



Brazil at the crossroads: Navigating Latin America's Turbulence

Posted on January 10, 2026 by Israel Dutra

To grasp the Brazilian political situation, one must consider Trump's new offensive across the continent. His election marked a new phase in the relationship between US imperialism and Latin American nations. Now, under the leadership of the far-right Trump and his circle of billionaires, imperialism seeks to impose a new form of colonisation, specifically targeting countries in the Global South.

On one hand, this neocolonial frenzy is exemplified by the extreme right's actions in Gaza; on the other, Trump aims to counter China's expansion, which is increasingly asserting itself in the world market with or without the BRICS nations.

Trump is initiating a multi-faceted assault on Latin America. This includes the tariff war, a declaration against Panama, the targeting of immigrants within the United States—most of whom are of Latin American descent—and the recent actions against Venezuela and Colombia.

The relationship between Brazil and these contradictions, as well as the essential resistance to Trump and his neocolonial strategies, forms the core of the discussion.

The central dispute in the country

The dispute in Brazil involves various sectors and social classes in opposition to one another, reflecting broader international tensions. Since Bolsonaro's government took office, two major challenges—strategic and historical—have emerged:

1. confronting the extreme right, which has a coup agenda, as evidenced by the exposure of its plans and the attempt to orchestrate a 'Brazilian-style Capitol riot' on 8 January 2023;
2. addressing environmental destruction, which poses a global threat, as deforestation and the dominance of agribusiness and extractivism continue to ravage the country.

In light of these two critical issues, how are the different actors responding?

The far right seeks to align itself with Trump in hopes of regaining power in 2026, despite Bolsonaro's conviction posing a barrier. It aims to employ the

narrative of narco-terrorism to justify an even more stringent security policy, as demonstrated by the recent massacre in Rio de Janeiro.

The government acts as a significant obstacle to the return of the coup plotters, attempting to balance its efforts between confronting imperialist attacks and addressing the urgent need to advance social agendas, such as reducing working hours. It relies on a very short-sighted strategy of class conciliation. This situation highlights the limitations of a government that does not fully commit to combating the extreme right and struggles to present itself as a viable alternative at COP-30, where environmental issues are on the agenda.

Social movements and key sectors, particularly those involved with the PSOL (Socialism and Freedom Party), confront the dual challenge of combating the far right on the streets while also preserving their political independence. They must support the working class and the public while distinguishing themselves from the government.

This scenario, as previously noted, is not exclusive to Brazil. Mamdani's victory in New York forms part of this broader trend, which is characterised by polarisation. The far right is actively capitalising on the crisis facing liberal democracies, as illustrated by the prominence of Trumpist parties in polls across the four largest European nations, all of which are witnessing significant growth. In contrast, the general strikes in Italy marked a high point of solidarity with Palestine, offering an internationalist example for millions. This trend is evident in the actions of European workers, the Flotilla, Greta Thunberg's activism, and Gustavo Petro's condemnation of imperialism, as well as other movements such as the uprisings of Generation Z.

Three Contradictions in the National Situation

The national situation is currently characterised by preparations for the 2026 election, during which the presidency, as well as the national and regional chambers and parliaments, will be renewed along with the governments of the country's 27 states. However, this prelude to the electoral process intertwines various crises and tensions that highlight Brazil's structural contradictions. In the immediate context, we can summarise that there are three significant tensions at play:

a) the political contest against Bolsonarism, the imprisonment of the coup plotters, and relations with Trump.

The demonstration on 21 September, which gathered over half a million people across hundreds of cities in Brazil, voiced outrage against the PEC da Blindagem (Shielding Constitutional Amendment) and revealed considerable reservations within the mass movement, reigniting the offensive in the streets that had previously been focused solely on Bolsonarism. This was a welcome and encouraging development. Its impact in parliament altered the agenda and provided a social foundation for the Supreme Court's positions, advancing the issue of amnesty and effectively burying the Shield Constitutional Amendment (for context, this was a bill that sanctioned impunity of parliamentarians, promoted by the right to grant amnesty to coup plotters).

