

# **THE DEVELOPING PARTY SYSTEM IN PORTUGAL: A CASE APPLICATION**

**Silvia M. Mendes\***

Department of Management & Public Administration  
University of Minho  
4710 Braga, PORTUGAL

**Pedro J. Camões**

Department of Management & Public Administration  
University of Minho  
4710 Braga, PORTUGAL

**Michael D. McDonald**

Department of Political Science  
Binghamton University (SUNY)  
Binghamton, NY 13902 USA  
mdmcd@binghamton.edu

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As the numbers on party identification alluded to, the electoral competition for governmental power in Portugal has focused almost exclusively on the Left-leaning PS and the Right-leaning PSD over the last 10 years. The election results in Table 6 show that in the last three legislative elections, 1991, 1995, and 1999 the combined vote of the PS and PSD totaled approximately 80%. From 1975 through 1987, these two parties won as little as 52 and never more than 76%. Even then, their highest combined vote percentages came when the PS was in an electoral alliance with two smaller parties (UEDS and ASDI, in 1980) and when the PSD was aligned electorally with CDS, PPM, and Reformists (the AD alliance in 1979 and 1980). Up until 1987, the Communists were receiving between 12 and 20% of the vote while the CDS/PP and other small parties to the Right of the PSD were receiving between 10 and 17% of the vote.

These vote percentages tell a common tale of partisan competition during a nation's first generation of democratic governance. The first 12 years of the *Democracia* exhibit a pattern of variable party competition similar to that seen in other emerging democratic systems and, for that matter, in re-established regimes throughout Europe after World War II (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 87-88). New and revamped systems tend to experience an early period of erratic, uncertain competition as ambitious politicians experiment to see what strategies will work. With experience as a teacher, the more as well as less successful politicians and organisations reconsider and re-strategize. The result, often, is to bring clarity to the nature of the competition. That is, through the early years of the process one learns who is vying for governmental power, who might be a pivot party for government formation, and who is positioning to keep their policy or ideological voice heard. Thereafter, electoral competition settles into a relatively more predictable pattern.

The right hand column of Table 1 records the effective number of Portuguese parties, according to both their votes and seats.<sup>1</sup> From 1975 to 1987, the Portuguese party system had, effectively, from three to five electoral parties and from two-and-a-half to four parliamentary

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<sup>1</sup> Political scientists have come to rely on the Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index, originally developed in economics to describe concentrations in foreign trade (Hirschman 1945), to describe the effective number of parties in a system (see Laakso and Taagepera 1979). The formula weights the system-wide vote or seat proportions received by the parties to describe the system at large. In a formula, the effective number of parties ( $N_{\text{eff}}$ ) is:

$$(N_{\text{eff}}) = 1 / \sum p_i^2,$$

where  $p_i^2$  is the proportion of votes (to produce  $N_{\text{Veff}}$ ) or seats (to produce  $N_{\text{Seff}}$ ), received by party  $i$ , and the squared proportion is summed across all parties receiving votes or seats.

parties. Since 1987, the Portuguese party system has been effectively a three-party system in the electorate and a two-and-a-half party system in the legislature.

[Table 1 about here]

By standards set by mechanical effects of electoral rules, Portugal's party system at the end of *Democracia's* first generation has to be considered small. With an assembly size of 230, 20 districts, no legal threshold, and a within-district-only d'Hondt allocation rule, Portugal's effective district magnitude is 11.5—i.e., the average number of seats per electoral district as adjusted for compensatory/additional seat allocations and for legal thresholds of inclusion (see Lijphart 1994, 25-9). Alone, that sort of effective district magnitude produces an expected 3.8 effective parties, something on the order of what one might find in Norway or Sweden (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 135-41).<sup>2</sup> But that is not what in fact occurs. During the 1990s, the two-and-a-half to three party system makes Portugal's party system look similar to either Ireland's party system, with its small district magnitudes and with its single-transferable vote rule (STV), or Germany's system, with its high legal threshold and two-tier compensatory allocation.

Three pressures operate to hold down the effective number of Portuguese parties. One is Portugal's semi-presidential system. Another is a relatively small number of issue dimensions that crosscut the Portuguese society. The third is a rather remarkably high breakeven point in the proportionate translation of vote to seat percentages, which is a consequence of an electoral bias favouring large parties, the PSD in particular, when votes are translated into seats.

## **Presidentialism**

The *Constitution of the Portuguese Republic* awards the President substantial power within the norms of a parliamentary system, as we have discussed. According to Matthew Shugart and John Carey (Shugart and Carey 1992; see also, Lijphart 1994, 130-4), such a powerfully endowed and popularly elected individual will tend to focus the electoral energies of parties and thereby exert pressure to reduce the number of effective parties.

The Constitution states that the President represents the entire Republic and holds responsibility for the independence and unity of the state (Article 120). Under that mandate, the Constitution does not anticipate that presidential candidates will be advocates for partisan policy positions. Indeed, presidential nominations come through petitions signed by a requisite number

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<sup>2</sup> Taagepera and Shugart (1989, 144) suggest that an approximate description for translating effective district magnitude into an effective number of electoral parties ( $N_{Veff}$ ) is:

$$(N_{Veff}) = 1.25 (2 + \log_{10} M_{eff}).$$

of citizens and submitted to the Constitutional Court (Article 124). With substantial power at stake and with one of the well-served functions of political parties being the organisation of an electorate, the Portuguese parties have found a way find a way into the presidential electoral process. Typically, persons announce their intentions to be presidential candidates; thereafter the parties meet formally and express their preference or support for one of the announced candidates.

The results of Portugal's six presidential elections are reported in Table 2. Overall, there is a tendency of parties to coalesce in one of two patterns that, in the end, has led to the election of a Left/Centre-leaning President. At times a Centre coalition of the PS and PSD formed—1976 and 1981. At other times, Left-leaning versus Right-leaning coalitions have formed—1980, the 1986 runoff, and 1996. One clear consequence is that the candidate supported by the Socialists has won all six elections. Another consequence is that presidential elections do appear to exert pressure to a reduced number of parties. Except for 1986, the effective number of parties is in the vicinity of 2.0. Interestingly, the 1986 election provides a particularly good illustration of pressure toward a small effective party system *but* also provides a strong qualification to the tendency.

