

# What Are (Semi-)Presidential Elections About?: Government Losses in the 2006 Portuguese Presidential Elections

Pedro C. Magalhães\*  
(pedro.magalhaes@ics.ul.pt)

First draft

Paper presented at the Kellogg Institute's Lecture Series, University of Notre Dame,  
South Bend, November 9, 2006

## Abstract

The Portuguese presidential election of 2006 represented a major upset for the incumbent Socialist Party (PS). In the March 2005 legislative elections, the PS had obtained 46.4 percent of the valid votes allowing it to form, for the first time in the history of this center-left party, a single-party cabinet supported by an absolute majority in parliament. However, less than one year later, the presidential candidate endorsed by the Socialist Party — Mário Soares, a former party leader, prime minister, and president of the republic — received only 14.3 percent of all valid votes. This paper explores four different potential accounts of this electoral outcome, each based in particular theoretical underpinnings and assumptions about electoral behavior in “less important” elections, such as presidential elections in semi-presidential regimes: “popularity contest”; “surge and decline”; “second-order” election; and “policy balancing”. On the basis of the results of a two-wave panel survey, several different hypotheses are tested concerning the determinants of vote choices and defections from the government party, and some conclusions are drawn about electoral behavior in Portugal and the potential generalization of findings to presidential elections in similar political systems.

\*Researcher at the Social Sciences Institute of the University of Lisbon (ICS-UL). The survey data used for this paper were the obtained under the auspices of the research program “Comportamento Eleitoral dos Portugueses”, coordinated by António Barreto at ICS-UL, and supported by ICS-UL, the *Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia*, the Tinker Foundation, the *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian*, the *Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento*, the *Comissão Nacional the Eleições* and the *Secretariado Técnico dos Assuntos para o Processo Eleitoral*.

## Introduction

The Portuguese presidential elections of 2006 represented a major upset for the incumbent Socialist Party (PS). In the March 2005 legislative elections, the PS had obtained 46.4 percent of the valid votes and the support of nearly 29 percent of all registered voters, allowing it to form, for the first time in the history of this center-left party, a single-party cabinet supported by an absolute majority in parliament. However, less than one year later, the presidential candidate endorsed by the Socialist Party — Mário Soares, a former party leader, prime minister, and president of the republic — received only 14.3 percent of all valid votes and the support of less than 9 percent of all registered voters. The perception of disaster for the incumbent party does come out mitigated by the fact that another candidate emanating from the Socialist Party, Manuel Alegre, also ran in the elections, albeit independently and without the party's endorsement. However, even the combined score of Soares and Alegre — 35.1 percent of the valid votes — still fell considerably short of the Socialist's performance less than a year earlier.

What explains the major losses experienced by the incumbent party in the Portuguese 2006 presidential elections? There are four generic accounts that could be advanced about this event. However, there may be more to those accounts than the mere interpretation of what took place in this specific Portuguese election. In fact, each has already been proposed as an explanation of similar phenomena and even, in some cases, as a potentially relevant approach to the study not only of presidential elections in semi-presidential systems, but also of other types of elections. And each account derives from a particular theoretical approach to the study of electoral behavior, with different assumptions about what motivates voters and different expectations about how voting behavior is affected by the institutional framework of politics.

The first account is the simplest: the reason why the Socialists experienced such an upset in a short time after their previous success is because legislative and presidential elections are fundamentally different. Portugal has a “semi-presidential” system, a hybrid form of government that is most generically characterized by the fact that, in it, an elected president coexists with a prime minister and a cabinet that are accountable to parliament (Elgie 1998). However, like most of these systems that have existed in post-

war Europe – Austria, Ireland, or France, among several others – or have been installed in new “third wave” democracies – Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, or Slovenia, just to name a few<sup>1</sup> – the particular brand of Portuguese semi-presidentialism is “premier-presidentialist” (Shugart and Carey 1992), i.e., a system where the cabinet is accountable *exclusively* before parliament. Although the prime minister is appointed by the president, the fact that the former is responsible only to parliament “is a feature that restricts the president’s real choice of prime-ministerial candidate to someone he expects to be able to command parliamentary support” (Shugart 2005), with the result that, with few exceptions, presidential elections lack direct consequences for the control of the executive.<sup>2</sup> One possible implication of this is that, unlike legislative elections — where cues such as party identification, ideology or perceived economic or government performance are often highly consequential for vote choices — presidential elections in this context are likely to become nothing more than “popularity contests”. Their outcome is determined by voters to whom the concerns that are typically present in general elections are rendered irrelevant by the very irrelevance of the presidential office, and where voting decisions are made simply on the basis of voters’ evaluation of the personal qualities of candidates. This is, in fact, what the little existing research has already found for presidential elections in other “premier-presidential” systems such as Ireland (Brug et al. 2000).

There are, however, other accounts that could be provided about these elections. The second possible account also starts from the premise that presidential elections in “premier-presidential” systems are indeed less salient for voters than legislative elections. However, it reaches a rather different conclusion: this does not prevent voters from being guided by similar cues or from activating the same predispositions that prevail in the “more important” elections, quite the contrary. The “surge and decline” theory, which has emerged in the context of American congressional midterm elections (Campbell 1960), provides such an account. It suggests that “less important”, “low stimulus” elections

---

<sup>1</sup> For an exhaustive list of semi-presidential regimes in old and new democracies, see Elgie (2005)

<sup>2</sup> As Shugart notes (2005), the exception to this pattern results from situations where the president is the *de facto* head of a parliamentary majority, a circumstance that has turned the French case, on occasion, more “presidential” in political practice. In the case of the second sub-type of semi-presidential regimes — “president-parliamentary” systems — the fact that the executive is accountable both before parliament *and* the president also brings this form closer to pure presidentialism.

represent a return to “normalcy” in terms of how different groups of voters, defined in terms of their party identification, tend to behave, a “normalcy” that inevitably leads to losses for executive incumbents. In high stimulus elections, such as those that contribute to determine the partisan control of the executive, low interest voters, independents, and partisans of the “losing” side tend to be mobilized to vote by the importance of what is at stake and to be swayed by the short-term contexts that favor the winners. However, in subsequent low stimulus elections, the “surge” that led the incumbent to power is likely to be followed by a “decline”, as voters who have lower levels of political engagement return to abstention and opposition partisans return “home” to their parties and candidates.

The third possible account of events is, in some ways, similar to the second, but rests on different assumptions about what is relevant in terms of individual motives and predispositions. By deriving from the study of elections in Europe rather than in the United States, it ends up giving party identification a much more limited role. The “second-order elections” theory (Reif and Schmitt 1980) suggests that the lower importance of these elections might be precisely the reason why voters can rely on little else but the conventional cues and concerns typical of general elections and also why, by the way, incumbents will tend to be punished. But the relevant cues in this account are ideology and government performance. On the one hand, since less actual power is at stake, voters who had voted strategically in first-order elections become, in second-order ones, more likely to opt for parties or candidates that are closer to their preferences. On the other hand, precisely because these elections do not affect who governs, some voters are likely to use them in order to send a costless signal about their level of (dis)satisfaction with government performance. In fact, the notion that “elections to choose a non-executive head of state” — such as presidential elections in most premier-presidential systems — should display these second-order effects has already been made in the literature (Eijk et al. 1996; Marsh 2000). And extant research on the French case shows that, even following periods of cohabitation — during which the reins of government are held by the prime minister and not the president — voters tend nevertheless to use presidential elections in order to hold executives accountable for economic performance, punishing or rewarding, on those grounds, the presidential

candidates endorsed by the parties controlling the assembly and the cabinet (Lewis-Beck 1997; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2000).

