRELIMO insurgency. The drain on popular support seemed to have been stopped and the war was successfully contained in the remote North.²⁹

This *status quo*, of limited war in the relatively marginal North, however, was one that general Arriaga, unlike his predecessors, was unwilling to accept. He opted for an escalation in the war, relying heavily on large airborne operations and raids by special shock troops – an operational strategy often referred by his many critics among the Portuguese military as an 'American way of war'. This change in approach was strongly opposed by many Portuguese officers, who, like Arriaga's predecessor general Santos, could not understand this 'complete U-turn' from attempting 'to attract the population' to American-style search and destroy – or, as the latter put it, 'slay and slaughter'.³⁰ Whether this was a fair characterization of the American approach in Vietnam is not the main point for the argument being made by this article – even if studies by an American counterinsurgency scholar indeed contrasted the Portuguese way in counterinsurgency in this period with the much

more kinetic heavy fire-power American war in Vietnam.³¹ The point is to underline that both Arriaga's critics and his advocates saw his approach to the war as different from that of his predecessors, more offensive, more reliant on growing number of special airborne forces. Arriaga is defensive about this. But he met general Westmoreland in 1969 – a figure seen as not worth meeting by most Portuguese senior officers. And even if Arriaga denies and Westmoreland confirms that he simply copied the US approach in Vietnam, the former still significantly concludes his remarks on this matter by saying that 'if there were coinciding features' between his campaign in Mozambique and Vietnam it is simply the result of 'similar minds, facing similar problems, naturally finding similar solutions'.³²

Arriaga not only saw the implicit existence of no-go areas as unacceptable, but also believed that by eliminating the existing FRELIMO bases inside Mozambique he could achieve a decisive victory, much like in a conventional war. This was the whole rationale for the significantly named Operation *Gordian Knot* in July 1970. But significantly for our analysis, *Gordian Knot* took place after a very similar incident to the one that would eventually lead to the operation resulting in the atrocities in Wiriyamu – a helicopter was shot at in the area believed to house a large FRELIMO base.³³ A pattern of FRELIMO provocation and willingness to react with offensive airborne operations can be seen emerging. *Gordian Knot*, in fact, was the largest airdrop of paratroopers in all the late colonial wars, and also the deployment of the largest-ever Portuguese force (8,000 men) used in a single operation.

To be fair to Arriaga, this does not mean that other aspects of a comprehensive approach to counterinsurgency – such as propaganda, resettlement or providing material improvements for the population – necessarily disappeared. Arriaga even complained bitterly about what he saw as the insufficient investment in resettlement and advocated the need to spend much more in creating real 'model villages' – ironically agreeing, in private, therefore, with at least part of the critique of Portuguese governance by the missionaries who denounced Wiriyamu.³⁴ However, such efforts did lose relative importance because of the military escalation that took place during 1970–74.

Arriaga's massive offensive in the North accelerated the shift in the main theatre of operations to the central region of Mozambique. While the Portuguese concentrated troops and efforts in the North, apparently a strategic decision by FRELIMO *guerrilleros* had already been taken to retreat from there and focus their activities on Central Mozambique. The Portuguese government had decided to build one of the largest dams in the World in the Tete region, to challenge its critics with a showcase of progress and visible demonstration of long-term commitment to remain in Africa. Construction work at the Cahora Bassa dam started in 1970. This required the protection of long logistical lines during construction, yet the enormous additional demands for military resources made by Cahora Bassa had to be met without any increase in pre-existing levels of military resources and manpower, as Arriaga bitterly complained.³⁵

FRELIMO skilfully used this new centrality of the Tete region to its advantage. The area was especially vulnerable to cross-border infiltration because it is an enclave surrounded by other African states, while there was a scarcity of Portuguese troops in the region at the time because soldiers were being heavily concentrated in the North to achieve Arriaga's elusive decisive victory in *Gordian Knot*. For the first time, the insurgents were able to organize attacks against settlers in this more heavily populated region. This allowed them to achieve a 'disproportionate psychological impact', showing a sound understanding of the basic principles of asymmetric warfare: it is not so much the amount of force, but who you target that matters most.³⁶ For example, attacks on a government plane and an airfield in the vicinity of the town of Tete led, in response, to the operation that culminated in the atrocities in the surrounding area, including Wiriyamu, and the ensuing international media storm.

Therefore, Wiriyamu helps to make clear that the strategy applied until 1973 by general Arriaga for achieving a decisive victory by increasing the intensity of the war did not work. Moreover, his efforts to develop major combined airborne operations were attacked by critics within the military as an abandonment of sound Portuguese counterinsurgency doctrine. But then what were the principles of Portuguese doctrine that Arriaga allegedly was violating? To answer this question, it is important to understand if the Tete massacre fits with mainstream formal Portuguese counterinsurgency guidelines.

Portuguese Late Colonial Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Wiriyamu

There was no general prescription in Portuguese formal counterinsurgency guidelines for an official, systematic retaliatory or scorched earth approach of the sort that resulted in the atrocities in Tete. Indeed, late colonial Portuguese doctrine officially encouraged a population-centric hearts-and-minds and civil-military comprehensive approach, well in line with the British counterinsurgency guidelines on which it was partly based. Portuguese guidelines were insistent on the need for a comprehensive approach, because, as the main military manual for counterinsurgency, *The Army in Subversive Warfare (O Exército na Guerra Subversiva)*, puts it: 'The solution for these conflicts can never be obtained by armed force alone'.³⁷ The manual further points out that this non-military side of counterinsurgency is especially 'worth emphasizing, because certain elements in the Armed Forces will tend, due to their professional bias, to concern themselves exclusively with fighting rebel forces'.³⁸

