

Neofascism, ‘New Republic’ and the rise of right-wing groups in Brazil

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Abstract

With the recent rise of right-wing groups in Brazil, which culminated in Jair Bolsonaro’s election, as well as in the election of other far-right-wing leaders, the impacts of these new arrangements in the Brazilian political and partisan field are put into question, besides which assumptions and ideological affiliations are at stake. In addition to categories such as ‘new right-wing groups,’ terms like ‘neofascism’ are used indiscriminately to interpret the most varied expressions and groups. In order to put these aspects into question, this article brings an overview of the relations between tiny neofascist groups and partisan political forces in Brazil. By analyzing from the moment of democratic transition until Bolsonaro’s election, the relations and disputes between tiny neofascist groups and partisan groups were investigated, in order to see the various disputes existing in the Brazilian far right-wing throughout the ‘New Republic.’

Key words neofascism; new right-wing groups; political parties.

Neofascismo, “Nova República” e a ascensão das direitas no Brasil

Resumo

Com a recente ascensão das direitas no Brasil, que culminou na eleição de Jair Bolsonaro, assim como de outros líderes da extrema direita, colocam-se em questão os impactos dessas novas formatações no campo político-partidário brasileiro e quais são os pressupostos e as filiações ideológicas. Além de categorias como “novas direitas”, termos como “neofascismo” são utilizados indiscriminadamente para interpretar expressões e grupos dos mais distintos. A fim de colocar tais aspectos em questão, este artigo apresenta um apanhado das relações entre grupelhos neofascistas e forças político-partidárias no Brasil. Analisando desde a transição democrática até a eleição de Bolsonaro, investigaram-se as aproximações e disputas existentes entre grupelhos neofascistas e agremiações partidárias, a fim de compreender as diversas disputas existentes no campo da extrema direita brasileira ao longo da “Nova República”.

Palavras-chave neofascismo; novas direitas; partidos políticos.

Neofascismo, “Nueva República” y el ascenso de las derechas en Brasil

Resumen

Con el reciente ascenso de las derechas en Brasil, que culminó en la elección de Jair Bolsonaro, así como en la elección de otros líderes de extrema derecha, se cuestionan los impactos de estas nuevas formaciones en el campo político-partidista brasileño y cuáles son los supuestos y las afiliaciones ideológicas. Además de categorías como “nuevas derechas”, términos como “neofascismo” se usan indiscriminadamente para interpretar expresiones y grupos de los más distintos tipos. Para cuestionar estos aspectos, este artículo ofrece una visión general de las relaciones entre pequeños grupos neofascistas y fuerzas político-partidistas en Brasil. Al analizar desde el momento de la transición democrática hasta la elección de Bolsonaro, se investigaron las relaciones y disputas entre pequeños grupos neofascistas y grupos partidistas, para comprender las diversas disputas que existen en el campo de la extrema derecha brasileña a lo largo de la “Nueva República”.

Palabras clave neofascismo; nuevas derechas; partidos políticos.

Néofascisme, « Nouvelle République » et la montée des groupes de droite au Brésil

Résumé

Avec la récente montée des groupes de droite au Brésil, qui a culminé avec l'élection de Jair Bolsonaro, ainsi que d'autres leaders de l'extrême droite, les impacts de ces nouvelles arrangements dans le champ politique et partisan brésilien sont remis en question, ainsi que quelles sont les hypothèses et affiliations idéologiques. Outre des catégories telles que « nouveaux groupes de droite », des termes tels que « néofascisme » sont utilisés sans discernement pour interpréter des expressions et groupes les plus variés. Pour remettre en question ces aspects, cet article offre un aperçu des relations entre les petits groupes néofascistes et les forces politiques et partisans au Brésil. En analysant depuis le moment de la transition démocratique jusqu'à l'élection de Bolsonaro, les relations et les différends entre les petits groupes néofascistes et les groupes partisans ont été étudiés, afin de comprendre les différents différends qui existaient dans le champ de l'extrême droite brésilienne tout au long de la « Nouvelle République ».

Mots-clés néofascisme; nouveaux groupes de droite; partis politiques.

Introduction

The conservative rise and the neofascist issue

Throughout the process of the recent rise of conservative and authoritarian forces in Brazil, several terms have been adopted to classify and interpret this phenomenon that, if not absolutely new in the history of republican Brazil, certainly brings some news, also in relation to its intensity and its electoral achievements. Among these terms, we may mention: a) conservative wave or tide; b) authoritarianism; c) Bolsonarism; d) neofascism; e) new right-wings; f) far-right-wing; g) radical right-wing; h) neoliberalism; i) illiberal democracy; j) populism, etc.

In a way, this diversity demonstrates the concern of researchers and intellectuals in face of a very complex and diverse phenomenon, as well as it points out that the phenomenon brings new traits and old features. Not unreasonably, the term 'new right-wings' gained strength, but with no absolute consensus on what the meaning and extent of this category is. We may mention some of the varied interpretations (without any pretense of being exhaustive in this regard).

