

THE PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC AT ONE HUNDRED

Richard Herr & Antonio Costa Pinto, Editors



The Portuguese Republic
at One Hundred

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EDITED BY
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António Costa Pinto

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Broken Promises, Postponed Commitments

The Political Elite's Contempt for Popular Democratic
Participation in the Portuguese First and Second Republics

RUI GRAÇA FEIJÓ

To the memory of Teresa B
Mother of my daughters

Portugal, an ongoing discussion with myself
my regret
my regret of us all
—Alexandre O'Neill¹

I

The feats and achievements of the Portuguese First Republic are numerous, far-reaching, and enduring. They more than deserve this volume's centennial celebrations, which combine academic scrutiny, rigorous and dispassionate analysis, and civic jubilation. As the grandson of a foot soldier who fought with the insurgents of 1910 and was a volunteer in Flanders in 1918, an active low-ranking officer against the monarchist insurrection of 1919 and a lifelong Republican who opposed the authoritarian regimes, I am proud to be associated with this celebration.²

The Provisional Government's creation of the universities of Lisbon and Porto in March 1911 can be singled out as an example of a myriad of reforming acts that together composed what Hermínio Martins calls the "Great Culture War," acts that have since been challenged, criticized, sometimes put on hold, nearly overruled in later regimes, but fortunately never completely reversed. The Republic itself would be shelved for forty-eight long years without giving way to a restoration of the monarchy, only to resurface, reinvigorated, in

. . . the dawn I waited for
 The new day clean and whole
 When we emerge from night and silence
 To freely inhabit the substance of time
 —Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen³

Attempts have been made to dissociate the experience of the First Republic from its symbolism as a herald of a new century. My generation and the previous one witnessed attacks on the memory of those sixteen years, grounded in currents of opinion that find their roots in the ideological combat against modernity.

João Ameal is credited with the utterance “In the last century, the History of Portugal was not done, but undone.” This implies that the Republic was the last phase of what was a national disgrace that began with the French invasions or the 1820 liberal revolution, only to end in 1926. In the opposite ideological camp, a well-known public figure wittingly countered: “The nineteenth century in Portugal ended in 1926—and was followed by nothing” (Cutileiro).

These are nice sound bites, no doubt—but wrong ideas. In my view, the Republic—be it considered as dating from the Fifth of October 1910 or from the day that Porto proudly celebrates every year as the first proclamation of the Republic (January 31, 1891)⁴—represents the fresh, early light of the new century’s dawn. As such, I shall concentrate on the Republic’s branching forward to its later years. I will take up the recurrent theme of political legitimization and the resilient attitude of contempt that I sense in political elites, an Ariadne’s thread that runs from the First well into the mature Second Republic of our day, an attitude that diminishes the importance of popular participation and shows contempt for it as a means of acquiring political legitimacy.

2

The political regime to which we attribute the responsibility for a bold reforming program that had considerable implications in the shaping of our twentieth century lasted a mere sixteen years and, paradoxically, was a fragile political entity. The catalog of shortcomings, difficulties, and incapacities bears comparison to Leporello’s aria in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*: seven parliaments, nine presidents, forty-five governments, countless coups, political violence on a significant scale, almost endemic civil unrest. The First Republic was no “brief shining moment,” no Camelot.

Why then did the Republic, armed with a strong reforming agenda

that found such a deep echo in the flesh of the nation that has endured beyond the Republic's breakdown, fail to stabilize and, in the end, to survive? I shall pick one critical aspect from among the many that I cannot review here: once it had become the power of the land, the Republican leadership recanted on its promise—going as far back as the Republican program of January 11, 1891, if not before—to adopt “universal suffrage,” whatever meaning this expression might have at that particular historical juncture, a progressive measure that would seem fit for what was then only the third republic in all of Europe.

The history of electoral rights in Portugal in the liberal period, as Pedro Tavares de Almeida has noted, is “complex and contradictory, not following a linear path of more or less regular movement toward universal suffrage.”⁵ Along this winding road, mapped in table 9.1, two milestones are to be pointed out: in 1878 the censitary male suffrage in force since the first formal elections was extended to so many men that the Republican press claimed that “the 1878 Law introduced universal suffrage under another name”⁶—although only 68.2 percent of all men aged 21 or older were given voting rights. This was, however, one of the highest proportions ever achieved under this form of suffrage. But in 1895 the *Regenerador* government redressed the situation restricting voting rights once again, and the number of voters fell from more than 900,000 to fewer than half a million, slightly less than 40 percent of the adult male population.

As a result of this brutal change, “universal suffrage” became a political banner for the Socialists and, mainly, for the Republican Party, which had fared quite well under the 1878 law. When they took power, however, the Republicans lowered the suffrage banner and dropped the claim. With an electoral code slightly adjusted for the 1911 elections for the Constituent Assembly the number of voters rose from 696,171 in the last election under the monarchy to 846,801 (an increase of about 20 percent but still short of the number of voters eligible under the 1878 legislation). However, Afonso Costa's Electoral Code of 1913, destined to live a long life, disenfranchised voters on a large scale and sealed off the loophole that allowed one woman, Carolina Beatriz Ângelo, to vote in 1911. Women were explicitly excluded from suffrage, and the eligibility of male voters was severely reduced. The electoral register again dropped below 400,000 voters, in line with what it had been back in 1869, even though the population had grown from 4.3 million to more than 6 million. In 1915 the proportion of population allowed to vote had reached the level of . . . 1861!

