“The role of the media in the Portuguese 2006 presidential election”[1]

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Abstract: The journalistic coverage of the 2006 presidential election and the interviews to journalists and politicians, lead us to look at the construction of presidential candidatures as a process of constant interaction between multiple “actors”: the candidates, parties, journalists and voters. The media serve as a laboratory in the construction of political candidatures where the candidates test previous intentions and manifestations; the parties analyze reactions to pre-candidates and candidates and possibilities to political support; journalists select, frame and present the news about the campaign and the election, and voters who are the news consuming public and whose opinion is asked through opinion polls. These opinion studies can, in turn, influence the candidates’ and parties’ decisions.

In this way, the media can be more than a mere virtual stage where things just happen, they can also be an important part of this process. While in some cases, candidates simply announce their decisions in the media, in others, like the case of the Expresso newspaper and the candidate (now President) Cavaco Silva, there is a special concern in preparing public opinion for announcements, through the media, using for instance newspapers as vehicles of a specific image or message. In this case, the media allows the evaluation of the impact of certain decisions before they are taken and helps to find the best ways of reaching the candidate’s objectives.
Portuguese political system

Due to the nature of this paper and the objective of being presented to an international audience (non Portuguese), it is important to give us readers some important background information regarding the Portuguese political system and media, in order to help us understand the case we try to explain.

Regarding the Portuguese political system, it is important to point out, in order to understand the political weight of the President, that we have a semi-presidential regime, with a Parliament (Prime-Minister, Government and Deputies from several parties) and a President. The Parliament is elected indirectly (we vote for a party) in Legislative Elections and has representatives from the most voted for parties. The Prime-Minister, who actually governs the country, is generally the leader of the most voted for party in Legislative Elections. The President, through a formal act, invites him to constitute a Government, which means choosing the Ministers and Secretaries of State. The Presidency is a largely symbolic position.

Now, we have a Socialist Government and deputies from different parties, in order of number: the Socialist Party (the most voted for in the 2005 legislative elections), the Social Democrat Party (centre right), the Communist Party, the CDS-PP (right wing populist) and the Left Block (trotskyist).

It is important to say that in Portugal, the Socialist Party that formed the Government in 2005, is socialist almost only in name, because all its recent economic and financial policies could have been made by a Government with a liberal/right orientation.

The Government is responsible to Parliament and the President. The Prime-Minister has executive and legislative powers, and the President, the highest political figure in the Republic, has only limited powers of intervention, but being elected directly by the Portuguese people, he is seen as a kind of guarantor of the other powers.

Some authors defend that the Portuguese President has more negative than positive powers: having the right of veto over all the legislation presented by the Parliament, can also exert “influence magistrature”, with a public exposure of ideas and opinions about all matters.

Two Portuguese Constitutional experts (Gomes Canotilho and Vital Moreira) give a metaphorical explanation about Portuguese Presidential powers: The President is the arbitrator between the Government and Parliament and between the political majority and the political opposition. The President polices the Government, controlling its behaviour and is its fireman, in cases of Government resignation, dissolution of Parliament or in declaring “state of emergency” in particular crises.

The presidential candidates in Portugal should be independent citizens, but this does not
mean political parties can not support one of the candidates. The President is elected for five years and can be re-elected for a maximum of two consecutive mandates.

Since the Carnation Revolution, of 25th April 1974, which instituted democracy, Portugal has had four elected Presidents: the first one, General Ramalho Eanes, a military and very important in the transition to democracy and in dialogue with the military that started the revolution. He was President from 1976 until 1985. The Constitutional review in 1982, extinguished the Revolutionary Council[2], that had important powers over which the President presided. Some authors, like Vital Moreira, believe that after this Constitutional review, the parliamentary component of the regime became predominant over the presidential, because Government is no longer politically responsible to the President (only institutionally), but only to the Parliament.

The next President was Mário Soares, from 1985 until 1995. He helped in the consolidation of democracy, and for that he is seen, by some people, as the “father of democracy” in Portugal. He was one of the founder members Socialist Party (PS) in 1973. During the dictatorship he was persecuted and exiled in Paris until 25th April 1974. Mário Soares was President during most of Cavaco Silva’s time in government and with the objective of criticising its performance, he invented the concept of “open presidencies”, which means that the President travels throughout the country and uses the media to draw attention to particular problems and Government mistakes. The relationship between the President and the Prime-Minister was very tense especially due to this President’s attitude of constant criticism. Mário Soares was again a presidential candidate in the 2006 elections, to “prevent Cavaco Silva’s triumphal walk to Presidency”.

The third President was Jorge Sampaio (1995-2005), probably the most criticised of all the Presidents in the democratic period, due to his constant hesitations in making decisions. In spite of that, he dissolved Parliament twice and called early elections. The first due to the resignation of António Guterres in 2001 and the second in 2004, after a series of political scandals during the time Santana Lopes was Prime Minister (July to November 2004).

In January 2006 Cavaco Silva was elected President and he took office in March.

The President Jorge Sampaio’s decisions to order the dissolution of Parliament in 2004 and in calling early Legislative Elections, after a serious of political scandals that lead to a political crisis, are seen as an important precedent and have installed a discussion about presidential powers in Portugal in the middle of the Presidential election pre-campaign.