In the analysis by Camila Rocha (2018), the new right-wing is a broad and complex phenomenon, with origins that are not necessarily immediate. The formation process of the new Brazilian right-wing involves everything from issues related to opposition to the administrations of the Brazilian Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores [PT]) up to the setbacks related to certain political agendas, such as the legalization of abortion, or issues based on customs. As Rocha (2018) demonstrates, even more organized groups, such as the Free Brazil Movement (Movimento Brasil Livre [MBL]) were created through socialization and interaction of small previous groups, in relationships that strengthened the sense of unity and political socialization, as well as establishment of a common philosophical identity.

According to Fábio Gentile (2018), the relation between neoliberal groups and the biased political agenda of the then Brazilian deputy and current president Jair Bolsonaro is based on the development of political strategies on both sides. Neoliberal political agendas, built through transnational interactions, are not necessarily assimilated, they demonstrate getting-together movements and disputes that are inherent to the political field.

In such a plural and sometimes conflicting new Brazilian right-wing field, some authors argue that the Brazilian society observes the phenomenon of deparating another phenomenon, i.e. 'ashamed right-wing,' which stemmed from the process of democratic transition and the advent of the so-called 'New Republic.' According to Marcos dos Reis Quadros and Rafael Madeira (2018), this process was driven by multiple reasons, including the establishment of parliamentary groups with a conservative profile, such as the so-called *bullet bench* (bancada da bala) and *evangelical bench* (bancada evangélica).

In the interpretation by Martin Egon Maitino (2018), the work of politicians like Jair Bolsonaro helped to give rise to this depuration process, as well as the movement and establishment of a new Brazilian right-wing field, characterized by glorification of the civil-military dictatorship, its crimes, and particularly anti-communism (and its most immediate variation, the so-called 'anti-PTism'). In a sense, it dialogues with the impressions conveyed by Mateus Pereira (2015), who observes the 'memory wars' around events such as the Brazilian National Truth Commission (Comissão Nacional da Verdade), and the creation of a network of far-right-wing tiny groups driven by historical negationism on the most recent Brazilian dictatorship.

Anyway, we may say that, depending on the focus of analysis, there are multiple new right-wings, not only in relation to the starting point, but also to the elements of unity and ideological identification. Even Antônio Flávio Pierucci (1987), in a text published at the end of the democratic transition process, already demonstrated the constitution of a 'new right-wing,' grounded in the denial of human rights and based on the uttering of supposedly irreconcilable identities.

Even considering the richness of the varied interpretations and a certain polysemy in the constitution of the new right-wings field in Brazil, it is usual to observe (not necessarily in specialized media outlets) the temptation to simplify such complex – and transnational – phenomena by means of heuristically inaccurate terms, such as neofascism, as it is used in some cases. Or, better stated, a notion of neofascism as comprehensive as it is conflicting, which encompasses such diverse categories in the right-wings field in Brazil, like monarchist groups, radical liberals, conservatives, evangelicals, militarists, arms lobbyists, neofascists, and so on.

In a way, this reflects not only the complexity of this issue, but also political disputes or even the influence of non-specialized media outlets. After all, the term fascism (and neofascism) is also a political adjective (Mann, 2008). Something slightly similar occurred throughout the interpretations of military dictatorships in Latin America – and during them –, which authors like Álvaro Briones (1975) regarded as the construction of a certain neofascism as a category to explain those authoritarian regimes.

However, there is an already fully consolidated interpretation that dictatorships in Latin America, despite providing the insertion of fascist groups and individuals, have not become any kind of neofascist regime (Boron, 1977). In the Brazilian case, in spite of the intense anti-communism manifested by the dictatorship that began in 1964, the former members of the Brazilian Integralist Action (Ação Integralista Brasileira [AIB]) did not stand out and they were unable to make the authoritarian regime 'fascist' (Trindade, 2000).

In more recent times, especially after Jair Bolsonaro's election, this debate has surfaced. Some questions are occasionally raised by experts or those concerned with the current phase of Brazilian democracy:

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- May Brazil be under a neofascist government?
 - As Guamán, Aragonese and Martín (2019) indicate, is the current neofascism, whose Brazilian representative might be Bolsonaro, characterized by a 'strange alliance' with international neoliberalism?
 - Could historical fascism, openly opposed to liberalism, become a counterpart in its updated version?

A priori, it is considered that both 'neofascism' and historical fascism itself should not be interpreted exclusively in the light of their leaders, but rather through situational aspects that encounter (and are built of) the cult of leadership and political mythology, forging a symbiotic relation between leaders, State, and nation. In other words, we take into account that an authoritarian personality does not build an authoritarian regime or a fascist movement alone.

Thus, and considering that neofascism and the far-right-wing, in Brazil, are not a recent novelty, this article aims to provide an overview of the relation between certain Brazilian far-right-wing groups, notably neofascist-inspired groups, and political parties legally constituted in the country. The text, with no intent of providing an exhaustive survey of the theme, brings an overview of the relation between far-right-wing groups, especially tiny neofascist groups, and political parties, in a time series that covers from the democratic transition to the inauguration of Jair Bolsonaro as President of the Republic.

Also, this initiative arises from a finding: since the moment of democratic transition to the height of the new right-wings, the Brazilian far-right-wing did not build a robust political project, in terms of party organizations, to utter ideological values capable of getting closer to the purposes of tiny neofascist groups.

