

The impact of party leaders on the outcome of the 2002 Portuguese Legislative Elections: Choosing between relatively unpopular candidates

Marina Costa Lobo¹

ICS-UL

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Abstract

This paper analyses the importance of affect towards party leaders in voting behaviour in the 2002 Portuguese legislative elections. It starts by presenting the electoral context and the way this may have influenced party leader effects. Two questions are then investigated: following Gunther and Montero's voting model we measure the importance of leader effects in explaining the vote for each of the five main parties in Portugal, namely PSD, PS, CDS/PP, CDU and BE. Then, we repeat the model to explain the vote within each block of parties. Affect towards party leader is a very important explanatory factor of the vote in Portugal, second to ideology, considering the five main parties. When votes within each block were considered, differences between the Left and the Right emerge: whereas on the Left, ideology continues to be the most important explanatory factor, on the Right it becomes unimportant due to the perceived ideological proximity between the two parties, and party leaders become the most important factor.

¹ The author would like to thank André Freire and Ana Espírito Santo for their help concerning certain quantitative aspects of this paper.

This paper analyses the leaders' effects on the outcome of this legislative election. Using data gathered in pre-election polls and data from a post-election survey², the impact of individual leaders on the voters' choice of party is analysed. The aim of this paper is threefold: firstly to describe the relationships which exist between candidate appraisal and party identification; secondly, to understand whether leader effects were significant in the 2002 elections, both in explaining the vote for an individual party, and the competition between parties of the same block.

Campbell's funnel of causality has long served as the main framework within which to understand individual decisions on the vote (Campbell et al, 1966). It has also formed the basis for the design of election studies both in the US and in Europe (Roth, 2002 and Curtice, 2002). In that framework, long-term socio-economic conditions structure society broadly into social divisions such as class, race, ethnic group, religion, etc. These social conditions shape individuals' group loyalties, i.e. through membership of a class, or religious group, his/her attitudes and consequent political behaviour. Given these, Campbell et al. explain voting decisions in terms of three attitudes: partisanship, issue opinions and candidates (Dalton, 2002: 173). This model assumes that there is a causal relationship between the various long- and short-term factors in this funnel of voting choice. That is, the determinants reinforce each other, namely belonging to a certain social grouping will make certain political attitudes more likely. These attitudes then feed into party attachment, appraisal of candidates and position on issues. Clearly then, the appraisal of candidates, which is the topic of this paper is not independent of the individuals' political attitudes, as explained by Campbell.

One of the factors that impressed great stability to this framework through the post-war decades was partisanship. Nowadays, there is ample evidence that partisanship is in decline across most advanced industrial democracies (Dalton, Wattenberg, McAllister, 2002). This decline in partisanship is crucial to understanding what is occurring at the level of individual voting behaviour. Parties served to represent certain social groups' interests, and to voice and shape these groups preferences into political options, including the vote. For long, they constituted useful shortcuts for individuals' understanding of the political realm. At this moment, as has been widely shown, parties have by and large ceased to perform these roles of interest aggregation and representation (Mair, 1995, 2002). The growing distance between

² The post-election survey was conducted by a Project of which I am a part at the Instituto de Ciências Sociais. It included both Module 1 and Module 2 questionnaires of the CSES (Comparative Studies of Election Systems), as well as other questions that the team saw fit to include. The questionnaire was applied in the two weeks following the 17th March 2003 elections, using a representative sample of the Portuguese population between the

electors and parties is a result of both society's transformations, and party transformations. As society has become more complex, traditional social divisions have suffered a process of erosion. Parallely, individuals possess greater social skills to make political decisions without having to follow a partisan cue. Parties in turn have been busy anchoring themselves in the state, and distancing themselves from social groups, in order to insulate themselves from this increasingly unstructured society (Katz and Mair, 1995). The consequences of these changes are momentous for the individuals' election behaviour. Given the decline of the importance of both social divisions, and party dealignment, it is relevant to question whether other factors in the funnel of causality, namely issue positions and candidate preferences tendentially become more important in determining voting choice (Franklin, Mackie, and Valen, 1992). Indeed, according to Dalton, it is relevant to see these factors' development as interrelated: "as the long-term determinants of party choice have decreased in influence, there has been a counterbalancing growth in the importance of short-term attitudes such as issue opinions (and possibly candidate image)" (Dalton, 2002:212). Given this it is logical to assume then, that each election campaign would be more important for the final outcome, since more voters would approach each election without a firm voting intention.

