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Dossier. 50 years of Scholarship on the Southern European Democratic Transitions: A Comparative Approach

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## From History to Memory: Representations of Regime Change in Portugal, Spain and Greece

*De l'histoire à la mémoire : Représentations du changement de régime au Portugal, en Espagne et en Grèce*  
*Grecia, memoria, significativa mnemónico, cambio de régimen, Portugal, España*

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### Résumés

English Français Español

This article aims at analyzing the memorialization of the political change in Portugal, Spain and Greece. The three transitions to democracy occurred in the same historical period and all three countries followed a common path of political democratization and integration in the institutional space of EEC/EU. Although this general background influenced to a certain degree those memorialization processes, each country followed its own path, according to the historical ground in which the dictatorships took shape, the inner characteristics of the political changes, the politics of memory operated by each state and the very post-dictatorial nature of each society. Considering the already existing academic production on the memory of the Transitions and the sociopolitical dynamics that have been focused on this past in each country, we make an original comparative analysis, identifying the main common features and singularities of these processes.

Cet article vise à analyser la mémorialisation du changement politique au Portugal, en Espagne et en Grèce. Les trois transitions vers la démocratie ont eu lieu au cours de la même période historique et les trois pays ont suivi un chemin commun de démocratisation politique et d'intégration dans l'espace institutionnel de la CEE/UE. Bien que ce contexte général ait influencé dans une certaine mesure ces processus de mémorisation, chaque pays a suivi sa propre voie, en fonction du contexte historique dans lequel les dictatures ont pris forme, des caractéristiques internes des changements politiques, de la politique de mémoire menée par chaque État et de la nature post-dictatoriale de chaque société. En considérant la production



académique déjà existante sur la mémoire des Transitions et les dynamiques sociopolitiques qui se sont focalisées sur ce passé dans chaque pays, nous faisons une analyse comparative originale, en identifiant les principaux traits communs et les singularités de ces processus.

Este artículo pretende analizar la memorialización del cambio político en Portugal, España y Grecia. Las tres transiciones a la democracia se produjeron en el mismo período histórico y los tres países siguieron un camino común de democratización política e integración en el espacio institucional de la CEE/UE. Aunque este trasfondo general influyó en cierta medida en esos procesos de memorialización, cada país siguió su propio camino, según el terreno histórico en el que se configuraron las dictaduras, las características internas de los cambios políticos, la política de memoria operada por cada Estado y la propia naturaleza postdictatorial de cada sociedad. Considerando la producción académica ya existente sobre la memoria de las Transiciones y las dinámicas sociopolíticas que se han centrado en este pasado en cada país, realizamos un análisis comparativo original, identificando los principales rasgos comunes y singularidades de estos procesos.

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## *Texte intégral*

# Introduction

- 1 Understanding the ways in which political change is remembered in Portugal, Spain and Greece implies considering the characteristics of each transitional process and the impact it had in the construction of contemporary societies in the three countries. As Feindt *et alii* have noted, in order to recognize a certain “mnemonic signifier”—be it, in this case, *25 de Abril*, *Transición* or *Metapolitefsi*—it is necessary to take into account its synchronic and diachronic dimensions. That is, in other words, to consider firstly how these mnemonic signifiers are determined by hegemonic political ideologies, cultural and social environment, judicial norms, etc. and, secondly how they are also articulated with other potential “mnemonic signifiers” that provide them context, sequence and continuity<sup>1</sup>.
- 2 The present article analyses the different interpretations of these mnemonic signifiers from the transitional moment onward. In a comparative fashion, we observe these processes and their main moments, taking into account the dynamics that allowed a coming to terms with the past and how the regime changes were constituted as objects of mnemopolitical disputes through their presences and absences. We explore how states and specific social actors—namely political parties, intellectuals, social movements and former resistance activists—have been defining specific politics of memory and silence in Portugal, Spain and Greece, over time.
- 3 Each transitional process is indeed singular in historical terms. The revolutionary process in Portugal has little to do with the “smooth” transfer of power from the dictatorship to the old political establishment in Greece, and even less with a transition led by the reformers within the regime in Spain. These markedly divergent trajectories influenced the different frames for the memorialization not only of the regime change but also of the dictatorships. Nevertheless, if we analyse the politics of memory and silence implemented in each case, in different temporalities, a rather different picture emerges. In all three cases, a complex configuration between state, civil society, generational renewal and international mnemonic trends has produced changing interpretations of the respective dictatorships and regime change that share some common features.

## **Framing the Transitions at the Outset: A Revolution, a Restoration and a New Start**

4 In the 1970s, the form of regime change determined to a large extent its synchronic perception: a *revolution* in Portugal, a *restoration* of the previous democratic regime in Greece and a *pacted transition* that offered a “new start” in Spain. In the Portuguese case, the military coup of 25 of April quickly turned into a revolutionary dynamic that marked the nature of Portuguese democracy. Challenging the image of a resigned people with “mild manners”, during the so-called “revolutionary biennium” (1974-1976) the repressive apparatus of the dictatorship was destroyed, new forms of popular organization were developed, and the independence of the former African colonies was established. The program of the victorious military forces would transform three verbs beginning with the same letter into a national goal: Decolonize, Develop, Democratize—the three Ds of the *MFA* (“Armed Forces Movement”)—embodied, simultaneously, a collective will for change and a strategic direction for the country.

5 In Greece, the term *Metapolitefsi* (“quasi-instantaneous regime change”) indicated the “slick” handover of power by the army to the conservative political elites. However, the rupture with the dictatorship became possible through the restoration of the limited democracy that had preceded the dictatorship. According to the parliament’s emblematic 4th Resolution on 17 January 1975, the dictatorship was a parenthesis of violent abduction of power, so democracy was never abolished according to law<sup>2</sup>. The regime change was related to the earlier mnemonic signifier of “post-war democracy”, establishing continuities with this period (the anti-communist legacy penetrated still all forms of political and social life) but also significant ruptures (the legalization of the communist Left and the abolition of monarchy), since the ultimate goal was a liberal democracy within the common European project.