[Table 2 about here]

In the 1985, supporters of President Eanes launched a new party, the PRD, which staked out a position between the PS and the PCP. The infighting among Socialists had its roots in disputes between Eanes and Soares that could be traced to the late 1970s and early 1980s. With Eanes constitutionally unable to succeed himself, having served two presidential terms, his supporters laid the foundation for a new party in the preceding 1985 Assembly elections. They argued that the PS had lost its compass on the path toward a democratic socialist society. The PRD proved a serious detriment to the electoral appeal of the PS for Assembly seats. It won over 18% of the vote and nearly the same percentage of seats; the PS received its lowest vote percentage, 21.4, during the *Democracia* period. During the following presidential election, the PRD and Eanes himself supported Francisco Salgado Zenha, a founding member of the renewed-PS shortly after the Revolution, who had sided with President Eanes when he took issue with Soares during the late-70's and early-80s. The presidential result was a three-way split of the vote on the left among Soares (PS, 25.4%), Zenha (PRD and PCP, 20.9%), and Lourdes Pintasilgo (UDP, 7.4%)—see Table 2. Soares finished second, ahead of Zenha; and while he was a distant second, it was enough to get him into a runoff with Freitas do Amaral. Seen in the light focused on events leading to Eanes successor, it appears that an ideological dispute resulting

from personalities of the candidates seeking power through the presidential office could come together to fractionalise the parties.

The pressure for electoral coalitions was clearly evident during the presidential runoff. Freitas do Amaral, a former student of Marcelo Caetano's pre-Revolution government and a founder of the decidedly Right-of-Centre, CDS/PP, had finished first in the first-round election. To some observers he appeared to be a shoe-in in the runoff. During the three weeks between the elections, however, the PRD, PCP, and UDP stood behind Soares. When the PCP convened in an extraordinary session in early February, the party secretary, Álvaro Cunhal, said: "If it upsets you to vote for him [Soares, former PS leader], shut your eyes. Ignore the name and photo. Just put a cross in the box next to them on the ballot paper" (quoted in Keesing's 1986, 34313). With the PRD, PCP and UDP support, Soares eked out a victory. The seemingly ideological dogmatism on the Left appears to have had its limits.

The presidential results suggest that the electoral basis of this office does indeed have a constricting on the party system, with a focus on the Centre. They also offer evidence of a caution not to overstate that tendency. The presidential office could prove fertile ground for launching a new party given the appropriate candidate with who can claim to be filling an ideological void. Still, typically, there are in the neighborhood of just over two effective parties at the presidential level. Viewed in conjunction with the legislative election results reported above, Table 1, one has the impression of a "stretched" two-party system. The major parties are in the Centre, one leaning a little to the Left and the other to the Right, and each of the major parties has its extremist on its wings. The wings stand on their own principles to the extent that prudence permits. At those times when electoral success and, with it, the pursuit of governing power require, the system temporarily constitutes effectively two umbrella parties.

### **Issue Cleavages**

A second restricting influence on the number of effective parties is that of issue cleavages. The few salient issue cleavages that exist among the Portuguese people and parties do not create much need nor leave much room for the development of a large number of parties. This, too, can be expected to reduce the number of parties (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Lijphart 1984; 1999; Taagepera and Grofman 1985).

In the early 90s at the request of Michael Laver and Ben Hunt, a few experts weighed in and pronounced themselves on the issue positions of the parties in 16 Western democracies, among them the Portuguese parties (Laver and Hunt 1992). From the expert assessments, Laver

and Hunt were among the first to provide the results of a survey of expert opinions on where the parties stand on eight particular issues and how important these issues are to them.

Table 3 reports the Laver-Hunt recorded salience of the four major Portuguese parties on these eight issues (see, Laver and Hunt 1992, 286-91). The most salient issue for all major parties is *public ownership of the means of production*, which Laver and Hunt report to be the most indicative of the Left-Right dimension. Companion to Table 3 is Figure 4, showing that to whatever extent other issues are salient, the Laver-Hunt experts see the major Portuguese parties as holding different pro-con positions but lining up in essentially the same Left-Right order from one issue area to the next. Looking at the party positions assigned by the experts, one's first impression is that there is a general Left-Right dimension, covering economic and social issues, and a second centralisation/decentralisation dimension. There is a seeming distinctiveness of a second dimension due to the outlying position of the PCP on the issue of centralisation and decentralisation. Indeed, Laver and Hunt (1992, 53) themselves speak of a singular dimension on which all of the issues, except for centralization/decentralization, load heavily. Centralisation/decentralisation is the only issue loading on a second dimension.

[Table 3 and Figure 1 about here]

Although there appears to be a second dimension, it must be interpreted with caution. This is because centralisation/decentralisation is much more a matter of the means of organizing political advocacy within the Portuguese context than a goal in and of itself. In advanced industrial societies, the Left tends to advocate centralized decision-making and improving the quality of life in the environment and of the workers congregating in cities. However, centralisation in the Portuguese mindset has instrumental value; it is not an ideological goal. Centralisation makes it easier to organize a planned economy and minimize the risk that localized political jurisdictions will variously define and distribute public sector goods and services with the effect that the scope of public goods is more narrow than it would be were they defined by one decisionmaker for an entire nation (Schattschneider 1960). In Portugal, with its experience of dictatorial rule and totally centralized government, a sizable agricultural sector, and a huge maldistribution of landholdings in rural areas, the political Left sees the instrumental value of centralisation differently. On the far-Left, the groupings of identified Communist factions, including the Greens (PEV), are divided on the question of centralisation (Laver and Hunt 1992, 289). Near the Left-Centre of the spectrum, the PS has mixed motives. Centralisation helps the PS desires to pursue a planned economy. But to avoid the risk of totalitarian rule, the PS favours distributing decision-making. As Silvia Mendes (2000) explains, when the decentralisation question took centre-stage in the form of a 1998 referendum asking whether there should be

devolution of political authority to regional units, it was not easy to discern where the Socialists stood. This was despite the PS's seemingly commitment to devolution as foreshadowed by the 1976 Constitution. In 1998, no party seems to have articulated a commanding and appealing principle for or against devolution. The debate seems to have been gone in the direction of technical and ancillary matters—e.g., the public finance expense of decentralisation, what it meant to Portugal's position in the EU, and the predictability how it might rearrange political competition.