The importance of the candidates for voting choices is a vexed issue. For some, the fact that a candidate's image may impact on an election result considerably, goes against the notion of party democracy. It signals the (re)appearance of populism in democratic societies, which is associated to a few perils, namely the appearance of anti-party leaders who appeal directly to the disenfranchised voter (Mény and Surel, 2002). However real this threat has been in contemporary Europe, it is possible to view the importance of candidates as instrumental, rather than superficial and short-term. Previous studies thought that voting on the basis of personality characteristics related to style or looks, and this was clearly possible to manipulate via the media, contributing to the "duping" of the electorate. Other studies have shown that appraisals of candidates concentrate on evaluating whether the party leader would be adequate to conduct governmental affairs (Miller, Wattenberg, Malanchuk, 1986), and thus are used as instruments to evaluate, together with other issues such as prospective evaluations of the economy to decide which voting option is best, rather than looks or style. It seems then that whether candidate effects are viewed as a relatively positive or negative development should depend on the degree of cognitive mobilization of the individual. Individuals who have a relatively high degree of social and economic resources will use candidate images

instrumentally, without being influenced by eventual media stunts, whereas individuals with low social and economic resources may tend to be influenced by the superficial aspects of candidate appeal.

The evidence on the importance of candidate appeal varies from country to country and also varies in its claims for the same country. According to Dalton, there is evidence from certain elections in the US, Britain, France and Germany, which point to the growing importance of candidate, images even in parliamentary systems (Dalton, 2002:209). Similarly, McAllister argues that there are now a few studies on the importance of leaders on electoral behaviour, showing that “public perceptions of leaders, if not decisive have a modest but significant influence on the vote”.³ Others are not so certain of the importance of leaders’ in the outcome of democratic elections. Anthony King, on the basis of evidence for the importance of leaders in the USA, Britain, Germany, France and Russia concludes that “far from being normal, it is quite unusual for leaders’ and candidates’ personalities to determine election outcomes- not rare but unusual” (King, 2002: 216). Due to the nature of this factor, i.e. it being a short-term conjunctural phenomenon, it may be important in one election but largely irrelevant in the following one. However, it may be said that Dalton, McAllister and King are not necessarily at odds with each other since they are trying to measure different things: the former two authors are stating that appraisals of leaders matter, the latter is arguing that only seldom are these traits the most important in deciding an election. The latter can be considered a “strong” hypothesis of the importance of leaders in the funnel of causality of vote prediction. In this paper we are trying to ascertain whether the party leaders mattered, rather than whether they mattered *more than any* other factor.

The Relevance of Studying Leader effects in Portugal

The reasons for investigating the importance of party leaders in Portugal are several, and will be analysed in turn. Two factors may be symptomatic of the importance of party leaders in determining electoral behaviour: declining or low absolute levels of party membership and even more important, party identification levels (Katz, 1996); and a high level of electoral volatility from one election to the next.

The absolute levels of party membership in Southern Europe in 1975 were lower than those of all the other consolidated democracies. This concurs to the idea that the social

³ McAllister, I. (1996), op. cit., p. 281.

context of democratisation in Portugal, i.e. at a time of increasing social differentiation and well into the age of mass-media communications, has meant that some of the parties' traditional functions, namely that of representation, have necessarily been less important from the outset of democracy in that country. Secondly, not only have party membership levels been low, they have remained low in the 1990s. Thus, although given the low starting point party membership has increased, in 1990 Portugal still has one of the lowest levels of party memberships in Europe, i.e. 4.5% (Mair and van Biezen, 2002).

It is necessary to look at party identification since even though membership is low, this measure might still be high, and thus electoral volatility low. Eurobarometer surveys have tracked the degree of partisanship in Portugal between 1985 and 1994. From that date onwards, the question on party identification has not been included in the Eurobarometer surveys. The data concerning party identification between 1985 and 1994 show that in Portugal, during that period the percentage of respondents who identify with a party is above the EC average (Schmitt and Holmberg, 1995: 126-7). In the EC9 between 1985 and 1992 the average percentage of total attached was 58,3%. In Portugal the corresponding percentage between 1985 and 1994 was 60,6%. Thus, in a comparative perspective for that period, Portugal fares well compared to other West European consolidated democracies. This above average level of party identification is shared by Greece, but not Spain. Moreover, the trend between 1985 and 1994 is of a rise in party identification. From 1994 onwards Eurobarometer surveys have no longer included the question of party identification in its questionnaire. However, the CSES (Comparative Studies of Elections Systems) post-election survey carried out in Portugal after the March 2002 elections did include that question. The results indicate that there has been a significant decline in party identification in Portugal. In this survey only 52% of the respondents reply that they identify in any way with a political party. Therefore, the last decade in Portugal has seen substantial change concerning the electorate's partisanship. Between 1985 and 1994 change is minimal, with party identification even increasing slightly from 58% to 64%. In 2002, 12% less respondents declare themselves close to any party.

