

I

Introduction

If democracy is unthinkable without strong political parties (Schattschneider 1975), we all have good reason to worry. For decades, parties around the world have appeared to be in decline, with links of representation and accountability between voters and elected officials growing increasingly tenuous. After Brazil redemocratized in the 1980s, scholars quickly classified it as an important case study of partisan and party-system weakness: its political institutions, it was said, promoted individualism and undermined parties as agents of collective representation (Ames 2001), resulting in an “inchoate” party system (Mainwaring 1999). Most observers concluded that the weakness of Brazil’s parties boded ill for the health of its nascent democracy (e.g., Lamounier 1989; Mainwaring 1992; Mainwaring & Scully 1995*b*; Weyland 1996; Kinzo 2004; D’Araújo 2009).

Some scholars did see a glass half-full rather than half-empty, noting that Brazil’s legislative parties were actually fairly cohesive, and that despite the party system’s extreme fragmentation and relative ideological incoherence, democracy appeared to function about as well as in any other country in the region (Figueiredo & Limongi 1999; Melo & Pereira 2013; Montero 2014).

However, Brazil’s recent political and economic crises – culminating in the 2016 impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff – has brought renewed attention to party and party-system dysfunction. After the 2014 elections twenty-seven parties held at least one seat each in the lower house of Brazil’s legislature (the Chamber of Deputies), and the largest party held only 11% of the seats (Câmara dos Deputados 2016). This is an extraordinary level of fragmentation, especially given Brazil’s lack of ethnic, linguistic, or religious cleavages, as for example in India.

The political crisis that erupted following that year's election was so profound that by the mid-2010s Brazilian voters expressed the lowest level of confidence in political parties of any country in the region (Latino-barómetro 2016b). Furthermore, by 2016 72% of Brazilians stated they felt close to none of Brazil's parties, the lowest level since survey firms started asking a partisanship question in 1989 (Datafolha 2016). Disillusionment with parties also damaged popular faith in democracy: by 2016 only 32% of Brazilians agreed that "Democracy is preferable to all other forms of government," a decline of twenty-two points from the previous year and ahead of only Guatemala across Latin America (Latino-barómetro 2016a). As of this writing, Brazil's political crisis continues, with judicial investigations revealing no apparent end to corruption.

For millions of Brazilians, the biggest disappointment in recent years has to be the dismal trajectory of Dilma's party, the Workers' Party, or PT for *Partido dos Trabalhadores*. The PT grew out of grassroots social movement and labor union opposition to Brazil's military dictatorship in the late 1970s, and for years it cultivated an image as Brazil's most programmatic party. The pronunciation of PT in Portuguese gave rise to the nickname applied to its partisan supporters: *petistas*, who grew from 0% of voters in 1980 to almost 30% just a generation later.

The PT's reputation as an outsider party changed after its long-time leader, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, first won the presidency in 2002. Winning elections and having to govern pushed the PT to enter broad coalitions and compromise or even abandon many of its long-held policy commitments. Yet political moderation did not hurt the party's performance – instead, that tactic paid huge dividends as the PT picked up hordes of new supporters in the 2000s who credited the party for growing Brazil's economy and for raising millions of Brazilians into the middle class.

However, a deep recession that began in 2013, along with evidence of the PT's involvement in massive corruption scandals under Dilma, deeply corroded the party's popular support. Corruption signaled a betrayal of the PT's core principles, the so-called *modo petista de governar* or "PT way of governing" – in particular of the party's supposed commitment to transparency and honesty in government.¹ The PT had deliberately

¹ The *modo petista de governar* can be boiled down to an effort to transform Brazil by (1) strengthening links between state and society by enhancing participatory opportunities; (2) reducing socioeconomic inequalities; and (3) improving the rule of law. The first element draws attention to problems of representation and accountability deriving from Brazil's party system and its formal institutional structure; the second deals with the tension between formal democratic equality and informal inequalities of opportunity based

created an organization that would bind the party to its principles and maintain strong links to its grassroots supporters, but by 2014 petistas were distancing themselves from the party, having concluded that Brazil's way of doing politics had changed the party far more than the PT had changed Brazil's way of doing politics.

