

BRAZILIAN WARS OF INDEPENDENCE: NOTES ON THEIR HISTORY AND HIS- TORIOGRAPHY

 João Paulo Pimenta^{1,2}

ABSTRACT

This article offers some remarks on the wars of Brazilian Independence, its history and historiography. It is centered in the book by Hélio Franchini Neto, *Independência e morte: política e guerra na emancipação do Brasil* (2015), which ideas provides good sources for the discussion of a major theme of ibero-american history of the nineteenth century.

KEYWORDS

Independence Wars – Brazilian Independence – Napoleonic Wars – Empire of Brazil – Spanish America – Nation.

1 Universidade de São Paulo. São Paulo - São Paulo - Brazil.

2 Author, among other books, of *The independence of Brazil and the Hispanic-American experience* (2015), *The Book of Time: a social history* (2021) and *Independence of Brazil* (2022). Email: jgarri-do@usp.br

AS GUERRAS DE INDEPENDÊNCIA DO BRASIL: NOTAS SOBRE SUA HISTÓRIA E HISTORIOGRAFIA

RESUMO

Este artigo realiza observações sobre as guerras de independência do Brasil, ocorridas entre 1822 e 1824, no tocante a sua história e historiografia. O ponto central é um comentário ao livro de Hélio Franchini Neto, *Independência e morte: política e guerra na emancipação do Brasil*, de 2015, cujas ideias, méritos e problemas fornecem um bom pretexto para a discussão de um tema crucial para a história ibero-americana do século XIX.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Guerras de independência – Independência do Brasil – Guerras Napoleônicas – Império do Brasil – América espanhola – Nação.

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Taken as a whole, the historiography of Independence has never completely ignored the numerous important military successes that occurred between 1822 and 1824 in several Brazilian provinces. Almost no one who has studied Independence in depth denied the existence, for example, of the sieges of Salvador and Montevideo, the battles of Pirajá and Jenipapo, of other confrontations that took place in Bahia, Maranhão, Piauí, Pará and the Cisplatina Province, or of the military mobilizations observed in Ceará, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo. And characters such as Cochrane, Grenfell, Madeira, Labatut and Fidié have always made their presence felt in the historiography of the period³. However, the wars of independence have almost always been treated in a tangential and fragmented way, and even the works of military historians, when valuable in their detailed treatment of interesting aspects of such successes, have hardly overcome the barrier of particularisms in a way that considers them part of a broader social history.

Besides suffering from residual and fragmented interpretations, the historiography of the wars of Independence also usually suffers from the limitations imposed on it by a widely dominant interpretative canon regarding the political separation between Brazil and Portugal: that of a fundamentally negotiated and peaceful process, supposedly devoid of deep ruptures, isolated and eccentric in relation to the rest of the world of its time and perfectly consistent with what would be a true Brazilian

3 Also in the Brazilian national memory, with its many state and local variations. In this regard: SOUZA, Maria Aparecida Silva. *História, Memória e Historiografia: a Independência na Bahia. Politeia* (Vitória da Conquista), v. 3, p. 175-194, 2005; COELHO, Raphael Pavão Rodrigues. *A memória de uma heroína: a construção do mito de Maria Quitéria pelo Exército Brasileiro*. 2019. 144 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em História) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em História, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2019. Available at: encurtador.com.br/nrzJZ. Accessed on: July 11, 2022; MORAES, Maria Dione Carvalho de; CAVALCANTE, Juliana Rodrigues. *Memória social da Batalha do Jenipapo: trilhas e enredos patrimoniais em Campo Maior (PI)*. *Ciências Sociais Unisinos*, v. 47, n. 3, 2011, p. 232-248. Available at: encurtador.com.br/LMQ26. Accessed on: July 11, 2022; e REIS, Natacha Regazzini Bianci. *Motins Políticos de Domingos Antonio Raiol: memória, historiografia e identidade regional*. 2003. Dissertação (Mestrado em História) – Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2003. Also GONÇALVES, Roberta Teixeira. *Lembranças de uma guerra: apropriações políticas das memórias históricas da Guerra da Cisplatina ou Guerra del Brasil*. Jundiá: Paco, 2017, since the Cisplatina War can be considered, at least at the level of international relations and in an extended periodization, as one of the Brazilian wars of Independence, perhaps the last of them.

national character - conciliatory and refractory to open conflicts. From this perspective, if wars in general typify disruptive and violent processes, the Brazilian wars of Independence could only have been sparse, insignificant or ambiguous.

