



THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL

SCOTT MAINWARING

Working Paper #66 - March 1986

The author is Assistant Professor of Government and Member of the Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame. He wrote *The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil, 1916-1985* (Stanford University Press) and has also written extensively on social movements and on transitions to democracy. He wishes to thank Caroline Domingo, Frances Hagopian, Margaret Keck, and Eduardo Viola for helpful comments.

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the transition to democracy in Brazil, focusing primarily on the period between 1983 and 1985. The first section argues that political liberalization initially resulted from a decision by leaders of the military regime, rather than from grass roots or opposition pressures; it then explains the logic of that decision. The author briefly examines the dialectic between the regime and the opposition during the 1974-83 period. He goes on to argue that the period beginning October 1983 marked some decisive changes in the political process; the military's support, cohesion, and ability to control the political process declined. The following section argues that this erosion of the military regime between 1983 and 1985 resulted from a combination of legitimation problems, which were long term and virtually inevitable, and choices that it made. The concluding section argues that the elitist nature of the transition has influenced the early period of democratic rule. There are many signs of continuity with the old regime, and only limited challenges to Brazil's lengthy tradition of political elitism and socio-economic inequalities.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo analiza la transición a la democracia en Brasil, centrándose principalmente en el período entre 1983 y 1985. En la primera sección se sostiene que la apertura política inicialmente resultó no de las presiones populares o opositoras, sino de una decisión de los líderes del régimen militar; luego explica la lógica de esta decisión. El autor resume brevemente la dialéctica entre el régimen y la oposición durante el período de 1974-83. En seguida plantea que el período que comienza en octubre de 1983 registra algunos cambios decisivos en el proceso político; el apoyo para el régimen, la cohesión interna y la habilidad de los militares para controlar el proceso político disminuyeron. Luego se afirma que esta erosión del régimen militar entre 1983 y 1985 resultó de una combinación de problemas de legitimación, los cuales fueron de largo plazo y virtualmente inevitables, y de opciones que no resultaron las mejores. La última parte sostiene que el carácter elitista de la transición ha influenciado el período inicial del régimen democrático. Hay muchas indicaciones de continuidad del viejo régimen, y los desafíos a la larga tradición de elitismo político y desigualdades socio-económicas de Brasil son limitados.

On January 15, 1985, Brazil elected a new president, 74 year-old Tancredo Neves, a moderate career politician who had been one of the important leaders of the opposition to the military regime which took power in 1964. Tancredo died before assuming office, but the Vice-President elect, José Sarney, took over the Executive Office on March 15, 1985, bringing to an end 21 years of military rule. Arguably, the transition in Brazil is the most important of the recent transitions in South America (Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia) given the country's size, population, and influence, and given the fact that Tancredo's election marked the demise of the most successful and long-lived bureaucratic authoritarian regime in the region.¹ As a result, the nature and implications of the Brazilian transition will have considerable significance for understanding the political reality of the region during the next several years.²

This paper analyzes the transition to democracy in Brazil. Starting from the viewpoint that political liberalization was initially a choice made by the military regime in 1974, I examine why the regime undertook that path. I then trace the main characteristics of the transition during two periods: March 1974 to October 1983, and October 1983 until January 1985. The latter period, which is examined in greater detail, is distinctive because of the extent to which the regime lost its ability to dictate or respond effectively to political change. The following section then analyzes the reasons behind the rapid regime erosion of the 1983-85 period. The paper concludes with a brief analysis of the effects of the kind of transition Brazil underwent on the new democratic regime during its first year.

Liberalization from Above: The Initial Impulse

In March 1974, President Ernesto Geisel and Chief of Cabinet Golbery de Couto e Silva announced their intention of promoting a "slow, gradual, and careful" process of political liberalization.³ This was not the first time the

military regime had announced its intention to move towards a more liberal political system. Presidents Castello Branco (1964-67), Costa e Silva (1967-69), and Médici (1969-74) had publicly stated their desire to do so, yet none was able to follow through on the project.⁴ Furthermore, during the course of the abertura there were tensions between pushing for liberalization and tightening authoritarian controls. Nevertheless, it is possible to date the abertura from March 1974 because despite oscillations and regressions, from then on the general movement was towards a more liberal political system.

Why did the military decide to open up the regime?⁵ In contrast to earlier coups, where the military had returned power to civilians after a short interregnum, in 1964, the predominant thrust was toward a more long term intervention (Stepan 1971). Nevertheless, most regime leaders never saw military rule as a stable, permanent solution. The military would restore order and eventually return power to civilians. The regime continued to define itself according to Western values, including those of democracy. Despite thousands of incidents of torture and political assassination, the regime always maintained some significant institutions typical of liberal democracy. In contrast to the recent authoritarian regimes of Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile, the regime only closed Congress twice (1968-69 and 1977), both times for relatively short intervals. Also in contrast to the other bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes of the Southern Cone, a party system functioned throughout the entire authoritarian period. The opposition party, the MDB, was created by the government in 1965. During the most repressive years (1969-74), it had difficulty in functioning as an independent opposition voice, but it always channeled some opposition demands, and after 1974 it became increasingly autonomous and important.⁶

During the 1968-74 period, there were some initiatives by the more nationalistic, far right wing elements of the military towards a deeper

break with democratic institutions. Yet in contrast to the regimes of Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, these initiatives were consistently defeated. The continuing existence of democratic institutions during the authoritarian period would later prove important during the liberalization process. Even though the military may have maintained these institutions as a façade, or at best as a means of eliciting civilian support for an authoritarian regime, the mere existence of parties, elections, and a constitution eventually gave the opposition important space to maneuver. These institutions meant that there was a minimal continuity of democratic practices and leaders. As a result, just as there was some continuity from the democratic experience of 1945-64 to the authoritarian regime, so, too, was there some continuity from the military system to the nascent democratic government.⁷

While the ongoing tensions between pressures to open and close the regime form an important part of the background for the abertura, they do not explain why the liberalization process went ahead after 1974 after having failed to do so earlier. Four factors were especially important in the decision to liberalize at that time.

In the post-World War II period, authoritarian regimes in the West face difficult legitimation problems. They have trouble constructing symbols and a discourse which can win widespread legitimacy. The Brazilian regime initially constructed almost exclusively negative symbols of legitimacy: anti-Communism, anti-corruption, and anti-chaos. Its discourse emphasized law and order, stability, and avoiding conflict (Lamounier 1979). These symbols effectively captured the sentiments of a large part of the population, especially from the middle class on up. Nevertheless, such symbols are almost intrinsically unreliable over the long run. For them to remain credible, there must be a perceived threat of Communism, corruption, or chaos. If an authoritarian regime is successful at extirpating these "evils," then its raison d'être disappears.

Conversely, if the regime fails at combatting its enemies, it can lose credibility because of its inefficacy. Paradoxically, it is where the authoritarian regime is most successful at meeting its goals of restoring peace and order that the challenge to its legitimacy is apt to be strongest. The regimes which are able to defeat the Left and invigorate the economy will probably enjoy broader support than regimes which are less successful at meeting their objectives, but they often face more pressures (internal and external) to open the political system (O'Donnell 1982). After all, why continue to repress when there is no visible and plausible enemy?

Under President Médici, the regime turned to more positive symbols for legitimacy, especially the themes of efficiency, economic growth, and national aggrandizement. Again, however, legitimacy based exclusively on performance is almost inherently precarious. Democratic legitimacy is based largely on procedure, even though performance and charisma play secondary roles. Procedure is a more stable basis of legitimacy than efficiency, because mere acceptance of the rules of the game ensure it. When legitimacy is based on performance, a regime can enter into crisis when its performance declines. Paradoxically, continuous outstanding performance, as measured by economic indicators, can generate shifts in public mood, away from focus on economic life, towards a deeper concern with other aspects of social and political life. Thus, in the contemporary West, where democratic norms and procedures have widespread legitimacy, either good or bad performance can undermine legitimacy based on efficiency.

