Summary

Presidentialization and partidarization are viewed as mutually exclusive events. Brazil is seen as an extreme case of presidentialized system. Brazilian presidents concentrate a huge amount of institutional power on their hands. They use this power to keep congress members disciplined. Political crisis are supposed to happens only when a President lacks the ability to use these institutional powers. Recent Brazilian political crises forced the analysts to reopen the debate about the working of presidential regimes. There are several analysis of Collor de Melo´s impeachment, but most of them are case studies and were written right after his impeachment under the spell of Linz critic of presidential regime. There are few attempts to square the case with the less pessimist view of the presidential regime that emerged after at the end of the 20th Century. A closer look into Brazilian political crisis reveals the centrality of parties and party leadership. Presidentialization and partidarization can walk side by side.

Introduction

According to the propositions advanced by Poguntke and Webb (2005) political regimes may be placed in a continuum extending from parliamentarized to presidentialized, from partified to personalized regimes. This characterization echoes Juan Linz warnings against presidential regimes. Linz, as it is well known, defined presidential politics as a zero-sum game and for this reason, as a regime prone to conflict and instability. Parliamentary regimes, on the other hand, would enhance cooperation and strength the party role.
Poguntke and Webb (2005) concept applies for both presidential and parliamentary regimes and their analysis concentrates on the latter. Recently, they argue, parliamentary regimes have assumed a presidentalist face as the chief executive concentrated power resources, gained greater autonomy and the electoral process became more personalized. All these characteristics, one should note, are stressed by Juan Linz’s view of presidential regimes.

The Linziana view of presidentialism has been criticized by the extant literature. The debate regarding the Brazilian case occupied a central position in this revision. It is fair to say that nowadays the standard comparative politics view of the subject tends to approximate presidential and parliamentary regimes. Post Linz scholarly work has shown that not all presidential regimes are alike. Presidentialism is not a conflict prone and it is not more unstable than parliamentary regimes.

Yet, following the suggestion of Poguntke and Webb, it may be the case that presidentialization and not presidentialism is the problem. That is to say, presidential regimes are problematical if and only if they exacerbate the personalistic features associated with presidential regimes.

With this regard, the Brazilian case comes to mind. Analysis of the Brazilian case tend to divide the recent democratic experience in two parts: the Collor and the post Collor period. The passage from the instability to stabity, from Color to Fernando Henrique and Lula may be interpreted as the passage from a more presidentialized to a more parliamentarized form of presidentialism. No analysis of Collor de Melo impeachment fails to point out the personalization of politics during his period of government. Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Lula, on the other hand, are praised for their personal qualities, for having grasped the limits of their personal power. Whereas Collor
governed through decrees, attempting to circumvent the Legislature, Fernando Henrique and Lula governed with the support of coalition. The contrast thus, is one between, imperial presidentialism versus coalitional presidentialism. Presidential style or strategy dictates the degree of presidentialization.

The analysis of the Collor period and his fate has gone through two phases. Initially, right after it occurred, analysis tended to associate his impeachment with Linz analysis. Collor as prove of the perils of presidentialism. Minoritarian presidents, that is, presidents whose party did not control the majority of the seats in Congress, would have a difficult time to govern. He would be tempted to bypass Congress, appealing to the electorate. Executive-Legislative conflict would be inevitable and a coup or the impeachment would be the likely solution for this conflict. As the time passed, as the Fernando Henrique government proved that minoritarian presidents had other and more simple options to govern, namely, to form a coalition. The crises and its outcome was treated as an anomaly. For most analysts, the type of leadership, if more confrontational or accommodative, explained the differences between the two periods.

As PT succeed PSDB and as presidential elections and alternation in power became routine, the Collor period was relegated to complete oblivion. Coalitional presidentialism became the norm; political instability and the personalization of politics the exception. The debate over the form of government and the differences between parliamentarism and presidentialism vanished. Presidents govern the way Prime Ministers do. They distribute portfolios, form a government, and count with their coalition within the Legislature.

