

Course correction – A populist haze — on Brazil polls

Brazil votes this week in an election charged by an anti-establishment campaign

The campaign for Sunday's elections in Brazil is beset by an anti-establishment mood, as in several democracies. Legislators at the state and national levels are being elected, but it is the contest for the President's post that has really polarised the campaign. The personalised nature of the contest owes to the lingering shadow of Operation Car Wash, a buzzword for the anti-corruption campaign that underpins the confrontation between the legislature and the judiciary. At the centre of the investigations into the multi-billion dollar distribution of patronage to political and bureaucratic bigwigs is Petrobras, the state-owned oil firm. The anti-graft developments have removed established leaders from the fray, including Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the former President from the left-wing Workers' Party (PT) now serving a 12-year jail sentence. His bid to run for a third term was quashed by the electoral court, following the dismissal of an appeal against his 2017 conviction. Under the watch of Mr. Lula's successor, Dilma Rousseff, Brazil plunged into its worst recession in a century. She was impeached, but more on technical grounds linked to fiscal mismanagement than any egregious violations. The outgoing President, Michel Temer, also came under the prosecution's scanner but he survived, thanks to Congressional intervention to prevent any ripple effects. The overall atmosphere in the run-up to the elections has thus got more murky.

Surging in several opinion polls in the five-corner presidential contest for the first round is the far-right frontrunner, Jair Bolsonaro, an ex-army captain often compared with autocratic leaders elsewhere. A stabbing incident at an election rally has forced Mr. Bolsonaro to campaign from his hospital bed, a sign of the sharp and often violent polarisation between political extremes. The firebrand politician's homophobic and misogynistic views triggered protests over the weekend by thousands of women. Mr. Bolsonaro's main challenger is the PT's Fernando Haddad, a former mayor of São Paulo, whose nomination was deferred until the verdict on Mr. Lula's candidacy. Mr. Haddad's prospects may have improved had the PT reconciled itself to the overturning of Mr. Lula's appeal in January. The party's best hope now is that the economist will convert the former President's popularity into votes for himself. There is concern among investors that the election of a populist may impede long overdue reforms to break the dominance of sectional interests in Brazil's economic policies. Such intervention is seen as crucial to restore investor confidence, stimulate infrastructure growth and reverse Brazil's recession. The expectation is that Sunday's vote will result in a run-off. That, many hope, will set the stage for a more sober lead-up to the final vote.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Populist** - representing the interests and opinions of ordinary people
- **Haze** - a situation or condition which makes it difficult for you to think clearly
- **Establishment** - the important and powerful people who control a country or an organization, especially those who support the existing situation
- **Campaign** - a series of actions intended to produce political or social change
- **Beset** - to cause someone difficulty or danger over a period of time
- **Legislator** - someone who has the power and authority to create new laws
- **Contest** - a competition, especially one in which people's skill in a particular activity or sport is tested
- **Polarise** - to form two very different groups, opinions, or situations that are completely opposite to each other, or to cause this to happen
- **Lingering** - lasting for a long time, especially when this is unpleasant or not necessary

- **Buzzword** - a word that has become very popular, especially a word relating to a particular activity or subject
- **Underpin** - to be an important basic part of something, allowing it to succeed or continue to exist
- **Confrontation** - a situation in which people or groups are arguing angrily or are fighting
- **Legislature** - the part of government that makes and changes laws
- **Judiciary** - the part of government that consists of all the judges and courts in a country
- **Patronage** - help or money that is given to a person or organization
- **Bureaucratic** - involving a lot of complicated rules, details, and processes
- **Bigwig** - an important and powerful person in an organization
- **State-owned** - owned by the government
- **Graft** - dishonest or illegal activities in politics or business that involve giving people money or advantages in exchange for their help or support
- **Fray** - a fight or argument, esp. one in which several people take part
- **Former** - used for describing someone or something that had a particular job, title, status etc in the past, but not now
- **Left-wing** - someone who is left-wing is considered to have socialist aims and ideas, for example that property, money, and power should be shared more equally
- **Sentence** - a punishment given by a judge, usually involving a period of time that a person must spend in prison
- **Term** - a period of time during which a politician or other official holds their job
- **Quash** - to stop something from continuing
- **Dismissal** - a refusal to accept that something might be true or important
- **Conviction** - a decision by a court of law that someone is guilty of a crime
- **Successor** - someone who has an important position after someone else
- **Plunge into** - to suddenly start doing something with energy and enthusiasm, but sometimes without thinking about it first
- **Recession** - a period when trade and industry are not successful and there is a lot of unemployment
- **Impeach** - to formally accuse a public official of a serious crime relating to their job
- **Fiscal** - relating to money and financial matters
- **Mismanagement** - the process of organizing or controlling something badly
- **Egregious** - extremely bad
- **Violation** - an action that is in opposition to a law, agreement, principle etc
- **Outgoing** - soon to leave a position of authority or power
- **Survive** - to manage to deal with something difficult or unpleasant
- **Thanks to** - used for saying that someone or something is responsible for something that happened
- **Intervention** - a situation in which someone becomes involved in a particular issue, problem etc in order to influence what happens
- **Ripple effect** - a situation in which one thing causes a series of other things to happen
- **Run-up** - to make something very quickly
- **Murky** - involving activities that are not clearly known and that people think are dishonest or morally wrong
- **Opinion poll** - an attempt to find out what people in general think about a subject by asking some people questions about it
- **Frontrunner** - the person or thing considered the most likely to win a competition, game, election etc
- **Autocratic** - ruling with complete power
- **Elsewhere** - in or to another place or other places
- **Stabbing** - an attack in which someone is stabbed

