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**Second Order Elections and Electoral Cycles in
Democratic Portugal, 1975-2002**

André Freire

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Please address correspondence to
Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa,
Avenida Professor Aníbal de Bettencourt, 9
1600-189 LISBOA - PORTUGAL
Telef: 217 804 700 - Fax: 217 940 274
Tel. (351) 21 799 50 00; Fax: (351) 21 7964953
URL: <http://www.ics.ul.pt>

Second Order Elections and Electoral Cycles in Democratic Portugal, 1975-2002

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the relationships between parliamentary, local and European voting behavior in Portugal during the democratic period, 1975-2002.

First, the evolution of the party system and of aggregate levels of volatility (total and inter-bloc) are compared across different types of elections: legislative, local and European. At the individual level, the social and political anchors of partisanship are also compared across elections of different types.

Second, theories on electoral cycles will be tested by comparing aggregate electoral results across parliamentary, local and European elections in different periods of the electoral cycle, using as the baseline the winners in each previous parliamentary election.

The main conclusion is that relations between second-order and first-order elections reflect not only short term phenomena, with the former being used by the voters to express content/discontent in national governments, but also long term influences, namely in terms of party system format.

Key words

Second-order elections; electoral cycles; Portugal

1. The Role of Elections in the Portuguese Political System

Prior to Portugal's relatively bloodless Revolution of Carnations on April 25, 1974, free and fair elections with universal suffrage and a competitive party system were unheard of (see Schmitter, 1978 and Cruz, 1988, p. 206). Unlike in neighboring Spain and in certain other democratic transitions, electoral politics played absolutely no role in bringing down the authoritarian regime (Bermeo, 1987). Instead, Portugal's transition was initiated by a coup lead by junior military officers (Linz and Stepan, 1996, Ch. 7). What was critical, however, was that despite an extremely unstable period of interim governments that lasted from 1974-76, the military nevertheless committed itself to holding free and fair popular elections one year from the date of coup. The Portuguese Constituent Assembly elections were held on schedule on April 25, 1975, and these were followed by the first free constitutional parliamentary elections one year later, on April 25, 1976.

Portugal's political system is semi-presidential (see Duverger, 1980), and thus the only two institutions with national electoral legitimacy and a responsibility for forming government are the President of the Republic (PR) and the National Assembly. The Head of State is the directly-elected president, but this officeholder must share power with a Head of Government (prime minister) who is responsible to the National Assembly. Although the president had more significant powers from 1976-1982, leading to an unclear "presidential-parliamentary" balance of power, the 1982 revision of the Constitution substantially reduced some of these powers, thereby making the system more "premier-presidential".¹ The presidential term is 5 years with a maximum of two terms. Since its transition to democracy began in 1974, Portugal has had six presidential elections, only one of which required a second round runoff.

The legislative branch, the National Assembly, is unicameral and composed of 230 members elected in 22 multi-member constituencies (I present the electoral systems used in all four types of elections below). Deputies' terms are four years maximum. National parliamentary elections ultimately determine which party will form the Government, who will become prime minister, and thus who will share executive power with the president. These are clearly the most important elections in the political system.

¹ See Shugart and Carey (1992, Ch. 2) for a typology of semipresidentialism.

Less important elections (in terms of their contribution to the functioning of the national political system) also take place in Portugal at the local, regional and European levels. Local and regional-level elections under democratic rules only began in 1976, following the promulgation of Portugal's new Constitution. The Constitution provided for 3 distinct levels of local governance (*autarquias locais*) according to their respective territorial delimitations—the ward (*freguesia*), the county-level municipality (*concelho*), and the special administrative regions of the Azores and Madeira. In this paper, I will refer only to local elections, because regional elections are not held in the whole country.

European Parliament (EP) elections only began in Portugal and Spain in June 1987, following those two countries' accession to the European Community in 1986. Voters have gone to the polls 4 times for EP elections and their importance for national politics is the same as elsewhere in the EU.

2. Main objectives of the paper

The aim of this paper is to explore the relations between parliamentary, local and European elections in Portugal during the democratic period, 1975-2001. Given this brief introduction to the Portuguese political system, and the relative importance of the different bodies for its functioning, I would argue that local, regional and European elections are second-order national elections, while parliamentary contests are of the first-order type. I use the definition of first-order and second-order national elections that is now standard in the literature (Reif, 1985b; and Reif and Schmitt, 1980; see also Marsh and Franklin, 1996; Marsh, 1998; and Norris, 1997). First order elections are those where there is much at stake, that is, the control of national executive power. This means that in parliamentary systems, legislative elections are first-order, as are elections for the head of state in presidential regimes. On the contrary, second-order national elections have no direct impact on the control of national executive power. In the case of EP elections, they do not even have any significant impact on the formation of executive power at the EU level. But second-order national elections are generally fought by the same actors (the same parties) as in the first-order ones, and are significantly influenced by national issues, despite their formally local, regional or European character (Franklin, 2001).

The relationship between parliamentary and presidential elections in semi-presidential systems is more problematic. For example, in describing the French 5th Republic, also a semi-presidential system, Reif considered that both presidential and parliamentary elections are first-order, except in certain circumstances (Reif, 1985b).² However, semi-presidential systems are in reality quite varied. In some of them--France, Finland, Poland, and Lithuania--the role of the president is very strong; namely she has the power to propose legislation, call for referendums and preside over the council of ministers (this is where the president is the head of government, at least under some circumstances, not co-habitation). While in other systems-- Austria, Bulgaria, Iceland, Ireland, Slovenia, Romania and Portugal after its 1982 constitutional revision-- the president has only very limited control over the executive power (Duverger, 1980; Shugart and Carey, 1992; Freire and Magalhães, 2002). So, in the latter cases we cannot say that presidential and parliamentary election results are of equal importance for the functioning of the political system, because they are not. Parliamentary elections are clearly more important.

So, I must conclude that Reif's classification is neither very suitable for the Portuguese case, nor for other weak semi-presidential systems. Because of this I will concentrate the analysis mainly on the comparisons between parliamentary *versus* local and EP elections.

Plus, at least in Portugal, the rationale of the competition and the actors contesting presidential elections has not always been the same as in the legislative elections, namely in terms of the left-right divide. In the first years of Portugal's democratic transition, the presidency was used to integrate the military into the new regime - it was only in 1986 that a civilian became head of state. In 1976 all the so-called democratic parties, i.e., those that were clearly in favor of the liberal democratic model (PS, PSD and CDS)³, supported the winner, Ramalho Eanes. In 1991, the PSD

² See also Marsh (1998), who says that in those cases where the election of a non-executive head of state is at stake, then the contest is of the second-order type.

³ Portuguese democratic politics have been dominated by four parties. The center-left Socialist Party (PS: *Partido Socialista*); the center-right Social Democratic Party (PSD: *Partido Social Democrata*); the PCP (*Partido Comunista Português*), an orthodox communist party; and the CDS-PP (*Centro Democrático Social-Partido Popular*), a right wing party. In the transition towards democracy in Portugal, the PCP was the only major party not pro the liberal democratic model.

was at risk of losing the presidential contest, so the party decided to support the leftwing candidate (Mário Soares), supported in the first place by his former party, the PS, and so the competition lost all its potential for ideological cleavage. The fact that before the 1986 presidential contest the candidates were usually military officers is another trait that place presidential elections apart from all other elections, by potentially introducing a very specific factor in the electors' choices.

