

Brazil: Dilma's dilemma

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Looking back on the momentous gains chalked by Brazil's former President Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva, it is easy to fall into the habit of projecting forward based on past trends. Unfortunately, this is specious reasoning. Brazil's momentum could easily carry the country off the tracks. The hard and thankless task of moving Brazil forward is frustrating President Dilma Rousseff.

Rousseff's troubles span both the domestic and international arenas. At home, the fight against corruption has become a pointed political issue. Last month Agriculture Minister Wagner Rossi got sacked, the fourth cabinet minister to be replaced by Rousseff in 72 days. Below the level of cabinet chief, the trend is even more unsettling: nearly 100 officials from the agriculture, tourism, and defense ministries have been either fired or arrested on corruption-related charges under Rousseff's watch. Yet Rousseff's attempt to "clean up" is backfiring. Rather than appearing a

dogged reformer, President Rousseff's disapproval rate has doubled to 25% since her inauguration in January, and the overall approval rate for her government recently slipped below the all-important 50% threshold. Elder political voices are charging her with being naïve, incompetent, or both. While this is normal fare in democratic politics, given Rousseff's lack of previous political experience it erodes her authority more than other leaders in such positions.

On a practical level, it is making her coalition harder to manage.

In August the Party of the Republic left Rousseff's coalition. It's a relatively insignificant party whose most salient leader was the Transportation Minister that Rousseff fired. But murmurs are growing that if more officials are sent packing, the PMDB – the largest partner of Rousseff's Worker's Party – will break with the President. The PMDB is widely seen as a beneficiary of graft across Brazil. First, though, erstwhile allies retaliated by leaking reports of corruption among Rousseff's inner circle. José Dias, a political consultant in Brasília, likens Rousseff's actions to hitting a "wasp's nest". In an interview with Reuters, he goes on to say: "This corruption sweep is snowballing out of control, it's extremely dangerous. She's already lost her legislative agenda, and now she risks growing instability". With her allies howling,

on August 24th Rousseff reportedly pledged not to fire any more ministers. Even if she can hold her coalition together, Dilma's honeymoon is over, and the attempt to fossick corruption from government ranks is the reason. To fall from the frying pan into the coals, Brazil's economy is overheating. Inflation is at the outer band that the central bank has set for tolerable price rises, and the government could easily fall into a serious budget deficit should commodity prices fall. Curbing consumer credit, mitigating inflows of hot money, and diversifying Brazil's economy away from iron ore and soybeans will require a sustained commitment by Rousseff's team of truly skilled technocrats.

As domestic pressures mount, Brazil's foreign policy is losing thrust. Lula positioned Brazil as Latin America's superpower, a major financier of African development projects, and an arbiter of Iran's nuclear program. He also set the stage for expansion into a new frontier: Palestinian independence. In December 2010, one month before Dilma took office, Lula recognized the state of Palestine along Israel's pre-1967 borders, causing a snowball of such declarations across South America. Since then, Brazilian foreign policy has gotten mired in efforts to chastise Chinese and US monetary policies.

Presuming Brazil's economy does not come apart at the seams and Rousseff



São Tomé and Príncipe: in the third attempt and after twenty years, a former autocrat returns to the presidency

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On August 7th, in the run-off for the presidential elections, seventy-five years old Manuel Pinto da Costa, the country's first post-independence President, defeated candidate for the ruling Independent Democratic Action (ADI) Evaristo Carvalho (sixty-nine years old), with 52.9% of the votes against 47.1%. Pinto da Costa has become one of several former African authoritarian rulers who, after departure from power, came back to the presidential palace several years later through the ballot box. Like Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Pinto da Costa returned to the presidency after a lean period of twenty years becoming his country's third democratically elected President, succeeding Miguel Trovoada (1991-2001) and Fradique de Menezes (2001-2011).

In mid-April outgoing President Menezes fixed the date for the election of his successor on July 17. After two consecutive terms in office, constitutionally he could not run for a third term. A few years ago, there was no doubt for many in São Tomé and Príncipe that the most suitable candidate for his succession was Francisco da Silva, the widely respected and popular president of the National Assembly (2006-2010). However, when he died of cancer after a three-year struggle in April 2010 the question about Menezes's succession was open again.

