

# Notes about politics in Brazil today

## Opinion

The current essay aims to propose a reflection about the actual political situation in Brazilian, considering the conflicts of interest concerning the elections of 2018 for the country's Government. The theoretical framework is based on a dialectical perspective, by considering the relation between structure and superstructure, developed by Antonio Gramsci in his famous "Quaderni del Carcere" (Prison Notebooks), written between 1929 and 1935 during his imprisonment by the Italian Fascist regime.

Brazil's economic structure is based on inequalities, not only in terms of an impair distribution of income, but also regarding the concentration of property within Brazil's most vulnerable groups (Black people, Women, Indigenes, People with mental diseases, etc.). According to ECLAC<sup>1</sup> in 2017, the Gini Inequality Index was 0.54 in Brazil. The total income of just 10% of Brazil's total population, namely those with the highest income, was 3.5 times higher than the total income owned by 40%, namely those with the lowest income. In 2017, the rate of Brazil's population belonging to the poorest ones, namely with an income below the "purchasing power parity index" was just 5.5 US \$ per capita per day, namely 26.5% for the country's overall population. Such value rises up to 30.1% within the age groups between 15 and 29, according to the latest available data published by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE (2018).<sup>2</sup> The dominating classes, constituted by important rural landowners, multinational companies, industrialists, bankers, large businesses concerns, collaborated all along Brazil's history in order to maintain and take advantage of such inequalities.

This elite maintained slavery for the longest time in the Americas, consequently promoting racism and the exclusion of the Black population from most of labour and educational opportunities. This scenery has repercussions until today. According to IBGE (2018), in addition to general income conditions, unemployment is significantly related to skin color: 33.7% of white people against 64.4 % of Black people, almost two times higher. The poor population is segregated inside territories without basic hygienic resources, with precarious public services, relegated within a zone of exclusion. Gentrification, furthermore, makes the access to the labour market and public policies even more difficult, also considering the general indifference of Brazil's public administration.

An organised group of urban workers have been mobilised by national trade unions since the industrialisation process of the 1920s. In the 1930s, Brazil's president Getúlio Vargas promoted policies for granting social insurance benefits, in order to obtain support from trade unions and urban workers. These policies, though causing on one hand a serious of conflicts of interest with the dominant classes, promoted on the other class conciliation and a process of general development. Vargas implemented a dictatorship from 1937 to 1945. With US-American hegemony in the world, the Brazilian economy became a satellite of the United States, with democracy, but whose main parties were controlled by the dominating classes.

A developmentalist era rose between 1950 and 1961 with Vargas's election in 1950, which suffered many internal pressures until his suicide in 1954. Juscelino Kubitschek was elected in 1955. He

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promoted an inner-national development with the construction of the new capital Brasília.

A major political crisis took place in 1961 with the resignation of the president, elected in 1960, Jânio Quadros. Vice President João Goulart was vetoed by the military forces and the dominant classes, for his alliance with working-classes and for proposing relevant reforms within the national economy; attitudes that contradicted the great interests of the dominant classes. These, together with American imperialist forces, carried out a coup d'état in 1964, implementing a military government until 1984. A constituent assembly drew up a democratic constitution and a declaration of human rights, which disputed dominant interests by establishing formal social guarantees and social security policies.

Elections were held in 1994, with the victory of Fernando Cardoso (1995-2002), which implemented a dismantle of the participation of the public system in Brazil's economy and society, promoting at the same time changes in the inner-national market, which foresaw privatisations with the support of the dominant classes.

The election of Ignácio Lula da Silva from the Brazilian Labour Party - PT (Partido dos trabalhadores) - created in 1980, disputed the dominant interests by establishing policies of inclusion for the poorer classes and so-called minori-ties, both through promoting a general development on one hand and through social education policies, public access to health, access to electricity, racial equality, raising the minimum wage above inflation, on the other hand. Once again, the dominant classes saw a reduction of their interests in monopolising high incomes, their commodification, their privatisation politics and, consequently, a reduction of social exclusion. The PT managed to elect Dilma Rousseff in 2010 and 2014. This last election was questioned by the conservative and neoliberal opposition with an important attempt to distort public opinion.

