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Voices, Votes, Verdicts: The Global Electoral Shift

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Hello and welcome back to the IRS journal!

As October comes to an end, it's great to finally share our first issue of the fall semester with you. Between the sudden temperature changes in Ankara, endless coursework, and the midterms around the corner, we know things feel a little chaotic right now. Before anything else: take a deep breath. You've got this, and best of luck!

Of course, midterms aren't the only "frightening" thing about late October. With Halloween approaching, the campus is officially shifting into spooky season. Whether you're dressing up, craving pumpkin-spice everything, or just watching Halloween costume reels in your study breaks, we hope you find some time to embrace the autumn festivities.

Publishing today, on October 29th, is especially meaningful for us. Today, we proudly celebrate the Republic Day of Türkiye, marking the 103rd year of the founding of the Türkiye Cumhuriyeti. It's a day that hits close to home, reminding us that a country isn't just built on paperwork and treaties, but on real sacrifices, reminding us that behind all the history and politics were the people who poured everything they had into building a future they might never live to see.

Happy 103rd Republic Day, Cumhuriyet Bayramınız kutlu olsun and here's to many more centuries!

For the October issue, we dig into two major shifts unfolding across the globe right now:
AI and Diplomacy and ***Elections*** around the world.

And for this **Oct. Issue 1**: we are gonna break down the global races this year and what the outcomes mean for the rest of us.

We hope these articles give you something interesting to think about between classes. Thank you so much for reading. Hang in there with your exams, and have a fun Halloween!!

Müge Derin Doğan

SERBIA'S NEW DAWN: INSIDE THE STUDENT MOVEMENT THAT DEFEATED VUČIĆ

Upcoming Elections in Serbia

On October 25th, Serbians head to the polls for early parliamentary elections, almost a year ahead of the originally scheduled date: December 2027, but with a twist. Students of Serbia choose their own candidates! The movement Serbian students started back in 2024, upon the tragedy where a train station collapsed in the city of Novi Sad, the second largest city of the country, costing the lives of 16 citizens, became the biggest rival force against their current government. Ensuring their voices are finally heard.

Where it All Began:

The station has been under reconstruction since 2021 to accommodate more passengers. On the day of the collapse, the construction was barely done, and the outdoor concrete canopy collapsed on 17 people who happened to be there. It instantly killed 14 of them, 3 others were heavily injured. 2 of them could not make it, and only one student at the Faculty of Medicine in the Novi Sad University survived.

A man holds a Serbian flag as people gather for the final opposition Student List rally in Belgrade, Serbia, on October 22, 2026, three days before parliamentary elections [Marko Drobnjakovic/AP]

After this horrible event, the city was in an unimaginable shock and sorrow, which spread around the entire country. The government insisted on taking no blame, trying to twist the situation. President Aleksandar Vucic claimed that no construction was carried out on the now-collapsed concrete canopy, although the people of the city said otherwise.

Eventually, after government misstatements, reports confirmed that the active site lacked the necessary permits and was a part of a live construction zone. People were enraged. The actions started with a strike, then were followed by protests mainly from the students. They demanded full transparency on the case, they demanded accountability, they demanded consequences for those who were responsible, no matter their position, and frankly, the Vucic government took no responsibility for this catastrophe, which made matters even more serious. The students took up the mission to ensure this would be their last blow to the nation.

Aftermath:

Even after almost 2 years, the students refused to back down from their mission. They fought for their goal, even if it meant getting arrested, assaulted, or even exiled, and their persistence under pressure against the government finally brought the good news. The president, Aleksandar Vucic, announced on September 27 that he was resigning from the presidency but would be running for the role of Prime Minister. After that, the early parliament elections were set for October 25, 2026.

Party Scandals:

Even after all the incidents, the current ruling party, the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), tried to cover up its mess, but it did not end there. According to recently surfaced information, over 150 testimonies revealed that employees working in the public sector and state institutions are pressured to sign off on an agreement to vote for SNS and be a part of the party's rallies. Additionally, the party's panic was clear in the rising amounts of violence against the student protestors. Vucic made praising comments for the protestors, saying they were "well-intentioned", but as the elections came closer day by day, he started accusing them of wanting to "bring down Serbia".

