Funding the Future

We have a better world to build

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Elections, and election results, dominate this morning's news.

President Lula has won in Brazil, against expectations. The result is tight, with Lula winning just over 51% and Bolsonaro just under 49%. It also looks very likely that Bolsonaro Junior will, like his father before him, not accept the result.

It would seem that democracy is something that the far right only takes seriously when they win, and treat as otherwise expendable.

I clearly do not know what will happen, but the risk of Bolsonaro Junior following in his father's footsteps by trying to take power despite losing the election seems high, especially as right-wing influence in the country's parliament grows.

Lula will face difficulties in governing, come what may.

What, however, is key is that people turned out to prevent a right-wing victory in this election, and that was critical and part of a trend. We have seen that here in the UK, with people actively voting to block Reform. The same trend also overturned Viktor Orbán in Hungary. Now it has given President Lula his fourth term in office at the age of 80.

The trend was also seen in Europe yesterday. Perhaps even more significant than Lula's win in Brazil was the win by the Student Movement in Serbia, whose slate of candidates scored a decisive victory in an election there yesterday, ousting Aleksandar Vučić after 12 years in office. In the process, they ended his far-right regime, which many of those elected to parliament yesterday said was associated with corruption.

There is, however, more to this victory in Serbia than a simple left/right fight. The significance here is that this was a student movement that has overturned an established far-right government.

Student protests, which started when a recently built railway station canopy collapsed late in 2024, killing 16 people, with a very strong suggestion being made that

corruption had played a part in the building's failure, led to the development of a political platform with the deliberate intention of creating hope for younger people in this country, with the goal of liberation from the far-right politics that was clearly oppressing a great many of those within it.

Whether the new coalition of interests that has taken power can survive the realities of governing remains to be seen. The point at this moment is that young people encouraged a very high turnout in this election to deliver an outcome that has shocked the political establishment of Serbia and has brought in a new generation of politicians who will face demands from the people who elected them to govern in the interests of the people of the country, and not of a tiny minority, which is the characteristic of far-right rule.

This victory also has another welcome dimension. Vučić has conceded defeat, as Viktor Orbán did in Hungary six months ago. It seems that, in Europe, the far right are at least willing to concede defeat when it happens.

So what is there to learn? I think there are three things.

Firstly, people who have experienced far-right government really do not want to suffer it again. The reality of it is toxic.

Secondly, people can get rid of far-right governments. Once in office, it is not inevitable that they embed themselves in perpetuity. Hope can be retained.

Thirdly, if change is to happen, it will be angry, empowered young people, who are those most failed by neoliberalism, who will be at its epicentre. They have reached the point where they have nothing to lose by ousting the far right and everything to gain, because the hope of the life they thought they might have has, in any case, been destroyed.

My only concern is, however, simply stated. Winning is one thing. Knowing what to do in place of neo-liberalism is something else. This week I will finish the text of my first book on that theme. I am already sketching out the second. We have a better world to build. There is a politics of care to deliver.