But how are first and second-order elections related? The first objective of the paper is to compare the evolution of the party system and aggregate levels of electoral volatility (total and inter-bloc) across different types of elections. Due to the well known limitations of aggregate measures of volatility, I will compare the individual levels of social and ideological anchors of partisanship across different types of elections (local and European *versus* parliamentary) – an individual level surrogate for inter-bloc volatility.

The second objective of the paper is to test theories on electoral cycles, comparing aggregate electoral returns across parliamentary, local and EP elections in different periods of the national electoral cycle, and using as the baseline the winners in each previous parliamentary election. The hypothesis to be tested here is whether second-order elections have a singular character or whether they are used by electors as a way to express content or discontent towards the national government.

In the beginning of each section of the paper the literature on second-order elections will be reviewed and the paper's contribution to what we already know about these type of elections and their relations with first-order ones will be defined. But there are three major methodological contributions of the paper that can be refered in advance. Empirical studies on second-order elections in the European context have usually compared parliamentary and EP elections, and usually lacked a longitudinal perspective. Using only Portuguese electoral data (1975-2002), I intend to overcome some of these two shortcomings of prior studies, extending comparisons to more types of second-order elections and introducing a long-run perspective. The latter is used in order to see if there is any structural influence of national parliamentary contests on second-order elections, namely in terms of trends in the party system format.

The third specific contribution of the paper is the use of a single country, with very similar electoral systems in the different types of elections (except for the

presidential ones) – see below-, which will allow me to test all hypotheses in a systematic way, while controlling for other institutional, cultural, social and political factors that can get in the way of clear comparisons between first and second-order elections.⁴

3. Electoral systems in different Portuguese elections

Electoral systems across different types of Portuguese elections are quite similar, except for the presidential contests. The latter are fought under a run-off majority system (Freire, 2001; Lopes and Freire, 2002). As in France, if there is no candidate with a majority of valid votes in the first ballot, a second election is held only between the two major candidates of the first ballot. Personalization is a central feature of presidential elections, although candidates usually receive partisan support. This system forces political parties to coalesce, and works against those parties that are not able to enter into larger coalitions, namely anti-system parties. This is an additional reason not to include presidential elections in the analysis that follows.

All other elections (parliamentary, regional, local and EP) are fought under the d'Hondt system of proportional representation (PR), and voters are not permitted to express preferences for particular candidates (closed lists). During the democratic period there were no major changes in the parliamentary electoral system—the only significant change was the reduction in the number of MPs from the 1991 election on, from 250 to 230 (Lopes and Freire, 2002). This latter change resulted in a minor reduction of the average district magnitude, from 11.4 seats/district between 1975 and 1987, to 10.5 from 1991 onwards (Freire, forthcoming). This system benefits large parties the most (those receiving more than 25% of the vote), is relatively fair to medium size parties (those with 15% to 25% of the vote), and can even allow for the entrance of very small parties (those with around 1,5% to 3% of the vote) due to the very large district magnitude of the Lisbon and Porto constituencies.

EP elections are fought in a single constituency (25 seats) and thus, on the one hand, the electoral system is not so fair for small and medium-sized parties, but on the other hand, it benefits them because fewer resources are needed for electoral campaigns (Bacalhau, 1996).

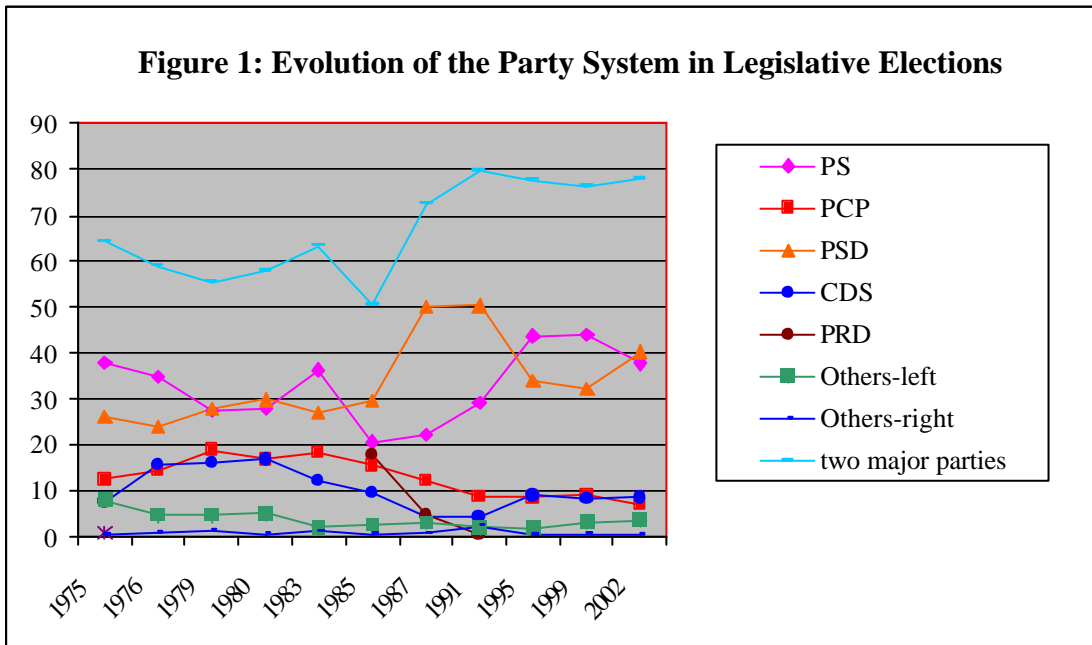
⁴ See Franklin 2001, p. 191.

Local elections are fought in 308 municipalities. I consider only the most important of local elections⁵, i.e., those for the municipal executive (*Câmara Municipal*). These elections are fought in medium/small districts – the average district magnitude in the 1997 elections was 6.56 seats – and so the system works against smaller parties. Furthermore, a large amount of resources (human, financial, and organizational) are needed to campaign in all 308 units, and this is yet another feature that works against smaller parties-- especially those that lack a strong organizational structure at the national level. Another singularity of local elections for the municipal executive is that they are highly personalized. This is due to the fact that although people vote in closed lists, campaigns revolve around the mayoral candidates.

4. The evolution of the party system across different types of elections

Portuguese democratic politics have been dominated by four parties (see Figure 1): the center-left Socialist Party, PS; the center-right Social Democratic Party, PSD; the PCP, a communist party; and the CDS-PP. The latter is a right-wing party with some Christian democratic origins, but which has recently changed its ideological profile to a more populist stance following their 1991 electoral defeat and a change in leadership. It also added the label *Partido Popular* to its name (for details about Portuguese parties, see Bruneau, 1997 and Lobo, 2001).

⁵ In Portuguese local elections there are two types of contests at the municipal level, for the executive and for the assembly, and one at the ward level, for the assembly – from which the ward's executive emanates.



Sources: data elaborated from official electoral results available at www.stape.pt; and www.cne.pt.

