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Portuguese Democratisation 40 Years on: Its Meaning and Enduring Legacies

Marina Costa Lobo, António Costa Pinto and Pedro C. Magalhães

ABSTRACT

On the fortieth anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, it is pertinent to ask how Portuguese citizens understand their transition to democracy. In this article, some of the main findings concerning the meanings and legacies of 25 April 1974 are presented, drawing on the findings of two surveys focusing on Portuguese attitudes towards 25 April and fielded in 2004 and 2014, respectively, to a representative sample of the Portuguese population. Here we focus on the degree to which the transition is viewed positively and its social and economic legacies. In the final sections, the main findings of the articles in this special issue are discussed through a presentation of the main questions they answer and the new ones they raise.

KEYWORDS

Democratisation; legacies; quality of democracy; Portugal; Carnation Revolution

The year 2014 marked the fortieth anniversary of the Portuguese transition to democracy. On 25 April 1974, a military coup toppled one of the longest-lasting authoritarian regimes in Europe, the Estado Novo (New State) that had been installed in 1933. Spain and Greece followed quickly in the footsteps of the Portuguese democratisers in a process that culminated in the consolidation of Southern European democracies: a process that was sealed in the 1980s when Greece, Portugal and Spain joined the European Union (EU).

While Portugal was the pioneer of the third wave of democracy (Huntington 1991), it was not necessarily a model. Indeed, the Portuguese transition to democracy was fraught with institutional instability and uncertainty about the type of regime to be created. Between 1974 and 1976, the transition to a liberal democracy seemed endangered. It involved the displacement of more than 500,000 Portuguese citizens from the former colonies back to Portugal and the end of a 500-year empire. Portugal being a pioneer of simultaneous democratisation and decolonisation, in which the lack of political pluralism in political institutions and in civil society was remedied at the same moment, the first two years of the transition gave rise to a complex legacy. Portuguese democracy was shaped by a 'double legacy': the authoritarianism of the right under the New State and the authoritarian threat of the extreme left of 1974–75 (Pinto 2006; 2010).

At the height of instability during the initial transition period, which lasted between 1974 and 1976 and was termed the *Processo Revolucionário em Curso* (Ongoing Revolutionary Process – PREC), key legislation was passed that led to widespread economic nationalisations and the flight of capital and businesspeople from the country. Following a winding down

of PREC after 25 November 1975, a gradual path to normalisation set in, which was consolidated with the adoption of the constitution in April 1976 and the first legislative elections shortly thereafter. Nonetheless, the legacies of the 'transition by rupture' endured well into the 1980s. The new constitution established the Conselho da Revolução (Council of the Revolution), a body composed entirely of military officers which had the power to veto all government legislation and to introduce laws. This institution remained in existence until 1982. Additionally, the constitution enshrined the principles of a nationalised economy which were not overturned until 1989.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that '[i]n some respects, the extraordinary events of the mid-1970s are already ancient history, and the Portuguese constitution and economic system are both marked by a self-conscious escape from this period. [Thus] ... contemporary Portuguese democracy rests in part on the sublimation of this conflictive experience which tends to make for a highly fragmented view of these events, and risks making the history of those years the captive of selective memories' (Maxwell 1995, p. 1). To what extent have these momentous transition experiences – and the memory of the dictatorship – been 'self-consciously forgotten'? What effect have 40 years of democracy brought to the collective memory surrounding these events? And what legacies linger from this process in present-day democratic Portugal?

In 2012–13, there seemed to be a resurgence of the symbols of the transition to democracy. Public protests against the austerity programme negotiated with the Troika (International Monetary Fund [IMF], European Commission and European Central Bank) were often accompanied by songs that are symbols of the transition to democracy, such as 'Grândola, Vila Morena' – the song that was played on national radio on the eve of 25 April 1974 as a secret signal to the military to launch the coup that brought down the regime. Indeed, more than 40 years later, the revolutionary process that began on 25 April 1974 and the politics of the Portuguese democratic transition process are still present in the discourse of the political elite and media pundits in Portugal. One only needs to look back a few months to the October 2015 legislative election result and the ensuing process for forming the government, which involved the parliamentary rejection of a centre-right cabinet and the formation of a PS (Partido Socialista – Socialist Party) minority government supported by the parties to its left. The acronym PREC was repeatedly thrown around – either to describe a legacy the new agreements on the left had finally managed to overcome or, alternatively, as something that was being somehow repeated 40 years later.

Similarly, while some figures on the left have described the economic and social policies of the outgoing rightist government as 'challenges to the democracy born on 25 April', some on the right have noted that historical dates other than 25 April are the ones that truly mark the start of democracy in Portugal. Memories of the past in current political discourse can be even more specific and personalised. While the adjective *salazarento* (derived from the name of the dictator, António Oliveira Salazar) is an epithet often thrown against those holding views considered to be conservative or even undemocratic, figures such as Álvaro Cunhal (the historical leader of the Communist Party), Vasco Gonçalves (prime minister in several 1975 provisional governments) or Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho (a prominent military figure in 1975 who was later imprisoned for his role in the terrorist group FP-25 [Forças Populares 25 de Abril – Popular Forces 25 April]) can still be found in critical comments about everyday politics made by people who were little more than young children when these figures last made a difference in Portuguese politics. Can we, therefore, infer that the transition has

become more politicised because of the crisis the country experienced as a result of the severe adjustment programme of 2011–14?

To respond to these questions, this article is structured as follows. First, the main issues and legacies of 25 April are briefly laid out before we move on to present some of the key findings from the 2004 and 2014 surveys on attitudes towards 25 April carried out among a representative sample of the Portuguese population. The surveys were conducted by the Observatório da Qualidade de Democracia (Observatory for the Quality of Democracy), which seeks to understand the perceptions citizens have of democracy in Portugal today. The surveys included a number of questions about 25 April in order to achieve an understanding of the way in which the Portuguese view both the transition to democracy and its legacies. Here we present findings about the degree to which 25 April is viewed positively, in terms of both the event itself and its social and political legacies. The presentation of these data serves as an introduction to the various articles contained in the special issue. In the final section, we will discuss the main questions answered and the new ones raised, and how they contribute to our understanding of how the past influences current political attitudes and behaviours in Portugal.

