

Number 58

NOTES ON THE STUDY OF RE-DEMOCRATIZATION

by Bolivar Lamounier
CEBRAP, São Paulo

Author's note: A preliminary draft of this paper was prepared while the author was a Fellow in the Latin American Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560. Please do not quote or reproduce without permission of the author.

This essay is one of a series of Working Papers of the Latin American Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Dr. Michael Grow oversees preparation of Working Paper distribution. The series includes papers by Fellows, Guest Scholars, and interns within the Program and by members of the Program staff and of its Academic Council, as well as work presented at, or resulting from seminars, workshops, colloquia, and conferences held under the Program's auspices. The series aims to extend the Program's discussions to a wider community throughout the Americas, and to help authors obtain timely criticism of work in progress. Support to make distribution possible has been provided by the Inter-American Development Bank.

Single copies of Working Papers may be obtained without charge by writing to:

Latin American Program, Working Papers
The Wilson Center
Smithsonian Institution Building
Washington, D. C. 20560

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars was created by Congress in 1968 as a "living institution expressing the ideals and concerns of Woodrow Wilson . . . symbolizing and strengthening the fruitful relation between the world of learning and the world of public affairs."

The Center's Latin American Program, established in 1977, has two major aims: to support advanced research on Latin America, the Caribbean, and interAmerican affairs by social scientists and humanists, and to help assure that fresh insights on the region are not limited to discussion within the scholarly community but come to the attention of interested persons with a variety of professional perspectives: in governments, international organizations, the media, business, and in the professions. The Program is being supported through 1982 by three-year grants from the Ford, Mellon, Kettering, Rockefeller, and Tinker Foundations, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Xerox Corporation.

LATIN AMERICAN PROGRAM ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Albert O. Hirschman, Chairman, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J.
Fernando Henrique Cardoso, CEBRAP, São Paulo, Brazil
Ricardo Ffrench Davis, CIEPLAN, Santiago, Chile
Leslie Manigat, Universidad Simón Bolívar, Caracas, Venezuela
Guillermo O'Donnell, CEDES, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Olga Pellicer de Brody, El Colegio de México, Mexico
Philippe Schmitter, University of Chicago
Thomas Skidmore, University of Wisconsin
Karen Spalding, University of Delaware

ABSTRACT

Notes on the Study of Re-Democratization

Focusing on the Brazilian case, the author examines some of the hypotheses already advanced to explain the process of liberalization (or re-democratization). Reviewing four criteria of democracy (non-discriminatory rules, electoral uncertainty, a regular electoral calendar, and freedom of the press), he states that a certain degree of re-democratization has indeed occurred in Brazil. He then proceeds to challenge three "economic" interpretations: (a) the attempt to link re-democratization to periods of economic expansion (or recession); (b) the view of re-democratization as a project of a local bourgeoisie fighting against multinational and, especially, State capital; and (c) the notion that re-democratization expresses the need to initiate redistributive policies, after a phase in which accumulation has been emphasized. But he concludes that economic concepts, at a higher level of abstraction, may be useful as a means to clarify the political logic of the re-democratization process.

NOTES ON THE STUDY OF RE-DEMOCRATIZATION

by Bolivar Lamounier
CEBRAP, São Paulo

Although there may be no necessary theoretical connection between the way in which an authoritarian regime is built and then dismantled, the Brazilian case seems to show a very close relationship between these two aspects. It could be said, of course, that this is so only because the Brazilian regime has not really been "dismantled," but only liberalized or slightly modified in its modus operandi. Whichever interpretation turns out to be more correct in the long run, we can still certainly assert that the "opening up" process experienced from 1973 to 1979 is virtually a mirror image of the efforts at consolidation made during the previous decade following the 1964 military coup.