Additionally, micro parties both from the left and from the right have persisted in Portuguese politics, and are displayed in Figure 1 under the labels of “others left” and “others right”. The two major parties (PS and PSD) have always controlled government, be it in a single party format (PS: 1976-77; 1995-2002; PSD: 1985-1995) or in coalition (PS-CDS: 1977-1978; PSD-CDS-PPM⁶: 1979-83; PS-PSD: 1983-85; PSD-CDS-PP: 2002-present date) (see Table 1).^{7 / 8}

⁶ PPM, *Partido Popular Monárquico*, is a micro right wing that advocates a monarchic regime.

⁷ Only in 1979 and 1980 was there a pre electoral coalition: AD, *Aliança Democrática*, which joined PSD, CDS and PPM in a single slate, except in the two islands of Azores and Madeira, where each of the three parties ran by its own. However, in order to trace the evolution of each one of the four major parties, and to compare the performance of large and medium/small size parties across different types of elections, I decomposed the votes in the coalition according to the following rules. First, I calculated the average vote percentage of each party (PSD, CDS, and PPM) in the elections before (1976) and after (1983) the coalition period. Second, I summed these three averages and determined the proportion of this total vote for each party of the coalition. Third, I used this proportion to determine the vote percentage of each party in 1979 and 1980, by multiplying the above mentioned proportion by the coalition’s total vote in each election. These procedures I used with the data presented in Figure 1, and Tables 2 and 3.

⁸ A similar procedure as the one described in the previous note was used in local elections – there were no relevant coalitions in EP elections. However, since in local elections coalitions have never included the entire country or something near, I could define the relative strength of each party in each election and then apply that information to estimate the part of the coalitions’ vote percentages that belong to each coalition’s partner. These procedures I used with the data presented in Figure 1, and Tables 2 and 3.

Table 1: Type of Elections, winner party and type of national cabinet/government, 1975-2002 (% of popular vote)

	Legislative elections	Type of national cabinet/government	Presidential elections	Local elections	EP elections
1975	April 25 (PS: 37.9); Constituent Assembly	Provisional governments			
1976	April 25 (PS: 34.9)	PS: single party minority	June 27 (Ramalho Eanes: 61.5)	December 12 (PS: 33.2)	
		PS-CDS: post electoral coalition			
		Presidential governments			
1979	December 2 (PSD-CDS-PPM: 45.1)	PSD-CDS-PPM: pre electoral coalition		December 16 (PSD-CDS-PPM: 47.2)	
1980	October 5 (PSD-CDS-PPM: 47.6)	PSD-CDS-PPM: pre electoral coalition	December 7 (Ramalho Eanes: 56.5)		
1982				December 12 PSD-CDS-PPM: 41.9	
1983	April 25 (PS: 36.1)	PS-PSD: post electoral coalition			
1985	October 6 (PSD: 29.8)	PSD: single party minority		December 15 (PSD: 34.0)	
1986			2nd ballot: February 16 (Mário Soares: 51.3)		
1987	July 19 (PSD: 50.2)	PSD: single party majority			July 19 (PSD: 37.4)
1989				December 17 (PS: 34.9)	June 18 (PSD: 32.7)
1991	October 6 (PSD: 50.6)	PSD: single party majority	January 13 (Mário Soares: 70.4)		
1993				December 12 (PS: 39.1)	
1994					June 12 (PS: 34.8)
1995	October 1 (PS: 43.7)	PS: single party minority			
1996			January 14 (Jorge Sampaio: 53.8)		
1997				December 14 (PS: 40.1)	
1999	October 10 (PS: 44.1)	PS: single party minority			June 13 (PS: 43.1)
2001			January 14 (Jorge Sampaio: 53.9)	December 16 (PSD: 39.7)	
2002	March 17 (PSD: 40.2)	PSD-CDS: post electoral coalition			

Sources: data elaborated by the author from official electoral results available at www.stape.pt

Notes: 1) for each type of election, the exact day of the consultation is showed, as is the vote percentage of the winner party or candidate (presidential elections).

2) For the legislative elections, the type of government is also presented. 3) in local elections, votes of pre electoral coalitions were sometimes disaggregated by party (1989, 1993, 1997 and 2001), in order to calculate a better estimation of the winner's vote- about the rules assumed for this procedure, see notes 6 and 7 in the main text.

Between 1976 and 1985, governments were mainly of a coalition type and never ended their terms (see Table 1; see also Bruneau et al., 2001). The 1985 general election was a critical one⁹ that initiated a huge transformation of Portuguese electoral politics, eventually ending the above mentioned cabinet instability. A new party instigated by the former president Ramalho Eanes (1976-86), PRD: *Partido Renovador Democrático*, fought that election, achieved 17.9% of the vote and reduced the PS to 20.8%, its worst result ever in parliamentary elections. However, the Socialists began recovering slowly in the next election (1987) and the PRD declined to about 5%, practically disappearing in the next election (1991).

The 1985 critical election is associated with five major features, some of which only began to reveal themselves in the 1987 realignment election (for details, see Freire, forthcoming; see also Lobo, 2001). Among these five major features, perhaps the most fundamental one is the concentration of the vote in the two major parties: from 1975 to 1985 the sum of the vote percentages in the two major parties (PS and PSD) was only twice slightly above 60%, but since the 1987 election onwards, the latter figure was always above 70%, and usually III above (see Figure 1). The latter phenomenon fundamentally altered the Portuguese party system in legislative elections in a majoritarian direction (see Bruneau et al, 2001; Lobo, 2001; Freire, forthcoming).

Following theories on second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1985b; Anderson and Ward, 1997; Marsh, 1998; Oppenhuis, Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Eijk, Franklin and Oppenhuis, 1996), the first thing to be tested is if small (“others left” and “others right”) and medium size (PCP and CDS) parties have always performed better in Portuguese second-order elections (local and EP) than in first-order ones (legislative). The second question is whether the trend towards bipolarization in first-order elections is also present in second-order elections.

⁹ I use Campbell et al's (1960) definitions for critical and realignment elections.

Table 2: Political Parties' Average Vote Percentages by Decade in First-Order and Second-Order Elections

Political Parties	Type of Elections	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	1975-2002
PS+PSD	Parliamentary	59.6	61.1	77.9	78.0	69.2
	Local	58.6	63.4	74.2	76.1	68.1
	EP	-	60.1	71.7	-	65.9
PCP+CDS	Parliamentary	28.6	26.5	16.1	15.6	21.7
	Local	34.9	29.5	20.5	16.8	25.4
	EP	-	27.7	21.1	-	24.4
PRD	Parliamentary	-	11.5	0.6	-	6.0
	Local	-	2.8	-	-	2.8
	EP	-	4.4	0.2	-	2.3
Others: left and right	Parliamentary	6.9	4.1	3.6	4.3	4.7
	Local	3.9	1.7	3.3	2.7	2.9
	EP	-	6.6	4.0	-	5.3

Sources: data elaborated from official electoral results available at www.stape.pt; and www.cne.pt.

Note: political parties' vote percentages are averages for each decade (1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000) or for the entire democratic period (1975-2002).

Looking at Table 2 we can clearly see that the two largest parties (PS and PSD) almost always performed better in first-order elections than in second-order ones. The only exception is in the 1980s, when the average vote percentage of the two major parties was smaller in legislative elections than in local elections. This exception is due to the fact that the new party, PRD, was not as successful in local elections, and at the national level the success of this party was at the cost of the PS' share. So, large parties seem to perform slightly better in first-order elections, as expected. On the one hand, the difference is not very impressive, especially if local *versus* legislative elections are taken into account. For the whole period (1975-2002) the two largest parties averaged 69.2% of the vote for parliamentary elections; 68.1% for local and 65.9% for EP elections. But, on the other hand, the electoral system in EP elections and especially in local elections works in favor of the large parties, so the above mentioned differences actually become more significant.

