

Ministerial Recruitment In The Portuguese Democracy (1974-2005)

Pedro Tavares De Almeida (Universidade Nova de Lisboa) y
António Costa Pinto (Universidade de Lisboa).

Regime discontinuities involving the replacement of the governing elite as well as the reshaping of fundamental institutions and values are a distinctive feature of the political history of modern Portugal (Almeida and Pinto, 2003). In this paper we characterise the socio-professional composition and pattern of recruitment of the Portuguese ministerial elite in contemporary democracy, with some hypotheses to explain the increasingly strong presence of «independents» in the Portuguese cabinets.

The nature of Portuguese democracy

Portugal's transition to democracy began with a military coup on 25 April 1974. Occurring at the height of the Cold War, when there were no great international pro-democracy pressures, the rupture provoked by the Portuguese 'captains' led to an accentuated crisis of the state that was driven simultaneously by the movement towards democracy and decolonisation.

The most complex phase of the democratisation process took place between 1974 and 1976, the year in which the new constitution was approved, and in which the first legislative and presidential elections took place. The divisions that arose as a result of decolonisation – the initial cause of the conflict between the captains who led the coup and the conservative generals – stressed the political role played by the Armed Forces Movement (Movimento das Forças Armadas – MFA), whilst clearing a space for the political and social mobilisation that produced the crisis of the state: 'at that moment, Portugal experienced the most intense and sweeping mobilisations of all the new democracies' (Schmitter, 1999: 360). As one analyst of the Portuguese transition has noted, the crisis of the state was a 'window of opportunity' for the radicalisation of the social movement: one that should not be ignored in any analysis of this period (Muñoz, 1997). It was in this context of powerful social and political mobilisation (with nationalisations, agrarian reform of the large southern latifundia, the occupation of urban buildings, and a strong military presence in political life and in the regulation of the social conflict) that the moderate political parties, in alliance with members of the military, defeated the radical left and their military allies.

Alone out of the four principal founding parties of Portuguese democracy, the Communist Party (Partido Comunista Português – PCP) had a long history of clandestine organisation within the country. The Socialist Party (Partido Socialista – PS), which was founded by Mário Soares in West Germany in 1973, was heir to the republican and socialist elements of the electoral opposition to Salazarism (Canas, 2005). The remaining two centre-right parties were only formed in 1974: the Popular Democratic Party (Partido Popular Democrático – PPD) – which was renamed the Social Democratic Party (Partido Social Democrata – PSD) in October 1976 – was founded by the 'liberal wing' that emerged during the last phase of the authoritarian regime; and the Social Democratic Centre (Centro Democrático e Social – CDS), a Christian liberal conservative party that was on the verge of being proscribed in 1975, and which later moved closer to the populist-liberal right as the Popular Party (Partido Popular – PP) (Bruneau, 1997; Frain, 1998). In an atmosphere of political purges and measures introduced to punish the authoritarian regime's ruling elite, the parties of the right did not incorporate leaders from the previous regime, and their political programmes shifted considerably to the centre and the left (Pinto, 2001).

The MFA's decision to respect the electoral calendar was the key element in the establishment of the democratic regime's founding legitimacy. Elections to the Constituent Assembly on 25 April 1975 gave the moderate parties powerful leverage. The PS won with a working majority, followed by the PSD; the PCP, however, only obtained 12 per cent of the vote. The d'Hondt system of proportional representation was adopted as a means to ensure that the diverse range of political forces contesting Portugal's first democratic elections obtained representation without also leading to an excessive fragmentation of the party system.

The 1976 constitution created a semi-presidential regime. Directly elected by universal suffrage, the president had the authority to dismiss parliament if the government did not have a stable majority, giving him the power to 'engineer a majority himself'. He also retained a pocket veto with which he could prevent any law from passing.

