

Women in Portuguese politics

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Abstract:

After the 1974 revolution, has the Portuguese transition to democracy improved women's participation in politics? Has the democratization process influenced women's access to elected offices? Keeping in mind an historical perspective, this paper offers an explanation of the Portuguese political system and an evaluation of the Portuguese political class, in order to introduce the gender issue. Even though the democratic regime is now over 30 years old, in fact there is still a female sub-representation in Portuguese politics, inscribed into the larger issue of women's access to all aspects of social, cultural and economic life. However, in all levels of government, women are better educated than men and reveal higher percentages of specialised professionals, teachers and top managers. And, not surprisingly, left wing parties are the ones that recruit them in larger numbers.

Key words: Portuguese transition; Women; Political elites; Political system; Gender issue.

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The presence of women in politics has increased worldwide during the 20th century and is well documented (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). In Portugal, women have been elected and appointed to public offices throughout this period, but in quite a limited way. *Estado Novo*, the authoritarian regime Salazar established in 1933, which lasted until 1974, was the first to allow them to express themselves by vote, but in a very selective mode, for only formally educated women or family heads were allowed to exercise that right. Considering literacy was low, those women were a very diminutive percentage of society. The same criteria applied to elected or politically appointed offices, where Portuguese women's participation was mostly barred.

After the 1974 carnation revolution, has the Portuguese transition to democracy improved women's participation in politics? Has the democratization process influenced women's access to elected offices? Keeping in mind an historical perspective, this paper offers an explanation of the Portuguese political system and an evaluation of the Portuguese political class, in order to introduce the gender issue. Even though the democratic regime, established with the 1976 Constitution, is now over 30 years old, in fact there is still a 'female sub-representation' in Portuguese politics, inscribed into the larger issue of women's access to all aspects of social, cultural and economic life (Viegas and Faria, 1999). And the social and cultural characteristics of the group of women who participate and are elected and appointed to public offices remains the same as in the former regime: only a very limited elite of very educated women have access to government, both local and national. It can be inferred that the democratic regime has introduced quite a considerable amount of measures to promote gender equality, but other factors have also influenced the arrival of women into political offices, such as social and economic development, and the enormous enlargement of university graduates, a female dominated group.

Historical introduction

Portugal's transition to democracy began in the dawn of 25 April 1974, when a group of captains of the army, who were fighting the colonial war, started a revolutionary movement. It was a peaceful revolution, which was absolutely unexpected by the government and by the majority of the population. Unexpected, but very much desired. The people rejoiced on the streets, and red carnations were inserted into the soldiers' guns, which fired no bullets at all. All the former regime's political elites were dismissed or exonerated. Law number one, dated the same day of the revolution, dismissed the president of the republic and all the members of the government and the parliament. It was a rupture transition, without any pact or negotiation between former elites and the new ones, and there was a movement of political purges, with the goal of removing every possible 'fascist' element (Pinto, 2005: 18).

This was how 48 years of dictatorship ended and two years of communist and military control begun. It is important to notice that this was a revolution that was made from top to bottom, from a few central political elites to the people, who adhered firmly and strongly. The physical presence of military forces on the streets completed the apparatus that brought about enthusiastic crowds previously motivated by decades of clandestine work done by members of the communist party and other resistance groups. Rural and industrial workers responded to powerful and effective propaganda and were

completely deceived as to the real goals and possibilities of the movement they were getting themselves into.

The first political elites to take power were the military. A National Salvation Comity was formed to rule the country. Most of its members were high officers of the military forces. Its president was a General of the Army named Spínola, one of the main contributors to the revolutionary movement. He was the first president of the new regime, followed by another General named Costa Gomes, who ruled until the first elections took place. The first prime-minister, Adelino da Palma Carlos, was appointed on 15 May 1974 and he was a civilian, a lawyer and university professor (and a free mason), but his two month government was followed by five other short termed governments, lead by radical left wing high ranking army officers.