By overlaying a single line across the party positions (i.e., dimensional line drawn at about a 45° angle, that Laver and Hunt refer to as the underlying Left-Right dimension), we see that there is only one dimension (see Figure 1).

Given the single-dimension of Portuguese politics, as seen through the lens of experts viewing the major parties, across the board, issue by issue, the PCP is furthest Left and the PP is furthest Right.<sup>3</sup> In between, the PS is located at a Centre-Left position and the PSD at a Centre-Right position in conformity with Figure 2.

[Figure 2 about here]

The consequence is that the issue space as organised by the Portuguese major parties appears to form one dimension. Whether the issue involves the ownership of the means of production, taxation and service allocations by the state, foreign relations, state control over social and religious aspects of life, or others, we find the parties arrange themselves along a one-dimensional policy space. At least according to these experts they are.

### **Disproportionality**

It might be said, half in jest and half-seriously, that political parties provide an answer to the question of whether falling trees make a sound in the forest when no one is around. Parties and their would-be vote supporters ask whether policy advocacy has any meaning if none or few of its candidates find their way to parliament. For this reason, even if policy is its foremost concern, a party that is continually disadvantaged by the rules translating votes into seats faces an uphill battle to keep its voters in subsequent elections and to serve the office-holding ambitions of its politically active members. In turn, it follows, disproportionately high seat returns for large

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<sup>3</sup> A convenient way to gain a visual image of the single dimension is to have the mind's eye draw a line from any party issue position to the illustrated dimension so that the imaginary line comes to the illustrated dimension at a 90° angle. We have drawn one such imaginary line from the PCP's position on decentralisation. It should be obvious that, for example, all the PCP issue positions are furthest Left along the illustrated dimension.

parties and, concomitantly, disproportionately low seat returns for small parties encourage the party system to contract in number. Such is the case in Portugal.

A review of the numbers in Table 1 shows that anytime a party received more than 20% of the vote—and this occurred with the PS and PSD or their alliances—the party received a seat-versus-vote bonus. Taking a party's seat percentage and subtracting from the party's vote percentage shows that Portuguese parties with small to moderate vote shares have suffered seat-versus-vote deficits between  $-0.1$  and  $-2.8$ . The PSD and PS, on the other hand, have received seat-versus-vote bonuses between 1 and 8 percent.

Figure 3 illustrates how the advantages and disadvantages correspond to the variability in the vote levels. The figure helps to illustrate two forms of electoral advantage. First, it marks the breakeven point for votes and seats somewhere near the vicinity of 20% of the vote. Parties winning votes above the 20% mark receive a seat bonus; those below that mark suffer a seat deficit. Relatively speaking, this is a very high breakeven point for a PR system. A breakeven score of 20 is below that of Anglo-American single-member district plurality systems (31 to 47%), but compared to other Western European PR systems during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only the French system in 1945-46 had a breakeven point as high as 20 (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 90-1). Almost surely this puts pressure on small and medium-sized parties to coalesce as well as on voters to focus their attention on the two largest parties. The second electoral advantage only involves the two major parties. There is a general tendency for the PSD large-party seat bonus to exceed the seat bonus going to the PS. On average, across all the 10 elections, the PSD seat bonus is  $+4.4$  while the PS seat bonus is  $+2.8$ . We believe this has something to do with the degree of the disproportionality because the higher the vote percentage, the larger the seat bonus more so for the PS as shown in the slope comparison. The PSD average vote is 37.7% compared to the PS average of 33.5%. However, as shown in Figure 4, even after taking the vote percentage differences into account, by overlaying a least squares line on seat advantages in relationship to the vote percentages, there is a general tendency for the PSD to receive a larger seat bonus than the PS—this is a bias in favour of the PSD.

[Figure 3 about here]

In addition to what the disproportionality of the system suggests about the pressures that reduce the effective number of parties, it raises a question about the operation of the electoral rules. How could a seemingly reasonable and fair set of rules—an assembly of 230 members, elected under d'Hondt rules in 20 districts with no legal threshold—be associated with such a high breakeven point and with a general tendency to reward the PSD more so than the PS? The answer, we think, could come from biases in the system.



## Electoral Bias

Two types of electoral bias can arise under most electoral systems. One is the result of the way a system creates differential voter weights due to either malapportionment in seat allocations or to differential turnout rates. The other comes from the electoral formula used to allocate seats on the basis of votes within districts. In Portugal, this formula is the d'Hondt rule.

Rotten boroughs and rules favouring rural over urban areas are legendary in SMD systems, as in the UK during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and U.S. into the 1960s, but malapportionment systems can exist in PR systems as well. As a hypothetical example of malapportionment under PR rules in Portugal, imagine that the Lisboa district deserves, on the basis of its number of eligible voters, 60 seats, but that the apportionment allocates only 50 seats. A party that receives its highest vote percentage in this district will win fewer seats than its nationwide percentage of the vote would require because the votes in this district are undervalued. Votes would be weighted as 5/6ths of their fair value. Malapportionment is a structural problem. The same consequence can arise for behavioural reasons associated with turnout differentials across districts. On this score, imagine two fairly apportioned districts, each with 10 seats and 1000 eligible voters. In District #1, only 100 votes are cast with the parties' votes distributed as  $A = 70$ ,  $B = 20$ , and  $C = 10$ . In District #2, all the eligible voters cast a ballot, and the party votes are  $A = 300$ ,  $B = 500$ , and  $C = 200$ . Under a fair allocation, by district, party  $A$  will win 50% of the seats (seven from District #1 and three from District #2) with only 33.6% of the vote (370/1100).

The 226 seats for resident citizens are apportioned to the 20 electoral districts, 18 contiguous geographical areas on the continent and one district each for the autonomous island regions of the Açores and Madeira. The district boundaries are set by statute. The voter registration on which the apportionment is based is compulsory and permanent (Article 113). As suggested in our discussion of voter turnout, the registration system makes one wonder whether there may not be some form of political maneuvering for partisan gain when it comes to getting and keeping voters' names on the rolls. In turn, basing the apportionment of seats on registration makes one wonder whether electoral bias due to malapportionment may have crept into the system.

