

# The building of Brazilian Party System: new parties's formation and political strategies

La construcción del sistema de partidos  
brasileño: formación de nuevos partidos y  
estrategias políticas

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## ABSTRACT

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the phenomenon of the formation and success of new parties in the period of redemocratization and the return of Brazilian multipartyism (1979-2018). Although the phenomenon is recurrent in Brazil, few studies have looked more directly at the subject in Brazil. What are the determinants of the ongoing formation of new parties? Our hypotheses are that the permissiveness of the electoral system loses effect when actors adapt to it and that factors endogenous to political competition increase the likelihood of new parties emerging. We use previous methodologies and conceptualize new parties as those that are organizationally new (obtain a new registration) and win at least one seat in the Chamber of Deputies. We divided the parties into contestation or coaptation parties to assess the impact of institutional and economic variables on them. Our results indicate that parties

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that are totally "outside the system" (those of contestation) have more difficulty in becoming competitive, demonstrating that the phenomenon of the appearance of new acronyms is more linked to a strategic reorganization of the elites than to a demand from voters.

**Keywords:** New parties – party organization – political behavior – party and electoral system – party strategies.

## RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de este trabajo es analizar el fenómeno de la formación y éxito de nuevos partidos en el período de redemocratización y retorno del multipartidismo brasileño (1979-2018). Aunque el fenómeno es recurrente en Brasil, pocos estudios han analizado el tema de forma más directa en este país. ¿Cuáles son los determinantes de la formación continua de nuevos partidos? Nuestras hipótesis son que la permisividad del sistema electoral pierde efecto cuando los actores se adaptan a él y que factores endógenos a la competencia política aumentan la probabilidad de que surjan nuevos partidos. Utilizamos metodologías previas y conceptualizamos a los partidos nuevos como aquellos que son organizativamente nuevos (obtienen un nuevo registro) y ganan al menos un escaño en la Cámara de Diputados. Dividimos a los partidos en partidos de contestación o de coaptación para evaluar el impacto de las variables institucionales y económicas sobre ellos. Nuestros resultados indican que los partidos que están totalmente "fuera del sistema" (los partidos de contestación) tienen más dificultades para ser competitivos, lo que demuestra que el fenómeno de la aparición de nuevas siglas está más vinculado a una reorganización estratégica de las élites que a una demanda de los votantes.

**Palabras Clave:** Nuevos partidos – organización de partidos – comportamiento político – partido y sistema electoral – estrategias de los partidos.

## INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian party system can be considered a system in formation. Although it has formed large parties that have exerted a strong influence on political competition at both national and state level, the constant arrival of new parties in the Chamber of Deputies shows that there is a constant reorganization of political elites.

Because of this, Brazil can be considered an excellent case study for the formation of new parties. In 2018, the country reached the highest number of effective parties in Congress, making it the most fragmented party system in the world, making it even more necessary to assess how political rules and actions affect the formation of a consolidating party system. No other country in Latin America has reached such high levels of fragmentation as Brazil. This is why the specific study of Brazil is justified as a specific case study.

Every election since re-democratization has seen the emergence of at least one new party on the political scene (we consider new parties to be those that gain registration with the TSE and win at least one seat in the Chamber of Deputies for the first time<sup>1</sup>). At certain times, the emergence of new political parties has had a greater impact on party fragmentation, while at other times

it has had a lesser impact. Parties that emerge as "contestation" parties<sup>2</sup> tend to be smaller and are subject to greater penalization by political competition<sup>3</sup>. While parties that emerge as medium or large (mostly co-opted) have a better chance of being competitive over time<sup>4</sup>.

Our main question here is, what are the determinants of the emergence of new parties in Brazil? The central hypothesis is that political strategies are decisive. Forming a party and maintaining it is not so simple<sup>5</sup>, so undertaking such an effort is only worthwhile if the probability of gains outweighs

1 This excludes parties created by mergers or that just change their name.

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- 2 This typology was created by (Rocha, 2021) to differentiate the type of initial formation of parties. Contestation parties are those in which more than 50% of their members had no party ties before they were created, while co-optation parties follow the opposite line, i.e. more than 50% of their members had party ties before joining the new party.
- 3 Nascimento et al (2016) point to this trend although they do not specifically analyze new parties.
- 4 Mainly because they have professional politicians from other parties, which is an important component for the electoral success of federal deputies, as shown by (Perissionoto & Bolognesi, 2010).
- 5 In Brazil, it is necessary to produce a party statute and organization, get it registered with a notary's office, and then collect at least 0.5% of the signatures referring to the valid votes in the last election that have a distribution of 0.1% in at least 1/3 of the states. In order to run for office, they must be registered no later than 6 months before the elections.

the costs. The logic is that no leadership will rationally create a party that cannot win or influence elections, and this is demonstrated by strategic behavior. Along these lines, institutional variables linked to the type of initial organization of the party and economic variables are mobilized to explain this dynamic of political competition.

Our article's central argument is that parties often emerge in Brazil due to the low level of electoral restrictions contained in legislation, combined with strategic coordination by party elites to win a representative space. The low level of restrictions on the entry of new competitors into the political market is a necessary (but not sufficient) part of what makes it possible for elites to increase their party supply. What will be discussed here is that the emergence of new parties is primarily due to the oscillations between party legislation and the electoral coordination capacity of new parties.