In the months preceding the elections, the National Electoral Commission (CEN) registered 13.842 new voters, increasing the total number of voters in the small country from 78.796 in the legislative elections of August 2010 to 92.638, of whom 8.598 were registered in the four constituencies abroad, Angola (3.536), Portugal (3.528), Gabon (1.389) and Equatorial Guinea (145). The CEN's US\$1 million budget for voter registration and the elections was co-financed by 40% by Japan, which made counterpart funds stemming from the sale of food aid available, and UNDP with US\$100.000. Portugal promised some US\$25.000 for equipment, printing

and transport of the ballot papers.¹ In addition, the Portuguese Electoral Administration sent two experts to provide the CEN with technical assistance during the electoral process.

Only three of the initial fourteen candidates were endorsed by political parties, while the others were all independent contenders. In early April, the major opposition party Liberation Movement of São Tomé and Príncipe/Social Democratic Party's (MLSTP/PSD) National Council nominated forty-five years old Aurélio Martins as the party's presidential candidate. Martins, a former journalist who made a fortune as a businessman in Angola, had been elected as the MLSTP/PSD's new party president with 73% of the votes on January 15th 2011. However, his nomination was fiercely contested by two other contenders for the party nomination: former Prime Minister and vice-president of the National Assembly Maria das Neves (fifty-two years old), and former Minister of Defense Elsa Pinto (forty-five years old), both claiming that the nomination process had been irregular. However, both women's criticisms were immediately rejected as ungrounded by the MLSTP/PSD's political commission. Consequently, Maria das Neves and Elsa Pinto both decided to run as independent candidates for the presidency.

During a meeting of the ADI's national council in early May, Prime Minister Patrice Trovoada, son of former president Miguel Trovoada, embarrassed his followers by suggesting that he was available to run for the presidency. His intentions were immediately rejected by his own party members, who did not accept that Trovoada would abandon the government only eight months after his election as Prime Minister. A week later, the ADI nominated Evaristo Carvalho, president

¹ Personal information from CEN president Vítor Correia (26 July 2011).



of the National Assembly and the party's vice-president, as presidential candidate. Known for his close ties with the Trovoada family, Carvalho did not initially have any intention of running for the presidency, but he quickly accepted Patrice Trovoada's choice. Still last year, in a television interview, Carvalho had declared that he felt too old to occupy senior political positions and only accepted becoming speaker of Parliament after having been pressured by his party.

The Democratic Convergence Party (PCD), the third largest party, nominated forty-six years old Delfim Neves, the party's vice-president and former Minister of Public Works, as presidential candidate. Delfim Neves, a successful businessman, had led Fradique de Menezes's election campaigns both in 2001 and 2006. During a meeting, the Democratic Movement Force of Change (MDFM), the party closest to President Menezes, decided to support Delfim Neves's candidature, but Menezes himself preferred not to publicly back his former campaign leader. Besides Maria das Neves and Elsa Pinto, another seven contenders presented themselves as independent candidates. The most prominent of all was Manuel Pinto da Costa, leader of the MLSTP from the party's foundation in 1972 to 1990, and the country's president during the socialist one-party state (1975-1990). In October 1990, when the MLSTP was transformed into a social-democratic party and renamed MLSTP/PSD, he resigned from the party leadership and announced his intention of running for President in the first democratic presidential elections of March 1991.

However, four months before the elections he withdrew his candidature when he realized that he had not the slightest chance against his challenger and erstwhile friend Miguel Trovoada. Finally, Trovoada, Prime Minister from 1975 to 1979 and imprisoned without charge or trial between 1979 and 1981 before he was allowed to leave for exile in Paris, was elected unopposed as President.