During this first two years period, there was a struggle between the communists and most of the military, who wanted to impose a totalitarian communist regime, and the civil society and its civil elites, who fought to establish democracy. The first democratic elections were held on the first anniversary of the revolution, 25 April 1975, and the people validated the civilian option. The Socialist Party won with 38 per cent of the votes, and the Communist Party, which presumed it held a revolutionary legitimacy to impose its model, had only a 12 per cent result. These elections were destined to form a Parliament whose main goal was to write and approve a new constitution, which established democratic principles. After one of the most troubling years of Portugal's history, with bank, industry and land occupations and nationalizations (Almeida, 2006b), and a few aborted revolutionary movements, finally on 25 April 1976 elections were held to form a new Parliament and the first constitutional government. Two months later the first president was democratically elected and on December of the same year local elections were held to vote for mayors, members of municipal councils and parishes. From then on democratic institutions began to function with some regularity, towards a multi-party system, in which two parties, the Socialist Party (PS) and the Social Democratic Party (PSD), alternate. This system characterises most democracies nowadays.

Presidents

The first democratically elected President of the Portuguese Republic was António Ramalho Eanes, a high ranking military officer who fought on the colonial war. He was clearly anti-communist and he won with over 60 per cent of the votes. He was re-elected in 1980 and remained in power until the 1986 elections, when Mário Soares was elected the first civilian President of Portuguese Republic since the First Republic, 60 years earlier. We can say that the people's choice of the first president was related to the necessity of a strong arm which could hold the military and make them return to their bases. Therefore, it was a military choice with a civilian purpose.

As for Mário Soares, his prestige came from his exile and resistance to the earlier regime. Even though he came from a wealthy family, his father, a school teacher and the owner of an elite private school, had a political history that had begun in the First Republic, before Salazar's New State. He is a lawyer, but it was his political carrier, and not his professional one, that lead him to power. He lived in exile for many years before the revolution, and was supported by international socialist organizations, both before and after 1974. It is well known his connection to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the support the United States ambassador in Portugal Frank Carlucci gave to the Socialist Party, as well as German Chancellor Will Brandt. Those were also the main reasons that allowed Jorge Sampaio to be elected President in 1996: as a law student in the 1960s, he was involved in students associations that fought Salazar's

regime. Afterwards, as a lawyer, he defended political prisoners. And latter, as a member of the Socialist Party since 1978, he was a member of parliament and the mayor of Lisbon, Portugal's capital city.

Nowadays, these selection criterions to elect presidents are no longer relevant. Younger generations have no memory of the old regime and aren't interested in those political careers. Their interests lie in performance and economic values. So it was logical to elect Cavaco Silva in 2006, a former prime-minister and an Economics Professor, who had already given proof of his political as well as professional competence as an economist.

Portuguese governments, the parliament and local political institutions followed the same path during the last 30 years of Portuguese history. Specially the left wing political elites, who evolved from the early revolutionaries to the new technocrats (Weber, 1959; Guérin et Kerrouche, 2006).

Central political elites

The first elected prime minister of Portugal was Mário Soares. He was appointed for his role as the leader of the Socialist Party, who won the 1976 elections. This is how the Portuguese political system works since the approval of the 1976 Constitution, which established a representative democracy, mediated by political parties. It is within the parties that political elites are chosen: each party has a convention that elects a leader and each one proposes a list of candidates to the parliament. This is a rather centralised and informal process: the intervention of the bases of each party is possible mostly as voters on the conventions. Lists of candidates depend on party leaders, who definitely control political careers, more so than in the rest of the OECD countries. Therefore, in Portugal, the level of democracy within political parties is rather more limited than the one that can be found in most democracies of its geo-cultural area (Freire, 2001).

