Connecting the dots between economic crises and civil unrest in Brazil during the 2010s and

future protests under Lula's third mandate

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Brazil has undergone transformative change with the end of the military dictatorship in 1985, the creation of the Plano Real in 1994, the country's economic rise with the commodities boom in the 2000s, and the current election of controversial political figures (Fishlow, 2011; O'Neil et al., 2012). Duquette et al. (2005) describe Brazil's new Republic as "semi-successful," with some democratic institutions being generally functional. Unlike Argentina and Venezuela, Brazil did not have a tradition of massive street protests (Alston et al., 2016). As such, the 2010s deserve special attention due to the excessive number of events, particularly in the rise of civil unrest and mass mobilization linked to a massive corruption scandal, an impeachment of a president, and significant democratic backsliding (see figure 1).
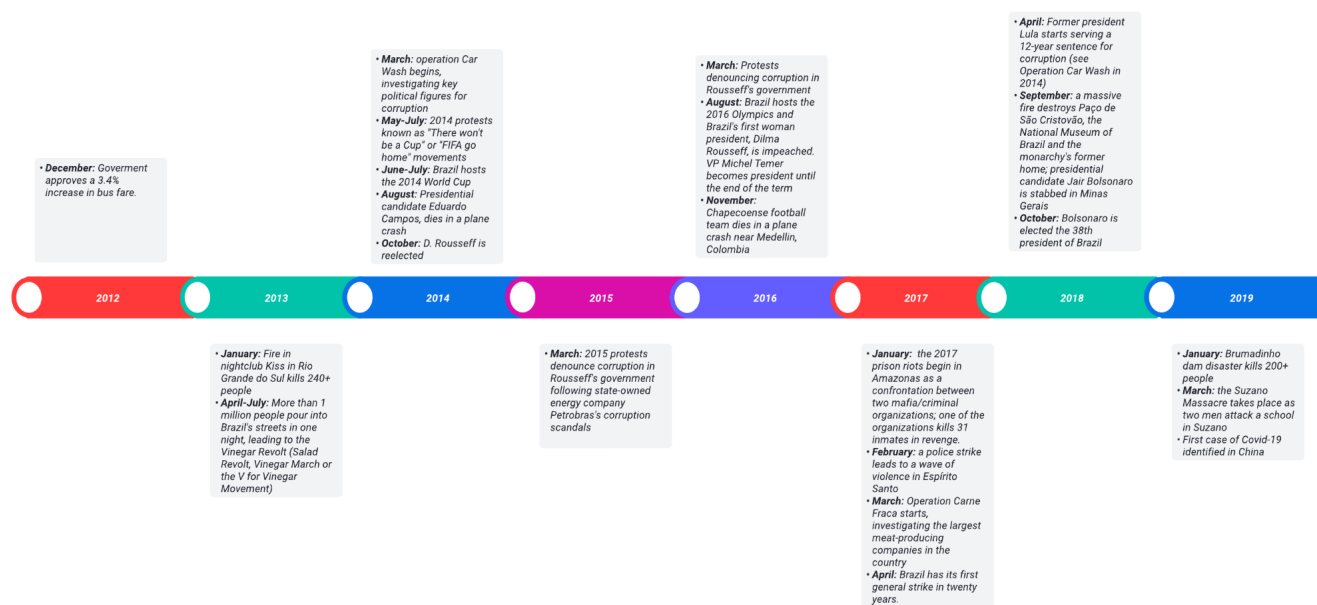

Figure 1. Overview of the main civil unrests and relevant events in Brazil from 2012 to 2019.

Although ACLED does not have sufficient data from 2013 to 2017 (see figure 2), numerous pieces of literature have reviewed how the protests in 2018 started, suggesting that despite the different thematics, there is a correlation between the 2013-2016 protests and the 2017-2018 protests (i.e., Arafa et al., 2021; Ramón, 2013; Hewitt, 2018; Wills, 2013). Most claim the wave of demonstrations that began in Porto Alegre and São Paulo in 2013 spread quickly across 353 cities and was considered the most prominent popular demonstrations since the impeachment of President Fernando Mello in 1992 (Arafa et al., 2021).
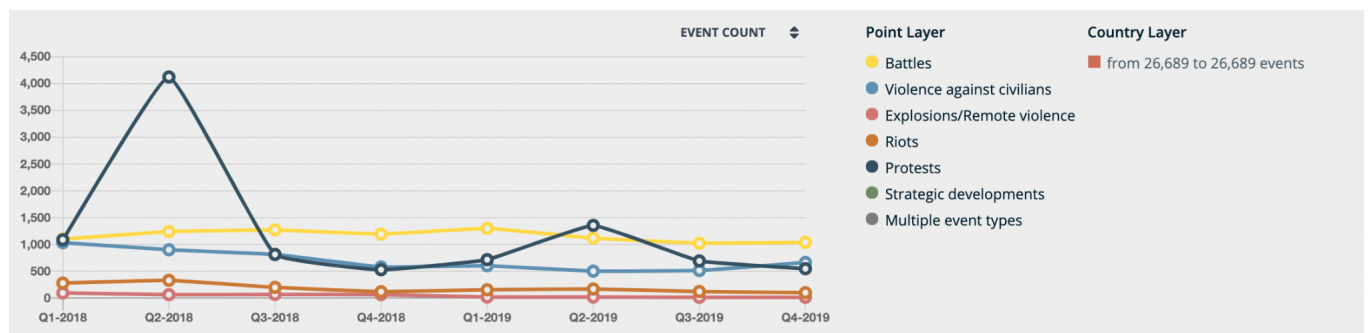

Figure 2. *The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) on social unrest in Brazil from 2018 to 2019. There were no data available for protests in 2011 to 2017 (ACLED, 2019).*