Portugal has produced two of the ten most volatile European elections between 1945 and 2000 (Gunther & Montero, 2001:87). This is the first indicator that social cleavages are not very strong, especially since in the Portuguese case a large amount of that volatility is

inter-bloc, i.e. between the left and right blocs of parties⁴. From this starting point, Gunther and Montero analyse the importance of social cleavages (religion and class measures both in objective, subjective and associational measures included) on electoral behaviour. They conclude that in the 1970s and 1980s the Portuguese electorate had “relatively shallow roots in that country’s class and religious cleavages” (Gunther & Montero, 2001: 124). Combining these social determinants with voters’ self-identifications on the left-right scale the authors find that in Portugal, throughout the period, and excluding the communist party, “between 33 percent and 58 percent of the vote is unexplained by these factors” (Gunther & Montero, 2001: 128).

The relative insignificance of social cleavages in explaining voting behaviour indicates that short-term factors, such as party leaders, can be determinant in the outcome of elections. Given the evidence from other countries and the relative unimportance of social cleavages to explain electoral behaviour in Portugal, Gunther and Montero tested the impact of party leadership evaluations on the vote and showed that these short term effects are indeed very important. They found that in Portugal, in 1993, affect toward party leader explains little in the parties on the extremes of the left-right spectrum, namely the Communists and the Popular Party. However, they also show that the importance of the affect toward the party leader in the two centrist parties is important, explaining 13% and 14% of the vote in the Social Democrats and the Socialist parties respectively (Gunther & Montero, 2001: 128). As expected, the more deeply anchored the electorate in those cleavage-based blocs, the less of an independent contribution the “party leadership” factor makes to leaders’ choices. Conversely, the more weakly rooted a party’s electoral support in distinct social or ideological blocs, the greater the extent to which voters’ attitudes toward individual party leaders can affect voting decisions (Gunther & Montero, 2001: 130).

Secondly, there is evidence related to party system change that would lead us to form the hypothesis that party leaders have assumed increasing importance in the decisions individuals make to decide on their vote. Since 1987 there has been a majoritarian tendency in the Portuguese party system, as a result of the concentration of votes in the two largest centre parties, the PS and the PSD. This electoral tendency has had an impact on the effective

⁴ About types of volatility, see Bartolini and Mair, (1990), *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability*, Cambridge: CUP. About levels of volatility in these countries in a comparative context, see Gunther and Montero, 2001, op.cit; on Portugal, see Lobo, (1996) “A evolução do Sistema Partidário Português à luz de mudanças económicas e políticas, (1976-1991)”, in *Análise Social*, vol. 139, pp.1085-1116 and Freire, A., (2001) *Mudança Eleitoral em Portugal Continental, 1983-1999: Clivagens, Economia e Voto nas Legislativas*, Oeiras, Celta.

number of parliamentary parties, and on government stability, namely single-party governments have been the norm since 1987. The 2002 legislative elections led to a coalition government for the first time since 1985, but the ENP actually decreased from 1999, thus it should not be interpreted as a sign of a decrease in the concentration of votes at the centre, which in fact did not occur (Freire, and Costa Lobo, 2002). Existing studies on individuals' voting behaviour in Portugal all concur that the impact of traditional social cleavages are comparatively weak (Freire, 2002, Gunther and Montero, 2001). The low party membership, and decline in party identification levels up to 2002 coupled with high levels of electoral availability, point to a personalisation of electoral politics. The only available study on the importance of party leadership for voting behaviour indicates that it is relatively significant among the two largest parties. Thus, there seems to be a phenomenon of personalisation at work, in part due to the changes in the party system and the catch-all nature of the PS and the PSD.

The Election Context: Pre-election polls and the personalisation of the election

The unanticipated 2002 legislative elections saw the return of the Portuguese Right to power, after six years of Socialist (PS- *Partido Socialista*) minority rule. Having been elected in 1999 with exactly half of all Parliamentary seats, the PS presided over a difficult two years of government, with a combination of worsening economic indicators, a sharp drop in the Prime Minister's popularity, and increasing political deadlock in Parliament. (Costa Lobo and Magalhães, 2002). This combination of factors, together with a mixed result in the December 2001 local elections, prompted António Guterres to announce on the night of the local elections that he was stepping down both as Prime Minister and as leader of the Socialist Party. Faced with this resignation, Socialist President Sampaio decided to dissolve the Parliament and call for fresh elections. On March 17th 2002, the PSD (*Partido Social Democrata*) the main centre-right party won a plurality of the vote (40.2%). Given that the minority status of the Socialists had been seen as one of the major causes of inefficacy of the previous government, the PSD decided to coalesce with the conservative CDS-PP (*Centro Democrático Social- Partido Popular*) (8.7%). The PS lost but not by a large percentage of the votes: (37.8%). The Communists continued its seemingly inexorable decline having achieved less votes than the CDS-PP and less parliamentary mandates. Finally, the extreme left-wing BE (*Bloco de Esquerda*), an assortment of extreme left-wing micro-parties managed

to elect an extra MP, raising their vocal parliamentary group to three deputies (Freire and Costa Lobo, 2002).

