

THE SHADOW OF THE AUTHORITARIAN PAST IN THE IBERIAN PENINSULA FAILURES AND SUCCESS OF RADICAL RIGHT POPULIST PARTIES

Luca Manucci

Until 2018, the Iberian Peninsula was considered an exception in Europe because populist radical right (PRR) parties were not successful in elections, whereas in Italy, Austria, Poland, and Hungary, these parties not only obtain excellent electoral results but participate even in government coalitions at the national level. Other countries which have been considered equally immune to the populist radical right, such as Germany and Sweden, in recent years have witnessed a growing success of PRR parties such as Alternative for Germany (AfD) and Sweden Democrats. Germany is an emblematic case: after World War II, the country took responsibility for the Holocaust and all the horrors of the Nazi regime, and started coming to terms with its past, in a process known as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which means ‘working through the past’, producing a foundational work of *Geschichtspolitik*, a complex conglomerate of formal apologies, reparations, and memorialisation of the past.

Germany, for a long time considered as a negative case when it comes to the presence and success of populist far right parties, became a “normal” country in 2017 when AfD became the third-largest party winning 94 seats in the federal election. Despite having based its collective identity upon the responsibility for the tragic mistakes of the past, nowadays in Germany the normalisation of the Nazi past is no longer taboo. AfD has sought to downplay the crimes of the Nazi era and challenged the central role

ABSTRACT

Since their transition to democracy in the mid-1970s, Spain and Portugal were considered immune to populist radical right (PRR) parties. In the last two years, however, the so-called Iberian exception seems to have come to an end. The different patterns of democratization produced different collective memories of the authoritarian past, with Spain that tried to silence its past for over two decades and Portugal celebrating the revolution that ended the *Estado Novo*. In turn, these different collective memories can contribute to shed light on the resounding success of Vox at the 2019 elections, compared to the more modest but still significant electoral breakthrough of Chega in Portugal.

Keywords: populist radical right; Spain; Portugal; authoritarian past.

RESUMO

**A SOMBRA DO PASSADO
AUTORITÁRIO
NA PENÍNSULA IBÉRICA:
OS FRACASSOS E O SUCESSO
DOS PARTIDOS POPULISTAS
DE DIREITA RADICAL**

Desde a sua transição para a democracia nos meados da década de 1970, a Espanha e Portugal foram vistos como imunes aos partidos populistas de direita radical (PPDR). No entanto, nos últimos dois anos, a chamada exceção ibérica parece ter chegado ao fim. Ambos os países foram governados durante muito tempo por regimes autoritários duradouros, mas enquanto a Espanha transitou para a democracia através de um pacto entre as elites que protegeu os representantes do regime de Franco de julgamentos e processos criminais, a democracia portuguesa resultou de um golpe iniciado pelas Forças Armadas, que evoluiu posteriormente para uma revolução social. Estas diferenças nos padrões de democratização produziram diferentes memórias coletivas do passado autoritário, com a Espanha a tentar silenciar o seu passado durante mais de duas décadas e Portugal a celebrar a revolução que pôs fim ao Estado Novo. Estas diferentes memórias coletivas podem contribuir para explicar o sucesso retumbante do Vox nas eleições de 2019, em comparação com o avanço eleitoral mais modesto, mas ainda assim significativo, do Chega em Portugal.

Palavras-chave: direita radical populista, Espanha, Portugal, passado autoritário.

that the end of the authoritarian regime is normally followed by two decades of silencing, during which the past is avoided and selective amnesia is widely used to dampen the rawest effects produced by a divisive past. At some point later on, though, the past invariably catches up and breaks into the present. Trials, movies, debates among historians, memory laws, books, TV shows: there are many occasions in which the past can become relevant once again and enter the public debate. This is precisely what is happening in Spain and Portugal: the longest authoritarian regimes of the 20th century in Europe are now 45 years behind us, and yet they seem to be more relevant than ever. The past is back, the topics that were conveniently forgotten are resurfacing, and the Iberian exceptionalism is over.

Portugal traditionally portrays itself as a non-racist country, a belief grounded in what is known as *Lusotropicalismo*, or the idea that Portuguese were better, more tolerant colonisers, and more willing to accommodate other views/values compared to other European countries. While the public expression of overt prejudice is certainly stigmatised, more or less

of the Holocaust in German cultural memory. Examples are numerous, but it will suffice to cite the position expressed in 2017 by Alexander Gauland, party co-founder: “Hitler and the Nazis are just bird shit in more than 1000 years of successful German history.”

