

Brazil: Country on Hold, Political Tension Running High

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This paper discusses the Brazilian 2022 presidential elections, presenting Bolsonaro and Lula as the two frontrunners who have too many other candidates to face, who compose a third way that together joins around 30% of voting intention. Approaching the way how Bolsonaro arrived at power in the 2018 elections – when Lula could not be a candidate because he was incarcerated – this paper also discusses Bolsonaro’s government so that it can be possible to understand from where Bolsonaro comes and who he is, which mistakes he is doing that justifies the low levels of popularity, especially compared to Lula. Looking forward to seeing what the best for Brazil is and based on the hypothesis that a coup led by Bolsonaro would never succeed, not because of the international support to Brazil but due to the resilience of internal defenders of the rule of law, this paper is theoretically supported on the paradigmatic theory and concludes from the scenarios structured that Lula seems to be victorious in all of them.

Keywords: Brazil, 2022 elections, 2018 elections, Bolsonaro, Lula, third way

Introduction

On October 2, 2022, nearly 146 million Brazilians will head to the polls to select who will be their president until 2026. They will also choose representatives for the Congress and their state governors. And while the polls will only open a year from now, make no mistake: the 2022 election has already begun (Ribeiro 2021).

Brazil is currently facing a scenario of strong political, economic, and social tension in which President Jair Bolsonaro faces a declining popularity and a deficient performance in the election polls for 2022 (Winter 2021). Considering a Datafolha (2021) poll from September, 59% of respondents said they would not vote for Bolsonaro “under any circumstances”. Overall, just 38% said the same about Lula. Additionally, 63% said Bolsonaro is “incapable of leading the country”, while great majorities also described him as dishonest (52%) and unprepared (62%).

These numbers show that more than losing popularity President Bolsonaro has lost the respect of his citizens, which rarely comes back. Indeed, Bolsonaro’s popularity has been steadily eroding since January 2021, when an emergency social program was scaled back just as the *Manaus variant* took the pandemic into its most brutal phase. COVID-19 has killed around 600,000 Brazilians, the world’s second-highest toll behind the USA and on a per-capita basis, Brazil is among the ten worst countries in the world. Today the cases and deaths are finally falling thanks to the vaccination drive, but constantly questioned by Bolsonaro, who has

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accomplished the feat of receiving little to no political credit for the improvement because he is part of the denial movement (Winter 2021).

The question that arises, therefore, is whether the support Mr. Bolsonaro still benefits will be sufficient to withstand his isolation in domestic and international political life. We seek to answer this question and have the aim to assess whether former president Lula da Silva is the political force best placed to achieve the Presidency of the Republic instead of Bolsonaro. It is also our goal to understand whether in any of the cases the best for Brazil will be in the first place, improving Brazil's image at the international level. The reactions to the events in the country have been one of concern and dissatisfaction. Moreover, it is necessary to consider that a third way exists and joins around 30% of voting intentions, which may exclude Bolsonaro from a second turn. Therein, we can rely on the central hypothesis that even if the democratic regime seems to have established itself as dominant, one should not overestimate the means that international community has to contain Bolsonaro's authoritarian impulses. If he fails in an eventual attempt of a coup, it will certainly not be due to pressure from external actors, but due to the resilience of internal defenders of the rule of law.

The framework of this research is a middle-range theory that covers the period from independence to the present day of Brazil's socio-political and economic evolution throughout paradigmatic models. Therefore, the liberal-conservative model is followed by the developmental model, which is ensued by the neoliberal model. This is succeeded by the rise to power at the beginning of the XXI century by left governments (Cervo 2008, 2003, 2001), until between 2010 and 2018 there is a rise of right or far-right governments to power in the Latin American countries. Nowadays, those countries have been living in a phase in which left governments have been returning to power in a cohabitation between right and left governments that prevents the formulation of a single model.

To do our research this paper is divided into three sections, one of them subdivided into two. After this introduction, a first section approaches the paradigmatic model (Cervo 2008, 2003, 2001), which analysis the conservative wave in Brazil and Latin America, and the recent new progressive wave in the region and possibly in Brazil, while the second section analyses Jair Bolsonaro's election and government and the third approaches the October 2022 pre-elections and its candidates and polls, constructing scenarios for the elections coming to an end with the conclusions of our research.

We must however warn our readers that due to the nature of the assignment and the ongoing political developments, the reflections recounted here are limited in scope, while they do follow the recent literature on the subject. The research uses primary sources founded in the media complemented by some theoretical approaches. Therefore, this paper should be read like a puzzle with missing pieces that will be sparingly added by history.

Paradigmatic Model – Conservative and New Progressive Wave in the Region

The framework of Latin American used here provide the support of the centre-periphery model that constitutes the foundation of Latin American structuralism (Bernal-Meza 2005 p. 65), which is of fundamental relevance for understanding the socio-political-economic transformations that Latin America has been going through since the independence process (Cervo 2008, p. 17).

The economic development strategies collide with each other because there is a very clear distinction between two dominant trends. The one that privileges free trade and liberal investment policies, benefiting both agrarian-export interests and the interests of transnational capital, since 1880 or even before; and the one that prefers the adoption of protectionist policies and state intervention, favouring the local business class as well as workers and populist coalitions (Klesner 2011, p. 914).