For Zibechi (2014), the initial 2013 protests surprised the political system as many experts were quick to try to justify them with the immediate problems such as urban transport and rising fare prices the media focused on as catalysts for the protests. It is crucial, however, to go beyond the consensus that the primary family income had risen during the previous years of economic growth — an 18% increase in incomes between 2001 and 2015 — and address the population's previously unspoken, day-to-day dissatisfaction rooted in economic inclusion through consumption over the years (Zibechi, 2014; Bianchi et al., 2021). The 2013 demonstrations, thus, were not spontaneous acts but the massive expansion of existing movements (Zibechi, 2014).
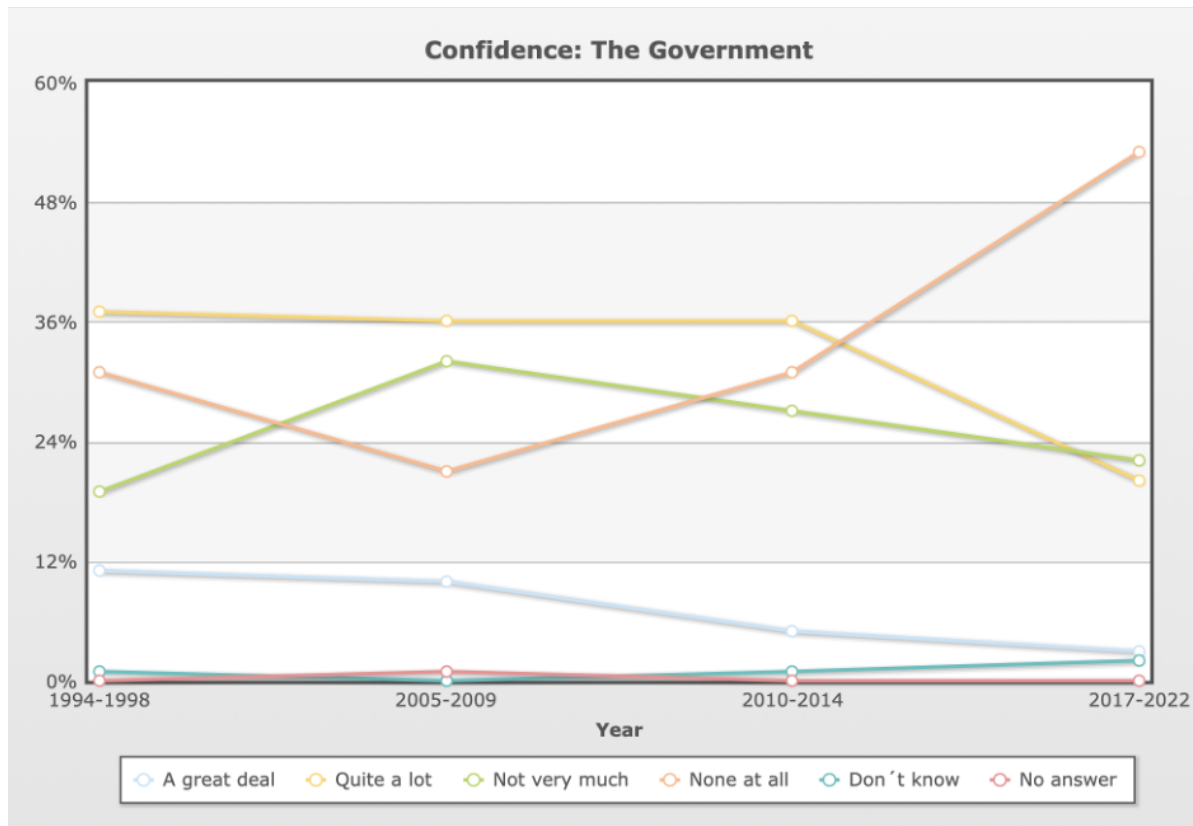
Figure 3. *Percentage of the degree of confidence in government from 1994 to 2022. Notice how, as time went by, the percentage of "none at all" in orange increased significantly (World Values Survey, 2022).*

As figure 3 indicates, confidence in the government deteriorated from the early 2000s to the 2010s, going from a significant percentage of those who trusted the government quite a lot to have no trust. This change raises the following questions: What led Brazilians to distrust their government in so little time, and what role do protests and civil unrest have in this change between citizens and government?

This paper attempts to explain the immense discontent the Brazilian population had for its government from 2013 to 2019, claiming that the intermission of economic growth to a sudden economic downturn in a short period combined with long-term structural problems and conjectural

tensions gave rise to issues and feelings previously undisclosed and the emergence of a multi-level crisis at the political, economic, and social levels (Bianchi et al., 2021).

Political context

A military coup in 1964 instituted a 25-year-long military dictatorship in the country, which ended in 1985. Then, Brazil's New Republic is young, with only eight presidents, two of whom were impeached.

Regarding recent civil unrest, a new political culture has been institutionalized, one that differs from the one that gave rise to Lula's Workers' Party (PT) with trade unions and other traditional organizations, and that is rooted in the work activists have done over the years with the recent addition of charismatic leaders, horizontal leadership, and digital media (Zibechi, 2014).

Because institutions, mainly the presidency, have experienced increasing skepticism, it is then crucial to understand the fall of the presidential institution symbolized by Lula, Dilma Rousseff, and Jair Bolsonaro's governments due to endogenous and exogenous factors and how they shaped the rise and expression of popular protest (Duquette et al., 2005).

