Dealing with the Legacy of Authoritarianism

In recent years the agenda of how to ‘deal with the past’ has become a central dimension of the quality of contemporary democracies. Many years after the process of authoritarian breakdown, consolidated democracies revisit the past either symbolically or to punish the elites associated with the previous authoritarian regimes. New factors, like international environment, conditionality, party cleavages, memory cycles and commemorations or politics of apologies, do sometimes bring the past back into the political arena.

This book addresses such themes by dealing with two dimensions of authoritarian legacies in Southern European democracies: repressive institutions and human rights abuses. The thrust of this book is that we should view transitional justice as part of a broader ‘politics of the past’: an ongoing process in which elites and society under democratic rule revise the meaning of the past in terms of what they hope to achieve in the present.

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This is an especially valuable contribution to our thinking on how elites and institutions reflect, reconstruct and reconcile authoritarian pasts in new democracies. From its introduction to its conclusion, the collection teaches us important lessons that extend beyond southern Europe and even beyond comparative politics.

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Dealing with the Legacy of Authoritarianism
The “Politics of the Past” in Southern European Democracies

Edited by
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# Contents

*Notes on Contributors*  

1. Introduction: The Authoritarian Past and South European Democracies: An Introduction  
   *António Costa Pinto*  
   1

2. Transitional Justice and Memory: Exploring Perspectives  
   *Alexandra Barahona de Brito*  
   21

3. Authoritarian Past and Democracy in Italy  
   *Marco Tarchi*  
   39

4. Coping with the Double Legacy of Authoritarianism and Revolution in Portuguese Democracy  
   *António Costa Pinto*  
   55

5. Party Attitudes towards the Authoritarian Past in Spanish Democracy  
   *Carsten Humlebaek*  
   73

6. Repressive Legacies and the Democratisation of Iberian Police Systems  
   *Diego Palacios Cerezales*  
   89

7. The Authoritarian Past and Contemporary Greek Democracy  
   *Dimitris A. Sotiropoulos*  
   109

8. Defending the Nation? Maintaining Turkey’s Narrative of the Armenian Genocide  
   *Jennifer M. Dixon*  
   125

9. The Politics of the Past: The Southern Cone and Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective  
   *Alexandra Barahona de Brito and Mario Szajder*  
   145

10. Authoritarian Legacies, Politics of the Past and the Quality of Democracy in Southern Europe: Open Conclusions  
    *Leonardo Morlino*  
    165

*Index*  

vii
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