What has been occurring throughout the historical process of Latin America from the colonial period to the present days is a cyclical evolution of these two distinct and opposing visions regarding the sub-region's socio-political-economic development strategies (Klesner 2011, p. 915). Therefore, the contemporary history of Latin America can be divided into historical periods, in relation to which there is a consensus among the epistemic community of Latin American International Relations.

It can thus be said that in the liberal-conservative paradigm, from the end of the XIX century when the independence process ends to the mid-1930s, Latin America adopted the scheme of international relations based on the exchange of its primary goods for manufactured products from industrialized countries. Consequently, it originated the creation and consolidation of domination and dependence structures on them by the USA and the United Kingdom (Cervo 2001, 2003, 2008, pp. 69-70) based on the agrarian-export diplomacy (Bueno 1995).

According to Cervo (2008, p. 72), from the 1930s onwards:

“the leaders break with the agrarian-export diplomacy based on the European market doctrine and provide new functionalities to the states”, giving rise to the developmental model, which presents three essential foundations that guide the internal action of the states: “a) the consistency of the transition, b) the development as a path of foreign policy, and c) the realism of conduct.”

The new model, that begins in the mid-1930s and gains relevance at the end of World War II extending to the debt crisis of the mid-1980s, bestows a different functionality to the external sector determining that in terms of foreign policy states must adopt three main purposes. Firstly, they must fulfil the interests of a complex society and conceive of development as an expansion of industry. Then, they must provide foreign policy with the necessary efficiency throughout decision-making autonomy, flexible and non-doctrinal foreign trade policy, and subordination of security policy to economic purposes. States must also negotiate with great powers and neighbours (Cervo 2008, p. 72). States must do all these in a pragmatic and non-ideological stance conducted through the import-substitution industrialization model.

The recurrent deficits of the Balances of Payments of Latin American countries resulting from the contradictions of the import-substitution industrialization model led to the imposition of orthodox structural adjustments policies required by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to resolve these imbalances (Klesner 2011, p. 915, Loxton 2021, p. 10) in the 1970s.

When the Cold War ends and the capitalist system spreads throughout the world, conservative governments would also arise to power in the Latin American countries adopting the new socio-political-economic strategy. First in Mexico and Bolivia (1985), then in Argentina (1989) and then in Peru and Brazil (1990) (Klesner 2011, p. 915).

The new socio-political-economic strategy comes to say that neoliberalism means a movement of initiatives that are largely promoted by the IMF, the World Bank, and other international institutions (MacNamara 2011, p. 913). Therefore, measures were taken by the *New Right* to reduce the size of the public sector, redirect the surplus to the private capitalist sector, create private capital markets and open the economy to world free trade (Bernal-Meza 2005, p. 152, Loxton 2021, p. 11) The right electoral took the form of conservatives winning the Presidency through blatantly personalistic vehicles like Fernando Collor de Mello in Brazil in 1989 or Álvaro Uribe in Colombia in 2002 (Loxton 2021, p. 11).

This is the globalization from above, parallel to which there is the globalization from below promoted by the development of technology and communications, which allowed various movements organized by civil society in Latin American countries to emerge and gain voice (MacNamara 2011, p. 913), fighting for social justice and countless other related causes structuring the great international fora that would have a relevant role to play at the beginning of the XXI century.

Largely because of this globalization from below, the economic and political measures imposed on Latin American countries within the scope of the Washington Consensus provoked a wave of social protests in the most varied countries and in different layers of Latin American civil society against the respective governments thanks to the “perception of the futility and cruelty of free market solutions” (MacNamara 2011, p. 913).

Although they have been differentiated, the effects of orthodox neoliberal policies on Latin American countries led in most of them to “another wave of democratic presidents generally coming from disadvantaged social circles and so-called leftists”, which aimed at “banish that regional model” (Cervo 2008, p. 82-83) and replace it for another one. In Brazil, the direction followed was that of the responsible left, according to which:

“some legacies of neoliberalism were kept, such as fiscal responsibility, monetary stability, stimulus to foreign investment, and opening of markets”. These legacies were softened by “another paradigm of international relations, called logistics state, in a dose capable of attenuating the effects of neoliberalism in the spheres of political, economic, and social life.” (Cervo 2008, p. 83)

The left-order in Latin America would not be, contrary to what leaders like Lula, the Kirchner couple, Hugo Chávez, and Nicolás Maduro, or even Evo Morales and Rafael Correa thought at the time a lasting order. Roughly from 2010

until 2018/2019, the lefts began to lose their place and to be replaced in power through elections or subversive processes by right or centre-right leaders. As right-wing authoritarian populists reached positions of power across the globe (Rydgren 2018, Scoones et al. 2018), Latin America entered a new wave contrary to the trend that stretched the beginning of this millennium and Brazil's right turn has become a source of concern (Escobar 2018, Abessa et al. 2019, Barbosa Jr. and Roriz 2021).