News's parties impact on the political system has a significant long-term effect, as shown by Kestler et al. (2016). The authors point out that if strong new parties tend to establish themselves during a period of re-democratization but fail to win the presidency, the system moves towards a type of consensualism, which is the case in Brazil.

The international literature contains a wide range of studies concerned with

understanding the formation, success and impact that new acronyms can have within established party systems (Bolleyer & Bytzeck, 2013; Hug, 2001; Krouwel, 2012) and in consolidating democracies (Chiru et al., 2021; Tavits, 2006, 2008). In Brazil, where the phenomenon is perhaps one of the most recurrent worldwide, there is still very little work effectively seeking to demonstrate why new parties are continually emerging.

The emergence of new political parties is generally associated with a certain permissiveness of the electoral system, which, although not incorrectly, oversimplifies the phenomenon. It is necessary to understand more directly how this permissiveness affects the entry of new parties, and how their differences in initial organization differ in the impact of their entry. In other words, although greater proportionality can act as an incentive to form new parties, the electoral success of new parties is quite different when we look more closely at their type of initial organization and impact on political competition.

With regard to party organization, studies such as those by Cheibub et al. (2022), Guarnieri (2011), and Zucco & Power (2019) analyze the problem of party fragmentation by pointing to the coordinating power that party leaders have in parties with a weaker structure. The "strength" of these parties lies precisely in their organizational

weakness, which gives them more freedom to coordinate political alliances in the states, so that candidates who were marginal in large parties can increase their chances in new parties.

This article sets out to investigate in greater depth the causes of the entry and, above all, the success of new parties. We demonstrate that institutional variables such as electoral barriers (party quotient), district size and the type of initial party formation (whether contesting or co-opting) affect the entry of new competitors differently. This leads the discussion to turn more towards understanding the real impact of new parties in various arenas of political competition and how new entries impact established parties.

In order to deal with our proposal here, this text has, in addition to this introduction, a first part in which we seek to better detail the "state of the art" of international literature, the main findings and methodological dissonances. Next, we try to demonstrate the national debate on the subject and analyze some initial data on how the

emergence of new parties affects the Brazilian party structure and its effects on political competition. In the fourth section, we explain the methodology used and the main findings. Finally, we conclude by demonstrating the main results and pointing to the need for a more in-depth study agenda on this phenomenon.

Much of the academic discussion in Brazil has focused exclusively on the effect of electoral rules on the electoral and parliamentary fragmentation of political parties, leaving in the background a deeper analysis of who these new parties are, how they differentiate themselves in the political spectrum and how they impact on competition between the established parties. This lack of studies on these new competitors tends to generate confusion in the public debate, since without really understanding how these new parties act in the political arena, there is always a tendency to postulate electoral reforms to reduce the party cadre without understanding exactly how they can fulfill effective electoral and government demands.

## DETERMINANTS OF THE FORMATION OF NEW PARTIES

The international agenda on the subject of the determinants of the formation of new parties is very rich and has grown substantially over the years. The main concern in general is

to analyze a change in the behavioral pattern of voters, which would have been the hallmark of studies in the first half of the 20th century by the theory of "Frozen party systems" of Lipset &

Rokkan (1967). If before sociological patterns based on social cleavages were able to explain the "non-change" in party systems, from the 1970s onwards it was necessary to invest more in explanatory variables that took into account institutional and conjunctural aspects.

In principle, the main theories regarding the formation of new parties are related to the so-called "new issues", i.e. new parties are forming because parties are not putting emerging issues such as environmental problems, gender issues, immigration, etc. on the agenda. Parties would therefore form to fill gaps in representation for dissatisfied voters (Harmel & Robertson, 1985). A vast literature has emerged in this field, mainly analyzing the formation of party families, such as the work of Poguntke (2002) on green parties in national governments, as well as the work of Mudde (2007) on right-wing populist parties.

This representative vacuum must be measured by those seeking to form a new party, assessing whether the benefits of forming a new party outweigh the existing institutional costs (Tavits, 2006). It should be assessed by challenges on the basis of data from previous elections, such as electoral volatility and the behavior of existing parties in relation to new issues. Such an assessment is taken into account in studies that show that a certain instability in government and the fragmentation of

the party system increase the chances of new parties being viable to form (Bolleyer & Bytzek, 2013).

Although the idea of a representative vacuum is important for analyzing the formation of new parties, this variable has an internal bias effect, which is that new parties tend to form when the programmatic diversity of established parties is low, but cannot explain why in contexts where there is no programmatic diversity parties do not form. This additional explanation needs to be sought in institutional variables such as the structure of competition. The structure of competition determines the level of restrictions in the political market, i.e. whether it is more closed and less likely to offer new candidacies, or more open, more conducive to the entry of new leaders (Mair, 1997). As we moved towards re-democratization and significantly liberal legislation in relation to the creation of new parties, the supply of parties increases and follows a flow based on the demand of voters who choose strategically within the possible gains that these new leaders can offer.

In the Brazilian case, in order to analyze the costs of forming a new party, it is necessary to look at least two central points; the first is the cost of gaining registration. Collecting signatures, creating provisional committees, formulating a statute and holding conventions requires bureaucratic timing between the formation of the party

and the launch of its candidacies in elections that can often be an impediment for those without a strong political structure.

