

6 Patterns of Ministerial Recruitment, Partisanship and Financial Crisis

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Introduction

It is not by chance that Schattschneider's (1942: 1) famous statement 'modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties' became a truism.¹ Without these political institutions, voters would lack meaningful choices and have difficulty controlling *ex ante* and *ex post* decision-makers. The party government model emphasizes parties' relevance in the government process and composition (Katz 1986; Blondel and Cotta 1996). One of the most established assumptions of this model is the condition that government positions flow from support within the party. Consequently, cabinet appointments are the most important personnel decisions in parliamentary systems (Neto and Strøm 2006), particularly as these officials are expected to be recruited and held accountable by parties (Müller 2000; Mair 2008).

Nonetheless, in the newer, crisis-prone democracies in Southern and Eastern Europe, cabinets have been plagued by a politicized recruitment system that puts party loyalty above professional skills and overall state exploitation by parties (Jalali and Silva 2014). In such contexts, the selection of non-partisan ministers has gained traction (Hanley 2018), emerging as a strategy to increase the legitimacy of governments characterized by state exploitation by political parties, avoiding manifestations of mistrust.

Despite the impressive research on ministerial recruitment, many questions remain unanswered. First, patterns of recruitment geared towards appointing non-partisan civil society personalities may be particularly acute in critical contexts where unpopular policies occur, such as political and financial crises (Centeno and Silva 1998). Nevertheless, consistent evidence is lacking in Southern Europe and new democracies – despite notable exceptions (Pinto and Almeida 2018; Cotta 2018).

Moreover, research has claimed that patterns of ministerial recruitment suggest the declining appeal of the party government model (Verzichelli and Cotta 2018), with a minister's experience outside the realm of politics emerging as a relevant credential to the detriment of partisan credentials. However, this begs the question of whether parties – that are office and policy seeking – are willing to relinquish operational control of government policies

and ministerial positions. If anything, the opposite can also be posited, as empirical endeavours tend to suggest that as financial crises and EU-related constraints may have been used by parties to advance their own agendas (see Moury and Standing 2017). Moreover, if the increase in non-partisans does not automatically preclude the party government model (Cotta 2018: 272), it becomes necessary to evaluate if and how parties control executive appointments in specific situations, particularly at critical junctures.

This chapter aims to assess partisan ministerial recruitment in Portugal, considering an extreme case – the 2011–2013 eurozone crisis. Using data on ministerial partisanship from 1999 to 2022, it seeks to characterize patterns of ministerial selection in Portugal before, during and after the crisis. Two trends make the Portuguese case particularly relevant from a comparative perspective. First, given its weak structural position and the unsustainability of public finances, Portugal was one of the eurozone countries hardest hit by the crisis. It had a highly fragile structural position, unsustainable public finances (a high fiscal deficit of 3% of gross domestic product – GDP) and a deficit that reached over 11% of GDP in 2010 – with the government reaching out for financial support in April–May 2011. Second, despite the party system’s resilience, even in the face of the crisis (De Giorgi and Santana Pereira 2020), there is a remarkable trend of partisan distrust, well above the EU average. Finally, Portugal has been pinpointed as a case with a particularly high and consistent presence of non-partisans in executive power (Pinto and Almeida 2018).

Against this backdrop, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how Portuguese parties have maintained their grip on government positions, given the unusually large number of non-partisans. On the one hand, recruitment from senior ranks in the party remained important, while non-partisanship did not increase during the economic crisis. Furthermore, as the chapter documents, while there is an overall trend towards recruiting ministers with no party affiliation, who gravitate towards a particular party’s orbit, this trend was not evident during the crisis. Nevertheless, non-partisan ministers played an important role during the Portuguese crisis, given the selection of non-partisan ministers for critical portfolios.

The third section of the chapter delves into the specific nature of non-partisanship, which explores how non-partisan ministers are often informally attached to parties. The institutional context is briefly described in the next section, setting the stage for understanding the Portuguese case. Then, data on ministerial recruitment in Portugal is presented, capturing the presence of partisans before, during and after the crisis. Finally, the chapter examines the role of non-partisan ministers during the crisis.

The Institutional Context

The 1976 Portuguese Constitution established a semi-presidential (Duverger 1980) or president-parliamentary regime (Shugart and Carey 1992), holding

the executive accountable to parliament and the president, as this latter position is directly elected and had important powers (Neto and Lobo 2011). After 1982, presidential powers were redefined and reduced (falling into the Shugart and Carey's president-parliamentary category), but the president remained influential within the political system.