The recent political crises forced the reopening of the debate. As President Dilma Roussef faces an impeachment process, one cannot keep treating the Collor case as
anomaly, as a singular case. Brazil elected four different presidents since redemocratization and two of them were impeached. Why? Is Dilma like Collor? What are the conditions leading to impeachment? Do the idea that presidential regimes may move in the presidentialized-parliamentarized continuum helps to explain the fate of Collor and Dilma? Is presidentialization and not presidentialism the problem?

This is an exploratory paper. As we said, the recent Brazilian political crises forced the analysts to reopen the debate about the working of presidential regimes. There are several analysis of Collor de Melo’s fate, but most of them are case studies and were written right after his impeachment under the spell of Linz critic of presidential regime. There are few attempts to square the case with the less pessimist view of the presidential regime that emerged after at the end of the 20th Century. The paper is organized as follow: the next section discusses the combination of presidentialization – parlamentarization with the personalization – partidarization dimension. Brazilian politics is generaly described as an extreme case of presidentialization and personalization. In the third section we show how the concept of personalization, or “personal capital”, is used to explain political crisis and government breakdowns as the ones that lead to the impeachment processes of Collor and Dilma. In the fourth section we show the limitations of these arguments. We defend that parties still have a central role even in a extremely concentrated political systems. Presidentialization and partidarization don’t need to be mutual exclusive terms.

II. Collor and the Perils of Presidentialization
As Gianluca Passarelli (2015 3) notes: “Since the 1979-1980, ‘advanced’ democracies have experienced an undoubted increase in the level of centralization of political power –lato sensu—in the Executive hands.” As the author complements, political leaders, mainly the chief executives, became “more proeminent”. Previously, Poguntke and Webb (2005) have noted that presidentialization of politics had three main consequences: a) the concentration of power resources in the hands of the chief executive; b) leadership autonomy and c) the personalization of the electoral process. The personalization of politics meant not only a smaller role for parties, it meant also a greater influence of mass media. Parties play a small and decreasing role in the electoral process. The leader faces the electorate via the mass media.

The more presidentialized the regime, the closer it gets to the Linz view of presidential regimes. Given the popular sources of their mandate, presidents are reluctant to accept any attempt to curtail his power. In fact, the political conflict and the electoral process tend to converge and revolve around the presidency. The office of the presidency is the big prize, one that is gained via popular and direct election. Once a political leader gets this prize, he or she will not have incentives to divide it with the opposition. He or she may always convokes or appeals to his electors. Presidential regimes have a Plebiscitarian or Cesarist feature. Moreover, given the role mass media plays nowadays in the electoral arena, the leader personal characteristics become key to distinguish winner from losers. A candidate without charismatic appeal seems to be condemned to defeat.

The risks underlying the presidentialization of parliamentary advanced democracies are the ones stressed by Linz. As the electoral competition revolves around the choice of likely Prime Ministers, as voters assume the role previously reserved to the parliament, politics becomes more personalized, more presidentialized. As the politics becomes
more presidentialized, the more important the leader appeal to the people. On the other hand, as parties and traditional political structures loses its importance, the less stable is the political regime, the more it depends on the popularity of the leader.

Fernando Collor de Melo, the first popularly elected president of Brazil after the end of the authoritarian regime, is the prototype product of presidential politics. His meteoric ascension and fall seems to confirm the risks inherent to the presidentialization of politics.

Collor de Melo was elected president of Brazil in 1989 in the first popular presidential election after the return to democracy. Completely unknown to the electorate, Collor emerged as the polls front runner after a series of national TV appearances in May 1985. In these broadcasts, Collor crafted an image of a resolute and independent leader, an outsider whose main mission was to crash traditional politics. He claimed to have no links with parties as a proof that had broken with the usual way of making politics in Brazil. He joined a small and recently founded party with few members in Congress. In fact, he campaigned as anti-party leader, that is to say, he made no efforts to get the support or the backing of the major parties.

After being elected, Collor would have maintained the same basic strategy. The president reckoned on his personal power to combat inflation and promote state reform. The presidential and congressional elections did not occur in the same year. Thus, the PRN, Collor’s party, remained a small party after his election. Thus, in order to govern, the president had two options: to form a coalition to obtain the necessary support in Congress or to try impose his will over a recalcitrant legislature. He could opt for the second alternative relying on the power to edit decrees and appealing directly the
people. The standard view of his government is that he would have followed this second alternative.

