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THE PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATIVE ELITE, 1851-1910

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The aim of this article is to draw the sociological profile and the career patterns of the core group of the Portuguese administrative elite, the directors-general, as well as to inquire into their role in policy-making and the connections between politics and administration.

The time span covers the period from the stabilisation of the liberal order in the early 1850s to the abrupt regime change that occurred in October 5, 1910, with the replacement of the monarchic constitutional regime by the short-lived First Republic (1910-1926). In the first half of the 19th century, a dramatic sequence of convulsive events – the Peninsular War and the subsequent flight of the royal family to Brazil; a series of revolutionary uprisings; two civil wars (1832-1834; 1846-1847) – had generated endemic political turbulence, and de-structured and paralysed the state, reducing its administrative capabilities to a minimum. In May 1851, a successful military *putsch* led to an enduring elite settlement that ensured the accommodation of conflicting interests and values, and the pacification of political life. This new period, the so-called *Regeneração* (Regeneration), was also a crucial one in modern state building and therefore in the formation of the administrative elite in Portugal⁽¹⁾. A decisive thrust

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⁽¹⁾ One commentator wrote that “l’administration portugaise, depuis 1834 [when the liberal forces seized power in the aftermath of the civil war], n’a exercé que la partie politique de son pouvoir. Soutenir les amis du ministère, veiller

to the modernisation of the state apparatus was the impact of the reforms implemented in most ministries in 1859-1860, involving fundamental changes in structure and recruitment: the development of a more hierarchical and specialised bureaucracy, and the introduction of the new method of merit-based selection of middle-rank civil servants, using competitive examinations⁽²⁾.

The highest ranked posts in central government were then, as in the present day, those of secretaries-general (*secretários-gerais*) and of heads of department or directors-general (*directores-gerais*). The former were usually selected (on the basis of the length of service) from among the latter, and with very few exceptions they held both offices simultaneously. While the functional role was not entirely new, the title of director-general, most probably imported from the French bureaucratic nomenclature, was only disseminated after the momentous reforms of the late 1850s.

According to official regulations, the posts of directors-general were filled at the discretion of ministers, and the appointees could come from outside the civil service. Access thereto was not by promotion or open competition, and both personal and political trust were major criteria of selection. Appointments were not for life; officeholders could be removed by the incumbent minister at any moment. Significantly, however, most directors-general had a state servant's background (and even an enduring administrative training) and became permanent, as illustrated by their remarkable length of tenure. Hence, they evolved into a stable elite of specialists.

Undoubtedly, this elite group was numerically small, and the opportunities to enter it were limited. First, the pattern of continuity in office of these top-level bureaucrats obviously implied minimal elite circulation,

sur les conspirateurs, gagner au gouvernement les personnes influentes et contrecarrer les plans de l'opposition, préparer les éléments électoraux et assurer le triomphe des candidats du gouvernement, a été son travail permanent. On faisait de la police politique, mais on n'administrat pas. L'exercice de ce pouvoir bienfaisant, que l'on appelle administratif, a commencé [in 1851] depuis que le pays est entré dans une période de paix et de réconciliation des partis, et dès que l'autorité a pu compter sur le concours de tous les hommes éclairés et patriotes" (António Augusto Teixeira de Vasconcelos, *Les contemporains portugais, espagnols et brésiliens*, vol. I: *Le Portugal et la Maison de Bragançe*, Paris, Typ. Guiraudet, 1859, p. 389).

⁽²⁾ Pedro Tavares de Almeida, *A Construção do Estado Liberal. Elite política e burocracia na Regeneração (1851-1890)*, Lisbon, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1995, pp. 251-268.

all the more since there was no compulsory retirement age; in fact, several incumbents died while in service or were forced to leave for health reasons related to age. Second, and more important, there were few posts to be filled. The growth of central government, both in terms of public employment⁽³⁾ and the administrative apparatus, did induce an increasing structural differentiation, with the reorganisation of older divisions (*Repartições*) and the creation of new agencies. Yet, the list of ministerial departments (*Direcções* or *Direcções-Gerais*) did not grow much throughout time. Taking into account the five civilian ministries alone (Finance, Foreign Affairs, Home Office, Justice and Public Works), these wider organizational units added up to 17 in 1910, against 13 in 1860. While still excluding the Ministry of War and the hybrid Ministry of Navy and Colonies, both administered mainly by military officers, 101 individuals altogether performed the role of secretaries-general and heads of department (regardless of being entitled directors-general) between May 1851 and October 5, 1910 (see table 1). The two biggest ministries (Finance and Public Works, in this order) were also the ones with the largest numbers of senior officials; conversely, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the smallest and also the last to incorporate the organizational division into departments, supplied a small contingent.

Table 1 - Ranks and Numbers of Senior Officials in the Civil Ministries, 1851-1910

Ministries	Secretaries-General	Directors-General	SG + DG*
Finance	4	33	35
Foreign Affairs	3	10	10
Home Office	7	19	19
Justice	8	14	14
Public Works	5	22	25
Total	27	96**	101**

* Number of individuals. With very few exceptions, the secretary-general held simultaneously the post of director-general.

** Two individuals who were directors-general in two different Ministries were counted only once.

⁽³⁾ Between 1853 and 1890, the number of persons employed in central government doubled, jumping roughly from 10 to 22 thousand (*ibidem*, p. 268 f.).

The existing literature on the Portuguese administrative elite, past and present⁽⁴⁾, comprises very few research monographs. For historical accounts, the pioneering and most comprehensive work is a prosopography of directors-general and heads of division (*chefes de Repartição*) between 1851 and 1890⁽⁵⁾; as regards a later period, valuable information and comments on senior civil servants may be found in an academic work on the authoritarian New State⁽⁶⁾. It should be stressed that the available tools of research are rather insufficient. There are no accurate, exhaustive lists of directors-general and other top officials, and most of them are not recorded in the biographical dictionaries. Moreover, their individual files in the ministerial archival collections often do not provide relevant information or, worse still, they are lost.