The fourth and last account is one in which legislative and presidential elections are also inextricably linked, like in the previous two accounts. However, what connects is not only the reliance of voters on similar cues. It is also the fact that, because (at least some) voters see presidential elections as actually important for policy outcomes, they tend to act purposefully to promote certain combinations of partisan control of the executive and other branches of government. “Policy balancing” theory has been applied to explain midterm losses (or split-ticket voting) in American midterm elections (Alesina and Rosenthal 1989; Fiorina 1992; Carsey and Leyman 2004) or vote shifts from government to opposition parties in European Parliament elections (Carruba and Timpone 2005). Its main hypothesis is that government losses stem from the fact that ideologically moderate voters are likely to be interested in placing veto-points to the executive in order to bring policy closer to their preferences, even if they themselves contributed to the formation of the executive majority in the first place. This notion also has some *prima facie* credibility in what concerns most premier-presidential regimes, including Portugal, where the president enjoys the ability to veto parliamentary laws and governmental decrees. In any case, the bottom line of this third story is rather different from the previous ones: the main reason why the Socialists were punished in the presidential elections was because moderate voters wished to prevent the control of both presidency and parliament by a single-party, the PS. In fact, for a Portuguese audience, this story will sound quite familiar: it corresponds, after all, to one of the “folk theories” about presidential elections that has often circulated in the Portuguese media and political discourse, i.e., the notion that “the Portuguese don’t like to put all the eggs in the same basket”.

This paper appraises the plausibility of these theoretical accounts on the basis of a post-electoral panel survey conducted following the 2005 legislative and 2006 presidential elections. In the two waves of the survey, 812 respondents, forming a representative sample of the voting age population in continental Portugal, answered several questions not only about their vote recall in both elections but also about a large number of aspects, including their evaluation of governmental performance, their ideological self-placement in a left-right scale, their level of interest in politics, their

assessment of the personal qualities of presidential candidates and a series of socio-demographic characteristics. In the next section of the paper, we will start by providing some basic information about the political and institutional context under which the 2006 presidential election took place. In the third section, we will put the first storyline to the test, by determining whether vote choices in the 2006 presidential elections were determined exclusively by voters' evaluations of candidates' personal qualities or, alternatively, if vote choices were also affected by the type of attitudes that shape voting behavior in legislative first-order elections: party affiliation, ideology or evaluations of government performance. Finally, in the fourth section of the paper, after presenting some broad aggregate patterns of vote shifts from the legislative to the presidential election, we will concentrate our analysis on the 2005 Socialist Party voters. That analysis, by testing different hypotheses about the type of previous government voters that were more likely to defect to candidates endorsed by other parties or to abstention, will shed light on the factors behind the losses experienced by the incumbent in the 2006 presidential elections and, thus, on the plausibility of the different accounts that were initially presented about the nature of presidential elections in the particular premier-presidential brand of semi-presidentialism.

### **The powers of the Portuguese presidency**

The rules regulating the role of the Portuguese presidency that exist today in Portugal are the result of a protracted process of institutional design and reform formally initiated in 1975, when the constituent assembly that had been freely elected one year after the April 1974 military coup first started its work. However, although these rules were extensively discussed in the assembly, their actual negotiation ended up taking place outside parliament, between party leaders and the factions of the military that, at different points in time during the 1974-1976 period, had control of the political transition process.

Initially, during the period of greatest political radicalization that started in early 1975, a "First Pact" between the parties and the military was signed in order to determine the content of the future fundamental law, in which the "Movement of the Armed Forces" (MFA) imposed the constitutionalization of the indirect election of the head of state by an

electoral college that would be composed both by parliament and by an “Assembly of the MFA”, which was itself formed by military officers. However, after the November 25<sup>th</sup> 1975 countercoup that neutralized the radical left-wing military, this and other aspects of the so-called “First Pact” were renegotiated. Of mutual interest to both sides — the moderate and hierarchical military that had now gained control of the reins of power, on the one hand, and the political parties, on the other — was that no such thing as an “Assembly of the MFA” was recognized by the constitution. This, however, opened a new question: how was the president to be elected? In their proposals for the revision of the “first pact”, all parties converged in the election by direct universal suffrage, but this was accepted by the military only under very stringent conditions. First, the imposition of an “implicit military clause” (Pereira 1984), through which the major parties, the center-left Socialist Party and the center-right Social-Democratic Party (PSD), would endorse a particular candidate in the next presidential elections, to be selected by the military Council of the Revolution (CR) itself. This was to be General Ramalho Eanes, a member of the CR and the newly appointed Army’s Chief of Staff following the November countercoup, in which he had played a leading role. Furthermore, this was accompanied by a second imposition, namely, the particularly strong role of the presidential office and a considerable amount of military tutelage in the regime. Although the executive would emanate (and be responsible before) parliament, the president also had the power both to nominate and dismiss the prime minister, as well as the ability to dissolve parliament. Furthermore, the president would preside over the Council of the Revolution, which in turn would have jurisdiction over military issues and defense policy, as well as the ability to scrutinize the constitutionality of legislation passed by parliament. Finally, the president would assume the crucial roles of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. All this was accepted by the parties and ultimately ratified by the constitutional assembly.

Only in the revision of the constitution that occurred in 1982, following considerable political strife between president Eanes and the main political parties, was this system be changed and ultimately find its current form. The two major changes operated by the PS and the PSD, who enjoyed the necessary two-thirds majority in parliament, aimed directly curtailing presidential and military powers. On the one hand,

the Council of the Revolution was eliminated, and its main tasks — constitutional review and policy-making in military and defense areas — were assigned, respectively, to a proper constitutional court and to parliament itself. On the other hand, the role of the president itself was changed. Thus far, the system had corresponded to a “president-parliamentary” model, where both the parliament and the president had the authority to dismiss the cabinet (Shugart and Carey 1992: 24-25). From 1982 on, the system would shift to “premier-presidentialism”, a system where, although the president is also elected by popular vote and preserves considerable powers, the premier and the cabinet are accountable only before parliament (Shugart and Carey 1992: 24). In other words, the president lost, since 1982, his or her ability to dismiss the cabinet at will.<sup>3</sup>

What “considerable powers” has the presidency nonetheless preserved? First, the president — who enjoys a five-year mandate and cannot fulfill more than two consecutive mandates — maintained the ability of both nominating the prime minister and dissolving parliament, constrained only, in the latter case, by time limits. Since the constitutional revision of 1982, unsurprisingly – given the exclusive accountability of the cabinet before parliament – all presidents have invited the leader of the most voted party in each legislative election to form government. However, the power to dissolve the assembly has been used no less four times. The first, in 1985, followed a crisis in the PS/PSD coalition government, and ultimately resulted in elections from which a fractionalized parliament emerged, leading to a PSD minority government. The second, in 1987, followed the approval of a motion of censure against the aforementioned PSD minority cabinet, and resulted in elections that led the PSD to government again, albeit this time with the support of an absolute majority in parliament. The third, in 2001, followed the resignation of the prime minister of a minority Socialist cabinet, with the following elections resulting in a new cabinet supported by a center-right coalition. Finally, in 2004, following an internal crisis in the PSD/CDS cabinet, parliament was again dissolved, and the new elections resulted in a PS cabinet supported by an absolute

---

<sup>3</sup> Of course, the dissolution of parliament and the calling of legislative elections, a power that the presidency has not relinquished, naturally impinges on the survival of the cabinet. However, unlike what occurred with the presidential power of cabinet dismissal enjoyed before the 1982 constitutional revision, the composition of the following cabinet is a decision that is immediately transferred to the electorate and the parties themselves, a process in which, as we have seen previously, the president’s intervention in the nomination of prime minister is constrained by the composition of parliament.



majority. In other words, the president has used his dissolution in order to provide particular solutions to crises impinging on cabinet stability, leading in all cases to electoral results that significantly changed the political status-quo.

Second, the president enjoys a series of “negative powers” vis-à-vis cabinet majorities, both through his ability to veto legislation emanating from parliament and government decrees and to refer legislation for both *a priori* and *a posteriori* review by the constitutional court. The direct impact of these powers on policy outcomes may be relatively limited, especially when facing cabinets supported by absolute majorities in parliament. Presidential vetoes of parliamentary bills can be overridden by an absolute majority in parliament, in which case the president is forced to sign the bill into law in its entirety.<sup>4</sup> Vetoes of government decrees are indeed final, but nothing prevents the executive from reintroducing the vetoed decrees as bills in parliament. As for referrals of legislation to the constitutional court, they are of uncertain effectiveness in terms of preventing majorities from passing their preferred policies, as research tends to suggest that the court, both because of the bipartisan system of appointment of its justices and of strategic behavior, tends to shy away from systematically confronting parliamentary majorities (Magalhães 2003).