The Portuguese political system has often been portrayed as a pervasive example of party government (Jalali 2007; Lobo 2000; Morlino 1995) with a stable governing elite. Despite their weak social linkages, parties managed to consolidate their position in the country's political landscape, which is reflected in the rapid structuration of the Portuguese party system, presenting a generally stable pattern of inter-party interaction. Government competition is essentially a competition between the Partido Social Democrata (PSD – Social Democratic Party) and the Partido Socialista (PS – Socialist Party), which have led all constitutional governments since democratization (excluding the short-lived and unsuccessful attempt to establish presidential governments in 1978–1979). Since 1987, the party system has become more majoritarian, as these parties monopolized government, with both achieving single-party parliamentary majorities, as well as large pluralities, despite a proportional representation electoral system (for an overview of the Portuguese parties and party system, see Jalali 2007). While there are signs of a decline in this 'majoritarian change' – particularly considering the decline in votes for the two largest parties, mostly visible since the eurozone crises, it has not been translated into executive instability (Pinto 2020).

The institutional framework is also characterized by a strong prime minister (King 1994; Helms 2004), which is reinforced by the cabinet formation process. Government formation rules are formulated in negative terms (Bergman 1993) since there is no compulsory inaugural vote in the parliament before a new government assumes power (Leston-Bandeira and Fernandes 2015). The process of forming a government – which tends to be shorter in negative parliamentarism – may also significantly affect positions within the cabinet and their party. The choice of ministers and junior ministers is a prerogative of the prime minister, a process in which they enjoy great autonomy from the president of the republic and the parties that support the government (Lobo 2005; Almeida and Pinto 2009). A by-product of this institutional arrangement is the establishment of a relationship of subordination between the prime minister and other cabinet members from the very outset. Along with other institutional and political arrangements, Portugal has been considered a clear example of a situation in which the status of the prime minister's position towards other political players is enhanced (Silveira and Silva 2022).

The Portuguese literature (Almeida and Pinto 2003; Almeida and Pinto 2009, 2018) has emphasized the low politicization of ministers, considering factors such as the 'prime ministerialization', the type and system of government, the Europeanization and the strategy towards openness to civil society due to the low territorial and social penetration of Portuguese parties.

These institutional features are important for understanding ministerial recruitment. Portugal has been depicted as one of the European countries in which non-partisan ministers are more significant in the executive ranks (Cotta 2018).

Economic downturns have been argued to act as a catalyst for a change in the profile of ministers, with experience from outside the realm of politics – to the detriment of partisan linkages – emerging as particularly suitable for efficient policy design and implementation (Pastorella 2016; Yong and Hazell 2011), and this is important given the need to ensure external credibility (Domínguez 1997: 27; Centeno and Silva 1998: 78; Bertsoy and Caramani 2020). More recently, the critical juncture argument has also permeated debates about the ruling elite (Camerlo and Rodríguez-Teruel 2020). Non-partisan ministers are expected to be immune to short-term electoral pressures, with different career goals and a greater capacity to attract support from external actors, which is crucial when dealing with difficult and unpopular reforms (Alexiadou and Gunaydin 2019; Caramani 2020; Wratil and Pastorella 2018).

Portugal was one of the EU countries most severely affected by the economic and financial crisis. Within this scenario, the Portuguese government reached out for assistance in the form of strengthened cooperation between the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission (EC) and the European Central Bank (ECB), dubbed the troika in 2011. The following section describes and interprets ministerial recruitment in Portugal before, during and after the crisis.

Ministerial Recruitment in Portugal

One of the most analysed and debated dimensions of the ruling elite in Portugal refers to the linkages between ministers and political parties. Despite popular distrust, political parties remain pivotal in representative democracies. It is through parties that citizens delegate authority to their political agents, and it is through parties that the latter are made accountable. This pivotal role derives to a large extent from their *de facto* (and in many cases *de jure*) monopoly on political representation. As such, it is largely through parties that individual political actors can run for office, and parties act as a key gatekeeper to public office. The pivotal role of parties is also clearly perceived in the prominence of ministerial portfolios controlled by the party in government, as shown in Table 6.1.

A distinction can be made between ministers who, at the time of their appointment, were party militants (rank and file) and those who held management positions in the national bodies of the party. As Figure 6.1 shows, all governments tend to recruit an important share of national leaders for ministerial positions.

