

INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS IN  
*Political Studies*

(Est. 1993)

**CONFRONTING  
THE AUTHORITARIAN CHALLENGE**

30th Annual Edition  
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## **Foreword: ideas Matter**

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This book brings together most of the papers presented at the 30<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Annual Meetings in Political Studies (now called Estoril Political Forum), which started in 1993, in Arrábida. This 30<sup>th</sup> edition took place on June 27-29, 2022, at the Palácio Estoril Hotel – the hotel of the Anglo-American allies during World War II. The general title was “Confronting the Authoritarian Challenge”.

On the topic of our tradition of annual meetings in Arrábida and in Estoril since 1993, the main point I would like to make is that all these 30 years were not the result of a plan, or of a trick, or of a plot, or of a conspiracy.

Petty minds nowadays fill the so-called ‘social media’ with insidious stories about conspiracies. I am delighted to say two things about this: first, I don’t use social media; I just rely on good friends who keep me aware of what is going on over there; second, I am particularly delighted to say that our tradition of annual meetings since 1993 has nothing to do with plans, plots, conspiracies, or power politics.

We were fewer than 20 participants in Arrábida in 1993. In June 2022, at the Palácio Estoril Hotel, our 30<sup>th</sup> edition, we have had 749 registered participants. How did this happen? Very simply, in my view, by the excitement of ideas. We came together in 1993 because we shared an attachment to, and a curiosity about, some ideas that were not vulgar. And our meetings have grown because more and more people have been attracted by these ideas. The same ideas have been the source of the launch of our Institute for Political Studies (IEP) at

the Universidade Católica Portuguesa in 1996: we had 40 students at the MA program that we launched in 1996. We now have more than 400 students within our BA, MA and PhD programmes.

Ideas indeed were at the root of the launching of all these undertakings. In 1993, I was invited to promote a week-long course in Political Theory in Arrábida by Bernardino Gomes – a Portuguese Atlanticist socialist that I had vaguely met through another Atlanticist socialist, the then President Mario Soares (to whom I had been political adviser in his first presidential mandate, 1986-1991). But we were not close – and I was certainly not a socialist. Bernardino Gomes simply may have found some common ground on our mutual attachment to the Western tradition of liberty under law.

In 1996 I was invited to launch a program in Politics at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa by Mário Pinto – whom I barely knew, and I was not a member of the Universidade Católica. Mário Pinto may simply have thought that there was common ground between us, mainly because of my liberal opposition to jacobinism and the so-called ‘enlightened despotism’, as well as my liberal opposition to post-modern nihilism.

Also in 1996 I met Marc Plattner – who kindly decided to come to Portugal to attend a lecture by Samuel Huntington, whom I had invited to launch a Lecture series called ‘The Democratic Invention’, which was the inauguration of the Mário Soares Foundation. I had never met either Huntington or Plattner – but a deep friendship with Marc emerged from that encounter. Marc even kindly decided to replicate ‘The Democratic Invention’ lecture series in Washington a couple of years later.

All these three encounters happened obviously not because of plans, but because of ideas. It is difficult to define the ideas that have generated this tremendous excitement – and we should always be skeptical about definitions, as Karl Popper, one of our great mentors, used to say. I would nevertheless tentatively submit three main topics:

In the first place, a clear and uncompromising attachment to liberal democracy, including market economies, checks and balances, and

personal liberty – basically defined as absence of coercion by others, as Isaiah Berlin, another of our great mentors, has recalled.

Next, a clear and uncompromising attachment to the Atlantic Alliance as the bulwark of liberal democracy and the Free World. We have from the outset been very clear about our attachment to the Western Tradition of Liberty under Law; and we have always made clear that this pluralistic tradition is rooted in Athens, Rome and Jerusalem. And it undoubtedly includes the great American liberal democracy – as Alexis de Tocqueville, another of our great mentors, has taught us.

Last but certainly not least, we have always made clear our attachment to the classical understanding of the Idea of a University as a place of learning – as Michael Oakeshott, another of our great mentors, used to say. This means the understanding of a University as a place for the pursuit of Truth, the Good and the Beautiful – and not as a place of propaganda. This means the stern defence of Free Speech and the stern refusal of tribalism and of collectivism. This also means the engagement in an on-going pluralistic conversation and the refusal of ideological warfare among “unfortunate dichotomies,” as Ralf Dahrendorf, another of our great mentors, used to say.

To conclude, and to put a long story short, **Ideas Matter**. And the **Idea of a University** matters above all. Please allow me to conclude therefore with a brief quotation from John Henry Cardinal Newman in his classical work *The Idea of a University*, which we always quote in the presentations of our Institute for Political Studies of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa:

“A University is a place where inquiry is pushed forward and discoveries verified and perfected, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge.”