



CADERNOS *de* **REGIONALISMO ODR**

Volume 6 | Number 1 | 2022

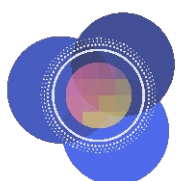


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CADERNOS *de* **REGIONALISMO ODR**



GRUPO DE PESQUISA VINCULADO À REPRI
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CADERNOS DE REGIONALISMO ODR: DOSSIÊ - 2022

Foreign Policy and Regionalism: the governments plans of Brazilian presidential candidates in the 2022 elections

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ISSN: 2675-6390

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CADERNOS DE REGIONALISMO ODR
DOSSIER - 2022

Foreign Policy and Regionalism: the governments
plans of Brazilian presidential candidates
in the 2022 elections

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JAIR BOLSONARO

*Heitor Erthal
Luan Oliveira Pessoa¹*

Received in: 21 August 2022
Accepted in: 30 August 2022.

Candidates

Jair Messias Bolsonaro (Partido Liberal), presidente
Walter Souza Braga Netto (Partido Liberal), vice-presidente

Coalition

“For the good of Brazil” (PP/REPUBLICANS/PL)

Previous political positions

City Councilor of Rio de Janeiro/RJ (1989-1991); Federal Deputy for Rio de Janeiro state (1991-2019); President of the Republic (2019-current)

Previous presidential campaigns

2018

International relations advisor

Unknown/uncertain

The reelection candidate for the Brazilian Presidency Jair Messias Bolsonaro aspires to a new term, so he gives continuity to his current government. He was a Federal Deputy for the State of Rio de Janeiro and a military officer from the Brazilian Army; now, he is part of the Liberal Party (*PL*, in Portuguese), as well as his running mate, retired general Braga Netto. Centralizing the campaign in one party is unusual in Brazilian politics, where the vice-president place can be offered to an aligned party. There were speculations on other names for the vice-president position, like the former ministers Damares Alves and Teresa Cristina, as a gesture towards the female vote, but the general was chosen. In the election pulls, Bolsonaro placed second, following the former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

This article intends to explore the Government's Plan for a possible new term for Bolsonaro 2023-2026. The main goal is to analyze the plan's foreign policy and regionalism ideas for a future government. It is entitled *For the good of Brazil*, it has 48 pages on many dear issues for the government to be (PELO BEM DO BRASIL, 2022). Notwithstanding, other sources will be used, such as the Government Plan of the 2018 election and the foreign policy made by the Bolsonaro administration.

Bolsonaro was elected President by the Social Liberal Party (*PSL*, in Portuguese) and left it in 2019. Then the President stayed partyless until 2021 when he decided to join the PL. Moreover, a group of his allies followed him to the new party, such as senator Flavio Bolsonaro, his son. Bolsonaro's entry into the PL consolidates his movement towards the *Centrão* — a group of Congresspeople from center-right parties, who prioritize their private interests instead of the public good — intending to have a bigger political base in the Congress, therefore more support for the government agenda and his reelection. This contradicted his 2018 campaign, in which he claimed to be an anti-establishment candidate against corruption.

The presidential-ticket Bolsonaro-Braga Netto officially formed a party coalition gathering PL, Progressives (PP), and Republicans. The Republicans are the youngest out of those, founded in 2003. It is associated with the evangelical Christian denomination Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, an electorate niche for Bolsonaro reelection. The PP originated from the National Renewal Alliance (*ARENA*, in Portuguese), a core party in support of the Brazilian Military Dictatorship (1964-1985). Those three are parties that tried to reinvent themselves to attract more votes in the current Brazilian

political scenario, featured by hate against politics, “desideolization” and demands for renovation in politics (MODZELESKI; CALGARO, 2017).

The fact that Bolsonaro has a presidential ticket based on one single party, the *PL*, this article paid attention to the values and ideas stated by the *PL* program (PARTIDO LIBERAL, 2022). Thus, it defends representative democracy, private property, and a society without ideologies. The document declares that ideologies divide societies, creating conflict and disunity. The State would work as a mediation institution, standing for human rights, safeguarding freedom and the survival of the private sector. The party also is in favor of federalism and the division of the three powers as pillars of the State. Moreover, the document also explains some ideas about international politics and foreign policy.

There is a small section in the last part of the program where the party establishes some ideas on international politics and foreign policy for Brazil. It explains that Brazil has to prioritize the self-determination of the people and the non-intervention of foreign actors, going along with some of Itamaraty's historical values. At the same time, it understands the importance of Latin American integration and the need to strengthen community sentiment at a regional level. It determines that Brazil should forge bonds with diverse international actors, building a relationship between North-South that results in a more even power distribution in the international system. Even though the *PL* has some ideas on those topics, there is no institutional division of it that studies international relations.

Those mentioned ideas are part of the current Government Plan. The plan *For the good of Brazil* is different from the one made in 2018, *The path of prosperity*. The ideological feature based on conservative-anticommunism is no longer the plan's cornerstone (CAMINHO DA PROSPERIDADE, 2018). In other words, the propositions are not pledging for a new Crusade, against the left reify on the Workers' Party (*PT*, in Portuguese). The current plan still has cross-cut right conservative ideas. Furthermore, it advocates for the family as the main responsible institution for children's education, and speeches against women's rights to abortion. In economic topics, the plan strongly supports neoliberalism, endorsing private entrepreneurship and taking responsibility from the State. Its main responsibility is to guard individual freedom.