6 In the Spanish case, the transition began gradually with a liberalization process of the Francoist reformers through negotiations with the democratic opposition. The result was an elite-driven democracy, which would not call into question the pre-existing social and political hierarchies. In this context, the past was considered an obstacle for democratic development and progress, modernization and Europeanization. The hegemonic political discourse “imposed” on the social imaginary the transition to democracy as a “clean slate”. In the absence of a suitable reference point in recent history, which could be transformed into an integrative common history, it was necessary to resort to an invented tradition<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the *Transición* constitutes still, despite the critical voices, the hegemonic unifying myth of the Spanish democracy. However, even if it facilitated the transitional process, the lack of discussion about the traumatic past in the public sphere, the so-called *pacto de olvido*<sup>4</sup> (“pact of oblivion”), would become unsustainable with the passage of time.

7 In contrast to Spain, the change operated in Portugal and Greece was made through a rupture that acknowledged the role of anti-dictatorial struggle. Greeks and Portuguese were the first countries in the post-WWII era which held their own repressive agents criminally accountable for human rights violations<sup>5</sup>, although these transitional justice measures were quite contained in space and scope. Furthermore, both Constitutions expressed a certain political consensus when speaking of the legitimization of the people’s resistance. In Portugal, from 1974 to 1976, a set of initiatives gave centrality to the memory of oppression and anti-fascist resistance: tributes to the victims of the dictatorship, expulsion and self-exile of figures from the previous regime, publication about the repression in the metropolis and in the colonial spaces, etc., “defining a practically unrepeatable stage in the process of remembering Salazarism”<sup>6</sup>. However, the anti-fascist resistance was not reified, in contrast to the resistance against the Colonels in Greece that acquired quasi-mythical proportions after 1974.

8 In the Greek case, the state was unwilling to implement politics of memory regarding the anti-dictatorial struggle. The rupture with the dictatorship was reinforced, however, by elevating the Polytechnic Student Uprising of 17 November 1973, and the supposedly united resistance against the Junta into the foundational myth of the “restored” democracy. The government celebrated the first free elections on the first anniversary of the Uprising in an effort to integrate it into a national narrative and to present the goals of the anti-dictatorial movement as aiming exclusively toward a parliamentary

democracy, far away from any prospect of a social revolution<sup>7</sup>. Despite the Left's efforts to institutionalize its commemoration, consecutive right-wing governments chose instead to celebrate the "restoration" of democracy on 24th of July (the date Konstantinos Karamanlis returned from his exile in Paris to assume power). Nevertheless, over time, socialists, communists and the Extra-parliamentary Left, along with student organizations and trade unions, established the Uprising as an alternative mnemonic signifier of the regime change.

9 In Greece, the broad rejection of the authoritarian past at the level of public attitudes, led the public authorities and municipalities to change the street toponymy and remove statues dedicated to Junta figures<sup>8</sup>, although no tributes to the dictatorship's victims were made. In Portugal, existing public references to the dictator were removed during the revolution. The Salazar Bridge changed to Ponte 25 de Abril, the Lisbon statue of Salazar with a university gown was targeted in the days after the 25th of April, while a statue in his home town, Santa Comba Dão, was decapitated. Although there are still around a dozen streets and avenues with the name of the dictator, a significant number of streets or monuments that evoked the Estado Novo's figures have been altered or removed from public space. However, the same did not happen in relation to the evocation of the colonial past, as the references to figures and events that explicitly evoke it remain unaltered, or were even the object of positive revalidation in the democratic period<sup>9</sup>.

10 Contrary to the other cases, the Spanish state did not acknowledge the role of the anti-Francoist struggle nor its victims<sup>10</sup>. The first principle introduced by the Transition was that everyone was equal in the face of the past<sup>11</sup>. The former regime and its opposition could be treated as equals as long as the deeply rooted historic differences that distinguished them remained officially unacknowledged by the state<sup>12</sup>. Although some compensation laws were implemented, they were not accompanied by an implicit recognition of the lack of legitimacy of the Francoist authorities, nor did they establish a direct link between anti-Francoism and democracy. This framework left intact the material traces of Francoism in the public sphere: "Franco was the face I saw everywhere" recalls novelist Antonio Muñoz Molina<sup>13</sup>. Leading figures of Franco's regime continued to name hundreds of squares and streets, while the Valley of the Fallen was "the most easily identifiable symbol with the regime"<sup>14</sup>. The monument was commissioned after Franco's victory in the Civil War to commemorate the dead of the Nationalist side. It was partly built by the forced labour of political prisoners and constitutes Spain's largest mass grave<sup>15</sup>.

11 However, in all three countries, civic organizations of former political prisoners pressured the state to adopt politics of memory. In Portugal, the *Associação de Ex-Presos Políticos Antifascistas* (AEPPA) was created in June 1974, promoted by the Maoist Left. The movement was engaged in the search for ways to bring political justice processes to bear on the repressive forces of the Estado Novo<sup>16</sup>. After 1977, AEPPA's activity would disappear and the *Tribunal Cívico Humberto Delgado* would gain preponderance. In the political field of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), the Union of Portuguese Antifascist Resisters (URAP) was created in 1976, and has since maintained a regular public presence around the memory of the anti-fascist resistance.

12 In Greece, an association specifically constituted for the promotion of the anti-dictatorial memory emerged from the very beginning. On 27 January 1975, members of resistance organizations from the entire political spectrum founded in Athens the Association of Imprisoned Exiles 1967-1974 (SFEA). The statute of the Association included a large number of objectives and actions: from prosecuting the crimes of the dictatorship to developing the spirit of unity and solidarity created between the prisoners and exiles<sup>17</sup>. Indeed, SFEA's members participated as prosecution witnesses in Greece's "Nuremberg trials"<sup>18</sup>, the trials against the coup's "ringleaders" and some of the most notorious torturers.