In 1996 and 2001 Pinto da Costa was his party's nominee for the presidential elections. In 1996 he lost by a narrow margin against incumbent Miguel Trovoada in the second round. In 2001, he was clearly defeated by Fradique de Menezes in the first round. In 1998, Pinto da Costa returned as chairman of the MLSTP/PSD, a position he maintained until 2005 when he retired from active politics. His adversaries have frequently criticized Pinto

da Costa, an economist trained in former East Germany, for his lack of initiative in creating businesses and jobs after he lost power in 1991. Given his age, this year's election, twenty years after his departure from the presidency, was his last chance to return to the highest office.

Pinto da Costa, who years ago admitted political responsibility for the mismanagement and economic collapse of his country during the repressive socialist one-party rule, claimed that he felt an obligation and duty to the people and could not watch passively as the country broke down. He promised to promote national reconciliation, guarantee political stability and fight corruption, in his opinion the major evils plaguing his country. Political stability is also an issue, because since 1991 the country has had sixteen different governments. Often, political instability was the result of conflicts between the Prime Minister and the President.

On June 2nd, a few days after having submitted his candidature, Pinto da Costa appeared in Lisbon to launch his campaign book *Terra*

Firme where he reveals his ideas on overcoming the archipelago's problems. The book was presented by former Portuguese President António Ramalho Eanes (1976-1986), who also authored the foreword where he praises the erstwhile dictator as "a competent, attentive politician guided by an ethic of the common good". Only four weeks later, the book was presented in São Tomé by former Prime Minister Carlos Graça (1994-1995). Despite his two electoral defeats, this time Pinto da Costa was considered a favorite. Unlike before, now he was not facing a strong charismatic rival and, equally

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important, the many failures during the democratic regime and the long time lag since his departure from the presidency had pushed the economic debacle and political oppression of his autocracy into the background. Many of the other independent contenders lacked the political profile and popularity and had no chance of obtaining a considerable number of votes, let alone of winning the elections. Sixty-one years old Gilberto Gil Umbelina, a musician who has spent half of his life in Portugal, had already participated in the legislative elections of August 2010.

His party, the Socialist Movement (MS), was founded just a few weeks before the polls and obtained only 238 votes (0.34%). Forty-nine years old Liberato Moniz, a Lisbon-based architect and founder of the small Universidade Lusíada in São Tomé (in 2006) had already announced his intention of running for the presidency many years ago. Unexpected, however, was the candidature of Jorge Coelho (53-years old), an economist who was chairman of the administrative board of the airport company ENASA from 2006 to 2009 and lived several years in the United States. In early June, following the announcement that he was running for the presidency, sixty-five years old Francisco Rita, a parliamentarian for the PCD, was dismissed as head of the provisional management commission of the port authority ENAPORT, after only eight months in office.

Another no-chance candidate was fifty-two years old economist Manuel Deus Lima, a former economic advisor to President Menezes, member of the MDFM and currently ambassador in Libreville. He was once detained for his involvement in illicit coining while he was an administrator at the Central Bank. In 2008 Deus Lima was elected as secretary-general of the MDFM, but Menezes dismissed him after only three months. Fifty-nine years old Carlos Espírito Santos 'Bené', also member of the MDFM and once a lecturer in African literature

at a private university in Lisbon, has also dreamed of becoming president for many years. A candidate who at least could claim to have played important roles in the country's recent political past was Filinto Costa Alegre (fifty-nine years old), a lawyer at the Central Bank. As a young student he was one of the leaders of the country's struggle for total independence in 1974/1975, and during the democratic transition in 1990 he was a co-founder of the *Grupo de Reflexão*, then the country's first opposition group that turned public. Costa Alegre claimed to want

to contribute to the country's third liberation, the economic, social and cultural liberation. His candidature was formally supported by José Cassandra, the president of the Regional Government of Príncipe (6.000 inhabitants) who published a letter calling for the electorate to vote for Costa Alegre.

On June 20th the Supreme Court of Justice conducted a sortition of the names of the candidates to determine the sequence of the thirteen candidates on the ballot paper. Two days later the Supreme Court went on to approve the candidature of fifty-nine years old Helder Barros, a former Minister of Education for the ADI and former staff member of the local UNDP office whose candidature had been initially rejected because it was submitted with a ten-minute delay. At the time the Portuguese had already produced 96.000 ballot papers with thirteen names. When the CEN asked them to print another edition with fourteen names, Portugal accepted reluctantly but demanded that the cost of the air transport of

the new ballot papers be covered by the CEN.