As regards the period studied here, printed primary sources are not abundant. There are a few useful legal studies on civil servants⁽⁷⁾, as well as some interesting official reports or memoranda written by the highest state administrators, but the latter very seldom published autobiographies or memoirs, the kind of material that might throw light on family backgrounds, networks, role perceptions and attitudes. Since most ministers likewise did not leave behind a record of their experience in government, the backstage of most decision-making processes – the part played by the actors involved, the bargainings and conflicts, the pressures of interest groups – is virtually unknown. Interestingly, the novels of the 19th and the early 20th centuries are full of characters of civil servants, but this rich seam of material has

⁽⁴⁾ For a recent period, there are a couple of works: an overview of senior civil servants (Hermano Carmo, *Os Dirigentes da Administração Pública em Portugal*, Lisbon, ISCSP, 1987, and a detailed analysis of the social and political background of directors-general serving in the year 2000 (Filipe Nunes, “Os Directores-Gerais. A elite administrativa portuguesa durante o XIV Governo Constitucional”, in António Costa Pinto/André Freire (eds.), *Elites, Sociedade e Mudança Política*, Lisbon, Celta Editora, 2003, pp. 97-129).

⁽⁵⁾ Tavares de Almeida, *A Construção do Estado...*, pp. 286-324.

⁽⁶⁾ Luís Salgado de Matos, *Um estado de ordem contemporâneo: a organização política portuguesa*, Lisbon, Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa, 1999.

⁽⁷⁾ See, namely, A.L. Guimarães Pedrosa, *Curso de Sciencia da Administração e de Direito Administrativo*, 2 vols., Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1906, and Martinho Nobre de Melo, *O Estado dos Funcionários. Estatuto Legal*, Lisbon, Ferin, 1914.

not been fully explored by historians. Newspapers also provide a great amount of information, albeit dispersed and not always reliable.

1. Social Profile

Building on previous research, our survey of the socio-demographic characteristics of directors-general is focused on birthplace, age, education (degree levels, fields of study, schools), and social origins. While the last are approached in more qualitative terms, due to the lack of detailed information on their family milieus, the former background variables are empirically examined. Continuities and discontinuities over time are not traced here. Drawing on aggregate data for the overall period and by ministry, the purpose of this collective portrait is to identify the basic features of the elite group, pointing out internal variations that may be related to the specifics of the institutional settings.

Geographic origins

In the 19th century, Portugal was largely a rural society. In 1900, only 15.7% of the population lived in urban centres; however, real middle-sized towns were rare, Lisbon and Oporto accounting for more than 60% of the urban population⁽⁸⁾. Moreover, a significant demographic trend was the increasingly disproportionate size of Lisbon, its macrocephaly.

Concomitantly, there was a pronounced concentration of central government employment in the capital. In 1854, around one-third of all public employees and almost half of the civil servants (47%) were situated in Lisbon⁽⁹⁾. As a famous 19th-century writer, Oliveira Martins, put it, the city was the major "bureaucratic cradle" in the country.

Not surprisingly, data available on the birthplace of directors-general show that nearly one-fourth of them were born in Lisbon and its surroun-

⁽⁸⁾ Teresa Rodrigues Veiga, "As realidades demográficas", in Fernando de Sousa / A.H. de Oliveira Marques (eds.), *Portugal e a Regeneração*, Lisbon, Editorial Presença, 2004, pp. 17-70 (38 f.).

⁽⁹⁾ Luís Espinha da Silveira, "A Administração do Estado em Portugal no século XIX", in *Los 98 Ibéricos y el mar*, Madrid, Comisaría General de España, Expo Lisboa '98, 1998, pp. 317-333 (329 f.).

dings (see table 2). A similar picture was found in France, under the Second Empire (1852-1871), when 30% of all directors-general were born in Paris⁽¹⁰⁾. Opportunities to start and develop a public career in the heart of central government, and therefore the chances of reaching the top of the bureaucratic hierarchy, were definitely better for people who were born and had lived for a long time in the capital, rather than for those coming from elsewhere. For social networking, as most middle and upper class families resided there⁽¹¹⁾, and to enter the avenues of power, Lisbon was indeed the right place to grow up and live in. It is worth noting that the traditionally more “elitist” Ministry of Foreign Affairs exhibited the highest proportion of directors-general who were born in the capital.

Conversely, only a very small number of directors-general came from Oporto, the second largest city in the country. The physical distance, along with the relative vitality of Oporto’s business and industrial activities, seemingly made a public career in the capital less viable and attractive for local people.

Table 2 - Place of Birth of Directors-General, 1851-1910 (%)

Ministries	Lisbon	Oporto	Other major cities	Rest of the country	Overseas	Total
Finance	20.0	0.0	15.0	65.0	0.0	100
Foreign Affairs	44.4	0.0	11.1	22.2	22.2	100
Home Office	6.7	13.3	40.0	40.0	0.0	100
Justice	16.7	0.0	50.0	33.3	0.0	100
Public Works	31.6	5.3	21.0	31.6	10.5	100
Nr.	17	3	20	31	4	75
%	22.7	4.0	26.7	41.3	5.3	100

Nr. = Number of known cases

⁽¹⁰⁾ Vincent Wright, “Les directeurs et secrétaires généraux des administrations centrales sous le Second Empire”, in *Les directeurs de ministère en France (XIXe-XXe siècles)*, Geneve, Librairie Droz, 1976, pp. 38-78 (43).