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SERBIA'S NEW DAWN: INSIDE THE STUDENT MOVEMENT THAT DEFEATED VUČIĆ

Supporters of "Student List-Students Win" celebrate in front of the Parliament building in Belgrade, Serbia, October 26, 2026. UROS ARSIC / REUTERS

"Victory Calls!"

The movement that started with students who wanted to express solidarity to the victims of the Novi Sad collapse and who were fed up with the many disappointments caused by the government eventually turned into an election campaign called the "Student List - Students Win", where they formed a list of independent candidates picked by the students to run for the elections.

The protest marches became "the beating heart of the movement", describe the students. They set out from every major city in Serbia and gathered in the Slavija Square in New Belgrade for a final rally they named "The Victory is Calling!" before the elections to write their own history. "Long live the students, long live the freedom, long live Serbia!" were their closing remarks before they met again in the polls.

Post-Elections:

The long-awaited day finally came around. Serbians, who are eager to vote, are headed to the polls on the 25th of October. Not even a day after it was announced that the Student List defeated Vucic, earning the majority of the votes. The competition was not even close. Students won 141 seats in the parliament, whereas it was only 103 for Vucic's party: SNS.

The celebrations are still ongoing nationwide as people express their joy about the change of the government. All made possible with the endless efforts of the students. They fought for what's right without looking back and earned their victory. Though this may seem like it was special only for the state of Serbia, it certainly isn't the only part of the world that was affected by this win. Serbian students showed the entire world what might happen when you stand up, raise your voice, and take action. They proved change is possible, together.

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Işıl Şanlıer

THE PRICE OF POLITICS: 2026 MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Every 2 years, American citizens head to the polls to vote for the midterm elections in the middle of a president's four-year term: a national political event that rarely stays within its borders in terms of its consequences. Scheduled for November 3, the election will give voters a chance to elect all 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and nearly one-third of U.S. Senators, two chambers that make up Congress. The newly elected Congress is scheduled to begin its service on January 3 in the following year of the election. Currently, both of the chambers are held by Republicans who belong to the same party as President Donald Trump. If the Democrats manage to win either the House or the Senate, President Trump will struggle to get any laws through Congress. The elections will therefore have a crucial influence on determining the foreign policy of the US and its effects on other states, as it remains one of the major powers in history.

The central topic of the 2026 midterm elections is shaped by the current costly living conditions in the US. A majority of voters are struggling to afford their basic necessities due to rising costs, particularly energy, groceries, housing, and healthcare. About eight out of ten voters report that the cost of living is the main concern in the upcoming elections, followed by healthcare and the war in Iran. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, annual consumer price inflation reached 3.7% in September 2026, up from 3.4% in August, followed by gasoline prices increasing 9.1% in September, along with the food index increasing 2.5% over the last year. The inflation figure remains above the Federal Reserve's longer-run inflation goal of 2%.

Partisan power plays and bitter divides are shaping the races that will determine the final two years of Donald Trump's presidency. Carson Elm-Picard / MS NOW; Photos courtesy of the candidate's campaign

The consequences of this economic situation have led voters to be skeptical about President Donald Trump's handling of the economy. Most citizens are blaming the economic policies and the President's actions for the economic crisis, which threatens his party's chances of being elected in November. According to an AP-NORC poll conducted in September 2026, six in ten adults indicate that the economy and the country as a whole have been worse off since President Trump took office in 2025. Along with a rate of seven in ten people feeling that Trump's handling of the cost of living is going worse than expected, similarly with trade and foreign policies.

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THE PRICE OF POLITICS: 2026 MIDTERM ELECTIONS

The war in Iran also provides an important connection between economic conditions and the midterm elections, since 64% of voters refer to the war with Iran as the top issue. More than 7 months into the war between the US and Iran, fuel and gas prices are rising, making transportation costs and the prices of some goods unaffordable. According to Mark Zandi, the cost of war has been around $2,000 per household in the US, including the gas prices and interest rates.

These economic and foreign policy concerns will play an important role in voters' decisions. When deciding whom to support, citizens may consider not only the current situation but the government's and Congress's decisions over the past 2 years. The research underscores that 47% of voters prefer Democratic control of the House of Representatives, while 38% prefer Republican control. The poll also found that 8 of 10 people say the country needs a fundamental change. These findings indicate that a majority of voters are dissatisfied with the current situation and are evaluating other actors as an alternative to Trump's administration. Therefore, the possibility of a party change in one or both chambers of Congress will be a key factor in the US's forthcoming policies and its approach to both living standards and Iran, reflecting voters' desire for political change.

