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THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL

by SCOTT MAINWARING

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 elected 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 Neves' 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 article 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, the analysis examines why the regime undertook that path and then traces the main characteristics of the transition during two periods: (1) March 1974 – October 1983, and (2) October 1983 – January 1985. The latter period, which is examined in greater detail, is distinctive for the extent to which the regime lost its ability to dictate, or respond effectively to, political change. The following section then discusses the reasons behind the rapid erosion of regime power during the 1983-85 period. The article concludes by assessing the effects on Brazil during the first year of its transition to the new democratic regime.

LIBERATION FROM ABOVE: THE INITIAL IMPULSE

IN MARCH 1974, President Ernesto Geisel and Chief of Cabinet Golbery de Couto e Silva announced their intention to promote a slow, gradual, and careful process of political liberalization.[3] This

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was not the first time the military regime had announced such an intention. 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 implement this goal.[4] Furthermore, during the course of the *abertura* there was a conflict between the push for liberalization and the tightening authoritarian controls. Nevertheless, it is possible to date the *abertura* from March 1974 because, despite oscillations and regressions, from that time 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 long-term intervention (Stepan, 1971). Nevertheless, most leaders of the regime never envisioned military rule as a stable, permanent solution; the military was to restore order and eventually return power to civilians. The regime defined itself according to Western values, including that 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 Brazilian regime closed Congress only 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 (Movimento Democrático Brasileiro), was created by the government in 1965. During the most repressive years, 1969-74, the MDB had difficulty in functioning as an independent opposition voice, but it always served as a channel for some oppositon demands and, after 1974, became increasingly autonomous and important.[6]

During 1968-74, some nationalistic, far-right elements of the military initiated moves designed to increase the break with democratic institutions. Despite these efforts, and in contrast to the experience of other such regimes (Argentina, Uruguay, Chile), their initiatives were consistently defeated. The continued existence of democratic institutions throughout the authoritarian period would later prove important to the liberalization process. Despite the fact that such institutions may have served the military mostly as a façade, or as a way to facilitate continuation of civilian support, the existence of parties, elections, and a constitution offered the domestic opposition space in which to maneuver and provided at least a minimal

continuity of democratic practices and leaders. Similarly in the past, just as some continuity had been observed in the transfer of power from the 1945-64 democratic leadership to their authoritarian successors, so, too, has there been a like continuity as the recent military regime has relinquished its power to the nascent democratic government.[7]

An important backdrop to the *abertura* was the continuing state of tension generated by the conflicting pressures to open up the regime on the one hand, and to keep it closed on the other. However, mere existence of such pressures does not sufficiently explain why the liberalization process grew after 1974 when it had failed to do so earlier. Four factors were crucial to the decision to liberalize at that time.

First, since World War II, authoritarian regimes in the West have had trouble in devising the appropriate symbols or discourse which could win them widespread legitimacy. Initially, the Brazilian regime constructed symbols of legitimacy which were almost exclusively negative: anti-Communism, anti-corruption, and anti-chaos. At the outset such symbols were very effective in winning the support of much of the population, particularly the middle and upper classes. To remain credible for the long haul, however, there must be a universally recognized and accepted threat of communism, corruption, or chaos. If an authoritarian regime should extirpate these "evils," then its *raison d'être* disappears; conversely, if the regime fails to combat its enemies, it loses credibility owing to its inefficiency. Paradoxically, it is precisely when the authoritarian regime meets its goals of restoring peace and order most successfully that the challenge to its legitimacy is apt to be greatest. Regimes able to defeat the Left and invigorate the economy will probably enjoy broader support than those regimes less successful in meeting stated objectives, but they will often face more pressures, both internal and external, to open up the political system (O'Donnell, 1982). After all, how do you justify repression when there is no visible and plausible enemy?

The Brazilian government under President Médici turned to more positive symbols for legitimacy, such as the themes of efficiency, economic growth, and national aggrandizement. However, legitimacy based exclusively on performance is also precarious. Democratic legitimacy is based largely on *procedure*, even though performance and charisma may play important roles. Procedure provides a more stable base for legitimacy than efficiency because it requires mere acceptance of the rules of the game in order to survive.

When legitimacy is based on performance, a regime may encounter crisis when performance declines. At the same time, a continued outstanding economic performance can shift public attention away from the previous focus on economic life, and towards a deeper concern with other aspects of sociopolitical 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, it was precisely those sectors which benefited most from the years of the "economic miracle" which were the most vocal in demanding a return to democratic rule: the population of the large and developed cities, and the middle class (Lamounier, 1980: 15-80). In 1964, these sectors had 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 and the Order of Brazilian Lawyers played a major role in opposing the authoritarian abuses (Dassin, 1984). 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, 1983). Furthermore, in the 1974 elections, the opposition trounced the government party in the largest, most developed states (Lamounier and Cardoso, 1976). The signs of disaffection and of decreasing legitimacy were most visible in the same sectors from whom the regime had derived legitimacy during its earlier years.

