PERGAMON Bulletin of Latin American Research 19 (2000) 501–525

BULLETIN OF LATIN AMERICAN RESEARCH

Is Brazil becoming a "boring" country?

Francisco Panizza

Department of Government, The London School of Economics and Political Science, LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK

Abstract

The article looks at the condition of Brazil's political system in light of the 1998 electoral results. It critically examines arguments that electoral volatility, political fragmentation and weak institutionalisation have produced a highly unstable political system unsuitable for sound policy-making and processing change. While not underestimating the influence of electoral rules, it argues that given the combination of political, institutional and economic turmoil of the 1980s, it is not surprising that electoral volatility over the period was amongst the highest in the world. Arguably, however, these factors are now having a diminished impact on the political system, lessening volatility and allowing the emergence of a more institutionalised party system.

Keywords: Brazil; Political parties; Party system; Elections; Institutionalisation; Democracy

1. Introduction

During a visit to London in the early 1990s the then Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guido Di Tella, said that he wished Argentina would become "a boring country". By "boring" he meant an economically and politically stable country that is mentioned in the back page financial columns of the international press rather than in front page headlines for military coups and economic meltdowns. Those who have followed the roller coaster rides of the Brazilian economy in late 1998 and early 1999 and its still fragile recovery since might scowl at the title of this article. Surely, Brazil has been anything but "boring" over the past few years! Economic volatility, however, has overshadowed a trend towards increasing institutionalisation and political

E-mail address: F.E.Panizza@lse.ac.uk

0261-3050/00/$20.00
PII: S0261-3050(00)00035-8

stability. The unprecedented re-election of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in October 1998 was perhaps the most visible signal that, after the long years of military rule and the political commotion of the past 20 years, Brazilian politics may now be entering a more steady and predictable path.

Of course, one should be cautious of making too much of a single set of electoral results, indeed, the current cycle of electoral stability evident in the past two elections may well have peaked in 1998. As in almost every democracy, there is a clear link in Brazil between economic and political stability, accentuated in the latter by some specific characteristics of the country's political system. A return to the pre-Real years of economic turmoil — a likely scenario in the first half of 1999 — would have had the danger of throwing the country back into the vicious circle of economic and political volatility that characterised most of the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s. But current political stability goes beyond Cardoso's own re-election. Arguably, the 1998 electoral results were in line with a number of other political trends related to the party system; the composition of Congress and the political map of the states also indicate that the Brazilian political system is rather more steady than suggested by arguments about electoral volatility and parties' fragility.

This article looks at the condition of Brazil's political system in light of the 1998 electoral results. It critically examines arguments that electoral volatility, political fragmentation and weak institutionalisation have produced a highly unstable political system unsuitable for sound policy-making and processing change. While not underestimating the influence of electoral laws and other institutional rules upon the party system, I will argue that the combined effects of the country's mode of transition to democracy and of the failed policies of economic stabilisation were fundamental causes of the political volatility in the years immediately following transition from military rule. The second part of the article will assert that in the latter half of the 1990s political sedimentation and a more stable socio-economic environment have favoured a moderate institutionalisation of the party system. I will conclude by arguing that the party system's alleged shortcomings may play a more ambiguous role in the stabilisation of the country's political system than is generally believed by its critics.

The arguments will be divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the political context in which elections took place between 1985 (the year of Brazil's return to civilian rule) and 1994 (the year in which Fernando Henrique Cardoso won his first presidential election). The second, core section analyses continuity and change in the political system in the light of the 1998 presidential and congressional (Lower Chamber) electoral results. The two subsequent sections discuss the process of institutionalising Brazil's political system and its implications for democracy and the governance of the country.

2. 1985–1994: Institutional change, political volatility and economic disorganisation

Between 1985 and 1994 Brazil went through a painfully eventful period of political democratisation combined with traumatic economic times. While the first half of the

1980s were dominated by the politics of transition to democracy, the second half of the decade and the early 1990s were plagued by economic disorganisation, most notably extremely high inflation, which became the most pressing political issue. Here I examine the influences of institutional change, the politics of transition to democracy and the failed economic stabilisation policies on electoral outcomes and the political context in which elections were fought.

The advent of democracy brought both institutional changes and continuity to the rules of the political game. On the one hand, the mode of transition, based mostly on elite transactions and compromise, allowed a large number of members of the political elite supportive of the old order to retain positions of power at federal, state and local level. But while elite continuity favoured the perpetuation of the patronage and clientelism that had historically secured its political hegemony, the return to democracy also established the values and principles of liberal democracy stronger than ever before in the country's political history.

When restrictions on party activity were lifted in 1985 Brazil's electoral laws became the most liberal in the country's history (Abranches, 1993, p. 113), resulting in an institutional framework of what, for want of a better term, can be described as electoral permissiveness.[1] The electoral rules of the New Republic (as the new democratic polity came to be known in Brazil) combined open list proportional representation for elections to the Federal Chamber of Deputies and state assemblies with extremely liberal party legislation. Under the open list system, candidates are not ranked by parties and voters choose individual candidates rather than party slates. The election of a given candidate is therefore dependent on his/her performance relative to other candidates of the same party, promoting intra-party competition and individualism over party organisation and discipline. Moreover, proportional representation with high magnitude districts and without minimum electoral thresholds, together with the possibility of forming electoral coalitions, mean that parties with as little as one per cent of the vote can gain representation in the Lower Chamber.

Elite continuity combined with electoral permissiveness reflected the contradictory nature of a process of transition to democracy that was influenced by both powerful conservative and strong democratising influences, the latter coming in reaction to the years of military rule. But paradoxically, the effect the two trends had on democratic institutions actually reinforced each other. They contributed to the fragmentation and the weak institutionalisation that characterised the political parties of the New Republic, particularly in its first decade. Additionally, the central role played by state governors in the process of transition gave them a significant role in the new

[1] An example of the reaction against the artificial straitjacket characteristics of political legislation under the military was the elimination of the electoral threshold to gain congressional representation. According to a prominent parliamentarian of the period, the threshold was lifted because it would have left the small Communist Party outside Congress. Many of its leaders, such as Roberto Freire, had distinguished themselves in the struggle against the military regime. (Interview with former senator and Constituency Assembly member Nelson Jobim, 15 April 1999.)

democratic polity, fostering a process of political and fiscal decentralisation. While hailed as a democratic gain, decentralisation actually reinforced patronage and fragmentation as state governors were and still are key figures in their states' patronage networks.

Political institutionalisation was not helped either by the exacerbation of one of the drawbacks of presidentialist regimes, namely the legislative–executive tensions fostered, in the case of Brazil, by the new President's low democratic legitimacy. José Sarney, the first civilian president for more than 20 years, was immediately weakened by the unfortunate circumstances of his accession to power (he took office because of the illness and death of president-elect Tancredo Neves) and by his past as a leading member of the pro-military Partido Democrático Social (PDS). The president's own legitimacy deficit increased the power and influence of congress, particularly of the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB) and its leader, Ulysses Gimaraes, who was regarded by many as the architect of the country's long transition to democracy. The legitimacy conflict reached its peak during the protracted deliberations of the Constituent Assembly between February 1987 and October 1988. Presided over by Guimaraes, the Assembly was regarded by many Brazilians as the true site of the country's new democracy. President Sarney became politically isolated, further weakened by the Assembly's political centrality. He exercised very little control over the works of the Assembly, which was subject to intense lobbying by different interest groups of the right and the left (Martínez Lara, 1996, pp. 91–124).

Along with the political developments that undermined the consolidation of the new institutional order, economic disorganisation, and particularly the short-lived success and subsequent failure of the 1986 Cruzado stabilisation plan, further eroded the political system's legitimacy. While the artificial economic stability achieved by the Cruzado helped the PMDB to gain a record number of seats in the 1986 congressional and state elections, the return of high inflation shortly after the election made clear the political manipulation of the stabilisation plan for electoral purposes. Support for the government and the legitimacy of the political elite as a whole were further diminished by accusations of corruption that increasingly dogged the last years of the first civilian administration. Thus, from its lofty claim to be the embodiment of the New Republic's promises of democracy, economic stability and social justice, the government of President Sarney and the parties that supported him — the PMDB and the Partido da Frente Liberal (PFL) — came to symbolise the New Republic's betrayal of the citizens' trust. Inflation, unemployment and corruption, the three evils of the final years of military rule, now became the defining features of the first democratic administration and its supporters in Congress.

