
PARTY POLITICS AND PORTUGUESE ELECTORAL RESULTS (1975-1991)

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O presente artigo reflecte sobre a forma como os partidos portugueses se anteciparam ou adaptaram à matriz política do pós 25 de Abril, durante o período revolucionário e no decorrer dos anos que precederam o estabelecimento da democracia e a normalização constitucional. Procede-se a uma análise descritiva das eleições legislativas até 1991, incidindo-se a atenção sobre a dinâmica de estratégias políticas adoptadas, procurando-se desta forma evidenciar a *rationale* (ou falta dela) que determinou este período da política partidária portuguesa.

This article offers an overall reflection on how political parties, personalities and programs managed to anticipate or adapt to the Portuguese matrix in the wake of the April revolution, throughout the revolutionary stages, and until the democratic establishment and constitutional normalisation. A descriptive analysis of the legislative electoral results is entailed, paying particular attention to the relationship dynamics between the political actors and their internal supporters, so as to highlight the rationale (or lack of it) that determines the Portuguese party politics.

OBJECT, PERIOD OF ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGICAL CAUTIONS

The recognition of the remarkable transition which Portugal underwent, from four decades of dictatorship, international isolationism and economical exclusion, to political democracy, does not preclude the acknowledgement of the defects and vices that have been pervasive in the Portuguese political dynamics. Following this reasoning, this essay attempts to examine the political unfolding that explains the making and consolidation of the Portuguese democracy, based upon the analysis of the results of the Portuguese legislative elections, from 1975 to 1991.

Even though it is recognised that numbers can never encapsulate the essence of the political behaviour, since elections reflect the choices of the electorate regarding political actors, ideologies and conflict/co-operation strategies, an electoral results' analysis becomes unavoidable. It is nonetheless important to look beyond such a numerical approach and search for structural, societal or economic blockages. Indeed, as Maxwell (In Maxwell, 1986:13) points out, in new democracies a failure of management of everyday political conflict can easily turn government crisis into a crisis of the regime itself, since the existing tradition often enhances "*patterns of authoritarianism not participation, of manipulation not resolution by law, of rights denied not rights defended, of exclusion not incorporation*". The tools of the political scientist can thus sometimes hide change of lack of change.

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Bearing this methodological feebleness in mind, the period of analysis follows Aguiar's (1994) thesis that from 1975 to 1991 a political cycle can be devised, from the foundation (initial instability) to the consolidation (maturity) of the Portuguese political system. The initial instability is characterised by a diverse coalition of parties, minority governments and significant institutional tensions. The political maturity period, on the other hand, is achieved through two elections with absolute majority, and is characterised by one party system with four or five relevant parties, significant electoral legislation, electorate's choices around two major political parties, normalisation of the institutional relations (balance of power between the President of the Republic, the Assembly of the Republic and the government) and democratic stabilisation with no serious political cleavages¹.

While the whole period of initial instability stands under analysis, the 1975 election of the Constituent Assembly is given a more detailed examination so as to highlight the origins and henceforth trends that apparently account for the Portuguese political instability, ideological indefiniteness and party politics' rationale. Moreover, following the election of the Constituent Assembly and even though major changes can be pinpointed in terms of the number of political parties, their designation and political programs, an element of continuity is also present in the terms of the pragmatic implications of the plebiscites (in the sense that the institutional framework established since 1976, is still directly linked to the electoral results of 1975).

REVOLUTIONARY STAGES

Following the 25th April revolution, the official program of the MFA was adopted as a Constitutional Law (Law n.3/74, 14th May). This meant that the ideals of democracy, decolonisation and development would be pursued, whilst the institutional bodies of the former regime were removed. Moreover, the MFA program proposed the institutionalisation of the Board of National Salvation, which had been established immediately after the military coup².