- **Stab** - to kill or hurt someone by pushing a knife or other sharp object into their body
- **Polarisation** - the act of dividing something, especially something that contains different people or opinions, into two completely separate groups
- **Extreme** - an opinion or way of behaving that is as different from another as it is possible to be
- **Firebrand** - someone who has strong feelings, especially about politics, and wants to change things or encourage other people to feel the same
- **Homophobic** - a fear or dislike of gay people
- **Misogynistic** - showing feelings of hating women or a belief that men are better than women
- **Trigger** - to make something happen
- **Protest** - a strong complaint or disagreement
- **Former** - used for describing someone or something that had a particular job, title, status etc in the past, but not now
- **Deferred** - delayed until a later time
- **Verdict** - an official judgment made in a court
- **Candidacy** - the fact that someone is a candidate in an election
- **Prospect** - the possibility that something will happen, especially something good
- **Reconcile** - to find a way to make ideas, beliefs, needs etc that are opposed to each other capable of existing together
- **Overturn** - to change a legal decision
- **Concern** - a feeling of worry about something, especially one that a lot of people have about an important issue
- **Populist** - representing the interests and opinions of ordinary people
- **Impede** - to make it more difficult for someone to do something or more difficult for something to happen
- **Overdue** - if something is overdue, it should have been done before now
- **Reform** - a change that is intended to correct a situation that is wrong or unfair, or make a system work more effectively
- **Dominance** - a situation in which one person or thing has more influence or power than any other
- **Stimulate** - to encourage something to happen, develop, or improve
- **Recession** - a period when trade and industry are not successful and there is a lot of unemployment
- **Run-off** - to force someone to leave a place
- **Set the stage for something** - to create the conditions in which something is likely to happen
- **Sober** - with a serious attitude
- **Lead-up** - the period that comes before an important event

Course correction – Quick retreat: on French protests

The French government rolls back a planned fuel tax hike, but the protests are widening

French President Emmanuel Macron's reforms programme could be at risk of losing steam in the wake of weeks of violent countrywide protests triggered by a proposed increase in the fuel tax. Paradoxically, as head of the centrist La République En Marche party, he had swept to power on a pledge of modernising the economy and restoring popular trust in politicians. Public anger against the fuel tax has escalated into a broad-based opposition to the government's overall policies. Prime Minister Edouard Philippe initially said the duty hike would be deferred for six months. But on Wednesday the

government cancelled the tax proposal altogether, arguing that a levy that was meant to induce motorists to go green was not worth the price if it undermined social cohesion. Mr. Philippe has also suggested that the introduction of additional safety checks on cars due to take effect next year could be delayed. The U-turn on measures to reduce CO2 emissions suggested that the government was on the back foot. The government has also said that it was open to reinstating the wealth tax, which was revised last year to narrow its scope. The measure was intended to improve the investment climate and boost growth and employment. But the accompanying flat tax rate on capital gains and dividends, besides limits on trade unions to negotiate wages, only served to reinforce Mr. Macron's image as a President of the rich.