Anthony King formulates several hypotheses to assess which elections have a better chance of being decided by. Firstly, the impact of leaders' personalities will be greatest when large numbers of voters perceive large differences in the competing leaders' capabilities; secondly, the impact of leaders' personalities will be greatest when voters' emotional ties to parties are at their weakest; thirdly, the impact of leaders' qualities will be greatest when voters can discern few other grounds, e.g. in terms of programmes or performance for choosing among either parties or the leaders; fourthly, the impact of leaders' characteristics should be at its greatest when the outcome of the election under consideration would in any case have been extremely close. We shall analyse these hypotheses in turn, relating them to the context of the election campaign.

Concerning the impact of leaders' this election was relatively *sui generis* in that one of the main contenders, namely Ferro Rodrigues, became party leader two months before the election. Moreover, the election of a successor for António Guterres was a messy process in which Ferro Rodrigues only emerged as the compromise candidate after two more prominent PS members (Jaime Gama and António Vitorino) announced that they were unavailable to lead the Socialist party (Costa Lobo and Magalhães, 2002). Still, Ferro Rodrigues was not an unknown quantity for the Portuguese electorate. As Minister for Solidarity he had been responsible for the introduction of the most emblematic measure of the Socialist government in their previous mandate, the Minimum Income Guarantee (Costa Lobo and Magalhães, 1999). This programme provided all families with a minimum income guarantee, thus helping those in extreme poverty. The difficulty was to present him as a "renewal candidate" relative to António Guterres, since Ferro Rodrigues had been an enthusiastic member of the Guterres government until the evening of the local elections *debâcle*. From the paper's perspective, it is interesting to note then, that no party leader had ever served as Prime Minister. Thus, this election was not a contest between the incumbent Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition party, but between two leaders who simply had been prominent members of previous governments. This is not a novel situation in a Portuguese legislative election, having occurred both in 1985 and in 1995.⁵ It is important from the perspective of the

⁵ In 1985, PS leader Soares declined to contest the elections, resigning as leader of the Socialist Party. Ten years later, PSD's incumbent Prime Minister, Cavaco Silva, followed a similar path. The fact that both were candidates in the subsequent Presidential election is

importance of leaders in electoral behaviour since no candidate had a prime ministerial “aura” to draw upon during the election campaign, nor could any candidate invoke experience of the job as a main advantage of his candidacy.

Figure 1 shows the results of a monthly panel survey⁶ where respondents are asked to evaluate whether they consider that the Prime Minister has been performing well/ very well, badly/ very badly, or so-so.⁷ The data below indicate that Guterres’ popularity decreased rapidly from mid-1999 onwards, and that by the winter of 2001 he had become more of a liability to his party than an asset. Curiously, it also shows that the decrease in popularity of the Socialist leader *was not* mirrored in a corresponding increase in popularity of Durão Barroso, PSD leader, until November 2001. As explained above, the methodology of the panel survey changed in 2002 and this was reflected in the percentage that evaluates positively Durão Barroso. However, the 2002 local elections result probably contributed to this increase in popularity, with the party also receiving a boost in voting intentions in the surveys that were carried out soon after that election.⁸

Figure 1 about here

In fact, just before the official campaign began, the PSD was ahead in the polls. Its leadership was emboldened by the local election results, and the only question seemed to be whether the PSD would achieve an absolute majority or not. However, as the official campaign got on its way and the Socialists rallied behind their new Secretary-General, polls showed that the difference in voting intention between the Socialists and the PSD was narrowing, and this was in part due to a good campaign which Ferro Rodrigues ran (Costa Lobo and Magalhães, 2002). This is also seen in the panel survey where in February the new

probably not unrelated to this sudden change of heart regarding party leadership. We must await to see whether Guterres will confirm the relationship between resigning from party and government just before the elections, and becoming a candidate to the following Presidential elections.

⁶ The pollsters in charge of this panel survey were fired soon after the 2001 local elections for failing to forecast the victors in key cities such as Lisbon, Oporto and Sintra, to name but a few. The panel survey thus continued in January, with a fundamental difference. The “so-so” category has been eliminated, and respondents are forced to choose between “well/ very well” and “badly/ very badly”. This explains in part the changes in the percentages of support for Durão Barroso in January 2002.

⁷ This latter option has not been shown in the graph below.

⁸ For instance, the Catholic University poll of 26th February gave it 43.5% of the vote, and 35.6% to the PS; the Markttest poll on the 22nd February attributed 46% of the vote to the PSD and 35.1% to the PS.

Socialist leader has a greater percentage of respondents who believe that he is performing “well or very well”.

Table 1 shows the party leaders’ popularity according to the post-election survey. It confirms the pre-election surveys where Ferro Rodrigues was a more popular leader than Durão Barroso. However, it also shows that 1) no leader is very popular, i.e. maximum score is 5.0 and 2) the popularity difference between the leaders of the two major parties is small (0.39).

