



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

Choosing a minister in Portugal

The factors that determined ministerial selection in
Prime Minister's António Costa first government

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first government in 2015

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Abstract

This dissertation discusses and analyzes the principal-agent theory fundamentals in ministerial selection and the factors that may have influenced António Costa, the Portuguese Prime Minister, in the selection process for his first government, in 2015.

Using a dataset comprised of 40 individuals, from which 17 are the ministers who were selected and 23 are people appointed by the media and political commentators, we analyze which factors had the most influence in the probability of being selected for a ministerial position. The observations were analyzed and discussed, firstly, by their distribution between selected and non-selected group for each variable and, secondly, by the results of four probit regressions.

The results suggest that being a former junior minister increases the probability of being selected as minister, as well as being male and having a higher academic degree, mainly a doctorate degree. Also, political experience in general has a positive impact in the probability of being selected.

Keywords: minister, Prime Minister, selection, government

Resumo

Esta dissertação discute e analisa os fundamentos da teoria do principal-agente na seleção ministerial e os fatores que podem ter influenciado António Costa, o Primeiro-Ministro português, no processo de seleção para o seu primeiro governo, em 2015.

Usando um conjunto de dados composto por 40 indivíduos, dos quais 17 são ministros selecionados e 23 são pessoas nomeadas pela comunicação social e comentadores políticos, analisamos quais os fatores que tiveram mais influência na probabilidade de ser selecionado para um cargo ministerial. As observações foram analisadas e discutidas, em primeiro lugar, pela sua distribuição entre os grupos selecionados e não selecionados para cada variável e, em segundo lugar, pelos resultados de um conjunto de regressões probit.

Os resultados sugerem que ter experiência como Secretário de Estado aumenta a probabilidade de ser selecionado como ministro, assim como ser do sexo masculino e ter um grau académico mais elevado, principalmente um doutoramento. Além disso, a experiência política em geral tem um impacto positivo na probabilidade de ser selecionado.

Palavras-chave: ministro, Primeiro-Ministro, seleção, governo

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Abbreviations

PM – Prime Minister

MP – Member of Parliament

PS – *Partido Socialista*

PSD – *Partido Social Democrata*

CDS-PP – *Centro Democrático Social – Partido Popular*

BE – *Bloco de Esquerda*

PCP – *Partido Comunista Português*

PRD – *Partido Renovador Democrático*

PEV – *Partido Ecologista “Os Verdes”*

EU – European Union

ECB – European Central Bank

IMF – International Monetary Fund

1. Introduction

In a semi-presidential democracy, the executive power is divided between the President and the Prime Minister. However, in the Portuguese case, the Prime Minister's power has grown over time (Costa Pinto & Tavares de Almeida, 2018; Moreira, 1989), which includes the power to select the ministers for her cabinet, who wield this tool with strategic effect (Berlinski et al., 2012). However, there are several factors that can influence or constrain her choices. The selection of ministers plays an important part in the policies that the Prime Minister wants her cabinet to follow.

In October 4th 2015, *Partido Social Democrata* (PSD), Portugal's main centre-right party, in a pre-election coalition with *Centro Democrático Social* (CDS-PP), a conservative right party, won the legislative elections, after governing from 2011 to 2015 under *troika* supervision. However, the coalition won with a minority position. Despite the minority position, Pedro Passos Coelho, the PSD leader, was invited to form a cabinet and was, thereafter, appointed Prime Minister. But, on November 10th, the left parties, with the majority of deputies, and lead by *Partido Socialista* (PS), the main Portuguese centre-left party, filed a motion to reject the PSD/CDS-PP coalition government (Fernandes et al., 2018). This led to the President appointing António Costa, the PS leader, as Prime Minister of a minority government supported by the extreme-left parties, *Bloco de Esquerda* (BE) and *Partido Comunista Português* (PCP). This was the first time in Portugal's democratic history that the governing party was not the one that won the legislative elections.

This study aims to analyze and find out what are the main motives for the Prime Minister to choose a select individual for the position of minister, by

reviewing the literature about the fundamentals of principal-agent theory applied to selection in the political process and the factors that influenced António Costa in selecting the ministers for his cabinet. Therefore, we analyse a data set comprising 40 observations, which includes 17 ministers who were selected in November 2015 and 23 individuals who were not selected, but were appointed by newspapers and political commentators as possible choices for ministers. The data was collected from the government and parliament website, published CVs, newspapers, and media channel's websites.

We began the analysis by examining the distribution of observations for each variable. Following that, we conduct three separate probit regressions, one with only political experience variables, another with personal characteristics ones and the third with all variables. Our findings suggest that previous experience as junior minister, being male and having a higher academic degree, specially a doctorate degree, increases the probability of being selected as minister. We follow this with a regression that aggregates all political experience variables into one aggregate variable. From this, we found strong evidence that having political experience in general increases the probability of being selected.

This work is organized as follows. Chapter 2 reviews existing literature on principal-agent theory applied to ministerial selection, the Portuguese political system and the factors that may influence the Prime Minister in the selection process. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, sample selection and variables used. The results about the distribution of observations in each variable and probit regression are analyzed and discussed in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the study.

2. Literature review

2.1 The principal-agent theory fundamentals in ministerial selection

Ministerial selection is, at its basis, a delegation situation that entails all types of representative democracies (Strøm, 2000a). Lupia & McCubbins (2000) explain us that delegation happens because the principal simply doesn't have the time and omnipresence to do everything himself and, most importantly, because the agent has information that the principal requires to put her agenda in motion. However, the principal, in this case, the Prime Minister, needs to select individuals that will allow that to happen. She may be forced to select some individual trait other than the political preferences of her appointee—for example, talent, experience, or following in the party—and may find that those best able to serve under her do not share her political opinions (Dewan & Hortala-Vallve, 2011).