Note the exemplary case of Varnhagen, in the pages of his *História da Independência do Brasil* (1916-1917) especially dedicated to Pará. At first, Varnhagen stated that, “[...] when the time for Independence and the Empire to be finally proclaimed in Pará came [...]”, “[...] everything was done with the least bloodshed [...]”, that is, thanks to the well-known “Grenfell stratagem”⁴. However, later on, when dealing with the landing of the English admiral in Belém on the night of October 16, 1823, he states that Grenfell managed to “[...] reestablish order, by force of successive attacks and some bloodshed [...]”. Finally, about the mutiny of the brig Palhaço, which ended with the death of 255 prisoners, Varnhagen wrote that “[...] although Grenfell himself had achieved the submission of the Portuguese forces occupying the capital without bloodshed, it was not long before mutinies broke out, ending in scenes of the utmost horror [...]”⁵. But, after all, was there bloodshed in Pará during Independence or not? The author’s reluctance to admit that indeed there *was*, is understandable, since his vision of Independence, a typical nineteenth-century intellectual construction, was preconceived as that of a natural, evolutionary, progressive process that, taking root in the Portuguese colonial enterprise, would have matured over three centuries until accelerated and driven by the individual action of Prince D. Pedro. A process, therefore, unable to admit major ruptures.

In a very different historiographic perspective formulated decades later, Nelson Werneck Sodré, despite dedicating a chapter of his *Introdução à Revolução Brasileira* (1958) to the formation of the national army from colonial times until the mid-twentieth century, as well as an entire book to

4 That consisted in bending the resistance of the government of Belém to the Brazilian Empire, making it believe that its presence near the city anticipated a powerful squadron commanded by Cochrane, when, in reality, Grenfell was alone and commanding a single ship. VARNHAGEN, Francisco Adolfo de. *História da independência do Brasil*. 7. ed. Belo Horizonte/São Paulo, Itatiaia/Edusp, 1981, p.349.

5 Idem, p. 350.

the so-called reasons of independence, *Razões da Independência* (1965), addresses the issue of the wars of independence almost imperceptibly, mentioning only generally the conflicts in the initial moments of the Brazilian Empire. After all, the author's emphasis resided, in tune with a critical Marxist historiography developing in mid-twentieth century Brazil, on the continuity of colonial structures that would tie down the full national development of independent Brazil. And since "the Brazilian structure was not shaken by autonomy" and "the relations of production remained the same" without any shift in "relations of class", the wars of independence were aligned with ordinary disturbances and riots, in a process that would have been fundamentally conservative in nature⁶.

If in Varnhagen the conservatism of Independence was praised, in Werneck Sodré it was regretted. These are two representative examples of historiographical divergences that involved hundreds of other historians and that ultimately resulted in an almost absolute convergence: the conservatism of a historical process that could not give centrality to the wars or to the other conflicts and military mobilizations. It is symptomatic that the most thorough historiographical revision of such an interpretation, including of the wars of independence, came from a rejection of its more general interpretive assumptions. Thus, in *Conciliação e reforma no Brasil* (1965), José Honório Rodrigues confronted, in a pioneering way, the mythology of the conciliatory Brazilian⁷; later, in *Independência: revolução e contra-revolução* (1975-1976), he dedicated long and detailed passages to the wars of Independence, giving them a central position in the unfolding of the separation process between Brazil and Portugal, in a tone strongly at odds with almost all the rest of the historiography. For Rodrigues, the wars of independence were not only far from being sparse and fragmented, but they would have constituted a true Brazilian national mobilization, involving practically all sectors of society at the time rehearsing a revolu-

6 SODRÉ, Nelson Werneck. *Introdução à revolução brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1958, p. 170; SODRÉ, Nelson Werneck. *As razões da independência*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1965.

7 RODRIGUES, José Honório. *Conciliação e reforma no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1965.

tion - also supposedly national - whose radicalism would soon be faced and defeated by a powerful conservative reaction, a counter-revolution⁸.