To do this, we use a rather restrictive definition of neofascism, just like an ideal type, which sees it as tiny groups that aim to reformulate and resume an archetype based on experiences of the fascist movements and dictatorships during the interwar periods. This more circumscribed definition of neofascism stems from the need to interpret the historicity of these tiny groups and their relations to political associations, as well as their interests in the plural phenomenon of new right-wings.

Neofascism, far-right-wing and new right-wings

The most recent times in the Brazilian political scene show the growth in the activity of small and mid-sized organizations and, particularly, a stronger far-right-wing discourse and political imagery, with capillarity in society. Permeated by misogyny, opposing social and income distribution policies, as well as showing contempt for human rights, these groups share elements of continuity in an authoritarian political culture, in which anti-

communism is an element of systemic apparatus, cult of leadership, and choice of “saviors of the motherland” (Girardet, 1996).

The ‘return,’ or more properly the growth, of the activities of the most radical and anti-democratic portions of the Brazilian right-wing is accompanied by the concern of a significant portion of public opinion and of several scholars (Velasco e Cruz, Kaysel, & Cudas, 2015). Especially in times of crisis of legitimacy and institutional disruption (intensified after Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment), some questions about the nature and capillarity of the far-right-wing in Brazil today gain strength, as well as its effective power (and its impact) in the political field, above all in institutional spheres.

This article aims to map the relations between groups and trends of the Brazilian far-right-wing and political parties since the end of the democratic transition or, in other words, the strategies of the far-right-wing throughout the so-called ‘New Republic’ until today and, particularly, their relations to party organizations. In this way, parties are taken into account as an element of political mediation, in addition to the need for interpreting the ideological variable in parties, a perspective that does not exclude other elements, such as macroeconomic issues, electoral alliances, and so on.

This approach is related to the concern about moving away from a mechanistic reading of political processes and – in contrast and especially – the interpretation of anti-communism, in addition to conservatism and authoritarian nationalism, as key categories for thinking through the Brazilian far-right-wing and the Latin American right-wings (Boisard, 2014; Motta, 2002). By working with these categories, we have a panorama of greater historicity and less immediacy, something which allows a more detailed reading of the relation between far-right-wing groups and political parties, since the end of the 1970s up to the most recent electoral processes.

Over the past few decades, it is not unreasonable to claim that the Brazilian right-wing is somewhat unknown. After all, once the institutional existence of a dictatorship built on civilian and military grounds and an exception regime that had subjugated political organizations of various shades – especially those situated ‘left’ to the political spectrum – come to an end, seemingly, there would have been a deep and sudden change. In the eyes of an external observer, Brazilian society (especially the political class and the ruling elites) may be characterized as having a kind of ‘democratic vocation.’

In fact, this issue may not be the result of any historical accident. As Daniel Aarão Reis (2010) suggested, during the *slow and gradual democratic transition*, but also around the Brazilian National Constituent Assembly process, the impression of a democratic and, above all, anti-authoritarian consensus has been created and, in theory, perhaps it represents this society itself. Therefore, the democratic status was a result achieved by the vast majority of Brazilian citizens, so that the civil support to the coup d’État and the continuity of the

exception regime might be a kind of lapse, the outcome of troubled relations, including those between civilians and the military.

Thus, a process of collective silencing (and a supposed democratic consensus) has been established, which included not only civil society around this pact, but also the elites and the ruling classes, as well as some opposition sectors. It is necessary to emphasize that this process took place not only in the dimension of a kind of collective imaginary that hung over civil society, but it had direct implications for the skeleton of the so-called 'New Republic' and its conservative transition – overall, this is the aspect outlined by Power (2000). Either in terms of the lack of legal implications for the players involved in the exception regime and in its persecutory practices or regarding the permanence of these elites and their players at the highest power levels, even wearing democratic clothes¹.

It is in this context that the far-right-wing issue and its relation to political parties is established. The moment of opening the political field during the final chapters of the democratic transition coincides with a relative dispersion of several small far-right-wing organizations, which sought to relate to opening room for possibilities in the political field, however, with a strongly refractory environment. From this perspective, we can observe the strategies, especially during the electoral processes and the relation to political parties.

In the late 1970s, after the repeal of the Ato Institucional n. 5 (1968), in addition to the end of the bipartisan system, the political opening process began. At that time, the movements of small far-right-wing organizations emerged, with a view to organize party acronyms as an instrument of dispute in this political opening context, also around the National Constituent Assembly process (Dreifuss, 1989).

Brazilian integralism – the main fascist Latin American organization –, although lacking the leadership of Plínio Salgado (who died in 1975), persisted as one of the main political references, largely because it has been the first mass political organization in Brazilian history, as well as the main fascist movement outside the European continent. In addition, the integralists had a relation, albeit in a supporting way, to deploying the authoritarian regime in 1964. Throughout the 1980s, unsuccessful negotiations about the founding of the Brazilian Nationalist Action Party (Partido de Ação Nacionalista [PAN]) were the main instrument with an integralist orientation towards political parties (Natali, 1986).