But one problem arises. The PM needs to obtain information about the candidates, regarding biases and competence, to appoint the right portfolio to the right ministerial candidate, in order for her agenda to be fully implemented. However, like most literature on the subject and empirical experience suggests, it is impossible for the principal to know everything about the candidates' biases, competence and own goals, leading to a hidden information problem. In the principal-agent framework, hidden information consists in the principals not fully knowing the competencies or preferences of their agents or the exact demands of the task at hand (Strøm, 2000a), resulting in an adverse selection problem, one of the types of agency losses, the other being moral hazard. Since

we are addressing selection, which is ex ante to any agreement, we will focus on the former.

The adverse selection problem arises at the cabinet-building stage (Indridason & Kam, 2008). The PM has imperfect information about ministerial candidates, but, despite that, she needs to select individuals who are loyal, competent and politically aligned with her. Since she does not fully know the candidates, this can lead her to systemically choose “bad” ones, resulting in agency loss and her agenda not being fully implemented. However, the literature identifies some major mechanisms that aim to contain agency loss, in this case, adverse selection: contract design and screening and selection mechanisms (Kiewiet & McCubbins 1991). Contract design aims to establish common interests between principal and agents or incentive compatibility, by giving the agent a cut of the principal’s gains (Strøm, 2000b). Well designed contracts enable the agent to pursue and reach some of his personal interests and objectives and, at the same time, implement the principal’s agenda. Screening and selection aim to sort out “right” agents, in this case, candidates, from bad ones. As Müller (2000) explains, the PM relies heavily on parties as screening and selection processes, due to the fact that they allocate several resources for that purpose, a direct consequence of the nature of parliamentarism itself. In short, like Strøm (2000b, p.283) explains, “principals use internal delegation and ex ante screening to select agents who share as many preferences as possible and about whom the principals have the best possible information”.

This information that is brought up to the PM by the screening processes can be of many different natures. Information regarding experience, like government or parliamentary experience can show the PM if a candidate has already shown the necessary competence as minister or if the candidate is politically aligned with her. Personal characteristics, such as a college degree or a former official position in a European institution, are factors that can give the PM a perception

of the level of knowledge and expertise of a candidate about a certain portfolio, which is essential for a good minister performance.

2.2 The Portuguese political system: semi-presidential democracy

Portugal is a third wave semi-presidential democracy (Costa Pinto & Tavares de Almeida, 2018). Semi-presidentialism, according to Duverger (1980), has three defining characteristics: a President elected by direct universal suffrage and with considerable political powers and a Prime Minister and ministers possessing considerable executive and governmental powers and responsible to parliament. In the case of Portugal, the President is directly elected for a mandate of five years and can be re-elected for one more. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President, taking in consideration the election results for the Assembly and the opinion of the parties (article 183 of the Portuguese Constitution). The Prime Minister can be appointed for an unrestricted number of terms, with a full legislature lasting four years. The ministers are appointed by the President on the Prime Minister's proposal, without any major restrictions.

The balance of power between President and Prime Minister has seen major changes since the inception of the semi-presidential regime by the 1976 Portuguese constitution. According to that constitution, the government was accountable to the parliament, but also to the President, who had the power to nominate the Prime Minister, conduct aspects of foreign policy and had a suspensive veto over any laws that the parliament submitted to him.

However, in the following years, constitutional revisions were put into effect, with the objective to curtail presidential power. The 1982 constitution review restricted the presidential power to dismiss the government, with him only able to do that under "exceptional" political circumstances (Araújo, 2003). The

suspensive veto power was abolished, but the power to veto any law was maintained.

This reduction of presidential powers was accompanied by an increase in the PM's power and, consequently, the cabinet (Costa Pinto & Tavares de Almeida, 2018), resulting from the perspective of some authors in a shift from a president-parliamentary system to a premier-presidential regime. In this regime, the President can intervene in the appointment of the government, but the power to dismiss it is very limited (Elgie, 2012). This shift resulted in the presidentialization of the political system, in which the Prime Minister's authority and power is perceived as higher than the President. Although in 1987, after the legislative elections, the Portuguese President Mário Soares (1992) said he was against this regime characterization, the public opinion was different. In 1993, 50.3 percent of those interviewed considered the prime minister to be the most powerful political office (Lobo, 2005).

Some authors argue that European integration also has an impact in the presidentialization process. Barreto (1999) argues that Portugal's entry into the European Community in 1986 has diminished the capacity of the national parliament to hold the government accountable for its decisions, which has undoubtedly helped to increase the government's autonomy.

2.3 The consequences of the presidentialization of the Portuguese political system

The phenomenon of the presidentialization of the political system has consequences in the process of ministerial selection. Given that the government has been given more power with the constitutional revisions and greater independence from the President, consequently, the Prime Minister has more

freedom to choose ministers according to her agenda and more independent not only from the President, but also from the party.

According to Lobo (2005), there is evidence that in matters of government formation, the Portuguese Prime Minister has been able to 'govern past parties' through the use of independent nominees for his cabinet. Centre-right and centre left governments have both included a large number of ministers who had no affiliation with the governing party (PSD or CDS-PP and PS respectively), described by Costa Pinto & Tavares de Almeida (2018) as "technocrats". These are individuals with expertise in certain fields and no political or legislative background. The main objective of the selection of technocrats is to bolster the effectiveness of the cabinet (Bäck et al., 2009) and for the prime minister to show that he is aware of public opinion.

In conjunction with technical competence as criteria for the selection of ministerial candidates, it is evident that personal trust and loyalty became as important as party membership in the selection of ministers (Costa Pinto & Tavares de Almeida, 2018). However, partisanship does not seem to matter in terms of durability in the government (Seixas & Costa, 2021).