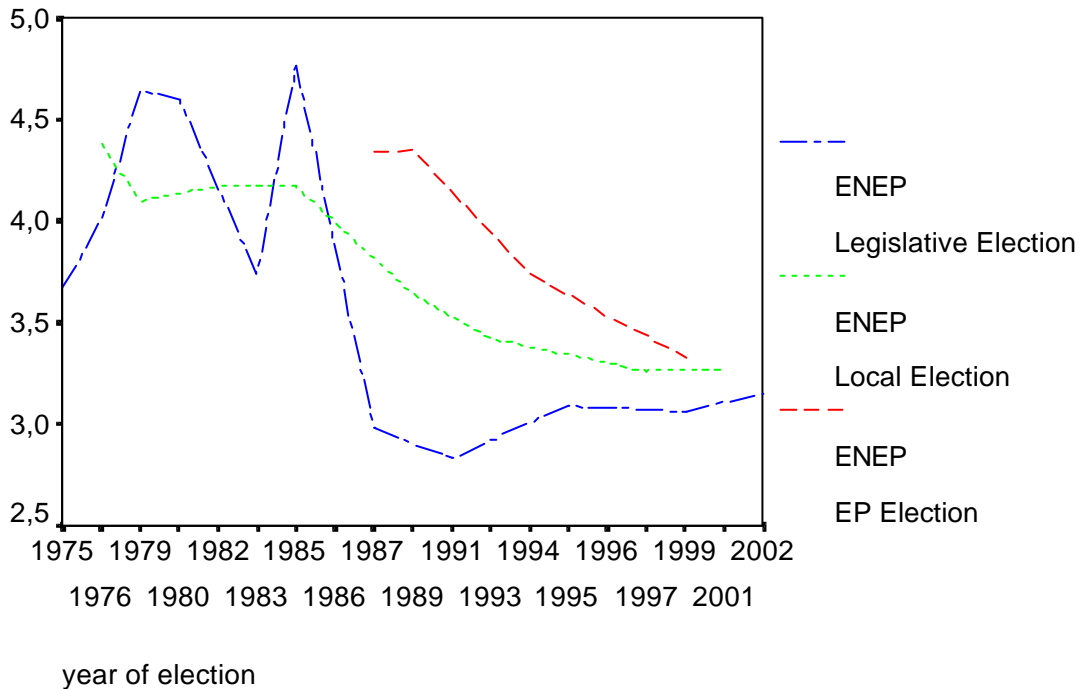
Medium (PCP and CDS) and small parties generally performed better in Portuguese second-order elections (see Table 2). Again, differences in vote percentages

are not particularly impressive, but keeping in mind the differences in electoral systems lends them greater importance.¹⁰ These differences are probably due to the electoral systems associated with each type of second-order election (average district magnitude is much lower in local elections than in EP contests, so the latter are less unfair to tiny parties), but also to the differences in the resources (human, financial and organizational) needed to fight local and EP elections. Many more resources are needed for contesting local elections (308 constituencies) than in EP elections (one constituency), and this works against smaller parties.¹¹

¹⁰ In fact, I tested for statistical significance (t-test for paired samples) and the differences only revealed significant in two cases. First, for the comparison between medium size parties' vote in legislative and local elections ($p = 0,011$). Second, for the comparison between small parties' vote in legislative and local elections ($p = 0,016$). However, in the latter case the relation is not in the expected direction, as I will mention below.

¹¹ The PRD stands apart as special case. In legislative elections, although it was a medium size party in 1985, it soon became a small party in 1987, and then disappeared from 1991 onwards. Second-order elections after 1985 only took place when the party was already in decline (EP:1987 and 1989; local: 1989) and so the party never succeeded there as it did in the first-order contests of 1985. Plus, as a new party it lacked a strong organizational structure, which is especially needed in local elections.

Figure 2: Effective Number of Parties
in Portuguese Elections, 1975-2002



So, in terms of the performance of different types of Portuguese political parties, theories about first and second-order elections do seem to receive empirical support. But did the developments in the party system that occurred for legislative elections also take place in second-order elections (local and EP)? In Figure 2 I display the trends in the effective number of electoral parties (parliamentary, local and EP elections) and candidates (presidential elections) in Portuguese democratic elections. The “effective number of parties and candidates” measure is taken from Laakso and Taagepera (1979), and elaborated using official Portuguese electoral data.

Comparing first-order (legislative) with second-order (local and EP) elections in terms of the trends in the effective number of electoral parties (Figure 2), we can see that there is a clear synchronicity. In all the three types of elections there is a majoritarian drive, with the reduction in the effective number of parties (see Figure 2). Furthermore, we can see that second-order elections are losing their distinctive character vis-à-vis the first-order ones. In all the elections between 1999 and 2002, the effective number of parties in all three types of elections shows hardly any differences. Whether

this is an indicator of a new era in Portuguese politics is unclear. Still, there seems to be some contamination from the first-order elections towards the second-order ones, a feature not predicted by second-order elections theory. This might mean that first-order elections are more important, in terms of financial state resources, mass media visibility and organizational structure. So if some parties lose their weight at the national level, this will tend to contaminate other levels of power (local and European). Plus, in a political system dominated by four major parties like the Portuguese, when the above mentioned phenomena occurs in two of the four major parties, such decline then translates into a reduction in the number of effective electoral parties.¹²

5. Levels of electoral volatility and social and ideological anchors of partisanship across different types of elections

In this section it will be tested if electors are more likely to change their vote options in elections with less importance (local and European) than in the most important ones (parliamentary). This hypothesis will be tested both with aggregate and individual level data.

At the aggregate level, I will use the concepts of total and inter bloc electoral volatility (Bartolini and Mair, 1990, pp. 17-52 and 313-314). Considering that second-order elections might be used by voters to express their discontent to the government in place, and considering that these elections have no direct consequences for national government formation, it is possible that voters feel more free to change their vote options in second-order elections than in first-order ones. I expect that this might

¹² We compared also the effective number of electoral parties in legislative (and local and EP) elections with the effective number of electoral candidates in presidential elections (data not shown), and we found that the latter is usually much lower than the effective number parties in the other types of elections, except in the highly polarized and competitive 1986 presidential election (about Portuguese presidential elections, see Freire, 2001). Also, it was found there is no similar development between the effective number of candidates in presidential elections and the effective number of parties in all the other elections.

happen both in terms of vote swings within the same ideological quadrant (within bloc volatility) and between the left-right boundary (inter bloc volatility).¹³

Let us begin by presenting the operational definitions. First, total electoral volatility (TV) can be expressed as:

$$TV = (|P_iV| + |P_jV| + |P_kV| + |P_lV| \dots + |P_nV|) / 2$$

where P_iV represents the change – in *absolute* terms – in the aggregate vote for party i between two consecutive elections.¹⁴

Note that P_iV to P_nV represents all parties competing and receiving votes in at least one of the two consecutive elections. Following Bartolini and Mair (1990: 20), I measured each party vote as a percentage of the total valid vote. The index is divided by two “on the assumption that accumulated net gains are equal to accumulated net losses” and also to make the index’s interpretation more intuitive: as it is it ranges from 0 to 100, instead of from 0 to 200 if it were not divided by 2.

