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THE ROLE OF PENTECOSTALISM IN DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT.
A CASE STUDY OF BRAZIL

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Abstract: The transition to democracy in Brazil has created a competitive religious environment which is causing religious shifting away from Catholicism. The Evangelical community, of which Pentecostalism is a subset, has been growing over the last few decades and is providing alternative structures for social and political expression previously denied to many. Pentecostal churches are building community networks and strengthening civil society in a way that is giving many of Brazil's marginalized access and legitimacy. The focus of this paper is to examine if Pentecostalism undermines or strengthens democratic consolidation in Brazil, and what role it has to play in power sharing.

Key Words: Pentecostalism, Evangelicals, religious conversion, Democratic Development, Modernization, Brazil

The State of Brazil. A Macro Analysis

Like so many other developing nations, Brazil has battled oppression, poverty and inequality. It has seen its share of monarchies, dictators and military regimes and more recently, embraced democracy with passage of a constitution in 1988 and free elections in 1989. The advent of democracy has ushered in neo-liberal economic policies and a consistently growing trend toward religious conversion which have impacted Brazil profoundly. It has also become an emerging economic player in the global market, and continues to show strength and perseverance in the face of a weakened global economy. In fact, recent 2013 economic indicators rank Brazil 8th in the world for GDP, along with low unemployment and little external debt¹.

A relatively healthy economy, free elections, and multiple political party environment position Brazil as a shining star among developing countries. However, on closer inspection, social indicators show a different story. The homicide rate for the period of 1980-2002 has skyrocketed from 15 to 32 per 100,000 people². And, recent data from Transparency International reveal a highly fractured and weak political system ranking Brazil 69 out of 178 for high corruption³. The effects of rapid industrialization and globalization have allowed persistent income inequality, social anomie and disconnect to remain⁴ while re-enforcing existing structures of clientelism⁵. It is, therefore, evident that underneath the neo-liberal policies and strong economic indicators there are deep divides and unstable political institutions. These imbalances are threatening the consolidation and stability of democracy in Brazil⁶.

There is much to be said about the political and social dynamics of Brazil which are contributing to instability. Of particular interest, are the features of uneven development, the effects of modernization and land management prevalent in Brazil. However, little has been written about how these changes are affecting religious shifting. There are multiple political and social dynamics at work, and it is critical to understand whether they are acting against or in favor of a stable democracy. As a study of the politology of religion, this paper examines a Brazilian state with the highest percentage of Evangelicals in the country. The region provides an example of how these social and political forces are creating conflict, and how Evangelicals are a viable resource for cooperation.

Defining Democracy

In order to examine Brazil's democracy, it is important to elucidate the parameters of the discussion. Defining "democracy" is difficult because there is no clear theoretical framework available. Experts often disagree on what defines a democracy or what elements must be in place for a stable democracy. Nevertheless, for this study I use Lipset and Lankin's

definition of democracy as a starting point: “an institutional arrangement in which all adult individuals have the power to vote, through free and fair competitive elections, for their chief executive and national legislature”⁷. This definition, while bare bones, articulates the need for participation by citizens. The next step is to define the features necessary for a consolidated democracy. The criteria for consolidation, as defined by Linz and Stepan, require that democracy: 1) be the only choice 2) be deeply internalized by the citizenry 3) be institutionally legitimized 4) be cohesive and have a robust civil society.

Granted, Brazil’s relatively high literacy rate, low unemployment rate and impressive budget surplus⁸ create an impression of stability. However, in order to understand the impact of the social and political dynamics going on in Brazil it requires digging deeper than the current economic indicators. The percentage of those living on less than \$2 a day and living below the poverty line compared to the percentage of those with the highest income⁹, reveals a society that is one of the most unequal in the world¹⁰. The United Nations ranks Brazil 84th out of 187 countries in the area of human development (based on life expectancy, educational attainment, and income), and gives it a GINI coefficient of 53.9 for inequality (the scale is 0 for absolute equality and 100 for absolute inequality)¹¹. Even more telling is the statistic showing that 84% of respondents are dissatisfied with the direction of the country. While these respondents claimed to be Pentecostal or Charismatic, thus not representing the general public, it is telling nonetheless¹². These statistics reveal a different side of Brazil. And, even though there are several indications of a healthy democracy, the intense inequality, the perception of corruption and the tenuous democratic attitudes threaten to undermine it or, worse, collapse it. The threat, however, does not come from a foreign enemy or a visible authoritative regime, but from a lack of cohesion and trust among the citizens. Consequently, Brazil demonstrates a high degree of democracy, but low degrees of consolidation among its citizens.

Is Brazil’s democracy institutionally legitimate? It presents as a thriving democracy with relatively healthy, competitive elections and multiple political parties. But, on the other hand, there are indications that the system is fractured. One strong indication of poor institutional legitimacy is the rate of violent crimes committed. In 2010, the United Nations documents that there were 40,974 intentional homicides, and of those, 89.8% were males¹³. In terms of corruption, a survey done by Pew Forum shows that 94% of respondents think corruption is a very big problem¹⁴. The political system is highly fragmented and has been plagued with multiple scandals over the years.

