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THE GENERAL ELECTIONS IN PORTUGAL 2019

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SUMMARY

The 2019 Portuguese legislative elections confirm the resilience of its party system and, in particular, of the center-left *Partido Socialista* (PS), one of the few social democratic parties in Europe that did not lose electoral relevance in the past decade. Its vote share of almost 37 % strengthens the party's position and confirms the positive evaluation that voters made of its 2015-2019 mandate.

Parties on the right-wing side of the spectrum were the most significant losers. The center-right *Partido Social Democrata* (PSD) and the conservative *Partido Popular* (CDS-PP) lost in seats, going from a joint 38,5% in 2015 to a combined result that does not add up to more than 32 % in 2019. The CDS-PP was hit particularly hard.

One of the lingering questions during the election was whether the two largest parties on the radical left – the Communists and the Left Bloc – would be punished or rewarded for the parliamentary agreement established with the PS during the 2015-2019 mandate. Though they were not massively punished, the Left Bloc did better than the Communists and consolidated its presence as the third largest party in Portugal. Results were worse for the Communists, who now appear more reticent than the Left Bloc to support a PS minority government.

The greatest novelties in 2019 are (1) the positive results of PAN, a party that combines ecologist and animal rights concerns and that won four parliamentary seats and (2) the parliamentary entrance of three novel parties, each with one seat. Among the three, *Chega* stands out for being the first populist radical right party to achieve parliamentary representation in Portugal. Its results have less to do with its anti-immigration rhetoric than with its anti-establishment discourse.

1. THE PORTUGUESE PARTY SYSTEM

After an authoritarian experience that lasted for almost half a century (1926-1974), the 1974 revolution inaugurated a new democratic stage in Portuguese politics. A stable multi-party system would emerge quickly, even if the first decade was characterized by relative party fragmentation and high cabinet instability. The 1987 electoral contest is said to initiate a more decisive move towards centripetal patterns of party competition, reinforcing a clear bipartisan trend, with the vote largely concentrated in two centrist parties: the center-left Socialist Party (PS - *Partido Socialista*) and the center-right Social Democratic Party (PSD - *Partido Social Democrata*) (Freire, 2006). The two have alternated in power with one another, having formed a 'grand coalition' only in 1983-85.

Apart from this bipartisan trend, the Portuguese political system exhibits majoritarian tendencies in various other regards, having a strong executive, a unicameral legislature, and a unitary and centralized organization of the state¹. Though formally a semi-presidential party system where the president acts as the head of state, executive power rests firmly with the prime minister and his/her government, who is responsible to a unicameral parliament whose 230 deputies are elected every four years. Legislative elections naturally determine the composition of the parliament, the party that shall form the government, and the prime minister. The electoral system rests on a proportional formula, even if its actual proportionality is mitigated by, first, the division of the

country into twenty-two electoral districts of divergent magnitudes and, second, the use of the *d'Hondt* method to convert votes into seats, a formula known for favouring larger parties (Costa Lobo et al., 2012: 33).

With the exception of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP - *Partido Comunista Português*), most of the remaining party organizations were hastily formed during the transition stage and were thus not clearly anchored in a class cleavage, having a relatively ill-defined ideological profile. This was actually instrumental during the initial stages of the transition to democracy, when a period of revolutionary agitation (1974-1976) pitted a strong radical left (the PCP included) against parties in favor of a western-style liberal democracy, with the latter using a shallow but broad basis of support against the former. One consequence of this context is that parties' designations are skewed to the left of their actual ideological positions: the Social Democratic Party (PSD) is more of a liberal center-right party while social democratic positions are best embodied by the Socialist Party (PS); the CDS-PP is the most conservative of all, even though it chose to initially call itself Social Democratic *Center* (CDS), becoming the People's Party (PP) only later. Originally based on Christian democratic ideas, and having a great degree of ideological overlap with the PSD, the CDS-PP tried at first to dispute the center-right space with the PSD. Having been largely unsuccessful at this, it has nonetheless become an indispensable coalition partner whenever the PSD has failed to win outright majorities (as in 2002-2005 and 2011-2015).²

1 With the exceptions of the autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira.

2 The two parties ran together in a pre-electoral coalition for the first (and only) time (so far) in 2015, following the 2011-2015 coalition government.

Glossary: Political Parties with Parliamentary Representation

	Ideological Family	Placement on ideological scale (0-10)
PS Partido Socialista (Socialist Party)	Social democratic	4 - 5
PSD Partido Social Democrata (Social Democratic Party)	Liberal*	7
CDS-PP Centro Democrático e Social - Partido Popular (Social Democratic Center - People's Party)	Conservative	8
PCP Partido Comunista Português (Portuguese Communist Party)	Communist	2
PEV Partido Ecologista 'Os Verdes' (Ecologist Party 'The Greens')	Ecologist	2
BE Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc)	Left libertarian / Socialist	2
PAN Pessoas - Animais - Natureza (People - Animals - Nature)	Ecologist	--

Source: Own elaboration. Ideological placement based on expert judgements of CSES (Comparative Study of Electoral Systems) collaborators 0="extreme left"; 10="extreme right". *It is problematic to classify the PSD given the diversity within the party, going from social democrats to conservatives, and including liberals.

Other than the PSD-CDS-PP recent governments, single-party governments have been a common feature of Portuguese democracy. The center-left (PS) did not have a 'natural' coalition partner in the same way that the PSD had, as ideological distances on the left-wing space are known to be significantly more accentuated than on the right-wing bloc. It would take up until 2015 for the PS to recur for the first time to the parliamentary support of the radical left (the PCP + the Left Bloc) in order to sustain a minority government (when its previous minority governments had actually relied on the center-right to pass legislation).