Bartolini and Mair have already discussed in detail some of the methodological issues involved with the creation of this and other volatility indices (1990, pp. 20-22), but I can summarize by saying that such indices can only be considered very crude measures of electoral change. First, because we can have a large amount of voting shifts that cancel each other out at the individual level and so are not detected by the aggregate measures. Second, because even completely stable elections at the individual level can be associated with aggregate electoral volatility due to abstention and electoral turnover.

In any case, let us move on to the inter bloc volatility (BV) formula, which can be expressed as:

$$BV = (|P(iV + jV + kV)| + |P(lV + mV + nV)|) / 2$$

Where $P(iV + jV + kV)$ represents the *net* change - in *absolute* terms – in the aggregate vote for parties i , j , and k , all of which come from the same bloc, between two consecutive elections.¹⁵

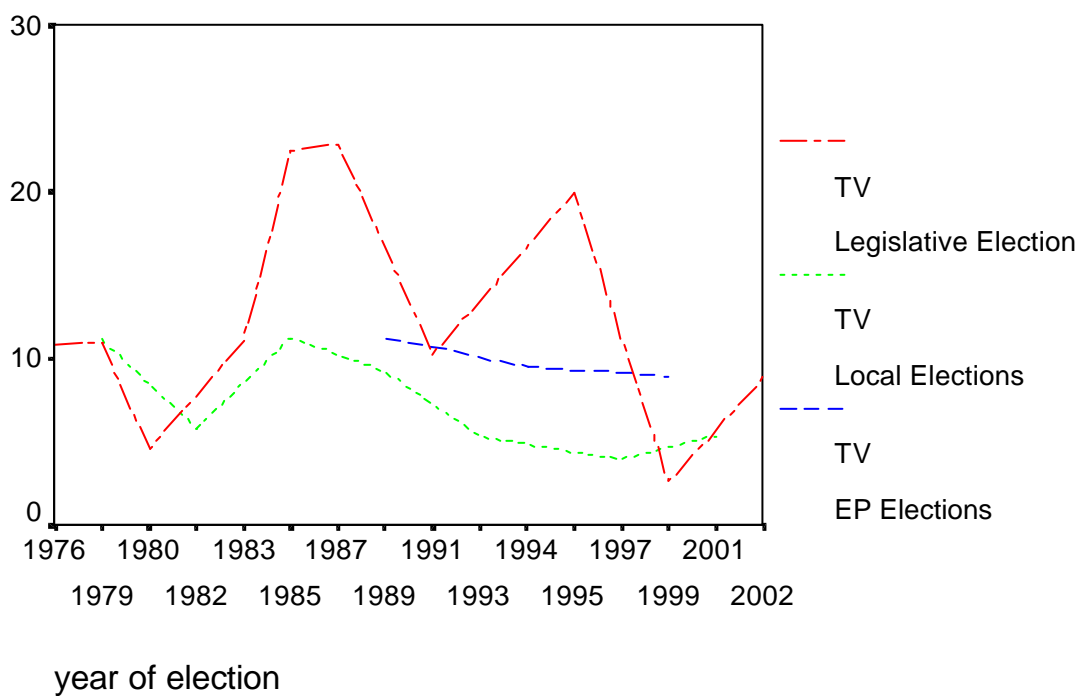
¹³ The sum of within and inter bloc volatility gives us total volatility (Bartolini and Mair, 1990, p. 23).

¹⁴ Bartolini and Mair, 1990, p. 20, italicized as in the original.

¹⁵ Bartolini and Mair, 1990, p. 22, italics as in the original.

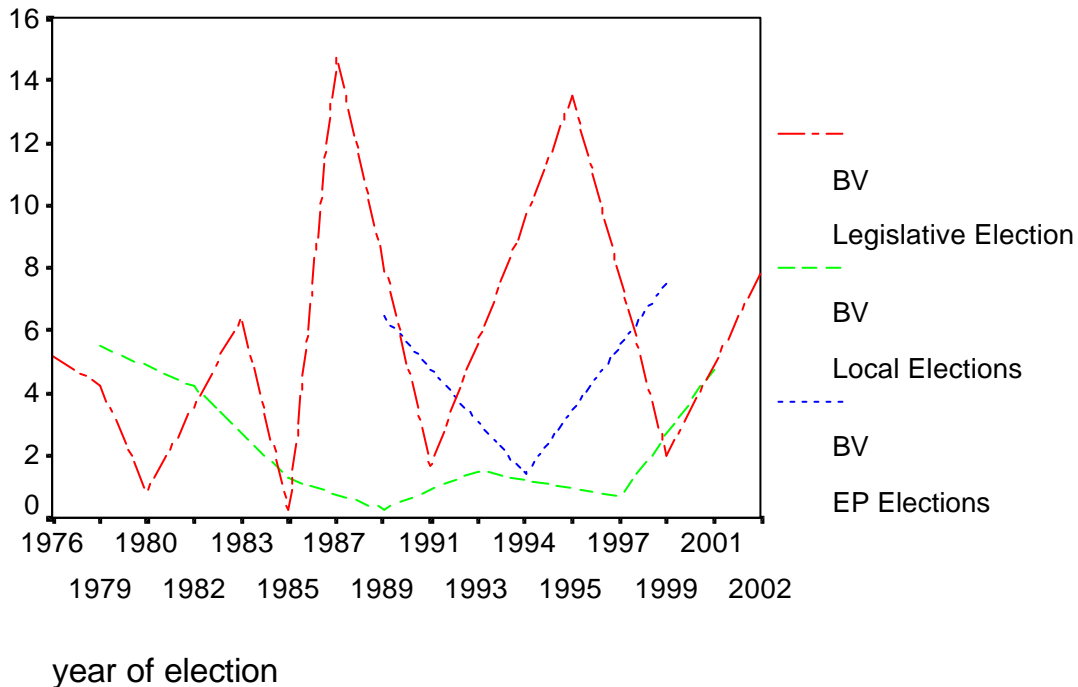
The constitutive logic of the measure is the same as for TV, only now it is applied to blocs of parties and not to parties taken individually (Bartolini and Mair, 1990, p. 22). I applied the BV formula to measure electoral shifts between the left and right blocs of Portuguese parties¹⁶ in two consecutive elections. Since this political cleavage is linked both to the class and religious cleavage in Portugal, BV can also be taken as a measure of change across both class and religious cleavage boundaries.

Figure 3: Total Volatility in Portuguese Elections, 1975-2002



¹⁶ As is the case with Bartolini and Mair, 1990, pp. 22-47 and 313-314.

Figure 4: Inter-Bloc Volatility
in Portuguese Elections, 1975-2002



Figures 4 and 5 show that neither hypothesis receive empirical support with aggregate level indicators. Total Volatility (TV) is usually larger in legislative elections than in both local and EP elections, sometimes very much larger (1985, 1987 and 1995) – Figure 3. The only minor exceptions are the 1980 and the 1999 legislative elections where TV is practically *ex aequo* in legislative and local elections (1980); or much lower in legislative than in EP elections (1999). As for inter bloc volatility (BV), Figure 4, it can be said that the findings are also negative, although here the picture is a bit more mixed. The legislative elections of 1987 and 1995 had levels of BV much higher than those ever found in Local and EP during the whole democratic period. Plus, except in 1980, 1985 and 1999, legislative elections always displayed higher levels of BV than local elections – only three in ten cases. In the case of EP elections, the picture is more mixed. The 1989 and 1999 EP elections showed greater BV than the 1991 and 1999 legislative elections, but if we compare the former EP elections with the 1987 and 1995 parliamentary contests, the picture is completely reversed.