In order to understand what is driving these deep divides, it is important to look at Brazil’s rapid development. As pointed out earlier,

the rate of development affects the quality of development. It is no secret that Brazil's rise to become the strongest economy in the region happened relatively quickly. While other Latin American countries were struggling to emerge from failed import substitution policies, Brazil was on track to be an economic miracle. Now as one of the BRIC countries, it is an economic powerhouse. The challenge for Brazil, however, is sustaining its neo-liberal markets in the face of a fledgling democracy and uneven development. Because, as Douglas Petersen points out, if most democracies in Latin America are flawed then they are unable to respond to the needs of whole segments of society¹⁵.

Modernization has been positive for Brazil in many ways. The GINI index which measures income distribution in a country, was at 63.3 in 1989, but has consistently dropped since 1993 to an all time low of 54.7 in 2009¹⁶. The illiteracy rates have also dropped significantly and so has unemployment. Unemployment in 2003 was at 9%, but at the last report in January 2012 it has dropped to 5.5%¹⁷. It is likely that as job opportunities increase, quality of life increases as well.

Even though all these indicators point to an increased quality of life, other indicators point to persistent inequality, exclusion from resources and insecurity. For example, the IBGE reports the monthly average family income per capita in 2006 as R\$596.00 (approximately \$327.86 USD), but half of these families are living below R\$350.00 a month (roughly equivalent to \$192.54 USD). This translates into an income gap of the richest 10% making 18.2% more than the poorest 40% in 2006. The illiteracy rates also show a huge disparity. In 2007 the rate of illiteracy in rural areas was 23.3% compared to 7.6% in urban areas¹⁸. In the processes of globalization, all traditions are radically changed and cultural identities are threatened¹⁹. Gaskill argues that these processes are the catalyst to anomie so evident in Latin America²⁰. Survey data help to support this argument: only 35% believe that most people are better off in a free market economy, 75% believe the government should guarantee every citizen food and a place to eat, and 79% believe that moral decline is a big problem²¹.

Capitalism has opened up new markets and new opportunities, creating rapid expansion and development. In fact, Brazil has transitioned from a predominantly agrarian society to a largely urban one. In 1960's only 44.7% of the population lived in urban areas and by 2010 this number had climbed to 84.4%²². This shift is creating overcrowding in the urban areas thereby exacerbating existing social stresses. The government has responded by opening up previously undeveloped land as an escape valve for the social tensions occurring in the cities²³. Most of this development has been in the Amazonian region of the north, creating high rates of migration. Just in the period of 2000-2010 alone, the northern region has experienced an increase of almost 23% in population. This massive

migration is producing large scale land conflicts, resulting in oppression and increased violence. It is difficult to know exactly how the Pentecostal “church” is affecting the migrating populations to the Amazonian region, but much has been written on the social and psychological benefits provided by the Pentecostal church to the community²⁴.

Understanding Religion in Brazil

How are Brazilians responding to the effects of modernization? Part of the answer is found in the phenomenon of religious conversion. Recent demographic data show that even though Brazil still has the world’s largest Catholic population, there is another trend that is emerging. Brazil now has one of the fastest growing Pentecostal/Evangelical populations. While many Brazilians have been leaving the Catholic Church for the Pentecostal faith since the 1940’s, the trend has continued to grow significantly since the 1990’s. The census data shows that from 1940 to 2010, Catholicism dropped from 95% to 64.6%, while Protestants (of which Pentecostals are a sub-set) increased from 2.6% to 22.2% in the same period²⁵. The World Value Survey conducted in 2006 shows a further decline in Catholicism to 69.1% and the percentage of Evangelicals at 23.3 % (2.3% claimed to be Protestant)²⁶. The Pew Forum’s research in Brazil shows that eight in ten Protestants are either Pentecostal or Charismatic, and that the majority of Pentecostals belong to the Assemblies of God Pentecostal Church claiming approximately 7 million, and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (Universal Church) claiming approximately 2 million adherents in 2000 which is an increase of 1.8 million members between 1991-2000 ²⁷.

