

married a Chinese woman 15 years ago. 'With the way the current visa system is structured, they let you know that this will never be your home.'

But despite these tough conditions, Yugo is not ready to give up on the Chinese dream.

'While Europe is rejecting migrants, China is doing a lot to help us,' he says.

CARLOTTA DOTTO

INTRODUCING... JAIR BOLSONARO



The election to power of the Far-Right 63-year-old former army officer has shocked those who thought that Brazil had buried the bad old days of military dictatorship.

Observers say that a tsunami of memes, hashtags and fake news stories flooded social media (over 50 per cent of Brazilians use WhatsApp) preceding the poll. The two most notorious examples circulating widely among Bolsonaro supporters were the false claim that the opposition Workers' Party (PST) were distributing 'gay kits' in schools and that the election machines were rigged during the first round of voting. In the end Bolsonaro's margin of victory narrowed to 10 per cent over the PST candidate Fernando Haddad – a clear victory but not the predicted landslide.

Bolsonaro and his followers believe that Brazilian society

is a battleground: conservative Christians waging war against a wide variety of miscreants and social misfits including indigenous and black people, environmentalists, feminists, artists and journalists. Already the first warning shots are ringing out – between rounds of the election some 60 attacks on journalists were reported and police raided university campuses across the country (falsely) claiming illegal political activity.

Bolsonaro made crime and corruption the main talking points in his attacks on the, often inept, PST. If toxic words mean a green light for his supporters, as with Trump, then Brazil's world-leading murder rate is likely to rise.

But he won't have it all his own way. The institutional structures of Brazil – an independent judiciary and a right-leaning assembly but with the PST still the largest party – will slow him down. The Left won 45 per cent of the vote nationally and are particularly strong in the northeast; the landless MST movement is deeply embedded in rural areas and will not be easy to dislodge. Bolsonaro's threat to tear open the Amazon rainforest will meet with rigorous international – and indigenous – opposition. Dark days ahead, but history has many twists and turns.

RICHARD SWIFT

ARMENIA FREE AND FAIR POLL

'Armenia has a revolutionary majority inside parliament,' declared Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan as he swept to a landslide victory in December's snap elections.

The one-time political prisoner saw his My Step Alliance receive more than 70 per cent of the vote in what was widely considered to be

Armenia's first free and fair elections.

Long-term rulers the Republican Party were dramatically wiped out after failing to reach the five-per-cent threshold required to enter parliament.

Pashinyan, 43, came to prominence when he spearheaded the country's 'Velvet Revolution' last May. Weeks of demonstrations, strikes and roadblocks broke out after the Republican leader Serzh Sargsyan was elected by parliament as prime minister after serving 10 years as president. The protests forced his resignation and catapulted Pashinyan to power as acting PM.

Political scientist Dr Jenny Paturyan welcomed the departure of the Republicans as a parliamentary force but raised fears that Pashinyan's large mandate could lead to 'creeping authoritarianism'.

'That would completely undermine the effort of the Velvet Revolution and result in another 30 years of disappointment,' she said.

With a parliamentary majority, Pashinyan will now be under pressure to make good on promises of rooting out corruption and sparking an economic revolution.

There may also be closer ties with the EU, political analyst Dr Nerses Kopalyan says, though he expects these to be bilateral agreements with specific EU countries to appease Russian concerns.

Minority groups in Armenia will be watching closely. Despite contributing to the revolution, the LGBTIQ community continues to face discrimination and cancelled a key November conference in the Armenian capital Yerevan over fears of attacks.

Pashinyan's ability to resolve such social issues and deliver on his revolutionary promises will now be put to the test.

JOE NERSSESSIAN

SERIOUSLY?



Whistle while you work

An intriguing story was recently shared by Amazon News, a Twitter account that collates propaganda – we mean, 'positive news' – about the tech giant:

'Amazon Flex allowed this woman to lose 100 lbs in 18 months by creating a workout while delivering packages.'

It referred to Jackie Crow from Kansas City, who works for Amazon Flex: a delivery service run by 'independent contractors'. Her ingenuity? Transforming the deliveries into mini workouts to help lose weight and deal with her rheumatoid arthritis.

The story is a masterclass in how to rebrand exploitation: no guaranteed hours, healthcare benefits or union rights? Who cares, as long as you work up a sweat!

On that topic, we hear that a great benefit of sweatshops is that they improve dexterity. Scavenging for scraps in a slum? It's the perfect cardiovascular workout.

Like platform companies Uber and Deliveroo, Amazon's labour regime is one where precarity is renamed freedom. Meanwhile, the low wages of Amazon warehouse workers mean that some have been reported to sleep in tents, and CEO Jeff Bezos is the richest man in modern history.