Parliamentary and presidential elections in the late 1980s and early 1990s reflected the polarising and delegitimising influences of political and economic volatility on the New Republic's fledging party system. Changes to electoral legislation also helped undermine the sedimentation of the political rules of the game and the construction of political identities that are fixed by these rules. Between the country's return to civilian rule under José Sarney in 1985 and the 1994 general election, four elections took place at national and state level: 1986 (congressional and state), 1989 (presidential), 1990 (congressional and state) and 1994 (presidential, congressional

and state).[2] During the entire period no two national elections were conducted under the same electoral rules. Among the main changes were the introduction of a runoff system for presidential and state governors' elections (1988); the reduction of the presidential mandate from five to four years (1994); and the unification of the dates for presidential, congressional state governors and state assemblies' elections (1994). Other important reforms were the awarding of the right to vote to the illiterate (1985) and the lowering of the voting age from 18 to 16 years (1988).[3]

The number of parties represented in the lower chamber shot up, from five in 1982 to 10 in 1986 and 18 in 1994. But contrary to what may have been expected given the proliferation of new political parties, the first congressional elections under democracy in 1986 were dominated by just two political parties, the PMDB and the recently founded PFL. The PMDB emerged from the election as the largest party in Congress, its share of seats in the Chamber of Deputies increasing from 39.3 per cent in 1982 to 52.8 per cent in 1986 (Table 1). Together the two parties gained control of more than three-quarters of the Lower Chamber's seats. In the Senate, the hegemony of the PMDB was even more complete, with 63.9 per cent of the vote (De Lima Junior, 1995, pp. 95 and 96). To complete its electoral landslide, the PMDB won 22 out of the then 23 state governorships.[4]

Clearly, the short-lived economic stability achieved by the Cruzado Plan was paramount in the PMDB's political success. Popular support for the government-manipulated plan (Baer, 1995) had translated into a massive vote for the PMDB and its junior ally, the PFL. The PMDB also had benefited from the nation wide organisation it built up in the years of struggle for democracy, which gave the party an important organisational advantage over its rivals. Electoral euphoria was short-lived; however, as the subsequent failure of the Cruzado Plan and the popular backlash against the administration of president Sarney left the country's new democratic order with a political vacuum and a legitimacy deficit.

The 1989 presidential election and the 1990 parliamentary and state elections took place in a context of high economic volatility, political uncertainty, ideological polarisation and the de-legitimisation of the country's political elite. Fernando Collor de Mello won the 1989 presidential election as a political outsider preaching the populist politics of anti-politics (Panizza, 2000). In a runoff election he narrowly defeated the candidate of the left, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, while the share of the votes received by the presidential candidates of the mainstream parties, the PMDB and the PFL, fell into single figures.

Collor de Mello's election marked the high point of the political volatility of the party system and the low point of the political legitimacy of the New Republic's

[2] I am not discussing municipal and state assembly elections in this article. Elections for mayors and municipal chambers take place separately from national and state elections.

[3] The unification of presidential, congressional and state elections was effectively made possible by the 1994 constitutional amendment that reduced the presidential mandate from five to four years (Constitution, article 82). The first unified election took place in 1994.

[4] *Sources*: Mainwaring (1995, pp. 366 and 367) and Lima Junior (1995, pp. 95 and 96).

Table 1
Congressional elections 1986–1998[a]

The number of seats and percentage share of seats by party Parties	1986	1990	1994	1998
PMDB	257 (52.9)	108 (21.6)	107 (20.8)	82 (15.98)
PFL	118 (24.2)	84 (16.7)	89 (17.3)	106 (20.66)
PSDB	—	37 (7.4)	62 (12.1)	99 (19.30)
PDS/PDC/PST/PTR/PP/PPR/PPB	38 (7.8)	68 (13.5)	88 (17.1)	60 (11.7)
PTB	18 (3.7)	38 (7.5)	31 (6.1)	31 (6.1)
PRN	—	40 (8.0)	1 (0.2)	—
PDT	24 (4.9)	47 (9.3)	34 (6.6)	25 (4.87)
PT	16 (3.3)	35 (6.9)	49 (9.6)	58 (11.31)
PL	6 (1.2)	15 (3.0)	13 (2.5)	12 (2.34)
PSB	1 (0.2)	11 (2.2)	15 (2.9)	19 (3.70)
PCB/PPS)	3 (0.6)	3 (0.6)	2 (0.4)	3 (0.58)
PMN	—	1 (0.2)	4 (0.8)	2 (0.39)
PV	—	—	1 (0.2)	1 (0.2)
PCdoB	6 (1.2)	5 (0.9)	10 (2.0)	7 (1.36)
PSC	—	6 (1,2)	3 (0.58)	2 (0.39)
PST				1 (0.2)
PSL				1 (0.2)
PRP			1 (0.2)	
PRS		4 (0.8)		
PSD		(0.2)	3 (0.58)	3 (0.6)
PRONA				1 (0.2)
Total	487 (100)	503 (100)	513 (100)	513 (100)

[a] *Sources*: from 1986 to 1994 Martins Rodrigues (1995, p. 79), for 1998 TSE < www.tse.gov.br/eleicoes/eleicoes98/index.html >.

political system. But the collapse of the party system was neither to be total nor long-term, as in Peru under Fujimori. Even in 1989 and 1990, the election of a populist outsider as president and shifts in the parties' electoral fortunes combined with elements of incipient political institutionalisation. On the left, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) and the Partido Democrático Trabalhista (PDT) increased their share of congressional seats. On the right, the PMDB and PFL, decimated in the 1989 presidential election, partially recovered in the 1990 parliamentary election, although at 38.3 per cent their joint share of seats in the Lower Chamber was the lowest since Brazil returned to democracy (Table 1).

Overall, the PMDB remained the country's largest political party between 1986 and 1994. Even the ideological polarisation of the late 1980s, manifested in the increase in the parliamentary seats of both the right and the left, was only of relative importance.[5]

[5] The conservative parties were the main beneficiaries of this situation as in 1990 President Collor's still considerable popularity benefited his party, the recently funded PRN. Altogether the conservative parties gained almost 50 per cent of the seats in the Lower Chamber (49.3 per cent). Meanwhile the parties of the left more than doubled their share of seats in the Chamber from 9.21 per cent in 1986 to 20.1 per cent in 1990.

The political divide between the conservative majority and the more centrist forces that had traditionally dominated Brazilian politics was not particularly wide, both being largely pragmatic and non-ideological, and the left remained in clear minority in Congress. Moreover, political fragmentation stabilised in the 1990s, albeit at a very high level, and the effective number of parties (Taagepera & Shugart, 1989, pp. 77–91) declined slightly from 8.7 in 1990 to 8.2 in 1994 (Fernandes, 1995, p. 117).

Collor's failure to govern without the backing of an organised congressional majority showed the limits of populist politics in Brazil. His impeachment and resignation, in December 1992, signalled the start of a gradual and uneven process of political re-legitimation of the political system and institutionalisation of the party system. Moreover, although economic disorganisation and inflation increased during the first two years of Itamar Franco's administration, some steps were taken over the period towards restoring economic order, contributing positively to the economic and political stabilisation of the second half of the decade. While the economic stabilisation plans of the 1980s and early 1990s (the Cruzado, Cruzado II, Bresser, Verão, Collor I and Collor II plans) ended in failure, a number of measures taken between 1990 and 1994 started to address the country's more entrenched financial and economic problems. The failure of Collor's stabilisation plan overshadowed his success in cutting the fiscal deficit and in promoting the most significant opening of the Brazilian economy since the 1950s. Likewise, Itamar Franco's erratic pre-Real economic policies should not detract from the importance the Emergency Social Fund (FSE) (later renamed Fiscal Stabilisation Fund — FEF) and the Monetary Transactions Provisional Contribution tax (CPMF) had on the public sector's finances (Baer, 1995, pp. 184–192).[6]

Political sedimentation and policy learning were evident in the 1994 election and in the political strategy that led to the victory of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The reunification of presidential, state and congressional contests in the 1994 general election reconnected the presidential campaign to political parties and, more generally, restored the links between politics, elections and party machines at different levels. In contrast with Collor's populism, the multi-party alliance set up by Cardoso signified the reconstitution of a political strategy based on the country's traditional logic of coalition presidentialism (Abranches, 1990).