In general terms, this political crisis was caused by the departure of the Prime-Minister at
that time, José Manuel Barroso, who decided to accept the invitation to become the next European Commission President. Barroso had formed his Government only two years before, after the resignation of António Guterres following bad local election results (he was re-elected Prime-Minister, in the 1999 Legislative Elections, without a majority in the Parliament).

In addition to this, Portugal currently faces a major economic, budget and social crisis and lack of trust in the future and in politicians in general.

This discussion about Presidential powers gained importance during the electoral campaign due to the political context, and also because of the profile of the most probable next President: Cavaco Silva, former Prime-Minister, who is known as pragmatic politician. All this contributes to the idea and feeling of placing all hopes in the January Presidential Elections and in the next Portuguese President.

The Presidential Election, that took place in 22nd January 2006, became very important in this context. Moreover, the candidates were very well known to the Portuguese electorate, and have an important visibility in the media. They were the former Prime-Minister and Presidential candidate, Cavaco Silva, the former President Mário Soares, a very well-known poet and Deputy Manuel Alegre, and two party leaders from the left, Jerónimo de Sousa and Francisco Louçã, the first, also a former presidential candidate in the 2001 Presidential elections and a well known lawyer and former Presidential candidate, Garcia Pereira.

**Portuguese Media**

In Portugal, due to a long period of political dictatorship and press censorship, newspapers are not partisan or party affiliated and try to maintain their independence, by giving equal space to different ideologies and political ideas, nevertheless, in some periods, such as in this Presidential election, some had different behaviour. Referring, for instance, to *Expresso*, a weekly newspaper, that seems to have contributed, in our understanding, in many ways to the candidature and election of the former Prime Minister, Cavaco Silva. It is interesting to observe that this newspaper was founded by some PSD activists (Social Democrat Party), the same party that elected Cavaco Silva Prime Minister in 1985 and supported his presidential candidature, in spite of his assurance of independence.

Before the “Carnation Revolution”, we had a political dictatorship and the regime controlled all media through censorship. All newspapers were politically aligned and had
connections to ideological groups. Television and radio were important instruments of the regime (there was only state television and radio stations were also controlled).

After the revolution, a period of expression and freedom of opinion began. However, the continuity of Governments elected from the left nationalized almost all sectors of public life including some media: at that time, the only television was public and even the newspapers and radio stations that were maintained in private hands were oriented by public service directives.

The centre-right Cavaco Silva Governments (1985-1995) started a sequence of privatizations in some sectors, including the media. In 1992, Portugal had its first private television: SIC, and one year later the second: TVI. The opening of Television to private enterprise and the emergence of more radio stations brought about important changes in the Portuguese media, such as more pluralism and the association of information to a market-based logic.

The transmission of political information on private channels in media such as television, lead equally to important re-definitions: the ‘media agenda’ started having different information orientations and preoccupations, and journalists began selecting and editing political information more and giving a voice to different political actors, such as the opposition, since under the public service mentality, the Government was practically the only one to transmit its message on television. Newspapers and radio stations followed these new orientations and Portuguese politicians have adapted themselves in order to transmit their message, as we will see further in this paper.

Now, media professionals tend to show themselves as neutral, independent and objective. In this context it is impossible to see a newspaper or a television station assume direct support for a political candidate or a political cause. In the Portuguese media, an attempt to obtain pluralism is through the publication of opinion articles from different points of view.

During electoral campaigns, we can nevertheless analyse the news (number and bias) and the space given to each candidate to understand if there are significant differences in the way candidates are treated.

In what concerns the relationship between media and politics in Portugal, one thing we can suggest is that: it seems to be consensual among journalists that the political agenda exerts an important control over the media agenda, during electoral campaign periods. This political control of the media agenda is still very pronounced in Portugal, where last year we had the case of the resignation of Marcelo Rebelo Sousa, an important political columnist[3] from his weekly comment spot on a news program, caused by the direct influence of the Santana Lopes government, that didn’t like his comments on the Prime-
Minister’s performance. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa gave the following answer when asked about his opinion on the politicians’ influence on the media agenda: “The influence is huge. Politicians can determine the choice of columnists and the way journalists intervene in discussions.”

During electoral campaign periods, the political agenda dominates the media agenda, which has some difficulties in prevailing, which means that generally journalists are limited to following candidates’ programs.

One important change in Portuguese politics caused by the media is the more speed: candidates anticipate their decisions and use the media to test decisions before actually making them, as a kind of laboratory. Besides that, the time given to candidates’ speeches (and politicians in general) is smaller, with the presence of journalists and their interpretation of events growing.

There is also an attempt to make a coherent and logical narrative from news coverage, which implies the construction of dialogues between candidates that may not exist otherwise (for example: asking a candidate to comment on the declaration of their opponent).

Gurevitch and Blumler, in a paper on the construction of electoral news, try to discover the motivation of journalists who are behind this type of campaign coverage: “Because in any other way a candidate would be speaking independently of others (…). If no-one attacked the ideas of the other the campaign would be very dry. It is because of argumentative coherence.” (in Traquina, 1993:191).