In 2011, the left turn was in full swing; during 2010 and 2018, the number of democracies with left wing presidents could be counted in one hand. Following the election of leaders like Mauricio Macri in Argentina in 2015, Iván Duque in Colombia in 2018, Mario Abdo Benitez in Paraguay in 2018, Luis Lacalle Pou in Uruguay in 2019 and, most importantly, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018, a natural question to ask is whether Latin America was then in the midst of a right turn. Following Loxton (2021, p. xi), conservative parties emerged because of their authoritarian inheritance and counter revolutionary struggle. The election of Bolsonaro in Brazil is not, clearly, an evidence of an authoritarian successor party¹ of the right thriving under democracy because the party that he ran with was not an authoritarian successor party and he was too young to have played a relevant role in the military dictatorship of 1964-1985, although he was a retired Army captain. Nevertheless, Bolsonaro's enthusiastic embraced of the memory of the dictatorship and echoed that of authoritarian successor parties, demonstrating that the sort of provocative rhetoric he used was not confined to the distant past.

Notwithstanding, from 2018/2019 onwards we have witnessed to a different phenomenon in Latin America. The right-wing governments that appeared so powerful seem now to be giving their places to left-wing governments. Or, in other words, it seems that in the region it exists both right-wing and left-wing governments with a predominance of these last ones. Indeed, in Chile, where polls pointed out the left's presidential victory, the leftist, former student leader Gabriel Boric truly defeated the right-wing candidate Antonio Kast, in last December. In Argentina, the president is the Peronist Alberto Fernández, while in Bolivia is Luis Arce since 2020, from the Movement for Socialism (MAS). In Peru, the president, from the leftist party Free Peru, is the professor and unionist Pedro Castillo. In Venezuela governs Nicolás Maduro, from the radical left, while in Guyana Irfaan Ali since 2020, from the People's Progressive Party, and in Mexico López Obrador since 2018, from the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). Just in Uruguay with Luis Alberto Lacalle Pou since 2020, when he got his first conservative government after fifteen years of left-wing leadership under the Broader Front Coalition; in Paraguay with Mario Abdo Benitez since 2018, from a right-wing political party in the country; in Jair Bolsonaro's Brazil; and in Colombia with Iván Duque Márquez, from the Democratic Centre Party since 2018, from the Grand Alliance for Colombia, a right-wing movement that took Duque to the Presidency we have right-wing governments in Latin America. This means that from 2018/2019 onwards there is a cohabitation in the region of right-wing and left-wing governments, with a possible new turn to the left. In this sense,

¹An *authoritarian successor party* is a political party that emerges from an authoritarian regime, but that operates after a transition to democracy (Loxton 2021, p. 2).

another possibility is that the region is experiencing a less ideologically coherent *anti-incumbent turn* (Loxton 2021, p. xi).

Leftist presidents are being elected by their citizens, which shows a great disappointment with the right policies applied before. For the time being, there is indeed a cohabitation of leftist and right governments in the region, which seems to be united around the instability that is common to almost all its countries. This might be a brand new and very recent social-political and economic model that the 2022 Brazilian election may come to follow.

Bolsonaro's Government – How Did we Get Here?

The Victory Vote in Bolsonaro in the 2018 Brazilian Presidential Elections

Bolsonaro won the October 2018 election with the coalition *Brazil Above Everything, God Above Everyone*, with his vice-president General Hamilton Mourão – a conservative retired general in the Brazilian Armed Forces – in the second round with 55.13% of the total vote since no candidate received more than 50% of the vote in the first round, held on the 7th of October (TSE 2018). He won against the Workers' Party (PT) candidate Fernando Haddad who obtained 44.87% of the total vote with the alliance *The People Happy Again* (TSE 2018).

The candidacy of Mr. Bolsonaro, a controversial federal deputy from Rio de Janeiro known for his far-right politics and defence of the former Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985) (Barón 2014), overshadowed the other conservative candidates. Observed for his intense opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage, Bolsonaro joined the small Social Liberal Party (PSL) to frame his attempt for Presidency shifting the party's ideology in favour of social conservatism and nationalism (Rennó 2020). Until 6th October, PSL was a small even a runt party. After 7th October, following the first round of the 2018 elections, Bolsonaro's PSL became the second biggest force in the Chamber of Deputies, occupying 55 of the 513 seats and 4 seats in Senate² (Venturini 2018), although Bolsonaro would retreat from the party later and become an independent, joining the Liberal Party (PL) in November 30 in preparation for the 2022 elections. Moreover, his candidacy in 2018 gained from the great opposition to the former PT government and ran in benefit of expanding gun ownership as a reaction to high crime levels, legalizing death penalty, and the privatization of state-owned companies (Finchelstein 2018).

Notwithstanding, during the campaign Bolsonaro was also subject of widespread protests for his homophobic, racist, and misogynistic beliefs (Simões 2018).

²These numbers are not enough to pass any bill. Nonetheless, the president refuses to negotiate the formation of a government coalition, calling it *politics as usual* or *old politics*. Bolsonaro rejects politics, associating it with corruption, clientelism and gerrymandering, which is precisely what he has been doing since taking office, but calling it *new politics* or *non-ideologic politics* (Chagas-Bastos 2019, p. 98).

Former president Lula³, once considered one of the most popular politicians in the world, intended to run for president with the PT but he had to choose the former mayor of São Paulo, Fernando Haddad, as his running mate. This was a last-minute substitute during the first round because Lula had been imprisoned since April 2018 on corruption charges linked to Brazil's enormous Operation Car Wash (Operação Lava Jato) scandal. Indeed, polling taken during the campaign found Lula as the favourite in both the first and the second rounds of the election, with 39% of voting intention (Datafolha 2018).

