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Regime Changes and Civil Society in Twentieth-Century Portugal

KERSTIN HAMANN AND
PAUL CHRISTOPHER MANUEL

Civil society is a frequently understudied, yet crucial actor in transitions to democracy. In Portuguese political history, civil society has traditionally been a marginalized actor. During and immediately after the transition to democracy (1974–76), civil society was unable to develop strong organizations. Yet, while Portuguese civil society played a secondary role during the immediate transition period, voluntary associations and organizations formed and stabilized after 1976, once democratic institutions were established. Thus, even though political institutions were not favourable for the development of a strong civil society for most of Portugal's history, an organized civil society (although still weak) is emerging under the new democratic regime.

How does an authoritarian regime, where political parties and independent interest organizations are outlawed, make a transition to a liberal democratic regime in which organizations independent of direct state control are responsible for the organization, expression and mediation of citizens' interests? In other words, how do societies restructure after prolonged periods of absence of legalized interest organization? More specifically, what is the role and function of civil society during democratic transitions?

Civil society, understood as the voluntary organizations and associations that are not directly controlled by the state (Pérez-Díaz 1993: 76-86), is a crucial yet understudied actor in comparative democratization literature.¹ It is understudied for obvious reasons: in many cases of transition, it is political elite actors who negotiate and legislate the emerging democratic regime into place, while civil society plays an often less visible and obvious role during regime transitions. Yet,

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civil society is important. Strikes and demonstrations can help or hinder the transition process, for example; popular organizations, such as political parties or labour unions, can transmit elite decisions to the masses and help implement them, and they can also channel popular demands to the elites, which may influence decision-making processes. Civil society, through political parties, labour unions, business associations or religious organizations, links elites to the citizens, and this is important since without these linkages, elites may not be able to enforce and implement their decisions. Thus, while seldom directly responsible for the specific course of a democratic transition, civil society nonetheless plays an important role for policy formation and implementation during transition periods and exerts both representative and control functions by linking elites and masses (Hamann 1998: 135-6). Recent research on the role of popular forces in transitional regimes has also pointed to the often crucial role of civil society in pressing for, facilitating and stabilizing democracy, especially in Latin America and Southern Europe (Drake 1996; Bermeo 1997a, 1997b; Valenzuela 1989).

Once the immediate transition phase is over and the newly formed democracy faces the task of consolidation, the system also needs to rely on civil society to bolster its legitimacy. Civil society 'affect[s] the performance of representative government' (Putnam 1995: 66). As Schmitter (1995: 285) points out, 'interest associations may be important (if subsidiary) sites at which the legitimacy of democracy is accorded ... therefore the long-term viability of a given democratic regime may come to depend on the configuration and behavior of such groups'. If civil society has a crucial legitimizing function in consolidating new democratic regimes, the question that emerges is how civil society forms after an extended period of under-organization during authoritarian regimes. How does civil society (re)structure during periods of transition, especially when these are sudden, unexpected and elite controlled?

The function of civil society during democratic transitions can be analysed on three levels. First, the density of civil society is significant - how many organizations exist and how many citizens are incorporated in them. Second, the role of civil society matters - what is the role and function of popular organizations during transition periods? And lastly, it is important to look at linkages between different interest associations to see whether there is a consensual or conflictual relationship, which can affect the course of the democratic transition. However, if civil society is weak during transitional periods, this does not mean that it is not in a position to stabilize once democratic rule is established. As we argue in the last part of this article, democratic institutions can foster the

stabilization of organizations of civil society, which in turn can contribute to the consolidation of democracy.² Thus, while historical legacy is important, it is not all-determining; instead, new institutions can influence the way social conflicts are organized and expressed. Institutional change, then, is related to changes in the organization of society.

Portugal is an interesting case for the examination of this question. Portuguese society has little history of independent associations and organization; yet, soon after the 1974 military coup, Portuguese citizens were expected to form political parties, trade unions and other associations vital for the functioning of a democratic system. We argue that the historical lack of development of Portuguese civil society largely marginalized it during the transition to democracy and can at least partially account for the upheavals during the transition period. Yet, once democratic rule was established, civil society was able to reorganize fairly rapidly and contribute to the consolidation of the new democracy. How Portuguese civil society was restructured in a period of increased politicization also helps in understanding the role of civil society in other countries undergoing democratic transitions, in eastern Europe and Latin America alike.

The role of civil society during the democratization process and in the subsequent democracy cannot be fully understood, though, without first analysing civil society during the *Estado Novo* (1933–74) and the First Republic (1910–26). Combined, these periods provided the social and political realities which the democratizers faced in 1974.

THE MARGINALIZATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER THE FIRST REPUBLIC

Civil society was marginalized and poorly organized during the First Republic.³ Controlled by a secular, Lisbon-based political elite (Payne 1980: 139–41), urban masses and the rural poor were systematically excluded from political participation. In this regard, Juan Linz (1977: 241) has argued that ‘the Portuguese political revolution in the early decades of the century was largely a Lisbon phenomenon that found only limited echo in most of the country’.

The Republic’s antagonistic stance towards civil society is reflected in its relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. The church’s powerful influence, especially among the northern and island populations, was considered a threat to the Republic. To restrict the church’s power, the Republic passed a number of anticlerical laws, including the *Lei de Separação* of 1911, which separated church and state, and made the church subordinate to state authority. Furthermore, many seminaries were closed, cemeteries secularized, church property nationalized, and

some eighteenth-century anticlerical laws were reintroduced (Robinson 1979; Wheeler 1978: 62–92).

Business groups and labour organizations were also frustrated by the lack of political stability and consequent economic disruptions during the 16 years of the First Republic: most of the 45 administrations formed from 1910 to 1926 did not last longer than four months. Even though several parties existed before the *Estado Novo* (New State) became established, they were never strongly organized, could not effectively represent the population (Opello 1985: 40) and confronted a fragmented party system (Wheeler 1978; Hamann and Sgouraki-Kinsey 1999). Instead, they resembled personalistic party machines, rather than organizations representing broad social issues. In sum, the First Republic did not afford civil society a significant role. Citizens, though adversely affected by the elite-directed, unstable political and economic situation, had few opportunities to organize and voice their interests independent of the state.

