

REMAKING THE ANC

Party Change in South Africa
and the Global South

edited by Anthony Butler



Contents

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Preface

It has been a real pleasure to prepare this book. The local authors were enthused by the intellectual energy and wisdom of our colleagues from other continents. Our discussions together have shed fresh light on the challenges confronting South Africa's governing party.

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elite differentiation within the party, indicates the existence of several locations of power at the federal and state levels. UMNO's patron-client ties are not as asymmetrical as they once were, as a result of an appreciable decline in personalised politics, and factional leaders now have some leverage to undermine the capacity of party presidents to act unilaterally. UMNO members, for instance, openly criticised Abdullah and Najib when they channelled lucrative rents to their business allies.

Second, electoral trends indicate that Malaysian society has persisted in punishing parties articulating race- and religion-based politics. This suggests that UMNO's position is precarious in the long term, particularly if it cannot sustain rural Malay support, which in 1990, 1999 and 2008 had swung to the opposition. Electoral trends further indicate that attempts to consolidate power will not augur well for political elites. Public criticisms as well as huge demonstrations in urban areas led by the middle class in 1999, in 2008 and in the period leading up to and in the immediate aftermath of the 2013 elections indicate an electorate intolerant of power concentration and abuse. For this middle class, it is insufficient that UMNO ensures economic growth to justify retaining power. UMNO is aware that for things to remain the same, the government must institute reforms to devolve power and check patronage.³⁰ However, UMNO has persistently refused to alter a patronage system that allows it to feed off policies to enrich its members, and it is unlikely to do so unless it loses power.

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The Workers' Party of Brazil: The pragmatic trap

Guilherme Simões Reis

Brazil has had two consecutive left-wing presidents representing the Workers' Party (PT, Partido dos Trabalhadores): Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who held office for two terms, and currently Dilma Rousseff, the favourite in the polls for the elections that will be held in October 2014. The PT's accession to power was part of a leftist wave in South America, which saw the left win elections in all countries but Colombia. At the same time, Brazil, together with Uruguay, differs from the other countries in the region in that it has a strong and institutionalised left-wing political party that has been active for decades, having taken part in all elections since it was founded in 1980.

What does it mean to have a left-wing party governing a developing country with serious historical, social and economic problems? There are many different constraints on a socialist party in government: the balance of forces inside parliament, the interests and preferences of the conservative majority of voters, right-wing control of the media, the economic structure and so on. On the other hand, if socialism is to represent more than an empty category, a socialist party must not only pursue gradual and cumulative reform in the face of such obstacles, but also try to overcome such constraints in order to make possible greater advances in the future.

Besides these external constraints, there are also internal ones,

which are of greater interest here. In the real world, parties are not unitary actors, but consist of groups of people with different interests, preferences, views, goals, interpretations of challenges and strategies. In order to simplify that complexity and make analysis feasible, we can divide democratic socialist parties into two broad groups:¹ a ‘purist’ faction, which avoids coalitions and refuses to deviate from the ideal party programme, and a ‘pragmatic’ faction, which acknowledges the need for coalition-building, as the party does not have the support of the majority of voters, but which in the process may lose the focus on long-term goals, by concentrating on day-to-day politics.

If one of these two groups becomes dominant and stronger than the other, the party as a whole will lose its ‘social democratic character’, turning itself either into a ‘ghetto’ party – that is, one having a narrow constituency and no real chance of impacting on national policies – or a non-ideological office-seeking party – one that does not offer anything different from the conservative parties and that abandons radical social and economic changes.

The Workers’ Party of Brazil is not safe from the second risk. Indeed, there has been a trend in its history to turn itself into a pragmatic office-seeking party. Winning presidential elections has become the most important goal in the view of most party leaders, and the original concerns about changing society and weakening conservative forces in national politics, both in state-level governments and in the Congress, have been neglected. This trend is directly linked to the balance of forces in the party: the pragmatists have become, from one presidential term to the next, stronger and stronger, a situation aggravated as outsiders enter the PT, attracted by its position as the main party in government.²

This does not mean that PT governments are the same as previous conservative ones, or that they are not making changes in people’s lives. In many respects the Lula and Rouseff governments are the most left-leaning governments the country has ever had, but there is no longer a major concern about making deeper changes. In its opposition to neoliberalism, the PT defends state intervention in economy and large investments in social policies of providing public

services and redistributing income. Still, several scholars³ hold that the party has undergone an ideological moderation over time, following a Przeworskian path⁴ similar to the one traversed by socialist parties in Western Europe in the first half of 20th century. Indeed, nowadays the party is in regular dialogue with businessmen and implements strict fiscal policies.