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Tuana İsmailoğlu

A RISKY GAMBLE: SÁNCHEZ CALLS A SNAP ELECTION

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez is about to take a risky gamble. He declared that on October 5, 2026, parliament would be dissolved, and general elections, which would normally be held in 2027, will be held on November 29, 2026. These snap elections are like a two-edged sword: Sánchez could increase his power over parliament, yet the same sword might cost him the prime minister's seat.

This decision came after 87-year-old Maricarmen Abascal was evicted from her home by the police force. Maricarmen couldn't afford an exorbitant rent increase after a mutual fund purchased the house where she had lived for 70 years; as a result, she was evicted. A couple of days after her eviction, Maricarmen lost her life in the hospital to which she was taken. Serving as the final straw in Spain's worsening housing crisis, the incident triggered massive street protests nationwide and prompted the country's two main unions, the UGT and CCOO, to launch their first joint strike in 14 years.

The minority-coalition government led by Pedro Sánchez tried to introduce several emergency decrees against the housing crisis. However, this attempt was rejected by votes from opposition parties. Rejection of decrees created a wave of anger against parties that voted for rejection in public. According to some news sources, such as Reuters and The Guardian, Sánchez wants to use these negative feelings towards his opponents to his advantage. However, given that Sánchez has been in office since 2018, this is seen as a risky gamble, and it raises questions as to why the issue has not been resolved until now.

According to the latest polls, the conservative Partido Popular (PP) is the leading party, but it doesn't have enough votes to secure a majority. In this case, Vox, another right-wing party, comes forward. Far-right party Vox, the third party in polls, is considered a possible coalition partner of PP. Given that they haven't used the accusatory language they used in 2020 for a long time, PP probably thinks the same way.

Spanish Prime Minister and Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) candidate for prime minister Pedro Sanchez addresses supporters during the last campaign rally in Valencia on April 26, 2019 ahead of the April 28 general election.JOSE JORDAN—AFP/Getty Images

For a minority-coalition government, poll results are not promising. Sánchez's party, the social-democratic Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), is in second place according to polls, except those conducted by government-affiliated CIS. Also, their votes decreased compared to 2023. The real collapse seems to be on the coalition partner Sumar; the party is in fourth place in polls. Sumar, a platform for uniting various left-wing parties, could lose many seats in parliament.

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A RISKY GAMBLE: SÁNCHEZ CALLS A SNAP ELECTION

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez wants to increase his party's power in the parliament in the elections that will be held on November 29. He aims to use the atmosphere that emerged in public after the housing crisis. He also reminds voters that he is one of the few leaders who opposed Donald Trump, criticized Israel's attacks against Palestine, and had a clear stance against climate change.

On the other hand, opposition parties are pleased with the decision to hold a snap election. If the election concludes as the polls foresee and a coalition of PP-Vox is formed, a far-right party could become an official government partner for the first time since Francisco Franco's death in 1975. If the second scenario happens, we could see Spain as a new member of the rising right in Europe; whether the sword cuts in Sánchez's favor or against him will be decided on November 29.

Spain's opposition and People's Party (PP) leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo addresses a rally ahead of elections at Retiro park in Madrid, Spain, June 18, 2023. REUTERS/Isabel Infantes/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights

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Kerem Mert Bozyiğit

DOES DONALD TUSK HAVE ANOTHER KO IN HIM?

Shifting the Gears: The Judicial Deadlock and Tusk's Return

After 6 months of abeyance for an oath-taking ceremony and a government-imposed appointment later, the Polish judicial crisis is ongoing. The crisis is characterized by the KO's policies toward the judicial body of the country, which have been reshaped by the Law and Justice Party's (PiS) executive power consolidation. In 2023, when Donald Tusk returned, and Civic Coalition (KO) formed the coalition government and started to implement their policies to "realign Poland with the path she needs to take". It's a cloudy future for Poland; whether the support for KO will erode is up for question in the upcoming elections, which will take place in November 2027 at the latest.