It is possible to affirm that Bolsonaro's victory in 2018 called attention for a possible change in the Latin American electoral behaviour since it has been clear the emergence of a gender and race gap in the analysis of electoral preferences. Bolsonaro's electoral offer has been characterized by a sexist, racist and praiseworthy on the dictatorship discourse searching for a traditional *family order* value (Murillo 2019). Not to mention his anti-Lula and anti-leftist discourse that has tried to join the PT to corruption.

On the other hand, the debate on party identification and voting in Brazil in these presidential elections had changed the traditional growing importance of voter positioning with respect to the main presidential parties so far – PT and Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB). These parties had indeed been the main presidential parties in the choice of presidential candidates at the 2002 and 2014 – and even before – presidential elections (Borges and Vidigal 2018, p. 53).

Over the past three decades, political power in Brazil has been shared between these two parties. Although both sides never admitted it publicly, the same social-democratic orientations drove many of their policies. Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FCH) from PSDB was responsible for the macroeconomic adjustment policy during the 1990s and Lula and Rousseff – riding on the international commodity boom – implemented and deepened social redistribution initially promoted by Cardoso. This means that during the 2000s, a time when everyone – from entrepreneurs to traditional politicians – was benefitting from significant economic growth, any threats to the turbid links between business and politics was easily neutralised by the system (Chagas-Bastos 2019, p. 94).

The Brazilian state had never been structured to be nurtured by the society, but to exert tutelage over the citizenry (Faoro 2001). This top-down structure, with exceptionally low representation and accountability, led to multiple obscure links between private and state-run businesses (Lazzarini 2010), creating an environment in which the act of taking from the state – in short, corruption – was a widely accepted and worthwhile practice.

There has been in Brazil a trend that points for the importance of the presidential dispute and of the social and economic micropolitics implemented by presidents to build genuinely national parties able to divide electoral preferences

³During Lula and Rousseff administrations (2003-2016), Brazil lived a unique moment. In this historical period, the ruling classes did not dominate the federal government, as they had done for centuries, but they remained in power. Those governments developed distribution policies to combat the huge existing social inequalities as well as recognition policies, and even sought to make the most oppressed sectors, always excluded from national life, visible, endowing them with legitimacy (Rubim 2015, Calabre 2015).

(Key 1955, Milkis and Rhodes 2007, Sundquist 2011). In Brazil, a share of the electorate could manage to position relatively consistently in between the two main parties in the presidential race (Samuels and Zucco 2014), a trend that Jair Bolsonaro came to interrupt. Empirical evidence has shown that party identification has been a weighting factor in voters' choice (Braga and Pimentel Jr. 2011, Peixoto and Rennó 2011).

Therefore, the 2018 presidential election showed how fragile the Brazilian political system was. The presidential race has been portrayed as the most unpredictable since 1989. The lead up to first round vote was indeed volatile, but the features of the Brazilian political landscape offer us some clues to make sense of the country's reality.

It is also interesting considering that positions on troublesome issues related to social, political, and cultural factors influenced vote choice and *bolsonarism* – supporters' affection toward Bolsonaro – in the 2018 Brazilian presidential elections. Results indicate that in addition to resentment against the Workers' Party, a cultural backlash perspective, and strict views on law and order, as well as economic liberalism and rejection of social policies were the characteristics of support for Bolsonaro (Rennó 2020).

The fact is that on the 28th of October of 2018, Brazilian voters delivered a sweeping victory to Bolsonaro putting the far-right populist at the helm of the world's fourth-largest democracy. After a loud campaign in which the former Army captain demonized his political opponents and promised to save the country from total ruin, Bolsonaro defeated the PT along with the social media and the networks of Pentecostal churches, which helped to disseminate his incendiary messages and his broad multiclass supporters (Hunter and Power 2019, p. 68).

In Alberto Fujimori's 1990 victory, Latin American political scientists had been amazed at the potential of the evangelical networks for the victory of a non-party outsider. However, in Bolsonaro's case, the process was not at all that surprising. In 2003 the Evangelical Parliamentary Front had already been created in Brazil to bring together legislators from different parties. Therefore, evangelical support for Bolsonaro, pushed by the faithful, was truly relevant for his victory. However, this support is based on personal relationships that become a fundamental asset in contexts of party disarticulation and political support is contingent, as indeed became clear when evangelicals abandoned their political options for the PT and for Marina Silva (Murillo 2019). There seems to be no confessional vote but a sensibility that drives the defence of the *status quo* of hierarchies associated with the traditional family, networks that become attractive in the context of disenchantment with traditional parties and the emergence of outsiders.

The dramatic ascent of this far-right figure caught many by surprise. Brazilian presidential elections since 1994 had been marked by a duopoly, with the left-leaning PT and the centre-right PSDB as the predictable finalists. These two parties consistently won between 70 and 90 percent of the vote. The three presidents elected in this period – Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002), Lula (2003-2010) and Dilma (2003-2016) – had all won second terms in office lending an air of stability to party politics (Hunter and Power 2019, p. 69).

