Brazilian Democratic Infrastructure

A Governance Diagnostic Ahead of the 2026 General Elections



The National Congress on the Esplanada dos Ministérios, Brasília — the seat of the constitutional order this report assesses.

This report applies a structured governance diagnostic framework to assess the condition of Brazilian democratic institutions ahead of the October 4, 2026 general elections. It does not predict electoral outcomes. It identifies where the system is functioning, where it is under constraint, and where the recovery from the 2023 coup attempt is holding — and what could reverse it.

THE CLASSIFICATION

Democracy Under Active Institutional Repair

CRITICAL THRESHOLDS BREACHED	GOVERNANCE STRESS	TRAJECTORY	RESILIENCE READ
1 of 4	ELEVATED	RECOVERING	MODERATE Consolidating Class

Brazil is not a democracy under threat of collapse. It is a democracy that survived an acute insurrectionary challenge and is now in a recovery phase whose consolidation is uncertain. That framing distinction matters: the questions this framework asks of Brazil are different from the questions it asks of a deteriorating democracy.

> **The central question here is not whether the system is failing. It is whether the repair will hold.**

What This Framework Does

The Country-Organism Governance Atlas evaluates democratic governance across twelve dimensions using established international indicators: Freedom House, V-Dem, the World Justice Project, Transparency International, Reporters Without Borders, the World Bank, and supplementary primary sources.

It does not produce a ranking. It produces a diagnostic: condition, emerging threat, and resilience under pressure — three reads, kept analytically distinct, because they have different evidential bases and different implications for action.

THE CRITICAL THRESHOLD

One floor of four is breached

Four thresholds define the outer boundary conditions of democratic institutional function. A breach in any one blocks a functioning-democracy classification regardless of performance in other dimensions. Three of four are clear. One is breached.

Anti-Corruption Effectiveness FLOOR BREACHED

35/100 · CPI 2025 · 107th of 182 countries

Brazil scored 35 points on the Corruption Perceptions Index in 2025 — its second-worst score ever, one point above the 2024 record low. The breach reflects chronic structural corruption that predates every administration assessed: recent contributing factors include Operations Sem Desconto, Carbono Oculto, and Compliance Zero, and the sharp expansion of parliamentary budget amendments (*emendas parlamentares*) as an opaque patronage mechanism.

This threshold breach is real and serious. It is not the story of 2026.

A lesson from this framework's retrospective work is that the anti-corruption threshold fires on structural chronic conditions, not on the acute democratic threat. Brazil's corruption problem has persisted through Lula's first two terms, through the Bolsonaro period, and into his third term. The acute governance question for October 2026 is answered by different dimensions entirely — specifically by the institutional constraints, electoral management, and emergency governance architecture, all of which are functioning and have been tested.

THE DIAGNOSTIC MATRIX

The Twelve Dimensions

Two dimensions are functioning. Nine are constrained. One is impaired. The trajectory is improving across seven of twelve — a recovery profile, not a deterioration profile. That distinction is the entire analytical story.

2	9	1	7
FUNCTIONING	CONSTRAINED	IMPAIRED	IMPROVING OF 12

DIMENSION	CONDITION	TRAJECTORY
Constitutional Integrity	CONSTRAINED	↗ Stabilizing
Information Environment	FUNCTIONING	↑ Improving
Institutional Signal Accuracy	CONSTRAINED	↗ Stabilizing
Institutional Constraint Architecture	CONSTRAINED	↑ Improving
Public Service Delivery Capacity	CONSTRAINED	↑ Improving
Anti-Corruption Effectiveness	IMPAIRED	↓ **Deteriorating**
Minority and Civil Society Protection	CONSTRAINED	↑ Improving
Emergency Governance Architecture	FUNCTIONING	→ Stable
Democratic Feedback Quality	CONSTRAINED	↑ Improving
Institutional Shock Capacity	CONSTRAINED	↓ **Deteriorating**
Accountability and Reform Capacity	CONSTRAINED	↑ Improving
Long-Run Governance Sustainability	CONSTRAINED	↑ Improving

THE FOUR NARRATIVES THAT MATTER MOST

Where the acute question is answered

01 Institutional Constraint Architecture

On September 11, 2025, Brazil's Federal Supreme Court convicted former President Jair Bolsonaro and seven high-ranking allies for attempting a coup following his 2022 electoral defeat. The conviction covered plans to declare a state of emergency, install a militarized electoral body, hold new elections, and — according to the indictment — assassinate President Lula, Vice-President Alckmin, and Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes.

The conviction was maintained under direct external pressure from the United States government, which imposed 50% tariffs on Brazil, revoked visas for STF justices, and extended Global Magnitsky sanctions to Justice Moraes's wife before and after the verdict. The STF did not change its position.