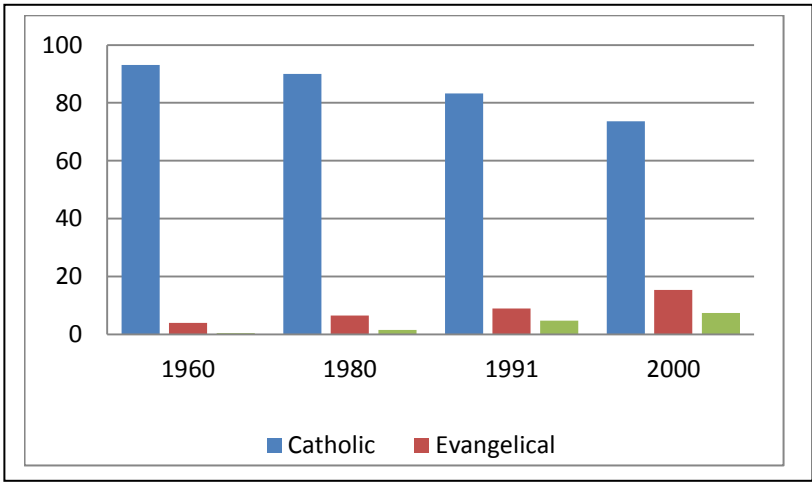


Figure 1. Religious Conversion in Brazil. Data source: IBGE

The religious shifting in Brazil has not decreased religiosity. In fact, data on religious practices show that 96.7% of respondents “totally believe” in God, 70.1% pray every day, and 25.6% attend church or religious services more than once a week²⁸. The Association of Religion Data Archives, using survey data from the World Values Survey, show that in 1991, 87.7% of those surveyed identified as a “religious person”, and by 2005 it was still 88%²⁹. The same data shows that religion is important to most Brazilians, and, in fact, has a role to play in Brazilian society.

Dealing with the effects of modernization. The literature reveals Brazilians are converting to Pentecostalism to help them deal with the effects of modernization, ineffective social policies, and ongoing exclusion and inequality. This is particularly true with the poor and the marginalized in Brazil who are converting to Pentecostalism³⁰. As Casanova observes all traditions “are radically transformed in the process of modernization” and people are “forced to respond to and adjust to modern conditions”³¹. The movement away from traditional life to a more modern society has affected the nature and structure of religious institutions in Brazil.

Structures of participation. Does the structure of participation within the Catholic Church and the Pentecostal church really matter? Much of the literature shows that it does matter. For instance, Lipset and Lakin argue that religion is only able to positively affect democracy insofar as it reflects a positive structure of participation³². Several experts argue that Pentecostalism exhibits egalitarian structures which allow everyone to participate in the leadership, and in the body of the church³³. This is not always the case within the Catholic Church. As Lipset and Lakin’s work on democracies in Latin America shows, the authoritarian structures of the Catholic church have contributed to conditions that are hostile to a stable democracy, and Cava claims that Pentecostalism is a “root contradiction to Catholicism”³⁴.

The Catholic Church, overseen by the Pope in Rome, has a traditional structure of leadership which is often imported from other countries. However, most Pentecostal churches in Brazil are made up of predominantly indigenous members and socially embedded³⁵, making them attractive to the poor and the marginalized³⁶. Because many of the Pentecostal churches are relatively de-centralized and autonomous³⁷, they are usually self-governing and flexible³⁸. This feature is distinctive from the Catholic Church’s traditionally hierarchical, centralized structure and provides a unique opportunity for the marginalized to gain access to political and social space.

Poor land management. Ineffective social policies such as poor land management is also driving religious conversion, particularly in the Amazonian region³⁹. Scholars have documented the effects of massive migration and how this has triggered land conflict, racism, and violence⁴⁰.

Rowan argues these types of abuses trigger the marginalized to seek out religion as a tool for change and a way to claim legitimacy⁴¹. Burdick's work also reveals that Protestantism/Pentecostalism helps the poor deal with abuses, create counterdiscourse to racism, and provide for a political space⁴².

So much of the literature on religious conversion focuses on the Pentecostal Church's ability to attract the poor and the marginalized⁴³. Nevertheless, the current literature does not provide definitive answers for what role the Evangelical church can play in accessing change; particularly in a fragmented democracy such as Brazil's. Is Pentecostalism able to contribute to cohesive democratic development? Some of the current literature on Latin American Pentecostalism argues that it may contribute while others argue it will not. Many scholars point to the Evangelical/ Pentecostal churches' ability to mobilize as a positive factor for democratic development⁴⁴. While others suggest that the Evangelical/Pentecostal church may be a force against⁴⁵ or have little to no effect on governmental structures⁴⁶. Petersen and Von Sinner argue that the effects of social networks created through religious community are positive for consolidation⁴⁷ and Freston points to these linkages as social capital⁴⁸. Von Sinner and Petersen also refer to Pentecostalism's potential to form alternative structures which they describe as "intermediate organizations"⁴⁹, and "alternative institutional organizations"⁵⁰. However, Petersen also argues that even though Pentecostals have the ability to link themselves horizontally does not necessarily translate into effective change vertically⁵¹. At any rate, the current research only hints at the potential for Pentecostalism to be a viable alternative institution capable of contributing to consolidation. But, it falls short in describing the nature or purpose of this alternative structure and how it would access change.

Rondonia: A Micro Analysis of Land Conflict

Nowhere has the Protestant growth been more active in Brazil than in the northern section of the country which inhabits the Amazonian basin. Plagued with land conflict, massive deforestation and even violence, this region has been at the center of international attention for the last few decades. It has also become a hotbed for Protestant growth. Of all the Amazonian states, though, only one has the distinction of having the most increase in Protestants for the entire country: Rondonia which is located in the northwest region of the Amazon.