Yet, viewed in the context of the several crises affecting Brazil since 2013, for which Brazilians widely blame the establishment parties, the Bolsonaro backlash begins to make sense. The PT was being blamed for the thoughtful downturn in the economy after 2013; for the huge corruption scheme uncovered since 2014 by the Car Wash investigations; and for the unprecedented levels of crime on the streets of Brazil. Lula, the PT's spearhead since 1980, might have been able to overcome these circumstances and going forward. Indeed, his popularity as a candidate depended on his strong base of personal support (*lulismo*), which had always been much broader than the partisan support for the PT (*petismo*). With Lula out of the run, he could do nothing. Moreover, overwhelming popular rejection of incumbent President Michel Temer and the nomination, as the PSDB's candidate a bland establishment figure, four-term São Paulo governor Geraldo Alckmin, who had lost badly to Lula in 2006, the way was ready to Bolsonaro and a broad political space from the centre to the far-right became vulnerable and the opportunity was seized by Bolsonaro (Hunter and Power 2019, p. 69-70).

In the end, what led Bolsonaro to Presidency was a combination of fundamental background conditions – economic recession, corruption, and crime –, political contingencies – most notably, the weakness of rival candidates –, and a shakeup in campaign dynamics produced by the strategic use of social media (Hunter and Power 2019, p. 70). María Victoria Murillo (2019) states that the issues that have most contributed to the electoral behaviour in the 2018 Brazilian presidential election have been: a) the economic crisis; b) the disenchantment with traditional parties; c) the significant decline in the support for democracy in Latin America between 2014 and 2016; d) the growing political insecurity that undermines government performance evaluations; e) the corruption scandals that affect the legitimacy of all political institutions; f) the *antipetismo* discourse; and g) the evangelical support (Burity 2021, p. 5).

This is all part of the democratic process. Indeed, much has been written about what a democracy is. To Papanikos (2022a),

“democracy exists when all participate to direct [govern, rule, manage, administer] the politeia. The word [direct] means that all directly (not through representatives) manage their politeia, e.g., its economy, its military, its erection of monuments of arts and worship, and its organization of religious, athletic, and educational festivities. In other words, all people govern and there is no need for anybody to govern for the people. Without the all, the many does not define democracy”.

Indeed, Papanikos (2022a) calls attention to the fact that Abraham Lincoln had stated democracy was the “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth”. According to Papanikos (2022a),

“many use this phrase as a praise of democracy. It is not. In a democracy there is no such thing as ‘for the people’. There was nothing ‘for the people’ in Ancient Athens. By definition, democracy was and is the people! Again, it should be mentioned that democracy is not necessarily the best of all available alternatives. It is absurd though to call something democracy when it is not”.

Representative democracy grants citizens the ability to elect and replace their governors. This ability to establish a vertical accountability is what, according to O'Donnell (2009), should make politicians in power pay attention to their voters. However, electoral behaviour is not the only tool for citizens in a democracy. They can organize demonstrations, denouncements, demands and other forms of pressure in non-electoral moments. Several Latin American countries have lived in the last decades mobilizations that have forced early resignations or have accompanied political judgment processes that have disrupted presidential terms. Nevertheless, voting remains the essential component of democratic functioning. Indeed, what matters so far as democracy is its future. And considering this, education is the most important factor which will contribute to a better democracy even if this process would not be linear but there will be ups and downs (Papanikos 2022b). Although necessary, education is not enough for the future of democracy. As Papanikos (2022b) states, “we know from the white-collar crime idea that educated people can be criminals and can undermine the political process towards democracy”. Therefore, as Papanikos (2022b) says, “we need virtue, we need pedagogy”, “without the two democracy cannot progress” and “not all people are able to achieve high levels of education, but all people can be self-ruled by the socially-accepted norms of morality, ethos and virtue”.

Bolsonaro's Government – 2019-so Far

A Brazilian politician and a retired military officer who has been the 38th president of Brazil since the 1st of January of 2019, Jair Bolsonaro had announced his candidacy for Presidency in March 2016 as a member of the Social Christian Party. He left the party in 2018 and joined the Social Liberal Party, and then launched his presidential campaign in August that year, with also retired general Hamilton Mourão as his running mate. He described himself as an outsider and a supporter of family values, coming in first place both in the first and second round of the election and thus becoming a president, succeeding Michel Temer.

The former Army captain has inherited a country with shocking numbers, both in economics as in social terms. This clearly salient two main aspects of his presidency. Firstly, it is obvious that Bolsonaro was not tailored for the position he holds. Secondly, the lack of preparation of his entourage and the absence of Congress support has led the country to a permanent state of crisis. Bolsonaro has failed to show any effectiveness, his leadership has been non-existent outside Twitter, the aura of victory had faded away quickly and has already seemed stale, and his impact on Congress has never been very significant, being still liable to drop further (Chagas-Bastos 2019, p. 93).

Once in office, Bolsonaro's officials working in the *Esplanada dos Ministérios*⁴ fell under three main categories, according to Chagas-Bastos (2019, p. 96). The first are the so-called *anti-globalists*, in line with Olavo de Carvalho, who is an eccentric YouTuber who became the ideological guru for Bolsonaro and his sons (Stefanoni 2019). In this category is the ministry of Foreign Affairs Ernesto

⁴The area of Brasilia where the ministerial buildings, with the ministers, are located is called *Esplanada dos Ministérios*.