However, over the past three decades that government structure has become more markedly hierarchical, with powerful ‘core executives’ (Helms

Table 6.1 Government composition and ministerial recruitment (1999–2022)

<i>Government/time in office</i>	<i>Type of majority</i>	<i>Parties in government</i>	<i>Ministers*</i>	<i>Partisan ministers</i>
Guterres II 25/10/1999– 06/04/2002	Single-party minority government	PS	36	23 (63.9%)
Barroso 06/04/2002– 17/07/2004	Minimal winning coalition	PSD, CDS-PP	23	18 (78.3%)
Santana Lopes 17/07/2004– 12/03/2005	Minimal winning coalition	PSD, CDS-PP	22	14 (63.6%)
Sócrates I 12/03/2005– 26/10/2009	Single-party majority government	PS	24	10 (41.7%)
Sócrates II 26/10/2009– 20/06/2011	Single-party minority government	PS	17	8 (47.06%)
Passos Coelho I 20/06/2011– 30/10/2015	Minimal winning coalition	PSD, CDS-PP	22	17 (77.3%)
Passos Coelho II 30/10/2015– 26/11/2015	Multi-party minority government	PSD, CDS-PP	17	14 (82.4%)
Costa I 26/11/2015– 26/10/2019	Single-party minority government	PS	28	16 (57.1%)
Costa II 26/10/2019– 30/03/2022	Single-party minority government	PS	22	11 (50.0%)
Costa III 30/03/2022–	Single-party majority government	PS	18	11 (61.1%)
Overall			229	87 (38.0%)

Source: compiled by the authors.

Note: * number of ministers and partisanship includes both inaugural governments and changes in government.

2012; Smith 1994) – a pattern also consistently identified in the Portuguese case (Silveira and Silva 2022) – presenting a clear predominance, within the cabinet, of key ministries (internal administration, finance, economy). The number of core ministries across governments may vary, as reported in Table 6.2. It is noteworthy that these ministerial positions tend to be occupied by partisan ministers who are of particular importance to the party leadership.

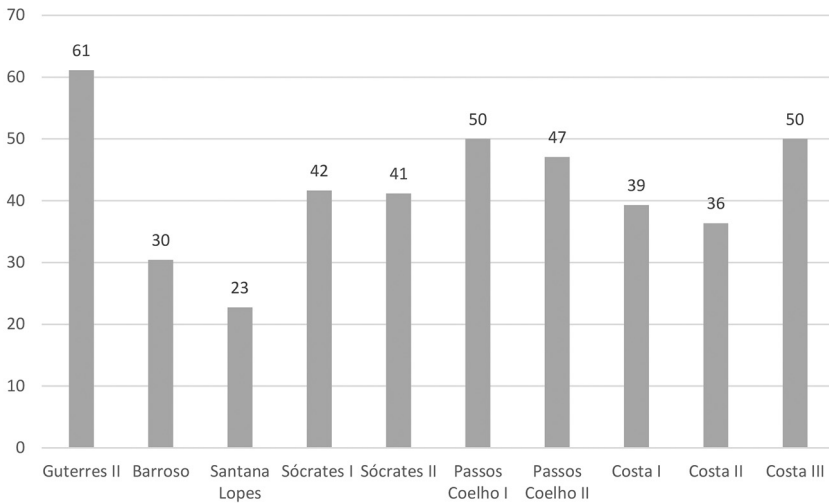


Figure 6.1 Partisan ministers emerging from the party leadership (%)
Source: compiled by the authors.

As depicted, ministries devoted to government coordination and which ‘act as final arbiters within the executive of conflicts between different elements of the government machine’ (Dunleavy and Rhodes 1990: 4) tend to be partisan. During the entire period, more than 72% of core ministries were occupied by a partisan minister, with the vast majority of ministers (80.9%) emerging from the party leadership. The highest ranking ministries are particularly permeated by partisan ministers in coalition governments, acknowledging the involvement of coalition partners in the core executive decision-making process.

Despite the narrative on the age of party decay (Manin 1997; Tormey 2015), with the expected decline in the influence of partisan elites within the political system (Mair 2013), party leaderships retain full *de facto* control of ministerial recruitment while giving the impression of greater inclusion by opening the process to the party rank-and-file.

Looser Grip on Cabinet Appointments?