None of Brazil's other parties have benefited from the PT's recent decline. In fact, the recent crisis has seen a decline in support for all major parties, not just the PT. In 1998, the three largest center-right parties – the PMDB, PSDB, and PFL² – won exactly 50% of the (lower chamber) vote, but by 2014 they managed only 27%.

The rise of the PT suggests that it is not impossible to build a programmatic party in Brazil – only that it is very difficult to do so. Likewise, the decline of the PT implies that it is also challenging to maintain a programmatic reputation after winning power. To be sure, Dilma was impeached partly because the PT was in a weak position. Although it had won four consecutive presidential elections, the PT's share of the legislative vote had peaked at 18% in 2002, and in 2014 it managed to win only 14%. Clearly, the PT's repeated success in presidential elections did not translate into similar success in legislative elections. In fact, since 2002 the PT had become an extreme example of what Samuels and Shugart (2010) call “separation of purpose” – its presidential candidates actually performed better where the PT's legislative candidates did *worse*.

Fourteen percent of the vote still made the PT the largest party in the Chamber of Deputies after 2014, but too small to shield Dilma from defections of coalition partners or from opposition attacks. Unlike any other impeachment in world history, Dilma was betrayed by a member of her own vice president's party, Chamber of Deputies Speaker Eduardo Cunha. Cunha was no anticorruption crusader. In fact, less than two weeks after Dilma was impeached, Cunha's colleagues sacked him on corruption charges, and he was later jailed. (It is widely believed that Cunha initiated impeachment proceedings against Dilma in a futile effort to avoid the fate he ultimately suffered.) Dilma's replacement Michel Temer epitomized Brazil's discredited political class, and not surprisingly has also been targeted by several corruption investigations.

on race, class, or gender; and the third focuses on the web of “illiberal” practices such as corruption, crime, police brutality, and lack of access to justice for average Brazilians (Magalhães, Barreto, & Trevas 1999).

² *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*, Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement; *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira*, Party of Brazilian Social Democracy; and *Partido da Frente Liberal* or Liberal Front Party, now called the *Democratas* or Democrats.

Regardless of whether one considers Dilma's impeachment a "coup," it is no surprise that the spectacle of a legislature full of corrupt politicians sitting in judgment of Dilma raised questions about the outcome's legitimacy in the eyes of many Brazilian voters. After all, more than 60% of legislators were themselves targets of judicial investigations when they voted to impeach the president (Transparency Brasil 2016). This fact helps explain why so many Brazilians currently hold parties and democracy in such low regard.

Given parties' discredit, why write a book about mass partisan attitudes in contemporary Brazil? As noted, conventional wisdom suggests that partisanship has little impact on voter behavior (Mainwaring 1992; Nadeau 2017). Instead, what matters most are "pork, pageantry, and performance" – candidates' personal qualities, performance in office, and ability to deliver constituent service (Ames 2008).

Such factors do matter – for nonpartisan voters. For those voters who affirm an affinity with a particular party, however, partisan attitudes powerfully shape *perceptions* of candidates' qualities, performance in office, and ability to "bring home the bacon." Generally speaking, this is not a novel claim. In fact, the endogeneity of attitudes and perceptions to partisanship is now conventional wisdom in the study of comparative political behavior (Bartels 2002; Tilley & Hobolt 2011; Healy & Malhotra 2013). However, given the assumption of weak parties in Brazil's electorate, our argument offers a novel way of understanding Brazilian politics.³

We show that mass partisan attitudes have played an underappreciated role in shaping Brazilian voters' attitudes and behavior since the 1980s. We explore positive partisanship – a psychological attachment to a favored party – as well as a hidden aspect of Brazilians' political attitudes, "negative" partisanship, the rejection of a disliked party. In particular, we highlight the importance of both positive and negative attitudes about the PT, because *petismo* and *antipetismo* have been the predominant elements of Brazil's party system in the electorate since the 1980s. Partisan attitudes about the PSDB and PMDB are less coherent than *petismo*, but the main difference is quantitative, not qualitative: the number of PMDB and PSDB partisans has always been fairly small, while *petistas* and *antipetistas* have comprised a substantial proportion of the electorate since the 1990s.