Araújo. In the second group are the many Army officers who Bolsonaro placed in key positions in his cabinet and who were early supporters of the president, like the vice-president Hamilton Mourão. In the third category are the technocrats invited by Bolsonaro to legitimise his ignorance towards the markets, the Congress, and the public opinion since he had affirmed that would fill positions in his government only based on technical qualifications and skills rather than ideological sympathy (Scrivano and Ribeiro 2018). This group includes the two almost super-ministers Sérgio Moro (Justice and Public Order) and the ultraliberal Paulo Guedes (Economy).

The fact is that these groups often sabotage and collide against each other. The disharmony among them made Bolsonaro hesitate several times during his administration so far, passing a bad image to the outside, and forced him to fire several ministers and second-tier appointees.

In this regard, all the political confusion portrayed since the beginning of Bolsonaro's presidency shows a pattern of rehearsed drawings to demonstrate cohesion around the conservative values since Bolsonaro makes his best efforts to maintain the public debate around beliefs, his only strategy. This strategy means an imaginary crusade where *bolsonarism* uses inappropriate comments as his weapons giving rise to false political crises (Chagas-Bastos 2019, p. 97).

These false political crises mobilise a political electorate that sees few political advances and no political agenda to tackle with the increasingly unemployment and the stagnant economy. They keep Bolsonaro's anti-system and transgressive character alive since he ran on a political liturgy filled with nonsenses. Finally, they disguise the government's administrative incapacity and help to cover its setbacks (Chagas-Bastos 2019, p. 97).

These crises, however, hijack the public debate. Bolsonaro is capable of emulating and neutralising his opposition since when he and his sons issue controversial statements mostly on social media they occupy the national debate instantly, blocking any possibility of serious debate around the real country's needs. In doing so, *bolsonarism* occupies all roles. It stimulates opposition and criticism, destroying the nature of politics and the essence of democracy. By dictating the rhythm and content of the days, he turned an entire country into a hostage. All of this would not be possible without the massive presence of the president and his aides on social media, as if they were still on the electoral campaign (Chagas-Bastos 2019, p. 97).

Bolsonaro structured his program around three features: a) a neoliberal orientation and a consequent withdrawal of state intervention in economy; b) a conservative social behaviour control based on the safeguard of *Western and Christian* values; c) a critique of democracy and the political party system, combined with nostalgia for military dictatorship and its values (Santos and Tanscheit 2019, p. 157).

Considering the way Bolsonaro drove Brazil's several policies, as well as his characteristics, in the end he is considered a far-right populist, who challenges the parliamentary model by suggesting that legislative representatives not only fail to adequately represent the interests of their people but also undermine them. Indeed, populism suggests that politics hinges upon the confrontation between the people

and the elite or the powerful. Consequently, populism is not just a different kind of party politics within liberal-democratic states but constitutes the “crisis of parliamentary democracy” (Schmitt 1988). This global phenomenon threatens the building of democratic constitutionalism, and its growth is associated with the weakness of liberal democracies (Gouvêa and Castelo Branco 2021).

The variables of populism in Bolsonaro government are divided into four: a) the use of political and religious moralism; b) the unserved use and impulsion of disinformation and fake news; c) the polarization of policy; and d) the militarization of politics (Gouvêa and Castelo Branco 2021).

October 2022 Pre-Electoral Campaign – Candidates and Polls

Apart from Bolsonaro and Lula – the two frontrunners – there are still other third-way candidates. João Doria since entering electoral politics in 2016 has set his eyes on the Presidency of the Republic. Every election since – from the São Paulo mayoral dispute in 2016 and the gubernatorial race two years later – were mere steppingstones towards this businessman ultimate goal (Camelo 2021). However, governor Doria’s party, PSDB, has hold its presidential primaries late in November and he and governor Eduardo Leite from Rio Grande do Sul were the two favourite, whose fight for the nomination of the party had not been easy, though the chosen has been João Doria.

Mr. Doria has done a lot for the state of São Paulo and for Brazil but even though there is little enthusiasm around him as a presidential candidate, neither from voters, who often see him as an opportunistic false person, nor from political allies, who do not see him as a trustworthy man. However, during the pandemic, Doria was the first politician to bring COVID vaccines to Brazil and signed a contract with China’s Sinovac to purchase Corona Vac. On the other hand, from the early stages of the spread, Doria sought to provide a counterpoint to president Bolsonaro’s pandemic denialism, trying to present himself as a true statesman (Ribeiro 2021).

Another candidate, who is trying to join the centre-left, though increasingly centrist, is Ciro Gomes from the PDT from which he is vice-president.

An experiment politician, Ciro has already served as a federal representative, governor of Ceará and within Lula’s cabinet. Additionally, he has run for president three times before, never winning more than 12.5% of the vote. This time, Mr. Gomes is trying to marry his leftist background with more conservative undertones – a marriage that has been orchestrated by João Santana, Brazil’s most respected political marketing guru, who has previously worked for Lula and has done time for laundering campaign money (Ribeiro 2021).