The traditional view about the Collor presidency and its final outcome assembles all characteristics associated with the perils of the presidentialization of politics. The direct appeal to the people using the mass media, the concentration of power resources in the hands of the chief executive, the list may go on. All these features tend to figure in the available explanations of his impeachment. Collor would be the example of the exacerbation of presidentization and the perils it involves.

Most analysis of Collor’s impeachment stresses his isolation, his lack of party support or from any other organized interest. In an early assessment of Collor’s ascension to power, Ben Ross Schneider (1991 324) observes that

In the presidential race, Collor began as a media curiosity- a young, good-looking governor who had fired highly paid bureaucrats with dubious functions. Collor managed to turn his brief record as governor into an anti-state, anti-party, anti-Sarney, anti-tudo que está aí (the whole existing political system) campaign. Like Jimmy Carter, he ascended from nowhere, making clever use of modern campaign methods, especially television and opinion polling. His ratings went from 5 percent of voters´ preferences in early February 1989 to 32 percent in early May. His popularity doubled in the early months of 1989 after a single television appearance”

Thomas Skidmore (cited by Liñan 2007 149), stresses the same points, noting that Collor
“used to making few concessions in dealing with other politicians. He seemed the modern incarnation of the infamous ‘colonel’ of northeastern politics, accustomed to giving orders rather than negotiating.”

Kurt Weyland (1993 8) analyzes of Collor impeachment start by noting Color’s lack of any meaningful party support:

“The Partido de Reconstrução Nacional (PRN), served merely as an electoral vehicle and involved little political weight, organizational strength, or commitment to a defined program “. In fact, it seems doubtful that PRN deserved to be treated as party at all, one learns that party was formed “assembling a disparate group of politicians from varying backgrounds, who jumped on the Collor bandwagon as it gained momentum, the PRN lacked internal focus or cohesion. In late 1989, it held only about 4% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies.”

Collor ended up a prisoner of his own strategy. He run as a “dark-horse”, as an anti-establishment, and as an anti-party candidate. He kept playing the same role after his successful bid to the presidency, insulating him from any political force. Thai is to say, Collor failed to realize that he could not govern without the support of traditional parties. He insisted in governing alone, issuing decrees and trying to obtain congressional votes in ad hoc way. As Pereira, Power and Raile (2008 9) note

“The Collor government has been the only administration since re-democratization in which a president governed without a stable, multiparty, majority governing coalition supporting him within Congress. Collor preferred
instead to build ad hoc coalitions, relying mostly on his high popularity and a
strategy of “going public” to achieve majority support.”

This view, that Collor opted to govern without the support of a coalition pervades the
literature. At this moment, we want to stress the link between these widely held views of
his government and the views about his campaign. The anti-party candidate became the
anti-party president. He won the presidency alone. He would govern alone. The
candidate said he would not compromise with the traditional way to do politics. The
president would have kept his promise. Analysts took Collor political discourse at face
value.

The impeachment follows from his minoritarian status and from his confrontational
strategy. The president tried to govern alone. Congress showed his limits.

Weyland (1993 3) takes this line of argument to its extreme form:

“Greek mythology would discern a close link between Collor's rapid rise and
dramatic fall from grace. In this perception, Collor's enormous political success
in 1989, which even he had not expected, engendered such delusions of grandeur
and high-handed behavior that the gods intervened to punish his display of
hubris. This article follows the mythological interpretation to the extent of
claiming that, in many ways, Collor's fall was intimately connected to his
dramatic rise in 1989. “

At this point, we want to stress some shortcomings of this type of analyses. The fate of
Collor appears as predetermined, a necessary consequence from his isolation and
confrontational strategy. An extreme case of personalization or presidentialization of
politics defined in the electoral arena. In doing so, works that emphasize Collor style
end up deriving his impeachment from his campaign. There are few references to his
more than two years of government. At this point, we just want to point that basic data on his government fails to confirm the image projected from his personalistic and authoritarian character. Contrary to the legend, Collor did govern with the support of a coalition. PFL, PDS and a plethora of small parties provide the government with the necessary votes during most of his government.