On June 29th, the number of candidates was again reduced to thirteen when Carlos Espírito Santo declared his withdrawal. Apparently, Espírito Santo was disappointed by his party and President Menezes who did not support his candidature, which had been announced many months before. The next day, the Constitutional Court further decreased the number of contenders to nine by excluding Rita, Umbelina, Moniz and Delfim Neves from the elections, because they had dual nationality, and had not withdrawn their second nationality by the time

The electoral observers from the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) considered the elections to be free and fair. However, the observers of the AU and the CPLP criticized the excessive practice of vote buying locally called *banho* when cash is given during the campaign and *boca de urna* when handed over at the polling station.

they had submitted their candidatures. Rita, Moniz and Delfim Neves filed an appeal against this decision. Neves claimed that he had cancelled his Portuguese nationality in time by presenting a declaration at the Portuguese embassy in São Tomé. At first he argued that it was not his responsibility to submit proof of the revocation of his Portuguese nationality, but then Neves rushed to the Central Registration Conservatory in Lisbon to obtain the documents, and on July 4th his local representative submitted the respective copies to the Constitutional Court.

When the official election campaign started on July 2nd, only nine candidates were able to compete for the votes of the almost 93.000 registered voters. This time the ballot papers with the names of fourteen candidates remained unchanged. For the first time in the country's history, at the request by the CEN, the nine candidates signed a 24-point code of electoral conduct to guarantee peaceful and fair elections. On July 7th the Constitutional Court decided by a 2-3 vote to readmit Delfim Neves as a candidate. The following morning, when Neves returned from Lisbon, his supporters received him enthusiastically at the airport and then marched through the city revealing the sizeable support he enjoyed among the population.

Notwithstanding, this decision by the Constitutional Court was fiercely criticized by Attorney General Roberto Raposo and the head of the country's bar association Gabriel Costa, since Hilário Garrido, one of the three judges who voted in favor of Neves' readmission is a brother of the candidate's wife. Raposo declared that by law, Garrido should have declared his bias and withdrawn from the vote. Moreover, the proof of Neves's revocation had only been submitted after the established deadline.² Garrido's participation was also criticized because shortly before the voting,

President Menezes had dismissed him as member of the Constitutional Court. In the context of this controversy, it became known that president of the Constitutional Court Silvestre Leite – who voted against Neves' readmission – is the brother of Evaristo Carvalho's wife.

The excessive number of independent no-chance candidates provoked several comments. The country's electoral law, which allows every citizen above thirty-five years and without a second nationality to run for the presidency could not alone be blamed for the large number. In the four previous presidential elections, the total number of candidates was between one (1991) and five (1996 and 2001), while the number of independent contenders never surpassed three (2001). In 2006, only three contenders ran for the presidency – the incumbent Menezes, supported by MDFM and PCD, Patrice Trovoada, backed by ADI and MLSTP/PSD, and one largely unknown independent no-chance candidate. Local observers suspected that some candidates might view the elections as an opportunity to negotiate their support for the two candidates in the run-off in exchange for money.³ Besides, they pointed to a certain trivialization of the post of head of state in the last years, resulting in the idea that virtually any citizen was capable of occupying the country's highest political office.

During the official fifteen-day election campaign, all candidates piously promised to safeguard political stability and combat corruption and poverty in the archipelago. Delfim Neves was forced to delay the beginning of his campaign for a week. Prime Minister and ADI leader Patrice Trovoada actively supported Carvalho during the campaign. Trovoada claimed that only Carvalho could guarantee political stability and repeatedly recalled Pinto da Costa's autocratic rule

The election of Manuel Pinto da Costa was a defeat for Patrice Trovoada, who, as did his predecessors, must now cohabit with a President from another political party. However, since 2006 when the last constitutional amendments came into effect, the presidential power to dismiss the government has been considerably reduced. Once an all-powerful President, the newly elected Pinto da Costa will be more of a representative political figure.