Table 1 about here

This overall appraisal of candidates can be furthered by looking at the popularity of candidates within voters for their own party. This is presented in Table 2. In it, the average liking of party leaders is presented of those respondents who replied that they had voted for the leader’s party in the 2002 elections. The table shows that among “own party voters” Paulo Portas, the leader of the CDS-PP obtains the highest average in the scale, with Ferro Rodrigues and Durão Barroso being less popular among their own party supporters. This is especially revealing of Durão Barroso’s relative unpopularity since at the time of the survey he was in effect Prime Minister. It also shows that no leader manages to have a positive appraisal (greater or equal to 5) to party supporters *outside his own block*. That is, right-wing leaders receive poor average marks from those who say they voted for left parties, and left leaders also fail to be liked by those who say they voted for PSD or CDS-PP.⁹

Also, there are interesting differences among the Right and Left. Whereas those who vote on the Right have, on average, a liking for both Durão Barroso and Paulo Portas, on the Left this does not happen. Communist and BE voters do not give positive appraisals (greater or equal to 5) to Ferro Rodrigues, nor do Socialists give positive candidate marks to Carvalhas or Louçã. Still, the Communists are the ones who on the Left appreciate other leaders most, and on average like their leader, Carvalhas, less.

Table 2 about here

Another relationship between party leaders was exploited, namely the party leaders’ popularity vis-à-vis the party he represents. The table below shows the results. Of the major parties, only Paulo Portas, the leader of the conservative CDS-PP is more popular than his

party. On two of the three measures presented Francisco Louçã, (occasional) leader of the *Bloco de Esquerda* is more popular than his party. This is not surprising in that the party is relatively new, and is in fact an alliance of previously existing parties. The party has very superficial territorial implantation and exists primarily through its leaders, and parliamentary deputies of which Francisco Louçã had been the most prominent since 1999. Indeed, it seems that only Portas, and Louçã to a lesser extent can be considered real assets to their parties in popularity terms. Portas especially manages to get a positive value on the scale 0-10 among PSD supporters¹⁰ and also is mentioned three times as much as his party as “the leader who best expresses my views”.

Table 3 about here

Thus, concerning Anthony King’s first hypothesis, namely whether the two main leaders were perceived as having very different qualities, the answer must be negative, since the pre-election panel and the post-election survey show that their standing was very similar on the eve of the election, and that they were not even very popular, either in absolute or comparative terms.

The second hypothesis posed by Anthony King, namely that leadership qualities will be most important when the party ties are at their weakest, has been discussed above. Comparing Eurobarometer data and data from the CSES survey it was shown that party identification has decreased between 1994 and 2002 from 64% to 52%. It is also important to note that the CSES is a post-election survey whereas the Eurobarometer is not. The former is carried out in a period where party identification is at a relatively strong point, due to the political context. Still, and looking at Figure 2 below, it must be concluded that party identification is *not* low in comparative terms in Portugal. Indeed, apart from the Flemish part of Belgium, Portugal is the European country where party identification is strongest. This does not invalidate the declining trend detected between the Eurobarometer and the post-election survey noted, but serves to place it in context. Furthermore, it is worth noting that in Portugal there is a slightly higher percentage of respondents who consider that there is a party

⁹ These figures are all significantly correlated. Significance = **0.05

¹⁰ This liking of Portas might be related to the fact that the survey is post-election and a coalition had been struck between the two parties.

leader which expresses their own views well (52%) than those who consider that there is a party which expresses their views well (50%).¹¹

Figure 2 about here

The third hypothesis is that leaders will be most important whenever voters see few differences in programmes or performance. Concerning the last election, it seems that neither the PS nor the PSD had a well-devised program with a clear, unifying goal to present to the electorate. This was in part due to the unanticipated nature of these elections, but it also seems that the lack of an overarching EU strategy contributed to this (Costa Lobo and Magalhães, 2002). Indeed, the 2002 election was the first election where there was no clear EU objective, apart from avoiding EU Commission fines, in line with the new fiscal commitments countries in the Euro have to abide by, and this was reflected in the relative *ad hoc* form that programs took. Still, despite being relatively more incoherent, the political programs of the two leading parties were substantially different on key matters, such as the budget deficit and the growth in civil service. Given that Portugal ran the risk of being fined by the Commission due to an excessive budget deficit the two main parties placed a different emphasis on what needed to be done: whereas the PS committed itself not to decrease social expenditure, the PSD placed greater emphasis on the need to combat waste in the public sector, and connected the issue to the inordinate growth in public sector expenditure.