Portuguese democratisation: main issues and legacies

On 25 April 1974, a bloodless military coup put an end to almost five decades of dictatorship (1926–74). Unshackled by international pro-democratising forces and taking place at the height of the Cold War, the coup led to a severe state crisis that was aggravated by the simultaneous processes of transition to democracy and the decolonisation of what was Europe's last colonial empire (Pinto 2011). Portugal's democratisation was characterised by an intense break with the past, enabled by the state crisis and by political radicalisation in which a new political elite pushed for punishment and accountability. The nature of the transition is certainly the main factor behind the rapid dissolution of the authoritarian institutions, the criminalisation of the political police, and administrative justice. However, the state crisis also constituted an important window of opportunity for the Portuguese type of transitional justice: simultaneously radical, diffuse and with little recourse to the judicial system. In fact, the state crisis and the dynamics of the social movements in 1975 exceeded the political punishment of the authoritarian elite, provoking the greatest experience of fear in the twentieth century among the country's social and economic elite (Pinto 2006).

The comparative literature on transitions to democracy has always included the Portuguese case; however, some of its characteristics – particularly the role of the military, the crisis of the state and the dynamics of the social movements – are difficult to integrate into the comparative analysis of democratisation. As Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan have noted: 'we all too often tend to see [Portugal] in the framework set by later transitions processes' (Linz & Stepan 1996, p. 117), while forgetting the greater degree of uncertainty and the extreme conflict path of regime change that, according to some authors, 'was not a conscious transition to democracy' (Hite & Morlino 2004, p. 47).

The nature of the Portuguese dictatorship tells us little about the nature of the country's transition to democracy. Salazarism was close to the Linzian ideal-type of an authoritarian regime: it was a regime that survived the fascist era and was not too dissimilar in nature from the final phase of neighbouring Spain's Franco regime, despite its single party being weaker and its limited pluralism greater (Linz 2000). The singularity of the collapse of the

dictatorship resides in the nature of the military intervention by the captains – a rare if not unique case in the twentieth century. The colonial war being waged by the regime in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau from 1961 onwards made these junior officers protagonists in the country's political transformation. In 1968, Salazar was replaced by Marcello Caetano, who initiated a limited and timid liberalisation of the regime which was swiftly halted by the worsening situation in Africa (Fernandes 2006). The inability of Salazar's successor to resolve some of the dilemmas caused by the war provoked the coup d'état in April 1974. This was a non-hierarchical military coup with a political programme that promoted democratisation and decolonisation.

Unlike in Spain, where there was a *ruptura pactada* (agreed break), Portugal underwent a transition without negotiations or pacts between the dictatorial elite and opposition forces (Gunther, Montero & Botella 2006). The simultaneous character of the democratisation and decolonisation processes was one factor of the crisis, and the decolonisation process was the main reason for the conflict – in the immediate wake of the regime's collapse – between some conservative generals and the Movimento das Forças Armadas (MFA – Armed Forces Movement) that had planned and executed the coup. This conflict was at the root of the military's generalised intervention in political life following the overthrow of the dictatorship.

The institutionalisation of the MFA transformed it into the dominant force behind the provisional governments. The 'interweaving of the MFA in the state's structures' and its emergence as an authority for regulating conflicts which substituted, dispersed and paralysed the classic mechanisms of legitimate state repression prevented 'the re-composition of the state apparatus' (Palacios Cerezales 2003).

The revolutionary period of 1974–75 was the most complex phase of the transition, particularly if one considers the transition to be the 'fluid and uncertain period in which democratic structures are emerging' but in which it is still unclear what kind of regime is to be established (Morlino 1998, p. 19). During these two years, powerful tensions emerged within Portuguese society which did not begin to subside until 1976 when a new constitution was approved and the first legislative and presidential elections were held.

The disagreements concerning the nature of decolonisation, which was the initial driving force behind the conflict between the captains who had led the coup and General Spínola and other conservative generals, led to the emergence of the MFA as a political force. This subsequently opened a space for social and political mobilisation that exacerbated the crisis of the state and which can perhaps explain why the moderate elites were incapable of directing the rapid institutionalisation of democracy. Many analyses of the transition rightly emphasise the powerful 'revitalisation of civil society' as a factor leading to the process of radicalisation. As Philippe Schmitter notes: 'Portugal experienced one of the most intense and widespread mobilisation experiences of any of the neo-democracies' (Schmitter 1999, p. 360).

The strength of the MFA, and of the military more generally, led to it exercising considerable leverage in order to be included in the nascent political system. Throughout that period, early attempts at the 'presidentialisation' of the regime were soon followed – after a failed coup attempt in March 1975 – by a 'first pact' between the parties and the military about the future content of the constitution, and signed two weeks before the scheduled elections for a constituent assembly in 1975 (Freire & Pinto 2005). This pact gave the military a veto over the future constitutional text, severely constraining the work of the freely elected members of the constituent assembly, and even imposed the 'constitutionalisation' of an Assembly

of the MFA formed by military officers, whose role included participation in the indirect election of the head of state.

It was at this time that the parties that were to represent the right and centre-right – the Centro Democrático Social (CDS – Social Democratic Centre) and the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD – Democratic Popular Party) – were formed (Lisi 2015). Great efforts were made to exclude from these parties anyone who had been associated with the New State and to find leaders with democratic credentials. Indeed, the CDS, which integrated sectors of Portuguese society that espoused conservative authoritarian values, was on the verge of being declared illegal up until the first elections for the constituent assembly on 25 April 1975.

The overthrow of General Spínola, the shift of the MFA to the left and the implementation of agrarian reforms and the nationalisation of large economic groups were both symbols and motors of an ever-worsening state crisis that was sustaining powerful social movements. The MFA's decision to respect the electoral calendar in 1975 was a significant factor in the founding legitimisation of the democratic regime and the carrying out of these elections as scheduled greatly enhanced the position of the moderate political parties.