THE REPRESSION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ESTADO NOVO

As a response to the political and economic havoc, the military staged a coup aimed at restoring order on 28 May 1926. Labour and business organizations, which had suffered from the Republic's economic and political instability, applauded the coup. The coup leaders suspended the 1911 Republican constitution and, in an attempt to counteract political instability, economic chaos and a growing cleavage between the state and civil society introduced censorship over the media.

Ironically, this 1926 military coup actually prolonged the political instability for several years. Internal military bickering and factionalism prevented the new authorities from providing effective leadership (Wheeler 1978: 246–53; Gallagher 1983: 42–7). Looking to the civilian world for answers, the military offered the finance ministry to an economics professor at the University of Coimbra, Antonio de Salazar (Georgel 1985: 58–9; Robinson 1979: 43). In the very next fiscal year, 1928–29, Salazar had balanced the national budget and increased economic stability through strict financial control over spending – the first time Portugal had a balanced budget since 1911–12 (Robinson 1979: 42; Gallagher 1983: 38–59; Wheeler 1978: 248–50). When the military decided in 1933 to leave politics, Salazar became their civilian successor.

The Structure of Civil Society under the *Estado Novo*

Once in charge, Salazar took steps to depoliticize civil society, which frustrated organized interests. As an economist, he ranked economic

interests over political structures (Robinson 1979: 128; Manuel 1995: 22), and he also opposed democratic ideas. Instead, he constructed an anti-modern, anti-liberal corporatist state (Payne 1980: 158; de Figueiredo 1976; Kay 1970). The 1933 Constitution of the Estado Novo declared Portugal to be a corporatist and unitary republic, and structured society according to a conservative conception of traditional values that considered the family and the church principal constituent elements.⁴

The constitution introduced a series of institutions to control civil society. First, it updated the secret police and placed that body under the interior minister's jurisdiction. Second, the regime granted itself the powers of censorship, which involved governmental propaganda, censorship of the press and media, and extended occasionally to banning books, movies and plays (Raby 1988: 6). Third, the education system was geared toward the transmission of corporatist values to children. Fourth, all public servants had to demonstrate their personal and professional loyalty to the regime. Fifth, the Mocidade Portuguesa was established as a compulsory organization for schoolchildren and university students in order to internalize the regime's values regarding state and society (Robinson 1979: 58–9).⁵

Although the constitution guaranteed many freedoms associated with a liberal democracy, such as the freedom of worship, expression and association, citizens were never allowed to exercise these freedoms. Democratic freedoms were 'effectively nullified by a clause which gave the government power to limit civil liberties "for the common good"' (Gallagher 1983: 65). In addition, democratic constitutional powers accorded to an elected National Assembly (that is, to interpret laws, repeal legislation, vote the annual budget and act as a watchdog) were never implemented. From 1933 until 1970, no deputies opposing Salazar or the Estado Novo were ever elected to this body, despite the fact that the Estado Novo held more elections than other European countries.⁶ They were intended to present an image of popular legitimacy (Schmitter 1977: 92–122). Consequently, political parties played no role in the Estado Novo's system of interest organization and representation.

The upper, or Corporative, Chamber represented the major sectors of society, including agriculture, industry, commerce, fishing, the church and the military (Robinson 1979: 49; Wiarda 1977: 108). Its functions included debating and offering the government advice. As President of the Council of Ministers, or Premier, Salazar wielded vast powers under the facade of parliamentary processes.

Salazar's restrictions on independent political movements were somewhat loosened following the Second World War, and an opposition

group, the United Democratic Movement (MUD), which joined together the various liberal opposition groups from within the regime, was allowed to form. Ultimately, however, the MUD gave the opposition only false hope as no MUD candidates were ever elected. In fact, in the 1950s, MUD supporters were persecuted by Salazar's secret police (Ferreira and Marshall 1986: 25). The only organizations representing leftist dissent were the democratic election committees (CDE), which functioned as a forum for political debate before the fraudulent, non-competitive elections (Maxwell 1986: 115-6; Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 27). Salazar did not maintain a fascist party organization, which corresponded to his desire to depoliticize the country (Payne 1980: 157).⁷ In the late 1960s, Marcelo Caetano, Salazar's successor, allowed a group of liberal opposition leaders to run opposition candidates in the elections (Pacheco Pereira 1987: 80).

The one democratic aspect of the constitution that did actually exist for a time was the direct election of the president. However, after an anti-Salazar presidential candidate, General Humberto Delgado, nearly won the 1958 election, the regime instituted indirect elections (Manuel 1995: 23-4). Save for short periods of semi-legal political opposition during elections, organized opposition was illegal. The Communist Party was the only party that maintained an organizational structure and was a prime target of the secret police. The Socialist Party, on the other hand, was comprised of a small group of intellectuals who were either in prison or exiled.

Business and Labour in the Estado Novo

Economically, the country was the least developed in western Europe. In 1970, more than a quarter of the Portuguese population was illiterate, and income distribution was extremely skewed.⁸ After a period of economic growth, the recession caused by the international oil crisis led to rising inflation and increasing labour unrest. Portugal's economy was still largely based on agriculture,⁹ and the industrial bourgeoisie was very small (Bermeo 1987: 220). In the mid-1970s, a small bourgeoisie started to industrialize the country, but the majority of the population did not benefit from the slow economic modernization (Pintado and Mendonça 1989: 13-29).

Independent business or labour organizations did not exist in the Estado Novo. Instead, the Estado Novo established a national system of *grémios* (employer associations) and *sindicatos* (trade unions). The *grémios* were based on production sectors and were created to substitute capitalist class conflict with harmonious class relations. The national system of *sindicatos* was organized by district (Wiarda 1977: 108; see

also Georgel 1985; de Lucena 1976). Unions were restricted to factories with more than 100 employees, which effectively barred most of the workforce from joining *sindicatos* given the small size of most factories. The regime was able to use the corporatist union structure to limit and control worker activity in the larger firms. The structure of the regime reveals that it 'was more concerned with social control than working class social justice' (Gallagher 1983: 69–70).

Strikes and lockouts were illegal, and both labour and employers were represented in the Corporative chamber. Wiarda (1977: 107–8) has argued that the 1933 Labour Statute reveals the entire corporatist system, as 'it proclaimed a hierarchy of goods and values – the good of the individual was below that of the common, or natural good'.¹⁰ Civil society was controlled by means of corporatist structures, which allowed only for a limited and partial representation of popular interests.