The new order would be established order for a transitional period, which the MFA referred to as a *período de exceção* (period of exception), that would last until the election of the Constituent Assembly (to occur within the

¹ The years of political maturity, Aguiar suggests, may or may not become another cycle, in this instance characterised by modernisation tensions (e.g.: choices between nationalisation, integration or federalism, security, stability, innovation, competition, finance, state intervention) that do not integrate any ideological formulas, but rather often lack a fundamental conflict between the left and right wing. The analysis of this period is not, however, the concern of this essay.

² The members of the Board of the National Salvation (all general-officers) would elect the President of the Republic and the new Chiefs of General Staff among its peers, hence concentrating the higher military rankings in the Board. On its turn, the President of the Republic would nominate a Civil Provisional Government gathering the political forces and independent personalities that recognised the political program of the military movement.

following 12 months, at the most). The transitional period would come to an end with the election of the President of the Republic and the Parliament, in accordance with the principles of the new Constitution (Gaspar, 1990:10). There was, hence, a constitutional consecration of "the unity between the people and the Armed Forces", through which one major actor (the military) attempted to politically regulate the system, benefiting from an image of legitimacy that derived from its role in overthrowing the former regime as well as from the overall perception that it was the only actor capable of successfully ending the decolonization process (Barroso, 1987:33).

The first constitutional conflict occurred when President António de Spínola attempted to anticipate the direct election of the President of the Republic without the previous approval of the new Constitution. The reasons for his actions appear to have been twofold. On the one hand his actions resulted from what was a perceived lack of authority of the Board of the National Salvation over the CCP-MFA (*Comissão Coordenadora do Programa MFA*), and on the other hand he appears to have acted out of concern of his own difficulty in controlling the decolonisation process (Gaspar, 1990:10-1). His strategy hence involved the creation of an authority referential around himself, through a Presidential election, that would ultimately lead to the concentration of the maximum authority in the hands of the Board of the National Salvation (Barroso, 1987:33). By opposing his democratic legitimacy to the revolutionary legitimacy of the MFA, General Spínola expected to form his own government and implement his own policies, most probably with the support of PPD (Gaspar, 1990:1)

The resistance to a revision of the constitutional law was tantamount, nonetheless. The political and popular support were very scarce and the counter-offensives of the CCP-MFA, the communists and some sectors of the progressist military, were enormous, ultimately leading to the failure of the Spínola's presidentialist strategy and his final resignation³. The political prominence of the CCP-MFA was hence demonstrated while, at the same time, the more moderate faction of the MFA lost ground to the radical factions.

The resignation of Spínola (30th September 1974) led to the second constitutional conflict, which would in turn lead to the institutionalisation not of democracy but of the MFA. The more radical factions within the MFA claimed the institutionalisation of their own assemblies⁴ and wanted an independent

³ He was replaced by General Costa Gomes (Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces) while the Provisional Government remained with Vasco Gonçalves as prime-minister, following the dismissal of Palma Carlos, after the Council of State refused his proposals regarding the anticipation of the presidential election.

⁴ The superior Council of the MFA was the Council of the Twenty. It was constituted by the CCP, the prime-minister and the military ministers, and acted under the auspices of the Chief of State, who directed the Assembly of the MFA.

MFA directorship to control the Armed forces and subordinate the Provisional Government (PPD, PS and PCP) to its authority. Moreover they wanted to indefinitely delay the election of the Constituent Assembly, which the polls indicated would strongly favour the PS and the PPD (Gaspar, 1990:12).

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The Spinoist 11th March turned out to be the pretext for the institutionalisation of the MFA, since the latter countered the coup with the formation of the Council of the Revolution and the MFA Assembly (Law n.5/75, 14th March)⁵. From the very start, the Council of Revolution was dominated by the radical factions of the MFA, among which stood nationalists, socialists, praetorian socialists, populists and communists. The MFA revolution was an explicitly socialist revolution, especially after the nationalisation (with no compensation) of the Portuguese banking and economic groups. During the Military Assembly that created the Council of Revolution, the President of the Republic set the elections of the Constituent Assembly for the 25th April 1975, the last possible date according to the calendar stipulated by the MFA. Though this decision was contradictory to the formation of the Council of Revolution, to oppose it would be to deny one specific item of the MFA program (Gaspar, 1990:13).