Moving between the ambiguity demonstrated by Varnhagen, the insignificance proposed by Sodré, and the anachronistic exaggerations of Rodrigues, many other authors continued to touch on the wars of Independence. None of them, however, with the desirable balance between information and interpretation and attributing them historical centrality as forceful and true as Hélio Franchini Netto, in his recent book *Independência e morte: política e guerra na emancipação do Brasil (1821-1823)*⁹. A book to be praised for being, without a doubt, the best written on the wars of Independence¹⁰ so far, but also to be critically examined in the light of the history and historiography of Independence, since its historiographical contribution resides not only in many rights, but also in the opportunity of mistakes to be corrected, omissions to be filled in, and interpretative problems to be repositioned¹¹.

Independência e morte could not be more aptly titled: true, precise, and iconoclastic in the right measure. After all, its central idea is that Independence came with bloodshed, as a violent process, and that Brazil was born as a state and as a nation, among other factors, through war:

8 RODRIGUES, José Honório. *Independência: revolução e contra-revolução*. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, 1975-1976, v.3, "As forças armadas".

9 FRANCHINI NETO, Hélio. *Independência e morte: política e guerra na emancipação do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks, 2019, 673 p. The book presents a vast and highly meritorious work with primary sources and bibliography, being an abridged version of a doctoral thesis defended in November 2015 at the History Department of the University of Brasília, oriented by Francisco Doratioto.

10 Hence its inclusion in a recent list of 100 essential books on independence: PIMENTA, João Paulo; MONTEIRO, GONÇALO, NUNO. Portugal and Brazil in the Age of Revolutions. *Oxford Bibliographies* (in press).

11 Beyond the questions to be discussed next, note that in formal terms, the book edition is careless; it presents numerous typos, including in the names of historical figures ("Montesuma", p. 49; "Castle-reach", p. 66; "Wensel", p. 105; "Greenfell", p. 382) e de autores ("Marcelo", p. 38; "Lívia Schiavinatto", p. 55; "Willian", p. 78; "Viana", p. 100; "Valentina", p. 589; Schwatz", p. 666). The footnotes lack standardization, with authors confusingly and indistinctly referred to by their last or penultimate surname in capitals, or even by their first name in lower case; and the works are sometimes fully referenced, including the website, sometimes only with title and year of publication (or even just the year).

War, imposing wills or breaking deadlocks, was key to the construction of the Empire's territorial unity, in the absence of an effective 'Brazilian' identity and in the midst of important differences between the regions of the Kingdom. It was a tool to consolidate the imperial power and unify the territory, running parallel to the political negotiations and attempts of co-optation by the two poles formed in the dispute and ended up concentrating the options, even with many other ideas and projects in vogue in the Kingdom in that period¹².

The idea is completed with the statement that the wars of independence unfolded from factors linked not only to the evolution of the conflict of political and economic interests between groups based in Brazil and Portugal, but also from a wide range of local situations, variable according to socioeconomic profiles and political contexts of each province:

In Pará, Maranhão, Piauí, Ceará, Cisplatina, and Bahia (which represented a significant part of Brazil's territory, population, and economy), in addition to points scattered throughout the Kingdom, there were struggles that began with local colors and tapered off, due to external pressure, into the choice between Lisbon or Rio de Janeiro. In these points, the conflict ended in war¹³.

We will soon comment on this central idea in detail¹⁴. For now, let us point out that, although fundamentally correct, it is inconsistent with the subtitle of the book - *política e guerra na emancipação do Brasil*. For, despite the author's good handling of the historicity of the concept of "independence" which, as has been well demonstrated by part of the historiography, at the time did not necessarily indicate a desire for total political

12 FRANCHINI. *Independência e morte*, cit., p. 26. In other passages (e.g., p. 24), however, the author speaks not of *building*, but of *maintaining unity*. As we have already showed, on other occasions, we obviously prefer the first statement in the context of Independence.