To understand the path of Brazilian electoral politics since democratization, it is particularly important to understand how the PT's

³ Ames and his coauthors do suggest that voters' policy attitudes may matter to some degree, in presidential and perhaps gubernatorial elections. The argument we develop implies that for partisans, policy attitudes in Brazil are mostly a function of partisanship.

emergence shaped Brazilians' political attitudes and voting behavior – both for and against. The ongoing political crisis (as of late 2017) renders none of this irrelevant. As we will show, antipetismo is not merely a phenomenon of the Dilma era – indeed, the number of antipetistas has been fairly constant since before Lula's first election as president, and the number of antipetistas was fairly high even when Brazil's economy was performing well. Moreover, the recent decline in the number of petistas may turn out to be temporary – a consequence of the deep crisis that began while Dilma was still in office. Those who were petistas at one point but who now call themselves nonpartisans may, at some point, return to the party's fold.

I.1 PARTISANSHIP AND ANTIPARTISANSHIP

The concept of party strength has three elements (Key 1952), each of which speaks to different aspects of the nature and process of representative government: (1) parties in government, (2) parties as organizations, and (3) parties in the electorate. Debate about the relative strength of Brazil's parties has focused on the first element (e.g., Figueiredo & Limongi 1999). Some important research exists on parties' relative organizational strength, but most of this work focuses on the PT (e.g., Meneguello 1989; Keck 1992; Samuels 2004; Amaral 2010; Hunter 2010; Ribeiro 2010).

As for the third element, the strength of parties in Brazilian voters' minds, relatively little research exists compared to the focus on Brazil's legislative parties, perhaps because observers tend to accept the conventional wisdom that in addition to incumbent presidents' ability to manage the economy, "pageantry and pork" are the most important factors shaping vote choice.⁴

The focus on legislative parties has created an imbalance in terms of what observers regard as important about Brazilian politics. This is particularly unfortunate given that although the aggregate level of party ID in Brazil is not particularly high in comparative perspective, it is also not particularly low (Huber, Kernell, & Leoni 2005; Kitschelt et al. 2010).

⁴ However, see e.g., Reis (1988); Balbachevsky (1992); Deheza (1997); Carreirão (2002); Kinzo (2004, 2005); Samuels (2006); Baker, Ames, and Rennó (2006); Carreirão (2007); Venturi (2010); Braga and Kinzo (2007); Veiga (2007); Rennó and Cabello (2010); Braga and Pimentel (2011); Paiva and Tarouco (2011); Veiga (2011); Pereira (2014); Speck and Balbachevsky (2016); Baker et al. (2016); Amaral and Tanaka (2016); Limongi and Cortez (2010).

This suggests that partisanship could be fairly important. And in fact, as we show, both positive and negative partisanship have powerfully shaped the political attitudes and behavior of a wide swath of Brazil's electorate.

Party ID is one of the most important variables in political science, simply because no other variable accounts as well or as consistently for political behavior (Huddy, Sears & Levy 2013, p. 2). Positive partisanship is typically considered a form of social identity – an affective psychological attachment to a larger group. It forms part of an individual's sense of self, and as such it shapes opinions about politics, motivates political engagement, and impacts vote choice (Miller & Shanks 1996; Greene, Palmquist, & Schickler 2002; Lavine, Johnston, & Steenbergen 2013). Levels of partisanship for different parties signal the main lines of political competition in a polity, as people who identify with a party typically vote for (candidates from) that party, while voters with no partisan attachments tend not to vote for (candidates from) just one party.

Of all of Brazil's many parties, only the PT has managed to cultivate a strong psychological attachment among a substantial proportion of Brazil's voters. The party began attracting a wide base of partisan support in the 1980s, and for the next three decades petismo's spread among voters reflected the party's growing importance in Brazilian politics. By the mid-2000s, about 30% of Brazilians claimed to be petistas, a relatively large proportion for any party in any country. Moreover, since the 1990s the PT has also had a disproportionately large share of all partisans. For example, in the 2000s more than half of all Brazilians who identified with any party identified with the PT.

Another reason to highlight the PT's impact on mass political attitudes and behavior in Brazil is that the spread of petismo sparked a reaction in the opposite direction: the emergence of a strong sense of dislike for the PT known as antipetismo. Relatively little is known – in Brazil or elsewhere – about negative partisanship, voters' *rejection* of a particular party. Although early scholars suggested that partisanship could entail both positive and negative attitudes (Campbell et al. 1960), most research has explored only the positive side of partisanship.⁵

The scholarly focus on positive partisanship may derive from the assumption that negative and positive partisan attitudes are flip sides of the same coin (Greene 1999). However, these attitudes do not always

⁵ For exceptions, see, e.g., Medeiros and Noël (2013) or Mayer (2017). For recent work on Brazil, see Ribeiro and Borba (2016) or Paiva, Krause, and Lameirão (2016).