Table 4 reports population and registered voters counts, as well as for each of the each of the 20 electoral districts. For the 1991 election, the time of the most recent available official census of population. We can compare the third column of numbers, the actual seat apportionment, to two precisely calculated theoretical apportionment values. The first

comparison is to what a hypothetically precise apportionment based on population, rather than on registered voters, would yield. Recognizing that any precise apportionment is impossible because seats are allocated in whole numbers while precise calculations include fractions, we see that only five of the 20 districts have actual apportionments that differ by more than rounding (i.e.,  $\pm 0.5$ ). These include the four of the five largest districts—Aveiro, Braga, Lisboa, and Porto—plus the Madeira islands district. Aveiro, Braga, Porto, and Madeira are slightly undervalued; Lisboa is noticeably overvalued with seats 3.16 above what its population size alone would indicate. The second comparison makes it clear that the slight under and overvaluing in certain districts, with respect to population size, is due in part to registration differentials. Comparably speaking, Aveiro, Braga, and Porto are slightly undervalued because their populations are low relative to the individuals registered. Indeed, in the case of Porto, the 1.4 seat undervaluing with respect to population becomes a 1.18 seat overvaluing when it comes to registered voters. It appears that, by and large, using of registration as compared to population may take away from the larger districts is in the end restored by an apportionment formula that provides a slight advantage to large districts. Notice that the two largest districts, Lisboa and Porto, each have seat allocation that is more than 0.5 above what the precise registration-based apportionment would yield. On the basis of these numbers, we must conclude that it is difficult to see how any sort of systematic malapportionment bias in favour of one party or the other exists in the Portuguese electoral system.

[Table 4 about here]

Could there be some form of interrelationship among apportionment, voter turnout, and the distribution of party votes that come together to favour the larger parties relative to the medium-sized and small parties and to benefit the PSD relative to the PS? The evidence that responds to that question is a resounding *no*. Students of SMD elections since the time of Francis Edgeworth's initial foray into investigating electoral bias (Edgeworth 1898, 536) have shown that the total vote-weight bias, which combines biases due to malapportionment with those due to turnout, can be calculated by means of simple arithmetic (Butler 1947, pp. 284-85). The nationwide vote percentage for a party is implicitly calculated with each voter given an equal weight. The calculation of an average vote percentage for a party across a set of districts with weights set according to the number of seats, means that any difference between the nationwide percentage and the weighted average percentage records the difference between fair vote weights and vote weights that they are affected by malapportionment differentials, turnout differentials, or both. These calculations for Portugal's 1991 election show that the difference is never more than nine one-hundredths of one percent (0.09%). By way of contrast, in the United States this

calculation can be shown to have been as large as 3 and 4% (Campbell 1996). In short, there is nothing in either the apportionment or the turnout rates across districts that would appear to produce a degree of partisan bias worth mentioning.

Of course, the high breakeven point, the advantages for the larger parties in general, and the advantage to the PSD over the PS are still unaccounted for. Given that it is not due to electoral biases associated with malapportionment or turnout, it almost certainly must be due to favouritism toward the large parties that arise from the seat allocation formula itself.

The d'Hondt formula for allocating seats based on vote percentages has a well-known tendency to favour parties that win large vote percentages. How much a large party is favoured depends on district magnitude so that the larger the magnitude, the smaller the favouritism. As a general tendency, Portugal's 11.5 effective district magnitude or 11.3 if we only consider the 226 seats allocated from the residential vote (#of seats / #of districts) should produce seat allocations with reasonable proportionate accuracy, or so it would seem. To say that Portugal's district magnitude is 11.5 is to use an average value to describe the system overall. As with so many descriptions based on an average value, there can be distortions in what the average actually tells us about reality. Table 3 showed that the Portugal's average district magnitude is a central tendency based on a highly skewed distribution. To see this, let us consider the median district magnitude. While the average is 11.5, the median district magnitude is seven. Only 10 out of 20 districts win seats ranging from three to six. The other half have seats ranging from eight to 50 seats, with two of these being outliers on the very high end, Lisboa with its 49 seats and Porto with 37.

From the literature developed by Rokkan (1968) through Rae, Hanby, and Loosemore (1971) and Lijphart and Gibberd (1977), it can and has been shown that under the d'Hondt formula a party could win as much as 25% of the vote in a three-seat district and never actually win a single seat. Generally, to be certain of winning a seat a party's vote percentage must exceed  $(100 \times [1 / M + 1])$ , where M is the district magnitude. In three, four, five, and six seat districts, therefore, a party would have to exceed, respectively, 25, 20, 16.7, and 14.2 percent of the vote to guarantee itself one seat. In Portugal, therefore, a small party can guarantee itself a seat from the Lisboa district with about 2% of the vote. In half of the districts, the vote percentage must be much higher. In those districts with three to six seats, a party's vote percentage will need to be higher than 25%, with three seats and higher than 14.2%, with six seats.

In stricter terms, whether a party actually has to reach those vote levels to win a seat within a district depends on the vote distribution across all of the parties and not just a single

party. To see how allocations might work, we can take an example similar to what we might actually see in Portugal, with five parties, A-E in the table below, receiving vote percentages of 39, 31, 12, 9, and 8. The numbers in the left-hand column give the d'Hondt divisor, from 1 to 5, and the numbers to the right of the divisions (in bold) give the rank order priority for receiving a seat.

		Hypothetical Example of Party Vote Percentage in a District (seat allocation priority number <b>in bold</b> next to the dividend)				
<i>Party</i>		<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>
		39%	31%	12%	9%	8%
d'Hondt Divisor	1	39.00 <b>1</b>	31.00 <b>2</b>	12.00 <b>6</b>	9.00 <b>9</b>	8.00 <b>10</b>
	2	19.50 <b>3</b>	15.50 <b>4</b>	6.00 -	4.50 -	4.00 -
	3	13.00 <b>5</b>	10.33 <b>7</b>	4.00 -	3.00 -	2.67 -
	4	9.75 <b>8</b>	7.75 -	3.00 -	2.25 -	2.00 -
	5	7.80 -	6.20 -	2.40 -	1.80 -	1.60 -

Under the given vote percentages, the two largest parties win the first five seats. Thus, in a district with three, four, or five seats, the two large parties win 100% of the seats with 70 percent of the vote. Even in an eight-seat district, the two largest parties win seven out of eight seats, i.e., 87.5% of the seats with 70% of the vote. Notice, also, that generally but not always the single largest party enjoys the single largest advantage. These two tendencies of the d'Hondt formula are important elements when it comes to explaining Portugal's high breakeven point, favouritism toward large parties, and in particular toward the PSD compared to the PS in the small districts. In other words, in Portugal's 10 districts with a small number of seats, even the medium-sized parties such as the Communists have found it difficult to win a seat. For that reason alone, both the PSD and PS enjoy an advantage over the smaller parties, and as the single largest party in the small districts most of the time the PSD enjoys the single largest advantage. To see how these effects arise, we need to turn to the seats won by the parties in each district.

