

## Welcome to the Jungle

A troubling new era has begun in Brazil with the election on Sunday of the far-right Jair Bolsonaro as president, writes Pepe Escobar.

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*It's darkness at the break of (tropical) high noon.*

*Jean Baudrillard once defined Brazil as "the chlorophyll of our planet". And yet a land vastly associated worldwide with the soft power of creative joie de vivre has elected a fascist for president.*

Brazil is a land torn apart. Former paratrooper Jair Bolsonaro was elected with 55.63 percent of votes. Yet a record 31 million votes were ruled absent or null and void. No less than 46 million Brazilians voted for the Workers' Party's candidate, Fernando Haddad; a professor and former mayor of Sao Paulo, one of the crucial megalopolises of the Global South. The key startling fact is that over 76 million Brazilians did not vote for Bolsonaro.

His first speech as president exuded the feeling of a trashy jihad by a fundamentalist sect laced with omnipresent vulgarity and the exhortation of a God-given dictatorship as the path towards a new Brazilian Golden Age.

French-Brazilian sociologist Michael Lowy has [described](#) the Bolsonaro phenomenon as "pathological politics on a large scale".

His ascension was facilitated by an unprecedented conjunction of toxic factors such as the massive social impact of crime in Brazil, leading to a widespread belief in violent repression as the only solution; the concerted rejection of the Workers' Party, catalyzed by financial capital, rentiers, agribusiness and oligarchic interests; an evangelical tsunami; a "justice" system historically favoring the upper classes and embedded in State Department-funded "training" of judges and prosecutors, including the notorious Sergio Moro, whose single-minded goal during the alleged anti-corruption Car Wash investigation was to send Lula to prison; and the absolute aversion to democracy by vast sectors of the Brazilian ruling classes.

That is about to coalesce into a radically anti-popular, God-given, rolling neoliberal shock; paraphrasing Lenin, a case of fascism as the highest stage of neoliberalism. After all, when a fascist sells a "free market" agenda, all his sins are forgiven.

The Reign of BBBB

It's impossible to understand the rise of Bolsonarism without the background of the extremely sophisticated Hybrid War unleashed on Brazil by the usual suspects. NSA spying – ranging from the Petrobras energy giant all the way to then President Dilma Rousseff's

mobile phone – was known since mid-2013 after Edward Snowden showed how Brazil was the most spied upon Latin American nation in the 2000's.

The Pentagon-suppliant Superior War College in Rio has always been in favor of a gradual – but surefire – militarization of Brazilian politics aligned with U.S. national security interests. The curriculum of top U.S. military academies was uncritically adopted by the Superior War College.

The managers of Brazil's industrial-military-technological complex largely survived the 1964-1985 dictatorship. They learned everything about psyops from the French in Algeria and the Americans in Vietnam. Over the years they evolved their conception of the enemy within; not only the proverbial "communists", but also the Left as a whole as well as the vast masses of dispossessed Brazilians.

This led to the recent situation of generals threatening judges if they ever set Lula free. Bolsonaro's running mate, the crude Generalito Hamilton Mourao, even threatened a military coup if the ticket did not win. Bolsonaro himself said he would never "accept" defeat.

This evolving militarization of politics perfectly meshed with the cartoonish BBBB (Bullet, Beef, Bible, Bank) Brazilian Congress.

Congress is virtually controlled by military, police and paramilitary forces; the powerful agribusiness and mining lobby, with their supreme goal of totally plundering the Amazon rainforest; evangelical factions; and banking/financial capital. Compare it with the fact that more than half of senators and one third of Congress are facing criminal investigations.

The Bolsonaro campaign used every trick in the book to flee any possibility of a TV debate, faithful to the notion that political dialogue is for suckers, especially when there's nothing to debate.

After all, Bolsonaro's top economic advisor, Chicago Boy Paulo Guedes – currently under investigation for securities fraud – had already promised to "cure" Brazil by bearing the usual gifts: privatize everything; destroy social spending; get rid of all labor laws as well as the minimum wage; let the beef lobby plunder the Amazon; and increase the weaponizing of all citizens to uber-NRA levels.

No wonder *The Wall Street Journal* normalized Bolsonaro as a "conservative populist" and the "Brazilian swamp-drainer"; this fact-free endorsement ignores that Bolsonaro is a lowly politico who has only passed two pieces of legislation in his 27 lackluster years in Congress.

