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Brasilien über alles?

The Brazilian Populist far-right and Bolsonaro's Rise to the Presidency:
"Trump of the tropics", "Brazilian Hitler", or simply Bolsonaro?

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1. Introduction:

The aim of this paper, to be presented at the 24th ASN Annual World Convention, is to explain the fundamental issues regarding the meteoric political rise of Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro, from the lowest echelons of the Brazilian Parliament, to prominence as the main catalyst of the diffuse anti-left wing sentiment spread throughout Brazilian society after four consecutive center-left wing governments led by PT (Worker's Party). Mr. Bolsonaro, aged 64, is a former army Captain who has spent nearly three decades in Congress, ever since he assumed his first term as Rio de Janeiro's State representative to the National Congress, in 1991, and has been repeatedly reelected, managing to keep his post until 2018.

We intend to analyze the ideological foundations of Jair Bolsonaro's political program of government to better understand the principles on which his populist/far-right movement is based and to what extent it can be compared to other right-wing populisms. Our primary sources on this analysis are his vague 81-slides Power-Point government plan, his previous and ongoing speeches and interviews. The analysis focuses primarily on his ultra-conservative, nationalist, religious and populist ideological approach and his first politically relevant decisions on the central public administration level during his first three months in office.

Jair Bolsonaro was elected on October 28, 2018 and his presidential term started January 1, 2019. In spite of his victory by a significant margin of 55,13% against 43,87 % of his opponent, Worker's party Fernando Haddad, his candidacy was deemed to be an underdog in the Presidential Race and the outcome of the election was nothing less than astonishing. His election marked a major breakthrough in the Brazilian political landscape, disrupting the de facto two-party presidential competition between the center-right Party of the Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB) and the center-left Worker's Party (PT). Against Mr. Bolsonaro's small So-

cial Liberal Party (PSL), it was believed that either Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB) or Fernando Haddad (PT), in spite of their growing rejection, should have won walking away.

We will analyze Bolsonaro's populism, as well as his controversial stances on multiculturalism, sexuality, racism, feminism, migration and his nostalgia for the nationalist, right-wing Military Junta which ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985. Not by chance did he choose as his campaign motto “Brazil above everything, God above everyone”. Our paper is original in a sense that it examines the issue of nationalism and far-right populism in South America, a continent that is largely overlooked when it comes to nationalism studies.

2. Nationalism Studies and the overlooked issue of nationalism in Brazil:

Nationalism, encompassing the concepts of nations, ethnic groups and nationalist movements is quite complex, variegated and subject to antithetical views among its body of scholars, drawing from their disparate theoretical and methodological perspectives on what is a nation and when does it historically emerge. The debate is nuanced and the mere attempt to clearly outline the different schools of theories on nationalism is a major challenge. There is dissonance among the main authors about the very definitions of nation, ethnicity, nationalism, and other forms of collective identity such as religious or even civilizational identities. Nonetheless, its centrality to the subjects of history and political science is universally accepted, whether in action or in the realm of study.

In spite of the large and contradictory literature in the field, some authors have tried to tackle the main points of convergence and divergence in nationalism studies. A.D. Smith, for instance, while advocating for his own theory, the *ethnosymbolism*, conceived a roadmap of the field. According to him, regarding the context of a major body of literature on nations and nationalism, there are two Key Questions outlining opposing streams of thought. The first

question is “why is the nation?”, while the second question is “when is the nation?” (Smith, 2002). On one hand, answers to the first question bring about a debate on primordialism versus instrumentalism, whereas answers to the second question give rise to a debate between perennialist and modernist perspectives. Modernists such as Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner argue that nations are a recent phenomenon derived exclusively from modernity, rejecting the perennialist notion that nations have existed ever since Antiquity. Modernists often have contending views about what were the main "engines" in the emergence of nations and nationalism. For instance, Marxists, like Hobsbawm, tend to associate nationalism with capitalism, especially in the early stages of capitalism (Hobsbawm, 2012). According to Hobsbawm, the unification of European national markets, following the decline of feudalism, has provided a strong impetus for the spread nationalist ideologies and the thought of the nation as an unbreakable whole.

On the other hand, reactions to the second aforementioned question bring forth a debate between instrumentalists and primordialists, concerning how natural or artificial is the character of the nation. For the instrumentalists, the nation is a socially constructed phenomenon, and thus, not a given. As Conversi defines, “Instrumentalism conceives ethnicity as a dependent variable, externally controlled according to its strategic utility for achieving more secular goods (formally in the name of the group, in fact solely to the elites’ advantage)” (Conversi, 2007,16). A thorough theoretical debate on Nationalism far exceeds the scope of this article. However, it is important that we bring up the reflection on what are the main stakes in this theoretical debate. The different theories to an understanding of nationalism, because they seek to explain how nationalism came to such a prominent role in contemporary politics. The body of theoretical literature on nationalism is significant to help us locate nationalism in time and place. However, these theories are still not sufficient to explain particular cases of natio-

nalism, like the Brazilian one, which is not *a priori* based on ethnicity. We will discuss, in the next pages, some of the particularities of Brazilian nationalism and why it is relevant to the scholarly debate.