To escape poverty and find better employment opportunities, many Portuguese emigrated (Baklanoff 1990: 37–90). By 1974, more than one million Portuguese citizens lived abroad, approximately one eighth of the entire population (Amaro 1985: 352). Emigration had at least two significant consequences. First, emigrants' substantial remittances connected Portugal's economy to the international market. By 1970, they were the country's largest source of foreign exchange (Schmidt 1981: 2; Holland 1979: 139–60; OECD July 1974). Second, returning emigrants brought with them new values and experiences. These, together with their economic success, presented a problem for Portuguese society, as citizens attempted to reconcile the poor conditions in Portugal with the plentiful economic opportunities abroad. This process started to erode the corporatist ideology, dominant especially in rural areas.

The Portuguese business elite benefited from the political and economic stability under Salazar prior to the outbreak of the colonial war in 1961 (Barreto 1996: 37). However, the support of business for the regime's colonial policies declined in the 1960s. The country's seven largest economic groups, which controlled nearly 75 per cent of the gross national product, criticized the colonial wars arguing that they were causing domestic labour shortages, a misuse of state finances and a lack of attention to domestic issues.¹¹

In the 1960s, Salazar opened the economy to finance the colonial war effort; in 1974, for example, 45 per cent of the annual budget went to the military. Portugal was even referred to as 'Africa's only colony in Europe' (Maxwell 1982: 235). Portugal was heavily dependent on foreign aid and investment (Maxwell 1982: 233). Only a quarter of total private investment came from domestic capital. The decision to change

the economic development path, however, led to some unintended consequences, which undermined the static structure of the regime. First, and ironically, the corporatist structure of Portuguese civil society, which was used to attract foreign investment (low wages, no unions and no collective bargaining), was weakened by the very success of the plans for industrial expansion, and workers started to organize.¹² Second, foreign investment increased considerably and industrialization expanded rapidly, which further integrated Portugal into the international economy and weakened the corporatist conception of economic arrangements (Salgado de Matos 1973; Brandão de Brito 1989; Baklanoff 1978: 136-8). Third, the seven largest economic groups started to withdraw support for Salazar's policies. The largest of these, Companhia União Fabril (CUF), had entered into several joint agreements with international firms, and often criticized Salazar's economic development path. Maxwell (n.d.: 11-14) notes that 'industrialists were impatient with the inadequate banking and financial institutions of the country and the lack of reliable information for economic decision-making'.

Portugal's continued involvement in colonial politics in the early 1970s was disadvantageous for business and prevented Portugal's membership of the European Economic Community (Maxwell n.d.: 13). Swayed by Portugal's traditional European and American political and economic allies, who favoured decolonization, most of the leading business groups wanted the regime to end the colonial wars, modernize the economy and focus on economic relations with Europe rather than Africa.¹³ Thus, while not independently organized, business supported a more open political and democratic regime. In sum, then, while officially maintaining a corporatist structure, the system started to crumble during the last decade of the regime (Murteira 1977: 37; Barreto 1996: 35-40). Nonetheless, opposition forces had little opportunity to organize collectively against the authoritarian regime.

The Roman Catholic Church and the Estado Novo

Although the church was one of the foremost organizations of civil society in the absence of other non-state controlled organizations, it was never granted much influence on political matters (Marques 1976: 193).¹⁴ Yet the church was an important player during the Estado Novo for at least two reasons. First, more than 90 per cent of the population considered themselves Catholic, and attendance at mass was quite high, and, second, even citizens without strong religious beliefs had historically turned to the church for help, given the chronic weakness of other institutions in civil society (de Sousa Franco 1987: 405; de Franca 1981).

Under Salazar, the church at first enjoyed a privileged position in Portugal. Salazar ensured that Catholicism was recognized in the Constitution of 1933 as the 'religion of the Portuguese Nation' (de Sousa Franco 1987: 405), used Catholic theories of corporatism to justify the Estado Novo, passed statutes against Protestantism, assisted with the development of the church radio station (*Radio Renscenga*), and permitted the creation of the Catholic University in Lisbon (Marques 1976: 206). Supplementing Salazar's efforts on behalf of the church was the fact that the Cardinal of Lisbon from 1930 to 1971, Father Gonçalves Cerjeira, had also been one of Salazar's classmates at the University of Coimbra (Georgel 1985: 42-3; de Sousa Franco 1987: 405).

Yet, the church never achieved a powerful state role under Salazar. Church opposition to the state first became visible in the 1950s, and was intensified during the economic expansion of the 1960s, when the ensuing social transformations started to erode the close relationship between Portuguese citizens and the church. Among these transformations were a larger working class, increased communist organization in the factories, and the emergence of Marxist influence at the universities (Braga da Cruz 1978).

However, the main issue behind the growing separation between the church and state was the colonial war in Africa that involved about 30 per cent of the population (Maxwell 1986: 110).¹⁵ Citizens looked to the church for help, guidance and support, and many parish priests came to support a political settlement to the war. In particular, when Pope Paul VI received the leaders of the liberation movements from Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde at the Vatican in 1973, and when the influential Bishops of Beira and Oporto started to question the ethics of continuing the colonial war, the regime increasingly shunned the church. This development assuaged the fears of many Catholics who thought that the church's association with the regime was 'jeopardizing the Church's position with the people' (Antunes 1982: 1141-54; da Felicidade 1969; Geraldine Freire 1976; Leal 1968: 398-401; Stobel 1973). The only sizeable organization of civil society thus became further alienated from the regime.

Civil society, then, was weak at best; independent interest organizations did not exist with the partial exception of the Catholic Church. The institutions of the Estado Novo did not provide much opportunity for a viable civil society to develop, and the active opposition was not well organized. Yet, after the coup of 1974, citizens mobilized and became actively involved in the struggles following the coup. The next section discusses the avenues which citizens took in an attempt to influence the course of the transition.

