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Broken Promises, Postponed Commitments

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**Abstract:**

The First Republic was a short period in Portuguese History which, nevertheless, left deep marks on the social and political tissue of the country. It was marred by instability. The political elite of the time recanted on their defense of "universal suffrage" and thus deprived the regime of a much needed popular base of support. The Second Republic that emerged from the Carnation Revolution instituted a democratic regime based on universal suffrage, and enshrined in its Constitution provisions for popular participation in a much wider scale than it has effectively offered up to the present. This manifests itself in the absence of an effective Regional level of power as well as in poorly endowed municipalities, and is reflected in the lowering of popular confidence in Portuguese Democracy shown in consecutive surveys. The capacity of the Second Republic to develop the principles of democratic participation granted in the Constitution is a test to the present decade, failing what a Third Republic may be looming in the horizon.



# BROKEN PROMISES, POSTPONED COMMITMENTS

Considerations on the political elite's resilient contempt for popular democratic participation in the Portuguese First and Second Republics and their problems of legitimacy<sup>1</sup>

Rui Graça Feijó<sup>2</sup>

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'Neil<sup>3</sup>

## 1.

The feats and achievements of the Portuguese First Republic are numerous, far-reaching, and enduring. They warrant the Republic ample credit to justify these Centennial Celebrations in which academic scrutiny and rigorous, dispassionate analysis march hand in hand with civic jubilation.

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<sup>1</sup> The background to this paper can be found in the author's involvement in translating and editing Hermínio Martins' forthcoming *As Mudanças de Regime em Portugal no Século XX*, and in the ongoing preparation of a sister volume on Federalism in Portugal. These have been carried out in very close, friendly and comprehensive relation with Hermínio Martins, whose intellectual generosity and inspiration I am pleased to acknowledge, while claiming full responsibility for inexactitudes or errors that may have made their way into these pages. David B. Goldey was the usual critical and generous reader of earlier drafts, whose pertinent suggestions substantially contributed to the shaping of the final version. Hermínio and David would deserve this to be a better paper

<sup>2</sup> I wish to thank the organizers – and Professor Herr in particular – for their kind invitation to participate in the Conference where this paper was first presented, and to FLAD for the material support provided.

<sup>3</sup> Translated by Richard Zenith. I am grateful to Richard for providing his translations of Portuguese poems used in this text and to Teresa Almeida for establishing the connection between the two of us.

Being the grand-son of a foot soldier who fought with the insurgents of 1910, a volunteer in Flanders in 1918, an active low-rank officer against the monarchist insurrection of 1919, and a life-long Republican in the Opposition to the authoritarian regimes, I am proud to be associated with this event.

The creation by the Provisional Government of the Universities of Lisbon and Porto (March 1911) can be singled out as an example of a myriad of reforming acts, all together composing the *Great Culture War* (Hermínio Martins), that have since been challenged, criticized, sometimes put on hold, almost banished in later regimes but, alas, 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 re-surface 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 Andresen).

Several attempts were made across the ideological field 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 16 years grounded on 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” – implying the Republic to be the last phase of what was a national disgrace, running from the French Invasions or the 1820 Liberal Revolution only to end in 1926. On the opposite ideological camp, a well known public figure, wittingly replicated: “The 19<sup>th</sup> century in Portugal ended in 1926 – and was followed by nothing” (Cutileiro).

Nice soundbites, no doubt – but wrong ideas. In my view, the Republic – be it considered as from the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1910, or from the day that Porto proudly celebrates every year as the first proclamation of the Republic (31<sup>st</sup> January, 1891<sup>4</sup>) - represents the fresh, early light of the new century's dawn. As such, I shall be concentrating on the branching forward from the Republic to later years, taking up the recurrent theme of political legitimization and how I sense a resilient attitude of contempt in the political elites, an Ariadne's thread that runs from the First well into the mature Second Republic of our days, diminishing and despising the importance of popular participation as a means of acquiring political legitimacy.

## 2.

The political regime to which we attribute the responsibility for a bold reforming program with considerable implications in the shaping of our twentieth century lasted a mere 16 years and, paradoxically, was a fragile political entity. The catalogue of shortcomings, difficulties and incapacities bears comparison to Leporello's aria in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* : 7 Parliaments, 9 Presidents, 45 Governments, countless coups, political violence in a significant scale, almost endemic civil unrest. The First Republic was no 'brief shining moment' we could call our Camelot.