The second is to consider the feasibility of the party overcoming the existing electoral "barrier"<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, the conquest and maintenance of representative spaces depends on the strategic calculation between the elites to ensure the best results for the new party.

The analysis of the determinants of the formation of new parties has played a fundamental role in explaining their emergence, but in addition to forming a party, it is also necessary to evaluate the success they achieve in the electoral arena. Although formation and success are similar in terms of analysis, they are conceptually distinct.

### *Success of new parties*

In addition to forming a party, it is necessary for party elites to achieve electoral success, which some authors classify as receiving a certain percentage of votes, even if they do not win seats (Emanuele & Chiamonte, 2018; Harmel & Robertson, 1985; Mainwaring et al., 2017) while others determine the electoral success of a party solely on whether it has electoral support and

whether this support translates into at least one seat in the national parliament (Bolin, 2014; Hug, 2001; Tavits, 2006). Methodologically, we side with the latter.

The main distinction between formation and success is related to the electoral system, in which case only success is explained by it (Harmel & Robertson, 1985). The idea is that more rigid electoral systems do not have such an impact on the formation of new parties, but have a direct effect on their electoral success.

Krouwel and Lucardie (2008, p.289) identify in the literature at least three important factors for the electoral success of new parties:

- 1) Institutional and structural conditions: such as the electoral system, party funding rules, political culture, the configuration of the party system and access to the media.
- 2) The political or economic climate, opportunity structure and specifically issues that may be beyond the control of established parties.
- 3) Internal party resources such as money, leadership and active members, effective leadership and a political project that deals with issues that are essential to the political values and ideologies of a given society.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of the Brazilian electoral system, the main barrier to entry is the electoral quotient measured as the total number of valid votes over the size of the district.

Although these factors help to explain part of the phenomenon, they do not fully cover it, since although less weight has been given to sociological variables, they can still be a determining factor.

For our study here, one of the most important aspects of the discussion on electoral success is related to party organization. In the study on right-wing populist parties, Mudde (2007) argues that party organization is important for electoral success and, above all, for their long-term institutionalization. In his study, the two issues are interlinked; voters will tend to vote for parties that can guarantee some level of cohesion if elected. This idea is important because voters who vote for new parties want them not only to win elections and represent them, but also to have the strength to maintain this representation over time, something that parties with organizational weakness cannot guarantee.

This combination of explanatory variables deals with what Bolleyer & Bytze (2013) discuss, evaluating not only success, but also looking at short- and long-term sustainability, i.e. understanding those that win at least one seat in national elections but fail to maintain their initial success and those that manage to remain organized and cohesive, gaining ground over time. This difference would be due to the structural conditions under which parties are formed, with the type of formation

determining their long-term existence<sup>7</sup>. There is therefore a theoretical gain in analyzing not only when a party gains a parliamentary seat as Hug (2001) and Tavits (2006) but how its initial formation guarantees long-term national sustainability.

A substantial part of this literature links electoral success to the institutionalization of the party over time. This is a more comprehensive way of assessing the success of new parties, but it has the difficulty of operationalizing what a well-organized structure is and consequently falls into the problem that Mudde (2007, p.265) points out; are parties successful because they are organizationally strong or do they become organizationally strong because they get electoral support?

We believe that this dichotomy is flawed; the structure of a party's initial formation is undoubtedly a crucial factor in determining its electoral success. In our data analysis here, the initial organization nested with the variables of the electoral system would therefore be fundamental in explaining the success

7 This is a methodology that was conceptually built by Hug (2001) and refined by Bolleyer and Bytze (2013) in which they divide new parties into entrepreneurs (who seek to launch themselves as a novelty on the electoral market without ties to political elites) and "roots" (those who emerge with the support of solid social movements). The latter are more likely to gain ground over time than the former, according to the authors' data.



of the new parties and the electoral support they receive, giving us the possibility of how the initial formation impacts differently on the electoral success the parties receive. As we have already mentioned, the strategy used here is to evaluate parties by their type of initial organization (whether contestation or co-optation) in national elections, demonstrating the impact that this organization has on support.

As you can see, much of the international literature deals with the fundamental problems that we will try to analyze here (mainly the success and institutionalization of new parties) and themes that the Brazilian literature has already worked on to some extent without necessarily looking at the discussion of new parties. In the next section, we discuss the national literature in more detail.

### *New parties in Brazil*

As already mentioned, although Brazil is a country that can be considered a "model" for understanding the entry of new challengers on the political scene, very little of the national literature has undertaken more systematic efforts to understand this phenomenon.

Seminal studies on the formation of parties in Brazil include the work of Kinzo (1988) who observed the emergence of the MDB as an opposition party in the midst of the authoritarian regime and, above all, his analysis of

the post-authoritarian party framework (Kinzo, 1993). By analyzing the party system that emerged in the 1980s, she took an important step forward in this area of study, which was already attentive to the issue of the formation of new parties:

The most striking feature of the Brazilian party scene is undoubtedly the proliferation of parties. If we take only the parties that took part in the elections to the Federal Chamber in 1990, there are 33 parties. Many of these are known to be irrelevant, even though they have obtained representation in the legislature (Kinzo, 1993, p.21).