This is a pertinent point in regard to the atrocities in Tete in late 1972; arguably, one of the things that went wrong in Wiriyamu and nearby settlements was that the commandos, who were trained as airborne assault shock troops, seemed only concerned with fighting hard the insurgents, and really not that concerned in their offensive operations with attracting civilians, especially if they were believed to be complicit with FRELIMO. In contrast, the official order of priorities in Portuguese counterinsurgency doctrine were first to 'regain control of the subverted population and re-establish the institutions and deficient public services', then to 'destroy the

politico-administrative organization of the insurgency', and finally to 'destroy the military forces of the insurgency'.³⁹

A significant part of the counterinsurgency manual is devoted to civil affairs, with guidelines for attracting and controlling the local population. As rebel forces could only survive if they were protected, informed and fed by at least a fraction of the population, this link had to be severed: 'it is indispensable for the forces of order to isolate the enemy from the population'.⁴⁰ A number of methods are advanced for achieving this, starting with propaganda, to which an entire volume of official guidelines was devoted.⁴¹ The manual insists that the first principle of effective propaganda in counterinsurgency warfare was the awareness by all those involved that everything in it 'always has a psychological impact'.⁴² Again, clearly this was not observed in the operations in Tete, causing a huge international embarrassment to the Portuguese authorities.

A careful reading of Portuguese doctrine, however, alerts us to the fundamental problem raised by population-centric approaches in civil wars: distinguishing between the civilian population to be protected and the hidden politico-administrative organization of the insurgents. This can be especially problematic if the local population resists being recovered or resettled. A number of means to tighten control of the population were offered in Portuguese doctrine, ranging from use of identity cards and conducting a census, to censorship and strict rules regarding the possessions of weapons, to restraints on movement and possession of food.⁴³ The aim was to get the relevant background information against which rebel activity would stand out and constrain the latter as much as possible without major violence against civilians.

The prevailing trend in Portuguese doctrine was to perceive the cause of all the violent troubles in Africa as the manipulation of the local tribal rank-and-file by small groups of ideologically driven and internationally connected elites with no legitimate right to speak for all of the population.⁴⁴ Therefore, ethnic divisions were seen as one of the key vulnerabilities of the insurgents – and one that might be actively exploited along with others such as insurgent dispersion, lack of secure communications, the insurgent's need to move frequently, and the contrast between the great hardships endured by those on the frontline and the lifestyle of the top leadership in the rear.⁴⁵

This could result in the active promotion of a civil war dynamic as part of Portuguese counterinsurgency. However, ethnic mobilization and usage of ethnic animosity was not a tool used only by the Portuguese; FRELIMO and other movements also played that card. Ethnic animosity in turn could encourage individuals to use the war to settle old scores. As some experts in civil wars have argued, this type of violence may be the rule, not the exception, in civil wars – the private use of intra-state violence by 'ordinary people' who, for the most part, 'wanted to survive or take revenge'.⁴⁶

This also meant that intelligence, as *The Army in Subversive Warfare* states: 'has exceptional importance' not only 'as a result of the clandestine nature of the enemy', but also because of the need to acquire a 'profound knowledge of the [local]

population' to exploit these divisions. After all the insurgents are 'invisible' so long as they remain 'dissimulated among the people'.⁴⁷ It states unequivocally that to have operations 'without good information is nothing but a waste of time, resources and manpower'.⁴⁸ Indeed, it could be even worse, of course, leading to massacres of innocent civilians.

What is the connection between this major aspect of Portuguese doctrine and the specific case of Wiryamu? The intelligence-centric nature of counterinsurgency guidelines made the already powerful tool of intelligence and political repression of the Portuguese authoritarian regime – PIDE/DGS – even more powerful. The military was authorized to interrogate *in loco* any captured suspected insurgents so as to be able to rapidly make operational use of any relevant information, but the assistance of PIDE/DGS was to be sought as soon as possible.⁴⁹

It is possible that poor intelligence was one of the causes of the atrocities around Tete – not only because there was no precise information as to where the FRELIMO rebels were, but also because the intelligence that was given to the commandos before the airborne raid on these small settlements was that they were part of a major base of a FRELIMO 'leader, Raimundo', located somewhere between 'Fumo Williamo' and 'Cantina Raul' with an estimated 300 fighters. According to the operational report contained in a memorandum to Arriaga, it is clear that it was also claimed that the *guerrilleros* 'live among the population that provide them with cover, information, sustenance' and this civilian cover 'allows them to operate freely against us'. This would explain not only the killing of the population but also the burning down of the settlements.⁵⁰

In the case of the atrocities under analysis, most accounts, including the one by FRELIMO, allocate a central role in the drama to a locally recruited agent of DGS, Chico Kachavi, who, upon failing to obtain actionable intelligence from the population living in these settlements, actively encouraged a brutal retaliation against them. This was well in line with the PIDE/DGS reputation for ruthlessness, violent abuses and summary executions of those who refused to 'cooperate'.⁵¹

Also important for analysing the connection between doctrine and the Wiryamu massacre is the fact that population resettlement came to be increasingly used especially in border regions and other places with a dispersed population, where the insurgents were particularly active. Even though official doctrine recommended this should be done voluntarily and as a last resort, because of the risk of alienating locals and the significant resources required to do it in an effective way. Furthermore, doctrine mandated relocation was to take into account 'concerns for development as well as military concerns'.⁵²

These doctrinal caveats proved to be prophetic because the preconditions they pointed to move populations in the right way failed to materialize in the Tete region – namely voluntary and economically viable resettlements – according not only to the missionaries who denounced the massacre, but also to other very relevant sources, from the top British diplomat in Mozambique,⁵³ to, even, the Portuguese defence minister who refers to 'escapes en masse' from resettlement villages, with people 'taking refuge in the bush'.⁵⁴

The local populations in Tete, indeed, strongly resisted being resettled, unlike people in Northern Mozambique, where the programme seems to have been applied much more on a voluntary basis, with those populations traditionally allied with the Portuguese like the Macua, but arguably even with the Macondes – because those among them more hostile to Portugal escaped to Tanzania and joined FRELIMO. Aside from a history of resistance to Portuguese expansion in the Zambezi region of Tete, locals had practical reasons for having settled in a dispersed manner – namely the lack of resources in a relatively arid area where it was difficult to sustain large settlements and large flocks. This resulted in a semi-nomadic way of life dependent on free-roaming cattle.⁵⁵