One brief exception came in 1918: Sidónio Pais decreed that presidential elections would be held by direct voting and suffrage extended

TABLE 9.1 EVOLUTION OF POPULATION AND REGISTERED VOTERS

Year	Population	Adult Males	Registered Voters	Percentage of Registered Voters in Population	Percentage of Registered Voters among Adult Males
1864	4,188,410		350,145	8.35%	
1877	(4,550,699)		478,509	10.51%	
1878	4,550,699	1,208,266	824,726	18.12%	68.25%
1890	5,049,729	1,315,473	951,490	18.84%	72.33%
1894	5,131,205		986,233	19.22%	
1895	5,237,280		493,869	9.42%	
1910	(5,960,056)	(1,472,908)	696,171	11.68%	47.47%
1911	5,960,056	1,472,908	846,801	14.21%	57.49%
1913	(6,130,892)	(1,494,558)	397,038	6.47%	26.57%
1915	6,130,892	1,494,558	471,557	7.69%	31.55%
1918	(6,130,892)	(1,494,558)	900,000	14.67%	60.22%
1925	6,032,991	1,535,651	574,260	9.52%	37.40%
1928	6,634,300		1,092,591	16.48%	
1933	7,057,400		1,238,224	17.55%	
1934	7,147,000		588,957	8.24%	
1942	7,830,026		772,578	9.87%	
1945	8,045,774		992,723	12.34%	
1949	8,333,400		1,128,198	13.54%	
1958	8,926,400		1,294,779	14.50%	
1965	9,122,000		1,357,495	14.88%	
1969	9,074,700		1,794,239	19.77%	
1973	8,978,200		2,096,020	23.35%	
1974	9,218,000		6,231,372	67.60%	

Sources: Philippe C. Schmitter, "The 'Régime d'Exception' That Became the Rule: Forty-Eight Years of Authoritarian Dominance in Portugal," in *Contemporary Portugal*, eds. Lawrence C. Graham and Harry M. Makler (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 3–46, at 36; Manuel Braga da Cruz, *O Partido e o Estado no Salazarismo* (Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1988), 196, 204; José Manuel Quintas, "Eleições para a Assembleia Nacional," in *Dicionário de História do Estado Novo*, eds. Fernando Rosas and José Maria Brandão de Brito (Lisbon: Bertrand, 1996), 1:290; Pedro Tavares de Almeida, *Legislação Eleitoral Portuguesa, 1820–1926* (Lisbon: Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda, 1998), 233; Teresa Rodrigues, ed., *História da População Portuguesa* (Porto: CEPESE/Afrontamento, 2008), 329, 340; Luciano Amaral, "New Series for GDP per Capita, per Worker and per Work-Hour in Portugal, 1950–2007" (Faculdade de Economia da Universidade Nova de Lisboa Working Paper Series 540, 2009), 31.

to all males aged 21 and older, regardless of literacy status. The electoral register jumped to more than 900,000, allowing 513,958 electors to cast their vote—a figure higher than the electoral register of 1915.

With the assassination of the “President-King” (Fernando Pessoa’s famous sobriquet), this legislation was repealed in favor of the 1913 Code. By 1925 there were 574,260 electors, less than 10 percent of the entire population, barely more than one-third of all adult males.⁷

This short survey suggests that the majority of the Republican elite that dominated between 1910 and 1926 held a conservative, aristocratic conception of the nature of their regime, downplaying the importance of involving citizens in public life and opening their political organizations to the emerging pattern of mass parties. Let us honor the minority within the Republican movement that kept alive the flame of universal suffrage in the face of mounting difficulties.⁸

The reliance on “revolutionary legitimacy” was a prominent feature of mainstream Republican thinking (the most radical measures were adopted *before* the elections for the Constituent Assembly). But “revolutionary legitimacy” tends not to be eternal and to wear thin if not refreshed or supplemented by other forms of political legitimization. Recent literature on changes of regime, namely, on the processes of transitions to democracy, emphasizes the importance of regular, free, and fair elections, with wide franchise as a key element in the consolidation of the new political landscape. I suggest that we might find a parallel in this situation.

The motive that has often been put forward as an explanation for the Republican leaders’ recanting of their earlier positions, that is, that they feared the conservative rural vote as having been influenced by the clergy and as being opposed to the reformist, secular republic, can be considered only a half-truth. The field was open for Portuguese Republicans to follow known examples. For instance, the promotion of schooling and literacy—so high on their agenda—and the ensuing emergence of the village schoolmaster as a counterpoint to the priest, could have resulted in a kind of *République au village* along the lines of what had happened in France.⁹ Excuses and short-sighted views do not replace the consideration of the full scope of opportunities.

To disenfranchise one’s opponents, whatever the argument—be it the need to have a “Republican Republic” or because “universal suffrage cannot be adopted in Portugal at present not only because of the threat to the stability of the current institutions but also because of the very autonomy of the country itself”¹⁰—is both a quick way to win elections and an expedient way to turn opponents into enemies of the regime. By recanting their promises, Afonso Costa and his followers were compro-

mising the legitimacy of their republic and hastening its end. Keeping the promise of universal suffrage might not have brought stable government, but it would have likely produced a regime with a more solid base.