The outstanding ideologue of the military regime, General Golbery de Couto e Silva, recognized the need for legitimacy as the main motive 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 between the military and the government, necessary during the most repressive phases of authoritarian rule, had created problems for the military. There was an ongoing tension between the military as an institution and the military as government. As an institution fundamentally oriented towards na-

tional defense, the military required the kind of discipline and unity which was threatened by political divisions. Yet, as the holder of power, the armed forces were constantly being politicized and subjected to internal divisions.

These divisions were especially apparent during the presidential successions, which almost always present dilemmas for authoritarian regimes. Unlike democratic systems, which have clearly stipulated procedures for determining presidential succession, authoritarian regimes lack defined mechanisms for transferring executive power, and because power is usually concentrated in the hands of the executive, the issue of who controls the succession takes on great importance.

The Brazilian regime was exceptional in the way it institutionalized presidential successions; still, every succession created serious tension 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 was repeated when President Costa e Silva died. Although hardliners took over during the Médici presidency (1969-74), 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 Silvio de Frota, attempted to undermine the *arbertura* 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 to relinguish power to civilians, both were aware that political liberalization, which by its very nature would allow greater separation between the military and the government, could alleviate some of these tensions.[9]

Third, by 1974 the military had decimated the Left, had control over popular movements and faced, a weak opposition. Peasant movements, severely repressed in 1964, had never recovered. The labor movement had been silenced since suppression of the strikes at Osasco and Contagem in 1968; no major strike occurred again until 1978. The opposition party had suffered many key losses due to the repression, and ARN (Aliança Renovadora Nacional), the government party, had easily won the 1970 elections. This situation led the regime to believe that it could successfully control a liberalization process, given the regime's strength, and the opposition's weakness and moderate character. The regime opted to liberalize, therefore, not because of weakness, but because of its strength.

This relative weakness of the opposition, and relative capacity of the regime to control the political situation, were distinctive

marks of the liberalization process in Brazil during the early phases of the *abertura*, which made it differ radically from the situation in Argentina and Bolivia in the early 1970s, where active, powerful opposition groups were able to mobilize to topple military governments.

This weakness of the Brazilian opposition, however, by no means implied that the regime enjoyed sufficient support to govern without repression and without frequent manipulation of electoral laws. From 1974 til late 1983, political liberalization was characterized by the curious situation which enjoyed the support of powerful political actors, of a steadily increasing (though fluctuating) opposition, yet was unable to topple the regime.

Fourth, the economic situation fostered the regime's belief that it could afford to liberalize. Some authors automatically attributed the *abertura* to the end of the economic miracle.[10] In fact, even though the 1973 oil crisis affected the Brazilian economy adversely, this argument is difficult to sustain. The main architects of the *abertura*, Geisel and Golbery de Couto e Silva, had planned an orderly and controlled liberalization even before the effect of the oil crisis became apparent. Furthermore, the Brazilian economy was one of the fastest growing in the world from 1967 to 1974. Inflation, which had almost reached 100% when Castello e Branco took over in April 1964, had been reduced to 20%. Finally, despite the deceleration in the rate of economic expansion after 1974, the Brazilian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continued solid growth (7% per annum) until 1980, even though this growth increased the external vulnerability of the economy, thus restoring order along the economic, as well as the political, front.

POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION, 1974-1983

EVEN THOUGH THE DECISION to liberalize originated with the authoritarian regime, it created a new dynamic between the regime and its opponents. Liberalization implied redefining the rules of the game in such a way as to enhance the role of the opposition. Thus, the 1974-1983 period inaugurated a stage of constant struggle and negotiation between regime and opposition, constant efforts by the latter to expand the cause of democracy, and constant attempts by the former to contain it.[11]

It is worth illustrating this point at some length to indicate the flavor of the transition during those nine years. As part of its decision to allow greater political freedom, the regime decided to allow more

competitive elections in 1974, anticipating a victory which would confirm its legitimacy. In 1970, under the aegis 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 in 1974 than it had in 1970, claiming many key victories. In the Senate the opposition won 16 out of 22 disputed seats. The government overestimated its own strength and underestimated that of the opposition, especially in the developed urban areas where the regime was soundly trounced. Demographic trends, notably a rapid growth of large cities, indicated that the regime would likely encounter trouble in the 1978 elections.

Following a pattern which would be repeated over the years, the regime used a combination of coercion and ingenuity to reassert 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 wider, the opposition demanded restoration of basic civil liberties, especially freedoms of the press and of speech, amnesty for political exiles and an end to torture. While the opposition successfully generated discussion of these issues, the regime took the initiative in responding to them. 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, responsible for eliminating important civil liberties. Also in 1979 the regime took the initiative in reforming the artifically imposed two-party system, created in 1965. The opposition had long been demanding party reform, but the regime seized upon the issue as a means to divide the opposition. Ironically, though perhaps typically, when the reform finally came, it garnered more support among government leaders than among the opposition party.[12] Equally instructive was the fact that the government included 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.