The Council of Revolution hence decided to impose the political parties a platform of constitutional consensus, in what would be the first attempt to limit the powers of the Constituent Assembly. This constitutional platform (*Plataforma de Acordo Constitucional*, April 11, 1975) was signed by seven of the twelve political parties contesting elections, including all the political parties that formed the Provisional Government (PS, PPD, PCP) plus the CDS. The UDP, LCI, MES, PUP and the FEC refused to sign the pact which, on the whole, assured power for the MFA during the next three years.⁶

⁵ The Council of Revolution concentrated the powers previously shared between the Board of National Salvation, the Council of State and the Council of Chiefs of General Staff, apart from including *ex officio* the military prime-minister under the aegis of its President (General Costa Gomes) (which was also, though not obligatory, the Chief of State and the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces) (Gaspar, 1990:12-3).

⁶ The terms of the consensus, that should be transposed to the fundamental law, included an agreement on the following:

The Council of the Revolution should remain as the centre of the political power, acting above a Civil Parliament (Legislative Assembly) and a Military Parliament (MFA Assembly), which together would elect the President of the Republic (simultaneously President of the Military Council and MFA Assembly).

The President and the Council held almost all the relevant powers, including the power to dissolve the Civil Assembly, to nominate the prime-minister and to chose certain ministers. The Council had controlling powers regarding the constitutionality of laws, it could invest the Legislative Assembly with constituent powers (so that it could issue statements regarding changes to the fundamental law, proposed by the Council), and it sanctioned the laws approved by the Civil Parliament and government. All the subjects related to the military institutions were of Council of Revolution responsibility. No institution had control powers over the Council and the Assembly of the MFA.

With the Maoist groups (MRPP and AOC) and the right wing PDC banned from the race, twelve parties lined up for elections: eight Leninist parties (PCP, MDP, FSP, UDP, MES, LCI, FEC and PUP), two social-democratic type parties (PS and PPD), one right wing party (CDS) and the monarchic party (PPM)⁷ (Mailer, 1977:221).

The poll was the heaviest recorded in state elections (91,7%) which accounts for the seriousness with which the first elections in 49 years were taken. Only 6,9% of the ballot papers were blanks or nulls which is a low number considering the campaign led by the MFA asking people to register a blank vote. Accordingly, the number of abstentions (8,3%) would increase in the following elections which again underlines the novelty of the 1975 plebiscite, although it also reflects the polarisation of politics in the country at the time (see Table 1).

Table 1
Results of the Election of the Constituent Assembly (4/05/1975) with Parties Grouped by Strategic/Ideological Orientations (percentage)

Party Groups					
Opposed to PCP		PCP affiliates		Leftist, populist, changing relations to the PCP	
PS	37,9	PCP	12,5	UDP	0,8
PPD	26,4	MDP	4,1	MES	1,0
CDS	7,6	FSP	1,2	FEC	0,6
PPM	0,6			PUP	0,2
				LCI	0,2
Subtotal	72,5		17,8		2,8
		Blank/Null	6,9		
		Total voting	91,7		
		Abstentions	8,3		

PS - Socialist Party of Portugal (*Partido Socialista Português*)

PPD - Popular Democratic Party (*Partido Popular Democrático*)

CDS - Social Democratic Centre Party (*Centro Democrático Social*)

The Constitutional Platform was explicitly provisional, its calendar stating that the pre-constitutional period would have an undetermined duration and that the fundamental law would endure for a minimum (transitional) period of three years and a maximum of five. Hence, the MFA was institutionalised and the Council of the Revolution was recognised as the highest political and legislative body of the country. The General Assembly of the MFA was given legislative powers leaving the yet to be elected Constituent Assembly the task of drafting a new Constitution.