THE COUP OF 1974 AND THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

Many junior officers opposed the prolonged 13-year (1961–74) colonial war in Africa. Consequently, the civilian-run Salazar/Caetano dictatorship was attacked by leftist middle-rank officers united in the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) in a coup on 25 April 1974. The immediate reasons for the rebellion predominantly concerned the military as an institution and Portugal's foreign policy, in particular, the ongoing colonial wars in Africa. The MFA connected a change in Portugal's decolonization policy with social and political changes within the country (Maxwell 1995: 45–65). Thus, the MFA's programme included democratization of political structures and social changes to achieve social equality and justice for all, and promised improvements in living conditions, especially of the previously underprivileged.¹⁶

While at first the MFA offered what appeared to be an intelligible political programme that promised democracy, decolonization and development (the famous 'three d's'), the MFA swiftly factionalized over its political objectives, with reformists, communists, socialists and third-world utopians all trying to gain an upper hand. After being ruled by only one regime and two leaders from 1933 to 1974, Portugal experienced six provisional governments, two presidents, a failed right-wing coup attempt, a failed left-wing coup attempt and three elections from 1974 to 1976. A political-military elite committed to a democratic system prevailed and crafted a democratic constitution in 1976.

These discontinuities on the leadership level were mirrored by discontinuities on the mass level, where instances of mass mobilization and polarization indicated massive social and economic changes. Portugal had not experienced any large-scale mobilization prior to the coup, interest representation had remained weak and few pre-existing organizations were able effectively to channel the newly surfacing interests. The fall of the dictatorship and the abrupt introduction of democracy met a Portuguese society without any effective political or economic associations that organized mass interests on a national level, and civil society had to be newly created. Even though the coup was followed by mass mobilization and demonstrations, these were mostly unorganized and short-lived.¹⁷ In the south, peasant unions developed rather spontaneously and peasants seized substantial tracts of land before losing much of their power (Bermeo 1986). In the north, smaller landowners, who feared for their property, conducted counter-revolutionary strikes and demonstrations. A large segment of the population, including the working class and a small middle class, remained politically uninformed and uninterested (Bruneau 1984: 77),

and political mobilization decreased rapidly after the initial period following the coup (Schmitter 1995: 287–88).¹⁸

The polarization of the political elites was also reflected in the 1976 Constitution. It stated that Portugal was on the path to a socialist democracy, and that the state was to assume a large and interventionist role in running the economy, which materialized in widespread nationalizations. Article 1 of the 1976 Constitution declared that the Portuguese Republic was 'involved in a transformation into a society without classes', Article 2 said that the state had as 'its objective to ensure the transition to socialism by means of the creation of conditions for the democratic power by the working class', and Article 9 defined 'the socialization of the means of production' (quoted in Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 185) as one of the fundamental tasks of the state. Counter-revolutionary responses followed the initial radical changes, especially the land seizures. As a consequence of Portugal's new economic model, a large proportion of the small Portuguese industrial bourgeoisie left the country and went abroad (Bermeo 1987: 221), thereby draining further resources from the country. In sum, the rhetoric and actions of the radical MFA, the support of the Communist Party (PCP) for rural land seizures in the south and the constitution with its socialist goals polarized the country and alienated the conservative parts of the electorate. No overall consensus on how the economy should be organized existed on either the elite or the mass level.

Political Parties

Political parties are sometimes considered part of 'political society' rather than 'civil society'. Yet, in many ways, political parties, much like other voluntary associations, match the criteria used to define civil society. As Elshtain (1997: 13) points out, historically, political parties were understood as part of civil society, 'part of a network that lies outside the formal structure of state power'. Furthermore, the line between social movements and interest groups, almost universally accepted as part of civil society, and political parties is becoming increasingly blurred both in terms of organization and function (Burstein 1995). Thus, even though political parties compete in democratic elections for legislative or executive positions, which distinguishes them from movements and interest groups, we consider them here as part of civil society.¹⁹

Political parties lack a strong foundation in Portuguese political history. While parts of the opposition to the *Estado Novo* had organized in election committees, these committees were not transformed into any kind of organized party after the coup. Moreover, to the extent that

primarily leftist opponents of the regime had participated in these opposition groups, the political centre and centre-right found itself without credible organizations after the coup and suffered from delegitimization due to its former ties to the discredited regime. The development of strong parties was further discouraged by the MFA's dominant political position and the semi-presidential system that emerged under the 1976 Constitution (Bruneau 1984: 77–8), which limited the political importance and the functions of the parties. No party other than the PCP had a strong, coherent ideology and political parties were neither deeply rooted in society (with the possible exception of the PCP) nor did they play the dominant role in the transition due to the continued involvement of the MFA. The major political parties were polarized and lacked a consensus on a market-oriented economy (Manuel 1996).

Portuguese citizens generally did not consider political parties to be integral parts of a liberal democracy. In 1978, only 18 per cent of survey respondents thought that parties with different ideologies were necessary institutions for Portugal's democracy; 24 per cent considered the president as necessary for the Portuguese democracy and 41 per cent did not know or gave no response (Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 34). While party membership rapidly increased during the transition, the ratio between members and voters remained low (Morlino 1995: 332–7). The PCP organized the highest number of members, but the Socialist Party (PS) accounted for the largest share of the vote in the first two elections (Morlino 1995: 337; Gladdish 1990: 110), meaning that except for the PCP, the other parties experienced a large gap between the size of their membership and their proportion of the vote.

The role of political parties was further weakened by the imbalance between popular support and political power. For example, during the first election in 1975, the PCP came in third, after the PS and the Popular Democratic Party (PPD). Yet, the PCP constituted part of the government, whereas the two parties with the strongest electoral support did not. Furthermore, even though about 50 parties were quickly formed after the coup (despite the initial proclamation of the MFA that society should organize in 'political associations, possible embroyos [sic] of future political parties' (Bruneau 1995: 146–7)), the government was dominated by the different factions within the MFA. As Bruneau (1995: 149) concludes, 'The elections, however, resolved little as the political struggle was now increasingly between factions of the MFA with high involvement by the PCP and other political parties.' The only party that played a major role in determining politics in the immediate post-coup period was the Communist Party. Even after the 1976 Constitution was

adopted and democratic elections determined the prime minister and the composition of the legislature, the president was a non-partisan military officer (Bruneau 1995: 150).