The first years of democratic consolidation were dominated by unstable coalitions and three presidential cabinets. With the 1982 revision of the constitution, the PS, PSD and CDS managed to secure governmental control over the armed forces, enhancing the role of parliament and removing unelected military officers from important positions of power. By 1985, all candidates contesting the presidential elections were civilians, with Mário Soares, then leader of the PS, becoming the first democratically elected civilian

president. Whilst some analysts have argued that the president retained significant powers after 1982 (and the dismissal of Santana Lopes's centre-right government in December 2004, whilst it had a secure parliamentary majority, strongly supports this thesis), others have sustained that Portugal has become closer and closer to the model of a parliamentary democracy (Sartori, 1994).

Curiously enough, the emergence of a centrist party sponsored by President Ramalho Eanes during his second mandate, and which had been spectacularly (and ephemerally) successful at the 1985 election – winning 18.4 per cent of the vote – did not lead to a major fragmentation of the party system. Rather, it produced a shift towards a bipolar competition between the PS and the PSD, at the expense of both the PCP and the right-wing CDS. From 1987 until 2002, the previous dominant pattern of coalition governments was replaced by a series of single-party majority PSD (1987-1995) and PS (1995 to 2002) governments, 'with a remarkable increase in cabinet durability not preceded by any change in electoral law' (Bruneau et al., 2001: 28).

Democratic consolidation, accession to the European Union (EU), economic development, and a new impulse for social change coincided during the 1980s in a 'virtuous circle' that linked the economy and politics (Maravall, 1997: 82). Accession to the EU was a policy shared by all parliamentary parties, with the exception of the PCP, and represented a new framework for both democratic consolidation and economic development. It was in this context that a second revision of the constitution in 1989 removed constitutional obstacles preventing the privatisation of the substantial nationalised sector.

Portugal has a long tradition of political and administrative centralisation. If we exclude the grant of autonomy to the island regions of Madeira and the Azores through the creation of regional parliaments and governments in accordance with the 1976 constitution, the new regime may be characterised as being a 'high unitarian democracy' (Diamandouros and Gunther, 2001: 20). Although regional identities are very feeble in metropolitan Portugal, proposals for the creation of semi-autonomous regions were included in the manifestos of the political parties as a decentralising device that would lead to administrative modernisation and rationalisation, and as a means of creating a greater opening towards civil society; however, it was a policy that neither governments of the left nor of the right were to implement. Accession to the EU in 1986 was to introduce a supplementary external spill-over, particularly with the influx of Regional Development Funds. However, the persistence of complaints against regionalisation from a part of the electorate led to the rejection of the proposal in a poorly attended referendum in 1998. Portugal thus continues to be one of the most centralised of all Europe's democracies. This is naturally reflected in the way in which public administration has developed. With democratisation, state expenditure has risen substantially, largely as a result of its increased participation in the provision of health and education services and in the extension of social security – those services having been neglected by the previous regime (Maravall, 1997: 54-57). The growth of the central civil service has outstripped that of the local administration to the extent that around 83 per cent of all public employees during the democratic period are employed by central government (Barreto, 1996).

The social profile of ministers

Geographical origins

Unlike in other southern European countries, regional identities in continental Portugal are weak and diffuse. Consequently, in terms of geographical analysis, the contrast between urban and rural areas, and the specific role played by the largest cities is a more appropriate indicator than regional differentiation.

Taking information on places of birth into account, the most important observed trend throughout the period being studied is the over-representation of Lisbon. Almost one-third of all ministers were born in or around the capital, while the city's population only accounted for approximately 10 per cent of the entire population. Most likely, *metropolitanism* ('the tendency for one or a few large cities to dominate the politics of a nation' (Frey, 1965: 131) will prove to be more accentuated when data on the previous place of residence of ministers becomes available. This seems to suggest high levels of centralisation in elite recruitment.

Educational credentials

Data on the educational background of Portuguese ministers show a striking and persistent feature over time: almost all of them had either a university degree or had graduated in the military academies. In other words, ministers without higher education training were atypical.