13 In Spain, grassroots actors who brought attention to the living legacies of the dictatorship and promoted the heritage of anti-Francoism also existed from the very beginning: Justice and Peace fought for amnesty for Franco's political prisoners, while

the Association of Ex-Prisoners of Catalonia and the Society of History and Justice of Andalusia demanded reparation for the victims<sup>19</sup>. Nevertheless, the decision by all major political parties to put aside the traumatic memory of the Civil War and the low political and official recognition of the anti-Francoist resistance led to the neglecting of the victims, and it was particularly visible in the absence of any state policy regarding this landscape strewn with unmarked mass graves. However, despite the state's disinterest, a first wave of mostly locally initiated spontaneous exhumations took place in the early years of the transition period<sup>20</sup>. These initiatives carried out by grassroots mobilizations were very abundant in certain provinces but the fact that they were local in scope explains why they have often been overlooked by historiography<sup>21</sup>.

14 In all three cases, the violence generated—through colonialism, political repression, military coups or civil conflicts—remained an uncomfortable and often silenced issue. The Portuguese case is particularly illuminating. Political change is inseparable from the defeat of the colonial project. The Colonial War lasted thirteen long years and ended with the emergence of five new nations in Africa: Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe; and a regime change in Portugal<sup>22</sup>. If the reckoning with the repression of the PIDE/DGS was quite timid, the one regarding the colonial war was simply non-existent. A particular Portuguese version of the *pacto del olvido* around the colonial violence lasted for decades. A political change in which the military played a key role did not offer the conditions to adjudicate a very recent past in which the typical atrocities of a colonial war (massacres of populations, brutal treatment of prisoners, etc.) were committed by the armed forces. Unlike the Spanish Civil War, the colonial war had just ended in the 1970s. The evocation of the war's violence and the complicity of significant sectors of the Catholic Church lead, for instance, to a heated controversy in 1979, following the suspension of the documentary series *Os Anos do Século*, after the exhibition of an episode considered as offensive to the feelings of the Portuguese people, marked by “unnecessary cruelty”<sup>23</sup>.

15 Similarly, in Greece, the Colonel's *coup d'état* in Cyprus and the subsequent Turkish invasion in 1974 constitute one of the most traumatic events in Modern Greek history. The military coup, against President Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus to force him to accept Athens as the “national centre” of Hellenism, provoked the Turkish invasion and the occupation of the northern part of Cyprus. Faced with the possibility of war with Turkey, the dictatorial regime collapsed<sup>24</sup>. However, state attempts to reckon with this “national trauma” have failed to a great extent, as in the Portuguese case, since no truth and justice process took place to convert it into national history. Although the coup leaders were prosecuted, those responsible for the *coup d'état* were never put on trial due to the very tense relations between Greece and Turkey. In the hegemonic political discourse, the coup leaders, the visible persons of the regime (already in jail) were considered the main perpetrators, while the “body” of the dictatorship, the junior officers seemed to strictly carry out orders.

## A New Phase of Memorialization: Problematizing the Transitions

16 During the 1980s, in Spain and Greece, the socialist governments proceeded to the implementation of politics of material compensation to the dictatorship's victims. A major difference was, however, that the Spanish socialists did not spend any of its considerable political capital on making justice for the old regime a political priority<sup>25</sup>. In Greece, PASOK's government intended to capitalize on the anti-dictatorial struggle by providing symbolic and material compensation to the dictatorship's victims: rehabilitation of the administrative status and pensions of the civil servants who had been persecuted for political reasons (Law 1543/1985); annulment of all the legal consequences of the dictatorship's convictions (Law 1863/1989) and recognition of the time of imprisonment and deportation for state pensions (Law 227/1994). Ex-political



prisoners played a crucial role as advocates. SFEA promulgated the rehabilitation of activists, the creation of the “Anti-Dictatorship Struggle Square” later renamed “Freedom Park” (1982), the official state-recognition of the resistance (1985), a public statue of the Greek army officer Spyros Moustaklis, who suffered permanent damage as the result of torture (1986), and the characterization of the former EAT-ESA torture camp as a historical preservation site (1997).

17 During the same period, in 1984, the Spanish PSOE government passed the Law of 8 June, which recognized the years spent in prison as social security contributions, while acknowledging for the first time the “struggle for liberty”<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, it was only in December 1986 that the members of the Democratic Military Union (UMD)<sup>27</sup> regained their active rights (Law 24/1986). The issue of the UMD was a matter of great symbolic importance, for although a number of Francoist judges, police and civil servants remained in office, the UMD’s democratic officers could not return to their positions in the army. Lastly, in 1990, PSOE granted the first compensations for the years of imprisonment. However, there was still no moral tribute to the anti-Francoist cause, and half of the applicants had their applications rejected due to the lack of documentary evidence to prove the deprivation of liberty<sup>28</sup>.

18 While PSOE did not pay public tribute to the anti-dictatorial struggle, PASOK, established in 1983 the Polytechnic Uprising as a commemoration day for primary and secondary schools. Finally, in 1999, parliament sanctioned the Uprising as “a day of honour to the Greek Youth and as a commemoration day of the Greek people’s Resistance against the dictatorship”<sup>29</sup>. Disputes over the significance of this historical event have never stopped over all these years. The controversies have not been restricted to its meaning but also to the question of the deceased. There are still segments of the Right and the extreme Right which dismiss the “tales of the Left” that exaggerate the “2-3 dead from stray bullets”, although it is certified that there were at least 24 fatalities<sup>30</sup>. During the 1990s, the massive demonstrations to celebrate the insurrection, often with violent clashes with the police, adopted the slogan, “The Junta did not end in 1973”, to denounce the omnipresence of the security forces in the rallies. This slogan would have an impressive afterlife in 2010 during the anti-austerity protests.