The Rise of Lula

Constructed ideas of social welfare

Brazil started its first years of the 21st century under the historical win of Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva, a leader Bourne (2008) describes as the best-known politician in the country that represented greater social equality and an end to extreme poverty. In his first major press conference as president, Lula announced the Fome Zero — Zero Hunger— program, one of many massive social welfare programs instituted by the Workers' Party, and that later became the more-encompassing

Bolsa Família that assisted in lifting millions out of poverty (see figure 4) (O'Neil et al., 2012).

Lula's focus on welfare was intended as a response to the demands of civil society in parallel to the idea that state's identities are socially constructed just like actors'; in this case, Lula's identity result from transformed and constantly-changing social interactions in favor of social equality (de Lima, 2012). By this logic, Lula's identity is intertwined with the image of a hungry child that, with the right incentives from the state, walked the ramp of the Planalto Palace and, thus, ending poverty was his most attractive campaign promise in 2002 and 2022cpresidential elections (Bourne, 2008).
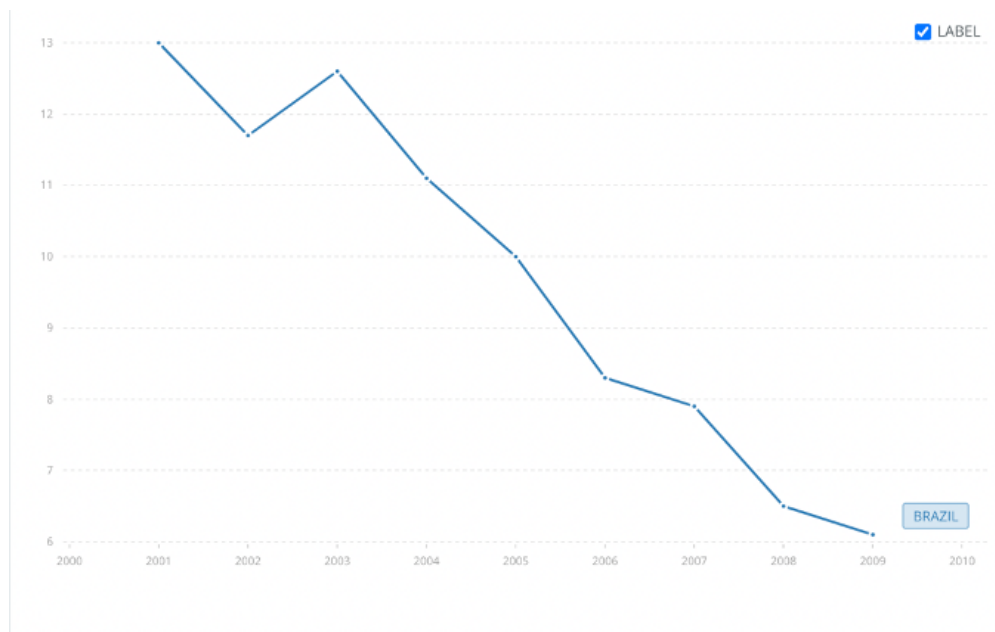

Figure 4. *Poverty decreased ratio from 2000 to 2010 (World Bank, 2022).*

Rising economy

Lula's administration also benefited from the country's rise in the sales of commodities in the first decade of the 21st century (O'Neil et al., 2012), in which Brazil's economy grew on average by 4% a year (World Bank, 2022). This same boom provided his administration with the means to invest in economic equality measures (Carpo, 2022). This trend is observed by the World Bank as figure 4 indicates a decrease from 13% to 6.1% in poverty rates during Lula's government. The opposite, however, occurred during Dilma Rousseff's administration, Lula's handpicked successor (see figure 5). Considering neo-structuralism, economic growth is insufficient to overcome underdevelopment, and the Brazilian model has the structural tendency to exclude the "population from the benefits of capital accumulation and technological progress" (Rocha, 2007). Structuralism, then, explains how, despite economic growth, (social) groups still rioted.
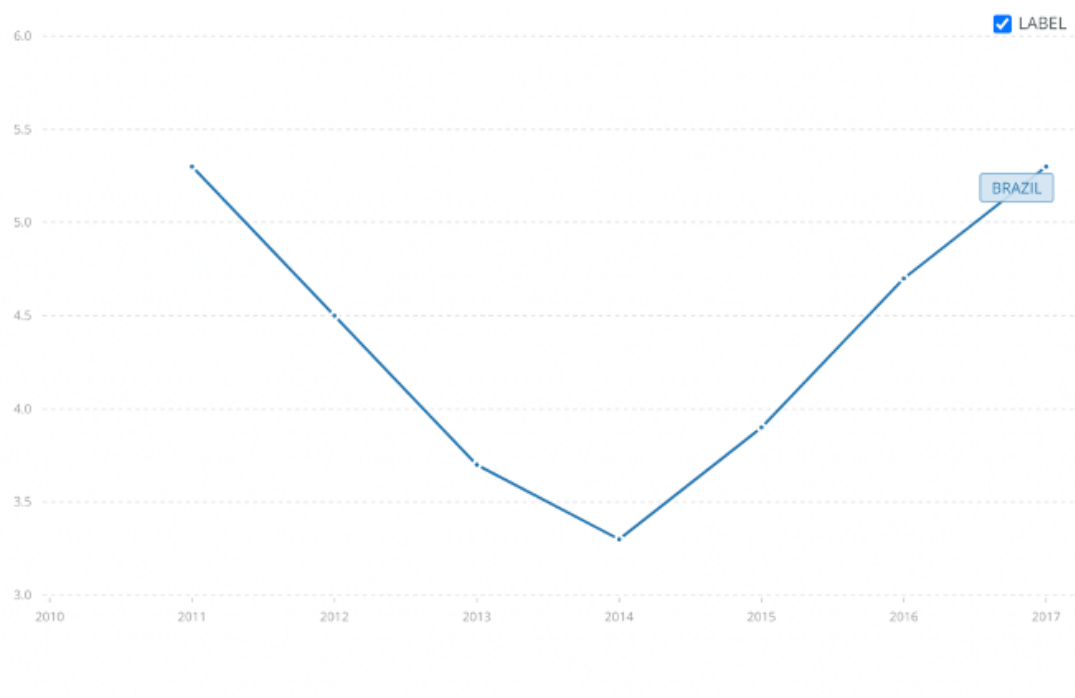
Figure 5. *Poverty rates from 2010 to 2017. Notice that in 2014 rates reached their lowest point but significantly increased in 2015 (World Bank, 2022).*