Of course, extended voting rights do not always go hand in hand with democratic rights, which the Republic generally upheld, as the events following the demise of the First Republic were to demonstrate. Without public liberties and basic political rights, and with censorship and administrative or political manipulation of the census and voting procedures, the meaning of elections and formal voting rights takes on a different light. The consideration that “it is good policy to interest as many Portuguese as possible in the affairs of public business”¹¹ exhibits the post-Republican authorities’ understanding that a wider electorate was a powerful means of political legitimization; and the authorities acted accordingly. First, on the question of women’s voting rights, the Ditadura Nacional would grant women the right to vote, provided they were “heads of family” and had obtained secondary or university degrees,¹² a limited right later broadened twice under the Estado Novo: once in 1946,¹³ and again under Marcello Caetano. Law 2137, dated December 26, 1968, proclaimed the equality of men and women for electoral purposes, except for Juntas de Freguesia. Second, the electoral census could be enlarged by altering legislation or manipulating the registration process. The history of the authoritarian period was one of meandering back and forth according to the circumstances: for the plebiscite of 1933, the register was enlarged; it was then severely curtailed until after World War II, when it was gradually enlarged. However, the peak that had been achieved in 1933 would be surpassed, in terms of the percentage of the population registered, only under Caetano in 1969—that is, when a new leader sought to establish the basis of his power by combining the legitimacy of his old career inside the regime with a personal triumph at the polls.

After the First Republic, in the periods of Ditadura Nacional and Estado Novo, changes of power inside the regime were associated with a tendency to enlarge the electoral census and to call elections (in 1928, 1933, and 1969)—if only again to limit the census or other progressive measures once the new leader had been installed. This indicates that the authoritarian elite saw a link between voting rights and an expected consolidation of their power, which we may consider as an expression of some sort of populism, or Caesarism,¹⁴ but which seems to have eluded most Republican, democratic leaders after 1910.

3

The dawn of the Second Republic would be marked by the political will to match the new institutional solutions with the stances and proclamations of the opposition to the authoritarian regime. In this light we might recall the insistence on having direct, popular elections for the President of the Republic (a key point since Salazar changed the Constitution of 1933 in the wake of the popular mobilization that surrounded General Delgado's 1958 campaign); the reluctance to enshrine the referendum in the Constitution of the Second Republic (for fear of the antidemocratic use it had suffered in the 1933 constitutional plebiscite, the referendum was inscribed in the Constitution only in 1989); and, of course, the outright defense of modern universal suffrage.

In the wake of Law 3/74, issued by the Junta de Salvação Nacional in early May 1974, a committee was established to prepare a new electoral framework. This resulted in approval of two diplomas by the Third Provisional Government in November 1974, which established universal suffrage in its modern sense in Portugal. As a result, the number of registered voters grew nearly threefold, from 2,096,020 in the 1973 legislative elections to 6,231,372 in the 1975 constituent election. This sudden increase ranks among the highest rises in the electoral body between two successive elections in Europe in the twentieth century.

The importance of this bold decision became evident when the path of the Carnations Revolution brought face-to-face those who claimed "revolutionary legitimacy" and those who claimed "democratic, popular legitimacy," based on the results at the polls. Any electoral arrangement based on restricted voting rights could not have produced the tremendous impact that the adoption of universal suffrage had in 1975.

After the confrontation of November 25, 1975, the demise of the radical left-wing camp paved the way for finalizing the transition and later for consolidating the Second Republic in Portugal as a democratic regime. However, the question of universal suffrage was no longer the central issue in the construction of a democracy in the last quarter of the twentieth century.¹⁵ New challenges had surfaced, and the Portuguese revolution brought to the fore the issue of public participation in civic and political life. Many observers and scholars who have analyzed the Portuguese experience have noted the high degree of popular mobilization that marked the "hot years."¹⁶ In a way, the presidential candidacy of Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho in 1976 (who earned 16.5 percent of the national vote and won in the district of Setúbal) was the swan song of

the grassroots popular movement that had erupted in the form of workers' committees or neighborhood commissions, among others.

The members of the Constituent Assembly were well aware of that genuine drive at the grassroots level and made room for the survival of those forms of political expression.¹⁷ Their aim, however, was to subordinate those bodies to the macrostructure of the state, which preferred more classical forms of organization and representation. The new political-administrative landscape designed to meet the requirements of Article 48 ("All citizens have the right to take part in political life and in the direction of public affairs of the country, either directly or through freely elected representatives") adopted a new mix of institutions: it created from scratch two autonomous regions in the archipelagoes of Azores and Madeira (Title VII), borrowed from historical tradition the local political level of municipalities and parishes, and passed on from the technocratic inheritance of Caetano's more progressive advisors the promise of a regional level of political administration (Title VIII).

The Constituent Assembly's general purpose was, thus, to consolidate and enhance the quality of Portuguese democracy by facilitating public participation and creating a multilevel system in line with the principle of *subsidiarity*. The Council of Europe defines the term as meaning that "the responsibility for carrying out tasks should be held at the lowest level of government competent to undertake them, and where necessary higher authorities should give support to enable them to fulfill the responsibilities that are appropriately theirs."