The proposition just stated implies a strong emphasis on the politico-institutional sphere, more or less narrowly construed, as opposed to broader economic or socio-cultural interpretations of the same process. However, attempts to look at the same events through economic categories--usually deemed to be in some sense more "structural"--have been so pervasive that I shall first consider some of them in order to suggest where, in my view, the proper balance lies. This is also made necessary by the fact that between 1964 and 1979 Brazil underwent tremendous economic changes. It would therefore seem ludicrous to suggest that the process of re-democratization now being experienced is nothing but a replay of some politico-institutional problem which was "already there" before the military coup of 1964.

A few caveats seem in order before jumping into the main arguments. First, I am here considering only the "opening" process which took place between 1973 and 1979, an observable fact. The interpretation proposed must therefore stand or fall as an attempt to understand this period only, regardless of whether re-democratization proceeds further, comes to a halt, or is reversed, afterwards. I do not dwell extensively on the origins of the "breakdown of democracy" in 1964, nor much less do I wish to make any prediction.

A second caveat is that the word "re-democratization" is here intended in the more usual sense of return to representative electoral institutions, to greater reliance on the "rule of law," and to freedom of the press. Although I do not disqualify the use of the term democracy to refer to deeper social arrangements or human goals, I should like to make it clear that I prefer the narrower, more conventional usage. It is quite true, however, that even within this frame of reference the degree of re-democratization achieved

in Brazil during the 1973-79 period is subject to controversy. Few, if any, Brazilians and observers of the Brazilian scene would deny that some degree of re-democratization took place. Since I cannot here discuss this problem as lengthily as it deserves, I shall submit only a few points.

An Excursus on the Criteria of Democracy

Among the many possible empirical criteria to tell whether or not a system is a democracy, the following four seem to me rather decisive: (a) political rules must be non-discriminatory, that is, one cannot, in a democracy, have one set of rules applicable to the government party (or parties) and another applicable to the opposition; (b) the electoral process must be capable of creating uncertainty for the incumbent elective office-holders; (c) there must be a pre-established electoral calendar, the intervals and rules of which must be free from government interference and manipulation (This is actually involved in the concept of uncertainty to which the previous item refers, but is important enough to be considered separately); (d) freedom of the press.

I am of course aware of the fact that these statements make use of terms which are not empirically unambiguous. This may be because of potential disagreement as to their meaning--for example, "freedom" of the press--or because they refer to continua without specifying the relevant cutting points--for example, how much government interference is really "interference"? Yet, some consensus does seem to exist among press and academic writers on the following appraisal of conditions in Brazil.

Character of the political rules. Discriminatory intent has been visible on a number of occasions since 1964--ranging from the totally arbitrary cassações, in which specific individuals were selected as targets for political punishment, to more subtle devices, such as establishing requirements for party organization which the opposition party obviously could not meet. In fact, one of the most frequent (and justified) accusations levelled against the government during the Geisel administration was casuismo, that is, the practice of devising arbitrary, short-term, and individualized measures to protect ARENA, the government party.

Yet, as I shall argue in greater detail at a later point, it would be a complete mistake to overlook the fact that the authoritarian regime established in 1964 could not do without some general, non-discriminatory rules, and that this was often the mechanism through which opposition forces gained leverage. Furthermore, since the consequences of a decision (provided it is cast as a general rule) can never be entirely predicted, the government itself was trapped by some of the key rules imposed on the opposition at some earlier point.

Electoral uncertainty. A democracy, I suggested, requires an electoral process, capable of generating enough uncertainty for incumbent elective office-holders. One important aspect of this, of course, is the continued operation of an electoral calendar, but this

will be considered separately under my third criterion. Another exceedingly important aspect is the degree to which the electorate is autonomous with regard to other roles or social conditions. It has often been said, and I partly agree, that not even a classical representative democracy can exist where a very large proportion of the adult population is closely controlled by employers, patrons, and what not. During the 1945-64 democratic "experiment" (to use Skidmore's word), the electoral process did not achieve full legitimacy in Brazil largely because the degree of control over the electorate on the part of rural chieftains and local bosses made it unacceptable to many important urban groups. The fact that a regional cleavage was also present--the northern and northeastern states being heavily controlled by clientelistic politics--certainly made matters much worse.