The first and last *Presidenta*

A modern coup

Dilma Rousseff was elected as the first female president and Lula's direct successor (Sader, 2011); however, the *presidenta's* government did not predict the drop in commodities and the corruption scandals that led to her impeachment (Doval & Actis, 2016). Bianchi et al. (2021) describe Rousseff's impeachment as a soft coup d´état in which its main benefit was the replacement, without elections, of a moderate social-democratic administration with a pro-market one — Michel Temer's administration. Akin to figure 3, Rousseff's approval rating stood at 8%, and her

administration lost control of their coalition in Congress and faced disunity in her party; this is atypical since Brazilian presidents have stronger powers to shape congressional behavior (Alston et al., 2016).

The Rise of Bolsonaro

Constructing the right-wing
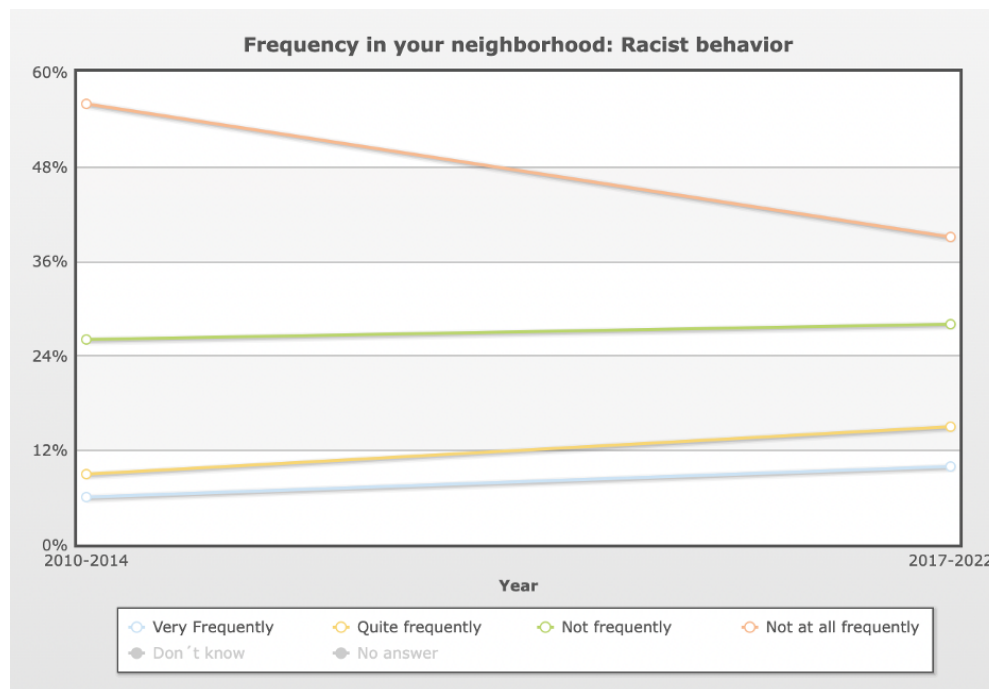
Figure 6. Frequency of racist behavior in neighborhood from 2010 to 2022 collected by the World Values Survey (2022). Although there was a decline in "not at all frequently", all of the other categories increased over the years, "quite frequently" being the most worrisome.

Bolsonaro, a backstage figure in the political spectrum that gained protagonism with the increasing ideological polarization and the birth of a "new Right" under neoconservatism (Bianchi et al., 2021). Although right-wing discourses have always been present in Brazilian politics, particularly during the military dictatorship, it was only after the 2013 protests that powerful

movements against feminism, "gender ideology," LGBTQIA+, and antiracism, among others, took place (Bianchi et al., 2021) (see figure 6). Under a constructivist framework, the rise of an extreme conservative political discourse can become a permanent force in Brazil's political landscape (Bianchi et al., 2021). This is due to Bolsonaro's discursive strategy called *right-wing counterpublicity*: aggressive rhetoric rich in curse words and political incorrectness to restore the traditional values and ways of life, attacking institutions, such as the Judiciary, and fostering an authoritarian political culture (Rocha et al., 2021). It is worth noting that this movement was carefully constructed since 2006; this "new right" took time to disassociate itself from the traditional right, stigmatized by the military dictatorship, similarly re-naming itself to the phenomenon that happened in Argentina as the "center" — Bolsonaro's strongest supporters and key to Lula's political survival (Rocha et al., 2021).