The Tusk–Kaczyński Rivalry

It's hardly possible to explain the Polish politics without the personal rivalry between Tusk and Kaczynski. Since the mid-2000s, two leaders have been in a political competition over any topic on the Polish agenda. Kaczynski has publicly claimed the demise of his twin brother, who was the president of Poland, was because of Tusk's government's negligence of the plane's security in the Russian airfield (Lepiarz 2023). Tusk led the government for 3 years; his term as prime minister would last 4 more years until 2014, when he resigned from the prime ministership to become president of the European Council. In his absence, Kaczynski's PiS won the elections and formed governments for over 8 years. Jaroslaw Kaczynski never assumed a title higher than deputy prime minister. Tusk's return marked another turning point in Polish politics, establishing the current party system and competition within it, but to understand it better, the entities that are competing need to be analyzed.

Rebuilding the Rule of Law

Civic Coalition (KO) consisted of a handful of parties united under the common cause of opposing the PiS. They won the 2023 election and reinstalled Tusk as the Prime Minister of Poland. Tusk formed a coalition government as the leader of Civic Platform (PO), with these parties united against PiS. In late 2025, these parties united under the name of Civic Coalition. Though it's being questioned after the events of late regarding the judiciary, KO's main focus is to re-establish the democratic institutionalism that is, according to the EU standards, as Tusk is a pro-EU politician, and reverse the democratic backsliding that was endured during the PiS period. Junior members of the current coalition are parties with tendencies towards the center-left to the left, which complicates internal decision-making within the coalition. KO's future and voting potential in the next elections will be discussed below.

Fractures on the Right: A Splintered Opposition

Standing in opposition are Kaczynski and PiS, who lost an important part of their support following Morawiecki's departure and the formation of Rozwoj Plus (Kołodziej). PiS lost a majority of its popularity with the return of Tusk, but the wave does not mean that anti-Russian sentiment is losing popularity. The alternative they pose to KO has lost elections, but this does not mean that PiS has lost its potential in Poland's legislative body. The other side of the opposition is represented by a newer actor, Konfederacja (KWiN). Founded in the late 2010s, KWiN is the far-right populist party of Poland that rose to popularity with the Euroscepticism that PiS paved the roads for and anti-immigration policies.

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DOES DONALD TUSK HAVE ANOTHER KO IN HIM?

The Demographic Divide: Polarized Electorates and Coalition Arithmetic

On the 23rd of October, KO's ruling coalition partner, Poland 2050's leader, has resigned from her post as both the leader of the party and part of the government, but KO's government is intact, with Poland 2050 staying within the coalition. During this political chaos, voter characteristics are another factor that needs to be understood. Tusk's return also led to a shift in the electorate. With Tusk's departure in 2014, the group of voters, some of whom continued to vote for the PO and others who dispersed to other left-leaning parties, seems to have gathered around him again. This may also be due to Tusk's unification of the major parties, most of which oppose the PiS government.

Donald Tusk is Poland's new prime minister | Photo: Alamy

Poland's voting pattern underscored a deep polarization: while Tusk mobilized an urban, educated, and firmly pro-EU electorate spanning young professionals and retirees, PiS relied on its traditional rural stronghold, which primarily has older voters, farmers, and those outside major metropolitan centers. While confederation voters can receive similar votes from all segments of the public in general, it is striking that they receive fewer votes than women only in the gender factor (Mikołaj et al. 19). Under these voter characteristic settings and according to Politico's Poland analysis, KO is still the leading political party in the country with around more than 30% votes which translates into the more dependency and leverage given the junior partners of the coalitions that KO might want to form in the future. PiS's main opposition position is being threatened but not yet attacked by the far-right KWiN, but the newly formed Rowzoj Plus can still do damage to Kaczynski's situation in the Sejm.

The Long Road Ahead

Finally, it is important to note that Poland was part of the 3rd wave of autocratisation that went through the executive branch, accumulating more and more power and moving away from deliberation for 8 years. A country to reverse 8 years of democratic backsliding will take time and trust in the process of democratization. However, with the global international order in chaos in contemporary times, what will unfold in Poland's domestic politics is a mystery that can only be revealed as it unfolds.