4

I would like to provide a view from below, as it were, gained in my time as *vereador* in Porto's Câmara Municipal (1994–1998) to emphasize the importance of subnational levels and forms of government. The eagerness with which the early constitutional authorities faced the question of municipal power can be grasped from this anecdote. The first municipal elections were held on December 12, 1976, in accordance with a bill passed in September. However, the bill defining the competences of those municipal bodies was passed only in October 1977 (Law 79/77); and the one that fixes the terms and limits for local finances would not be published until 1979 (Law 1/79). The local government born in this peculiar way owed a great deal to the "municipalist tradition," whose roots historians trace to preindependence times and whose modern form was crafted in the revolutionary 1830s.¹⁸ Apart from the

rhetoric of “municipalism,” the new municipal government represented a substantial break with the past once it became fully inserted into the world of democratic representation through universal suffrage. In this sense, it can rightly be claimed that “Portuguese local government . . . in its modern form, has been built up from scratch.”¹⁹

Much hope was placed on these new authorities, deemed to invert the Salazar inheritance of “a system that actively encouraged the population’s political apathy”²⁰ where local authorities “essentially played a role as units of administration of the [central] state.”²¹ These hopes were grounded on the apparent adoption of the most commonly accepted principle of local government in continental Europe: “general competence.” In 2003 the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe issued a statement in which it “welcome[d] the fact that the Portuguese municipalities have general competence to undertake activities affecting the interests of their citizens in accordance with each municipality’s own decisions.”²² In precise terms, “the general competence that municipalities possess in most European countries [consists of] the right to intervene and take initiatives with respect to any matter relating to the local community in so far as the law does not explicitly provide otherwise. . . . It bolsters the conception of the municipality as a general political authority which acts in its own right.”²³ The other side of the coin, alas, comes in the form of a much narrower definition of legal functions and the fact that resources are made available in close relation to the legally defined functions. The Portuguese system of local government comes close to the British alternative principle of *ultra vires*, “whereby local authorities may only carry out such responsibilities as are specifically assigned to them by parliament.”²⁴

Although it has been generally agreed that “Portugal is one of the European countries which follows a more neutral policy regarding the financial transfers from the center to the local authorities,” having set up a model of “relative autonomy,”²⁵ and thus assuring “the preservation of local independence in decision-making with respect to budgetary considerations and spending . . . [and] . . . reducing central government’s margin for manoeuvre and manipulation,”²⁶ the amount of resources channeled to municipal authorities is quite poor in comparative European terms. These conflicting realities are the source of a great deal of tension between the expectations placed on the shoulders of local mayors and the municipalities’ capacity to deliver and respond effectively to its electors.²⁷

The idea that Portugal has decided, since the revolution, to follow so-called European patterns in most political domains has long been established. It is therefore relevant to assess how the adoption of a European

model has affected subnational structures of government and their participation in public spending.

5

The trend in post–World War II Europe is to diversify and increase the complexity of territorial administration in response to public pressures toward self-government.²⁸ We can grasp the extent to which the trend to adopt a variety of subnational forms of government has encompassed Europe from table 9.2, which refers to the current 27 member countries of the European Union (EU 27).

This table shows that the mix of three subnational levels of government enshrined in the Constitution of the Second Republic is not actually in place: Portugal instead appears as a two-tier system. The second tier consists of the Autonomous Regions of Azores and Madeira; the parish level has insufficient power or resources to be considered an independent level. As a matter of fact, the implementation of a form of regional level of government was defeated in a national referendum held in November 1998, but it was not removed from the Constitution. For most practical purposes, however, Portugal should be compared with countries that have only one subnational level of government, because the two autonomous regions comprise only 3.4 percent of the nation's territory and only 4.6 percent of its population.

With this in mind, we may now compare the percentage of public spending channeled through subnational governments in the EU 27 (see table 9.3). This exercise offers a glimpse of the extent to which subnational governments have resources (and indirectly, competences) that allow them to respond to their citizens' requirements. The first conclusion we can draw from table 9.3 is that Portugal is among the poorest EU nations in spending for subnational government. EU nations spend an average of 33.5 percent of their total budget, but Portugal spends only 13 percent. Only Greece, Malta, and Cyprus allocate smaller shares of their budget. And our closest neighbors—Mediterranean, Catholic, Napoleonic, centralist, statist, bureaucratic, patrimonial (to use a variety of attributes often applied to this group of countries deemed to bear structural historical similarities)—are much more generous: France, 20.2 percent; Italy, 31.2 percent; Spain, 54.1 percent.

If one splits the €9.3 billion that Portugal allocated in 2007 to all subnational forms of government, the two autonomous regions absorbed about 20 percent of that sum (Madeira, 11.1 percent; Azores, 8.3 percent), leaving 80.6 percent to the other level.²⁹ Broadly speaking, the

TABLE 9.2 LEVELS OF SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION
(AS APPLIED TO THE 27 EU MEMBER NATIONS, 2007)

	Member Countries	Number of Countries
Countries with one level	Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia	8
Countries with two levels	Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden	12
Countries with three levels	Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom	7

Source: Dominique Hoorens, ed., *Sub-National Governments in the European Union: Organization, Responsibilities and Finances* (La Défense, France: Dexia, 2008), 37–39.

autonomous regions receive 2.6 percent of national public spending (20 percent of 13 percent), and the local authorities receive 10.4 percent of the grand total. The “transfers to local authorities” are of two kinds: 92.4 percent of these transfers go to municipalities, and 7.6 percent go to parishes (State Budget for 2009). Thus, parishes receive less than 0.8 percent of the nation’s public spending, and municipalities grab some 9.6 percent. Converting these rates to euro amounts per capita in 2005, we see that the average EU expenditure through local governments is €3,337 per capita, compared to Portugal’s €656 (less than one-fifth of the EU average). Figures for total subnational public spending per capita are €4,114 for the EU nations and €885 for Portugal (that is, 21.5 percent of the EU 27 average).