As is clear, the formation of new parties was already a prominent issue at the beginning of the democratic period. Although many parties were formed, the initial analyses focused mainly on analyzing the largest parties, with the PT receiving the most attention (Keck, 1991; Meneguello, 1989) and to a lesser extent the PSDB (Roma, 2002; Vieira, 2012) and the PMDB (Maciel, 2014; Nobre, 2013). This was largely because, as in the analysis by Kinzo (1993), most of the new parties would be irrelevant and the result of the proportional electoral system and the open list in the composition of legislatures.

As party competition stabilized somewhat in the 2000s (see figure 1 below), the analysis of new parties took a back seat. Only more recently has there

been a greater concern on the part of researchers to evaluate the emergence of new parties in relation to the entire party system.

The work of Krause et al. (2018) makes an important theoretical and empirical contribution by analyzing the dynamics of the emergence of new parties in South America between 1979 and 2015. The authors point to a multi-causal dynamic explained by economic, social and institutional factors in the formation of new parties, but only looking at parties that launched for the first time in a given election and counting their success as those that achieve more than 5% of the vote, greatly reducing the universe of analysis.

The most recent work by Maglia (2020) analyzes the new parties on the ideological spectrum, pointing to an interesting relationship already reinforced in international literature; that right-wing parties tend to form more new parties than left-wing parties. According to the author, this is to some extent due to a more closed market on the left, a condition not seen on the right. These findings are in line with the international literature, which focuses more on far-right populist parties and green parties, which are the ones that most seek to challenge the agenda of the established parties.

In addition to these studies, previously mentioned studies such as those by Cheibub et al. (2022) or Zucco and

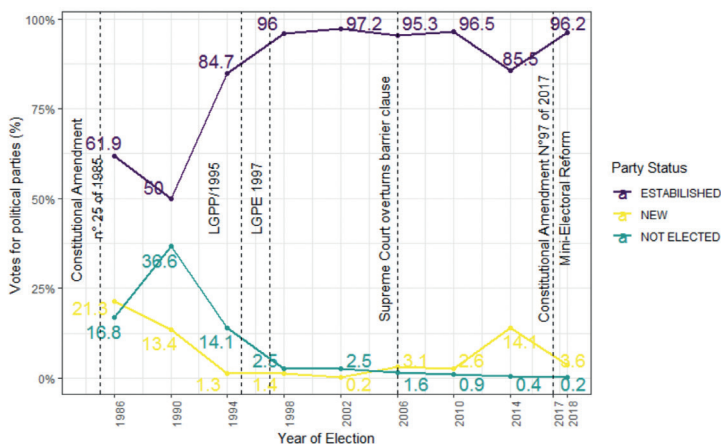
Power (2019), although they do not necessarily discuss the formation and success of new parties, they seek to explain the factors for fragmentation that go against what has been established here; party strategies explain hyper-fragmentation more than institutional changes. Regarding party organization, Guarnieri (2011) shows that party life in Brazil is quite healthy, with important differences in party structures; the less centralized parties tend to commit more coordination failures than the more centralized ones. Furthermore, the concept of nested games coined by Melo (2010) combined with how political competition is structured, also helps to explain part of the fragmentation phenomenon; larger parties manage to reduce competition in majoritarian elections by coordinating support with smaller parties in legislative elections. This leads to reduced fragmentation in majoritarian elections and increased fragmentation in proportional elections. This form of competition would be decisive in explaining the endogenous nature of fragmentation, which is maintained mainly by the emergence of new competitors.

Although still few in number, national studies have pointed to dynamics similar to those analyzed in international literature; institutional, economic, social and opportunity factors are variables that are generally prominent in assessing the emergence and success of new parties.

The Brazilian democratic period that emerged after 1979 saw the party system change substantially over time. In the figure below, we show the

relationship between the established and new parties, with some important institutional changes over time.

Figure 1. Percentage of votes for established and new parties by election year.



Source: Own elaboration based on TSE data.

As expected, in the first decade of reopening, many parties launched themselves, since the mechanical and psychological incentives of the electoral system had not yet formed, giving new challengers the idea that launching themselves had more benefits than costs. This meant that the total number of "wasted" votes (from unelected parties) was high. The percentage of votes for new parties in this period was also high. In addition to the effect of the party system being under construction, Constitutional Amendment 25 of 1985 gave strength to the formation of new parties since it did

not require a number of signatures for support and reduced the percentage needed to be elected to a minimum of 3% of the vote in 5 states for 2% in each 5 five states. If they didn't achieve the minimum required for representation, elected parliamentarians could choose an elected party to migrate to within 60 days<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> nationalization. However, since parties could form coalitions in proportional elections, it was the votes of the coalition that counted, and not just those of the separate parties, which ensured that smaller parties could circumvent the barrier clause. EC 97 of 2017 banned coalitions in proportional elections to avoid this phenomenon.

The 1990s, especially from 1994 onwards, and the 2000s basically consolidated the competition between the established parties, causing the percentage of votes for the new parties to be reduced to an average of 1.5% of the total votes, growing again after 2010.

Once again, there were important institutional changes. The Political Parties Law of 1995 and the Elections Law of 1997 had an important aspect; mainly the PPL instituted the obligation of signatures for support in the formation of parties, established an electoral barrier of 5% of the valid votes distributed in at least 1/3 of the states with at least 2% in each of them<sup>9</sup>. Only new smaller parties were launched in this period, which indicates that the change in legislation did not inhibit the formation of parties, only what we call co-optation.