While the partisan grip on cabinet appointments remains remarkably strong, there are also important pockets of non-partisanship. Existing research has highlighted the significant presence of ministers with no party affiliation or little political experience in the various executives (Lobo 2000, 2005; Almeida and Pinto 2009). Portugal has come under particular scrutiny, considering the weight and importance of ministers without a parliamentary career or party leadership positions, and this is often in sharp divergence from the

Table 6.2 Core ministries and ministerial recruitment (1999–2022)

	<i>Core offices*</i>	<i>Partisan ministers (%)</i>	<i>Partisan ministers emerging from the party leadership</i>
Guterres II 25/10/1999–06/04/2002	13	69.2 (9)	100 (9)
Barroso 06/04/2002–17/07/2004	6	100 (6)	83.3 (5)
Santana Lopes 17/07/2004–12/03/2005	7	85.7(6)	66.7 (4)
Sócrates I 12/03/2005–26/10/2009	9	44.4 (4)	100 (4)
Sócrates II 26/10/2009–20/06/2011	5	80 (4)	100 (4)
Passos Coelho I 20/06/2011–30/10/2015	11	63.6 (7)	57.1 (4)
Passos Coelho II 30/10/2015–26/11/2015	5	100 (5)	60 (3)
Costa I 26/11/2015–26/10/2019	8	50 (4)	75 (3)
Costa II 26/10/2019–30/03/2022	5	60 (3)	66.7 (2)
Costa III 30/03/2022–	4	75 (3)	100 (3)
Overall	69	x= 72.8 (51)	x= 80.9 (44)

Source: compiled by the authors.

Note: core offices were equated as those of the office of the presidency of the Council of Ministers, and the ministers of internal administration, of foreign affairs and of finance.

prevailing patterns in most European democracies (Pinto 2020). This section aims to identify the specific contexts in which parties lose their grip on cabinet appointments. Two important dimensions need to be mentioned here: government composition and critical junctures.

The first dimension pertains to the effects of types of majorities on the selection of ministers. As shown in Table 6.1, there are clear differences in the non-partisan quota between cabinet types. The proportion of non-partisan ministers seems to increase in single-party majority governments (an average of 49% of non-partisan ministers) and single-party minority governments (45.5%).

The percentage of non-partisan ministers is lower in coalition governments (an average of 25.5%). Theoretically, non-partisan ministers (also frequently dubbed independent ministers) tend to be recruited to solve disputes among the parties forming or supporting the cabinet (Verzichelli and Cotta 2018: 90). As office- and policy-seeking actors, political parties in coalitions are expected to claim the portfolios associated with their preferred policies, as a strategy to control those policy areas while also ‘reinforcing the loyalty of

certain extra-parliamentary clientele groups on which they depend for the maintenance of their parliamentary standing' (Browne and Feste 1975: 533). In the same vein, party families have been estimated to emerge as relevant predictors of particular portfolio allocations (Budge and Keman 1990: 95), a pattern that seems to hold true in the Portuguese case.

Coalition governments – which tend to be partisan – were established between two parties sharing conservative and liberal economic positions. According to Budge and Keman (1990), such party families would be more likely to be allocated the internal administration, foreign affairs, defence, finance, economy and justice ministries. As Table 6.3 shows, these were consistently the positions allocated to non-partisan ministers.

As Bäck et al. (2011: 446) posited, faced with a 'comprehensive policy agreement', 'parties are less likely to try to get their most highly valued posts'. Portuguese coalition governments were supported by coalition agreements that implied a 'permanent collaboration',² with 'interaction' and 'mobilisation of structures and officials from both parties', including 'the development of efforts' for the revision of the Constitution and 'the exchange of information and mutual consultation on what regarding electoral acts'. The trade-off between party satisfaction with portfolio allocation and the

Table 6.3 Non-partisan ministers in coalition governments

<i>Government</i>	<i>Type of portfolio</i>	<i>Non-partisan minister</i>
Barroso	Social security and labour	Bagão Félix
	Health	Luis Filipe Pereira
	Foreign affairs	António Martins da Cruz
	Agriculture	Sevinate Pinto*
	Public works, transport and housing	Carmona Rodrigues
Lopes	Foreign affairs	António Monteiro
	Internal administration	Daniel Sanches*
	Health	Luis Filipe Pereira
	Public works, transport and housing	António Mexia
	Education	Maria do Carmo Seabra*
	Social Security and Family	Fernando Negrão*
	Culture	Maria João Bustorff*
Finance	Bagão Félix	
Coelho I	Education	Nuno Crato*
	Finances	Vitor Gaspar*
	Health	Paulo Macedo*
	Economy and labour	Álvaro Santos Pereira*
	Internal administration	Anabela Rodrigues*
Coelho II	Education	Margarida Mano*
	Health	Fernando Leal da Costa
	Administrative modernization	Rui Medeiros*

Source: compiled by the authors.