Of course, those first years of democracy were unstable and governments fell rather quickly: after two years as prime-minister, Mário Soares was replaced and three other governments were appointed until the next elections, in 1979. A right wing coalition was elected, lead by Francisco Sá Carneiro, an attorney who had been a young member of parliament during the final years of the former regime. Most leaders of the two right wing parties in Portugal these years had had this earlier political career as members of parliament who had tried, unsuccessfully, to institute democracy within the New State regime. Francisco Sá Carneiro, along with another political leader of the coalition, was killed in 1980. The right wing coalition remained in power until the next election, in 1983. Mário Soares was re-elected, but his government, again, only lasted two years: in 1985 the Social Democrat Party won the elections and a centre-right government was formed. Prime-minister Cavaco Silva inaugurated a period of stability and economic prosperity, very much influenced by the Portuguese adhesion to the European Union (EEC by then) in 1986. Just as the revolution had been directed by a few centralised elites, also Portugal's transition into democratic stability was related to the interest right wing governments had in creating more favourable conditions to Portuguese integration in the EEC (see more about European Union membership as a way to secure democracy and promote economic development in Dudek, 2005, and Bukowski, Piattoni, Smyrl, 2003). And there were profits in it, for a great amount of money was invested into the Portuguese economy.

In order to manage all these changes and a recovering economy, professional skills became more important than political ones. Therefore, from then on, ministers and members of parliament have been selected among professional specialists. Universities,

rather than former regime's prisons or exile, became the main breeding ground for political elites. After Cavaco Silva, the Socialist prime-minister António Guterres (1995-2002) also had this type of background: he is an engineer, and his government was formed with other engineers and economists. This was a new Socialist Party, the one that emerged in the mid 1990s, completely different from the early one: after the old revolutionaries from the time of Mário Soares, an atheist and a free mason, these new socialist elites were practicing Catholics, very much influenced by a few members of the high church hierarchy, with ties to the Opus Day organization. Guterres' career followed a path that is now usual for Portuguese politicians: he went on to be appointed the president of the Socialist International, from 1999 to 2005. Since then, he is the High Commissioner of the United Nations to the refugees. The same path was followed by Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, the Secretary-General of the Socialist Party from 2002 to 2004. An engineer and university professor, he resigned from his post and was invited to be Portugal's ambassador to the OECD.

The Social Democrats won the election in 2002, and Durão Barroso formed a new government. His career was both professional and political: in Law school he was a leader of the student's association, and he went on to obtain masters and doctoral degrees in Political Science. In parallel to his academic career (he was a university professor in Lisbon and Washington) he was an active leader of the Social Democratic Party, a member of parliament, a secretary of state and a minister in several governments. Also, like Guterres, after being prime-minister, he went abroad to an internationally prestigious job: since 2004 he is the President of the European Commission. He was replaced by Pedro Santana Lopes, whose career includes the presidency of a football club and mayor of Lisbon. Anyway, he only lasted four months in government. President Jorge Sampaio did not consider him fit to run the country, so he dissolved the parliament and ordered an election. In 2005 the Socialist Party won and José Sócrates formed a new government composed of technocrats, recruited mainly on the best universities in Portugal and abroad (Pinto and Almeida, 2003; Almeida, Pinto and Bermeo, 2003). Sócrates had been a member of parliament since 1987, a party leader since 1991, a secretary of state and a minister in Guterres' government, in 1999. He was elected general secretary of the Socialist Party in 2004.

Members of parliament

Very much like governments, the Portuguese parliament reflects the same evolution in its political elites. The first elected members were mostly university graduates, but this group was under 60 per cent. Afterwards, more than 80 per cent are graduates and post-graduates. There are considerable differences among parties: for example, in 1975 over 80 per cent of the Communist Party's members of parliament had only high school. And right wing members of parliament were usually higher educated than the ones on the left wing. But nowadays the parties are very similar regarding educational profiles of its elected members. There was a strong approach of the profiles of left wing parties' members of parliament to the so called bourgeois parties, just as it happened to the European left wing parties after World War II (Freire, 2001). Regarding age, the early members of parliament were younger than nowadays. The average rose from 42 to 45 years old (by the time they were elected). Their main professional careers are in Law, followed by managers and teachers. There were also quite a few farm and industry workers during the first years of democracy, most of them within the Communist Party, but those ones were almost totally eliminated from parliament.