However, the fact that the president cannot be counted as a proper “veto-player” in policy-making should not lead us to completely underestimate his influence. Ironically, the president’s influence in this regard is arguably amplified by the fact that he has lost, since 1982, his ability to dismiss the executive at will. It is true that the 1982 constitutional amendments contributed to clarify the assignment of competencies between president and prime minister, neutralizing the tendency towards an hierarchical ascendancy of the former over the latter and depriving the former of any executive competencies, in noticeable contrast with the pre-1982 period and, particularly, with the period between 1977 and 1979, where three successive cabinets of “presidential initiative” — whose prime ministers were appointed by the president among independents or non-leading party figures — took office. However, elected by universal suffrage and through a majoritarian electoral system — and, thus, with a level of electoral

---

<sup>4</sup> The exceptions concern the sort of “para-constitutional” legislation regulating elections, national defense, state of emergency and the Constitutional Court, which need parliamentary approval by a two-thirds majority and whose presidential veto can only be overridden, again, by a two-thirds majority.

support that is invariably greater than that enjoyed by any single party in the Portuguese PR system in legislative elections — and not directly accountable for government performance, the president tends to be seen by public opinion as being “above parties” and as detached from everyday politics (Araújo 2003), allowing him to obtain levels of public support that are systematically above those enjoyed by the prime minister and are also less sensitive to changes in economic performance (Veiga and Veiga 2004).

The combination between this enhanced political capital and the panoply of powers and resources that remain available to the presidency still render it influential on both policy-making and the electoral fortunes of incumbent parties and prime ministers. Vetoes or referrals to the constitutional court, regardless of the ultimate fate of bills or decrees, potentially make cabinets incur in political costs that would otherwise be negligible. Such costs include, for example, the increased public visibility brought to bear on a law that has been vetoed or referred to the court by the president or need to ensure that no defections or absences occur in parliament in order to obtain the absolute majority of all elected MP’s that is necessary to override vetoes (Shugart 2005). Presidents have used the political leverage that derives from this in two ways. In some cases, in order to obtain concessions from governments in policy-making, in the form of pre-promulgation amendments in governmental decrees informally negotiated with the cabinet (Antunes 1991; Magalhães 2001). In other periods, presidents have chosen to engage in “wars of attrition” with parliamentary majorities, in which the ultimate fate of the vetoed or referred legislation was perhaps less important than the public controversy and its impact on government popularity that such intervention by the president typically brought about (Araújo 2003). The latter phenomenon is illustrated by the 1991-1995 period of cohabitation between the Socialist president Mário Soares and the Social-Democrat prime minister Cavaco Silva, during which the former accompanied the resort to vetoes and constitutional review referrals with the use of his office, its resources and its visibility to amplify social and interest group grievances. Although the popularity of both the president and the prime minister suffered from such conflictuality, their effect was far more devastating in the case of the cabinet, and played no small role in the ultimate electoral defeat on the Social Democrats in the 1995 elections (Magalhães 2003).

The non-negligible character of these “considerable powers” can be inferred, for example, from the way that both parties and voters take into account the stakes involved in presidential elections. In all elections that have taken place since 1982, the candidates endorsed by the main parties have been major political figures in the respective parties, including former prime ministers (Mário Soares in 1986, 1991 and 2006 and Cavaco Silva in 1996 and 2006) and party leaders (Freitas do Amaral in 1986 and both Jerónimo de Sousa and Francisco Louçã in 2006). Furthermore, in all elections but 1991, the two major parties — the PS and the PSD — have endorsed different and competing candidates. Finally, also voters seem to remain mobilized by presidential elections, at least in comparison with legislative elections. If we consider only those elections that have taken place since the 1982 constitutional revision, the average turnout for presidential elections is 63 percent, not much less than the average turnout in the legislative ones in the same period (68 percent), a difference that ultimately evaporates once we consider only the presidential elections where the incumbent was not running for reelection.<sup>5</sup>

### **The context of the 2006 elections**

The 2006 elections were fought by five candidates. Cavaco Silva, former prime minister, was supported by the center-right PSD and by the rightist Social Democratic Center-Popular Party (CDS-PP). Although he delayed the official announcement of his bid for the presidency until October 2005, a mere two months before the election, his candidacy had for long been seen as an almost certainty. His defeat in the 1996 presidential elections was followed by a period of public quietude. However, his return to the public sphere was initiated in 2003, with the publication of a memoir of his days as PSD’s party leader and prime minister between 1985 and 1995, and was then followed by a series of carefully managed public pronouncements and newspaper articles that were the object of increasing public attention. In the meantime, in spite of some speculation and name-throwing, both the PSD and the CDS mainly neglected to search for an alternative candidate, and Cavaco Silva’s bid for the presidency became increasingly seen

---

<sup>5</sup> For the 1986 presidential elections, which had two rounds, we considered the average turnout in those rounds.

as inevitable, particularly as several opinion polls conducted since 2003 revealed that he was the best potential candidate positioned to end the previous dominance of the office by candidates endorsed by leftist parties (namely, Mário Soares and Jorge Sampaio, both former leaders of the PS).

In the meantime, for the PS, the presidential elections could be an opportunity to rebound from recent electoral mishaps. Although the Socialists had triumphed in the March 2005 legislative elections, the local elections held in later October brought a disturbing message, as the party failed to conquer the mayor's office in any of the five major cities in the country and obtained a national score no different from that of 2001, which was already so low that it had prompted the resignation of the Socialist Prime Minister António Guterres. However, no credible candidates seemed to emerge. The first the PS seemed to flirt with was, precisely, Guterres. However, his public image of Guterres had been severely tarnished by his last years in office, perceived as having the main responsibility for the large budget deficit found by the end of 2002, a violation of the European stability and growth pact that remains, today, at the forefront of the Portuguese political agenda. Ultimately, that the Guterres hypothesis was discarded became evident for all observers when the Socialist government supported his (ultimately successful) candidacy for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The PS then seemed to consider other possibilities, particularly António Vitorino (former member of the European Commission) and Manuel Alegre, one of the party founders and the main challenger of prime minister José Sócrates' bid for the party's leadership in 2004, generally perceived as representing the more leftist and laicist factions of the PS. However, as the endorsement of Alegre by the Socialists appeared increasingly plausible, the Socialist Party leadership decided instead to endorse former president and prime minister Mário Soares, who announced his candidacy in August 2005. After some hesitation, Alegre refused to step down, and confirmed by late September that he would also present himself, albeit as an independent candidate. Finally, three other candidates emerged: Jerónimo de Sousa and Francisco Louçã, leaders, respectively, of the Communist Party (PCP) and the Leftist Bloc (BE), two leftist parties which have been partially competing for the same electorate in legislative elections; and Garcia Pereira, a

well-known lawyer and eternal presidential candidate of the fringe PCTP-MRPP, a party in the extreme-left.

The campaign was marked by two revelations about mass opinions early on during the months of September and October. The first was that, in all opinion polls conducted since all candidacies were confirmed, Cavaco Silva emerged with a very comfortable advantage over all remaining candidates and with the clear possibility to win at the first round. The second revelation, perhaps more shocking, was that ever since Alegre and Soares were both included in the menu provided to respondents in opinion polls, the former obtained more voting intentions than the latter, indicating a severe split within the potential electorate of the official candidate endorsed by the PS.

This changed the dynamics of the campaign and represented a shock from which Soares’s campaign never fully recovered. His candidacy, in an effort to capitalize on his previous presidency between 1986 and 1996, had been initially presented as “national” and “supra-partisan”. However, this unexpected third place in the polls forced Soares to ponder a far more aggressive strategy vis-à-vis Cavaco Silva than previously anticipated, as well as to reconsider the notion that all remaining candidates to the left of Cavaco could be generally ignored throughout the campaign. In the end, only in the December polls did Mário Soares’s voting intentions surpassed those in Manuel Alegre, but early January witnessed a new inversion of that trend. As the date of the election — January 22<sup>nd</sup> — approached, polls revealed a last minute trend, i.e, the decisive rise of Alegre and the decline of both Soares and Cavaco Silva, with the latter moving to increasingly uncomfortable terrains in what concerned his ability to obtain more than 50 percent of the valid vote in the first round.