A prime example of the growing power of the Prime Minister is Cavaco Silva's government. During his tenure as PM, starting in 1987, and also as PSD leader, his real power was even higher than the party's statutes suggested, but also contingent on the electoral results of the PSD (Lobo, 2005). Cavaco Silva (2002, p.103) explains that he '*had total freedom from the party to choose the members of government, for the entirety of my time as Prime Minister*'. This is evidence that, despite statutory obligations of the party, in matters of ministerial selection the Portuguese PM has been able to 'govern past parties' through the use of independent nominees in government (Lobo, 2005). Silva (2008, p.101) comments that Cavaco Silva did not find "*the required political and technical qualities in the leading group of PSD, so he went elsewhere to find them*". In the 1987 and 1991

legislative elections, the importance of the leader, Cavaco Silva, in the results was consensual. Both parliamentary majorities of the PSD are credited, according to Calder (1992), to Cavaco Silva, because of the personalization of the campaign done by the PSD, which was seen as a referendum on the leader's personal abilities.

2.4 Factors

For Harold Wilson, a former British PM, cabinet selection was a multidimensional jig-saw puzzle (Koss & Wilson, 1977). Several aspects need to be taken into account when choosing ministers and appointing them to each portfolio. It's important to note that prime ministers in Portugal have a large degree of autonomy in the selection of ministers, a process that is marked by the parties' weak and subordinated role (Costa Pinto & Tavares de Almeida, 2018). Literature suggests many factors and variables that PMs analyze to make the best decision possible for them, however we will be adopting variables suggested by Kam (2010) and Fleischer & Seyfried (2015).

2.4.1 Political experience

Government experience

Literature and empirical experience show that ministerial candidates who were previously cabinet members are more likely to be successful in acquiring a cabinet position, because it allows direct recollection of previous stances in the decision-making processes in cabinet (Kaiser & Fischer, 2009).

Party experience and parliamentary experience

Literature emphasizes that parliament is like a “school for ministers” (Rose, 1971), because parliamentary experience allows Prime Ministers to screen potential candidates and their policy positions ex ante (Indridason & Kam, 2008). Also, party members have a greater chance of being selected because of parties’ screening and selection mechanisms, that give principals more information about candidates, reducing agency loss. Being on the same party also makes the PM expect that the candidate will be politically aligned with her and also being relatively loyal to her. On the other hand, and opposite to countries like Germany, where almost all cabinet ministers have party affiliation or political experience (Kaiser & Fischer, 2009), Portuguese governments have had a significant number of ministers with no parliamentary or party experience, with 61.8 percent of ministers in that situation between 23 July 1976 and 30 October 2015, which can be a result of the strong distrust of the population on parties and political leaders and the attempt to “*promote ‘openness towards civil society’*” (Costa Pinto & Tavares de Almeida, 2018, p.124).

Junior minister experience

Experience as a junior minister can be a factor in selection for higher ministerial positions. Pinto and Almeida (2008) point out that prior experience as a junior minister is positively associated with appointment to senior ministerial roles, as it can serve as a valuable training ground for future cabinet members. Simultaneously, the position of junior minister – where, in general, the technical talents and skills are more valued – has been an important step in the rise to the rank of cabinet minister.

Experience in a governmental position

According to Blondel (1985), experience in a governmental or public state position, such as minister's chief of staff or advisor, can serve as a valuable asset in the selection process for ministerial positions because it demonstrates an individual's expertise and familiarity with the inner workings of government and public administration. This experience can include knowledge of policy-making processes, understanding of government regulations and procedures, as well as knowledge of the political landscape. Additionally, experience in a governmental or public state position can also indicate an individual's ability to navigate the complex bureaucratic environment and manage large-scale projects.

2.4.2 Personal characteristics

Literature refers personal or socio-demographic characteristics as determinants of ministerial selection. These features refer to formal or informal rules that balance representative terms in cabinets in order to satisfy party fractions as well as the electorate (Dowding & Dumont, 2008). These individual factors may vary across time and country. However, it is reasonable to assume that compliance of ministerial candidates to these requirements enhances the likelihood that they become ministers (Fleischer & Seyfried, 2015).

Age and gender

In the United Kingdom, Members of Parliament who enter the House of Commons later in life have a much lower probability of obtaining a ministerial office at some point in their career (Buck, 1963). In Portugal, according to Almeida & Pinto (2002), the typical Portuguese minister is a male in his midforties, with 44,3% of ministers between 1976 and 1999 in the 40-49 age group. This means that past Prime Ministers valued individuals with several years of

life experience, whatever the type, for his cabinet. Regarding gender, the number of women (seven) in the Portuguese ministerial elite is very small, accounting for less than 4% of the total number of ministers between 1974 and 1999, even with the number of women parliamentarians increasing dramatically – from 5% in 1976 to 17% in 1999. This is due to the still present belief that politics and leadership are primarily male domains. Women are often discouraged from pursuing political careers and may face social stigma or even harassment if they do. Also, they may face structural barriers to political participation, such as lack of access to education or financial resources, restrictive laws and regulations, and discriminatory political party practices.

Academic degree

Academic credentials have been a major and almost obligatory prerequisite for access to the most senior political positions. University degrees have, unquestionably, acted as a powerful social mechanism restricting the range of elite recruitment, with data showing that a minister without a college degree is very uncommon, with 98,8% being graduated (Almeida & Pinto, 2002).

Official position in European/international organization or degree in foreign university

Since 1974, a distinctive trait of ministers' educational profile has been increased cosmopolitanism, with those being graduated at foreign universities accounting for a quarter of all ministers. Also, having served as officials or advisers in international or European organizations (the European Commission, the European Central Bank or the International Monetary Fund) have become more common traits of cabinet members (Costa Pinto & Tavares de Almeida, 2018, p.126).