A population-centric approach to unconventional warfare can, moreover, have a darker and more violent side. Specifically, the emphasis on the population can lead counterinsurgents to view the population as a military target, if the latter is unwilling to be attracted by propaganda and follow plans for resettlement. This logic, crucial to the understanding of massacres in intra-state wars, applies to insurgents as well as counterinsurgents. FRELIMO also committed abuses against the local population. For instance, there were targeted killings of traditional chiefs, when they were not amenable to attraction to FRELIMO, and the guerrillas also undertook ‘mine laying outside *aldeamentos* [resettlement villages]’, so that, as British diplomatic sources put it, ‘atrocities by FRELIMO guerrillas are well attested’ as were ‘brutalities’ by Portuguese forces.⁵⁶

As the case of Wirihamu makes clear, a coercive response to problems with the local population was all the more readily adopted when areas peopled by those resisting resettlement were also the ones from which recent guerrilla attacks had been launched. Operation *Marosca*, against the area around Tete, had been the result of not only a FRELIMO attack on a civilian transport plane approaching the aerodrome in the outskirts of town, but also as we saw in the initial section where we described the different reports of the incident of an ambush near the location of the massacres on the same commando company that would some days later commit the atrocities analysed in this article, resulting in six casualties, with one of the latter dramatically shouting while being evacuated: ‘avenge your comrades!’⁵⁷ This is a stronger indicator of the importance – regardless of formal doctrine – of the logic of retaliation in civil wars and in counterinsurgency.

This is a part of the explanation of the case that, in our view, cannot be ignored. However, the preferred explanation for this case among the top Portuguese leadership, both political and military, was that it was due to nefarious foreign influences and not because of population-centric Portuguese counterinsurgency doctrine or any unit-driven desire for revenge of their wounded comrades. British diplomats do confirm criticisms and pressure from South African and Rhodesian security forces over the alleged lack of offensive effectiveness of Portuguese troops. This goes together with raids by Rhodesian troops on ZANU insurgent camps inside Mozambique – an informal agreement allowed the neighbouring white powers to engage in ‘hot pursuit’ of insurgents – where atrocities were apparently committed according to a scorched-earth, no-prisoners strategy. In the ‘Mucumbura area on the

Rhodesia border where there is little doubt' that the Rhodesian special forces, accompanied by Portuguese commandos, were 'allowed in and acted savagely'.⁵⁸ These joint deployments, along with this pressure for greater efficiency, could have had some influence in the *modus operandi* of Portuguese commandos, namely those involved in the Tete raid. The actual workings of the 'Alcora alliance' of the three Southern African powers resisting the tides of decolonization and majority rule is an understudied issue, only now beginning to be carefully explored – and this certainly will contribute to a better understanding of the wider context of Wiriyamu. Still, as far as we know, the support was mostly material, logistical and even that was limited.⁵⁹

Also popular among the Portuguese military leadership was, as we saw, the accusation that general Arriaga made an effort to emulate the 'American way of war' in Vietnam, creating a double problem: first, Portugal did not have the resources to pursue such an approach, and, second, this more aggressive approach created at least as many problems as it solved, one of the biggest ones being Wiriyamu.⁶⁰ Defence minister Silva Cunha was explicitly critical of this change of approach in his memoirs and makes it clear that he believed Arriaga's love of big airborne operations led him to violate the basic common-sense rule of 'not kicking a hornets' nest', thus forcing the FRELIMO insurgents to move out of their marginal Northern sanctuaries and into much more vital and less-defended areas of Central Mozambique.⁶¹ This division within the Portuguese leadership takes us logically to the subsection that will deal specifically with the likely degree of knowledge and complicity of the top Portuguese military and political leadership in the Wiriyamu atrocities.

Portuguese Leaders and the Atrocities

At the highest political level, there are indications that there was a *bona fide* reaction of shock and denial by Marcelo Caetano. In fact, back in June 1970, Caetano had reacted to the growing criticism to the recent escalation of the campaign in Mozambique by general Arriaga, reminding the latter of the Portuguese doctrinal principle that 'in this kind of war what matters most to us is to win the hearts of the living and not to cut off the heads of the dead'.⁶² These brutal words may indicate that some knowledge of previous atrocities had reached him by this stage. Yet these early concerns were apparently never enough for Caetano to risk dismissing the politically powerful Arriaga. Or was it a matter of protesting good principles but allowing bad practices as long as they might get results?

Still some degree of, if not innocence, then ignorance by Caetano must be allowed. He ordered a preliminary investigation by preeminent white settler Jorge Jardim in mid-August, which did conclude that there was evidence of 'excessive' conduct by Portuguese troops in the area named by the Spanish missionaries.⁶³ When Caetano was informed of this, he opted for a public acknowledgement of *some* military wrongdoing. He also dismissed with immediate effect the military *supremo* of the Tete district, because he should have been aware of and prevented this atrocity.⁶⁴ All this seems to indicate sincere ignorance, which Caetano also claims in

his memoirs, even if it does not excuse the ease with which he accepted the conclusions of the final report that nothing requiring individual punishment had been found, and that the operation was justified by the need to 'relieve insurgent pressure on the town of Tete'.⁶⁵ This shows both an ongoing attempt to find some justification for the events, and a lack of commitment to serious sanctions for such abuses.

But what about the other levels of leadership, including not only direct orders but also actions that might indirectly have led to the atrocities? The key person here is general Arriaga. As we saw, the civilian authorities, even governor-general Pimentel dos Santos, had been forced into a background role by Arriaga, especially in Tete, where he had successfully pushed for the granting of all power to the military commander, despite the strong reservations of the Overseas minister and the governor-general.