It is too simplistic to consider the Hot Summer of 1975 to have been simply an attempt by the Partido Comunista Português (PCP – Portuguese Communist Party) to impose a new dictatorship with the support of the Soviet Union. Naturally, the democratic political elite made much of this argument in its founding discourse, but this does not provide a full explanation of events. The situation was more complex: conflict was fed by the development of strong grassroots political organisations, such as the workers' commissions, the growing challenge posed by the extreme left during the crisis, and its influence within the military (Fishman 2011; Fishman & Lizardo 2013).

Portuguese society began to polarise in 1975 with the emergence of an anti-revolutionary (and anti-Communist) movement in the north of the country. It was in this context of increasing mobilisation that on 25 November 1975 moderate MFA officers organised a successful counter-coup that toppled the radicals. The Partido Socialista (PS – Socialist Party) and the PPD backed the moderates, leading mobilisations in Lisbon and Porto, the former opening a cleavage with the Communists that was to become a central divide on the left of the political spectrum. In the provinces to the north of the river Tagus, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and local notables supported parish-level mobilisations, the local military authorities remaining neutral and/or complicit in the activities. As elements of the right, military officers and civilians alike, began to mobilise, the anti-left offensive became violent.

Following the November counter-coup that neutralised the radical left-wing military, a new settlement between the parties and the military followed in the shape of the 'second pact'. This included the direct election of the president of the Republic by universal suffrage but under stringent conditions imposed by the moderate and hierarchical military that had now gained control of the reins of power. Among those conditions was the imposition of an implicit military clause through which the major parties, the centre-left PS and the centre-right Partido Social Democrata (PSD – Social Democratic Party) would endorse a particular candidate in the next presidential elections, one selected by the military Council of the Revolution.

Caught by surprise by the April coup, the international community in general, and the United States (US) in particular, focused on supporting democratic political forces on the centre-left and right while intervening in the rapid process of decolonisation, particularly

in Angola (Sá & Gomes 2011). The same post-1945 methods deployed to deal with Italy were used in the Portuguese case. The moderate political parties were financed by the US administration, which together with the international organisations of the European political families – these often mediating the US role – also supported the training of party cadres. The impact of foreign aid, however, was limited. It was drowned out by the powerful political and social mobilisation led by the left, in an economy strongly marked by a large nationalised sector and by the capital flight and actual flight of members of the economic elite from the country. Although domestic political factors played a critical role in enabling both the triumph of moderate civilian forces and the final withdrawal of the military from the political arena, international support and prospects for membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) were more important than the early literature on the transition suggests (Lains & Lobo 2007).

The nature of the transition left several legacies for the democratic consolidation: the presence of the military, which had been responsible for the demise of the New State and which demanded a stake in the new regime. After difficult negotiations, the military was found an important role within the institutions, where it was to condition the political system at least until 1982. Second, the authoritarian right-wing nature of the New State and the radicalisation of the transition ensured the ascendancy of left-wing parties within the party system (Jalali 2007). Nonetheless, the conflicts between the PS and the PCP during the transition rendered any coalitions between the two major parties on the left unviable for almost 40 years (Lobo 2005). Finally, the radicalisation of political actors and society during the transition period divided those who believed Portugal should be a liberal democracy – which included the PS, PSD and CDS – from those, like the PCP, that believed a socialist regime was better for Portugal. This became the main cause of tension between the main parties on the left: the PS and the PCP.

Attitudes and objectives of 25 April 1974 according to the Portuguese

Having presented the context and the form the transition in Portugal assumed, we now provide a broad perspective on attitudes towards that period of Portuguese history among the electorate 40 years on. Indeed, this special issue is based largely on the results of a representative survey carried out in 2014.

The survey was composed of three different parts relating to three distinct themes concerning Portugal's transition to democracy. The first section is dedicated to the place of 25 April in history – in relation to both the long run and to the Salazar dictatorship. The second part, which is also the largest, revolves around the perceived objectives and meanings of 25 April 1974, the image of political leaders during the transition, and the political, social and economic legacies of the transition to democracy. The third part is concerned with perceptions on the quality of democracy. Here we will focus mainly on the second part of the survey, which deals directly with current attitudes towards the transition to democracy and its consequences.

With regard to methodology, a representative sample of 1,256 people aged 15 or over and residing in Portugal was questioned by GfK Metris in January 2014. Respondents were selected using the quota method based on a matrix crossing the variables sex, age (seven groups), education (two groups), occupation (two groups), region (seven regions) and habitat/settlement size (five groups). The results were weighted based on statistical data

from the Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE – National Statistics Institute) (Census 2011). The information was privately collected through direct personal interviews. This special issue also makes use of a similar study carried out in 2004, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of 25 April 1974, with a representative sample of 1,216 respondents.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to discuss in detail all the issues covered by the 2014 survey. Rather, we opted to analyse topics that contribute to gaining a broad understanding of generic feelings towards the transition and its legacy. Below we present data indicating whether the Portuguese feel positively and have pride in 25 April, before presenting perceptions of the social, economic and political legacy of the transition.

Figure 1 shows that the vast majority of respondents – 79 per cent – feel the way 25 April was carried out is a source of pride for the Portuguese, a percentage that is slightly greater than that returned in 2004 (77 per cent). By contrast, the proportion of those who feel no pride in the Portuguese transition fell by two percentage points. Similarly, 58 per cent of Portuguese believe 25 April should go down in history as having more positive than negative consequences. At the opposite pole, only ten per cent think it had more negative than positive consequences. Compared with 2004, we find there to be a consolidation of the positive image of 25 April. While the same percentage of respondents claimed 25 April had more positive than negative consequences, in 2004 more respondents held the opposite view (14 per cent). Hence, over the course of a decade the level of consensus vis-à-vis the meaning of 25 April rose slightly.