The highest proportion of those with university education may be found during the authoritarian period (100 per cent). This did not alter with democratisation (see Table 1). Even within the left-wing parties, academic credentials have been an indispensable prerequisite for access to the most senior political positions. When we consider that in 1981 only 1.6 per cent of the Portuguese population had a university degree (Barreto, 1996), it is undeniable that educational qualifications have acted as a powerful social mechanism restricting the range of elite recruitment. We should note that from 1945 to the mid-1980s, the

overall proportion of university educated ministers in the older Western European democracies was 77 per cent (Blondel and Thiébaud, 1991: 21).

Table 1: Educational level of ministers (%)*

	Civilian	non-	Civilian		Total	
	university educated	Military graduate	non-university educated	Military graduate	%	N
New State	0.0	0.0	73.8	26.2	100	103
Democracy	1.5	0.0	87.2	11.3	100	204
1974-76	1.8	0.0	63.6	34.5	100	55
1976-99	1.2	0.0	95.1	3.7	100	163

* Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding;
 N = Total number of ministers.

Table 1a: University degree of civilian ministers (%)*

	Incomplete	Graduate	Post-graduate	Doctorate	Total	
					%	N
New State	0.0	52.6	3.9	43.4	100	76
Democracy	0.0	66.3	11.8	21.9	100	178
1974-76	0.0	71.4	5.7	22.8	100	35
1976-99	0.0	71.0	9.7	19.3	100	155

* Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding
 N = Number of all university educated civilian ministers

The proportion of civilian ministers with a doctorate is also impressive, and reached its peak during the authoritarian regime (43.4 per cent). As we shall see below, this accounts for the importance of university professors as a reservoir for ministerial recruitment.

Table 1b: Fields of higher education of ministers (%)*

Field of education	New State	Democracy	
		1974-76	1976-99
Agronomy and Veterinary	1.0	3.7	4.4
Economics and Management	7.8	7.4	20.6
Engineering	17.5	16.7	29.3
Humanities	1.9	5.5	4.4
Law	47.6	29.6	35.6
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	6.8	1.8	2.5
Medicine	3.9	0.0	1.2
Military	26.2	35.2	3.7
Social Science	2.9	0.0	5.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.6
N	103	54	160

* Multiple coding has been applied as some ministers held degrees in two or more academic fields. Percentages do not, therefore, total 100.
 N = Number of ministers who completed their higher education studies.

Amongst civilian ministers, those holding degrees in Law maintained the highest share throughout the entire period. Engineering emerged as the second largest discipline in the authoritarian period, and since 1976 it has seriously challenged the traditional hegemony of legal training.

In the democratic regime there has been a clear diversification of expertise amongst members of cabinet. Accompanying the rise in engineering graduates there has also been a rapid expansion in the number of ministers with degrees in Economics and in Management. This picture is congruent with the demographic trends in the professions: between 1970 and 1990, there was a steady growth in the number of engineers, and a remarkable increase in the number of economists (Carapinha and Rodrigues, 2000: 132). Another distinctive trait of ministers' educational profile during democracy has been the increased "cosmopolitanism", with those taking their undergraduate and post-graduate degrees at foreign universities

accounting for almost one-quarter of all ministers appointed since 1974. During the transition to democracy, the majority of those who had studied or taken degrees abroad had gone to France. Since 1976, however, the United Kingdom comes clearly ahead, and the predominant post-graduate qualifications taken there are in the academic fields of Economics and Engineering.

Occupational profile

Recruited from a highly educated middle-class, the majority of Portuguese ministers have also been drawn from a narrow professional range. Prior to the consolidation of contemporary democracy, the two most important occupational categories were the military and university professors. On the whole, the contingent of public employees has predominated, a characteristic that in part reflects the central role that the state has performed in the structuring of the occupational market, where it is the major employer in some professions. The ministerial elite's dependence on state employment (as is the case for other political office-holders) may be considered to be an indicator of weak elite autonomy (Etzione-Halevy, 1993).

The strong presence of the armed forces at the ministerial level is principally a result of their direct involvement in regime transitions and crises. During the democratic transition of the mid-1970s more than one-third (35 per cent) of the ministers were military officials, but from 1976 on, this proportion declined dramatically, representing only 3.8 per cent (see Table 2). Since 1980, even the Defence portfolio has been occupied exclusively by civilians.