Moreover, earlier in December 1972, Tete had been visited by both the minister of defence and general Arriaga, who had spent Christmas there. This was a reflection of the concern with increased FRELIMO activity in Tete. And despite their differences, the fact is that both Silva Cunha and Arriaga pressed local officers to act, to take the offensive, to engage the insurgents and to get results quickly – especially after the politically humiliating and psychologically alarming attacks on settlers in the outskirts of the town of Tete itself. Arriaga made it clear in a briefing to the press and the diplomatic corps reported by the British Consul in Mozambique – that all the population outside of official settlements was perceived as being on the side of FRELIMO – a point reproduced almost verbatim in the operational documents to which we had access.

Given the profile of the military *supremo* in Tete, Colonel Videira, one of the founders of the paratroopers in Portugal and a man close to Arriaga and his operational concept, it is not surprising that he ordered Operation *Marosca* as an airborne assault of a kind that made civilian casualties likely. Despite the fact that no genocidal instructions could be documented in this case, there is clear evidence that pressure from both the top political and military leadership was exerted on the military in Tete to regain control of the situation quickly and decisively. Again, this made civilian casualties more likely. Whether the commandos involved in *Marosca* went too far, or were obeying orders, is now impossible to know for sure, even if the top officer of the commandos on the ground claims that he had orders to 'kill everyone'. Notably, this allegation does not fit entirely smoothly with the fact that some accounts of the commandos and the victims insist on the importance of the role of the DGS agents in pressing *in loco* for the military to go on killing whenever they seemed too hesitant to do so.

WIDER PATTERNS: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL IMPLICATIONS

In this last section the article will briefly point to some of the ways in which the particular case of Wiriyamu can be used to address some of the debates on the nature, dynamics and determinants of intra-state warfare in general and in particular of atrocities, understood in this context as massive indiscriminate violence.

This article makes four major claims: first, that this was a case of a successful provocation strategy by FRELIMO insurgents; second, that the often cited notion that counterinsurgents are particularly apt to win by following the principle of divide and rule ignores the fact that the same applies to insurgents, as the choices made by FRELIMO leading up to Wiriyamu demonstrate; third, resettlement and control of the local population and of the core areas of a country are vital for successful counterinsurgency, and Wiriyamu provides crucial evidence of the failure of the Portuguese strategy in Mozambique in achieving this; and, fourth, this bloody incident is the result of a number of causes, but two stand out for their particular relevance in the light of recent debates about extreme violence in civil war: a failure of intelligence and therefore of discrimination was compounded by Arriaga's new operation approach that emphasized more kinetic search and destroy airborne operations and/or a discriminate killing of populations seen as irretrievably on the side of the insurgents. We will now go over each of these four major claims.

Successful Provocation

The provocation by FRELIMO in the shape of feeble attacks in the outskirts of the town of Tete itself in the area of Wiriyamu – a small ambush to a patrol of commandos and a small arms attack on civilian planes and airfield – had major, arguably even decisive, implications for the outcome of this unconventional war: a strategic victory for the insurgents in the shape of independence granted to them. It is therefore a paradigmatic illustration of the disproportionate impact that guerrilla warfare can achieve in internationalized intra-state warfare in a post-colonial era.

The sequence of events that we have just described, based on the best available cross-analysis of sources, can indeed be seen as a perfect illustration of the strategic logic of provocation in an insurgency. The kind of self-inflicted damage that an overreaction by counterinsurgents can provoke is illustrated by a number of famous images, from Lawrence of Arabia's notion of trying to eat soup with a knife to the description of intra-state asymmetric warfare as the equivalent of waging war on a fly using a hammer inside a house.⁶⁶

Targeted Killings and Divide and Rule by both Counterinsurgents and Insurgents

Hit and run tactics can have a huge psychological impact even with minimal military intensity and despite limited damage if they are used in a strategically effective way. FRELIMO *guerrilleros* managed this through a decision by their top leader, Samora Machel, to change their main theatre of its operations from the remote rural North to more heavily populated Central Mozambique.

Local Africans were now confronted with the need to choose sides in a civil war which until then had followed relatively clear lines, with the Macondes providing logistical support and fighting units to FRELIMO and the Macuas often supporting the Portuguese, with the rest of the local population remaining largely on the sidelines. This was no longer an option when FRELIMO moved to Central Mozambique and, in reaction, Arriaga decided the only way he could meet the challenge was by accelerating population resettlement in the region and

Africanizing the war on a large scale – raising the relative weight of locally raised troops to more than 50 per cent of the total. This forced the African masses into a civil war in a region which until then had barely been touched by the conflict. One of the faces of this civil war dynamics – again relevant to Wiriyamu – was the insurgents' strategy of targeted killings of local chiefs who were seen as pro-Portuguese. The need to react to this worrying trend in Tete was another of the justifications for the attack that led to the massacre in Wiriyamu.

While Portuguese doctrine correctly predicted that in such a highly politicized type of war propaganda and morale are crucial not just to the enemy forces and the local population but also to the counterinsurgents themselves, in Mozambique there were nonetheless major splits and increasing tensions within the Portuguese Armed and Security Forces and between the Portuguese military and Portuguese settlers and the Catholic Church. Some of the foreign Catholic missionaries in Mozambique, who had no natural identification with Portugal to begin with, frequently clashed with Portuguese colonial authorities in defence of the increasingly progressive principles of papal doctrine, and some even went so far as to sympathize with FRELIMO. Father Cesare Bertulli, one of those who denounced Wiriyamu, proudly ends his memoir of his time in Mozambique with a letter of praise by Samora Machel.