An unexpected challenge came from popular movements. After years of being virtually dormant as far as the public was concerned, popular movements surged back with surprising vitality between 1977 and 1980. Most publicized was the auto workers movement of Greater São Paulo, which staged major strikes in successive years be-

tween 1978 and 1980 (Humphrey, 1982; Tavares de Almeida, 1981). Throughout the country, peasant unions emerged stronger than at any time since 1964 and more numerous than ever. Neighborhood associations and local movements for urban services also blossomed all over the country (Boschi, 1983; Singer and Brant, 1980; 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 as much public support as possible, the government attempted to make new inroads into the popular sector. Significant in this regard was the reformulation of wage policy in 1979 designed to favor the poorest workers. Traditional mechanisms, such as housing projects, 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 repressive measures were employed against the auto workers' strikes while violence against peasants was rampant in the Amazon region (Martins, 1984 and 1980).

In urban areas, these policies often succeeded in containing the challenges posed by popular movements. The regime prevented the movements from becoming a determining element in the political process, even though it had to reformulate its own policies and style of decision making to do so. In the poorest states, the government managed to retain its 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 ability to marginalize these movements. In many rural areas, especially frontier regions, private and public repression remained the norm.

Every step in the *abertura* provided new possibilities for the opposition and new dilemmas for the regime. The latter designed the 1979 party reform in such a way as to maximize its own prospects in the 1982 elections. Its strategy was to divert the opposition into several parties, assuming that a large, malleable centrist party would emerge. By 1981 it was apparent that the government would fare quite poorly under the new electoral laws and party situation. The centrist Popular Party (PP for Partido Popular) proved to be more combative than the regime expected. Furthermore, the largest opposition party, the PMDB (Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro), proved significantly stronger than the government had anticipated. As a result, in November 1981, the regime once again turned to authoritarian means to impose changes in the electoral laws, this time to prevent party alliances during the 1982 elections.

The 1982 elections marked a new point in the *abertura*, since significant decision centers were at stake for the first time. These elections, for state governors, were the first since 1965 and 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 accounted for 60% of Brazil's population and 75% of her GDP. The opposition also far outpolled the government in terms of popular votes for governors.

Nevertheless the government could claim some significant victories too. It elected governors of two important states, Rio Grande do Sul (in the far south) and Pernambuco (in the northeast) and it won a majority of states (12 out of 22). Thanks to the continuous tampering with electoral laws (Fleischer, 1984a), and despite having a minority of the popular vote, the PDS (Partido Democrático Social) elected a majority of representatives for the electoral college which would determine the presidential election of January 1985. Many observers 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 beginning the *abertura*, the regime still retained a relatively strong position. This does not mean that it was consistently able to impose its will throughout the 1974-1983 period. Indeed, it generally failed to control the events of political change to the degree it would have liked. Yet what was remarkable about the Brazilian *abertura* was the regime's ability to respond to new situations in ways enabling it to remain in power and to limit the nature of the political change.

Even though state policies reflected the dialectic between the regime and opposition, the regime was able to ensure significant continuity in both policies and leadership during this period. For example, sporadic repression continued against popular movements and against the Left during the Figueiredo administration. Indeed, in some rural areas, especially the Amazon, the level of violence even escalated after 1978. Figuieredo employed clientelistic practices and generally excluded the popular sectors from the decision-making sphere.

The continuity of leadership during this period is remarkable, as is the regime's ability to institutionalize regular presidential succes-

sion. 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 also been responsible for implementing policy during the most repressive years.

This ability 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 backwards towards a democratic regime than it did in moving towards authoritarianism. 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 when Franco died in late 1975 and, for most purposes, was completed by December 1978 when a democratic constitution was promulgated.

None of this is to dismiss the opposition's role in the *arbertura* 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 in restraining this impulse only because it was flexible enough to meet some of the opposition demands. Over 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 WITH OCTOBER 1983, the political process changed in significant ways in relation to the first nine years of the *abertura.* After years of responding successfully to a wide amalgam of challenges, the regime lost its ability to control the presidential succession, paving the way to an earlier transition to democracy than most observers expected. Indeed, it lost its very 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 ignominous defeat. The regime's decline and the opposition's ascension can be subdivided into three short periods.

1. Regime Erosion: October to December 1983.

Throughout almost 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 supported the regime, and it was not terribly consequential even when it didn't: 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 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 a low point in 1983, proved to be the issue which provoked a PDS revolt. In July 1983, as part of the stabilization plan sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government presented a new wage policy which would have resulted in enormous erosion of real earnings of vast sectors of the society. Congress rejected successive government proposals, under PDS leadership, despite government pressure on its own behalf. It took the government several months to get a proposal finally approved.

Another blow to PDS unity and ability to control the presidential succession occurred in late December. In his end-of-year speech, President Figueiredo announced that he would not coordinate the party's campaign after having previously 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 from the task of choosing a successor probably affected adversely the party's chances of re-establishing some degree of internal cohesion. This decision seemed to strengthen the candidacy of Paulo Maluf, thereby increasing the feeling of the opposition that it could not negotiate the choice of the next president. Figueiredo's decision marked a profound change from past practices. 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 of increased tension between the PDS and the government, that the campaign for direct elections began.