The importance of university professors (in particular, professors of law) is not in itself surprising, but it was during Salazar's regime that this numerically small body was to become the single major source of ministerial recruitment, and one that, at 33 per cent (see Table 10), was significantly higher than the European average. Even when we limit our comparison to authoritarian regimes alone – and with Franco's Spain in particular – the difference is noticeable. Enjoying great social prestige, they were transformed into a 'super-elite', sharing the leading positions within the state apparatus, government and the public economic sector between themselves. By the 1960s, for example, professors of law enjoyed greater prestige than leading industrialists (Makler, 1968). Another significant group of professors represented within Cabinet from the 1950s were those coming from the Faculty of Engineering who were associated with economic development and infrastructural modernisation projects, and who occupied the ministries of Economics, Commerce and Public Works.

Table 2: Ministers' occupational background (%)*

Occupational categories	New State	Democracy	
		1974-76	1976-99
Military	26.2	35.2	3.8
Army	17.5	20.4	3.2
Navy	7.8	11.1	0.6
Air Force	0.9	3.7	0.0
Judge or Public Prosecutor	4.8	3.7	1.9
Diplomat	2.9	0.0	2.5
Senior civil servant	6.8	5.5	13.2
Middle civil servant	0.0	0.0	0.6
Officer of state corporatist agencies	7.8	0.0	0.0
Officer of Central Bank	0.0	0.0	4.4
Officer of international organisation	0.0	1.8	1.3
University professor	33.0	22.2	32.1
Teacher	0.0	0.0	0.0
Employee	0.0	1.8	0.6
Writer or Journalist	0.0	1.8	2.5
Lawyer	6.8	18.5	19.5
Medical doctor	2.9	0.0	1.3
Engineer	7.7	11.1	15.1
Manager	0.9	9.3	24.5
Businessman, industrialist or banker	2.9	0.0	1.9
Landowner or farmer	1.9	0.0	0.0
Full-time politician	0.0	1.8	3.1
Other	0.0	0.0	1.3
N	103	54	159

* Occupation immediately before first ministerial appointment. Multiple coding has been applied.

N = Number of known cases.

Table 2a: Occupational distribution of ministers according to employment status (%)

Employment status	New State	Democracy	
		1974-76	1976-99
Public	86.4	60.4	54.7
Private	5.8	33.9	25.2
Mixed	7.8	5.7	20.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	103	53	159

N = Number of known cases.

University professors were to remain the largest single category of ministers in contemporary Portuguese democracy (32.1 per cent), albeit with two significant differences from the authoritarian regime: (i) not all of them came from the highest ranks of the university profession, and (ii) law professors ceased to dominate. Since 1976 engineers and, especially, economists have been favoured in the ministerial selection processes, provoking a relative decline in the number of law professors. This tendency was stimulated by the economic crises and the 1978 and 1982 International Monetary Fund negotiations, and later by the demands of European integration.

The consolidation of democracy is associated with some important changes in the ministerial elite's occupational background, particularly with the expansion of the liberal professions and the emergence of a large proportion of professional managers (24.5 per cent). Lawyers, given their protected position within civil society, constituted an important reserve of pro-democratic counter-elites during the authoritarian regime, and their return to the political elite was a natural consequence of the transition to democracy. In the democratic regime, they became one of the dominant professional groups within both the parliamentary and party elites. Their lesser importance within the ministerial elite, particularly when compared with the professional managers, can perhaps be attributed to the increasingly technical nature of ministerial functions since the 1980s, and the consequent need to recruit trained specialists.

If we look at the occupational distribution of ministers, we see that public employment is a structural characteristic of the Portuguese ministerial elite, peaking at 86.4 per cent during the New State (see Table 2a). This trait, however, should not be confused with the presence of those with a purely bureaucratic background. Even under Salazarism it was the military and the university professors who constituted the majority of ministerial office-holders, with very few of the members of the bureaucratic elite actually obtaining ministerial rank. Furthermore, a significant proportion of senior public servants in the democratic regime (13.2 per cent) includes managers of the state's regional development commissions – almost all of them being engineers and economists.