The dominance of the PCP led to a leftist orientation of all political parties, which saw themselves competing with the communists for the votes of an electorate that had been radicalized after a long dictatorship. The most important centre and centre-right parties were the PPD (later renamed the Social Democratic Party or PSD) and the conservative Social Democratic Centre Party (CDS). It is interesting to note the leftist-sounding names of these centre or centre-right parties, an indication of the general political orientation in Portugal in the mid-1970s.

With the exception of the PCP, which had been formed in 1921, all parties were founded shortly before or after the overthrow of Caetano and thus lacked both organization and membership. The PS, for example, was created in 1973 in Germany. Moreover, the parties that emerged in the mid-1970s all suffered from internal factionalism and were structured around *personalismo* rather than coherent programmes suited to catching mass support. At least during the early years of the new democracy, this accounted for difficulties in locating parties on an ideological spectrum (Gladdish 1990: 116-7), which led to voter fluctuation and instabilities within the party system (Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 42).

During the first years after the coup, both centre parties were considerably weakened by organizational and ideological problems. The PPD/PSD suffered from internal strife and problems of leadership after the death of Sá Carneiro in December 1980 (Manuel 1996: 45). The conservative CDS, on the other hand, was strongly identified with the old regime, which diminished its credibility as a serious political alternative. The CDS was the only party that voted against the 1976 Constitution, considering it too socialist (see Bruneau and Macleod 1986: Ch.4).

The only party that emerged relatively well organized from the Salazar-Caetano regime was the PCP, which was staunchly pro-Moscow. As allies of the leftist faction of the MFA, the communists participated in government. Given strong competition from the ultra-left, the PCP was not in a position to promote moderation. The PCP became part of the governing coalition with the MFA and was thus in a position to influence significantly the political direction of the country immediately after the coup.

The PCP's main problem was to present itself as a legitimate party with democratic credentials once the stage for democratic elections was set in 1976. In the meantime, many previously radical voters had turned

against the Stalinist party (Maxwell 1986: 118). The PCP's main support came from the landless labourers in the Alentejo and the industrial workers in the southern cities (Lewis and Williams 1984). By the late 1970s, many voters (for example, the landowners in the north opposed to the land reforms) had moved towards the ideological centre as the continuing economic crisis made the implementation of the socialist promises impracticable. The PCP, still adhering to its revolutionary course, thus became politically isolated.

Due to the continuing dominance of the MFA, however, even the winners of the elections (in particular, the PS) were not the principal political decision-makers. As Bruneau (1995: 149) points out, 'the two parties which had led in the Constituent Assembly elections were not in government and if anyone governed, it was the Revolutionary Council'. The downfall of the authoritarian regime was followed by a vacuum without strong political parties. As Bruneau and Macleod (1986: 3) argue, there existed a shortage of structures upon which to build democracy. The MFA attempted to fill this vacuum, but despite their revolutionary ambitions, they lacked a clear conception of how to attain the new socialist society they envisioned and had no clearly defined ideas on how to implement their plans for a reformed Portugal (Mujal-León 1977: 21-3). Competition rather than cooperation characterized the fragmented party system that was built on weak parties with opposing ideologies.

Labour Unions

The tight control of the Estado Novo over the unions eased somewhat under Caetano, when workers' representatives were allowed to be freely elected to the state trade unions. This gave the Communist Party the opportunity to infiltrate the union movement in the late 1960s, but the right to free elections of representatives was rescinded soon after (Kohler 1982: 212, 217; Maxwell 1995: 72, 109-10). The new union organization, Intersindical (IS), created in 1970 and closely identified with the Communist Party, subsequently went underground.

After 1974, IS was the only generally acknowledged legitimate organization representing the working class. The PCP intended to keep control over the entire workers' movement and attempted to constrain and limit the wildcat strikes that broke out after the coup (Opello 1985: 76). The PCP tried to monopolize workers' representation in the workplace by decree, and in 1975, the formation of any other unions was declared unlawful in those sectors where IS was already present.

The PS and PPD, in contrast, proposed to reduce communist influence in the workplace through the introduction of more pluralistic

labour relations, and favoured democratic freedoms over a strong and unified workplace organization (Insight Team 1975: 211; Kayman 1987: 117). Although the MFA initially decided to side with the Communist Party, by 1976 the newly elected socialist government overturned this decision and denied the Communist Party the exclusive right to represent the workforce (Manuel 1998: 145). This debate, also known as the '*un^cidade*' debate, was largely fought by political parties, while labour organizations had little direct input (Manuel 1995: 74-6).

The 1976 Constitution granted the right to form free unions. In 1979, the General Workers' Union (UGT) emerged as a trade union affiliated to the socialist and social democratic parties (Kohler 1982: 219; Durão Barroso 1984-85: 453-4). In the meantime, Intersindical had changed into Confederates Geral de Trabalhadores (CGTP/IN). Whereas CGTP/IN was mostly supported by blue-collar workers, UGT had its core constituency in the service sector (Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 105). The two unions thus had different target groups, which effectively diminished competition between them.

One of the main problems of the union movement was its poor organization. Unions were organized by profession and region, which accounted for their high degree of fragmentation (Kohler 1982: 219; Durão Barroso 1984-85: 453-4). Overall union membership increased dramatically in the latter half of the 1970s, and according to some sources, ranked as high as 45 per cent of the total workforce in 1978 (Kohler 1982: 241 fn.152), while the strike rate was relatively low²⁰

The two major unions also employed different strategies. While the UGT preferred negotiation with the government, advocated compromise, and asked for a social contract with employers and the government, its communist rival organization pursued a strategy of confrontation (Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 107). This difference in strategies made unified action by the two unions virtually impossible and weakened the workers' movement as a whole (Rodrigues 1996: 499-500).

Ties between labour unions and political parties are relatively strong in Portugal. Union leaders can be elected to parliament under a party label, and they can also hold office in the decision-making body of their affiliated party (Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 101). Despite the close organizational links, the relationship between parties and unions have sometimes been conflictual. For example, in 1974 and 1975, the PCP was interested in channelling and moderating workers' demands to the radical government, which meant a reduction in strike activity (Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 102). The constitution asserts official independence of unions from 'employers, the state, religious denominations, parties

and other political associations' (quoted in Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 102), but in spite of this formal independence, the parties retained significant influence over the union movement. Morlino (1995: 357) even understands the role of the CGTP/IN as close to a 'transmission belt for the Communist Party'. However, as the PCP became politically isolated and most of the other parties had only a secondary role in Portuguese politics due to their exclusion from government, the existing strong ties between unions and parties did not significantly contribute to Portugal's political stability.