Why then did the Republic, armed with such a strong reforming agenda which echoed so deep into the flesh of the Nation that it endured beyond its breakdown, fail to stabilize and, in the end, to survive?

I shall pick up one critical aspect among many that I cannot review here: once it become the power of the land, the Republican leadership recanted on its promise – going as far back as the Republican Program of 11 January 1891, if not before - to adopt "universal suffrage", whatever meaning this expression might have in that

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<sup>4</sup> Pedro Baptista "O lugar do 31 de Janeiro na História", *Tripeiro*, 7th series, XXIX (1) 2010, pp. 6-9

particular historical juncture, a progressive measure that would seem fit for what was then only the third Republic in Europe.

**TABLE 1**  
**Evolution of population and registered electors**

YEAR	(1) POPULATION	(2) ADULT MALES	(3) REGISTERED ELECTORS	(4) (3)/(1)	(5) (3)/(2)	Multiply factor
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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%	1.72
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%		0.49
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%	1.22
1913	(6,130,892)	(1,494,558)	397,038	6.47%	26.57%	0.47
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%	1.91
1925	6,032,991	1,535,651	574,260	9.52%	37.40%	0.64
1928	6,634,300		1,092,591	16.48%		1.90
1933	7,057,400		1,238,224	17.55%		
1934	7,147,000		588,957	8.24%		0.47
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%		1.32
1973	8,978,200		2,096,020	23.35%		1.17
1974	9,218,000		6,231,372	67.60%		2.97

Sources: Philippe C. Schmitter, "The 'Régime d'Exception' That Became the Rule: Forty-Eight Years of Authoritarian Dominance in Portugal" in Graham & Makler (eds) *Contemporary Portugal*, Austin & London, University of Texas Press, pp. 3-46, at p. 36; Manuel Braga da Cruz, *O Partido e o Estado no Salazarismo*, Lisboa, Editorial Presença, 1988, pp. 196 and 204; José Manuel Quintas (1996: 290); "Eleições para a Assembleia Nacional", in Fernando Rosas & José Maria Brandão de Brito (eds) , *Dicionário de História do Estado Novo*, Lisboa, Bertrand, 1996, vol. 1, p. 290; P.T.Almeida, *Legislação Eleitoral Portuguesa, 1820-1926*. Lisboa, Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda, 1998, p. 233; Teresa Rodrigues (ed.), *História da População Portuguesa*. Porto, CEPESE/ Afrontamento, 2008, pp. 329 and 340.;Luciano Amaral, ""New Series for GDP per capita, per worker and per work-hour in Portugal, 1950-2007", FEUNL Working Paper Series # 540, 2009, p. 31

The history of electoral rights in Portugal in the liberal period, as Pedro Tavares de Almeida has noticed, is “complex and contradictory, not following a linear path of more or less regular movement towards universal suffrage”<sup>5</sup>. In this winding road – mapped in Table 1 - two milestones are to be singled out: in 1878 the censitary male suffrage in force since the first formal elections was substantially enlarged to the extent that the Republican press claimed that “the 1878 Law introduced universal suffrage under another name”<sup>6</sup> – although only 68.2% of all men aged 21 and above 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 electors fell from above 900,000 to less than half a million, short of 40% of the adult male population.

As a result of this brutal inflexion, “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 sitting in power, however, the Republicans lowered the banner and dropped the claim. The 1911 elections for the Constituent Assembly were disputed with an electoral code slightly adjusted, and electors rose from 696,171 in the last election under the Monarchy to 846,801 (an increase of about 20%) – still falling short of the figures obtained under the 1878 legislation.

But 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 to vote in 1911: Carolina Beatriz Angelo. Women were explicitly excluded from the suffrage, and the criteria for men severely reduced. The electoral register dropped again below 400,000 voters, in line with what it was back in 1869 – while the population had grown from 4,3 to over 6 million. In 1915 the proportion of population allowed to vote had reached the level of... 1861!