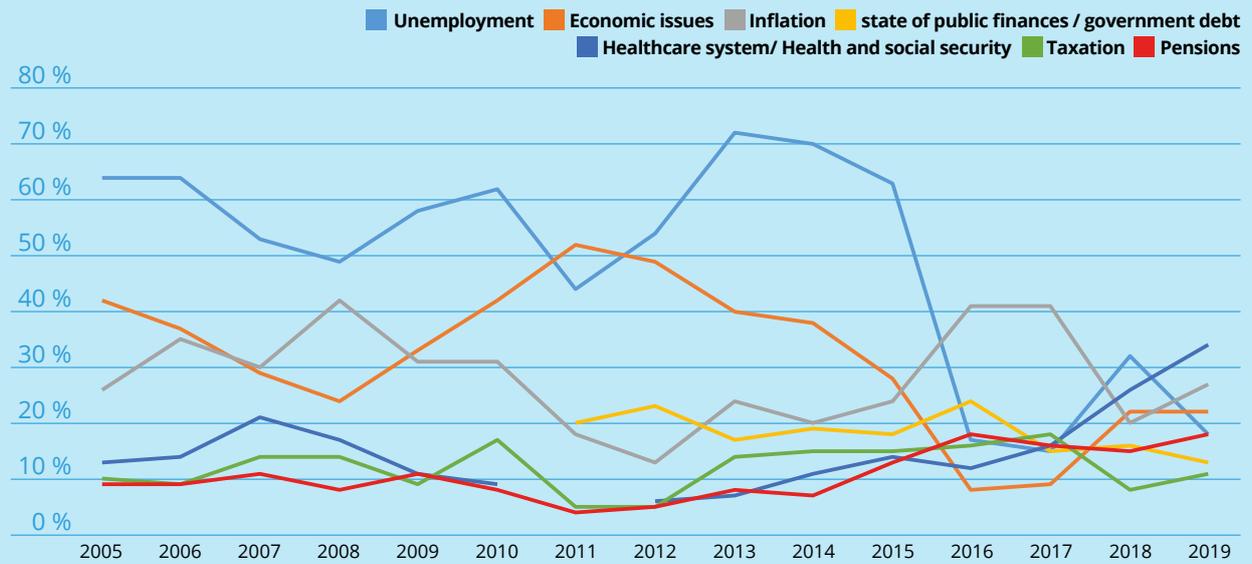
The radical left space has been traditionally occupied by the PCP, an orthodox communist party that, despite having lost some of its historical strength, still maintains a significant level of encapsulation of its electorate and organic ties to the largest labour union. Since the fall of the Socialist bloc, it has retained around 8% of the popular vote, geographically concentrated in some rural and industrialized areas. It runs in coalition with its junior (and subordinated) partner, the Ecologist Party 'The Greens' (PEV). Disputing the radical left space with the Communists is the Left Bloc (BE), a party founded in 1999 and which has grown substantially ever since, scoring better than the Communists for the first time in

2009, achieving its first double-digits result (10,2 %) in 2015. It is different from the Communists in its libertarian orientation, allying an anti-capitalist discourse with 'new left' post-material concerns. Perhaps because of this, it seems to have a greater capacity to attract dissatisfied voters, having a younger and more educated electorate than the Communists (Lisi, 2009).

The strength of the radical left in Portugal and the absence of radical right parties with parliamentary representation is not only a product of historical conditions but can also be related to the fact that **socio-economic issues have been, by far, the most salient issue in the political debate**, playing a large role in structuring the political space and the content of political competition.³ Non-material issues such as abortion or gay rights have, at times, brought cultural issues to the agenda and highlighted the existence of a libertarian-authoritarian axis of competition at the elite level. However, these issues appeared only sporadically on the agenda and the cornerstone of political conflict continues to revolve around economic issues, a tendency that was actually reinforced in the last few electoral contests, when the 2011-14 bailout program and the means of overcoming 'austerity' overshadowed other issues (Ferreira da Silva e Mendes, 2019).

3 This has to be put in the context of a country where levels of socio-economic inequality remain high and with the lowest GDP per capita in Western Europe (nowadays below Slovenia and Cyprus).

Fig. 1: Top concerns in Portugal



Source: SORA 2019a / own representation

Surveys on the main concerns of the Portuguese electorate confirm that the emphasis on socio-economic issues at the elite level tend to go hand in hand with people's perceptions of the country's main problems. Eurobarometer surveys show that unemployment, the country's economic situation, and inflation have traditionally ranked as top concerns when respondents are asked about the country's main problems (Fig. 1).