13 Idem, p. 24.

14 Which is not at all original. Before Franchini, there were many authors who affirmed it. Just two examples: SLEMIAN, Andréa; PIMENTA, João Paulo. *O "nascimento político do Brasil": as origens do Estado e da nação (1808-1825)*. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A Editora, 2003; p. 96; e KRAAY, Hendrik. *Muralhas da independência e liberdade do Brasil: a participação popular nas lutas políticas (Bahia, 1820-25)*. In: MALERBA, Jurandir (Org.). *A Independência brasileira: novas dimensões*. Rio de Janeiro: FGV, 2006, p. 303-341.

separation¹⁵, the same cannot be said of the concept of “emancipation”. Widely used by influential European publicists in the Luso-American world of the early 19th century, this concept indicated a process of slow and gradual political maturation, metaphorically associated with a child who, having been prepared for adulthood by his parents, separates from them when the time comes¹⁶. And, in the process in question, Brazil’s *Independence* was often thought of as an *emancipation*, that is, as a natural, desired, and therefore non-violent separation from Portugal. An independence which, as an intellectual conception, is also a historical phenomenon, but which, as a description of the process, is contrary to Franchini’s own idea, which merely adopts a term whose conceptual charge, if discussed by him, would strengthen, and deepen his central idea.

The subtitle of the book also allows us to discuss its periodization, which formally is presented to us as 1821-1823. However, Chapter I is entitled “1822 Brazil”, and in it we see the very well-developed centrality, for the wars to come, of such milestones as the beginning of the violent conflicts over the exercise of the government of Bahia, on February 19 and 20, 1822; or the decrees of August 1 by which the still prince regent declared an enemy any military forces that landed in Brazil without his consent, and explained the causes of war against Portugal (a matter Franchini explores in depth in Chapter III, “An armed rebellion”). Once again, it is the author himself who shows us the inadequacy of his subtitle, since the Independence wars began in 1822, not 1821. But periodizations are

15 OLIVEIRA, Cecília Helena de Salles. Sociedade e projetos políticos na província do Rio de Janeiro. In: JANCSÓ, István (Org.). *Independência: história e historiografia*. São Paulo: Hucitec, Fapesp, 2005, p. 476-477; NEVES, Guilherme Pereira das; NEVES, Lucia Maria. *Independência/Brasil*. In: FERNÁNDEZ SEBASTIÁN, Javier (Org.). *Diccionario político y social del mundo iberoamericano (Iberconceptos II)*. Madrid: Universidad del País Vasco/Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2014, v. 4, p. 49-64. Perhaps Franchini’s only slip in his handling of the concept occurs on p. 416, when he fails to understand what the supporters of D. Pedro in Parnaíba, on October 19, 1822, meant by “independence”.

16 MOREL, Marco. *Independência no papel: a imprensa periódica*. In: JANCSÓ, István (Org.). *Independência: história e historiografia*. São Paulo: Hucitec/Fapesp, 2005, p. 617-626; PIMENTA, João Paulo. De Raynal a De Pradt: apontamentos para um estudo da ideia de emancipação da América e sua leitura no Brasil. *Almanack Braziliense*, n. 11, 2010 Available at: encurtador.com.br/cuTZ5. Accessed on July 11, 2022; SANTOS, Cristiane Alves Camacho dos. *Escrevendo a história do futuro: a leitura do passado no processo de independência do Brasil*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2017, p.60-72.

never perfect, as any historian knows, and one must always be flexible. In doing so, however, in Chapter II, “The ‘Luso-Brazilian’ Constituent”, Franchini also goes backwards in his narrative and, in dealing with the arrival of the Porto Revolution in Brazil, confuses his reader, who is already getting used to tracing the relationship between the events of 1822 and the wars to come (dealt with in depth in Chapters III to VII), besides offering him a chapter perhaps without the same informative and interpretative power of the others.

And if there is a link on the political plane that makes the events of 1822 tributary to the convocation of the representatives of the Portuguese nation to the Lisbon Cortes, the same can be said about the relationship between the wars and earlier events. On this point, there is a noticeable absence in Franchini’s book: his almost irrelevant consideration of the numerous and powerful connections between the warring conjuncture of 1822-24 and the Napoleonic Wars formally ended in 1815. As another author, Alejandro Rabinovich, pointed out, since the beginning of the 19th century, the European wars of the late 18th century were “crossing” the Atlantic, in the sense of metamorphosing, involving, and interacting with the crisis of the Iberian empires in the Americas ever since the first moments of this crisis¹⁷. In what concerns particularly the wars in Brazil, its connections with the Napoleonic wars can be evidenced with a simple preliminary enumeration of European ex-combatants who, in Portuguese America in the early 1820s, not only renewed their military service but also became outstanding political leaders. This is the case of Cochrane, Lecor, Álvaro da Costa, Rego Barreto, Caula, Avilez, Bernardo Pinto da Fonseca, Fidié, and José Maria de Moura, among others. And, also, because in Brazil, as in other parts of the Western world at the time, there were strong symptoms of the militarization of politics and the politicization of war¹⁸.