1.1 Partisanship and Antipartisanship

TABLE 1.1. *The Four Possible Types of Voters*

		Strong identification with in-group	
		Yes	No
Strong antipathy for out-group	Yes	Hard-core partisans	Negative partisans <i>(Pure antipartisans)</i>
	No	Positive partisans	Nonpartisans

mirror each other. The latter can in fact emerge autonomously, and can have distinct effects. Table 1.1 identifies the range of possibilities.

First, “hard-core” partisans have both positive and negative attitudes. These partisans not only identify with a party but also strongly reject another. A second group of voters, those on the lower left, may have positive feelings for a particular party, but lack strong negative partisan sentiments. These first two groups of individuals would be functionally equivalent in terms of voting behavior if we were to examine only the positive partisanship question surveys typically ask.

Members of a third group, on the lower right, are nonpartisans – they express neither positive nor negative attitudes toward any political party. Many Brazilians do fall in this box – and for them, pork and pageantry may matter most of all. However, it is crucial to distinguish nonpartisans from members of the fourth group, negative partisans. These voters, whom we also call “pure antipartisans,” have strong attitudes against a party, but no positive partisan attachment.

Despite the relative lack of research, examples of negative partisans from around the world are not hard to come by. For example, in Argentina many voters are anti-Peronists but do not identify with any party (Torre 2003), while in the USA some voters dislike the Republicans but do not identify as Democrats (or vice versa). (See Chapter 6 for a broad comparative perspective.)

As we will detail, positive and negative partisan attitudes are not psychological mirror images: many Brazilians identify with a party without feeling negatively about any, while others feel strong antipathy toward a party without developing a positive partisan attachment. This means we stand to gain a great deal in terms of understanding Brazilian politics by distinguishing negative partisans from nonpartisans. Voters who dislike a particular party may not know which candidate or party they like, but by affirming that they “would never vote for” or “strongly dislike” a particular party they have significantly narrowed their choices. Ignoring negative

partisan attitudes means losing a great deal of information about voters' likely behavior, and leaves out a major component of the story scholars seek to tell about the key contours of politics in different countries.

The contours of positive and negative partisanship in Brazil are shaped mainly by how people feel about the PT. At times, almost half of all voters have been either *petistas* or *antipetistas*. Moreover, just as most positive partisans in Brazil are *petistas*, most negative partisans are *antipetistas*. These facts point to a key caveat to our claim that partisan attitudes have provided more structure to Brazil's party system in the electorate than scholars have perceived: partisanship does matter, but voter behavior in Brazil is largely structured around sentiment for or against the PT, not about other parties.

1.2 TWO PUZZLES

Two puzzles motivate our research. The first is the rise of *petismo*. We started exploring this question in the early 2000s, shortly after the number of *petistas* first began to outpace the number of partisans for any other party (Samuels 2006). The rise of *petismo* is puzzling because existing theories predict that sociological and institutional factors should impede the development of mass partisanship in Brazil. How did the PT upset this prediction?

A second challenge is that existing work on mass partisanship explains something that already exists. In the USA, for example, a sizable literature seeks to explain partisan *realignments*, transformations in what partisanship means to voters and/or in parties' demographic bases (e.g., Mayhew 2002). Likewise, in Europe and elsewhere, scholars have focused on explaining partisan *dealignment* or collapse, a gradual dissipation of partisan support (e.g., Dalton et al. 2002). In either case, partisanship already exists – it is just changing, or disappearing.

In contrast, the rise of *petismo* is an electoral “alignment” – the initial emergence of party ID where none had existed before. Because partisanship first emerged before the advent of modern social science methods, scholars tend to take its existence among voters for granted. Yet perhaps obviously, to explain the initial emergence of partisanship we cannot rely on the theory of childhood socialization (e.g., Zuckerman et al. 2007), which assumes that partisan identities already exist as sociocultural categories, and that they can be transferred from parent to child. The key puzzle in Brazil is explaining partisanship in “generation zero.” In western Europe, generation zero emerged when parties represented relatively

distinct, identifiable, and coherent social categories, a situation that bears no semblance to 1980s Brazil. How do collective partisan identities emerge in the first place in such a context?

