



By: TA | AP Brief

# Portugal chooses between a moderate and a populist in runoff presidential election



Center-left Socialist candidate António José Seguro is heavily favored to defeat hard-right populist André Ventura in Portugal's **runoff presidential election** Sunday in a vote that will test the depth of support for Ventura's brash style of politics.

Recent opinion polls say Seguro will collect twice as many votes as Ventura in the head-to-head between the two top candidates in last month's first round of voting, when **none of the runners** captured the more than 50% of the vote required for victory.

But making it through to the runoff is already a milestone for Ventura and his **Chega (Enough) party**, which has quickly grown into a significant force in Portuguese politics during a wider **European shift to the right**.

Seguro, a longstanding Socialist politician, has positioned himself as a moderate candidate who will cooperate with Portugal's center-right minority government, repudiating Ventura's anti-establishment and anti-immigrant tirades.

In Portugal, the president is largely a figurehead with no executive power. Traditionally, the head of state stands above the political fray, mediating disputes and defusing tensions.

However, the president is an influential voice and possesses some powerful tools, being able to veto legislation from parliament, although the veto can be overturned.

The head of state also possesses what in Portuguese political jargon is called an "atomic bomb," the power to dissolve parliament and call early elections.

## Political instability

In May, Portugal held its third general election in three years in the country's worst bout of **political instability** for decades, and steadyng the ship is a key challenge for the next president.

Ventura, an eloquent and theatrical politician, has rejected political accommodation in favor of a more combative stance.

One of his main targets has been what he calls excessive immigration, as foreign workers have become more conspicuous in Portugal in recent years.

"Portugal is ours," he said.

**In March, the winner will replace center-right President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa**

During the campaign, Ventura put up billboards across the country saying, "This isn't Bangladesh" and "Immigrants shouldn't be allowed to live on welfare."

Although he founded his party less than seven years ago, its surge in public support made it the second-largest party in Portugal's parliament in the May 18 general election.

In March, the winner will replace center-right President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, who has served the limit of two five-year terms.