It is as if journalists were trying to create a dialogue between candidates that otherwise may not exist, leading to comments and actions that would not occur if it wasn’t for this journalistic intervention. Moreover, the electoral campaign covered by the media has another constraint: It is necessary to transform the information and declarations given by all “actors” in a coherent and unified way, in other words, to give a vision of the whole campaign and political context.

**Expresso Newspaper**

In 1972, Francisco Pinto Balsemão founded the company Sojornal/Expresso, believing that in spite of censorship, it was possible to print a quality weekly paper. Three years later, he created a new company to distribute this newspaper all over the country.

Francisco Pinto Balsemão was one of the three founder members of the Social Democrat Party (PSD – centre right) in 1974, and he was deputy and minister (1979-1985) and
finally Prime-Minister from 1981 to 1983.

It is important to know this, because some researchers, such as Boaventura Sousa Santos, point to the ownership of media companies as one of the factors that can influence news and electoral campaign coverage.

Since 1983, Balsemão has initiated a multimedia strategy and began buying shares in different kinds of media. In 1991, a super–holding was created, named Impresa, that applied for the concession of private television channels, and started the SIC project, which became the first in Portugal.

Today, Impresa is the biggest media group in Portugal and has television channels, newspapers, news magazines other thematic magazines and distribution companies. The *Expresso* newspaper is the oldest title in this group and a well-known newspaper of reference in Portugal. And according to his Political Editor, Mário Ramires, “it is a newspaper that was born from an idea of political and social intervention”.

In 2005, each *Expresso* edition had a print run of between 150 and 155 thousand copies. But as its political editor points out: “it is difficult to know exactly the number of readers, because one edition is read by more than just one person, sometimes four or five. And because *Expresso* is a political newspaper, we know that we are read by all the Portuguese political elite. Our political and economic sections are a reference to the important sectors of our society. Our objective is to provide the best information either in opinion forming or thought provoking terms.”

In spite of uncertainty regarding the true number of readers, we can say that *Expresso* is the most read weekly paper in Portugal, a country where the most sold quality daily papers (*Público* and *Diário de Notícias*) have a circulation of 50 or 60 thousand copies each.

The most sold are the sports papers. A study published in January 2005 from *Marktest*, a market research company, shows that the most read newspapers and those that improved their readership were the sports papers *A Bola* and *Record* and the weekly newspaper *Expresso*.

Nevertheless, newspaper reading rates in Portugal are very low when compared to other European Union countries[4]. Television is the main source of information for the Portuguese people and has a central importance in all events broadcast to society. But it is also important to point out that, the broadcast news is often organized based on the newspaper titles of the day. The special case of *Expresso* newspaper and the private television channel SIC is a good example: because they belong to the same media group, they share resources, such as journalists and some offices, which means that they quote each other frequently. (Salgado:187).
This tendency is explained by Ignacio Ramonet with the term “media mimicking”, which means that media cover many events, imitating each other. This author has, however, clear ideas about which media dictates the rules: “television produces an impact so strong in the mind of the public, that the other media are constrained to follow, support and extend this impact.” (2001: 27).

After studying some cases of recent electoral campaigns and elections in the Portuguese media, we believe that the specific case of Portuguese media is an example of mutual influence and contamination, where both newspapers and television channels dictate the news, as they may have gained the “exclusive”, and where neither one nor the other exclusively holds the role of dictating the rule. (Salgado, 2003: 187). It is worth mentioning the growing use of coloured images and pictures in newspapers, which can be seen as a direct influence of television, regarding competitive parameters.

The Candidate, now President, Cavaco Silva

In this section we try to describe some important moments of Cavaco Silva’s political life before the 2006 Presidential Election and draw attention to some traits of his personality that may have a connection with his political journey.

Cavaco Silva comes from a simple family, contrary to most Portuguese politics who reach top positions. He was always an excellent student, and someone who understood soon that he could surpass all his difficulties with hard work. He is known for his determined, persistent and calculating character. Professionally, his most underlying characteristics are linked with him being a liberal economist, a “cold Professor”, but mostly an intermittent politician, which means that he is present in Portuguese politics only at times chosen by him.

Cavaco Silva is the politician who said, during his time as Prime-Minister, that he never read newspapers, that “he was never wrong and rarely had doubts”, and who called his Ministers and Secretaries of State his assistants. His authoritarian way in ruling and in treating others was mentioned many times.

This Economy Professor, PhD in Finance from the University of York, entered active politics through an invitation from the Democratic Alliance[5] leader, Sá Carneiro, to be his Minister of Finance, in 1980.

In 1985, Cavaco Silva was unexpectedly elected PSD (Social Democrat Party) President[6]. Under his leadership, this party won three consecutive Legislative Elections, and he was the Portuguese Prime-Minister for a decade, 1985-1995. During this time, he liked to repeat that Portugal had changed and that his opponents, unlike him did not understand it,
and that was the reason why he kept on winning elections. But this magic did not last forever. Between 1993 and 1996, Cavaco Silva and his party lost all the elections, from local to presidential and his political image suffered greatly. By this time, he had almost all the press and public opinion against him. His Governments were associated with an abundant period, due to European Union funds [7]. Many roads and new buildings were made, but the essential reforms that the country needed were not done (justice, education, health amongst others).