The Collor government was not a fleeting government as the reading of these analyses would make us suppose it was. Collor governed for more than two years and approved a series of reforms. He was not a lame-duck from the start. In order to be impeached, Collor had to lose the support from the right wing parties that held portfolios during his entire government. These parties, at some point, decided to abandon the president. More than moving toward the opposition, they decided it was time to Collor to go. This was not a minor decision. Impeachment asks for more than a confrontation.

III. Coalitional government and presidentialization.

A period of stability followed Color’s impeachment. Fernando Henrique Cardoso was elected in 1994 and reelected in 1998. He completed his two terms. And so did Luís Inácio Lula da Silva after him. Lula was elected in 2002 and reelected in 2006. For Brazilian standards, these were impressive marks. Stability, it seemed, came to stay. The pessimism of earlier analyses was replaced by a more optimistic view. Presidentialism worked. Presidents could form coalitions and govern with its support. Collor and his impeachment were left behind, an anomalous event.
Obviously, that does not mean that the country was free from political crises. Crises do happen. In a sense they are the bread and butter of politics. And crises come in different stripes. Some are more profound than others. The Executive-Legislative relations were never easy. The specter of conflict and paralysis never disappeared. In order to govern, to gain the votes needed to approve his agenda, presidents had to have special skills. Coalitional presidentialism was not a matter to be left to amateurs. Sola and Kugelmas argued that stabilization, in the political and economic spheres, could not be reached without high doses of statecraft. Whereas Collor showed to have none, Fernando Henrique Cardoso had in excess. As Mainwaring (1997: 107) asserts “Cardoso was a better leader than his predecessors. He was articulate, had a clear vision of where he wanted to go and chose capable ministers”

More sober accounts point out for some learning process or the mere and simple recognition of the limits of presidential power. For instance, Pereira, Power and Raile (2008 10) asserted that contrary to Collor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso

“learned quickly that governing without a sustainable coalition in Congress would be too risky even with an impressive range of presidential powers and resources for trade with legislators. He initially included only four parties in his governing coalition (PSDB, PFL, PTB, and PMDB). However, in order to accelerate approval of his many proposed constitutional reforms (which necessitated supermajorities in both houses of Congress), Cardoso recruited two additional parties (PPB and PPS) into his government, bringing the coalition size up to 381 seats, or almost 75% of the Chamber of Deputies.”

The argument, as the author note, “emphasizes both institutional constraints and the relative autonomy of presidential leadership.” (pag 1) From Fernando Collor de Melo to
Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the Brazilian political system passed from the dark to the bright side of the presidentilization of politics. The presidential leadership and strategies were central in both cases. The first Fernando thought or was led to thought that he could govern without Congress appealing to his voters. Linz fears materialized. With the second Fernando, things changed radically. Cardoso knew or learned that he had to share the benefits derived from the presidency with his partisan allies.

In both cases, personalization and presidentialization of politics, in the sense defined by Gianlucca Passareli (2015:7) interacted and produced different outcomes. As this author notes, the former implies mainly considering a sort of personal “capital” in terms of skills, characteristics, attitudes, for example, while the latter considers primarily institutional resources, constraints, and opportunities.

If skills and attitudes are crucial, under less benign situation things could turn around again. Not all leaders have the same skills or face the same partisan constrains.

Fernando Henrique could exercise his statesmanship with greater autonomy from his party. Luís Inácio Lula da Silva faced an entirely different situation.

According to Pereira, Power and Raile (2008 13):

“Upon taking office, Lula immediately expanded the number of cabinet-level posts from 21 to 35. Ostensibly, the purpose of expanding the cabinet upon taking office was to include several new ministries with responsibilities for different dimensions of social policies, but the bulk of the new positions went to loyalists of the president’s own Workers’ Party. The PT was awarded no fewer than 20 portfolios. (...)n the first year of government, cabinet expansion and over-rewarding of PT members were necessary for Lula to satisfy the internal factions within the party.”
The fractured nature of PT, its internal division in factions, made “coalition management” a difficult task. Lula, contrary to Fernando Henrique Cardoso before him, could not be as generous with allies. The parties that joined the presidential coalition were not paid their just price. Internal conflict was unavoidable and this explains the eruption of the corruption scandal known as Mensalão.