Cardoso's coalition was an alliance of centrist political and economic modernisers and traditional political bosses around a programme that contained the promise of change within the limits of a reconstituted conservative political order. The coalition sought to occupy the political centre, reversing the polarisation of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Based on the alliance between the Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB) set up in 1988 by a group of PMDB dissidents, and the PFL, the alliance coalition cut across several of the country's multiple dividing lines. It connected a party (the PSDB) with strong links with the São Paulo industrial elite with

[6] The Emergency Social Fund gave the federal government flexibility in the allocation of up to 15 per cent of tax revenue previously tied up by the constitution as mandatory transfers to the states. The CPMF secured an easy way to collect and difficult to evade source of fiscal revenue.

another (the PFL) based in the underdeveloped Northeast. An alliance between one party led by Brazil's foremost left-of-centre intellectual–politician and another party rooted in the *coronelista* politics of the Northeast may appear awkward. However, similar alliances between modernisers and traditional political forces have historically constituted the core of the country's power block, underpinning the ascendancy of past leaders such as Getulio Vargas and Juscelino Kubistcheck.

Cardoso's victory was grounded in the success of the Real stabilisation plan, enacted in 1994 while he was Finance Minister in the Franco administration. Technically, the Plan was much more accomplished than its ill-conceived predecessors were. The fact that some of the technocrats who devised the plan had also been behind the previous stabilisation plans shows both continuity in the policy-making elite and the fact that its architects learned from past economic and political mistakes (Sola, 1991). But it was the way the Plan was implemented that is key to understanding its true political significance. While Presidents Sarney and Collor de Mello implemented previous plans by surprise and in isolation, the Real was gradually introduced over a period of several months. Each step was announced in advance and a consensus was built about its merits. Perhaps the difference in implementation strategies amounted to the difference between a strategy of extreme personalism and maximum executive autonomy, bordering on isolation, and one of embedded autonomy (Evans, 1992). While the shock and surprise of the previous plans highlighted Sarney and Collor's distance from the political system, the Real presented Cardoso with the possibility of building up a presidential candidacy based on a strong popular mandate and the support of a multi-party alliance and powerful economic interests.

Cardoso won the 1994 presidential contest (Table 2) with an absolute majority (54.3 per cent) of the vote. Lula da Silva was second with 27 per cent of the vote. No other presidential candidate polled more than eight per cent of the vote. Although separated by important political and ideological differences both Cardoso and Lula were political insiders supported by established political parties. In spite of the electoral volatility and economic turmoil of the first half of the 1990s congressional election results did not represent too radical a political shift from the 1990 election. The share of seats of the PMDB and the PFL in the Lower Chamber was within two per cent of

Table 2
The 1994 and 1998 presidential elections[a] (percentages)

Candidate	1994	1998
F. H. Cardoso	54.3	53.06
Lula da Silva	27.0	31.71
Ciro Gomes		10.97
Enéas	7.4	2.14
O. Quércia	4.4	
L. Brizola	3.2	
Others	3.7	2.11

[a] *Source*: TSE < www.tse.gov.br/eleicoes/eleicoes98/index.html >.

their 1990 results, while at 83 seats, the combined numbers gained by the two main left-of-centre parties, the PT and the PDT, was just one more than their 1990 total. Meanwhile the vote for Collor's ad hoc political party, the Partido da Reconstrução Nacional (PRN) collapsed and the party's number of seats in the Lower Chamber went from 40 to just one. While on the surface the collapse of the PRN could be seen as detrimentally increasing electoral volatility, it actually signalled the reassertion of more stable political forces. Four years later the 1998 general election confirmed the trend towards electoral stability and political institutionalisation. The paper will now turn to the second part of the analysis, an examination of both the continuity and changes that have come to light since he 1998 presidential and congressional (Lower Chamber) elections.[7]

3. The 1998 General Election: Political stability and moderate party system institutionalisation

3.1. The presidential election: Concentration, continuity and regional shifts

The October 1998 election was the third presidential election since the return to civilian government, confirming Brazil as a stable electoral democracy.[8] Over 100 million citizens were registered to vote in the country's 307,730 electoral sections, making Brazil the second largest democracy in the West after the US.[9] Twelve candidates battled it out in the 1998 presidential election, but as in 1994, the only candidates with a realistic chance of victory were President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (PSDB) and the PT leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Cardoso ran as the candidate of a broad centre-right political alliance. As he put it, his political strategy was "to weave an alliance of parties ranging from the A to Z of the political spectrum". He came close to this goal by securing the support of six parties, which, in September 1998, controlled 396 seats out of the Lower Chamber's 513 seats.[10] Again, as in 1994, the heart of his coalition was the alliance between his own centrist PSDB and the conservative PFL. While the PMDB had joined the governmental coalition after the 1994 election, the party did not formally endorse Cardoso's candidacy. However, the PMDB did not put forward a presidential candidate of its own, lending its de facto support, therefore, to Cardoso.[11] Lula da Silva was the candidate of a four-party,

[7] The Senate election is not analysed as it entailed only its partial renewal.

[8] The election comprised the presidency, all state governors, the full Federal Chamber of Deputies, one third of the Senate and all state assemblies.

[9] The exact number of registered electors was 106,101,067, *Source*: Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (TSE) < www.tse.gov.br/eleicoes/eleicoes98/index.html >. (This is the address for all subsequent references to TSE.)

[10] The parties supporting Cardoso were the PSDB, the PFL, the PPB, the PMDB, the PTB and the PSD.

[11] As free TV electoral time is awarded in proportion to the number of seats held by each party in the Federal Chamber of Deputies and in the State Assemblies, the broad multi-party coalition gave Cardoso a considerable TV time advantage over his rivals.

left-of-centre coalition led by the PT-PDT alliance, which, at the time of the election, controlled 96 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.[12] A second left-of-centre candidate, former Finance Minister Ciro Gomes, ran with the backing of the former communists, the Partido Popular Socialista (PPS) and, paradoxically, the small, conservative Partido Liberal (PL) which had, in 1994, supported Cardoso.

The 1998 presidential campaign was again largely centred on the 4-year success of the Real stabilisation plan. In 1998, Brazil registered its lowest rate of inflation for more than 30 years and Cardoso, who had consistently registered high approval ratings throughout most of his administration, remained comfortably ahead of his rivals in the opinion polls, suggesting that he would win in the first round.[13] However, in August, just about a month before the election, the Russian crisis seriously hurt the Brazilian economy.[14] The deteriorating economic situation forced Cardoso to revise his campaign strategy, which was originally planned around the self-congratulatory slogan of "four more years of development" plus a general commitment to fight poverty and social exclusion.[15] In order to neutralise the expected electoral fallout from the crisis Cardoso shifted the campaign's emphasis from issues of economic growth and social justice to his credentials as the "experienced statesman" best equipped to steer the country through the turbulent waters ahead.