This elitist profile is determined by the parties' selection process: for their candidates, leaders choose preferably male, middle-aged individuals, with large

educational and professional resources. Equally as important as demand, there is the offer factor: these are the same individuals who are more than others available to pursue a political career. The professionalisation of politics in Western industrialised nations has increased lately (Borchert 2003). And Portugal is no exception, especially with upward political careers. Earlier political careers of members of parliament are relevant, especially as members of other elected offices, such as local councillor. This is a growing factor: 'local councillor and parliamentary experience are the two main factors of political professionalisation of Portuguese members of parliament' and, from 1987 on, over 50 per cent of MP have had that experience, which is similar to the European average (Freire, 2001: 115, 118).

Mayors (Almeida, 2006a)

Continental Portugal is divided into 18 districts and there are two autonomous regions, on the Atlantic islands of the Madeira and the Azores. Each one is divided into municipalities, founded, in most cases, in the middle-ages. At present there are 308 municipalities, ruled by an elected mayor and a group of councillors. The local electoral process is also based on lists of candidates who run for the major political parties or, since the 2001 election, on independent voters associations. The winner list elects the mayor and the number of councillors for each party is proportional to the electoral results. So the body of councillors is multi-partied and they all have to work together and run the municipality for four years.

This wasn't always the case: in the New State regime, councillors were elected locally, but the mayor was centrally appointed by the Minister of the Interior, after being nominated by the district governor (also centrally appointed). The legislation of 1936 specifically refers that they were to be chosen among local economic and social elites, people who possessed social and symbolic capitals, preferably with a university degree. They did not receive payment (except for the mayors of Lisbon, Oporto, and other important towns, representing only 8.6 per cent of the municipalities), therefore they had to have their own incomes and pursue their professional careers in parallel.

After 25 April 1974, old mayors were dismissed by decree and administrative commissions were appointed for each municipality. These commissions were supposed to be composed of independent personalities or groups and political currents which identified themselves with the Movement of Armed Forces, and should function until the first democratic local elections took place. In most cases, local citizen comities affiliated to the Communist Party presented the list of the commission members to the Ministry of Interior and were immediately approved. The role of Communist Party local leaders was fundamental to the attraction and mobilization process of the people who actively participated in the replacement of the mayors and all the presidents of economic and corporative institutions.

There was an almost complete discontinuation of the local political elites. Traditional elites were mostly landowners, especially on the southern latifundia region. Nowadays those groups don't even run for local elections. And economic power is no longer a way of conquering local political leadership. New professions emerged in the group that controls political jobs. Economic elites based on landownership are completely and deliberately absent from local politics. Also, political jobs are no longer interesting to these groups, whose professional activities either in agriculture or others are increasingly more time consuming and provide them with incomes that are by far more appealing than a mayor's salary.

There were 464 individuals appointed presidents of the administrative commissions, 49.4 per cent of them with a university degree and 5.2 per cent with a

technical degree. If we consider all the members of these commissions, only 26.6 per cent had a university degree and 6.7 per cent had a technical degree.

This was the first time women were appointed to lead municipalities. During the Estado Novo regime, women were allowed to run for municipal councils, and there were some who were elected. In 1973 there was a woman appointed vice-president of a municipality. Anyway, there were only nine women appointed presidents of the administrative commissions, representing 1.9 per cent. And from a total of 2547 members of these commissions, there were 92 women (3.6 per cent).

There is no doubt that during this revolutionary period there was an intentional enlargement of the professional categories of the leaders of the municipalities. For example, factory and farm workers were appointed presidents, which was something absolutely unheard of before.

The first democratic local elections were held on 12 December 1976. After over half a century of mayors being appointed by the central government, from that date on they were elected by the people, mediated by the political parties. Anyway, eligibility criteria were definitely modified: new factors were introduced, such as the direct relation between the candidate's professional and social background and the social and demographic characteristics of the region, or the social work done, instead of the social capital possessed. And personal sympathy, a new and very important factor introduced in 1976, contrary to fear and respect, which people generally felt for mayors before 1974.

With the regime's transition, there was an almost complete replacement of the local political and economic elites: less than three per cent of the old mayors were elected afterwards and only for a very short period of time.