3. Historical background of nationalism in Brazil

In the beginning, it is worth explaining that nationalism is not a new phenomenon or political trend in Brazil, and its origins date back even to the colonial period. E. Bradford Burns, American professor of history at the University of California, awarded by the Brazilian government with the Order of Rio-Branco, divided Brazilian nationalism into three phases: colonial nativism, nineteenth-century defensive and twentieth-century offensive nationalism. In this part of our article, we intend to briefly explain the phenomenon of Brazilian nationalism since it integrated the political program from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries onward (Burns, 1968, 8-11). For the Brazilian sociologist Hélio Jaguaribe all previous forms of nationalism seeking to break with colonial relations between the Brazilian periphery and the Portuguese metropolis were only of a supra-structural nature. He pointed out that what changed, were only the political system, forms of government and institutions while the socio-economic relations based on exploitation, plantations and export economy remained unaffected (Jaguaribe, 1958, 15-21). Such an elite, unwilling for social changes, modernization of the economy and seeking to keep the power at all costs, the Brazilian sociologist Jessé Souza called “The Elite of the Backwardness” - “A Elite do Atraso” (Souza 2017).

At the beginning on the 20th century, the post-slavery and post-colonial young Brazilian republic needed to face a complex socio-economic situation, therefore the elite of this country opted for the political orientation called “nacionalismo integrador” - integrating nationalism. Its aim was to transform a historically constructed nationality into a nationality in

political terms. It is worth noting that this process had begun in Europe as early as the 18th century and only reached Brazil two hundred years later. Curiously, that time, in the 20th century, the integrating nationalism in Europe was being transformed into the imperialist nationalism. Nevertheless, one should not have any illusions that the Brazilian nationalism was only one of the forms of the public control over emerging new social groups, including workers, or over former slaves who, after the announcement of abolition in 1888, were abandoned to their own fate (Freitas, Luna, 2006, 328-358).¹

In the first half of the 20th century, nationalism became a leading doctrine in Brazil, initially on the political and socio-cultural levels, but from the thirties onward also on the economic one. The main slogans referred to the intensification of production in the internal market, the concentration of national capital, the creation of enterprises and the state monopoly in the oil and mining sector, as exemplified by Petrobras. In the political sphere, social justice, democracy, political neutrality and autonomy towards the United States and other European powers were demanded (Jaguaribe, Op.cit, 30-32).

The cultural nationalism aimed at transforming Brazilian society into one integrated and homogenous nation. The first step was to pay more attention to the inhabitants of rural areas from the remote political and administrative centers. This was reflected in such concepts as *regionalismo*, *sertanismo*, *ruralismo* and *caipirismo*, which successfully incorporated the rural element into an elitist vision of the society. This romantic dimension of nationalism was also noticeable in the literature of the authors such as Graciliano Ramos (*Vidas Secas* - 1938), José Lins de Rego (*Fogo Morto* - 1943) and Jorge Amado (*Terras do Sem-Fim* - 1943). Ac-

¹ Fernandes, Florestan. (1965). *A Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes* ["The integration of Blacks into a class society"], in which he stated that Brazilian State had effectively abandoned the African-Brazilians to their own fate, which led to the extreme social marginalization and economic poverty of the former slaves, so that they were not ready to face the new hierarchy established by the white elite.

According to José Aderaldo Castello, understanding of one's own country, divided into diverse natural regions over which different cultures overlapped, could lead to an interregional approach and, consequently, to the nationwide method of making politics (Castello, 1997, 109-113). "Integrating nationalism" aimed at creating new Brazilian citizenship in a utopian vision of the integrated and homogeneous society. Such Brazilian "tabula rasa" was reflected by Macunaíma, the character created by Mario de Andrade. Dorine Daisy Pedreira de Cerqueira saw in this caricature protagonist a humorous creation of the Brazilian individual who was deprived of foreign influence and a collective inferiority complex called in Brazil "Mongrel complex" (complexo vira lata) (Rodrigues 1993, 51-52). Mario de Andrade was also the propagator of the concept of "brasilidade", the collection of particular qualities for the Brazilian nation (Cerqueira, 1997, 127-132).

Another widespread nationalist-integralist theory was the utopian concept of "lusotropicalism" propagated by Gilberto Freyre, the author of "Casa Grande & Senzala" (1933) pointing to factors such as cultural and biological miscegenation being the pillar of so-called „racial democracy". This theory, however, only existed in theory (Emery, 1997), 187-191). Another attempt to build the Brazilian national identity was reflected in the avant-garde, elite artistic movement from the 1920s, culminating in the *Semana de Arte Moderna*. Artists such as Anita Malfatti, Lasar Segall, Emilio di Cavalcanti, Candido Portinari, Tarsila do Amaral were emphasizing a new national identity by stressing the African, Indigenous and *sertanejo* features as a key elements of the Brazilian national character (Bastazin, Pinheiro, 1992, 8-9).

The beginnings of Brazilian nationalism as part of the political and economic governmental plan fell on the end of the First World War and gained momentum after the Great Depression in 1929. A year later, the nationalism became the official doctrine of the Getúlio Vargas government known later as "Estado Novo", ideologically similar to fascist Italy, Nazi

Germany or salazarist Portugal . Unlike Hitler and his theory of the superiority of the "Aryan race" that was standing above other human races, the authoritarian government of Getúlio set himself the task of creating a new Brazilian race. He tried to convince the society that the miscegenation made the post-colonial Brazilian society different from other American countries. Getúlio Vargas was aware that the descendants of Africans or Indians were the majority in Brazil, while the white population - a minority. The miscegenation, however, was just a way to make it impossible for the non-white population to take power over the white Brazilians.