Table 1. ELECTORAL RESULTS, 2005 LEGISLATIVE AND 2006 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS (%)

Parties	2005 legislative elections		2006 presidential elections		
	Electorate	Valid votes	Candidates	Electorate	Valid votes
PS	28.9	46.4	Soares	8.6	14.3
			Alegre	12.6	20.8
PSD+CDS	23.1	37.1	Cavaco	30.5	50.5
Other parties	10.3	16.5	Other candidates	8.7	14.4
Null/Blank	1.9		Null/Blank	1.1	
Abstention	35.7		Abstention	38.5	

In the end, with a score, on average, two percentage points below that found in the very last voting intention polls, Cavaco Silva ultimately won the presidential elections in the first round. Table 1 provides the full results, comparing them with those of the 2005 legislative elections. First, while abstention increased by only three percentage points, the results of the candidate endorsed by the Socialist Party were catastrophic: losses represented more than 20 percentage points among the electorate as a whole and more than thirty percentage points in terms of the valid vote. Even the combined vote for the two candidates emanating from the Socialist area (21.2 of the electorate, 35.1 of valid votes) still fell quite short of the score obtained by the Socialist Party in 2005 (28.9 of the electorate, 46.4 of the valid votes). Conversely, while the smaller parties managed to convert their previous electoral support in legislative elections into support for their candidates — with minor losses expectable on the basis of the incentives to strategic voting present in the majoritarian system of presidential elections — Cavaco clearly surpassed the electoral support enjoyed less than a year earlier by the two parties that, now, had endorsed his candidacy.

### **A mere popularity contest?**

The first account we had advanced for the 2006 presidential elections can be now restated: the lower importance of presidential elections in comparison with legislative elections, which resides on the fact that they do not contribute to the formation of the executive, could have conceivably lead voters to rely exclusively on judgments about the personal qualities of candidates, discarding cues that are relevant in elections where “real power” is at stake, such as legislative elections: ideology, partisanship and government performance.

Some initial doubts can be immediately cast upon about the credibility of this storyline. It is true that “leader” or “candidate” effects have been shown to be stronger in presidential than in legislative elections (McAllister 1996) and, more generally, in all elections using majoritarian rules (Norris 2004). Furthermore, research on electoral behavior in Portugal has revealed that, even in legislative elections, and contingent upon particular election contexts and parties, affect towards party leaders has had a substantial impact on vote choices (Gunther and Montero 2001; Lobo 2004; Lobo 2006). The

phenomenon has been explained on the basis of the relatively shallow socio-structural anchorage of the vote in Portugal, caused by the historically late creation of the Portuguese democratic party system, the parties' orientation towards building electoral support from within the state apparatus (rather than through the extra-parliamentary institutionalization of true mass-based parties) and by the particular legacies of the 1974-1976 revolutionary period, which super-imposed on the traditional left-right cleavage a more fundamental one around the option for liberal democracy (Biezen 1998; Gunther and Montero 2001; Jalali 2003).

However, several of the factors that, in other cases, have been found to render ideological and partisan cues useless as guides to the vote in presidential elections in semi-presidential systems — the merely symbolic and representational role of the presidential office, the recruitment of candidates within minor party figures, or the credible de-emphasis of candidates' partisan ties (Brug et al. 2000) — seem to be absent in the case of Portugal. As we have seen, candidates in Portuguese presidential elections have been recruited among high-level party and government officials and parties' endorsements are explicit. Past periods of premier-presidential cohabitation have been characterized by conflicts over a variety of policy and institutional issues, which gained center stage in public debates (Frain 1995), and the presidency has, even after 1982, made its influence felt both in terms of affecting the electoral agenda (by dissolving parliament) and conditioning directly and indirectly the action of executives and the popularity of the parties that support them. Thus, we should expect that, in spite of the potential relevance of the affect for candidates or the evaluation of their personal qualities as an explanation of the vote choices, elements such as party identification, ideology or evaluations of governmental performance could still play an important role.

We tested this hypothesis by means of a multinomial logistic regression of presidential vote choices in the 2006 elections as expressed in a vote recall question in a post-electoral survey conducted in February 2006, with vote for Soares used as the reference category (1), vote for Alegre coded as 2, Cavaco Silva as 3, Francisco Louçã, Jerónimo de Sousa and Garcia Pereira aggregated in a single category (Others, 4), and abstention as 5. Independent variables include *Gender* (Male, 1; Female, 2), *Age* and *Education* (12-point scale, from “None” to “Post-Graduate education”), employed as

basic control variables. Social-structural independent variables, which aim at taking into account the extent to which the vote is anchored on relevant and historical social and political cleavages, include *Subjective social class* (5-point scale, from “Working class” to “Upper”), *Union membership* (No, 0; Yes, 1) and *Religiosity* (4-point scale, from “Not at all” to “Very”). An additional group of variables concern long-term attitudinal predispositions towards particular vote choices, including left-right ideology and party identification (Miller and Niemi 2002). In the European context, party identification has been commonly discarded as an explanation of the vote and overall party system stability, seen as a mere proxy for actual voting behavior (Butler and Stokes 1969; Budge, Crewe, and Farlie 1976) and was typically replaced both by socio-structural and ideological explanations. However, the well-documented secular decline of party identification in Western democracies in the last decades, the generic factors found to influence such decline on the basis of survey data —socioeconomic modernization and cognitive mobilization (Dalton 2000) — and the fact that the impact of party identification seems to vary across countries at all levels of development and in different geo-cultural areas according to predictable institutional factors (Norris 2004) is scarcely compatible with the notion that party identification, as captured by survey data, should be seen today as nothing else but a mere proxy for current voting preferences. Thus, the notion that party identification can “be usefully applied in most democratic systems” (Dalton 2000: 20), particularly those where party systems that are not clearly anchored in social structures (Marsh 2006), has regained credibility in contemporary electoral research. Thus, we used *Attachment to PS*, a folded 7-point scale, ranging from “Very close” to one of the opposition parties (-3) to “Very close” to PS (3), with 0 for independents and missing values, as well as *Left-right self-placement*, ranging from 0 (Left) to 10 (Right) in response to the standard LRSP item.

Finally, “short-term” factors, including leader/candidate effects and issues, most notably economic and government performance (Miller and Niemi 2002), must also be considered. Evaluations of *Government performance* are measured in a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (“Very bad”) to 5 (Very good”) and DK/NA answers recoded as an intermediate category (3). *Interest in politics*, a four-point scale ranging from 1 (“Not interested/DK/NA”) to 4 (“Very interested”), is introduced in the model as an explanation



of abstention. Finally, *Soares's personal qualities* consists in an index with values ranging from 0 to 1. The survey asked respondents to choose which presidential candidate they perceived to be the most “honest”, “able to defend responsible policies”, “strong”, “able to make decisions”, “able to strengthen the economy”, “able to fight unemployment”, “the most charismatic” and “most able to communicate with people”. We recoded all individual answers as 1 when Soares was selected and 0 when he was not, and simply calculated an average index, with 0 meaning that Soares was not chosen as the best candidate at any level and 1 that he was chosen as the best candidate at all levels.<sup>6</sup>

Table 2. PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR MULTINOMIAL LOGIT REGRESSION OF PRESIDENTIAL VOTE CHOICE IN PORTUGAL, 2006 (reference category: vote for Soares; standard errors in parenthesis)

Predictor variables	Soares vs. Alegre	Soares vs. Cavaco Silva	Soares vs. Others	Soares vs. Abstention
Intercept	7.209** (2.136)	4.852* (2.208)	8.149** (2.380)	9.973*** (2.246)
Gender	-.878 (.513)	-1.483** (.527)	-1.185* (.579)	-1.038 (.543)
Age	-.025 (.017)	-.018 (.017)	-.023 (.019)	-.053** (.018)
Education	.094 (.125)	-.045 (.129)	.077 (.142)	.059 (0.135)
Subjective social class	.483 (.258)	.808** (.272)	.245 (.296)	.275 (0.281)
Union membership	1.522* (.670)	.598 (.722)	.893 (.749)	-.121 (0.787)
Religiosity	-.475 (.289)	.522 (.305)	-.396 (.322)	-.066 (0.308)
Left-right self-placement	-.206 (.112)	.209 (.113)	-.435** (0.130)	-.005 (.117)
Attachment to PS	-.234 (.228)	-1.246*** (.243)	-.897** (.259)	-.553* (.249)
Government performance	-.157 (0.250)	-.364 (.254)	-.502 (.272)	-.486 (.259)
Interest in politics	-.308 (.312)	-.414 (.318)	.201 (.351)	-.974** (.324)
Soares's personal qualities	-6.076*** (.997)	-8.019*** (1.167)	-7.435*** (1.309)	-6.033*** (1.110)
N			529	
Nagelkerke r <sup>2</sup>			.66	

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

One of the most consistent results of this analysis is that voters in Soares differ from voters in all other candidates (and also from abstainers) in that their evaluation of

<sup>6</sup> See descriptive statistics for all variables in the appendix.

the qualities of Soares was higher than that made by other members of the electorate, a phenomenon that resists the introduction of all other relevant controls. However, this is not enough to conclude that the 2006 Portuguese presidential elections were a mere “popularity contest”, or that partisan endorsements and ideological statements were inconsequential as voting cues. First, ideology also seems to matter somewhat, at least in helping to distinguish voters in Soares from those that decided to vote for any of the candidates endorsed by the smaller leftist parties (voters which, predictably, were considerably more leftist than Soares’s). Second, more importantly, although voters for the two candidates emanating from the Socialist area (Soares and Alegre) are indeed indistinguishable in terms of their level of partisan attachment to the Socialist Party, the same clearly does not occur in what concerns the other candidates who were endorsed by others parties.