This is a fairly common trend in consolidated democracies; with the so-called maturity of democracy, there would be less support for new parties, tending over a period of time to a reopening on the part of voters to vote for new parties. This dynamic occurred, however, over a shorter period of time in Brazil.

The large percentage differences between the decades between new parties are closely linked to the type of party organization; contestation parties tend to destabilize the system less than the so-called co-optation parties<sup>10</sup> which generally follow a strategic rule of reorganizing the established elites for various reasons; regional disputes, the weakening of opposition parties, the possibility of leadership that doesn't exist in established parties, etc.

These distinctions are very important for analyzing the impact of new parties on the party system since, as we can see, the periods when more co-optation parties emerged (the late 1980s and early 1990s and after 2010) were when the percentage of support for established parties fell the most. Parties of contestation, in turn, tend to have less of an impact on support for established parties. Understanding this dynamic is important for explaining

9 It is important to note that the parties had a "bridge of time" to adapt to the new rules, which would only be mandatory from 2006, but in 2007 the barrier clause was overturned by the Supreme Court in a Direct Unconstitutionality Action brought by the smaller parties

10 In this study we used the methodology employed by Rocha (2021) in which the author classifies the initial organization of parties as contestation or co-optation. In the first case, the parties tend to fight "against everyone", with more than 50% of their initial membership coming from outside the political field. The co-opted parties would move in the opposite direction; they tend to build their initial cadres with names who already had elective mandates or some history of political activity (as advisors, party leaders, etc.). As we can see, the author's conceptualization is associated to some extent with the study by Bolleyer and Bytzek (2013) and the classic typification of internal vs. external parties made by Duverger (1951).

stability and change in Brazilian political competition.

The next section will describe our methods and analysis to explain the emergence and success of the new parties.

## DATA AND METHODS

We built a database from the Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (Superior Electoral Court/TSE) to evaluate our hypotheses. The data covers the period from 1979 to 2018; the analysis begins in 1979 because the first election is a determining factor in explaining the formation of the party system, although the analysis of the differences between new and established parties basically begins in 1986, since the 1979 elections maintained the parties of the military regime and in 1982 all the parties were new, since this is when the new Organic Law on Political Parties (1979) came into force.

The study's unit of analysis is the new parties that emerge at each election for Federal Deputy, conceptualizing as new parties all those that manage to register and win at least one seat in the Chamber of Deputies<sup>11</sup>. Based on the aggregate vote in the states in

national elections, we seek to understand the variables that best explain the victory of these parties in the National Parliament. This conceptualization is fairly minimalist, but important for explaining the framework of party strategies that have been developed over time. The table below summarizes the new parties classified by year and type of formation.

The question that surrounds us here is: Why do new political parties continue to emerge? Seeking answers to this question is extremely important because despite institutional changes, the patterns of party emergence seem to remain the same. It is also because, with a democracy that has been functioning for some time, we would expect to see a decanting of preferences between the parties that dominate the contests.

The central hypothesis of this work is that party strategies and institutional incentives affect new parties differently because of their initial organization. We can therefore describe it as:

<sup>11</sup> This conceptualization is rather minimalist since it does not take into account variables such as the electoral program of these parties, whether their formation is really innovative from the point of view of their leadership (genuinely new), etc. However, for the purposes of this work, we believe that from a methodological point of view it helps us to explain the phenomenon we are looking at; party strategies.

*H1: The permissiveness of the electoral system has little effect on the success of new parties.* structure of the competition and the entry of new challengers.

Table 1. New parties by year of emergence and organizational typology.

Party Typology		
Year	Co-optation	Contestation
1986	PFL/PL/PCB/PDC/PSB	PC DO B/PSC
1990	PRN/PSDB/PTR/PMN/	PST
1994	PPS	PV/PRP
1998	-	PRONA/PSL/PST
2002	-	PSDC
2006	PSOL	PTC/PHS/PT DO B/PAN
2010	PRB	PSL/PRTB
2014	PSD/PEN/PROS/SD	PRP/PSDC/PTN/RTB
2018	-	REDE/NOVO

Source: Own elaboration based on TSE data.

With this, we have tried to demonstrate that although there is strong criticism of the Brazilian electoral system, which is generally considered to be a determining factor in the emergence of new parties, it seems to have less effect on the formation and success of these parties than party strategy variables. This is because the way elites organize themselves in the states and coordinate candidacies better explains the

This leads us to develop a second hypothesis that can be described as:

*H2: Party strategies and factors endogenous to political competition have a positive effect on the formation of new parties.*

Although, as already mentioned, the institutional variables are a necessary condition, they are not yet a sufficient

condition because of how the parties manage to deal strategically with the rules, with their endogenous competition reducing the institutional effect on them.

To analyze the effects of the successful formation and entry of new political parties, we ran a model to test variables that affect the possibility of forming a new party and another that more specifically evaluates the success of these new parties.

In model 1, we used some variables that have already been consolidated to some extent in the international literature, mainly by Tavits (2006). In this model, we run the number of new parties in a given election as the dependent variable (a counting variable), analyzing mainly entry costs. In model 2, the dependent variable is the percentage of votes received by new parties, seeking to explain their success on the basis of institutional, economic and social variables. The variables used are described in more detail below.