Place of birth

In Portugal, regional identities are weak and diffuse, so they don't play a significant part in the country's political life. So, the more appropriate geographical analysis is between urban and rural areas and the role played by the largest cities, especially the capital, Lisbon. Between 1974 and 1999, 32,9% of ministers were born in the capital. The proportion of ministers born in the capital city has varied between one-fifth and one-third of all ministers, while the city's population only reached a maximum of about 10 percent of the total population of the country. This seems to suggest the persistence of high levels of centralization in elite recruitment (Almeida & Pinto, 2002).

2.5 The Portuguese political situation in the 2010's

2.5.1 The financial crisis and the PSD/CDS-PP government

After the start of the 2008 financial crisis, the Portuguese centre-left party *Partido Socialista* (PS) government failed to approve the fourth austerity package, in May 2011, which made impossible to meet debt obligations in international markets (Fernandes et al., 2018). The government asked for a bail-out, which was done under an agreement with *troika* (IMF, the ECB and EU) that foresaw severe austerity measures to reduce the budget deficit. The Prime Minister, José Sócrates, resigned after the failed approval of the austerity package, however it still was his government that signed the agreement with the *troika*. *Partido Social Democrata* (PSD), Portugal's main centre-right party, won the 2011 elections and formed a coalition majority government with *Centro Democrático Social* (CDS-PP), a conservative right-wing party, with Pedro Passos Coelho being nominated as Prime Minister.

After three years of austerity, in 2014, Portugal exited the *troika* program, but the legacy of austerity and economic crisis was harsh (Fernandes et al., 2018). Working class incomes remained much lower than pre-crisis levels, unemployment was declining but was still high and people in these situations tended not to perceive any macroeconomic improvements (Magalhães, 2017). This led to the erosion of the PSD/CDS coalition popularity, which was evident with a big defeat in the 2014 European elections.

2.5.2 The 2015 legislative elections

In October 4th 2015, the PSD/CDS-PP pre-election coalition, "*Portugal à Frente*" won the legislative elections, but lost one-fourth of the previous vote percentage, with 38 percent. The PS got no more than 32 percent, with studies appointing that voters perceived the Right has being more economically competent than the PS, mainly due to the bad performance of the last Socialist government (Magalhães, 2016) that lead to the default. However, the lower vote share of the coalition was not sufficient to have a majority position. Despite this, Pedro Passos Coelho was invited to form a cabinet and was, thereafter, appointed Prime Minister, since in the Portuguese system, there is no need to win an investiture vote to take office. Only avoiding rejection of the government program by an absolute majority is needed, according to article 195 of the Portuguese Constitution.

2.5.3 The overthrow of the PSD/CDS-PP government

The initial solution found by parliament was a minority government, since the joint forces of the PSD and CDS-PP were not enough to form a majority. Not needing an investiture vote facilitates this solution, which was repeated many times during Portugal's democratic history on PS governments and one time on

a PSD government. Until 2015, parties short of a majority never faced a negative majority from the opposite ideological bloc (Fernandes et al., 2018). In the PS proposed minority governments, the PSD and CDS-PP never had enough seats to bloc them, since the only alternative was to align themselves with the extreme-left, *Partido Comunista Português* (PCP) and later the *Bloco de Esquerda* (BE), which was implausible. On the other hand, in 1985, when the PSD proposed its minority government, the PS and PCP lacked the seats to overthrow the cabinet, due to the short-lived *Partido Renovador Democrático* (PRD), a large third party at the time.

The other alternative would have been a repetition of the PSD/PS coalition of the 1980s, known as the “Central Bloc”. This oversized joint force seemed to make sense in terms of policy proximity, mainly regarding NATO, the Euro and European Union, but could be electorally damaging in the long run for the Socialists, because it meant foregoing any office gains, a troublesome situation for a mainly office-seeking party (Fernandes et al., 2018). The PCP, and later, the BE, have always been “outsider” parties until that moment, because of their opposition to NATO and euro-skepticism (Cunha, 2008).

But, this time, a new solution was possible. The distribution of seats that resulted from the elections gave the Left a majority in parliament, that could reject the PSD/CDS-PP proposed government program. This was the ideal situation for the PS, that could avoid the option of no office gains (allowing a minority PSD/CDS-PP government), and the option with potential long-term electoral costs (“Central Bloc” coalition). Therefore, the PS could secure office through an understanding with the extreme left-parties (Fernandes et al., 2018), which was only plausible because of a renewal in the PS elites, who had no memory of the conflicts of the 1970s with the extreme-left (Freire, 2017).

And so, on November 10th, 2015, the left parties, with the majority of deputies, and lead by the PS, filed a motion to reject the PSD/CDS-PP coalition

government. This led to the President appointing António Costa, the PS leader, as Prime Minister of a minority government supported by the Left. This was the first time in Portugal's democratic history that the governing party was not the one that won the legislative elections.

2.5.4 Contract parliamentarism: the “geringonça”

Bale & Bergman (2006, p. 422) explain that “contract parliamentarism” consists in a minority government whose *“relationships with [its] ‘support’ parties are so institutionalised that they come close to being majority governments”*. Therefore, is not a cabinet coalition, but a PS minority cabinet with the institutionalised support of the BE and PCP. This solution was dubbed by Paulo Portas, the CDS-PP President, as “geringonça”.

These relationships have an impact in the government formation process because policies and, consequently, ministers, need to reflect the preferences of multiple actors (Fernandes et al., 2018). To better control the dangers of delegation, the three parties signed coalition agreements, an *ex-ante* mechanism. These agreements regulate policy, procedural rules, and the allocation of office benefits. A special feature of these agreements is that the PS signed three bilateral agreements with the PCP [and *Partido Ecologista “Os Verdes”* (PEV), PCP's satellite party] and the BE, and although their content overlapped significantly, it was not a unified multilateral agreement, like other similar situations in European countries.