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<sup>5</sup> Almeida, *Legislação Eleitoral Portuguesa 1820-1926*. Lisboa, Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda, 1998, p. xxi

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Almeida, *op. cit.*, p. xxi

One brief exception came in 1918: Sidónio Pais decreed that Presidential elections would be held by direct voting and suffrage extended to all male aged 21 and above, regardless of literacy status. The electoral register jumped to over 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” (Pessoa), his legislation was repealed in favor of the 1913 Code. By 1925 there were 574,260 electors, less than 10% of the entire population, barely more than one third of all male adults.<sup>7</sup>

This short survey suggests that among the majority of the Republican elite that dominated between 1910 and 1926 there was a conservative, aristocratic conception of the nature of their regime, downplaying the importance of involving citizens in public life and open their political organizations to the emerging pattern of mass parties. Honour be paid to the minority within the Republican movement that kept alive the flame of universal suffrage in the face of mounting difficulties<sup>8</sup>.

The reliance on “revolutionary legitimacy” was a prominent feature of mainstream Republicans (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 the change of regime, namely on the processes of transitions to democracy, emphasize 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 the Republican leaders’ recanting on their earlier positions, i.e., that they feared the conservative rural vote deemed influenced by the clergy and opposed to the reformist, secular Republic, can only be considered as a half truth. The field was open for the Portuguese Republicans to follow known examples: for instance,

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<sup>7</sup> Besides Tavares de Almeida extended bibliography, see Maria Namorado & Alexandre Sousa Pinheiro, *Legislação Eleitoral Portuguesa. Textos Históricos. 1820-1974* (2 vols). Lisboa, Comissão Nacional de Eleições, 1998

<sup>8</sup> Fernando Farelo Lopes, *A 1ª República Portuguesa: questões eleitorais e deslegitimação*. Lisboa, ISCTE (Doctoral dissertation, 2 vols), 1988

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 a *République au village* along the French lines<sup>9</sup>. Excuses and short-time 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 stability of the current institutions but also because of the very autonomy of the country itself”<sup>10</sup> – is a short way to win elections but also an expedite manner to turn opponents into enemies of the regime. By recanting their promises, Afonso Costa and his followers were compromising the legitimacy of their Republic, and hastening its end. Keeping the promise might not have brought stable government, but it would have likely produced a more solidly based regime

Of course, enlarged voting rights do not always walk hand in hand with democratic rights (which the Republic generally uphold), as the events following the demise of the First Republic were to demonstrate. In the absence of public liberties, deprived of basic political rights, subject to censorship and administrative or political manipulation of the census and voting procedures, the meaning of elections and formal voting rights must be seen in a different light. But the consideration that “it is good policy to interest as many Portuguese as possible in the affairs of public business”<sup>11</sup> denounces a comprehension by the post-Republican authorities that enlarged voting was a powerful means of political legitimization - and they 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<sup>12</sup>, a limited right later enlarged twice under the *Estado Novo*: in 1946<sup>13</sup>, then under Marcello Caetano. The Law 2137 of 26.12.1968 proclaims

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<sup>9</sup> Maurice Agulhon, *La République au Village*, Paris, Plon, 1970

<sup>10</sup> Words of MP Sá Pereira in Parliament (1913) quoted in Almeida, *op. cit.*, p. xxiv

<sup>11</sup> DL 14802, 29.12.1927

<sup>12</sup> DL 19694, 5.5.1931

<sup>13</sup> DL 2015, 28.5.1946



the equality between men and women for electoral purposes, except for *Juntas de Freguesia*.

Secondly, enlarging the electoral census could be done by means of alterations to the legislation and/or manipulation of the registration process. The history of the authoritarian period was one of meandering back and forth according to the circumstances: up to the Plebiscite of 1933, the register was enlarged; then severely curtailed until the aftermath of World War II, when it was gradually enlarged.

However, the peak that had been achieved in 1933 would only be surpassed, in terms of the percentage of the population registered, under Caetano in 1969 – that is, when a new leader sought to establish his own power basis 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 *Dictadura Nacional* and *Estado Novo*, changes of power (inside the regime) were associated with a tendency to enlarge the electoral census and call elections (1928, 1933, 1969) – if only to limit again the census or other progressive measures once the new leader had been installed - thus revealing 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<sup>14</sup>, 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 banner since Salazar changed the

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<sup>14</sup> José Adelino Maltez, “Para uma caracterização do Portugal Contemporâneo – das eleições condicionadas à revolta do sufrágio universal”, roneo, (Paper presented at the symposium *Discussão Pública do Anteprojecto de Lei Eleitoral para a Assembleia da República*, University of Coimbra, 1998)