WhatsApp Me to the Promised Land

Even as large misinformed masses progressively became aware of the massive Bolsonaro campaign manipulative scams on WhatsApp – a tropical post-Cambridge Analytica saga; and even as Bolsonaro pledged, on the record, that opponents would have only two options after Sunday's elections, jail or exile, that was still not enough to arrest Brazil from inexorably slouching towards a dystopian, militarized BET (Banana Evangelical Theocracy).

In any mature democracy a bunch of businessmen – via black accounting – financing a multi-tentacle fake news campaign on WhatsApp against the Workers' Party and Lula's candidate Haddad would qualify as a major scandal.

WhatsApp is wildly popular in Brazil, much more than Facebook; so it had to be properly instrumentalized in this Brazilian remix of Cambridge Analytica-style Hybrid War.

The tactics were absolutely illegal because they qualified as undeclared campaign donations as well as corporate donations (forbidden by the Brazilian Supreme Court since 2015). The Brazilian Federal Police started an investigation that now is bound to head the same way of the Saudis investigating themselves on the Pulp Fiction fiasco in Istanbul.

The fake news tsunami was managed by the so-called Bolsominions. They are a hyper-loyal volunteer army, which purges anyone who dares to question the “Myth” (as the leader is referred to), while manipulating content 24/7 into memes, viral fake videos and assorted displays of “Bolso-swarm” ire.

Consider Washington’s outrage at Russians that may have interfered in U.S. elections allegedly using the same tactics the U.S. and its comprador elites used in Brazil.

### Smashing the BRICS

On foreign policy, as far as Washington is concerned, Reichskommissar Bolsonaro may be very useful on three fronts.

The first one is geo-economic: to get the lion’s share of the vast pre-salt reserves for U.S. energy giants.



That would be the requisite follow-up to the coup de grace against Dilma Rousseff in 2013, when she approved a law orienting 75 percent of oil wealth royalties towards education and 25 percent to health care; a significant U.S.\$ 122 billion over 10 years.

The other two fronts are geopolitical: blowing up the BRICS from the inside, and getting Brazil to do the dirty work in a Venezuela regime change ops, thus fulfilling the Beltway obsession on smashing the Venezuela-Cuba axis.

Using the pretext of mass immigration from Venezuela to the Brazilian stretch of the Amazon, Colombia – elevated to the status of key NATO partner, and egged on by Washington – is bound to count on Brazilian military support for regime change.

And then there’s the crucial China story.

China and Brazil are close BRICS partners. BRICS by now essentially means RC (Russia and China), much to the disgust of Moscow and Beijing, which counted on Haddad following in the footsteps of Lula, who was instrumental in enhancing BRICS geopolitical clout.

That brings us to a key point of inflexion in the rolling Hybrid War coup, when the Brazilian military became convinced that Rousseff’s cabinet was infiltrated by agents of Chinese intel.

Still, China remains Brazil’s top trade partner – ahead of the U.S., with bilateral trade reaching \$75 billion last year. In parallel to being an avid consumer of Brazilian commodities, Beijing has already invested \$124 billion in Brazilian companies and infrastructure projects since 2003.

Chicago Boy Guedes has recently met with Chinese diplomats. Bolsonaro is bound to receive a top Chinese delegation right at the start of his mandate. On the campaign trail, he hammered that “China is not buying in Brazil, China is buying Brazil”. Bolsonaro might attempt to pull a mini-Trump sanction overdrive on China. Yet he must be aware that the powerful agribusiness lobby has been profiting immensely from the U.S.-China trade war.

A mighty cliffhanger is guaranteed to come at the 2019 BRICS summit, which will take place in Brazil: picture tough guy Bolsonaro face to face with the real boss, Xi Jinping.

So what is the Brazilian military really up to? Answer: the Brazilian “Dependency Doctrine” – which is a true neocolonial mongrel.

On one level, the Brazilian military leadership is developmentalist, geared towards territorial integration, well-patrolled borders and fully disciplined, internal, social and economic “order.” At the same time they believe this should all be carried out under the supervision of the “indispensable nation.”

The military leaders reason that their own country is not knowledgeable enough to fight organized crime, cyber-security, bio-security, and, on the economy, to fully master a minimal state coupled with fiscal reform and austerity. For the bulk of the military elite, private foreign capital is always benign.

An inevitable consequence is to see Latin American and African nations as *untermenschen*; a reaction against Lula’s and Dilma’s emphasis on the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and closer energy and logistical integration with Africa.