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Sergen Balpınar

ON THE SHADOWS OF 7TH OCTOBER: 2026 ISRAEL GENERAL ELECTION

As Israelis prepare to head to the polls on October 27, the country finds itself at one of the most important and transformative periods in its modern history. This crucial vote to determine the 120 members of the 26th Knesset (Israel's parliament) represents a critical milestone: it is the first general election held since the attacks that started on October 7, 2023 and the ongoing conflict that destabilized the Middle East.

Although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing and religious coalition has survived its full four-year legislative term without collapsing early, a rarity in İsrael's history, this does not change the fact that Israelis remain divided by their differences of opinion. Behind the political headlines lies a deeply traumatized nation. This election is not only about regular politics. In reality, it's all about the costs of a long war and the future of Israel's democracy.

How Does an Election Work and Netanyahu's Plan

Israel uses a system called proportional representation. Basically, people vote for a political party list, not for a single leader. Because of this, no single party has ever won the needed 61 seats for a majority in the 120-member parliament. Therefore, leaders must always engage with other parties to form a coalition government. Small parties are pretty important because of the national electoral threshold.

Today, the polls show that voters are hesitant about one man: Benjamin Netanyahu. On one side, there are loyal supporters who want him to stay. On the other side, there is a large group of opposition parties whose main goal is to remove him from office.

Because no side seems to have enough votes to reach the 61-seat majority, experts say Netanyahu has a specific plan, where he wants to create a political deadlock. If no one can form a new government, he will remain in power legally. For Netanyahu, this deadlock is a shield that keeps him at the center of power and buys him time while his corruption trial goes on.

The Fight for Leadership: Netanyahu vs. Eisenkot

The main battle in this election is between Netanyahu and his strongest rival in years: Gadi Eisenkot. Eisenkot is the former Chief of Staff of the Israeli military and the leader of the new center-left Yashar Party. He has attracted many voters who care deeply about security but dislike Netanyahu's alliance with the far-right. Eisenkot's standing with the public is also shaped by personal loss, after his 25-year-old son, Gal, was killed in action in Gaza.

Recent polls show a clear race. A poll by Maariv demonstrates that Eisenkot's Yashar party is leading with 21 seats, while Netanyahu's Likud has dropped to 18 seats. Also, a survey conducted by the public broadcaster Kan shows that 43% of people prefer Eisenkot as prime minister, compared to 38% for Netanyahu. In the same Kan poll, Yashar is projected to win 22 seats and Likud 20 seats.

There are several more important figures. Former Prime Ministers Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid have joined forces in a party called Beyachad, which means together. There is also Avigdor Liberman, the leader of Yisrael Beiteinu. However, building a winning coalition is pretty hard. Recently, the election committee tried to ban Arab-majority parties from the elections. Even though the Supreme Court struck down this ban, right-wing opposition leader Liberman still refuses to work with them. This causes more tension inside the parliament.

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ON THE SHADOWS OF 7TH OCTOBER: 2026 ISRAEL GENERAL ELECTION

Equality of Rights: Military Service for All

While secular and Modern Orthodox Israelis serve their country and get killed, Haredi Jews pursue their Torah studies and are exempt from the mandatory military draft. This topic is often referred to as "Equality of Burden". Recently, the Supreme Court ruled that these religious exemptions are against the law.

Israelis have been at war for three continuous years. Secular citizens have left their jobs and families for their country in Gaza and Lebanon. They feel deeply that this draft system is unfair. Opposition parties want a mandatory draft for everyone. Netanyahu, however, is stuck in the middle. Since he needs the support of the religious coalition partners to stay in power, he must protect the exemption.

An Israeli man, accompanied by children, votes at a polling station during Israel's national election, in Jerusalem, 27 October 2026. REUTERS - Ronen Zvulun

Will Foreign Policy Change?

Many international experts note that even if Netanyahu loses the election, Israel's core foreign policy or defense strategies won't change drastically. On September 26, 5 top opposition leaders signed a "non-aggression pact". This agreement showed that they mostly disagree with Netanyahu's personal style and domestic choices, not with the military goals of the wars. Whether Netanyahu wins or another leader takes over, Israel will continue to focus heavily on fighting Iran and keeping military control over the region.