As parties were more long-established than the *PSL* in 2018, the *PL* and the other

parties of the coalition have influenced the structure and organization of the plan, when the anti-systemic and outsider features are no longer effective, and the plans show signs of expertise in the campaign. Moreover, Flávio Bolsonaro was responsible for coordinating the preparation of the document and he had suggestions from political leaders, such as Ciro Nogueira, leader of PP; Valdemar da Costa Neto, leader of *PL* and his running mate, Braga Netto (COSTA, 2022). In addition, it also had guidance from economists throughout the document, stated as specialists on the topic by the plan. Likewise, the layout became more professional, quite different from what was presented in 2018.

The introductory and text presentation of the plan has economy as the most important issue, afterwards values and principles are presented. The structure of the document is based on the six strategic axes. This organization of the text, mainly the strategic reasoning (“*fundamentação estratégica*”, in Portuguese), alludes to institutional presentations made in private companies. In that regard, this visual choice increases the plan’s liberal feature presented in the economic topics, and the relevance of the private companies’ behavior in the next term of public administration.

Notwithstanding the program point out that “[t]here must be a wider angle to comprehend the direction that the world might take” (PELO BEM DO BRASIL, 2022, p. 6, free translation), it blames the Brazilian current economic troubles on the COVID-19 pandemic; the Russo-Ukrainian War, and the improvement in the quality of life of populations in the “Orient”. Thus, the candidate claims that the reasons for fuel shortages and rising food prices are due to international factors that are exogenous to the government.

Despite these global setbacks, Brazil is no longer placed in the role of critic of the Liberal International Order (FARIAS; CASARÕES; MAGALHÃES, 2022) aiming at the formation of a new order with other countries under extreme right governments, such as Hungary and Turkey. This time, Brazil appears as a relevant country to contribute to the solutions to the current problems of the “West”. The vision in 2022 about Brazil’s place in the International System is a profound counterpoint to what was proposed in the 2018 program, in the same way, that it differs from Ernesto Araújo’s administration at Itamaraty (2019-2021), even though he continues to guide “Occident” and “Orient”.

The plan section on foreign policy is the last of the strategic axes (“Governance and

Geopolitics”) and is combined with the defense policy. That section begins with an allusion to values historically defended by Itamaraty: the “multilateral global order, international law and the Charter of the United Nations” (PELO BEM DO BRASIL, 2022, p. 44, free translation). The program goes on to state that Brazil is fundamental in contributing to the solution of several contemporary international agendas, despite not detailing non-trade agendas from an international perspective. Converging with these values, Brazilian foreign policy should strive for a universalist vocation, building ties with all the members of the United Nations (UN). Once again, it marks the change in relation to the 2018 program.

The proposals for 2023-2026 address interacting and cooperating more with "democratic countries" and based on free enterprise, while at the same time defending that Brazil should be more "friendly" and "close" to as many countries as possible. Thus, the proposal will increase trade with more development partners through bilateral and multilateral agreements. In this context, the program aims to position the country within the current order, as well as the desire to win Brazil entry into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)². This stance of greater openness to dialogue appears as a response to the criticisms that report loss of international credibility during the first term (2019-2022) (GHIROTTO, 2020).

Despite the fact that the document does not name enemies or negative examples and other mentioned changes, the geographical environment remains a topic that has not been addressed much. There is no specific proposal on Brazil's relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean or South America. These regions are only named indirectly within the universalist argument for State relationships or to inform that inflation has not only affected Brazil. The most significant mention is the appreciation of the South American ministerial meeting on transnational organized crime in June 2022 in Brasília. Furthermore, there is no mention of any specific regional initiative, neither Mercosur nor the Forum for the Progress and Integration of South America (*PROSUR*, in Spanish)³. Mercosur is implicitly noted in the appreciation of the negotiations concluded with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), while the European Union (EU) is an absence, despite the conclusion of the Mercosur-EU negotiations, comparatively, have been much more celebrated.

Therefore, the most elaborate proposal in its external agenda is the intention to be

part of the OECD, in order to help the project, attract investments and capital and strengthen ties with developed countries. Historical principles of Brazilian diplomacy are affirmed in the program and even concerns about external dependence are expressed, but without resorting to regional instruments. However, neoliberal and conservative precepts follow manifestos as beacons for the proposals. Although it may be common in the anti-globalist extreme right forces in the world, the ambivalence between neoliberal economic policies and the state protection of the population against globalization crises (SANAHUJA; LÓPEZ BURIAN, 2022) has increased, in the face of reelection, with Bolsonaro's approach to *Centrão*. In the same way, this relation has given slightly more diluted contours to reactionary internationalism and challenges to the political system, although, they are still present, as in the recent speech to foreign diplomats about Brazilian electronic voting machines (SPIGARIOL; NICAS, 2022).

Notes

- ¹ This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – Brasil (CAPES) – Finance Code 001.
- ² The OECD is an international organization initially treated as a “club of rich countries”, which demands a series of reforms and public policies for membership, many of them limiting the scope for action of the State and Brazilian foreign policy itself.
- ³ PROSUR is a forum proposed in 2019 by Chile and Colombia, with Brazilian support, in order to constitute itself as a non-ideological alternative to replace the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR, in Spanish) and isolating, especially, the Nicolás Maduro presidency in Venezuela (HERNANDEZ; MESQUITA, 2020).

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How to reference:

ERTHAL, Heitor; PESSOA, Luan Olliveira. Jair Bolsonaro. **Cadernos de Regionalismo ODR**, São Paulo, v. 6, 2022, p. 20-28. ISSN: 2675-6390.

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