In 2016, Dilma was accused of a crime of a lack of responsibility, however without proper evidence, and Vice President Michel Temer in collusion with US imperialism and market forces organised an impeachment, quite similar to a mili-tary coup, against the legitimately elected president, creating a new government. At the same time, they accused Lula of crimes without proof, being convicted and imprisoned, preventing him, consequently, from running in the 2018 elec-tions, where he had chances to win.

Temer began a cycle of neoliberal reforms by cutting social policies and changing labor laws, in order to enable inter-mittent employment contracts with reduced rights and more exploitation. The 2018 elections were polarised between the extreme right-hand candidate,

military captain Jair Bolsonaro, for 30 years without a prominent federal deputy, and Fernando Haddad, from the PT, jurist with MA in economics and Ph.D in Philosophy, university professor at the University São Paulo, former mayor of São Paulo and former minister of Lula. Conservative forces, dominant classes, military forces and evangelicals came together around Bolsonaro, using the power of the media and social networks. A fake news system was set up, subject to parliamentary investigation, to demonize the PT candidate. In the second round, the right won the elections with its agenda to demolish the policies of inclusion, participation and the presence of the public sphere in the national economy, with privatisation processes and the promise to fight corruption and crime through repressing methods.

The dominant forces restructured the anti-Vargas and anti-PT project, and adopted a liberal market strategy in line with the foreign policy of the United States and Israel. The Brazilian tradition of non-alignment, the defense of peoples' autonomy and the strengthening of the south-south alliance was compromised. Bolsonaro formed a conservative government regarding the socio-cultural structure along with a neoliberal economy, characterised by authoritarianism, evangelical religion in the public sphere and free access to firearms, mainly in defense of private property.

Its first year of government continued with a widespread campaign of fake news, contemporary advancing with the dismantle of the public power, consequently promoting a progress of privatisation. Such policies either weakened the public power or eliminated and repressed the participation of the general population in decision making processes concerning civil rights within the public sphere. The tendency of authoritarianism, conservatism in customs, repression promoted by military and police forces, along with privatisation and neoliberalism was consolidated in their speeches and projects.

The new government lost progressively the legitimacy of a large part of its electorate; however the same discursive structure has been maintained for the most right-hand oriented groups, that remained ideologically faithful, which cor-responds to around a quarter of the electorate. The new government is in opposition to environmental policies, indige-nous reserves and the black population (quilombolas), the option for sexual diversity, cultural and press freedom. Public advertising, that critically analyse the current governmental form, had been cut out from the national press. Also financial founding for artists

who are in opposition to the current ideology have been denied.

By critically analysing Brazil's new government, brings forth evident signs of Fascism and Nazism, i.e. using the executive powers in order to destroy the process of democratisation and the public power, increasing at the same strategies of repression. In addition, the proposal to eliminate national sovereignty by aligning with the United States is explicit. The implementation of neoliberalism translates into the reduction or elimination of social rights, for instance social security, the deregulation of labor legislation and the dismantle of public funds and policies. It implemented the presence of military forces for the administration of education, deregulated the sale of firearms and tried completely to exempt homicide committed by police forces from judicial trials.

The current governmental power implements an explicit policy to accentuate the concentration of income in the hands of the capitalistic class and to silence the demands of workers by eliminating active participation of the general population in the public sphere. The president is founding a political party called Aliança para Brasil, whose number will be 38, reminding to Schmidt Wesson 38 and his minister of economy makes explicit reference to the 18th century liberal scholar Adam Smith, which turns poor people responsible for their own inequality.

In summary, a sociological analysis of this situation at a national level shows a dismantle of workers' rights, in order to promote the benefits of national and international capitalists, but burning the image of Brazil as a democratic country in defense of the environment.

## Acknowledgments

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## Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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