What may appear as a picture of Portugal consistently channeling fewer than average resources to local government or to the subnational system does not, however, hold true for the two autonomous regions. Let us compare the average per capita expenditure for the subnational system across the EU with what happens in Azores and Madeira. The EU’s spending of €4,114 for the subnational system in 2005 would compare to about €3,300 in Portugal for the autonomous regions alone: Madeira, €3,806; Azores, €2,885. Dominique Hoorens shows that those countries with the highest “regional” spending (including federated states) are all below the level for Madeira. Spain spends €3,100; Germany, €3,150. Even the Azores receive more than Austria’s regions, €2,800, or Belgium’s €2,500.³⁰ Clearly, Portugal remains a very centralized state, limiting the resources it makes available to local self-government, though it exhibits advanced forms of political devolution to the two autonomous regions. We can conclude that Portugal combines a

TABLE 9.3 SUB-NATIONAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IN THE EU 27 (2007)

Country	Percent of GDP	Percent of Public Expenditure
Austria	17.3	35.1
Belgium	21.0	42.9
Germany	19.6	43.2
Bulgaria	6.8	18.3
Cyprus	2.1	4.7
Czech Republic	12.0	27.4
Denmark	33.4	64.7
Estonia	8.4	25.4
Finland	19.6	40.2
France	11.1	20.8
Greece	3.1	6.7
Hungary	12.9	24.9
Ireland	6.8	19.9
Italy	15.6	31.2
Latvia	10.2	27.4
Lithuania	8.5	25.1
Luxembourg	5.2	13.2
Malta	0.6	1.5
Netherlands	15.4	33.3
Poland	13.5	30.8
<i>Portugal</i>	6.0	13.0
Romania	8.4	24.0
Slovakia	6.6	17.6
Slovenia	8.8	19.5
Spain	20.9	54.1
Sweden	25.0	45.0
United Kingdom	12.9	29.0
Total EU 27	15.7	33.5

Source: Hoorens, *Sub-National Governments in the European Union*, 31 and 77.

very generous treatment of the autonomous regions with a very parsimonious, even stingy attitude toward the vast majority of the territory and its inhabitants.

A fundamental question remains: Does this imbalance of resources and competences affect the well-being of the population? To cut short a long discussion, let me present table 9.4, which shows the evolution of

TABLE 9.4 EVOLUTION OF PORTUGUESE REGIONAL GDP PER CAPITA IN PURCHASING POWER PARITIES (EU 27 = 100)

	Portugal	North	Center	Lisbon	Alentejo	Algarve	Azores	Madeira
1995	75	64	64	104	70	79	60	67
2007	76	61	65	106	73	80	68	97
	+1	-3	+1	+2	+3	+1	+8	+30

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Contas Regionais, 2008—Preliminar, 9, www.ine.pt.

regional wealth, as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in Purchasing Power Parities from 1995 to 2007.³¹

In those twelve years, the country as a whole progressed from 75 percent of the EU 27 average to 76 percent. At the regional level, the North lost 3 percent its purchasing power. Other regions made modest gains: the Center and the Algarve, 1 percent; Lisbon and Alentejo, 2 and 3 percent, respectively. But the autonomous regions gained 8 percent (Azores) and 30 percent (Madeira). This very substantial difference casts doubts on the putative efficiency of centralization in the creation of wealth and promotion of development, and it points to the need for both further inquiry and discussion of the underlying prejudices that have militated against the process of creating constitutional regions in continental Portugal.

6

Many academics and politicians stress the imminent failure of the Portuguese Second Republic. Talk of impending doom tends to catch the audience's attention. Although I do not believe that such a breakdown is imminent, it is impossible to ignore the evidence of a severe decline in public approval of the current form of democracy in Portugal. The question of democratic legitimacy looms on the horizon once again.

Figure 9.1, borrowed from André Freire and José Manuel Leite Viegas, shows a rapid decline in the rate of satisfaction with the performance of democracy in the current regime, from nearly 80 percent satisfaction less than two decades ago to about 30 percent in 2010. This puts Portugal at odds with most of its partners in the European Union and elsewhere in the developed democratic world.³² Compared with a group of solid democratic countries, whose inhabitants' rate of satisfaction was around 65 percent from 2002 through 2006, Portugal in 2005 exhibited a rate of 47.6 percent. Scandinavian countries had rates above 70 percent (reaching 93.4 percent in Denmark); our neighbor Spain

rated 77.7 percent; and the United States 78.4 percent. Having fallen faster than the rate of satisfaction with democracy in other nations, the rate in Portugal is at a worrisome level today. These bare figures from opinion polls match a diffuse *fin de partie* atmosphere that has been captured by this line of graffiti seen on a Porto wall: “*Queremos mentiras novas*” (We want new lies).