One year before the 1991 legislative elections, some important changes began to be made in Cavaco Silva's image. By this time, Portuguese politicians started giving more attention to political marketing and importing the manuals that were used to shape American politicians' behaviour.

Some of the American basic political marketing ideas were adopted: the increased importance of the leaders’ image in parallel to the decreasing importance of political parties and some changes in electoral campaigns, such as the idea of preparing the electoral campaign to be broadcast on television, which means: instead of travelling the whole country during the electoral campaign and making speeches in all villages and towns (the convoy model), some special places of mobilization are chosen, in order to give the idea of a winning campaign, a rally is prepared for the evening, and staged to finest details, with music, a speaker to warm up the audience. Besides that, and to facilitate the transmission of the candidate’s political message, proposals and broadcast via the media, there is also a preoccupation in preparing one issue per day, using simple language.

According to Thomas Patterson, some of the reasons that explain this new kind of electoral campaign are with in their own nature: “strategy became more important, elections started being more personalized, when parties started losing their influence. The candidate assumes responsibility for the election results and one of his main worries is to create an identity and a distinctive image that will distinguish him from his opponents. Besides that, there is also an attempt to avoid controversial issues and exploit the ones that will bring more advantages to the candidate’s electoral campaign”. (1993:77).

Patterson, nevertheless, believes that the changes in the way candidates manage their campaign are not as important as the changes that occurred with in journalism. According to this author the appearance of a more aggressive type of journalism has coincided with the impact of commercial television and with the ever more frequent publication of opinion polls in the media.

Under the influence of Fernando Lima, press officer, Cavaco Silva revealed his life story and some of his private life to the Portuguese people. In October 1990, the Expresso newspaper published an extensive article about Cavaco Silva’s personal life untitled: “The
story of little Anibal”, that had the participation of his wife, his father and brothers and friends who were close to him. The next year, in the same newspaper, he appeared in the first person with an almost psychoanalytical approach. “I am now very different from the person that was elected in 1985... I was shy before people and before the crowd, I wasn’t a communicative person, I didn’t know how to speak, and I was very sensitive to what others would say about me.”

For the first time, the man who became furious with information leaks, who never answered a phone call from a journalist personally, dared to speak of life beyond politics and economics. He also started appearing more on television including on interview programs.

Coincidentally or not, it was during this phase that the decay of his Government began. The absolute political majority in the 1991 legislative election was followed by the 1993 economic crisis and the lost of direction of some Government sectors/Ministries. Cavaco Silva’s more relaxed attitude seemed to cause some lassitude in the behaviour of his subordinates and a series of political scandals was revealed by the press, and mostly by the *Independente* newspaper[8]. A series of Government reshuffles were taken without positive results and anticipating a bad election in the next legislatives in 1995, Cavaco Silva announced that he was no longer a candidate for the PSD leadership, and in consequently would not be candidate for the position of Prime-Minister.

After this announcement, press curiosity about his political future began: was he planning to be a presidential candidate in the 1996 presidential elections? In his own style, setting his own agenda and indifferent to the press and his party, he answered that “the future belongs to God”.

After his party’s (PSD) defeat in the 1995 legislative elections, he decided to stand in the 1996 presidential elections, against Jorge Sampaio, his main opponent, who was supported by the Socialist Party (PS). Jorge Sampaio was elected President, and Cavaco Silva decided to withdraw from active political life and return to teaching.

Some press columnists argued that his defeat was related to a bad electoral campaign and others believed that it was impossible to win an election with all the negative events of his last years in power still in the memory of the Portuguese people.

It is not possible to know exactly what caused his defeat in the 1996 election, whether it was due to his political image still being strongly associated to his last years in Government or bad management of his electoral campaign, or even both. We do know, however, that, in accordance with the opinion polls of the time, that the difference in vote share between both candidates decreased during the campaign, with Jorge Sampaio winning 53,91% and Cavaco Silva 46,09%. We can also speculate on his future
intentions, based on his behaviour in recent years. After the lost election in 1996, Cavaco Silva devoted himself to a “sporadic guerrilla war”. First against António Guterres’s Government (Prime-Minister at that time), whom he accused of creating an enormous budget deficit and secondly against his own enemies inside the party.

As the Expresso columnist, José António Lima, describes in the year 2001, Cavaco Silva always had the intention to run for President again, but this time, he preferred to bet on the calculated construction of his campaign: “What motivations and intentions are behind Cavaco Silva’s systematic interventions in the country’s political life? To whom do they serve (or whom do they not serve…) these shock interventions, these unexpected raids, methodically prepared – an interview followed by a university conference and a lunch with former ministers, all with the intention of appearing in the news? At the same time, as Cavaco Silva appeared in public conferences and events, he was much more uninhibited and warmer in his relationship with the press. As one of his collaborators [9] said, “Cavaco Silva treated his shyness problem in the same way he treated all other problems. He understood that it was politically important to surpass it and he worked for that.”