After 27 October: Deadlock

Although Benjamin 'Mr. Security' Netanyahu's party, Likud, finished the elections in first place; his political alliance remained at 54 seats. Neither Netanyahu's bloc nor the opposition can reach the majority in the Knesset. Therefore, the election did not produce a clear winner, creating a complete political deadlock in the country, as noted before. Negotiations will be held between parties to decide who will serve as prime minister until coalition talks are completed or whether new elections will be held.

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Kağan Süpürgeci

GUINEA-BISSAU: ATTEMPT AT SOFT TRANSITION OF POWER

For decades, Guinea-Bissau has faced political ambiguity. It's not a recent case for Guinea-Bissau; this uncertainty can be traced back to its independence from Portugal in 1970. Hitherto, the military's breath was up to its shoulder. There had been multiple coups, civil wars, and such political crises. Since the day it secured its independence, Guinea-Bissau has never had a long-lasting, structurally strong, stable government. Although the transitional authorities have taken some steps towards civilian rule, the postponed elections and restrictions on political activity leave the credibility of the transition uncertain.

However, there was a glimpse of hope in December 2026, a new election after a year of military rule. That hope has yet to secure its position as hope and nothing more because, in recent months, the current president of Guinea-Bissau's National People's Assembly, Domingos Simões Pereira, has declared that holding elections is not possible in December. He called for the intervention of international authorities, such as Portugal, the African Union, and the EU. The National People's Assembly is not actually the parliament that holds the power right now; the parliament is in charge. As recently as the Transitional National Council, it was the parliament elected in the previous elections held on 23 November 2025.

Nevertheless, this parliament never came to power because, right after the elections, before the results were announced, the military took power, and Pereira went to Lisbon to receive medical treatment following the temporary lifting of the detention. He was held in house arrest and custody for up to 7 months. We can see clear measures being taken by the military government to demonstrate its intention to transition to power. Releasing the major opposition leader is not a decision that can be taken seriously. Elections have been officially postponed; the date is yet to be announced.

There are some other attempts at the provisional government's transition of power. First of all, the prohibition of candidacy of the current leader of the transitional government and the prime minister. It is unclear how this will be received, given the postponement of the elections, but it is evident that some measures are being taken. Another one being, there are some civilian members of society in the provisional government. Also, it's evident that some authorities act as mediators: Senegal and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States).

There are some not-so-hopeful aspects of transition, too. Especially according to the African Union's communiqué, the transparency of elections is highly questionable. It noted that some party headquarters had been closed, political activity and freedom of expression had been restricted, and the referendum had been held without international observers. With the August Constitutional Referendum, the president's power has been extended, and the number of members of parliament has been reduced. The future of Guinea-Bissau's democracy does not seem bright. Yes, there might be light at the end of the tunnel. Although, as for now, we don't know how far or bright it is.

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Tahir Deniz Demirel

BRAZIL AT A TURNING POINT: FIERCE ELECTORAL COMPETITION

With October ringing in a wave of political shifts in the world, Brazil's significant second-round presidential election on October 25 will have major effects, with two candidates offering different visions for the country's future. The present president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and senator Flávio Bolsonaro are competing in a closely contested race shaped by economic concerns, political divisions, and environmental challenges.

According to Brazil's Superior Electoral Court (TSE), Bolsonaro received 47.03% of valid votes in the first round on October 4, while Lula secured 45.16%. Since neither candidate received more than 50%, the election will be decided on October 25 with the second round.

One of the biggest differences between the candidates is their approach to the economy. Lula, representing the left-wing Workers' Party (PT), supports social welfare programs, workers'rights, and government investment. His policies mainly focus on reducing inequality and improving living conditions for lower-income Brazilians. In contrast, Bolsonaro, representing the right-wing Liberal Party (PL), supports reducing government spending, encouraging private businesses, and limiting state intervention in the economy (Fellet). However, Brazil's economic situation makes these promises difficult to achieve. According to Reuters, the country's gross public debt has reached 82.9% of GDP, and led to raising questions about how the candidates will finance their policies (Ayres)

The influence of the United States also became a central subject in Brazil's elections. On May 26, Bolsonaro met U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House, where they discussed issues including organized crime, trade, and critical minerals (Magalhaes). Meanwhile, President Lula has criticized foreign interference and highlighted Brazil's sovereignty. These disagreements show how the election could influence Brazil's future relationship with the United States.