In the Brazilian case, precisely those sectors which benefitted the most from the years of the "economic miracle" were the most vociferous in demanding a return to democratic rule: the population of the large developed cities, and the middle class (Lamounier 1980: 15-80). In 1964, these sectors led the demonstrations against João Goulart; in 1984, they led the demonstrations for direct elections. By 1974, when the abertura

began, the disaffection of middle class Brazil was already apparent. Such prominent institutions as the Brazilian Press Association (Dassin) and the Order of Brazilian Lawyers played a major role in opposing the authoritarian abuses. The Catholic Church, which essentially endorsed the coup in 1964, had become an outstanding source of opposition (Mainwaring 1986). Even some leaders of the industrial bourgeoisie of São Paulo began to call for a move towards democracy (Cardoso). And in the 1974 elections, the opposition trounced the government party in the largest, most developed states (Lamounier and Cardoso). The signs of disaffection and of decreasing legitimacy, among precisely those sectors from which the regime had derived legitimacy during its earlier years, were visible for all.

The outstanding ideologue of the military regime, General Golbery de Couto e Silva, recognized the legitimacy problem as the main reason for promoting political liberalization. In a major speech at the Escola Superior da Guerra (Superior War College), Golbery argued that the extreme concentration of power had created the threat of a "black hole," a vacuum resulting from the gap between the major decision centers and civil society. Although he did not refer explicitly to the notion of legitimacy, Golbery's speech indicated an acute awareness of the problem.⁸

A second factor which contributed to the decision to liberalize was the fact that the close identification of the government with the military, necessary during the most repressive phases of authoritarian rule, created problems for the military. There was an ongoing tension between the military as institution and the military as government. As an institution fundamentally oriented towards national defense, the military required the kind of discipline and unity which political divisions threatened. Yet as the holders of power, the armed forces were constantly politicized and subjected to internal divisions.

These divisions were especially apparent during the presidential successions, which present difficult dilemmas for authoritarian regimes. Unlike democratic systems, which have clearly stipulated procedures for determining presidential successions, authoritarian regimes lack defined mechanisms of transferring executive power. At the same time, because power is usually extremely concentrated in the executive's hands, the issue of who controls the succession is especially important.

The Brazilian regime was exceptional in the way it institutionalized presidential successions, but every succession still created serious tensions within the armed forces. From 1965 until 1967, there were conflicts between soft and hardliners as to who would succeed Castello Branco. In 1969, this scenario repeated itself when President Costa e Silva died. The hardliners took over during the Médici presidency (1969-1974) but the group headed by General Golbery de Couto e Silva immediately began to plan ways of returning to power--which it did. During Geisel's presidency (1974-1979), the Minister of the Army, General Sílvio de Frota attempted to undermine the abertura and become the next president. In 1978, the opposition party chose a dissident general to run for president. Even though Geisel and Golbery did not propose relinquishing power to civilians, they were aware that political liberalization, by allowing for a greater separation between the military institution and the government, could alleviate some of these tensions.⁹

Third, by 1974 the military had decimated the Left, had popular movements well under control, and faced a weak opposition. The peasant movements were severely repressed in 1964 and had not recovered. The labor movement was silent following the repression of the strikes at Osasco and Contagem in 1968. There was not a major strike again until 1978. The opposition party had suffered many key losses due to the repression, and

Arena, the government party, had easily won the 1970 elections. This situation led the regime to believe that it could successfully manage a controlled liberalization process. Given the regime's strength and the opposition's weakness and moderate character, the government was confident that liberalization would not jeopardize its ability to control major aspects of the political struggle.

Thus, the regime opted to liberalize not because of its weakness but, conversely, because of its strength. This relative weakness of the opposition and relative capacity of the regime to control the political situation during the early phases of the abertura were distinctive marks of the liberalization process. In this sense, political liberalization in Brazil differed radically from the cases of Argentina and Bolivia in the early 1970s, where an active and powerful opposition mobilized to topple military governments.

This weakness of the opposition, however, by no means implied that the regime had sufficient support in society to govern without repression and without numerous manipulations of electoral laws. From 1974 until late 1983, political liberalization was characterized by the curious combination of generally (though not unilinearly) increasing opposition, and a continuing opposition inability to topple the regime, which continued to enjoy the support of powerful political actors.

Fourth, the economic situation also contributed to the regime's belief that it could liberalize at a minimal cost. Some authors attributed the abertura in mechanistic fashion to the end of the economic miracle.¹⁰ In fact, even though the 1973 oil crisis adversely affected the Brazilian economy, this is a difficult argument to sustain. The main architects of the abertura, Geisel and Golbery de Couto e Silva, had planned a controlled liberalization even before the effects of the oil crisis were apparent. Furthermore, the Brazilian economy was one of the fastest growing in the

world between 1967 and 1974. Inflation, which had been almost 100% when Castello e Branco took over in April 1964, was reduced to 20%. Finally, despite the deceleration of economic expansion after 1974, the Brazilian GOP continued to grow at a solid pace (7% per annum) until 1980, even though this growth came at the expense of dramatic increases in foreign debt.

Political Liberalization, 1974-1983

Political liberalization initially resulted from a decision by the authoritarian regime, but this decision to open the political arena resulted in a new dynamic between the regime and the opposition. Liberalization inherently meant redefining the rules of the game in such a way that the opposition could become a more important actor. Thus the period beginning in 1974 and ending in October 1983 involved constant struggles and negotiations between regime and opposition, constant efforts by the opposition to further the cause of democracy, and constant attempts by the regime to control the most important parts of the liberalization process.¹¹

It is worth illustrating this point at some length to indicate the flavor of the transition during these nine years. As part of the decision to allow greater political freedom, the regime decided it would allow more competitive elections in 1974, anticipating a victory which would help establish its legitimacy. In 1970, at the apex of the "miracle," the government party (Arena) had demolished the MDB, creating the expectation that it would win subsequent elections. Yet the opposite happened: the opposition fared far better than it had in 1970, claiming many key victories. In the Senate, the opposition won 16 of the 22 seats which were open to dispute. The government had overestimated its own strength and underestimated that of its opposition, especially in the most developed

urban areas, where the regime was soundly trounced. Demographic trends, most notably the rapid growth of the large cities, indicated that the regime would be in trouble for the 1978 elections.

Following a pattern which would be repeated over the years, the regime used a combination of coercion and political acumen to reassert its authority and its ability to control the liberalization process. In April 1977, President Geisel closed Congress to promulgate new electoral legislation which enabled the government to maintain control of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies in the 1978 elections.

Beginning in 1978, the regime faced challenges at both the institutional and popular levels. As the political arena opened, the opposition demanded the restoration of some basic civil liberties, especially an end to torture, freedom of the press and freedom of speech, and amnesty for political exiles. While the opposition was successful in generating a discussion of these issues, the regime took the initiative in responding to these demands. During his presidency, Geisel reduced the incidents of torture, despite resistance from the hardliners. In 1979, the regime granted amnesty to exiles and abolished Institutional Act No. 5, which had been responsible for eliminating important civil liberties. In addition, in 1979 the regime took the initiative in reforming the artificially imposed two-party system, created in 1965. Party reform had long been a demand of the opposition, but the regime used the issue as a means of dividing the opposition. Ironically, yet perhaps typically, when the reform finally came, it had more support among the government leaders than among the opposition party.¹² Also instructive was the fact that the government imposed the dissolution of the opposition party as part of the reform. Even measures taken in the name of liberalization (or democracy) were often imposed in manipulative fashion.

A more difficult and unexpected challenge came from popular movements. After years of virtual dormancy, at least in the public eye, popular movements resurged with surprising vitality between 1977 and 1980. The most publicized was the auto workers' movement of Greater São Paulo, which had major strikes in successive years between 1978 and 1980 (Humphrey; Tavares de Almeida). Throughout the country, peasant unions emerged stronger than they had been since 1964--and far more numerous than ever. Neighborhood associations and local movements for urban services also blossomed all over the country (Boschi; Singer and Brant; Moisés 1982a; Moisés 1978).