Constitution of 1933 in the wake of the popular mobilization that surrounded General Delgado's campaign in 1958); the reluctance in accepting to enshrine the referendum in the Constitution (for fears of the anti-democratic use it had suffered back in the constitutional plebiscite of 1933, the referendum would not be inscribed in the Constitution before 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* (early May 1974) a committee was established, to prepare a new electoral framework, resulting in two diplomas approved by the Third Provisional Government in November 1974. Universal suffrage in its modern sense was finally adopted in Portugal, and as a result registered voters grew threefold, from 2,096,020 in the 1973 legislative elections, to 6,231,372 in the 1975 Constituent election. This sudden increase ranks amongst the highest rises in the electoral corps between two successive elections in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 polls results. Any other electoral arrangement based on restricted voting rights would not have produced the tremendous impact that the adoption of universal suffrage actually had in 1975.

After the confrontation of November 25, 1975, the demise of the radical left-wing camp paved the way to finalize the transition and later the consolidation of 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 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>15</sup>. New challenges had surfaced, and the Portuguese Revolution certainly contributed to bring to the fore the issue of *public participation* in civic and political life. It has been noted by many observers and scholars who analyzed the Portuguese experience the high degree of popular mobilization that marked the

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<sup>15</sup> In this respect the outstanding issue is now the age at which voting rights are granted, several countries having moved to the age of 16. In 1975 Portugal lowered it from 21 to 18 in 1974 and has remained stable ever since

“hot years”<sup>16</sup>. In a way, the presidential candidacy of Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho in 1976 (who polled 16.5% of the national vote and won in the district of Setúbal) was the swansong of the grassroots popular movement that had irrupted under the form, among others, of worker’s committees or neighborhood commissions.

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<sup>17</sup>. Their aim, however, was to subordinate those bodies to the macrostructure of the State in which more classical forms of organization and representation were preferred.

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 municipalities and the 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 general purpose was, thus, to consolidate and enhance the quality of Portuguese democracy by facilitating public participation and by creating a multi-level system in line with the *principle of subsidiarity*, which is to be understood, according to the words of the *Council of Europe*, 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”.

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<sup>16</sup> See for a good analysis and updated bibliography, Diego Palacios Cerezales, *O Poder Caíu na Rua. Crise de Estado e Acções Colectivas na Revolução Portuguesa, 1974-1975*. Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2003

<sup>17</sup> The *Comissões de Trabalhadores* appeared then on articles 55 and 56, the *Comissões de Moradores* in articles 264 to 266; they are still present in the Constitution after several amendments.

#### 4.

I would like use a view from below, borrowed from my time as *vereador* in Porto's *Câmara Municipal* (1994-98) to give some emphasis to sub-national 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 only passed in October 1977 (Law 79/77); and the one that fixes the terms and limits for *local finances* wouldn't be published before 1979 (Law 1/79).

The local government born in this peculiar way owed a great deal to the so-called "municipalist tradition", whose roots medieval historians trace to pre-independence times and whose modern mould was crafted in the revolutionary 1830's<sup>18</sup>. Apart from the rhetoric of "municipalism", the new municipal government represented a substantial caesure with the past since 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"<sup>19</sup>.

Much hope was placed on these new authorities, deemed to invert the Salazar's inheritance of "a system that actively encouraged the population's political apathy"<sup>20</sup> where local authorities "essentially played a role as units of administration of the

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<sup>18</sup> José Mattoso, *Identificação de um País. Ensaio sobre as Origens de Portugal, 1096-1325*. Lisboa, Estampa, 1985; Rui Graça Feijó, *Liberal Revolution, Social Change and Economic Development*. New York, Garland, 1993

<sup>19</sup> Armando Pereira, "The system of Local Government in Portugal" in Richard Batley & Gerry Stoker (eds) *Local Government in Europe – trends and developments*. Basingstoke and London, Macmillan, 1991, pp 134-145 at p. 139

<sup>20</sup> Joyce F. Riegelhaupt, "Peasants and Politics in salazar's Portugal. The Corporate Stae and Village 'non-politics'", in Graham & Makler, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-190

(central) state”<sup>21</sup>. These hopes were grounded on the *apparent* adoption of the most commonly accepted principle of local government in Continental Europe: “General Competence”. The *Congress of Local and Regional Authorities* of the *Council of Europe* issued a statement in which it “welcomes 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”<sup>22</sup>

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 provides otherwise (...). It bolsters the conception of the municipality as a general political authority which acts in its own right”<sup>23</sup>.