As far as the goals of the transition are concerned, a majority of Portuguese (55 per cent) believe democratisation was the main purpose of those responsible for the events of 25 April (Figure 2), a view that has grown by five percentage points since 2004. Other goals were mentioned – decolonisation and modernisation of the country both receiving 38 per cent – but it is clear the goals of the transition to ensure democratisation seem to have

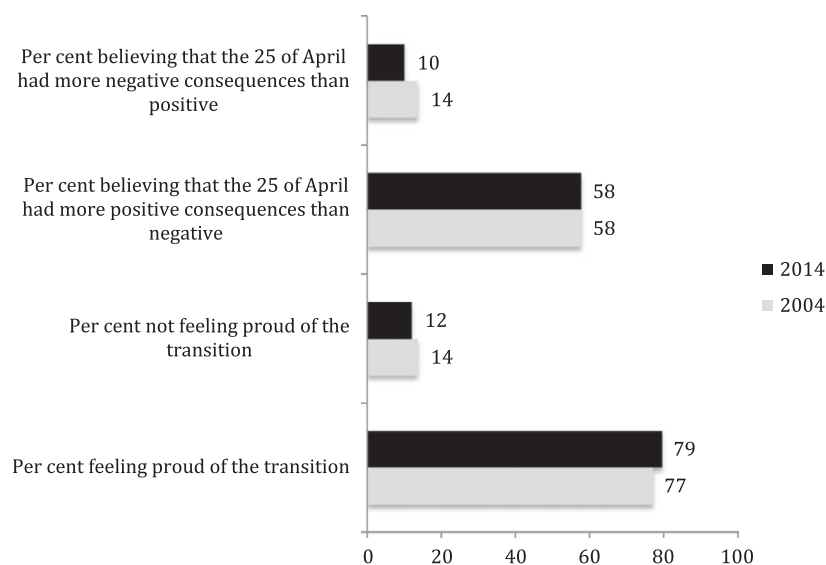


Figure 1. Key attitudes towards the transition (percentages).

Source: Barometer of the Quality of Democracy: Thirty Years of the 25 April (2004); Barometer of the Quality of Democracy: Forty Years of the 25 April (2014).

Note: Don't Know/ No answer (DK/NA) not shown.

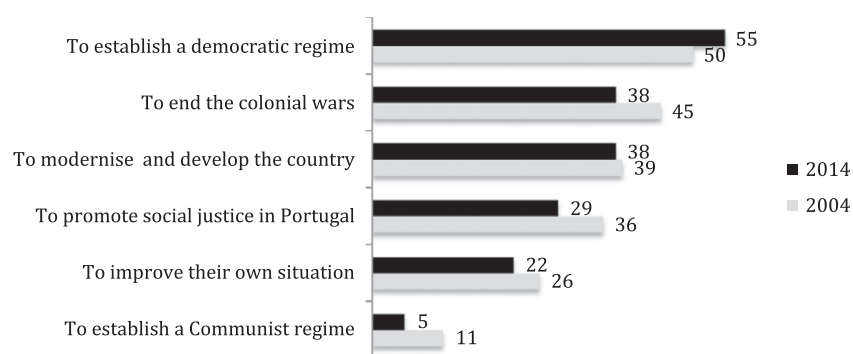


Figure 2. Goals of the transition (percentages).

Source: Barometer of the Quality of Democracy: Thirty Years of the 25 April (2004); Barometer of the Quality of Democracy: Forty Years of the 25 April (2014).

Note: Replies to the question: 'Of the following phrases, please choose all those that correspond to your opinions on the intentions of those who carried out the 25 April revolution'.

become consensual. It is also worth mentioning that the proportion of those who believe the purpose of 25 April was to install a Communist regime halved between 2004 and 2014 to a mere five per cent.

In Figure 3 we return to the indicator that showed the proportion of individuals who believe 25 April had more positive than negative consequences (58 per cent); however, now we break down this overall number by looking at how different social groups respond to the question. We see that there are no major differences between the selected social groups. Between men and women, the differences are as low as a single percentage point. The difference between generations of individuals born before and after 25 April 1974 is two percentage points. The same holds true when one looks at the opinion of the Portuguese according to their employment status. Some difference of opinion occurs between respondents with

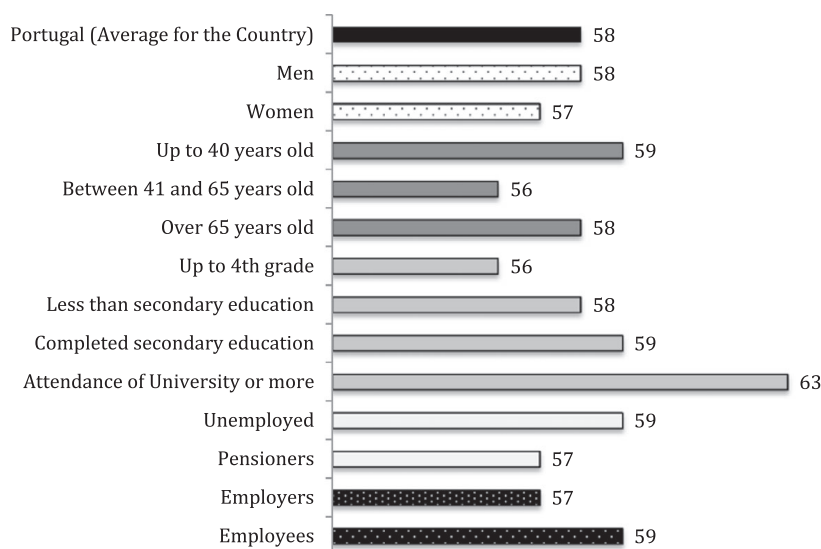


Figure 3. Statement '25 April had more positive than negative consequences', by social groups (percentages).

Source: Barometer of the Quality of Democracy: Forty Years of the 25 April (2014).

different levels of education. While 56 per cent of those who claim to have completed only the fourth grade agree with the statement, 63 per cent of respondents who have at least a bachelor's degree agree that 25 April has had more positive than negative consequences. Hence a conviction that 25 April is viewed homogeneously across genders, generations and working status in Portugal.

As for pride regarding the transition to democracy, Figure 4 shows breakdowns of the national average of feelings of pride (79 per cent) among relevant social groups.

There are few differences between men and women, or between generations of Portuguese (four per cent). The largest difference occurs among university graduates, where 86 per cent feel pride in 25 April – seven percentage points more than the Portuguese average. As for employment status, employees also stand out, 84 per cent agreeing with the statement.