#### Can’t Rule Out Military Coup

Despite this there is internal military dissent – which could even open a possible way towards the removal of Bolsonaro, a mere puppet, to the benefit of the real thing: a general.

When the Workers’ Party was in power, the Navy and the Air Force were quite pleased by strategic projects such as a nuclear submarine, a supersonic fighter jet and satellites launched by Made in Brazil rockets. Their reaction remains to be seen in the event Bolsonaro ditches these techno-breakthroughs for good.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

The key question may be whether there is a direct connection between the cream of the crop of Brazilian military academies; the “dependency generals” and their psyops techniques; different evangelical factions; and the post-Cambridge Analytica tactics deployed by the Bolsonaro campaign. Would it be a nebula congregating all these cells, or is it a loose network?

Arguably the best answer is provided by war anthropologist [Piero Leirner](#), who conducted deep research in the Brazilian Armed Forces and told me, “there’s no previous connection. Bolsonaro is a post-fact. The only possible connection is between certain campaign traits and psyops.” Leirner stresses,

“Cambridge Analytica and Bannon represent the infrastructure, but the quality of information, to send contradictory signals and then an order resolution coming as a third way, this is military strategy from CIA psyop manuals.”

There are cracks though. Leirner sees the arch of disparate forces supporting Bolsonaro as a “bricolage” which sooner or later will disintegrate. What next? A sub-Pinochet General?

Why Bolsonaro is not Trump

In *The Road to Somewhere; The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics*, David Goodhart shows that the driving force behind populism is not the fascist love of an ultra-nation. It’s anomie – that feeling of a vague existential threat posed by modernity. That applies to all forms of Right populism in the West.

Thus we have the opposition between “Somewheres” and “Anywheres”. We have “Somewheres” that want their nations’ democracy to be enjoyed only by the “home” ethnicity, with the national culture not contaminated by “foreign” influences.

And we have “Anywheres” who inhabit the rootless postmodern vortex of multiculturalism and foreign travel for business. These are a demographic minority – but a majority within



political, economic, educational and professional elites.

This leads Goodhart to make a crucial distinction between populism and fascism – ideologically and psychologically.

The standard legal distinction can be found in German constitutional law. Right populism is “radical” – thus legal. Fascism is “extreme,” thus illegal.

Trump being labeled a “fascist” is false. Bolsonaro in the West has been labeled “The Tropical Trump.” The fact is Trump is a Right populist – who happens to deploy a few policies that could even be characterized as Old Left.

The record reveals Bolsonaro as a racist, misogynist, homophobic, weaponizing thug, favoring a white, patriarchal, hierarchical, hetero-normative and “homogenous” Brazil; an absurdity in a deeply unequal society still ravaged by the effects of slavery and where the majority of the population is mixed race. Besides, historically, fascism is a radical bourgeois Final Solution about total annihilation of the working class. That makes Bolsonaro an outright fascist.

Trump is even more moderate than Bolsonaro. He does not incite supporters to literally exterminate his opponents. After all, Trump has to respect the framework of a republic with long-standing, even if flawed, democratic institutions.

That was never the case in the young Brazilian democracy – where a president may now behave as if human rights are a communist, and UN, plot. The Brazilian working classes, intellectual elites, social movements and all minorities have plenty of reasons to fear the New Order; in Bolsonaro’s own words, “they will be banned from our motherland.” The criminalization/dehumanization of any opposition means, literally, that tens of millions of Brazilians are worthless.

Talk to Nietzsche

The sophisticated Hybrid War rolling coup in Brazil that started in 2014, had a point of inflexion in 2016 and culminating in 2018 with impeaching a president; jailing another; smashing the Right and the Center-Right; and in a post-politics-on-steroids manner, opening the path to neo-fascism.

Bolsonaro though is a – mediocre – black void cipher. He does not have the political structure, the knowledge, not to mention the intelligence to have come so far, out of the blue, without a hyper-complex, state of the art, cross-border intel support system. No wonder he’s a Steve Bannon darling.

In contrast, the Left – as in Europe – once again was stuck in analog mode. No way any progressive front, especially in this case as it was constituted at the eleventh hour, could possibly combat the toxic tsunami of cultural war, identity politics and micro-targeted fake news.

They lost a major battle. At least they now know this is hardcore, all-out war. To destroy Lula – the world’s foremost political prisoner – the Brazilian elites had to destroy Brazil. Still, Nietzsche always prevails; whatever doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. The vanguard of global resistance against neo-fascism as the higher stage of neoliberalism has now moved south of the Equator. No pasarán.

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