17 RABINOVICH, Alejandro M. *La société guerrière*. Pratiques, discours et valeurs militaires dans le Rio de la Plata, 1806-1852. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013, p. 31-32 ; RABINOVICH, Alejandro M. The Making of Warriors: The Militarization of the Rio de la Plata, 1806-1807. In: BESSEL, R./ GUYATT, N./RENDALL, J. (Ed.). *War, Empire and Slavery, 1770-1830*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 81-98.

18 PIMENTA, João Paulo. *Independência do Brasil*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2022, p.56. The book by HALPERIN DONGHI, Tulio. *Revolução e guerra: formação de uma elite dirigente na Argentina criolla*. São

In this same direction, the widespread publicizing of European wars in Brazil since 1808 created specters, expectations and subsidized the construction of political experiences decisive not only for the unfolding of the Independence process (including its wars) but also for the formation of powerful yearnings to diminish and deny their violent and destructive nature. These yearnings are embedded in the very process of Independence. We will soon come back to this point as well. For now, it is enough to indicate that the relations between the Napoleonic Wars and Brazilian wars of Independence still need to be properly explored by historiography, preferably with the observation of a whole warlike conjuncture that goes far beyond Brazil and Portugal¹⁹.

As for the final milestone in Franchini's periodization, the withdrawal of Portuguese troops from Montevideo, as his book shows, marks a convincing turning point in the history of warfare. It occurred, however, not in the year of 1823 highlighted in the subtitle, but in 1824; moreover, Chapter VIII, "O pós-guerra e o reconhecimento da independência", expands the analysis to 1825. And, since Franchini has gone that far, this good closing of the book would have rendered an even more convincing historiographical service if he had considered, even in passing, the relations between Brazil and Spanish America, which, throughout that year, were based on the possibility of at least two wars: one, between Brazil and a hypothetical coalition of Bolivarian republics over the Chiquitos question, and which never materialized; the other, between Brazil and the *Províncias Unidas del Rio de la Prata*, prepared in the midst of the Chiquitos question and the negotiations for the Portuguese and British recognition of the Independence of Brazil, to finally be launched in December 1825. Considera-

Paulo: Hucitec, 2015 (1. ed. 1972) would serve Franchini's work well. At the beginning of the 19th century, a typical revolutionary conjuncture of acceleration of historical time, many dimensions of social reality are merging and creating new syntheses: besides politics and war, also economy, culture, etc. Also TERNAVASIO, Marcela. *Los juegos de la política: las independencias hispano-americanas frente a la contrarrevolución*. Buenos Aires/Zaragoza: Siglo XXI/Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2021.

19 An excellent collaboration in this direction: PUIGMAL, Patrick. *Brasil bajo influencia napoleónica y francesa. Los mensajeros de la independencia: militares, libreros y periodistas*. *História*, Instituto de Historia, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, n. 46, v. 1, enero-junio 2013, p. 113-151. Available at: encurtador.com.br/jtNXZ. Accessed on: Jul 11, 2022.

tion of the possibility of such external wars would show that, in that year, Brazilian wars of independence were already sufficiently resolved to give way to international conflicts between American states whose consolidation, although incipient, already allowed them at least to wage war against each other²⁰.

Brazil's relations with Spanish America, which begin with the Napoleonic wars, run through the entire Independence process and were partially reconfigured in 1825, form an intrinsic part of the development of a historical reality multifaceted in its time and space, in the midst of which the wars of independence from 1822 to 1824 could finally be understood to the extent of Franchini's pretensions: as a nodal element not only of the process of political separation between Brazil and Portugal, but also of the very construction of the new State and the new nation:

In 2022, Brazil, celebrates 200 years of its Independence. Observing the country today, with its challenges and problems, it is easy to forget that in a territory of continental dimensions, there is a consolidated State and, more importantly, Brazilians see themselves, from north to south, as a single nation²¹.

