

Reelection of Dilma in Brazil: A Pyrric Victory and What Comes Afterwards

Saturday 1 November 2014, by [BORON Atilio A.](#) (Date first published: 27 October 2014).

Dilma's victory was distressing and difficult in yesterday's run-off, the closest ever in Brazilian history, according to several newspapers on their front pages. In the 2006 runoff Lula defeated the candidate of the PSDB, Geraldo Alckmin, by more than twenty points: 61 to 39 percent. In 2010 Dilma crushed the PSDB candidate Jose Serra in the second round by twelve points: 56 to 44 percent. Yesterday, she beat Aécio by only three points: 51.6 to 48.5 percent. Distressing and uncertain not so much though, not because of the tiny difference with which she defeated her rival but rather because of the agonizing three weeks of the campaign where, for a moment, the Workers' Party (PT) looked to be condemned to take on a humiliating return to the bench after 12 years in government. And if that was something that almost happened, it was due to their own errors rather than because of the merits of their very conservative opponent.

As we have demonstrated before in numerous other opportunities, the people prefer the original to the copy. And if the PT took on— by and large, though not in its totality — the neoliberal agenda of the Brazilian right, no one should be surprised that in the present complicated juncture, a significant section of the citizenry would show its predisposition to vote for Aécio. It is true that there were a few heterodoxies in the application of that prescription, the most important among them being the creation of the program Bolsa Família. But regarding the fundamental economic orientation, there was the continuity of the tyranny of financial capital, and its inverse, the phenomenal public debt of the federal government, which is tied to the lack of social investment (approximately one tenth of what is paid in interest charged on the public debt to bankers!), the deliberate de-politicization and demobilization of the people that marked the PT administration from the beginning of its rule, plus the delay in fighting against inequality and the need to confront problems such as public transit — amongst so many others — that affect the well being of the working classes (especially the most vulnerable groups among them such as the Afro-Brazilians, those on the margins of the city and the countryside, and the youth) ended up pushing the PT to the edge of a catastrophic defeat. Contrary to what some publicists hold, “post-neoliberalism” still has not reared its head in the Planalto Palace in Brasília.

The relief offered by the verdict at the ballot box yesterday will not last long. Dilma will face four very difficult years, and the same could be said for Lula, her only possible successor (at least for now). One of the most illustrative lessons is the ratification of the truth that is contained within the teachings of Machiavelli when he said despite all the concessions made to the rich and powerful, they will never stop thinking that the ruler is an intruder that illegitimately interferes in their business and the enjoyment of their assets. They are, as the Florentine said, insatiable, eternally non-conformist and they always maintain a propensity to conspire and be seditious. The tremendous destabilizing offensive launched in the last three weeks by the Brazilian capitalists from within the Sao Paulo Stock Market, by international financial capital (recall the rabble rousing articles from *The Economist* and the *Wall Street Journal*, among others) and the potent media artillery of the Brazilian right-wing (principally O Globo network, Folha, Estado de Sao Paulo and *Veja* magazine) teaches us a lesson, and it shows the mistakes a government makes when it thinks that ceding ground to the demands of the powerful will result in, if not loyalty, then tolerance by them.

Dilma runs the risk of being asphyxiated by her rivals whose extreme bellicosity was made apparent in the electoral campaign, and they do not seem willing to wait another four years in order to form the government. That is why the hypothesis of an “institutional coup” has emerged, even if it is unlikely, it should not be discarded aprioristically, same with the unleashing of ferocious destabilizing offensive aimed at ending the PT “dictatorship” that according to the caveman right that meets in the Military Club is “sovietizing” Brazil. What happened with Jose Manuel Zelaya in Honduras and Fernando Lugo in Paraguay should serve as evidence to prove to convince the skeptics of the impatience of local capitalists and their North American mentors to take power by force even if conditions are not favorable to such acts. In order not to succumb to these great determinants of power, it is necessary to, foremost, urgently reconstruct the demobilized popular movement — disorganized and demoralized by the PT, something it will not be able to do without a reorientation of the direction of the government that will redefine the economic model — trim the aggravating privileges of capital, and make it so the popular classes and layers feel that the government wants to go beyond welfare programs and proposes to modify the root cause of the unjust economic and social structure of Brazil. In second place, fight to bring about an authentic political reform that will truly empower the popular masses and will open a path — long delayed — toward a profound democratization.

The Brazilian Congress is a perverse trap dominated by agribusiness and local oligarchs (253 members of the Agribusiness Parliamentary Front, that cuts across all parties, out of a total of 513 parliamentarians) product of the lack of impetus given to agrarian reform after 12 years of PT governments and the unending political maneuvers that the PT had to do in order to achieve a parliamentary majority, something that can really only be achieved through grassroots action and never within the halls of the legislature. But in order for the people to take on a protagonist role and for social movements and political forces that will drive change to flourish — something that most certainly won't come “from above” — it is necessary for the government to make decisions that will empower them. Ergo, political reform is a vital necessity for there to be governability during new period, introducing institutions such as the popular initiative and the recall referendum. That is if the people organize themselves and build their political consciousness, curb the dictatorship of the caciques (chiefs) and colonels who make the congress a bulwark of reaction.

Will this be the course of action that Dilma embarks on? It seems unlikely, save for the eruption of a renewed dynamic of the masses precipitated by the worsening of the generalized crisis of capitalism and as an answer to the reloaded offensive by the right (discretely, but resolutely supported by Washington) which will profoundly alter the propensity of the Brazilian state to administer public affairs with its back to the people. This is an old political tradition, from profoundly oligarchic roots, that comes from the age of the empire, during the mid-nineteenth century, and has remained with slight variations and sporadic upheavals until today. Nothing could be more necessary to guarantee governability during this new term of the PT that the vigorous surge that Alvaro Garcia Linera called the “plebeian potential,” kept dormant for decades, which the PT has not dared wake.

Without that massive protagonism of the masses in the state, the government will remain prisoner of the traditional de facto powers that have ruled the destiny of Brazil for time immemorial. And the consequence of that will be a disaster not only for that county, but for all of Our America because Aecio, and the political and social bloc he represents, will not give up and will not cease in their efforts to “uncouple” Brazil from Latin America, liquidate UNASUR and CELAC, promote the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Europe and the inclusion into the Pacific Alliance, and to build a “sanitary barrier” that will isolate Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela from the rest of the countries in the region. A program, which is easily proved, that is in harmony with the fundamental strategic priorities of the United States in the turbulent global geopolitical transition, which is none other than to return Latin America and the Caribbean to the condition it was in the

night of December 31, 1958, on the eve of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. That was when the empire saw its positions endangered in the Middle East, Central Asia, Asia Pacific and even Europe. Its immediate reaction is to strengthen its control over what Fidel and Che characterized as its strategic rearguard. Which is to say, us. It did it in the seventies, when it was suffocated by the combined effect of the oil crisis, stagflation, and defeats in Indochina, principally Vietnam. In that conjuncture its answer was to install military dictatorships in almost all of Latin America and the Caribbean. And it will try to do it again now, when its international situation is much more compromised than it was back then.

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P.S.

* TelesurTV. 27 October 2014:

<http://www.telesurTV.net/english/bloggers/Brazil-A-Pyrrhic-Victory-and-What-Comes-Afterwards-20141027-0001.html>