The current republic and the last years of the First Republic are both plagued by the frailty of their legitimacy, but our contemporaries seem to combine a critique of the current state of affairs with a defense of the principle of democracy; they are very far from espousing an ontological critique of democracy itself, as was common in the 1920s. Indeed, the main thrust of complaints in our time is the limited scope of political participation.³³ This reaction can be understood both by the overwhelming presence of political parties that suffocate the popular voice and also by the limited scope for subnational organs of power, in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

However, political regimes evolve and change. The pursuit of the “quality of democracy” calls for an unending process of adjustment and improvement. The scope of changes can be of different magnitudes and may or may not imply a change of regime. The Portuguese Second Republic may survive for decades, or a more or less peaceful, substantial revision of the Constitution may bring a Third Republic. Much depends on how the Second Republic confronts the shortcomings it has so far exhibited. Among those is what I regard as an Ariadne’s thread that runs from the First Republic’s curtailing of voting rights rather than fulfilling its promise of universal suffrage, to the Second Republic’s vague and insufficient moves toward developing the conditions and institutional instruments for the people to exert their constitutional right to participate in the political process in ways other than mere regular voting for national organs of power or impoverished, weak municipalities. Both processes contribute to the emergence of a perception of an aristocratic, if not oligarchic, elite, and they undermine the political legitimacy of the Republic. Some of the First Republic’s acknowledged “errors” were aptly overcome later in the century, but the persistence of a conservative intellectual attitude that tends to downplay and disregard political participation at the grassroots and the contribution of the many, in countercurrent to recent developments in democracy in Europe and elsewhere, is particularly disturbing. Manifestations of contempt or disdain for what is closer to the bottom of the political and administrative ladder, or farther away from the capital, are so abundant as to make a choice of examples

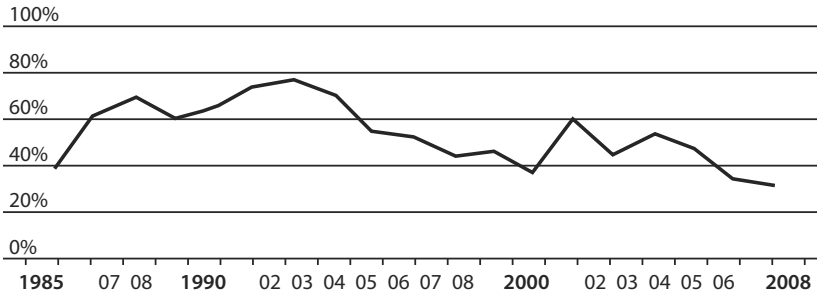


FIGURE 9.1. Rate of satisfaction with the performance of democracy. *Source:* André Freire and José Manuel Leite Viegas, *Representação Política—O caso português em perspectiva comparada* (Lisbon: Sextante, 2010).

quite difficult; and conservative intellectuals sing in chorus Salazar’s tune of the people’s “unpreparedness” for democracy.

In the pressing quest for solutions to shrinking political legitimacy, it is worth listening to some voices that echo in our memory, voices of some of our egregious ancestors that may bring surprising contributions, addressing in a fresh and inspiring way the models of territorial administration and self-government that pertain to the broader issue of the “quality of democracy.” I refer to a minority current within the Republican movement: Federalism.

Hermínio Martins distinguishes three branches of Federalism: “imperial and postimperial,” of which Spínola’s program contained in *Portugal e o Futuro* was perhaps the last example; “Iberian and European Federalism,” partly overcome by the process of European integration but quite alive in this very context; and “Federalism at home”—precisely the one that may be useful insofar as it covers what is perhaps wrongly termed “regionalism.”³⁴ Alves da Veiga, the veteran republican leader of the 1891 uprising in Porto, proposed in 1911 a federal constitution modeled on his book *Política Nova*. That constitutional document suffered the same fate as the constitutional draft later prepared by Sebastião de Magalhães Lima and a committee of assembly members, which has been labeled “a Republic of Municipalities,” for the extended decentralized powers it offered to local organs of self-government. This occurred long before Fernando Venâncio’s writing of the political-fiction novel *El Rei no Porto* (2001), an ironic story about the power of municipalities in the northern, monarchical part of a divided Portugal. The legacy of those leading early Republicans was later taken up, among many other examples, by the *Nucleo*

Republicano Regionalista do Norte led by Eduardo Santos Silva in Porto in 1924.³⁵

My point is not to demonstrate the existence of this current in the Republican tradition before and after 1910. Rather, I would stress the emphasis that federalists of all currents always placed on decentralized self-government for the territorial units, which would join together in the formation of the nation in a non-unitarian state. The suggestion I present to you is that republican federalism and regionalism offer pertinent thoughts and merge with the cause of those who call for the fulfillment of yet unrealized constitutional principles of popular participation and enlarged self-government as part of the quest for a better democracy; they are increasingly resentful of the ways the Second Republic has performed in this regard.

Some, like Fernando Marques da Costa, have openly argued that Portugal requires a Third Republic.³⁶ This new polity would replace the unitarian character of the state, a core defining value of the current constitution (whose pertinence is under dispute due to the strength of the autonomous regions and the notion of “progressing” or “evolving” autonomy), embracing a federalist-inspired new model that would not change the substance of present-day arrangements but would instead call, as we say in colloquial Portuguese, “the oxen by their names.” This, however, could entail other constitutional changes such as the acceptance of regional states and political parties, a bicameral parliament, and a redefinition of the status and role of the president of the Republic.