Note: * non-partisan ministers with no prior linkages to political parties.

drafting of comprehensive coalition agreements as management mechanisms is evident in the appointment of non-partisan ministers. As Table 6.3 shows, coalition partners could leave their preferred portfolios so long as non-partisan ministers were involved and formal cooperation ensured.

While theoretical and empirical accounts of portfolio distribution help us to understand the recruitment of non-partisan ministers in coalition governments, data on the Portuguese case report an important underlying reduction in the presence of non-partisanship within cabinet at times of crises. This is the second important dimension relates to the declining importance of non-partisan ministers at critical junctures – particularly political and economic crises.

Critical Non-partisan Ministers

The eurozone crisis seems to have triggered the transformation of executives (Pastorella 2016). The increasing complexity of policymaking in troubling times tends to require policymakers with an enhanced competence profile, as Blondel (1991) has noted in the past. However, the recruitment of non-partisan ministers can hardly be taken as an isolated phenomenon. Rather, the complexity of contemporary democratic governance, particularly within the context of the multi-level governance system of the European Union, fuelled the trend towards an increasing role of non-partisan ministers in dealing with such complexity.

While comparative endeavours highlighted the effect of the economic crisis in the recruitment of civil society personalities as a strategy to avoid further manifestations of partisan mistrust, Portugal emerged as a deviant case. Data on the longitudinal evolution of the proportion of non-partisan ministers (Table 6.4) indicate a statistically significant relationship between the partisan nature of ministers and the critical political and economic variables (chi-square with two degrees of freedom = 6.38, $p = 0.041$).

During the period after the crisis, the share of portfolios secured by non-partisan ministers increased – albeit at a lower rate compared to the first decade of the new millennium. Harsh economic and political conditions (as a compound and litigious government coalition) did not increase the recruitment of non-partisan members. On the contrary, during this critical period,

Table 6.4 Partisanship before, during and after the eurozone crisis (1999–2022)

	<i>Non-partisan ministers</i>	<i>Partisan ministers</i>	<i>Ministers within parties' orbit*</i>
Before (1999–2011)	49 (40.1)	73 (59.8)	31 (63.3)
During (2011–2015)	8 (20.5)	31 (79.5)	1 (12.5)
After (2015–2022)	30 (44.1)	38 (55.9)	22 (73.3)

Source: compiled by the authors.

Note: * percentage of reported non-partisan ministers.

the cohort of non-partisan ministers was only marginal, reaching the lowest level of 7% of ministerial positions in 2014.

This does not imply the reduced importance of such ministers. On the contrary, the eurozone crisis emerged as an important context for selecting non-partisan ministers to occupy critical portfolios. In 2011, the PSD led by Pedro Passos Coelho obtained 40.3% of the vote and sought support from its usual partner, the Centro Democrático Social-Partido Popular (CDS-PP – Social Democratic Centre-Popular Party), to form a government enjoying majority support in parliament. This coalition government envisaged the bailout agreement as an opportunity to implement major harsh and highly contested reforms to recover Portugal's credibility among international institutions and markets (Gaspar and Avillez 2014; Moury and Standing 2017; Pereira 2014). Following an electoral pledge, the government began the term with only 11 ministers and 35 junior ministers, becoming one of the smallest executives in the history of democratic Portugal. Four ministers were members of the PSD, three were members of the CDS and four were non-partisan. All non-partisan members, who had no previous connections to either of the coalition partners, were responsible for implementing the most important structural reforms.

The most impressive example of the critical role of non-partisan ministers in this context lies with the minister of finance. One of the most striking features of Passos Coelho's government was the elevation of Vítor Gaspar, the finance minister, to the second highest ranking in the government hierarchy. Excluding presidential cabinets in the 1970s, it was the first time a non-partisan minister had occupied such a senior position in a Portuguese executive. Moreover, in this case, this also meant that the leader of the junior coalition partner, Paulo Portas, was relegated to third position in the government hierarchy. This choice was perceived as an intention to highlight the finance minister's internal authority and the government's commitment to comply with the memorandum of understanding (MOU). The executive's external credibility was one of the main reasons for appointing Gaspar, as he had been a senior official in international institutions in the economic, monetary and financial areas (the ECB and the EC). He was a renowned economist who knew how European institutions worked and spoke the same language as ECB and EC officials. As the prime minister acknowledged, 'it was important to have someone they could trust on our side' (Aureliano 2015: 196).