On the left, the PS programme was not a clear break with the previous government, since as has been explained above Ferro Rodrigues was a great supporter of the Prime Minister, right up to Guterres' resignation. In consequence, the new PS leader minimized the need for a fundamental change in government economic policy whereas PSD campaigned actively for change. The post-election survey also helps us understand to an extent whether or not the electors perceived substantial differences between the parties that contested the election. Looking at table 3 then we must conclude that electors clearly distinguish between the various main alternatives. From these left-right placements of the parliamentary parties it is clear that there is a perception of ideological difference between the two largest parties, the PS and the PSD by the respondents. Moreover, all leaders are positioned slightly more to the centre of the left-right spectrum than the parties they lead. These differences are nonetheless

¹¹ Unfortunately, these questions are part of Module 2 of the CSES whose data is not yet available and so the comparative data on this could not be presented. Perhaps at a later stage I can incorporate this data.

small. What matters is that electors distinguish both between leaders and parties in terms of ideological positioning.

Table 4 about here

Finally, according to Anthony King the importance of leaders will be greatest when the pre-election polls show that the outcome of the elections will be very close. The 2002 elections were in fact very competitive. Up until the eve of the election polls showed that it was possible for the PSD to win a relative majority, but the left-wing parties have a majority of votes in Parliament. At the beginning of the year, polls indicated that the PSD would win comfortably, perhaps even with an absolute majority. However, as the campaign went on, the difference between the two main parties decreased.¹² A poll of these polls shows that in December the voting difference between PS and PSD was 9% whereas in February it had decreased to 6% (Freire and Costa Lobo, 2002).

Thus, the electoral context of the 2002 elections offer mixed indicators of the potential importance of Durão Barroso and Ferro Rodrigues in influencing the vote. On the one hand the two leaders had a similar standing with the electorate. Durão Barroso was not capable of significantly improving his popularity as Guterres' dwindled. When Ferro Rodrigues was elected, he used his credibility as a popular minister to become slightly more popular than Durão Barroso, according to the newspaper Expresso panel survey, in the month before the election. Still, no candidate stood out dramatically in popularity terms. Moreover, the party programmes of the two main parties, and despite incoherencies, were different, and the respondents were aware of this as shown in the post-election survey. Both these indicators predict that the leaders' importance will be smaller in this context. On the other hand, it was shown that party identification was declining (although not relatively low) in Portugal, and that the election was extremely close up to the last campaigning day, with divergences in the polling institutes as to which party would win most votes. These findings show that in terms of the electoral context there does not seem to be overwhelming evidence that would point to the decisiveness of leaders in the outcome of the elections. Yet, the context does not exclude that they might have been important. The next section of the paper will present a cumulative model of the importance of leader effects in the electoral result of 17 March 2002.

¹² Poll results in www.Publico.pt.

The impact of Leader evaluations in the 2002 legislative Elections

In this section of the paper we construct a model of voting behaviour to understand what is the importance of affect towards party leaders on the vote for that party. In effect, the model presupposes that the impact of leaders is mediated by other, more long-term factors, such as social determinants and ideological positioning on the left-right scale.

It is necessary to make a few considerations on the data availability. Firstly, the post-election survey that was fielded did not include any questions regarding specific characteristics of party leaders, such as competence, honesty, charisma, etc. These questions are standard in a few election studies, such as the British Election Study¹³ and are then used to understand the reasons for leader identification on the part of respondents. The main reason for this absence in the Portuguese post-election survey were space/time constraints: the team opted to include both CSES Module 1 and 2 in this first survey, which left relatively little space to place other questions, given that the availability of respondents decreases sharply if the interview lasts longer than 45 minutes. We hope to be able to include a few questions on leaders' personalities in order to understanding what lies beneath the like/dislike scale in which respondents placed each of the main party leaders in the future, as well as questions on the performance of the leaders (as Prime Minister or as leaders of the opposition parties).

Two questions will be answered in this part of the paper. Firstly, we try to ascertain the importance of leader effects in explaining the vote for each of the five main parties in Portugal, namely PSD, PS, CDS/PP, CDU and BE. Secondly, we will ascertain the role of leader effects on the vote *within each bloc*. This seems especially useful given the previous descriptive findings where it appears that some party leaders are indeed popular within their own block, among supporters of other parties.

The two voting models constructed are an adaptation of the model designed by Richard Gunther and José Ramón Montero (2001). In that study, the authors explain voting in three Southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) using a series of Probit equations for each country. The dependent variable was vote recall except in the Portuguese case, where the survey used is from 1993 and the dependent variable is vote intention (p.112). The independent variables were tested in blocks. The first block included socio-economic variables, namely: occupational status, income and employment status (employed or self-employed), and/or the interviewer's assessment of the respondent's house or neighbourhood.

¹³ See for instance, Crewe and King's article on the subject which uses measures of certain qualities of party leaders.

Then the respondent's membership of a union and degree of religiosity were entered in stepwise fashion. After showing the incremental r^2 contribution of objective/subjective economic conditions, trade union membership and degree of religiosity, the authors present the cumulative pseudo r^2 of social structural variables for each party. Next, the authors add an independent variable measuring the ideological proximity of the voter to the party in question, or the "left-right anchoring of partisanship". The variable is constructed by measuring the distance between the Respondent's left-right placement and the respondent's opinion on the left-right placement of the party in the dependent variable. Lastly, the authors introduce a variable of affect towards the party leader, which measures the independent effect of liking the leader, after all the other independent variables have been considered.