As we saw earlier, although strong, the idea is not original. Franchini's pretensions could then be better stated - the author does not treat them in these terms - in terms of deepening, detailing, and giving greater consistency to what we already know about the relations between the wars of Independence and the formation of the Brazilian State and nation. However, the realization of such pretensions is limited by the fact that the author, although a reader of numerous historiographies, has not thoroughly evaluated the one already available regarding these relations speci-

20 ROJAS CASTRO, Daniel Emilio. *Relations diplomatiques colombo-bresiliennes, 1821-1831*. 2013. Thesis (Doctorate in History) – Université Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne, 2013; also MATTOS, Ilmar Rohloff de. Construtores e herdeiros. A trama dos interesses na construção da unidade política. In: JANCSÓ, István (Org.). *Independência: história e historiografia*. São Paulo: Hucitec, Fapesp, 2005, p. 271-300.

21 FRANCHINI. *Independência e morte*, cit., p. 625. A few lines below, the author states that "[...] almost two hundred years ago, this process of consolidation of the state and its territory began." Evidently, one cannot state the *beginning of the consolidation* of something that, strictly speaking, did not exist before 1822 (but rather, its *construction*).

fically. It also comes up against a disappointing treatment of the broader spectrum of the wars of Independence, not only because of its inadequate consideration of the Napoleonic wars, but also because of its stereotypical and anachronistic approach to the Spanish-American wars, which, as is widely known, in many cases were also directly or indirectly Luso-American wars. If, in 1808, what mattered in the political experiences built and lived in Brazil were mainly the European events, especially the Peninsular ones, from 1810 on, these started to share space, sometimes even in a disadvantageous relation, with the Spanish-American events, and for a very simple reason: as long as the Court was in Brazil, it always had a convulsed, dangerous, reckless and, contradictorily, inspiring neighborhood. This is why the wars here and there formed, in a progressive and coherent way, a single historical-temporal unit (integrated into an even broader conjuncture and with specific plural times and spaces), which spans the wars from 1822 to 1824 and, crossing the entire 19th century, reaches the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870). However, and despite the enormous interpretative potential of considering this unity for the formation, through war, of the Brazilian State and nation, Franchini preferred to inherit from historiography the old insistence on the contrast, on the exceptionality and uniqueness of Brazil in relation to Spanish America:

These two historical events, for instance, were very different in the time in which they took place, so that one cannot compare the Brazilian process, concentrated in practically little more than a year, with the long decade that marked the emancipation of the Spanish Colonies²².

22 FRANCHINI. *Independência e morte*, cit., p. 635-636. In another passage, however, Franchini suggested the possibility that “[...] the North-Northeast was in a situation more similar to the Spanish colonies in the Americas in their process of Independence, than to south-central Brazil [...]” (p. 58); and further on, in the opposite direction, states that armed force “[...] not only ensured that there was an organizing center of power in Rio de Janeiro, but was also essential for the Brazilian case to differ from that of Spanish America, insofar as Brazil ended up united [...]” (p. 120), which implies disregarding the case of the Cisplatina Province, moreover widely contemplated in the book itself. For an explicit confrontation with such positions and ambiguities, see: PIMENTA, João Paulo. *A Independência do Brasil e a experiência hispano-americana (1808-1822)*. São Paulo: Hucitec/Fapesp, 2015.

Which is, no doubt, a way to inadvertently reinforce that same paradigm of non-violent Brazil that *Independência e morte* meritoriously wants to confront: a convulsed Spanish America in contrast to a peaceful Brazil.

