

Brazilian Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores or PT)

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Description The Brazilian Workers' Party (PT), led by Luiz Inácio (Lula) da Silva in his fourth attempt at the presidency, finally assumed power in 2002. The victory of the PT has been seen as the first decisive rejection of the so-called Washington Consensus through a democratic election, and has been viewed by many as a hopeful sign of new political possibilities in the wake of neo-liberal globalization.

The PT is an unapologetically left-wing party with roots in the radical union movement of Brazil. As shown in the first major policy initiative of the Lula government — the Zero Hunger program — the party is committed to wide-scale reform and amelioration of the social and economic inequities that have long hampered Brazil's development. During the election campaign, the prospects of a PT victory in the world's tenth-largest economy led many Western economists, politicians and business leaders (including George Soros) to sound warnings about the dire economic consequences that would come with the party's election, especially given Brazil's heavy foreign-debt burden. This scenario has failed to emerge largely due to the Lula government's pragmatic acceptance of monetary austerity measures, a move that has led to significant criticism and dissent from within the PT. Even within its current fiscal limits, the PT government has continued to have the support of the Brazilian public, with Lula emerging as the new leader of the politics of the developing world.