Table 5 shows the number of seats, the party vote percentages, and the number of seats won in each of the 20 electoral districts for the 1999 Assembly election. The first thing to notice is that only in districts with 10 or more seats did a party win a seat with less than 10% of the vote. Furthermore, the most *disproportionate* within-district results arise in the small districts, and the *most directly proportionate* results for the leading party in a district emerged in the largest districts. On the small-district side, Beja with three seats saw the PS win 67% of the seats (two

of three) with 46.7% of the vote, and in Portalegre with three seats, the PS won 67% of the seats (two of three) with 51.3% of the vote. On the large-district side, in Lisboa, the PS won 46.9% of the seats (23 of 49) with 42.6% of the vote; in Porto the PS won 51.4% of the seats (19 of 37) with 48.0% of the vote.

[Table 5 about here]

The message that is loud and clear here is that in all districts, regardless of district magnitude, the leading party enjoys a seat-to-vote advantage. And the smaller the district, the larger, generally, is that advantage, unless their regional base warrants substantial electoral effort. For instance, the Communists are discouraged in small districts, except in the Alentejo districts of Beja and Évora. The two large parties tend to enjoy highest vote support in districts with fewer than seven seats.<sup>4</sup> To the PS and the PSD relative appeal in small districts, the d'Hondt formula adds a bonus.

Finally, though a strong inference would require more detailed analysis, the election results in Table 9 offer a strong suggestion that the small advantage over the PS comes from how the PSD's relatively low vote support in Lisboa, Portalegre, and Setúbal. These three districts had, in 1999, 50, 19, and 17 seats, respectively. Other than districts in the Communist strongholds in the Alentejo, Lisboa, Portalegre, and Setúbal are the two districts where the PSD does relatively poorly. The PS, on the other hand, performs at or about its nationwide average in these three districts. Because the d'Hondt formula inflicts disadvantages to medium-sized parties in large districts, the PSD disadvantage for poor performance in a district is attenuated. And, even though the PSD-to-PS advantage is small, if the PS held the advantage, it would almost surely have won a clear majority of the seats in 1999, instead of the exact 50% (115 seats) they did win. That is, if the Lisboa area were divided into 10 five-seat districts, the PS almost surely would have had a parliamentary majority. Alternatively, if Viana do Castelo, Vila Real, Viseu, the Açores, and Madeira formed one combined district of 30 seats, the PS would likely hold a majority.

The development of the Portuguese party system during the nation's 25-plus years of *Democracia* shows us something on the order of a two-and-a-half to three party system. Each of three elements—a presidential office with real powers, legislative electoral rules, and a seemingly unidimensional issue space—tend to push the party system toward fewer rather than more parties. Under the political developments in the light of the push from presidential politics is it likely that

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<sup>4</sup> The 1999 PS and PSD combined nationwide vote amounted to 76.3% of the total. With the PSD doing especially poorly in Alentejo districts, the combined percentages of the two major parties is lower. Otherwise, in Viana do Castelo they won an average 76.0%, and in the other six small districts they won more than 80%.

the system may go even further toward a two-party model? Today, that looks unlikely. The ideological distances between the parties, especially the Communists and the PS, appear too large to allow a merger except for the temporary electoral convenience at the time of the majoritarian presidential contests. The rules for electing the Assembly of the Republic—as long as there exist a few large districts, the Alentejo geographic Communist base, or both—provide real opportunities for the Communists. For one thing, the party can retain its distinctive voice through the legislative elections and in the Assembly of the Republic itself. Also, Communist leaders will be able to retain their positions of power, in the party organisation and in the Assembly. Having the Communists stand on their own also saves the PS the effort of devising a strategy for trying to figure out how to structure a ballot that balances their politicians with politicians who, but for electoral disincentives, would prefer to stand for election as Communists. The long-run fate of parties that have been standing to the right of the PSD is not so clear. They do not appear to have any particularly strong regional base, similar to the Alentejo for the Communists. And, after 1976, their electoral size has never been so large as to lead anyone to believe that they can mount and sustain electoral efforts that will do much to put power in the hands of their leaders. We can well imagine that ambitious politicians on the Right will be able to find leadership positions within the PSD, reasonably congenial to their ideological leanings. This is the reason for the AD having recently resurfaced, died, and is a possibility.

We have at this juncture, therefore, a vision of a Portuguese party system that lines up Right to Left with one major Right-leaning party, one major Left-of-Centre party, and a medium-sized party somewhat on the distant Left in the Portuguese policy space. Given, on the one hand, that it is the distance along the Left-Right spectrum that would seem to provide the motivation for the system not to contract to a two-party system and, on the other, that we are assuming there is no significant dimension other than Left-Right that might expand the system, we turn next to the evidence of the policy space of Portuguese politics to see what it can tell us.

## **Conclusion**

This study tells a story of the Portuguese party system. Throughout this paper, we have argued and effectively shown evidence pointing to the forces contributing to this compression tendency: the characteristics of the electoral system—particularly the nature of the presidential powers, the vote-to-seat-translation rule, d'Hondt, and the geographics and size of the electoral districts. These features of the Portuguese society and party system are not likely to change, at least not in the near future. That means that one can expect the tendency for Portugal to have a

small number of effective parties is likely to continue. And this has important implications for those smaller parties that have up until now been able to compete, and wish to continue competing for a few seats in parliament, with the two largest Centrist parties, the PS and the PSD. In the Portuguese case, these smaller parties are the PCP and the PP.