Figure 5 shows the proportion of individuals, by social group, who agree that the actions of 25 April sought to democratise the country. Again, as in previous graphs, we do not see large differences between genders and the national average. Age-wise, there is a trend among the elderly to agree less with the claim – 48 per cent – while among the younger generations this value varies between 56 and 58 per cent. There are also differences between employees and employers, the former being more likely to agree with the statement (60 per cent) than the latter. The major discernible difference in Figure 5 concerns levels of education. While 47 per cent of respondents who have only completed the first four years of education agree that the purpose of 25 April was to democratise the country, this rises to 68 per cent among those who have a degree.

The analysis shows there is a consensus in attitudes towards 25 April regarding both pride and its positive consequences. Furthermore, compared with the survey conducted in 2004, these positive attitudes achieve a relatively greater consensus among individuals. Looking at the social groups, we do not find large differences in attitudes towards 25 April across gender, generation or employment. What seems to matter most is the respondent's level of education. Higher levels of schooling indicate a greater propensity to hold a positive appreciation of 25 April, which is an encouraging sign that links further increases in levels of education to positive views of democratisation.

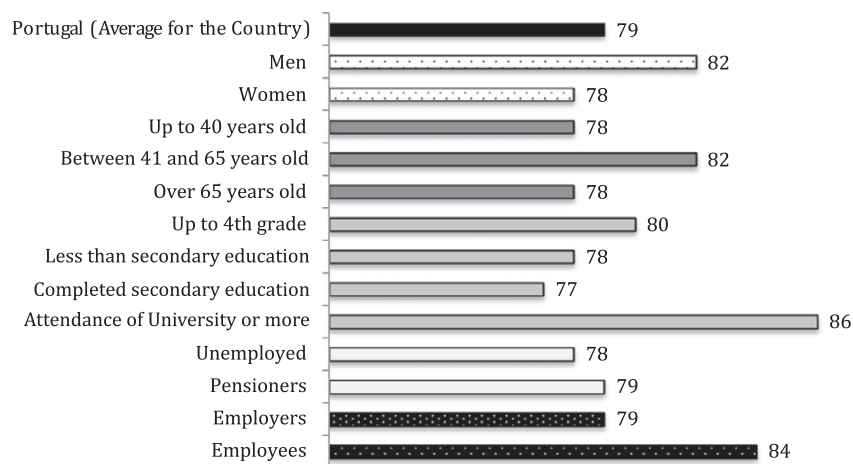


Figure 4. Statement '25 April is a motive of pride for the Portuguese', by social groups (percentages). Source: Barometer of the Quality of Democracy: Forty Years of the 25 April (2014).

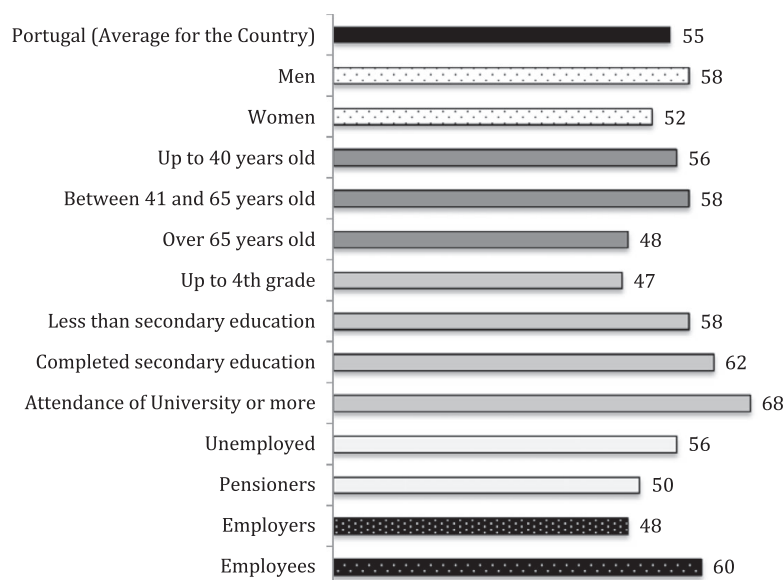


Figure 5. Statement 'The goal of 25 April was the democratisation of the country', by social groups (percentages).

Source: Barometer of the Quality of Democracy: Forty Years of the 25 April (2014).

The legacies of Portuguese democratisation

Several questions in the survey are related to some of the legacies of 25 April which merit discussion. The questions at hand are which legacies remain, to what extent they gather consensus among the Portuguese population and what differences there are between 2004 and 2014. Does the economic crisis influence the perception of the legacy of 25 April?

From the outset 25 April was linked with three objectives that have been labelled the '3 Ds' – decolonisation, democratisation and development (Ferreira 1983). Indeed, the actions of 25 April were carried out with short-term and more medium- to long-term goals. The short-term goal was to end the colonial wars in which Portugal was involved, which ultimately implied decolonisation. The medium- to long-term goals were political democratisation, economic development and the country's modernisation. To what extent have these goals been achieved?

We will start by presenting the perception of how the '3 Ds' have been addressed. In Figure 6 we show that, while a large majority consider decolonisation to have been completely or mostly achieved (68 per cent), only a minority agree that democratisation (45 per cent) or development (41 per cent) has been attained.

Since development is the objective that the Portuguese believe has been left largely unfulfilled, some of its aspects merit more thorough exploration and are specifically itemised in Figure 7, which shows the degree to which the Portuguese believe that – compared with the situation before 25 April – there have been improvements in each policy mentioned.

Figure 7 shows that on social issues the majority of Portuguese consider that there have been improvements since 25 April, especially in housing, health care, education, living standards in general and environmental and heritage protection. On the other hand, we

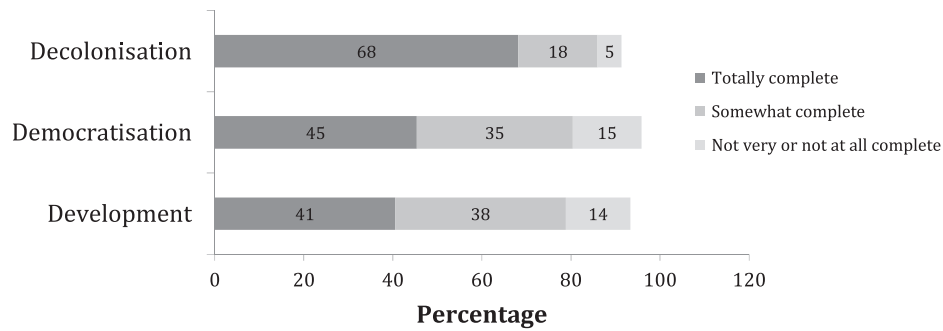


Figure 6. Legacies of 25 April: decolonisation, democratisation and development.