The Mensalão Crises was not a minor affair. The crisis was sparked by the accusations made by Lower House Representative and National President of PTB, Roberto Jefferson. Jefferson, after being accused of receiving kickbacks in the Postal Service, revealed that side payments by Lula aides were made regularly to obtain votes in Congress. An investigation committee was formed uncovering the use of illegal funds to finance PT activities. Several PT leaders were implicated and punished. Investigations came close to the presidency and the opposition seriously considered the possibility of opening the impeachment procedure against president Lula.

According to Nunes and Melo

“The presidentialization of PT was attained; not by means of distancing Lula from the party, but through a long process where the dominant and most cohesive coalition not only controlled the most amount of resources, but also had more autonomy. Perhaps the strongest evidence of this process can be found in the episode that created the biggest crises ever faced by the party: the “mensalão”. When the scandal exploded, a completely stupefied party discovered the extent to which the autonomy of its majority group had reached, and particularly, its most restrictive nucleus.”

The Mensalão came close to proof fatal for PT and Lula. The government were led to paralysis and few analysts imagined that party could keep control of the presidency. But
the fact is that PT and Lula proved to be able to steer the president out of the crises, to promote a coalition reshuffle and to march to win the presidency in 2006.

Lula second mandate was a period of euphoria. The country seemed to have finally confront some of its deepest and more resilient problems. Among the government achievements, reduction of poverty and of the income inequality loomed large. After a long period of economic stagnation, the country GDP grew consistently for years, escaping the dire consequences of the 2008 international crises. The Lula government became to be seen as the aurora of a new era.

Since Lula reelection, analyst warned that Lula was detaching himself from PT. A process of personalization and the consequent *departification* of the presidency was identified. Lula became more autonomous and could exercise his leadership with greater latitude. Even Nunes and Melo, critical of this view, were forced to assert that “it is true that after 2002 there were differences between Lula’s electorate and those of PT, as other studies have pointed out.”

The “*Lulismo*” replaced the “*Petismo*” (Samuels, 2008; Singer, 2009; Rennó and Cabello, 2010). We will not go any further on this debate. All we want is to stress the relationship between this debate and the presidentializatin of politics. That is to say, one may cast this debate on the terms set by the presidentialization literature. Following Gianluca Passareli, Lula’s second term witnessed a process the author names as “the presidentialization of parties”, described by the author as the situation in which they have given greater autonomy to their leader, with great independence on crucial political topics (e.g. electoral campaign, ministerial appointments, public policies): in that situation s/he (the leader) is unaccountable to the party. (2015:8)
The role of the leader, the elected chief of executive, is aggrandized, whereas the role of activists and members is reduced. As the author notes, this reversal of influence is complete in the candidate selection process. Lula, as it is well documented, had complete control over his succession. The picking of Dilma Roussef as the party candidate in the 2010 election was an entirely and personal Lula decision. A decision made before any party member had made any movement. Lula made Dilma candidacy public and tied the party hands. No one dared to contest his decision.

Running for the presidency was Dilma Roussef first electoral experience. She had not faced the electorate before. Without experience, she was also a complete unknown. Her image had to be made via the association with her godfather. Besides, in order to avoid risks, Lula engineered a series of agreements and parties alliances in order to simplify the political field. The main objective was to reduce and simplify the electoral contest. To make it a government versus opposition battle, a competition between the continuity and the rupture with Lula administration. There could be no doubt about who was the government candidate. That is to say, no splinter candidate coming from within the coalition could bid the presidency. More specifically, Ciro Gomes, the PSB popular leader could not run.

Dilma´s election was praised as Lula´s victory. She was seen as his creature and an unequivocal prove of his political ability. If Lula could elect Dilma, that showed that he could elected whoever he wanted, even a streetlight as the Brazilian political folklore would put it.