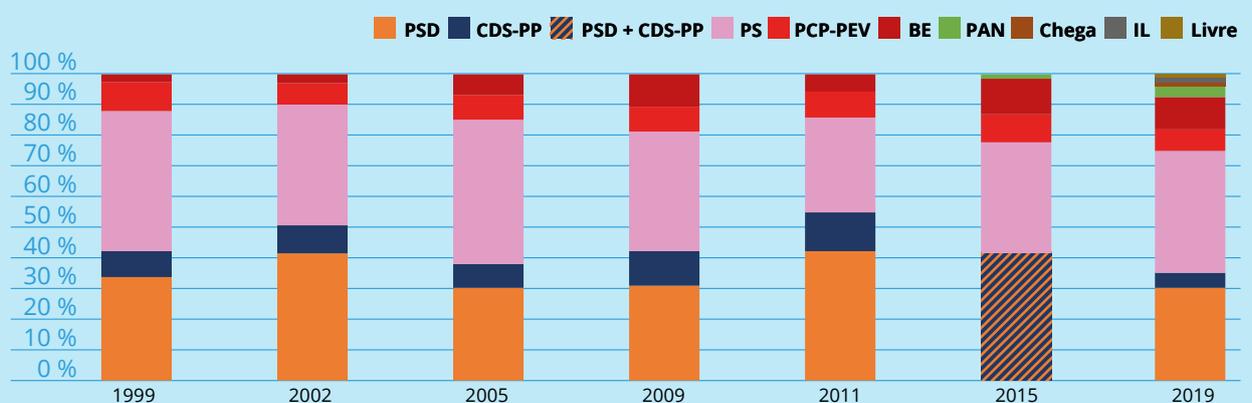
In line with the country's recent economic recovery and reduction in unemployment rates, this trend has changed (or become significantly more moderate) over the last legislative period. Healthcare appears now as a top concern, in accordance with much of the public debate that has taken place around the deterioration of public healthcare services and state under-investment in this area. Recent surveys on the main

concerns of the Portuguese over the course of 2019 confirm that healthcare, employment and wages, and the economy are top concerns, together with another issue that the abovementioned surveys failed to cover – corruption.⁴

Voting patterns and the resilience of the party system

Despite having five parties with a considerable number of parliamentary seats, Portugal has traditionally come close to a de facto bipartisan system when considering how largely concentrated the vote has been in the two main mainstream parties. Jointly, the PS and the PSD have often gathered more or around 75 % of the vote – a tendency that has started to change only in the last decade, albeit modestly (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Evolution of vote share



Source: SORA 2019a / own representation

4 ICS/ISCTE September 2019 survey, p. 3: https://sondagens-ics-ul.iscte-iul.pt/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Sondagem-ICS_ISCTE_Setembro2019_parte2.pdf

The swing in the electoral pendulum between the two major parties has, at times, been accentuated, something that cannot be dissociated from the 'catch-all' nature of the two parties. With the center-left traditionally more concerned with socio-economic equality and welfare, and the center-right with fiscal containment and reducing the state's size, Portugal has nonetheless traditionally appeared as one of the least polarized European countries in terms of ideological distances between the two major mainstream parties (Freire, 2006: 385). This is both a cause and a consequence of an electoral with low levels of ideological sophistication, with weak partisan loyalties, and a centrist outlook whose vote is first and foremost swayed by short-term political factors, most notably **performance judgements** – either in terms of government performance or economic performance (Jalali, 2007; Magalhães, 2014).

Though the tendency of overwhelming concertation of the vote in the largest parties has undergone some changes, particularly from 2009 onwards – a year in which PS and PSD have jointly gathered 'only' 65,7 % of the vote –, **it is nonetheless significant that Portugal appears as the only South European country where the economic crisis did not produce seismic changes in voting patterns.** While other European countries have undergone a clear fragmentation of the party system – neighboring Spain being an example, with the appearance of new challenger parties with considerable electoral strength –, changes in Portugal have been more modest and of a different nature. The only novel party to achieve parliamentary representation was PAN (People - Animals - Nature) in 2015, but with only deputy. The weariness of the mainstream was, instead, most visible in the good results of the Left Bloc (BE), both in 2009 and 2015. Together with the 8,25 % obtained by the Communists in 2015, the double-digits result of the BE gave the radical left (PCP-PEV + BE) an unprecedented 18,4 % of the vote share (even if it should not be exaggerated, in light of the historical strength of the radical left).

Added to the 32,3 % gathered by the PS, this created an unparalleled situation in Portuguese politics whereby the election winner – the right-wing PSD-CDS-PP coalition (38,5 %) – faced a negative left-wing majority in parliament. United by the idea of 'turning the page on austerity' and blaming the right-wing incumbent for the most painful bail-out measures, the PS and the radical left (PCP-PEV + BE) reached an unprecedented governing solution in 2015. Though it did not come down to a cabinet coalition, they nonetheless agreed on what has been dubbed a form of 'contract parliamentarism', whereby the radical left remained outside of office but had an institutionalized influence on policy-making via 'coalition agreements' and weekly meetings (Fernandes

et al., 2018). This was, nevertheless, a major transformation in the Portuguese party system, given the previous *cordon sanitaire* keeping the radical left out of governmental business. The agreement appeared initially so bizarre to most observers that it became widely known as the *geringonça* ('contraption') – a term used to describe a device that appears odd and malfunctioning. Skepticism was indeed not unwarranted given the parties' programmatic distance on key issues like European integration, the Euro or NATO membership.

It is worth noting, however, that this agreement followed a period in which polarization amongst the mainstream had increased, with the center-right taking a more liberal and market-friendly turn during its incumbency under the international bailout program (2011-2014) and the center-left later criticizing this government for taking austerity too far (Ferreira da Silva and Mendes, 2019).