The most relevant division after Wiriyamu was, however, the one between different sections of the Portuguese military. The MFA, i.e. the corporate movement of junior and mid-level officers who grew tired of the war, was the historically decisive expression of this division; since they were the ones who organized the military coup of April 1974 that put an end to the authoritarian regime of the *Estado Novo*, purged the military of all the officers still willing to go on fighting in Africa, and imposed rapid cease-fires – not only in Mozambique, but also in Guinea and Angola – and quick decolonization. The worsening military situation in Portuguese Guinea is often mentioned as the immediate cause of the 1974 military coup, but Mozambique also played a major, if less often noted, role. Some high-ranking officers, not least chief of the general staff Costa Gomes, had become concerned that younger officers were getting out of control under the strain of the circumstances and the influence of Rhodesia and South Africa. He also was concerned about the growing tension between white settlers and the military in Mozambique. An eloquent expression of this was the existence of another report about Wiriyamu, compiled by members of the MFA in Mozambique, and, literally on the eve of the coup, given international visibility in an article in *The Guardian* in which the dissident officers showed their discomfort about the 'dirty' aspects of the war.⁶⁷

To Secure or Not to Secure the Base Areas

FRELIMO's decision to focus the war in the central province around Tete proved strategically wise. It increased the psychological impact of the insurgency, shattering the relative sense of security that Portuguese settlers had long enjoyed regarding a conflict safely confined to the remote North. This is a reminder that space is a vital factor in all wars. A war like this may not have a clear frontline but

the geopolitics of an insurgency are very relevant, and remote locations may provide the right setting for protracted struggles with which both the insurgents and the counterinsurgents feel relatively comfortable. However, if insurgents want to move up the stakes, then they have to risk moving into more central areas – as was the case of FRELIMO's offensive in Tete that set the stage for Wiriyamu.

The Darker Side of Population-Centric Warfare: Lack of Information to Discriminate or Discrimination Against Hostile Populations?

One possible explanation for Wiriyamu is the one advocated forcefully by Stathis Kalyvas who claims that often indiscriminate violence in civil wars is the result of the impossibly high costs of getting the necessary information to apply more targeted violence, as well as the organizational disruption this would cause in a conventional army.⁶⁸ This seems to fit well with some of the information we have. Particularly telling was general Arriaga's initial reaction to the allegations about Wiriyamu: standing operating procedures based on Portuguese doctrine were meant to minimize casualties, even among the insurgents; but he was also keen to emphasize that 'assessing rigorously whether local elements are more or less enemies' could mean an unacceptable sacrifice of 'the aggressiveness and operational results', resulting in 'prolonging the war'.⁶⁹ But the available information also seems to fit with a competing explanation for extreme violence in civil wars: Dongsuk Kim's notion that 'staunch civilian support for the insurgents' may prompt particularly 'embattled leaders' to resort to 'mass killing'.⁷⁰ Indeed, by the end of 1972 general Arriaga would remain as commander-in-chief in Mozambique for only another half-year and he was coming under increasing criticism.

It is vital to realize that population-centric counterinsurgency in asymmetric civil wars – such a topical issue today – is not an automatic insurance policy against serious atrocities in this type of conflict. Historically, one of the most effective tools to control the population in such campaigns was resettlement, but this could often involve forced removal of large sections of the rural population, a violent uprooting that today would hardly be tolerable. Moreover, resettlement requires resources that may not always be available – this was a recurrent complaint of the Portuguese military in Mozambique. Furthermore, the success of resettlement may depend greatly on whether locals see the move as acceptable. In regions where traditionally the most lucrative economic practices – from free-roaming husbandry to poppy or coca cultivation and piracy – may depend on a nomadic or semi-nomadic life and/or lack of control by the state, population-centric approaches face a major obstacle. Thus, they can become not a way to avoid violence but an additional cause of it.

A memorandum to Arriaga defined the aim of Operation *Marosca* as the creation of 'an empty area' in which the enemy could be fought without civilian cover. This document also made the vital point that 'populations that resist resettlement after repeated warnings and insisted on living in suspected areas have to be considered as hostile'.⁷¹ The final report of the official enquiry to the atrocities concluded that 'this was a region where there was an enemy base' and where 'the population was entirely

subverted and on the side of the guerillas' making it impossible to distinguish one from the other, so the operation was deemed brutal but fundamentally 'justified' given the circumstances'.⁷²

The same memorandum to Arriaga on Operation *Marosca* makes it clear that the operation was based on intelligence that a major base of the top guerrilla leader in the region, Raimundo, with an estimated 300 insurgents, was located somewhere between 'Fumo Williamo' and 'Cantina Raul'. It was further claimed that these *guerrilleros* 'lived among the population' and 'found in it cover, sustenance, information', counting on their 'total silence'. Special emphasis was given to 'reliable information that in particular the population of Fumo Williamo was completely loyal to the enemy'.⁷³ In recent coverage of the massacres by Portuguese media, the Portuguese officer commanding the company involved in the atrocities returned to the site in Mozambique with reporters, and he expressed to the survivors his deep guilt for 'a criminal act' for which 'I don't know when I will find rest', he was given an additional shock when he heard that the locals claimed they had 'no connection to FRELIMO', because as he put it 'that was the information we had'.⁷⁴

Wiryamu clearly represents a case of failure of Portuguese counterinsurgency doctrine, but not necessarily a random loss of control. It may well be very revealing of the kind of patterns of extreme violence that may be found in certain circumstances even in population-centric campaigns, because they depend on reliable information about locals' connection with the *guerrilleros*. And a common pathology in such campaigns may well be to transform locals resistant to counterinsurgent efforts into even more of a target.

GENOCIDE NO, ATROCITIES YES

In conclusion, was there a massacre in the village of Wiryamu in December 1972 by Portuguese air-borne commandos? Yes and no. No, insofar as these killings of large number of people with great cruelty probably took place not in *one* location but in several, probably *three* closely adjoining locations, and Wiryamu, with that name, did not officially exist. But above all yes, because one of these relatively improvised rural dwellings, although not big enough or even stable enough to be registered in most maps, was a set of huts in a place called by locals Williamo or Wiryamu, and the internal Portuguese reports admitted to as many as 63 civilian victims of an atrocity committed by a company of Portuguese commandos with information and encouragement by PIDE/DGS in the region in question.