2. Mobilization of the Opposition: January to April 1984

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. 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.

As the campaign for direct elections accelerated, the regime began to disintegrate visibly, and an increasing number of PDS members began to support direct elections, including, on February 8, Vice-President Chaves himself. Before the turn of the year, the PMDB presented an amendment in Congress for direct elections which seemed to have no chance of passing. The opposition needed the support of 2/3 of both houses in order to win. This meant getting 320 votes in the Chamber of Deputies and 46 in the Senate, although the opposition parties controlled only 244 seats in the Chamber and 24 in the Senate. But what the regime had dismissed as impossible in January, when the campaign began, began to seem quite plausible by mid-March. Several PDS members in the Congress 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 group reckoned that if the regime elected the next president under the conditions then prevailing, the country would enter into an unprecedented political crisis. This faction 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, after which things would return to normal.

Throughout 1984 tensions between these factions remained high, with leaders of the groups insulting one another publicly in a way unprecedented for the authoritarian regime. The Minister of the Navy was fired in late March as a result of his outspoken views on behalf of the more liberal faction in these conflicts. In mid-April, Theodorico Ferraço, a PDS Deputy from Rio, described the government as a group of "a half dozen irresponsible people who are leading the country." Meanwhile, Vice President Chaves, who had previously announced his support for direct elections, recommended that they be held in 1984.

3. The Electoral College: April 1984 to January 1985.

As the date approached (April 25, 1984) for voting on the amendment to re-establish direct elections for president, regime intransigents won out. President Figueiredo declared emergency measures to be in effect in Brasilia and ten nearby cities to abort the possibility of demonstrations. In addition, he mobilized all the support he could muster in Congress to defeat the amendment. When roll call finally came, the amendment fell 22 votes short of the 320 needed to pass the Chamber of Deputies.

As the campaign for direct elections went on, the PDS set about attempting to find a 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 Chaves, the most liberal of the three, had the most popular support by far, 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. However, by April the most likely winner seemed to be Maluf, who was anathema to the moderate factions of the party as being notorious for egregious corruption.

With these possibilities in mind, the moderate factions began to flirt with the idea of supporting Tancredo Neves, even though he was not officially a candidate. Two days following defeat of the amendment for direct elections, 8 of the 9 governors from the impoverished

Northeast, all PDS leaders, pledged their support to Tancredo, an avalanche of defections. In mid-June, when it appeared certain that Maluf would win the PDS convention, not only did the President of the PDS resign, but the Governor of Rio Grande do Sul, also from the PDS, announced his preference for Tancredo over Maluf. The last week of June, these defections were consecrated by the formation of the Liberal Front, headed by moderate PDS leaders who supported Aureliano Chaves and had voted for direct elections. By mid-July, the Liberal Front had decided to vote for Tancredo, who increasingly appeared to be the likely opposition candidate, regardless of whom the PDS nominated. Consequently, the opposition seemed to have a good chance of winning the election, a situation which paved the way for increasing acceptance of indirect elections except for most of the PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores) and the PDT (Partido Democrático Trabalhista).

From this point on, unity within the PDS became progressively eroded. Aureliano Chaves withdrew his candidacy and began to work openly for Tancredo, an old political rival. Some regime moderates continued to put their hopes on Andreazza, but the PDS convention, held 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, gave an unprecedented lambasting to the Minister of the Air Force for having called the PDS defectors traitors. Maluf's victory implied virtual defeat for the PDS in the January election.

Meanwhile, Tancredo Neves embarked upon construction of a broader network of support, aiming his campaign at both the members of electoral college and the public at large. Equally important, Neves 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 previous 1973-83 period.

a) Erosion of consensus in the upper echelon of the regime.

The leaders of the military government had always experienced some internal tensions, usually between the hard-line and the moderate authoritarian factions. These tensions were generally accentuated during periods of debate over the presidential succession.

Nevertheless, until 1982, the level of agreement and unity, both within the armed forces and within the government, was striking. Conflicts notwithstanding, all the presidential successions were handled in ways which managed to avoid crises for the regime.

In 1983-84, the presidential succession provoked an unresolvable crisis. For the first time, the regime found itself unable to agree upon an acceptable candidate. The major leaders were split not only over whom to choose for president, but over whether to shorten the mandate for the next president, and whether to hold direct elections in future presidential contests. 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. Chaves' 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 make 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 revealing the profound schisms within the upper echelons of the regime were the tensions evident between the president and the vice president. Even though Chaves served as interim president on two occasions when Figueiredo underwent his operations, the president never seemed to trust, or work with, his running mate, and the friction between the two was exacerbated during the campaign for direct elections.

b) Inability of President Figueiredo to lead the regime.