2 "Aceitação pelo Tribunal Constitucional de candidatura de Delfim Neves continua na grande polémica judicial" (*O Parvo*, 13 July 2011).

3 "Eleições em São Tomé, um negócio para alguns dos candidatos – diz Óscar Baia" (*VOA News*, 7 July 2011).



during the one-party regime. In turn Pinto da Costa declared that political stability could not be achieved by concentrating all political power in one single party, the ADI. He claimed that the opposite was true, since the concentration of power in one party could provoke instability, because it would take away the President's constitutional function of arbiter.

Pinto da Costa won the elections with 21.457 votes (33.9%), while Carvalho was the second most voted candidate with 13.125 votes (20.1%). However, due to the three rival candidates from his party, Pinto da Costa's result was worse than in 1996 and in 2001 when he got 36.8% and 39.9% of the votes respectively. Delfim Neves and Maria das Neves proved that they enjoyed considerable popularity among the electorate. They obtained 13.7% and 13.4% of the ballots respectively. Maria das Neves won in Príncipe where she obtained 36.3% of the votes, although the president of the Regional Government had publicly supported another candidate. She blamed vote buying for not having achieved the second position. The other six candidates all received less than 5% of the votes.

Elsa Pinto obtained only 4.2% of the ballots, but still more than her party's official candidate, Aurélio Martins. He must be considered the greatest loser of these elections, since as official party candidate he received only 3.9% of the votes, the worst result of the four competitors from the MLSTP/PSD. Still, on voting day Martins declared that he believed he could win. Afterwards he asserted that he had been victim of sabotage by his rival candidates and announced his support for Pinto da Costa in the second ballot. He also stated that he would complete his term as party leader. However, in view of his electoral debacle his future as party chairman must be considered as rather uncertain. Costa Alegre, who obtained 3.8% of the votes also blamed the *banho* for his defeat and refused to throw his support behind any of the two remaining candidates in the run-off.

In contrast, Delfim Neves, a known adversary of Trovoada, immediately declared his and his party's support for

Pinto da Costa in the second round, since he considered Carvalho to be a follower of the Trovoada family and to lack a personal political project. He explained that his party was ready to support Pinto da Costa, although Carvalho belonged to the so-called parties of change (PCD, ADI, MDFM) and recalled that in a similar constellation, in 2006, as presidential candidate, Patrice Trovoada himself was supported by the MLSTP/PSD against the candidate of change, Fradique de Menezes. A few days later, Maria das Neves also announced that she would support Pinto da Costa, arguing his political program would better serve the country's development. She stressed that her political support was not conditioned by any kind of financial returns.

The elections were boycotted by the population in the localities of Capela and Milagrosa (Mé-Zochi district) in protest against the absence of drinking water. In Santa Catarina (Lemba district), the people protested against the lack of access to local radio, television and the cell phone coverage by blocking the road to stop the elections from going forward in all places beyond that point. On July 20th the elections were repeated in all the boycotting localities, more than 1.000 voters.

The electoral observers from the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) considered the elections to be free and fair. However, the observers of the AU and the CPLP criticized the excessive practice of vote buying locally called *banho* when cash is given during the campaign and *boca de urna* when handed over at the polling station. Voter turnout was 68.4%, considerably less than in 1996 (77.3%), about the same turnout as in 2001 (68.5%) and 2006 (67.4%), but higher than in 1991 (60.0%) when Miguel Trovoada was the only candidate.