3. Research model, assumptions and hypotheses

A new data set comprising 40 observations was collected. It includes the 17 ministers who were effectively selected in November 2015 and 23 individuals who were not selected but were appointed by newspapers and political commentators as possible choices for ministers. The data was collected from the government and parliament website, published CVs, newspapers, and media channel's websites.

For the analysis, the probit model was the one chosen. As a type of generalized linear model, is commonly used in government selection situations because it is well-suited for modelling binary outcome variables, such as whether or not an individual is selected for a government program or job. According to Wooldridge (2002), the probit model estimates the probability that a binary outcome will occur as a function of a set of predictor variables. One of the key advantages is that it can account for unobserved heterogeneity in the population. This means that it can consider the fact that individuals may have different thresholds for selection, and that these thresholds may be related to observable characteristics such as education or experience. As Greene (2012) explains, this feature is a considerable advantage over other models that do not account for unobserved heterogeneity.

The main goal of this analysis is to identify which factors, that were explained in Chapter 2, influenced the choices of António Costa, the Prime Minister, regarding his ministers for the government that was sworn in in November 2015.

The previous literature analysis allows us to expect, to a certain degree, the variables' behaviour and their possible results.

Political experience, whether it is as minister, Member of Parliament, junior minister or in other governmental positions, is expected to positively influence the probability of an individual being selected, because they have previous

knowledge of the inner workings of the government and the Portuguese political background, allowing them to perform more effectively (Blondel, 1985; Kaiser & Fischer, 2009; Pinto & De Almeida, 2008).

Party affiliation is also expected to have a positive impact, because of the party's screening processes that give the Prime Minister more information about the candidates (Indridason & Kam, 2008), as previously explained.

Regarding personal characteristics, we can expect that being male and aged between forty and fifty years will positively impact selection (Almeida & Pinto, 2002), as explained in Chapter 2.

Also, having a higher academic degree is likely to increase the probability of being selected, due to the expertise and knowledge a degree provides, which expectedly improves ministerial performance. Empirical data supports this, as 98,8% of ministers between 1976 and 1999 are graduated (Almeida & Pinto, 2002).

Individuals with a foreign academic degree or an official position in a European or international organization are also more likely to be selected (Costa Pinto & Tavares de Almeida, 2018).

Finally, being born in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon is expected to increase selection probability, as one third of ministers from 1976 to 1999 are born in this region (de Almeida & Pinto, 2002). Table 1 shows the chosen independent variables and the expected results for each of them.

The model is defined by the following linear function, where S_i is defined as the probability of individual i being selected as minister:

$$S_i = \Phi(\beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Min} + \beta_2\text{Parl} + \beta_3\text{Sec} + \beta_4\text{Part} + \beta_5\text{Cargo} + \beta_6\text{Age} + \beta_7\text{Gend} + \beta_8\text{Academ} + \beta_9\text{EuInt} + \beta_{10}\text{Foreign} + \beta_{11}d_2 + \beta_{12}d_3 + \beta_{13}d_4 + \beta_{14}d_5 + \beta_{15}d_6)$$

Where:

- Φ is the standard normal cumulative distribution function;
- $d_2, d_3, d_4, d_5, d_6, d_7$ are the dummy variables representing the categories of place of birth, with the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon as the reference place.

The independent variables and their expected results are the following:

Variables		Expected results
Experience as minister	Min	Positively influence
Experience as MP	Parl	Positively influence
Experience as junior minister	Sec	Positively influence
Party affiliation	Part	Positively influence
Experience in governmental position	Cargo	Positively influence
Age	Age	Age between forty and fifty years
Gender	Gend	Being male
Academic degree	Academ	Higher degree will positively influence
Previous official position in European/international organization	Euint	Positively influence
Foreign academic degree	Foreign	Positively influence
Place of birth	d2-d6	Being born in the M. A. of Lisbon

Table 1 – Independent variables and expected results

Regarding the chosen independent variables, some assumptions need to be made:

- Previous ministerial experience: only ministerial experience in the national government will be accounted. Therefore, the position of President of the Autonomous Region (A. R.) of Azores and President of the A. R. of Madeira will be accounted as previous governmental position, such as the case of Carlos César, PS President and former President of the A. R. of Azores;
- Past parliamentary experience: members of parliament who were elected for the first time in October 2015 will not be accounted, since they lack any meaningful experience in the position;
- Previous governmental position: positions in the Public Ministry will not be accounted, due to the separation of powers. Only positions nominated by the government and other state positions will be accounted;
- Age: the age of the individuals in the analysis is the one at the end of the year of 2015, so month and day of birth is ignored;

- Academic degree: post-doctorate degrees and postgraduate studies are not part of the analysis;
- Place of birth: divided by NUTS II in continental Portugal, with the Autonomous Regions of Azores and Madeira counting as one, as well as foreign countries. Also, Alentejo and Algarve are accounted as one region, because of the low number of individuals born in these regions.

4. Analysis and discussion

4.1 Descriptive analysis

The dataset comprises of 40 observations, with their distribution shown in Table 2.

	Selected	Not selected	Total
Experience as minister	4	4	8
%	24%	17%	20%
Experience as MP	7	10	17
%	41%	43%	43%
Experience as junior minister	8	4	12
%	47%	17%	30%
Party affiliation	11	15	26
%	65%	65%	65%
Experience in governmental position	12	12	24
%	71%	52%	60%
Age (average)	54,0	54,2	54,1
<40	2	2	4
%	12%	9%	10%
50-60	11	14	25
%	65%	61%	63%
>60	4	7	11
%	24%	30%	28%
Gender (male percentage)	13	13	26
%	76%	57%	65%
Academic degree			
High school	0	1	1
%	0%	4%	3%
Bachelor degree	5	13	18
%	29%	57%	45%
Master's degree	3	2	5
%	18%	9%	13%
Doctorate degree	9	7	16
%	53%	30%	40%
Previous official position in European/international organization	11	11	22
%	65%	48%	55%
Foreign academic degree	7	5	12
%	41%	22%	30%
Place of birth			
M. A. of Lisbon	6	9	15
%	35%	39%	38%
Centre	3	6	9
%	18%	26%	23%
North	3	4	7
%	18%	17%	18%
Alentejo and Algarve	2	2	4
%	12%	9%	10%
A. R. of Azores and A. R. of Madeira	0	1	1
%	0%	4%	3%
Foreign countries	3	1	4
%	18%	4%	10%
<i>N=40</i>			