Table 3: Ministers' occupational background by cabinet, 1999-2005*

	14th	Cabinet15th		Cabinet16th		Cabinet17th		Cabinet
	PS		PSD-PP		PSD-PP		PS	
Lawyer	3	10.30%	3	13.00%	7	35.00%	1	5.90%
Economist/manager	5	17.20%	4	17.40%	4	20.00%	2	11.80%
Officer of international organisation	0	0.00%	3	13.00%	0	0.00%	1	5.90%
Civil servant	2	6.90%	2	8.70%	2	10.00%	2	11.80%
Full-time politician	11	37.90%	5	21.70%	2	10.00%	2	11.80%
University professor	9	31.00%	7	30.40%	3	20.00%	9	52.90%
Other	1	3.40%	2	8.70%	3	15.00%	1	5.90%
N	29		23		20		17	

* Multiple coding used

14th Cabinet (led by António Guterres) = October 1999- 2002

15th Cabinet (led by José M. Durão Barroso) = April 2002-2004

16th Cabinet (led by P. Santana Lopes) = July 2004-2005

17th Cabinet (led by José Sócrates) = since March 2005.

N = Total number of ministers

The left-right cleavage – which in the democratic period has been represented by the two main parties of government, the PS and the PSD – has not been translated into substantive differences with respect to the occupational background of their respective ministers.

Gender

The demands for women's political and civil rights were only met with the transition to democracy, and the question of the lack of women in the parties' leaderships, within parliament, and within the government only entered the political debate during the 1980s. With Portugal having one of the largest rates of female employment in Western Europe since the 1960s (Barreto, 2000: 119), the contrast of this with the presence of women within the legislature and the executive is particularly noticeable.

Whilst the number of women parliamentarians increased dramatically – from 5 per cent in 1976 to 21 per cent in 2005 – this increase has been driven more by the parties of the left than by those of the right, with the PCP having the highest percentage of women deputies since 1976, followed 15 years later by the PS, which has established an internal system that is designed specifically to increase the number of women candidates. The Portuguese case also seems to demonstrate that the closed party list system of proportional representation increases women's chances of entering parliament (Siaroff, 2000). During the 1990s, 12 per cent of Portuguese deputies were female – a figure that is only slightly below the EU average (Viegas and Faria, 2001) – although the indicators showed that 'civic and political demobilisation' of women remained high (Cabral et al., 1993). A moderate proposal advanced by the PS, which sought to establish gender quotas for candidates to parliament, was rejected in 1999 as a result of opposition from both the parties of the right and the PCP, thereby demonstrating elite resistance towards a culture of 'parity' through positive action.

The number of women (before 1999 there were seven) in the Portuguese ministerial elite is very small, accounting for less than 4 per cent of the total number of ministers between 1974 and 1999. The first woman to become a member of the executive was Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, an independent who was appointed Minister for Social Affairs in July 1974, and who later led one of the governments appointed by President Eanes in 1978.

The more significant increase in the number of female secretaries of state improved the overall average to 8 per cent at the beginning of the 1990s if we consider all members of government and not only ministers. The rate of increase has been irregular, however, as no political party has a specific policy aimed at increasing women's participation in government. It only really became noticeable when in 1995 the PS, after 10 years of centre-right governments, nominated a government in which 15.8 per cent of the members were women – although this proportion was to decrease following the first government re-shuffle (Viegas and Faria, 2001: 27). The creation of a Ministry for Equality in 1999 was also a PS initiative, albeit a short-lived one, as the ministry was soon dissolved.

If the left-right division may be a reasonable explanation for the variation in the number of women in Parliament, the same cannot be said for the ministerial elite. Moreover, and like it happens in other European democracies, 'specialist recruitment patterns' appear to have been the most important ones for enabling women to enter government (Davis, 1997).