Nevertheless, the authoritarian government of Getúlio undertook many activities aimed at integrating the society by including certain ethnic elements into his vision of the national culture of Brazil. One of such actions was to recognize the Afro-Brazilian customs and traditions like samba and capoeira as the national heritage. The "ideological" and "symbolic" occupation of the countryside areas and the promotion of internal migration from the villages to the industrialized cities, aimed at integrating and mixing the countryside population with the urban one (Fausto, 2006, 128-135). By that time, Brazilian nationalism began to take its own individual direction. Theoretically, it was closer to the concept of "social nationalism", according to which, "stresses the shared sense of national identity, community, and culture" (Kellas (1991, 51-54) with the exceptions that the outsiders were not welcome even if adopted the national characteristics. For Vargas' government, the Japanese and the Jewish immigration, for instance, were considered a threat to Brazilian national identity. Curiously, in such a multicultural country as was (and still is) Brazil, the government denied the cultural pluralism and deprived certain ethnic and racial groups of their rights in order to avoid a power-sharing with them.

E. Bradford Burns noticed the transition of Getúlio's government from the cultural and political nationalism to the economic nationalism. It is worth noting that both, Getúlio Vargas and later military junta (1964-1985) drew inspiration from the ideas of Alberto Tôrres (1865-1917), who was in favor of strengthening the federal government in order to take control over sources, wealth, industry and commerce. Following those concepts made Brazil become one of the most industrialized countries in Latin America until the middle of the 20th century (Burns, *Op.cit.*, 77-81).

Nationalism in Brazil gained a more left-leaning character from 1956-1964 during the presidencies of Juscelino Kubitschek, Jânio Quadros and João Goulart, and became the leading doctrine of the leftist-wing political elite. Juscelino Kubitschek himself announced “50 years' progress in 5 years”, and gave rise to the concepts of “developmental nationalism”. Brazil aspired to become more independent from the great European powers and the USA. This latter was, by that time, the largest investor in Brazil and was strongly politically, economically and ideologically associated with the right-wing oligarchy which accused João Goulart of communism-orientation and thus aroused fear in the US (*Ibidem*, 90-95).

The period of the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985) is the period of rebuilding the Brazilian, homogeneous national identity. Natalia Ap. Morato Fernandes drew attention to the strategic planning of the dictatorship related to the construction of the cultural industry and the acquisition of total domination over artistic production in Brazil. The military junta announced then that if one did not love Brazil, one should leave it, under the motto "Ame-o ou deixe-o"[Love it or leave it] (Fernandes, 2013, 173-192). The military regime was characterized by an authoritarian political model and a conservative social project, which severely curtailed the right of the popular masses to participate in the decision-making process. It was a period marked by intense economic growth, but also by the increase of social in-

equalities, as social inequality was considered a minor issue. As the economist Delfim Netto, Minister of Finance epitomized during the zenith of the regime's fast-paced economic growth, from 1967-74, "a cake had to rise before it could be sliced and served up. If there was no cake, what could be divided? So, we made the cake grow."

4. **Jair Bolsonaro's Government Plan**

In this part of the article, we intend to focus on the techniques used by Jair Bolsonaro to convince the Brazilian electorate to his election program. We will not evaluate it in terms of substance or merit, we will rather focus on his form of expression and the message format.

Its most striking defect is its non-unified character. The first part reflecting the values, the reorganization of state structures seems more like a public speech than a political program itself. One can notice lots of populist slogans followed by the exclamation marks which give the impression that the candidate is shouting to his potential electors. However, we will not notice this expansive form of his expression in the last part, where the economic program is included, as it was written by Bolsonaro's economic adviser Paulo Guedes. Guedes's statements are clear, condensed, balanced and detailed.

Bolsonaro's program refers to universal slogans, such as respect for human rights and dignity, privacy and freedom, including the issue of choice, improvement of the education and health care system. These are universal themes that every Brazilian elector fights for, regardless of his/her political orientation. On the first pages, one can read the slogan saying: "Your cell phone, your watch, your savings, your home, your motorcycle, your car, your land are the fruits of your work and your choices".²

² Original version: "Seu celular, seu relógio, sua poupança, sua casa, sua moto, seu carro, sua terra são os frutos de seu trabalho e de suas escolhas". Jair Bolsonaro (2018). O caminho da prosperidade. Proposta de Plano de Governo, 4.

As mentioned, characteristic features of the Bolsonaro's program are populist slogans and telling people what they wanted to hear. Unfortunately, many of the points only indicated a given problem, without any further analysis nor proposing an appropriate solution. According to Pedro Menezes, founder, and editor of Instituto Mercado Popular, some of his proposals are good and “brave but so empty of details that they mean nothing. Bolsonaro lost the opportunity to explain how the path to the pension fund capitalization will be” (Menezes, 2018). Those empty promises are apparent in such statements as the promise of “necessary adjustments to ensure growth with low inflation and job creation”,(Bolsonaro, 2018, 9) and “our priority is to generate growth, opportunities, and employment, removing large numbers of the population from the precarious situation they are [living] in” (Ibidem, 50).

