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INTERVIEWER: Welcome to this Trending Globally explainer. I'm sitting with Professor Jim Green who knows more about Brazil than practically anyone else we could find. And we're going to talk about the Brazilian elections. Now, by way of background, I'm going to assume most people listening to this are interested in this but really don't know what's going on.

So here's a quick primer, if you will, on what's been going on. There was a thing called the BRICS. The B was for Brazil. For 10 years, they were celebrated as being the one large developing economy that was really shaking up the world, and they did a lot.

They also had this very interesting sustainable welfare program called Bolsa Família, which got lots of plaudits from abroad. And the party that was in charge seemed to be very popular and was doing quite well. And then the wagon and the wheels and the trucks and the train all came apart very quickly for reasons which are very complex. I hope Jim is going to help sort this out.

Quick bit of background, Jim. What happened? Why did PT go from being everybody's favorite lefty party to persona non grata, the President's in jail, and the right's revanche?

JIM GREEN: So the worker's party headed by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, labor leader, was elected to the presidency in 2003 and expanded the economy based on large amount of commodity exports and took advantage of kind of a global boom in the economy. When the international economy collapsed in 2009, to a certain extent, Brazil sustained itself for several more years, but as demands of its goods declined, as demands from China, its goods declined in the United States. The economy started to slowdown.

At the same time, Lula had a very aggressive social program that he developed over this period of eight years in office and recommended as his successor, his chief of staff, a person named Dilma Rousseff, who had been a former fighter against the military regime, had been in prison for three years and tortured. And she was elected in 2011. And Lula left office with 80% popularity.

And Dilma came into office and for the first year and a half of her first term, she was extremely popular. 2013, there were large scale mobilizations in June. In part, asking the worker's party to fulfill all of its demands and continue expanding the promises that it made to the people. But

it was also a critique of the decision to spend resources on the World Cup, soccer cup, that was going to be held in Brazil in 2014.

As these mobilizations grew, more conservative forces joined them calling for the end of the worker's party government. And polarization started in the country. Dilma, nevertheless managed to win the election. She-- 54 million votes to 51 million for her opponent who was a center right candidate. And soon thereafter, the people who lost the elections challenged the election results, which was very unsuccessful because there really was no election fraud. And then started a process of impeaching Rousseff, alleging that she had manipulated the budget by doing kind of creative budgeting essentially.

At the same time, a series of investigations about corruption in Brazil among the political parties identified possibly money laundering and illegal activities done by certain people linked to the worker's party. And so those investigations created a situation of disappointment with the worker's party and its government and disappointment with Dilma. She was impeached in 2016.

Her vice president came to power, and he led a disastrous government, which is the most unpopular government in the history of Brazil, has 3% support among the people saying it's a good government. I think they say, I haven't been able to verify this, was one of the lowest popularity rates of any elected or any government in power. And in fact, the candidate of this political party, the Brazilian democratic movement, came in the presidential race as 1% of support to give you an idea of that. The main political party, which was the center right political party that had elected the president before Lula, Fernando Cardoso, a sociologist and politician, they also have shown tremendous weakness because of the unpopularity of this government in power for the last two years.

INTERVIEWER: So is there something that's a bit of a tune we've heard before? We seem to have established parties which have disappointed people on both the left and the right. And now what we have is a kind of insurgent co-op populist moment going on in Brazil, just as we have in other countries. Is that fair?

JIM GREEN: It is in a lot of ways, although the candidate of the right, which is kind of filling the vacuum of dissent and unpopularity is an extremely far right figure who is extremely misogynistic and racist and homophobic, who defends the military coming to power, who defends torture, and at some point, even said that the problem with a military dictatorship is that instead of torturing

people, they should have killed them. They should have killed 30,000 people, including Fernando Cardoso, the former president.

He however, has on a very strong law and order campaign, captured the imagination of certain people who are very unhappy about violence, drug lords controlling cities and neighborhoods and cities. And he offers a lot of simplistic solutions to very complex problems in Brazil, which has built his popularity. And he has built his popularity on the people who are against the worker's party and the possibility of the worker's party coming back to power.

So Lula, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, was in prison this last year on charges that a construction company offered him an apartment in exchange for some favors that were given, although the apartment never was transferred into the name of Lula. And he never occupied it. Many people realize this was kind of trumped up charges, exaggerated charges, in order to make him ineligible as a presidential candidate. In prison, his popularity rose from 35% to 40% of people who wanted to see him as the next president, largely because he had really, for the first time in the history of Brazil, done things to meet the needs of ordinary people, poor people, people from the areas of the country that had been most left behind.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, the left behind narrative is a common one in politics these days, along with the right wing homophobic insurgent. It seems to be a common thread. Now we have an election coming up where a lot of these issues are going to be sorted out. There's two rounds of voting. Walk us through where we are, what's going to happen, what we should be paying attention to.