Soon after its boom the union movement lost considerable strength. The UGT had to face grave organizational problems, and Intersindical became less able to mobilize the workers as strikes were costly and often ineffective. The IS lost its initial claim as the legitimate representative of the working class because of its close ties with the PCP, and the union itself was not able to achieve substantial gains for the working class (Kohler 1982: 220). This is not to say, though, that workers did not benefit from the democratization process - political freedoms, labour-friendly legislation, social welfare reforms and public-sector jobs certainly presented highly valued gains (see Drake 1996: 64). Yet, unions lost strength as the revolutionary efforts came to an end, and overall union affiliation remained low, in part because of the small number of industrial workers.

Right after the coup and during the transition period, Portuguese unions were excluded from representing workers' economic and political preferences in the national policy-making bodies, and no effective organization existed to channel elite agreements to the masses. Organizational control over sizeable segments of the society, especially the working class, was thus largely absent. One indication of the disjuncture of the narrowly defined political class and the general population was the increasing number of strikes following the announcement of austerity measures (Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 106-7). Because of the polarization of the unions and parties, compromise and consent were unlikely. The lack of a consensus on specific democratic rules and on the organization of the economy, together with the absence of widely supported democratic popular organizations, partially explain some of the upheavals of the transition period.

The Business Elite and the Transition

Many MFA officers distrusted capitalists, viewing them as anti-democratic sources of power, especially after Spínola's failed right-wing coup of March 1975. Starting in March 1975, the MFA nationalized some major businesses, including the once-powerful Companhia União

Fabril (CUF) (Manuel 1998: 145). Moreover, under communist-leaning Prime Minister Gonçalves, many business leaders were arrested on charges of corruption, and their properties nationalized. The economy was unstable, and the MFA closed the Lisbon Stock Exchange. In all, the MFA nationalized more than 50 firms in the three months following the failed 11 March 1975 coup (Pintado and Mendonça 1989: 35-9).

Between 1974 and 1976, Portugal underwent a serious economic crisis, including budget deficits, and drops in income from tourism and in remittances from emigrants. By the summer of 1975, agriculture, industry and construction showed significant negative growth rates (World Bank 1978: 1-23). These events caused panic among the business elite, many of whom fled the country out of fear of a socialist revolution. Yet, the 1976 victory of the pro-democratic MFA faction enabled the business elite to gradually reconsolidate their position. The moderate, socialist government led by Mário Soares defeated the more radical elements of the revolutionary military and political elite, and sought to rebuild the economy based on a market-oriented model. Prime Minister Soares invited self-exiled business leaders to come back to Portugal. In addition, his government turned to the IMF for assistance and applied for membership of the European Economic Community, indicating a commitment to a free-market economy. Consequently, business, which was unable to influence significantly the political dynamic from 1974 to 1976, became much more willing to support the democratization process.

The Roman Catholic Church and the Transition

The church became involved in the politics of the transition only after it was attacked by radical elements of the MFA, over the objections of communist-leaning MFA Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves. For his part, Gonçalves feared and respected the church's power and moral authority in the eyes of much of the population. Consequently, Gonçalves tried throughout his rule not to offend the conservative clergy and, instead, sought to find common ground with progressive Catholics. He mostly feared a religious backlash against the MFA, and therefore tried to stop radical anticlerical activities. He ultimately failed in this objective.

The *Radio Renascença* case was an important focus of church involvement in politics during the transition. As the larger political dynamic heated up in the so-called 'hot summer' of 1975, communist workers took over the church-run *Radio Renascença*, and broadcast anticlerical propaganda. They held the station for more than a year. Elsewhere, crucifixes on chapels and churches were taken down by the far-left Fifth Division officers, who occasionally forced village people to watch films about communism or listen to lectures on Marxism-Leninism.

These activities, and the possibility of a communist regime, prompted a powerful reaction against the communists and other leftist groups in the deeply religious northern areas and in the islands. The Portuguese bishops, also fearing that an anticlerical leftist regime would threaten religious freedom, asked all Catholics to vote for any party that would guarantee the traditional values of family and liberty (that is, not the far left) during the 1975 electoral campaign for a provisional assembly.

With its prayers answered after the moderate results of the April 1975 election (combined with the victory of the moderate MFA officers in November 1975), the church retreated from active political involvement. The new political forces posed no serious threat to religious freedom.²¹ While neither business associations nor labour organizations were strong, autonomous actors, the church was able to defend itself during the hot summer. It did not, however, stand in the way of democracy.²²

In sum, organized interests in civil society were not crucial players in the 1974–76 period, which was undeniably controlled and dominated by the new military and political elite. Linkages existed mostly along ideological lines (in particular, between leftist parties and unions) rather than along functional lines. The coup led to a political vacuum (at least in the short or medium term) without well-organized associations to fill it with concrete political programmes and alternatives. Strong popular organizations that could balance and restrain each other did not exist; on the contrary, the radicalism of the PCP and its dominance over the union movement resulted in further polarization. The leftist military did not and could not quickly provide the institutions and structures to regulate adequately social, political and economic conflicts. The economic crisis and the need for foreign capital made the socialist rhetoric incompatible with economic reality. Elites did not have many well-organized, effective, legitimate, and ideologically diverse organizations to support their policies, and political parties were polarized. Socialist changes promised by the government could not be implemented due to the economic quagmire which Portugal found itself in, but were sufficient to threaten the interests of industrialists and farmers in the north. Only the Roman Catholic Church had the means to defend its institutional interests against the agitation of MFA elements, and to influence the moderate outcome. Political parties became increasingly more important in deciding Portugal's politics after the Constituent Assembly elections of 25 April 1975, especially when compared with their marginal role immediately after the coup and during the early phase of the democratic transition.

CONCLUSION: CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEMOCRATIC PORTUGAL

How, then, did Portuguese civil society restructure after the prolonged period of absence of legalized interest organizations? We argue that after the initial revolutionary period, civil society was slowly able to develop once democratic rules had stabilized and were widely accepted. Thus, civil society is not just a factor that can contribute to the stabilization of democracy, but democratic institutions can also foster the creation of organizations that form civil society.