The growing success of a rhetoric that presents national pride as a positive trait and urges to liberate citizens from the sense of collective responsibility for the crimes of their ancestors, indicates that 75 years after the end of World War II nationalism, nativism, and populism are acceptable elements in public debates, and surely no country is immune to the populist far right. The politics of memory, in this regard, seems to play a fundamental role: we need debates about the past and how the past should be recorded, remembered, and disseminated, because countries often prefer to silence and to forget it. However, taking responsibility and memorialising the past in appropriate ways is essential to build collective identities compatible with the pillars of liberal democracy: minority protection, separation of powers, and free media.

Concerning Portugal and Spain, two countries that remained under authoritarian rule until the mid-1970s, the shadows of the past are extremely relevant when analysing the success of two populist far right parties such as Vox and Chega. Countries belonging to the second wave of democratisation such as Italy, France and Austria show

hidden forms of prejudice seem to be structural. Portugal is experiencing a surge in racist violence, and while the Black Lives Matter movement crossed the Atlantic and sparked rallies in Portugal, Chega organised a counter-protest to claim that “Portugal is not racist”. Chega’s leader, André Ventura, led the parade gesturing with his arm in a way that some considered a Nazi salute. Moreover, during 2020, several politicians, NGOs, associations, activists and movements advocating for the rights of migrants have been targeted and received threats. In July, a man killed Bruno Candé, a black actor, shooting him four times in broad daylight, in what the European Network Against Racism described as an explicitly racially motivated crime. In this context, racism in Portugal seems to be an elephant in the room or, to paraphrase the American writer David Foster Wallace, the Portuguese are like young fish unaware of what is water, because they are so used to it that they do not even notice it or reflect upon it, but take it for granted. With Chega obtaining the first seat in parliament for a PRR party since the end of *Estado Novo*, Portugal was forced to look at itself in the mirror. The reaction for the time being, however, seems to be one of denial rather than the beginning of a serious, critical reflection on the country’s authoritarian past, colonialism and racism.

PORTUGAL IS EXPERIENCING A SURGE IN RACIST VIOLENCE, AND WHILE THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT CROSSED THE ATLANTIC AND SPARKED RALLIES IN PORTUGAL, CHEGA ORGANISED A COUNTER-PROTEST TO CLAIM THAT “PORTUGAL IS NOT RACIST”.

In Spain, the return of the past and its ghosts has been, if possible, even more traumatic: on 24 October 2019, Francisco Franco’s body was exhumed from the ‘Valley of the Fallen’ (*Valle de los Caídos*) and moved to a cemetery in Madrid. Franco was, until that moment, the only European dictator whose body was still preserved into a mausoleum. The *Valle de los Caídos* was constructed with the help of forced labour between 1940 and 1958, and for several decades it has offered a standardised version of the Spanish Civil War. The memorial is one of the most visited monuments in Spain, and on the day of Franco’s reburial a large group of nostalgic supporters, including Antonio Tejero—the former Civil Guard lieutenant-colonel who led the failed military coup in 1981—gathered with banners and pre-constitutional flags at the cemetery. The left welcomed the reburial as a victory for democracy, while Santiago Abascal, leader of Vox protested the decision in the name of freedom and common sense.

The Iberian exception, which argued for the immunity of Spain and Portugal to the far right, came to an end in the past two years. Both Vox and Chega can be considered as populist and radical right parties: they criticise the ‘progressive establishment’ and the political elites in the name of a nativist understanding of ‘the people’. Both parties are the first PRR parties to enter the parliaments of Spain and Portugal almost half a century after the transition to democracy. Apart from this aspect, however, their electoral performance has not been comparable: while Chega in October of 2019 elected only one MP, its leader André Ventura, thanks to its performance in the outskirts of Lisbon

and Alentejo, Vox became the third most voted party in Spain at the November 2019 elections, with 15.1 percent of the votes and 52 seats. Moreover, the two parties propose a different construction of ‘the other’: in the case of Chega, aliens are quite traditionally identified with migrants and Roma people, while for Vox the biggest threat to the nation comes from separatism, in particular Catalan.