According to the IBGE, Rondonia stands out as having the highest percentage of Protestants/Evangelicals in the country. Over the past 40 years Rondonia has had an explosion in Evangelical growth. In 1960, only 3.6% of the population were Protestant, by 1980 that figure climbed to

over 17%, and by 2010 to 33.8%⁵². The demographics have also changed over the years. The change in demographics is most likely due to a high percentage of migration to the area. In 2010, the IBGE records Rondonia as the highest percentage of those not born in the municipality (58.6% of residents). This data suggest that as migrants move to the area they bring change with them. In fact, from 1960 to 2010, those living in this region claiming to be Protestant went from 1.1% of population to 33.8%⁵³. Since Pentecostals are highly motivated to “convert” others, it is likely that high degrees of migration have impacted religious conversion in the region. In fact, the IBGE describes Rondonia as a hotbed of Evangelical conversion.

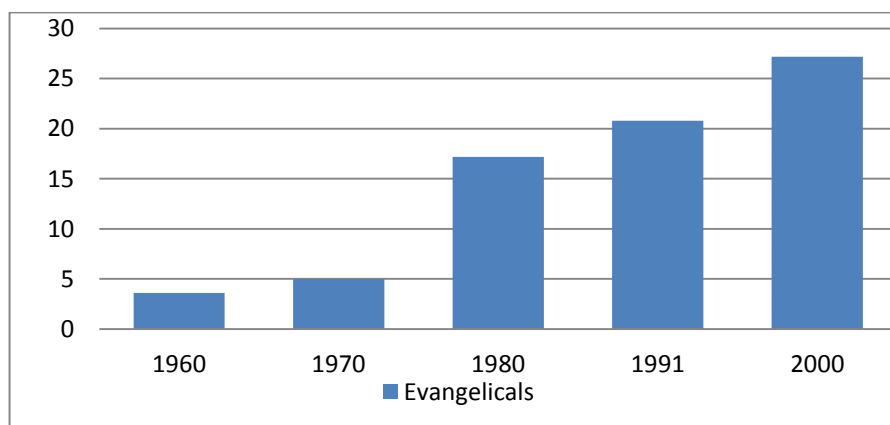


Figure 2. The Growth of Evangelicals in Rondonia for the years 1960-2000; data compiled from IBGE census. Online source: www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/tendencias_demograficas/tabela02.pdf

The region borders Bolivia to the west, and for centuries was a desolate jungle inhabited only by indigenous peoples and accessible by few. Eventually, border disputes between Bolivia and Brazil prompted the government to begin development in the region as a way to secure the border. In the early 1960's the government began clearing the forests of Rondonia in order to provide affordable land to landless migrants overcrowding the cities⁵⁴.

Highway systems were built to connect Rondonia to the center-south region⁵⁵ and, small-farmer settlements were created through the government's National Integration Program (PIN)⁵⁶. This first project reported a migration of 100,000 families to Rondonia during 1971-1974; three-quarters of which were poor families from the Northeast⁵⁷. Then in the 1980's the World Bank, in conjunction with the national government, launched the Northeastern Brazil Integration Development Program (Polonoroeste). Among the many goals of this program was to offer public land to landless farmers and to absorb the economically disadvantaged

from other regions⁵⁸. These developments have created massive migration of the poor trying to gain access to affordable land in Rondonia. Development has also opened up land for cattle ranchers, loggers and other agricultural industries. Thereby, causing large masses of people settling in the Amazonian region.

In fact, the IBGE records a population growth in Rondonia of 490,000 in 1980 to over 1.7 million in 2014⁵⁹. Included in this mass migration are the landless poor, squatters and land speculators⁶⁰, triggering land conflict, rural violence, and massive deforestation⁶¹. The government's transfer of public land to private ownership, and subsidies and tax breaks have caused illegal transactions, chaotic land rights, and slave labor working conditions⁶². Large landowners and developers often employ wage earners at subsistent wages. The chaotic land development has also affected the indigenous in the area. Even though the government has demarcated indigenous lands, the protective lines are unclear, and regularly disregarded.

The affects of migration and capitalist development on Rondonia have included an increase in violence. Numerous studies by independent organizations and by government entities confirm that Rondonia suffers from poor land management, and large scale corruption by the police and the politicians. The IBGE shows the Rondonia as having the highest percentage of violent deaths among women for 2008⁶³ and the Human Rights Watch sites Rondonia as a dangerous place due to rural violence⁶⁴. Most of the research attributes this violence to land struggles⁶⁵. Pace describes this conflict as a constant battle between farmers/extractors and land grabbers/developers⁶⁶. Often, large landowners/grabbers evict occupants, workers or small farmers in order to occupy or sell the land. If eviction does not work they resort to intimidation or violence including kidnapping, torture, and even murder⁶⁷. The Human Rights Watch reports multiple cases of torture and rampant violence against the poor and landless peasants, including abuses by the local police⁶⁸. The International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL) has issued a report on the plight of the poor peasants in Rondonia, documenting slave labor and several massacres including the most famous in 1995 when paramilitary police fired on a group of squatter families killing more than 12 people⁶⁹.