**Table 1: Vote and Seat Legislative Election Results by Party, 1975-99**

Election	Party Percentages						Effective Number of Parties
	Left Faction	APU/CDU		PS	AD		
		MDP	PCP		PSD	CDS/PP	
1975							
Vote%	0.8	4.4	13.5	40.7	28.3	8.2	3.66
Seat%	0.4	2.0	12.0	46.4	32.4	6.4	
1976							
Vote%	1.8	----	15.3	36.7	25.2	16.7	4.00
Seat%	0.4	----	15.2	40.7	27.8	16.0	
1979							
Vote%	2.8	19.5		28.2	46.3		3.00
Seat%	0.4	18.8		29.6	51.2		
1980							
Vote%	2.4	17.3		28.7	48.3		2.89
Seat%	0.4	16.4		29.6	53.6		
1983							
Vote%	0.7	18.7		37.3	27.8	12.7	3.73
Seat%	0.0	17.2		40.4	30.0	12.0	
1985							
Vote%	20.4	16.0		21.4	30.6	10.0	4.78
Seat%	18.0	15.2		22.8	35.2	8.8	
1987							
Vote%	6.5	12.5		22.8	51.3	4.4	2.98
Seat%	2.8	12.4		24.0	59.2	1.6	
1991							
Vote%	2.6	9.0		29.6	51.0	4.4	2.79
Seat%	0.0	7.4		30.9	57.4	2.2	
1995							
Vote%	1.9	8.7		44.6	34.8	9.2	2.97
Seat%	0.0	6.5		48.7	38.2	6.5	
1999							
Vote%	2.5	9.2		44.9	33.0	8.5	3.06
Seat%	0.9	7.4		50.0	35.2	6.5	

*Note: For the purpose of exposition, cell entries for the Left faction only include the following parties: UDP, PSR, PRD, PCTP/MRPP; the Right faction refers to PSN.*



**Table 2: Presidential Election Results by Candidate, 1976-2001**

Year	Vote%	Party Support	Candidate	Effective Number of Parties
1976	61.5 16.5 14.4 7.6	PS + PSD + PP Independent Independent PCP	António dos Santos Ramalho Eanes Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho José Baptista Pinheiro de Azevedo Octávio Pato	2.31
1980	56.5 39.0 1.5 0.8 0.8 0.2	PS + PCP PSD + PP Independent Independent Independent POUS	António dos Santos Ramalho Eanes Francisco Sá Carneiro Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho Carlos Galvão de Melo António Pires Veloso António Aires Rodrigues	2.12
1986 <i>First Round</i>	46.3 25.4 20.9 7.4	PSD PS PRD + PCP Independent	Diogo Pinto Freitas do Amaral Mário Alberto Nobre Lopes Soares Francisco Salgado Zenha María de Lourdes Pintasilgo	3.15
1986 <i>Runoff</i>	51.3 48.7	PS + PCP PP + PSD	Mário Alberto Nobre Lopes Soares Diogo Pinto Freitas do Amaral	NA
1991	70.4 14.1 12.9 2.2	PS + PSD PP PCP UDP	Mário Alberto Nobre Lopes Soares Basílio Aldolfo Mendonça Horta da França Carlos Alberto do Vale Gomes Carvalhas Carlos Manuel Marques da Silva	1.87
1996	53.8 47.2	PS + PCP PSD	Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio Aníbal Cavaco Silva	1.99
2001	55.8 34.5 5.1 3.0 1.6	PS PSD PCP BE PCTP	Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio Joaquim Ferreira do Amaral António Simões de Abreu Fernando Rosas António Garcia Pereira	2.30

**Table 3: Saliency and Positions on Eight Policy Issues of Major Portuguese Parties**

Issues	PCP		PS		PSD		PP	
	Score	Saliency	Score	Saliency	Score	Saliency	Score	Saliency
Increase in services vs. Cut in Taxes	3.43	12.86	8.75	11.63	14.00	12.40	17.00	15.00
Pro-friendly relations vs. Anti-friendly with Former USSR	1.14	13.71	7.88	12.00	13.00	10.50	15.86	12.29
Pro-Public Ownership vs. Anti-Public Ownership	1.14	18.86	9.50	14.00	13.83	15.00	18.14	16.86
Pro-Permissive vs. Anti-Permissive Social Policy	2.67	16.43	8.00	14.38	12.40	13.17	18.17	12.14
Anticlerical vs. Proclerical	2.71	4.83	9.63	7.57	13.50	8.40	19.29	16.67
Pro-Urban Interests vs. Anti Urban Interests	7.00	10.83	8.29	10.43	10.80	9.20	16.50	13.17
Pro-Decentralization vs. Centralization of Decisions	13.83	13.33	8.57	13.29	11.60	13.40	12.50	11.00
Environment vs. Growth	5.83	13.17	9.86	11.00	12.60	10.80	13.83	7.67

*Note: These are the results of a survey of expert opinions on party positions conducted by Laver and Hunt (1992, 286-91)*

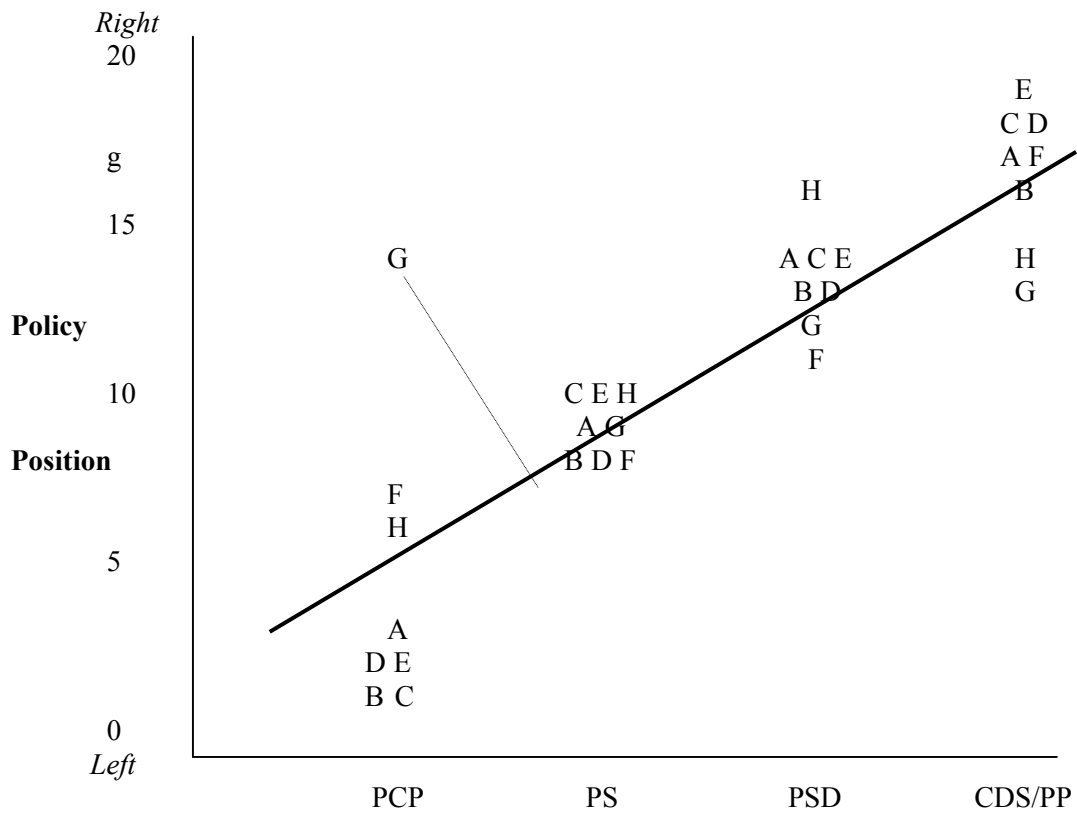
**Table 4: Actual and Hypothetical Apportionment of the Legislative Seats among 20 Districts, 1991**