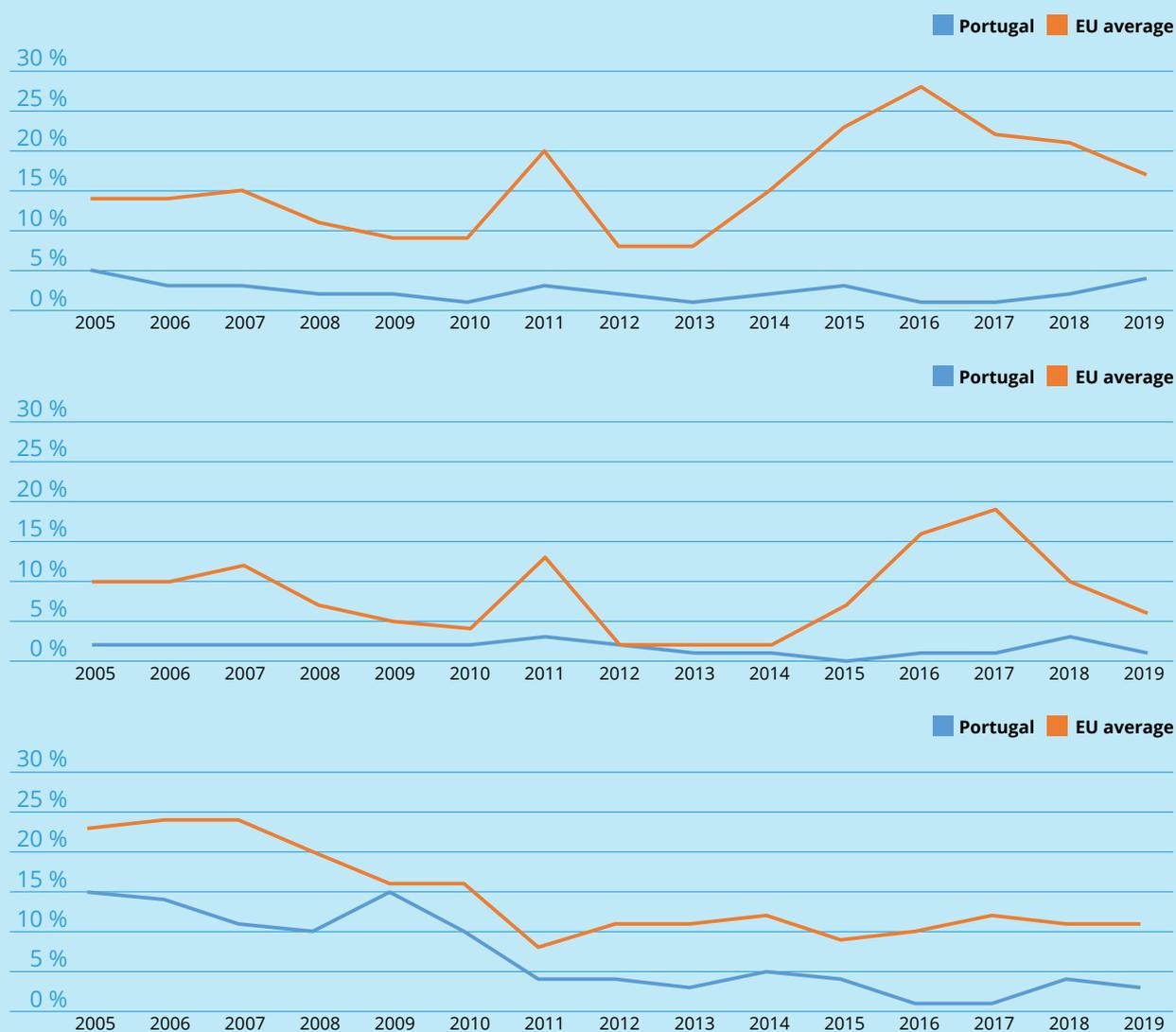
Against the odds, the Socialist government (2015-2019) successfully kept the *geringonça* alive and well – reversing (to some extent) some of the most controversial austerity measures implemented under the previous government –, while at the same time benefiting from the country's improving economic performance to meet Brussels' budgetary requirements. As Fernandes et al. (2018) discuss at length, it is debatable whether this government has truly 'turned the page on austerity' or simply masked it under different and less visible means (e.g. via declining public investment). Nevertheless, policy reversals in areas that had a direct and positive impact on people's incomes seem to have been enough to award this government with evaluations that have been majoritarily positive.⁵

2. THE LACK OF SALIENCE AND POLITICIZATION OF IMMIGRATION

As mentioned above, socio-economic issues have dominated both the political debate and public opinion concerns, overshadowing other issues. Among them is the issue of immigration, an absence that appears at first sight striking if one puts Portugal into a comparative perspective. **While almost everywhere else in Europe concerns over immigration have pronouncedly increased over the past years, in particular during the peak of the refugee crisis, the same did not happen in Portugal. In fact, Portugal consistently appears in Eurobarometer surveys as the EU country that is the least concerned about immigration.** Issues that are ordinarily (even if mistakenly) associated with immigration, such as 'terrorism' and 'crime', are also much less of a concern in Portugal than in most other European countries.

⁵ See, for example, the ICS/ISCTE September 2019 survey, p. 12-13: https://sondagens-ics-ul.iscte-iul.pt/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Sondagem-ICS_ISCTE_Setembro2019_parte2.pdf

Fig. 3: Concern over immigration, Concern over terrorism and Concern over crime



Source: Eurobarometer / own representation

The lack of public concern over immigration and what are often termed law-and-order issues provides a solid clue as to why Portugal has so far remained one of the few exceptions in Europe when it comes to the absence of a radical right populist party with parliamentary representation. Other issues on which radical right parties have capitalized on – such as European integration or the center-periphery cleavage (as in Spain) – also failed to offer a breeding ground for mobilization, given the long-standing consensus on European integration and the utter absence of center-periphery tensions in Portugal. The obvious exception in this regard lies with the potential of corruption and diffuse anti-elite sentiment to fuel a party of this type. Not only it is the case that corruption appears as a top concern for the Portuguese, but it is also known that populist atti-