There has been a real enforcement of local democracy. After a much centralised regime, which deprived municipalities of its centuries' old tradition of autonomy, the goal of the new legislators was to create a safety net of several layers of government in order to protect the citizens from the return of another potentially authoritarian regime (Phillips, 1996: 23). The decision to decentralise and strengthen local government at the municipal level was quite easily accepted by all political forces at the time (Pereira, 1991: 134).

There were 1170 mayors in Portugal between 1976 and 2005, 31 of them women (2.8 per cent). In these last three decades, 44 per cent of the mayors had a university degree and nine per cent had a technical degree. Specialised professionals are still the majority, but with only 26.2 per cent, a figure which is considerably lower than earlier values. They are followed by teachers, with 18.1 per cent and civil servants with 11.4. Women have higher percentages of specialists, teachers and top managers (mostly with an Economics degree) than men. Male specialists are mostly lawyers.

Women in Portuguese politics

After the first nine women appointed president of the local municipalities' administrative commissions from 1974 to 1976, there were 31 women elected mayor from 1976 to 2005. Even though their numbers have been increasing, especially by the end of the 1990s, there is no doubt that there is a diminutive female representation. Anyway, it was a considerable revolution in local politics, considering that there was not a single female mayor before 1974.

Insert table 1 about here

Briefly analysing the gender question in Portugal, the first woman to ever vote in this country was called Carolina Beatriz Ângelo. She was a medical doctor, a widow and a mother who, in 1911, required the right to vote as a family head. Lacking specific laws regarding gender, the case went to court. She won and exercised her right to vote. The law was altered immediately after, denying this right to women. Later, in 1931, for the first time in Portugal there was a law allowing women to vote, as long as they were family heads. Anyway, this law had significant gender discrimination: men only had to prove they could read and write, whereas women had to show a high school or university diploma. Two months later, feminine vote was enlarged to emancipated women and they were allowed to be council members in their municipalities. Under these circumstances, active female participation in national politics was quite reduced. From 1934 to 1973 there were only 14 female members of the Portuguese parliament, then called National Assembly (Vargas, 2000: 43-44). As for cabinet members, the first woman appointed was Maria Teresa Lobo, Undersecretary of State of Social Assistance in 1971.

After the 25 April 1974 revolution, an electoral law was passed on November of the same year which introduced for the first time total gender equality, just as many other laws were issued on that period to pave the way towards political, social and civic rights gender equality.

In 1979, for the first and only time, there was a woman Prime-Minister for five months: Maria de Lurdes Pintassilgo, a chemical engineer who had been a member of the lower chamber of the Portuguese parliament during the Estado Novo regime. She was a Minister of Social Affairs in 1974-1975. After being Prime-Minister, she was appointed UNESCO ambassador, and she was an adviser to the President Ramalho Eanes. In 1986 she was elected a member of the European Parliament, in the Socialist Party's lists.

After Pintassilgo, only in 1985 did Prime-Minister Cavaco Silva (recently elected President of the Republic) invite a woman to be a minister on his cabinet. Women's participation in Portuguese governments from 1976 to 1995 is limited to six ministers, 33 secretaries of state and four undersecretaries of state. This adds up to 44 women, a total of 5.8 per cent of total cabinet members throughout this period. The first woman civil governor was appointed in 1980. Until 1994 three more were appointed, which, for a total of 114 civil governors appointed from 1974 to 1994, represents 3.5 per cent (data collected from França, 1994). Regarding members of parliament, there were 19 women elected in 1975 (7,7 per cent), 13 in 1976 (4,9 per cent), an average of 18 of between 1979 and 1991 (7,25 per cent), 32 in 1995 (13,9 per cent) 40 in 1999 (17,3 per cent), 44 in 2002 (19,2 per cent) and 62 in 2005 (27 per cent). The Communist Party had always the largest percentage of women elected for parliament, followed by the Socialist Party (Freire, 2001: 60). But in the last 2005 election this panorama has changed, as we can see on table II, with a large percentage of women on the Left Block and on the Socialist Party. These figures demonstrate the slow evolution of women in Portuguese politics and the fact that in central representative institutions women have achieved a more prominent position than in local ones.

Insert table 2 about here

To complete this picture, table III shows us the numbers of Portuguese female members of the European Parliament.