Table 2 – Distribution of observations

Regarding experience as a minister, 24% of the selected ministers had previous experience, which suggests that previous experience as a minister may not have

been an important factor in the selection process. It is likely that ministers with previous experience would have a better understanding of the workings of government and would be able to hit the ground running in their new roles, but the desire to have new faces for ministers have been prevalent for the PM. Only 17% of the non-selected group had this experience, so it appears that this factor had minimal relevance.

On the other hand, experience as a Member of Parliament may have been seen as a valuable asset in the selection process, with almost half of ministers being MP's. They would have already had a good understanding of the political landscape and would be able to navigate the complex dynamics of government effectively. However, it seems this was not a differentiating factor between the selected and non-selected individuals, as Table 2 shows.

Previous junior ministers represent almost half of the selected ministers (47%), showing that the PM valued the experience and knowledge gained from serving as a junior minister, as it can facilitate a smooth transition into a ministerial role and increase the chances of success in that position. It is important to note that many junior ministers were brought back from previous PS governments, before the PSD/CDS-PP government of the last four years. Only 17% of the non-selected individuals are junior ministers, so this factor appears to show some importance in the selection process.

A large percentage of the selected and non-selected individuals (65%) were members of the party, suggesting António Costa gave preference to individuals who he knew well and probably were more loyal to him and aligned with his political agenda, using the party as a selection and screening process. However, the presence of a significant percentage of independents in the government (35%) also shows some "openness to civil society" (Costa Pinto & Tavares de Almeida, 2018), with those individuals possibly chosen for their competence. Since both

groups have the same percentage, it seems party affiliation was not a differentiator factor between them.

Also, a vast majority of the selected ministers (71%) had experience in a governmental position, such as minister's chief of staff or advisor, compared to the non-selected group (52%). This suggests that experience in a governmental position was an important asset in the selection process and differentiated both groups. Individuals with experience in governmental positions would have already have a good understanding of the workings of government and would be able to navigate the complex dynamics of government effectively.

Regarding personal characteristics, gender is the most significant factor in the selection process, with 76% of the selected ministers being male, which reflects the historical underrepresentation of women in politics and government, particularly in senior positions (de Almeida & Pinto, 2002). In the non-selected group, the difference is lower (53%), but it suggests it was a distinguishing aspect between individuals.

A relatively high age is also predominant between selected ministers, averaging 54,1 years, with almost two thirds between 50 and 60 years and 24% with more than 60 years. This reveals that the PM prioritized experienced individuals for his cabinet, some of them with decades of experience in the political ground. Since the age average and distribution of the individuals is almost identical between groups, it seems this was not a differentiating factor.

The Metropolitan Area of Lisbon is the most represented region in the government, with more than one third of the ministers born there, which is in line with the historic percentages (de Almeida & Pinto, 2002). This reflects the centralization of senior positions in Portuguese politics and the concentration of political and economic power in the capital. It is also important to note the lack of ministers from both autonomous regions, which are historically underrepresented in the national government (de Almeida & Pinto, 2002). This

suggests it was also not a differentiating factor between selected and non-selected individuals.

On the other hand, having a higher academic degree is a major factor in the selection process, such as a doctorate degree, which 53% of the ministers possess. This shows António Costa highly values individuals with the highest level of education and theoretical expertise in the field. As Table 2 shows, the distribution of academic degrees in the non-selected groups significantly differs from the minister's group, which heavily appoints that education was an important differentiating factor.

Additionally, a significant part of the ministers has an academic degree obtained in foreign countries. This suggests that the PM values the experience and exposure to different educational systems and cultures that comes with studying abroad. Having a foreign academic degree may also demonstrate a minister's ability to adapt to new environments and work and communicate effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds, for example in international committees. It appears that this factor had impact in the decision between individuals from both groups, because of the low percentage (22%) in the non-selected group.

Finally, most ministers (65%) had previous official positions in European or international organizations. This indicates that this type of experience was viewed as a valuable characteristic, as it provides exposure to the workings of international organizations, as well as experience in representing a country on the international stage. In particular, candidates who have a deep understanding of EU policies and institutions, as well as the ability to navigate complex decision-making processes and negotiate effectively with EU officials and other member states, are highly valued in ministerial roles that involve a significant degree of engagement with the EU, possibly due to the increasing degree of Europeanisation of national politics.

Holding a previous official position in a European or international organization may demonstrate a minister's ability to work effectively in a multinational environment and negotiate complex issues on behalf of their country. Since the non-selected group had 48% of individuals, it seems this variable had some significance.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1 Probit analysis discussion

The results of the probit regression are displayed in the following three tables. For the analysis, three models were tested. Model 1 uses the variables regarding political experience, Model 2 uses personal characteristics variables and Model 3 uses all the variables. Previous official position in European/international organization has been included in the personal characteristic's regression because it includes not only if the individuals were Members of the European Parliament, but also members in other European and international organizations, for example the European Sociological Association and other scientific consortiums. Despite this, this variable was also tested in the Political experience regression, but the results were similar (see Appendix).

It is important to note that a lack of significance does not mean that there is no relationship between the variables and the probability of selection. It only means that the relationship is not strong enough to reject the null hypothesis of no relationship at the given significance level.

Also, the A. R. of Azores and Madeira show empty results because the database only has one observation for the "Place of birth" variable.