Several PRR and post-fascist parties (e.g., *Democracia Nacional*, *España 2000*, *Forza Nuova*, and *Alternativa Española*) participated in elections in Spain without ever obtaining any representation at the national level. In Portugal, the *Partido Nacional Renovador*, now renamed *Ergue-te*, has been participating at national elections for two decades but, unlike Chega, it never managed to elect any representative to the *Assembleia da República*. To understand how Vox and Chega succeeded in electing their representatives after decades of electoral failure of PRR parties, it can be helpful to look at the two countries’ authoritarian past, particularly at how the two regimes rose to power and then lost it, and how they decided to collectively remember those events. Indeed, memory is a struggle over power: through myths and memories it is possible to legitimate power holders, public discourses and political options.

Looking at the end of the Iberian exception through the lens of collective memories is the goal of this article. This operation can be fruitful for several reasons. First, Spain and Portugal share a very similar pattern of political evolution in the 20th century: both Spain and Portugal witnessed turbulent times after which an authoritarian regime took over power and held it for over four decades. Second, the two countries display very similar characteristics concerning their cultural roots, their political and electoral systems, the way in which they were hit by the Great Recession, while also sharing several socio-economic and political-institutional features. Third, while the two countries are comparable in many respects, the fact that they crafted very different collective memories of their authoritarian past can shed light on the different performances of PRR parties. The next section illustrates the similarities between the authoritarian regimes in the two countries, with a particular focus on the critical difference in the role played by the Spanish Civil War in the seizure of power by Franco. Subsequently, the paper proceeds to illustrate how the different types of democratic transitions in Portugal and Spain produced different types of collective memories about the authoritarian past. The conclusions reflect upon the possible developments in Spain and Portugal concerning the electoral performance of Vox and Chega and their coalition potential.

REPUBLICS, DICTATORS, AND DEMOCRACIES

This section presents an overview of the crucial historical passage from the Spanish Second Republic to the authoritarian regime of Franco through three years of devastating civil war, and the parallel passage from the Portuguese First Republic to the over four-decade period of authoritarian regime known as *Estado Novo*. While a detailed historical account of those events is beyond the scope of this work and has already been

the subject of many studies, what is relevant here is the different ways in which Franco and Salazar seized power, and that when they were forced to step down the two countries experienced two different types of transitions to democracy —revolution in Portugal and pact in Spain— which in turn produced different opportunity structures for the success of PRR parties. Given the parallel historical and cultural trajectories of the two countries, observing the critical junctures in which their paths diverge becomes decisive when examining the differences in the social acceptability of radical right ideas of power. The first step consists in observing how Franco and Salazar seized power after the failure of the chaotic Portuguese First Republic (1910-1926) and Spanish Second Republic (1931-1939).

GIVEN THE PARALLEL HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL TRAJECTORIES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES, OBSERVING THE CRITICAL JUNCTURES IN WHICH THEIR PATHS DIVERGE BECOMES DECISIVE WHEN EXAMINING THE DIFFERENCES IN THE SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY OF RADICAL RIGHT IDEAS OF POWER.

REPUBLICS

In 1908, in the main square of Lisbon, King Carlos I and his son were assassinated by the Carbonária, a secret society with anti-clerical and revolutionary goals initially allied with the Italian Carbonari. This led to the disbandment of the Portuguese monarchy after almost eight centuries, which became official after the 5 October 1910 revolution, a day still celebrated every year as a national holiday in Portugal, marking the beginning of the Portuguese First Republic. The following sixteen years constituted a period of almost continuous turmoil with a series of attempted coups, nine presidents, forty-four prime ministers, and a short-lived dictatorship. Sidónio Pais, a leading member of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Portuguese Constitution of 1911, led an insurrection in December 1917 becoming first Prime Minister and subsequently President of the Republic, thus amassing all the power in his hands and *de facto* suspending the institutional framework introduced by the same constitution he helped to draft, which earned him the epithet of “President-King” coined by Fernando Pessoa.

After a failed attempt, Pais was ultimately assassinated in Lisbon on 14 December 1918 by a left-wing activist. His dictatorship, as has been noted, already showed “some of the characteristics of the modern post-war dictatorship, especially those of a fascist nature”. The First Republic ended on 28 May 1926 (later renamed as National Revolution by Salazar), when a nationalist military coup like the one that brought Pais into power started the first phase of the Portuguese authoritarian period, known as *Ditadura Nacional*. General Carmona, republican but against democracy, was the leader of the most conservative and authoritarian wing of the military, and was able to balance the interests of Catholics and republicans. Carmona appointed António de Oliveira Salazar as Minister of Finance in 1928, and as Prime Minister in 1932. *Estado Novo* began in 1933 and lasted for the following forty-one years.