⁽¹¹⁾ In early 19th century, a foreigner wrote of “la répugnance des nobles et des grands propriétaires à vivre dans leurs terres, et leur séjour permanent dans la capitale et dans les environs” (Adrien Balbi, *Essai statistique sur le royaume de Portugal et d’Algarve comparé aux autres états de l’Europe*, Paris, Chez Ray et Gravier, 1822, p. 163). On the preference of 18th-century aristocrats to live in Lisbon, see Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, *O Crepúsculo dos Grandes. A casa e o património da*

Data available on the regional background of the political elite for the same period confirm, and stress, the over-representation of Lisbon, especially among officeholders of senior ranks. In fact, the capital was the birthplace of 47.6% of State Council members between 1851 and 1890⁽¹²⁾, and of 29.8% of the Cabinet ministers appointed from 1851 to 1910⁽¹³⁾.

This geographic pattern in elite recruitment at the apex of power apparently illustrates the dynamics of centralisation that permeated the Portuguese political and administrative system at the time.

Age

The mean age of directors-general at entrance in office was 47 (see table 3), just like first-time ministers in the same period⁽¹⁴⁾.

Table 3. Age Profile of Directors-General at Time of First Appointment, 1851-1910

Ministries	Age Brackets (%)					Mean Age
	< 35	35-44	45-54	≥ 55	Total	
Finance	9.1	22.7	54.6	13.6	100	46
Foreign Affairs	0.0	50.0	37.5	12.5	100	47
Home Office	13.3	53.3	20.0	13.3	100	41
Justice	16.7	33.3	16.7	33.3	100	47
Public Works	0.0	10.5	42.1	47.4	100	52
Nr.	5	23	28	18	74	47
%	6.8	31.1	37.8	24.3	100	

Nr. = Number of known cases

aristocracia em Portugal (1750-1832), 2nd ed., Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda, 2003, p. 427 f.

⁽¹²⁾ Tavares de Almeida, *A Construção do Estado Liberal...*, p. 47. The State Council was a body designed to advise the King, and it included a few leading figures. Its members, appointed by the King himself and having lifetime functions, came from the inner circle of the ruling elite.

⁽¹³⁾ Pedro Tavares de Almeida / António Costa Pinto, "Portuguese Ministers, 1851-1999: Social Background and Paths to Power", in Pedro Tavares de Almeida et al. (eds.), *Who Governs Southern Europe? Regime Change and Ministerial Recruitment, 1850-2000*, London, Frank Cass, 2003, pp. 5-40 (21).

⁽¹⁴⁾ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

Mean age fluctuated in ministries between the limits of 41 and 52. These extremes were found in the Home Office and the Ministry of Public Works, respectively. While possibly corresponding to the different administrative cultures of individual ministries, variations in the average seem to be correlated more closely with the predominant occupational backgrounds of the appointees. On one hand, the youth of the incoming senior officials of the Home Office – the political ministry proper, which was very often run by the Prime Minister as well – was to some extent associated with a distinctive recruitment pattern: in fact, the Home Office was the ministry that recorded the lowest proportion of elite members with a previous bureaucratic career, and the highest one with officials holding a liberal profession background (see table 5). On the other hand, the opposite case of the higher average found in the Ministry of Public Works reflects the leading role played there by military officers, who became directors-general when they already had a senior status in the Army. Yet, it was in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the oldest man, aged 68, was appointed director-general, after having continuously served as head of division for almost 32 years. He left his post one year later.

Most directors-general were appointed in their 40s, a standard entrance age in various European countries⁽¹⁵⁾. Very few reached their positions before 35. Those who managed it did it mainly by so-called “lateral entry”. Two remarkable examples are José Luciano de Castro (1834-1914) and Lopo Vaz (1848-1892), leaders-to-be of the two major dynastic parties, who were drawn from the liberal professions and politics. They were the youngest directors-general: the former was appointed in the Ministry of Finance at just 28 years of age, the latter in the Home Office at 29.

By contrast, a significant proportion of the appointees (almost one quarter) were 55 years old or over. This age group was the largest in the Ministry of Public Works, for the reasons mentioned above, and was also well represented in the Ministry of Justice, which recorded the highest proportion of directors-general recruited in the bureaucratic career.

⁽¹⁵⁾ John A. Armstrong, *The European Administrative Elite*, Princeton (N.J.), Princeton University Press, 1973, p. 239; Vincent Wright, “Les directeurs et secrétaires...”, p. 56.

Education

While academic credentials or specialised knowledge were pre-requisites for some middle-level elite positions in central government – e.g. in the Public Works, where there were posts of head of division that were reserved for experts in civil engineering or mining – there were no formal requirements to be appointed director-general. Not surprisingly, however, most of these senior officials had a high level of education: 72% held a university degree or had graduated from a military academy. As a matter of fact, military officers very often took a Bachelor of Science (Mathematics or Physics) degree at the University of Coimbra or Lisbon Polytechnic School and then would complete their specialised training in the Army School (*Escola do Exército*). Ministers altogether boasted much higher academic credentials: 93.5% had a higher education⁽¹⁶⁾.

Most of those who did not have a university background belonged to the older generations of directors-general and were mainly to be found in the Ministry of Finance, where professional experience and practical knowledge were apparently more valued. One of those directors-general, António Maria Pereira Carrilho (1835-1903), started as a youngster to work as an office clerk in a trade company and then took up a long, successful civil servant career. He was an autodidact who became one of the most renowned national experts in financial matters. While being the main draftsman of state annual budgets year after year, he was also unquestionably one of the most powerful and feared mandarins of the national administrative elite. In Foreign Affairs, the non-university educated were drawn from upper middle social strata; one of them, Emílio Achilles Monteverde (1803-1881), was the author of several best-selling pedagogic works.

Law was the hegemonic academic field of the university-educated elite groups. Among directors-general, 58% had a legal training. It was only natural that these were to be found in large numbers in the Ministry of Justice and, in a lesser proportion, in Foreign Affairs and the Home Office. By contrast, they were a rarity in Public Works, a ministry that since its beginnings had been full of engineers, most of whom were military officers. A small, yet not negligible, group of agrarian engineers and veterinarians was likewise to be found in this ministry, since agriculture and afforestation policies were among its responsibilities.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Tavares de Almeida/Costa Pinto, "Portuguese Ministers, 1851-1999...", p. 21.