Inspired by the triad 'God, Homeland, and Family' used at the times of the AIB, part of the integralist militancy advocated the creation of the PAN as "a political instrument capable of preserving the magnificent conquests of Brazilian civilization, since its initial landmark – the Holy Cross" (Partido de Ação Nacionalista, 1983, p. 1). The group introduced itself as an actual representative of Brazilian nationalism and had as its primary principles the fight against the "threat of foreign imperialism (communist or capitalist)" (Partido

¹ This was not, of course, a Brazilian specificity in terms of 'per transaction' or 'ongoing' transitions. In relation to this topic, see Costa Pinto and Martinho (2003).

de Ação Nacionalista, 1983, p. 3), in line with the 1930s anti-communist and antiliberal integralist discourse.

One of the group's proposals was the building of a third way at the economic and political levels, based on the Church's Social Doctrine in accordance with the principles of integralist corporatism². However, the moments before the 1989 presidential elections marked, in fact, an intensified fragmentation of the Brazilian far-right-wing, either due to the dispute for representativeness or the ideological background issues, as well as the emergence of new organizations. The integralists, in addition to founding the PAN, hypothesized the creation of the Integralist Action Party (Partido de Ação Integralista [PAI]), highlighting the internal disputes over *who* should be the *successor* of Plínio Salgado (Integralista sonha com partido, 1988), or even if the AIB acronym should be re-founded.

In the context of defining presidential candidacies, it became clear that the most radical portions of the Brazilian right-wing did not have a unified political project, also in terms of organization, nor a candidate who represented them. The fascist-inspired far-right-wing was divided into small organizations, such as: a) Brazilian Nationalist Action (Ação Nacionalista); b) Brazilian National Socialist Party (Partido Nacional-Socialista Brasileiro); c) Brazilian National Revolutionary Party (Partido Nacional Revolucionário Brasileiro); d) Brazilian Homeland and Freedom Movement (Movimento Pátria e Liberdade); e) Brazilian Integralist Action (Ação Integralista Brasileira); f) Brazilian Free Country Movement (Movimento Pátria Livre); g) Brazilian Nationalist Front (Frente Nacionalista); h) Brazilian Democratic Nationalist Action (Ação Nacionalista Democrática [ANDE]) (Direita luta pela "boquinha", 1989), etc.

Among these organizations, the ANDE was one of those that tried to combine the various far-right-wing acronyms within that period. Led by Raphael Noschese and João Marcos Flaquer, former leaders of youth and student groups active during the dictatorship³, they claimed the creation of an acronym to gather the many dispersed groups (Direita articula-se com objetivo de influir na sucessão, 1989). Despite the attempt to create a feasible common political platform, the group also tried to outline choices in terms of candidacies that, perhaps, represented the group's interests. The names suggested were Jânio Quadros (with a conservative profile, who ended up not running for president) and Guilherme Afif Domingos (Jânio e Afif são as opções da direita para a presidência, 1989), from the Brazilian Liberal Party (Partido Liberal [PL]), who was affiliated to the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (Partido Democrático Social [PDS]) during the dictatorship.

Anyway, there is a need to consider that the ANDE had an innocuous participation in the attempt to establish links between the radical sectors of the Brazilian right-wing or

² In relation to the corporatist projects and the 'Integral State' models, see Gonçalves and Caldeira (2016).

³ Raphael Noschese was the leader of the group called 'Democratic Student Movement' (Movimento Estudantil Democrático), an organization active during the political unrest process that preceded the 1964 coup d'État. In turn, João Flaquer had already been the main leader of the 'Communist-Hunting Command' (Comando de Caça aos Comunistas [CCC]).

even in the definition of a candidacy representing these diverse small groups. As for the support to the 1989 candidacies, the name of Ronaldo Caiado gained momentum in some sectors, including integralist groups (Direita luta pela “boquinha”, 1989). One of the reasons for this support was Caiado’s extra-parliamentary activity in the Brazilian Rural Democratic Union (União Democrática Ruralista [UDR]) that, in addition to advocating the property and interests of large landowners, fought – even violently – the movements claiming rights in the countryside, above all the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra [MST]).

Despite the definition of support for a certain candidate, the context of the Brazilian far-right-wing in mid-1989 consisted in intense fragmentation and mere political support. In addition to the reminiscence of an authoritarian past and the ‘ashamed right-wing’ phenomenon, it is worth considering that the emergence of new acronyms, as well as the radicalization of some of these groups, helped to foster such a disarticulated nature.

Since the 1980s, the action of several neo-Nazi groups has gained strength in Brazil. We may define three trends of the neo-Nazism configurations in the beginning of the ‘New Republic’ (Gonçalves, Caldeira, & Andrade, 2017). The first of them consisted of urban youth groups, especially the so-called *skinheads* (or *naziskin*), characterized by the appeal to aesthetic practices of ritualized violence, mainly in the persecution of minorities (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, and transgenders [LGBTs], Brazilian Northeasterners, Jews, etc.)⁴.