Although some of these feelings still remain, it seems safe to say that it has become a residual problem. Few groups denied legitimacy to the electoral process after 1974, and those who did seldom invoked the old concern over clientelistic control. Rather, as was the case with some radical student groups, they stressed "the rules created by the dictatorship," and their effect preventing the expression of popular interests--as opposed to any would-be inability of "the people" to know or to articulate its "true" interests. The degree of uncertainty seems therefore to have been deemed satisfactory by the opposition forces, as should be expected from the MDB's important gains from 1974 on.

Autonomy of the electoral calendar. Manipulation of election timing and/or rules is of course one of the most salient aspects of the Brazilian authoritarian experience. From the extinction of the multi-party system and cancellation of the direct presidential elections scheduled for 1965, to the blatantly manipulative pacote de abril (April package) handed down by Geisel in 1977, to the extinction of the two-party system against the wishes of most MDB deputies as late as November of 1979, the examples are perhaps too numerous to bear recollection. In all of these instances, widespread and justified indignation was recorded, and it would certainly be foolish to assume that democratic institutionalization will soon prevent such interference from military or other sources. Even after the formal elimination (on December 31, 1978) of the powers granted to the President by Institutional Act Number 5 of December 13, 1968, the potential for manipulation remained high even within the more relaxed rules. The extinction of the MDB in November 1978 (under the cover of a law designed to extinguish both MDB and ARENA and to clear the ground for a return to a multi-party system) is a case in point. In addition to the stated aim of doing away with the MDB, the law practically ensures, without saying it in so many words, that the municipal elections scheduled for November 1980 will not be held. The latter was accomplished under formally impeccable rules, that is, through a majority of ARENA deputies and senators in the Congress. Of course, this result was possible only because one-third of the senators were biônicos (indirectly elected by the government party, and thus virtually

identical to an appointment; this new rule was established by Geisel's April Package of 1977, contrary to the Brazilian tradition of popularly elected senators); and because the vast majority of ARENA, the governmental party, wanted to disband, provided they could extinguish the MDB opposition through the same act.

Yet, here again it would be a serious mistake to focus exclusively on the fact of, or the potential for, manipulation. One of my central contentions is precisely that the main leaders of the authoritarian regime, since its inception in 1964, have been very sensitive to the need to maintain the electoral calendar, as well as a set of rules within which an electoral opposition should be capable of surviving. Indeed, at least a few of the casuismos (most notably under the Costa e Silva administration) were intended as means to make the MDB opposition viable. And even though many would dismiss this problem as merely a matter of keeping a façade for foreign consumption, it is important to recognize that the incumbents often paid a very high price to make sure that elections were held as scheduled. The most famous instance, of course--if only because it practically doomed the President's ability to control his own succession--was Castelo Branco's insistence, against rather serious advice, on holding direct gubernatorial elections in 11 states on October 3, 1965. The government was (perceived as) defeated in two key states--Guanabara and Minas Gerais--thus triggering a series of military pressures which forced the regime to move much farther in the authoritarian direction, undermining the authority of Castelo Branco and his more moderate associates.

Freedom of the press. This is the fourth in my list of operational requirements for a democracy. As in the preceding items, the point here is that neither the permanence of strong controls nor the record of blatant "deviations" from the democratic norm should allow us to overlook the constraints to which the authoritarian regime was forced to bow on more than one occasion.

Under Geisel, and up to 1979, the record seems quite clear. The larger newspapers and magazines were gradually encouraged to take up independent roles; and, indeed, most of them became rather critical of the government's hesitation (or slowness) to liberalize. As of 1978, they had proceeded far enough to make Brazil's large press at least as free of government control as it had been in the pre-1964 period. However, censorship was still applied, with varying degrees of consistency, to the small papers--the many "alternatives" usually leftist or at least broadly oppositionist ones. As to television and radio, a distinction must be made between their regular programs and their use for electoral campaigns. As to the regular programs, strict controls were maintained throughout. Political debates or news did, of course, broaden their coverage, as compared to the heyday of authoritarian rule between 1968 and 1973. But this was a product of the trial-and-error method employed to explore the range of tolerance of the regime, and varied with the circumstances.