Table 4 - Academic Credentials of Directors-General, 1851-1910 (%)

Ministries	Graduates*	Fields of Education**			
		Law	Maths / Engineering	Military	Others
Finance	45.4	66.7	13.3	13.3	6.7
Foreign Affairs	70.0	85.7	0.0	0.0	14.3
Home Office	89.5	70.6	5.9	0.0	23.5
Justice	85.7	91.7	0.0	0.0	8.3
Public Works	86.4	5.3	26.3	47.4	21.0
Nr.	69	40	8	11	10
%	71.9	58.0	11.6	15.9	14.5

Total number of cases = 96

* Percentage of all cases, by Ministry

** Percentage of all graduates, by Ministry

In 19th-century Portugal, as regards higher education, the formation and socialisation of the elites took place in two major institutions: the ancient University of Coimbra, where the sole Law School was located, and the Army School in Lisbon, the latter providing not only military training and a close connection with the Polytechnic School but also some specialised technical training (engineering, topography, mining). There was some mutuality between the two major *loci* of elite education, where most bureaucrats and politicians were drawn from, since many military officers did preparatory studies at the Faculties of Mathematics and “Natural Philosophy” (i.e., Physics and Chemistry). This circulation made it easier to build social networks between civilians and military that in many cases would grow to be of decisive importance in the development of their professional and political careers. Education surely acted as an effective source of elite cohesiveness.

Social milieu

The administrative elite, especially the directors-general, were largely drawn from the middle and upper middle social strata. This is a broad picture that relies on more or less detailed empirical evidence (educational

profile; places of birth and of long-time residence; information on parents' occupation), as well as in varied contemporary accounts (political writings, parliamentary discourses, newspapers, novels). As Júlio de Vilhena put it, "distinction, good manners and groomed elegance [...] singled out top bureaucrats who were granted access to the most elitist salons, and excelled everywhere in their gentlemanly fashion"⁽¹⁷⁾.

In a poorly industrialised and urbanised society, where occupational opportunities were limited, the state inevitably became the main provider of employment for educated men of bourgeois origins⁽¹⁸⁾. To become a civil servant was then the safest, and relatively prestigious, career prospect for them.

Directors-general were a socially homogeneous elite group, although not an exclusive or closed one. First, their selection was not based on hereditary "ascriptive" premises, i.e. family ties played a minor role in the recruitment of the administrative elite. Second, a sizeable minority seems to have had modest family backgrounds, while a fair number of individuals belonged to or were closely connected with the patrician families. None of the latter, however, came from the old titled aristocracy. There were in fact five directors-general (around 5% of all) who held noble titles, but these were of recent origin; three of the titled ones came from the provincial nobility, and the other two were middle-class men. This picture clearly contrasted with that of other European countries⁽¹⁹⁾. For example, under the Second Empire in France, almost one-fourth of the directors-general were nobles⁽²⁰⁾; and in Britain, "the civil service retained [...] its aristocratic personnel until the end of the 19th century and in some cases well beyond"⁽²¹⁾.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Júlio de Vilhena, *D. Pedro V e o seu reinado*, vol. 2, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1921, p. 36.

⁽¹⁸⁾ See, e.g., António de Serpa Pimentel, *Questões de Política Positiva. Da nacionalidade e do governo representativo*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1881, pp. 255-264, and Joaquim Pedro Oliveira Martins, *Política e Economia Nacional*, 2nd ed., Lisbon, Guimarães Editores, 1954, p. 79 (1st ed.: 1885).

⁽¹⁹⁾ Arno Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1981.

⁽²⁰⁾ Vincent Wright, "Les directeurs et secrétaires...", p. 44.

⁽²¹⁾ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, London, Picador, 1992, p. 240; see also Ellis Wasson, *Born to Rule. British Political Elites*, Stroud (Gloucestershire), Sutton, 2000.

The declining role of grandees and nobles in the “ruling elite” of 19th-century Portugal is confirmed by the evidence available for top-level political officeholders. Between 1851 and 1890 only around one-fourth of the members of the exclusive State Council and one-fifth of all Cabinet ministers were drawn from the nobility, and in the same period less than one-tenth of the MPs were titled⁽²²⁾. Two main factors account for the precocious waning of the influence of the Portuguese aristocracy (comparatively with most of its European counterparts): on one hand, its growing financial debts to the Crown in the course of the 18th century; on the other hand, and most decisive, its massive support of the legitimist forces that were militarily defeated by the liberals in the 1832-34 Civil War⁽²³⁾.

2. Career Patterns

Professional training

A striking feature of the professional training of directors-general is the overwhelming proportion of those with a public employment background, particularly those who were civil servants in central government. Taking into account that half of those classified in table 5 under the category “Others” (two diplomats and a prosecutor) were public employees, these constitute around 86%, while the remaining 14% were drawn from the private sector (people in liberal professions, business, and landowners). Among state servants, those with a bureaucratic career in the ministries were predominant, representing nearly 54%.

⁽²²⁾ Tavares de Almeida, *A Construção do Estado Liberal...*, pp. 58-59, 96-99, and 159-162. See also Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, “Nobreza, Revolução e Liberalismo: Portugal no contexto da Península Ibérica”, in Silvana Casmirri/Manuel Suárez Cortina (eds.), *La Europa del Sur en la Epoca Liberal. España, Itália y Portugal. Una perspectiva comparada*, Cassino, Università di Cassino, 1998, pp. 131-150.

⁽²³⁾ See Maria Alexandre Lousada, “D. Pedro ou D. Miguel? As opções políticas da nobreza titulada portuguesa”, *Penélope*, vol. 4, 1989, pp. 82-117. In the words of a 19th-century writer, many aristocrats committed “suicide” when they joined D. Miguel and the absolutist cause (Duarte Gustavo Nogueira Soares, *Considerações sobre o Presente e o Futuro Político de Portugal*, Lisbon, Typ. Universal, 1883, p. 514).