Despite their different styles and orientations, all previous military presidents had come across as effective leaders. When Figueiredo took office in 1979, it appeared that he would carry on this tradition. The new president seemed enthusiastic, and his proposal of carrying out the *abertura* appealed to the media. However, Figueiredo's charisma wore off, and he increasingly appeared ill-suited for executive office. In a major speech in January 1985, Figueiredo asked the nation to forget him – hardly a request befitting a president who hopes to be remembered as an effective leader.

Nowhere was Figueiredo's ineffectual leadership more apparent than in the presidential succession process. In May 1983, Figueiredo agreed to coordinate the PDS procedure for choosing

the next president. Seven months later, however, he decided against it, contrary to the practice of all his predecessors in the military presidency. Coordinating the presidential succession obviously was more difficult in a time of open political competition, but this reversed decision revealed a vacillation uncharacteristic of previous administrations. Effective leadership and campaigning on behalf of one of the candidates, particularly if Figueiredo had opted for Chaves, 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. Early in 1984, it was clear that, in terms of popular support, Aureliano Chaves far outdistanced both Maluf and Andreazza. In fact, surveys showed Chaves as leading all potential candidates in a direct election for president. Although history can always devise strange twists of fate, it seems likely that, had the regime chosen Aureliano as its candidate for president, or negotiated with the opposition to agree upon Chaves, it would have been able to elect one of its own for president. Figueiredo was the only person in a position to enhance Chaves' chances significantly and he consistently refused to do so.

c) 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, few major conflicts between the regime and the government party had occurred prior to 1983. 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, providing a forecast for the even greater tensions which surfaced during the presidential succession. Throughout the entire process, friction between the moderate sectors and more intransigent groups were sharp. These strained relations culminated in the decision of moderate PDS Congressional leaders to abandon the party to help create the Liberal Front, and to vote for Tancredo Neves.

d) 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 party reform as a method to divide the opposition, and this strategy proved successful to a significant extent. After the merger of the PP and PMDB in January 1982, in most states there was essentially a return to a bipartisan 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 against each other as much as they did against the regime. In Rio Grande, these divisions were sufficiently sharp for the PDS to win the election. As a result of the November 1982 elections the government lost its majority in the lower house of the legislature (Chamber of Deputies) but managed to ally itself with the conservative PTB in order 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. At a national level, despite the relatively limited popular support of their parties, 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 overrode these party disputes and served to unite 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 with almost no penetration into 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, 1984: 60). The virtual unanimity of the opposition also denied the government a legitimate interlocutor upon whom 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 a good chance 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 Neves, 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 Neves over

Maluf, while, at the same time, Brizola attempted to convince Neves to shorten his mandate to two years and then call direct elections. The PTB, who had supported indirect elections all along, also voted for Neves. The indirect election created an immediate crisis for the PT. After internal debate, the party decided to abstain; it then expelled the three Congressional members who voted for Neves, leading to important defections from the party.

e) Unity between opposition parties and social movements (January to April 1984).

During the second half of the 1970's, a broad spectrum of social movements provided some of the greatest 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, even dominant, role in the struggle for democracy. In fact, many social movements declined after 1980. The reasons were many, but among them was the fact that often there was competition, rather than cooperation, between social movements and political parties. Many leaders of social movements chose to run for public office in the 1982 elections, leading to enervation of their respective movements. With few exceptions, the movements opted for autonomy in the 1982 elections, i.e., not supporting any particular party. The campaigns attracted so much attention that movements frequently ended up in a subordinate position.[13]

The weak response of social movements to the November 1981 "electoral package," which the regime imposed in an attempt to enhance its electoral prospects for the following year, already indicated significant distance between movements and parties. This distance was confirmed in the aftermath of the elections. Many such movements had expected that the election of opposition governors, especially in Rio and São Paulo, would increase their own influence. 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 opposition parties narrowed during the campaign for direct elections. The social movements mobilized people to participate in the demonstrations. While the primary responsibility for 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 eroded in the months following the defeat of the Amendment of Direct Elections. Many movement leaders, following the general line of the PT, were committed to holding direct elections. They felt that the PMDB went too far in playing by the rules and did too little to mobilize the population toward forcing the regime to give in on this issue. Especially in the months immediately following January 15 when the new Cabinet was being discussed, the social movements were discouraged by the conservative cast of the new government.

f) Effective leadership in the opposition, particularly around the figure of Tancredo Neves (April 1984 to January 1985).

Neves was able to do something that perhaps no other opposition figure could: win the support of significant parts of the left, center-left, and much of the center-right, while proving acceptable to the military. 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. Support of the center-right, which included mostly PDS people who defected to the Liberal Front, was necessary for his electoral victory. Finally, the fact that Neves proved acceptable to the majority of military leaders avoided an authoritarian objection or complication. A more progressive leader (Brizola or Ulysses Guimarães) might have induced a military veto.

For years, Tancredo Neves had been an outstanding leader in the moderate opposition. With the party reform of 1979-80, he became president of the center-right Popular Party (PP). In June 1983, he suggested that 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, prior to 1984, Neves was not popular with the more progressive opposition leaders. This situation changed in 1984 when it appeared that his candidacy might be the only way to defeat the regime.