The institution of the military

Because Bolsonaro is no secret admirer of the military dictatorship as an ex-army captain, it is possible to associate the increased perception that the armed forces should interfere in government affairs with the lack of confidence in the government and the presidency(see figures 7 and 8) (Bianchi et al., 2021).
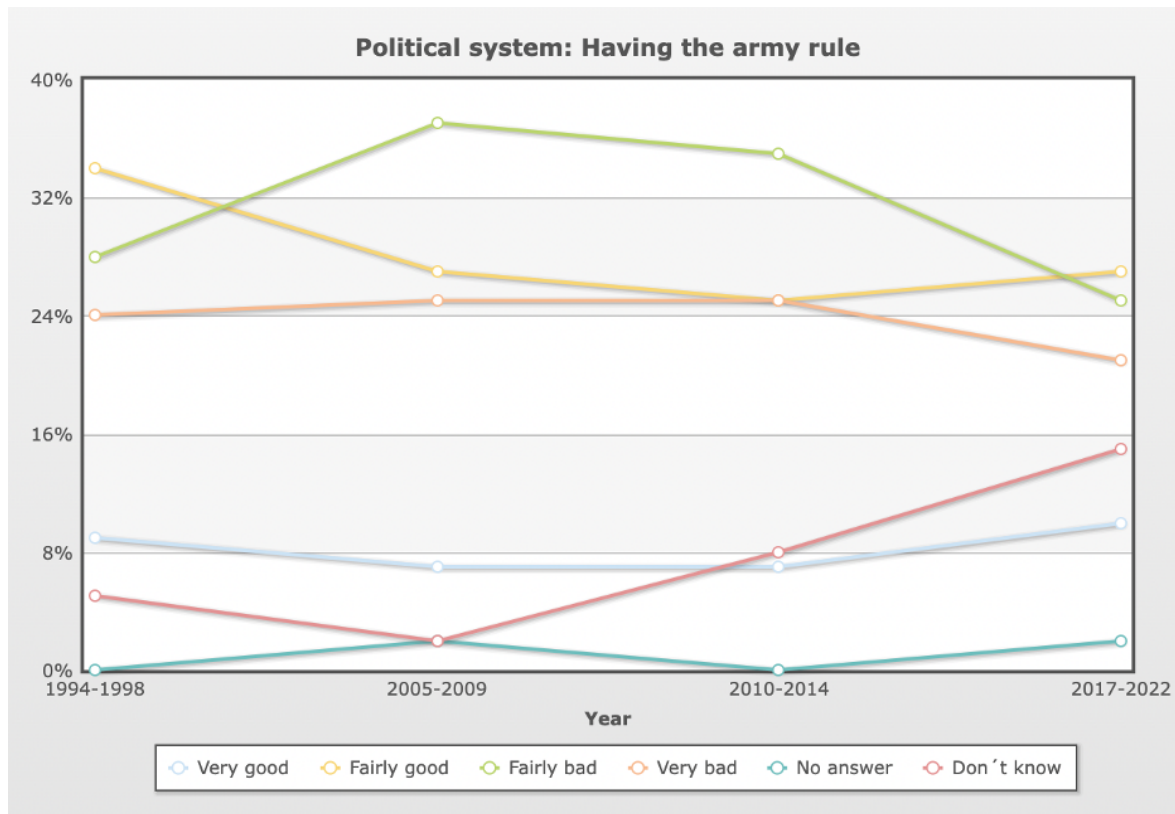
Figure 7. *Graph indicating changes in how Brazilians perceived having a military government over time. "Fairly bad" started to decrease and was surpassed by "fairly good" in 2017.*

The militarization of politics performed by Bolsonaro and his supporters is done by transferring functions aimed at civilians to the military, attributing to them the decision-making body of the most relevant issues (Gouvêa & Castelo Branco, 2021). For this reason, there has been a decrease in viewing an army rule as "fairly bad" (figure 7).
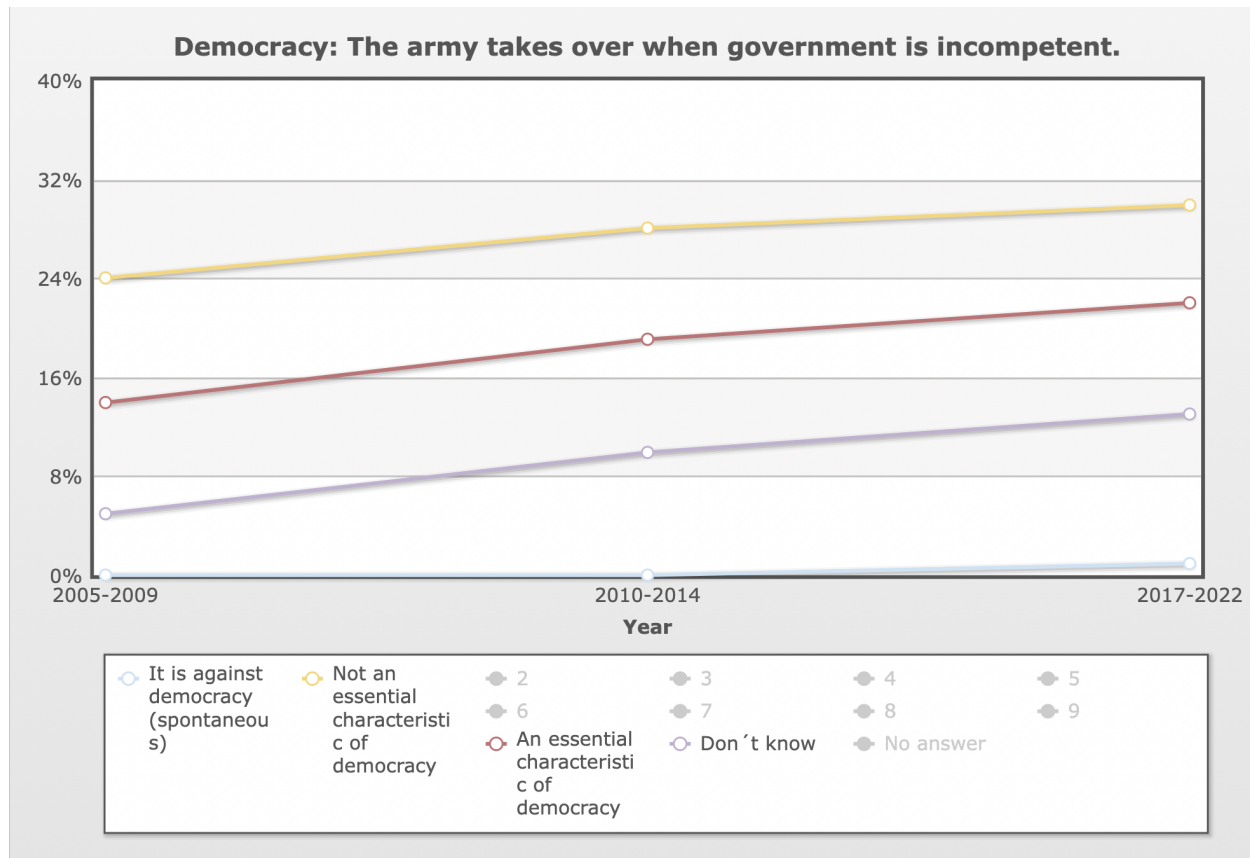
Figure 8. *The percentage of those that believe the army should take over when the government in incompetent increased even though the percentage of those that disagree is still high. This can be correlated to the lack of confidence in the government.*