Portugal may, and most likely will, stay short of becoming an open federalist state. Spain is a model to bear in mind, having broken away from the very same mold of centralist tradition to achieve levels of development and political responsiveness that have no parallel in Portugal. Although Spain has not established an openly federalist state, its structure is quite close to that model, which three of our European partners have adopted (Austria, Belgium, Germany) and which is hotly discussed elsewhere (for example, in Italy).

The core political elite that has dominated the Second Republic may still be persuaded that what its members wrote in the 1976 Constitution (and have found no reason or no strength to change in the years since), what they have been so critical of in the “European example,” if actually implemented, is indeed compatible with the Second Republic and the Republican tradition and need not remain a postponed commitment. Their stubborn attitude in keeping Portugal one of the most centralized states in the European Union, their reluctance to implement a regional level of government, their preference to keep the scope of competences

of municipalities at the current low level, on the fallacious argument that the country cannot afford the financial lack of discipline that those reforms would entail (as if centralism would spare us the costs of financial irresponsibility . . .), is no less patronizing than nor substantially different from Afonso Costa's recanting on the promise to grant open suffrage to illiterate men on the basis that they were "people without any clear idea about anything whatsoever"—just to be reminded that the Republican leadership had not asked for proof of literacy from those who fought and died in Rua de Santo António or in the Rotunda.³⁷

The evolutionary capacity of the Second Republic—an idea that the experience of constitutional adaptation to new realities since 1975 seems to support—is currently under observation. Should it persist with the current trend of megalomaniac investments in the Lisbon area, the much-delayed process of institutional creation and political devolution to the regions, the restraints it places on the competences of local government, the semipermanent state of conflict with the autonomous regions, in a clear challenge to the respect due to the principles of equality and participation enshrined in the core values of modern democracy—then either Jose Mattoso's bitter remark that Portugal "is becoming a country of bits and pieces that nothing holds together"³⁸ imposes itself, or a Third Republic may actually be in the making.

FINALE

A final word on the future seems in order. The future, as Sir Karl Popper would say, is open³⁹—and I have no greater insight than anyone else about what will actually happen in the days ahead. However, because this paper is presented in the San Francisco Bay Area, on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley, I cannot escape the resonating echo of words by two illustrious men of the twentieth century who walked these very same streets and pathways, heard the Campanile bell toll, sat in the tranquility of these libraries or under these trees, and were inspired with eloquence to reveal fundamental aspects of their, and our, society, writing words I have carried in my memory for years and repeat now with great respect.

Allen Ginsberg, who is said to "see with the eyes of angels" (William Carlos Williams), perhaps further than most of us, opened his epic poem "Howl"⁴⁰ with this stanza:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving
hysterical naked,

dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry
fix

Ginsberg's lines brutally remind us all that rational behavior is far from being the only door opening up to the future. Other considerations do shape the agency of men. Among those, even if only as a worst-case scenario, one can recall Carlo Maria Cipolla's Third (and Golden) Rule on Human Stupidity: "A person is stupid if they cause damage to another person or group of people without experiencing personal gain, or even worse, causing damage to themselves in the process."⁴¹

History, therefore, is about contingency, largely shaped by our beliefs, our choices, our actual deeds, more or less rational, more or less impulsive. In other words, history is shaped by the use we give to our rights of citizenship, so intimately related to the very essence of the Republic as a field of combined liberties that in my daily life I endeavor to preserve, but whose fate I am unable to predict.

NOTES

1. Translated by Richard Zenith. The poem "Portugal" appeared in Alexandre O'Neill, *Feira Cabisbaixa* (Lisbon: Ulisseia, 1965). I am grateful to Richard for providing translations of Portuguese poems used in this text and to Teresa Almeida for having introduced us to one another.

2. This essay originated when I became involved in translating and editing Hermínio Martins's forthcoming book *As Mudanças de Regime em Portugal no Século XX* and preparing a sister volume on federalism in Portugal. These projects have been carried out in very close, friendly, and comprehensive contact with Hermínio, whose intellectual generosity and inspiration I am pleased to acknowledge, while retaining full responsibility for inaccuracies or errors that may have made their way into these pages. David B. Goldey generously read and critiqued earlier drafts, and his pertinent suggestions substantially contributed to the shaping of the final version. Hermínio and David would deserve this to be a better essay.

I wish to thank the organizers, and Professor Herr in particular, for their kind invitation to participate in the conference at which I first presented this content, and to FLAD for the material support provided.

3. Translated by Richard Zenith. The poem "25 de Abril" first appeared in Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, *O Nome das Coisas*, Part 2 (1974-75) (Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 1977), 76.

4. Pedro Baptista, "O lugar do 31 de Janeiro na História," *Tripeiro* 29 (2010) 7th series: 6-9.

5. Pedro Tavares de Almeida, *Legislação Eleitoral Portuguesa 1820-1926* (Lisbon: Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda, 1998), xxi.