Dilma inherited from Lula a heterogeneous coalition. Hence, its working could not be taken as granted. The coalition had to be administered and oiled. Conflicts happen all
the time. Coalitional presidentialism asks an experimented and crafted leader, one that is able to divide the benefits of power with allies. In the words of Pereira, Power and Raile “much like an architect who is forced to build a house on shaky foundations, the president faces difficult choices in cementing his coalition, and bad initial decisions will later compromise the structural soundness of the edifice” (2010:13).

According to Pereira’s argument Dilma did make bad initial decisions. A well oiled coalition is one that share portfolios proportionally to the share of seats of each coalition partner. Dilma, as Lula before her, gave PT more cabinet posts (46%) than the party share of seats within the coalition (27%) and gave to PMDB only 16% of portfolios less then its 24% share of seats. All other coalition partners also received less cabinet positions then their share of seats within the coalition. This dis-proportionality made the coalition more difficult to manage. In his words:

Coalitions that are larger, with greater ideological heterogeneity, or with a higher concentration of power in one of its members are more difficult to manage. The less proportional the cabinet, the less satisfied the coalition partners in the legislature, and the higher the cost of “purchasing” their loyalty. A cabinet constituted disproportionately of an executive’s own partisans may also create external animosity, but the larger effect would be to disrupt relationships within the governing coalition. Such situations imply a higher cost of governing, more coordination problems, and a greater necessity of side payments to discipline the coalition. Ignoring such expectations can undermine support from within the governing coalition. (Pereira, 2010)
According to Raile, Pereira and Power (2010) the skills necessary to run a coalition are linked to the efficient use of the “presidential toolbox”: pork and coalition goods. These tools interact and this interaction explain the variation in presidential success. In the words of the authors:

In the case of Brazil, legislators derive substantial positive utility from both pork and coalition goods. Consequently, the two become imperfect substitutes in the political marketplace. Executives consider this substitutability when devising legislative strategies. Empirically, we should observe coalition goods being offered as a substitute for pork and vice versa. However, given the sunk-cost nature of coalition goods, we expect that pork drives the month-to-month marginal variance in legislative support. (Raile, Pereira and Power, 2010:3)

Since the distribution of coalition goods like cabinet seats precedes the distribution of pork, presidential success is obtained by administering the latter. Ability is linked to the efficient use of pork. Lula was able to overcome the problems surrounding his presidency, despite his dis-proportional coalition, because he made efficient use of pork. It was the inability in handling pork that lead Dilma to low levels of legislative support and, ultimately, to the impeachment process.

Differences in “personal capital” cause variation in presidential success. To measure presidential success we use the legislative success of the executive - the proportion of bills presented by the executive branch that became law. Table 1 shows legislative success of each presidential coalition form Collor to the first term of Dilma. Dilma and
Collor have the lowest success scores. Cardoso and Lula have the highest ones. It is in accordance with the “personalization” thesis.

### Table 1

**Legislative Success (Collor to Rousseff)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President</th>
<th>Success (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collor</td>
<td>65,93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franco</td>
<td>76,14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardoso I</td>
<td>78,72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardoso II</td>
<td>74,38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lula I</td>
<td>81,47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lula II</td>
<td>69,75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilma</td>
<td>63,15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Font: Banco de Dados Legislativos do CEBRAP

As the explanation goes, Collor failed because he despised parties and decided to govern without them. Cardoso, on the contrary, gave the proper attention to the formation of a proportional coalition and was able to build it. Lula decided to give more attention to his own party and formed a dis-proportional coalition but he was very skillful in the use pork. Dilma failed for opposite reasons. But if we take a close look to data we can see that this argument has some problems. First of all, if it is true that Collor and Dilma success rates are lower relative to Cardoso’s and Lula’s, their success were not lower in absolute terms. Almost two thirds of their projects were approved. Second, the argument was presented *post facto*. Dilma’s first term legislative success is very close to Lula’s second term legislative success. Hence, Dilma’s lack of *virtú* manifested itself only in her second term. Why?
There is more to legislative success than “personal capital”. If it helps to explain some variation among presidential success it doesn’t explain why political crisis develop into government breakdowns.