Evangelical Growth in Rondonia. Rondonia provides a snapshot of the social dynamics affecting those struggling to participate in a developing democracy. Like most of Brazil, it is plagued with uneven development and poor public policy development. The end result is increased violence and inequality for many sectors of society. The portability of the Protestant religion has allowed the religion to grow and thrive in this region. The faith, and the support of the religious community, is providing an outlet to a chaotic world of violence, illicit activity and upheaval.

Given the persistence of fragmented political parties in Brazil, it is hard to know the impact of the Evangelical community. However, there is a curious development occurring in Rondonia. For starters, the percentage of voters in Rondonia has continued to climb over the years, remaining steady in the 2010 elections.

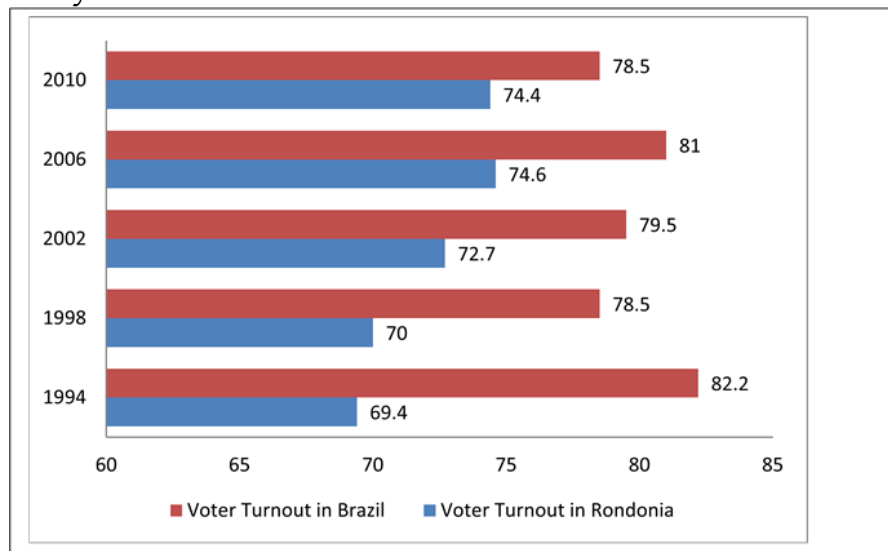


Figure 3. Voter Turnout in Brazil and Rondonia. Aggregate voter data expressed in percentages for years 1994-2000. Data compiled from electionresources.org. Online source:

<http://electionresources.org/br/president.php?election=2010&state=PE>

While substantially lower than the national average, the data show that Rondonians are taking more of an interest in presidential elections. Also noteworthy, is the 2010 presidential election. Even though Dilma from the Worker's Party (PT) won the election, Serra from the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) took 52.6% in Rondonia, compared to Dilma's 47.4%⁷⁰. Rondonia was one of eleven states/territories to go to Serra in the final elections. Further, Serra's party, the PSDB, has had a strong showing in Rondonia over the years. In 1994 and in 1998, the PSDB presidential candidate, Cardoso, was elected president and won Rondonia overwhelmingly. In Rondonia in 2002, the PSDB presidential candidate had a strong showing, but did not win the final election, and in 2006, the PSDB presidential candidate won in the runoffs, but not in the final elections.

The PSDB is described as a party in the center by the US State Department, but it has recently formed an alliance with the Democratic Party (DEM) which is described as center-right⁷¹. While there are many political parties in Brazil, the PSDB is the main opposition party to the PT which is described by the US State Department as center-left. The DEM is a member of the Christian Democrat Organization of America (ODCA) and the PSDB is an observing party. Both parties are focused on stabilization

and growth of the economy, land reform and social justice. The high concentration of Evangelicals in Rondonia is likely contributing to the strong showing of the PSDB in the region.

While regions like Rondonia continue to expand and develop, violence and conflict are escalating. Land owners, squatters and the indigenous battle over land in a chaotic and lawless environment. This is a common occurrence in Brazil, particularly in the Amazon region. These conflicts, violence and upheaval threaten democracy. In order for Brazil's democracy to sustain development and to become deeply rooted, the conflict must be reduced. After all, if large sectors of society feel excluded from the process of growth and development, they are likely to be a factor for resistance. Therefore, considering the possibility of religion in a power sharing relationship is a worthy endeavor.

How Protestantism Can Reduce Fragmentation

What is the role of power sharing, and how does it work? Because power sharing emphasizes collective interests through coalition and consensus building the goal is to produce a stable, entrenched democracy that reduces conflict⁷². It also provides for more participation by a broader range of citizens, allowing inclusion of all population groups⁷³. This is crucial in deeply divided societies where many groups are often excluded. The difference between the consensus model and the majoritarian model is the former tries to disperse and restrain power while the latter concentrates power in the hands of the majority. The consensus model is more beneficial for inclusion and participation, particularly in developing democracies. Some of the features of an effective consensus democracy include: broad coalition cabinets, parliamentarism, a proportional electoral system, and elite accommodation⁷⁴. While Lijphart (2008) concedes that parliamentarism is ideal for consociationalism, presidentialism is not incompatible with the theory. What is most crucial, however, is the interaction by and with the elites. In a power sharing arrangement, the elites are required to accommodate and collaborate with rival relations, and must be committed to cohesion and achieving stability⁷⁵. This, in effect, means that the elites of the religious institutions must work together to achieve consensus. Or, another option is for religious elites to collaborate by forming a pressure group. The model would be similar to the Christian Coalition/Christian right in America or the Christians on the Left (formerly known as the Christian Socialist Movement) in the United Kingdom.