Scholarship that might help answer this question has focused on elites' top-down efforts to craft party ID. This literature suggests that partisanship is more likely to develop when parties (1) perform well in office; (2) develop a coherent brand that overlaps with or reinforces existing forms of social identity such as religion or ethnicity; (3) have extensive national and local-level organizations; or are active in (4) ideologically polarized or (5) postconflict environments (e.g., Torcal & Mainwaring 2003; Lupu 2016).

These hypotheses fail to explain the relative success of Brazilian parties at cultivating partisanship. First, both the PT and its main rival the PSDB have performed well in national elections since the 1990s, but the latter never gained many partisans whereas the PT did. Second, *all* of Brazil's main parties have diluted the coherence of their brands since the 1990s, but paradoxically the PT's partisan base continued to grow as it did so – and no party has sought to create a partisan brand that appeals to only one race, ethnicity, or religion. Third, although several parties have extensive organizations, only the PT has cultivated a mass partisan base (Samuels & Zucco 2014).⁶ In short, existing research offers no clear explanation for the PT's ability to cultivate mass partisanship through 2013 and other parties' inability to do so.

This brings us to the second puzzle motivating our research: the existence of a relatively large number of negative partisans among Brazilian voters, most of whom are antipetistas. Why do so many Brazilians passionately dislike the PT but refuse to identify with another political party?

Some suggest that the answer to this question lies with anger at the PT's involvement with corruption under Dilma. It is true that by late 2015 Brazilian voters were citing corruption as the country's most important problem (Folha de São Paulo 2015). Why do some Brazilian voters focus blame for corruption on PT and only the PT? Corruption has permeated Brazilian politics for generations. Corruption under Dilma cannot explain antipetismo.

For similar reasons, exploring why so many Brazilians took to the streets to protest Dilma circa 2013 also provides little insight into the roots of antipetismo (cf. Winters & Weitz-Shapiro 2014). Antipetismo predates Dilma by decades, and the number of antipetistas in the

⁶ The fourth and fifth conditions are irrelevant for the Brazilian case.

electorate has been large and fairly constant since the 1990s. Moreover, there are many more antipetistas in the electorate than there were protesters in the streets. These facts imply that antipetismo also cannot be explained with reference to Dilma's mismanagement of Brazil's economy. Even when Brazil's economy was booming during Lula's second term (2007–10), the share of antipetistas in the electorate was only slightly smaller than it was in 2014. In short, antipetismo has deeper roots than any anger directed at Dilma.

The fact that most antipetistas are purely negative partisans is also puzzling. Many petistas are “hard-core” partisans: they like the PT, and also affirm that they would never vote for the PT's main competitor, the PSDB. In contrast, relatively few antipetistas have a positive partisan attachment. Specifically, despite what knowledgeable observers might expect, very few antipetistas are *tucanos*, the nickname for PSDB partisans, based on the party's avian mascot, the toucan. That is, most antipetistas have an out-group that they hate, but no in-group that they like – which means that the answer to the question of where antipetismo comes from cannot rest with a “top-down” effort by party elites to craft (anti-)partisan attitudes. Antipetismo has existed almost as long as the PT has – but apparently not because other party leaders have deliberately sought to capitalize on widespread anti-PT sentiment. Antipetismo appears to have emerged as a reaction to the emergence of the PT and of petismo among Brazilian voters, not because the PT's rivals deliberately cultivated it.

1.3 OUR ARGUMENT

Let us elaborate on the explanation for both the rise of petismo, and of antipetismo. To explain the PT's ability to cultivate mass partisanship, we agree that elites' efforts to develop and disseminate a party brand is important. As per Social Identity Theory (SIT), a coherent brand is essential for instilling the notion in individuals' minds that an in-group exists with which they can identify and in which they can invest emotional and psychological energy.

As the literature suggests, we also agree that developing an extensive party organization is important. However, we add a third element to this story, one that scholars have overlooked: whether parties use their organization to engage individuals who are active in organized civil society. Formal party organization can be extensive, but might also exist only on paper. It could also be extensive but decentralized, making it difficult for central-party elites to coordinate its use. In either of these examples, the