	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Experience as minister	.05324	.6286422	0.08	0.933	-1.178876	1.285356
Experience as MP	-.1676553	.5245623	-0.32	0.749	-1.195779	.860468
Experience as junior minister	.8712692	.500331	1.74	0.082	-.1093616	1.8519
Party affiliation	-.3737574	.56908	-0.66	0.511	-1.489134	.7416189
Experience in governmental position	.4486854	.5025914	0.89	0.372	-.5363757	1.433747

Table 3 - Political experience regression results

	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Age	-.0298364	.029595	-1.01	0.313	-.0878415	.0281686
Gender (1=male)	1.17782	.5941471	1.98	0.047	.0133133	2.342327
Academic degree	.3960812	.2872775	1.38	0.168	-.1669723	.9591348
Previous official position in European/international organization	.7386095	.6020442	1.23	0.220	-.4413754	1.918594
Foreign academic degree	-.0992369	.6606126	-0.15	0.881	-1.394014	1.19554
Place of birth (M. A. of Lisbon as reference)						
2-Centre	-.0364441	.6264554	-0.06	0.954	-1.264274	1.191386
3-North	-.4369269	.6795648	-0.64	0.520	-1.76885	.8949957
4-Alentejo and Algarve	-.0329143	.8640627	-0.04	0.970	-1.726446	1.660617
5 - A. R. of Madeira and Azores	0	(empty)				
6- Foreign country	1.23177	.8837592	1.39	0.163	-.5003664	2.963906

Table 4 - Personal characteristics regression results

	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Experience as minister	.7603592	.9694796	0.78	0.433	-1.139786	2.660504
Experience as MP	.5406969	.7536253	0.72	0.473	-.9363816	2.017775
Experience as junior minister	.7072303	.7263087	0.97	0.330	-.7163086	2.130769
Party affiliation	.0548895	.8927568	0.06	0.951	-1.694882	1.804661
Experience in governmental position	.4639443	.7012185	0.66	0.508	-.9104186	1.838307
Age	-.0635323	.0427913	-1.48	0.138	-.1474018	.0203372
Gender (1=male)	1.20049	.6842459	1.75	0.079	-.1406077	2.541587
Academic degree	.745947	.370882	2.01	0.044	.0190317	1.472862
Previous official position in European/international organization	1.116362	.8188132	1.36	0.173	-.4884823	2.721206
Foreign academic degree	-.1276532	.8859897	-0.14	0.885	-1.864161	1.608855
Place of birth (M. A. of Lisbon as reference)						
2-Centre	-.3144304	.7738793	-0.41	0.685	-1.831206	1.202345
3-North	-.9784206	.8878551	-1.10	0.270	-2.718585	.7617433
4-Alentejo and Algarve	-.5528698	.9880041	-0.56	0.576	-2.489322	1.383583
5 - A. R. of Azores and Madeira	0	(empty)				
6- Foreign country	1.581933	1.0669	1.48	0.138	-.5091518	3.673018

Table 5 – Regression results with all variables

The results from the three regressions corroborate some of the findings from the previous analysis on the distribution of observations.

We can conclude from Table 3 that, when only taken into account political experience, being a former junior minister is statistically significant, which means it has a relationship with the probability of being selected as minister. In this case, increases it. This may be due to the PM considering this type of experience as a

valuable asset, as it demonstrates a certain level of expertise in a specific field and knowledge of government processes. Additionally, having served as a junior minister indicates that the individual has already gained some experience working in government and may be better equipped to handle the demands of a ministerial position.

From Table 4, it is possible to conclude that, when only personal characteristics are considered, gender is statistically significant, with being male increasing the probability of being selected. This conclusion corroborates the results from the descriptive analysis, in which the vast majority of ministers were male, in line with the historic underrepresentation of women in female cabinet recruitment (de Almeida & Pinto, 2002).

In Table 5, with all variables considered, the “academic degree” variable shows statistical significance, which means this indicates that there is a relationship between being selected as minister and the academic degree they possess. In this case, a higher academic degree increases the probability of being selected, particularly if the individual has a doctorate degree. A possible explanation for this is the public opinion regarding the last PS government, which is associated with the default and the coming of the *troika*. By selecting highly educated individuals, who are probably of higher competence, António Costa tried to change the public view on his government, that his focus was to have the most qualified people for the job and for his cabinet to perform effectively and not to appease internal party powers. This relates to the historic evidence that Portuguese Prime Ministers are able to ‘govern past parties’ (Lobo, 2005) and have the freedom to choose the ministers they want, past statutory obligations of the party. The results from the analysis also corroborate this, with party affiliation having low importance for the selection process, despite the majority of the government being party affiliated.

It is important to note that the “gender” variable keeps being significant in this third model, which further corroborates the conclusions from the results of Table 4. Also, the “experience as junior minister” variable drops its significance in this model, in comparison with the political experience model. For that reason and to study the effect of the experience in general we are going to study experience as a unique variable in the next section.

4.2.2 Probit analysis discussion with aggregate “political experience” variable

In order to deepen the analysis, a new regression model was tested, by aggregating all variables regarding political experience (as shown in Table 3). The main objective is to find out if having political experience in general, ignoring the type of it, has a strong relationship with the probability of being selected as minister.