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 actually 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”<sup>24</sup>

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 centre to the local authorities” (Council of Europe), having set up a model of “relative autonomy”<sup>25</sup>, and thus assuring “the preservation of local independence in decision-making with respect to budgetary considerations and spending (...and...) reducing

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<sup>21</sup> Walter C. Opello, “Administração Local e Cultura Política num concelho rural” *Análise Social* XV (59), 1979, pp. 655-762

<sup>22</sup> CoE Resolution 127, 2003

<sup>23</sup> Blair, *loc. et op. cit.*, p.51

<sup>24</sup> Blair, *op. et loc.cit.*, p.50

<sup>25</sup> Gerry Stoker’s Introduction to Batley & Stoker, *op. cit.*, p.6

central government's margin for manoeuvre and manipulation"<sup>26</sup>, the amount of resources channeled to the municipal authorities is quite poor in comparative European terms. These conflicting realities are the source of a great deal of tension between the popular expectations placed upon the shoulders of their Mayors, and the Municipalities' capacity to deliver and respond effectively to its electors<sup>27</sup>.

The idea that Portugal has decided, after the Revolution, to follow "European" patterns in most political domains has long been established. It is therefore relevant to assess the extent to which the adoption of a "European" model has been done in terms of sub-national structures of government and their participation in public expenditure.

## 5.

The trend in post-World War II Europe is to diversify and increase the complexity levels of territorial administration in response to public pressures towards self-government<sup>28</sup>. We can grasp the extent to which the trend to adopt a variety of sub-national forms of government has encompassed Europe from Table 2, referring to the current 27 members of the EU.

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<sup>26</sup> Pereira, *op. et loc. cit.*, p. 139. For an alternative view, see Fernando Ruivo's extensive bibliography

<sup>27</sup> I have addressed this issue in "Robin Hood and the Sheriff of *Terreiro do Paço*", a paper given at the *Oxford Workshop on Portuguese Politics, Society and History*, May 2009

<sup>28</sup> For recent trends, see Michael Keating, "Territorial Politics and the New Regionalism" in Paul Heywood, Erik Jones and Martin Rhodes (eds), *Developments in Western European Politics 2*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002

TABLE 2

LEVELS OF SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENT EU 27			
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<b>Countries with ONE level of sub-national government:</b>			<b>8</b>
Bulgaria	Estonia	Lithuania	Malta
Cyprus	Finland	Luxemburg	Slovenia
<b>Countries with TWO levels of sub-national government:</b>			<b>12</b>
Austria	Greece	Latvia	Romania
Czech Republic	Hungary	Netherlands	Slovakia
Denmark	Ireland	<b>PORTUGAL</b>	Sweden
<b>Countries with THREE levels of sub-national government:</b>			<b>7</b>
Belgium	Germany	Poland	UK
France	Italy	Spain	

Source : HOORENS, Dominique Hoorens (ed.), *Sub-National Governments in the European Union. Organization, responsibilities and finances*. La Défense, Dexia, 2008

This table shows that the mix of *three* sub-national levels of government enshrined in the Constitution of the Second Republic is not actually in place: Portugal appears as a *two-tier* system: the Autonomous Regions of Azores and Madeira plus the municipalities in the whole country (the parish level being insufficiently endowed with power or resources to be considered as an independent level). As a matter of fact, the regional level of government was defeated in a national referendum held in November 1998, but not removed from the Constitution. It should be noted, however, that for most practical purposes Portugal should be compared with those countries which have only *one* sub-national level of government, given the fact that the two Autonomous Regions comprehend only 3.4% of our territory and 4,6% of its population.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TABLE 3</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sub-national Public Expenditure in the EU27 (2007)</b></p>
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COUNTRY	% GDP	% 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
<b>PORTUGAL</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>
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
<b>TOTAL EU 27</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>33.5</b>

Source : HOORENS, Dominique Hoorens (ed.), *Sub-National Governments in the European Union. Organization, responsibilities and finances*. La Défense, Dexia, 2008



Having this comparative frame in mind we may now compare the percentage of public expenditure channeled through sub-national governments in the EU27. This exercise offers a glimpse on the extent to which sub-national governments have resources (and indirectly, competences) that allow them to respond to their citizens requirements. The first conclusion from Table 3 is that Portuguese sub-national government is among the poorest among our partners. For an European average of 33.5%, Portugal channels only 13%. Only Greece, Malta and Cyprus allocate smaller shares of their budget. And our closest neighbors, “Mediterranean, Catholic, Napoleonic, Centralist, Statist, Bureaucratic Patrimonialist” (to use a variety of attributes often applied to this group of countries deemed to bear structural historical similarities) use this channel much more generously: France: 20.2%, Italy 31.2%, Spain 54.1% .