⁷ The PCP, the PS, MDP, PPD and the CDS presented themselves in all 20 electoral regions, the FSP in 16, MES in 15, FEC in 12, PPM and UDP in 10, PUP in 7 and LCI in 4. Driven by their hatred of the Moscow-oriented PCP, the AOC and PCPml supported the PS while MRPP threatened to sabotage the campaign. The PRP-BR and LUAR, on the other hand, argued that the elections had nothing to do with the revolution and called for "direct workers' control" through the setting of Workers' Councils (Mailer, 1977:221).

PPM - Popular Monarchist Party (*Partido Popular Monárquico*)
MDP - Popular Democratic Movement (*Movimento Democrático Popular*)
FSP - Popular Socialist Front (*Frente Socialista Popular*)
UDP - Union for Popular Democracy (*União para a Democracia Popular*)
MES - Movement of the Socialist Left (*Movimento da Esquerda Socialista*)
FEC - Communist Electoral Front (*Frente Eleitoral de Comunistas*)
PUP - Popular Unity Party (*Partido de Unidade Popular*)
LCI - International Communist League (*Liga Comunista Internacionalista*)

Source: Adapted from Bruneau, Thomas. "Popular Support for Democracy in Postrevolutionary Portugal: Results from a survey". In: GRAHAM, Lawrence e WHEELER, Douglas, eds. *In search of modern Portugal. The revolution and its consequences*. London: Wisconsin, 1983.

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The polls clearly gave predominance to four political parties (PS, PPD, PCP and CDS) leaving the other smaller parties with no significant political strength, a pattern that would persist in the following elections. Perhaps even more relevant, at the time, is the setback suffered by the PCP, which encountered severe defeat even in areas with strong communist tradition.

Though apparently contradictory to the relevance and activism of the communists at the time, these results encapsulate the then positioning of the political parties either to the right or the left of the PCP. Accordingly, the PS gave the working class a socialist option that differed from what was perceived to be a Stalinist solution to the Portuguese revolution, an option that received the indirect support of the small but noisy Maoist left as well as extensive international support. Moreover, about a million votes, out of a total electorate of five and a half million, poured in from overseas workers and soldiers, giving an overwhelming support to the socialist party. External interference was put into practice by the West-German and American governments, NATO and EEC, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the International Socialist. On the one hand, the western interests directed their interference towards the ideologically fragmented MFA and the programatically and organisationally feeble Socialist Party. On the other hand, the Communist Party was influenced by the theories of the international communist movement, unconditionally instrumentalised by PCUS (Eisfeld, 1983:96). Note, however, that although it is hard to conceive any autonomous social evolution in a context of western/eastern bipolarity, especially since any communist or socialist perceptions were seen as diffident of the North Atlantic interests and accepted norms, any analysis of the political scene as a battlefield between the democratic freedom and the communist dictatorship is, at least, excessive, though often politically exploited.

Most of all, what was at stake were different conceptions for the organisation of society and indeed the PCP and the PS envisaged different types of future. The PCP pursued state capitalism whereas the PS envisaged mixed economy, and this was the main source of the PS's popularity among international capitalists. Indeed, the socialist call for pluralistic democracy was a call for liberal capitalism.

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The success given to the democratic powers by the electoral results gave the latter the political strength and legitimacy that they lacked before the 1975 election. The more radical factions of the MFA, perceiving that the revolutionary power was going to be questioned, decided to prevent what seemed inevitable. Hence, against the MFA program and the constitutional consensus, the Council of Revolution proclaimed the MFA as a "movement of national liberation" and decided that the political pluralism should be limited to the parties and forces committed to the socialist construction (*Plano de Acção Política, Conselho da Revolução, 21 Junho 1975, 1.3.*). Moreover, on 8th July 1975, the Assembly of MFA unilaterally replaced the constitutional platform by a Guide Document of the Alliance People-MFA (*Documento Guia da Aliança Povo-MFA, Assembleia do MFA, 8 Julho 1975*), which functioned as the Constitution of the MFA (Gaspar, 1990:14).