The growth of the Workers’ Party

The PT was formed in 1980 during a period of political opening which saw the legalisation of multi-party politics. It came about through the association of various left-wing groups, trade unionists included, and acquired the character of a ‘factions party’ (*partido de tendências*, as it is called in Brazil). It grew continuously without interruptions, initially in opposition to the dictatorship then ruling Brazil. It was concerned, therefore, not only to advocate social fairness, but also to promote political and civil rights.

There were three individuals involved in initial discussions about the foundation of a workers’ party, the so-called ‘historical union leaders’: Lula himself, then president of the union of metal workers; Olívio Dutra, president of the union of bank employees; and Jacó Bittar, president of the union of oil workers – all three based in São Paulo state. The party’s foundation was given impetus by strikes in the motor industry in 1978 in the state of São Paulo.⁵

Besides trade unionists, the party also secured the adherence of other groups, such as student and middle-class Marxist organisations; progressive movements within the Catholic Church influenced by liberation theology; the intelligentsia based in universities and research institutes; peasant and landless workers’ organisations; and some politicians from the opposition party to the military dictatorship, the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB).⁶

From the outset the PT was critical of other ‘progressive’ movements and organisations, such as the MDB, the populist Brazilian Labour Party (PTB) and the historical Brazilian Communist Party (PCB). The MDB, for instance, was dismissed as being heterogeneous and made up of elite

cadres, incapable of fighting for workers' political independence.⁷

The founders of the PT set themselves in opposition not only to the authoritarian regime, but also to the period of democratic government in Brazil between 1945 and 1964, which it criticised as a 'formal and parliamentary democracy, the product of a deal made among dominant elites', excluding 'organised popular participation'. The PT has always considered itself as marking a deep change in the Brazilian polity, as is clear from Lula's speech as party president at its first national convention:

The Workers' Party is a historical innovation in this country. It is an innovation not only in political life but also in the history of the left. It is a party that was born boosted by mass movements and people's struggles throughout Brazil. It is a party that was born from the understanding that the workers developed after being manoeuvred by bourgeois politicians for decades and after listening to rigmarole from purportedly working-class vanguard parties. Only workers may conquer what they have the right to. Nobody has ever gifted us; nobody will ever give us anything for free.⁸

After Lula nearly won the 1989 presidential elections, the right and centre parties saw the need to join together, despite their differences, in a single bloc, so as to keep the PT out of power. Consequently, from the 1990s onwards the PT has influenced the behaviour of all other political players in Brazil: 'Petism' and 'Anti-Petism' help to mobilise a great majority of the voters, as Singer points out. One can say that the PT has caused a realignment in Brazilian politics, which have been split between those who support the party and those who oppose it.

As the PT was initially built out of many different groups opposed to the military regime, it emerged almost as a front, unlike previous leftist parties in Brazil. This diversity has been a mark of the party's organisational development, and since its foundation it has been characterised by divisions and ideological differences between the component groups.

PT achieved electoral growth by putting forward its own candidacies in majoritarian elections (for the presidency, for state governorships, mayoralities and senatorships) and refusing to enter coalitions with other parties, emphasising itself as a new force in politics and claiming to represent a unique *Petista* way of governing.⁹ This strategy worked well: gradually PT grew and imposed itself as the major force within the left, overcoming the communists from PCB and the Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B) and, later, the Democratic Labour Party (PDT), heir of the old Brazilian Labour Party. In the 1989 presidential elections, Leonel Brizola, leader of the PDT, led the polls for some time, but in the end he finished in third place.

There was a slowdown in the party's electoral growth in the 1992 local elections (unsurprisingly, internal reforms took place in the years following). But the party won in four state capitals – Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte, Goiânia and Rio Branco – and only lost in the runoff in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and João Pessoa. As a result of the elections the PT ceased to be a 'party from São Paulo state'. The PT elected the mayors of 53 towns throughout the country, the highest number in its history until then, although the number of people ruled by the PT declined, as it lost in the biggest Brazilian city, São Paulo.

In 1994 Lula lost the presidential election to Fernando Henrique Cardoso, from the liberal Party of Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB), who was boosted by the popularity of his economic Plan Real (to deal with hyper-inflation), despite a poll of a few months previously which predicted that 40 per cent of the votes would go to the PT's candidate. Although defeated, Lula won five million votes more than in 1989. In addition, the PT elected state governors for the first time, in Espírito Santo and Federal District, as well as four new senators.