Political pathways to the cabinet: the main career patterns

Following the 1974 coup, a large group of military officers, lacking any real political experience, controlled important ministerial portfolios in the provisional governments. The first civilian ministers were well-known members of the democratic and communist opposition, and most of them had served long political apprenticeships in the regime's prisons or in forced exile. Some of the leaders of the right-wing parties had also been actively involved in politics, particularly during the final years of the regime, when they were members of the 'reformist' groups that had initially supported Marcelo Caetano.

Table 4: Political offices held by ministers (%)*

Previous political office	New State	Democracy	
		1974-76	1976-99
None	28.1	65.4	23.3
Mayor or local councillor	7.7	0.0	4.9
Prefect (<i>governador civil</i>)	8.7	0.0	2.4
Colonial governor	6.8	0.0	0.0
Parliamentarian	30.1	7.3	51.5
Member of Corporatist Chamber (1933-1974)	25.2	5.4	3.7
Secretary or under-secretary of State	34.0	12.7	46.0
Member of <i>cabinets ministériels</i>	4.8	3.6	9.8
Director-General	--	1.8	5.5
Minister	11.6**	0.0	9.2***
Member of the "Council of the Revolution"--	--	1.8	0.0
N	103	55	163

* Before their first appointment to cabinet. Multiple coding has been applied therefore percentages do not total 100.

** Individuals who had been ministers in the previous regime – the Military Dictatorship (1926-1933).

*** Includes 14 individuals who were ministers during the transition to democracy (1974-76), and one who was a minister in the last New State cabinet.

N = Total number of ministers.

Table 4a: Ministers' previous parliamentary experience (%)*

Times elected to parliament	New State	Democracy	
		74-76	76-99
Once	61.3	100.0	38.0
Twice	22.6	0.0	40.5
Three times	9.7	0.0	10.7
More than three times	6.4	0.0	10.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	31	4**	84

* Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

** Sá Carneiro and Magalhães Mota were elected deputies to the New State's 1969 National Assembly as members of a small reformist and pro-democratic parliamentary group (the *Liberal Wing*); Jorge Campinos and Lopes Cardoso were elected deputies in the first democratic elections, held on 25 April 1975.

N = Number of all ministers who were elected to parliament prior to first ministerial appointment.

Since 1976, a parliamentary career has once more become the single most important path to ministerial office. Another important type of political experience, which often goes together with a representative background, is having held a junior governmental position, such as secretary or under-secretary of state. Whilst still corresponding to a minority of cases, membership of a *cabinet ministériel* (i.e. the staff who directly assists a minister) has been a promising springboard for those aspiring to ministerial office (see Table 4). Almost one-half of all ministers have had partisan leadership experience, either at the national or regional level. Local political careers are still not favoured routes to reach ministerial office, which is in contrast with the situation in most Western European democracies, where the average proportion of ministers who have been involved in local and regional politics is around 50 per cent (Thiébaud, 1991: 34). With democratisation, prefects have become increasingly irrelevant as they have progressively been dominated by local branches of the national governing party. Also, between 1974 and 1999 only a few ministers (4.9 per cent) had previously served as local councillors (but none of them as mayors). Nevertheless, the importance of elected local officials is increasing in the selection of the national political elite. The reinforcement of local autonomy and the increased financial muscle of many of the larger local authorities that has come about as a consequence of EU membership, is changing the image of local government. The symbolic prestige of the mayor's office in both Lisbon and Oporto has been enhanced during the late 1990s, mainly as a result of the 1996 election of the former mayor of Lisbon, Jorge Sampaio, as President of the Republic. A growing number of parliamentary deputies also have been elected after having served an 'apprenticeship' in local government (Magone, 2000; Freire, 2001). In the most recent governments, the number of ministers with experience in local politics has risen (see Table 5).

It should be stressed that the number of ministers with a parliamentary background, accounting for approximately 51 per cent, is much lower than the Western European average of around 75 per cent (Winter, 1991: 48). With respect to the length of parliamentary service, we note that a large proportion of those who were deputies (38 per cent) were elected only once, some of them having never actually served in Parliament due to their receiving promotion to the Cabinet within a matter of weeks after their election. Even the assumption that 'prime ministers and deputy prime ministers are more likely to be parliamentarians' (Winter, 1991: 62), must be treated with caution in Portugal's case: Cavaco Silva, PSD prime minister for ten years and leader of the first party to win an absolute parliamentary majority, had no previous parliamentary experience.