Let us insist on this point: the historical unity that involves, in the so-called Age of Revolutions, the crisis of the Iberian empires in their many reciprocal interactions and the various specific modalities of creation of dozens of states and nations in the American continent helps to explain the founding myth of a singular, non-violent Brazil and - a corollary of such conceptions - supposedly superior to its continental neighbors. In concrete terms, this historical unity and its conforming power of the future wars of Independence were built in situations such as: the Portuguese military threats against Buenos Aires, Paraguay, and Upper Peru starting in 1808; the wars effectively waged against indigenous territories near Rio de Janeiro, against the French in Cayenne in 1809, and against Hispanic Americans in the Banda Oriental in 1811²³; the elevation of Brazil to Kingdom in 1815, apparently based on fears that Portuguese America would follow the same path of political fragmentation and civil wars as Spanish America; Portugal's mobilizations and military expenditures with the Banda Oriental (later Cisplatina Province) that, between 1820 and 1822, provided the pretexts for the outbreak of the Porto Revolution and the subsequent crystallization of the division of political interests between Brazil and Portugal; the performance in Brazil, between 1822, 1823 and 1824, of several soldiers trained in European conflicts, but also Spanish-Americans, such as the ones already mentioned here of Labatut, Cochrane, Grenfell; and the advances in the international consolidation of the Brazilian Empire as an independent and sovereign state in 1825, which connected with political and military mobilizations involving practically all the incipient national governments of the continent.

To the relationship between war, state, and nation, Franchini adds detailed information, based on extensive documentary research; the well-drawn extra-provincial spatiality of the conflicts; and the forcefulness of many statements based on a historical matter whose density was practi-

23 Franchini mentions the Cayenne and Montevideo campaigns at pp. 223-224, 494 and 525-529.

cally unknown to us until now. We should also highlight his competent, rigorous and elucidating game of scales, according to which - and contrary to many historians and Brazilians full of common sense - the size of the Brazilian wars of Independence - military bodies available and created, armed combatants, deaths and injuries, mobilized resources - were never insignificant, either in comparison with other wars throughout human history, or in terms of what they meant to Brazil in the early 19th century²⁴. Furthermore, he explains that many of the combatants in the Brazilian wars of independence, once they started to lean definitively towards what at the time could be referred to as the "Brazilian party" or the "cause of Brazil", tried to erase or openly deny their participation on the opposite side²⁵. The scale of the phenomenon - delightfully satirized by João Ubaldo Ribeiro's novel *Viva o povo Brasileiro* (1984) - as well as the details of the concrete cases typifying it, still need to be elucidated²⁶; but, on this point, Franchini is absolutely right in positioning it at the core of the emergence of the mythology of non-violent Brazil.

It is not, however, the only phenomenon at this core. Another one, not treated by Franchini, but by authors before him and who would also make a great figuration in *Independência ou morte*, concerns the discursive, linguistic and conceptual construction according to which the course of events in Brazil would be leading it to an outstanding place among the "civilized" states and nations, since its Independence would have been administered by the wise conduct of notorious men capable of supposedly promoting moderation and avoiding the "horrors" of "anarchy", "civil

24 Although the statement that "the war in Brazil mobilized a larger number of combatants than the wars of liberation in Spanish America" (FRANCHINI. *Independence and death*, cit., p. 28) is clear nonsense, without support in the literature on the Spanish-American campaigns (e.g., THIBAUD, Clément. *República en armas: los ejércitos bolivarianos en la guerra de Independencia en Colombia y Venezuela*. Bogotá: Planeta, 2003; and ORTIZ ESCAMILLA, Juan. *El teatro de la guerra: Veracruz, 1750-1825*. Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2008).

25 FRANCHINI. *Independência e morte*, cit., p.597, e 638-639.

26 A contribution in this direction: GUERRA FILHO, In: NASCIMENTO, Jairo Carvalho do; OLIVEIRA, Josivaldo Pires de; GUERRA FILHO, Sérgio Armando Diniz (Org.). *Bahia: ensaios de História Social e Ensino de História*. Salvador: Eduneb, 2014, p.19-41. Available at: encurtador.com.br/cjzT5. Accessed on: Jul 11, 2022.

war” and “outpouring of blood” (coeval expressions) observed at the time in other parts of the world. This construction, present in periodicals, memoirs, travelers’ reports, and official pronouncements, would also appear in what may be considered the first formal history of Brazil’s independence: *História dos principais sucessos políticos do Império do Brasil*, authored by José da Silva Lisboa (1826-1830). Such a construct would become one of the most powerful and enduring subsidies of the myth of non-violent Brazil²⁷. A myth whose history, yet to be properly written, will henceforth find in Franchini’s book an obligatory reference.