<b>District</b>	<b>1991 Population Count</b>	<b>1991 Registration Count</b>	<b>1991 Actual Seat Apportionment</b>	<b>1991 Precise Apportionment Pop. Basis</b>	<b>1991 Precise Apportionment Regis. Basis</b>
Aveiro	667314	526727	14	15.19	14.30
Beja	165261	152597	4	3.76	4.14
Braga	776254	587337	16	17.67	15.95
Bragança	155423	148876	4	3.54	4.04
Castelo Branco	209948	199654	5	4.78	5.42
Coimbra	425211	370925	10	9.68	10.07
Évora	171143	149495	4	3.90	4.06
Faro	339836	293573	8	7.74	7.97
Guarda	184337	173630	4	4.20	4.71
Leiria	427633	358145	10	9.73	9.73
Lisboa	2057562	1796885	50	46.84	48.80
Portalegre	130706	117052	3	2.98	3.18
Porto	1686884	1319056	37	38.40	35.82
Santarém	440006	385602	10	10.02	10.47
Setúbal	719347	595534	16	16.38	16.17
Viana do Castelo	242371	214800	6	5.52	5.83
Vila Real	236594	213334	6	5.39	5.79
Viseu	402273	344478	9	9.16	9.35
Açores	239190	181018	5	5.44	4.92
Madeira	250550	193763	5	5.70	5.26
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9927843</b>	<b>8322481</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>226</b>

**Table 5: Percentage of Votes and Seats Won by Parties in each of 20 Districts, 1999**

District	Number of Seats in the District	PS	PSD	PCP-PEV	CDS	BE
		Vote% Seats	Vote% Seats	Vote% Seats	Vote% Seats	Vote% Seats
Aveiro	15	40.2% 7	38.3% 6	3.5% --	13.6% 2	1.3% --
Beja	3	46.7% 2	14.5% --	28.3% 1	3.9% --	2.0% --
Braga	17	44.3% 8	36.8% 7	5.4% 1	8.8% 1	1.7% --
Bragança	4	39.7% 2	44.9% 2	2.6% --	8.6% --	0.8% --
Castelo Branco	5	51.7% 3	31.9% 2	5.3% --	6.3% --	1.2% --
Coimbra	10	47.1% 6	35.2% 4	6.1% --	6.0% --	2.0% --
Évora	4	45.6% 2	18.7% 1	24.6% 1	5.0% --	1.7% --
Faro	8	48.4% 5	29.4% 3	8.3% --	7.3% --	2.3% --
Guarda	4	43.3% 2	39.2% 2	3.2% --	9.8% --	1.1% --
Leiria	10	36.8% 4	42.6% 5	5.3% --	9.9% 1	1.7% --
Lisboa	49	42.6% 23	27.3% 14	12.3% 6	8.5% 4	4.9% 2
Portalegre	3	51.3% 2	22.6% 1	15.1% --	5.9% --	1.2% --
Porto	37	48.0% 19	32.7% 13	6.3% 2	7.5% 3	2.3% --
Santarém	10	45.5% 5	30.2% 3	10.1% 1	8.1% 1	2.0% --
Setúbal	17	43.7% 8	18.0% 3	24.8% 5	5.6% 1	1.1% --
Viana do Castelo	6	40.2% 3	35.8% 2	5.0% --	14.0% 1	1.2% --
Vila Real	5	40.8% 2	45.4% 3	2.4% --	6.9% --	0.8% --
Viseu	9	38.2% 4	44.3% 4	2.2% --	10.5% 1	1.2% --
Açores	5	53.3% 3	35.8% 2	1.7% --	5.6% --	1.1% --
Maderia	5	35.1% 2	46.3% 3	2.8% --	10.6% --	1.2% --
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>44.0% 112</b>	<b>32.3% 80</b>	<b>9.0% 17</b>	<b>8.4% 15</b>	<b>2.5% 2</b>

