The State of Brazil Under Jair Bolsonaro

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Introduction
As the title would suggest, my research aimed to analyze “the state of Brazilian”, such as it were, under the rule of current Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro. This entailed trying to determine the unique social, political, and economic impact that Bolsonaro—and “Bolsonaro-ism” as an ideology—has had on Brazilian life.

Context
On October 29 2018 Jair Bolsonaro, former military officer and otherwise undistinguished politician, won the presidential election of Brazil with a resounding 55% of the vote. In an unprecedented way, he campaigned as—and indeed, judging from comments candidly made over a thirty year political career, very much was—a figure of the far right, running on a platform that promised extreme law and order and openly demonized indigenous people, the LGBT community, and feminists alike. Considering the political makeup of the administration preceding him, presided over by the center-left Worker’s Party, Bolsonaro’s ascension seemed to suggest that a significant and dramatic shift was in store for Brazil.

Methodology
Nothing too exciting I’m afraid. I primarily relied on (what I considered) credible new articles and scholarly studies, human rights organizations’ reports, in some cases anecdotal testimonies, and any relevant quantitative data (e.g. Brazil’s unemployment rate), to determine what life is currently like in a Brazil post-Bolsonaro.

Economic Impact
Perhaps the only aspect of Bolsonaro’s Brazil that can be considered a “mixed bag”. On one hand, unemployment (as seen in the first figure above) has on the whole gone down ever so slightly, currently residing at around 11.2% compared to its maximum of 13.7% reached in 2017.

On the other hand, rampant income and wealth inequality remains a serious concern. While overall trend-lines indicate that such inequality is declining to an extent (albeit a fairly measly one. It would take the country an estimated 75 years, for one, to reach the level of inequality seen in the UK, itself hardly a model of equitable wealth distribution; for another, Brazilian women are expected to close the wage gap by 2047, black Brazilians by 2089), such an extent is nevertheless insufficient for adequately addressing the now increasing rate of poverty. The World Bank estimates that 3.6 million people this year alone are expected to either revert back to or newly enter into poverty.

Political Impact
Despite campaign promises to the contrary, corruption under Bolsonaro’s administration has markedly increased, and at a significant rate. Several international organizations (Human Rights Watch, GAN Integrity, and others) have noted that corruption, particularly in the Judicial and Police sectors, has notably and dramatically increased in scale and brazenness.

Social Impact
As was the case politically, societal ills (e.g. children’s rights, unlawful killings) have only worsened under Bolsonaro’s administration. Freedom of expression in particular has become an immense issue: reporters have been routinely harassed, intimidated, and even physically assaulted for expressing dissent against the administration. LGBT rights are especially vulnerable. Bolsonaro, for instance, pushed for a bill that would prohibit teachers from promoting their own opinions in the classroom by using the terms “gender” or “sexual orientation,” and which ordered that sex/religious education be framed around “family values.”

Bibliography
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