Table 5 - Occupational Background of Directors-General Prior to First Appointment, 1851-1910 (%)

Ministries	Central Administration	Local Administration	Military	Academics / Teachers	Business / Professions	Others	Total
Finance	63.6	6.1	3.0	9.1	12.1	6.1	100
Foreign Affairs	70.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	20.0	100
Home Office	27.8	11.1	0.0	38.9	16.7	5.5	100
Justice	78.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3	7.1	100
Public Works	36.4	4.5	50.0	4.5	4.5	0.0	100
Nr.	51	5	12	11	10	6	95
%	53.7	5.3	12.6	11.6	10.5	6.3	100

Nr. = Number of known cases

Looking at the distribution among ministries, two aspects may be pointed out. On the one hand, the directors-general of the Home Office and Public Works were untypical in not having possessed the dominant “pure” bureaucratic background. As public education and public health were two fields for which the Home Office was responsible, academics (namely medicine professors) and teachers were an important source for the recruitment of senior officials. In Public Works, military engineers were hegemonic, but it should be stressed that all of them had been in charge of technical and administrative functions in this ministry long before reaching the position of director-general.

On the other hand, a large number of those who had a bureaucratic training gradually climbed the rungs of the career ladder, thus undergoing an intensive apprenticeship, before being appointed to the highest positions. Two obvious examples are those of António Maria Pereira Carrilho and Eduardo Montufar Barreiros (1829-1914). The former was admitted in 1860 in the Ministry of Finance as a low-rank clerk; after having gone through a series of ascending stages, he was appointed head of division in 1870; fourteen years later, in 1884, he was eventually appointed director-general. The latter entered Foreign Affairs in 1862 at the bottom of the hierarchy, and in 1875 he reached the post of head of division; in 1883,

he was at last appointed director-general. Both of them would also become secretaries-general⁽²⁴⁾.

The strong predominance of internal channels of elite recruitment, together with the relatively marginal importance of “lateral entries” (namely, as regards “real” outsiders), had two important results. First, it encouraged the continuity of the incumbents and, therefore, role stability. For most incoming directors-general, their appointments were not conceived as something external to their careers, but as its natural extension. Therefore, the office of head of division was clearly seen as a springboard to the apex. Curiously enough, the appointment of outsiders as directors-general sometimes brought protests from heads of division, who felt that their legitimate aspirations had been jeopardised. Second, it favoured the specialisation and “professionalisation” of top bureaucratic roles. On attaining office, directors-general had experience and expertise, and they knew both policy areas and issues, and the working of the administrative machinery. Additionally, it may have helped to promote an *esprit de corps* among the administrative elite.

Term in office

Rules of procedure in every ministry stipulated that senior officials (secretaries-general, directors-general) were appointed and removed at the minister’s discretion. Since they were, by definition, posts subject to political confidence, appointments were transitory. It would be expected that following a change of party in power, an overall or partial replacement of those officeholders would from time to time take place. That was apparently the case in neighbouring Spain, where every government turnover entailed massive “purges” of directors-general and other top officials⁽²⁵⁾.

⁽²⁴⁾ In contrast with this career pattern, in Britain “there were Permanent Secretaries in 1870 who had never held any inferior civil service post” (Henry Parris, *Constitutional Bureaucracy. The Development of British Central Administration Since the Eighteenth Century*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1969, p. 151).

⁽²⁵⁾ Angel Marvaud, *L’Espagne au XXe siècle. Etude politique et économique*, Paris, Librairie Armand Colin, 1915, p. 58.

In Portugal, at least after 1851, that did not occur⁽²⁶⁾. As a matter of fact, cases of secretaries-general and directors-general resigning or being removed following a Cabinet turnover or reshuffle were very rare, even in cases of political crises or of greater inter-party or else intra-party friction and conflict⁽²⁷⁾.

Although there were a few significant variations among ministries and departments as regards average duration in office, the dominant pattern is that of stability and continuity of senior officials. Table 6, on the turnover of ministers and secretaries-general, and table 7, on the length of tenure of directors-general, clearly show the great stability of the administrative elite and its apparent imperviousness to Cabinet instability and political turmoil.

Countless examples could be mentioned here to illustrate in a more concrete and personalised way this long-term service in elite positions. The following selected cases seem to illustrate the point. In the Ministry of Finance, António Maria Pereira Carrilho, the man who devised state budgets year after year, as mentioned above, was director-general for 19 years. In Public Works, a ministry very sensitive to political clientelism, Ernesto Madeira Pinto was secretary-general for ten years (1900-1910) and director-general of different departments for 24 years (1886-1910). Last but not least, in the Home Office, Artur Silva Fevereiro (1851-1913) was director-general of Political and Civil Administration (the department that was in charge of "monitoring" elections) for 25 years (1885-1910), and also secretary-general for 20 years (1890-1910).

⁽²⁶⁾ Comparing the two Iberian countries, a journalist at the time pointed out that in Portugal, since the *Regeneração*, there had been a climate of "tolerance that avoided changing senior officials following every new ministerial appointment, this being the usual procedure in Spain, where it entailed anarchy" (*O Paiz*, 11 October 1873).

⁽²⁷⁾ In February 1880 there was a vivid debate in Parliament on the "purges" of public employees, the opposition accusing the newly appointed Progressive Cabinet of having dismissed and compulsorily transferred hundreds of persons, namely in the ministries of Finance and of Justice. Answering these accusations, one of the most eloquent MPs at the time argued that the Cabinet had acted with full legitimacy, since it had removed or punished those state servants who had been selected in the past on the basis of "political trust", and were actively fighting the incumbent government (António Cândido, *Discursos Parlamentares, 1880-1885*, Porto, Companhia Portuguesa Editora, 1917, pp. 56-73). It should be emphasised, however, that none of the directors-general was de-selected by the Progressive ministers.