With regard to electoral activity, however, the situation was clear-cut, and can be neatly divided into two sub-periods. The first refers to the election of 1974 only. Through the Etelvino Lins Bill of 1974, which received ostensible support from the executive, the two parties were granted free and equal time on television and radio, within a well-defined timetable, but with no restrictions as to the style or techniques to be employed. This was undoubtedly a step forward in the liberalization strategy espoused by Geisel.

As a result, the 1974 campaign became fairly lively during the last few weeks, despite the almost negligible degree of participation on the part of organized groups, and despite the still prevailing fears and apprehensions surrounding opposition activity. As is well known, 1974 was a resounding defeat for the government party, especially in the larger and more developed states. Many observers underlined the role of television in bringing about that outcome. Judging from the measures adopted for the 1976 municipal elections, there can be no question that the government agreed with them. On the 25th of June, the Lei Falcão, named after Geisel's Minister of Justice, was forced through Congress by the then-tightly-disciplined government party. Its main objective was to restrict television and radio coverage to the municípios in which they were located (thus eliminating them altogether in most municípios); and more importantly, to forbid any sort of "live" message or debate, even in tape form. The parties were allowed only to broadcast the candidates' static pictures (in the case of television) and names, followed by their respective party labels, curricula, and registration number (since voters are permitted to write the candidate's name, number, or both, on the ballots).

Despite the "local election" arguments which provided the rationale for the Lei Falcão, the pacote of April 1977 actually extended its provisions to the state and federal elections scheduled for 1978. It is therefore clear that, in this particular respect, the trend from 1976 to 1978 was not "re-democratization," but rather an attempt to turn the clock back; or forward to an Orwellian future, if we consider that Lei Falcão is the harshest set of measures ever employed to regulate electoral communication in the Brazilian media. It can be safely asserted that Lei Falcão will soon be discarded, if re-democratization continues, since it is clearly in contradiction to the atmosphere of political "opening," not to speak of the degree of "normal" political freedom which the printed press already enjoys.

The Economic Interpretations

Whether one chooses to emphasize economic or political explanations, some versions of each clearly must be discarded from the very beginning. This suggests the need for at least a rough classification of the arguments which began to take shape during the last few years, as the process of re-democratization itself became more credible. In his recent discussion of the search for the economic determinants of authoritarian rule in Latin America, Hirschman puts in a nutshell what is probably the initial consensus in any such effort:

Over a century after Marx, the general proposition that important political change can best be explained by economic factors is neither particularly novel nor wholly convincing. Nevertheless, considerable intellectual excitement is still apt to be generated--and quite legitimately so--when a specific turn of the political tide is shown or alleged to originate in a precise feature of the underlying economic terrain.¹

This observation seems to be valid for economic as well as political arguments, and for the rise as well as the demise of authoritarian rule. Thus, on the side of economic arguments, we should perhaps start by discarding the accepted wisdom that attempts to link political outcomes to the up- (or down-) swing of the economic cycle, if for no other reason, simply because the more usual tendency to link authoritarianism to recession and democracy to economic expansion seems flatly contradicted by the experience of many countries during the last 10 to 15 years. The connection (or coincidence) between economic expansion and political "hardening" in Brazil circa 1968 is too well known to require elaboration. Less known, but equally instructive, is the case of South Korea. As a journalist put it soon after President Park's assassination in October 1979, referring to the constitution he had adopted in 1972:

Mr. Park called the Constitution Yushin, which means revitalizing. The President wanted South Korea to build a modern industrial economy and drafted the Constitution to give himself powers to steer the nation through a second decade of headlong industrial expansion. The South Koreans [following Park's assassination] have not decided when they will part with the Yushin Constitution. . . . [But the question] is not whether they will do so, but how, and when. . . .²

The problem, of course, and this seems particularly true under present international economic conditions, is that the meaning of "expansion" may be extremely ambiguous from the standpoint of power-holders. Depending on conditions specific to each country, it may be regarded as a situation in which tensions decrease, thus making it easier to coexist with an opposition and to satisfy various demands, or as a rare opportunity which must be explored to the full, thus making it necessary to prevent political "annoyance"--a task made easier, needless to say, by the fact that greater abundance makes it easier to "buy out" many possible sources of non-conformity.