The findings in the paper conclude that "the incremental contribution of affect toward party leader varies inversely with the strength of the relationship between the vote and our standard social-structural and left-right variables" (p.130). Party leaders matter most in the PS and the PSD. However, the incremental r^2 of affect toward party leader is smaller than ideological distance between self and party.

Our study does not use Probit equations, but logistic regressions. This is due to the fact that both are closely related and when the logit transformation is chosen, this procedure essentially computes a logistic regression. Moreover, it seems that the former is rather more useful when dealing with experimental studies and the latter with observational ones.

The variables employed were the following. In table 5 the dependent variable is respondents' vote recall in the five main parties contesting the election, by recoding the variable in order to isolate the vote for each of the five main parties. In each case, the value "0" included all the parties in the opposite block to which the party belonged to, whereas the value "1" was the party whose votes we wanted to explain. It was decided to add the *Bloco de Esquerda* which has managed to elect two MPs in 1999 and three MPs in 2003.

We used all the variables included in the Gunther and Montero study, but added a new one that is the absolute value of the distance between the R's left-right placement and the R's placement on the Left-Right scale of the party leader in question (Annex 1). This variable was entered before the variable which measures the R's likes-dislikes vis-à-vis the party leader in question, in order to differentiate between the portion of affection which derives from ideological proximity, and other factors which may be causing the degree of affect towards the party leader. The first operation was to check that the independent variables being used were not in fact too highly correlated with each other. The variables which are, in all cases most correlated with each other are the variable which shows the liking for each leader and

R's distance from the party in question on the left-right axis (shown in Table 3 above). This means that the closer to the party ideologically a respondent is then the higher the likelihood that the respondent likes the party leader and vice-versa. Still, the correlations are not higher than 0.644, for any of the variables analysed, which allows us to proceed with the analysis.

Table 5 about here

Looking at the different block of variables introduced, we can see that in terms of social determinants, as found in other studies cited above, they are of little importance, except in the case of the Communist party, and now, the Bloco de Esquerda. The degree of religiosity¹⁴, in particular, seems to be the most important social anchor distinguishing voters' party choice. What seems interesting is that the cleavage cuts across the left parties, with PS voters correlating positively, and significantly, although not very strongly, with degree of religiosity, similarly to the PSD. On the contrary, it is the Communists and the Bloco de Esquerda who the non-religious prefer to vote for, with significant correlations once again. The Socialists are also similar to the PSD in relation to unionisation, correlating negatively with it: indeed, it seems that unionisation is a strong predictor for a vote only in the Communist party.

The second block includes only one independent variable, ideology. In this case, the variable is the absolute value of the difference between R's ideological self-placement and the placement of the party in question. This emerges as the most important factor for all five parties being analysed. Indeed, ideological proximity to the party in question is more important, even in the case of the Communists and the Bloco de Esquerda in explaining the vote for these parties, than social determinants, and liking for party leaders.

The next two blocks deal with the party leaders. The independent variable that was added in the third block tried to investigate the portion of affection towards the party leaders which due to ideological proximity. Thus, the variable measures the absolute value of the difference between R's ideological self-placement and the party leader's placement on the left-right scale. This variable is only significant for the two right-wing parties. In the last block, affect towards the party leader was included and is indeed almost as important as ideological proximity to the party in question for the PS, the PSD and the CDS-PP. Among

¹⁴ Degree of religiosity was chosen instead of church attendance because it seems a broader indicator of political views nowadays. Indeed, it has been argued, rightly it seems that the decline in church attendance, as has

the Communists, this is also a significant explanatory variable, although with much less importance than with the three parties just mentioned. This model places party leaders clearly as one of the most important factors, together with ideology in determining voting behaviour, and confirms the findings by Gunther and Montero that they were an extremely important determinant of voting behaviour. It is an indicator that in Portugal the image of the party leader is very important to the outcome of an election.¹⁵

The importance of leaders can be more closely investigated by controlling for ideology. In particular, and once again following Gunther and Montero, we look next at the importance of affect for a party leader among voters for the same block. Here the question is, what is the importance of a given leader in managing to gather voters that share a left or right ideology? In the following table, we therefore reran the model, but with different dependent variables. To see the importance of the variables in explaining voting for parties within the same block, we recoded q.22, so that only parties of the same block were included each time. On each occasion one party was attributed the value 1, whereas the other party(ies) in the same block were attributed the value 0.