6. Ibid.
7. Besides Tavares de Almeida's extended bibliography, see Maria Namorado and Alexandre Sousa Pinheiro, *Legislação Eleitoral Portuguesa. Textos Históricos. 1820–1974*, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional de Eleições, 1998).
8. Fernando Farello Lopes, *A 1ª República Portuguesa: questões eleitorais e deslegitimação*, 2 vols. (PhD diss., ISCTE, Lisbon, 1988).
9. Maurice Agulhon, *La République au village* (Paris: Plon, 1970).
10. Words of Deputy Sá Pereira in Parliament (1913), quoted in Tavares de Almeida, *Legislação Eleitoral Portuguesa*, xxiv.
11. Decree-Law 14802, December 29, 1927.
12. Decree-Law 19694, May 5, 1931.
13. Decree-Law 2015, May 28, 1946.
14. José Adelino Maltez, "Para uma caracterização do Portugal Contemporâneo—das eleições condicionadas à revolta do sufrágio universal" (paper presented at the symposium "Discussão Pública do Anteprojecto de Lei Eleitoral para a Assembleia da República," University of Coimbra, 1998).
15. The central issue is now the age at which voting rights are granted, with several countries having lowered the age to 16. In 1975 Portugal lowered the legal voting age from 21 to 18, where it remains in 2012.
16. For a good analysis and updated bibliography, see Diego Palacios Cereales, *O Poder Caíu na Rua: Crise de Estado e Ações Colectivas na Revolução Portuguesa, 1974–1975* (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2003).
17. The *Comissões de Trabalhadores* appeared then in articles 55 and 56, the *Comissões de Moradores* in articles 264 to 266; they are still present in the Constitution after several amendments.
18. José Mattoso, *Identificação de um País: Ensaio sobre as Origens de Portugal, 1096–1325* (Lisbon: Estampa, 1985); Rui Graça Feijó, *Liberal Revolution, Social Change and Economic Development* (New York: Garland, 1993).
19. Armando Pereira, "The System of Local Government in Portugal," in *Local Government in Europe: Trends and Developments*, ed. Richard Batley and Gerry Stoker, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 139.
20. Joyce F. Riegelhaupt, "Peasants and Politics in Salazar's Portugal: The Corporate State and Village 'Non-Politics,'" in *Contemporary Portugal: The Revolution and Its Antecedents*, ed. Lawrence C. Graham and Harry M. Makler (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 167–90.
21. Walter C. Opello, "Administração Local e Cultura Política num concelho rural," *Análise Social*, 15 (1979), 655–762.
22. Council of Europe Resolution 127, 2003, www.coe.int, Point 6.b.
23. Philip Blair, "Trends in Local Autonomy and Democracy," in Batley and Stoker, *Local Government in Europe*, 41–57, at 51.
24. Ibid., 50.
25. Gerry Stoker, introduction to Batley and Stoker, *Local Government in Europe*, 6.
26. Pereira, "System of Local Government," 139 (see note 19 above).
27. I have addressed this issue in "Robin Hood and the Sheriff of *Terreiro do Paço*," a paper presented at the Oxford Workshop on Portuguese Politics, Society and History, May 2009.

28. For recent trends, see Michael Keating, “Territorial Politics and the New Regionalism,” in *Developments in Western European Politics 2*, ed. Paul Heywood, Erik Jones, and Martin Rhodes (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

29. Paulo Trigo Pereira, António Afonso, Manuela Arcanj, and J.C. Gomes Santos, eds., *Economia e Finanças Públicas* (Lisbon: Escolar Editora, 2007). Percentages were calculated on figures for 2002.

30. Dominique Hoorens, ed., *Sub-National Governments in the European Union: Organization, Responsibilities and Finances* (La Défense, France: Dexia, 2008), 80.

31. “Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) are currency conversion rates that both convert to a common currency and equalise the purchasing power of different currencies. In other words, they eliminate the differences in price levels between countries in the process of conversion.” See the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) website at <http://www.oecd.org/std/ppp>.

32. André Freire and José Manuel Leite Viegas, *Representação Política: o Caso Português em Perspectiva Comparada* (Lisbon: Sextante, 2010), 352–56.

33. *Ibid.*, 356–61.

34. Hermínio Martins, “Portugal and Europe: The Federal Idea in Portuguese Thought,” in Occasional Papers of the Watson International Studies Centre, Brown University, 1997; and “O Federalismo no Pensamento Político Português,” *Penélope*, 18 (1998): 13–49.

35. António José Queirós, *Um Projecto Descentralizador: o Nucleo Republicano Regionalista do Norte (1920–1924)* (Porto: O Progresso da Foz, 2010). The leader of this movement, Eduardo Santos Silva, a doctor, professor, and sometime president of the Municipal Senate in Porto, was the grandfather of Artur Santos Silva, the current chairman of the commission for the Centennial Celebrations of the Republic—a clear example of continuity of our political elites.

36. See Fernando Marques da Costa, “Portugal: uma República Federativa,” *Expresso*, Jan. 6, 2009; and “‘Tomorrow Never Dies’: The Rise of the IV Republic” (paper presented at the Oxford Workshop on Portuguese Politics, Society and History, June 2003).

37. Vasco Pulido Valente, *O Poder e o Povo* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1976), 108.

38. José Mattoso, “Uma Ideia para Portugal,” *Público*, March 6, 2010.

39. Karl Popper and Conrad Lorenz, *O Futuro está Aberto* (Lisbon: Editoriais Fragmentos, n.d.).

40. Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1956), 9. The William Carlos Williams quote is taken from the book’s introduction, page 8.

41. Carlo M. Cipolla, *Allegro ma non troppo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1988). Let us not forget that the First Rule says, “Always and inevitably each of us underestimates the number of stupid individuals in circulation.”