JIM GREEN: So there are 12 presidential candidates. There are actually 28 political parties in Brazil. It's a very complex system, which makes it very difficult to have a working majority in the Congress because you have to make a lot of wheeling and dealing in order to get a majority of people to support your legislation. Of those 12 candidates, five are important.

Jair Bolsonaro, who is a former captain in the military who congressman for many years and represents the far right. Many would call him a fascist. The candidate of the center right who supported the coup is a former governor of the state of Sao Paulo of Lebanese descent. His name is Geraldo Alckmin. He is now at 9% in the popularity.

The candidate of the left representing Lula is Fernando Haddad, also of Lebanese descent, who was the former Minister of Education for six years in Lula's government and expanded dramatically the public education system and was the mayor of the city of Sao Paulo for four

years. And there's another candidate of the kind of center left named Ciro Gomes who was a former governor of a state in the Northeastern part of Brazil who is running around 11%. And then there's another candidate named Marina Silva who was the Minister of Environment, comes from a poor background, was a rubber tapper's daughter, learned to read and write when she was an adult. And she represents a coalition of her party called Network and the Green Party, but she is really deflated. She ran twice before and had somewhat, a certain amount of popularity but has weakened.

At this point, it looks like the runoff-- the elections are on Sunday, the two highest voters will be Bolsonaro representing the far right and Haddad representing the worker's party. And then on the 27 of October, which is a Sunday, there will be the second round, and the person with the most votes wins.

INTERVIEWER: Now we'll come back and do another podcast to talk about the election results, but just projecting forward, walk me through two scenarios. The worker's party is definitely in [? mallador ?] with the ruling elites if we want to put it that way. They've jailed the ex-president. They've put lots of legal barriers in the way of the party. What happens if the PT come back to power?

JIM GREEN: So if Haddad wins a majority, and I think at this point, it's seen that he's favored to win, although it's impossible to predict the future in Brazil. It will be a government where he will likely not have a majority in Congress. It will be hard for him to overturn some nefarious legislation that's been passed and to pass other pieces of legislation. And if there is a polarization by the right which doesn't recognize the election results, and if they mobilize, as they did against Dilma Rousseff, it's very possible that the military might intervene under the pretext that they need to establish social order.

Now unfortunately, Brazil has seen the military intervene in its politics seven times in the 20th century, once in '37 to '45, and another time between 1964 and 1985. So this is not a scenario that we can discount. The other scenario would be if Bolsonaro wins the election which will cause a huge collective depression among progressive people in Brazil, but I think soon thereafter, they will regain their desire to resist and to fight back against this government.

There could be again, significant polarization, and the military could also intervene. After all, Bolsonaro was the captain, and the generals don't really like captains giving the orders. He didn't have a very successful military career, and so I think it's very likely that the military could

come in and sweep him from power. And Brazil could have its third military dictatorship in the last 100 years.

INTERVIEWER: So political scientists in particular tend to think that the days of the military coming in and sweeping away democracies, that was back in the '60s and '70s. That doesn't happen anymore. You actually think it's very probable right now.

JIM GREEN: It is a possibility, a serious possibility. I would like not to see it happen, but it could happen. There are two indications that I think show the way in which the institutions of Brazilian society are not functioning democratically. One is, for example, the most important newspaper, the equivalent of the *New York Times*, although it's very conservative in its politics, wants to interview Lula. A member of the Supreme Court authorized that. Another member of the Supreme Court because the other member was on vacation that day disauthorized it. They're now debating that, and at one point, they were saying well, he could be interviewed, but there needs to be a censorship of the interview before it can be published.

And the second one is that the member or the leader of this investigation, this corruption investigation team called Car Wash, has released information that was unnecessary to release this week to try to influence the elections by showing that the worker's party may have been involved in corruption.

INTERVIEWER: Not looking too good for the institutions, or the practice of Brazilian democracy. We might be sliding back into a military dictatorship.

JIM GREEN: On the other hand, Brazil has unleashed in the last 30 years, huge social movements. This last Saturday, for example, there over a million people mobilizing all throughout Brazil in every single state, led by feminists, saying we can't support Bolsonaro. He not him was the slogan of the campaign. And it really shows not only the energy and the sophistication of people, but a desire to do everything possible to defend democracy in Brazil.

INTERVIEWER: In that case then, we'll end on a hopeful note, and we'll get back together just after the first round of voting, and we'll discuss anew what's happening next. Thanks very much, Jim.

JIM GREEN: My pleasure.

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NARRATOR:

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