Source: Barometer of the Quality of Democracy: Forty Years of the 25 April (2014).

Notes: DK/NA not shown. Replies to the question: 'Of the three goals of the transition, namely: decolonisation, democratisation, and development, to what degree do you believe they have been achieved?'

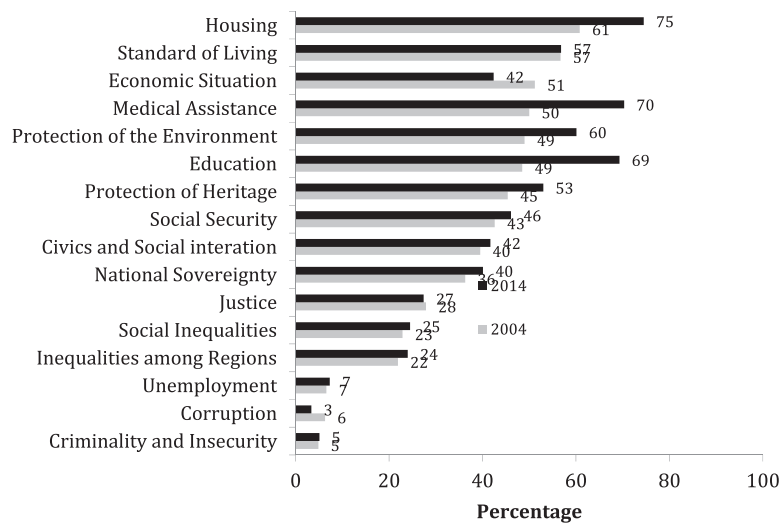


Figure 7. Improvement in key dimensions of politics and policy since democratisation (percentage in agreement).

Sources: Barometer of the Quality of Democracy: Thirty Years of the 25 April (2004); Barometer of the Quality of Democracy: Forty Years of the 25 April (2014).

Note: Replies to the question: 'Concerning the policies below, and comparing to the situation before 25 April 1974, to what extent do you think that things in Portugal have improved?' (percentage who believe that the policy area has improved).

found that only a very low percentage of respondents believe crime, safety, corruption and unemployment levels have improved since democratisation.

Figure 7 also shows that from 2004 to 2014 there are virtually no decreases in the proportion agreeing the present situation is better than before 1974 – with the exception of the general economic situation, where the percentage of those who believe things are better than they were before 25 April fell from 51 to 42 per cent.

This brief presentation of some of the main findings of the 2014 survey on attitudes towards 25 April shows that collective memory surrounding these events is becoming

increasingly consensual. A majority of Portuguese people have pride in the transition and consider its effects to have been largely positive; this is particularly true of those with higher levels of education. Concerning the goals and the achievements of democratisation, the Portuguese highlight aspects of the welfare state as the most positive legacies, particularly in education, housing and health. Have memories of the transition become more politicised because of the crisis through which the country is living following the introduction of the severe adjustment programme in 2011–14? At first glance, it does not seem the politicians' recent attempt to re-politicise 25 April is having any effect in transforming this historic event into a contentious topic.

The articles

The articles in this special issue develop all these topics and pose additional questions. One of those concerns what the Portuguese actually know about the democratic transition. A social survey can never work exactly as a civics test and the surveys analysed in these articles are no exceptions. We do not get a detailed inventory of what Portuguese citizens actually know about the events before and during the democratic transition, nor were these surveys appropriate instruments for gauging that. However, among the several articles in the special issue, one in particular does address the topic. José Santana-Pereira's 'Transition as Ancient History?' (Santana-Pereira 2016) looks at the transmission and conservation of social knowledge about Portuguese democratisation, in this case through an analysis focusing on the recognition by citizens of some of key military and political players.

Forty years after the Portuguese transition to democracy, knowledge of the events and actors involved seems to have become diffuse and blurred. Of course, age emerges as a major determinant of ability to recognise names. Among those born after 1970, the proportion of respondents saying they recognise each particular political figure is invariably lower than among those who belong to earlier generations. Furthermore, for those who experienced events only second-hand, percentages signalling widespread recognition (say, above 80 per cent of respondents) can only be obtained for those political figures who continued to play a central role in Portuguese politics after the transition, either as heads of state (Ramalho Eanes and Mário Soares) or as party leaders (Freitas do Amaral, Álvaro Cunhal, Sá Carneiro and Mário Soares). Those figures whose major role was more limited to the revolution and its immediate aftermath – with the understandable exceptions of Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho and António de Spínola (perhaps because he was the first president after 25 April) – are known by just a third or fewer of those belonging to the younger generations socialised after the revolution.

Furthermore, these numbers should not be read in a way that overestimates what the respondents actually know about each of these characters: they simply measure an avowed recognition of names rather than specific facts about people. Thus, what the younger generations actually know about historical figures like Melo Antunes, Vasco Gonçalves, Spínola or Costa Gomes is very unclear, even among those who reportedly recognise their names. In fact, about a quarter of those who say they do recognise their name cannot even state a positive or negative opinion about their role in the transition. In sum, for most of those born after the 1970s the appearance of these names in newspaper articles and political commentary today is probably seen, at best, as a reminder that one of these days they should find the time to look them up in Wikipedia.