Since logit coefficients are not easily interpretable, we can ascertain the substantive impact of the some of the main variables by calculating the predicted probabilities of voting for Soares across changing values of those independent variables while the remaining ones are kept constant that their mean values.<sup>7</sup> Table 3 shows how the probability of voting for Soares, expressed in percent terms, changes as the values of evaluations of *Soares’s personal qualities* change from a low to a high level, with “low” and “high” conceived as, respectively, one standard deviation below and above the mean sample values.<sup>8</sup> As we can see, the probability of voting for Soares increased nine-fold for individuals with a high evaluation of Soares in comparison with those that made a low evaluation. Although individuals who made a higher evaluation of Soares were also more likely to vote for Alegre and to abstain than those with lower evaluations, we know from the previous analysis that these voters, in this respect, were different from those that voted for Soares (in the sense that their evaluations of Soares’s personal qualities were significantly lower). Conversely, the table reveals that the majority of voters with low evaluations of Soares ended up voting in Cavaco Silva, way above of his share of the

---

<sup>7</sup> All calculations made with XPost: Post-Estimation Interpretation Using Excel, by Simon Cheng and Scott Long, available in <http://www.indiana.edu/~jslsoc/xpost.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> In cases where these values are outside the range of the scales, we use the appropriate endpoints.

electorate (31 percent in the electorate, 45.4 percent in the sample, due to underreporting of abstention).

Table 3. EFFECTS OF EVALUATION OF SOARES'S QUALITIES ON THE PROBABILITY OF VOTING FOR DIFFERENT CANDIDATES

Vote for	Sample distribution	Low	High	Change in probability
Soares	8.3%	0.9%	8.1%	+7.2%
Alegre	18.7%	18.0%	23.5%	+5.5%
Cavaco	45.4%	56.8%	40.2%	-16.6%
Others	10.4%	8.6%	7.3%	-1.3%
Abstention	17.1%	15.7%	20.8%	5.1%

Table 4 does the same kind of analysis for the impact of *attachment to the Socialist Party*. As we can see, its impact on the probability of voting for Soares is only slightly lower than that detected for the evaluation of his personal qualities, showing a seven-fold increase from low to high levels of attachment to the PS. Predictably, these effects are also strong and positive with what concerns the probability of voting for Alegre. Conversely, individuals with a low level of attachment to the Socialist Party were overwhelmingly more likely to vote for Cavaco Silva than to vote for any other candidate or to abstain.

Table 4. EFFECTS OF ATTACHMENT TO PS IN THE PROBABILITY OF VOTING FOR DIFFERENT CANDIDATES

Vote for	Sample distribution	Low	High	Change in probability
Soares	8.3%	0.7%	5.1%	+4.7%
Alegre	18.7%	8.5%	37.5%	+29.0%
Cavaco	45.4%	72.2%	28.1%	-44.1%
Others	10.4%	7.7%	6.9%	-.8%
Abstention	17.1%	10.9%	22.4%	+11.5%

Another way of highlighting how voters' party identification and parties' endorsements also had an important role to play in voting choices in the 2006 elections is through a visual representation. Figure 1 plots the predicted probability of voting for Soares against the evaluation of his personal qualities, while the party identification variable is set, respectively, at "low" and "high" levels, and the remaining variables are kept at their mean values.

Figure 1. THE IMPACT OF PARTISANSHIP AND EVALUATIONS OF SOARES ON THE PROBABILITY OF VOTING FOR SOARES

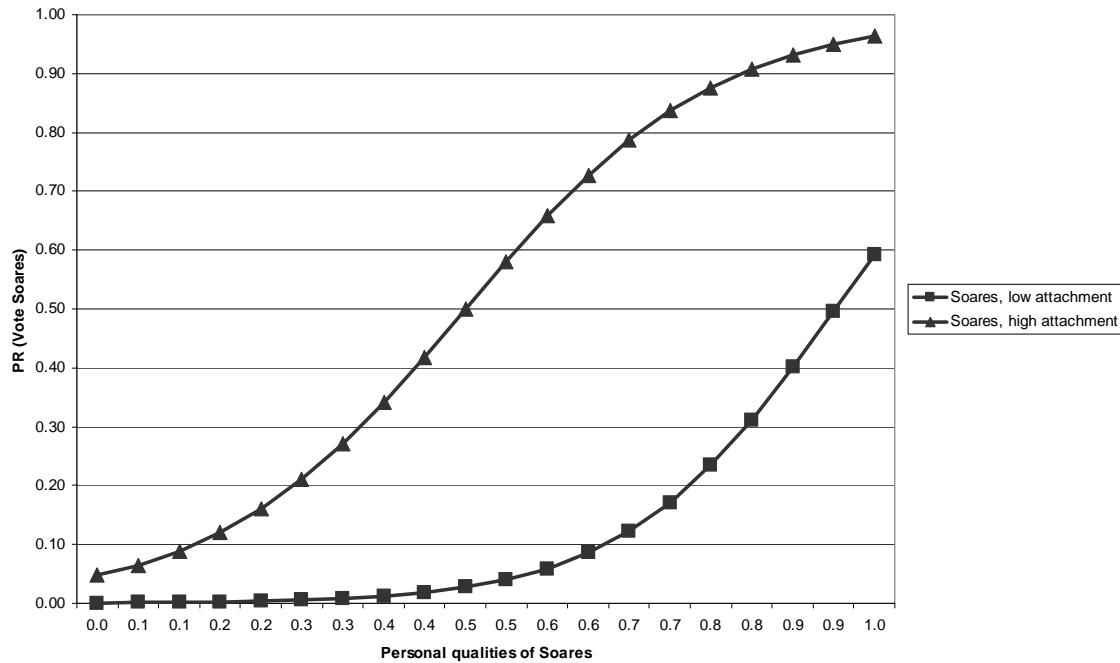


Figure 1 clearly supports the notion that presidential elections were, to some extent, about the personal qualities of candidates as perceived by voters, by showing how the probability of voting for Soares sharply increases as individuals' evaluations of his personal qualities improve. However, it also shows that low levels of attachment to the Socialist party preserve the probability of voting for Soares at extremely low levels, even as the evaluation of his personal qualities is already way above the actual mean value of that index in the sample (.12). In other words, in the 2006 presidential elections, although voters in Soares were certainly different from others in terms of their negative or positive evaluations of the candidate, and although the official endorsement of Soares by the PS was not enough to significantly deflect Socialist partisans from a vote in Alegre, party identification was certainly important when it came to decide between voting either in the two Socialist-area candidates or in any of the remaining options. There, in sum, was more to the 2006 elections than a mere popularity contest.

### **Where did the Socialist voters go, and why?**

One thing that clearly stands out from the available data is that defection from within the ranks of previous voters in the Socialist Party to the ranks of presidential candidates not endorsed by the PS was the single most important electoral shift that took place between the 2005 and 2006 elections. On the basis of our two-wave panel post-electoral survey (the first after the legislative and the second after the presidential elections), it is possible to estimate that about 17 percent of the entire Portuguese electorate (excluding the small contingent of new voters that registered between the 2005 and the 2006 elections) moved from voting in the PS to voting in a candidate other than Soares, with abstention on the part of previous Socialist voters adding 6 percent more to the tally of losses. From a different point of view, this means that less than one of out three of the previous PS voters ended up voting for Soares in 2006. These are mostly net losses, since the ability of Soares to attract previous abstainers or non-PS voters was almost non-existent, according to the survey.