In the 1996 local elections the PT kept advancing in the countryside. The proportion of the population ruled by the party decreased once more, but the number of towns ruled by the PT increased to 115 in all the states with the exception of four. It was also the party whose candidates participated in the run-off in most state capitals (although it lost on five occasions and won only in Belem and Porto Alegre).

Lula suffered his third presidential defeat in 1998, when Brizola offered to run as candidate for the vice-presidency. Though the PT increased its representation by only nine seats in its bloc in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower chamber of Congress, it was now by far the strongest force on the left, which had only a third of the seats. More importantly, in the 2000 local elections, the PT became the party with the most votes in Brazil, electing mayors in 187 towns. In 2002, besides finally electing Lula as president, the PT became, for the first time, the largest party in the Chamber of Deputies. If one calculates the figures after the 'traditional' moves of representatives to different parties post-election, the PT had a total of 93 federal deputies, or 18.1 per cent of the house.

Internal struggle

The PT has always suffered from internal conflicts between its numerous factions. Since the beginning, more or less radical forces coexisted inside the party, Trotskyist or Leninist in orientation, many of them entering the party from armed struggle against the military regime. According to Secco, the importance of these radical groups – which made up just ten per cent of party members – was limited to their theoretical and ideological contribution, as they did not impact significantly on social movements or elections.¹⁰ But their presence did contribute to strengthening the radicalism of the party's discourse.

The PT's failure in the 1982 elections favoured anti-institutional pressures from the revolutionary wing.¹¹ Moderates such as Lula and other union leaders reacted by creating the group called Articulation in 1983 to give expression to the views of the independents.¹² For most of its history this group has led the party and has beaten the left wing in internal elections, with the exception of a short period in the first half of the 1990s when the 'PT's left' took control of the party. As Sarti states,¹³ Articulation promoted the centralisation of decision-making, contrary to the original idea of building the PT as a decentralised party with a bottom-up organisation centred on groups, factions and autonomous regional committees. The initial intention of reaching

internal decisions by direct democracy and in local and issue-based small groups was abandoned and the party became bureaucratised, with professional leaders taking charge of coordinating the party.¹⁴

Articulation never accepted quietly the resistance of the more leftist sections to its leadership, accusing them of a 'two-colour activism' (*militância de duas camisas*), that is, of working as a faction inside the party, not accepting majority decisions and instead promoting their own views. Indeed, internal decisions taken by the party have been mostly the ones proposed by Articulation. This majority sector also saw itself 'as a popular reaction to the party left's elitism and vanguardism', merging a vague idea of socialism with a pragmatic focus on day-to-day political struggles.¹⁵

In 1989, when the leftist and clandestine Revolutionary Communist Party (PRC) ceased to exist after the fall of the Berlin Wall, most of its members merged with part of another minor faction to form a new group, this time on the 'PT's right wing', called Radical Democracy, led by the ex-guerrilla José Genoïno. It was then that Articulation became for the first time the force in the centre of the party, oscillating both left and right.¹⁶

Although small, the Marxist groups had more centralised and better structured organisation than the centrist factions, making it possible for them to punch above their weight in the party. In reaction, the moderate majority, in an effort to exert a monopoly of party control, did not allow proportional representation in internal elections to the committee until 1989, and did not allow internal rules that would have made it possible for the rank and file to control the party's legislative representatives and office-holders, as those leaders came mostly from the moderate group.¹⁷

According to Sarti,¹⁸ Articulation's dominance was maintained as well by a 'regional centralisation', as the party's organisational growth took place by expansion from its centre in São Paulo. This has ensured that cadres from that state form the majority of the party's national leaders, particularly those from Articulation and Radical Democracy, the most moderate groups inside the PT. The strategy of always having

their own candidate was strictly applied only in national elections or elections for office in São Paulo; in other regions it was relaxed to facilitate trade-offs with other parties to secure national and São Paulo state offices.

The deepening of internal division and of the contradictions inside Articulation caused a split in this majority group. Some of their leaders created the Left Articulation and together with Socialist Democracy and some smaller groups beat the most right-wing sectors for control of the PT for the first (and last) time. In 1995, Articulation – Unity in Struggle (the most moderate part of old Articulation) merged with Radical Democracy to form the Majority Sector, regaining party control from the radical groups. One of the most important leaders of Majority Sector, José Dirceu, became president of the party with the role of professionalising it, and he played a central and pragmatic role in its electoral expansion and in coalition-building.