Was this event part of a planned genocide by the Portuguese late colonial state or army? The question is not merely academic because, as we saw, then Labour leader, and soon to be British prime-minister, Harold Wilson, compared these Portuguese atrocities to those committed by Nazi Germany. This was significant both because of the international media impact they caused, and because the 600th anniversary of the traditional alliance between Portugal and Britain was being celebrated, with an official visit by Caetano occurring precisely when these allegations emerged, thus threatening further diplomatic isolation for Portugal. This politically very strong

language allowed both the Portuguese and the British Conservative government some room for plausible denial. Clearly, there was nothing as massive and systematic (and as close to Nazi Germany) so as to justify the term genocide in this instance. Also because, as a reader of *The Times* with local knowledge noted, the names listed as victims included people of different ethnic origins, which would fit the fact that these settlements seemed to include a variety of individuals trying to escape Portuguese resettlement.⁷⁵

What is beyond doubt, because it was both officially recognized by the Portuguese regime at the time, and publicly so in more recent years by some of the perpetrators themselves, was the existence of criminal, and sometimes extremely cruel, executions of unarmed civilians – whether sympathetic to FRELIMO is beside the point – in very large numbers. Was this an indiscriminate killing? Yes, in the sense that no one was spared. No, in the sense that this operation targeted what was regarded as FRELIMO bases disguised as civilian villages, the Portuguese military relied in mounting the operation on apparently false information by DGS. However, this in no way reduces the criminality of such killings, but simply widens responsibility beyond individual soldiers and their commanding officers.

Portuguese late colonialism claimed not to be colonial at all, and its official doctrine claimed that Portugal was blind to race, in line with the notion of *lusotropicalismo* developed by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre. Therefore *assimilados* (i.e. integrated Africans) were Portuguese citizens. And even though it could be argued that this equality was not real in practice, it nonetheless made genocide hardly a rational political option for the Portuguese regime.

Victory, according to this dogma of a pluri-continental and multi-racial Portuguese state, would be assured not by persecuting and trying to expel or eliminate entire ethnic groups, genocide or ethnic cleansing, but rather by trying to assimilate them. In fact one of the statistics most proudly showed by the Portuguese military to their political masters, both in public and in internal documents, was the number of *recovered* local populations. Even those ethnic groups more closely assimilated to the insurgents were supposed to be won over, because this corresponded, as we have seen, with Caetano's injunction to 'win the hearts of the living, and not cut off the heads of the dead'.⁷⁶

This private reminder echoes the terms the Portuguese government used in public to defend Portugal from accusations of atrocities in Wiriyaamu. Indiscriminate violence was not Portuguese policy, Portuguese officials, therefore claimed, that, if something had gone wrong, then it was a war crime. This was probably the case, but it does not absolve local officers, soldiers or DGS agents who participated in mass killings of civilians. It is also relevant to note that this kind of aggressive operation was the direct result of an operational approach by general Arriaga favouring aggressive search and destroy raids by airborne troops. Furthermore, it reflected the pressure on the military from both Arriaga and defense minister Silva Cunha to do something about the alarming number of insurgent attacks close to the town of Tete.

It is noticeable – and actually was noted by people at the time – that there seems to be a grammar, or choreography, of terror, with similar acts of brutal torture, amputation, disembowelling, cutting open of pregnant women, repeated sexual assault of women and horrifying assassination of babies and children recurring in these atrocities across time and space. Such acts seem to be linked with exhibiting power and also humiliating the victims; the pretence of dark humour may have made the gruesome killings more palatable to the perpetrators. It is also clear that this massacre was, according to the claims of FRELIMO itself at the time, the result of insurgent attacks conceived as a deliberate provocation to the Portuguese military by targeting the outskirts of more populated areas with higher density of white settlers, as well as ambushing Portuguese commandos who tried to react to those attacks, so as to show the growing strength of FRELIMO and cause an overreaction that would damage the Portuguese campaign politically.

This shows the dynamics of guerrilla warfare at its most effective – minimal force resulting in disproportionate use of force in reaction by the counter-insurgents, generating a blowback that damages their standing among the local population as well as internationally. Wiryamu resulted in a decisive political victory for the insurgents, with increased diplomatic pressure on Portugal and rifts between the Church, the military, the intelligence services and the political elites. This, in turn, decisively contributed to the atmosphere of growing discontent among the Portuguese military with the campaigns in Africa. This, in turn, led to the victorious military coup of April 1974 and a rapid cease-fire and final agreement in September 1974 to grant independence to Mozambique under FRELIMO control, with repatriation of most Portuguese settlers by June 1975.⁷⁷

A population-centric approach to intra-state warfare points, all other factors being equal, to a more discriminating use of force than conventional war for control of territory, not people. However, this is still a war, and attempting to use coercion against elusive insurgents who seek cover and support from the population is far from simple. The centrality of intelligence, as well as of control of the population to separate insurgents and civilians and allow discriminate violence, makes this type of warfare very dependent on the quality of information and the ability to effectively and voluntarily control local settlements of civilians.

Population-centric warfare, on the other hand, should not be seen as equivalent to population-friendly war or somehow immune to war crimes. The price of avoiding massive killings often was large-scale forced resettlements, as well as abusive local militias, a pervasive intelligence-gathering apparatus, and major restrictions to the freedoms of the local population. There may even be a specific *pathology* of population-centric war of which the Wiryamu atrocity would be a paradigmatic example: the targeting for brutal punishment of local populations that refuse to be turned to the side of the counterinsurgents.