At its birth, therefore, Brazil not only began to invent a history for itself - that of its presumed differences, singularities, and superiorities - but also went on distorting and silencing it, pushing the wars of Independence towards irrelevance or ostracism. All this shows us how such wars were effectively political wars, both in terms of the coeval narrative disputes about them and their actual existence as military confrontations. On this point too Franchini is quite right in politicizing the wars of Independence, and he does it very well, although in a partial way. For the wars (I) *arose out of*, (II) *developed from*, and (III) *resulted in* political phenomena of the greatest importance. However, if this emergence is (despite some caveats we pointed out earlier) well demonstrated in his book, and if the political impacts are well enunciated in it (although not in depth), it lacks the political development of the war.

And here we can resume this brief approach to the problem of the relations between history and historiography of the wars of independence and the formation of the Brazilian state and nation by adding one last element: the role of political identities in the advent of such wars, as well as, in a reverse and simultaneous way, the role of the wars in the Portuguese identity dynamics developing in Brazil, especially in the early years of the 1820s²⁸. Now, Franchini is categorical and correct in stating - based

27 OLIVEIRA, Cecília Helena de Salles. Historiografía y memoria de la Independencia. In: PIMENTA, João Paulo (Coord.). *Y dejó de ser colonia: una historia de la Independencia de Brasil*. Madrid: Silex, 2021, p.335-370.

28 This can only enhance the study of social diversity at armies in the wars of independence, pioneered by José Honório Rodrigues and later, among others, by SILVA, Luiz Geraldo. *Negros patriotas. Raça e*

on historiography - that neither the wars nor Independence itself were processes of confrontation between two opposing nations or based on national identity conflicts between Brazilians and Portuguese²⁹. This is a fact. However, after reading *Independência e morte*, we can ask ourselves three questions: 1) how, effectively, did the wars of independence further politicize collective identities that, in Brazil, had already been undergoing such reconfiguration since the end of the eighteenth century? 2) How did the wars create, if at all, new political identities? And 3) what happened so that the conjugation of these identities with political projects identified as *Brazilian* and *Portuguese*, corresponding to the two major factions in struggle during those decisive years of 1822, 1823 and 1824, increasingly acquired features of identities and alterities of a national kind? Not that a Brazilian national identity has suddenly emerged with the wars or soon after their end; it is undeniable, however, that they have contributed to this advent³⁰. If before the wars there was already an accelerated definition of Portuguese and Brazilian political, economic, and military interests as incompatible with each other, the armed confrontations between groups that could defend projects placed under such polarization surely placed the game of identities and alterities previously outlined on a new level, and according to a logic less based on the viability of Independence itself, and more on state building and consolidation.

We still ignore how all this happened exactly. For our part, we only sustain that in Brazil a Brazilian State, a nation and a national identity were

identidade social na formação do Estado nação (Pernambuco, 1770-1830). In: JANCÓSÓ, István (Org.). *Brasil: formação do Estado e da nação*. São Paulo: Hucitec, Fapesp, Editora Unijuí, 2003, p. 497-520. This is a highly topical issue, which, in the context of the Bicentennial of Independence, is gaining even more momentum through the political pressures of the present on the past (whether or not such pressures result in anachronisms and distortions depends on the competence of each historian).

29 FRANCHINI. *Independência e morte*, cit., p.37, p.39, among other passages.

30 For our part, we are unaware of any empirical basis that so far could support Franchini's insinuation that a "Brazilian national identity" would have emerged earlier in the central-southern provinces of Brazil than in the north-northeast (FRANCHINI. *Independência e morte*, cit., p. 42). The revolutions of Pernambuco in 1817 and 1824 failed to engender nation projects that, even considering their particularities, did not refer, respectively, to the Portuguese and Brazilian nations then in power.

constituted in a process of reciprocal configurations and determinations³¹; and that, once the basic referential substratum of these three points - their condition as *Brazilians* - was defined, history would engender what we could call a nationalism that was also Brazilian, at least in its basic matrix. All this goes back to Independence, but not only to it; and sensitively, but not exclusively, to its wars, addressed and explained by Franchini - let us repeat - with a quality hitherto unknown to historiography. His book thus, before exhausting a major theme, opens it up and offers it to the future investigation of many problems derived from it and related to it.

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