Bolsonaro stresses that his goal is “to drive away the populism” (Ibidem, 51), and assures “less space for the populists and their lies”, (Ibidem, 5) although he himself promises a social, economic and political miracle in a country that is immersed in multidimensional crisis. One of these miracles is, for example, to improve education to compete with the countries such as Japan or Asian Tigers, like Taiwan and South Korea. The argument that applies here is that he personally visited these countries, which gives the voter the wrong understanding that visiting them is equal to understanding their social politics. One should remember, that the problem of the Brazilian education system is very complex and requires huge investments and reforms to be able to match the level of those mentioned countries.

In his program, Bolsonaro guarantees “a decent government, unlike (...) [former government] that has thrown us into an ethical, moral, and fiscal crisis. A government without taking-for-granted, without spurious agreements. A government made up of people who have a commitment to Brazil and Brazilians. That meets the expectations of citizens and works for what really makes a difference in everyone's life” (Ibidem, 2).

It is worth pointing out what rhetorical strategies Bolsonaro took to convince the electorate to vote for him. First, Bolsonaro aroused fear among the Brazilians by stressing the statistics reflecting the scale of crime in the country, then created the image of a common public enemy in the form of leftist governments or social movements, and consequently tried to strengthen the self-esteem as a Brazilian nation and eradicate the “Mongol complex”.

The sense of danger is created by providing various statistics on the scale of crime in Brazil. The northern and north-eastern states still show the highest homicide rate in the country, however one should remember that it is conditioned by many socio-economic factors that Brazil has been grappling with for centuries. Nevertheless, these regions have constituted the bastion of the leftist Brazilian Workers' Party (in Portuguese "Partido dos Trabalhadores") over the past two decades. The presentation in the form of slides of various statistics on crime rates, without a comparative analysis of how much this scale has changed (increased or decreased) is only part of the truth that the Brazilian voter may not even have explored. Pedro Menezes explained that, according to DATASUS statistics, the percentage of homicides has officially increased since the military dictatorship, but has diminished during the Workers' Party government (Menezes, 2018).

In the form of slides and more statistics, Bolsonaro described the reality of this country, in which crimes, murders, rapes and sexual abuse of children have been a problem throughout the decades. Simple numbers without further explanation or analysis arouse fear among Brazilians, for whom security was and is one of the most important political postulates. One of the forms of combating the crime, according to Bolsonaro, is the legalization of weapons and he argues that in countries such as the US, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Israel, Switzerland or Canada the open access to weapons did not increase the number of crimes (Bolsonaro, *Op.cit.*, 24). Again, he gave clichéd examples of so-called countries

of the “First World”. We use this word consciously because, although the division into the “first” and the “third world” has long been out of use, it is still widespread in Brazilian public discourse. The same slogans were applied in the part concerning the improvement of the country's economy, aiming at reaching for the level of economies of the developed countries, promising that his “strategy will be to adopt the same actions that work in countries with [economic] growth, employment, low inflation, income for workers and opportunities for all” (Ibidem, 13).

It is worth noting that the statistics in the Bolsonaro's program are not only provided by the official institutions, among others, IBGE, IEPA, but his source of information was two TV reports launched by the Globo “A Guerra do Brasil” and “Julgamento da Revolução - About GLOBO, 7 de outubro de 1984”. The Globo station has a certain stigma in Brazilian society because during the military dictatorship it was responsible for propagating the regime's ideological, anti-democratic political stances (Souza, Op.cit., 227-228).

Referring to Globo's reports is also contradictory to what Bolsonaro proclaimed, namely that he would announce a government deprived of any ideology. His political program, however, created the image of a public enemy, which is the former president Inácio Lula da Silva and his Workers' Party, both seen by Bolsonaro as “inefficient” and “corrupted”. Bolsonaro believed that Lula's government “corrupted democracy and slowed down the economy” as well as “destroyed the country” (Bolsonaro, 2018, 10). According to Paulo Menezes, the financial crisis in Brazil is not directly related to corruption, but it was caused by the constitutional provisions implemented before the Workers' Party took over the government. Lula and his political party could have made the financial and economic situation worse, but they were not the immediate and the direct cause of the current problems in Brazil (Menezes 2018).

Another enemy pointed out by Bolsonaro was a conference of leftist political parties and other organizations from Latin America and the Caribbean, known as *Foro de São Paulo*, founded by the Workers' Party in 1990, aimed at looking for alternatives to neoliberal politics. According to Bolsonaro, *Foro de São Paulo* was supposed to have weakened the democracy, and, by showing more statistics, he tries to persuade that the crime is higher in the regions ruled by the members of this conference (Bolsonaro, 2018, 26). This point, however, does not explain that *Foro de São Paulo* is more active in the poorer and more economically backward north-east region called “Nordeste”. One should remember that the problem of crime and poverty in the given regions is supra-structural, over-institutional and is the results of long-term socio-economic inequalities. Consequently, the enemy for Bolsonaro is any elite that professes “cultural marxism” (Ibidem, 7).

