

Call for Paper: Latin American Perspective on Brazil under Bolsonaro: Social, Political and Economic Impacts in the Country and in Latin America.

The right-wing is on the rise worldwide. Political leaders around the globe have been elected as part of this trend. Trump in the United States, Erdoğan in Turkey, Duterte in the Philippines, and Bolsonaro in Brazil are prominent examples. Nationalism, anti-globalism, and populism are some of the terms that academics, the media, and ordinary people use to explain the phenomenon. Are we living a new wave of fascism? Why are human rights, socially marginalized groups, and social and political activists under attack? Is democracy in danger?

In *How Democracies Die* (2018), Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt argue that the current conjuncture adds to the ways in which democracies may collapse. Different from the “spectacular fashion” of military coup d’états, nowadays “democracies may die at the hands not of generals but of elected leaders—presidents or prime ministers who subvert the very process that brought them to power.” Such considerations help to explain why Jair Messias Bolsonaro, a low-ranking politician who has been representing the far-right in Brazilian politics for almost three decades, became the 38th president of the Republic of Brazil. Two of his declarations while a congressman sum up his politics: “Elections won’t change anything in this country. It will only change on the day that we break out in civil war here and do the job that the military regime didn’t do: killing 30,000. If some innocent people die, that’s fine. In every war, innocent people die.” (*From a 1999 interview on Brazilian television*). “I’m in favor of torture, you know that. And the people are in favor as well.” (*From an appearance on Brazilian television in 1999*).

Newspapers and magazines worldwide from a broad range of ideological perspectives have reacted to his election mostly with apprehension. The British magazine *The Economist* wrote immediately prior to the elections that “the probable president (Bolsonaro) is reviving Latin America’s unholy marriage between market economics and political authoritarianism.” The headline of the *The New York Times* article on the presidential inauguration read: “Jair Bolsonaro Sworn in as Brazil’s President, Cementing Rightward Shift.” These examples show how observers across the globe appear deeply concerned about Brazilian democracy and the effects Bolsonaro’s election will have on the country’s domestic and foreign policies.

Inside Brazil it is no different. Journalists, politicians, artists, and academics have expressed concerns about the effects of Bolsonaro’s election on economics, politics, social and human rights, the environment, indigenous people, Afro-Brazilians, the LGBTI community, and the poor and working classes. Former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who had been reluctant to open-

ly criticize the candidate prior to the elections, has declared that Bolsonaro could jeopardize Brazil's image abroad. Rubens Ricupero, one of Brazil's most experienced diplomats, stated that the proposals of Jair Bolsonaro "could leave Brazil poorer, isolated, and despised."

Although Bolsonaro was elected in part because of a wave of anti-corruption and anti-Workers' Party (PT) sentiment, the concerns about Brazil's young democracy and its image worldwide should not be neglected. After more than three decades of the reconstruction of democratic institutions in Brazil, a former captain with a history of anti-democratic, homophobic, misogynist, and racist declarations and attitudes is now the president of the largest and richest country in South America. These unsettling facts demand interpretations. There are many possible approaches to analyzing the reasons and consequences of Bolsonaro's election.

In tune with such concerns, *Latin American Perspectives* invites the submission of articles that will examine the political, economic, and social impacts of the new Brazilian government on the country, Latin America and worldwide. To follow are some scholarly and theoretical debates that authors might wish to consider.

In *How Fascism Works* (2018: 188), Jason Staley argues that "the mechanisms of fascist politics all build on and support one another. They weave a myth of a distinction between us and them, based in a romanticized fictional past featuring us and not them, and supported by a resentment of a corrupt elite, who take our hard-earned money and threaten our tradition." In *From Fascism to Populism in History* (2017X), Federico Fichelstein advocates that old and new populism and fascist experiences can't be reduced to their national or regional conditions. "We now have no excuse to allow geopolitical narcissism to stand against historical interpretation, especially when analyzing ideologies that cross borders and oceans and even influence each other (xii)." In this sense, populism and fascism are not located in Europe, the United States or Latin America since they are a transnational and global phenomenon.

Taking into consideration such arguments, the editors will encourage authors to debate the theoretical issues explaining Bolsonaro's successful rise to power. Do current analytical approaches to populism and fascism contribute to understanding Bolsonaro? What new theoretical understandings are being developed in order to explain the phenomenon?

The issue should also contribute to debates about how class relations have been transformed and translated into politics. The social policies of the leftwing governments of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff and their socioeconomic and political consequences occurred when

Brazil experienced a growth spurt in the first years of the twenty-first century. At the same time there has been a considerable weakening of key industrial sectors of the economy that have diminished the importance of traditional urban trade unions. To what extent have these changes affected class relations in Brazil? What is the impact of the expansion of the informal economy and the growing numbers of temporary, non-permanent workers had on traditional labor relations?

Another essential question is the role of the judicial system in the Brazilian political process, since Matthew M. Taylor (*Dados*, 2007) has demonstrated the error of excluding this branch of the government from any analysis even though the study of the judiciary and public policy-making in Brazil is still incipient. To what extent has the judiciary become a political instrument to defend a conservative vision of Brazil, using crime and corruption as a means of fueling political polarization?

The role of traditional and new media as political actors might also be addressed, since they are responsible for the greatest amount of information flow inside the country, offering at times acceptance and legitimacy to Bolsonaro's political agenda. Fábio Konder Comparato ("A democratização dos meios de comunicação de massa," 2000: 134) has stated that "in countries where the oligarchic regime clearly prevails under a democratic guise, as in the case of Brazil, the exploitation of the most important forms of mass communication is done by private groups, closely attuned to the interests of their class." In the last twenty years, with dramatic changes in information technology, what have been the impacts of social media in the political arena?

Debates about the changing role of the United States in the twenty-first century are also relevant for this issue. In 2008, Nikolas Kozloff (*Revolution! South America and the Rise of the New Left*: 1-2) pointed out that "recently South America, far from fitting its stereotype as a region of 'banana republics,' seems to have turned a critical page in its political history." Referring to the change in region after left-leaning governments have taken power and have diminished US ability to secure advantages for American business, Kozloff argues: "Across the region, governments have held U.S. oil companies to great account and control. Moreover, corporations have been forced to hand over greater share of profits to the state and in some cases have been obliged to enter into joint venture if national governments (2)." And in a sort of precipitated conclusion, Kozloff wrote that "it would appear as if the heady days when U.S. business called the shots are at an end" (2). More than a decade after those considerations, is this affirmation still valid?

Another possible theme would be to observe the role of the military in this evolving conjuncture. As Kozloff has also noted, in the beginning of the twenty-first century “in some cases the military has even allied itself to newly elected, left-leaning regimes and severed military ties to the United States (2).” Do events from 2014 on, as observed in Brazil and other parts of Latin America, indicate different conclusions?

The editors would also welcome analyses of the practical consequences of the use of racism, mysogyny, and homophobia in Bolsonaro’s campaign and government policies, as well as the emergence of forms of resistance to the far-right in power. These themes might include the ways in which urban, rural, and environmental movements, indigenous peoples, Afro-Brazilians, LGBTI activists, women, and others have responded to new government policies.

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James N. Green: james_green@brown.edu

Tulio S. H. Ferreira: tulioferreira@gmail.com