While initially at odds with the EC and several EU member states, Portugal emerged as being capable of disrupting the austerity narrative, particularly signalled by the election of Mário Centeno – the first Southern European from a country receiving a bailout – as president of the Eurogroup in 2017. After the 2011–2015 crisis, the prominence of the finance ministry remained high. Given the PS government's (2015–2021) focus on maintaining budgetary consolidation, the ministry was kept in the hands of a non-partisan minister. Overall, while the EU integration budgetary discipline may

have accorded this ministry increased importance, it has conventionally been taken to be a major element in cross-sectoral coordination given, among other things, its role in the annual budget exercise (Silveira 2021; Lobo 2005).

In addition to the finance ministry, the new economy and labour mega-ministry was also crucial in executing the MOU. Containing portfolios that were previously held by other ministries, this ministry was designed with the intention of implementing important structural reforms, such as crucial labour reform (Pereira 2014). The minister was Álvaro Santos Pereira, an economist based in Canada who was well-known for several proposals to reform the Portuguese economy (Pereira 2014). The other two non-partisan ministers held the education and health portfolios: two areas targeted in the MOU as important to achieving the deficit reduction goal, even although it mirrored government's agenda and was less of a 'diktat handed down from international lenders' (Moury and Standing 2017:10). The former was occupied by Nuno Crato, an academic and former president of the Portuguese Mathematics Society, who gained public notoriety through the dissemination of scientific books and regular media appearances to discuss education issues. The latter was occupied by Paulo Macedo, who had little experience in the area but was considered one of the top Portuguese managers in both the private and public sectors. While particularly scrutinized by international creditors, these have always been sensitive areas at the core of the Portuguese welfare state, not least due to the powerful and highly mobilized interest organizations.

Overall, while numbers suggest that non-partisanship was on the wane during the eurozone crisis, these ministers became increasingly important within government, a pattern consistently identified in other European counterparts (Alexiadou and Gunaydin 2019; Kaplan 2017). They allowed governments to signal their pro-market credibility to investors (Kaplan 2017) and were targeted to increase the government's reform credibility. During economic crises, cabinet ministers have to enact policies and adopt reforms that often contradict their electoral promises, the ideological stances of parties and even their convictions. Unlike elected cabinet ministers who fear the electoral costs of policies they introduce, non-partisan ministers have made no election promises and are often appointed to enact their preferred policies for stabilizing the economy, while their professional careers are not subject to electoral approval (Alexiadou and Gunaydin 2019).

Nevertheless, the history of the Portuguese bailout contains two different periods. The first was 2011–2013, when the most demanding measures were taken, while at the international level the eurozone was facing fragmentation risks caused by the sovereign debt crisis. This was followed by a progressive easing of the austerity measures and the adoption of actions to prioritize the stimulation of economic growth. This period coincides with improvements to the European context, with the changes in the eurozone institutional architecture and the response of the ECB to the crisis. The opening of a new economic and political cycle coincided with a major government

reorganization, particularly after the coalition crisis in the summer months of mid-2013.

After Gaspar's resignation in July 2013, Passos Coelho recruited Maria Luís Albuquerque (a former junior minister in the Treasury) to take over as finance minister. This appointment was regarded as a sign that the policy of austerity was to continue, particularly by Paulo Portas, whose decision to leave the government provoked a major political crisis that almost resulted in the collapse of the coalition and imperilling any second bailout. This crisis was due mainly to the different views the PSD and the CDS held in respect of the application and political management of the programme.

Under these circumstances, and besides his 'minimalist understanding of presidential powers' (Feijó 2019: 48), the president had to intervene. For several weeks the head of state tried to negotiate a political agreement between the coalition partners and the PS to ensure fulfilment of the MOU. As the parties could not agree, the president had only two options: either call early elections or accept a new version of the coalition government. He decided on the latter, but imposed some requirements, such as the inclusion of the leader of the junior partner in the executive and other conditions intended to ensure political stability (Franco 2020: 200–201; Silva 2018).

The political resolution of this crisis (and the fulfilment of presidential demands) was a turning point in the composition of the cabinet that involved a significant government reorganization and portfolio restructuring that brought an end to the mega-ministries. Paulo Portas became deputy prime minister with responsibility for economic coordination and was put in charge of negotiations with the troika. The junior coalition partner was also allowed to appoint the new minister of economy, Pires de Lima, a businessman who was also a senior member of the CDS-PP and who was very close to Portas (Paris, Marchi and Raimundo 2019).