In 2003 four legislators from different leftist sectors were expelled from the PT for criticising the government and voting against social security reform, which sought to change the retirement rules of public servants, a historical constituency of the party. One year later, the four were among the founders of Party Socialism and Freedom (PSOL), which attracted a significant number of former PT members. This split had a moderate electoral and trade union impact but it proved significant in changing the PT's internal balance of forces. As many of the most leftist members left to join PSOL, the pragmatic wing of the PT became even more dominant. From then on, internal disputes have become more personality-based than before.

In the first Lula government, which implemented an austere economic policy, critical voices in PT were silenced not only by the threat of sanctions, but also by co-option using a carrot-and-stick approach. Following a path of 'coalition presidentialism', Lula took into account not only partisan and regional factors in choosing his ministers, but also looked for cadres who would represent all the different sectors within his own party.

The government confronted a serious crisis in 2005, when the

scandal known as 'Mensalão' broke. Critics alleged that the government had made payments to deputies to have its projects approved, while defenders contested that version explaining that the scandal was only a matter of the irregular financing of election campaigns, which, though not allowed, is widespread. As a result of the crisis, some members of Majority Sector joined Socialist Democracy to build a new broad movement called Message to the Party, while the majority of the Majority Sector changed their name to Building a New Brazil (CNB) in 2007.

Internal debates were fierce until 2005, with the radical sectors claiming the kudos for programmatic changes, such as the implementation of a participatory budget, a popular policy implemented by the PT in state-level and local-level governments but ignored by the president. As Lula's government moved to the left and the opposition tried to take advantage of the Mensalão scandal, the various groups inside PT muted their criticism and preferred instead to defend the government's achievements.¹⁹ The leadership of Lula was of extreme importance in keeping the party united in the middle of crisis, but that does not mean that the most symbolic cadre of PT is neutral: Lula is the most popular of the pragmatists.

The pragmatic dominance

The risk to the PT of losing its ideological identity has grown as the dominance of the pragmatists increases and the purists are weakened. According to Secco, 77 per cent of PT members have joined the party since 2001 (one year before Lula's victory), many attracted by the possibility of access to office. Becoming less left-wing and more concerned with office-seeking, the PT has grown more and more like its biggest partner in Rouseff's government, the PMDB, a phenomenon that may be called the 'Peemedebisation' of the PT.

At the same time, the party PSOL has developed a role of unconstructive opposition, tending to oppose everything that is supported by the government, and very often building ad hoc parliamentary coalitions together with the right-wing parties PSDB and

Democrats (DEM), besides attacking all PT's presidential candidacies while staying relatively indifferent to the PSDB's candidates. In all this, PSOL does not offer a real alternative to the left, or function as a stick to stop the Peemedebisation of PT and its office-seeking trend.

The only possible way of avoiding becoming a purely office-seeking party such as PMDB is to strengthen the purist barrier to pragmatist advancement. This could happen as a result of external pressure, if PSOL took a more constructive and less 'ghetto party' role, or by internal pressure, which would be the better option for PT members, if the radical groups and the Message to the Party broad sector were strengthened vis-à-vis Building a New Brazil (CNB). Such a realignment could be assisted by the return of internal discussions about policy programmes, which are almost nonexistent nowadays owing to the routine of day-to-day public management.

The strength of pragmatism inside PT is also related to its funding. Historically the party has been financed mostly by the public party fund (which all the parties inside parliament share) and by its office-holders: 30 per cent of their earnings must be given to the party.²⁰ Most of the PT's legislators are from CNB. The majority of the members who attend the party's meetings are advisers or have other political jobs (and few are voluntary activists), which means that they are politically and financially dependent on the mostly pragmatic party leaders: the party bureaucracy is increasingly becoming the preserve of office-holders.²¹ These characteristics have prompted Ribeiro²² to consider the PT as a cartel party, following Katz and Mair's approach.²³ What is more, the party increased its campaign funding since 2002 with contributions from private firms,²⁴ and in return its candidates satisfy interests that are at variance with left-wing goals.