The former lead judge of the Operation Car Wash anti-corruption task force, Sérgio Moro is also another presidential candidate for the October 2022 election. Mr. Moro briefly served as Justice Minister under the Bolsonaro administration, but he resigned in 2020 accusing the president of trying to interfere with the work of the federal police (Ribeiro 2021). Early December, Moro officially stepped into the political arena by joining Podemos, a right-wing party that has mostly voted in

favour of the Bolsonaro government's legislative proposals. Subsequently, he confirmed his intention to run for president during a television interview (Hatzikidi 2021).

Sérgio Moro also has a personal history with Lula. He led the investigations under the Operation Car Wash and convicted Lula for corruption and money laundering, incarcerating him and thus excluding him from the 2018 elections. Though, the Supreme Court overturned the convictions declaring that Mr. Moro was biased during the case. Therefore, all evidence gathered under Mr. Moro's supervision was thrown out and Lula was released from prison.

In spite of the divisive nature of both Lula and Bolsonaro, which the Brazilian media's portrayal of the battle between them has been one of polarisation since a vote for one or the other is seen as a preference that pushes the country to the extremes of the political spectrum, many see a middle path, a so-called *third way*, with a moderate candidate as the best way forward for Brazil (Hatzikidi 2021).

Both frontrunners will have to deal with disaffected voter bases. If Lula appears with the image of *thief* in the eyes of many – a reason they find not to vote for him again –, Bolsonaro is often labelled as *mad* or *crazy* especially in the context of managing COVID-19 and the vaccination effort. They see Bolsonaro's management of the pandemic as cruel, indifferent, and incompetent governance, which has marked an extreme decline in his approval rates.

At a first glance, it seems that Bolsonaro's unpopularity is directly causing Lula to flow in the polls. Though, disenchanted voters do not always migrate to another candidate, much less to Lula. Rocha and Solano (2020) note that "regretful" voters, those who had chosen Bolsonaro in 2018 but now feel disappointed, admit they might support his re-election mostly because they see no other political alternative. However, these "regretful" voters face a dilemma. Most of them affirm they will support Bolsonaro "if they have to", which means that if Bolsonaro faces Lula in second round they will prefer Bolsonaro, unless a third way with a credible chance of success emerged. Nevertheless, many of these "regretful" voters confess they are uncertain about both the frontrunners since one is a *thief* and the other is *crazy*.

The question that arises is to know who is the most viable third way for Brazil.

Moro's electorate is an anti-PT basis, compound by supporters of the Car Wash Operation, who sees the former judge as a hero and look for a more centrist candidate (DIAP 2021).

Moro's performance shows a positive recall of the former judge and former minister, who left the scene in 2019. Yet, the expectation that he would embrace an electoral campaign was always in the air and it came into light on November 10, when Moro joined Podemos with the intention of leading the third way.

Nevertheless, Moro's reliable performance in the polls also demonstrates Ciro Gomes' campaign mistakes. Ciro took a confrontational stance with the PT looking for votes within *bolsonarism* but the truth is that his votes ended up migrating to Sérgio Moro. He is also attracting a considerable number of former Bolsonaro's voters. 18% of those who voted Bolsonaro in 2018 say that in 2022 will vote for Moro. Likewise, 29% of voters who, in the last election, voted blank

or null, and 22% of those who did not show up to vote in that election, say that they will vote for Moro in 2022. Indeed, Moro's electorate is very balanced in terms of gender and education and in general they are 35 years or more and they are the richest. 30% of voters with income above 10,000 Reais intend to vote for the former judge (DIAP 2021).

The same research shows that 7% of those who affirm to have voted for Bolsonaro in 2018, have the intention to vote in 2022 for Lula, who is also attracting 40% of those who say they have voted blank or null and 48% of those who have not shown up in the 2018 election. Lula is also a strong candidate among women (49%). Likewise, Lula is a strong candidate among those who have completed elementary school (45%) and high school (46%), as well as those who live in the Northeast region (51%). Besides, Lula is still in the preference of the voters with an income less than 2,000 Reais (56%) and young people (46%) (DIAP 2021).

Bolsonaro is preferred by male voters (39%), 37% from the Southeast region and 35% from the Midwest region. Most of his voters earn between 2,000 and 3,000 Reais (40%), are evangelicals (47%) and are over 35 years old, still maintaining a loyal following: 65% of those who voted for the president in 2018 intend to repeat the vote (DIAP 2021).

Facing these candidates and their characteristics, at least four scenarios can be drawn.

According to research done by the Atlas Político (DIAP 2021) at the end of November 2021, Lula extended his advantage over his opponents in the 2022 electoral race, counting with 42.8% of voting intentions. Bolsonaro appears in second place with 31.5% – with a failure rate of 65.3% –, whereas the entry of former judge Sérgio Moro into the dispute messed up the third way dividing the preferences of anti-PT voters. Moro took the third place with 13.7% of the votes removing a portion of the votes from Bolsonaro, but also from Ciro Gomes, who comes in fourth with 6.1% of the votes, and especially from João Doria with just 1.7% of voting intentions.

In a second-round scenario, the research shows that Lula wins all the candidates. Against Bolsonaro, he wins with 50.5% of the votes; in a dispute against Moro with 46.4% of the votes; against Ciro with 42.3%; and against Doria with 47.2%. Moreover, the number of voters who declare their vote blank, null or who do not know which candidate is going to choose is still high in scenarios where Lula is fighting against Moro (24.4%) and against Doria (37.4%), which shows the indecision of voters, who have not yet decided on their vote. In a scenario of dispute between Lula and Bolsonaro, only 13.5% of voters remain in doubt (DIAP 2021).