All partisan ministers included in the inaugural government (from both coalition parties) had a strong political background, considerable parliamentary experience and occupied leading positions within their political parties. This pattern was combined with a handful of non-partisan ministers who were positioned strategically to ensure the advancement of the adjustment programme, both in the face of international creditors and national party agendas (Moury and Standring 2017: 674). After the coalition crisis, executive cohesion and political stability became the main priority for the president and prime minister, particularly considering the good results in restoring external credibility with international lenders during the first half of the mandate. Without jeopardizing external credibility, the 2013 reorganization and resulting cabinet composition remained a compromise between the need to finish the execution of the MOU and the need to restore the executive's political cohesion. The latter was facilitated by strengthening the partisan foundations of the cabinet, with only two non-partisan ministers remaining in office (Paulo Macedo in the health ministry and Nuno Crato in education).

The ministers who left the government as a result of this reorganization were not only those who were subject to heavy public criticism (due to austerity measures and unpopular reforms), but also those with whom the CDS, and with Portas in particular, had a more conflictual relationship (Pires and Martins 2015). However, the finance ministry remained under the control of the PSD (Maria Luís Albuquerque), and Passos Coelho also appointed as minister of the environment his number two in the party, Jorge Moreira da Silva. To replace Paulo Portas at the foreign ministry, the prime minister turned to Rui Machete, who had served as justice minister and deputy prime minister in the ‘centre bloc’ government of 1983–1985. These ministers came to join Marques Guedes (presidency and parliamentary affairs) and Poiares Maduro (deputy prime minister for regional development), who had been appointed to the cabinet a few months earlier. As a result, the number of partisans increased substantially, while the group of non-partisans decreased dramatically.

A final note worth highlighting is that partisanship does not preclude policy expertise. Indeed, a qualitative analysis clearly demonstrates that expertise, political competence, policy alignment with the prime minister’s liberal agenda (which overlapped the policy commitment in respect of the MOU) and personal trust played important roles in the process of ministerial selection. The PSD, for example, appointed specialists such as Miguel Relvas, Paula Teixeira da Cruz and Moreira da Silva, who represent seamless examples of ministers and senior party members who meet all the requirements. In a similar vein, the CDS selected senior party members as ministers, most of whom had expertise within their policy areas and who were loyal to Portas.

Selecting the Best and the Brightest... so Long as They Are within the Party’s Orbit

Data on non-partisan ministers need, however, to be considered cautiously. While non-partisan ministers are broadly equated as individuals without political background and technical expertise (Pinto et al. 2018), there may not be clear boundaries with political parties. Some of the ministers with no party affiliation gravitate towards the orbit of a particular party. Being politically close and having informal connections to the partisan sphere – in most cases with a trajectory of political and governmental collaboration with a certain party – these non-partisan ministers are an important recruitment reserve for the main governmental parties.

As Figure 6.2 shows, purely non-partisan ministers are under-represented within Portuguese governments, as the average of non-partisan ministers politically close to political parties is over 58% over the entire period. The Portuguese case presents a hybrid recruitment strategy that combines the ‘aura’ associated with non-partisan ministers while ensuring a modicum of partisan control of the government. This strategy is particularly acute when

there is partisan alternation in government, which emerges with a lower average of such hybrid recruitment (53%) compared to the selection of such ministers when there is no alternation (62%).

The eurozone crisis (which took place during the 2011–2015 Passos Coelho government) emerged with an abnormal pattern, as this recruitment strategy was not used.

The specific political context of the period 2011–2015 – a coalition government under presidential pressure to maintain political stability – made partisanship a crucial selection criterion, even presenting a pattern of the selection of partisan ministers emerging from party leadership. In this context, it was essential to ensure that politics remained under control while enjoying the benefits of necessary non-partisan appointments, recruiting experts within specific policy domains and who had professional careers outside of politics. The type of government (coalition) and the system of government (semi-presidential) played an important role because they created incentives for the promotion of partisanship. Partisans would facilitate proper internal and external government coordination, political communication and party-society linkage. As they are expected to have different skills, attitudes and mindsets, the choice of partisan ministers is understandable, especially at critical economic and political moments (Bakema 1991: 95).