The government regained ground and popularity, influenced by a complex web of factors, from immediate electoral interests to fluctuations on the international stage, not to mention the prevailing mood on the streets. It was this atmosphere that resonated strongly in the protests against the PEC da

Blindagem (Constitutional Amendment Proposal) and the attempts to manoeuvre for amnesty.

In light of this situation, Lula engaged in negotiations with Trump, as Bolsonaro was no longer a viable electoral option. The government also enhanced its popularity by advocating for issues such as the taxation of large fortunes and the campaign to eliminate the 6×1 scale (which refers to the reduction of the working week).

On the defensive, the far right sought to reposition itself around the public security agenda, mirroring strategies already employed in various countries, such as Ecuador and El Salvador, where Bukele serves as a model for intensifying internal repression and appealing to the most regressive sectors of the population.

b) The issue of public security discourse and the genocide of Black youth in the country's favelas and peripheries

The incursion by police forces under the command of Cláudio Castro in the early hours of Tuesday, October 28, resulted in the deadliest military operation in the country's history. A slaughter, a veritable massacre, occurred, with figures likely still underreported, indicating 128 fatalities.

The massacre represents a crime committed by the state—a brutal act of violence that perpetuates the cycle of the so-called war on drugs policy, which engulfs the hills and favelas of Rio. This situation exposes the working population to conflict between state forces and various factions, including militias and drug traffickers. The death toll has surpassed that of the

Carandiru massacre in the 1990s in São Paulo.

The United Nations issued a statement denouncing it as a barbaric crime. Governor Cláudio Castro directly ordered the operation, ostensibly seeking media attention and prestige, but at the cost of increased lethality and manipulation of narratives. The use of “narco-terrorism” is concerning because it fits into the far-right agenda, similar to strategies used by Trump, which aim to provoke Venezuela and Colombia both in military and political ways to weaken their governments and gain control over them.

A broad mobilisation, spearheaded by Black and peripheral movements, points out the need for a robust response from the streets, advocating for protests and actions that seek an alternative solution—one that entails putting an end to the massacres and violence directed at the population.

COP-30: Mobilisation and the Limits of Green Capitalism

The conference commences shortly after the federal government’s approval of oil exploration in the Amazon river estuary, marking a departure from the goals for reducing carbon emissions set by the Paris Agreement in 2015. According to COP President André Corrêa do Lago, the focus has shifted to adapting to climate change, implying an admission of inability to act against the fossil fuel industry’s interests and acknowledging the critical points of no return that have already been reached or are imminent. The Brazilian government’s substantial limitations on this issue are reflected in its endorsement of the Tropical Forest Forever Fund (TFFF), which aims to combat deforestation through the financialisation of protected forests.

In this context, COP 30 also serves as a reflection of national reality, highlighting both the contradictions within the government regarding so-called “green capitalism” and the imperative to confront denialism and violence from the extreme right.

We oppose oil exploitation

The Brazilian government is reintroducing the Tropical Forests Forever Fund (TFFF) as a significant initiative, initially proposed at the G20 in 2022. The TFFF embodies the principles of green capitalism by financializing the preservation of tropical forests, viewing them as integral to capitalist accumulation, to which market attention must be directed. Furthermore, the National Privatisation Program (PND) encompasses over 3,000 kilometres of navigable stretches of the Tocantins, Madeira, and Tapajós rivers— a development that traditional communities have already opposed. These issues are in direct conflict with the government’s stance.

Debates on Strategy and the Role of the Socialist Left

In this complex context, the role of socialists within the PSOL, a broad party that identifies as anti-capitalist, is to take the lead in confrontations with the extreme right while maintaining an independent and combative stance towards the government.

Defending programme issues such as the reduction of working hours, the immediate taxation of billionaires, the non-exploitation of oil in the Amazon Estuary, and the cessation of the so-called “War on Drugs” serves as a transitional measure towards a broader solution. This involves progressing in

the fight against financial capital and advocating for ecosocialism, which are essential to securing a social majority.

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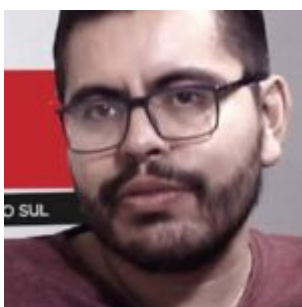


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