

My Edit 

The Finished Article 

Under the scorching Rio de Janeiro sun and only meters away from the famous Copacabana shoreline, even the most committed of ~~Sunday's demonstrators~~ seemed to give in to the indolence of the place, with an oftentimes surreal result: a hand-made placard calling for the president's impeachment in one hand, a refreshing caipirinha in the other. And even if this did not feel like your usual carefree Sunday stroll down Copa's signature Avenida Atlantica, it was ~~neither any~~ also nowhere close to the enraged and politically conscious crowd that had ~~shaken the country~~ just over two years ago.

Who were these people, then? And how did Brazil ~~reach the point of these~~ erupt in massive, anti-presidential demonstrations only two months after ~~p~~President ~~Dilma Rousseff~~ was sworn ~~back in~~ again? The answer ~~to the question~~ may go back to June 2013, when the largest demonstrations in over two decades started with small-scale protests by the ~~Free Pass Movement~~ against an ostensibly modest rise in public transportation fares. But ~~in the face of Brazil's minimum wage of roughly 720 reais (£150), an increase of 20 centavos (or 0.2 reais) per journeyride is not as modest as it seems in face of Brazil's minimum wage of approximately \$720 Reais (£150). T~~Indeed, the Real is worth so little in a city ~~that's~~ expensive even by ~~most~~ European standards that living ~~over~~ here is, as an online campaign ~~had~~ put it, ~~something of a "sur-real"~~ experience.

As the 2013 protests came and went, ~~and~~ those accused of leading them ~~severely were hunted down and prosecuted~~ repressed with an ~~intensity~~ shocking zeal ~~that shocked many~~, ~~Dilma Rousseff~~ would soon secure a narrow re-election and could ~~behave been~~ excused ~~to for~~ hoping the worst was over. But not quite: the ~~Petrobras oil scandal~~, ~~breaking~~ out ~~on~~ the eve of the election ~~and is already~~ day, the ~~magnitude by still increasing in its~~ has become the largest ~~of its kind~~ in the country's history. ~~So much so it now possesses~~ persists as a very real obstacle in Brazil's ~~strive~~ efforts to ~~steer away from the head off~~ recession path. ~~Even m~~More importantly, it has ~~further~~ deepened a crisis of legitimacy for ~~Brazil's domestic~~ elites and re-invoked the image of ~~the~~ political system ~~as that is both~~ massively corrupt and out-of-touch. With Brazil ~~standing right still~~ caught between the heavily ~~contested~~ protested 2014 World Cup and the ~~massively under-prepared~~ 2016 Olympics Games, the timing could hardly be more explosive.

This is why ~~dismissing the~~ Sunday's demonstrators as merely disgruntled right-wingers — ~~possibly~~ — Brazil's ~~answer to~~ version of ~~Cubans outraged Cubans in Miami~~, or the ~~Venezuela's inconvenienced affluent~~ right-wing — is ~~an~~ easy ~~but not at all wise thing to do~~ as it is shortsighted. Even if the ~~protesters~~ were largely called for, and backed by, the ~~Right~~, many of the participants did ~~not~~ strike me as ~~your average~~, die-hard, right-wing ideologues ~~more of the "down with this sort of thing" types~~ —. But ~~because~~ Sunday also marked the ~~30th anniversary of the~~ end of the military regime, ~~exactly thirty years ago~~ rule here, ~~and so~~ many of those calling for a military intervention have no memory of life under a military ~~rule~~ regime. ~~Myself being~~ I, ~~on the other hand~~, only a generation away from Greece's ~~own~~ dictatorial past, ~~was chilled to see the image of people~~ ~~carelessly smiling while~~ casually calling for the army to step ~~back~~ in ~~was~~ chilling.

~~And sure enough~~ Then again, many of the young Brazilians ~~that~~ who took to the streets yesterday ~~were~~ disgruntled right-wingers, pro-dictatorship advocates, ~~or~~ and possibly both. But to ~~stop~~ reading stereotype them ~~thereas such only defleets~~ inhibits a vital understanding of ~~athis~~ generation of ~~Brazilians — one that~~ who shares a global frustration, ~~in face of and experiences~~ the uncertainty and harshness of an ~~equally~~ global crisis. ~~Just like~~ As in the European South, Brazil is about to be ~~caught into the braid~~ strapped by the ~~unrelenting demands~~ of global capital, which, ~~as we've seen~~, reshapes livelihoods beyond recognition, ~~not at all unlike~~ just as neighbourhood gentrification ~~prices people out of their neighbourhood~~, here in Brazil, as like in Greece, I am seeing a ~~type~~ kind of nationwide ~~gentri~~ nation: that prices ~~out~~ people's out of our houses, our livelihoods, out of the very country ~~and seeps their lives apart~~ we call home.