The situation leading to the establishment of the Spanish Second Republic was equally chaotic and unstable. After World War I, the country faced diffused poverty and strikes, until the coup of Miguel Primo de Rivera, on the 13th of September of 1923. The economic situation however, worsened again following the Great Depression, when Primo de Rivera and the King had to flee the country. The Second Republic was proclaimed on the 14th of April of 1931, after the republicans obtained a landslide victory in municipal elections. The new republican constitution introduced a secular democratic system and established the right to regional autonomy, which was exercised by Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia. Elections were supposed to take place but the constitutional assembly, in which radicals and socialists had the majority, postponed them and remained in power for two more years, until 1933. In the meantime, the Jesuits were banned and had all their property confiscated, the army was reduced, and landowners were expropriated.

General elections were held in November 1933, with the left increasingly divided and the right united under the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right (CEDA). In October of 1934, as a reaction against the presence in the government of the CEDA, which was reversing many measures approved in the previous years, a series of revolutionary strikes took place. These were supported by the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE) and General Union of Workers (UGT) in Catalonia and Asturias, bringing to new heights the tension and rivalry between the left and the right, in what became known as black biennium. This period was marked by diffused violence and repression, in an anticipation of the impending Civil War.

New general elections took place in February of 1936, with the left-wing Popular Front winning a majority of the votes by a thread. After the electoral results, violence began to spread across the country, while the right abandoned the parliamentary option and began to conspire to overthrow the Republic. In this scenario, the fascist Falange Española led by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of Miguel, became increasingly popular. Several political leaders were assassinated, and the climate quickly spiralled down into a climate of civil war. A nationalist coup in July of 1936 rapidly spread across the country, but neither the nationalists nor the republicans managed to quickly resolve the conflict in their favour. Francisco Franco, general of the nationalist army, achieved a complete victory only in April of 1939, after the war left in its trail 300.000 victims between fighters and political executions, plus probably another 200.000 victims as a result of mass extra-judicial murders, concentration camps, torture, and imprisonment.

DICTATORSHIPS

For the purposes of this study, debating about the fascist nature of the authoritarian regimes in Spain and Portugal is not necessary. In fact, what really matters here is that the two regimes displayed comparable characteristics, and that their idea of power has been stigmatised after the transition to democracy in both countries. Both regimes

come extremely close to the definition of authoritarian regime provided by Linz. *Estado Novo* and Francoist Spain based their power on the absence of political freedom and freedom of expression, the rejection and distrust of political parties, the presence of a powerful political police, with Catholicism and nationalism being two main ingredients in their ideological orientation. Both regimes evolved over time, especially after the end of World War II, given the defeat of fascism and National Socialism. There were also minor differences: for example, the Spanish single party was stronger and more relevant than the Portuguese *União Nacional*, while at the same time Spain showed a slightly broader pluralism compared to Portugal.

More importantly, both authoritarian regimes arose as reactions against the chaos of the democratic and republican forms of power that characterised Spain and Portugal before Salazar and Franco took power. Moreover, both regimes were particularly sceptical about the effectiveness of parliamentary democracy, given that in both countries this form of power had not proved to be successful in guaranteeing stability. What certainly matters for the purpose of this study, is the fact that Franco had to win a bloody civil war before he could take over

FRANCO HAD TO WIN A BLOODY CIVIL WAR BEFORE HE COULD TAKE OVER POWER, WHILE IN PORTUGAL THE FIRST REPUBLIC WAS REPLACED BY AN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME IN A RATHER NON-VIOLENT FASHION.

power, while in Portugal the First Republic was replaced by an authoritarian regime in a rather non-violent fashion. As a result, Franco immediately based his political action upon the need for centralisation, fighting the centrifugal tendencies associated with the Spanish Second Republic and the subsequent civil war. Franco tried to suppress the conflict between Madrid and the autonomous regions, freezing the centre-periphery cleavage but de facto making it even more relevant than before, ready to reacquire its centrality after the end of Francoism.

DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

Both countries transitioned to democracy in the same period. Portugal initiated its democratic transition on the 25th of April of 1974, when a military coup evolved into a social revolution known as the Carnation Revolution and ended with the enactment of the Portuguese Constitution in early 1976. The Spanish transition to democracy started with the death of Franco in November 1975 and was concluded with the 1977 general election (although some pinpoint its end as late as 1982, with the first peaceful transfer of executive power). As much as the two authoritarian experiences in Spain and Portugal were remarkably similar, the end of *Estado Novo* and of Franco's regime could not have been more dissimilar.

Spain transitioned to democracy through a so-called *ruptura pactada*, a transfer of power which the incumbent elites were able to negotiate because the main goal was to avoid re-opening the wounds linked to the traumatic memories of the Civil War. In particular,

the authoritarian regime and the newly formed democratic forces agreed to close the divisive past and build the rising democratic framework on a pact of silence or forgetting (*pacto del olvido*). Therefore, the first law adopted by the democratic parliament was an amnesty that made it impossible to prosecute members of the Franco regime for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The past thus became a taboo; the parties agreed not to legislate about it with the goal of achieving national reconciliation. Obsessively avoiding the repetition of a traumatic past became the priority of the new democratic order, and for two decades the plan appeared to be successful, with the past swept under the carpet and a collective selective amnesia as a key ingredient for a peaceful transition towards democracy.

In Portugal, the democratic transition did not include any negotiation or pact. In fact, democracy was only achieved after a tumultuous period. The Armed Forces Movement (MFA) initiated the transition with two main goals: to end colonial wars in Guinea, Angola and Mozambique and to create a more democratic system after almost half a century of authoritarianism. The revolution featured several radical measures such as expropriations, nationalisations, agrarian reforms, and purges. The atmosphere was so tense that, with the country facing the increasing risk of a civil war, right-wing forces mobilised against the transformations introduced by the left and side-tracked the revolution through a counter-coup on the 25th of November of 1975. The socialist party (PS) won both the constituent assembly election and the first free legislative elections, marking the victory of more moderate forces vis-à-vis extreme left or right forces.

POLITICS OF MEMORY

Portugal implemented a thorough process of lustration, while Spain avoided discussing the past at all. Portugal saw very radical purges (*saneamentos*) that reshaped the state administration, private companies, TV channels, radios and newspapers, although they were partially reversed in the following years. Moreover, extensive agrarian reforms and nationalizations left long-lasting legacies during the phase of democratization. At the symbolic level, Portugal implemented several symbolic measures of transitional justice. Marcelo Caetano, who served as leader of *Estado Novo* after Salazar's health forced him to step down, fled in exile to Brazil, and so did the members of the former regime who wished to follow him.

Although no criminal trials took place, the symbolic and material break with the past was clear. The government created the Black Book Commission on Fascism, which remained active until 1991 and published many volumes about the regime's repression, political prisoners, and censorship. The armed forces, together with left-wing associations and civilians, implemented the so-called Cultural Action Campaigns (*Campahnas de Dinamizaçao Cultural*) with the goal of educating the rural sectors of the population while creating a link with the army. Salazar's name was removed from public monuments, including Lisbon's trademark bridge over the Tagus River, renamed 25 April

Bridge. While the date of the republican revolution –the 5th of October of 1910— became a national holiday, the celebrations of the military coup of 1926 were abolished. A new holiday, with the official name of Freedom Day, is celebrated every year on the 25th of April. Finally, the constitution of 1976 banned parties with a fascist ideology, and despite some debate about its utility, it has survived subsequent constitutional revisions. Spain, given the nature of its democratisation process, followed a completely opposite path mostly avoiding a lustration process. Some efforts must be acknowledged: for example, pensions and indemnities for the Republican victims of the Civil War and for political prisoners in Franco’s prisons. However, since the overall aim was to suppress collective memories, a very important work of coming to terms with the past was neglected. In particular, trials for the regime’s criminal wrongdoings were never held, purges were virtually non-existent, and no restitution of confiscated property was granted to individuals. Moreover, a notable absence in Spain’s approach towards its authoritarian past is the absence of truth or historical commissions, which means that, among other things, the number of victims of the Civil War was never officially established. Also unlike Portugal, the presence of monuments, homages and commemorations allusive to the process of democratisation is scarce. Finally, monuments and street names celebrating Franco’s regime and the Nationalists’ dead from the Civil War were not quickly removed. By and large, institutional violence went unpunished, the public debate avoided approaching thorny issues concerning the past, and traumatic memories were buried for the sake of national reconciliation.