The government responded to these movements with varying degrees of repression, cooptation, and concessions. Aware that its political future depended upon maintaining some popular support, where possible the government attempted to make new inroads in the popular sectors. Significant in this regard was the reformulation of wage policy in 1979 so as to favor the poorest workers. Traditional clientelistic mechanisms, such as housing projects, which had been left behind during the most repressive period, resurfaced. But in other cases, the regime made clear that it wished to impose limits upon popular movements. Every year, it resorted to repressive measures to deal with the auto workers' strikes. In the Amazon region, violence against peasants was rampant (Souza Martins 1984; Souza Martins 1980).

In urban areas, this combination of policies often contained the challenges posed by popular movements. The regime prevented popular movements from becoming a determining element of the political process, even though in order to do so it had to reformulate its own policies and style of decision making. In the poorest states, the government continued to enjoy popular support. By 1982, urban popular movements were on the decline, a result of the economic crisis, the attention commanded by the

political parties, and government's ability to marginalize these movements. In many rural areas, especially frontier regions, private and public repression remained rampant.

Every step in the abertura implied new possibilities for the opposition and new dilemmas for the regime. The regime designed the 1979 party reform in such a way as to maximize its own prospects for the 1982 elections. Its strategy was to push the opposition into several parties, expecting that among others, a large and malleable centrist party would emerge. But by 1981 it appeared that under the new electoral laws and party situation, the government would fare quite poorly. The centrist Popular Party (PP) proved to be more combative than the regime expected. Furthermore, the largest opposition party, the PMDB, was significantly stronger than the government had expected. As a result, in November 1981 it once again turned to authoritarian means of imposing a change in the electoral laws, this time to prevent party alliances for the 1982 elections.

The 1982 elections marked a new point in the abertura, since for the first time significant decision centers were at stake. These elections for state governors, the first since 1965, resulted in a stalemate. The opposition won most of the major states: Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, as well as a number of smaller states. The opposition controlled states which accounted for 60% of Brazil's population and 75% of her GDP. It also far outpolled the government in terms of popular votes for governors.

The government could nevertheless claim some significant victories. The government party won the gubernatorial race in two important states, Rio Grande do Sul (in the far south) and Pernambuco (in the northeast), and it won a majority (12 of 22) of states. Thanks to the continuous tampering with the electoral laws (Fleischer 1984a), despite having a minority of the popular vote, the PDS won a majority of representatives for the electoral college which would determine the presidential election of January 1985.

assumed that by getting the majority of the electoral college votes, the regime had virtually wrapped up the 1985 elections, two years and two months before it took place. Indeed, if the regime had played its cards well, it probably could have wrapped up the 1985 election, thereby prolonging its control of the executive office until 1989 or 1991.

More than eight years after it had begun the abertura, the regime was still in a relatively strong position. This does not mean that it was able to consistently impose its will during the course of the abertura. Indeed, it generally failed to control the events of political change as much as it hoped to. Yet what was remarkable about the Brazilian abertura between 1974 and 1983 was the regime's ability to respond to new situations in ways which enabled it to remain in power and to establish some limits to the nature of political change.

Even though state policies reflected the dialectic between the regime and opposition, the regime was able to ensure significant continuity in policies and leaders during the 1974-83 period. For example, there continued to be sporadic repression against popular movements and the Left during the Figueiredo administration. Indeed, in some rural areas, especially the Amazon, the level of violence escalated after 1978. Figueiredo implemented more clientelistic practices, but the popular sectors remained excluded from the decision making sphere.

The continuity of leadership during the 1964-82 period is remarkable for a regime which institutionalized regular presidential succession. Such key figures as Presidents Figueiredo, Geisel, and Médici, Chiefs of Cabinet Leitão de Abreu and Golbery de Couto e Silva, and Cabinet members Delfim Neto, Jarbas Passarinho and Mário Andreazza, to mention only a few, played leading roles in lengthy chapters of the regime's history. In many cases, the same figures responsible for leading the abertura had been responsible for implementing policy during the most repressive years.

This capacity of the military government to provide continuity in policies and to limit the nature of political change made the Brazilian abertura singularly slow and protracted. The regime spent more time evolving back towards a democratic regime than it did moving in an authoritarian direction. Indeed, there may be no other contemporary case where an authoritarian regime initiated a transition to democracy which took so long to complete. In the Spanish case, for example, the transition began in late 1975, when Franco died, and for most purposes was complete by December 1978, when a democratic constitution was promulgated.

None of this is to dismiss the opposition's role in the abertura. The opposition -- whether through the MDB or its successors, the Church, social movements, or other forces -- constantly pushed the regime into making new concessions. Indeed, the regime was as successful as it was only because it was flexible enough to meet some opposition demands. Over a period of time, the opposition's ability to affect the political arena increased significantly. Yet until 1983, the opposition was incapable of toppling the regime, either electorally or through mass mobilization.

The Struggle for Democracy, October 1983 to January 1985

Beginning in October 1983, the course of the abertura changed in significant ways. After years of responding successfully to a wide amalgam of challenges, the regime lost its ability to control the presidential succession, paving the way for an earlier transition to democracy than most observers had expected. Indeed, it lost its ability to formulate a coherent, articulate political strategy during this final period in power. Whereas in November 1982, the government seemed almost certain to win the presidential election of January 1985, when the score was finally tallied, it suffered an ignominious defeat. The regime's decline and the opposition's ascension can be subdivided into three short periods.

1. October to December 1983: Regime Erosion Throughout virtually its entire course, the regime had been able to count on the government party (ARENA until 1979, PDS afterwards). The party had always been the submissive partner of a tandem--a party of the regime, not a regime of the party, a party of the government, but not a party in government. Generally, the government party had supported the regime, and even when it didn't, this was not terribly consequential: the regime imposed its will on the party. This situation changed in the second half of 1983. In July, a liberal faction within the PDS won 35% of the votes in the election for the Executive of the PDS. This liberal faction had already clashed with Figueiredo, and the strength of this group, coupled with the eroding cohesion within the PDS, led Figueiredo to threaten to resign from the party.

The debate over wage policy, in the midst of the severe recession which began in 1980 and reached its low point in 1983, proved to be the issue which provoked a PDS revolt. In July 1983, as part of the IMF sponsored stabilization plan, the government presented a new wage policy which would have resulted in a sharp decline of real earnings of vast sectors of the society. Congress rejected successive government proposals, with PDS leaders playing a decisive role, despite governmental pressures. It took the government several months to finally get a proposal approved.

Another blow to the PDS's unity and ability to control the presidential succession occurred in late December. In his end of the year speech, President Figueiredo announced that he would not coordinate the party's campaign after having agreed to do so in May 1983. Coordinating the campaign was difficult in light of the profound divisions within the party, yet his decision to abdicate choosing a successor probably adversely affected the party's chances of re-establishing some degree of internal cohesion. His decision strengthened the candidacy of Paulo Maluf, who was such an anathema to the opposition that it became more reluctant to negotiate over choosing the next president. Figueiredo's decision marked a profound

change in relation to past practices; the previous military presidents had indicated and actively campaigned for their personal choice for president--and in the cases of Castelo Branco (1964-67), Médici (1969-74), and Geisel (1974-79), they had won. It was within this context of gradual erosion of the government's ability to manage the political and economic situation and increasing tensions between the PDS and the government that the campaign for direct elections began.

2. January to April 1984: Mobilization of the Opposition The opposition parties had long proposed direct elections for president, but the massive public campaign for direct elections began only in January 1984. The first demonstration took place in Curitiba, the largest city of the southern state of Paraná, on January 12, with approximately 30,000 people present. Over the next three and one-half months, there were literally hundreds of demonstrations all over the country in favor of direct elections. Never before in Brazilian history had so many people demonstrated for anything. The largest masses gathered in Rio (about one million people on April 10, 1984) and São Paulo (over one million people on April 16, 1984). Even occasional warnings by military leaders that demonstrations for direct elections could endanger the abertura failed to diminish the opposition's resounding success in mobilizing the Brazilian population. By as early as January 25, when 200,000 people gathered in the rain in São Paulo, even some PDS Congressional leaders announced their support for direct elections.

