

**Title:** “Portuguese Army Officers and the Military Academy – Social Origin and Academic Merit as Predictors of Professional Progression (1910-1974)”

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**Abstract:**

The great transition between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries brought about deep changes in the organisation of armies and on the nature of war, induced by the centralisation of State power, the strengthening of democratic ideals, the acceleration of industrialism, the speed and variety of scientific and technological developments, massive population growth, and the urban explosion, in emerging industrial societies.

As to the rank and file, the citizen armies emerged; as to the officers, the professional ideal took shape. Occupational identities gained homogeneity, full-time employment became the rule, criteria for selection and progression was redefined. Individual merit, if we were to believe the ideological discourse, prevailed over class origin.

However, as this study shows, in Portugal and during the period under analysis, class criteria never ceased to influence the professional success of the officers trained at the Military Academy (*Academia Militar*) until the end of the *Estado Novo*, in 1974 – even if academic merit is clearly the best predictor of professional success, during all the period under consideration. Higher class origin, as measured by parents’ occupation, shows a strong, positive and stable correlation, with academic and professional success, among Army officers, a probable consequence of better opportunities, regarding background, socialisation and education.

One cannot, therefore, speak of a decline of class origin as opposed to the rise of a meritocracy in the Army, especially since academic and professional success was greater for candidates and officers coming from the upper strata of society or from families traditionally linked to the military profession. Other findings of this study confirm this general, underlying, trend.