
Petrobras Again Becomes Focus of Brazilian Presidential Debate

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Different from the previous two televised debates, the one organized by the Catholic TV Aparecida in the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida lacked direct confrontation among the candidates, this time subjected by the rules of the discussion forum with draws for questions and answers.

Despite the format, which avoided direct face-to-face confrontation, President Dilma Rousseff, seeking re-election, and the head of the opposition Social Democracy Party, Aécio Neves, fired accusations at each other.

“Throughout my life I’ve had zero tolerance for corruption and all the corruption crimes were discovered by a government organization, which is the federal police,” Rousseff said.

The scandal refers to the revelations by the ex-director of the state-run organization, Paulo Roberto Costa, who is involved in petty corruption cases and has agreed to collaborate with the justice system in order to reduce his sentence and has accused the politicians for benefiting from the irregularities of the largest company in the country.

Environmentalist Marina Silva, considered to be favorite to compete against Rousseff in a second round of voting, questioned Rousseff and Neves on presenting a government programme.

Silva, from the Brazilian Socialist Party, argued that land reform was “essential to promote

social equality” and insisted on the need to improve basic sanitation, supported the investment equivalent to 10 percent of the gross health revenue and 10 percent of GDP for education.

However, she avoided going into depth about her defense of an independent central bank, according to her proposal and a topic which was dealt with by several other candidates, including Rousseff.

“Some candidates support the independence of the central bank, with the president and directors having a fixed mandate. I think that the central bank has an operational autonomy, but the independence as a new power is a mistake” and even “unconstitutional,” Rousseff said.

She repeatedly cited numbers favoring her management, such as “leaving the hunger map”, according to Tuesday’s report by the United Nations and 50 million people who had more access to the health care with the “More Doctors” program which took physicians, many of them foreigners, to remote areas.

She defended herself from the attacks of the Green Party candidate, Eduardo Jorge, on being criticized for maintaining an energy matrix with hydro-electronics and fossil sources, such as coal and nuclear fuel, and acknowledged the need for more investments in wind and solar energy sector and said that their production “is expensive.”

Controversial issues such as legalization of marijuana, abortion and homosexual marriage were dodged by the main candidates and addressed more by minor aspirants.

As everyone agreed with the political reform proposed by the episcopacy and whose document was given in the debate to the eight out of 11 candidates who will compete for the presidency on October 5 with almost certain second round on 26 that month.

The “punch” in the debate was placed by the leftist Luciana Genro, candidate of the Socialism and Freedom Party, while the conservatives Levy Fidelix, from the Brazilian Labour Renewal Party and Jose Maria Eymael, of the Christian Social Democratic Party, defended the positions of the church.