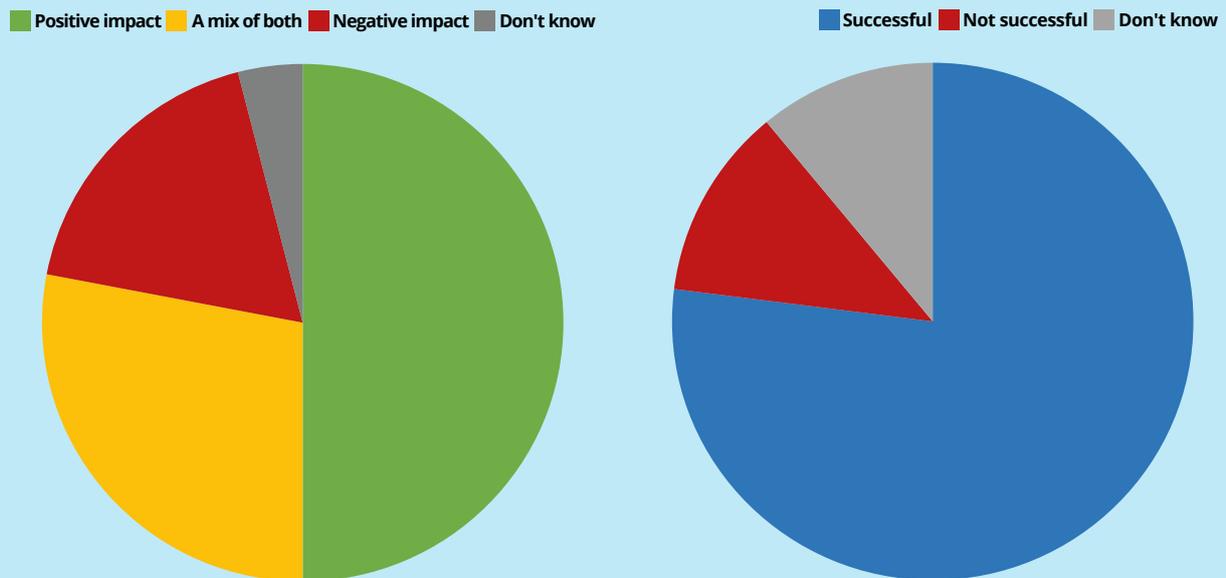
tudes are widespread among the Portuguese, judging by the overwhelming number of people who perceive a gap between ‘the elite’ and ‘the people’ and who dislike and distrust professional politicians (Magalhães, 2019).⁶

In understanding the lack of public and political concern over immigration, the first and most obvious factor to have in mind is that Portugal has simply not registered immigration flows in any way comparable to its Western European neighbors. It is the country in Western Europe with the least number of asylum applications⁷ and, even though it joined programs for the redistribution of refugees in Europe, it is estimated that about half of those who entered opted to leave (*Jornal de Notícias*, 9 January 2018). In fact, Portugal is overall one

6 It is telling that the Portuguese often stand out for having one of the highest levels of external inefficacy in Europe – that is, number of people who think that politicians do not care about what they think (European Social Survey, 2014).

7 Eurostat asylum statistics. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics

Fig. 4: Perceived Impact of Immigration and Perceived Integration Success



Source: Special Eurobarometer 469 (2018). Data for Portugal. / own representation

of the EU countries with the lowest share of foreign-born residents, constituting about 4 % of its total population.⁸ Among them, a significant portion comes from Portuguese-speaking countries, with obvious cultural affinities – Brazil alone being responsible for more than 20 % of the foreign-born population in 2018.⁹

Although the Portuguese do not stand out for having particularly favorable attitudes towards immigration – even if above the EU28 average on indicators such as the perceived positive impact of immigrants on society –, **Portugal does stick out when it comes to public opinion perceptions on how successful the integration of immigrants is perceived to be, having the lowest number of respondents in the EU who think integration was not successful** (Eurobarometer, 2018 – Fig. 4). This is in line with Portugal's positive scores on integration indicators. When put against the 38 countries included in Migrant Integration Policy Index (a tool which uses hundreds of integration indicators across different policy areas), Portugal ranked second in its overall integration score in 2014 (only behind Sweden), even if critics are right to point out that its good policies do not always translate into good practices (Henriques, 2019).¹⁰

Moreover, when looking at net migration rates over the past decade, it is obvious that the Portuguese had more reasons to be concerned about emigration than immigration. The effects of the economic crisis translated

into net losses of hundreds of thousands between 2011 and 2016 and positive net migration rates have been slow to recover (Figure 8). Note that these statistics refer only to 'permanent migration', with the number of 'temporary migrants' being vastly superior, exceeding more than 100,000 emigrants per year over the same period.¹¹

With a rapidly aging population and one of the lowest fertility rates in Europe (1,38 in 2017), it is not uncommon for political or economic actors to point out that Portugal needs more immigration to keep its workforce at stable levels, even if this is not a debate free of political contention, with right-wing parties preferring to put the emphasis on incentives to fertility instead (Moleiro, 2018). Though this question was largely absent from the 2019 electoral campaign, it is telling that the center-right leader opted to open one of the most important televised debates by pointing out that over 300,000 people chose to leave the country in the last four years – attesting for the meager attractiveness of the Portuguese labour market –, whereas the incumbent Prime Minister António Costa (PS) replied by emphasizing that net migration rates have actually turned positive for the first time in several years. Other than this, the only time the immigration issue made it to the forefront of the electoral campaign was during a meeting in which António Costa – visiting the Cape Verde Association and in the presence of representatives of the immigrant community – stated that Portugal needs more immigrants and, thus, facilitate their entrance, putting an