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NOTES

1. FRELIMO – *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* – was founded in 1962 in Dar-es-Salam. The standard text in English regarding the outbreak of the colonial war in Mozambique is still Thomas H. Henriksen, *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Mozambique's War of Independence, 1964–1974* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1982).
2. See e.g. definition of mass murder in AA. VV. *Serial Murder: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives* (Washington, DC: Behavioral Analysis Unit-FBI 2008), online at <www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/serial-murder/serial-murder-july-2008-pdf>, accessed 20 Dec. 2010.
3. E.g. Michael Brown (ed.), *Grave New World: Security Challenges in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington, DC: Georgetown UP 2003) pp.2–3, points out that only 18 per cent of conflicts between 1945 and 1995 have been conventional wars. For similar data for more recent years see AA. VV. *SIPRI Yearbooks*, online at <www.sipri.org/contents/publications/yearbooks.html>, accessed 22 Dec. 2009. For definitional matter and discussion of debate over the rising number see Stathis Kalyvas and Paul Kenny, 'Civil Wars' in Robert Denemark (ed.), *The International Studies Encyclopedia* (London: Blackwell 2010), online at <www.isacompendium.com/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9781444336597_chunk_g97814443365975_ss1-7>, accessed 15 Dec. 2010.
4. DGS (Direcção-Geral de Segurança) was the name given by the more liberal-minded Caetano to PIDE (Policia Internacional de Defesa do Estado) but the personnel and the task of internal political repression both in the metropole and the colonies remained the same.
5. The original Wiriyamu article, 'Portuguese Massacre Reported by Priests', appeared in *The Times*, (10 July 1973) p.1. Adrian Hastings would later publish his own account of the whole controversy in his book *Wiriyamu* (London: Search Press 1974). See also his article, 'Reflections upon the War in Mozambique', *African Affairs* 73/292 (1974) pp.263–76.
6. See António Sousa Ribeiro, *Terror em Tete: relato documental das atrocidades dos portugueses no distrito de Tete, Moçambique, 1971–1972* (Porto: A Regra do Jogo 1974).
7. On this see Hastings (note 5) and Cesare Bertulli, *A Cruz e a Espada em Moçambique* (Lisboa: Portugália Editora 1974).
8. For Wiriyamu's impact on Caetano's visit, see Norrie MacQueen and Pedro Aires Oliveira, 'Grocer Meets Butcher: Marcello Caetano's London Visit of 1973 and the last days of Portugal's Estado Novo', *Cold War History* 10/1 (2010) pp.29–50.
9. TNA. FCO PREM 15/1828. 'Alleged Massacres in Mozambique', brief by FCO, 27 July 1973.
10. See 'I Survived the Mozambique Massacre', *Sunday Times*, 5 Aug. 1973.
11. Statement by the Portuguese Ministry of Defense, 19 August 1973, reproduced by the UK embassy in Lisbon to FCO, 19 August 1973. TNA. PREM 15/1828.
12. Loudon's close connections with Caetano's regime were made public in 1976, leading to his dismissal from the *Financial Times*. On this see James Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media, 1972–79: A Struggle for Representation* (London: Frank Cass 2000) pp.223–24.
13. 'Villagers killed in Mozambique Army Raid', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 Aug. 1973
14. An extended version of those interviews (originally made in 1992 and 1998) was published as part of the book by reporter Felícia Cabrita, *Massacres em África* (Lisboa: Esfera dos Livros 2008) pp.97–151.
15. Carlos M. Gomes, *Moçambique 1970: Operação Nó Górdio* (Lisboa: Tribuna 2002) p.18.
16. Cited in 'Atrocity Storm puts Heat on Caetano Visit', *The Guardian*, 11 Jul. 1973.
17. See e.g. António C. Pinto (ed.), *Modern Portugal* (Palo Alto: SPOSS 1998) maxime pp.41–59; Kenneth Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy* (Cambridge: CUP 1995).
18. Oliveira Salazar, 'A Atmosfera Mundial e os Problemas Nacionais', *Discursos e Notas Políticas. V. 1951–1958* (Coimbra: Coimbra Ed. 1958) pp.424, 430–31 [Original speech to the National Radio, 1 November 1957].
19. See e.g. Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1984); Stephen Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and*