Arguing in reverse, we could just as well say that stagnation or recession makes life difficult for any regime, but this still does not tell us whether policy-makers will react by seeking greater support (through re-democratization) or by imposing tougher controls (keeping or even tightening authoritarian structures). Looking at

the Brazilian experience under Geisel, these difficulties with the cycle or trend argument can be shown to be even greater, if we consider that the growth rates, while lower than during the 1968-1973 period, are still relatively high; and, indeed, that one of the problems faced by the government in 1975 was that it felt it necessary to slow down an "overheated" economy, but seems not to have been capable of doing so.

A second interpretation, as simple and as frequent as the preceding one, is what we could call "actor" arguments: i.e., the tendency to look at the re-democratization process as a project of some particular actor, group, class, or sector. This sort of theory evidently requires a few assumptions, among which three will be noted: (a) the actor must be a cohesive entity; (b) it must be shown that democracy better satisfies its interests, or provides for a more congenial environment for its survival; and (c) that it exerts nearly complete control of the political process ex ante, so that it makes sense to think that the re-democratization "agenda" is of its own making.

An obvious candidate--although one hardly compatible with a strict economic interpretation--would of course be the military, or the government itself, if we consider that distensão was an explicit policy of the Geisel administration. In favor of it we could immediately adduce that (a) the Geisel group is generally thought of as the more "liberal" wing of the Army, and (b) the military's concern with their own internal cohesion may have induced them to accept distensão and eventually a return to representative institutions as a means to "extricate" themselves from too much political involvement.

Although this hypothesis deserves more serious consideration than I may have just suggested, it is useful at this point to examine why it has not been emphasized, since this will help us map more clearly the "space" where economic interpretations are currently thriving.

At the simplest level, it seems entirely clear that, no matter how "enlightened" it may have been, Geisel's distensão was also a response to important and continuous opposition faced by the regime from the moment of inception--opposition ranging from mild non-cooperation on the part of some politicians to armed guerrilla struggle. Secondly, the extrication hypothesis turns out to be at best a half-truth, as the events surrounding the dismissal of Minister of Defense Sylvio Frota, as late as October 1977, made abundantly clear. Throughout the succession of maneuvers of which the Minister's dismissal was a chapter, it became crystal clear that Geisel's desire to restrict military involvement in "political" matters was by no means shared by the totality of the senior officers.

In addition, there seems to be no clear connection between the economic roles performed by the military institution (or, more broadly, by the techno-bureaucracy) and the idea of re-democratizing.

They do certainly control major economic resources--most notably the state productive sectors--but it seems difficult to see why open democratic politics would provide them with a congenial milieu.

The foregoing provides a background for the analysis of an opposite (but still "actor-oriented") hypothesis, namely that re-democratization is primarily a project of the bourgeoisie, and that its motivation is exactly the need to redistribute the very impressive amount of economic (and political and military) power presently concentrated in the hands of the techno-bureaucracy.