The yellow-vest protests have shone the light on France's tax system, its rates said to be the highest in the European Union, and buttressed the demand for improvements in the standard of living. The government is committed to increasing the minimum wage from next year but could now face pressure for further concessions on social welfare. Conversely, Paris would also be constrained to demonstrate compliance with EU rules that set an annual fiscal deficit target of below 3% of GDP on member-states. Adherence to common norms would especially be on Brussels's radar after the recent stand-off involving the Italian government. A concern linked to the withdrawal of the tax increase is the rise in France's carbon emissions. The mass protests have, unwittingly, pitted the majority who would have been hit by the higher levy against the imperative to meet the Paris climate agreement targets. Mr. Macron, who has fashioned himself as a champion of the green cause, can realise the mission to combat global warming only by rallying his people. His ability to regain lost ground will determine the prospects of warding off the populist threat in the 2019 European Parliament elections. His handling of the challenges at home will crucially define his ambitions on the EU stage.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Retreat** - to avoid a dangerous, unpleasant, or embarrassing situation, especially by moving away from it
- **Protest** - sa strong complaint or disagreement
- **Roll back** - to remove something, or to reduce the influence of something
- **Reform** - a change that is intended to correct a situation that is wrong or unfair, or make a system work more effectively
- **In the wake of** - happening after an event or as a result of it
- **Trigger** - to make something happen
- **Paradoxically** - used for saying that something is strange because it is the opposite of what you expect
- **Centrist** - not extreme in your political beliefs
- **Popular** - a popular belief, feeling, attitude etc is one that many people have
- **Escalate** - to become much worse or more serious, or to make something do this
- **Tax-deferred** - taxed at a later time
- **Altogether** - completely
- **Levy** - an amount of money that you have to pay, for example as a tax
- **Induce** - to cause something, especially a mental or physical change
- **Cohesion** - a situation in which people or things combine well to form a unit
- **U-turn** - a sudden and complete change of policy by a government or by someone in authority
- **Emission** - a substance, especially a gas, that goes into the air
- **On the back foot** - in a worse situation than other people or groups
- **Reinstate** - to start using or having something such as a law or benefit again
- **Boost** - to help something to increase, improve, or become more successful

- **Dividend** - a share of the profits of a company, paid once or twice a year to the people who own the company's shares
- **Negotiate** - to try to reach an agreement by discussing something in a formal way, especially in a business or political situation
- **Reinforce** - to make an idea, belief, or feeling stronger
- **Buttress** - to make someone or something stronger by supporting them in some way
- **Concession** - something you give or allow to someone in order to reach an agreement
- **Social welfare** - services provided by the government or private organizations to help poor, ill, or old people
- **Conversely** - used for introducing a sentence, or part of a sentence, which says something that is the opposite of the other part
- **Constrain** - to force someone to do something that they do not want to do
- **Compliance** - the practice of obeying a law, rule, or request
- **Adherence** - the action of continuing to obey a rule, law, agreement etc
- **Stand-off** - a disagreement or fight in which neither opponent can do anything to win or achieve their aim
- **Concern** - a feeling of worry about something, especially one that a lot of people have about an important issue
- **Unwittingly** - in a way that is not conscious or deliberate
- **Imperative** - extremely important and urgent
- **Combat** - fighting
- **Rally** - a public meeting that a lot of people go to in order to support someone or something or to protest against someone or something
- **Regain lost ground** - to become successful again after having been delayed or having had problems
- **Determine** - to control what something will be
- **Prospect** - the possibility that something will happen, especially something good
- **Ward off** - to prevent someone or something unpleasant from harming or coming close to you
- **Ambition** - something that you very much want to do, usually something that is difficult to achieve

Course correction – **After Salzburg: on rejection of post-Brexit blueprint**

With her Brexit proposal rejected by the EU, the British PM's position stands weakened

The rejection of Prime Minister Theresa May's post-Brexit blueprint at the Salzburg summit rules out nothing as yet in Britain's rocky negotiations on withdrawing from the European Union. All the same, the development is a blow to Ms. May, who faces a possible backlash at the Conservative party conference this month. Her proposal, adopted by the Cabinet in July, has deepened divisions among the Tories. Two senior Eurosceptic ministers have quit. A controversial idea in the July white paper is for a hybrid arrangement, with Britain staying in the common market only for trade in goods and agriculture, and without the obligations of free movement of people. This is at odds with the EU stance of not allowing cherry-picking when it comes to its four basic freedoms — of movement of capital, goods, services, and labour. The other dispute is over the post-Brexit status of

the soft border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Maintaining the status quo is critical to keeping the peace under the terms of the 1998 Good Friday agreement. Brussels seems flexible on its original proposal for full regulatory convergence and jurisdiction of EU courts over Belfast. This is meant to assuage London's concerns about two separate jurisdictions operating within the U.K. Britain's alternative proposal to avoid the return of checkpoints on the Irish border and to get around the difficulties of erecting invisible borders is to bring all of the U.K. under a common customs arrangement. Eurosceptics see this as aligning the country too close to the EU and curbing its freedom to negotiate trade deals outside the bloc. For Brussels, it would still amount to an unacceptable division of the EU's four freedoms.