In 2001 the PT instituted a supposedly democratic way of selecting its leaders: the process of direct election (PED), in which all the party members can vote. Since then, however, the pragmatists have become stronger and the internal balance of forces even more uneven. As Secco states, the PED is susceptible to the abuse of economic power.²⁵ The groups able to attract the greatest funding for their intra-party campaigns

■ Table 1: Party fragmentation in South America and size of president's party (Lower Chamber, 1989–2002)

Countries	Effective number of parties*			President's party (%)		
	Average	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Brazil	8.1	7.1	8.7	16	5	21
Argentina	3.1	2.8	3.4	44	33	52
Bolivia	4.6	3.9	5.4	29	25	40
Chile	5.7	4.7	7.1	26	12	32
Colombia	3.5	2.2	6.5	35	13	60
Ecuador	6.2	5.1	7.4	20	4	43
Peru	4.2	2.9	5.8	31	3	56
Uruguay	3.6	3.1	4.3	35	32	39
Venezuela	4.3	2.8	5.5	28	13	48

Note: The effective number of parties (ENP) is an index of party fragmentation created by Laakso and Taagapera in 1979, taking into account both their number and their relative size.

Source: F. Anastasia, C.R. Melo and F. Santos, *Governabilidade e Representação Política na América do Sul* (Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, 2004)

are those that support policies and a way of formulating them which are the furthest removed from those that animated the creation of the PT.

The dominance of pragmatists in the PT is also suited to the balance of forces among the parties in the country. The Brazilian party system is very fragmented. Although the PT has consolidated itself as one of the two biggest parliamentary parties (together with the PMDB), it has never won as much as a quarter of the seats in Congress. A single-party majority government is unimaginable in Brazil. The country has always had coalition governments in its democratic history. As Table 1 shows, party systems in the other South American countries are much less fragmented and the parties of all Brazilian presidents have never secured a majority. Moreover, left-wing allies have had a relatively small number of deputies, which has compelled the government to include conservative parties in the ruling coalition, particularly the PMDB, and this has reduced the chance of major reforms in policy.

Table 2, even though it does not include Lula's second government

■ Table 2: Parties in presidential coalitions in Brazil between 1985 and 2007

President	Period	Parties in coalition
José Sarney	03/1985 to 02/1986	PMDB, PFL, PTB, PDS
	02/1986 to 03/1990	PMDB, PFL
Fernando Collor	03/1990 to 10/1990	PMDB, PFL, PRN
	10/1990 to 01/1992	PFL, PDS, PRN
	01/1992 to 04/1992	PFL, PDS
	04/1992 to 10/1992	PFL, PDS, PSDB, PTB, PL
Itamar Franco	10/1992 to 01/1993	PMDB, PFL, PSDB, PTB, PDT, PSB
	01/1993 to 05/1993	PMDB, PFL, PSDB, PTB, PDT, PSB, PT
	05/1993 to 09/1993	PMDB, PFL, PSDB, PTB, PSB
	09/1993 to 01/1994	PMDB, PFL, PSDB, PTB, PP
	01/1994 to 01/1995	PMDB, PFL, PSDB, PP
F.H. Cardoso (I)	01/1995 to 04/1996	PSDB, PMDB, PFL, PTB
	04/1996 to 12/1998	PSDB, PFL, PMDB, PTB, PPB, PPS
F.H. Cardoso (II)	01/1996 to 03/2002	PSDB, PFL, PMDB, PPB
	03/2002 to 12/2002	PSDB, PMDB, PPB
Lula da Silva (I)	01/2003 to 01/2004	PT, PL, PCdoB, PSB, PTB, PDT, PPS, PV
	01/2004 to 01/2005	PT, PL, PCdoB, PSB, PTB, PPS, PV, PMDB
	02/2005 to 05/2005	PT, PL, PCdoB, PSB, PTB, PV, PMDB
	05/2005 to 07/2005	PT, PL, PCdoB, PSB, PTB, PMDB
	07/2005 to 01/2007	PT, PL, PCdoB, PSB, PTB, PP, PMDB

Sources: For the governments led by Sarney, Collor, Franco and the first by Cardoso: O. Amorim Neto, *Presidencialismo e Governabilidade nas Américas* (Rio de Janeiro, 2006). For both Cardoso's governments and the first of Lula's: A.C. Figueiredo, 'Instabilidade política no primeiro governo Lula: Conflito partidário, ideologia e instituições' in M.R.S. Lima (ed.), *Desempenho de Governos Progressistas no Cone Sul: Agendas Alternativas ao Neoliberalismo* (Rio de Janeiro, 2008), 47–65.

nor Rousseff's, shows that all governments in Brazil since the end of the military dictatorship have been coalitions, most of them involving more than three parties. In addition, the first Lula government had a particularly high number of parties: between six and eight.