IV – Divided parties

If it was not the lack of ability the cause of the dismiss of Dilma and Collor what was it? To answer that we have to rethink the way coalitions are managed in Brazil. Data show that deputies consistently follow party leaders. On average, 92% of the parliamentary vote in favor of the Government when the coalition is “united” (when all the leaders of the coalition parties share a position in line with that of the Government leader). This support does not present significant variations between the different presidents. When the coalition is “divided” (when at least one party leader that belongs to the coalition announces does not follow the government), parliamentary votes in favor of the Government fall to 67%. This suggests that the support the Government receives from the members of the coalition parties is not unconditional. When party leaders stand against the Government, the parliamentarians tend to follow their parties. This leads to the conclusion that governmental support is party-based. In other words, the Government negotiates its support with the parties and not individually.

Government’s defeat does not result from the lack of discipline in its bases. Losses tend to occur when the Government does not have the support of a majority in Congress, and when agreements between the parties were not made in advance. For example, the largest number of government defeats occurred under Fernando Collor’s presidency: 14 losses in 61 voting processes, in which a simple majority was required. As noted before,
Collor did not form a majority coalition and many times relied on the indiscipline of the opposition, the PMDB, to win. Thus, of all the defeats he suffered, 12 were predictable because the Government did not have the support of the political parties that held the majority of seats. When Collor negotiated and obtained the support of the PMDB, he was not defeated.

The contrast with the Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s success could not be greater. In Cardoso’s eight years as president, his government only suffered 11 defeats in 205 voting processes on matters that required simple majority for approval. The Government’s support was challenged on 221 occasions in voting processes on constitutional matters, during which it experienced only 18 defeats. And it is important to understand the meaning of “defeat” when it comes to constitutional matters: it actually reflects the inability to enforce a modification of the constitutional status quo. This means the Government has failed to meet the 3/5ths of the votes required to pass a proposal and the opposition has not managed to impose a constitutional amendment contrary to the Government’s interests. In this respect, the executive was not defeated once. Lula’s case is not different: in his first term, there were only nine defeats on 178 roll calls. In his second mandate, Lula was defeated 24 times on 260 roll calls.

In summary, political parties are crucial actors in the Brazilian legislative process. The decision-making process is far from being governed by individual interests. The floor is highly predictable. If the positions of the party leaders are known, it is possible to anticipate the results of the roll call votes.

Presidents loose when there are divisions within the coalition and they temporally loose a majority. Government breakdown happens when allied parties leave the coalition and presidents lost their majority. Personal capital cannot explain it. For parties to leave
coalitions they had to be part of it from the beginning. For the personalization argument to work presidents have to suddenly lose their ability to manage coalitions.

As we saw above, Collor managed to build a majority and pass some important legislation. The impeachment was only inevitable after he lost the support from the conservative forces, mainly from PFL, his principal partner since the beginning of the government. According to Weyland (1993:4) the conservative leadership

“distrusted Collor as unpredictable and dangerous and backed him only with reservations. When allegations of corruption began to surface, the PFL did not block the opposition demand for an investigation. Their objective was to weaken Collor’s political position in order to make him more dependent on their support, hoping in this way to increase their influence in government and increase their access to patronage, thereby boosting their chances in future elections”.

The conservative strategy failed. They throw the baby out with the bathwater. They were not able to limit the investigations on Collor and, ultimately, were removed from power along with him.

How could experienced politicians, as was the case of the PFL leaders, made such a huge mistake? The answer lies in the nature of Brazilian political parties. If, on one hand, parties in Brazil are presidentialized in Passarelli’s sense - party leaders have the institutional means to control party members (Guarnieri, 2011; Braga, 2008) and enjoy great independence in relation to these members – on the other hand Brazilian parties are seldom controlled by one charismatic leader. The main parties in Brazil (PT, PMDB, PSDB) have “dominant coalitions” (Panebianco, 1990) formed by a handful of party leaders. Even the PT, despite the strong leadership of Lula, is formed by many
“tendencies”. To keep the dominant coalition united is a challenge to party leaders analog to the challenge posed for a President of keeping the government coalition united. PFL leaders were trying to keep their party united and alive when they decided to let the investigations of Collor to proceed.