Consensus Among Religious Elites. Accommodating the demands of rival relations, is not an easy undertaking. The current Protestant/Pentecostal churches are scattered all over the political map, and have demonstrated little willingness to compromise. In order for Evangelical churches to act as a collective pressure group, they will have to form a

consensus on issues. An important issue to rally around is better land management, particularly decreasing illegal land grabs and fraud. Land rights as a social issue is already an important political hot button. It is an effective impetus to forming a coalition necessary for influencing public legislation. Groups like the Landless Workers and the Catholic Church's CEB's, which have been fighting for land rights for decades, are entrenched social movements ripe for consensus.

In order for elites to establish long term consensus, democratic stability has to be the primary goal⁷⁶. Otherwise, the need for power and domination undermine support. Elites are likely to be committed to stability and consolidation if they understand it is the only way to gain access, and that there is political strength in numbers. In other words, in a stable democracy there is a seat at the table for them. Without a commitment to stability, though, the system will continue to be fragmented and stalled in conflict. Consequently, the religious institutions are at risk of losing their influence or by being dominated by hegemony. These are reasons enough to pursue a power sharing arrangement. This is particularly true for all Protestant groups as they compete for adherents in a competitive market, long dominated by the Catholic Church.

Evangelicals as a Power Sharing Partner. The key, is for the religious elites, acting as a pressure group, and in collaboration with a political party to mobilize around a prominent cleavage⁷⁷. The most likely scenario is for the religious leaders from the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) and the Assemblies of God (AG), to collaborate with leaders from the mainline Protestant churches and the Catholic Church. The large Pentecostal churches, have the organizational structure, the large membership base, and the financial wealth necessary for forming a faction. In fact, the UCKG owns several television and radio stations, and is already heavily involved in the Brazilian Republican party. A former notable UCKG member is Jose' Alencar, Lula's Vice President in 2002 and 2006. He was able to mobilize a significant number of Evangelicals in both elections. Currently, there are over 60 Evangelicals serving in the Brazilian congress, and the past presidential elections have courted the Evangelical community. Attempted coalitions have had short term success, but cotention remains a problem.

If consensus is necessary for coalition, then the "glue" is likely to be found in the fight for social justice. Social action is evident in the number of Non-Profit Private Foundations and Associations (Fasfil) recorded by the IBGE. In 2005, there were 338 Fasfil's in Brazil of which 35.2% worked for citizen's rights, 24.8% were religious institutions, and 7.2% worked in the field of health and education. There was a 22.6% increase in Fasfil's between 2002-2005, and an 18.9% increase in religious organizations in the same period⁷⁸. A recent survey done in 2006, shows 77% of the general public and 87% of Pentecostals believe they have a responsibility to work

for justice for the poor, and 75% of the general public and 81% of Pentecostals think the government should guarantee every citizen enough to eat and somewhere to sleep⁷⁹. When you combine this data with the organizations fighting for land rights, it is evident that social justice matters to Brazilians. This is no surprise considering that the Social Justice theology is already rooted in Brazilian culture. In many ways, the Social Justice theology is the Protestant version of the Liberation Theology of Catholic Church, but it is not necessarily grounded in class warfare/Marxism. It also does not run counter to democracy or capitalism. Rather, the theology infuses religion into politics through a “calling” placed on the believers. In this way, the Social Justice theology is capable of transcending race, gender and socioeconomic position. Thus, it provides a powerful basis for consensus.

In a successful power sharing arrangement, stability is the goal and it is accomplished through political pacts and/or coalitions⁸⁰. The elites of the Protestant, Pentecostal, and Catholic churches would ideally form an alliance with a political party focused on reducing social injustice. The focus of issues include: better land management, a more fair and accessible legal system, a less corrupt police force which would eliminate para-military forces, and improved educational funding/systems. These issues will allow elite leaders to build coalitions with minimal friction, and lasting potential. ultimately, though, the focus of social justice is to reduce inequality.

Is the Evangelical community capable of a power sharing relationship? The Evangelical community is fragmented and lacks a single governing body like the Catholic Church which makes direct political involvement and a power sharing arrangement difficult. Nonetheless, Evangelicals have already shown a capacity for social network and institutional building, and for political mobilization. They are already exerting political pressure. In fact, the CIA World Factbook refers to Evangelical churches as pressure groups, along with the Catholic Church and land rights’ movements⁸¹.