As in Portugal we have Presidential elections every five years, one good question at this time would be: why wasn’t Cavaco Silva a candidate in the 2001 elections? The answer is simple: all Presidents in the democratic period have been re-elected to a second term, and there are those who believe [10] that Presidents tend to be less interventionist in their first term, with the intention of re-election.

Cavaco Silva when stating, during the 2006 presidential election campaign, that he took advantage of his last 10 years away from active party politics, to prepare himself for “non executive functions” [11], has confirmed what was suspected from all his past actions and initiatives, whether a newspaper article, a conference in Angola, a disinterested statement for a role he was obviously interested in, or more recently the doubt over whether he would be a candidate. All this demonstrates that Cavaco Silva is a politician who plans all his objectives and complies scrupulously with all his programs and timetables.

2006 Presidential Election: Candidates and Media

While Cavaco Silva, supported by the right, was managing his silence strategy using advances and retreats, the left candidatures defined their positions. He was the last one to announce his candidature, but most probably the first one to decide it. One of the fiercest opponents of his candidacy was Mário Soares, who decided to stand to stop Cavaco
Silva’s victory. Like Mário Soares, the left wing candidates seem to have conditioned their candidatures to the possibility of Cavaco Silva emerging as the candidate of the right, as they all defined defeating the right their main ambition.

Mário Soares revealed that he believed he was the only one able to unite the Portuguese people and prevent Cavaco Silva’s victory, Manuel Alegre defended that without his candidature Cavaco Silva would win much more easily. Jerónimo de Sousa and Francisco Louçã wanted with their own candidatures to give importance to this election and help to demystify the strategy of the right and according to Garcia Pereira his candidature had the purpose of bringing all the essentials and sometimes inconvenient issues to debate, but mainly to help prevent the victory of the “candidates of the establishment”, Cavaco Silva and Mário Soares.

The candidates’ media utilization was different and shows different possible methods of using the relationship between politics and media during an electoral campaign. All left candidates resorted to the media only to announce their candidatures, except for Manuel Alegre who had a more troubled course of decision, which seems to be a result of an interaction between the news media, the opinion poll results and his own personal ambition.

The case of Cavaco Silva was different. In spite of not being assumed, we can identify a preoccupation in preparing public opinion to the announcement of his candidature, through the construction of an image of competence and exemption, fulfilled as in the presentation of his candidature, as when he declared his independence from the party interests. But mostly with the publication of news articles in the past five years, especially in Expresso newspaper, that functioned as transmission vehicles of the wanted image, this means served the purpose of erasing the bad memories left by his last years in Government, showing a different person, someone more communicative, but equally concerned with the country’s future.

Not only were interviews and news stories about his personal and professional life published, but also several opinion articles where Cavaco Silva placed himself above political and party life and gave his opinion about some important economic and political events. With this attitude, he gave the impression of being someone above suspicion for not being connected to institutionalized interests, a type of guardian of the truth and with competence to advise on the best way to take.

This preoccupation with the image of an independent candidate, placed in a strategy of formal distancing from party political apparatus was carried during the electoral campaign. In spite of being supported by the right (PSD and CDS-PP), Cavaco Silva assumed
himself as an independent and during the campaign only allowed one brief participation of the party leaders, who appeared not as such, but as “friends”, this in spite of his candidature using the resources of these parties (regional campaign headquarters and human resources, for example). But, in this context, what really matters are the media declarations.

Here it is important to point out that, nowadays, political information arrives to the electorate particularly through media, which turns it into an important sphere of political representation. The media decide, overall, what issues are relevant to public knowledge and deliberation, through its agenda-setting function they select what issues and whose people should have public visibility, which translates for the understanding of the people, into the important issues and personalities for society. However not only is this agenda definition not neutral, as politicians attempt to impose their own political agenda, aware of the kind of publicity and visibility that the media provide. A good example is the press conference starting at the same time as news programmes to ensure direct coverage.

In this way, politics tries to coincide its timings with the media, and there is an effort also in using the same “language” as the media, like the creation of interest and news motifs to journalists.

Cavaco Silva’s candidature illustrates quite well these two tendencies: the announcement was a press conference at the same time as news programmes, two ways of assuring journalists’ presence and the consequent coverage of the event. Besides that, the taboo that was created around his candidature and the management of uncertainty, with several comments that either meant an advance, either a retreat of his intention, while the logistics structure was being discreetly set up, contributed to increase the media interest around his figure and candidature.

Since 2001, when the first 2006 presidential election opinion polls started to be published, Cavaco Silva was seen as the most probable winner. The anticipated winner even before being a candidate, Cavaco Silva didn’t give up his very precise preparation of a professional campaign, adapted to modern times.

His campaign was conducted by himself and his staff only had to adapt. He decided when and how to advance, and was at an advantage and knew how to manage that advantage. It was a campaign “in crescendo”, to create the momentum of victory and thought out to the smallest detail where nothing was left to chance.

The campaign was strongly centred on the economic and social crisis, and its strategy tested the capacity of the other candidates to help overcome the crisis. This is the justification for his choice of emphasizing two aspects of his profile: the **economist** (the academic and technical capacity and the experience to help overcame the problems) and
The social-democrat (the social conscience).