What seems to be a suicidal strategy or a huge mistake in the case of the PFL is reasonable when one takes into account the stability of the dominant coalition inside the party. Access to government resources changes the balance of power within the party leadership. Resources are scarce and some leaders will benefit while others will not. The losers will press the winners for more resources. To support an unpopular President is a risk for a coalition party leadership. If this support is not rewarded with a “fair” distribution of power it become a stupidity.

Collor realized the need to give more space to PFL. He tried a ministerial reform to accommodate PFL but it was too late. Some state governors from the party were left behind. In the PFL and other Brazilian parties the dominant coalition is “rendered stable through an agreement and a division of spheres of influence between the national leaders and intermediate leaders” (Panebianco, 1990). In the words of Collor’s government leader in the Chamber of Deputies, Humberto Souto, during the impeachment process:

"Until the day before the vote, which was on 29 September, we counted 18 votes more than necessary to stop the impeachment of Collor (...) Some deputies started looking for me to say that governors had called them asking to vote for the impeachment (...) Our advantage vote fell from 18 at night to 12 in an instant. Then another deputy came to me and said it would withdraw support from his bench, and saw the lead with seven votes. It was a domino effect (...)
we finish the night certain that we would be defeated” (El País, 15/04/2016)

The perils of a divided party also haunted Cardoso’s second term. A dispute between Bahia’s governor Antonio Carlos Magalhães, from PFL, and the party President, Jorge Bornhausen, started a schism that would drive PFL away from FHC government. As Cardoso approached the PMDB to guarantee the approval of the reelection, the PFL saw its space in the government shrinks. Members of the party, following the lead of ACM, threatened the government pretending they would support the creation of a committee to investigate cases of corruption during the FHC era. Facing the choice between a President with low levels of approval and a heavy weight member of the party dominant coalition and with an eye on the coming presidential election, Bornhausen decided to keep the party united. If it was not the proximity of the presidential election and the support of the PMDB maybe FHC would suffer the same fate of Collor and Dilma.

Dilma had to deal with a divided PMDB since the beginning. To make things worse she decided to support the creation of new parties to divide the opposition. One of these parties was the PSD who were born from the opposition party DEM (former PFL). The creation of new parties opens a window in the tight law on party migration. It is allowed to a deputy to leave her party if she decides to fund a new one, otherwise she loses her seat. Many politicians in the opposition and away from the benefits of power choose to migrate to the new party in order to be free to negotiate their support for the government agenda. But the infidelity spread to coalition partners as well. Ultimately the “divide and conquer” strategy proved to be a bad choice. The divisions within coalition partners became uncontrollable.
Divided parties are a problem to coalition management. Party leaders, and not only presidents, are strategic actors in the making and keeping of coalitions. The problem is that their strategic calculus follow different time horizon. Presidents negotiate with party leaders in a finite time horizon. Party leaders negotiate within the party dominant coalition in an infinite time horizon. Presidents distribute power positions among parties looking for *ad hoc* majorities. Even if all parties receive some positions, not all members of the parties can be benefited. Party leaders have to keep the party together if not by the distribution of positions, by the perspective of reaching power in the near future.

**Final comments**

As we said in the beginning this is an exploratory paper. We discussed the idea that presidentialization implies personalization. We investigate if “personal capital” is behind the success and failures of presidents, more specifically we questioned the idea that president success is linked to the ability in distributing particularistic benefits to individual legislators. We argue that parties are central actors in this story. Divisions within government coalitions lead to governmental crisis and divisions within parties that support the governments leads to government breakdown. It happens because party leaders, in a long term perspective, sometimes put the unity of her party above short term benefits of power.

Concentration of power on the hands of the president and party leaders, leadership autonomy and personalization of the electoral process are all characteristics of Brazilian politics. But we intended to show that presidentialization doesn’t imply a smaller role
for parties. Parties are central actors in Brazilian politics. Political crisis cannot be explained solely based on presidents personal characteristics. To understand political crisis and government breakdown one have to look to the game between and within parties.
Bibliography


