

## Fri Oct 9, Politics Class Notes, Brazil day 2

### ICP Sections 3 and 4 and Farrell ch 4

#### ICP Section 3: Governance and Policy-Making

- Key legacy: centralization of state authority in the executive combined with decentralized federal structure
  - Legislature and judiciary are generally much less powerful
  - However, with 5,564 municipal governments, the federal executive can't do everything!
  - A move towards greater decentralization in 1988 has both led to policy innovations in direct democracy and to the further fragmentation of Brazilian political society ("polity")
- Changes in the check on the executive in the 1988 constitution
  - Replaces executive decrees by "temporary" provisional measures
  - Limited the president to a single term (amended by Cardoso in 1997)
  - Nonetheless, more than 80 of all legislation starts in the executive
- State agencies
  - The public share of GDP rose from 16 to 32% between 1947 and 1969 (a huge %)
  - Various development projects, often under the control of the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES)
- The military/police
  - a huge problem in Brazil, even since the military relinquished power in 1985
    - § the military
      - secured amnesty for the regime's crimes and retain cabinet posts
    - § The police
      - Rampant crime and urban violence (more than 50 mayors assassinated between 1990 and 2000)
      - Arbitrary detention, corruption, torture, systematic 'gang-style' killings
      - In Rio and Sao Paolo, the police may commit around 10% of homicides
- The judiciary
  - Network of state/federal and a supreme court (which lacks effective judicial review)
  - Also includes a reasonably effective Electoral Supreme Tribunal (TSE)
  - Brazil is a **civil law** country run on established penal codes, which both makes the judiciary less effective and provides a barrier to judicial activism
  - Severe problems with corruption (tied to difficulties with prosecuting the police)
  - Possible reform: subjecting judges to election (currently appointed)
- Subnational Government
  - "politics of the governors" since the Old Republic, resurgent since 1982 (first chance to elect governors directly)
  - Although clientilism is still endemic, a lot of good work is being done through direct democracy, often affiliated with Lula's PT party

## ICP Section 4: Representation and Participation

- Why does the text say that representation and accountability are so weak in Brazil?
- Recent changes: explosion in civil society activism for different identity groups

### The Legislature

- Bicameral
  - Upper house: 81-member Senate (3 per state)
  - Lower house: 513 member Chamber of Deputies
- Elections via Proportional Representation (8 seat minimum and 70 seat maximum per state)
- “Election to the federal legislature is often used as a steppingstone to even more lucrative, especially executive, posts.” (Similar to the “revolving door” in Washington, DC)
- Very poor gender/ethnic representation

### Political Parties

- Many parties with weak party identification, fostered in part by the specific PR system in use: “the 559 representatives of the 1987-1991 legislature had belonged to an average of over three parties during the five years of the legislature. Politicians switched parties to increase their access to patronage.”
- Generally, parties on the right are economically neoliberal, want to shrink the public sector, and support reduction in the welfare state and overall privatization
- A number of ‘centrist’ parties exist, but they are often swayed by political expediency
- On the left, the Workers’ Party (PT) dominates. It has itself transformed from a pro-nationalization and unionization party to a pragmatic party of neoliberal reform with social programs
- No one party has more than 23% of all legislative seats, and coalition governments have tended to fail in Brazil (hence the powerful executive).
- Unlike in the US, turnover is very high in the Brazilian legislature (50/60% per election)

### Elections

- Illiterates given the franchise in 1985, voting age reduced to 16 and voting made compulsory for many in 1988

### Culture and Identity

- What does it mean to say that “Brazil is the country of the future and *always will be*”?
- What does the phrase *para ingles ver* (“for the English to see”) signify?
- How has the role of the Church in Brazil changed over time?

## Farrell, ch. 4 (skip 89-96): The List System of Proportional Representation

- You definitely don’t need to understand everything in this chapter, but read through it to get an idea of the diversity of systems out there. Key takeaway: there is no single list system, and list systems can be mixed with SMP or other systems (in ‘mixed systems’ like that of Germany)
- Electoral formula: ‘largest remainder’ versus ‘highest average’ systems
- District magnitude: two-tier districting and electoral thresholds
- Ballot structure: closed vs. open lists