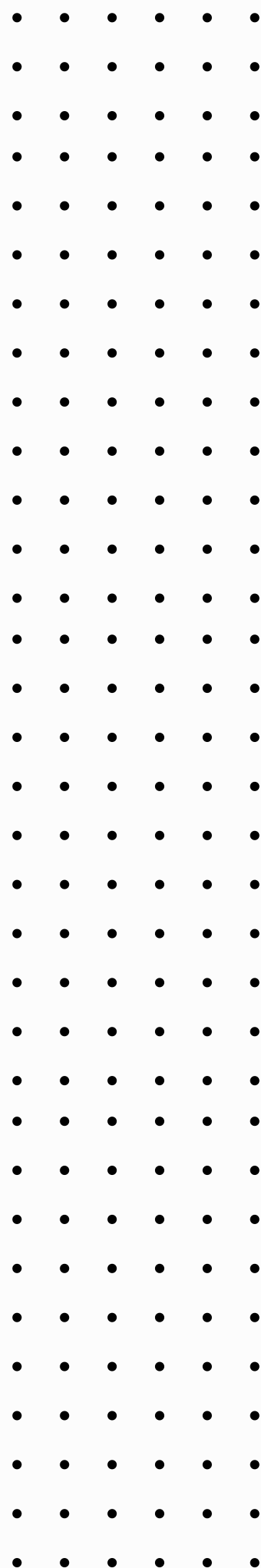


# A DROP OF LEFTWING IN A SEA OF RIGHTWING? THE BRAZILIAN ELECTIONS



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On October 2, the Brazilian citizens were called to vote for their National Congress, corresponding to the most national legislative body, the Governors, vice governors, and the legislative assemblies of all the federal states. The elections were polarized by the leaders of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Worker's Party) Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who gained the 48% of the voters, followed by his opponent Jair Bolsonaro, leader of the Liberal Party with the 43% and thus went to the second run-off.

The Brazilian elections drew wide international attention; President Bolsonaro has been a deeply polarizing figure, drawing ire for his flagrant disregard for environmental concerns, his ties to far-right forces both domestically and abroad, and for the importance of the office in the decision-making process. The President, with his or her cabinet, fully controls the federal executive branch of power, by drafting bills and setting up the political agenda, which can affect the legislative one.

Although Lula da Silva obtained the majority of the votes, the Brazilian electoral law states that if none of the presidential candidates receive more than 50% of the votes, the two most voted proceed for a second round. Therefore, on the 30th of October more than 156 million Brazilian citizens are going to vote for the second time, and choose between Inácio Lula da Silva and the current president Jair Bolsonaro.

What is important to highlight is that the difference between the two political leaders was only 5%, whereas in the chamber of deputies and in the senate Bolsonaro's party won the majority of the seats. Therefore, both of the legislative bodies have been shifted towards the right, by making Lula's performance a modest but nonetheless important left-wing result over a broader right-wing success at the federal level.

## The two candidates

Jair Bolsonaro is a far-right populist leader and a former army captain, who in 2018 decided to run for the first time for the presidential election with the Social Liberal Party (SLP), from which he separated a year later. He created his own new party called: Alliance for Brazil, which failed after a few months for lack of support and forced him to change his political position, and run for the Liberal party.

His ambiguous political strategy, together with its anti-environmental and security policies, gained the support of several influential national investor groups, businessman, evangelical and catholic communities, and farming lobbyists. On the other hand, his opponent, Lula, is a former metal worker and Union leader, who governed Brazil for more than 7 years, known for his social economic programme. "Bolsa familia", whose aim was to reduce poverty and inequality by providing a minimum level of income for extremely poor families. However, Lula's reputation has been marked by several scandals.

In 2014, a federal investigation discovered him guilty of a multi-billion dollar bribery coming from the oil giant Petrobras, and a sentence of the appeal court accused and imprisoned him for corruption and money laundering in 2018. However, after several months in prison, the Supreme Court annulled the case, citing procedural errors, leading to the release of the former president, which immediately jumped back into politics.

## The possible outcomes

Despite Lula's success in the first round, there's still a possibility that Bolsonaro might overcome him by a few votes. Considering the inaccuracy of the national opinion polls for the first round, which wrongly forecasted Lula winning with more than 14 percentage points over Bolsonaro, the results of the second round have never been more uncertain. In the aftermath of the first round, Lula

shifted his focus towards the evangelical and Catholic Church electors, historically supporters of the right-wing, by promising that he would not restrict any religious freedoms in an attempt to gain more votes from this electorate. At the same time, Bolsonaro has been accusing the press of supporting Lula, as well as some judges of the Supreme Court of collusion against him and by accusing the supreme court of jeopardizing the electronic voting system.

Biggest concern raised by several Brazilian and International experts is that even if Lula is going to win, Bolsonaro might not recognize the legitimacy of the election results. Moreover, considering that his party already gained the majority in the Congress, he will be able to implement impactful constitutional reforms, which will allow to change the configuration of the Supreme Court, by giving him the possibility to appoint more judges even without holding the Presidential office, considering the influence that he has inside his party. In sum, the political future of Brazil has never been so uncertain, not only for the results of the election per se, but also for the post-election phase and the stability of the government.

Outcomes of the presidential election will be carefully followed by the international community, especially the US and the EU. Brazilian elections will have an immediate impact on geopolitical security, the stability of energy markets as well as the future of global climate ambitions. Brazil hosts some of the most important natural resources, belonging to the Amazon rainforest, which is fundamental for the earth's biodiversity and for the global oxygen production. Nonetheless, this latter holds very useful mineral and agricultural commodities and has one of the biggest crude oil reserves in the entire world.

This is why, due to the current war in Ukraine and the oil embargo from Russia, many European countries started to seek alternative partners to satisfy their domestic needs. Hence, Brazil can represent a crucial partner for the EU, thanks to its large oil reserves which can be able to satisfy its petrol demand. However,

another Bolsonaro term characterized by far-right hostility will indubitably complicate such endeavours as opposed to Lula's more ameliorating stance on the international rules-based order and cooperation.

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