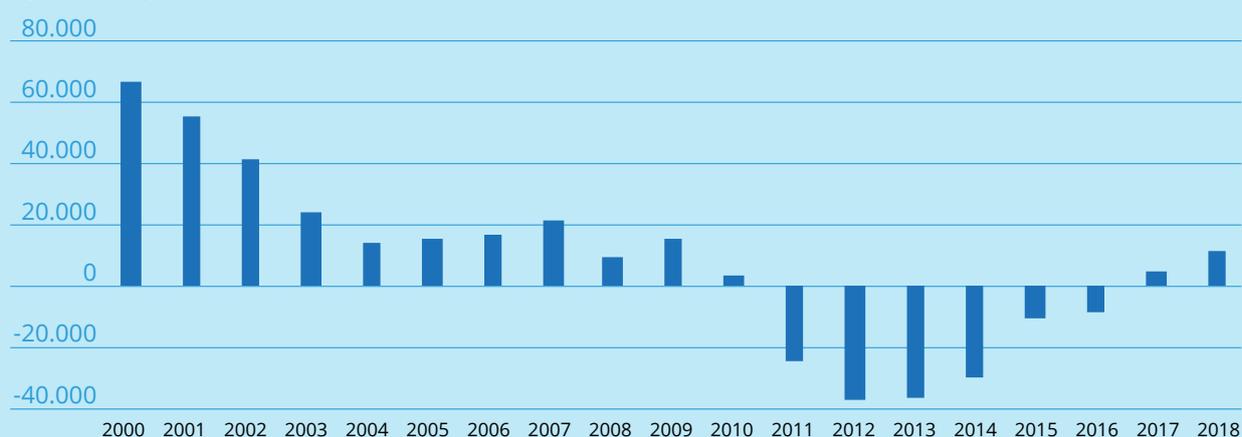
8 Eurostat population statistics. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=People_in_the_EU_-_statistics_on_origin_of_residents

9 Available at Pordata: <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Popula%C3%A7%C3%A3o+estrangeira+com+estatuto+legal+de+residente+total+e+por+algumas+nacionalidades-24>

10 <http://mipex.eu/portugal>

11 Data discriminated by type and year available at Pordata: <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Emigrantes+total+e+por+tipo-21>

Fig. 5: Net migration rate



Source: INE and Pordata / own representation

end to the existing 'labor market's quota system' (Pereira, 2019). When asked about his opinion, the PSD candidate agreed that Portugal needs an 'immigration strategy', as long as it serves the needs of the Portuguese labour market, adding that there should be no 'fundamentalism in being either entirely against or entirely pro open doors' (Carrapatoso, 2019).

The generalized absence of publicly visible debates on immigration does not amount to its complete absence in electoral manifestos, even if the space that each party dedicates to the theme is quite modest. The party that deals more at length with the issue is the ruling PS which, in line with Costa's previously cited words, highlights the need to attract regulated fluxes of migrants to sustain the country's development, both at the economic and demographic level (PS, 2019: 142). Though there is no visible disagreement on this, it is interesting to note that different parties put the emphasis on different aspects. The center-right PSD also mentions the positive contribution of immigration to the country's demography and its social security system, but does not explicitly refer to the need to attract more immigrants. Instead, it dedicates most of the manifesto's space on immigration to the need to improve integration policies, in light of the still existing shortcomings in terms of discrimination and equality (PSD, 2019: 102-103). The CDS-PP, in line with its more conservative profile, speaks of a 'rigorous management of migration flows, oriented towards the needs of the labor market' and the need to 'fight illegal immigration trafficking networks' while having a 'clear and responsible policy of legal immigration' and maintaining the current policy 'open to the reception and integration of refugees' (CDS-PP, 2019: 198). In contrast, the Left Bloc chooses to put an emphasis on bureaucratic obstacles, namely the slow pace of regularization of immigrants, whereas the PCP puts a similar emphasis on the need to fight the exploitation of immigrant workers (BE, 2019: 100; PCP, 2019: 99). In addition, none of the parties failed to mention the emigration issue and the need to reduce outgoing flows.

The strongest anti-immigration rhetoric comes from two parties with an obvious radical right leaning and who, up until 2019, had no parliamentary representation. The first is the National Renovator Party (PNR), an ultranationalist party that exists since 2000 but that has never managed to get more than 0,50 % of the popular vote. Its links to violent far-right groups have long cast a negative image over the party, generally seen as too extreme. The novelty in this party family is the recently founded party 'Chega' ('Enough'), with a strong populist rhetoric. Running for the first time in 2019 European elections (when it gathered 1,4 % of the popular vote), this party has somewhat benefited from greater visibility than the PNR. This is in part because its leader, André Ventura, is a well-known football commentator whose political career was put under the spotlight when, still as a PSD representative running in the 2017 elections, he accused the Roma of living on state benefits. Its program has visible similarities with Vox's electoral program in Spain, namely when it comes to its tough rhetoric on immigration (e.g. proposing the deportation of all illegal immigrants or of all legal ones who engage in crime). However, Chega's billboards have focused more on other demands typically supported by populist parties, such as slashing the number of Parliament seats or a tough hand on law-and-order issues.