The Guide Document strengthened the Council of Revolution considering it "the maximum organ of national sovereignty" with tutelage powers over a National Popular Assembly which encompassed the Assembly of the MFA and a Civil Assembly. Rather than considering the role of the political parties and the universal suffrage, it contemplated the establishment of successive assemblies, deriving from the workers and housing committees, whose revolutionary devotion was previously assessed by the MFA. When the Assembly of MFA approved the Guide Document, though stating that it had an experimental character, the PS and the PPD abandoned the Provisional Government and less radical members of the Council of Revolution publicly opposed the communist faction, denouncing it as an instrument of partidary penetration of the military movement. From this moment on, the more radical factions were forced into a defensive and isolated position, until the 25 November 1975 coup reopened the path for the democratic institutionalisation (Gaspar, 1990:14-5).

By then, both the Guide Document and the First Constitutional Platform were caduceus. The Second Constitution Platform (*II Plataforma de Acordo Constitucional*) hence looked upon the election of a military (General Ramalho Eanes) for the Presidency of the Republic, as the only way to both limit the political parties' power and assure the institutional survival of the Council of Revolution. The President of the Republic would remain the President of the Council of Revolution hence compensating the latter's lack of political legitimacy (Gaspar, 1990:15). As far as the political parties were concerned, electing a military was a means to restore the discipline and hierarchy of the Armed Forces, withdrawing the military from the political arena in the process. On the other hand, the control over the Armed Forces and the Council was essential for the elected military to be able to politically intervene, based upon the universal suffrage legitimacy.

The fundamental law approved by the Constituent Assembly adopted the terms of the revised platform to the full, hence establishing a semi-

presidentialist regime⁸. Though the Constitution of 1976 was limited by the power given to a non-democratic institution such as the Council of Revolution, democracy was institutionalised and the Assembly and the President were elected (by this order). The regime of exception would, nonetheless, prevail until 1980, such as the Constitution stipulated.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRACY

The results of the election for the Assembly of the Republic in April 25, 1976 were similar to those for the Constituent Assembly one year earlier, setting an electoral trend that, though based on volatile results, coalitions and political strategies, would remain intrinsically the same (see Table 2).

Table 2
National Results of the Portuguese legislative elections from 1976 to 1991 (%) (STAPE)

	PCP	PRD	PS	AD	PSD	CDS	Blanks/Nulls
1976	15	-	35	-	24	16	11
1979	19	-	27	42	-	-	9
1980	17	-	28	44	-	-	8
1983	18	-	36	-	27	12	6
1985	15	18	21	-	30	10	6
1987	12	5	22	-	50	4	6
1991	9	1	29	-	50	4	6

On the basis (or despite) the 1976 electoral results, the PS formed a minority government and attempted to govern in a parliamentary system that required a majority to pass legislation and to remain in office. This was even more difficult to achieve since the semi-presidentialist regime that the Constitution of 1976 established had to balance the normal civil authority with the exceptional military powers. The regime could only effectively function if there was a parliamentary majority, which was difficult to achieve with (an allegedly independent) military president. On the other hand, it could be effective if the elected and powerful President voluntarily renounced to the exercise of his powers or restricted them to the non-partial crisis resolution. None of these appeared to be viable options.

An alliance with the communists was perceived as undesirable, in a period of growth of Eurocommunism, and counterproductive, since the Socialist ascent

⁸ The revised platform preserved the principle of the MFA institutionalisation, and the Council of Revolution remained a sovereign body. Assisted by a Constitutional Commission, it held controlling powers over the unconstitutionality of laws or unconstitutionality by omission, as well as exclusive competence to legislate upon military subjects. Apart from presiding the Council, the President of the Republic held powers to dissolve the Parliament, and nominate and resign the prime minister, though the latter two powers were shared with the Legislative Assembly (Gaspar, 1990:15).

had been based on the opposition to Communism. A coalition with the social democrats was considered but ultimately set aside, to which contributed the animosity between Mário Soares (General Secretary of the PS) and Sá Carneiro (President of the PSD). Hence, when the socialists formed the First Constitutional Government, the success of the endeavour was dependent on the support given by President Eanes and on the credibility of the socialists as a borderline between the left and the right wing, to some extent irreconcilable. The First Constitutional Government managed to survive for sixteen months, looking for support either at the left or at the right, until the growing (economical) structural problems proved the strategy not to be viable (Bruneau in Graham & Wheeler, 1983:29).