De-democratization

Levitsky & Way (2002) define democracy based on four main criteria:

1. Executives and legislatures are elected through free, open, and fair elections

2. Universal suffrage

3. Political rights and civil liberties are protected

4. Elected authorities have actual authority to govern

Based on these criteria, Brazil cannot be classified as a competitive authoritarian. However, Brazilian democracy has not only been undermined by the executive but also by a highly independent yet corrupt judiciary and a problematic Supreme Court (Daly, 2019). Perhaps the most significant indication of democratic backsliding in Brazil, apart from the increasing desire for military rule, is based on three central hypotheses by Lust & Walder (2015) for democratic backsliding: Leaders' Normative Preferences (as Bolsonaro has not shown commitments to democratic principles), distribution of income (see figure 9), and Strategic Interaction I: Elite Compromise (polarization in the general population and among political parties leave little room for cooperation).

Average monthly income by percentile range in Brazil in 2021 (in Brazilian reals)

Monthly income in reals*

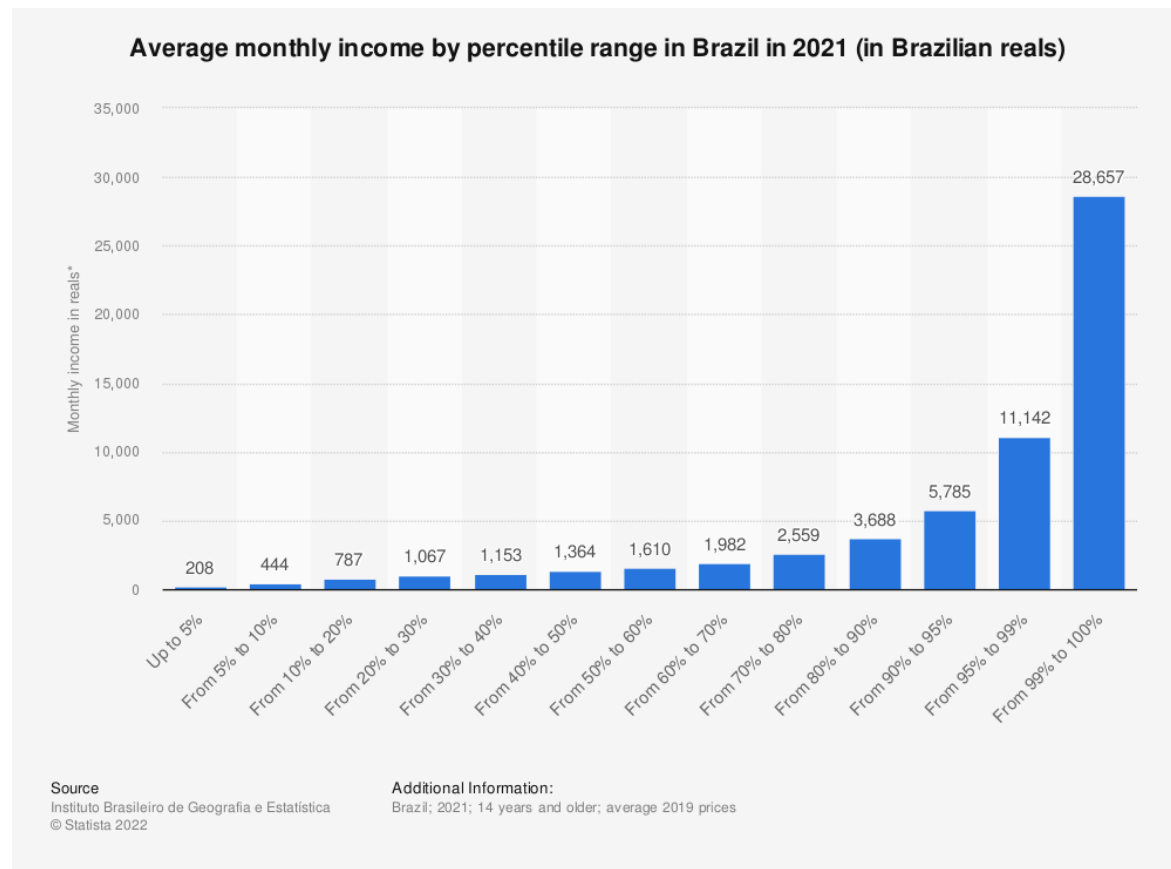| Percentile range	Income
Up to 5%	208
From 5% to 10%	444
From 10% to 20%	787
From 20% to 30%	1,067
From 30% to 40%	1,153
From 40% to 50%	1,364
From 50% to 60%	1,610
From 60% to 70%	1,982
From 70% to 80%	2,559
From 80% to 90%	3,688
From 90% to 95%	5,785
From 95% to 99%	11,142
From 99% to 100%	28,657

Figure 9. Income distribution by percentile range in Brazil in 2021. The 1% (from 99% to 100%) is almost slightly higher than the sum of all of the other percentiles' income (Statista, 2022)

Despite the re-emergence of the military as a politically powerful actor, the Constitution remains relevant, Congress and courts stay in place, and there is no obvious government scheme despite Bolsonaro's supporters calling for a military intervention to stop Lula from taking office in 2023 (Daly, 2019; Ellsworth & Gaier, 2022).