3. THE ELECTORAL RESULTS

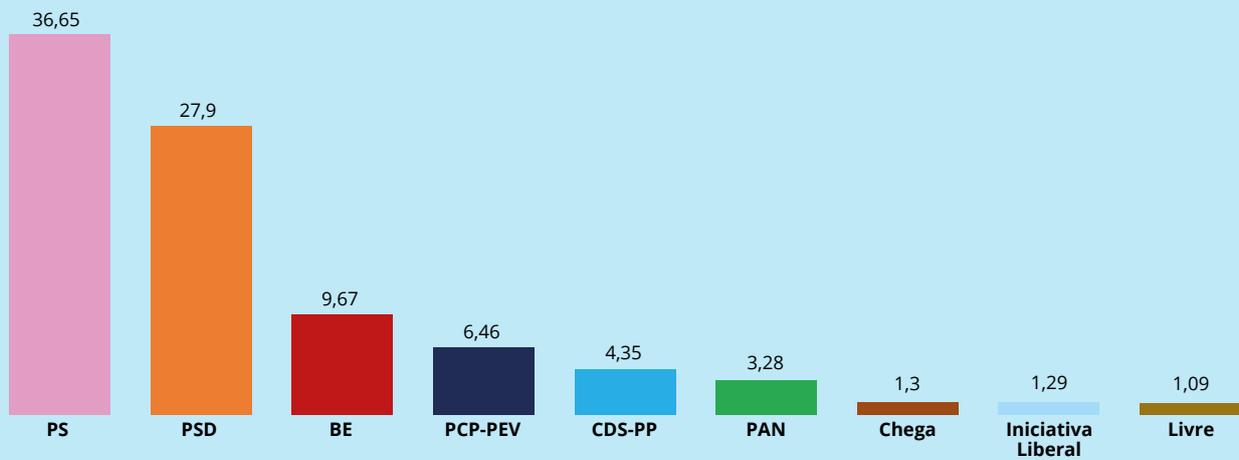
The good electoral performance of the incumbent party was largely expectable in light of the country's positive economic performance. The lingering question for most political pundits over the past months was whether the PS could obtain an absolute majority on October 6 or not. The party was careful not to set this as an explicit goal for itself, though many naturally suspected this was its secret preference. Curiously, polls showed that voting intentions for the PS decreased after surveys in the first half of September indicated that the party was close to obtaining an absolute majority. This is possibly the result of two factors. The first is that the same opin-

ion polls revealed that the majority of respondents preferred to avoid an absolute majority. The second is that the PSD's leader was widely credited with a surprisingly positive performance in the electoral campaign, contributing to the growth in voting intentions for the PSD over the month of September.

All in all, the center-left emerged as the clear election winner, reinforcing its parliamentary presence with at least 106 deputies (36,65 % of the vote share)¹², though short of the 116 seats needed for an absolute majority. This once again confirms the Portuguese exception to the overall

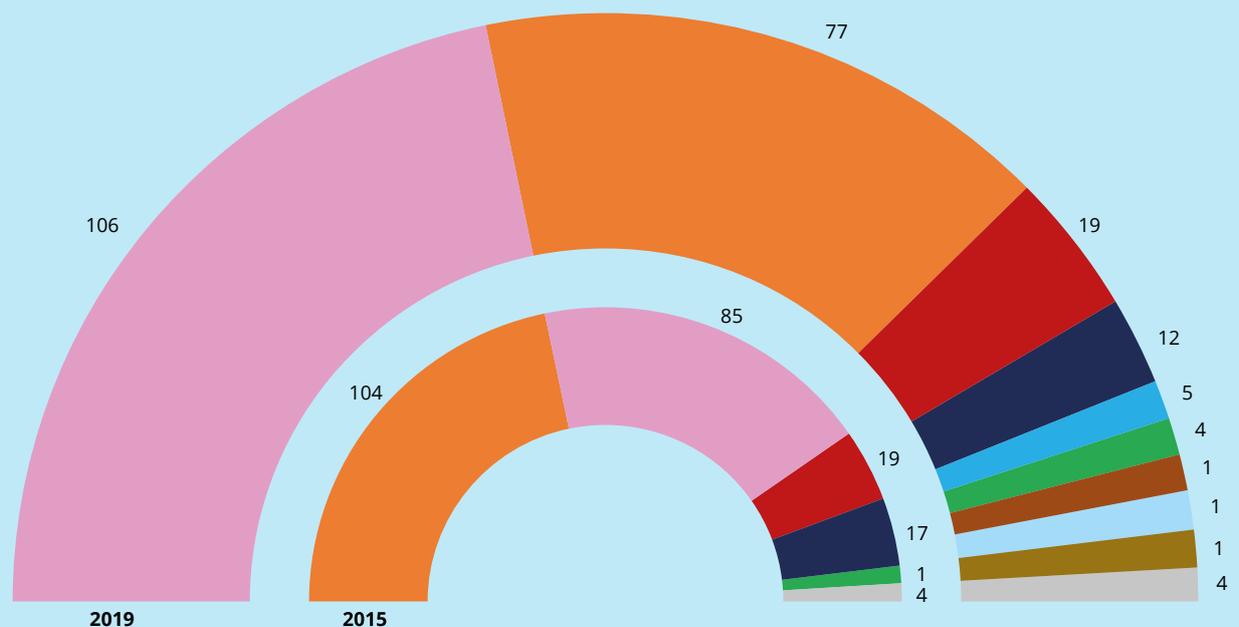
decimation of social democratic parties elsewhere in Europe. The center-right PSD was second, with about 27,9 % of the vote, a result that turned out to be more positive than the debacle that many had anticipated, even if it constitutes a historically low result for the PSD. It was the conservative CDS-PP that registered the largest downfall, gathering only 4,25 % of the vote and losing a total of 13 parliamentary seats. This is illustrative of the poor state in which right-wing parties find themselves, after the PS appropriated what has typically been a right-wing banner – budgetary rigor – and blamed the PSD-CDS coalition of 2011-2015 for going too far on its austerity program.