19 Despite the prosecution of the Greek Junta protagonists, the commutation of the sentences from death to life imprisonment and the exceptionally lenient treatment that they received in prison, suggests that there were significant lingering sympathies for the prior regime<sup>31</sup>. Indeed, the question of granting amnesty to the coup leaders remained open from 1978 to their death. In the 1970s, the political parties that tried to defend the Junta and its political figures had very limited success. Nevertheless, in the 1980s, ten per cent of the electorate, and one quarter of the voters of the right-wing New Democracy (ND) held positive attitudes towards the Junta<sup>32</sup>.

20 In Spain, the PSOE government continued the commitment of not turning the past into a weapon within the public discourse during its long period of majority government from 1982 to 1993. In 1985, the then Prime Minister Felipe González expressed his opposition to the withdrawal of Franco’s effigies, citing the need to turn the past into everyone’s heritage: “Some try to erase the traces of 40 years of dictatorship. It seems useless and stupid. Some others have made the mistake of knocking down Franco’s statue. I have always believed that if anyone thought it was worthwhile pulling Franco off a horse, he should have done so when he was still alive”<sup>33</sup>. However, faced with the danger of losing the 1993 elections, PSOE did not hesitate to insinuate that a victory by the right-wing Popular Party (PP) would mean a return to Francoism<sup>34</sup>.

21 In Greece, respectively, the PASOK government “opened” the Cyprus “national trauma” in order to delegitimize Karamanlis’ first transitional government. In 1986, the government set up a parliamentary committee to investigate the events of 1974, the so-called “Cyprus File”. The committee completed its inquiry in October 1988, documenting in 21,000 pages the chains of events that led to the coup. The question of the possible responsibilities of the political personnel who handled the second Turkish

invasion in August 1974 provoked heated debates between the MPs, and resulted in the final departure of the ND's MPs from the commission. The committee did not succeed in establishing truth and justice since criminal penalties did not fall within its remit. It validated, however, the anti-dictatorial consensus and the supposedly united resistance against the Junta.

22 In contrast, in Portugal, from 1985 a certain negative memory of the revolution which sought to block the expression of the memory of resistance started taking shape. Manuel Loff uses the notion of “memory screen”, borrowed from Henry Rousso, to point out how the memory of the dictatorship and the memory of the revolution are only understandable if taken as a whole. This process would be consolidated in the period of the so-called “cavaquismo”—the center-right governments led by Aníbal Cavaco Silva (1985-1995). This view proposed the theory of the two dictatorships: the Estado Novo was an authoritarian dictatorship that was followed by a totalitarian Marxist dictatorship, which briefly prevailed in the “hot” period of the revolution<sup>35</sup>. In this reading, political democracy was placed in opposition to the revolution, building an interpretation that understands political democracy as constituted “despite the revolution, and not because of the revolution”<sup>36</sup>. Luciana Soutelo saw the reinforcement of a conservative viewpoint in relation to the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, increasingly observed as a kind of “disorder” that was corrected by the 25<sup>th</sup> of November and the advent of the “democratic normalization”<sup>37</sup>.

23 This period also included the question of granting pensions to ex-PIDE officers. In 1992, a debate emerged, caused by the granting of pensions to two former secret police agents for “exceptional and relevant services provided to the country”. Although the dispatch was not confined to these two cases but also involved the military and their families, it was an example of economic reparation given to those who participated in the repressive apparatus of a regime whose defeat constitutes the genesis of Portuguese democracy<sup>38</sup>. The case was even more striking because, years before, the government had refused to grant a pension to Salgueiro Maia, leading figure of the Carnation Revolution. This “memory rebellion” was particularly acute at the time of the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 25<sup>th</sup> of April in 1994. The public visibility of the torturers in the media space was countered by criticism of what was seen as a historical revisionism that excused Salazarism. An example of this criticism was a petition signed by a diverse group of politicians, journalists and former resistance activists, condemning the “shameless campaign of whitening of the previous regime”<sup>39</sup>.

24 In Spain and Greece during the 1990s, criticisms of the Transitions were viewed through the lens of PSOE's and PASOK's hegemony. In the Spanish case, the PP promoted an image of transition as a fraud, blaming it for the PSOE's corruption scandals, and calling for a “second transition”, a political change that would close the era of “oligarchy” of the socialist hegemony<sup>40</sup>. In Greece, Nikiforos Diamandouros, a scholar who had been involved in transition studies in the European south in the 1980s, broached the “cultural dualism” theory: two distinct cultures had been at war since the foundation of the modern Greek state, an introverted “underdog culture” adhering to the “tradition” of the Byzantine and Ottoman past, favouring clientelist networks of power while remaining phobic of the West; and an extrovert culture that “draws its intellectual origins from the Enlightenment” and expresses the secular demands for modernization, prevalent in the more “developed” societies of Western Europe<sup>41</sup>. Accordingly, PASOK's administration was considered as part of the “underdog” culture, which impeded the country's modernization. Although manifested in the 1990s, this interpretation of the “unfinished” transition would gain greater impact on public opinion during the economic crisis.