In addition to this rather violent trend, the historical negationist publications on the holocaust, published by the Editora Revisão (founded in Porto Alegre, in 1985) (Jesus, 2006), comprised the most significant part of spreading anti-Semitism in the far-right-wing within the period, besides the principle of articulation between the other organizations, especially to some of the integralist groups (Caldeira, 2014).

Through the historical negationist literature and works like *Holocausto: judeu ou alemão?* (Castan, 1985) – by Siegfried Ellwanger Castan, owner of the Editora Revisão –, concerning the discourses denying the holocaust and resuming National Socialism, there was a dialogue with *skinhead* groups – like the *white power* (Almeida, 2004) –, in addition to strategies aimed at promoting party organizations.

The Brazilian National Socialist Party (Partido Nacional-Socialista Brasileiro [PNSB]) and the Brazilian Revolutionary Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista Revolucionário Brasileiro [PNRB]) were the 2 neo-Nazi organizations in the 1980s articulation process. Led

⁴ The skinheads’ neo-Nazi organization, in Brazil, is particularly characterized by its tiny size – very small groups –, with a relatively short life and an ideological core based on anti-communism, anti-Semitism, and the defense of a white (and European) racial superiority. Following its emergence in São Paulo, in the 1980s, it has become clear, over the years, that this detachment from the neo-Nazi currents of the Brazilian far-right-wing trends has gained strength, so that the cooperative relation to some groups operating in neighboring countries (particularly in Argentina and Chile) deepens, as well as in Portugal and in the United States of America (USA) (cf. Almeida, 2017).

by Armando Zanini Jr. (Lopes, 1992), a reserve officer from the Merchant Navy, the 2 small-sized associations advocated the practice of eugenics, based on the need to establish an authentic ‘Brazilian race,’ mainly grounded in the exclusion of the Jewish presence in the nation and in its ethos.

The two associations, by playing no prominent role even in the far-right-wing field, did not manage to be granted a political party license by the Brazilian Higher Electoral Court (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral [TSE]). Also, the relation between rather radical groups – like the *skinheads*, as well as Armando Zanini’s party projects – and other organizations (especially along with some integralist groups) was established with major caveats, either due to the radical discourse, the overt intolerance, or even the illegal nature of these organizations, especially because of the historical negationist anti-Semitism⁵.

In addition to these rather radical trends, linked in various ways to historical fascist experiences, another significant portion of the far-right-wing, during the 1980s, consisted in groups linked to (reserve and active) military personnel and civilian collectives, which came into contact, for instance, by means of periodical publications like *Letras em Marcha*, *Inconfidência*, and *Ombro a Ombro* (Santos, 2009), and routinely denounced the ‘communization’ of the Brazilian nation, via brainwashing, during the transition process (“*Letras em Marcha*” aponta comunização, 1986).

In the *Ombro a Ombro*, founded in 1988 by former members of the Brazilian Higher School of War (Escola Superior de Guerra [ESG]) and the Alumni Association of the Brazilian Higher School of War (Associação de Diplomados da Escola Superior de Guerra [ADESG]), the process of attempting to articulate military interests around the democratic transition is clear, particularly with regard to the electoral race. One of the central aspects in *Ombro a Ombro* and in other periodical publications was the struggle for the memory of the 1964 coup d’État, weighted by the transition process, but also the tensions between the military personnel, the political class, and civil society, also based on discussions about the prosecution of crimes committed during the dictatorship (Cardoso, 2011).

In relation to political parties and the electoral process, in the course of the 1989 elections, there was a marked concern with the advance of the left-wing field, especially through the candidacies of Leonel Brizola (from the Brazilian Democratic Labor Party [Partido Democrático Trabalhista – PDT]) and Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (from the PT), but not in terms of promoting a presidential candidacy that represented the sectors to the right of the active and reserve military personnel.

⁵ A legal dispute started in 1986, involving, on the one hand, historical negationists (especially the Editora Revisão and Siegfried Ellwanger Castan), against groups fighting for human rights, Jewish associations, and anti-racist movements. This dispute, which emerged in the local courts of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, reached the Brazilian Supreme Federal Court (Supremo Tribunal Federal [STF]), which prohibited the works produced by the Editora Revisão to be published (cf. Caldeira, 2009).

In fact, the only clear definition could take place just on the threshold of the second round of the 1989 presidential elections, in which Fernando Collor de Mello (from the Brazilian National Reconstruction Party [Partido da Reconstrução Nacional – PRN]) is described as capable of preventing the advance of the “candidate who represents the old and outdated politics [...] who reduces everything to a clash between the poor and the rich; between capital and labor” (Momento decisivo, 1989).

In general terms, we may claim that, from the moment the democratic transition process was constituted to the process of outlining the first elections for President of the Republic, in 1989, the scenario of the Brazilian far-right-wing showed a great ramification and disarticulation. While some expressions seek to combine in the expression of somewhat consecrated political leaders (like Jânio Quadros), others try to combine in the references contrary to left-wing social movements (like Ronaldo Caiado). At other times, the figure of the emerging leadership (Fernando Collor) is taken as an instrument to guarantee the interest in facing the ‘communist advance.’

