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Portugal

In Portugal, the right-wing party confirms its majority

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On the night of 9 June, the secretary general of the Socialist Party (PS) announced that his party was the big winner of the European elections and that the PS "is now the leading political force in Portugal".

In fact, the Socialist Party managed to hold on to a 0.97-point lead over the Democratic Alliance (AD), the right-wing coalition (PSD/CDS) which formed a minority government in March and sent the Socialists back into opposition after almost ten years in power.

No hegemonic party°

The Socialist euphoria, with a decimal point victory, conceals the reality observed in the legislative elections of 10 March and confirmed by the European elections: neither the Socialist Party nor the Democratic Alliance occupy a hegemonic position in Portuguese politics. The shift to the right in March continues and is causing general unease in the political centre. At the same time, popular apprehension grew in the face of the rise of the far right in the parliamentary elections (18%), despite its fall two months later in the European elections (9%).

The parties to the left of the Socialists have not yet been able to recover from the defeats of recent years, but they have managed to stabilise the vote they won in last March's parliamentary elections, and must now look to move forward to regain the ground they lost. The parties to the right of the DA continue to gain ground, nipping at the heels of the traditional right, which is struggling to hold on to its slender advantage (at the general election, it had less than a one-point lead over the Socialist Party).

The Democratic Alliance imposes austerity and privatisation

The minority government of the DA is unstable, but will have to approve a state budget in October. It is announcing sectoral programmes on immigration, health and housing to condition both the PS and the far right to European and social policies. Unfortunately, we already know what this means: changes initiated by the right without going through Parliament always become difficult to reverse later on. In the space of three months, the government has already imposed high barriers to the regularisation of illegal immigrant workers, repealed the fragile socialist measure that put an end to the "golden visa" - after ten years under pressure from the social movement - is preparing to privatise health structures and is trying to solve the shortage of teachers by inviting retired people in, which will have little effect. It's all about pragmatism and speed, because the Prime Minister has turned the government into an election committee.

The PS is betting on achieving the status of "leading force in the country" in order to accentuate the government's wear and tear. But the fact is that the PS, which formed a government with an absolute majority, resigned on its own initiative and then lost 42 seats in March (there are 230 MEPs in Parliament), does not represent an alternative to right-wing governance.

Government by decree

For the time being, the Right is ignoring Parliament and governing by decree, in an attempt to repeat Cavaco Silva's experience of the 1980s, when a minority PSD government overthrown in Parliament succeeded in imposing a lasting and comfortable majority. If it fails to do so, it will try to join forces with the ultra-liberal IL party and the far right (Chega) to govern, as it will have no other choice.

The Socialist Party is in the same situation: even if a parliamentary rejection of the state budget led to elections in the short term and the SP got ahead of the AD, it would hardly have a majority to govern. The only proposal that the SP seems to be promoting is a return to the neoliberal consensus that it used with its former absolute majority.

The problem for the left is different. With a total of just over 10%, all the parties that represent this area - the Left Bloc, the PC and the Livre (Greens) - have lost ground since 2022. However, the Left Bloc has recovered somewhat and stabilised its vote in 2024 at 4.3%. In the huge demonstrations marking the 50th anniversary of 25 April and those organised by social movements, particularly in the fight for housing, feminism, anti-racism and LGBT, there is a demand for unity that constitutes an alternative to the right and the threat of the far right.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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