If one splits the €9.3 billion that Portugal allocated in 2007 to all sub-national forms of government, the two Autonomous Regions absorbed about 20% of that sum (Madeira 11,1%, Azores 8,3%), leaving 80,6% to the other level<sup>29</sup>. Broadly speaking, the Autonomous Regions get 2.6% of national public expenditure (20% of 13%), and the local authorities 10.4% of the grand total. The “transfers to local authorities” can also be broken into two: 92,4% for the Municipalities, 7,6% for the Parishes (State Budget for 2009), so what really ends up in the latter is less than 0.8% of public spending, and the municipalities grab some 9.6%

Converting these rates in actual Euro per capita (figures for 2005): the average European expenditure through *local* governments is € 3,337 compared to Portugal’s € 656 (less than one fifth). Figures for *total sub-national* public expenditure are, respectively, € 4,114 and € 885 (or 21.5%)

What appears as a consistent overall picture of Portugal channeling fewer than average resources to the local government or to the sub-national system taken as a whole does not, however, hold true when we single out the Autonomous Regions. Actually, we can compare the average per capita expenditure for the whole sub-

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<sup>29</sup> PEREIRA, Paulo Trigo Pereira, António Afonso, Manuela Arcanjo & J.C. Gomes Santos (eds.), *Economia e Finanças Públicas*, Lisboa, Escolar Editora, 2007. Percentages calculated on figures for 2002.

national system in Europe with what happens in Azores and Madeira. The € 4,114 seen above for the whole sub-national system would compare to about € 3,300 in Portugal for the Autonomous Regions alone (Madeira € 3,806; Azores € 2,885, in 2005). Hoorens shows that those countries with highest “regional” spending (including federated states) are *all* below Madeira’s level (Spain: €3,100, Germany: €3,150) or even the Azores (Austria: €2,800, Belgium: € 2,500)<sup>30</sup>. Clearly, Portugal remains a very centralized state, limiting the resources made available to local self-government, at the same time that is ready to exhibit advanced forms of political devolution to the two Autonomous Regions. We can conclude that Portugal combines a very generous treatment of the Autonomous Regions with a very parsimonious, or even stingy, attitude towards the vast majority of the territory and its inhabitants .

A fundamental question remains: does this imbalance of resources and competences project any reflexes on the well-being of the population? To cut short what is a long discussion, let me just present Table 4 showing the evolution of regional wealth, as measured by GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Parities from 1995 to 2007.

**TABLE 4**

Evolution of Regional GDP per capita in PPPs								
EU 27 = 100								
Year	Portugal	North	Centre	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 : INE								

In those twelve years the country as a whole progressed from 75% of the EU27 average to 76. Looking at the regional level, the North moved *back* by three percentage points. Two regions gained modestly one percentage point – the Centre

<sup>30</sup> Hoorens, *op. cit.*, p. 80

and the Algarve; two had moderate gains of two or three points – Lisbon and Alentejo. But the Autonomous Regions had gains of eight points (Azores) and 30 points (Madeira). A very substantial difference of performance that casts doubts on the putative efficiency of centralization in the creation of wealth and promotion of development, and requires both further inquiry and discussion of the underlying prejudices that have militated against the process of actual creation of the Constitutional Regions in the Continent.

## 6.

In many academic venues, as well as in several political environments, a discourse stressing the imminent failure of the regime under analysis is not uncommon. Catastrophism catches the attention of audiences. Yet, I do not believe that the Portuguese Second Republic is under imminent threat of breakdown. But, on the other hand, it is impossible to turn a blind eye on the evidence that points to a severe erosion on the rate of approval of the current form of Democracy in Portugal. The question of democratic legitimacy looms again in the horizon.