Neves' well-established history as a moderate, flexible politician accounts for the fact that he proved acceptable to so many sectors of the society. Tancredo ran a campaign of wide appeal, yet one which did not make the kind of radical commitments that 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 persecution of military leaders. While promising institutional changes which would further the cause of democracy, Neves also made clear he was not talking about major socio-economic change.

While it is important to emphasize Tancredo's role in the period which began April 25, 1984, he never played a central role in the mobilization for the direct elections. According to some reports, Tancredo never believed that the campaign would be successful. His personal political style was better suited to behind-the-scenes negotiations with political and military elites than to mobilization of 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 REGIME POWER during its last year and a half was the result of a combination of legitimation problems, which were fundamentally structural, and of government choices. For the most part, the regime handled the transition with unusual political perspicacity, avoiding the precipitous decline in legitimacy and increase in political mobilization which usually accompany transitions in the wake of regime collapse. It would be misleading to suggest that the regime suffered a direct, steady decline in legitimacy after 1974. Its level of support followed a pattern somewhat akin to that of the *abertura* as a whole; periods of decline, followed by other periods during which the regime renewed its appeal on the basis of its initiatives. Yet the pattern of gradual decline 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; its successor, the PDS, won only 36.7% in 1982 (Soares, 1984: 51-52).

The difficulty that contemporary Western authoritarian regimes have in developing formulas for legitimacy which are effective over the long term has already been noted. In Brazil, this difficulty became more acute the longer the regime was in power. It became easier for the opposition to denounce the authoritarian measures still being employed. At the same time, it became increasingly difficult to justify these measures. There was no opposition in sight, since that would be "disloyal" to the 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 vast manipulation 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 regaining legitimacy through its attempts to restore democracy.

These *casuismos* were profoundly ambivalent in their effects. In the short run, they helped the regime retain power, but their long term efficacy was dubious, for they were instituted in authoritarian fashion and had an anti-democratic intent. 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 blatant measure, the government dissolved the MDB to enhance its own electoral prospects, using party reform to divide the opposition. Two years later, the November 1981 package also contained flagrantly manipulative measures, such as imposing a straight party vote and not allowing party identification on the ballots. All these measures provided the opposition with ammunition with which to attack the regime's authoritarian character. The government was moving towards democratic rule in its attempts to regain legitimacy, but this very move only served to expose its authoritarian character the more. By the early 1980's, electoral manipulation seemed to 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 would be the outcome for the regime if the system were to become more democratic. The adverse impact of the *casuismos* and other such measures became so apparent that, by early 1984, even some leading figures in the regime (notably Aureliano Chaves) decided to support direct elections for president.

By 1983, the economic crisis combined with a wave of corruption scandals to shrivel public confidence in the regime even further. When the military took power in 1964, the armed forces had used the twin issues of economic crisis and corruption to justify the overthrow of Goulart. When the same problems erupted during the Figueiredo administration, they rebounded against it. After basing their claim to legitimacy on the principle of efficiency, the regime's credibility was severely undermined by the severity of the domestic economic problems, and they appeared lame in attributing the cause to international factors beyond their control. The international conjuncture certainly contributed to the crisis – but this did little to convince most

Brazilians that the regime was efficient, given the indications to the contrary.

The economy entered deep, 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, the government announced, immediately after the elections, that it would resort to IMF loans and accept its stabilization program. This action represented a political defeat for the regime, since it involved 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 capital income fell approximately 15%. By 1983, the inflation rate was well over 200% per annum. Meanwhile, the foreign debt increased from $6.6-billion in 1971 to approximately $100-billion by 1984. It became apparent that some of the 1970's growth had been purchased at the price of an increasing external debt (Tavares and David, 1982; Lessa, 1983). Under other circumstances, the economic crisis could have led to an authoritarian stance hence, more rigid but, given the "tired" nature of the Brazilian regime by 1983, and the deep desire on the part of a 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 darkened the regime's public image further.

Even though the gradual erosion of regime legitimacy was clearly visible, the regime's displacement from power in January 1985 was not inevitable. In retrospect, there may well be a temptation to read backwards into the events of October 1983 to October 1984 the unavoidable demise of an old regime *in extremis*. Nevertheless, a balanced analysis would have to emphasize both the strengths, as well as the vulnerabilities, of the Brazilian regime in 1983. Considering everything it had experienced and the length of the *abertura*, the Brazilian regime's capacity to remain in power while promoting political liberalization stands out as exceptional.

While the slow decline in legitimacy set the stage 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 Chaves would have won. The PDS's ultimate choice, Maluf, was by far the worst in terms of regime unity and popular support.

For the opposition, the most important choice was that of Neves as the candidate to run against the PDS. As became clear during the course of the campaign, Neves had an ability to placate the military and to win support from former PDS leaders that probably no other opposition candidate possessed. In this sense, the decision of progressive opposition leaders to accept Tancredo was an important one. While this decision helped pave the way for the March 1985 transition, other factors, in particular the decisive voice of ex-regime supporters and marginalization of the progressive sectors of the opposition, also marked the early days of the new democratic regime.