Although the economic crisis could not be ignored, the President succeeded in preventing it from becoming the centre of the electoral debate. Rather, the crisis was both acknowledged and concealed throughout Cardoso's electoral campaign. On the one hand, his TV electoral programmes largely ignored the crisis, accentuating instead the Government's achievements and the promises for the future. On the other, Cardoso referred to the crisis in his speeches and interviews as president but he sought to put it "beyond electoral politics".[16] He repeatedly emphasised his determination to take "all necessary measures" to overcome the crisis regardless of its electoral costs and expressed confidence that under his stewardship Brazil would succeed in avoiding its worst consequences.[17] In contrast, the left opposition hoped that the crisis could give Lula the chance to shift the electoral debate away from the alleged success of the Real and instead make evident the true condition of the country's economy. However, Lula was forced to tread a difficult path between stressing the true gravity of the economic situation and opening himself up to accusations of seeking to destabilise the economy with scaremongering rhetoric.[18]

---

[12] The parties backing Lula da Silva were the PT, the PDT, the PSB and the PC do B.

[13] Only in May did the polls briefly suggest the possibility of a second round election due to a fall in Cardoso's popularity.

[14] In August 1998 Brazil lost U$11.707 bns in international reserves, (*Folha de São Paulo*, 1 September 1998).

[15] See, "Crise adia programa de metas de FH" (*O Globo On Line* 24 September 98).

[16] See, for instance, Cardoso's speech of 23 September 1998, transcribed in *Folha de São Paulo*, 24 September 1998.

[17] In fact, the government delayed the announcement of the agreement with the IMF until after the second round election of state governors because of fears that the announcement would be unpopular and prejudice Cardoso's allies' chances.

[18] See "Petista vai culpar FHC por crise" (*Folha de São Paulo*, 25 August 1998).

Table 3
Presidential election 1998[a]

Candidate	Votes	Percentage of valid votes
F. H. Cardoso	35,936,916	53.06
Lula da Silva	21,475,330	31.71
Ciro Gomes	7,426,232	10.97
Enéas	1,426,232	2.14
Ivan Frota	251,351	0.37
Sirkis	212,990	0.31
Zé Maria	202,657	0.30
J. De Deus Barbosa	198,926	0.29
Eymael	171,827	0.25
Theresa Ruiz	166,139	0.25
Sergio Bueno	124,571	0.18
Vasco Neto	109,008	0.16

[a] *Source*: TSE: < www.tse.gov.br/eleicoes/eleicoes98/index.html > .

As with Carlos Menem in Argentina's 1995 presidential campaign, in the end the crisis did not affect Cardoso's electoral position and there is some circumstantial evidence to show that it may even have helped to consolidate his lead. Although support for the president dipped briefly in late August, creating the possibility of a second round contest, Cardoso quickly recovered. His lead narrowed from 14 to 8 points in September, but widened again by the middle of the month. According to an opinion poll conducted between 1 and 2 September, 54 per cent of the voters regarded Cardoso as "the best qualified leader to deal with the crisis", compared with only 16 per cent who considered Lula to be the best man. Moreover, 73 per cent of voters stated that "a candidate's ability to solve the economic crisis would be a major consideration in their voting intentions."[19]

The results of the presidential election are in Table 3. Cardoso won in the first round with an absolute majority (53.06 per cent) of the valid votes, just slightly below what had been predicted by the opinion polls. His nearest rival, Lula da Silva, fared significantly better than predicted by the opinion polls. This raised allegations about possible political bias by the polling organisations since, throughout the electoral campaign, the polls had consistently measured Lula's percentage of support to be in the mid-20s percentage points. On election day, however, he polled 31.71 per cent of the votes. Coming in third, with a respectable 10.97 per cent of the votes was Ciro Gomes, a former member of Cardoso's PSDB. The only other candidate who polled more than one per cent of the vote was the right-wing maverick populist Enéas Carneiro with 2.14 per cent of the vote.

In spite of the large number of contenders for the presidency, the 1998 presidential electoral results show a pattern of political concentration rather than of electoral

[19] *Latam Markets Today*, 14 September 1998.

fragmentation. The two front-runners, Cardoso and Lula da Silva, jointly polled 84.77 per cent of the vote and the three most voted candidates' joint share of the vote reached 95.74 per cent. Electoral concentration was even higher than in 1994, when the corresponding figures were, respectively, 81.3 and 88.7 per cent (Table 2). The high concentration of votes among a small number of candidates may seem unusual in a country of the size and diversity of Brazil, with such a proliferation of political parties. However, the pattern is in line with the country's political tradition. In five out of the six presidential elections between 1945 and 1994 the winning candidate polled more than 45 per cent of the votes and in four out of these six elections it gathered more than 48 per cent of the total vote (Abranches, 1993, pp. 110 and 111).[20]

A number of factors can be suggested to explain this phenomenon. The first one concerns Brazil's regional and social differences. It is not easy for a candidate to "travel well" across the country's regional, social, economic, cultural and religious differences. To weave mass support across the country's multiple dividing lines requires large organisational and economic resources which are only available to the few candidates with a realistic chance of winning the election. An additional feature in the case of Brazil is the coalitional nature of its presidentialist system. The need to put together multi-party coalitions favours electoral alliances around a reduced number of candidates. A related third point is that free TV airtime had a decisive influence on the electoral campaign. Free electoral time is by far the single most important campaign instrument and candidates from the largest parties enjoy a substantial advantage as they have a larger share of TV time. For the smaller parties it is more advantageous to "sell" their airtime to a frontrunner in exchange for political benefits than to use their reduced air space to promote a candidate with no chance of winning the election.

Cardoso's 1998 vote held steady from the 1994 election: In absolute figures, he obtained 35,936,916 votes — 1.6 million more votes than in the 1994 election. In percentage terms his 1998 share of the vote went down by just 1.24 per cent from 54.3 per cent in 1994 to 53.06 per cent in 1998 (Table 3). In contrast, Lula da Silva's share of the vote went up by 4.71 per cent, from 27 per cent in 1994 to 31.71 per cent in 1998. In 1998, however, Lula ran in tandem with PDT leader Leonel Brizola, who in 1994 had polled 3.2 per cent of the votes as the PDT's presidential candidate. Thus, Lula and Brizola's share of the vote in 1998 was just 1.51 per cent above the joint share of both candidates in 1994. Moreover, Lula's 1998 share of the vote was almost equal to the 31.6 per cent obtained by adding together his and Brizola's votes in the first round of the 1989 election.[21] The electoral results show that the main left-of-centre candidates'

[20] Between 1945 and 1989 most presidents were elected with around 50 per cent of the vote. The only exception was the 1955 election, where Kubitschek gathered just 35.7 per cent of the vote. In 1989 Fernando Collor de Mello won the first round with just under 30 per cent of the vote. For an overview of Brazil's post-war presidential elections see Abranches (1993).

[21] In the first round of the 1989 election Lula polled 16.1 per cent of the total votes while Brizola won 15.5 per cent. *Sources*: For 1998 TSE; for 1994 Kinzo (1995, Table 1); and for 1989 Mainwaring (1995, Table 11.12).

combined vote has hovered at around 30 per cent in the three post-military presidential elections, although the internal balance of voters' preferences has shifted strongly towards the PT's leader.[22] Meanwhile the almost 11 per cent vote polled by the centre-left candidate Ciro Gomes suggests that Cardoso may have largely kept his share of the votes by balancing out losses to the centre-left of the political spectrum with gains in support from conservative voters.

Cardoso's triumph was grounded on broad based, nation wide electoral support. He won in the country's five geographical regions, in 24 out of the 27 federal states and in 87 per cent of the country's 5513 municipalities.[23] He achieved his highest share of the vote in the Centre-West (61.15 per cent) and the lowest in the Northeast (47.73 per cent).[24] Cardoso clinched his electoral triumph in the Southeast, the country's most developed and highly populated region. More specifically, he secured his first round electoral triumph in the key state of São Paulo, where his advantage over Lula was more than five million votes. However, Cardoso obtained below average support in the South, Brazil's second most developed region.[25] He won in most urban areas but lost in some important capital cities, including Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Porto Alegre and Fortaleza. In turn, Lula obtained his best result in Rio Grande do Sul, where he comfortably beat Cardoso with 49.1 per cent of the votes against 40.6 per cent for Cardoso. He also obtained a narrow victory in Rio de Janeiro. Elsewhere in the Southeast, Lula won in industrial cities with a strong tradition of trade union activity, such as São Bernardo and Cubatão in São Paulo, and Volta Redonda and Campos in Rio de Janeiro. Lula also won in six out of the nine regional state capitals of the Northeast.[26] The third place candidate, Ciro Gomes, won only in his home state of Ceará.