How should these mainly negative findings be interpreted? Two major kinds of explanations are possible and these are not necessarily contradictory. The first one is more theoretical. Only small segments of the electorate are using second-order elections to express their discontent with the national government in place. The others segments of the electorate usually vote “sincerely” in second-order elections, i.e., for those parties they prefer the most without any tactical and/or protestative considerations.¹⁷ On the contrary, tactical considerations may be much greater in first-order elections among larger parts of the electorate, and so the result is usually higher volatility in first-order elections.

The second type of explanation is methodological. Aggregate volatility is only a very crude measure of electoral change, in that it may sometimes represent very understated values for shifts in individual-level political preferences. As it was said before, if there are many vote shifts that cancel each other out – for example, an equal share of the electorate moving from left to right and from right to left. This volatility is not revealed by the aggregate measure of inter bloc volatility, and this is probably the case in local elections, where many vote shifts from left to right and vice versa are canceling each other out.

Because of the limitations in aggregate measures of volatility, the best way to estimate electoral change is with individual level data and panel designs (Heath et al, 1991, pp. 10-31). In Portugal, there was no National Election Study until very recently (2002 legislative elections), and even for these elections no panel design was used. Panel surveys have always been scarce in Portugal, but so have academic surveys on electoral behavior. However, using Eurobarometer data from the 1989 (EB 31.1) and 1994 (EB 41.1) European Election Studies¹⁸, and from the 2002 Portuguese NES survey¹⁹, the relative anchors of partisanship across different types of elections can be

¹⁷ About the “sincere vote” in second-order elections, see Eijk and Franklin, 1996b; Eijk, Franklin, and Oppenhuis, 1996; Oppenhuis, Eijk, and Franklin, 1996

¹⁸ See Eijk and Franklin, 1996, for details on the European Election Studies of 1989 and 1994.

¹⁹ The Portuguese NES survey, *Portuguese Electoral Behaviour and Political Attitudes in Comparative Perspective*, is directed by António Barreto, André Freire, Marina Costa Lobo, and Pedro Magalhães. The Portuguese NES is a member of CSES, *The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*. The post electoral survey was fielded in March 2002, shortly after the 2002 legislative elections of March 17, and was based on a multi-stage probability sample of the Portuguese people living on the mainland and aged 18 or more.

compared. It will be tested if the social and ideological anchors of partisanship are weaker in second-order elections than in first-order ones, thus indicating a greater probability of vote shifts between left and right in second-order elections.

Table 3: Ideology, cleavages and the vote in Local, European Parliament (EP), and Legislative elections, 1987-2002 – OLS regressions

Independent variables	Dependent variable: past vote ordered in a left-right scale					
	Local elections, 2001	Legislative elections, 2002	EP 1989	Parliamentary 1987	EP 1994	Parliamentary 1991
	Beta & significance	Beta & significance	Beta & significance	Beta & significance	Beta & significance	Beta & significance
Self placement on a left right scale	0.502***	0.617***	0.683***	0.705***	0.586***	0.626***
Education	0.074	0.038	-0.019	-0.013	0.072	0.080**
Household Income	n.u.	n.u.	0.117**	0.045	0.100*	0.028
Union membership	0.090**	0.084**	-0.045	0.054	0.091*	0.061
Church attendance	0.105***	0.068**	0.111**	0.112***	0.097*	0.077**
Occupation	0.011	0.030	n.u.	n.u.	n.u.	n.u.
Adjusted R ²	0.299	0.419 (0.415)	0.504	0.552 (0.554)	0.381	0.423 (0.381)
N	1303	1303	1000	1000	1000	1000
Valid N	554	538	276	324	272	420

Source: Local and Legislative elections, 2001 and 2002 respectively: data elaborated from *Portuguese Electoral Behaviour and Political Attitudes in Comparative Perspective*, 2002 Legislative Elections Post Electoral Survey; March 2002 – Portuguese NES Survey; European and Legislative elections, 1987 to 1994: data elaborated from Eurobarometers 31.1 and 41.1, ICPSR study numbers 9360 and 6535.

The Portuguese NES Survey is a member of The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems and the respective data is available both through CSES and António Barreto, André Freire, Marina Costa Lobo, and Pedro Magalhães, at *Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa* (www.ics.ul.pt)

Notes:

- 1) * p < 0,1; ** p < 0,05; *** p < 0,01.
- 2) For the Adjusted R² in legislative elections we present two values: one with the total number of people who voted for legislative elections; the other with only those who voted in legislative and local elections (in parenthesis).
- 3) N.u. = not used.
- 4) Self placement on a left right scale: 0 – left; 10 – right
- 5) Education: 1 – none; 11 – post graduate complete; or Age Finished School: 1 – up to 14 years; 9 – 22 years and older..
- 6) Household Income (Quartiles): 1 – Poorest; 4 - Richest.
- 7) Union membership: 1 – yes; 2 – No.
- 8) Church attendance: 1 – never; 6 – once a week or more; or 1 – never; 5 – several times a week..
- 9) Occupation: 1 – manual workers; 2 – routine non manual workers; 3 – professionals.
- 10) Vote in local elections 2001: 1 – Left Bloc (BE) – Left; 2 – PCP-CDU; 3 – PS-PCP; 4 – PS; 5 – PSD; 6 – PSD-CDS-PPM; 7 – PSD-PPM; 8 – CDS-PP (right).

The survey included questions on past vote in legislative elections (2002 and 1999), and also a recall question for electoral behaviour in the previous local elections (December 2001).

- 11) Vote in legislative elections 2002: 1 – Left Bloc (BE) – Left; 2 – PCP-CDU; 3 – PS; 4 – PSD; 5 – CDS-PP (right).
- 12) Vote in EP elections: 1989: 1 - UDP (Left) ; 2 – PCP-CDU; 3 – MDP-CDE ; 4 – PS; 5 – PSD; 6- CDS; 7 – PPM; 8 - PDC (right); 1994: 1 - UDP (Left) ; 2 – PCP-CDU; 3 – PS ; 4 – PSD; 5 – CDS; 6- PSN; 7 – PPM (right).
- 13) Vote in legislative elections: 1987: 1 - UDP (Left) ; 2 – PCP-CDU; 3 – MDP-CDE ; 4 – PS; 5 – PSD; 6- CDS; 7 – PPM; 8 - PDC (right); 1991: 1 – PCP-CDU (Left); 2 – PS; 3 – PRD; 4 – PSD; 5 – CDS; 6 – PSN; 7 - PPM (right).
- 14) When using the Eurobarometer data, in EP Elections, only respondents aged 18 or more were included. In legislative elections, only people aged 20 or more (1987) or aged 21 or more (1991) were included.