Two factors may have contributed to the reduced number of ministers with parliamentary experience in the democratic period. On one hand, the party leaders who have been appointed to the position of prime minister have always enjoyed a great deal of autonomy in the selection of their ministers (Silva, 2002). On the other, the parliamentary groups have tended to occupy a subordinate position within the party's internal power structures. Additionally, it is significant that once the parties obtain power, it is normal for them to effect a 'governmentalisation' of their leaderships through the control exercised over them by ministers who also hold key positions within the party leaderships (Lobo, 2002).

Table 5: Political offices held by ministers, by cabinet (1999-2005)

Previous political office	14th PS	Cabinet15th PSD-PP	Cabinet16th PSD-PP	Cabinet17th PS	Cabinet			
None	5	17.20%	4	17.40%	6	30.00%	6	35.30%
Mayor or councillor	4	13.80%	4	17.40%	3	15.00%	3	7.60%
Parliamentarian	23	79.30%	15	65.20%	11	55.00%	9	52.90%
Secretary or under-secretary of state	16	55.20%	10	43.50%	4	20.00%	7	41.20%
Member of <i>cabinets ministériels</i>	5	17.20%	5	21.70%	6	30.00%	--	--
Director-General	1	3.40%	9	39.10%	4	20.00%	5	29.40%
Minister	9	31.00%	7	30.40%	7	35.00%	7	41.2
N	29		23		20		17	

* Multiple coding has been applied therefore percentages do not total 100.

N = Total number of ministers

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15th Cabinet (led by José M. Durão Barroso) = April 2002-2004

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17th Cabinet (led by José Sócrates) = since March 2005.

The relative devaluation of a parliamentary background in ministerial careers is undoubtedly related to the elevated number of technocrats and “independents” having little political experience, who have served in the governments of the democratic period – particularly in the more technical portfolios. In fact, almost one-quarter (23.3 per cent) of ministers have not held any political office prior to their appointment (35 per cent in the present cabinet). During the early period of Portugal’s democratic consolidation, the semi-presidential nature of the political system (which was later reformed) favoured the formation of presidential ministries peopled by independent personalities. However, the recruitment of the latter has also been promoted by the parties, with a view to increasing their political legitimacy and the technical efficiency of their governments. This is, in part, symptomatic of a structural fragility of parties in democratic Portugal: despite their protagonism on the political stage, parties’ roots are shallow, and their penetration in civil society is weak.

Concluding remarks

Overwhelmingly recruited from amongst a group of highly educated middle class and middle-aged men, Portuguese ministers form an ‘elitist’ group that is drawn from a very narrow professional spectrum. This image, moreover, remains constant across party lines. Up until the consolidation of contemporary democracy, the two single most important occupational categories were military officers and university professors. The consolidation of democracy during the 1970s is associated with one important change in the occupational background of the ministerial elite: the re-emergence of liberal professionals, and the appearance of a large number of managers.

As far as the political *cursus honorum* of Portuguese ministers is concerned, two characteristics are worth while noting: the persistence of the relative unimportance of local politics; and, as a secular trend, the declining role of parliamentary experience. In Portugal, unlike in many of the other Western European countries, there is a long tradition of separation between politics at the national and the local levels. Consequently, local politics has never been a promising route to ministerial office. Prior to the authoritarian period, parliamentary experience was regarded as an essential prerequisite for a ministerial career – at least for civilians. The contemporary democratic regime, however, has not clearly resumed this tradition of the liberal past, while it has favoured the enhancement of more technical credentials and technocratic backgrounds in ministerial recruitment. As the comparison with other European democracies reveals, this tendency does not arise only from the growing complexity and technical character of policy-making; among other factors, it is also connected with the weak institutionalisation of parties and the extensive autonomy that prime ministers enjoy when selecting ministers.

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