Table 6 - Turnover of Ministers and Secretaries-General, 1851-1910

Ministries	Ministers		Secretaries-General	
	Nr.*	Mean term in office (years)	Nr.**	Mean term in office (years)
Finance	55	1.07	4	14.75
Foreign Affairs	50	1.18	3	19.67
Home Office	50	1.18	7	8.43
Justice	60	0.98	8	7.38
Public Works***	52	0.98	5	10.20

* Number of appointments since 21 May 1851 until 5 October 1910, except those *ad interim* for short periods.

** Number of individuals who were secretaries-general in the same period.

*** Since October 1859, when the post of secretary-general was established.

Table 7 - Term of Office of Directors-General, 1851-1910 (%)

Ministries	Time Periods (years)						Total
	< 1	1-4.9	5-9.9	10-14.9	15-19.9	≥ 20	
Finance	0.0	39.4	27.3	15.1	9.1	9.1	100
Foreign Affairs*	50.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	100
Home Office**	5.3	52.6	26.2	5.3	5.3	5.3	100
Justice**	0.0	14.3	42.9	28.6	7.1	7.1	100
Public Works***	0.0	22.7	18.2	31.8	18.2	9.1	100
Nr.	5	30	25	18	10	8	96
%	5.2	31.3	26.0	18.8	10.4	8.3	100

* Since December 1869, when the post of director-general was established.

** Since August/September 1859, when the post of director-general was established.

*** Since October 1852, when the first directors-general of the newly founded Ministry of Public Works were appointed.

This steady pattern of stability and continuity of the administrative elite was viable only on the basis of an agreement (whether or not explicit) between the major political contenders. It had three consequences. First, it obviously had a positive, stabilising effect in state functioning and

policy-making, by suppressing or reducing the disturbing impact of Cabinet instability and high ministerial turnover. Second, the length of tenure reinforced the trend toward the “professionalisation” of state administrators, which may have had contradictory results in terms of policy: the improvement of their expertise and effectiveness or, inversely, routinisation and inability to innovate⁽²⁸⁾. Third, it strengthened the power of the administrative elite and its role in policy-making, especially in periods of intense circulation of the ministerial elite⁽²⁹⁾. As Max Weber emphasised “technical knowledge alone does not guarantee the power of the official. In addition there is the knowledge of concrete facts crucial for his behaviour: knowledge of the service. This is imparted to the official alone through the administrative apparatus”⁽³⁰⁾.

Mobility

The functional mobility of directors-general was very limited: barely 10% held the post in two different departments. Among those, only two individuals moved from one ministry to another: Lopo Vaz, who started at the Home Office, where he stayed for less than two months, and transferred to the Ministry of Finance; and Frederico Abreu e Gouveia (1832-1905), who left the Home Office to enter the Ministry of Justice.

Table 8 - Interdepartmental Mobility of Directors-General, 1851-1910

	Nr.	%
One Department	86	89.6
Two Departments	10*	10.4

* Includes two directors-general who moved to other Ministries.

⁽²⁸⁾ For a broad conceptualisation of the impact of different rates and types of elite turnover, see Robert Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, Englewood Cliffs (N.J.), Prentice-Hall, 1976, pp. 65 f.

⁽²⁹⁾ Significantly, the Marquis of Valada (1826-1895), a leading figure in the Upper House, once named the top bureaucrats as the “permanent ministers” (*Diário da Camara dos Dignos Pares do Reino*, Lisbon, 1872, p. 58).

⁽³⁰⁾ Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 5th ed., Tübingen, 1972, p. 855; quoted by Edward C. Page, *Political Authority and Bureaucratic Power. A Comparative Analysis*, 2nd ed., New York / London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992, p. 48.

The very low horizontal mobility was not confined to the high level posts, being rather a common feature of civil servants throughout central government. In fact, even a bird's view of lists of civil servants published at the time clearly shows that many of them stayed in the same departments, and also in the same divisions, for entire decades. Moreover, the *cursus honorum* of many directors-general also show that they ran the very same departments in which they had spent their lifetime careers. This lack of mobility, before and since they were in office, amplifies the image above depicted of the dominant profile of directors-general, as a group of specialists, rather than generalists.

As regards external mobility, there is no systematic, accurate information available on the professional paths of directors-general after leaving office, but we may speculate that it was also very limited. A large contingent "retired" or died while in office, and most of the others returned to their former activities (e.g. university professors, lawyers, etc.). A few of them moved to highly prestigious and well-paid public offices – as members of the Court of Auditors, the Administrative Supreme Court or the Royal Company of Railways (e.g. José Maria de Lara, Lopo Vaz, José Luciano de Castro, António Maria Pereira Carrilho). Fewer still may have joined private companies (e.g. colonial companies).

While the average income of civil servants was low⁽³¹⁾, it should be stressed that the post of director-general was *per se* an appealing and coveted one by virtue of its symbolic prestige⁽³²⁾, instrumental power and salary. Moreover, as the prospect of higher public offices or lucrative private jobs was limited, encouragement for external mobility was poor and the incumbents would usually be interested in keeping their positions. In some cases at least, this assessment may have determined a low-profile attitude, accommodation or passive submission *vis-à-vis* ministers of different party affiliations⁽³³⁾.