The news coverage of the 2006 presidential election campaign was not made in a very balanced way. Since the beginning there was an attempt at bipolarization: Cavaco/Soares. For instance, several opinion polls published in *Expresso* newspaper and SIC, a private television channel[12], insisted on placing Mário Soares in second place, when all other opinion polls, placed Manuel Alegre as the second candidate in terms of voting intentions. With this type of attitude, we can say that there was an attempt to influence the election result. Like the number of news stories published on each candidate and the importance, in terms of pages and photos, given to each candidate, or the news bias, the publication of specific opinion polls can also help to build specific election results.

**The *Expresso* newspaper, the Candidate Cavaco Silva and the 2006 Presidential Elections**

The first time a possible Cavaco Silva candidature for the 2006 elections was mentioned, was in 1999. Very early on, in the opinion of the majority of journalists and politicians. For this reason, it is considered important to analyse this newspaper, in order to expose and understand possible intentions of support, either from the part of the political class or the journalistic class with regards this election and the instrumentalisation of the press.

Through analysing the *Expresso* it is possible to see that Cavaco Silva was never away from the political scene for very long. He published texts, gave interviews with a view to comment on certain aspects of the political or economic life of the country and was also newsworthy when giving conferences or travelling abroad and making speeches, all of which were reported in the press. Cavaco Silva has also been quoted numerous times by *Expresso* commentators.

In the pages of the *Expresso*, the four types of article referred to above appeared on an almost regular basis, and, except on rare occasions, Cavaco Silva is always placed in the role of a “specialist” and considered to be above questioning because of his distance from the party-political world.

There are also other types of article which it is worth mentioning, which are related to his personal life: the birth of a grandchild, his appearance at a wedding, the launch of a book, all of which are featured prominently in the pages of this newspaper, that is, they all received at least one front-page mention.

In a text by Luís Felipe Miguel, a Brazilian political scientist, we can find one possible justification for the constant presence of Cavaco Silva in the pages of the *Expresso*: “The
agents who have the greatest political capital are able to direct the news (and, consequently, the public agenda) through interviews and declarations” (2002:173). Some politicians have created a high degree of visibility, as is the case of Cavaco Silva, which leads to the conclusion that any action or intervention is always expected and always has some sort of impact thus making it impossible for the media to ignore.

The political editor of the Expresso has said that “some people have guaranteed coverage” and, he went on to explain the interest in journalistic coverage of Cavaco Silva was due to it being obvious that he would stand for election in 2006. “Politicians do not act by chance, and Cavaco Silva, by what he has been doing, even though distant from political life and through the actions he has taken, has the responsibility of declaring his candidature, to prove himself coherent with the interventions he has made and because of the expectation he has created in the electorate.”

Therefore, because of the number of news items published about the former prime minister: we have followed his journey because we are convinced that he will be a candidate to the Presidency. The only thing we need to do is to anticipate and analyse the possible scenarios that may take place. But we don’t invest the news, the sources have always existed. I have no doubt that Cavaco will stand because I have information which suggests it.

It is worth mentioning briefly the appearance of other candidates to the presidency in the pages of this newspaper: Mário Soares and Manuel Alegre. We can see that neither of them has received the same coverage as that given to Cavaco Silva. Both have regular columns in this newspaper and are therefore not considered any different to any other columnist. The Expresso hasn’t ignored any important events in their lives, such as the European Elections in which Mário Soares stood as Speaker of the European Parliament or the poetry prize won by Manuel Alegre, but generally their presences in the newspaper don’t receive any form of “special treatment”, contrary to Cavaco Silva, that for saying he was apart from political life, his reappearances were treated as a novelty and with the corresponding journalistic interest.

It is worth mentioning a few of those articles. In 1999 a column written by the then editor José António Saraiva[13] questioned, in the face of increasing intervention in politics by Cavaco Silva through constant criticism of the Guterres socialist government, what his true motives were: “the reasoning Cavaco has is probably the following: following a socialist government and president, a social-democrat government and president will follow, so he tries to grind down the Socialist government.”[14]

Some time later, the same journalist suggested how the presidential candidatures should be constructed: “the candidate must emerge long before the elections, smoothly, […]
appearing in the eyes of the country as the man who could be the next president. The electorate must get used to the idea little by little.”[15]

The media, and in this case, the Expresso performed a determining role in bringing the activity and course of the proto-candidate into public view. As Mário Ramires, political editor of the Expresso stated, in interview, “five years of news about a candidate may appear a lot, but considering the possibility of a candidate affirming their position, it could be very little.” A presidential candidate is not built from one moment to the next. When people make their voting choice, want to know not only the proposals of the candidate for that particular election, but also their journeys, and their positions throughout their lives.”

Did Cavaco Silva know how to mould the media or did the media mould the figure of Cavaco Silva, in its search for “heroes” and exceptional people?

The rehabilitation of Cavaco Silva’s image was also achieved by António Guterres’s socialist government. Cavaco, who in the eyes of Portuguese people, was someone authoritarian and austere, when compared with the argumentative and hesitating posture of the subsequent Portuguese Prime-Minister, started being seen as a politician with determination who had a project for the country. These are the most frequent images associated to both politicians in the press at that time.