## Memorialization in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A New Frame for Making Sense of the

# Troublesome Present and the Uncertain Future

- 25 From the 2000s onwards, changes in the national and international contexts led to shifts in the memorialization frameworks in all three cases. The systemic nature of the Europe-wide crisis, changes in the correlation of political forces and the universalized human rights discourse, along with the generational renewal led to significant shifts in the interpretations of our mnemonic signifiers. In all three countries, intense debates around the Transitions' nature erupted in the public space, with the Spanish case as the most prominent theatre of "memory wars". In Spain, the early critical dissident voices regarding the lack of a clear rupture with the dictatorship, as well as the recuperation of the grassroots movements<sup>42</sup> and the Left's role in the Transition acquired a wide diffusion. Transition to democracy was denounced as an elite-driven political scam, the "1978 regime"<sup>43</sup>, by left political parties such as United Left (IU), and particularly *Podemos*, as well as by intellectuals and grassroots movements, who claimed the necessity "to lay the foundations for a second transition towards a quality democracy, after twenty-five years of incomplete democratic transition"<sup>44</sup>.
- 26 Grassroots movements have been the main driving force influencing "official" politics of memory by pressing governments on a wide range of issues regarding the past. This social movement for the "recovery of historical memory" was given a big boost by the 1998 indictment of Pinochet on charges of crimes against humanity, by the Spanish judge Garzón<sup>45</sup>. Many citizens became mobilized by what they perceived to be a double standard in the Spanish justice system: its willingness to go after the crimes of another country's dictatorship while refusing to investigate those of its own former dictatorship<sup>46</sup>. According to this complex movement, the violence suffered by the victims of the dictatorship has to be rehabilitated in the public space by providing justice, truth and reparation. The existence of more than 180 associations shows the vitality of this phenomenon. Multiple factors led to this associational explosion from political and generational to cultural ones<sup>47</sup>. Among them, a number of researchers have highlighted the transfers of victim-centred approaches from Argentina to Spain<sup>48</sup>, which have been strongly influenced by the transnational discourse of Holocaust remembrance<sup>49</sup>.
- 27 In this context, the issue of the mass graves began to gain visibility<sup>50</sup>. The excavation of these "crime scenes" in various parts of the country has provoked heated discussions and public performances in family contexts, politics, historiography, media, arts and the public sphere, fueling a broader debate regarding the scale of the Francoist repression<sup>51</sup>. Quite different from state-sponsored transitional justice programs, the exhumations in Spain have incorporated additional methods of pedagogy and publicity<sup>52</sup>. They function as "mobile seminars", roaming the countryside and teaching citizens about the traumatic past<sup>53</sup>. By 2019, this grassroots movement had exhumed 740 graves containing 9,000 persons<sup>54</sup>. The exhumations as memory triggers generate sharp polemics among political parties but also within the associational movement, expressing different political sensibilities<sup>55</sup>.
- 28 Additionally, in 2011, the Commune, the Association of Prisoners and Victims of Francoism, was created. Their goal has been to vindicate the anti-Francoist resistance and to put an end to the dictatorship's impunity. They denounce the lack of knowledge about the last phase of Franco's regime and the idea of a *dictablanda* ["soft dictatorship"] by stressing the harsh repression in the 1970s. They don't consider themselves victims but living resistance fighters, who have the moral duty to give their testimony and transmit the anti-Francoist legacy<sup>56</sup>.
- 29 Due to the social movement's pressure, left political parties reinserted the past into politics by using historic anniversaries to undertake legislative initiatives<sup>57</sup>, while right-wing parties and the Catholic Church responded with their conservative memory politics<sup>58</sup>. In 2001, the Autonomous Community of Madrid approved aid to ex-political prisoners, although less than 1,000 received compensations<sup>59</sup>. The same year, however,



the PP government honored the policeman Melitón Manzanas, murdered by ETA in 1968 when he was head of the San Sebastián Political and Social Brigade. Manzanas was a torturer and, according to *Le Monde*, a former collaborator of the Gestapo<sup>60</sup>. The Supreme Court rejected the appeal of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) against the commendation, sustaining that “personalities of notable political importance under the previous regime have rendered important services to democracy. [...] One of the basic pillars of our democracy is to allow all those who have taken on democratic principles to be integrated, with total oblivion of their previous life trajectory”<sup>61</sup>. Additionally, in 2004, the right-wing government authorized several grants to the Francisco Franco Foundation.

30 Finally, it was during the mandate of the socialist José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004-2011) when the most systematic initiatives were carried out, culminating in the enactment of the Law of Historical Memory in 2007<sup>62</sup>. The law’s biggest contribution was that it opened an unprecedented public debate about the past, paying tribute to the victims. Even so, the law received harsh criticism from victim organizations, left-wing parties and international organizations regarding the “individual” reading of memory and the refusal to cancel the judicial convictions of the Franco era. The Catholic Church responded with rites of canonization<sup>63</sup>, and PP remained resolute in its opposition to any revisiting of the past. In 2008, judge Baltasar Garzón tried to use the Law to prosecute former Francoist officials but eventually was forced to relinquish his judicial post, thereby closing the judicial avenue for victims. During the subsequent rule of PP (2011-2018), the law was de facto abolished, since there were no funds allocated for its implementation. Most recently, these associative initiatives led the PSOE-*Unidas Podemos* government to adopt a new law, the “Democratic Memory” bill, which contains measures that address the dictatorship’s legacy, such as the closing down of the associations that glorify the dictator’s memory and the annulment of all the summary trials<sup>64</sup>. However, the state’s initiatives to address the past still provoke political tensions and discrepancies, demonstrating the lack of even a minimal consensus about how to remember the Francoist regime.

31 In Portugal, the interpretation of what had happened during the political rupture of 1974/5 would once again be at the centre of the debate. In 2004, on the 30th anniversary of April 25 the right-wing government of PSD and CDS/PP, promoted the motto “April is evolution”, suggesting a direct sequence between the final years of Marcelism—with its experience of “evolution in continuity”, maintaining the war and blocking freedom, while social and economic modernization were progressing, and the contemporary nature of the country at the dawn of the 21st century. The initiative produced criticisms from social and political sectors that understood it as an erasure of the disruptive nature of the Carnation Revolution, which led to several anonymous additions to the initiative’s outdoor posters, which completed with an R the word “evolution”.

32 Ten years later, in 2014, April 25 was again appropriated, but this time by anti-austerity protesters. In a political cycle in which the right-wing was again in power—with an external intervention and the imposition of austerity measures—April 25 featured in slogans, symbols and iconography used in the anti-austerity manifestations. Also, during this period some ceremonies or right-wing politicians’ public interventions were interrupted by groups of activists chanting “Grândola, Vila Morena”, an emblematic song and symbol of the revolution. This was also the case in Spain and Greece, where the *indignados*—citizen’s movements who protested against the crisis, unemployment and corruption, promoting a more participatory democracy—, questioned the ideal character of the Transitions, pointing out the continued presence of authoritarian legacies<sup>65</sup>.