Table 6 about here

The findings for the Left block show that social structural variables still explain, to a significant degree vote choices for different parties of the Left. Thus, active people tend to vote for the PS whereas inactive tend to vote for the PCP. Religiosity is an even greater divider, with those with a higher degree of religiosity voting more for the Socialists. It seems indeed that the religious cleavage does not overlap with the left-right cleavage, since within the Left, a higher degree of religiosity correlates positively for a vote in the PS. On the contrary those who belong to a Union tend to vote for the PCP, with membership of a Union correlating negatively with a vote for the Socialists. The most important explanatory factor in explaining vote choice among the Left block is still ideological proximity to the party in question. Thus, due to the ideological differences attributed to the parties on the Left,

occurred everywhere in Europe and in Portugal, should not be equated with a decline in the Church as a cue to an individual's view of politics.

¹⁵ Although the data is not presented in this paper, the relative importance of affect towards party leaders was investigated simply among PSD and PS voters. Parties do not only compete within their own block, and in Portugal, there have been several occasions where inter-block volatility has been quite strong, meaning that there is competition for votes between the two largest parties at the centre of the political spectrum. The findings are basically the same as those in Table 4, and thus are not reproduced here. Ideology is the most important factor, followed by affect towards party leaders.

ideology is still the most important determinant of voting choice among the left-wing electorate, even though affect towards party leaders has an importance too.

On the Right the CDS-PP does tap relatively more votes among the inactive. In this categorization the largest group are retired people (49%), followed by housewives (27%), and the unemployed (10%). The most important finding however, is that contrary to what happens on the Left ideological distance from the party by the respondent disappears in this model. Thus, it seems, the two right-wing parties do not compete on ideological grounds. This is probably due to the fact that Respondents placed PSD and CDS closer to each other ideologically than occurs with parties on the Left (see Table 4). Instead, it is affect towards the party leader which becomes the most significant explanatory variable on the Right in explaining the vote. Gunther and Montero also found that party leaders had an even more substantial role as a determinant of the vote *within* each bloc. We concur, and go further, by distinguishing between the Left and the Right. Due to ideological proximity, when right-wing voters enter the voting booth, it seems that affect towards party leaders is determinant. Durão Barroso's relatively chronic unpopularity, and Paulo Portas' relative popularity were probably one of the most important factors contributing to the lack of absolute majority of the PSD.

Conclusions

This paper has shown that the effect of party leaders is very important in determining the vote choice of the Portuguese. We started by contextualising the election in order to understand the popularity standing of the Prime Ministerial candidates, and other party leaders. We saw that in this election no candidate had been Prime Minister before, and none could be considered very popular in absolute terms. Importantly, no candidate managed to be popular with voters of the other block. Within the same block, on the Left no party leader obtained a positive approval from other parties' voters. On the Right the opposite happened, with both Durão Barroso and Paulo Portas achieving a positive average approval among voters of the CDS-PP and the PSD, respectively. Moreover, only the leaders of small parties, namely Paulo Portas and Francisco Louçã managed to be more popular than their parties. This leads to the conclusion that neither the PS nor the PSD had a very popular leader that might have swung undecided voters of their own block or even in the other block to their party.

Concerning the vote model presented, it has been amply shown in other studies that social anchoring is not evenly distributed among the parties, with the right-wing parties and the PS having relatively shallow social roots. This paper confirms this view, with the exception of religiosity which seems to cut a line between the PCP, the BE on the non-

religious side, and the others on the religious side of this cleavage. In the first model presented, however, ideology continues to be the most important factor in explaining votes for each party analysed.

When we consider the blocks of parties separately, i.e. the left block and the right block, important differences between them emerge. Ideology as an explanatory factor continues to be important on the Left, due to perceived differences by the electorate on the positioning of the Left parties, and especially the differences in ideological placement between the Socialists and the other parties. However, on the Right, ideology as an explanatory factor for vote choice disappears, because contrary to what occurs on the Left, voters perceive very little difference in ideological terms between the PSD and the CDS. It is in this block that the party leader becomes absolutely crucial to the electoral strategy.

This paper therefore confirms what PSD members and elites have always intuitively known, and is in fact a trademark of that party: the search for a strong leader has always been a primary objective among the party's factions (Sousa, 2000, Frain, 1998). It also contributes to the explanation of the lack of an absolute majority for the PSD and the fact that the CDS kept its share of the vote. Given that party leaders are the determinant factor on the Right, Durão Barroso's relative unpopularity during Guterres' government, as well as during the campaign did not manage to induce CDS-PP voters to vote tactically for an absolute majority. Insofar as Ferro Rodrigues and the PS lost by a small margin of the vote, and given the relative importance of affect towards party leaders, we can also conclude that his leadership did not manage to swing undecided voters on his own block, where he was not very popular, nor among right-wing voters, to vote for the PS. It must be recalled of course, that Ferro Rodrigues was elected leader only one month before the elections, and thus had less time to consolidate his role. To conclude, then the 2002 legislative elections occurred in a context where an electorate that is highly sensitive to affect towards party leaders, had to choose between party leaders that in fact were not that popular.

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