When the campaign for direct elections accelerated, the regime began to visibly disintegrate, as an increasing number of PDS people came to support direct elections, including, as of February 8, Vice-President Chaves himself. Before the turn of the year, the PMDB presented an amendment in Congress for direct elections, yet it seemed to have no chance of passing. To win, the opposition needed the support of 2/3 of both houses. This meant getting 320 votes in the Chamber of Deputies and 46 in the Senate, while the opposition parties controlled only 244 seats in the

Chamber and 24 in the Senate. But what the regime dismissed as impossible in January, when the campaign began, seemed very plausible by mid-March. Several PDS Congresspeople predicted that the Amendment for Direct Elections would pass.

It is difficult to overstate the impact of the campaign for direct elections. The campaign's success gave the opposition a confidence it had not known since 1968 and led to an unprecedented crisis within the regime. As the campaign proceeded, many PDS leaders came to feel that the regime needed to negotiate a way out. Led by Aureliano Chaves, Chief of Cabinet Leitão de Abreu, the (PDS) head of the Chamber of Deputies, and the Ministers of the Air Force and the Navy, this faction reckoned that if the regime elected the next president under the prevailing conditions, the country would enter an unprecedented political crisis. These leaders felt that, at the very least, the regime needed to reduce the mandate of the next president to a maximum of four years. Another faction, led by the Chief of the National Information Service, the Minister of the Army, the Minister of Justice and the other two candidates for president, fiercely opposed this kind of negotiation. They believed that the regime could weather one more crisis and let things return to normal.

Throughout 1984, the tensions between these factions remained high, with leaders of the various groups publicly insulting one another in a way which was unprecedented for the authoritarian regime. In late March, the Minister of the Navy was fired as a result of these conflicts because of his outspoken views on behalf of the more liberal faction. In mid-April, Theodorico Ferrazo, a PDS Deputy from Rio, said the government was a group of "a half dozen irresponsible people who are leading the country." At the same time, Vice-president Chaves, who had previously announced his support for direct elections, stated that he felt they should be held in 1984.

3. April 1984 to January 1985: The Electoral College As the date (April 25, 1984) for voting for the amendment which would have re-established direct elections for president approached, the regime

intransigents won out. President Figueiredo declared emergency measures in Brasilia and ten nearby cities, aborting the possibility of demonstrations. In addition, he mobilized all the support he could muster in Congress to defeat the amendment. When the roll call finally came, the amendment fell 22 votes short of the 320 it needed to pass the Chamber of Deputies.

As the campaign for direct elections proceeded, the PDS set about attempting to find its candidate for president. The three main candidates were Vice-President Aureliano Chaves; Minister of the Interior Mário Andreazza; and Federal Deputy Paulo Maluf, ex-Governor of São Paulo. Aureliano, the most liberal of the three, had by far the most popular support, but he lacked support within the party machine. Andreazza was Figueiredo's preferred candidate, and during the early stages it appeared he had good chances of winning. But by April the most likely winner was Maluf, who was anathema to the moderate factions of the party because of his reputation for egregious corruption.

With this scenario in mind, the moderate factions began to flirt with the possibility of supporting Tancredo Neves, even though he was not officially a candidate. Two days after the defeat of the amendment for direct elections, eight of the nine governors from the impoverished Northeast, all PDS leaders, stated their support for Tancredo, beginning an avalanche of defections. In mid-June, when it appeared certain that Maluf would win the PDS convention, the President of the PDS resigned, and the Governor of Rio Grande do Sul, also from the PDS, stated his predilection for Tancredo over Maluf. The last week of June, these defections were consecrated with the formation of the Liberal Front, headed by moderate PDS leaders who supported Aureliano and had voted for direct elections. By mid-July, the Liberal Front had decided that no matter who the PDS candidate was, it would vote for Tancredo, who was increasingly likely to be the opposition candidate. As a result, it appeared that the opposition had good chances of winning the election, a situation

which contributed decisively to the increasing acceptance of indirect elections. (The PDT and PT were partial exceptions.)

From this point on, the erosion of unity within the PDS was progressive. Aureliano withdrew his candidacy and began to work openly for Tancredo, an old political rival. Some regime moderates continued to put their hopes in Andreazza, but the PDS convention, in the second week of August closed that question: Maluf won, 493 to 350, leading some of Andreazza's coterie to defect to the enemy camp. Among the most important of these was the ex-Governor of Bahia, Antônio Carlos Magalhães, who in September lambasted in unprecedented fashion the Minister of the Air Force for having said that the PDS defectors were traitors. Maluf's victory virtually implied the PDS's defeat in the January election.

Meanwhile, Tancredo Neves went about constructing a broader network of support, aiming his campaign at both the members of electoral college and the public at large. Equally important, Tancredo was busy persuading the military not to intervene. The success of his campaign on all fronts is undeniable. By January 15 he came out ahead, 480 to 180, in the electoral college, and averted the possibility of a coup. Through this double victory, he became the first civilian elected to the presidency since 1960.

Having briefly outlined the main developments of this period, we can discern the most important political changes in relation to the 1973-83 period.

1) Erosion of consensus in the upper echelon of the regime. The leaders of the military government had always experienced some internal tensions, usually between hard line authoritarians and more moderate figures. These tensions were generally most accentuated during periods when the presidential succession was being debated. Nevertheless, until 1982, the level of coherence and unity, within both the armed forces and within the government, was striking. Notwithstanding conflicts, all of the presidential successions were handled in ways which avoided crises for the

regime.

In 1983-84, the presidential succession did provoke an unresolvable crisis. For the first time, the regime was incapable of agreeing upon an acceptable candidate. The major leaders were split over whom they preferred for president, whether to shorten the mandate for the next president, and whether to agree upon direct elections for subsequent presidential elections. Ex-President Geisel and Chief of the Cabinet Leitão de Abreu supported Vice-President Chaves; Figueiredo supported Andreazza; and ex-chief of the Cabinet Golbery supported Maluf. Aureliano's supporters generally favored a negotiated settlement with the opposition, including a reduction of the presidential mandate and an assurance that the next presidential election would be direct. The supporters of Andreazza and Maluf generally preferred a hard line approach: impose a PDS victory now, and consider making some concessions later. But whereas Maluf's supporters urged Figueiredo to play a neutral role in the succession question, Andreazza hoped the president would force his nomination to go through. Equally significant in indicating the profound schisms within the upper echelons of the regime were the evident tensions between the president and the vice-president. Even though Aureliano served as interim president on two occasions when Figueiredo underwent operations, the president never seemed to trust or work with his running mate, and the conflicts between the two were accentuated during the campaign for direct elections.

2) Inability of President Figueiredo to lead the regime. Despite their different styles and orientations, all of the previous military presidents had stood out as relatively effective leaders. When Figueiredo took office in 1979, it appeared that he would carry on this tradition. The new president seemed effusive, and his proposal of carrying out the abertura appealed to the media. Over time, however, Figueiredo's charisma wore off as he appeared increasingly ill suited for the executive office. In a major speech in January 1985, Figueiredo requested that the nation forget

him--hardly a request befitting of a president who aspires to be recalled as a good leader.

Nowhere was Figueiredo's ineffectual leadership more apparent than in the presidential succession process. In May 1983, Figueiredo agreed to coordinate the PDS's process of choosing the next president. Seven months later, however, he decided against doing so, contrary to what his predecessors as military presidents had done. Coordinating the presidential succession process was more difficult in a time of more open political competition, but this reversal underscored a wavering which did not characterize the previous administrations. Effective leadership and campaigning on behalf of one of the candidates, especially if Figueiredo had opted for Aureliano, could have helped the regime avoid some of the schisms which emerged.

Particularly salient in this regard was Figueiredo's persistent refusal to support his own vice-president. As early as the first months of 1984, it was clear that in terms of popular support, Aureliano far outdistanced both Maluf and Andreazza. In fact, survey polls showed Aureliano as leading all potential candidates in a direct election for president. Although history can always devise strange twists of fate, it seems likely that if the regime had chosen Aureliano as its candidate for president, or had negotiated with the opposition and agreed upon Aureliano, it would have been able to elect one of its own for president. Figueiredo was the only person in a position to significantly enhance Aureliano's chances--and the president systematically refused to do so.