33 Since then, recent years have seen some controversies of a historiographical and memorial nature surrounding 25 April and the revolution, such as those in 2012, 2019 and, more recently, 2020<sup>66</sup>. Some of these polemics were led by scholars, while others had a bigger social echo, such as the discussion in 2019 on the memorialisation of Salazar. In 2020 and 2021, debates on Salazarism, the economic and social

development and the social presence of PIDE/DGS also provoked a heated intellectual debate, while the death of Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho in 2021 triggered an extensive public debate, centred on his role in 1974 and beyond<sup>67</sup>. These debates have given rise to the re-emergence of narratives, coming from the Right, blaming the 25th April revolution for maintaining historical atavisms—and not as a time of unprecedented social, economic and political achievements—and evoking what would have been the dictatorial traits of the period. The creation in 2021 of an official commission responsible for carrying out, between 2022 and 2026, a programme of activities associated with the 50th anniversary of the 25th of April makes it predictable that disputes about this past will continue.

34 One aspect that has gained some new visibility is the relationship between political change and colonial past, following diverse and continuous public discussion on this last topic since 2017<sup>68</sup>. During the official commemorations of the 25th April in 2021, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa addressed the Portuguese colonial past and its colonial wars. The intervention was almost unanimously approved by politicians from different parties and political analysts. Such endorsement might be explained by the ambiguous nature of the speech: while recognizing the need “to study the past and to dissect it” and going against a glorifying vision of the empire, the president also warned about the danger of “excessive global self-punishments”<sup>69</sup>. However, a speech that addressed the issue of colonial violence, racism and slavery is not something to be dismissed in a country where public memory is still characterized by readings that imply the greatness of the “Discoveries” and the singularity of the “Portuguese presence in the world”. In fact, the discourse can be seen as a symptom of a need of the political elites to positioning towards a growing demand, especially among new, politicized generations, for a historical balance that takes into account the interdependence of the ruptures with the dictatorship and with colonialism, in the framework of critical view on the colonial legacies in Portuguese society today.

35 In Greece, in times of crisis, right-wing political parties, intellectuals and media demonized the *Metapolitefsi*—seen not as regime change but as the whole period of the Third Greek Republic—for being responsible for the crisis due to a supposed hegemony of the Left<sup>70</sup>. In this context, the “historical memory” of the Polytechnic Uprising was defamed, linked to the creation of a culture borne of the dominant left-wing ideology that glorifies resistance and excuses violence against the state<sup>71</sup>. This critique came as an answer to the transformation of the Polytechnic to a *lieux de mémoire*, an inter-generational space that facilitates the articulation of affective encounters and engagements with different temporalities, imaginaries, forms of political action, and transmission of discontinuous histories of resistance.

36 At the same time, Greek conservatives have transferred the focus from the people to the elites in their commemorations, by strengthening 24 July, the historic moment of the democratic “restoration” and not 17 November, the date of the Polytechnic uprising. Indeed, the official commemoration of the *Metapolitefsi* is still celebrated on 24 July. By doing so, the dominant political discourse emphasizes the role of the political elites in the process of the transition to democracy and not that of the popular movement which managed to shake the very foundations of the dictatorship but did not overthrow it. However, the formal elite-celebrated anniversary of the 24th of July does not occupy the central symbolic space of the Polytechnic.

37 In the same period, kitsch became a “light” way to remember the Greek Junta and effectively forget the systematic persecution of its dissidents<sup>72</sup>, since Colonels have been widely remembered for their grotesqueness and their ridiculous speeches<sup>73</sup>. Dictatorship has been also depicted as a time when people made money and felt safe and important infrastructure was built<sup>74</sup>. Indicatively enough, in 2017, an article written by the political scientist Stathis Kalyvas provoked sharp reactions. According to Kalyvas, the Junta contributed to the complete democratisation of the Right and through it to the country’s democratization. He argued the period was identified with great economic prosperity and social modernization; many arts flourished and the youth came massively closer to Western standards of life; last, the dictatorship was

easily and quickly overcome because it was a short break of no great significance<sup>75</sup>. Significantly, this narrative closely parallels the conservative narrative of the Franco regime in Spain and the right-wing reaction against the revolution and its legacies in the Portuguese case.

38 The growing critique of the left version of the Greek Transition was also evident in the controversy around a series of events installed by The Documenta 14 at the Municipality Arts Center at the EAT-ESA Freedom Park. The thematic core of Documenta 14 included issues that had become highly charged in the political debates of recent years in Greece, such as the Left's struggle against the dictatorship. Although some celebrated that Documenta14 converted the Freedom Park into a *lieux de mémoire* for the first time<sup>76</sup>, some others sustained that the victims of the Junta remained silent, since most events excluded them from their narrative<sup>77</sup>. Another critique was that the artists had not made a distinction between collective and individual practices or between different levels of struggle, promoting thus an equation of struggles for collective freedom and individual radical actors<sup>78</sup>. Despite these controversies, in Greece no discussion has taken place regarding the creation of a significant museum dedicated to resistance and repression. Small regional museums administrated by former activists without state support, such as the EAT-ESA, are still the rule, while the only Museum of Democracy, inaugurated in 2000, is situated on the unapproachable island of Ai Stratis and is dedicated mainly to political exile. Other important mnemonic places, such as the Yaros concentration camp, have been completely abandoned.