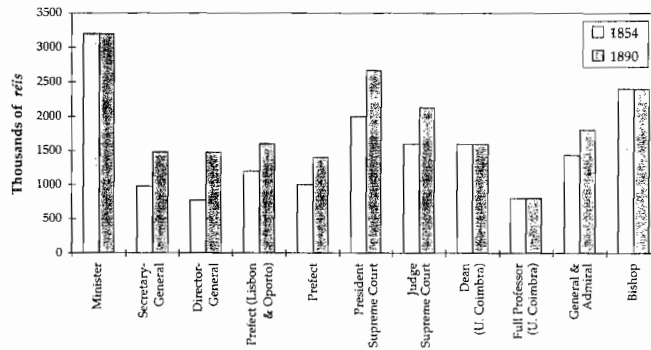
⁽³¹⁾ As a French scholar remarked, "ces emplois publics si désirés sont cependant maigrement retribués. Aussi, les fonctionnaires s'ingénient pour la plupart, afin de compléter leur budget, à cumuler des occupations diverses et plusieurs traitements. Ainsi, beaucoup d'employés de l'Etat sont en même temps professeurs, journalistes, avocats, etc., etc." (Léon Poincard, *Le Portugal inconnu*, Paris, Bureau de la Science Sociale, 1910, p. 416).

⁽³²⁾ Directors-general were granted the honorary title of *conselheiros*.

⁽³³⁾ Tavares de Almeida, *A Construção do Estado Liberal...*, p. 293; see also António Manuel Hespanha, *Guiando a Mão Invisível. Direitos, Estado e Lei no Liberalismo Monárquico Português*, Coimbra, Almedina, 2004, p. 310.

As regards the evolution of salaries in the second half of the 19th century, it is worth while pointing out that the financial position of directors-general was much better, both in absolute and relative terms (see figure 1), after the reform decree of 16 April 1867. Following this reform, their yearly gross salary (basic salary plus fixed benefits) jumped from 780 to 1,480 thousand réis, the greatest increase recorded among state servants. Since prices in 1890 were only 15% higher than in 1854, their living conditions improved substantially.

Figure 1 - Yearly Gross Salary of Directors-General and of Other Top Position Holders



3. Politics and Administration

The building of the liberal order in 19th-century Portugal seems to be characterised by a permanent osmosis between politics and administration. This is highlighted by two concomitant tendencies. On the one hand, political clientelism, pervasive at the time, increasingly relied on the preferential access to, or direct control of public goods and services. In particular, state jobs were highly disputed as rewards by party voters and followers. On the other hand, more and more MPs had a civil servant's background⁽³⁴⁾.

⁽³⁴⁾ Pedro Tavares de Almeida, *Eleições e Caciquismo no Portugal Oitocentista (1868-1890)*, Lisbon, Difel, 1991; António Costa Pinto / Pedro Tavares de Almeida, "On Liberalism and the Emergence of Civil Society in Portugal", in Nancy Bermeo / Philip Nord (eds.), *Civil Society Before Democracy. Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Lanham (Md.), Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, pp. 3-21 (6 f.).

Symptomatically, the rationale of the electoral reform decreed in 1895 was to reverse both trends. Hence, the franchise was reduced, as a means to fight the widespread electoral corruption, and a limit for the maximum number of MPs drawn from public employees was established (40, i.e. one-third of all representatives)⁽³⁵⁾.

Evidence on the political activity of directors-general, before and after their appointment, shows the interlinking and role exchange between politicians and top bureaucrats (see table 9). More than half of them (57%) held a political office, mostly as MP, in their lifetime. It should be noted that throughout the period studied here, there were no legal constraints that prohibited directors-general from seeking election to Parliament, and if they got a seat they were not forced to give up their posts, except under the 1895 Electoral Decree, which made the two positions incompatible.

Table 9 - Political Offices Held by Directors-General, 1851-1910

	Minister	MP / Peer	Prefect	Total*
Before appointment	2	17	12	21
Since appointment	5	6	0	8
Before and since	1	26	0	26
Nr.	8	49	12	55
% **	8.3	51.0	12.5	57.3

* Multiple offices excluded.

** Percentage of all cases (96).

Most of those who played an active role in political affairs were affiliated to the Regenerator Party (*Partido Regenerador*) or the Progressive Party (*Partido Progressista*), the two major challengers, which alternated in Cabinet more or less regularly. It was only natural that the former had a larger share (44%) than the latter (33%), since it stayed in power for a longer period (see table 10). Among ministries, the distribution of

⁽³⁵⁾ The last clause was suppressed by the 1897 Electoral Law. See Pedro Tavares de Almeida (ed.), *Legislação Eleitoral Portuguesa, 1820-1926*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda, 1998.

the supporters of the Regenerator Party was more balanced than the one of the Progressive Party, which was strongly rooted in Public Works.

Table 10 - Party Alignments of Directors-General with Political Activity, 1851-1910

Political Party	Nr.	%
<i>Regenerador</i>	24	44.2
<i>Progressista</i>	16	32.7
Others	3	5.8
Unknown	9	17.3
Total	52	100.0

Although a very significant number of directors-general were politically active at some point – around one-third of them while being in office – this did not mean that High Administration was strongly “politicised”, at least not in the sense of being pervaded and dominated by party politics. While obviously not being insulated or free from partisan (and factionalist) control and rivalries, the administrative elite was largely politically “neutral” in its attitudes and role perception.

The preceding analysis of career patterns, in particular the predominance of internal recruitment and the length of tenure, as well as certain contemporary parliamentary debates or political writings on the issue, suggest that most top bureaucrats may have acted as and thought of themselves as being “professional administrators”, loyally serving ministers irrespective of party affiliations. Additional evidence supports this hypothesis.

First, the parliamentary activities of most directors-general who were MPs were focused on issues related to their technical expertise, and they intervened mostly in the work of the specialised committees⁽³⁶⁾. Besides, many of them had a low profile as MPs, being silent in parliamentary sessions or even, as Júlio de Vilhena says in his memoirs, barely attending them⁽³⁷⁾.

⁽³⁶⁾ See Maria Filomena Mónica et al. (eds.), *Dicionário Biográfico Parlamentar, 1834-1910*, 3 vols., Lisbon, Assembleia da República/Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2004-2005.

⁽³⁷⁾ Júlio de Vilhena, *Antes da República. (Notas autobiográficas)*, vol. I, Coimbra, França & Arménio, 1917, p. 156.