European Council President Donald Tusk's remarks in Salzburg that the July proposals were not workable amplified these concerns. They drew angry reactions from Ms. May, who harked back to the *mantra* that a no-deal was better than a bad deal. But then, discrepancies in the opposing positions go back to the 2016 referendum outcome. Brussels had said then that while it regretted the verdict, it respected London's decision to leave. It stuck firm on established procedure and stressed that withdrawal negotiations could not commence until Article 50 of the EU treaty was triggered. It emphasised that exit from the bloc would involve costs for Britain, just as the benefits of membership entailed obligations. This accent on process could harden in the wake of the populist threat across the region to the European project. With elections to the European Parliament due next May, the leaders are keen that the anti-EU parties see the economic and political perils of quitting the bloc. Brexit uncertainty will linger, meanwhile.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Brexit** - an exit (= act of leaving) by the United Kingdom from the European Union (short for "British exit")
- **Blueprint** - a detailed plan for doing something new, or something that is a model for how something should be done
- **Weaken** - to make someone or something less powerful or important, or to become less powerful or important
- **Summit** - a meeting or series of meetings between leaders of two or more countries
- **Rule out** - to stop considering something as a possibility
- **Rocky** - a rocky relationship, situation, or period of time is one in which there are a lot of problems
- **Negotiation** - formal discussions in which people or groups try to reach an agreement, especially in a business or political situation
- **Backlash** - a strong, negative, and often angry reaction to something that has happened, especially a political or social change
- **Conservative** - not willing to accept much change, especially in the traditional values of society
- **Controversial** - a controversial subject, opinion, or decision is one that people disagree about or do not approve of
- **Hybrid** - a mixture of different things or styles
- **Obligation** - something that you must do for legal or moral reasons
- **At odds (with)** - disagreeing with someone
- **Stance** - an attitude or view about an issue that you state clearly
- **Cherry-picking** - to choose only the best things or people out of a group

- **Dispute** - a serious disagreement, especially one between groups of people that lasts for a long time
- **Status quo** - the present situation, or the way that things usually are
- **Keeping the peace** - to avoid or prevent an argument
- **Flexible** - able to make changes or deal with a situation that is changing
- **Convergence** - a situation in which people or things gradually become the same or very similar
- **Jurisdiction** - the right or power to make legal decisions
- **Assuage** - to make an unpleasant or painful feeling less severe
- **Concern** - a feeling of worry about something, especially one that a lot of people have about an important issue
- **Jurisdiction** - the right or power to make legal decisions
- **Erect** - to put something such as a fence in an upright position
- **Invisible** - something that is invisible cannot be seen
- **Customs** - a government department that collects taxes on goods that people bring into a country
- **Euroceptic** - someone, especially a politician, who thinks that their country should not be part of the European Union
- **Align** - to give your support publicly to a group, political party, or country
- **Curb** - to control or limit something that is harmful
- **Negotiate** - to try to reach an agreement by discussing something in a formal way, especially in a business or political situation
- **Amplify** - to increase the size or effect of something
- **Hark back to** - to remember or talk about something that happened in the past
- **Discrepancy** - a difference between things that should be the same
- **Referendum** - an occasion when everyone in a country can vote to make a decision about one particular subject
- **Regret** - to feel sorry or sad that something has happened
- **Verdict** - an official judgment made in a court
- **Commence** - to begin, or to begin something
- **Trigger** - to make something happen
- **Entail** - if a situation or action entails a particular thing, it involves having or doing that thing
- **Obligation** - something that you must do for legal or moral reasons
- **Accent** - a special emphasis given to something
- **In the wake of something** - happening after an event or as a result of it
- **The perils of (doing) something** - danger or problems connected with a particular activity
- **Bloc** - a group of countries or people with the same political aims
- **Linger** - to last or continue for a long time
- **Meanwhile** - at the same time

SOME IMPORTANT IDIOMS AND PHRASES

11. Keep your fingers on the pulse -

Meaning - Being constantly aware of the most recent developments.

Example - An entrepreneur must keep his fingers on the pulse of the market to be successful.

12. Mean business -

Meaning - Being serious about what you announce.

Example - Now that all our policies about work are put up on intranet, we mean business.

13. Think on your feet -

Meaning - Adjusting quickly to changes and making fast decisions.

Example - A good sales man must be able to think on his feet to close the deal.

14. Sail through something -

Meaning - Being successful in doing something without difficulty.

Example - The presentation at the national conference was extremely important for the company. We sailed through it.

15. Tricks of the trade :

Meaning - Clever or expert way of doing something.

Example - Being into the construction business for last 10 years, I know all tricks of the trade.

16. Not let grass grow under feet -

Meaning - Don't delay in getting something done.

Example - As soon as he finished all the registration formalities, he put the house on sale. He doesn't let the grass grow under his feet.

17. Work like a charm -

Meaning - Works very well or has the desired effect.

Example - I had cloves from my sore throat and they worked like a charm.

18. Back-room boys -

Meaning - People who perform important work but have no contact with the public.

Example - Our back room boys deserve an applause for the success of this advertisement.

19. Dead wood -

Meaning - People or things which are no longer useful or necessary.

Example - The company bought in a lot of new computers. They no longer want the dead woods.

20. Get the axe -

Meaning - lose the job.

Example - The projects team was undergoing a major restructuring, recruitment executives were the first to get the axe.

“ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS ACHIEVED”.