Nor can it be said that all of the government's losses were absorbed by the other candidate of the Socialist area, Manuel Alegre. In fact, nearly half of PS voters in 2005 ended up shifting either to Cavaco Silva, to one of the candidates endorsed by the smaller left-wing parties, or to abstention in 2006. Nothing as dramatic took place with the electorates of the remaining parties or even with previous abstainers. About four of five previous abstainers or voters in either the PSD or the CDS in 2005 ended up, respectively, abstaining again or voting in Cavaco Silva in 2006. And although those who voted for the PCP and the BE electorates in 2005 were indeed more divided when it came to the 2006 elections — one out of four voted for Alegre — those defections were, in absolute terms, almost insignificant when compared with those experienced by the Socialists.

How did this happen? Once the notion that the 2006 elections were exclusively a popularity contest has been discarded, and once we realize how considerations and cues typically relevant in legislative elections were also relevant in presidential elections, three stories about those elections remain credible. The first, the “surge and decline” one, is

that the major losses incurred by the Socialist Party mainly resulted from defections on the part of voters with lower levels of attachment to the PS (independents and opposition partisans) to opposition candidates, as well as and from low interest voters to abstention. The second, the “second-order elections” account, suggests that defections arose both among previous “strategic” voters than had more incentives to signal their sincere preferences in less important elections and among supporters of the incumbent party that were now willing to signal their displeasure with the executive. The third story suggests that the losses experienced by the Socialist Party resulted from the defection of moderate voters, interested in preventing the control of both the presidency and the executive by a single party and the lack of policy moderation likely to result from unified government.

Following the strategy adopted by Marsh (2003) in his study of European Parliament elections, we test these different hypotheses by focusing our analysis on those respondents that, in the first wave of the panel survey, recalled having voted for the winning party, the PS. The model of voting behavior tested here is similar to that used in the previous section, including the role of party identification, interest in politics and evaluations of government performance. We want to determine, first, the applicability of a “surge and decline” type of explanation: whether there was a systematic tendency towards defection from the PS to candidates other than Soares among those whose partisan attachments are further away from the PS (i.e., independents and opposition partisans) as well as a tendency towards defection to abstention among low interest voters.

Second, regardless of the null result obtained when the full sample was used, the “second-order” account still raises the hypothesis that, among previous voters for the government party, the worse government performance was evaluated, the more likely were voters to defect. We test this hypothesis by preserving evaluation of government performance in the model. We also added, however, two additional independent variables. The first is the perceived importance of presidential elections for the country, a four-point scale ranging from 1 (“Not at all important”) to 4 (“Very important”). If the “sincere voting” hypothesis advanced by the “second-order elections” account holds, we should observe that the less important the former PS voters perceived these presidential elections to be, the more likely they were to defect to candidates endorsed by other

parties, particularly those candidates endorsed by the smaller parties in the left. Finally, we also include the distance between each respondents' left-right self-placement along a 11-point left-right scale and their perception of the ideological mid-point between the PS and the PSD, the two larger centrist parties along the same 11-point scale. In other words, we expect that the closest former PS voters are to that perceived mid-point (i.e., the more ideologically moderate they are) the more likely they were to switch from a vote in the Socialist Party to a vote in the center-right candidate (Cavaco Silva) in order to promote control of the executive and the presidency by different parties and, thus, obtain more moderate policies.<sup>9</sup>

Table 5 provides a preliminary approach to the subject, by showing how each type of 2005 PS voters — distinguished in terms of different values of the independent variables — distributed themselves in the sample in terms of the vote choice in the 2006 presidential elections. First, in the sample, while most previous Socialist voters who are PS identifiers remained with either Soares or Alegre, most independents and opposition identifiers defected: the former especially to Cavaco Silva and abstention, and the latter again to Cavaco and to the candidates endorsed by the smaller leftist parties. Similarly, as the surge and decline approach would also lead us to expect, lower interest 2005 PS voters were, this time, more likely to abstain than those with higher levels of interest. Second, before any controls are employed, the hypotheses derived from second-order theory also seem credible: on the one hand, previous PS voters whose evaluation of the performance of the Socialist government was better did vote in greater numbers for Socialist candidates (and particularly for the officially-endorsed Soares) than those whose evaluation was worse, who tended to abstain or vote for candidates other than those endorsed by the largest parties. On the other hand, voters who awarded different levels of importance to the presidential election also voted differently: those who perceived the elections as being less important tended to vote more in the candidates endorsed by the smaller leftist parties instead of voting for the Socialist candidates (particularly for Alegre). Finally, only the policy balancing hypothesis seems in thinner ground: apparently what makes moderate voters different from others is the fact that they tended to defect to abstention, not the fact they vote in greater numbers for Cavaco Silva.

---

<sup>9</sup> See descriptive statistics for all variables in the appendix.

Table 5. RECALLED VOTE IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AMONG FORMER PS VOTERS (row percentages)

	Soares	Alegre	Cavaco Silva	Others	Abstention
All 2005 PS voters (N=188)	27%	27%	18%	8%	19%
Party identification					
PS identifiers	29%	29%	16%	6%	21%
Independents	11%	23%	29%	8%	29%
Opposition identifiers	15%	15%	40%	30%	0%
Interest in politics					
Somewhat/very interested	30%	33%	18%	10%	10%
Little/no interest	24%	19%	19%	7%	32%
Government performance					
Good/Very good	34%	27%	19%	7%	12%
Bad/Very bad	11%	28%	15%	11%	34%
Importance of elections					
Very/somewhat important	27%	28%	19%	8%	18%
Little/no importance	28%	21%	14%	14%	24%
Distance from mid-point PS/PSD					
Below median	21%	27%	19%	6%	27%
Above median	33%	31%	15%	9%	12%

Table 6 presents the results of a more systematic analysis of the characteristics of vote switchers in which, among the sub-sample of voters that voted PS in 2005, we regress the option to vote for Soares or to “defect” to any other option is regressed on the series of independent variables described above. By focusing on this sub-sample, we sharply reduced the number of observations, making it therefore less likely to find statistically significant relationships, which led us to relax the threshold of statistical significance to  $p < .10$ . However, as we can see, this has not prevented the detection of several coefficients whose level of statistical significance goes well beyond that.



Table 6. PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR MULTINOMIAL LOGIT REGRESSION OF PRESIDENTIAL VOTE CHOICE IN PORTUGAL AMONG PREVIOUS SOCIALIST VOTERS, 2006 (reference category: vote for Soares; standard errors in parenthesis)

Predictor variables	Alegre	Cavaco	Others	Abstention
Intercept	11.228** (4.284)	2.820 (5.082)	17.078** (5.964)	10.617* (5.072)
Gender	-.765 (.767)	-1.875* (.946)	-.125 (1.109)	.759 (1.108)
Age	-.012 (.026)	.019 (.033)	-.094* (.043)	-.009 (.035)
Education	.118 (.216)	.085 (.260)	-.197 (.314)	.111 (.262)
Subjective social class	.975* (.431)	1.148* (.546)	1.266† (.684)	1.356* (.579)
Union membership	1.549 (1.003)	.804 (1.190)	.592 (1.277)	.907 (1.210)
Religiosity	-.136 (.527)	1.236† (.687)	.556 (.720)	.480 (.712)
Left-right self-placement	-.318 (.239)	-.176 (.264)	-.857** (.323)	-.438 (.712)
Attachment to PS	.213 (.407)	-1.289* (.524)	-1.897** (.631)	.275 (.609)
Government performance	-.464 (.394)	-.397 (.477)	-.993† (.511)	-.735 (.525)
Interest in politics	-.224 (.537)	.320 (.611)	.286 (.674)	-1.166† (.655)
Soares' personal qualities	-9.017*** (2.102)	-13.221*** (3.288)	-5.889** (2.677)	-6.922** (2.590)
Importance of election	-1.252† (.641)	-.440 (.713)	-1.981** (.755)	-2.040** (.756)
Distance from PS/PSD mid-point	-.246 (.202)	-.369 (.263)	-.225 (.278)	-.327 (.285)
<b>N</b>			<b>141</b>	
<b>Full model Nagelkerke r<sup>2</sup></b>			<b>.75</b>	

†p<.10; \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

It is clear that the evaluation of Soares' personal qualities continues to play a major role not only in the choices of the electorate as a whole but also in the choices of former PS voters. As we can see in table 7, if all former PS voters had made a highly positive evaluation of Soares's qualities, Soares would have been able to retain the majority of the Socialist voters in his camp and the overwhelming majority of the losses he would have experienced would have been to the other candidate in the Socialist area, i.e., Alegre. However, we know that was not the case. The average evaluation of Soares on a scale of 0 to 1 within the group of former Socialist voters was .19, and almost half of them (46 percent) thought that Soares was not the best candidate in any of the eight

different dimensions, a phenomenon that, as we can see, provided a major contribution to engrossing the ranks of the supporters of Manuel Alegre in the 2006 elections.