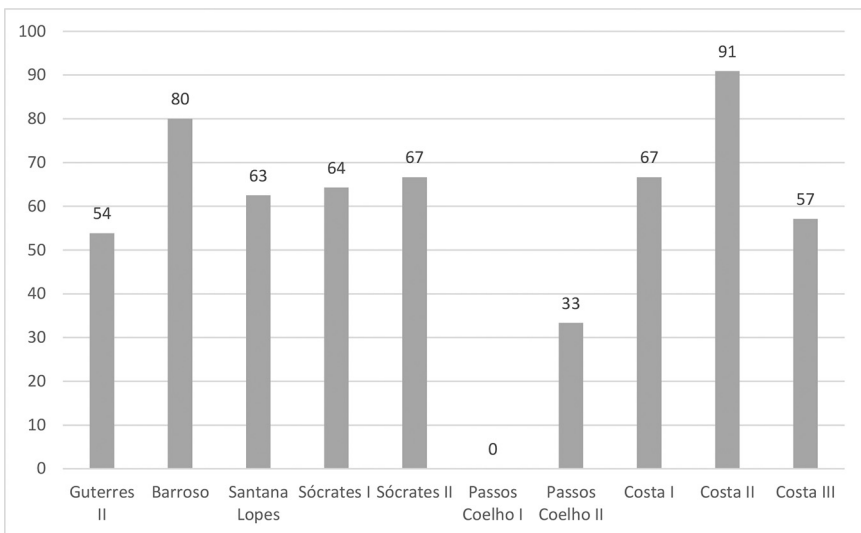


Figure 6.2 Non-partisan ministers politically close to parties (%)

Source: compiled by the authors.

Concluding remarks

The drift of countries towards increasingly restrictive adjustment programmes during the 2011–2013 eurozone crisis triggered the selection of non-partisan ministers. Such patterns of ministerial recruitment were seen as a symptom of the waning of the party government model. This has been equated as the government's strategy to avoid the declining perceptions of legitimacy and trust in parties, particularly when faced with austerity narratives and the need to implement wide-ranging fiscal consolidation measures to reduce public spending.

Against the conventional narrative focused on crisis-prone Southern European countries, partisanship was not the biggest loser of the austerity narrative in Portugal. As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, during periods of economic and political crises, parties in government faced strong incentives to maintain a grip on policy and government positions. To avoid suffering the consequences of a 'government performance deficit' (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000: 13), parties were also faced with powerful incentives to maintain a considerable grip on the selection of ministers. This is visible in three different dimensions.

While partisan credentials are still important, not all party members are alike. First, the pivotal role of parties is clearly visible in the prominence of ministerial portfolios controlled by partisan members. The recruitment of partisan ministers tends to revolve around individuals coming from the national structures of the governing parties. This was most visible during the eurozone crises and the implementation of the MOU. Moreover, these individuals tend to occupy core ministerial positions, demonstrating their importance within parties and governments. To a large extent, this mirrors the trend towards partisan governments.

Second, non-partisanship remains a remarkable feature of Portuguese governments during the 21st century, with the exception of the eurozone crisis period. In this context, Portugal may emerge as an outlier, as the number of non-partisan ministers steadily declined during the adjustment programme. However, the few ministers appointed with no partisan connections were critical actors (in the finance, economy and trade ministries) in fulfilling the government's 'signalling function', as Bermeo (2003: 222) called it. The portfolios allocated to independent ministers during the first half of the government mandate were crucial for ensuring the government's external credibility. Moreover, the bailout was perceived by the ruling party's leadership as a 'window of opportunity' to pass neoliberal reforms that were in line with its agenda (Moury and Standring 2017: 674). Hence, the partisanship requirement was modelled by non-partisan experts (due to the need for external credibility and the constant technical negotiations with troika officials) and political and policy alignment with the prime minister's agenda. Internal government dynamics would further reinforce the partisan composition of the executive, although expertise was never discarded. If anything,

the importance of expertise combined with partisanship demonstrated how the Portuguese case also fits into the theoretical expectation that party leaders tended to look for experts to face crises.

Third, ministers with no party affiliation tend to gravitate towards the orbit of a particular party. This gravitation was, however, avoided as a recruitment strategy during the crisis, further reinforcing the party government's premises. Hence, the abrupt reduction in the number of non-partisan ministers during the last financial crisis needs to be treated cautiously as it did not preclude the salience of a partisan aura.

Notes

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- 2 In 2002, the PSD and the CDS signed a document entitled the 'Democratic convergence towards a legislature government' (Jornal de Negócios 2011).

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