In the analyses which start from this premise, there is an all-too-obvious tendency to ignore sectorial differences within the bourgeoisie, let alone the immense variety of political utterances coming from entrepreneurs, and to think of that class' political cohesion as something that must exist by definition. In addition, there is a regrettable tendency to wrap up the requirements of demonstrating cohesion and nearly complete control over the political agenda into one, and then to dismiss both, through the concept of ideological hegemony. A mild version of this view can be found in Peter Evans's Dependent Development³ and more radical versions in recent analyses by Bresser Pereira⁴ and Figueiredo.⁵ Evans, for example, writes:

The potential is there for the state to use its position in infrastructure or basic products to squeeze either the multinationals or local capital. . . . [But] the peculiar political strength of the local bourgeoisie is striking. Private enterprise continues to hold sway ideologically despite both its objective limitations and the immense objective power of the state enterprise. . . . [Thus] it is not surprising that the antistatist campaign has become linked to pressure for democratization and a return to civilian rule.⁶

Two features of this view seem to me particularly striking. One is the suggestion that the bourgeoisie's political actions are motivated by a remarkable combination of foresight and false consciousness. Foresight, inasmuch as it is actually conducting a broad preventive action against a potential long-range threat on the part of the techno-bureaucracy. And false consciousness because, as Evans himself demonstrates, the expansion of the state enterprises has invariably benefitted local capital and, indeed, made it possible for a number of local enterprises to survive. This surprising combination would seem natural, of course, without the assumption of cohesion and homogeneity, but is hardly credible if held together with it.

Secondly, there is a remarkable tendency to accept as a fact the assertion that the anti-statist campaign "has become linked to pressure for redemocratization and a return to civilian rule." This statement has been frequently made by foreign as well as

Brazilian writers. Yet, the most salient relationship between the anti-statism and re-democratization movements would seem to be that anti-statist entrepreneurs were often against re-democratization, and vice versa: the "re-democratizing" ones were often in favor of the status quo or even of greater state control of the economy. At the very least, we would need a fourfold table, in order to subdivide both statist and anti-statists according to their re-democratizing or non-re-democratizing preferences. Logical exercises aside, and pending more careful research into it, I would prefer to pose the issue as I did in an earlier work:

[It] seems quite clear that the political manifestations of the entrepreneurs (empresarios) in the last few years have been notably cautious and limited, suggesting not so much an immediate impossibility of accommodating the interests of their various sectors, but rather: (a) the use of an opening process already under way to try to redress a prior loss of access to decision-making centers, and (b) some sort of preventive, anticipatory repositioning, in order not to be later branded as "enemies of" the opening up process--an outcome which could be at least as damaging to them as their limited challenges to the present order of things.⁷

If the empirical linkage between anti-statism and re-democratization seems arguable, the logical underpinnings of the more radical "actor" analysis focusing on a would-be "bourgeois project" seem even more so. In the case of Bresser Pereira, for example, there is a visible tendency to stretch the descriptive concept of the bourgeoisie in all directions, thus making it necessarily true that virtually any pressure for re-democratization will be a bourgeois action. More important, however, is that he does make an attempt to specify an intermediate link which corresponds to my second requirement, i.e., why it is that democracy better satisfies the interests of the bourgeoisie, or provides a more congenial environment for its survival. In addition to the "hegemony" argument (which he stresses even more radically: being the hegemonic class, the bourgeoisie has no reason to fear democracy), he also presents an argument based on the policy-making setting which best fits the bourgeoisie. The problem, he says, is that unlike other previously dominant classes, the bourgeoisie is "a very numerous class."⁸ It follows, or so Bresser thinks, that the bourgeoisie is inherently democratic, on one hand because capital accumulation does not require more coercion than that already imbedded in market and representative institutions; and on the other, because such a numerous class needs impersonal, formal mechanisms to adjust the interests of its various factions and/or individual members. Now that the Brazilian economy has become "fully capitalist," he contends, the bourgeoisie has also become "fully hegemonic," and thus authoritarian rule does not correspond to its rational interest.