Table 7. EFFECTS OF EVALUATION OF SOARES IN THE PROBABILITY OF DEFECTING FROM THE SOCIALIST CANDIDATE

Defection	Sample distribution	Low	High	Change in probability
No	23.3%	1.4%	52.8%	51.4%
To Alegre	35.6%	66.4%	34.7%	-31.7%
To Cavaco	24.3%	25.8%	1.8%	-24.0%
To others	8.9%	1.8%	4.2%	2.4%
To abstention	7.9%	4.5%	6.4%	1.9%

However, this is, again, only part of the story. First, as we can see in table 8, there remains clear evidence supporting the “surge and decline” hypothesis about the Socialist losses, even after statistical controls are introduced. On the one hand, although party attachment did not help to distinguish those Socialist voters who chose to remain with Soares from those who defected to Alegre, previous Socialist voters with low levels of attachment to the Socialist Party tended to vote disproportionately both for Cavaco Silva and for the candidates endorsed by the smaller leftist parties, i.e., all candidates supported by parties other than the PS. When we consider that nearly half of previous voters in the PS expressed, in 2006, that they were either “independents” or close to parties other than the Socialist, we can have a better grasp both of the “surge” that had benefited the Socialists in 2005 and of the “decline” that followed. On the other hand, although the coefficient does not reach statistical significant at  $p < .05$ , there is a tendency for low interest voters within the previous PS voters to simply demobilize rather than choose any other option, as the “surge and decline” approach suggested might be the case.

Table 8. EFFECTS OF ATTACHMENT TO PS IN THE PROBABILITY OF DEFECTING FROM THE SOCIALIST CANDIDATE

	Sample distribution	Low	High	Change in probability
No defection	23.3%	6.7%	8.7%	2.0%
Defection to Alegre	35.6%	39.1%	79.3%	+40.2%
Defection to Cavaco	24.3%	30.8%	2.6%	-28.2%
Defection to others	8.9%	19.4%	0.5%	-18.9%
Defection to abstention	7.9%	3.9%	9.0%	5.1%

Second, there is also some support for the “second-order” account. Besides party identification, there are three aspects that help distinguishing those Socialist voters who

defected to candidates endorsed by the smaller leftist parties from those who ended up voting Soares: their ideological self-placement (more leftist, obviously) and, more to the point, the importance they awarded to the presidential elections and their evaluation of government performance. The less important they felt presidential elections to be and the less satisfied with government performance they were, the more likely they were to abandon the Socialist ranks and vote in Jerónimo de Sousa, Francisco Louçã, or (to a much less extent) Garcia Pereira. In other words, another factor that contributed to Socialist losses in 2006 besides the (low) the popularity of Soares and the “decline” that deprived him from the votes of individuals with low attachment to the PS was the fact that Soares’s candidacy was unable to prevent losses among those who used these elections to signal their discontent and to express their sincere preferences: those voters ended up choosing candidates supported by the smaller parties to the left of the PS, suggesting that a second-order pattern was also behind the losses experienced by Soares in 2006.

Table 9. EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ELECTIONS AND IDEOLOGICAL PLACEMENT IN THE PROBABILITY OF DEFECTING FROM THE SOCIALIST CANDIDATE TO CANDIDATES SUPPORTED BY OTHER LEFTIST PARTIES

	Low/left	High/right	Change in probability
Defection to others			
Importance of elections	6.8%	2.1%	-4.7%
Evaluation of government performance	6.2%	2.1%	-4.1%

Finally, two null findings should also be mentioned. First, it seems that evaluations of government performance played no role in motivating shifts towards Alegre, Cavaco Silva or even to abstention among previous Socialist voters, once all other independent variables are taken into account. In other words, considering also the general lack of impact of evaluations of government performance in voting decisions among the electorate in general that we detected previously, there is no evidence that the 2006 presidential elections in Portugal have worked as “referenda” (Tufte 1975) or “barometer” elections (Anderson and Ward 1996). Second, the ideological closeness of former PS voters’ to the mid-point between their perceived ideological positions of the

PS and the PSD — their “moderation” — is also not helpful, keeping other things equal, in distinguishing those who voted Soares from those who defected. Thus, we find no evidence for the notion that greater ideological moderation within the Socialist camp resulted in balancing the control of the executive branch with control of the presidency.

## **Conclusion**

We now have a somewhat better grip on what was at stake at the 2006 presidential election in Portugal and on the reasons behind the Socialist debacle. One of those reasons was the candidate the Socialist Party chose to endorse. This was almost certainly a surprise for the PS leadership, who probably hoped to capitalize on Soares’s personal image as former president and one of the “founding fathers” of Portuguese democracy, presenting him as a “consensual” candidate of “national unity” and “above parties”. However, this was not to be. The reasons why Soares was ultimately perceived by voters as lacking a vast array of relevant personal qualities for the job is, of course, a matter of research in and of on its own. The context of this particular election — economic crisis and a recent memory of government ineffectiveness and instability, for example — may have demanded a different personal and political profile than that of Soares. The convoluted and even somewhat bitter process of candidate selection within the Socialist may have tarnished his image, especially among voters identified with the PS. The need to compete with both Cavaco Silva and another candidate from the Socialist area may have prevented Soares’s candidacy from capitalizing on the aspects of his profile that deserved national consensus, or maybe that “consensus” has been overestimated. In any case, both among the electorate in general and the Socialist electorate in particular, Soares’s popularity was very low, and this had an effect on vote choices above and beyond voters’ partisan and ideological predispositions to vote for this or that candidate. The greatest beneficiary was of this was, as we have seen, the independent candidate that emerged from the Socialist area, Manuel Alegre.

This is, however, only part of the story. As we have seen, party affiliation and, to a lesser extent, ideology and government performance, were also relevant to explain vote choices and government losses in the 2006 presidential elections. On the one hand, Soares (as well as Alegre) were unable to repeat the feat that the Socialist Party, in the

crucial 2005 elections, had manage to achieve: the attraction of large numbers of independent voters or even opposition partisans. In presidential elections, these voters seem to have either swayed again to the winning side – Cavaco Silva – or returned to the ranks of their parties (i.e., the candidates endorsed by them). To a great extent, therefore, the results run counter the common assumption that presidential elections are only about the personal attributes of candidates and that partisanship and ideology counts for little. This may be the case in presidential elections in most *presidential* systems, but is certainly not the case in all presidential elections in all premier-presidential systems. On the other hand, even under the majoritarian context of presidential elections and the incentives towards strategic voting it entails, the candidate endorsed by the Socialist Party was unable to prevent the loss of votes to candidates endorsed by the smaller leftist parties, particularly among previous PS voters who perceived the presidential elections to be unimportant or made a worse evaluation of the government’s performance. In other words, as the second-order model suggests, part of the losses seem to have derived from voters who wished to express either their sincere preferences or their temporary dissatisfaction with the government.