A coalition of US civil society organizations formally rejected the US government's interference, stating that Bolsonaro's conviction should be recognized as a sign of democratic strength rather than mischaracterized as weakness. The statement was correct. This is the strongest active checkpoint resilience signal in any country this framework has assessed.



The Esplanada dos Ministérios — Brazil's federal institutions, the architecture whose constraints held under the coup attempt.

02 Emergency Governance Architecture

Brazil's 1988 Constitution requires congressional approval for both the State of Defense and the State of Siege. Emergency powers cannot persist without legislative oversight — a structurally superior architecture to systems where declarations persist indefinitely without automatic review.

The coup plot itself targeted this mechanism. The plotters needed sufficient institutional support to invoke a state of siege, and they could not obtain it. The mechanism held under the most acute test any democratic emergency architecture has faced in recent Latin American history.

> **2026 DEPLOYMENT CHAIN**
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> Military deployment in seven states operates under a strictly defined three-step chain: **TRE request → TSE approval → Presidential decree**. No deployment can occur without completing this sequence. Soldiers may only enter a polling station if the presiding poll worker formally requests their presence.

03 Democratic Feedback Quality

Trust in political parties stands at 20%, structurally low and sitting at the Warning/Failure boundary. Trust in the courts is 45%; the civil service, 41%. These are not strong numbers.

20%	45%	41%
Trust in political parties	Trust in the courts	Trust in civil service

What matters for the October 2026 context is the direction: the OECD's 2026 survey records an increase in trust in the federal government between 2022 and 2025 — the opposite of the US case this framework assessed in its July report. The TSE, Brazil's Superior Electoral Court, enacted a comprehensive AI electoral regulation framework updated in March 2026, banning deceptive deepfakes, requiring content labeling, and establishing platform liability for non-compliance. It formally barred Bolsonaro from office. It ruled Pablo Marçal ineligible until 2032. It is one of the world's most assertive and independent electoral management bodies.

04 Anti-Corruption Effectiveness

CPI 35/100 in 2025 is the second-worst score in Brazil's history. The *emendas parlamentares* mechanism simultaneously drives the fiscal deficit and the deterioration in corruption perceptions — it functions as an opaque patronage system through which the Centrão coalition extracts resources in exchange for legislative support. This is a known structural feature of Brazilian politics that has operated across administrations. The STF's prosecution of January 8 participants represents a meaningful exercise of accountability at the apex level. It does not resolve the structural trajectory.

THE GOVERNANCE STRESS PROFILE

Two Amber, two Green, no critical signals

This is the lowest Governance Stress Profile reading of any case this framework has assessed — significantly below the US case (three critical signals) and below Brazil's own 2021 baseline, when an active insurrectionary threat was present.

Polarization velocity — **ELEVATED · AMBER**

Lula versus Bolsonarismo remains the defining political axis. The imprisoned Bolsonaro's endorsement of son Flávio has consolidated right-wing opposition behind a single candidacy; polls show a statistical tie. The critical distinction from 2021–2022: polarization operates through electoral channels, not insurrectionary mobilization.

Electoral legitimacy — **ELEVATED · AMBER**

The TSE's AI regulation, Bolsonaro's disqualification, and the Marçal ineligibility ruling all strengthen the 2026 environment relative to 2022. The residual risk is specific: if the amnesty bill passes post-election, it could retroactively delegitimize the accountability process that underpins 2026 electoral credibility.

Executive boundary testing — **CONTAINED · GREEN**

Lula governs through the Centrão coalition via constitutional channels. No executive orders targeting the judiciary; no impeachment threats against judges. The STF is an institutional ally of the current government, not its adversary. Not a current stress vector.

Civil society absorption — **CONTAINED · GREEN**

Civil society space has materially reopened since the 2022 transition. Media freedom is restored; environmental, LGBTQ+, and indigenous rights organizations operate actively. Legislative threats — Bills 1,659/2024 and 3,580/2024 — are being contested and have not passed.

Overall Governance Stress Level — **ELEVATED**

THE DIAGNOSIS

Whether the repair consolidates or is reversed



The Amazon — deforestation has fallen and IBAMA enforcement capacity has been restored under the current administration.

Brazil enters its 2026 general elections having done something that few democracies achieve, and none in this framework's validation battery had yet demonstrated: it convicted a former president of attempting a coup, withstood external pressure from the United States government to reverse that conviction, and proceeded toward the next electoral cycle with its constitutional architecture intact.

The governance picture that emerges is the structural inverse of the United States case assessed in this framework's July 2026 report. Where the US shows nine of twelve dimensions deteriorating simultaneously, Brazil shows nine of twelve with an improving trajectory. Where the US Governance Stress Profile registers three critical signals, Brazil registers none. Where the US judiciary faces active executive pressure, Brazil's judiciary is the institutional anchor of the entire democratic order.