Fig. 6: Election results (in percent)¹³



Source: <https://www.legislativas2019.mai.gov.pt> / own representation

Fig. 7: Distribution of seats



Source: *Jornal de Notícias* / own representation

12 There are still four seats to be determined, corresponding to the electoral districts abroad.

13 See footnote above.

Another question in the mind of political observers ahead of these elections was whether the radical left would be rewarded or punished for its collaboration with the mainstream left over the 2015-2019 legislative period. Despite the relatively positive evaluations of the *geringonça*, some feared that it could hurt the traditional status of the radical left as an outsider whose main role is to voice discontentment. In spite of the fact that none of the two political forces grew in comparison to the good results of 2015, the Left Bloc and the PCP-PEV coalition did not share the same fate. While the BE evaded punishment, consolidating its position as the third largest party – with 9,67 % of the vote share and the same 19 parliamentary seats –, the same cannot be said of the PCP and its satellite party PEV. They saw their vote share decrease from 8,25 % in 2015 to 6,46 % in 2019, losing a total of five parliamentary seats. There are various possible reasons for this. The first is that the Communists seemed to have struggled more with the inherent tensions involved in supporting the government while keeping its anti-system discourse. The second is that it is a party typically overrepresented among older people, causing many to predict that it is destined to lose electoral relevance over time. Young people leaning towards the radical left have instead largely concentrated their vote on the Left Bloc, whose electorate is diametrically opposed to the Communist Party in its demography.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, if one adds the vote of the PCP-PEV to the one for the Left Bloc, the joint results of the radical left are still high, which seems to confirm the positive evaluation that most voters have made of the coalition agreements they made with the PS in 2015. This was also the interpretation that the Prime Minister António Costa has made of the results, stating during his election night speech that the 'Portuguese liked the *gerigonça*' and that he remains open to finding solutions on its left.

The largest surprise of the 2019 elections was perhaps the parliamentary entrance of three (!) new parties, with one deputy each. While *Livre* (or *Free*) is another left-wing player – electing a black woman who has put an emphasis on equality and social justice –, the other two newcomers – *Iniciativa Liberal* and *Chega* (each with 1,3 % of the vote) – can be described respectively as classical liberal and radical right populist. *Iniciativa Liberal* (Liberal Initiative) stood out for its emphasis on a flat-rate tax and the reduction of the role of the state whereas *Chega* (Enough) attempted to capitalize on a strong anti-establishment discourse. This was obvious in its leaders' speech, commemorating the 'first time that the Portuguese voted for a truly anti-system and truly right-wing party', 'a voice against the rigged, corrupted, and miserably rooted system' (Jorge, 2019).

Another clear winner of the electoral night was PAN (People - Animals - Nature), a party that saw its representation increase from one seat in 2015 to four seats in 2019 (3,28 % of the vote share). The ecologist/ animal rights party benefited from increased visibility since it was first elected in

2015, particularly in light of its appropriation of the environmentalist banner, at a time in which climate change concerns and the associated 'youth climate strikes' also had a visible impact in Portugal.

4. OUTLOOK

Though **the joint results of the two largest parties confirm the continuation of a bipartisan trend in Portuguese politics and the overall resilience of its party system**, it is nonetheless significant that the Portuguese National Assembly went from a parliament with six different parties in 2011 to one with a total of ten political forces in 2019. Knowing that parliamentary representation is a door for new parties to achieve greater visibility – and anticipating that a negative change in economic conditions might lead more people to look for alternatives –, there are good reasons to think that new parties have the potential to grow in the future.

For the moment, however, the positive evaluations of the 2015-2019 government and of the parliamentary agreements that sustained it are a prelude to a renewed agreement on the left. However, it is still not clear which form these agreements might take – that is, whether there will be formal agreements as in 2015 – and whether they will involve the same partners as in the previous legislature. The situation has changed in regard to 2015 in that the PS is now the clear election winner and does not need both the support of the Left Bloc and the PCP-PEV to forge a governmental pact. An agreement with one of the two forces is now sufficient to attain an absolute parliamentary majority, the other option being a minority government that works on a 'variable geometry' basis, that is, a government that relies on the ad hoc support of different parties depending on the content of legislation, negotiating at each step. Though this solution carries greater risks of instability, it would allow the PS to shift allies depending on its preferences, possibly turning to the center right on some issues.

Judging by António Costa's first speech after the election, this does not seem to be his preferred path, though, as he affirmed that he will try to renovate the political solution that sustained the last government. He also stated that he is open to agreements with *Livre* and PAN. Among his previous partners, the Left Bloc appeared more sympathetic to a formal agreement than the Communists. While the leader of the Left Bloc showed her entire availability to negotiate – "either on a stable solution that assures the continuity of the restitution of rights and income" or on "year-by-year negotiations" –, the leader of the PCP seemed to close the door to formal agreements, preferring to manage its support on a "case-by-case basis" (Martins e Brito, 2019). Regardless of the possible solutions ahead, the 2019 elections confirmed the electorate's validation of the center-left rule and, to some extent, of the parliamentary agreements that were made to its left, opening the door to the consolidation of a trend that was unknown in Portuguese politics up until 2015.

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PROFILE

In recent years in particular the topic of migration has led to new political polarisations in the societies of Europe. The political and social challenges associated with this development are not yet foreseeable. There is a need for studies which explore the relationship between migration and democracy.

The Mercator Forum for Migration and Democracy (MIDEM) asks about the impact of migration on democratic institutions, policies and cultures and looks into political decision making processes in the field of migration policies - in individual countries and in a comparative view of Europe. A spotlight is put on the relation between migration and populism.

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