Interestingly, in contradiction to such an ideological political program, Bolsonaro hails a Brazil “of diverse opinions, colors, and orientations” (Ibidem, 4), and also promises a “Brazil free from crime, corruption and perverse ideologies” (Ibidem, 5). It is worth mentioning here the theory of the Dutch political scientist, Cas Mudde who claimed that the populist leaders divide society into two antagonistic groups, “pure people” and “corrupted elite” (Molly, 2018). This division is visible in the political program of Bolsonaro in which, he positioned himself belong “pure people”, while Lula’s party represents the “corrupted elite”.

Bolsonaro promises also to restore the dignity and the hope for a better future, in a country that does not believe to be a “land of the future”.³ He claimed that “WE ARE MUCH STRONGER than all these problems” (Bolsonaro, 2018, 15) and the government itself “will

³ In 1941, Stefan Zweig published a book titled “Brazil, Land of the Future”. Nowadays, Zweig's notion Brazil as being the land of the future is frequently scorned by Brazilian intellectuals in media outlets.

trust the citizen” (Ibidem, 19). Unfortunately, it seems that Bolsonaro takes advantages of the ignorance of some of his voters about the history of their country (Bôas, 2000, 265-269). An example of that is the statement saying that “The Armed Forces of Brazil has a history that makes us proud. For example, the Brazilian heroes fought against National Socialism during World War II. We were the only country in Latin America to fight against the Nazis. Subsequently, other heroes prevented the seizure of power by leftist forces planning a communist coup in Brazil in 1964, according to the editorial: Julgamento da Revolução – O GLOBO, 7 de outubro de 1984”[The Revolution under review- O GLOBO, October 7th 1984] (Bolsonaro, 2019, 33).⁴

This brief and simplified summary of the Brazilian history of the first half of the twentieth century is only partially correct. In the first phase of the war, the country’s leader Getúlio Vargas strongly supported Hitler and opposed to the leftist movements led by Luís Carlos Prestes. In addition, Vargas deported Prestes' wife, Olga Benario, to Germany. Aware that she was a German Jewish woman during the Second Reich, Vargas accomplished his political vendetta against Prestes, and sent Benario to face certain death at Bernburg concentration/extermination camp. Brazil joined WWII at a time when the balance of power changed through negotiations with the president of the United States, a country that later supported the coup d'état in Brazil in 1964, and gave firm economic and political support to the military junta until the 1980s.

⁴ The editorial from the newspaper O GLOBO, referred by the text, was published 20 years and 7 months after the 1964 Coup that established an authoritarian political regime under military tutelage, during the initial stages of democratic transition. In the editorial, the owner of the gigantic media corporation 'Organizações Globo', Roberto Marinho, claimed that the events of 1964 were not a Coup but rather a Revolution, and that it was a necessary step to fight the corruption and economic mismanagement of Goulart's government. Only in 2013 did the corporation release an editorial using the word 'Coup' and publicly apologized for its institutional support.

Jan-Werner Müller, a German historian in his book "What is populism", drew attention to several features of populist leaders. First, they promise the fulfillment of the highest and often impossible ideals, and these features are strongly noticeable in Bolsonaro's program. Secondly, the populist opposes the people and the nation to the corrupt elite, and this point is present practically on every page of his program. Bolsonaro aspires to be the only representative of the nation, but Müller warns that populists who use a democratic language in their speeches, in reality govern in an extreme anti-democratic policy (Müller, 2017).

5. Presidential race and victory of Jair Bolsonaro

The election of Jair Bolsonaro as the president of Brazil is a complex phenomenon that should be perceived on many levels. One of the most determinant factors was a diffuse feeling of dissatisfaction with the previous ruling party and numerous corruption scandals in which its members were involved, in a climate of political, institutional and economic crisis. As a result, some sectors of the Brazilian electorate began to look for an alternative to the mainstream political parties- the center-left Worker's Party (PT) and the center-right Party of the Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB). It was this feeling of frustration among key sectors of the electorate that propelled Jair Bolsonaro as a relevante candidate.

During the presidential race Bolsonaro used a political language of hatred, openly calling for the annihilation of the Left. On september 1, 2018, during a rally in the northern state of Acre, Bolsonaro picked up a camera tripod, and, pretending it was a machine gun, yelled: "Let's shoot down Acre's PT supporters!". Afterwards, he said: "We will chase these crooks from Acre!". The declarations caused so much outrage in Brazil as well as abroad that the candidate later disclaimed that he was not instigating political violence. "There is a figure of

speech, hyperbole, it was used, nothing more besides, what's the problem, I do not want to kill anyone".

A few days later, on the ensuing September 6, during a rally in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais, a man suddenly approached and stabbed Bolsonaro in the stomach.⁵ Ironically, from that moment onwards, his campaign definitely took off. Although by that time he was already the frontrunner of the presidential race according Datafolha and Ibope, Brazil's two biggest polling research institutes, with 20% of voting intention. After the attack that nearly killed him his voting intention grew almost twofold.

His electorate saw him a man of extraordinary charisma, and got impressed by his straightforward and brutally honest remarks, leading many to construe him as the only authentic politician in the whole spectrum of Brazilian political landscape, the only one who was genuine enough to freely speak his mind. As such, Bolsonaro branded himself under the slogan of a political outsider, a national savior, and the only honest politician in the electoral contest.

In our opinion, the Brazilian leftist parties committed serious strategic mistakes. First, they did not manage to establish any political alliance with left-oriented parties, nor allowed the emergence of a "new" candidate who could represent them and oppose to Bolsonaro.