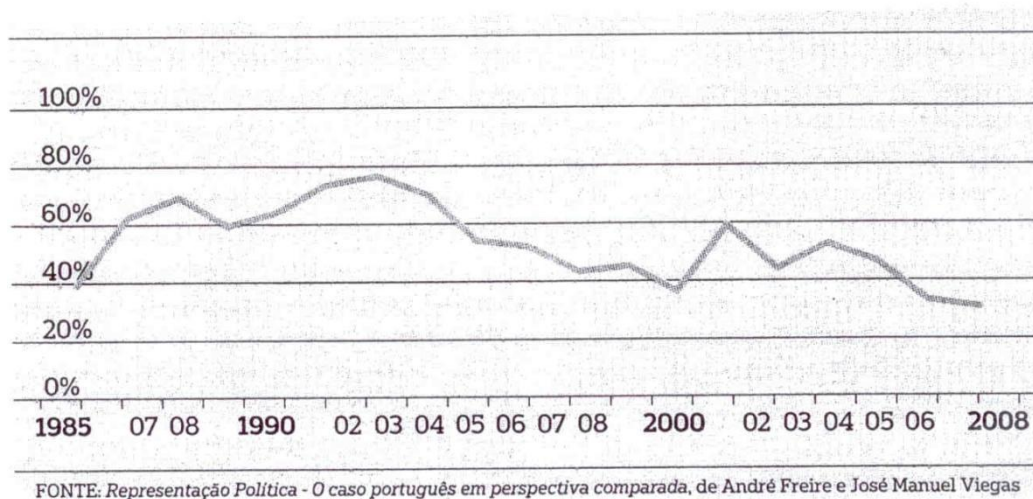
Figure 1, borrowed from the most recent publication by Freire and Viegas, shows a rapid decline in the rate of satisfaction with the performance of the current regime, and the fact that it has dropped from nearly 80% less than two decades ago to about 30% does place Portugal at odds with most of its partners in the European Union and elsewhere in the developed democratic world <sup>31</sup>. Compared with a group of solid democratic countries in 2002-2006, whose rate of satisfaction was around 65%, Portugal exhibited in 2005 a rate of 47.6%. Scandinavian countries had rates above 70% (topping 93,4% in Denmark), our neighbor Spain rated 77.7%, and the USA 78.4%. Having fallen faster than elsewhere, satisfaction with Democracy in Portugal is at a worrying level today, and these bare figures of opinion polls match a diffuse *Fin de Partie* atmosphere which has been captured by a graffiti on a Porto wall: “*Queremos mentiras novas*” (“We want new lies”) .

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<sup>31</sup> André Freire & José Manuel Leite Viegas, *Representação Política – o Caso Português em Perspectiva Comparada*. Lisboa, Sextante, 2010, pp. 352-356

**FIGURE 1**

**Rate of Satisfaction with the Performance of Democracy**



What constitutes a sharp distinction between the current situation and the last years of the First Republic, both plagued by the frailty of their legitimacy, rests on the fact that our contemporaries seem to combine a critique of the current state of affairs with a defense of the principle of Democracy, thus being very far from espousing an ontological critique of Democracy current in the 1920's. Indeed, the main thrust of the complaints refers to the limited scope of political participation<sup>32</sup> This reaction can be understood both by the overwhelming presence of political parties stuffing popular voice, and also by the limited scope for sub-national 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

<sup>32</sup> Freire & Viegas, *op. cit.* pp. 356-361

peaceful, substantial revision of the Constitution, may bring a Third Republic. Much depends on how the Second Republic confronts itself with the shortcomings it has so far exhibited, and amongst those, what I regard as an Ariadne's thread that runs from the First Republic attitude of curtailing voting rights instead of promoting its promise of universal suffrage, to the Second Republic's vague and insufficient moves towards developing the conditions and the institutional instruments for the people to exert their constitutional rights 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 undermine the political legitimacy of the Republic. Some of the First Republic 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 quite difficult, and play a revisited form of 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 echoing in the mist of 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.

According to Hermínio Martins, three branches of Federalism can be distinguished: "imperial and post-imperial" (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”<sup>33</sup>.