The lack of impact on vote choices of evaluations of government performance—except in the particular case of vote for the candidates endorsed by smaller parties — is intriguing in and of itself, because it contrasts with extant research suggesting that presidential elections in premier-presidential systems such as France have served, at least in some circumstances, to hold the executive accountable, by punishing or rewarding the candidates endorsed by the incumbent’s party on the basis of performance evaluations or indicators (Lewis-Beck 1997; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2000). Our findings, however, can also be taken as evidence of the crucial differences between the French case and several other premier-presidential systems. France has long been pointed out as a case where, under conditions of unified government, presidents become “supreme heads of the executive and real heads of government”, with the head of state exercising “in practice much stronger powers than his counterparts” (Duverger 1980, p. 180). In contrast, at least since 1982, and in spite of the considerable powers they still enjoy, Portuguese presidents have been generally seen as unaccountable for government performance: their indication of a prime minister is directly determined by

electoral outcomes; their intervention in the day-to-day affairs of government is minimal or, at least, opaque in the public's eyes; and their role in government termination has always resulted in new elections, and not in "presidential" cabinets. In fact, while not necessarily relinquishing their personal identification with a particular party or ideological sector, both presidential candidates and presidents in office tend to make an explicit effort to present themselves as being "above parties" and "everyday politics". Cavaco Silva, for example, was particularly reluctant during the campaign to express any concrete judgment about the performance of the Socialist government, a strategy that deprived dissatisfied voters from cues suggesting that a vote for him would be a vote "against" the government. This crucial difference between the Portuguese and the French system, in both institutional rules and the political practices they generate is perhaps the crucial explanation as to why presidential elections in Portugal cannot be conceived as referenda on government performance or barometers of their popularity.

More broadly, these results suggest hypothesis that could be applied to other presidential elections in Portugal and other premier-presidential systems. They run against the common assumption that presidential elections are mostly about the personal attributes of candidates or incumbent performance, and that partisanship and ideology counts for relatively little, or at least less than in other sorts of elections. This may be the case in presidential elections in most *presidential* systems, but not so in presidential elections in semi-presidential systems. Whenever presidents hold enough power to render their election relevant for parties and voters but not enough to turn their election into the most salient one in the political system, "surge and decline" and "second-order" patterns are precisely what should be expected. This paper shows that, at least in one such election, where he had privileged access to individual-level panel data, this was precisely what could be found.

## References

- Alesina, A., Rosenthal, H., 1989. Partisan cycles in Congressional elections and the macroeconomy. *American Political Science Review* 83: 373-398.
- Araújo, A., 2003. El presidente de la república en la evolución del sistema político de Portugal. In A Barreto, B. Gomez Fortes, and P. Magalhães (eds.), *Portugal: democracia y político*. Siglo XXI: Madrid.
- Biezen, I. van, 1998. Building party organizations and the relevance of past models: the Communist and Socialist parties in Spain and Portugal. *West European Politics* 21: 32-62.
- Brug, W. van der, et al., 2000. Exploring uncharted territory: the Irish presidential election, 1997. *British Journal of Political Science* 30: 631-650.
- Budge, I., Crewe, I., and Fairlie, D.J. (Eds.), 1976. *Party Identification and Beyond: Representations of Voting and Party Competition*. John Wiley & Sons: London.
- Butler, D., Stokes, D. E., 1969. *Political Change in Britain*. Macmillan: London.
- Campbell, A., 1960. Surge and decline: a study of electoral change. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 24: 397-418.
- Carsey, T. M., Layman, G. C., 2004. Policy balancing and preferences for party control of government. *Political Research Quarterly* 57: 541-550.
- Carrubba, C., Timpono, R. J., 2005. Explaining vote switching across first- and second-order elections. *Comparative Political Studies* 38: 260-281.
- Dalton, R. J., 2000. The Decline of Party Identification. In R. J. Dalton and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Duverger, M., 1980. A new political system model: semi-presidential government. *European Journal of Political Research* 8: 165-187.
- Eijk, C. van der, et al., 1996. What voters teach us about Europe-wide elections: what Europe-wide elections teach us about voters. *Electoral Studies* 15: 149-166.
- Elgie, R., 1998. The classification of democratic regime types: conceptual ambiguity and contestable assumptions. *European Journal of Political Research* 33: 219-38.
- Elgie, R., 2005. Variations on a Theme. *Journal of Democracy* 16: 98-112.
- Fiorina, M. P., 1992. *Divided government*. MacMillan: New York.
- Frain, M., 1995. Relações entre o Presidente e o primeiro-ministro em Portugal: 1985-1995. *Análise Social* 133: 653-678.
- Gunther, R., Montero, J. R., 2001. The anchors of partisanship: a comparative analysis of voting behavior in four southern European democracies. In P. N. Diamandouros and R. Gunther

- (eds.), *Parties, Politics and Democracy in the New Southern Europe*. Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore.
- Jalali, C., 2004. As mesmas clivagens de sempre? Velhas clivagens e novos valores no comportamento eleitoral português. In A. Freire, M. C. Lobo, and P. Magalhães (eds.), *Portugal a votos: as eleições legislativas de 2002*. ICS: Lisboa.
- Lewis-Beck, M. S., 1997. Who's the chef? Economic voting under a dual executive. *European Journal of Political Research* 31: 315-325.
- Lewis-Beck, M. S., Stegmaier, M., 2000. Economic determinants of electoral outcomes. *Annual Review of Political Science* 3: 183-219.
- Lewis-Beck, M. S., Nadeau, R., 2000. French electoral institutions and the economic vote. *Electoral Studies* 19: 171-182.
- Lobo, M. C., 2004. O impacto dos líderes partidários: uma escolha entre candidatos pouco populares. In A. Freire, M. C. Lobo, and P. Magalhães (eds.), *Portugal a votos: as eleições legislativas de 2002*. ICS: Lisboa.
- Lobo, M. C., 2006. Short-term voting determinants in a young democracy: Leader effects in Portugal in the 2002 legislative elections. *Electoral Studies* 25: 270-286.
- Marsh, M., 2000. Second-order elections. In Rose, R. (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of elections*. MacMillan: London, pp. xx-xx.
- Marsh, M., 2003. Theories of less important elections: explanations of electoral behaviour in European Parliament elections. *Revue de la Maison Française d'Oxford* 1.
- Marsh, M., 2006. Party identification in Ireland: An insecure anchor for a floating party system. *Electoral Studies* 25: 489-508.
- McAllister, I., 1996. Leaders. In L. LeDuc, R.G. Niemi & P. Norris (Eds.), *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*. Sage: Thousand Oaks.
- Miller, W. L., Niemi, R. G., 2002. Voting: choice, conditioning, and constraint. In L. LeDuc, R. G. Niemi, and P. Norris (Eds.), *Comparing Democracies 2: New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting*. Sage: London.
- Norris, P., 2004. *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Electoral Behavior*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Pereira, A. G., 1984. *O semipresidencialismo em Portugal*. Ática: Lisbon.
- Reif, K., Schmitt, H., 1980. Nine second-order national elections: a conceptual framework for the analysis of European election results. *European Journal of Political Research* 8, 3-44.
- Shugart, M. S., Carey, J. M., 1992. *Presidents and assemblies: constitutional design and electoral dynamics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.



Shugart, M. S., 2005. Semi-presidential systems: dual executive and mixed authority patterns.  
*French Politics* 3: 323-351.

Veiga, F. J., Veiga, L. G., 2004. Popularity functions, partisan effects, and support in Parliament.  
*Economics and Politics* 16: 101-115.

## Appendix: descriptive statistics

	Full sample			2005 PS voters		
	Mean	Standard deviation	N	Mean	Standard deviation	N
Gender (Male: 1; Female: 2)	1.49	.50	793	1.54	.50	230
Age	45.82	16.65	800	48.85	15.63	234
Education (No formal education:1; Post-graduate:12)	6.00	2.39	798	5.91	2.49	233
Subjective social class (Working class: 1; Upper class:5)	2.16	.95	787	2.17	.94	231
Union membership (No: 0; Yes:1)	.16	.36	790	.24	.43	228
Religiosity (Not at all religious:1; Very 4)	2.75	.89	805	2.71	.83	236
Left-right self-placement (Left:0; Right 10)	5.46	2.53	666	4.83	2.15	200
Attachment to PS (Very close to opp. party: -3; very close to PS:3)	-.22	1.48	812	.55	1.04	236
Evaluation of government performance (Very bad:1; Very good:5)	3.05	1.12	812	3.38	1.02	236
Interest in politics (Not interested: 1; Very interested: 4)	2.57	.95	812	2.62	.94	236
Soares's personal qualities (Not selected as best in any: 0 Selected as best in all:1)	.11	.19	812	.19	.26	236
Importance of elections (Not at all important:0; Very important:4)	3.42	.86	812	3.41	.85	236
Distance to mid-point PS-PSD (Absolute difference LRSP and mid-point of perceived positions of PS and PSD in 11-point scale)	2.17	1.80	650	2.14	1.64	202