

Brazil's Dilma Rousseff Reelected for Second Term in Office



The run up to the election was anything but placid!. After a tight race, marked by innumerable twists and turns, not the least when the main opposition candidate Eduardo Campos was killed in a plane crash on the campaign trail, Brazil's left-wing president, Dilma Rousseff, was re-elected on October 26th to a second four-year term with 51.6% of valid votes. Aécio Neves, of the centre-right opposition, won 48.4%. It is the fourth election in a row won by her Workers' Party the PT.

What is the reaction to Dilma Rousseff's victory in the western press?

Although Dilma Rousseff can point to record-low unemployment, rising wages and falling inequality under the PT's watch, Aécio Neves, whom *The Economist* quotes, claims that progress has stalled since Ms Rousseff was first elected in 2010.

Rousseff was victorious across the poor north and north-east—helped by less fortunate Brazilians' gratitude for the PT's popular social programme but most of the richer south, south-east and centre-west voted for her business minded rival. In São Paulo, home to one-fifth of Brazil's people and a third of its economy, Neves won by 64% to 36%. In the south-east Neves lost only in Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, Brazil's second-biggest state where he served two successful terms as governor in 2003-10—an inexplicable defeat that cost him the presidency.

Given the acrimony that exists after the election, bipartisanship seems an unlikely prospect. Neves' people are saying that they lost in part because their opposition to the government has been too soft in recent years. They are certain to push for a congressional inquiry into the so-called Petrobras scandal that Neves claimed meant kick-backs to the PT.

Nay-sayers claim that Rousseff's formidable task is to persuade investors that her administration can work with businesses to reset Brazil's economy. They say that the boom that fueled robust growth under Lula da Silva's fizzled out during Ms. Rousseff's first term. That Brazil fell into recession this year and is dogged by high inflation, rising debt and low productivity.

Standard & Poor's in March downgraded the nation's sovereign debt to one level above junk.

Has not Rouseff vowed to hold a referendum on political reform if she was re-elected?

Obviously this deserves credit. But a previous attempt, prompted by nationwide protests in June 2013 that demanded this, among other things, was stymied by congress.

In harsh terms, the Economist claims that, in the absence of fully fledged structural reform, Brazil will continue to drift, putting jobs, incomes, as well as the PT's cherished social programmes at risk.

So there is some real bitterness in Brazil today?

The contest, was indeed marked by bitter speeches and harsh accusations on both sides, and it has left Brazilians split along economic and regional lines.

Although, in her victory speech in Brasília, the capital, Rousseff offered some conciliatory notes for the nation as a whole, and called for "peace and unity."

Rousseff repeatedly thanked her still-popular predecessor and mentor, former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who stood on stage beside her, and praised her supporters and colleagues within the Workers' Party, the PT.

Also in her speech, Ms. Rousseff vowed to combat inflation and take measures to boost industrial output.

she said and I quote: "I will promote actions in the economy to resume our growth speed and ensure high levels of employment."

What was Neves' reaction?

Neves himself alluded to the theme of reconciliation in a brief concession speech minutes before Ms. Rousseff spoke. Addressing supporters Belo Horizonte, in his native state of Minas Gerais, Neves said he had phoned Ms. Rousseff to wish her government success and said that "I highlighted that the greatest of all priorities should be to unite Brazil around an honorable project that dignifies Brazilians."

How did the influential Financial Times weigh-in?

The publication admits today that Rousseff has the support of the poor: after a dozen years of her party being in power, 40 million people have been lifted from the brink of poverty due to social reforms and economic boom, which the country experienced until Rouseff came to power. The growth during her four-year rule is the lowest for any Brazilian president since the early 1990s.

And the polls?

Ibope agency, when carrying out the latest survey, spoke with over 3,000 voters across Brazil. One of them had this to say:

"I'm voting for Dilma because the Workers' Party has made life easier for the poor. I still live in a slum, but now my home is full of nice, modern things — I've got a TV, a new refrigerator and air conditioning," Ana Paula Marinho, a nurse who lives in the Pavao-Pavaozinho (Pah-vow-zin-yo) favela, said and she added: "We can see that we've got a better future with Dilma."

Another polster added: "We've never seen social advances among the poor as we've witnessed during the last 12 years. Those are real accomplishments and we're all better off for it. But we need new ideas on the economy, on how to keep growing, or those gains will be reversed no matter what policies are enacted."

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