A second important aspect of Santana-Pereira's article relates to explanations of knowledge of democratic history that go beyond first-hand experience of events, i.e. age. Those explanations involve several of the usual suspects, namely formal education and levels of politicisation. Media use, particularly of high-content media such as newspapers and among the younger generations, also seems to matter. It is difficult to say to what extent the role of the media here can be construed as a proper effect of exposure to particular content or as an indication of an individual's more general cognitive mobilisation. There are good reasons to believe there may be something about the way Portugal's democratic transition is treated in the media today that leads the latter to continue to play an important role in fostering knowledge about the players and events of the period. Anniversaries of the key dates – not only 25 April 1974, but also 11 March and 25 November 1975 and 25 April 1976 (the date of the promulgation of the constitution) – have been punctuated in Portugal by special media dossiers, including in-depth articles, interviews with major players and book reviews. However, if exposure to newspapers is one of the things that really makes the difference here, the low and falling numbers of those who actually read them in Portugal leave us with another indication about the different realms of historical knowledge and meaning that political elites, on the one hand, and the younger generations, on the other, seem to inhabit in Portugal (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] 2010).

And yet, having said that, when we go beyond a civics test approach, it is interesting to confront the facts of Portuguese social and political change since democratisation with the way people perceive those facts, which is a topic discussed both earlier in this introduction (in Figure 7) and in the article by Edalina Rodrigues Sanches and Ekaterina Gorbunova on 'Portuguese Citizens' Support for Democracy' (Sanches & Gorbunova 2016). There are domains in which contemporary concerns with recent developments (economic performance), changed standards of evaluation and even some empirical indeterminacy (national sovereignty, corruption) seem to affect opinions and perceptions about what has changed and to what extent in the last four decades. Attitudes about these domains are inevitably something that is socially and politically reconstructed and are insusceptible to simple comparisons with facts. However, it is nevertheless remarkable that in almost all areas in which there are solid metrics showing unquestionable societal improvements in comparison with the situation of Portugal 40 years ago – such as in health provision, education, housing or standards of living – overwhelming majorities recognise these improvements as real. Conversely, in other areas where, objectively, the comparison with the past is less favourable – unemployment, crime rates, social inequality, regional asymmetries – respondents are much less sanguine about the positivity of developments since democratisation. In other words, it is somewhat reassuring to see that in their views about what has improved in their society in the last 40 years most Portuguese seem to live not in a politically and ideologically constructed world, but in one where perceptions meet objective facts.

Beyond that, how do the Portuguese currently evaluate the authoritarian past and the democratic transition? On the descriptive side, we already know the answer. In both 2004 and 2014, an estimated one-half of the population espoused a predominantly negative view of the authoritarian regime, about 20 per cent see more positive than negative things and close to a third are ambivalent. As Santana-Pereira, Filipa Raimundo and Pinto show in their article, 'An Ever-Shadowed Past?' (Santana-Pereira, Raimundo & Pinto 2016), this means that in light of the available data the Portuguese are generally less ambivalent about

the authoritarian past than the Spaniards, showing higher percentages at both extremes ('more negative than negative' and 'more positive than negative'). At least on the surface, this fits well with the contrast between the agreed transition in Spain and the rupture in Portugal and the legacies that such different paths towards democratisation may have left, as Santana-Pereira, Raimundo and Pinto note.

The Portuguese public's views about the consequences of April also seem to have remained unchanged in recent years, as we saw earlier and as Lobo shows in her contribution, 'Bringing the Past Back in', close to 60 per cent see mostly a positive legacy, a quarter are ambivalent, and predominantly negative views are held by a tenth of citizens (Lobo 2016). Finally, when asked about whether they are proud of the way the country became a democracy, in both 2004 and 2014 close to 80 per cent answered in the affirmative. In other words, as we move from a more contentious past and the process of regime change to the final outcome of that process itself, positive attitudes increase and become hegemonic, to the point that today pride in the way Portugal became a democracy is even more prevalent than in Spain.

Yet, this apparent stability in views about the past conceals a rather important change that seems to have occurred in the last decade. As Santana-Pereira, Raimundo and Pinto show, the social and political correlates of views of the authoritarian past in Portugal changed completely from 2004 to 2014. Back at the beginning of the twenty-first century, views of the authoritarian past were still structured around political predispositions – namely party identification. Supporters of leftist parties – the Left Bloc, PCP and PS – more negatively evaluated the authoritarian past than did supporters of the centre-right parties and non-partisans. By 2014 all this was gone and nostalgia or rejection vis-à-vis the Salazar and Caetano regimes had ceased to be structured around partisan or ideological lines.

The blurring of these political lines is not the only way views of the past have become more diffuse. In 2004, individuals who were less educated, more religious and socialised during the first period of the authoritarian regime (i.e. before the start of the Portuguese colonial war in Africa) were more likely to assess the preceding authoritarian regime more positively. By 2014 all this was also gone, and very little variance in these attitudes is now explained by any conventional variable employed in the analyses. All that is left are small relationships between having been socialised entirely under democracy (more negative views) and being unemployed (more positive). The story is very similar when we look at correlates of attitudes vis-à-vis the revolution and democracy. As Lobo shows in her article, by 2014 party identification and ideology had ceased to be correlates of views about democratisation and 25 April 1974, in contrast with the not so distant past.

Why? This is a mystery that all articles in this special issue approach in an understandably cautious fashion. For Santana-Pereira, Raimundo and Pinto (2016), this change occurred because the salience of the economic crisis in 2014 changed standards of evaluation. Nostalgia vis-à-vis the preceding regime was turned into a short-term attitude of protest vis-à-vis the consequences of the crisis, losing its past political and partisan moorings (although it remains unclear why that protest should lack a politicised component). Lobo's explanation goes more along the lines of a secular decline, according to her second hypothesis: with time, she argues, past meanings and their linkage with ideological and partisan preferences tend simply to erode. After all, from 2004 to 2014, the percentage of the voting-age resident population born after 1970 and socialised entirely under democracy – where such linkages should be weaker – jumped from 29 to 41 per cent by a mere effect of ageing and replacement.