Insert table 3 about here

Concerning this subject, Portugal's female representation is not so different from the average found in rest of the world. Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris summed up women as world leaders in 2002 and these are their figures: 4.7 per cent of women elected heads of state or government and ten per cent members of cabinets (Inglehart and Norris, 2003: 127-129). Yet, in relation to European countries, Portugal is very low on the list of parliament representation: for instance Sweden had 42.7 per cent women and Spain had 28.3 per cent. France was behind with 10.9 per cent (Vargas, 2000: 62).

With such a limited universe, trying to make a portrait of women in Portuguese politics is almost like describing individuals, rather than a group. Anyhow, there are some possible conclusions to be taken: for example, the levels of academic achievement are higher in female than in male politicians. This fits into the Portuguese demographic reality, where, for instance, in 1991 women enrolled in universities represented 55.5 per cent of the undergraduate population. Regarding the total university graduates, women represented 65.7 per cent. And, on the professional level, women are gaining positions on jobs usually reserved to men, in such fields as law, police and diplomacy (Viegas and Faria, 1999: 19, 40). Teachers and health professionals have the highest percentages of women in its workforce.

Insert table 4 about here

In local government women are also better educated: 58 per cent of women who were elected mayor from 1976 on had a college education whereas men only had it in 43 per cent of the cases. Like Members of Parliament, women mayors in Portugal were elected mostly with left wing parties (from 1976 to 2005): 38.7 per cent were elected with the PSD (right wing), but adding 29 per cent with the Socialist Party and 29 per cent with the Communist Party (with a total of 58 per cent), we can apply to Portugal the rule that says that in present day's countries women's values tend more towards the left (Inglehart and Norris, 2003: 99). Nevertheless, in 2005, 19 women were elected mayor and this tendency has changed: nine of them (47.4 per cent) are Social Democrats (PSD), six are Socialists (31.6 per cent), three are Communists (15.8 per cent) and one is with the Left Block (BE). They are mostly university graduates: five of them are high school teachers and one is a university professor. There are two economists, two engineers, one lawyer, one medical doctor, one sociologist. And then there is a computer programmer, two bank clerks, another clerk and two civil servants. Nowadays, professions no longer vary according to parties: they are all equally distributed. As for the Socialist Party, its six women mayors are as follows: three high school teachers, one university professor, one lawyer and one computer programmer. Three of them have formerly been members of parliament.

Since March 2005, the new Socialist government has appointed two female ministers, one as Minister of Culture and the other as Minister of the Education. Both of them have doctoral degrees and they were selected in the best universities, where they are professors: the first one teaches Literature and the second Sociology. There are also three women Secretaries of State: one is a musician, the other an engineer with a doctoral thesis in the making and the third one is an Economics pos-graduate. As we can see, nowadays women are also recruited for government for their technical skills, rather than political careers.

The Socialist Party has also elected four women members of the European Parliament in 2004 (33.3 per cent of a total of 12). One of them was a member of the Socialist Youth when she was elected: Jamila Madeira, 31 years old, is an economist

and a pos-graduate and she works in a large state enterprise. Her political career has begun in the university and she was a member of the Portuguese parliament since she was 22 years old. By placing her on the list of candidates to the European Parliament, the Socialist Party was clearly targeting women and youth as privileged groups. The other three were definitely chosen to be candidates to such a prestigious post as a reward for a previous successful political career: they are all around 50 years old, they are trained professional with high academic achievements and their political lives have all begun when they were young. Elisa Ferreira has a PHD in Economics and she is a University professor, who was twice a minister in Guterres' governments: environment, 1995-1999, and plan, 1999-2002. Ana Gomes is a post-graduate in European Union Law and a career diplomat. She was Portugal's ambassador in Djakarta, Indonesia, from 1999 to 2003. Finally Edite Estrela has a master degree and she was a high school teacher of Portuguese language and literature. She produced cultural television shows, published books and was a member of the Portuguese parliament from 1987 to 2004. She was also the mayor of Sintra (1994-2002).