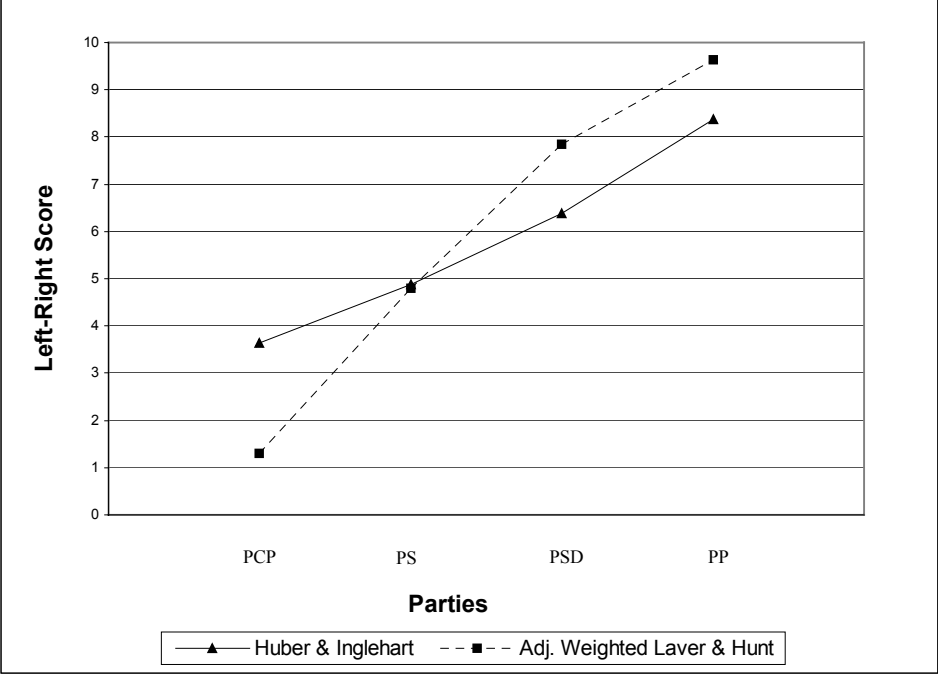
**Figure 1: Alignment of Major Portuguese Parties on Eight Policy Issues**



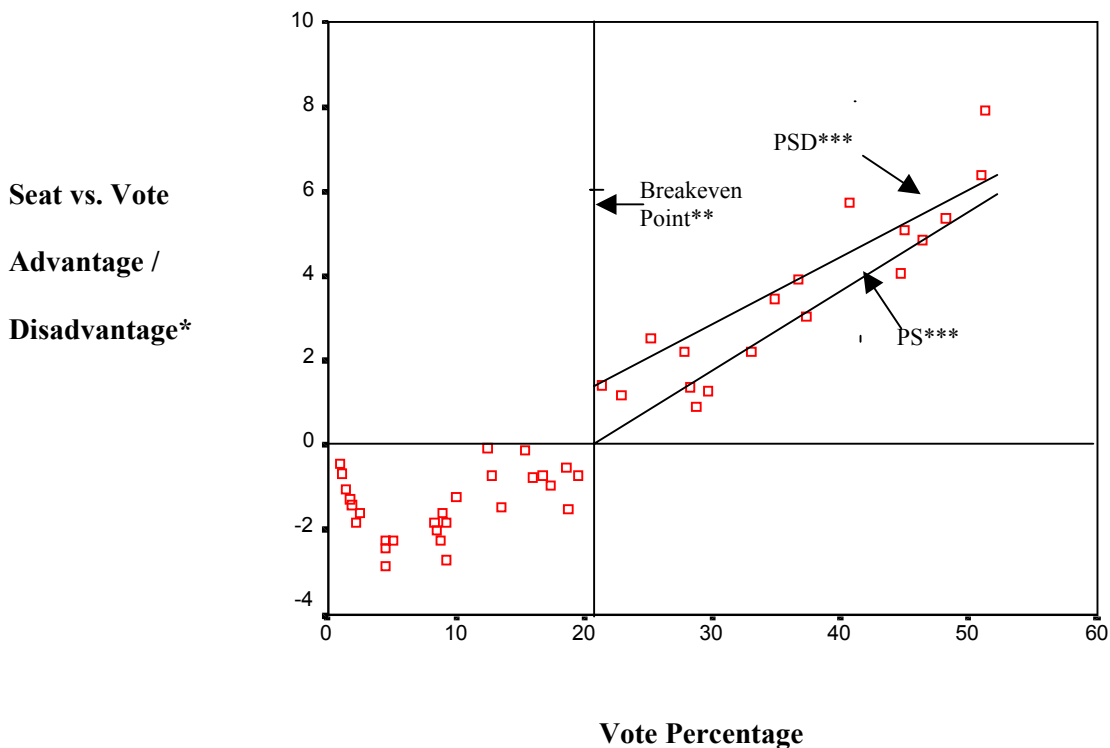
Issue Domains	PCP	PS	PSD	CDS/PP
<b>A.</b> Services vs. Taxes	3.43	8.75	14.00	17.00
<b>B.</b> Unfriendly with USSR	1.14	7.88	13.00	15.86
<b>C.</b> Public vs. Private Ownership	1.14	9.50	13.83	18.14
<b>D.</b> Restrictive Social Policy	2.67	8.00	12.40	18.17
<b>E.</b> Anti- vs. Pro-clerical	2.71	9.63	13.50	19.29
<b>F.</b> Urban vs. Rural Interests	7.00	8.29	10.80	16.50
<b>G.</b> Centralize Decision Making	13.83	8.57	11.60	12.50
<b>H.</b> Environment vs. Growth	5.83	9.86	16.60	13.83

*Source: Party positions are from a survey of experts conducted by Laver and Hunt (1992, 286-91). High scores represent what are usually taken to be issue positions of parties on the political right.*

**Figure 2: Left-Right Alignment of Major Portuguese Parties According to the Experts**



**Figure 3: Relationship between Seat Percentage versus Vote Percentage Advantage/Disadvantage and the Level of Party Vote Percentage, Assembly Elections 1975-99**



**Notes:**

\* The seat percentage versus vote percentage advantage/disadvantage is calculated as (% of Seats - % of Votes). A party with an *advantage* has a positive score because it has received a larger percentage of seats compared to votes; a party with a *disadvantage* has a negative score because it has received a smaller percentage of seats compared to votes.

\*\*The breakeven point is an eyeball estimate of the vote percentage level where a party can expect to have neither an advantage nor a disadvantage—i.e., to breakeven.

\*\*\* The lines for the PSD and the PS show the respective least squares estimates of how their advantages increase as the level of their vote percentages increase. The equations are:

$$\begin{array}{l}
 \text{PSD} \quad \text{Advantage} = -1.39 + .153 \text{ Vote}\%, \quad \text{with } R^2 = .681; s_e = 1.06 \\
 (n = 10) \qquad \qquad \qquad (1.32) \quad (.034)
 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{l}
 \text{PS} \quad \text{Advantage} = -3.44 + .186 \text{ Vote}\%, \quad \text{with } R^2 = .755; s_e = 0.89 \\
 (n = 10) \qquad \qquad \qquad (1.20) \quad (.035)
 \end{array}$$

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