Traditionally, progressive parties achieve their best results in the more developed South and Southeast, while conservative forces tend to fare better in the conservative North and Northeast (Selcher, 1998, p. 31). In 1998, however, the left achieved its best results in the Northeast, where Lula da Silva and Gomes' joint share of the vote (47.67 per cent) was only fractionally below Cardoso's 47.73 per cent. While Gomes' popularity in his native state of Ceará contributed to the left's good regional result, Lula's share of the regional vote was nevertheless almost exactly in line with his national average (31.64 and 31.71 per cent, respectively). The left presidential candidates' good showing in the Northeast appears to support the argument that presidential elections are less influenced by local power brokers than parliamentary ones

[22] Altogether, however, the 1998 election showed an increase in support for the candidates of the left, if the votes for the PSB-PPS candidate, Ciro Gomes, are added to those of the PT-PDT alliance. In 1998 the left candidates' joint share of the vote reached 42.68 per cent, representing a 12.46 per cent increase in relation to the 1994 election.

[23] Conventionally, Brazil is divided into five socially and economically distinctive geographical regions: Centre-West, North, Northeast, South and Southeast.

[24] Source for all figures TSE.

[25] Results in the South are largely explained by Lula's strong showing in the PT's stronghold of Rio Grande do Sul. Similarly, Cardoso's share of the vote in the Northeast was affected by the considerable regional support for Ciro Gomes, a former governor of the Northeastern state of Ceará.

[26] *Sources*: TSE and *Folha de São Paulo*, 1 November 1998.

(Furtado, 1965, p. 155). Perhaps it also reflects social changes in the region, such as increasing urbanisation and a more developed civil society, allowing for a more level playing field between candidates of different ideological orientation.

A significant difference between the 1994 and 1998 presidential elections was the collapse of the vote for the maverick right-wing populist Enéas Carneiro. As a political outsider, his natural constituency was the "protest vote", which in Brazil traditionally reflects the electorate's alienation from the political system. However, the de-legitimisation of the political system had already peaked with Collor's anti-party victory in 1989. While in 1994 Carneiro was the third most popular candidate with a not insignificant 7.4 per cent of the vote (beating established politicians such as former São Paulo governor and PMDB's candidate Orestes Quércia and PDT's Leonel Brizola), in 1998 his share of the vote came down to just 2.14 per cent, suggesting a significant recovery in the legitimacy of the political establishment.[27]

3.2. The congressional election: The confirmation of the hegemony of the centre

In 1998 the entire Chamber of Deputies and one-third of the Senate came up for re-election. This section concentrates on the elections to the Lower Chamber as it gives a more comprehensive view of the country's political landscape than the partial renewal of the Senate.[28] Table 3 shows the results of the last four elections for the Chamber of Deputies. Electoral rules make it extremely unlikely that a single party will dominate the election as the open list proportional representation system combined with high district magnitude facilitates the representation of a large number of parties.[29] As we see, the distribution of seats in the Lower Chamber did not match the parties' share of the vote, as the rule that set up the maximum and minimum number of states' representatives over-represents the small states (Table 1).[30] Because the smaller and less populated states tend to be concentrated in the North and the

[27] Another proxy index for protest vote, the number of blank and void votes, remained almost unchanged at 18.7 per cent of the vote in 1998 versus 18.8 per cent in 1994. The 1998 election percentage figure of blank and void votes, however, was considerably higher than the 6.4 per cent registered in the 1989 presidential election (*Source*: TSE; Kinzo, 1995, p. 186).

[28] The partial renewal of the Senate did not significantly alter its political map. The PMDB was the main winner of the election, with a net gain of 6 seats, which took its total number from 20 to 26 seats. The PFL lost four seats and with it its status as the largest party in the Senate. Since the 1998 election the PFL has 20 seats, followed by the PSDB with 16 and the PT with seven. Altogether the government retains a large majority in the Senate. Since the election government parties have 68 senate seats (− 1), versus 13 (+ 1) from the opposition. (*Sources*: TSE and DIAP, 1999.)

[29] The method for determining proportionality is that of the largest reminder, which is the most favourable for small parties.

[30] The imbalance in favour of smaller states was initiated by the Constitution of 1946 but intensified in the 1970s, when the military regime changed the electoral rules to favour the conservative states of the Northeast. Constitutional complementary law no. 78 of 30 July 1993 establishes that no state should elect less than eight federal deputies and that the most populated state (São Paulo) is to be represented by 70 deputies. As a result of this electoral bias São Paulo, which has 21 per cent of the national population, holds only 14 per cent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

Table 4
The number of seats, percentage share and party switching for the five largest parties between 1995 and 1998[a]

Parties	Seats 1/2/1995	Seats 3/9/1998	Seats 4/10/1998
PFL	89 (17.35)	110 (21.44)	106 (20.66)
PSDB	62 (12.09)	95 (18.52)	99 (19.30)
PMDB	107 (20.86)	88 (17.15)	82 (15.98)
PPB	88 (17.15)	77 (15.01)	60 (11.70)
PT	49 (9.55)	50 (9.75)	58 (11.31)
Total	395 (77)	420 (81.87)	405 (78.95)

[a] *Source*: Carlos Pereira (mimeograph of unpublished tables).

Northeast, the distortion favours the country's poorer regions, giving congressmen from these regions and the parties they represent a bigger hand in congress.[31]

Electoral results from the 1990s show that although in comparative terms Brazil's party system continues to be affected by a considerable degree of volatility, it has become more stable than in the 1980s. From 1982 to 1986 the Pedersen index of electoral volatility measured in seats (Pedersen, 1983, pp. 31–34) was 42.5 per cent, but fell to 38.6 per cent between 1986 and 1990 (Mainwaring, 1995, p. 374).[32] Volatility fell much further in the 1990s: Between 1990 and 1994 the index was 23.29 per cent, while between 1994 and 1998 it came down to 13.81 per cent, less than one-third of what it was between 1982 and 1986. Electoral stability is even stronger if instead of comparing 1994 with 1998 electoral results, the latter are compared with the composition of the Lower Chamber in September 1998, the month before the election. This comparison is pertinent in order to take into account party switching, that is, deputies that change parties during the lifetime of the legislature, which significantly alters the Chamber's political map. If volatility before and after the 1998 election for the five larger parties is calculated in this way, the Pedersen index would be just 3.8 per cent (Table 4).

The party system remained highly fragmented throughout the 1990s. Eighteen parties gained representation in the Chamber of Deputies in 1998, the same number as in 1994. However, the Rae index of political fragmentation (Rae & Taylor, 1970, p. 26) has declined slightly, from 0.937 in 1990 to 0.929 in 1994 and 0.855 in 1998. There was no dramatic change in the largest parties' share of the seats in the last two elections. While in 1994 the PMDB gained 107 seats, equivalent to 20.8 per cent of the Chamber's total seats, in 1998 the PFL gained just one less seat (107), amounting to 20.66 per cent of the total seats. Following the trend of the last three elections, there

[31] So, while in the 1998 Lower Chamber election the PSDB obtained 17.5 per cent of the popular vote versus 17.3 per cent for the PFL, the PFL with its electoral base in the North and the Northeast had the larger number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

[32] By comparison, in a century of Western European elections, covering 13 countries and 303 electoral periods, the highest volatility recorded was 31.1 per cent, in Weimar Germany from 1919 to 1920.