3) Increasing tension between moderate sectors of the PDS and the government. Even though ARENA and PDS leaders sometimes expressed frustration at their marginalization from the decision making process, until 1983, few major conflicts between the regime and the government party had occurred. ARENA/PDS leaders had consistently gone along with the regime, a situation which broke down in October 1983, when the party rejected successive wage packages proposed by the government,

anticipating the even greater tensions which surfaced during the presidential succession process. Throughout the entire succession, tensions between the moderate sectors and the more intransigent groups were sharp. These tensions culminated in the decision of moderate PDS Congressional leaders to abandon the party, help create the Liberal Front, and vote for Tancredo Neves.

4) Unification of the opposition political parties around the idea of direct elections (January to April 1984). After the 1979 party reform, the opposition parties frequently had difficulties in creating alliances against the regime. The regime had promoted the party reform precisely as a way of dividing the opposition, and to a significant extent this strategy proved successful until late 1981. After the merger of the PP and PMDB in January 1982, in most states there was essentially a return to a biparty system. However, in the campaigns for the 1982 elections, in the states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Rio Grande do Sul, where competition among opposition parties was sharp, these parties campaigned as much against each other as they did against the regime. In Rio Grande, these divisions were sharp enough that the PDS won the elections. The government lost its majority in the lower legislative branch (Chamber of Deputies) as a result of the November 1982 elections, but alliances with the conservative PTB enabled it to push through some important measures. At a local level, disputes between the various opposition parties were an ongoing part of the political process, especially regarding leadership positions in unions and social movements. And at a national level, despite their parties' relatively limited popular support, both Leonel Brizola (President of the PDT and Governor of Rio de Janeiro) and Lula (President of the PT) remained important political figures.

The campaign for direct elections overcame these party disputes and essentially united the opposition parties. Symbolically, this was visible in the moments when Lula, Brizola, Tancredo, and Ulysses Guimarães (leader of the center-left faction of the PMDB) joined hands together. Only the PTB,

a small conservative opposition party, which had almost no penetration in social movements, failed to participate in the campaign for direct elections.

This unity of the opposition parties was an important component in the success of the campaign for direct elections. It helped generate the perception of a national consensus on the issue--a fact supported by surveys which showed that by early 1984 over 80% of the population wanted the chance to vote for president (Soares: 60). The virtual unanimity of the opposition also denied the government a legitimate interlocutor upon which it could rely.

After the Amendment for Direct Elections was defeated on April 25, this unity of the opposition parties dissolved. Aware that it had good chances of winning in the electoral college, the PMDB became less convinced of the need to have a direct election. When Ulysses Guimarães decided to renounce his own presidential pretensions in favor of Tancredo, the PMDB thrust all its energies into the efforts to win in the electoral college. The PDT was ambivalent about the indirect elections. It eventually decided to support Tancredo over Maluf, but at the same time, Brizola attempted to convince Tancredo to shorten his mandate to two years and then call direct elections. The PTB, which had supported indirect elections all along, also voted for Tancredo. The indirect election unleashed an unprecedented crisis for the PT. The party decided to abstain after internal debate. It expelled the three Congresspeople who voted for Tancredo, leading to important defections from the party.

5) Unity between opposition parties and social movements (January to April 1984). During the second half of the 1970's, a wide amalgam of social movements provided some of the most consequential opposition to the military regime. Labor unions, peasant unions, Catholic base communities, neighborhood associations, women's groups, human rights organizations, ecology groups, and others worked towards constructing a more democratic order.

Many observers expected these social movements to continue to play an important, or even predominant, role in the struggle for democracy. In fact, after 1980 many social movements declined. The reasons were manifold, but among them was the fact that there was often competition rather than cooperation between social movements and political parties. Many leaders of social movements opted to run for public office in the 1982 elections, often leading to an enervation of the movements. With few exceptions, the movements opted for a position of autonomy in the 1982 elections, i.e., of not supporting any particular party. Nevertheless, the campaigns attracted so much attention that the movements often ended up in a subordinate position.¹³

The weak response of social movements to the November 1981 "electoral package," which the regime imposed to attempt to enhance its electoral prospects for the following year, already indicated significant distance between social movements and parties. This distance was confirmed in the aftermath of the elections. Many movements had expected that the election of opposition governors, especially in Rio and São Paulo, would increase their own space. They were subsequently disappointed when the new administrations failed to be as responsive to movement demands as they had hoped.¹⁴

This gap between social movements and the opposition parties was reduced during the campaign for direct elections. The social movements helped mobilize people to participate in the demonstrations. While the primary responsibility of the success of the campaign must go to the opposition parties, social movements played an important secondary role.

This relative unity between social movements and opposition parties dissolved in the months following the defeat of the Amendment of Direct Elections. Many leaders of these movements, following the general line of the PT, were convinced of the importance of holding direct elections. They felt that the PMDB went too far in playing by the rules of the game and that it did too little to mobilize the population in an effort to force the regime to

hold direct elections. Especially in the months immediately following January 15, when the new Cabinet was being discussed, the social movements felt discouraged by the relatively conservative definition of the new government.

6) Effective leadership in the opposition, particularly around the figure of Tancredo Neves (April 1984 to January 1985). Tancredo was able to do something that perhaps no other opposition figure could have done: win the support of significant parts of the left, center-left and much of the center-right, while proving an acceptable figure to the military. The support of part of the left and center-left was indispensable in making possible an alliance between the PMDB and PDT, as well as part of the PT, during his campaign. For his electoral college victory, he needed the support of the center-right, which was embodied in the ex-PDS leaders who defected to the Liberal Front. Finally, the fact that Tancredo proved acceptable to most military leaders avoided an authoritarian involution. A more progressive leader (Brizola or Ulysses Guimarães) might have induced a military veto.

For years, Tancredo had been one of the outstanding leaders of the moderate opposition. With the party reform of 1979-80, he became president of the center-right Popular Party, PP. In June 1983, he launched the idea of having the political parties come up with the next president. This idea of finding a "consensus candidate," to be coordinated by President Figueiredo, met significant resistance among progressive opposition figures. Indeed, until 1984 Tancredo was not a popular figure among progressive opposition leaders. This situation changed when, in 1984, it appeared that his candidacy might be the only way of defeating the regime.

Tancredo's well established history as a moderate, flexible politician helps account for the fact that he proved acceptable to so many sectors of the society. Tancredo ran a campaign which appealed to a wide spectrum yet without making the kind of radical commitments which might have provoked a military veto. For example, his campaign emphasized "an

atmosphere of change," but at the same time he assured the military that there would be no persecutions of military leaders. While promising institutional changes which would further the cause of democracy, Tancredo also made it clear that he was not receptive to major socio-economic changes.

While it is important to emphasize Tancredo's role in the period beginning April 25, 1984, he played a less central role in the mobilization for the direct elections. According to some reports, Tancredo never believed that the campaign for direct elections would be successful. His own political style was more amenable to the behind-the-scenes negotiations with political and military elites than to mobilizing the masses. Furthermore, he realized that his own prospects would be enhanced by indirect elections.

Notes on the Erosion of the Regime, 1983-1985

The erosion of the regime during its last year and a half in power can be explained through a combination of legitimation problems which are fundamentally structural in nature and of government choices. In general terms, the regime handled the transition with unusual political perspicacity, thereby avoiding the precipitous decline in legitimacy and the increase in political mobilization which accompany transitions after regime collapse. It would be misleading to suggest that the regime suffered a unilinear decline of legitimacy after 1974. Its level of legitimacy followed a pattern somewhat akin to that of the abertura as a whole: periods of decline, followed by other periods when the regime gained renewed legitimacy on the basis of its initiatives. Yet the pattern towards a decline in legitimacy is clear. The government party, Arena, won 50.5% of the votes for federal deputies in 1966, 48.4% in 1970, 40.9% in 1974, and 40.0% in 1978, and its successor, the PDS, won 36.7% in 1982 (Soares: 51-52).