Second, those few (like José Luciano de Castro or Lopo Vaz) who were politically active parliamentarians, sometimes fighting energetically against the incumbent Cabinet, were not punished or dismissed due to their adversarial attitude. The only known exception took place in 1861, when José Maria de Abreu (1818-1871), a professor at Coimbra, then director-general of Public Education and a MP, was dismissed from his office after having voted against a government bill. This “affair” in fact gave rise to a vigorous critical reaction against the incumbent Prime Minister, the Marquis of Loulé, who was also responsible for the Home Office. As the main opposing newspaper wrote at the time, the office of director-general had effectively become a post of “administrative trust” rather than “political trust”, and the dismissal of Abreu could lead the way to a return of the “exclusive partisanship, power abuse, and political intolerance, that had left such deep wounds in the country” before the beginning of the *Regeneração* period in 1851⁽³⁸⁾. Interestingly enough, a few years later the same José Maria de Abreu was re-appointed director-general of Public Education under a new Cabinet again led by Loulé.

Third, many directors-general were the most skilled and competent experts in their fields, and so, regardless of party divisions, their cooperation and advice was highly valued by ministers, who sometimes praised their work in parliamentary speeches or other public statements.

In broader terms, as regards the impact of party politics on the recruitment of public employees, it should be emphasised that patronage and the “spoils system” affected mainly local government and the peripheral agencies of central government. As mentioned above, the core personnel of ministerial departments – a “reservoir” from which many MPs were drawn – showed a high pattern of stability over time. Also, the introduction

⁽³⁸⁾ Quoted by José Maria de Abreu, *A demissão do director geral da Instrução Publica*, Lisbon, Typ. de José da Costa, 1861, p. 18. Several years later, a commentator wrote: “Civil servants cannot do without politics. They do need it, so that it becomes clear that they are at their country’s service and not their government’s; what is really important is that they do not use their power abusively [...] that they are loyal to institutions [...] that they abide by and enforce laws, as far as they are concerned; and that while performing their duties they never oppose or betray governments, even when they are on the very opposite side of their partisan beliefs. Apart from this, let them think as they please; let them speak and write as they deem appropriate” (*Jornal da Noite*, 17 December 1883).

of meritocratic criteria, based on open competition, for the selection and promotion of civil servants in central government⁽³⁹⁾, largely reduced the scope, even if it did not eliminate patronage and nepotism⁽⁴⁰⁾. In short, opposing and divergent trends were at stake at the time, and so the broad picture drawn at the beginning of this section should be considered in all its shades.

While constitutional role assignment meant that top bureaucrats were subordinated to ministers, the real power relationship between them is, of course, difficult to assess, owing to the lack of detailed, reliable information that might enable us to see through decision-making processes in the past. The greater or lesser influence of the former depended on the articulation of various features, both of a personal nature (personality, experience, and expertise of directors-general themselves and of ministers with whom they interacted) and context-related, like the degree of political and governance stability or the different existing priorities in terms of public policy areas.

Bearing in mind everything already stated about the career patterns of directors-general, as well as the information available on individual cases, we may hypothesise that most senior officials did not confine themselves to complying with instructions from above and to running the bureaucratic machine's own routine procedures. Instead they took a very active part in both conceiving and implementing certain important government policies⁽⁴¹⁾. A few directors-general did have a decisive role in devising and developing indispensable modern tools for knowledge on and the administration of the country – official census and statistics, territorial cartography, geodetic survey, etc.⁽⁴²⁾. In this connection,

⁽³⁹⁾ The recruitment through open competition was introduced in central government in 1859, while only in the early 1890s in local government.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ See, e.g., Nogueira Soares, *Considerações sobre o presente e o Futuro...*, p. 477 f., on the positive experience of competitive examinations in the selection of civil servants to the Foreign Office.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Joaquim Tomás Lobo de Avila, *Estudos de Administração*, Lisbon, Typographia Universal, 1874, p. 287; Júlio de Vilhena, *Antes da República (Suplemento). Resposta a um livro póstumo*, Coimbra, França & Arménio, 1917, pp. 42-43 and 48-50.

⁽⁴²⁾ Tavares de Almeida (n.2), pp. 256 and 331; Rui Miguel C. Branco, *O Mapa de Portugal. Estado, Território e Poder no Portugal de Oitocentos*, Lisbon, Livros Horizonte, 2003, pp. 109 f. On the early achievements in this critical area, the following assessment is illuminating: Le gouvernement de ce pays n'a commencé que

it should definitely be highlighted, also by contrast with later periods, that we may find among these senior officials some of the most qualified, talented and cosmopolitan men of their time – people who were members of scientific academies, went abroad on study missions, wrote technical and scientific books, and produced admirable reports and memoranda that inspired or were used to justify innovative, pioneering measures. Hence, their personal imprint may be perceived in many reforms.

depuis une dizaine d'années à prêter lui-même plus activement son concours aux travaux et aux publications statistiques: mais, une fois entré dans cette voie, il s'y est piqué d'émulation [...] Ainsi les sources de la statistique sont devenues, au Portugal aussi, beaucoup plus abondantes qu'elles ne l'avaient jamais été [...] Grâce à ses travaux et aux moyens d'information qui les ont rendus possibles et leur ont servi de base, l'essai d'une statistique générale se présente aujourd'hui comme une tâche plus facilement abordable et mieux saisissable dans son objet pour le Portugal que pour l'Espagne. Seulement [...] il ne faut pas perdre de vue que les ressources de la statistique officielle et administrative même, sont loin d'y valoir celles que l'Angleterre ou les Etats-Unis, la France ou la Belgique, les Pays-Bas ou l'Allemagne, sont en mesure d'offrir" (Charles Vogel, *Le Portugal et ses colonies*, Paris, Guillaumin, 1860, pp. 198-201).