According to Ipec⁵ (2021), in a survey presented in mid-December 2021, in the two scenarios pointed out, the first with all the pre-presidential candidates and the second with just the most important ones, Lula's victory in the first round is

⁵Ipec stands for *Inteligência em Pesquisa e Consultoria*, which means Intelligence in Research and Consulting, an institute formed by former executives of the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics – Ibope.

clear. In the first scenario, Lula would win with 48% of the votes and, in the second, with 49%.

In the first scenario, Bolsonaro appears in second place with 21% of the votes, followed by Sérgio Moro with 6% and Ciro Gomes with 5%. Tied with João Doria with 2% comes André Janones from AVANTE, followed by pre-candidates who receive 1% or less of voting intentions (Ipec 2021).

In the second scenario, Bolsonaro is also in second place but with 22% of voting intentions, followed by Sérgio Moro with 8%, Ciro Gomes with 5% and Doria with 3% (Ipec 2021).

An eventual new scenario might be the dispute between Lula and Sérgio Moro in the second turn since both have exchange accusations in the media. Indeed, it is very probably that the election come to be more clearly decided around March. At that time, if Bolsonaro downs even more in the polls, Sérgio may come to occupy his space and goes into a second turn with Lula. This scenario is very much plausible. That is why both Bolsonaro and Lula fear Moro so much that they have been accusing him of several things in the media and have also been trying to wear off his image by criticising him every time.

Conclusion

Considering that the trend today is one of cohabitation of left and right governments in Latin America since the right-wing governments have been falling, it is possible that Brazil, like other countries of the region, follow that trend and their voters choose for the left in the 2022 elections, as has recently happened in Chile with the victory of Gabriel Boric. Besides, Bolsonaro's government does nothing to help due to its mistakes in all policies that have been developed, the lack of support from the Congress and Bolsonaro's lack of negotiation skills.

Indeed, in October 2022, Brazilians will head to the polls to select their new president, their representatives for Congress and their state governors. Nevertheless, the conjuncture is incredibly stressful since the two frontrunners – Bolsonaro and Lula – face also candidates who compose a third way that joins around 30% of voting intention.

Bolsonaro, a controversial federal deputy from Rio de Janeiro, won the 2018 election due to a change in the Brazilian electoral behaviour since in this election it has been clear the emergence of a gender and race gap in the analysis of electoral preferences, a sexist, racist and praiseworthy on dictatorship discourse searching for a traditional *family order* values, not to mention his anti-Lula and anti-leftist discourse that has tried to join the PT to corruption (Murillo 2019). Apart from that, Bolsonaro interrupted the trend in the choice of presidential candidates, always from the two main presidential parties so far – PT and PSDB (Borges and Vidigal 2018, p. 55). Besides, Bolsonaro benefited from the enormous support of the evangelical networks and of the dramatic corruption scandal that had led Lula to prison on the case of the Car Wash Operation.

During his government, Bolsonaro showed that he was not tailored for the position he holds. Additionally, the lack of preparation of his entourage and the

absence of Congress support has led the country to a permanent state of crisis. All he does is his best efforts to maintain the public debate around beliefs, his only strategy, which means an imaginary crusade where *bolsonarism* uses inappropriate comments as his weapons giving rise to false political crises (Chagas-Bastos 2019, p. 97).

In the end, Bolsonaro is a right-wing populist who evidences the crisis of parliamentary democracy (Schmitt 1988), with his anti-establishment and authoritarian dimensions (Laclau 2005).

This Bolsonaro wants to win the 2022 elections. Lula wants the same. However, apart from Bolsonaro and Lula – the two frontrunners – there are still other third-way candidates. Polls are much more favourable to Lula.

In all scenarios presented above, Lula emerges as the victorious in the 2022 presidential elections, leaving no margin for the third way. This does not seem to be the best for Brazil since Lula's image is not the best especially abroad, which may not contribute to improve Brazil's image at the international level facing the reactions to the events in the country, which have been one of concern and dissatisfaction. Indeed, Lula is seen by many as a *thief* – an image difficult to clean.

Moreover, Lula would come to power in a different conjuncture from the boom of the commodities of the 2000s that had allowed a good management of the resources on the part of the former president. For 2022, the Brazilian Central Bank (2021, p. 18) has estimated a GDP growth at just 2.1%.

On the other hand, it seems impossible Bolsonaro wins the presidential elections or even to be able to reach the second turn, given his reduce rates provided by the polls, although his voting intentions indicate the maintenance of his far-right electorate, who is, however, insufficient.

It is possible, therefore, and considering the exchanges of accusations through the media, that the biggest confrontation occurs from March 2022 onwards between Lula and Sérgio Moro, who very probably will go into a second turn.

In any of the cases, if Bolsonaro tries, from now until the elections, an eventual attempt of a coup in order to maintain himself in power, it will not for sure be successful, due to the resilience of internal defenders of the rule of law. Brazilians are more powerful and, most importantly, are more conscious of their power.

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