IBERIAN VERGANGENHEITSBEWÄLTIGUNG

Given the two radically different types of democratic transition that characterised Spain and Portugal, it is unsurprising that, in Portugal, the Carnation Revolution became a foundational myth of the new democratic system and the authoritarian past was overtly repudiated, whereas in Spain it was ignored and silenced. Collective memory is a conflictual process of bottom-up and top-down memory building, involving institutions and the public, the media as well as historians, which selects parts of the past to create a collective identity. Different typologies of collective memories can promote a process of coming to terms with the past, or *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, while others can contribute to silence the past.

THREE DECADES AFTER THE PACTO DEL OLVIDO, THE LEFT BROKE THE INSTITUTIONAL SILENCE ABOUT THE AUTHORITARIAN PAST AND THE CIVIL WAR, WITH THE PP ACCUSING THE PSOE OF OPENING PANDORA'S BOX THUS REOPENING THE WOUNDS OF A TRAUMATIC PAST.

The latter typology clearly characterises Spain, which based its collective memory on the principle of ‘letting bygones be bygones’ and built its democratic consolidation upon it. Spain, in order to avoid stirring the traumatic memory of the Civil War, decided not to deal with its past. For a long time, it constituted a paradigmatic case of successful transitioning based on the decision to

leave aside the most painful episodes of the past. Things, however, began to change by the end of the 1990s, when radio and television programmes, books, documentaries and films launched a memory boom, a trend that continued with campaigns to locate and exhume mass graves from the Civil War, culminating in the Historical Memory Law approved by the Zapatero government in 2007.

Three decades after the *pacto del olvido*, the left broke the institutional silence about the authoritarian past and the Civil War, with the People's Party (PP) accusing the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) of opening Pandora's box thus reopening the wounds of a traumatic past. Thirty years after the Amnesty Law of 1977, the Historical Memory Law approved by PSOE's PM Zapatero constituted —despite its limitations— the more forceful condemnation of the dictatorship ever issued by the Spanish government and finally provided material and symbolic reparations, as well as institutional preservation of the memory of the past. Unsurprisingly, while for some the law went too far, for others it should have been more extensive and daring. Interestingly, the past resurfaced also during the Great Recession when the *Indignados*, which later found political representation in Podemos, advocated for a real democracy in contrast with the “regime of 1978” —*el Régimen*— and the constitution approved by the post-1977 democratic order. Portugal, on the contrary, built its democratic system upon the celebration of the Carnation Revolution, the explicit rejection of the authoritarian past, and the institutional commitment to commemorate the democratic transition. Today, Portuguese citizens are mostly proud of the way the country became a democracy, and this attitude is more prevalent than in Spain. The stigma attached to the authoritarian regime is so strong and explicit that the whole party system has been ‘biased leftwards’, a bias formed as a reaction to the right-wing dictatorship. Some authors claim that between 1978 and 1995, with the right in power, the memory of the revolution has been devaluated, and that historical revisionism tried to modify the popular perception of the democratic transition and anti-fascist resistance, while from the mid-1990s a ‘rebellion of memory’ took place ending the whitewashing of the dictatorship. Overall, however, in contemporary Portugal, the memory of the revolution is a shared, foundational myth. Different interpretations, of course, coexist, and while the radical left stresses the importance of the 25th of April of 1974, the right emphasises the counter-coup of the 25th of November of 1975, which prevented the communists from bringing the revolution closer to non-democratic positions. The revolution has such a central place in Portuguese self-representation and collective memory that some even argue that it overturned hierarchies and unleashed a deep cultural transformation, generating a democratic habitus. Like in Spain, the past re-emerged during the Great Recession, when symbols of the transition to democracy were used by social movements, and the impositions of the troika were deemed detrimental to the gains of the revolution and essentially undemocratic.

CONCLUSIONS

The end of the Iberian exceptionalism can be seen as the result of a difficult economic situation following the Great Recession, signalling a growing disillusionment with mainstream parties after repeated corruption scandals, and possibly showing that the post-authoritarian liberal democratic system struggles to maintain its legitimacy.