	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Political experience	1.631623	.8360817	1.95	0.051	-.007067	3.270313
Age	-.0344176	.0302753	-1.14	0.256	-.093756	.0249209
Gender (1=male)	1.094889	.6350395	1.72	0.085	-.1497654	2.339544
Academic degree	.5434737	.3217832	1.69	0.091	-.0872099	1.174157
Previous official position in European/international organization	.7967816	.6561304	1.21	0.225	-.4892103	2.082773
Foreign academic degree	.0738654	.718272	0.10	0.918	-1.333922	1.481653
Place of birth (M. A. of Lisbon as reference)						
2-Centre	-.0877403	.6661077	-0.13	0.895	-1.393287	1.217807
3-North	-.4742639	.7029126	-0.67	0.500	-1.851947	.9034195
4-Alentejo and Algarve	.0807689	.9535334	0.08	0.932	-1.788122	1.94966
5 - A. R. of Madeira and Azores	0	(empty)				
6- Foreign country	2.025126	1.100931	1.84	0.066	-.1326593	4.182911

Table 6 – Regression results with “political experience” aggregating variable

The results in Table 6 show that having political experience in general is statistically significant. In this case, it means it has a positive relationship with the probability of an individual being selected as minister. Therefore, we can conclude that political experience was an important factor for António Costa in

selecting the ministers for his cabinet. In line with the previous analysis, some explanations can be synthesized.

Firstly, political experience allows a candidate to have a deeper understanding of the political landscape, including the workings of government and the nuances of policymaking. This knowledge and experience can help a minister make informed decisions and effectively navigate complex political issues. Secondly, it also provides a candidate with a network of contacts and relationships within the political sphere. This was a particularly helpful asset, because of the agreement with the BE and PCP, which required connections and consensus between the three parties in order to approve state budgets and laws. Finally, political experience can also help to establish a candidate's credibility and legitimacy as a leader. It can demonstrate a proven track record of success and provide evidence of a candidate's ability to handle high-pressure and high-stakes situations, which is also of great importance in handling public opinion and, again, the other parties in the agreement.

Also, the “academic degree” and “gender” variables are, again, statistically significant, which reinforces the conclusions from the previous analysis.

Lastly, being born in a foreign country also shows statistical significance, when comparing to the M. A. of Lisbon, leading us to conclude that the Prime Minister values a certain level of cultural diversity and inclusivity within the government. This can be beneficial in promoting a more diverse and representative government, as well as potentially bringing unique insights and solutions brought by their perceived higher level of adaptability, flexibility, and global awareness. However, in this case, these benefits may be limited, because the individuals are born in Portuguese-speaking countries, with big similarities with Portuguese culture and society.

5. Conclusion

This study presents an analysis about the principal-agent theory applied to ministerial selection and the factors that influenced António Costa choosing ministers for his first government. It provides a theoretical view on the principal-agent theory applied to the process of selection of the cabinet by the Prime Minister and the factors that can influence the decision, suggested by extant literature. Additionally, it presents an empirical analysis on the selection process of the first António Costa's government, by examining the impact of each variable on the probability of being selected as minister.

Our analysis was conducted by examining 40 individuals, the 17 selected ministers and 23 proposed by the media and political commentators, through the distribution of observations in each variable and by probit regressions.

Our findings allow us to conclude that there is some evidence that previous experience as junior minister, being male and having a higher academic degree, specially a doctorate degree, increases the probability of being selected as minister. We follow this with a regression that aggregates all political experience variables into one aggregate variable. From this, we found strong evidence that having political experience in general increases the probability of being selected. Also, the "academic degree" and "gender" variables are statistically significant, which reinforces the conclusions from the previous models.

The conclusions from this study offer, in our view, useful insights into the factors that influenced António Costa's ministerial selections and highlights potential biases in the selection process, particularly with regards to gender, academic qualifications and political experience. We consider that these insights can be helpful for future government selection processes', mainly in prompting political leaders to consider a more diverse and balanced approach to selecting their cabinets, weighing the many factors considered in our analysis.

The implications of the study are multifaceted and potentially far-reaching. Regarding gender, the underrepresentation of women in politics is a longstanding issue, with women often facing structural barriers to entry and advancement in political careers. Our findings suggest that these barriers may persist even at the highest levels of government. This is particularly timely given the current global push for gender equity and women representation in politics. By highlighting the barriers that women may face in accessing ministerial positions, the study can help to inform policies and practices aimed at increasing gender diversity in government. Political leaders may need to take proactive steps to identify and recruit qualified women for ministerial positions, and to ensure that gender diversity is reflected in the highest levels of government. Regarding the importance of a higher academic degree and having political experience, the conclusions can also have broader implications for democracy and good governance. By ensuring that ministerial appointments are based on merit and expertise rather than political connections or personal relationships, political leaders can promote transparency and accountability in government. Since our results show some evidence that both factors have significance in the selection process, particularly political experience as junior minister, we suggest that António Costa tried to balance his government by recruiting individuals with expertise on a certain field, in order to appease public opinion and for his government to perform effectively, but also ones with political experience, who are familiar with the inner workings of politics and politically aligned with the prime minister's agenda.

However, since this analysis is a case study about this particular government in Portugal, generality is in part sacrificed. The sample of 40 individuals is relatively small, and it is possible that the results may not be representative of all potential ministerial candidates in Portugal in the analyzed period of time. Also, with a small sample, each observation carries more weight and can have a larger

impact on the overall results. This can increase the likelihood of sampling error or other types of biases, which may affect the accuracy and reliability of the study's results, making them less robust. Despite these limitations, we believe this type of analysis can be applied to other past or future Portuguese governments and also governments in other countries with semi-presidential democracies, in order to make comparisons viable. We consider that further research on past Portuguese governments would be very interesting, in order to find out historic trends in Portuguese ministerial recruitment.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Political experience regression with “Previous official position in European/international organization” variable

	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Experience as minister	-.1282026	.6372541	-0.20	0.841	-1.377198	1.120792
Experience as MP	-.3008975	.5452231	-0.55	0.581	-1.369515	.7677202
Experience as junior minister	1.038921	.5319316	1.95	0.051	-.0036457	2.081488
Party affiliation	-.1572717	.6141856	-0.26	0.798	-1.361053	1.04651
Experience in governmental position	.2572235	.5296844	0.49	0.627	-.7809389	1.295386
Previous official position in European/international organization	.5633266	.4758287	1.18	0.236	-.3692806	1.495934