- the Modern Military* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1994); Theo Farrel, *Norms of War: Cultural Beliefs and Modern Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner 2005).
20. ANTT/AOS/CO/PC 44 fol.493–94 Portuguese MoD to all military ministers memorandum of Meeting of Supreme National Defense Council, 15 August 1959.
 21. Oliveira Salazar, *Discursos e Notas Políticas. VI. 1959–1966* (Coimbra: Coimbra Ed. 1968) pp.123–24.
 22. Costa Gomes, *O Último Marechal* (Lisboa: Editorial Notícias 1998) pp.90–9, 110, 112; José Freire Antunes, *Kennedy e Salazar. O Leão e a Raposa* (Lisboa: Difusão Cultural 1991) p.214.
 23. Antunes (note 22) p.208; Káulza's archenemy confirms this cf. Gomes (note 22) p.95.
 24. Joaquim Silva Cunha, *A Nação, o Ultramar e o '25 de Abril'* (Coimbra: Atlântida Editora 1977) p.346; Jorge Jardim, *Moçambique Terra Queimada* (Lisboa: Intervenção 1976) p.114.
 25. Cited in Gomes (note 15) p.50.
 26. Luís Nuno Rodrigues, *Spínola* (Lisboa: Esfera dos Livros 2010) pp.208–09.
 27. Gomes (note 22) p.126.
 28. Gomes (note 15) p.18.
 29. Gomes (note 22) pp.126, 132.
 30. Gomes (note 15) p.15–6.
 31. See e.g. John P., *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961–1974* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1997).
 32. Káulza de Arriaga, *Guerra e Política: em nome da verdade, os anos decisivo* (Lisboa: Eds. Referendo 1988).
 33. This incident is referred to in Gomes (note 15) p.23.
 34. C-i-C Káulza letter to PM Caetano (18 November 1971), in José Freire Antunes (ed.), *Cartas Particulares a Marcello Caetano* (Vol. 2) (Lisboa: D. Quixote 1985) pp.268–69.
 35. C-i-C Káulza letter to PM Caetano (18 November 1971) in Antunes (note 34) p.271. See also Cabral Couto, 'Cargas Críticas', in José Freire Antunes (ed.), *A Guerra de África* (Vol. 2) (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores 1996) pp.976–80.
 36. C-i-C Káulza letter to PM Caetano (18 November 1971) in Antunes (note 34) p.269.
 37. EME, *O Exército na Guerra Subversiva [The Army in Subversive Warfare henceforth EGS]* (Lisboa: EME-IAEM, 1963) 5 volumes, Cited in *EGS* (Vol. 1) p.I/xi.
 38. EME, *EGS* (Vol. 1) p.II/23.
 39. EME, *EGS* (Vol. 1) p.II/19.
 40. EME, *EGS* (Vol. 4) p.III/1.
 41. EME, *EGS* (Vol. 3).
 42. EME, *EGS* (Vol. 3) p.II/2–17.
 43. EME, *EGS*, (Vol. 4) p.III/2.
 44. EME, *EGS*, (Vol. 2) p.I/12; see also 'The Enemy' p.I/1–24.
 45. EME, *EGS*, (Vol. 2) p.I/10–11.
 46. Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: CUP 2006) p.45 passim.
 47. EME, *EGS*, (Vol. 2) p.V/1.
 48. EME, *EGS*, (Vol. 2) p.V/2.
 49. EME, *EGS*, (Vol. 2) pp.IV/12, V/11–12; EME, *EGS* (Vol. 5) p.I/10.
 50. Memorandum on Operation 'Marosca' in annex to Tel. 19 March 1973 from C-i-C Arriaga to Governor-General Santos, in José Amaro (ed.), *Massacres na Guerra Colonial. Tete, um exemplo* (Lisboa: Ulmeiro 1976) p.51.
 51. For a detailed and very critical analysis cf. Dalila Mateus, *A PIDE/DGS na Guerra Colonial 1961–1974*. (Lisboa: Terramar 2004). PIDE's relationship with the military in Mozambique is examined in Amélia Souto, *Caetano e o Ocaso do 'Império'. Administração e Guerra Colonial em Moçambique durante o Marcelismo 1968–1974* (Porto: Afrontamento 2007).
 52. EME, *EGS* (Vol. 4) pp.III/2, III/25.
 53. See TNA FCO 9/1310. Dispatch of H C Byatt, British Consul in Lourenço Marques to FCO 21 March 1973.
 54. Cunha (note 24) p.347.
 55. TNA FCO 9/1310 9 Tel. Con. Mozambique to FCO 21 March 1973.
 56. TNA 36/1491 Tel. Consul general in Mozambique to FCO 11 July 1973; see also 'Guerrillas Accused of Killing 17 Africans in Mozambique Village', *The Times*, 11 January 1974.
 57. Cited in Cabrita (note 14) p.251.
 58. TNA FCO 9/1310 Consul general in Mozambique to FCO 21 March 1973.

59. For preliminary efforts see e.g. Margaret Hall and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence* (Athens, OH: Ohio UP 1997) p.34; Sue Onslow, *Cold War in Southern Africa* (London: Routledge 2009).
60. See e.g. Gomes (note 15) p.15.
61. Cunha (note 24) p.344.
62. Letter from PM Caetano to commander-in-chief Kaulza (17 June 1970) in Antunes (note 34) p.265.
63. José Freire Antunes, *Jorge Jardim: Agente Secreto* (Venda Nova: Bertrand 1996) pp.490–94.
64. Gomes (note 15) p.50.
65. Marcelo Caetano, *Depoimento* (Rio de Janeiro: Record 1974) pp.181–83
66. Cf. Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, 'Strategies of Terrorism', *International Security* 31/1 (2006) pp.69–72, we transpose the strategic logic of provocation used by the authors in the context of terrorism, because it seems to be a particular but not exclusive manifestation in terrorism of a logic more widely applicable to insurgency, using terrorism as well as other tactics.
67. Peter Niesewand and António de Figueiredo 'Smith Raiders get Lisbon License to Kill', *The Guardian* 23 April 1974. Figueiredo was a well-known Portuguese anti-regime activist living in exile in Britain.
68. Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: CUP 2006) maxime pp.165–67.
69. Tel. 10.02.1973 C-i-C Arriaga to governor-general Santos. Doc. 1 in Amaro (note 50) p.23.
70. Dongsuk Kim, 'What Makes State Leaders Brutal? Examining Grievances and Mass Killing during Civil War', *Civil Wars* 12/3 (2010) pp.237–60; Benjamin Valentino, Paul Huth and Dylan Balch-Lindsay, "'Draining the Sea": Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare', *International Organization* 58/2 (2004) pp.375–407. See also the arguments made by Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: CUP 2005).
71. Memorandum on 'Operation Marosca' in annex to Tel. 17.03.1973 C-i-C Arriaga to governor-general Pimentel Castro in Amaro (note 50) p.51.
72. Ibid.
73. Memorandum on 'Operation Marosca' in Ibid. pp.51–53.
74. Second-lieutenant Antonino Melo cited in Cabrita (note 14) pp.279–82.
75. See letter to the editor by M. A. Faul in *The Times* 12 Dec. 1973.
76. Letter from PM Caetano to commander-in-chief Kaulza (17 June 1970) in Antunes (note 34) p.265.
77. For reasons of space, it will be impossible to provide here a full account of the major international repercussions of Wiriyamu and the damage it caused to the reputation of the Portuguese regime. Besides spoiling Caetano's official visit to London, Wiriyamu reactivated previous accusations of Portuguese cruelty in its conduct of warfare in Africa and became the object of an international enquiry conducted by a UN commission. That commission's findings and recommendations, however, were very much conditioned by the change of regime in Lisbon in 1974, on the one hand, and by the decolonization process in Mozambique, on the other.