I already noted the difficulty found by contemporary authoritarian regimes in the Western world in creating long term legitimation formulas. In Brazil, these difficulties became more acute as the regime grew older. It became easier for the opposition to denounce the authoritarian measures the government still employed. And as the authoritarian period grew older, it became more difficult to justify authoritarian measures. There was no opposition in sight which would be "disloyal" to a democratic regime, and it became increasingly evident that most of the society yearned for a return to democracy. Between 1974 and 1985 the regime attempted to find new legitimacy formulas as electoral politics became more central. Yet it could not win elections without resorting to a vast array of manipulations of electoral laws. These "casuismos," to use the Brazilian lexicon, kept the government in power, yet along with other authoritarian measures, they clearly prevented the government from gaining legitimacy on the basis of its attempts to restore democracy.

These casuismos had profoundly ambivalent effects. In the short run, they helped the regime remain in power, but their long term success was dubious, for they were imposed in authoritarian fashion and had an anti-democratic content. Geisel closed Congress to impose the April 1977 electoral package, which created "bionic" senators (one-third of the Senate), elected indirectly to assure an Arena victory. In December 1979, in another blatantly authoritarian measure, the government imposed the dissolution of the MDB to enhance its electoral prospects by dividing the opposition through the party reform. The November 1981 package contained flagrantly manipulative measures, such as imposing a straight party vote and not allowing party identification on the ballots. All of these measures gave the opposition new ammunition to denounce the regime's authoritarian character. The government was moving towards democratic rule in its attempts to regain legitimacy, but this very move helped expose its authoritarian character. By the early 1980's, it seemed that electoral manipulation would have a limited future. The question was not whether the

regime would be able to perpetuate itself in power ad infinitum via electoral manipulation; rather, it was what outcome would result from its inability to remain in power if the system were to become more democratic. The adverse impact of the casuismos and other authoritarian measures became so apparent that by early 1984, some leading regime figures, mostly notably Aureliano Chaves, decided to support direct elections for president.

By 1983, the economic crisis and a wave of corruption scandals further contributed to the regime's declining legitimacy. When the military took power in 1964, the armed forces used the economic crisis and corruption as justifications for overthrowing Goulart. When the same problems erupted during the Figueiredo administration, they had an adverse effect. After having attempted to construct legitimacy on the basis of efficacy, the regime could only explain away the economic crisis of the 1980s as the result of the difficult international conjuncture. The international conjuncture certainly contributed to the crisis--but this fact did little to convince most Brazilians that the regime was efficient, given all the indications to the contrary.

The economy entered a deep and prolonged recession in 1980, but it was not until after the November 1982 elections that the severity of the debt crisis became apparent. After having denied the need to do so, immediately after the elections the government announced that it would resort to IMF loans and accept its stabilization program. Doing so represented a political defeat for the regime, since it implied making concessions to a foreign institution. Worse, the stabilization program exacerbated the economic crisis.

Never before in Brazilian history had the economy suffered through such a deep recession or such a high inflation rate. Between 1980 and 1984, per capita income fell approximately 15%. By 1983, the inflation rate was well over 200 % per annum. Meanwhile, the foreign debt increased from 6.6 billion dollars in 1971 to approximately 100 billion dollars by 1984. It

became apparent that some of the growth of the 1970's had come at the expense of an increasing external debt (Tavares and David; Lessa). Under other circumstances, the economic crisis could have led to a more rigid authoritarian stance, but given the "tired" nature of the Brazilian regime by 1983, and the deep desire on the part of divided society to restore democracy, the opposite occurred. A series of disclosures of massive fraud, embezzlement, and corruption within enterprises linked to the armed forces further contributed to darkening the regime's public image.

Even though the long term decline of legitimacy of the authoritarian regime seems clear, this decline did not inevitably lead to the regime's displacement from power in January 1985. Retrospectively, there will be some tendency to read into the events of October 1983 to October 1984 the inexorable displacement of an old authoritarian regime in crisis. But a balanced analysis would have to emphasize both the strengths and vulnerabilities of the Brazilian regime as of 1983. Considering everything it had gone through and how long the abertura lasted, the Brazilian regime's capacity to remain in power while promoting political liberalization stands out as exceptional.

While the gradual decline in legitimacy set the background for the more rapid erosion of 1983-84, it was choices by both the regime and the opposition which ultimately determined the latter's victory--and the return to democracy--in January 1985. If the regime had played its cards better, or if the opposition had played its cards worse, the former could have won the January 1985 election. In this sense, political choice and leadership played a decisive role in enabling the transition to take place when it did.

Perhaps most significant in this regard was President Figueiredo's refusal to support Aureliano Chaves as his successor. If the President had done so, it is likely that Aureliano would have won both the PDS convention and the January election. At one point, Figueiredo considered holding primary elections within the party as a means of determining the candidate. If this had happened, everything indicates that Aureliano would have won.

The PDS's ultimate choice, Maluf, was by far the worst in terms of regime unity and popular support.

On the part of the opposition, the most important choice was that of Tancredo as the candidate to compete against the PDS. As became clear over the course of the campaign, Tancredo had an ability to appease the military and to win support from ex-PDS leaders that probably no other opposition candidate would have developed. In this sense, the decision of more progressive opposition leaders to accept Tancredo was decisive. Yet while this decision helped pave the way for the March 1985 transition, some characteristics of the transition, in particular the decisive voice of ex-regime supporters and the relative marginalization of progressive sectors of the opposition, also promised to mark the early days of the new democratic regime.

From Elite-Led Transition to Elitist Democracy

The period beginning October 1983 represented a new period in the democratization process in Brazil, with characteristics which differed markedly from those of the 1974-82 years. In terms of the typology which Eduardo Viola and I established regarding transitions to democracy, we could describe the 1974-82 years as a "transition from above" and the 1983-85 period as a "transition through withdrawal" (Mainwaring and Viola). The critical difference between the two kinds of transition is in the regime's relative ability to influence the transition (greater in transitions from above) and in the relative degree of discontinuity in the political process (lesser in transitions from above).

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to overstate the extent to which the period beginning October 1983 represented a rupture in the political process. Even though regimes which effect transitions through withdrawal lack legitimacy and support in civil society, they are still powerful enough to impose some limits on what kind of transition takes place. These limits

may erode over time--the political world is always dynamic and fluid--but it is almost certain that they will mark the first years of democratic rule. In this sense, it is significant that even though the Brazilian regime suffered a major legitimacy problem by late 1984, it did not collapse. Equally significant is the fact that the opposition, despite the relative unity of the main opposition parties and the social movements, was incapable of overthrowing the regime. Only through an alliance with significant and substantial parts of the regime did the opposition come to power. Without the creation of the Democratic Alliance, the opposition could not have won the 1985 election. The coalition which brought the Democratic Alliance to power represents parts of the PMDB, the PFL and the PDS. This means that the left was excluded, while the Center Right and even parts of the right were included. In the definition of the Cabinet, this alignment of forces became clear. Progressive sectors of the PMDB began to complain of "continuismo," that is, a basic continuity in policies despite the changes in names and faces.¹⁵ The PDT and PT did likewise, even though the latter party was embroiled in internal disputes which threatened its very existence. Several of the current cabinet ministers held positions of power during the military regime, and one (the Minister of Communications) remains in the PDS.

Although the process beginning October 1983 presented characteristics different from that of the earlier part of the liberalization process, the Brazilian transition remained a relatively cautious one. Even before March 15, 1985, it was apparent that the major changes would take place in terms of political institutions, while there would be few changes in the socio-economic order. The elitist nature of the negotiations which took place between the PMDB, the Democratic Front, the Democratic Alliance, and the Armed Forces systematically excluded popular participation. Considering the lengthy nature of elitist political domination in Brazil, this fact is hardly earth-shaking.¹⁶ Yet considering the important role the mobilizations of early 1984 played in defeating the authoritarian regime, the

return to politics as usual was a disappointment to the progressive segments of the society—including the progressive sectors of the PMDB. These sectors had already experienced a sharp disappointment with the results of the Montoro and Brizola governments at the state level following the November 1982 elections, and by early 1985 it appeared likely that their disappointment would be repeated.