Conclusions

In the last 30 years, Portugal has been through a considerable evolution, from its early revolutionary moments until a sort of democratic stability was achieved, with the aid of the European Union and its political demands, economic regulations and (very important) financial contributions. Portuguese society accompanied the changing times. Its elites, both political and economic, lead the way for important transformations. And they can be seen as a mirror of those same transformations, for their social characteristics reflect the people who vote for them. Presently, with globalization and the EU enlargement, Portugal faces serious challenges, for which it should be prepared. Portugal's political elites have the skills to overcome these new times: they have the education and the political and professional experience. But, as before the revolution, regarding the gender issue, only the fittest and best prepared (both academically, professionally and insertion into the part system) can achieve the political spotlight.

Of course the democratic transition has brought about a sexual revolution in Portugal and, at least in legislation, total gender equality. In local government there are women mayors, where there weren't any. And both the parliament and government have as increasing number of women. There hasn't yet been a presidential election which gave a woman a victory, although there have been a few candidates. Regarding the workplace, there is indeed gender equality, even if in top management jobs they are still a minority. And there are even some professions in which women are prevalent. So the initial hypothesis about an improvement of women's participation in politics and the democratization process influencing women's access to political offices can be proven right.

Regardless of these claims, there is still a long way to go into gender equity in Portugal. And the questions it poses cannot be answered merely by the regime transition explanation. There are other issues at stake, which are related to the wider gender question, not only in areas related to economic development and society as a whole, but deeper ones. For instance, why did those few women participated in politics in the Estado Novo Regime? And why should women nowadays still want to be a part of politics at all? How can it be compatible with motherhood, family and career opportunities?

Some social scientists defend the thesis that women who participate in politics do not crave for power, like men do: they rather want to change society for the best (Barros, 1999: 16). Others say that the political system still limits women's access and

women, themselves, tend to keep away, because they feel powerless to change it (Viegas and Faria, 1999: 46-48). Much more could be added, like the negative image many politicians have in the present times, with ties to corruption, which women do not usually want to be associated with, or the party system which still regards women as strangers, especially in the majority parties.

Without any doubt, gender wise Portugal is on the right track, but the question remains: why are women in politics still a minority?

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Tables:

Table I: Mayors 1976 – 2005

Election dates	Elected women	%	Elected Men	%	Total
1976	5	1,6	299	98,4	304
1979	4	1,3	301	98,7	305
1982	6	2,0	299	98,0	305
1985	4	1,3	301	98,7	305
1989	7	2,3	298	97,7	305
1993	5	1,6	300	98,4	305
1997	12	3,9	293	96,1	305
2001	16	5,2	292	94,8	308
2005	19	6,2	289	93,8	308
Totals	78		2672		2750
Averages	8,7	2,8	296,9	97,2	100

Source: author's research.

Table II: Panorama of the Portuguese Parliament in 2005

2005	Members of Parliament	Women	%
PS	121	47	38,84
PSD	75	7	9,33
CDS	12	1	8,33
PCP/PEV	14	3	21,43
BE	8	4	50,00
Totals	230	62	27,00

Source: Electronic resource: http://www.parlamento.pt/deputados/deputados_gp.aspx.

Table III: Percentage of Portuguese women elected as Members of the European Parliament, 1987 – 2004

Election years	%
1987	4,2
1989	12,5
1994	8
1999	18,5
2004	25

Sources: Viegas and Faria, 1999: 54-55. Electronic resources: www.europarl.eu.int/members/public/geoSearch and www.europarl.eu.int/members/archive.

Table IV: Percentage of Portuguese women on civil service

Female percentages on civil servant jobs, 1997	%
Cabinet staff	49,4
Cabinet head	35,8
Graduate technical staff	59,4
Academic researchers	50,9
University teachers	36,1
Technical school teachers	42
Primary and high school teachers	75,4
Pre-school teachers	99,1
Medical doctors	47,1
Nurses	82,5
Health workers	85,6
Judges	33,7
Attorneys	35,1
Law officer	55,1
Prision guard	11,4
Notaries	55,7
Notary worker	80,5
Criminal investigation worker	9,8

Source: Viegas and Faria, 1999: 98-99.