Table 5
Ideological alignments in the Chamber of Deputies 1994–1998[a]

Ideological orientation	1994 election	1998 election
Centre and centre-right (Supported Cardoso)	393 (76.6%)	381 (74.26%)
Left and centre-left (Supported Lula (1994–1998) and Ciro Gomes (1998))	110 (21.4%)	124 (24.17%)
Others	10 (1.95%)	8 (1.56%)
Total	513 (100%)	513 (100%)

[a] Parties supporting Cardoso in 1994 and 1998: PSDB, PFL, PMDB, PPB, PT and PSD. Parties supporting Lula and Ciro Gomes: PT, PDT, PSB, PCdoB, and PPS. The PL supported Cardoso in 1994 and Gomes in 1998. *Source*: TSE < *www.tse.gov.br/eleicoes/eleicoes98/index.html* > .

was a moderate increase in the three largest parties' share of seats: Their combined total went up from 46.6 per cent in 1990 to 50.3 per cent in 1994 and 55.94 per cent in 1998.[33] Another measure of political concentration — the number of effective parties has also continued to fall, from 8.7 in 1990 to 8.2 in 1994 and 6.9 in 1998.[34]

Politically, the election confirmed the catch-all political centre's hegemony in Brazilian politics. Brazilian elections tend to have a low ideological content. The personalisation of politics and weak party identification combine to make elections personal contests or plebiscites on the outgoing government's performance rather than ideological battles, a trend that was reinforced by the institution of presidential re-election in 1998. An imperfect, shorthand, way of mapping the parties' ideologies would be to divide parties according to their presidential candidate's political leanings. Thus, parties that supported Lula da Silva and Ciro Gomes should, in principle, be assumed to be located at the left and centre-left of the political spectrum. Conversely, parties backing the government coalition should be considered to belong to the centre and centre-right.[35] Table 5 presents the ideological alignment of the political parties in the Chamber of Deputies in the 1994 and 1998 elections defined in terms of the parties' support for the different presidential candidates.

[33] In the 1990 election the party with the third largest number of seats was the PDT, as the PPB was only constituted after the election, in 1995, as a result of the merge between the PP and the PPR.

[34] In spite of the reduction in the number of effective parties, Brazil still has the highest number of effective parties in the list of 48 countries produced by Taagepera and Shugart (1989, pp. 81 and 82). For the formula to calculate the effective number of parties see Taagepera and Shugart (1989, pp. 77–81).

[35] However, political divisions within the coalitions can be equally significant. It is difficult to align the parties that supported Cardoso's candidacy in terms of their specific ideologies, as most of them are catch-all parties with no defined ideology or, as is the case with the PMDB and the PSDB, they host different ideological factions.

On the surface, we can discern a slight shift to the left, as the centre and centre-right parties, which controlled 76.6 per cent (393) of the seats in February 1994, saw their share of seats fall to 74.26 per cent (381), representing a loss of just 12 seats. In contrast, the left gained 14 seats, increasing its share of seats from 21.44 per cent (110) of the seats in 1994 to 24.17 per cent (124) in 1998. However, the difference is almost totally accounted for by the PL's shift in support from Cardoso to Ciro Gomes. In spite of its support for Gomes, the PL can hardly be placed at the left of the political spectrum, so the net result is effectively almost identical to that of the 1994 election.[36] Within the government coalition the parties of the centre, the PSDB and the PMDB, gained 181 seats versus 197 for the right and centre-right forces (PFL, PPB and PTB), representing a net gain of 12 seats for the centre in relation to their 1994 results.

Brazil's federal system of government and the country's significant regional socio-economic and political divisions make regional politics a crucial element in the workings of Congress. Although there are no regional parties as such, parties have different regional strengths and regional interests have a strong influence on congressional votes. The 1998 Lower Chamber elections show that the six largest parties won seats in all of the country's five regions, but that the parties' regional share of seats show some significant differences, indicating the persistence of a "Northeast–Southeast" political divide.

The parliamentary delegation of the Chamber's largest centre-right party, the PFL, remains heavily concentrated in the North and the Northeast with more than 60 per cent (65) of the party's 106 elected deputies representing Brazil's two poorest and most underdeveloped regions. The party's main stronghold remains the Northeast, where the PFL controls 31.8 per cent (48) of the region's 151 seats. In contrast, just 24.52 per cent of the party's representatives were elected in the Southeast, where the party captured just 26 of the region's 179 seats. The regional spread of the largest party of the left, the PT, is the opposite to that of the PFL. Altogether, 67.24 per cent (39) of the PT's representatives in the Chamber of Deputies are from Brazil's two richest regions, the South and the Southeast, versus 24.14 per cent (14) from the North and the Northeast. The party is underrepresented in the North and the Northeast, where it controls only 7.69 per cent (five) and 5.96 per cent (nine) of the regions' seats.[37] The PSDB emerged from the election as the most "national" of the largest parties. It obtained its greatest share of the vote (24.02 per cent) in the Southeast, but the party's parliamentary representation is fairly evenly distributed throughout the regions.[38] The most significant result is the PMDB's collapse in the Southeast, where it won just 9.5 per cent (17) of the region's seats. While it once controlled the most urbanised and

[36] The PL was set up in 1989 as a vehicle for the presidential candidacy of the late economically liberal politician Guilherme Afif Domingos. It has now become a political machine devoid of ideological content.

[37] The PT's delegation to the Lower Chamber is also heavily concentrated in some key states. So, the party elected 14 representatives in São Paulo, amounting to 24.13 per cent of the total party representation in the Chamber of Deputies. It also elected eight deputies in its stronghold of Rio Grande do Sul, which is the equivalent to 25 per cent of the state's representation in the Chamber of Deputies.

[38] The exception is the South, where the PSDB controls just 10.39 per cent of the region's seats in the Lower Chamber.

developed regions of the country, the PMDB is now dependent on the electoral strength of its traditional regional leaders.[39]

In brief, based on conventional measures of political fragmentation we can see that in 1998 Brazil's political system remained highly fragmented at congressional level but concentrated at the level of presidential elections.[40] Although stable in relation to 1994, the number of parties represented in congress (18) remains high. More useful indexes, such as Taagepera and Shugart's number of effective parties and Rae's index of party fragmentation, show a fall that, although moderate, has been apparent for the past three elections. The increase in the three larger parties' share of seats has also been apparent in the past three elections, lowering from four to three the number of parties required to achieve a parliamentary majority.[41]

What is perhaps more significant politically is the decline of the PPB on the right of the political spectrum and of the PDT on the centre-left. This leaves the PT and the PFL as the main forces at either side of the political spectrum, with the PMDB and the PSDB occupying the political centre. Moreover, these four parties joint share of seats in the Chamber of Deputies has risen from 52.6 per cent in 1990 to 59.8 per cent in 1994 and 67.25 per cent in 1998. The above-mentioned parties also control more than three-quarters of the state governments (22 out of 27). This situation gives some support to suggestions of a possible trend towards a party system structured around

[39] While structural differences, such as economic development, urbanisation and education, explain some of the parties' regional strengths and weaknesses, specific political factors are also an important influence in the parties' different regional electoral outcomes. So, for instance, 20 out of the PFL's 48 Northeastern deputies were elected in the State of Bahia, a personal stronghold of PFL's leader Antônio Carlos Magalhães. Meanwhile, while the PSDB achieved its largest regional share of the vote in the Southeast, it obtained its best parliamentary results in the state of Ceará where it controls 54.55 per cent of the state's seats in the Chamber of Deputies. This outcome was largely thanks to the political prestige of the state's highly popular governor Tasso Jereissati.

[40] Electoral concentration in the 1994 and 1998 presidential elections was even more remarkable given that the elections were conducted under a runoff system, which is usually favourable to vote dispersion in first round voting. It can be suggested that in both elections concentration was favoured by a combination of conjunctural and institutional factors. The 1994 election had a strong plebiscitarian element built up around the Real stabilisation plan. Likewise, re-election, introduced for the first time in 1998, tends to turn the presidential contest into a plebiscite on the Government's performance, a trend reinforced in 1998 by the still enduring electoral appeal of the Real. Thus, re-election may favour the unification of opposition parties behind an anti-government candidate and also the gathering of the pro-governmental parties behind the re-election seeking president. The latter of course is highly contingent on the president's popularity but in Brazil the president's power of patronage may significantly contribute to keeping together the government coalition. Conversely, when the president cannot stand for re-election or when his popularity is extremely low, it is likely that more candidates, both from the government alliance and from the opposition, will contest the election.