The following year, Cavaco Silva published two articles, with the objective of criticising the socialist government, namely the State Budget and the deficit, and Guterres’s lack of initiative. The first was published in February and the second in May and were entitled “The Monster” and “The Patriotic Mission”. These articles were published in Diário de Notícias newspaper, but had an enormous highlight in Expresso. It was the special case of this opinion article that makes an attempt at demystifying Cavaco Silva’s intention: “Each time Cavaco intervenes with an interview or a corrosive article as “The patriotic mission”, he can ask: what motivates Cavaco Silva? The Presidency? Government again? Returning as a saviour in case of a catastrophe?.[16]

In the 25th November edition, Cavaco published the article “Win the disenchantment” in Expresso newspaper, where he draws attention to the fact of Portugal being the last European country in terms of development. He also tried to prove how Portugal improved during the time of his governments and how that tendency was inverted with the socialist government.

In 2001, Cavaco publishes his book “Chronicles of an Announced Crisis”. This event is highly covered in the 8th December edition of Expresso newspaper, which makes a special news story with his family and professional life and an interview about several issues. On this occasion, Cavaco considers unfounded the statements that defend that, due to his growing public interventions, he is interested in the 2006 presidential elections
and he is already constructing his own presidential candidature. He said on that occasion: “It is necessary to understand the real context of my public interventions and the reason why I make them”.

With the proximity of local elections, Cavaco Silva reinforces his opinion in the press about the necessity of punishing the socialist government and argues that the Portuguese people should vote against it in order to prove their disagreement with the government’s performance. The socialists lost this election and, consequently, the Prime-Minister António Guterres resigned. Due to this resignation, the President (Jorge Sampaio) called early parliamentary elections. In March 2002, the PSD won the elections without an overall majority in Parliament and had to form a coalition with the other right wing party, CDS-PP.

In 2002, Cavaco publishes the first volume of his “Political Autobiography” and the Expresso newspaper anticipates this book, in the 16th February edition with a big article about Cavaco Silva’s past as a politician, and with several extracts quoted from his book.

After the PSD’s election, Cavaco Silva limited his press interventions a lot, giving the idea that one of his objectives had been accomplished.

This sort of silence ends in March 2003 when he gives an interview to the public television channel. Once again, this event is covered and analysed in Expresso newspaper. A columnist classifies the interview in this way: “Cavaco Silva’s return to television, with an interview in prime time, was interesting and revealing in several ways. He didn’t want – contrary to others, who were more impulsive and hasty – to reveal his strategy and anticipate his timetable concerning the 2006 presidential election. But, because of his behaviour and the things he said, as well as his distance from the government and what he intentionally left unsaid, it is obvious that he ended the interview more a presidential candidate, than when he started it.”[17]

In its last edition of 2003, the Expresso newspaper covers the formation of the first support group to Cavaco Silva’s presidential candidature. It is a group of young people of varying political orientation, which describes the proto-candidate in the following way: “A strong personality, determined, coherent and learned, who represents the soul and the aspirations of the Portuguese people.”

Judging from the opinion poll that was published in Expresso newspaper, in 2004 Cavaco’s possible presidential candidature seems unbeatable. Several politicians have presented, in the meanwhile, their availability to run for the 2006 election and the opinion studies that were published simulate the various election results possibilities, in the several cases of Cavaco Silva’s opponents.

The first page of 14th February Expresso edition highlights the release of the second
volume of Cavaco Silva’s “Political Autobiography” and publishes this text: “Cavaco Silva prefers journalists to public figures in the release of his book. The former Prime-Minister and possible presidential candidate preferred an original and unexpected way of presenting his new book, more similar to a press conference without any kind of festivities or applause. The event, which is generating a big expectation between politicians, for being considered as the first public step to his presidential candidature, will take place on 8th March in Lisbon and the next day in Porto.

In spite of the expectation and of the fact of several public personalities declaring their support to his presidential candidature, Cavaco Silva did not dispel their doubts. In November[18], the Expresso newspaper publishes what would become one of the most commented of all Cavaco Silva’s articles, with the following title: Cavaco Silva gives an “alarm call”, where he defends “that the moment when competent politicians should dismiss the incompetent ones, has arrived”. This warning was understood by the President Jorge Sampaio, who decided to dissolve Parliament, when Santana Lopes was Prime-Minister, and call early legislative elections.

The Expresso political editor, Mário Ramires, believes that this intervention of Cavaco Silva was made with the objective of influencing a change in the political scene. Cavaco Silva had the notion of the increased difficulties for being elected President, while Santana Lopes was still in power as Prime-Minister. When asked about the Expresso’s responsibility for the publication of the kind of articles that can influence Portugal’s political future, Mário Ramires, admits to be conscious of the role of the Expresso in this political event.