Anyway, although there was no effective articulation of a candidacy, as well as the political impact of the far-right-wing in this situation was minimal, the existence of a principle of articulation between these small groups becomes clear, in addition to the attempt of expanding a political space. First, it was about the need for articulation in a new circumstance, marked by an expansion of possibilities (candidacies, acronyms, action spaces as pressure groups), but this should be articulated in a context of critiques of right-wing authoritarianisms, or even to the end of the Cold War, which helped to typify the binarism characterizing the discourse of these groups.

There is, however, a process evidencing the crucial values for these portions of the Brazilian far-right-wing, based on sharing a critical view of the democratic transition process, regarding the danger of the advance of left-wing forces, as well as the need to disseminate a conservative ideal, grounded in nationalism and the presence of an authoritarian State. As for the State, it could range from the purpose of repressing social movements to an intervention in the economy and labor relations.

Since 1989, especially after the election campaign, the relation between the far-right-wing and political parties regarding representativeness and influence has significantly changed. The physician Enéas Ferreira Carneiro, who had no previous political experience, led the creation of the Party of the Reconstruction of the Brazilian National Order (Partido de Reedificação da Ordem Nacional [PRONA]) in 1989, the same year in which he launched himself as a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic.

Although he had only 15 seconds available on the Free Airtime for Election Campaign Advertisement (Horário Político Eleitoral Gratuito), Enéas Carneiro criticized the National Constituent Assembly, political professionalism, and professional election campaigns, as well as asked voters to choose him using sentences like:

If you believed me, protest against everything that is there. Vote for the end of disorder! On the fifteenth, take a deep breath, fill your chest with air, and shout along with the whole Brazil: My name is Enéas!

The slogan “My name is Enéas,” combined with the content of political discontent, was a prominent element during a presidential election campaign with more than 20 candidates. Also, the fact that Enéas Carneiro (and the PRONA) introduced himself as an outsider in face of the political professionalization process, was one of the ingredients to build an outsider’s political narrative – which raised the candidate to fame. Finally, an authoritarian discourse, a praise for order, and the denunciation of a moral and behavioral crisis (Partido de Reedificação da Ordem Nacional – PRONA – Ata de Fundação, 1989) helped him to gain a spot in the conservative field, also pleasing many far-right-wing sectors (Caldeira, 2016a).

However, PRONA’s growth as a referential party for the Brazilian far-right-wing should not be seen only as a mechanistic relation between the leadership discourse and the concerns of some sectors in the political field. First, it is necessary to grasp the existence of an unfilled vacancy in the Brazilian right-wing field, built even by means of the democratic transition process.

The PRONA’s political strengthening process, after 1989, coincides with two situational elements. The first was the political crisis triggered by the impeachment of Fernando Collor de Mello, in which the figure of outsider represented a critique of political professionalization and an alternative to the discontent generated by the fall of the first president elected by direct vote after the end of the military regime. In addition, the development of new economic policies in line with the Washington Consensus, especially the Brazilian Real Plan (Plano Real), was the target of several critiques coming from the left- and the right-wing.

In the political expression arranged by the right-wing, it was up to the PRONA to articulate with many existing tendencies, refining its discourse, in which the appeal to order and authority was consistent with the denunciation of a conspiracy to destroy national sovereignty⁶. The defense of a *strong, technical, and intervening* State would become not only a PRONA’s letter of introduction addressed to several members of the Brazilian far-right-wing, but an effective outcome of this interaction.

Between 1989 and the preparation for the 1994 elections, the PRONA intensified its relation to some political nuclei of authoritarian nationalism, especially those contributing to the newspaper *Ombro a Ombro*, where several collaborators in the 1994 government program came from, devoted to areas like economics, strategy, geopolitics, and mineral

⁶ This was the motto not only of election campaigns, but also of the PRONA’s Government Program (cf. Carneiro, 1994).

issues, just as in the case of Rear Admiral Roberto Gama e Silva, candidate for vice-presidency alongside Enéas Carneiro.

Other far-right-wing groups have declared support for Enéas Carneiro's candidacy, such as some skinhead groups – authoritarian, but openly non-racist (Vale, 1994) –, and especially Armando Zanini, as president of the Brazilian National Revolutionary Party (Partido Nacionalista Revolucionário Brasileiro – PNRB) (Mack, 1994). Although these supports were not officially acknowledged by the PRONA, they illustrate the representativeness degree achieved by the party, as well as a certain movement pattern of neofascist groups in relation to the institutional political field.

In the 1994 elections, Enéas Carneiro won third place, with 7.38%⁷ of the valid votes, so that the 'danger Enéas' was considered as a risk of the rise of (neo)fascism. Regardless of the characterization of the political ideals of Enéas Carneiro and the PRONA – which were closer to authoritarian and conservative nationalism than to (neo)fascism or integralism –, the relation to far-right-wing organizations gained strength in the future candidacies.

In 1998, the year of Enéas Carneiro's last presidential candidacy, the relation to small groups strengthened, either to conservative organizations fighting abortion or to organizations such as the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (Movimento de Solidariedade Ibero-Americana) – the main arm of Lyndon LaRouche's organizations in Brazil (Krischker, 2004) –, intensifying the conspiracy content in the candidacies of the leader of the PRONA.