In 7 December 1977, the three opposition parties rejected the *moção de confiança* (confidence motion) presented to the Parliament by the prime minister. President Eanes, for the first time indicating that he intended to fully use his powers, then demanded that the following government be based on a "stable and coherent majority" (*Comunicação do Presidente da República de 24 Dezembro 1977*), and intense negotiations regarding the formation of another government followed. The PS was again confronted with the inoperationality of forming a coalition either with PCP and the PSD (whose basis of support was expected to erode if out of power). The remarkable solution was the formation of a Socialist government with the participation of members of the CDS (three ministers and several secretaries of State), which functioned as a coalition even though it was not such by definition.

The Second Constitutional Government was formed and functioned well enough until Sá Carneiro consolidated his power in PSD, thereby giving indications to the CDS that its secondary presence in government and correspondent implementation of unpopular policies, could erode its right wing basis of support in favour of the PSD. The CDS hence progressively demanded changes in the cabinet, following which refusal, the government majority in the Assembly disappeared.

In July 1978 the alliance between the PS and the CDS, through which the parliamentary majority had been achieved, came to an end. Eanes decided to exonerate the prime minister who refused to hand in his resignation, since he considered that the President of the Republic could only do so after verifying the lack of parliamentary support, which hadn't been done. This was clearly a confront between two distinct conceptions regarding the political regime - presidentialist and parliamentary. Mário Soares resorted to the feeble strategy of 1976, its success being dependent on the position taken by the parliamentary right and left wing. On the other hand, the purpose of Eanes to recall the secretary-general of the PS in order to form the Third Constitutional Government was no longer viable. Since the President could not open a precedent regarding his lack of authority, and since he had powers to do so, he exonerated the Prime Minister (Gaspar, 1990:17-8).

This was only the beginning of the political confrontation. There was no real possibility of establishing a majority without the socialists, and President Eanes refused to anticipate elections claiming that the electoral census was not complete. Instead, he wanted to force a prime minister to the Parliament so as to create conditions either to an anti-parliamentary *fronda* or to the formation of a presidential majority, if necessary by dividing the parliamentary parties before dissolving the Assembly of Republic and setting the date for elections. His main target was PSD, in permanent crisis since the resignation of its president, Sá Carneiro.

108 During this permanently unstable period, following the negative experiences of the First and Second Constitutional Governments, the President of the Republic increased his role and three governments of presidentialist initiative followed (one neutral, another further right and another further left). Nobre da Costa, an independent, was called to form a Third Constitutional Government with other independents, remaining in office until November 21, 1978, basically with the sole support of PSD and other independents. The formation of the Fourth Constitutional Government, was entailed with further consultation with the PS, the PSD and the CDS, and gave leadership to Mota Pinto in December 1978. He would resign in June 1979, following two censure motions that brought together the socialists and the communists. Since neither a coalition nor a government initiated by the president had worked, the president appointed an interim prime minister (Lurdes Pintassilgo) in August 1979, dissolved the Assembly of the Republic and prepared for mid-term parliamentary elections, which were held in December 1979 (Bruneau in Graham & Wheeler, 1983:30-1).

The Constitution had in the meantime become at the core of the political cleavages (mainly regarding issues related to the existence of the Council of Revolution, the State's control of the economy and the rigidity of the procedures for the Constitutional revision) (Gaspar, 1990:19). After returning to the presidency of PSD, Sá Carneiro resisted an alliance with Eanes and ensued the constitutional issue. In 1979 he presented his project for the constitutional revision and formed an electoral coalition - the Democratic Alliance (AD - *Aliança Democrática*) that included CDS, PPM and the reforming movement. His objective was to force the parliament dissolution and obtain a majority in the intercalary elections.