How ~~may~~ can we protect ourselves against the effects of this global crisis? For one ~~thing, by not~~ we ~~must not~~ underestimate the very real threat of military or other ~~reactionary forces~~ stepping-in ~~returning to deal with~~ suppress social instability and discontent. But ~~furthermore than that, our true chance lies in~~ we ~~must recognize and~~ highlighting the common structure and source of our grievances. ~~We are~~ otherwise ~~letting down to luck~~ we've put down to chance the way in which ~~these common grievances~~ are expressed, ~~whether by a~~ — nonchalant ~~advocate of military intervention on the~~ Copacabana ~~military~~ advocate ~~to~~ a ~~restrained~~ militant supporter of ~~Syriza~~ voter Greece's new leftwing ~~Syriza~~ government.

~~A~~ — and I can think of nothing more dangerous ~~at this point in time~~ right now.

Brazil can't afford to ignore protesters when they're calling for the military

Antonis Vradis

Disgruntled rightwingers or disillusioned generation, we must recognise the importance of their grievances

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Under the scorching Rio de Janeiro sun and only metres from the famous Copacabana shoreline, even the most committed of Sunday's demonstrators seemed to give in to the indolence of the place, with an often surreal result: a handmade placard calling for the president's impeachment in one hand, a refreshing caipirinha in the other.

And even if this did not feel like your usual carefree Sunday stroll down Copa's Avenida Atlântica, it was nowhere close to the enraged and politically conscious crowd that shook the country just over two years ago.

So who are these new protesters? And how did Brazil erupt in massive anti-presidential demonstrations across the country, only two months after President Dilma Rousseff was sworn in again?

The answers go back to June 2013, when the largest protests in more than two decades started with small-scale action by the Free Pass Movement against an ostensibly modest rise in public transport fares. But in the face of Brazil's minimum monthly wage of about 720 reais (£150), an increase of 20 centavos (or 0.2 reais) a trip is not as modest as it seems. Indeed, the real is worth so little in a city that is expensive even by European standards that living here is, as an online campaign has put it, a "sur-real" experience.

As the 2013 protests came and went, and those accused of leading them were prosecuted with a shocking zeal, Rousseff secured a narrow re-election and could have been excused for hoping that the worst was over. But not quite.

The Petrobras oil scandal broke out on the eve of the election. In the year since, a continuing investigation into the Brazilian oil giant has unearthed solicited donations from Petrobras executives to politicians across the spectrum on a large scale - with even the ruling Workers' party (PT) treasurer, Joao Vaccari, charged with corruption. The fallout persists as a very real obstacle in Brazil's efforts to head off recession and, more importantly, it has deepened a crisis of legitimacy for Brazil's elites, reinvoking the image of a political system that is both massively corrupt and out of touch.

Standing as we are between the heavily protested 2014 World Cup and the under-prepared 2016 Olympic Games, the timing could hardly be more explosive.

This is why dismissing Sunday's demonstrators as merely disgruntled rightwingers, as some have, is as easy as it is shortsighted. Even if the protests were largely called and backed by the right, many of the participants didn't strike me as diehard rightwing ideologues. Sunday happened to mark the 30th anniversary of the end of military rule in Brazil, and perhaps most of the protesters who were calling for military intervention have had no first-hand experience of life under a military regime.

In fact, many of the young Brazilians who took to the streets ~~were~~ disgruntled rightwingers, pro-dictatorship advocates, and possibly both. But to stereotype them as such inhibits a vital understanding of this generation, one that has experienced the uncertainty and harshness of a truly global crisis. As in the European south, Brazil is about to be trapped by the unrelenting demands of global capital. And just as neighbourhood gentrification the world over prices people out of their homes, in Brazil "gentri-nation" is altering livelihoods, suffocating the political spaces where we act and restraining the social spaces where we live.

How can we protect ourselves against the dismal effects of this crisis? We must not underestimate the very real threat of military or other reactionary forces returning to suppress social discontent, nor should we overestimate the capacity of social-democratic domestic politicians, such as Rousseff's damaged PT, to bring about positive social change in what is a global crisis.

But more than that, we must recognise the common structure and source of our grievances. If not, we've put almost down to chance how these grievances are expressed - and the rejection of politics as a whole, rather than just politicians, may very well cause the chilling military-friendly demands of the sort expressed in Brazil on Sunday.

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