The transition took an unexpected twist when Tancredo Neves died before he could assume office. The new president, José Sarney, embodied the fragile side of the Brazilian transition. Until June 1984, Sarney had been president of the PDS, and along with his PDS colleagues had helped bury the Amendment for Direct Elections. The fact that an old regime leader became president of the New Republic was telling of the kind of compromises which were made to depose the military regime.

The political world is fluid and dynamic, subject to constant flux, as political actors modify their identities, or as new situations emerge. Democratic regimes, in particular, can undergo constant changes and contain the potential for a deepening of democracy. Nevertheless, foundational periods of new regimes, particularly democratic regimes, are especially important. These foundational periods lay the groundwork which the new democratic experience will rest upon. Possibilities for alliances, for changing political culture, for transforming social structures, for rewriting constitutions, are greater in foundational periods than in subsequent years. It is above all during foundational periods that political identities can undergo significant changes, for political actors tend to define their relationship to the rest of the political arena during such periods. For this reason, the legacy that a new democratic regime inherits from the transition, as well as from previous political traditions, matters a great deal.

Thus it is not surprising that the painfully slow transition in Brazil, involving so many elements of continuity from the military regime, has left its mark on the first year of the new regime. The limits imposed by this

kind of negotiated transition to democracy, which can occur only with the consent of significant sectors of the old regime, were immediately apparent in Tancredo's cabinet selection. Despite his widely acknowledged talents as a negotiator, Tancredo was subjected to extraordinary pressures to respond to traditional clientelistic demands. The PMDB--in itself a highly heterogeneous party, the PFL, and sectors of the PDT all scrambled for cabinet positions. All of the country's regions demanded their share of the pie. Eminently political motives displaced competence as the main motive for nominations. This scenario cannot be comprehended without reference to Brazil's "patrimonial" heritage, the strong centralized state, and the relative weakness of civil society. However, the nature of the transition to democracy also contributed to this clientelistic division of the state bureaucracy.

The new regime considered three far-reaching reforms in its first year. It virtually killed two of them and watered down the third. Recognizing the desperate plight of millions of Brazilian peasants and the explosive rural situation, Tancredo Neves had announced his intention of sponsoring an agrarian reform. The initial proposal, formulated by the Minister of Agrarian Reform and the head of the National Institute for Agrarian Reform, was quite ambitious. Badgered by rural elites and the military ministers, Sarney killed this proposal and offered an alternative that was so diluted that the head of the Rural Society of São Paulo conceded that the measure wasn't bad, as agrarian reforms went. Peasant protest failed to convince the president to follow through with the initial proposal.

The Minister of Labor, Almir Pazzianoto, an ex-labor lawyer for the renowned and combative metallurgical unions in the industrial region just south of São Paulo, proposed major changes in the country's long-standing corporatist labor laws. His proposal fared no better than that of his counterpart at the Ministry of Agrarian Reform, prompting him to remark in November 1985 that the government was "like John the Baptist. It announces great changes, but does not concretize them."

The third potentially far reaching reform, a new Constitution, will become a reality--but under conditions designed to limit the magnitude of changes. The new constitution will be written by the Congress after the November 1986 elections, rather than by an autonomous Constituent Assembly. The new Congress will still include individuals elected under the authoritarian regime's electoral legislation, which severely underrepresents the modern, more liberal parts of the country. Progressive sectors of the country are nevertheless depositing considerable hope in the prospects of a new constitution, but unless the November 1986 elections bring big surprises, the results are likely to be a disappointment for them.

While progressive measures are deleted from the agenda, the signs of continuity with the old regime remain. Particularly important in this regard is the president himself, who until mid-1984 was one of the outstanding civilian leaders of the old regime. Less visible to the public's eye, but perhaps more important, given the president's limited political base, is the presence of six military ministers--a number probably unmatched by any other democratic regime in the world. Sarney frequently seeks the council of these military ministers, who, in turn, frequently seek to influence the president. They helped torpedo the agrarian reform and the new labor law; they also successfully insisted that members of the armed forces not be tried for past crimes, whether torture or graft. They also blocked an amnesty that would have restored the rights of 2600 military officers dismissed during the military regime for political reasons.¹⁷

In the Brazilian case, there are reasons to be skeptical about the potential advantages of a conservative transition, even if it was the only kind of transition possible at that time. The many concessions Tancredo made to the Center Right and the marginalization of the left wing of the PMDB suggest that the government will not take many steps to redress the egregious income distribution, extreme regional inequalities, and terrible social injustices which have plagued Brazilian society.¹⁸ While addressing

these problems is not necessarily critical for the stability of a democratic regime, it will surely be decisive in determining the quality of democracy. And the elitist nature of the political bargains which led Tancredo to power do not augur well for a more participatory regime.

Are there any signs of challenges to this new but listless democracy that emerged from an old, tired transition? Yes--but they are overshadowed by indications that the new regime will be shaped by the continuity that also characterized the transition. Among the challenges perhaps the most important is the Workers Party, a left-of-center party with a diffuse ideology, and demands that are generally moderate by comparative standards. One of its major banners, for example, giving workers the right to organize internal factory commissions, was conquered by the Argentine labor movement in the 1940s. Judging by the election results of November 1985, the PT's popularity is growing enough that it could cause some changes in the political system. The left-of-center (though even less so) PDT, headed by Lionel Brizola, is also on the move. Finally, although the wide amalgam of social movements are now somewhat politically isolated, their proliferation during the last decade indicates a modest strengthening of civil society vis-à-vis the state.

One of the most encouraging steps of the new democracy is that it has respected traditional civil liberties, notwithstanding ongoing repression in many rural areas. Furthermore, the high level of continuity during the transition means that the right is engaged in, rather than outside of, democratic politics; this fact that might augur well for the stability of the new regime. But significant changes in Brazil's profoundly elitist political culture, or significant measures to address the egregious poverty that afflicts tens of millions of people in what has become one of the Third World's richest economies, still have not appeared on the horizon.

NOTES

1. In the Brazilian case, it is necessary to note one important caveat. Most of one small but politically important opposition party, the leftist Workers Party (PT), decided to boycott the January 15 election on the grounds that it was not truly democratic since it was indirect. Thus, within Brazil there is not absolute consensus that the new government should be considered democratic. The existence of some significant legacies from the authoritarian period, such as the National Security Law (albeit revised in 1983) and the authoritarian Constitution contribute, to this argument. Without detracting from the importance of these observations, I would argue that the alternance in power marked the establishment of a democratic regime.
2. In recent years, the subject of transitions to democracy has assumed considerable importance. Among the most important works are O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead; Rustow; O'Donnell 1979a; O'Donnell 1979b; Herz.
3. For a key speech by Geisel, announcing his intention to promote a slow, gradual, and safe "decompression," see Opinião 2 (September 1974).
4. For a discussion of the liberal and authoritarian tendencies within the armed forces, see Schneider. For a good discussion of the whole period, see Moreira Alves. An important overview of the 1964-77 years is Flynn, pp. 308-515.
5. This section owes a great deal to discussions with Donald Share. We address this question in Mainwaring and Share. For important interpretations of why the regime began to open up, see Lamounier and de Souza; Santos 1978.
6. On the party system during the military period, see Jenks; and Fleischer 1984b. The relative resiliency of democratic institutions in Brazil is also highlighted in Trindade's excellent article.
7. This continuity in democratic discourse and institutions and the parallel lack of institutionalization of an authoritarian regime was noted by Linz.
8. An expanded version of the speech was published in Golbery de Couto e Silva, Chapter I.
9. For an excellent discussion of the military, see Stepan 1985. See also Góes and Camargo, pp. 125-171; Dreifuss and Soares Dulci.

10. Although focusing on the European cases (Spain, Portugal, and Greece), the influential work of Poulantzas adopted this perspective. For a critique of the "economistic" understanding of the abertura, and more generally of political life, see Santos 1980.

11. This section owes a great deal to discussions with Eduardo Viola. We briefly sketched our view of the Brazilian abertura in Mainwaring and Viola.