Leaving aside the numerous problems of historical interpretation that these statements raise, I will confine my critique to two

other pillars of Bresser's model of the Brazilian process, roughly from 1973 to 1978. One refers to the "backward linkages" of the model, i.e., why it is that the bourgeois-military alliance collapsed in the first place--thus triggering the distensão process. Bresser contends that the roots of this process are to be sought in the slowing down (desaceleração) of economic growth which made the struggle for a share of the surplus virtually unmanageable. His argument, however, is not cast in general terms--as in the models which simply refer to the downward swing of the economic cycle. He immediately adds that there are specific reasons why desaceleração opens the stage for political crisis in "dependent" countries (which he labels "industrialized underdeveloped countries"). The main reason is that there is actually no market, no possibility of making allocations through impersonal mechanisms. Due to the high degree of oligopolization, decisions necessarily become individualized; they penalize or benefit very visible actors. The problem of legitimacy thus becomes very serious, and virtually insoluble, since it has to do very directly with the military's authority to set priority and other criteria for the economy.

Clearly, this argument has some merits. Note, however, that it directly contradicts the argument that the bourgeoisie needs representative institutions (i.e., a political "market") because it is "very numerous." Somehow the market was not there circa 1973, when Bresser tries to account for the collapse of the alliance, but made its appearance later, when it became necessary to account for the (imputed) fact that the bourgeoisie specifically wanted to return to civilian rule and representative institutions.

The "forward linkages"--i.e., the relationship between the earlier, actor-oriented model of re-democratization as a bourgeois project and the later views of the process in its more advanced stages--do not seem to be much more consistent. As with many other writers who adhere to a similar interpretation, Bresser noticed that "civil society" was quite massively aligned against the status quo by 1977--especially after Geisel's April Package. He then emphasizes that the crisis had become "autonomously political."⁹ In a similar vein, Figueiredo refers to the amnesty law as a "point of no return" and says that the abertura, although limited, might "embrenhar-se por imprevistos caminhos."¹⁰

The notion that political processes undergo qualitative changes and reach points of no return is, of course, as common as it is acceptable. In the context of a thoroughly economicistic analysis, it does however sound very much like the 13th beat of the clock, which casts doubt on the other twelve. Somehow it suggests that there was no "politics" in the previous stages--presumably because the system as a whole was highly integrated and well directed toward fulfilling its "tasks." But here we reach the threshold of an altogether different model, no longer reducible to the more usual "actor-oriented" analyses.

Discussions of O'Donnell's thesis, according to which bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes emerged in the 1960s largely as a response to the need to deepen the process of industrialization, have raised doubts about what seems to be a functional argument, i.e., the notion that such regimes emerge because there is a "task" to be accomplished. Insofar as the Brazilian case is concerned, both Serra and Hirschman have pointed out the inadequacy of the thesis on empirical grounds.¹¹ The model could also be challenged, of course, on logical grounds, or more precisely, on the question of whether or not it is legitimate to ascribe any "functions" to political regimes. However, the line to be pursued here will be a different one. I will initially note that economists seem generally more willing to make such statements, even if not always using the term "function," or even if disagreeing as to which functions may be attributed in each case. Hirschman himself, in the article just cited, makes frequent use of the notions of constraints, or ranges of tolerance imposed on political systems by the economy; and actually rephrases O'Donnell's thesis through a series of arguments, one of which refers to the weakness of political and ideological support for the "accumulation function" in Latin America. The important question, however, seems to be: will a regime undergo re-democratization after the function which produced authoritarianism has been accomplished, and because it has been accomplished? Or, to put it differently: is it acceptable to say that the regime became--in some objective sense--"dispensable"? Or, even more strongly, could we say that an authoritarian system will give way to re-democratization because it becomes objectively necessary to accentuate other--let us say, redistributive, or reform--"functions"?

By simply asking these questions we seem to feel that there is something illegitimate about them. The fact is that the "need" for the redistributive function is likely to appear either (a) as a perception, on the part of some actors, that the regime became "dispensable"--we are here reminded of Roberto Campos (Brazilian Minister of Planning of the first post-1964 government) saying in 1972 that an authoritarian system, after making the economy grow, cannot perform the equally important function of redistributing wealth; or (b) in the form of political demands, and here what we need is a theory about their origin and impact.