Alves da Veiga, the veteran republican leader of the 1891 rising in Porto, proposed in 1911 a federal constitutional modeled in his *Política Nova*, which suffered the same fate of the Constitutional draft prepared by a committee of members of the Assembly led by Magalhães Lima, which has been labeled as “a Republic of Municipalities” for the extended decentralized powers it offered to local organs of self government - long before Fernando Venâncio would write his political-fiction novel *El Rei no Porto* (2001), an ironic story about the power of the 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 (1924)<sup>34</sup>

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 claim the fulfillment of yet unrealized constitutional principles of popular participation and enlarged self-government as part of the quest for a better democracy, and are increasingly resentful of the ways the Second Republic has performed in this regard.

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<sup>33</sup> Herminio Martins, “Portugal and Europe: the Federal Idea in Portuguese Thought”, Occasional Papers of the Watson International Studies Centre, Brown University, 1997; and “O Federalismo no Pensamento Político Português”, *Penélope*, 18 (1998), pp. 13-49

<sup>34</sup> 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, sometime president of the Municipal Senate in Porto, was the grand-father of Artur Santos Silva, the current chairman commission for the Centennial Celebrations of the Republic – a clear trait of continuity of our political elites.

Some like Fernando Marques da Costa have openly argued that Portugal requires a Third Republic, replacing the Unitarian character of the State, a Constitutional core definition whose pertinence in the characterization of the current situation is under dispute due to the actual strength of the Autonomous Regions, and the notion of “progressing” or “evolving” autonomy, by an openly federalist-inspired new model that would call, as we say in colloquial Portuguese, “the oxen by their names”<sup>35</sup>. This, however, could entail substantial Constitutional changes such as the acknowledgement of regional states and political parties, double-chamber parliament, redefinition of the status and role of the President of the Republic, etc.

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 mould of our 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, on the other hand, is adopted by three of our European partners (Austria, Belgium, Germany) and hotly discussed elsewhere (e.g., Italy)

The core political elite that has dominated the Second Republic may still be persuaded that what they have written in the 1976 Constitution (and have found no reason or no strength to change in the last thirty five years), what they have been so critical in showing as the “European example”, if actually implemented, is indeed compatible with the Second Republic and the Republican tradition (to which most belong) taken as a whole – including those who were a minority in their days – and need not remain a postponed commitment. Their stubborn attitude in keeping one of the most centralized states in the European Union, their reluctance to implement a regional level of government, to keep the scope of competences of municipalities at the current low level, on the fallacious argument that the country cannot afford the financial

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<sup>35</sup> See his “Portugal: uma República Federativa”, *Expresso*, January 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

indiscipline those reforms would entail (as if centralism would spare us the costs of financial irresponsibility...), is no less patronizing nor substantially different from Afonso Costa recanting on the promise to 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... <sup>36</sup>

The evolutionary capacity of the Second Republic – an idea supported by the experience of the last thirty five years – 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 brakes applied on the competences of local government, the semi-permanent 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”<sup>37</sup> imposes itself, or a Third Republic may actually be on the making.

## FINALE

This Conference’s title is *The Portuguese Republic – Traditions, Achievements and Future*. A final word on the “future” seems thus adequate.

The future, as Sir Karl Popper would say, is open<sup>38</sup> – and I have no greater insight into what will actually happen in time ahead than any of you. However, being in the San Francisco Bay area, in the campus of the University of California, Berkeley, I cannot escape the resonating echo of words by two illustrious men of the twentieth century

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<sup>36</sup> Vasco Pulido Valente, *O Poder e o Povo*, Lisboa, D. Quixote, 1976, p. 108

<sup>37</sup> José Mattoso, “Uma Ideia para Portugal”, *Público*, March 6, 2010

<sup>38</sup> Karl Popper & Conrad Lorenz, *O Futuro está Aberto*. Lisboa, Editorial Fragmentos (n.d.)



who walked these very same streets and pathways, heard the bell toll of the Campanile, sat in the tranquility of these libraries or under the trees, and were inspired with eloquence to reveal fundamental aspects of their, and our, society, writing words I carry in my memory for long and 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 *Howl*<sup>39</sup> with this stanza:

*I have seen 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. Amongst 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*<sup>40</sup>

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 endeavour to preserve, but whose fate I am unable to predict.

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<sup>39</sup> Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*, San Francisco, City Light Books, 1956

<sup>40</sup> Carlo M. Cipolla, *Allegro ma non troppo*. Bologna, Il Mulino, 1988. Let us not forget that the First Rule says that “always and inevitably each of us underestimates the number of stupid individuals in circulation”.