Lula da Silva, two-term president of Brazil during 2003-2010, decided to run again the presidential race in 2018. They mistakenly assessed their chances in the presidential election and did not realize the scale of rejection. In April, Lula was convicted of a second-instance court due to corruption and money laundry. It was the moment when his Workers' Party should put up a new candidate. Nevertheless, Lula da Silva decided to conduct his electoral

⁵"Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil's Presidential Front-Runner, Stabbed at Rally." *BBC News*, BBC, 7 Sept. 2018, in: www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45441447.

campaign from prison, which led to the major rejection of his party by the Brazilian electors. From the moment when Lula was arrested, the party focused primarily on the defense of the former president in court and public opinion instead of looking for some alternatives. In August 2018, the Workers' Party declared Lula's candidacy, but it was blocked one month later in September, under the law "Ficha Limpa" [Clean Record], that Lula himself had signed a few years before, prohibiting the participation in the election of candidates convicted by a decision of courts of the second instance. The Workers' Party, therefore, had to present a new candidate and build his political image from the very beginning one month before the elections. They opted for Fernando Haddad, an experienced politician, but unknown on a nationwide scale. It is worth noting that Haddad was a professor of political science at the University of São Paulo (USP) and former education minister in Lula's government, and the mayor of São Paulo between 2013-2016, however, he was not elected for the second term 2017-2020. The Workers' Party committed another mistake in relation to Haddad, because they focused more on the alliance between him and Lula under slogans such as "Haddad to Lula", instead of building his image as of an independent candidate.

Secondly, at the beginning of the presidential campaign, the Workers' Party rejected the political alliance with other leftist parties, for example with Ciro Gomes from the Democratic Labor Party (PDT) that perhaps would allow them left to survive on the political scene. Negotiations between those two parties took place during the October elections, but the problem was that neither Ciro Gomes nor Haddad wanted to resign from the presidential candidacy to assume the possible post of vice-president.

Before the second round of the election, Haddad tried again to form an alliance with Ciro Gomes (PDT), Marina Silva (Rede) and former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (PSDB), but with no results. Cardoso decided to remain neutral, Marina Silva declared that

she would only give support in the final stage of the campaign of the second round. Ciro Gomes, as one of the few partied, finally agreed to support Haddad in his presidential race. However, in the social media, Ciro Gomes has repeatedly criticized Bolsonaro and expressed his concerns about the Bolsonaro's proto-fascist attitudes, but never even mentioned Haddad. In the final election period, the Workers' Party decided to change its strategy from highlighting the close link between Lula and Haddad, and to put itself in the role of defender of democracy, which they believed was threatened by Jair Bolsonaro. Thus, the Workers' Party (PT) candidacy tried to brand itself at a cross-party dimensional level, as the only one able to stop Bolsonaro's undemocratic aspirations, by leading a multiparty democratic front. That way, they managed to convince some voters who in the first round voted for smaller political parties, and were hesitant in the second round between Haddad and Bolsonaro. Even political actors deemed to be antagonistic to the Worker's Party (PT), such as Alberto Goldman, a prominent leadership at the Party of the Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB), publicly announced that he would vote for Haddad out of disgust with Bolsonaro's remarks that he would jail or force into exile PT supporters immediately after his electoral victory. Goldman, a former governor of the state of São Paulo, released a video on his Facebook profile claiming that, sadly, there was no other option than Haddad.⁶ The video was later deleted from his Facebook profile due to the controversy it sparked among right-wing voters, who flooded his comments timeline in outrage, in spite of his video containing many critical remarks on Haddad and his party, and clearly stating that his support was reluctant.

On the map showing the distribution of votes on Haddad and Bolsonaro in the second round, it is clear that it was uneven. Bolsonaro won significantly in the southern, south-east-

⁶ Ex-governador Alberto Goldman, do PSDB, declara apoio a Haddad [Ex-Governor Alberto Goldman, from PSDB, announce support to Haddad]
in: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/eleicoes/2018/noticias/2018/10/24/goldman-declara-apoio-haddad.htm?cmpid=copiaecola>

ern and central-western states, i.e. everywhere where is the highest income per capita. Haddad won in the north and north-east part of the country, especially in smaller towns, far from big urban centers. The inhabitants of these regions are the beneficiaries of the government program Bolsa Familia, granting minimum income to families living in extreme poverty.

Interestingly, Bolsonaro was able to gain significant support even among the minorities that he insulted, that is, among LGBT groups or Afro-descendent communities.⁷ It is difficult to explain why the minorities decided to support Bolsonaro. There are no published studies on this phenomenon, however, in our opinion, three points can be distinguished. First, they decided to do so, because they rejected the Worker's Party and its all possible candidates as Lula or Haddad. The second issue is the problem of class and social identity in Brazil. Bolsonaro was mainly supported by the upper middle class, to which many Brazilians aspire to belong. Third, neo-pentecostal churches in Brazil openly supported the candidacy of Bolsonaro and urged their believers to vote on him.

We do believe that Bolsonaro was not elected on the wave of growing nationalism in Brazil, but because of some strategic errors committed by the mainstream political parties, complex social, political, economic and institutional crisis in the country, as finally thanks to his populist attitude and great charisma.