The competitive landscape among religious groups is enormous, though, and while the Catholic Church does not present a hegemonic threat, there is little possibility for alliance between it and other Christian churches. Further, the traditional Protestant churches do not trust the neo-Pentecostal branches, especially the UCKG. Recent corruption charges against the UCKG leadership reveal deep tensions and divides across denominations. These issues, combined with a deeply mistrusting culture which is due in part to a historically corrupt government, is likely to make any power sharing arrangement difficult and short lived. Nevertheless, the Evangelical community is strong and growing, thereby making it a undeniable force. More conceivably, though, is a pressure group that includes individual religious leaders, but not necessarily churches. Similar to the CC and CSM, the organizational model is one of autonomy. The

group functions independently, but in conjunction with churches and a political party. The group educates and mobilizes the churches members in order to influence and shape public policy, thereby acting as a conduit between the two.

Conclusions and Implications

With democracy trying to take root in countries previously denied such as Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, the fight for human rights has become more pertinent, and the role of religion has become more significant. In fact, data suggests that in many parts of the world religiosity is growing. This is particularly true in the developing world. New freedom means religious options, and this is creating a religious shifting. Nowhere is this more evident than in Brazil. A country with a deeply religious identity. The world's largest Catholic country is now home to the largest Pentecostal movement. Brazilians' have not abandoned their faith, but are finding relief in and expression through the Pentecostal faith.

Pentecostalism is providing alternative structures for social and political expression previously denied to many. Now the oppressed and marginalized are forging community networks, and accessing legitimacy which makes them an undeniable force. The impact of this mobilization and cohesiveness begs the question: does Pentecostalism undermine or strengthen democracy?

Pentecostalism as a Positive Force

If the goal of democracy is to give citizens access to the decision making process, then Pentecostalism is a positive force. If, as Lipset and Larkin argue, religion positively affects democracy when the structure of participation is open, then Pentecostalism is a positive force⁸². If cohesion and inclusion is a necessary feature of a stable democracy⁸³, then Pentecostalism is an agent of stability. In this paper, I have argued that Protestantism, Pentecostalism in particular, strengthens democracy. The distinct features of Pentecostalism are helping sectors of society create social and political space through civic society. More importantly, their faith is being expressed through new roles of leadership, inclusion and expression. There is a sense of community and responsibility not seen in the past.

Pentecostalism as a Social Force

In Brazil, the Protestant faith is offering relief to the suffering while also seeking social justice. What the Liberation Theology of the Catholic Church attempted to do is now being expressed through the Social Justice theology of Protestantism. The religious are combining their religious

values with their fight for social equality. The mostly indigenous movement of Pentecostalism is providing the mechanisms of equality regularly denied to the oppressed and excluded. This is translating into new identities of expression. However, while Pentecostalism is providing a process of inclusion, it has not fully manifested itself into a politically cohesive body. Much like the political parties, the religious community is fragmented and competitive.

Current research suggest that Evangelicals are not particularly unified or overly interested in participating in the political process. Certainly, the Brazilian political landscape makes it hard to imagine a religious institution accessing participation on any level. However, the Protestant churches have already shown some propensity to participate and, more importantly, to mobilize the vote. In the 2010 election alone, there were a total of 71 evangelical deputies and senators elected, up from 43 in 2006. In the same election, Silva, presidential candidate and AG member, garnered 19% of the vote in the primary election even though she was representing a little known party. In a country of almost 200 million people, of whom approximately 26 million are Protestant (Pewforum.org 2006), it is evident that the Protestant churches have institutional strength and significant resources.

These large membership bases combined with powerful leadership, make Pentecostalism an undeniable force. Certainly, the data on how Brazilians feel about religious leaders and institutions are telling. In a nationwide 2005 survey, 54% of respondents believe that religious leaders should influence government⁸⁴, and 77% have confidence in religious institutions, 46.7% believe churches give answers to social problems (up from 41.6% in 1991), and 62.1% believe churches give answers to moral problems (up from 43.8% in 1991)⁸⁵. This data suggest that religious leaders (and institutions) are influential, trusted and valued when compared to other institutions.

The current federal government structure includes a form of proportional representation, but not on the basis of religion (it is based on the percentage of population in each state and federation). However, considering the significance Brazilians place on religion, it seems appropriate to factor religious groups/churches into the informal political structure. In fact, in according to data calculated by the Association of Religion Data Archives from the World Values Survey in 2005, 88% of respondents said they identify as religious (this number is up from 85.4% in 1997). More importantly, though, are the 91% who reported they believed religion is important⁸⁶. These figures and others presented throughout the paper, clearly indicate that Brazilians are religious, and that religion plays a significant role in the decision making process (social and political). If this is in fact the case, then how does Pentecostalism factor in as a positive force for consensus? In this paper, I have argued that a power sharing relationship is one answer.

Sustaining Democracy

Modernization and capitalism have indeed given Brazil a place at the global table. However, rapid development has created one of the world's most unequal societies beset with violence and oppression. The effects of anomie leave people feeling unsafe and insecure. The case for Rondonia shows that the demand for land and further expansion does not abate. Consequently, massive migration, chaotic land laws and inability to address abuses, often result in land grabbers and illegal squatters resolving their disputes through violence and oppression. These factors are threatening Brazil's democratic stability.