39 In Spain and Portugal, the question of the long-serving dictator's memorialization has provoked heated debates. In the summer of 2019, an old discussion about Salazar's musealization process in his homeland, Santa Comba Dão, returned to the public space, provoking intense controversy. Although, the idea dates back to the 1990s, the project had been reconfigured and appeared, two decades later, explained by the local mayor as an effort to enhance the tourist use of the figure of the dictator. The initiative led in the summer of 2019 to a petition signed by 204 former political prisoners and a letter addressed to the Socialist prime minister, António Costa, carrying approximately 18,000 signatures. In September 2019, the Parliament approved a vote condemning the museum, and in January 2021, the CEIS<sup>20</sup> (Centre of 20th Century Interdisciplinary Studies) of the University of Coimbra—which was providing scientific advice to the idea—disengaged from the proposal<sup>79</sup>.

40 In contrast, the long movement to create a museum to the victims of the dictatorship finally achieved success. In the last years, two spaces were inaugurated with the mission of articulating the memory of repression and resistance: the Aljube Resistance and Freedom Museum, opened on April 25, 2015, in Lisbon; and the National Resistance and Freedom Museum, currently being installed in the former fortress-prison of Peniche. The origins of the Aljube museum began with the creation of the Movimento Não Apaguem a Memória (NAM), which was formed in 2005. The association was constituted following a protest against the transformation into a private condominium of the building on Rua António Maria Cardoso, in Lisbon, where the PIDE/DGS headquarters was located<sup>80</sup>. In 2007 the movement took on a legal form, becoming an association and gaining the capacity to exercise public influence. An example of this was the participation in the launching of a process that in 2008 culminated in the approval of a parliamentary resolution recommending the government to “create effective conditions, including financial ones”, that make possible a series of measures aimed at disclosing “to future generations the struggles for freedom in the resistance to dictatorship and for democracy”. These included setting up roadmaps, promoting the values of democracy and freedom in schools, “supporting research programs dedicated to the Estado Novo” and creating a museum of resistance in the former prison of Aljube<sup>81</sup>. In July 2019, the Assembly of the Republic passed also a resolution that created a Museum of Resistance and Freedom in Porto, to be installed in the former headquarters of PIDE/DGS, and articulated with the museums of Aljube and Peniche.

41 In Spain, there is still no museum to the resistance or the victims. Despite the social movements' pressure and after ten years of protests, the decaying most infamous Spanish prison, *la cárcel de Carabanchel* was demolished. Carabanchel's panoptic silhouette was one of the most literal symbols of Franco's repression<sup>82</sup>. Local residents, historians, and family of former convicts fought for the central dome of this prison to be preserved, but today the only part that remains of the prison is the former entrance. However, popular pressure did lead to the exhumation of Franco, on 24 October 2019. Debates about the Valley of the Fallen's resignification had started from 2009, while in 2011 the socialist government formed an "expert commission" to decide on the future of the controversial mausoleum<sup>83</sup>. After a lengthy and tortuous legal battle, the socialist government eliminated what United Nations have described as an international anomaly: having a dictator buried in a state-run mausoleum that draws tourists and far-right sympathizers, while it contains the remains of nearly 34,000 victims of the Civil War. While left-wing parties celebrated the exhumation, representatives of the PP called it "a necro-show", and the far-right Vox talked about "the Transition's betrayal"<sup>84</sup>. The new "Democratic Memory" bill contains the conversion of the Valley of the Fallen into a place of collective memory, but no decision has been made on what shape this will take. In the meantime, thousands of Francoist symbols still persist in the country<sup>85</sup>.

## Conclusions

42 Distinct political and social contexts, shifting correlation of forces, competing political ideologies, different generations, as well as international mnemonic trends such as anti-totalitarianism and human rights discourse sparked constant resignifications of our mnemonic signifiers in a fractured public space where there has been no clear and stable consensus on how to reckon with the past. Although the divergent histories generated very different frames for the memorialization of the regime change and the dictatorship, it is striking that similar patterns of re-interpretations—and ongoing conflicts—took place in all three cases over the course of three historic periods.

43 In the early period, each transition created enduring and very distinct narratives about not only the actual transition to democracy but also about the dictatorship and the anti-dictatorial struggle, while the related "national traumas" remained an uncomfortable and often silenced issue. However, in all three countries, grassroots movements, consisting mainly of resistance activists and victims, fought from the very beginning to incorporate their memories into the master narratives, but often from the margins. The early 21st century, along with changes in the national and international contexts led to shifts in the memorialization frameworks. In Greece and Portugal, right-wing governments put into question the Transition's revolutionary legacy, while in Spain it was mainly the Left and the vigorous social movement who criticized the transition's "regime". The result in all cases has been a more conflicted realm of memory politics than ever before.

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## Notes

1 FEINDT *ET AL.*, 2014.

2 ALIVIZATOS, 2016, p. 51.

3 HUMLEBAEK, 2010, p. 187.

4 AGUILAR, 2008a, p. 251; LABANYI, 2009.

5 SIKKINK, 2012.

6 LOFF, 2015, pp. 31-39. For an overview of the dynamics between memory and justice, see also, among others: PINTO, 2004; PIMENTEL, 2013; RAIMUNDO and PINTO, 2014; RAIMUNDO, 2018; ALIVIZATOS, 2016, p. 51.

7 KARPOZILOS, 2019, p. 191.

8 SOTIROPOULOS, 2010, pp. 461-462; DALKAVOUKIS, 2015.

9 GEORGE, 2018; CARDINA, 2020.

10 GALLEGO, 2008, p. 123; VILARÓS, 1998; RESINA, 2001, pp. 83-125; SARTORIUS, 2007; YSÁS, 2009, pp. 393-408; VINYES, 2014, pp. 155-181; MUÑOZ, 2016, pp. 276-299.