Lula, governability, and the future of Brazil

Despite numerous corruption scandals, convictions, and controversies, Lula was elected for his third term, winning a tight race by 2 million votes against incumbent Jair Bolsonaro (Nicas, 2022). This historical comeback, however, comes with another set of challenges, particularly in terms of massive civil unrest, as pro-Bolsonaro supporters were engaged in violent riots in Brasília on December 12, 2022 (Gazeta do Povo, 2022). In terms of rational choice, Lula's primary objective in his third term must center around avoiding any events that may destabilize and delegitimize his government, as it is expected that riots and protests will increase if there are no significant improvements in the economy and if polarization remains high. He must also focus on governability and political survival, especially since Bolsonaro's party has the majority in the upper and lower chambers (Economist Intelligence, 2022).

A SWOT analysis is to understand Lula's options.

Strengths
- Excellent negotiator and knows how to play both sides
- Has solid allies from his time in government, especially abroad
- Extremely charismatic and popular
- Has loyal supporters that engage remember his days of glory

Weaknesses
- Involved in corruption scandals and was inprisioned
- His reputation is closely linked to corruption
- Older than when we first took office, he is now 77 years old; this affects the possibility of reelection as he will be 81 years old by the end of his term

Opportunities
- Can forge new alliances with the "Centrão", Bolsonaro's support base
- Brazil has a lot of potential as an exporter of commodities given the geopolitical context (i.e, Russian-Ukraine war)
- Can make Brazil a big player in the international arena, leading the fight against climate change, for example
- Can invest in issues Bolsonaro's administration did not (i.e., education, food security, etc.)

Threats
- Bolsonaro and Bolsonarism are still popular and, thus, a threat
- Hostile Congress (his party does not have the majority)
- Failing economy (not the commodities boom his administration experienced in the 2000s)
- High expectation can worsen his popularity if his government is unable to deliver
- Massive protests and civil unrest that deestabilize the country; massive polarization
- Most business people are pro-Bolsonaro

Internal / **External**

Figure 10. A SWOT analysis of Lula's third mandate.

Governability

Bruera (2013) argues that, unlike the structural and institutional approaches, the governability approach is closely linked to how political actors perceive constraints. Lula's team can also adopt two traditional governability strategies: the social counter-hegemonic strategy that relies heavily on citizens and civil society to mobilize extra-institutional support and the elite-centered strategy that accepts the existing distribution of power, which seeks accommodation with dominant strategic actors and emphasizes top-down agreements with them (Bruena, 2013). Hirabahasi (2022) argues that Lula will need the support of the "Centrão" (Big Center) political parties, such as PP and Republicanos, that are neither left nor right-winged but that have a strong presence in both congressional houses. Externally, Lula has the opportunity to gain the support of

non-traditional allies and must account for the following scenarios listed by Polga-Hecimovich (2022):

Scenario I	Scenario II	Scenario III	Scenario IV
• High dependency on legislative forces, social pressures, economic constraints, and international contexts • Limited policymaking successes and less legistlative maneuverability • Will need to balance centrist demands and his left-wing base • Growth will be slower than in the 2000s and social benefits won't be as generous, possibly angering his supporters • Lula will have to bypass the spending ceiling • Failure to gain legislative support will push him toward unilateralism	• Conditional to the rise of commodities • The economy will grow, easing the burden of persistent inflation • Lula will gain popularity and have more leverage to negotiate with allies and opponents and pursue a more ambitious agenda • Economic prosperity will isolate Bolsonaro and decrease the public's will to return to his policies	• In contrast, a prolonged supply problem and continued economic slowdow will decrease Lula's abilities to pursue his agenda • Economic fragility will threaten his political surival, possibly strengthening Bolsonaro • Voters will blame Lula for economic crisis	• Worse than scenario III, this is the worst-case scenario • economic recession breaks Lula's legislative coalition • Attempts to rebuild legislative coalition will lead to more corruption allegations • May reignite conversations regarding impeachment, further polarizing the country

Figure 11. *Summary of the scenarios listed by Polga-Hecimovich (2022). Scenario I is more likely, while Scenario IV is the worst-case scenario.*

Moreover, Lula's strategy must include allies in all government aspects, particularly in the military branches. His plan is already set in motion as he announced early for the Ministry of Defense José Múcio Monteiro, former president of the Tribunal de Contas da União and the first civilian to take charge of the ministry linked to the army, navy, and the air force since Temer's administration (G1, 2022). The objective is to secure that the military will support this mandate and end Bolsonaro's threats of military intervention.

Conclusion

The timing of the economic crisis in 2013, combined with corruption scandals, led to protests revindicated issues from anti-corruption to gender to impeachment; the wave is still ongoing in the country in 2022, deteriorating confidence in the government. A possible explanation for the

awakening of civil society could be the economic crises that followed, the geo-political context of the time, and Brazil's political history. Lula's negotiation skills will be more critical than ever if he wants to guarantee his political survival.