Perhaps both hypotheses are true, but it is possible that another factor may also have contributed. In 2006, Cavaco Silva was elected president with an endorsement that came exclusively from the parties on the right of the political spectrum – the first time this had happened since democratisation. He repeated that feat five years later. Among his partisan supporters was the Centro Democrático e Social–Partido Popular (CDS-PP – Social and Democratic Centre–People’s Party), whose identifiers in 2004 tended to have more nostalgic attitudes towards the authoritarian past (Santana-Pereira, Raimundo & Pinto 2016) and more ambivalent ones towards 25 April. The President’s speeches in the yearly solemn session dedicated to commemorating 25 April were seldom able to avoid controversy, particularly after a PSD–CDS right-wing government took over in 2011. However, his election and role as head of state may have been precisely one of the factors that contributed to making 25 April, the democratic transition and the regime it created into things the political and ideological right in Portugal could finally claim as their own, filling them with new and more congenial meanings, including ‘economy liberty’, ‘anti-totalitarianism’, ‘intergenerational justice’ and ‘economic development’.

To put it differently, maybe there is no contradiction between the continued rhetorical use of symbolic dates and events of the democratic transition by politicians and pundits in Portugal, on the one hand, and the waning among mass publics of a partisan or ideological cleavage around how to generically evaluate them, on the other. When austerity policies are presented by some as part of a ‘radical ideology ... representing a rupture with all consensuses born in April and fomented by four decades of democracy’, and rising public debt is simultaneously portrayed by others as undermining the legacy of 25 April – ‘the possibility of each generation taking its destiny into its own hands, delegating to next ... the higher good of freedom’ – this also means that whether authoritarianism, regime change or democracy is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ does not seem to be greatly at stake in political discourse anymore. Instead, one could speculate that it is precisely because the past is being actively reinterpreted (with some ‘revisionist’ intents, according to some), and thus made ‘polysemic’, that it is no longer important as a source of partisan cleavages among the public. Of course, this is almost certainly only superficially true, i.e. in terms of the kind of generic evaluations captured in most questions in the surveys employed by these articles. From this point of view, it is perhaps a shame that the survey questions measuring people’s perceptions about the avowed goals of 25 April (democratisation, social justice, decolonisation, etc.) were not subjected to deeper examination by the different articles in this respect. However, that the generic polarity of judgements about the authoritarian past and about the democratic transition seems to have become depoliticised is a significant development on its own.

Although positive or negative views about the past seem today to be unrelated to partisan or ideological predispositions, this does not mean they lack important correlates among measurable political attitudes. This is the task Sanches and Gorbunova take upon themselves in their article (Sanches & Gorbunova 2016). People’s satisfaction with the way democracy works is often treated in the literature as a dimension of political support of a rather instrumental nature, with economic performance evaluations appearing as the strongest predictor (for a recent study, see Armingeon & Guthmann 2014). It is not surprising, therefore, that satisfaction with democratic performance has plummeted in recent years in Portugal (De Sousa, Magalhães & Amaral 2014), in tandem with what has occurred in most of Southern Europe (Alonso 2013). However, beyond these short-term determinants

of democratic support, other factors emerge as important. Sanches and Gorbunova indicate two of them, both anchored in matters relating to Portuguese democratic history.

First, 'pride in the democratic transition' seems to be a very important correlate of satisfaction with the way democracy works in practice in Portugal: the stronger that pride the higher the satisfaction. Sanches and Gorbunova see this as a legacy of democratisation, particularly of how its nature as a 'rupture' ended up triggering 'a strong reaction to the past' and contributed to the 'shaping of an explicit pro-democratic culture' (Sanches & Gorbunova 2016). Second, they find that in Portugal the home team effect (Holmberg 1999, pp. 117–118), through which voters seem to become more strongly supportive if their preferred party is in power, may have a somewhat larger significance than expected. It may be an effect in which the real difference is found not so much between supporters of parties currently in power and those in the opposition, but rather between supporters of the mainstream parties (PS, PSD and CDS-PP, which are often described in Portugal as part of an 'arc of governance') and all the other parties that have never been involved in any government in the country's democratic history – most notably the PCP and the Left Bloc. As Sanches and Gorbunova put it, 'these results make even more sense if we consider that in Portugal extreme-left parties have been systematically left out of the government, and perhaps for that reason tend to assume more critical stances about the democratic performance of the elected governments' (Sanches & Gorbunova 2016).

To be sure, there are some potential inferential problems still to be dealt with here. For example, it is difficult to determine to what extent manifestations of pride in the transition are not themselves the result of current feelings of satisfaction. And should we expect that, say, among Spaniards, who experienced a different type of democratic transition, the relationship between positive feelings towards the democratisation process and current political support for the regime is any different from its counterpart in Portugal? Finally, considering that the government at the time the survey was conducted was composed of two of the mainstream parties, to what extent is the version of the home team effect uncovered by Sanches and Gorbunova really different from the more conventional government/opposition variety? All this is yet somewhat unclear.

However, the results point to an interesting hypothesis about future levels of democratic support in Portugal. In the same way that the last decade has brought a novelty in the partisan make-up of the presidency, which may have contributed to a greater reconciliation with the past, there are other recent developments in Portuguese politics that may produce some reconciliation with the present. One of the legacies of the transition, as Jalali (2004, pp. 93–95) argues, has been that the main cleavage in Portuguese politics is not so much between the left and the right, but rather between the PS, PSD and CDS, on the one hand, and all the parties to their left – most notably the PCP – a cleavage around regime preferences formed in 1974–76. This is still visible in voting behaviour patterns that remain structured around this conflict and on patterns of government formation which have led to the exclusion of all parties to the left of the PS from both formal coalitions as well as any form of 'contract parliamentarism' (Aylott & Bergman 2004), causing an alternation – in the absence of a single-party majority – between centre-right coalitions and PS-led minority governments (Lisi 2009).

However, as a result of the 2015 elections, the austerity period that preceded them and the complex process that followed them, both the PCP and the Left Bloc will for the first time play a decisive role in allowing the PS to govern. In the case of the PCP, this brings an end to its complete exclusion from all processes of government formation and support since the provisional governments of 1975. If Sanches and Gorbunova are correct, support

for how democracy works in practice in Portugal may also hinge on the performance of this previously untested solution. Regardless of whatever policy outputs and economic outcomes may arise from it, its political viability is at this point uncertain. However, if it proves resilient, this solution may grant the PCP and the Left Bloc status and legitimacy beyond those of primarily protest parties and thus help bring their supporters fully into the fold of what it means to govern in Portuguese democracy today.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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