Table 3 clearly indicates that the social and ideological determinants of the vote have a stronger impact in first-order elections than in second-order ones-- adjusted R^2 is 0.299 and 0.419 respectively for local and parliamentary elections. This result is all the more relevant if we keep in mind that both aggregate measures of volatility revealed that the 2002 Legislative elections were more volatile than the 2001 local elections (see Figures 4 and 5). But we know from prior studies (Campbell, 1966, and 1993; Eijk and Franklin, 1996c) that one of the major determinants of the different outcomes in first and second-order elections is turnout. Thus, the differences in the relative strength in the anchors of partisanship across elections might be due to differential turnout; those participating in second-order elections might be more sophisticated voters²⁰ and their behavior might be less determined by cleavages and ideology. So, the regression equation for the legislative elections was re-run including only those respondents who voted in both 2002 and 2001. The result clearly strengthens the argument (adjusted R^2 = 0.415). Ideological and social anchors of partisanship are more important in first-order elections.

Comparing the vote in legislative (1987 and 1991) and European (1989 and 1994) elections using the Eurobarometer data²¹, we can see again that the social and ideological anchors of partisanship are always more important in first-order elections than in second-order ones--adjusted R^2 are 0.552 and 0.423 *versus* 0.504 and 0.381,

²⁰ Of course, the term sophistication is used loosely here. I could just as easily say fickle. Voters who demonstrate consistent ideological positions and party loyalties that correspond to a predictable sociological position may be just as (if not more) sophisticated as voters who shift back and forth between parties.

²¹ Both Eurobarometers include recall questions about past vote in EP (1994 and 1989) and legislative elections (1991 and 1987), which I used. Unfortunately, I could not find a question about party choice in the 1999 EP elections in Eurobarometer 52.0. So I restricted our analysis to 1989 and 1994.

respectively (Table 3). These differences are less dramatic than those found between Local (2001) and Legislative (2002) elections, but they are very important because the 1987 election was a highly volatile one, both in terms of TV and BV, and most of all the aggregated measures revealed much higher values for the legislative than for EP elections. However, the regression equations for legislative elections were re-run including only those who voted in both elections: EP and legislative. The evidence shows that the picture stayed the same in the 1987 (0.554), but not in the 1991 election (0.381), which now is about equal to the 1994 EP election. So, only in the latter case do the differences in the strength of the anchors of partisanship seem to be due to differential turnout.

Thus, despite our analysis of only a limited set of elections, the individual level evidence allows us to conclude that people are more prone to change their vote across party blocs in second-order elections than in first-order ones. However, sometimes these differences between first-order and second-order elections might be due to differential turnout. On the other hand, differences between aggregate and individual measures (or proxy measures) of volatility are probably mostly due to the methodological limitations of the former.

6. Electoral cycles and different types of elections

The hypothesis to be tested in this section is if second-order (local and European) elections have a singular character or if they are used by electors as a way to express content or discontent with national government (Tufte, 1975; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1985a and 1985b; Anderson and Ward, 1997; Shugart and Carey, 1992; Oppenhuis, Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Eijk, Franklin and Oppenhuis, 1996; Marsh, 1998). This will be done by comparing aggregate electoral results across parliamentary, local and European elections in different periods of the electoral cycle, using as the baseline the winners in each previous (or concurrent) parliamentary election (Table 4).

Before proceeding with the analysis three major issues must be clarified. First, how can the dependent variable be measured? The dependent variable is the change in vote percentage for the party (or parties) that control the national government between the prior first-order elections (legislative) and the subsequent (or concurrent) second-

order election (local or European) (a similar strategy as that used by Marsh, 1998; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1985a and 1985b; for a different approach in the US context, see Tufte, 1975).

Second, it is necessary to decide how to define and classify the different parts of the electoral cycle. The notion of electoral cycle is related to the idea that during any national government's existence there are popularity cycles with differential political consequences depending on the time elapsed between the first-order and the second-order elections (Marsh, 1998; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1985a and 1985b; Tufte, 1975; Anderson and Ward, 1997; Eijk, Franklin, Oppenhuis, 1996; Oppenhuis, Eijk, and Franklin, 1996). Some authors use continuous measures for the electoral cycle variable (for example Marsh, 1998). Since there are very few cases, I used a discrete variable with three categories: the "honeymoon" period, i.e., until twelve months after the prior legislative election ; the "midterm" period, i.e., from thirteen to thirty six months after the prior legislative election; the "later term" period, i.e., from thirty seven to forty eight months after the prior legislative election.²²

The third major issue to be solved before moving on to empirical tests relates to the expected political consequences for national governments in second-order elections that take place during different phases of the national electoral cycle, in terms of citizens' electoral behavior. For the "midterm" period there is a large consensus in the literature, with most of the authors considering that governmental parties will tend to lose vote share in second-order elections (Marsh, 1998; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1985a and 1985b; Tufte, 1975; Anderson and Ward, 1997; Eijk, Franklin, Oppenhuis, 1996; Oppenhuis, Eijk, and Franklin, 1996). In terms of the honeymoon period (sometimes concurrent elections), some authors defend that national governments will receive greater or near identical support in second-order elections as they did in prior first-order ones (Marsh, 1998; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1985a and 1985b; Tufte, 1975; Shugart and Carey, 1992). Others defend that since second-order elections that take place during the honeymoon period have hardly any consequences for national governments, voters will tend to cast "sincere votes" (Eijk, Franklin, Oppenhuis, 1996; Oppenhuis, Eijk, and Franklin, 1996). Therefore, larger parties in government and

²² Remind that in Portugal normal national government terms are four years (forty eight months), except if for any (special) reason the president calls for early elections.

opposition will tend to lose vote share to smaller parties in multiparty systems. Finally, the later term period is for some authors a period of a certain recovery in national government popularity, and so parties controlling national cabinets will tend to lose less votes than in midterm elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1985a and 1985b). However, others defend that since second-order elections tend to better fulfill their function as markers of public opinion support for government the closer they fall to the next first-order election (later term), voters will tend to cast more “protest votes” in those periods (Eijk, Franklin, Oppenhuis, 1996; Oppenhuis, Eijk, and Franklin, 1996). Therefore, according to these authors, parties in control of government will also tend to lose votes in second-order elections if they take place in the later term of the national cycle.

Table 4: Electoral Cycles in Democratic Portugal, 1976-2001: change in national government vote support in second order elections, and popularity trends

	Change in vote percentages of the party(ies) controlling national government: second order elections compared with the prior (or concurrent) legislative election			National government popularity (in the month of the second-order election) Scale 0-67	Trends in national government popularity: Excluding honeymoon periods	
	Honeymoon	Midterm	Later term		Popularity trend 1	Popularity trend 2
1976: L		-1.7		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1979: L	2.1					
1982: L		-5.7		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1985: L	4.2					
1987: EP	-12.8					
June 1989: EP		-17.5		28.7	-5.3	-14.3
Dec. 1989: L		-15.7		28.7	-1.3	-15.5
1993: L		-16.9		29.0	-1.98	-10.4
1994: EP		-16.2		31.0	1.48	-8.86
1997: L		-3.6		33.3	-2.05	-13.4
1999: EP			-0.6	32.7	-0.2	-10.4
2001: L		-7.7		22.3	-5.2	-18.6

Sources: in terms of electoral returns, the data was elaborated by the author from official electoral results available at www.stape.pt; www.cne.pt. The data referring to government popularity was elaborated by the authors from the monthly polls carried out by *Euroexpansão*, a commercial polling unit, between 1986 and 2001, and published by *Expresso*, a weekly Portuguese newspaper.