### *Independent Variables*

To assess which variables have an impact on the formation of a new party, we used those that are usually tested in the literature to assess entry costs, i.e. which variables inform political elites that it is more advantageous to undertake efforts to form a new party than to join an existing party.

The need to obtain signatures is the first independent variable. It was categorized as binary<sup>12</sup> due to changes in Brazilian legislation. As there was no minimum support requirement until 1995, using only the absolute number of signatures required would create a major distortion in the variable, as it would have 0 values before 1994 and increasing values from 1998 onwards<sup>13</sup>.

Party fragmentation is calculated using the actual number of parliamentary parties. The ENP is also a widely used indicator in political science that seeks to capture both the level of competitiveness of the party system and the level of dispersion it possesses. The index was developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) based on Rae's (1967) fractionalization index, which seeks to understand dispersion/concentration in party systems. The index is calculated as  $F = 1/\sum Vi^2$ , so that  $Vi^2$  is the percentage of votes won by each party. The total of this value returns values that can be 0 (no fragmentation) or decimal numbers, importing integer values for analysis. These numbers will give us the data for the number of relevant parties, i.e. those that obtain a favorable number of seats in the

12 Zero until the 1994 elections and 1 after that election when the Political Parties Law of 1995 required a minimum number of signatures of 0.5% of the valid votes in the previous election in 1/3 of the states in order to formally support a new party.

13 The use of absolute values of required signatures is a methodological resource that is more appropriate for comparative studies

competition. For our analysis here, we consider NEEP always at T-1; firstly because it takes time to form a new party and secondly because we understand that the increase in party fragmentation indicates to leaders seeking to form a new party that the electoral chances of a new competitor are high when they look at previous results.

The type of coalition with which the party runs is also important. The elections allow electoral coalitions in proportional elections until 2018. In short, a party can choose to run for proportional seats alone or in coalition with one or more other parties. Thus, we have a binary variable (running alone or in coalition). In practice in Brazil, this has largely been a means of circumventing the electoral barrier of the party quotient. As of the 2022 elections, parties can no longer form coalitions in proportional elections, although the possibility of forming party federations has arisen as an additional resource, which although it obliges parties to align ideologically for 4 years (and not just during the electoral period) has a similar effect to coalitions<sup>14</sup>.

14 This rule was introduced by the 2017 Constitutional Amendment, a mini electoral reform. Although it attempts to create more homogeneity between the parties that unite, it is still penalized by institutional loopholes; parliamentarians who wish to leave the federation or are expelled for parliamentary indiscipline can do so as long as they join new parties. In other words, the rules still create incentives for elites to rearticulate in new parties.

The size of the district is also a very important variable. Since the work of Rae (1967) it has been known that the more proportional the districts, the greater the tendency for the party system to fractionalize. Although this is an effect of the so-called "permissiveness" of the electoral system, we have shown here that the impact of the size of the district differs between the new parties according to their type of organization (whether contestation or co-optation).

The electoral quotient, measured as the total of valid votes over the total of seats, until 2018 played the role of an electoral barrier<sup>15</sup> to new challengers, since it established a floor that parties had to worry about and that if not reached, they would not win representation. The electoral quotient is expected to reduce the success of new parties, since it is a harsh rule for new competitors. In the literature, the electoral quotient is generally analyzed in

15 The 2017 Constitutional Amendment also included a performance clause that requires parties to achieve a minimum percentage of 2% of the valid votes in 1/3 of the states in 2022, with at least 1% in each of them, or to have elected 11 deputies in at least 1/3 of the states. In 2026, they will need 2% of the valid votes distributed in 1/3 of the states, with at least 1.5% in each of them, or to have elected 13 deputies in 1/3 of the states. Finally, in 2030 it will be necessary to get 3% of the valid votes distributed in at least 1/3 of the states with at least 2% in each or to elect 15 deputies in at least 1/3 of the states. Parties that do not reach these minimums will not be entitled to free advertising time or the party fund.



the model of the formation of a new party, but since the electoral quotient can only be calculated after the election, we associate it with the probability of the party's successful electoral support.

Table 2 below summarizes the descriptive data for the variables used.

	N	Mean	Sd	Median	Mín	Max	VIF
Dependent Variables							
Total of new parties per year	831	5	2	5	1	7	-
National percentage of votes for new parties.	831	1.55	2.63	0.72	0.21	15.16	-
Independent Variables							
Party typology (co-opted or contested)*	831	2	1	2	1	3	1.24
Signature required (0 for not required and 1 for required)	831	1	0	1	0	1	2.22
Party fragmentation (T-1)	787	12	3	10	7	16	1.98
Type of Legend (Running in coalition or alone)*	831	1	0	1	1	2	1.11
Magnitude of the District	728	21	17	12	4	70	1.31
Electoral Quotient	728	137038	86472	153845	967	1191554	1.65
GDP	831	3	3	3	-4	8	1.15
Inflation	831	20.7	44.9	4.2	2	147	1.31
Unemployment	738	7.9	1.5	7.3	6.2	12.3	1.44

\*Nominal Variables. Source: Own elaboration based on TSE data.