The December 2, 1979 elections gave this coalition the majority of mandates in the Assembly of the Republic (42% corresponding to 121 deputies), in this sense prevailing over the intent of Eanes who, for the first time, faced an adverse majority in Parliament that limited his intervention powers. Nonetheless, the President of the Republic continued to refuse the majority's proposal for the revision of the Constitution by referendum. On the one hand, he had to abide by the constitutional norms that demanded a new

parliamentary election in 1980, before the Assembly of the Republic could revise the constitutional text, which did not explicitly anticipate the referendum, but rather stipulated rigorous procedures as to the process and limits of its revision. On the other hand, his consent would mean surrender if not political suicide. Alternatively, Ramalho Eanes chose to renew his presidential candidature, which plebiscite would take place after the parliamentary election (Gaspar, 1980:19).

Sá Carneiro sought the constitutional referendum so as not to be at the mercy of the PS during the revision of the fundamental law. The latter demanded a majority of 2/3 in order to approve any amendment, which gave the socialists the power to veto the proposals of the governmental majority, preventing the Democratic Alliance from eliminating the socialist norms and objectives of the former constitutional text. Within this context, the Democratic Alliance had to find his own presidential candidate, who would have to be binded to its strategy for the procedures of the constitutional revision (Sá Carneiro wanted the revision to be approved by a simple majority and to be ratified by referendum. Lucas Pires wanted the recourse to the referendum in those amendments that had not obtained the majority of 2/3 in Parliament). General Soares Carneiro, accepted to run against General Eanes, his strategy being encapsulated in the formula "one majority, one government, one president", by that order (Gaspar, 1990:20-1).

The credibility of this strategy made General Eanes, the PS (and later on the PCP) join forces. The socialists compromised into not changing the presidential powers in the constitutional revision. On its turn, the President refused the revision by referendum, accepted to resign from Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces and renounced to his former opposition regarding a minority socialist government. This agreement preceded the public presentation of General Eanes' candidature and was finalised before the October parliamentary election, so as to allow the Socialist and Republican Front⁹ to present its own presidential candidate. Hence, the Presidential election, that took place on 7 December 1980, after the Democratic Alliance had increased its presidential majority, was the first election centred and disputed over the constitutional issue (Gaspar, 1990:20).

General Eanes was re-elected and thus the constitutional revision occurred with no recourse to the referendum, but based upon a 2/3 majority instead. Hence, the President won a second mandate, the revision of the constitutional text stood in the hands of the socialists, and the parliamentary majority was left "without a president". Furthermore, the Democratic Alliance lost its leader, Sá Carneiro, in the night before the elections, in a plane crash (Gaspar, 1990:21).

⁹ The Socialist Republican Front gathered PS, ASDI (*Acção Social Democrata Independente*), and UEDS (*União da Esquerda Democrática Socialista*).

In 1982, the Democratic Alliance and the PS finally reached an agreement on the constitutional text. The socialists refused to eliminate their collectivist norms and the material limits for its revision. The Council of Revolution was eliminated and its powers were redistributed by a Council of State (consultation organ of the President of the Republic whose composition reflected the predominance of the political parties) and a Constitutional Court (whose composition was dependent on a *de facto* party's agreement, at least between the two major parties - the PSD and the PS). Moreover, the Government was no longer politically responsible before the President of the Republic, and an attempt was made to circumscribe the latter's powers regarding the dismissal of the prime-minister (Gaspar, 1990:21-2). The same revision majority also approved the Law of National Defence and of the Armed Forces (*Lei da Defesa Nacional e das Forças Armadas*, October 28, 1980) that restored the democratic authority over the military institution. The institutions that were left from the exception regime were extinct. From then onwards the Portuguese democracy was no longer limited by the existence of non-democratic political institutions and the political role of the military was left with no constitutional legitimacy - the transition was over.

THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY

In the final days of 1982, after the constitutional revision, the Democratic Alliance was hardly surviving, in such a way that President Eanes did not hesitate to dissolve the Assembly of Republic against the opinion of the Council of State. In the parliamentary election of 1983, the PS was again the most voted party, followed by the PSD. The socialists avoided a repeat of the 1976 mistake while the social democrats were no longer internally paralysed: they formed a governmental coalition (Central Block - *Bloco Central*) with large majority.

This was essentially a defensive bi-party alliance since only with joined forces could the two parties face General Eanes' counter-offensive regarding the Constitutional revision, which he perceived as having diminished his powers (the prime-minister was now responsible before the Assembly of the Republic, the Government could only be dismissed when the "regular working of the institutions" was at stake and the dissolution of the Parliament needed the agreement from the Council of State (Gaspar, 1990:23). Moreover, the following election would be for Presidency, and with the help of the then coalition, Mário Soares could gather sufficient support from both parties so as to be re-elected. Nonetheless, the PSD was afraid of being colonised by this strategy, especially since it did not have a candidate of its own. Furthermore, the strains between the socialists and social-democrats became more and more serious, leading to the rupture of the Central Block coalition, in 1985, with the social democrats withdrawal from the third and last government of Mário Soares.

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President Eanes dissolved, for the third time, the Assembly of the Republic and set the parliamentary elections for October, very close to the presidential ones, in January 1986. In the meantime, the presidential party PRD had emerged as General Eanes' answer to the constitutional revision, a political party that was largely perceived as a vehicle for his return to political influence after the end of his second term in early 1986.

In the October 1985 parliamentary elections, the PRD emerged with 18% of the votes, with a major impact on socialist support which fell to 21% of the vote (from its previous 36% in 1983). For the first time, the PSD was the most-voted Portuguese political-party (although its proportional gain was only 3% above its 1983 percentage). The new leader of PSD, Professor Anibal Cavaco Silva, was hence called on by President Eanes to form government. He would manage to obtain two consecutive majorities in the following plebiscites.

PARTY POLITICS AND ELECTORAL ANALYSIS

During the initial period of instability, the Portuguese society evolved within a model in which political quality was evaluated in ideological terms. Indeed, ideology was, at the time, at the core of the political debate, the electorate resolve (and external interference) being intimately related to the choice between alternative political models for the organisation of the State. Accordingly, the electorate gave indications as to the type of power they preferred (democratic rather than socialist pluralism) thereby granting the PS successive biggest electoral results. The electorate positioning, as well as that of the political parties, hence became residual, being defined in relationship to the PCP (further right or further left), a political spectrum that remained for as long as the communists held to their predominance in important economic sectors. Following the revolutionary period, however, and with the exception of the Communist party, the Portuguese political parties have been unable to present clear ideological options to the electorate, which in itself may account for the Socialists', Social Democrats' and Centre Democrats' inability to gain any clear electoral ascendancy.

In a context of ideological indefiniteness, the political elections were often instrumentalised by the political parties so as to ratify strategies that had already been accorded upon, rather than acting as a device presented to the population as the legitimate means for political participation. The frequency with which the Portuguese political system resorted to anticipated elections, the successive governmental experiences that proved to be unable to form/sustain firm coalitions, and their inability to function steadily with parliamentary support, further substantiates this point.

Hence, the volatility of results that stand out from an analysis of the Portuguese political matrix, from the initial instability to the political maturity,

maybe understood as a consequence of volatile party strategies that resulted from both internal bickering and circumstantial and opportunistic political behaviour that sought new electoral expression in accordance with the dictums of political timing and strategies.

However, other vectors of analysis must also be pursued in terms of the possible existence of a volatile electorate, relevant changes in the political context, indefinición of the institutional political system derived from the essence of semi-presidentialism, changes in parties' programs, adjustment of political personalities, diminishment of the ideological distance between parties, or even short term factors such as leader's personalities or unexpected economic issues. Regretfully, such analysis does not fit the conciseness of this essay.

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