During 2005, in spite of not always mentioning the 2006 Presidential election, the Expresso newspaper continues to publish news about Cavaco Silva, with an almost weekly cadence. In February, before the 2005 legislative election, some rumours about Cavaco Silva’s preferences for the election are published. He would prefer a socialist government to win the election instead of Santana Lopes continuing in power. As we already mentioned, Cavaco Silva knew his chances of election were very limited if Santana Lopes was Prime-Minister. The PS and José Sócrates won the election.

After the election, Cavaco started a series of praises to the new Prime-Minister’s political courage in the press and during the presidential campaign he always mentioned his availability for “institutional cooperation”, in what we can interpret as an attempt more to give the image of a consensual politician.

Summer precipitated the announcement of the left-wing presidential candidatures, but in
spite of that, Cavaco Silva only declared his candidature in October.

It is also worth mentioning, the smaller weight that the 2001 presidential election had in *Expresso* newspaper, when compared with the 2006 presidential election, in terms of printed pages. The 2001 election was the re-election of the President Jorge Sampaio and when his opponents were known, journalistic coverage lost part of its interest, because they were all politicians with little public visibility and few chances of defeating Jorge Sampaio.

**Some Conclusions**
Since the year 1999, seven years before the 2006 election, *Expresso* newspaper published several articles about Cavaco Silva, his professional and academic life, and his opinions on different national and economic subjects, in an attempt to clean his past image of an authoritarian and inflexible ruler, projecting an image of competence, independence and of a changed and more communicative person. In this context it is also important to say that Cavaco Silva represented real possibilities for the first time, after the “Carnation Revolution”, of the election of a candidate from the centre-right to the Presidency, which may have mobilized political organized interests from the right wing to this election. The ownership of *Expresso* newspaper must be mentioned in this context, especially when there are studies which prove that organizational patterns and media ownership can and do influence press content.

It is difficult to conclude if the *Expresso* newspaper and its journalists acted in an intentional way, but what we have seen suggests that not only did Cavaco Silva use the press to influence Portuguese politics, creating all the conditions for his 2006 presidential candidature, as the *Expresso* newspaper revealed itself to have a special interest in the former Prime-Minister’s actions and thoughts.

Cavaco Silva, who always complained of the Portuguese media, especially during the time when he was Prime-Minister, would end up using them quite well, during the construction of his presidential candidature.

This paper has another subjacent question, which is the discussion of when an election is, in fact, won: whether during the campaign, the pre-campaign or even before these periods, and the difficulty of knowing when the pre-campaign really begins, as not only does it vary from case to case, as several preparatory actions can be made without public knowledge. The construction and the preparation of candidatures are very important in this context. In the Portuguese case, where the Presidency is a non-executive function,
whose attributions are well defined in the Constitution, all candidates’ distinctive elements that can be marked through time, may, in fact, make a difference in the candidate’s real possibilities of election.

In Cavaco Silva’s case, where besides constructing a candidature, he had to build a new image, the antecedence of some actions was decisive. We can see it with the publication of books and articles in the press, where he did a sort of assessment of his past, showing, in this way, a disposition to begin a new phase in his political life.

The *Expresso* newspaper performed, in a way, an important role in the construction of a different image of Cavaco Silva, which helped in his election: An image that is certainly more adjusted to the exercise of the Presidential function in Portugal, which means a listener, and a more tolerant person.

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[1] This work had the financial support of FCT and FSE within the scope of the III Community Support Framework.

[2] Note: The Revolutionary Council was created in 1975 by the Armed Forces Movement, after the revolution, with the objective of helping to ensure security, trust and tranquillity and the transition to democracy. In the beginning it was made up of the President, and important military figures, in addition to the Prime-Minister, if he was drawn from the military. This Council advised the President on all his decisions (like the present State Council) and was guarantor of the democratic institutions and compliance with the Constitution. It also had the power to legislate on military issues, and to approve international treaties.

With the regard to the President, the Revolutionary Council, besides being his advisor, had the power to authorize the President in making the following decisions, amongst others: declarations of war and declarations of state of siege and state of emergency. With these competencies the Revolutionary Council was a true organ of political power guarded by the military, and exerted parallel powers to Parliament, and in some cases, could dictate its activity.

The Revolutionary Council was dissolved in 1982, and some of its powers were transferred to the State Council and to the Constitutional Court, both created in the meantime, and to Parliament (legislative functions).

[3] Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, well known University Professor, media columnist and former PSD leader.

[4] Just to mention some examples, according to the European Social Survey (round2-2004), the percentage of people that never reads newspapers, in Portugal is 41.2%, in Austria is 12.8% and in the United Kingdom, 25%.

[5] The “Democratic Alliance” was an alliance of the parties from the right to constitute Government. Its leader, Sá Carneiro, was killed in a plane accident in December 1980.

[6] He told the press that he only went to the PSD Congress in Figueira da Foz, to try out his new car.

[7] Portugal’s official entry to the European Union was in 1986.

[8] For example, the lack of payment of property taxes caused the resignation of two Ministers of Finance and the resignation of the Health Minister due to the infection of haemophiliacs with the HIV virus.


[11] Interview to a radio station

[12] From Eurosondagem, an opinion poll company.

[13] His resignation was announced in October 2005, in the middle of the presidential pre-campaign following 21 years as editor of that newspaper.