Certainly, given the subsidiary role of civil society during both the authoritarian regime and at least the first part of the democratic transition, it might seem surprising that civil society in democratic Portugal is evolving and has consolidated. Civil society, though still not as fully developed and politically important as in other western liberal democracies, has nonetheless turned out to be an important political actor that has contributed to the consolidation of democratic rule.

Civil society has not played a significant role in Portuguese politics for most of the twentieth century. It is noteworthy that while popular mobilization was high during the transition to democracy (1974–76) citizens participated in politics mostly in an unorganized fashion. Few well-established organizations of civil society existed, and civil society played a secondary role in determining the politics of the transition. Although the linkages between unions and their ideologically proximate parties were strong, none of them exerted a dominant and direct influence on the policy-making process during the immediate transition period, which was mostly led by the MFA.

Yet, once democratic rule was introduced, civil society evolved and stabilized. This history of, first, the virtual absence of civil society during the First Republic and then the *Estado Novo*, and second, the creation of civil society during and after the transition to democracy, can be accounted for by the institutional structure of the respective regimes. Facing legal repercussions, citizens were confronted with severe disincentives to organize, and state control of citizens' organizations was widespread and profound prior to the introduction to democracy. Citizens' political action during the revolutionary period of the transition frequently took the form of unorganized demonstrations and mobilizations. Mass organizations, such as parties and unions, were polarized and oftentimes fragmented.

The new democratic institutions in place since 1976 have provided civil society with the opportunity to organize, and as a result, parties and interest groups have become increasingly important political actors. Parties now dominate the political discourse and the party system has

stabilized. Interest groups, especially organized labour and business, provide workers and entrepreneurs with effective structures for interest representation.

Political parties, for example, are well established in democratic Portugal. The party system has become less polarized, and the parties have fairly stable electoral bases. Parties have become important vehicles for the organization and expression of voters' electoral preferences. Likewise, labour unions have taken on a representative function in industrial relations. Labour unions have evolved into an important political force typically in association with, but not necessarily directed by, political parties. Union members are particularly politicized because they can run for and hold a parliamentary seat under the auspices of a political party. The resulting politicization of organized labour is widespread.²³ For its part, the business community has demonstrated growing support for the democratic regime, especially after liberalization measures were introduced in the 1980s. The economic situation has improved since the end of the economic crisis in 1986. Furthermore, the EU requirement that Portugal become a fully democratic state prior to joining the community has encouraged business to support the democratic regime (Manuel 1996: 75). Portugal's GDP grew by 2.3 per cent in 1995 and 3.3 per cent in 1996, while inflation was relatively low (IBRD/World Bank 1996). Economic reforms, combined with significant assistance from the European Union, have contributed to business' increasing support for democratic rule (Louçã 1997: 193-201).²⁴

In the Portuguese transition to democracy, civil society, or the lack thereof, can be understood as a confining condition on the decision-making elites, rather than actively involved participants in the decision-making process itself. Popular mobilization was high in the immediate transition period, while organizations and institutions that could effectively channel popular interests were weak. This fact may well have posed constraints on the actions of the elites, but did not amount to a direct and explicit function of civil society in negotiating the rules of the new political system.

The subsequent evolution of civil society has been greatly facilitated by the new democratic rules that allow for meaningful citizen organization and participation. At the same time, though, it could be argued that the emerging civil society has also strengthened the consolidation process. To conclude, we contend that this brief study of Portuguese civil society under dictatorship and democracy clearly illustrates both the need for and potential value of further attention being paid to civil society in democratization studies.

NOTES

1. Similarly, Diamond (1997: xxx) defines civil society as 'the realm of organized intermediary groups that are voluntary, self-generating, independent of the state and the family, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules'. See also Schmitter (1997: 240).
2. On the political effects of institutions, see, for example, Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth (1992) or March and Olsen (1989, 1984).
3. One result of this attitude was that abstention rates often exceeded 50 per cent of those eligible to vote. See Robinson (1979: 36-7).
4. This refers to Article 5 of the Constitution. Gallagher (1983: 85-109) provides an excellent discussion of the Estado Novo's structure. The two papal encyclicals which particularly oriented Salazar's thinking are Leo XIII's 1891 *Rerum Novarum* and Pius XI's 1933 *Quadragesima Anno*.
5. During the Spanish Civil War years, these groups wore dark green shirts, gave Roman salutes, and had an 'S' on their belt buckles, signifying '*servir*'. This was never a great success, and all political content was dropped after 1945. See Robinson (1979: 58-9).
6. The total number of general elections held from 1933 to 1970 is as follows: Portugal (17); Greece (12); Ireland (11); France (9); Italy (8); and the UK (8).
7. Linz (1977: 241) notes that 'the absence of a real Fascist Party in Portugal ... has compelled the regime to co-opt large numbers of people lacking strong ideological commitments from the civil service, the army, academia, the professions, intellectual life, etc'
8. The bottom 50 per cent of households received merely 14 per cent of total national income before 1974, while the top five per cent received 40 per cent of total income (Maxwell 1982: 235).
9. For example, in 1960, 42.8 per cent of the population was employed in agriculture, compared to 29.8 per cent in 1970 and 28.1 per cent in 1975 (Kohler 1982: 232, fn.1).
10. Theoretically, wealth in a corporatist system has a social function and was to be subordinate to the good of all. The labour statute builds on Mussolini's *Carta del lavoro* and papal encyclopaedias.
11. The regime had started industrial projects in Angola before they were started in Portugal, which infuriated the business groups interested in developing Portugal. See Marques (1976: 248-53); Rodrigues Pintado and Mendonça (1989: 13-31); *Problèmes Économiques et Sociaux*, 507 (8 March 1985: 7).
12. Wages in Portugal were seven times less than those in Sweden and five times less than those in Britain. Also, since the majority of employees in the factories were women, wages were even lower, around half of those of men, and averaged about two dollars a day in the early 1970s. The absence of free trade unions and collective bargaining were some of the reasons these industries were established in the first place. Marcelo Caetano advertised these attractions in the country's search for foreign investment (Maxwell n.d.: 13; Brandão de Brito 1989).
13. Several international organizations organized economic boycotts to protest the Portuguese colonial policy in Africa. On 1 March 1973, the international civil aviation organization voted to suspend Portuguese involvement as long as the war continued. Caetano's regime even had difficulties buying weapons and spare parts on the world market, because any company which sold to Portugal risked serious penalties. Chrysler Corporation was indicted on 16 January 1973 for shipping 100 engines to Portugal for armoured vehicles. These boycotts created a very difficult business situation for the Portuguese. Combined, these factors led the leading business groups to the conclusion that the days of Portuguese colonialism were over. See *Público Magazine*, 22 April 1990.
14. Juan Linz (1975: 289) observed that the church was granted a semi-autonomous influence in civil society. He also remarks that a regime such as Salazar's is 'unlikely to