Although the PRONA has consolidated itself as the main reference of the far-right-wing, its relation to integralist groups only intensified in the 2000s, due to the *institutional gap* of integralist groups, as a result of power struggles and ideological conceptions in face of troublesome themes – such as anti-Semitism and historical negationism (Caldeira, 2014) –, or strategic issues. In any case, the PRONA remained as the main institutional reference for the Brazilian far-right-wing until 2006, when the party was extinguished.

Since 2002, the Brazilian political scene has changed after the victory of the PT and the rise of several left-wing governments in Latin America. Although the PRONA was in its final phase, there was cooperation between the party's parliamentary leaders and the right-wing sectors, especially in the claims that involve memory struggle processes concerning the military regime, and this causes a getting-together between party deputies and other far-right-wing leaders, like the retired military man and then federal deputy, Jair Bolsonaro⁸.

After the end of the PRONA, a vacancy emerged in terms of the Brazilian far-right-wing representativeness, but the context became diverse. Either due to the continuity of the PT administrations until the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, in 2016, or in relation to

7 Or exactly 4,670,894 votes, according to TSE data.

8 The Projeto de Lei n. 5.508, proposed in 2005, which provided for the inscription of a military man killed in combat with the 'Revolutionary Popular Vanguard' (Vanguarda Popular Revolucionária) in the book of the Homeland's heroes, was jointly written by Jair Bolsonaro and deputy Elimar Máximo Damasceno, from the PRONA.

the Latin American context. Also, it is necessary to consider the existence of other variables, such as the relation between evangelical conservatism (and not just Catholic organizations' conservatism) and the most recent far-right-wing.

The activities of the Brazilian National Truth Commission (created in 2011 and institutionalized in 2012) intensified the reaction of right-wing military sectors, especially the most radical trends (Pereira, 2015). Organizations like the Terrorism Never Again (Terrorismo Nunca Mais [TERNUMA]) began to ask for narratives against the reports made by this commission, as well as a defense of alternative political projects.

It is in this core that re-founding the “Brazilian National Renovation Alliance” (Aliança Renovadora Nacional) (Caldeira, 2013) begins to be idealized, a party that supports the dictatorship started in 1964, as well as the creation of the Brazilian Military Party (Partido Militar Brasileiro [PMIB]), which announces itself as “the solution to put the country back on the trail.” In this context, the actions of the party (being created) are announced, once again, as strategies against the advance of communism in Brazil.

With the deepening of the political crisis, some acronyms hitherto of little relevance, such as the Brazilian Labor Renewal Party (Partido Renovador Trabalhista Brasileiro [PRTB]) – and its main leader, Levy Fidelix –, began to signal a turn to the radical right-wing from 2014 on. To do this, they fostered a relation to rather radical trends, including neofascist tiny groups, such as the Nationalist Front. Founded in Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil, the Nationalist Front, expressed inspiration both in Plínio Salgado's integralism and in Italian fascism and in Oswald Mosley's organizations, in addition to the actions undertaken by neofascist groups in various countries, like Ukraine, Italy, and France. Also, the PRTB gave rise to potential relations with some small skinhead groups (Caldeira, 2016b), but the negative impact on the media has significantly cooled down these cooperations.

Therefore, the electoral process that consecrated Jair Bolsonaro's victory linked the PRTB to the victorious electoral ticket, since Hamilton Mourão, reserve general and current vice-president, is affiliated to that party. Throughout the 2018 election campaign, the PRTB in São Paulo effectively got closer to the Brazilian Integralist Front (Frente Integralista Brasileira [FIB]), the main neo-integralist organization operating in the country. Victor Barbuy, president of the FIB, met publicly with Rodrigo Tavares, PRTB's candidate for the Government of the State of São Paulo, and with Levy Fidelix, president of the acronym (Frente Integralista Brasileira, 2019). On both occasions, the FIB and PRTB leaders carried copies of books written by the AIB's top leader.

However, despite the support of neofascist groups for the party that constituted Jair Bolsonaro's winning coalition (PRTB and Liberal Social Party [Partido Social Liberal – PSL]), there is no evidence attesting the prominent participation of neofascist groups (in the ideal type proposed) in the building of Bolsonaro's militancy or social media. In this regard, we may, even a priori, make some comments.

Undoubtedly, Bolsonaro was a representative of rather radical portions of the Brazilian far-right-wing. A politically active figure since the democratic transition period, Bolsonaro stood out for advocating torture and other activities incompatible with the democratic order, fostering disbelief in liberal democracy and institutional rites, contempt for minorities, and political persecution of opponents. Thus, it is not surprising that the then deputy Jair Bolsonaro has been acknowledged as a potential leader by rather radical Brazilian far-right-wing groups, including those of a neo-Nazi inspiration (Oliveira, 2014).

However, resorting to an anti-communist rhetoric and radical and intolerant assumptions, Jair Bolsonaro and his allies were, until very recently, representative figures of the so-called 'low clergy,' i.e. parliamentarians lacking significance or political power. This took place even in terms of representativeness and relation to neofascist organizations, something which, as mentioned, benefited the PRONA and Enéas Carneiro, also due to the existence of a more structured political party.