6. Foreign Policy

Bolsonaro's ultra-conservative, nationalist, religious and populist far right agenda is defined by a domestic component that has been amply covered and a foreign policy component that has generally received less attention. The domestic component is undoubtedly the most radical aspect of Bolsonaro's presidency. The foreign policy, however, is worth explor-

⁷ Homossexuais, negros e pobres votaram em um candidato que os considera inferiores ou os odeia [Homosexuals, black and poor people voted for a candidate who considers them inferior or hates them] in: El Pais. (28/10/2018) https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/10/09/opinion/1539102091_173002.html

ing for what it reveals about the role Brazil is establishing for itself at a moment when other far right forces have amassed more real power around the world than at any time since World War II. This is also of particular importance considering Brazil's leadership role in Latin America, being the region's biggest economy and most populous country. Since taking office as foreign minister, Ernesto Araújo has abandoned any pretense of conciliation with Bolsonaro's international critics. Instead, he vowed to eagerly translate the President's far right views into Brazil's official foreign policy, breaking with traditional stances that used to guide the Foreign Affairs Ministry (Itamaraty) from the early 20th century to 2018.⁸ It is important to notice that such stances were traditionally observed by all sorts of governments, from democratically-elected center-left wing Goulart (1961-64) and the Worker's Party (2003-2016) to center-right wing presidencies such as Dutra (1946-51), Collor (1990-92), Franco (1992-94), Cardoso (1995-2003), Temer (2016-2018), and what is more interesting is that some major foreign policy guidelines were followed even throughout the Military Regime (1964-85).

According to A. Cervo and C. Bueno, in spite of all the talk about the dangers of socialism Goulart's administration supposedly represented, the Military Regime (1964-85) continued to pursue the major foreign policy's tenets from Goulart's administration, which in turn had been traced during the predecessor presidency of Jânio Quadros, in 1961.⁹ Jânio Quadros' foreign minister, San Tiago Dantas, formulated a set of foreign policy principles known as 'Independent Foreign Policy'.¹⁰ In line with A. Cervo and C. Bueno, Vizentini concedes that, given the specificities of the internal context, the regime has rescued many of the principles of

⁸ Itamaraty, the name of the traditional Palace hosting the Ministry Foreign Affairs is used as a metonymy to refer to Brazil's foreign policy.

⁹ Cervo, A. L., & Bueno, C. (2002). *História da política exterior do Brasil*. [History of Brazil's Foreign Policy].

¹⁰ From Portuguese 'Política Externa Independente'.

the Independent External Policy (IEP) launched by Dantas.¹¹ There is a significant degree of consensus among scholars in the analysis of the foreign policy guidelines of the first military government. The main body of scholarly literature tends to see the first military administration, that of Marshall Castelo Branco (1964-1967), as deviant in its foreign policy objectives due to its due to the automatic alignment with US interests. During this period, the idea that in the face of communist danger, the idea that ideological frontiers should be preserved through US supremacy gained strength. Such a position did not last because it did not present concrete economic and political results. The hardliner sector of the Military represented by Costa e Silva (1967-69) defended a foreign policy that closely resembled the 'Independent Foreign Policy' in order to defend greater autonomy of the country and the end of the automatic alignment with the US, derived from the pragmatic realization that Brazil's international interests would not always be overlapped.

The foreign policy during Geisel's Military administration (1974-1979) is certainly the one that has been most thoroughly analysed by the scholarly, generally emphasizing the audacity of its actions in the international arena. It was in this term that the Military regime markedly distanced from the US. In the aftermath of the oil crisis knocking on the door, Geisel approached the Arab countries, exporting primary products in exchange for oil. Relations with regional powers such as Algeria, Libya, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, were strengthened, furthermore, through arms sales and scientific and technological bilateral cooperation agreements. The resumption of diplomatic ties and trade relations with Communist China in 1974, and the recognition of the Marxist government in Angola marked realistic perspective on the assessment of circumstances. Furthermore, the confidential nuclear deal with Germany was

¹¹ Vizentini, P. F. (1998). *A política externa do regime militar brasileiro* [The Foreign Policy of the Military Regime]. Porto Alegre: UFRGS.

one of the highest points of friction in the history of Brazil - United States bilateral relations.¹² It is noteworthy that the Military regime acted pragmatically and never severed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, not even during the 1964-67 period of closest alignment to the US and the Western bloc at the heyday of the Cold War. To sum up, it is clear that most of the way through the Military regime, Brazil's kept on with its traditional 'independent foreign policy', and such stances were more or less observed by the Itamaraty ever since.

Hence, President Bolsonaro and his appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto Araújo, in less than 100 days in office, are breaking major paradigms in Brazil's foreign policy. Araújo's evolving foreign policy is a wholesale rejection of the approach implemented by the Workers' Party (PT) governments in power from 2003 to 2016. Beginning under Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010). Lula's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Celso Amorim, who had also acted in the same post under the presidency of Itamar Franco, and set the goal that Brazil should take on a more proactive role in global affairs, starting by projecting its influence over Latin America. Amorim stayed in the post throughout Lula's two consecutive presidential terms and had time to implement what he labeled a return to San Tiago Dantas' principles of the 'Independent Foreign Policy'.