12. For excellent discussions of the regime's strategy during these years, see Moisés 1982b: 43-75; and Velasco e Cruz and Estevam Martins.

13. The relationship between social movements and political parties is an important and relatively understudied subject. I address this question in Mainwaring 1985.

14. For an important evaluation of the opposition governments, see the various articles in Novos Estudos CEBRAP 10 (October 1984).

15. An interesting example is Roberto Mangabeira Unger, who helped write the PMDB Platform. In early 1985, Mangabeira Unger published a series of 12 articles in the Folha de São Paulo, criticizing the direction the PMDB had taken.

16. An excellent recent discussion of Brazil's elitist political culture is O'Donnell 1984. On the historical formation of these patterns, see Faoro. See also Weffort. Da Matta is also an important contribution.

17. The information on the military comes from an oral presentation by Alfred Stepan at the meeting of the working group on "Dilemmas and Opportunities in the Consolidation of Democracy," São Paulo, December 16-17, 1985.

18. Brazil has one of the worst income distributions in the world. In 1981, the wealthiest ten percent of the population accounted for 50.6% of Brazil's total income, according to the World Bank (World Bank).

REFERENCES

- ALVES, M.H. MOREIRA (forthcoming) *State and Opposition in Military Brazil*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- BOSCHI, R. R. (1983) (ed) *Movimentos Coletivos no Brasil Urbano*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.
- CARDOSO, F.H. (1983) "O Papel dos Empresários no Processo de Transição: O Caso Brasileiro." *Dados* 26: 9-28.
- DA MATTA, R. (1979) *Carnavais, Malandros e Heróis: Para uma Sociologia do Dilema Brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.
- DASSIN, J. (1984) "The Brazilian Press and the Politics of Abertura." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 26 (August): 385-414.
- DREIFUSS, R.A. and O. SOARES DULCI (1983) "As Forças Armadas e a Política," pp. 87-117 in Sabastião Velasco e Cruz, et. al., *Sociedade e Política no Brasil pós-64*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- FAORO, R. (1958) *Os Donos do Poder*. Porto Alegre: Globo.
- FLYNN, P. (1979) *Brazil: A Political Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- FLEISCHER, D. (1984a) "Constitutional and Electoral Engineering in Brazil: A Double-Edged Sword, 1964-1982," *Journal of Inter-American Economic Affairs* 37 (Spring): 3-36.
- _____(1984b) *Do Antigo ao Novo Pluripartidarismo: Partidos e Sistemas Partidários no Congresso Nacional (1945-1984)*. Brasília.
- GOES, W. de and A. de CAMARGO (1984) *O Drama da Sucessão e a Crise do Regime*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira.
- HERZ, J. (1982) (ed) *From Dictatorship to Democracy*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- HUMPHREY, J. (1982) *Capitalist Control and Workers' Struggle in the Brazilian Auto Industry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- JENKS, M. (1979) "Political Parties in Authoritarian Brazil," Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University.

- LAMOUNIER, B. (1979) "O Discurso e o Processo: Da Distensão às Opções do Regime Brasileiro," pp. 88-120 in Henrique Rattner (ed.) *Brasil 1990: Caminhos Alternativos do Desenvolvimento*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- _____ (1980) "O Voto em São Paulo, 1970-1978," pp. 15-80 in Lamounier (ed.) *Voto de Desconfiança*. Petrópolis: Vozes/CEBRAP.
- LAMOUNIER, B. and F.H. CARDOSO (1976) (eds) *Os Partidos e as Eleições no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- LAMOUNIER, B. and A. de SOUZA (1981) "Governo e Sindicatos no Brasil: A Perspectiva dos Anos 80," *Dados* 24.
- LESSA, C. *et. al.* (1983) *Desenvolvimento Capitalista no Brasil*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- LINZ, J.J. (1973) "The Future of an Authoritarian Situation or the Institutionalization of an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Brazil," pp. 233-254 in Alfred Stepan (ed.) *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Future*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- MAINWARING, S. (1985) "Grass Roots Popular Movements and the Struggle for Democracy: Nova Iguaçu, 1974-1985," in Stepan (ed) *Democratizing Brazil*.
- _____ (1986) *The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil, 1916-1985*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- MAINWARING, S. and D. SHARE (forthcoming) "Transitions Through Transaction: Democratization in Brazil and Spain," in Wayne Selcher (ed.) *Political Liberalization in Brazil: Dynamics, Dilemmas, Perspectives*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- MAINWARING, S. and E. VIOLA (1985) "Transitions to Democracy: Brazil and Argentina in the 1980s." *Journal of International Affairs* 38 (Winter): 193-219.
- MARTINS, J. de SOUZA (1980) *Expropriação e Violência: A Questão Política no Campo*. São Paulo: Hucitec.
- _____ (1984) *A Militarização da Questão Agrária no Brasil*. Petrópolis: Vozes.

- MOISES, J.A. (1978) "Experiências de Mobilização Popular em São Paulo." Controponto III, No. 3: 69-86.
- MOISES, J.A. *et. al.* (1982a) Alternativas Populares da Democracia. Petrópolis: Vozes/CEDEC.
- MOISES, J.A. (1982b) Lições de Liberdade e de Opressão. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- O'DONNELL, G. (1979a) "Notas para el estudio de procesos de democratización política a partir del estado burocrático-autoritario," Estudios CEDES II, No. 5.
- _____ (1979b) "Tensions in the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State and the Question of Democracy," pp. 285-318 in David Collier (ed.) The New Authoritarianism in Latin America. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- _____ (1982) El estado burocrático-autoritario, 1966-1973. Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano.
- _____ (1984) "Y a mí, que me importa: Notas sobre sociabilidad y política en Argentina y Brasil." Kellogg Institute Working Paper #9 (January).
- O'DONNELL, G., P. SCHMITTER, and L. WHITEHEAD (eds) (forthcoming) Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe and Latin America. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University.
- POULANTZAS, N. (1976) La crisis de las dictaduras. Madrid: Siglo XXI.
- RUSTOW, D. (1970) "Transitions to Democracy: Towards a Dynamic Model." Comparative Politics II (April) :337-363 .
- SANTOS, W.G. dos (1978) Poder e Política: Crônica do Autoritarismo Brasileiro. Rio de Janeiro: Forense-Universitária.
- _____ (1980) "A Ciência Política na América Latina: Notas Preliminares de Autocrítica." Dados 23: 15-27.
- SCHNEIDER, R. (1971) The Political System of Brazil: Emergence of a 'Modernizing' Authoritarian Regime, 1964-1970. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

- SILVA, G. de COUTO e (1981) *Conjuntura Política Nacional, O Poder Executivo e Geopolítica do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olímpio.
- SINGER, P. and V.C. BRANT (1980) São Paulo: *O Povo em Movimento*. Petrópolis: Vozes/CEBRAP.
- SOARES, G.A. DILLON (1984) *Colégio Eleitoral, Convenções Partidárias e Eleições Diretas*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- STEPAN, A. (1971) *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- _____(1985) "Military Politics and Three Polity Arenas: Civil Society, Political Society and the State" in Stepan (ed), *Democratizing Brazil*.
- _____(forthcoming) (ed) *Democratizing Brazil*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- TAVARES de ALMEIDA, M. H. "Tendências Recentes de Negociação Coletiva no Brasil." *Dados* 24: 161-189.
- TAVARES, M. DA CONCEIÇÃO, and M.D. DAVID (1982) (eds) *A Economia Política da Crise*. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes/Achiame.
- TRINDADE, H. "Bases da Democracia Brasileira: Lógica Liberal e Práxis Autoritária (1822-1945), pp. 46-72 in Alain Rouquie, et al. (eds.) *Como Renascem as Democracias*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- VELASCO e CRUZ, S. and ESTEVAM MARTINS, C. "De Castello a Figueiredo: Uma Incursão na pré-História da 'Abertura,'" pp. 13-61 in Velasco e Cruz, et al., *Sociedade e Política no Brasil pós-64*.
- WEFFORT, F. (1984) *Por que Democracia?* São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- WORLD BANK (1983) *The World Bank Development Report, 1983*. New York: Oxford University Press.