Since the PT's national hegemony in the left-of-centre of the political

system has been assured, the party's priority has become to win the presidential elections (as well as state-level city mayoral elections in São Paulo, which is by far the most populous state and the financial centre of the country and from which most of party's leaders come). There is very little concern about the policies implemented by allied regional and local governments (excluding São Paulo) and about strengthening the PT's politicians there. Because of this and because the PT does not intend to threaten its conservative allies, there is no serious move to change the constraints imposed by the balance of forces in Congress: no stronger campaign to increase the party's share of seats, no change to the electoral system.²⁶

Consequently, despite its electoral achievements and its positive successes in reducing poverty and unemployment, the PT has not overcome the challenge of attracting voters to the left and thereby making possible a socialist hegemony. Instead, it has simply moved to the centre of the ideological spectrum in order to win the support of the median voter.

The priority given to winning presidential elections relegates to a lesser importance any concern to increase the number of deputies from the party or the number of governors and mayors, thereby providing excessive space to its conservative allies, particularly the PMDB. It does not help to change dramatically the balance of forces. Instead, the PT is nowadays left with no alternative but building coalitions that represent serious constraints to any socialist advancement.

One example of this is the significant size within the government coalition of socially conservative factions, mostly linked to representatives of Pentecostal Christianity. Here one can mention the remarkable participation of the Brazilian Republican Party (PRB), which is basically the political arm of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (one of whose main leaders is the senator and bishop Marcelo Crivella, ex-gospel singer and nephew of Bishop Edir Macedo). This reliance on conservative forces makes it much more difficult to promote social and identity issues, such as homosexual marriage or abortion, than distributive issues, which have a better reception among these culturally

conservative groups, which have mostly a lower-class constituency.

The balance of forces among parties also impacts on the way the government deals with agriculture. In Brazil, soya cultivation in large estates is favoured over more labour-intensive forms of agriculture. The members of parliament associated with agribusiness, spread through many different parties, are among the most conservative allies of the PT's government, although they had previously supported the PSDB government. As the PT wants to please both capital and labour, it does not challenge the lobbyists of land owners, or confront their anti-environmentalist actions and the recurrent slave labour accusations against them.

There are two different ministries in Brazilian government dealing with agrarian issues, with contradictory policies: one of them, the Ministry of Agrarian Development, is an ally of the Movement of Landless Workers (MST) and is controlled by the PT's left-wing faction Socialist Democracy (DS), while the other, the Ministry of Agriculture, is on the hands of the PMDB. Unsurprisingly, the former favours land reform and family agriculture, while the latter defends agribusiness interests. The Ministry of Labour also has a programme to support cooperative methods but between 2003 and 2009 only 250 000 families benefited, which means that, although well planned, it is not a priority in the government's budget.

Conclusion

The social progress achieved by the PT during its three terms in presidential government is significant and has brought about a change in trend in South American politics. This has not happened, however, without obstacles and contradictions.

Brazil is internationally regarded as a regional leader and power, member of BRICS and player of a prominent role among developing nations. This is what is expected of a country with a huge internal market, a broad range of various natural resources and a diversified industrial sector. These features also point to its relatively significant ability to develop autonomous policies, which – in the hands of a

left-wing party – could advance economic and civil rights. As Singer states,²⁷ even the great number of unemployed workers has engaged in the electoral process, even though without proper ideological direction.

The constraints on the scope of party politics are serious, and more difficult to manage than in neighbouring countries. Outside the PT, the balance of forces is also adverse, as the party system is fragmented and potential left-wing allies are feeble. As we have discussed, one of the greatest difficulties lies inside the party: pragmatism reigns supreme.

Brazil's presidential system is thus biased in favour of the conservative pragmatists, who happily agree to be part of a government coalition in order to gain access to office and power. The party believes it has no alternative but to attract to the government groups linked to the elite, the financial sector, agribusiness and religious conservatism. With winning presidential elections having become the only non-negotiable goal, there is no serious effort to change the balance of forces that over-represents the conservatives and keeps the left feeble.

Until now, it has been possible for the PT in government to favour both the traditional constituency of a left party and the economic elite. This cannot continue forever. When the crisis comes, the party will need to choose between labour and capital. At that stage, unless the purist groups within the party are strengthened and the Peemedebisation process stops, there is little chance of the socialist alternative emerging as victor.