The South American bloc Mercosur has been a keystone of Brazilian foreign policy since its inception in the early 1990s. At first, its main goal was the establishment of a cohesive trade bloc and customs union involving Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Some years later, however, the government began to develop a strategy of enlargement to bring into the fold of Mercosur all the other South American countries. In the Brazilian view, South America is not just a specific geographical region (different from Latin America as a whole)

¹² Pereira, A. D. (2010). *Relações exteriores do Brasil III, 1964-1990: do Regime Militar à "Nova República"* [Foreign Relations of Brazil III, 1964-1990: from the Military Regime to the 'New Republic']. Editora Vozes.

but also an autonomous political -economic area, given that US influence recedes as distance from Washington increases. Brazil's political elites consider this subregion to be within its natural sphere of influence.¹³ Hence, it is noteworthy that it was Cardoso's administration that organized the first summit of South American presidents in Brasilia in September 2000.

Lula deepened this strategy from 2003 onwards, leading to the creation of the South American Community (SAC, or CASA as in its Portuguese and Spanish acronym, meaning home in both of these languages) at the Cuzco presidential summit of December 2004. The name was later changed to the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the constitutive treaty of which was signed in Brasilia in May 2008. Mercosur arguably constitutes the inner circle of UNASUR. Mercosur was initially a pragmatic integration project that dealt with trade, customs, and market access, but which has become increasingly a symbol for progressive and leftist ideologies. In Brazil, it has turned into the flagship of those who stand for developmental, anti-imperialist, or left-wing nationalist ideas. To the most vocal of its supporters, Mercosur is not simply an economic association or a instrument, but rather a supranational identity that provides its member countries with the only way to survive in a globalizing world.¹⁴ Mercosur's position as South American as the core for an ambitious Brazil-led Latin American integration project was officially established by Lula's administration, as the inaugural speech of its foreign minister unequivocally demonstrated (:

“Under Lula's government, South America will be our priority. The relationship with Argentina is the pillar upon which Mercosur is built. [Without] the Common External Tariff and the Customs Union [...]any pretension to negotiating to-

¹³ Souza, A. (2008). *O Brasil na região e no mundo: Percepções da comunidade brasileira de política externa* [Brazil in the region and in the world: perceptions of the Brazilian foreign policy community]. Rio de Janeiro: Centro Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais (CEBRI).

¹⁴ Malamud, A. (2005). Mercosur turns 15: Between rising rhetoric and declining achievement. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 18(3), 421-436.

gether with other countries and blocs is a mere illusion [...] We consider it is essential to deepen integration among the countries of South America [...] The process of democratic change that Brazil is undergoing with Lula's government might be a source of inspiration and stability for the whole of South America [and] we will not shirk from contributing to the solution of conflicts [...] A political stable, socially just and economically prosperous South America is a goal that must be pursued not just from a natural sense of solidarity, but also for the benefit of our progress and well-being."¹⁵

Now, let us fast-forward from Amorim's inauguration speech as minister of foreign affairs in 2003 to Araújo's speech in 2019 and the U-turn represented by Bolsonaro's foreign policy becomes self-evident:

"To remember the nation, is not to remember the liberal and international order, it isn't to remember the global order, it isn't to remember what was said in the latest article in *Foreign Affairs* or the latest piece by *The New York Times*. It is to remember the nation as an essential reality. We are not here to work for the world order. This is Brazil. Don't be afraid to be Brazil. Don't be afraid."

The isolationist stance is clear compared to the straightforward way Amorim said that the Latin American integration was a top priority of the Worker's Party government as well as the essentialist view on what is a nation.

Final Considerations

In our article, we tried to analyze the attitudes of Jair Bolsonaro in the pre-election period and during his first 100 days of the presidency. We argue that his political discourse strongly represents the far right, however, his current government might be characterized

more by sheer populism. Bolsonaro's rhetorical persecution of leftist parties polarizes the society and intensifies the political conflict in the country. According to Müller, the conflict based on cultural war is important for populists who want to show what the nation is (Müller 2017). Additionally, by introducing some reforms, as in the case of the "Bolsa Familia", that was strongly debated in the pre-election period, Bolsonaro tries to convince the supporters of the leftist Labor Party. By facilitating access to weapons, Bolsonaro makes the society feel that everybody has the right to decide and rule over himself. Müller warns, however, that populism is never the way to greater participation in politics (Müller 2017).

On the other hand, we also note some internal features and external circumstances that prevent Bolsonaro from becoming a "traditional" populist or dictator. First, Bolsonaro, in spite of his controversial statements, seems to lack leadership in dealing with the Congress. Second, the Brazilian young democracy, despite its fragilities and imperfections, seems to be strong enough to defame the both, populist and extreme right inclinations of Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro is able to fight against his opposition only ideologically, because practically his political coalition does not constitute the majority in the Parliament, that is necessary to pass on his reforms. His inability to conduct a dialogue in the Parliament is now strongly visible in the ongoing parliamentary debate on the government's pension system reform.

Thus, we conclude that Bolsonaro is partly populist, partly far right, but still very different from his nationalist-orientated predecessors, other contemporary populists and the far right politicians. From our point of view, the politician he resembles the most is Donald Trump. We shall remember that populism affects always a society that feels unrepresented. Maybe this is a moment for the mainstream parties in Brazil to think about what mistakes were made, and at what point significant parts of the society distanced themselves from politics to choose an outsider with an aggressive far right speech as President.

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