Notes:

n.a. = not available.

L = Local elections.

EP = European Parliament elections.

Honeymoon – see definition in the paper text.

Midterm – see definition in the paper text.

Later term – see definition in the paper text.

***National government popularity*: see definition in the paper text.**

Popularity trend 1: see definition in the paper text.

Popularity trend 2: see definitions in the paper text.

Setting aside the honeymoon periods, we can see that the party (or parties) controlling national government always loss electoral support (in terms of share of the vote) from the first-order elections to the subsequent second-order ones (Table 4). From the late eighties through the mid nineties these losses have always been very high, greater than 15 percentage points. Midterm losses are always higher than later term losses, as expected. However, since there is only one case for second-order elections in the later term, it is not possible to derive any conclusions from this data. The same is true for the honeymoon period, where there are only three cases, so here too it is not possible to derive any conclusions. From the few cases there are in the honeymoon period, a kind of “bandwagon effect” seems to be in place for 1979 and 1985, but in the other election (1987) the “sincere vote effect” seems to be in place.

Does the decline in a government’s popularity correlate with the decline in vote share in the second-order elections? Both in midterm and later term elections governments always lost popularity (“trend 1” and “trend 2”) (Table 4).²³ However, when the government’s lost vote share in second-order contests was correlated with the decline in popularity over time (“trend 1” and “trend 2”), correlations (Pearson r) were very near to zero and never significant in statistical terms. From these data we might conclude that decreases in popularity do not seem to explain a government’s performance in second-order elections—a counterintuitive conclusion to say the least!

²³ Note that I only have survey data on governments’ popularity from 1986 to 2001 (see Sources in Table 5). *Popularity trend 1* represents the difference between the average national government’s popularity in the six months before the second order election, and their average popularity in the period 12 to 7 months before the second order election. *Popularity trend 2* represents the difference between the average national government’s popularity in the six months before the second order election, and their popularity in the first six months after the prior first order election, with the election month included.

But is it possible to say that there is no link between national governments' popularity and their losses in second-order elections? Instead of using decreases in the governments' popularity over time a static measure was used following Tufte's (1975) approach-- national government's level of popularity in the month of the second-order election (see notes in Table 4).²⁴ As we might suspect with so few cases to analyze, the correlation between this measure and electoral performance is not statistically significant, but its value is now much more relevant and in the expected direction (0.268). Plus, if I exclude the 2001 outlier, the correlation is 0.894 and statistically significant ($p = 0.016$). This finding gives empirically support in the Portuguese case to what seems to be a widely accepted conclusion in the literature about second-order (Europe) and midterm elections (US), i.e., that a national government's popularity does explain changes in support from first-order to second-order elections; namely the higher the government's popularity during the month of the second-order elections, the lower their losses in those elections.

But losses in national governments' support in second-order elections are also dependent on national economic conditions. For example, the greater the annual growth in inflation (-0.253) or unemployment (-0.239), the greater the losses; the greater the annual growth in GDP (0.263) or household final consumption expenditure (0.400), the lower the losses.²⁵ All these data clearly indicate that the outcomes in second-order elections are, at least partially, affected by national factors, even though they are local or European ones.

²⁴ National government popularity is an index calculated from the responses to a question on government's performance evaluation, calculated according to the following formula: (% of responses "very good" and "good" * 2) + (% of responses "more or less" * 1) + (% of responses "bad" or "very bad" * 0) / 3. For each period of the electoral cycle (honeymoon, midterm and later term) I present the loss (or gain) in vote percentage in the second order election of the winner in the prior legislative election (first order), i.e., vote percentage in the second order election minus vote in the first order election.

²⁵ None of these correlations are statistically significant, but here again I remind the reader that I have only a few cases. Available economic indicators for midterm and later term periods go only from 1989 through 1997--five cases. Economic data is from the UN World Development Indicators, cd-rom.

7. Conclusions

This article has argued that a comparison of first and second-order elections in one country over time presents a number of methodological advantages, insofar as it serves as something of a test case for the literature. Since Portugal uses very similar electoral systems in the different types of elections (except for the presidential ones), we can compare voting behavior trends while controlling for other institutional, cultural, social and political factors that can make cross-national comparisons somewhat more difficult. While the choice of case is perhaps not ideal due to the limited number of data points in certain analyses, and also to the general scarcity of voter survey data, it nevertheless provides an interesting test for many of the theoretical claims made in the literature on second-order elections.

Plus, the conclusions about the relations in electoral behaviour across different types of elections (first-order versus second-order) are further strengthened by the fact that comparisons were extended to a larger number of second-order elections than usually occurs in studies about this subject. The same can be said about the long run perspective used. Let us turn to the substantive findings.

First, as expected from theories of second-order elections, small and medium-sized parties perform better in second-order elections than in first-order ones. However, the latter finding is only partially true, since differences in electoral systems (average district magnitude) and resources can explain why small parties perform better in European than in national legislative elections, but not in local ones. Medium-sized parties perform better in all second-order elections, but the differences are larger when we compare local and legislative elections. Nevertheless, the differences between parties' performance in different types of elections are not very impressive. I believe that these relatively minor differences are at least partly due to the institutional contingencies discussed above (average district magnitude differences and resource requirements). In any case I believe that these issues are worth a closer look with comparative case designs and with more case studies.

Portugal emerges as a very interesting case because the changes in party system format that occurred in first-order elections were mirrored in second-order elections. Since 1987, there is a majoritarian drive in legislative elections, such that the party system exhibits a clear trend towards greater bipolarization. Despite a slight time lag,

the same trend is present in second-order contests. One outcome of this trend towards bipolarization in both first-order and second-order elections is that it erodes the specificities of second-order elections (better performance of small and medium-sized parties). Is this type of phenomenon also taking place in other multiparty democracies? I believe that this is a line of inquiry worthy of further study.

Other findings about electoral change in first-order and second-order elections resulted rather mixed. At the aggregate level, electoral volatility (TV or BV) was almost always greater in first-order than in second-order elections, contrary to our expectations. However, individual level data revealed that voters are more prone to cross the left-right boundary in second-order elections than in first-order ones, as expected, although this is sometimes due to differential turnout. Those who participate in both elections are often voters whose vote choices are less determined by cleavages and ideology. The article concludes that the differences found between the aggregate and the individual level are probably due to the limitations in the aggregate measures of volatility. However, since we do not have many surveys to test these questions, that it is a line of inquiry worthy of pursuing further, with other comparative and case studies.

In Portugal, as elsewhere, second-order elections are used by voters to express their discontent with national governments. Furthermore, losses in national governments' electoral support between first and second-order elections are dependent not only on a governments' popularity, but also on national economic conditions. However, the causal model at work here is complex and the number of cases in Portuguese democratic history are very limited. So, more work on economic and retrospective voting in second-order elections is needed, be it with case studies or comparative.

Portuguese electoral data revealed that the influence of national factors in second-order elections is not only evident in the short term but also in the long term—i.e. in terms of changes in the party system. Also, the increasing similarity between first and second-order elections, namely in terms of aggregate party system developments, means that the second-order elections model is losing some of its heuristic value in Portugal.

However, this does not mean that local and supranational factors are not also important in local and EP elections, respectively, but that national factors have an important, persistent and structural impact on second-order elections.

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