Word count: 2081

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Appendix A — LOs application

#ss112-institutionalism —As the motivator behind this assignment, this LO was crucial to understanding why and how the trust in government deteriorated over the years. I focused on the presidency and the individuals that have occupied the position in the past decade. This decision resulted from my midterm feedback to focus on the decline of the presidency reflected in low confidence in the government. The Rousseff's impeachment also indicates the fall of the presidency and how easy it became to dispose a sitting president. I also intertwined this LO with #structuralism and #constructivism, such as Bolsonaro's neoconservatism and the right's rise to power with a carefully constructed strategy since 2006.

I also discuss the rise of the armed forces as a political actor, complementing this with data on how it has been perceived more favorably — or less negatively. With this in mind, I also included in Lula's strategy how he can and is reducing the military's importance to legitimize the presidency again.

Overall, I applied this LO throughout the assignment but focused on the rise of the military as a result of conservative ideologies and the population's discontent with the economy.

#ss112-constructivism — Unlike in the midterm, I used constructivism to explain Lula's popularity with the importance of a welfare state and focused on how the right-wing constructed its new reputation since 2006. This application is evident in the section entitled "constructing the right-wing," in which I discuss how it disassociated itself from the military dictatorship by adopting a more "moderate" approach, forming the Centrão, and how Bolsonaro gave rise to the strategy called *right-wing counterpublicity.*

This focus on ideologies has led to the decline of the presidency, the rise of the military, and civil protests related to social causes. It has made it clear that Lula and Bolsonaro's battlefield is ideological.

#ss112-structuralism — Although this LO was the hardest to apply, I wanted to analyze how economic factors, such as poverty rates and monthly income, affect social groups, making them dissatisfied. Economic factors were the core of my thesis as I argued it unleashed a wave of protests. I integrated this LO with #constructivism and # institutionalism to show how all these frameworks are connected. For example, Lula's welfare policies were both economic and ideological, affecting how the president is perceived.

#ss112-integratingtheories — Because this LO is about the connections between frameworks and political behavior in the past, present, and future, I focused on the 2013 protests as a starting point to explain the 2018 uprisings the ACLED had data on. I used #constructivism, #institutionalism, and #structuralism and even included #rationalchoice to model Lula's strategy for this third term and governability frameworks. It is only possible to understand the protests that occurred in the 2010s with a combination of theories that will provide insight into future unrest.

#ss112-rationalchoice— I applied this LO mainly in the last section, where I discuss Lula's next moves. Instead of focusing on Bolsonaro's or collective political decisions, I wanted to focus on Lula to see what would happen in the following months. This was motivated by the protests that occurred on Monday, December 12, and made me wonder what I would do if I were in Lula's position. I used a SWOT analysis to lay down to understand what he can do and is already doing.

If Lula wants to survive his third and possibly last term, he must understand that 2022 is not 2002 anymore. Naturally, he will fight for his political survival, and his next move will be to avoid Rousseff's fate and avoid, to the best of his ability, any civil unrest that may delegitimize his government.

#ss112-observationalstudy — This paper interprets the database (ACLED, WVS, World Bank) observational study results and explains the underlying principles, drawing information from other sources, such as academic papers. An example is the use of data from the World Bank to explain the economic growth during Lula's government. I also included data visualizations from other sources, such as Statista, and added visualizations I made to explain the possible scenarios, the SWOT analysis, and the timeline of the events.

#ss112-democratization — Instead of focusing on democratization and the 1988 pact, I analyzed democratic backsliding as a product of the civil unrest. Although Brazil is not a competitive authoritarian regime per Levitsky & Way's (2002) definition, the country has demonstrated an alarming fall between democracy and authoritarianism. I also analyze how Rousseff's impeachment can be considered a soft coup but that, surprisingly, did not cause more backsliding and most democratic institutions are still intact albeit fragilized (i.e., the Constitution and the presidency). I also drew on Lust & Walder's (2015) hypothesis for backsliding indicates that Brazil is in a dangerous zone, especially with Lula's inauguration in January. We are still determining if there will be a smooth transition of power.

Appendix B — HCs application

#organization — I organized this document based on the main LO I used throughout the assignment: #ss112—institutionalism. For this reason, each main section relates to the three main presidents and how the institution of the presidency deteriorated over the years. The general structure was designed to integrate each SS112 theories and demonstrate how it is possible to understand each president's administration under a structuralist, constructivist, and institutionalist lens. In essence, this assignment's backbone consists of the following structure.

1. Introduction

    a. Changes Brazil experienced over the years, highlighting the many protests during the 2010s and justifying this paper

    b. #context: timeline of the main events

2. Thesis

3. Political context

4. Presidency

    a. Lula

        i. Social welfare as a constructivist strategy (#constructivsm)

        ii. How the economy and social groups interact (#structuralism)

    b. Dilma Rouseff

        i. Impeachment (#democratization/#institutionalism)

    c. Jair Bolsonaro

        i. Right-wing ideologies (#constructivism)

        ii. Rise of the military as a political institution (#institutionalism)

#strategize — I used a SWOT analysis to explain how Lula can reduce the possibility of future riots. This HC application is closely related to rational choice, as he will guarantee his political survival. I later built on his current strategy to peacify the armed forces by nominating a civilian and ally for the ministry of defense. I also included four possible scenarios and how Lula is in a weak position regardless of which takes place and will have to seek unconventional allies. Moreover, I linked this HC with governability theories.

#context — Although I applied this HC in a broader sense, it was crucial to situate the country's political context. I also explained the economic situation of the primary presidents, explaining the global context of the commodities boom in 2000. I also included a timeline of the main protests and events in the 2010s.