The party typology was taken from Rocha's study (2021) in which the author differentiates parties by their initial organization. When a party begins its trajectory with more than 50% of its membership having held no elective positions previously and without having participated in political parties, they are classified as contestation parties. Conversely, when more than 50% of the members of the new parties already held elected office in other parties or actively participated in their previous political party, they were classified as co-opted<sup>16</sup>. The introduction of this variable serves as a proxy to test the problem of "new issues"; since contestation parties are considered outsiders, more support for them would mean support for demands not addressed by the established parties. As expected, we estimate that the so-called "permissiveness" of the electoral system acts differently on these parties, precisely because of the distinction between their initial organization.

Finally, we analyzed classic macroeconomic variables such as cumulative unemployment rates, inflation and GDP for the year of the election to see if the macroeconomic context has a significant impact on the success of new parties. It is expected that higher inflation and unemployment will increase

the number of new parties, while an increase in GDP will negatively affect the participation of new parties.

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive data for the variables used.

### *Results*

Below, we run two regression models to try to capture the effects of the variables analyzed on the formation and success of new parties by modifying the dependent variables. The idea, as stated above, is to first try to understand which variables enter into the calculation of the political elites<sup>17</sup> when seeking to form a new party and then try to understand which variables have a significant impact on their success.

Table 3 shows the results of the models<sup>18</sup>.

In model 1, as already mentioned, we sought to understand the effects mainly of institutional variables on the formation of new parties. The dependent variable in this model is the (discrete

16 The author collected the biographical data of the deputies elected by new parties from the Chamber of Deputies website. <https://www.camara.leg.br/deputados/quem-sao>. Accessed on 25/10/2022

17 In this study we don't look at demand from the point of view of the voter, but only from the political strategies used by party elites.

18 In all the models, we ran the independent variables in correlation models and also in VIF models to analyze possible multicollinearity, which was not detected in any of them. For the linear regression model (model 2) we also ran the Breusch-Pagan residuals test where the p-value was greater than 0.05, failing to reject the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity.

Table 3 - Regression models for the formation and success of new parties.

	Dependent variable:	
	Total of new parties per year Poisson (1)	Percentage of votes for new parties OLS (2)
Signature required (1)	-0.486*** (0.053)	
Party fragmentation	0.090*** (0.006)	
Type of legend (Isolated)		0.162 (0.152)
District Magnitude		-0.003 (0.004)
Electoral Quotient		0.00000 (0.00000)
Party Typology (Co-optation)	0.059* (0.035)	1.847*** (0.127)
GDP		-0.130*** (0.017)
Inflation		0.011 (0.037)
Unemployment		0.077* (0.039)
Constant	0.904*** (0.059)	0.166 (0.399)

Observations	787	635
R2		0.374
Adjusted R2		0.367
Log Likelihood	-1,510.403	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,028.807	
Residual Std. Error		1.349 (df = 627)
F Statistic		53.596*** (df = 7; 627)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

numerical) count of the number of parties that emerge in an election year.

The institutional change brought about by the 1995 Political Parties Law, which made it compulsory for new parties to obtain a minimum number of signatures in order to become operational, had the expected effect in reducing the formation of new parties. The growing size of the electorate means that newcomers to politics have to collect an ever-increasing number of signatures, which means that the introduction of the rule had the expected effect; the more signatures required, the fewer new parties formed. Party fragmentation captured by ENP, as expected, showed positive significance. As already mentioned, ENP is always observed at T-1, i.e. political elites look back at the past election and assess the volatility in electoral demand, indicating how willing voters are to vote for new parties. As fragmentation increases,

it becomes clearer to political elites that the likelihood of gaining electoral support increases since the history of new challengers in national elections is a success story.

Finally, the fact that the party typology is co-opted increases the number of new parties in elections, confirming our hypothesis that the permissiveness of the electoral system affects parties differently according to their origin. Co-opted parties are more likely to form and consequently, as shown in model 2, are more likely to be successful in elections.

It seems that the negative effect of the need for signatures on new parties tends to lose strength in relation to variables specific to political competition; the need for signatures reduces the number of new challengers, but its impact is reduced by variables endogenous to the political system such

as party fragmentation and the type of organization with which parties are formed. Once again, this points in the direction of our central argument: although institutional variables are a fundamental part of the discussion, the way parties organize themselves has a more direct impact.

In model 2 we tried to assess which variables have the most direct impact on the success of new parties. In model 2 the dependent variable is the percentage of votes received by new parties aggregated at national level.

Interestingly, in model 2 the institutional variables were not statistically significant, which leads us to accept the hypothesis 1. In other words, the so-called "permissiveness of the electoral system" does little to explain the entry of new challengers when placed alongside the party's initial organization in the model. The possibility of running as a coalition in districts of high and medium magnitude, which is generally seen as a facilitator for new parties to gain a foothold, does not show any strength in the model. Similarly, the electoral quotient, which could be considered a barrier for new and small parties, is also not significant. Discussion around the permissiveness of the Brazilian electoral system does not say that the system does not have mechanisms that facilitate the entry of new and small competitors, but only that the way in which the established elites

organize political competition also impacts on the chances of new challengers, with those who have a stronger internal organization being the ones who can better deal with the competitive arrangements.