In order for Brazil's democracy to sustain development and to become deeply rooted, it is important for conflict to be reduced. After all, if people feel insecure and are unable to participate in society, they are likely to feel unsatisfied with the political process. This makes the Protestant church a valuable resource. They have already shown a capacity for social networks, and for political mobilization. The logical next step is to factor them in as a consensus builder.

While Brazil's pattern of governing is not ideal to the consociational model, it is still possible to increase consensus. As Lijphart pointed out, what is most important for consensus building are the elites. If the elites are committed to consensus, and to stabilizing democracy, then power sharing is more likely to occur. This research shows that the Protestant churches, Pentecostals in particular, demonstrate a high degree of power which is translating into a formidable power bloc. Further, past voting behavior has shown that politicians recognize this, and have begun courting the evangelical vote. What is necessary for consensus, is an organized attempt at power sharing. But, first it must be generally accepted that religion, Protestantism particularly, has a positive role to play.

What is likely to affect this change? First, the political elites must be willing to invite the religious leaders to the table which should not be difficult considering that many of the political elite identify as evangelical. Secondly, the religious elite must be willing to form a consensus. The most likely scenario: a pressure group which forms an alliance with a political party. As mentioned earlier, the Christian Coalition joining with the Republican Party in America, and the Christians on the Left with the Labour Party in Britain present as possible models for Brazil. In this model the pressure group, working as a grassroots movement, acts as a bridge between the church and political party to affect public policy. The key issues drawing the most support and consensus in Brazil would mostly likely include: social justice and land reform.

What is likely to motivate religious leaders to unite as a pressure group? Mainly, it would be to avoid a religious hegemonic power. More importantly, though, is to be included in the decision making process, and

to access legitimacy for the church and for its members. Lipset and Lakin argue that as democratization continues, more social actors will emerge⁸⁷, creating the need for more social and political space. The church has a role in providing this space.

Implications

What are the implications of a power sharing relationship which includes Protestants/Pentecostals? While it is always hard to foresee the political consequences of change, it is possible to look at past behavior, and predict future behavior with a degree of certainty. This is a benefit of using the case study method in conjunction with quantitative survey data. It allows the researcher to look at the nuances of a particular case in order to make a reasonable assertion about future events. Brazil presents as a fascinating, and worthwhile case. As a developing nation it has many positive features and advantages; and somewhat reliable survey data. Since there are deep divides that are threatening cohesion and consolidation, it is important to evaluate measures that are likely to reduce these inequalities and risks. Brazil has already taken steps to increase consensus by using proportional representation, but it has not fully factored in religion. Does Protestantism have the features necessary for reducing conflict, for increasing cohesion, and for creating access for those traditionally excluded?

There are many drawbacks to this argument. First, and foremost, the competition among religious groups is enormous, and while the Catholic Church does not present as a hegemonic threat, there is little possibility for alliance. Mistrust among congregations and adherents is a problem, and corruption is prevalent in the Prosperity Theology churches. Further, there seems to be little room for agreement by religious groups on political issues other than on social/moral issues such as gay marriage and abortion. It is unclear whether churches would be able to form alliances on little else. Even more damaging is the ongoing tension among religious leaders and a deeply mistrusting culture which is likely to make any power sharing arrangement difficult, and short lived. Another drawback is the fragmented political party system. The parties have been unable to forge any lasting alliances or to develop cohesive party platforms; necessary components for long term stability. Lastly, combining religion with politics may possibly increase conflict. Even when representation is guaranteed as in a power sharing arrangement.

Final Thoughts

Brazilians are religious. Contrary to secularization theory, faith is important to them and it is impacting their daily lives significantly. Religion offers hope to the suffering and expression to the marginalized.

These factors, combined with the recent transition to democracy, are creating a competitive religious environment in Brazil. Within this environment, Evangelicals are developing large social networks which seem to be translating into political mobilization. However, the ability for churches to act as a cohesive unit in the political realm remains a challenge. In order to elucidate the argument further, it is recommended that more cases be included. By examining other developing countries with large and growing Pentecostal communities, it is possible to determine the likelihood of Protestants/Pentecostals entering into a stable and long term power sharing arrangement. One example that comes to mind is the large and growing Pentecostal community in South Korea.

The need to understand religion and its role in improving or undermining democracy is a necessity. In the developing world, where rapid change may be causing instability and chaos, religion seems to be providing many with coping mechanisms. No where is this more true than in Latin America. The transition to democracy has also created a religious shifting that does not appear to be abating. Therefore, studying the role of religion, and its effects on democracy is a worthy and ongoing process.

Notes:

1. The countries ranked in order which are ahead of Brazil for 2013 GDP: United States, European Union, China, India, Japan, Germany and Russia; the United Kingdom is ranked just behind Brazil; see Central Intelligence Agency, „The World Factbook”,

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