11 MORÁN, 2015, p. 106.

12 DAVIS, 2015, p. 671.

13 MUÑOZ MOLINA, 2000.

14 REIG TAPIA, 2017, p. 270; RODRIGO, 2021, pp. 162-164.

15 OLMEDA, 2009.

16 On AEPPA see CARDINA, 2014.

17 Statute of the Association: <https://sfea.gr/2015-03-17-21-13-44/sfea-1967-1974> (in Greek).

18 ALIVIZATOS, DIAMANDOUROS, 1997, p. 28.

19 ENCARNACIÓN, 2014, pp. 102-103.

20 AGUILAR, 2017, p. 2.

21 DAVIS, 2015, p. 670; SERRANO MORENO, 2016, pp. 150, 153.

22 PINTO, 2001; AFONSO and GOMES, 2010; OLIVEIRA, 2014; CARDINA, 2020.

23 MAURÍCIO, 2013, p. 168; SIMÕES, 2020; CARDINA, 2020.

24 On this also see Balios and Muñoz's contribution in this dossier.

25 ENCARNACIÓN, 2014, p. 82; FYTILI, 2017, pp. 49-69.

26 AGUILAR, 2008b, p. 420.

27 The Democratic Military Union was a Spanish clandestine military organization, founded at the end of Franco's dictatorship with the aim of democratizing the armed forces and overthrowing the dictatorship. Its creation, in September 1974, was clearly influenced by the Portuguese MFA.

28 URQUIJO, 2006.

29 KOTEJA, 2013.

30 KALLIVRETAKIS, 2003, pp. 42-65.

31 KATSIKAS, 2014.

32 BEXRAKIS, NIKOLAKOPOULOS, 1988, p. 117.

33 CEBRIÁN, 1985.

34 JULIÁ, 2009, pp. 234-235.

35 LOFF, 2015, p. 64.

36 ROSAS, 2015, p. 203.

37 SOUTELO, 2014.

38 SOUTELO, 2014, p. 121.

39 LOFF, 2015, pp. 87, 98.

40 PASAMAR, 2015.

41 DIAMANDOUROS, 1994, p. 8.

42 RADCLIFF, 2007, pp. 343-372; SÁNCHEZ LEÓN, 2011, pp. 95-112.

43 GUSTRÁN, QUIROGA, 2019, p. 22.

44 "Por una segunda transición democrática y plurinacional", *El País*, 3 March 2004.

45 ROHT-ARRIAZA, 2005.

46 ENCARNACIÓN, 2014, p. 133.

47 AGUILAR, FERRÁNDIZ, 2016, p. 7.

48 BABY, 2011; BAER, SZNAIDER, 2015; FERRÁNDIZ, 2013; RUBIN, 2014; YUSTA, 2011.

49 ROTHBERG, 2009; TRAVERSO, 2011, p. 265.

50 See for example the Almudena Carracedo's prize-winning documentary *El silencio de otros*.

51 GÁLVEZ, 2006, pp. 25-51; GOLOB, 2008, pp. 127-141; FERNÁNDEZ DE MATA, 2010, pp. 279-303; FERRÁNDIZ, 2010, pp. 161-189; BEVERNAGE, COLAERT, 2014, pp. 440-456.

52 FERRÁNDIZ, 2013, p. 45; RUBIN, 2014, p. 112.

53 BEVERNAGE, COLAERT, 2014, p. 449.

54 "Décadas de retraso en memoria histórica condenan a la mayor parte de familias a no recuperar jamás a sus muertos", *El Diario*, 26 October 2019.

- 55 FERRÁNDIZ, 2006, pp. 11-12.
- 56 Manifiesto de la Asociación La Comuna, 2011.
- 57 ENCARNACIÓN, 2014, pp. 100-101.
- 58 BALFOUR, 2008, pp. 179-186.
- 59 EGIDO LEÓN, 2006, p. 269.
- 60 MUNIESA, 2005, p. 207.
- 61 “El Supremo avala la condecoración al Comisario Melitón Manzanas”, *El País*, 13 March 2003.
- 62 AGUILAR, 2008a, pp. 417-433. The Law established rights for personal reparation and recognition, the government’s responsibility for the exhumation of unmarked Civil War graves, the removal of Francoist symbols and the establishment of a national archive.
- 63 DÍAZ BURILLO, 2018, pp. 211-228.
- 64 <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/Paginas/enlaces/150920-enlace-memoria.aspx>
- 65 KORNETIS, 2019, pp. 71-87.
- 66 In 2012, the debate began with Manuel Loff’s critique of Rui Ramos’s *History of Portugal* and continued for several weeks in the pages of the *Público* newspaper, involving several other historians. In 2019, the motive relates to the debate on the installation of a museum in Salazar’s birthplace.
- 67 Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho was the operational head of the April 25<sup>th</sup> coup. During the revolutionary biennium he became associated with the military Left and a symbol of a leftist Third-Worldism. He was arrested in the 1980s for alleged links with the terrorist organization *Forças Populares-25 of April* (FP-25), which carried out several attacks, and was later amnestied.
- 68 CARDINA, 2020.
- 69 Available at: <https://www.presidencia.pt/atuabilidade/toda-a-atualidade/2021/04/discursodo-presidente-da-republica-na-sessao-solene-comemorativa-do-47-o-aniversario-do-25-de-abril/>
- 70 FYTILI, 2014, pp. 99-116; KOUKI, LIAKOS, 2015, pp. 49-61.
- 71 MAVROGORDATOS, 2009, pp. 968-972; ANDRONIKIDOU and KOVRAS, 2012, pp. 707-725.
- 72 NIKOLAKOPOULOS, 2013; KOURNIAKTI, 2017, pp. 339-368.
- 73 ANTONIOU ET AL., 2017, p. 292.
- 74 PANOURGIA, 2009, p. 151.
- 75 KALYVAS, 2017.
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- 77 MOUDOPOULOS, GIANNAKIS, 2019, p. 196.
- 78 STAVRIDES, 2017, p. 68.
- 79 On the issue see SÁNCHEZ, 2020, pp. 76-85.
- 80 Also worthy of mention is the creation, in 2015, of the *Associação de Exilados Políticos Portugueses* (AEP61-74), focused on the memory of exile and the desertion of the colonial war.
- 81 Resolução da Assembleia da República n.º 24/2008.
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- 83 TÉBAR HURTADO, 2021.
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