[41] However, the increase in the larger parties' share of seats should not lead to a fall in the overall number of parties in the absence of change in the electoral rules, such as the introduction of an electoral threshold. The need for parliamentary alliances will also continue, as there has been no significant change in the largest party's comparatively low share of seats in the past three elections. Moreover, a working parliamentary majority will effectively require the support of at least two of the larger parties, thus strengthening the centre parties' political hand.

four parties broadly representing different shades of the political spectrum as well as different balances of regional influences.[42]

4. Moderate party system institutionalisation and political stability

The previously analysed electoral results shed significant light on the institutional status of Brazil's party system and its implications for democratic rule and political stability. Comparative political theory assigns increasing importance to the institutionalisation of party systems for democratic government and political stability. According to received opinion, low institutionalisation makes electoral outcomes unpredictable, increases actors' uncertainty about the desirability of democracy, makes it more difficult for citizens to evaluate the party performance and increases the chances of significant policy change. Low institutionalisation is also associated with personalism and low legitimacy, which carry with them their own problems. Personalist politics raises questions about accountability and favours the emergence of ad hoc parties at the service of individual leaders. Low legitimacy makes it easier for anti-party politicians to win office and for powerful external actors to challenge the political system (Mainwaring, 1999, p. 322).

Although we still do not have a long enough and, more important, an environmentally stable enough series of elections since Brazil's return to democracy to derive firm conclusions about future trends in the party system, it can be said that patterns of institutionalisation are emerging. However, it is important to note that elections have been held under different rules in a context of political realignment and economic disorganisation. While there have been five national elections since the country's return to civilian rule in 1985, only two out of the four civilian presidents have been popularly elected. Moreover, a study such as this one, mainly based on electoral data, cannot effectively cover all dimensions of party system institutionalisation with the same depth.

Given the combination of political, institutional and economic turmoil of the 1980s, it is not surprising that electoral volatility over the period was amongst the highest in the world. Arguably, however, these factors are now having a diminished impact on the political system, lessening volatility and allowing the emergence of a more institutionalised party system. The relatively low (for Brazilian standards) volatility index for 1994–1998 does not constitute a pattern that will necessarily be reproduced in the future. However, the 1998 results show a continuation of the decline in electoral volatility for the fourth consecutive electoral period. The mean volatility measure for elections between 1982 and 1998 has fallen to 29.00, still high compared with mature democracies, but well within the average of the so-called "third wave" democratising countries (Mainwaring, 1999, p. 29).

Parties that have strong social roots are able to survive longer than those that are mere flags of convenience for ambitious leaders. Brazil's main political parties are

[42] Interview with PT leader in the Chamber of Deputies, José Genoino, 14 April 1999.

relatively young, although the oldest of the main parties, the PMDB, is already 35 years old and the PT and the PDT are both more than 20 years old. At least part of the reason for high party turnover lies in the imposition of the artificial two party straitjacket by the military and its subsequent removal in 1979. Splits such as that of the PSDB from the PMDB in 1989 and the multiple mergers that led to the formation of the PPB in 1995 can be traced back to the party system during the years of military rule and its reconfiguration after Brazil's return to democracy. Personalism is strong in Brazilian politics, although parties are characterised by different levels of personalism, which is stronger in the PFL and the PMDB than in the PSDB and the PT. But with the exception of Leonel Brizola's PDT, no party is entirely at the whim of its leader. More significantly, none of the main parties in 1998 was an empty artificial shell for a political outsider such as the PRN was for Collor de Mello in 1989, Cambio 90 for Fujimori in Peru or the Movimiento Quinta República for Chávez in Venezuela.

Congruence between presidential and congressional party vote shows the ability of parties to structure voting patterns and thus party identification at different levels. Disjunction between the vote for president and lower chamber seats has been historically high in Brazil (Mainwaring, 1999, p. 77 and pp. 109–125) but it has fallen over the past two elections. Two main factors have historically contributed to the high level of electoral disjunction. First, presidential candidates tend to be supported by electoral coalitions of different degrees of consolidation, rather than by single parties. And, more importantly, the elections for president are Brazil's only truly national elections. Elections for the Lower Chamber reflect state and local politics rather than national concerns. Although the Chamber is notionally a national body, representatives are locally oriented. Electoral disjunction reached a record 76.5 per cent in the non-concurrent 1986 Congressional and 1989 presidential elections. Since then, however, disjunction has fallen from 52.3 per cent in the 1989–1990 non-concurrent elections to 31.5 per cent in 1994 and 19.9 per cent in 1998.

Finally, in a highly institutionalised party system, parties enjoy a high degree of legitimacy as they are acknowledged as being the proper actors to constitute governments and their role is not questioned by other powerful political actors. Surveys consistently show that Brazilian citizens have little trust in political parties, suggesting a low degree of legitimacy (Mainwaring, 1999, p. 27). However, a more significant indicator of party system legitimacy would be the ability of political outsiders to challenge the parties' monopoly of political representation. In extreme cases such as those of Fujimori in Peru and Chávez in Venezuela, their successful challenges have led to the delegitimation and effective collapse of the party system. In the case of Brazil, the 1989 electoral triumph of Collor de Mello suggested a similar development. Since 1989, however, the situation has changed considerably. Arguably, Collor's "party-less" victory has been the exception rather than the norm in recent elections.[43] Personalities may be electorally more important than party affiliation, but

[43] The other obvious case is the victory of Jânio Quadros in 1961. While Quadros was not a party candidate he was supported by the UDN, one of the main parties of that period.

personalism and even populism are not necessarily the same as being anti-party. The main contenders for the executive before and after 1989 cultivated a supra-party image but they all have been from major parties. Moreover, while politicians running as candidates for executive positions at state and local level often switch parties for electoral considerations, all states governorships and the most important mayoral positions of the past two elections have been won by candidates from established parties and most of them by candidates from the largest parties.

5. Conclusion: Political institutionalisation and democracy

Political parties are essential institutions of representative democracies. But as Susan Stokes (1997) points out, their status in democratic theory is more ambiguous than is assumed by some of the literature on party systems. Stable party systems provide voters with predictability and responsiveness and enhance governability. However, strong parties with deep roots in society may become too pervasive, making conflict unmanageable as was the case in Allende's Chile. Equally, old parties may signify the party system's ability to adapt and maintain the trust of the citizens through time, as in Britain or the US, or represent the survival of an entrenched political oligarchy as in Austria or Colombia.

Brazil's moderately institutionalised party system is characterised by most of the political shortcomings typical of unstable party systems rather than by the rigidity and polarising effects of over-institutionalised systems. Personalism, lack of internal discipline, large-scale party switching, poor accountability, high legislative turnover and unreliable parliamentary majorities are among the most common criticisms levelled at the country's party system. But institutional rules do not determine political outcomes; they only set up the framework in which politics take place. Politics is an ambiguous game and some of the party system's alleged shortcomings are sources of stability for the political system as a whole.

The considerable degree of electoral volatility experienced by Brazil since the return to democracy does not necessarily equate to greater political uncertainty. Neither, for that matter, do the parties' splits and mergers or high legislative turnover. A comparison with Italy is pertinent to illustrate this point. In post-war Italy volatility was apparent in short-lived governments and in the permanent reshuffle of government coalitions. In post-authoritarian Brazil, volatility has taken the form of shifting electoral results and the proliferation of parties, often of an ephemeral nature. In both countries, however, volatility barely conceals a strong underlying political continuity in the form of centrist coalition rule and a political elite playing musical chairs.[44] Furthermore, both in Italy and in Brazil, political relations between the countries' more industrialised regions and the relatively more underdeveloped ones have shaped

[44] The Collor government has been the only exception to the centrist rule that has characterised the administrations of presidents Sarney and Franco and the two administrations of President Cardoso. The Brazilians have a term to identify this centrist political elite, they called it the *centrão*.

the ways in which their respective polities operate. As Italy has its "southern question" Brazil has its "northeastern question." The result of this political divide is the superimposition of traditional forms of patronage over important elements of the politics of citizenship and public opinion. In both countries, in order to win elections, it is necessary to bridge the social, political and economic divide between the two regions. Thus, government coalitions have consisted of alliances between political elites representing urban industrial interests and the political machines of the more underdeveloped regions. In Italy for most of the post-war period this alliance was formed within the internal factions of the Christian Democratic party. In Brazil it has taken the shape of coalition presidentialism and, in the Cardoso administration, of the alliance between the PSDB and the PFL.