Two governance dimensions are genuinely functioning right now: press freedom, which has recovered materially from the Bolsonaro era, and emergency governance architecture, which was tested directly by the coup attempt and held precisely because it required congressional approval that the plotters could not obtain.

The primary governance question for October 2026 is therefore not whether Brazilian democracy is functioning — it demonstrably is — but whether the accountability process that defines its current recovery will consolidate or be reversed. The amnesty bill pending in Congress is the single most consequential variable in this assessment.

If the post-election configuration produces a congressional majority capable of passing it, Bolsonaro's allies could be pardoned, the accountability precedent reversed, and the democratic recovery stalled — without a single institutional checkpoint failing. The system would not be captured. However, the deterrent effect of accountability — the most important structural signal Brazil sent to future would-be authoritarians in the region — would be erased.

> **The October 4 election is not merely an election. In governance diagnostic terms, it is a referendum on whether the institutional repair Brazil has undertaken since January 2023 will be confirmed or reversed.**

Emerging Threats

All five control concentration patterns — constitutional, judicial, decree-based, electoral, and administrative — are assessed as not active in the current period. The STF is functioning and independent. The TSE is assertive and independent. Lula governs through the legislature, not decree. No pattern of institutional capture is present.

The insurrectionary threat that defined Brazil's 2021–2022 period was resolved by the failure of the January 8 attack and the subsequent accountability process. That pattern is not active in the current scoring period. The primary residual risk is the amnesty bill reversing that accountability post-election — a political risk, not a structural institutional one.

THE RESILIENCE READ

Moderate — Consolidating Class

WHAT IS FUNCTIONING AND TESTED

- **Judicial independence.** The STF convicted a former president, withstood US government pressure, and continues to function as the system's primary institutional anchor.
- **Electoral management.** The TSE is structurally independent, technologically sophisticated, and has enforced electoral law against powerful actors including Bolsonaro and Marçal.
- **Emergency powers architecture.** Constitutional congressional oversight held under direct test by the coup plotters. 2026 military deployment is under strict TSE civilian oversight.
- **Civil society.** Space has reopened materially; organizations are active and successfully resisting the most dangerous legislative threats so far.
- **Amazon governance.** Deforestation has significantly reduced under the current administration; IBAMA enforcement capacity has been restored.

WHAT IS UNDER PRESSURE

- **The amnesty bill.** A single legislative act capable of reversing the accountability process without capturing any institution. This is the framework's primary downgrade risk for Brazil.
- **Fiscal trajectory.** Gross debt at 80.1% of GDP and a nominal deficit of 9.41% of GDP in an election year, with the IMF zero-deficit commitment effectively abandoned, constrains the government's ability to fund the social programs that underpin political stability.

REVERSIBILITY WINDOW

The window for recovery consolidation is open. Whether it stays open depends primarily on the outcome of the October election and the congressional configuration it produces. The structural preconditions for both consolidation and reversal are simultaneously present. This framework does not predict which path Brazil takes — it identifies that the choice will be made in the next four months.

RECLASSIFICATION CONDITIONS

What would move the classification

▲ Upgrade

Toward Stable Advanced Democracy

- Amnesty bill fails in the post-election Congress, confirming the accountability precedent is politically durable.
- CPI improves above 40 across two consecutive annual assessments, resolving the threshold breach.
- Trust in political parties returns above 30% across two consecutive surveys.
- *Emendas parlamentares* reformed with transparency and independent oversight requirements.

▼ Downgrade

Toward Democracy Under Structural Contestation

- Amnesty bill passage — reversing accountability for January 8 participants and creating structural impunity for future insurrectionary acts.
- Freedom House score falling below 70.
- STF composition shifting to reliably produce outcomes correlated with executive political preferences.
- TSE independence compromised through appointment or legislative restructuring.

Methodology Note

This report applies the Country-Organism Governance Atlas, a structured governance framework evaluating twelve dimensions of democratic function using established international indicators. All classifications are traceable to named indicators, documented sources, and explicit thresholds.

Stage 0 disclosure: This framework has been calibrated across ten reference cases and produces internally consistent classifications. It has not yet been formally tested against out-of-sample cases by independent analysts, validated against historical governance trajectories, or subjected to prospective tracking. The classifications in this report are structured analytical opinions, not validated predictive assessments. No claim is made regarding accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, or predictive value. This report supplements but does not replace country-specific expert analysis, legal due diligence, or investment-grade political risk assessment.

Note: the Brazil 2021 retrospective validation case assessed the Bolsonaro period. The current report applies the same instrument to a materially different political period and should not be read as an update to that case.

Country-Organism Governance Atlas · World Academy / COGA Initiative · July 2026

US Diagnostic Report also available at nevogoor.substack.com