- introduce major structural changes in society, but often they will also limit the power, organizational capacity, and autonomy of privileged elites: business, professional groups, foreign capitalists, even the churches, and in rare cases the army. ... The purpose of such regimes is to exclude from independent, uncontrolled opportunities to participate in power and to organize to that effect the masses demanding a greater share in the goods of the society, particularly workers, farm labourers and underprivileged peasants, and sometimes religious, ethnic, or cultural minorities.'
15. Maxwell (1986: 110) notes that 'There were 170,000 men in the Army, and 135,000 of these were in Africa. 16,000 men in the Air Force, 18,000 in the Navy, 10,000 in the Republican Guard (GNR), 15,000 in the paramilitary security police (PSP). This figure was exceeded only by Israel (40.09), North Vietnam (31.66) and South Vietnam (55.36).'
 16. Section 6 of the MFA programme states that its aims were to create 'a new economic policy that will serve the whole of the Portuguese people, and in particular those sections of the community that have hitherto been at the greatest disadvantage. ... Of necessity this will involve an anti-monopolist strategy. ... a new social policy, the chief aim of which must be to defend the interests of the working classes in all spheres and to attain a progressive but rapid improvement in the quality of life of all Portuguese citizens' (quoted in Kohler 1982: 178).
 17. Even though several cases of bombings, strikes and demonstrations took place, these events were not central to the larger political dynamic (see Huntington 1985: 254-79 or Bruneau 1974: 277-88).
 18. Bruneau (1981: 6-9) reports that in opinion polls conducted in 1978, Portuguese citizens consistently gave 44-50 per cent 'don't know; no answer' as a response to questions such as 'Which government or regime has best governed the country?' (44 per cent 'n.a., don't know') or 'Which party governs best?' (49 per cent 'n.a., don't know'; 11 per cent 'none'). This illustrates the political apathy of Portuguese citizens four years after the coup.
 19. Stepan (1988: Ch.1) draws an explicit distinction between 'political society' and 'civil society'. However, Stepan (1988: 7) also notes the importance of studying the interrelationships between civil society and political society. Given that these relationships are generally understudied, that the distinction between political parties and other organized interest groups is becoming increasingly blurred and that the linkages between political parties and some popular organizations (most notably unions) were very strong during the Portuguese transition to democracy, political parties are here interpreted as part of civil society, as an 'arena where manifold social movements and civic organizations from all classes attempt to constitute themselves in an ensemble of arrangements so that they can express themselves and advance their interests' (Stepan 1988: 3-4).
 20. Membership numbers vary according to the source, though, and are in general not very reliable. ILO statistics on strike activity in Portugal are only available from 1977 onward. Reliable strike data for the period immediately after the coup are not available. In 1977, 309,460 workdays were lost due to strike activity in 332 disputes, involving some 307,960 workers (*Yearbook of Labour Statistics* 1987: 974).
 21. *Documentos Pastorais, 1967-1977* (1977: 298-303); *Eleições em Abril: Didrio de Campanha* (1975: 403-4).
 22. The 1976 Constitution provides for a separation of church and state. The church certainly plays an important role in Portugal, but no legal restrictions on other religions exist. Although religious freedom exists, this is not reflected in religious diversity. The country remains overwhelmingly Roman Catholic: more than 96 per cent of all children are baptized in the church, 80 per cent of all marriages take place in the church, and almost 70 per cent of the Portuguese are practising Catholics. There exists significant variation in the degree of practice of Catholicism: in the islands and north 70 per cent of the population regularly attend mass, whereas only about 30 per cent of Lisbon residents and 15 per cent of the Alentejo populations do so (Wiarda 1994a).

23. At present, approximately 30 per cent of the workers are unionized in the two major organizations, the communist-affiliated *Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores-Intersindical Nacional (CGTP-IN)* and the socialist *União Geral dos Trabalhadores (UGT)*. These unions are near equal in size and pursue more moderate policies than during the transition. The Social Democratic Party originally supported the socialists and the UGT against the Communist Party in the 1974-76 period. Since 1976, ideological and political differences between the PS and the PSD have played out in the UGT, leading to the development of the Social Democratic Reformist Union Tendency (*TESIRESD*) in the early 1980s. Since 1985, the UGT has backed the PS. The Popular Party supports a small Christian-Democratic union movement. Positive economic indicators have benefited workers and unions alike and have strengthened the unions' democratic commitment, and unions have turned into meaningful vehicles of organization and representation for workers' interests in democratic Portugal.
24. Two of the major business associations are the Portuguese Industrial Association (*AIP*) and the Confederation of Portuguese Industry (*CIP*). The *AIP*, founded in 1860, promotes business growth and development, and has not been particularly known as a political pressure group. It represents and connects more than 1500 firms from a variety of industries for the express purpose of association, not organization. The *CIP* was founded in July 1974 to function as a pressure group for business. It claims to represent some 50,000 firms from all sectors of the economy, roughly representing some 75 per cent of Portuguese industry. The *CIP* has yet to become an effective counter to workers' organizations. The Portuguese Confederation of Commerce (*CCP*), founded in 1977, is composed of wholesale and retail trade associations. It seeks to pressure government directly. The Confederation of Portuguese Farmers (*CAP*) represented owners during the revolution's heady days of agrarian reform, competing with the PCP's Secretariat of Collective Units of Production and the National Confederation of Farmers. In addition, smaller organizations exist. (Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 110-11; Wiarda 1994b: 204-6).

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