Nevertheless, the vertiginous strengthening of Jair Bolsonaro's 2018 presidential candidacy faced the lack of a robust party machine, now signaling to the Brazilian National Ecological Party (Partido Ecológico Nacional [PEN] – which would change its acronym to PRONA, in honor of Enéas Carneiro, or PATRIOTAS), or even to the Brazilian Free Social Party (Partido Social Livre [PSL]), a group that until recently did not have a fully defined ideological agenda.

The hypothesis and argument we come up with is that, more than the existence of an articulation pattern of neofascist groups throughout the experience of the so-called New Republic, the movement of new right-wings helps us to interpret more effectively the creation of a 'Bolsonarism.' That is, neofascist organizations start to get closer to Bolsonaro – and to Bolsonaroism – during their growth phase and the agitation of new right-wings, but Bolsonaroism is not a direct outcome of the articulations of neofascist groups, also because such tiny groups do not have a significant political strength.

Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account that, throughout the electoral process, Jair Bolsonaro's campaign discourse signaled the emptying of the State, not only in its social dimension, but also from the viewpoint of the privatization of State-owned companies in strategic sectors that, in rhetoric and in the right-wing nationalist imaginary, are crucial for the maintenance of national sovereignty.

Despite the prejudiced and intolerant values expressed by Jair Bolsonaro, some elements of his political project represent the diversity of the new right-wings in Brazil, in miscellaneous terms, too. Conspiracy theories (such as 'globalism' or 'cultural Marxism'), directly steeped in an imagination that permeated various right-wing thought currents (and also historical fascism itself), coexist with an ultra-liberal project and discourse in the economy, as well as support for Israel and the United States of America (USA), above all in the political projects of Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump. From this viewpoint,

although the Jair Bolsonaro's discourse and practice do justice to some force ideas of the Brazilian far-right-wing of a neofascist inspiration, at other times they offer disruptive points, or at least substantial differences, just as in the case of advocating privatizations.

Not only due to disputes between representatives of a specific field, namely the Brazilian far-right-wing, but also as a consequence of philosophical and ideological issues, the getting-together or support of neofascist groups to certain aspects of Jair Bolsonaro must be analyzed in the light of the interests of these neofascist groups, as well as their similarities and differences. Nevertheless, stating the differences should not mean erasing the similarities between Bolsonaro's supporters, historical fascism, and neofascist groups, too.

Anyway, starting from the consolidation of a conservative rhetoric during the fall of Dilma Rousseff, in 2016 (and not just the rise of Jair Bolsonaro), there has been a strengthening of a feeling more favorable to the far-right-wing, but without the existence of a fascist-inspired political group to channel such a 'potential.'

Final remarks

Altogether, it is observed that, since the end of the democratic transition until more recent times, the Brazilian far-right-wing – especially the neofascist groups – varies in attitude towards the institutionalized political field and, particularly, the political parties. However, this condition must be interpreted by means of endogenous and exogenous variables, related not only to the realm of right-wing radicalism, but also to conjectural aspects at the national and international level.

The initial period is strongly marked not only by disarticulation between small groups (and which, despite their similarities, seek diversified strategies and interests), but above all by the political environment refractory to nationalism and right-wing authoritarianism. The 'ashamed right-wing' context was, despite the existence of a conservative transition, key to cool down the far-right-wing temptations.

The changes found out must be interpreted, on the other hand, through the combination of a national context more prone to the work of a group used to the far-right-wing discourse. First, the existence of a political and representativeness crisis (institutionalized in the impeachment of Fernando Collor), but also the intensification of privatization processes. The danger becomes not only the advance of left-wing forces, but the very guarantee of national sovereignty in face of the international interests.

Throughout the period of relative hegemony of left-wing forces in the national context, but also in the Latin American context, there is a discourse of *reaction to the progressive agendas* and, especially in Brazil, attempts to discuss the authoritarian legacies that persist around the conservative transition process. In this circumstance, the institutional disruption,

as well as the impacts of an economic crisis of international scope, becomes an ingredient to articulate far-right-wing tendencies that, although lacking the representativeness of a specific channeling group, seeks to tension the political field by means of platforms and anti-democratic statements.

Thus, although it seems wrong to speak of continuity and absolute cooperation in the radical Brazilian right-wing fields over the last few decades, it would also be wrong to assert the lack of relative historicity in the most recent phenomena. One of the main points to consider in the agitations between neofascist groups and the recent rise of radical right-wings in Brazil is the permanence of some traits, which we may see as some *political imaginary* or *political culture*, with a view to the transmission dynamics, too, and the dialogues between various generations of people, social groups, and political organizations.

We agree with the interpretation of authors like Boisard (2014), which claims that anti-communism is an element consolidating a genealogy and an interconnection to properly analyze right-wings' thinking – especially among radical right-wings – in Latin America. Sure, between the Cold War contexts and the new right-wings' escalation, the times are quite diverse.

Finally, it is worth asking this question:

- Is not it necessary to interpret these issues according to their historicity and diversity, going beyond categories like neofascism, which can pose interpretive pitfalls?

We bet so.

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