FROM ELITE-LED TRANSITION TO ELITIST DEMOCRACY

OCTOBER 1983 USHERED in a new period in the democratization of Brazil, with characteristics which differed markedly from those of the previous years of *abertura.* 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, 1985). The critical difference between the two kinds of transition lies in the regime's ability to influence the transition (greater in transitions from above) and in the degree of discontinuity in the political process (lesser in transitions from above).

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to overstate the extent to which the post-October 1983 period represented a rupture in the political process. Even though regimes which effect transitions through withdrawal lack legitimacy and the support of civil society, they still retain enough power to impose some limits on the kind of transition that takes place. This ability may erode over time – the political world is always dynamic and fluid – but it is almost certain to mark the first years of democratic rule. In this sense, it is significant that, even though it suffered a major legitimacy problem by late 1984, the Brazilian regime did not collapse. Equally significant is the fact that the opposition, despite a considerable degree of unity among main op-

position parties and the social movements, was incapable of overthrowing the regime. Only by allying with significant and substantial parts of the regime was the opposition able to come to power. Without creation of the Democratic Alliance, a coalition composed of parts of the PMDB, the PFL (Partido do Frente Liberal) and the PDS, the opposition could not have won the 1985 election. This means that the left has been excluded, while the center-right, and even parts of the right, have been included. This alignment of forces became clear in the naming of the Cabinet. Progressive sectors of the PMDB complained of *continuismo*, i.e. a basic continuity in policies despite the changes in names and faces.[15] The PDT and PT complained also even though the latter was embroiled in internal disputes severe enough to threaten its very existence. Several current cabinet ministers held positions of power during the military regime, and one (the Minister of Communications) remains in the PDS.

Although post-October 1983 characteristics differ from those of the preceding liberalization period, the Brazilian transition is relatively cautious. Even before March 15, 1985, it was apparent that major changes would be confined to political institutions, while there would be minimal change in the socio-economic order. The elitist negotiations between the PMDB, the Democratic Front, the Democratic Alliance, and the Armed Forces systematically excluded popular participation. Considering the length of the elite political domination of Brazil, this fact is hardly earth-shaking,[16] yet, considering the important role played by the popular mobilizations of early 1984 to reverse authoritarianism, the return to politics as usual has been a disappointment to progressive segments of the society – including sectors of the PMDB. These had already been sharply disappointed by actions of the Montoro and Brizola state governments following the November 1982 elections, and by early 1985 it appeared likely that this 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 revealing of the compromises made to depose the military regime.

The political world is subject to constant change as actors modify their identities or as new situations emerge. This is particularly

true of democratic regimes during their foundation periods when the groundwork is being laid for the future. Possibilities for alliances, for changing political culture, for transforming social structures, for rewriting constitutions, are greater in these periods than subsequently. Above all, it is during foundation periods that political identities undergo their most significant changes, for it is then that the leading actors define their relationship to the rest of the polity. For this reason, the political legacy inherited by the new regime matters a great deal.

Thus, it is not surprising that the painfully slow transition, involving so many elements of continuity from the military, has left its mark on the first year of the government. The limits imposed by a negotiated transition, which can occur only with the consent of significant sectors of the previous regime, were immediately apparent in Neves' cabinet selection. Despite his talents as a negotiator, he was subjected to extraordinary pressure to respond to traditional clientelistic demands. The PMDB (in itself highly heterogeneous), the PFL, and sectors of the PDT all scrambled for cabinet positions. All of the country's regions demanded their share of the pie. Political motives replaced competence as main criteria for nominations. This scenario can best be understood in reference to Brazil's "patrimonial" heritage of a strong centralized state combined with the relative weakness of its civil society. However, the nature of the transition also contributed to this application of patronage to the state democracy.

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 to initiate agrarian reform. The first proposal, formulated by the Minister of Agrarian Reform and the head of the National Institute for Agrarian Reform, was quite ambitious. Badgered by the rural elite and the military ministers, Sarney killed this proposal and offered an alternative sufficiently diluted that the head of the Rural Society of São Paulo grudgingly conceded that the measure wasn't bad as agrarian reform programs went. Despite peasant protest, the president failed to follow through with the initial proposal.

The Minister of Labor, Almir Pazzianoto, an ex-labor lawyer for the 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 in that it announces great changes, but does not put them into effect.