Open list proportional representation is a disincentive to stronger party organisation and discipline. But the open list has also a democratic dimension as it prevents the party elite from controlling access to the political system, as is the case with closed lists. Arguably, this makes representatives more responsive to their local electors than to the good will of the leaders. The flip side of the system is lax parliamentary discipline. This can be an obstacle to efficient government and an incentive for corruption as shown by the problems experienced by the Cardoso administration in attempting to pass its programme of economic reforms. But as the PT has shown on the left and the PFL on the right, lax party legislation and open list proportional representation are no obstacles for well-disciplined parties. Furthermore, the weak institutionalisation of the party system is a logical consequence of coalition presidentialism, since there are incentives for presidents to undermine parties so as to prevent disciplined opposition and make possible ad hoc coalition building through clientelistic methods. An example of this logic at work is the "A–Z" coalition sought by President Cardoso. With regard to party switching, there is no question that this is a corrupting practice that diminishes congressional life. However, party switching has often been deliberately promoted by the larger government parties to strengthen their own majority at the expense of the smaller parties, thus lessening political fragmentation.

Finally, personalism is increasingly a characteristic of most political systems. It is not always the case, however, that personalism lessens political debate and brings the danger of erratic policy-making and anti-party politicians. In a country of the size and social complexity of Brazil leaders often embody popular demands for change and political ideas more visibly than political parties. For all the shortcomings of the debate and the gross bias of the TV Globo, in 1989 Collor de Mello and Lula da Silva represented powerful images of two very different political projects. As Mangabeira (1990, p. 321) puts it, the direct confrontation of personalities can be and has often been an opportunity to assess the real intentions of those aspiring to higher office, and while Collor was a true anti-party politician, in this, as in many other things, he appears as the exception rather than the rule.

To conclude, therefore, political systems shape and are shaped by the political rules of the game, including electoral legislation, but also by the society they represent. Brazilian parties are heterogeneous and have weak identities for the political reasons analysed above and because Brazilian society combines large socio-economic

inequalities with a soft-edged social heterogeneity. Regional, ethnic, religious, class and other social dividing lines constitute elements of a hierarchically fragmented system of differences rather than nodal points of hard-edged political antagonisms, which are often the basis upon which strong party identities are built. Traditional forms of patronage, together with geographical and social mobility and the unifying force of modern communications, weaken political antagonisms rooted in regional, cultural and economic differences. The absence of ethnic, religious or properly regional parties, so common in other large and divided societies, makes the country's political fragmentation less the result of strong identities and of rights-oriented social groups and more the product of differential access to patronage and negotiable interests. Social conflicts are often not openly expressed as political antagonisms, as common crime and social exclusion become the "non-political" expressions of those left outside the boundaries of the political order.

While this makes intractable conflicts less likely to emerge, permanent bargaining, combined with social exclusion, is the normal form of politics in a system characterised by deep inequalities articulated in a complex system of differences. Lax party organisation, facility of entry and the porous nature of its political dividing lines makes the system less rigid and therefore less vulnerable to the challenge of outsiders, as the boundaries between its inside and its outside are easily traversed. Conservative transformism (Gramsci, 1991) rather than erratic populism may be the political system's most enduring characteristic. This has been an obstacle to swift reform over the last decade and is likely to continue to be so in the future. This condition, however, is not entirely negative. It should not be forgotten that while negotiations and bargains may be obstacles to the ever-increasing imperatives of market reform, this is also the stuff of which democratic politics are made.

Glossary of Brazil's Political Parties

PCB	Partido Comunista Brasileiro
PCdoB	Partido Comunista do Brasil
PDC	Partido Democrata Cristão
PDS	Partido Democrático Social
PDT	Partido Democrático Trabalhista
PFL	Partido da Frente Liberal
PL	Partido Liberal
PMDB	Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro
PMN	Partido da Mobilização Nacional
PP	Partido do Povo
PPB	Partido Progressista Brasileiro
PPR	Partido Progressista Reformista
PPS	Partido Popular Socialista
PRN	Partido de Reconstrução Nacional
PRONA	Partido da Reedificação da Ordem Nacional

PRP	Partido Renovador Progressista
PRS	Partido das Reformas Sociais
PSB	Partido Socialista Brasileiro
PSC	Partido Social Cristão
PSD	Partido Social Democrático
PSDB	Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira
PST	Partido Social Trabalhista
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores
PTB	Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro
PTR	Partido Trabalhista Renovador
PV	Partido Verde

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Lynda Dexheimer for her assistance with the original manuscript. I would like to thank Vicente Palermo, Carlos Pereira and two anonymous BLAR reviewers for the many useful comments and insights.

References

Abranches, S. H. (1993). Strangers in a common land: Executive/legislative relations in Brazil. In S. Marks, *Political constraints on Brazil's economic growth* (pp. 105–129). New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

Abranches, S. H. (1990). O dilema político institucional brasileiro. In J. P. Dos Reis Velloso, *Modernizacão Política e Desenvolvimento*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olimpo Editora.

Baer, W. (1995). *The Brazilian economy*: *Growth and Development*. Connecticut and London: Westport, Praeger.

De Lima Junior, O. (1995). As Eleições Gerais de 1994: Resultados e Implicações Político-Institucionais. *Dados*, *38*(1), 93–106.

DIAP (Departamento Intersindical de Assessoria Parlamentar) (1999). *Para Falar com os Poderes* Série Agenda. Brasilia: DIAP.

Evans, P. (1992). The state as problem and solution: Predation, embedded autonomy and structural change. In S. Haggard, & R. Kaufman, *The politics of structural adjustment*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.

Fernandes, L. (1995). Muito Barulho por Nada? O Realinhamento Político Ideológico nas Eleições de 1994. *Dados, 38*(1), 107–144.

Furtado, C. (1965). Political obstacles to economic growth in Brazil. In C. Véliz, *Obstacles to change in Latin America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gramsci, A. (1991). *Prison notebooks*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kinzo, M. D. G. (1995). The Congress in Brazil's Democracy. In M. D. Kinzo, & V. Bulmer-Thomas, *Growth and development in Brazil: Cardoso's challenge* (pp. 171–184). London: Institute of Latin American Studies.

Mainwaring, S. (1999). *Rethinking party systems in the third wave of democratization*: *The case of Brazil*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Mainwaring, S. (1995). Brazil. Weak parties, feckless democracy. In S. Mainwaring, & T. Scully, *Building democratic institutions. Party systems in Latin America* (pp. 354–543). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Mangabeira Unger, R. (1990). *A Alternativa Transformadora. Como Democratizar of Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Guanabara Koogan S.A.

Panizza, F. (2000). Neopopulism and its limits in Collor's Brazil. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, *19*(2), 177–192.

Pedersen, M. N. (1983). Changing patterns of electoral volatility in European party systems, 1948–1977: Exploration in explanation. In H. Daalder, & P. Mair, *Western European party systems. Continuity and change* (pp. 29–66). London: Sage.

Rae, D. W., & Taylor, M. (1970). *The analysis of political cleavages*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Selcher, W. (1998). The politics of decentralized federalism, national diversification and regionalism in Brazil. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, *40*(4), 25–50.

Sola, L. (1991). Heterodox shock in Brazil: Técnicos, politicians and democracy. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, *23*, 163–195.

Stokes, S. (1997). Are parties what's wrong with democracy in Latin America? Guadalajara, Mexico, *Prepared for presentation at the XX International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association.*

Taagepera, R., & Shugart, S. (1989). *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems*. Newhaven: Yale University Press.