Immediately after the elections, rumors circulated that on the Friday preceding the elections the supporters of one of the candidates had withdrawn US\$2.5 million (40 billion Dobra) from two local banks to be used for vote buying. The online paper *Téla Nón* claimed that

Official Election results on July 17th

Pinto da Costa	Evaristo Carvalho	Delfim Neves	Maria das Neves	Elsa Pinto	Aurélio Martins	Filinto Costa Alegre	Helder Barros	Jorge Coelho	Manuel Deus Lima
33.88%	20.73%	13.66%	13.36%	4.24%	3.86%	3.79%	0.65%	0.63%	0.33%

the votes bought with this money had impacted the results significantly.⁴ Reportedly many voters even went to the campaign headquarters and residences of the candidates to ask for money. Costa Alegre reported that thousands of voters had asked him for 20.000 or 50.000 Dobra notes, but he had refused to pay. On July 22nd the fortnightly paper *O Parvo* published in its online edition a sequence of four photos showing Pinto da Costa taking bank notes from his wallet when a man approached his car apparently asking for money.⁵ A week later Carvalho confessed publicly to use vote buying, because unfortunately the electorate had gotten into the habit of receiving some support in exchange for casting their vote.⁶ For years, vote buying has become an integral part of the electoral process in this impoverished country, with voters asking for money and candidates paying for votes. Poor people have perceived that elections create opportunities to make some easy money from local politicians, who usually are little concerned about their constant struggle to make ends meet.

To avoid any suspicion of financial deals with other candidates, Pinto da Costa declared that any voluntary support by defeated contenders was welcome, but he would not negotiate support-involving payments. He asked the Attorney General to investigate the alleged withdrawal of billions of Dobras on the eve of the elections. Pinto da Costa again warned that a victory by Carvalho would result in a concentration of political power since the ADI would provide the heads of government and of state. In turn Patrice Trovoada accused Pinto da Costa of not knowing the democratic system well quoting Portugal and Cape Verde were the same party controlled government and the presidency, but there was no absolute power. He asserted that in a semi-presidential system there was no danger of absolute power, particularly if the ruling party had no majority in Parliament, as is currently the case in the archipelago. The fact is, voters in São Tomé and Príncipe have refused twice to elect the ruling party's candidate as President. When Pinto da Costa lost the presidential elections in 1996 and 2001, the MLSTP/PSD was in government.

The campaign for the run-off formerly began on July 28th, after the announcement of the official results of the first round by the Supreme Court. Counting on massive support by Prime Minister Trovoada, Carvalho hoped to win the votes of the 31.6% of the electorate who did not vote on July 17th. Besides, he tried to convince those who voted on Maria das Neves and Defim Neves not to vote for Pinto da Costa. His campaign strategy for the run-off was

again focused on recalling Pinto da Costa's dictatorship during the one-party rule. After independence in 1975 Carvalho himself was a member of the Political Bureau of the MLSTP, and from 1978 to 1980 he was Minister of Construction and Transport. However, in 1982 he abandoned the party in protest against Pinto da Costa's intentions to transform the MLSTP into a revolutionary vanguard party. Three years later, when the gradual political liberalization of the regime began, Carvalho became an independent deputy of the Popular National Assembly. In 1990, he was one of the founders of the *Grupo de Reflexão*, the opposition group which later in the year became the PCD, the party that won the first free elections in 1991. He was Minister of Defense in the PCD government of Noberto Costa Alegre (1992-1994) and Prime Minister in the transitional governments of 1994 and 2001, constituted by the Presidents Miguel Trovoada and Menezes respectively after they had dissolved Parliament.

Finally Carvalho was again defeated by Pinto da Costa, albeit by a rather small margin. Voter turnout was 74%, more than in the first round, but less than in the 1996 run-off (78.7%), when Pinto da Costa was defeated by Miguel Trovoada. The result was also a defeat for Patrice Trovoada, who, as did his predecessors, must now cohabit with a President from another political party. However, since 2006 when the last constitutional amendments came into effect, the presidential power to dismiss the government has been considerably reduced. Once an all-powerful President, the newly elected Pinto da Costa will be more of a representative political figure. Immediately after his election, he repeated that he was ready to cooperate constructively with the government. It remains to be seen whether the MLSTP/PSD and PCD, which together hold the majority in Parliament, will support this position over the remaining three years of the current legislature.

4 "'Banho' de Boca de Urna terá tido impacto no resultado do escrutínio de Domingo" (*Téla Nón*, 18 June 2011).

5 "Flagrantes com rosto do candidato Pinto da Costa" (*O Parvo*, 22 July 2011).

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