The third potentially far-reaching reform, a new Constitution, will become a reality, but under conditions designed to limit the extent of changes. The new constitution will be written by the Congress after the elections of November 1986 rather than by an autonomous Constituent Assembly. The new Congress will still include individuals elected under the authoritarian regime's electoral legislation, which severely under-represents the modern, liberal parts of the country. Nevertheless, progressive forces are placing considerable hope in the prospects of a new constitution, although the results are likely to be disappointing unless the November 1986 elections bring big surprises. As progressive measures get deleted, other signs of continuity remain. One such sign is the president himself, who, until mid-1984, was an outstanding civilian leader in the old regime. Less visible, but perhaps more important, given the president's limited political base, is the presence of six ministers carried over from the military regime, a number probably unmatched by any other democratic regime in the world. Sarney frequently seeks the council of these military ministers, who, in turn, seek to influence the president. They helped torpedo the agrarian reform and the new labor law; they also insisted, successfully, that members of the armed forces not be tried for past crimes, whether torture or graft. In addition, they blocked an amnesty which would have restored the rights of 2600 military officers dismissed for political reasons during the military regime.[17]

In the Brazilian case, there are reasons to be skeptical about the advantages of a conservative transition, despite it being the only transition possible at that time. The many concessions Neves made to the center-right, and the marginalization of the left wing of the PMDB, suggest that the government will be reluctant to redress the egregious income distribution, extreme regional inequalities, and many social injustices which plague Brazilian society.[18] While addressing these problems is not critical to the stability of the democratic regime, failure to do so will surely be decisive in determining the quality of democracy. The elitist nature of the political bargains which led Neves to power do not augur well for a more participatory regime.

Are there any challenges to this new listless democracy which is emerging from the old, tired regime? Yes – but they are overshadowed by the continuity that characterized the transition. Perhaps the

most important challenge comes from the Workers Party, a left-of-center party with a diffuse ideology and demands considered 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 stimulate changes in the political system. The left-of-center (though less so) PDT, headed by Lionel Brizola, is also on the move. Finally, although the wide amalgam of social movements have now become somewhat isolated, politically, their proliferation during the last decade indicates a latent capacity for strengthening of civil society *vis-a-vis* the state.

The most encouraging step taken by the new democracy is that it has respected traditional civil liberties, despite a history of continued repression in many rural areas. Furthermore, the high level of continuity during and subsequent to the transition means that the right is engaged in, rather than outside of, democratic politics, a fact that might augur well for the stability of the new regime. Significant changes in Brazil's profoundly elitist political culture, or measures which 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 PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* or Workers' Party), 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 change 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, forthcoming; Rustow, 1970; O'Donnell, 1979a and 1979b; Herz, 1982, and Levine, 1973.

3. For a key speech by Geisel, announcing his intention to promote a slow, gradual, and safe "decompression, see *Opinião* (1974).

4. For a discussion of the liberal and authoritarian tendencies within the armed forces, see Schneider (1971). For a good discussion of the whole

period, see Moreira Alves (forthcoming); while an important overview of the 1964-77 years is given by Flynn (1979: 308-515).

5. This section owes a great deal to discussions with Donald Share, with whom I address this question in Mainwaring and Share (forthcoming). For important interpretations of why the regime began to open up, see Lamounier and de Souza, 1981; and Santos, 1978.

6. On the party system during the military period, see Jenks (1979) and Fleischer (1984b). The relative resiliency of democratic institutions in Brazil is also highlighted in an excellent article by Trindade (1985).

7. This continuity in democratic discourse and institutions, and the parallel lack of institutionalization by an authoritarian regime was noted by Linz (1973).

8. An expanded version of the speech was published in the book by Golbery de Couto e Silva (1981).

9. For an excellent discussion of the military, see Stepan (forthcoming); as well as de Goes and de Camargo (1984: 125-171); and Dreifuss and Soares Dulci (1983).

10. Although it focuses upon the European cases (Spain, Portugal, and Greece), the influential work of Nicos Poulantzas (1976) adopted this perspective. For a critique of the "economistic" understanding of the *abertura* and, more generally, of political life, see the article by Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos (1980) in *dados*.

11. This section owes a great deal to discussions with Eduardo Viola; our view of the Brazilian *abertura* is summarized in Mainwaring and Viola (1985).

12. For excellent discussions of the regime's strategy during these years, see Moisés, 1982b; and also Velasco e Cruz and Estevam Martins (1983).

13. The relationship between social movement and political parties is an important, though relatively understudied, subject which I address in Mainwaring, 1985.

14. For an important evalution of the opposition governments, see the various articles in *Novos Estudos* CEBRAP (1984), which is put out by the *Centro Brasileiro de Analise e Planeiamento*.

15. An interesting example is Roberto Mangabeira Unger, who helped to write the platform of the PMDB (*Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*). In early 1985, Mangabeira Unger published a series of 12 articles in the *Folha de São Paolo*, criticizing the direction the PMDB had taken.

16. An excellent recent discussion of Brazil's elitist political culture is given by O'Donnell, 1984; and see Faoro (1958) for the historical formation of these patterns. Important contributions are also made by Weffort (1984) and Da Matta (1979).

17. Information on the military is derived from an oral presentation of Alfred Stepan, which he delivered at the meeting of the working group on "Dilemmas and Opportunities in the Consolidation of Democracy," which was held in São Paolo, 16-17 December, 1985.

18. Brazil has one of the most skewed distributions of income in the world. In 1981 the wealthiest 10% of the population accounted for 50.6% of total national income (World Bank, 1983).

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