Beyond economic and diplomatic questions, political polarization is still a major problem in Brazil. Bolsonaro is the son of former President Jair Bolsonaro, whose political movement continues to have strong support among conservative voters. Lula, on the other hand, represents a more progressive political approach. According to Associated Press, approximately 21% of eligible voters did not participate in the first round (Hughes). This shows that the division also affected the public trust in politics.

Environmental policy is another important issue in this election. Lula supports stronger environmental protections and aims to reduce deforestation in the Amazon rainforest. By contrast, Bolsonaro places greater emphasis on economic development and reducing environmental regulations affecting businesses (BBC News Brazil).

As October 25 approaches, Brazilian voters are split between two different political directions, not only for themselves and their economy but also for the fate of the Amazon's future. Although the candidates have different priorities, both will face similar challenges, including economic uncertainty, political division, and environmental protection.

Continued on the next page

BRAZIL AT A TURNING POINT: FIERCE ELECTORAL COMPETITION

October 25th and Beyond

On October 25, Lula won the presidential election with 51.79% of the votes, defeating Bolsonaro. Despite fierce competition, Lula achieved a significant victory. Economically, Lula plans to continue his social welfare policies and aims to decrease poverty and inequality. In addition, environmental protection, the preservation of the Amazon rainforest, will remain as important policy. However, the economic situation of Brazil still seems to challenge Lula's fulfillment of his promises and the existence of political polarization still remains a problem for Brazil.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and his running mate Geraldo Alckmin address supporters during a victory rally after winning the presidential run-off in Sao Paulo, Brazil, October 25, 2026 [Natacha Pisarenko/AP Photo]

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CONTRAST IN THE RECENT GERMAN STATE ELECTIONS

On the 6th day of September in 2026, Saxony-Anhalt held state elections, resulting in Alternative for Germany's (AfD) victory, doubling its vote share compared with the previous election. With the elections, the party has increased its seat count to 39 by winning 16 more seats. This was the first time that a far-right party had reached the threshold for power at the state level in Germany since World War II. Meanwhile, Elif Eralp, who was born to a Turkish family, has won the Berlin state elections held on the 20th day of September in 2026, in contrast to the results of the state elections in Saxony-Anhalt.

The election results were a victory for the far-right. AfD has taken 44% of the vote in the state, putting them in first place. Even though it was the first time AfD had led the state, it wasn't surprising. According to the results of the Federal election held in recent years, AfD had taken 37% of the votes from the same state, which shows that AfD had already had strong support from the residents of the state of Saxony-Anhalt even before the state elections. It is assumed that the driving factors of this tremendous support may be related to the decrease in jobs following the reunification, besides demographic issues like an aging population, gender imbalance, and the growing number of immigrants; the rate of people without German citizenship has doubled compared with the previous decade, according to the "State Office for Statistics of Saxony-Anhalt". Furthermore, the attack on the Magdeburg Christmas market in 2024 might have boosted the support. The party's promises focus on encouraging childbirth, reducing migration, and integration programs.

Die Linke, a far-left party in Germany, won the elections in the state of Berlin held on the 20th day of September in 2026, taking 25% of the vote. The party's candidate was Elif Eralp, whose family is rooted in Kayseri, Türkiye. This contrasts with the far-right's victory in Saxony-Anhalt. It is assumed that the reason for this contrast might be age. Berlin is the second youngest state in Germany, with an average age of almost 43. However, Saxony-Anhalt has the oldest population with an average age of 48 years. The immigrant rate can also be considered in the data. As of 2025, 25% of Berlin's residents are foreign. In contrast, this rate is only 8% in Saxony-Anhalt. Social campaigns play a significant role in the elections, too. Eralp promised to handle the problem of unaffordable housing and social inequality. She emphasized that she sees Mamdani, the mayor of New York, as a role model, stating, "Naturally, the success of a democratic socialist in New York, the heartland of capitalism, is a major success" (Turkish Minute, 2026), which shows that Eralp focuses on social equality while AfD focuses on demographic issues.

Both the elections in Berlin and Saxony-Anhalt show how regional demographic and socioeconomic conditions shape the state elections rather than internal politics. This may cause clear contrasts that differ across regions of Germany. The future of state-level policy remains uncertain, yet the reality is clear as day: no party commands a dominant lead nationwide.

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