What is most striking, however, about the functional argument as phrased by Roberto Campos is that it attempts to provide a positive rationale for the opening of a political system after a period of economic expansion. While the most common view is that the slowing down of the growth rate, if combined with political opening, will result in a "hyper-inflation" of political demands, here we have an attempt to emphasize the positive economic function of the process, not to speak, of course, of the frequent need on the part of the rulers to expand their bases of support.

The point here, it seems to me, is that we seem to have two different conceptions about the relationship between stagnation, or recession, and political demands. On the one hand, there is the notion that economic stagnation, or slowing down, necessarily

implies an erosion of the incumbents' authority and power resources. Since (by definition) they will have less economic surplus to meet demands, and since the latter will at best remain constant, and more likely will increase sharply, the ratio between the two is expected to change in a way that can only erode the incumbent regime's power bases. The consequence will be either (a) a return to authoritarian rule, with increased reliance on direct coercion, or (b) a rapid process of change which may result in democracy, or, just as likely, in chaos and again in authoritarianism.

Even though these hypotheses are persuasive as depictions of alternative scenarios, I would point out that they are by no means the only possible "logical" deductions, and that other scenarios remain perfectly possible.

The flaw clearly lies in the assumption that an increase in demands necessarily results in a decline in the government's ability to gain support. Quite on the contrary, it may be argued that this will produce an "inflationary" situation such that the price of the goods that the government itself is capable of providing will increase. One likely result of this is that the real income--i.e., political support, and thus authority--of the government will increase rather than be reduced. Without such a hypothesis we could never understand why governments fear their own immobilisme, and often do actively seek to gain support through policies which encourage new demands and imply realignments in their social bases.

This notion also helps to make better sense out of Bresser's hypothesis that desaceleração is likely to force the government to seek broader support. A reduced rate of growth does indeed change the ratio of goods to demands, and thus pressures the government (any government) into making more consequential decisions. But whether or not the government will be capable of seeking a re-alignment, and what the outcome of the attempt will be, are hardly questions for which the economic arguments thus far examined have answers. The motivation and/or ability to initiate changes have to do with political perceptions and ideologies, with policy-making processes, with institutional structures, and so forth. The outcomes may be failure and a return to harsher authoritarian rule, democratization, pretorianization, or any combination thereof.

The reasons for preferring these assumptions are simple and two-fold. First, contrary to what is sometimes implied by the "functional" approaches, there is no such thing as an "unpolitical" authoritarian stage later followed by an "autonomously political" process of re-democratization. As the Brazilian experience abundantly shows, political choices had to be made throughout the period since 1964, each with its particular combination of costs and benefits. And secondly, contrary to what the actor-oriented

analyses would have us believe, once at least a modicum of change begins to take place, no actor whatsoever really meets in unambiguous terms the three criteria of cohesion, unequivocal interest in re-democratizing (or maintaining the status quo), and nearly complete control. As a matter of fact, the image of an "autonomously political" process is literarily attractive precisely because it points to the fact that the process of re-democratization results from the interplay of many actors, each of which exerts only a share of control over the process as a whole.

REFERENCES

¹Albert O. Hirschman, "The Turn to Authoritarianism in Latin America and the Search for Its Economic Determinants," in David Collier (ed.), The New Authoritarianism in Latin America (Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 68.

²Henry Scott Stokes, "Korea's Generals said to agree to scrap Constitution," The New York Times, November 2, 1979.

³Peter Evans, Dependent Development (Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 262-268.

⁴Luís Carlos Bresser Pereira, O Colapso de uma Aliança de Classes (Brasiliense, 1978).

⁵Euríco de Lima Figueiredo, "Abertura Política: Processo de Conservar o Ontem," Jornal do Brasil, September 30, 1979.

⁶Evans, op. cit., pp. 266-269.

⁷Bolívar Lamounier, "O Discurso e o Processo," in Henrique Rattner, Brasil 1990 (Brasiliense, 1979), pp. 90-91.

⁸Bresser Pereira, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

⁹Ibid., pp. 135-137.

¹⁰Figueiredo, op. cit.

¹¹See Collier (ed.), The New Authoritarianism in Latin America.