While all these factors are relevant and may help to understand the growth of populist radical right parties, we must not forget to look at the bigger picture: the formation and influence of political culture, the role of collective memories, and the opportunity offered by swiftly changing structures at the global level.

Spain and Portugal followed a similar socio-economic and political-institutional trajectory for many centuries. In the 1930s, however, their path began to diverge after a critical juncture that created long-lasting and profound consequences: the Portuguese republican experience, marked by instability and a declining economic situation, degenerated relatively quickly into an authoritarian right-wing regime, while the Spanish Second Republic spiralled into a Civil War, and Franco seized power after three tragic years of fighting and half a million victims. While both countries prefer to develop selective amnesia when it comes to their authoritarian past, Portugal founded its democratic system on the myth of the Carnation revolution, while the Spanish transition to democracy did not generate any positive collective memory. Working through the authoritarian past implies its de-legitimation and stigmatisation, while silencing can neutralise the effects of the authoritarian past for some time, even decades, but a society cannot avoid coming face to face with past trauma and sooner or later is forced to brave it.

This is crucial because, in Spain, many traumatic collective memories that were suspended during the dictatorship and swept under the carpet after Franco's death, re-emerged with renewed vigour and the *pacto del olvido* came to an end. The Spanish party system is no longer a deal for two, but now includes five parties, three of which propose a populist rhetoric. The fact that this transformation is not taking place in Portugal, or is taking place so slowly that it is difficult to observe it in real time, suggests that the Portuguese party system is solidly built upon the myth of the Carnation Revolution, and while new parties are slowly emerging (*Livre*, *Iniciativa Liberal*, *Chega* itself), the mainstream ones have a firm grip on Portuguese democracy.

Right-wing populism thrives through *anemoia* —nostalgia for a time you have never known— or *Fernweh* —nostalgia for a place where you have never been. In other words, the 'good old times', the 'golden age', when the country was safe, and things were just fine. The broader the space for this kind of collective imagination linked to a mythical past, the stronger the chances that fabricated traditions will thrive, and PRR parties

THE END OF THE IBERIAN EXCEPTIONALISM CAN BE SEEN AS THE RESULT OF A DIFFICULT ECONOMIC SITUATION FOLLOWING THE GREAT RECESSION, SIGNALLING A GROWING DISILLUSIONMENT WITH MAINSTREAM PARTIES AFTER REPEATED CORRUPTION SCANDALS.

will have material to mobilise a significant part of the population. Vox has at its disposal abundant mythological material to be disassembled and reassembled to advocate for the return of a Spanish golden age. In particular, after the unilateral declaration of independence of Catalonia, Vox had the chance to own a very salient issue by presenting itself as the one party in a position to guarantee the territorial and political unity of Spain, as it was intended during Franco's regime as a reaction to the wounds of a fratricidal struggle. This operation, given the fact that the past is collectively remembered as a popular struggle against the right-wing authoritarian regime, is more difficult for Chega. However, this does not mean that Chega has no mythological material to work with: if Salazar's regime is unanimously condemned and the revolution is universally celebrated, the country has "conveniently forgotten" other aspects of its own past, in particular its colonial past.

In the months to come, it will be interesting to observe to what extent Chega and Vox will be willing and able to be perceived as possible coalition partners by the mainstream right, and to what extent they will remain stable actors of the party system or just one-hit wonders. The fact that they emerged as splinter groups from mainstream right-wing parties in itself shields them from some of the stigma while earning them greater visibility. Vox's *Koalitionsfähig* potential—or the ability to form a coalition—seems to be higher than that of Chega, also for the obvious reason of the electoral success the two parties enjoyed so far. Moreover, to constitute a credible alternative to the left-wing coalition PSOE-Podemos, Ciudadanos and the PP will probably need to form a coalition with Vox. Chega, on the other hand, seems to be more isolated at the far end of the Portuguese political spectrum, but things may change if the party manages to grow in the polls. In the long run, it might even replace CDS – *Partido Popular* as the natural coalition partner of PSD (*Partido Social Democrata*). To achieve this goal, Chega needs to be perceived as a respectable right-wing force, disassociating itself from extremism and with a clear policy concerning the party's links to far right, violent or nostalgic movements. Finally, Chega can also exploit the lack of debate about the authoritarian and colonial past. **RI**

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