Also, as expected in model 2, being a party of contestation reduces its electoral impact, with the parties of co-optation having a much higher margin of votes and electoral success. Once again, it seems that there is little support/demand for new issues or political novelties on the Brazilian scene. High electoral volatility and party fragmentation are more the result of entry strategies by established elites than a realignment of preferences. Along with the new party organization variable, the macroeconomic variables proved to be significant, mainly GDP and unemployment, with no impact on inflation. As expected, the lower the economic growth, the greater the likelihood of votes for new parties. Similarly, the higher the unemployment, the greater the chances of new parties receiving a better vote. These figures are in line with the theory. United the variables of initial organization such as elite strategy and macroeconomic results, we can also fail to reject hypothesis 2, demonstrating that economic arrangements and opportunities have a more direct impact than institutional variables.

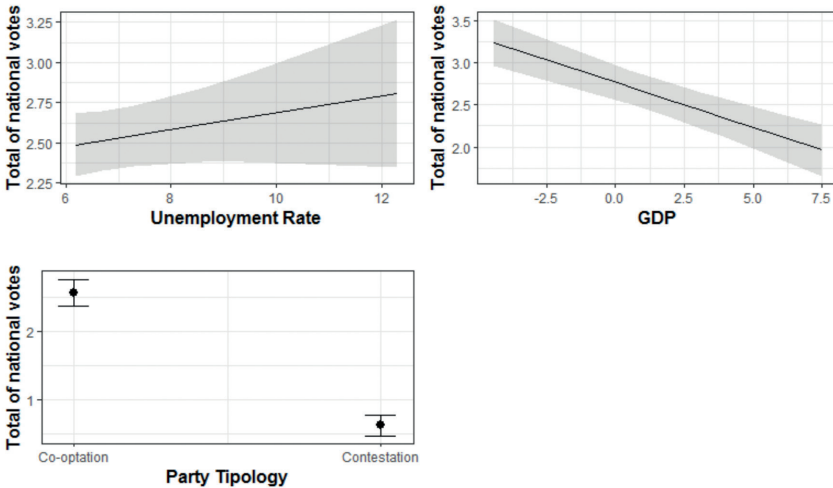
Below (figure 2) we run the models of the predicted probabilities of the

main significant variables in the model, namely party typology, unemployment and GDP. Controlling for all variables, an increase in the unemployment rate increases the total national vote for new parties by up to 1%. In the same vein, controlled for the other variables, GDP values closer to 0 increase support for new parties by almost 1.5%. Finally, being a party of co-optation, controlled by all the other variables, increases the percentage of national votes by almost 3%, while parties of contestation fall below 0.5%. These data further reinforce our

hypothesis 1: electoral permissiveness has a low impact on the entry of new challengers when controlled by the type of initial organization it has. The data points to the impact of the party's initial organization on its performance.

Parties of contestation tend to emerge small and maintain this level throughout their trajectory, while the opposite is true for parties of cooptation: they tend to emerge medium or large and become more easily capillarized.

Figure 2. Predicted probabilities for the significant variables in model 2.



The results show a very interesting dynamic in the relationship between the emergence of new parties in Brazil. Although the Brazilian system has seen the formation and success of several parties in every election since 1982, the

idea that the Brazilian political system is more permissive can be challenged to some extent. Although Brazil has an electoral model that favors the entry of new challengers (open list, proportional system, large districts, etc.), this

entry is slowed down by the political competition inherent in the established political elites.

The idea of parties that emerge "against everyone", although it receives

attention from those who say they are dissatisfied with politics, has its impact reduced by the effect of electoral competition, which seems to have little space for them.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although the Brazilian political system has seen the emergence of new parties since redemocratization, we see that how parties are formed matters. Contestation parties that seek to be an "alternative" to the system generally have little political support, emerge mainly in large districts and, because they run largely in isolation, tend to have fewer material resources necessary for their institutionalization.

On the other hand, co-opting parties follow a logic of political strategy aimed primarily at reorganizing political classes. These strategies vary (fragmentation of the opposition, freedom to run for majority positions, conflict in the party's coalition choices, etc.). For these parties, the so-called permissiveness of the electoral system matters less since they behave like established parties, with the magnitude of the district having less impact, they make more coalitions because of their party strategies and tend to gain more support over time.

This data shows that the formation and success of new parties is much more complex than just the permissiveness of the electoral system. Although the so-called permissiveness has an important effect on the analysis, party strategies deserve more in-depth attention.

The Brazilian party system is very complex, and any institutional engineering must improve the representative process, giving it more solidity without being based on fragile analyses, such as those that link conjunctural problems, like the current Brazilian political crisis, to the number of parties. This is because a reduction in the number of parties does not in itself guarantee greater cohesion between parties or lower transaction costs. It is also because, as we have shown here, in the way the Brazilian political system has been structured, reforms can reduce the number of parties without ensuring that the number of new competitors is reduced, creating only a re-articulation of elites. Once again, it is important for institutions to create mechanisms that reinforce democracy and the internal

organization of parties, guaranteeing the broad participation of the various social segments contained in a society as diverse and plural as Brazil's.

Finally, there is a need to expand the analysis of the formation and success of new parties in Brazil; how they behave in coalitions, their geographical and representative dimension, their real impact on the party system, ideology

and performance, membership, among many others. Any analysis that aims to better understand the Brazilian party system must be attentive to both the volatility in voter demand and the substantive aspects that new parties bring to their strategies. All these factors are extremely important when assessing the role of multipartyism in the political system in general.

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