



THE CURRENT ENIGMA OF BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

Originated from some questions of British academics (mainly from the University of Kent) about the Brazilian political reality, it was sought, based on historical and social elements, to analyse the presidential election of 2018. This text, which was presented in November 2018 in a seminar in Canterbury, has, in addition to the introduction and the final considerations, three parts: a brief history of the Brazilian formation, an analysis of the capitalist crisis and the previous governments, and an approach of the political manipulations carried out through social networks. Finally, the fascist leitmotiv of the Bolsonaro's campaign was also analysed, problematizing its nuances in a dependent and underdeveloped country.

Keywords: Brazilian elections. Dependent capitalism. Fascism. Financial capital. Media manipulation.

1 INTRODUCTION

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On October 28th of 2018, the Brazilian population voted to elect its new president. In the result, Jair Bolsonaro, the candidate of the Social Liberal Party had 55.13% of the votes (57.797.847) and Fernando Haddad, of the Workers' Party, had 44.87% of the votes (47.040.906). The difference was more than 10 million votes. 2.14% voted blank (2.486.593), 7.43% of the votes were null (8.608.105) and 21.30% abstained to vote (31.371.704).

It is important to note that in the first round, which took place on October 7th of 2018, Bolsonaro had already achieved a large number of votes. With 46.03% of the votes (49.276.990), he was shortly to be elected in advance.

Bolsonaro's campaign was highlighted by three central points: by the use of social networks as a form of political manipulation; by the discursive centrality in the fight against corruption; by the dissemination of hate values and prejudices. On this last point, Bolsonaro made speeches against women, against black people and against homosexuals. He also made, with even more force, speeches against the Brazilian left people. He said that if these people do not subordinate themselves to his command, they will be arrested, expelled from Brazil, or exterminated.

His words appeared in various places and echoed throughout the world. They came to different countries and cities. Thus, in addition to the Brazilian population, that also shocked many people around the world. Many people, including members of right-wing political organizations, said that all this was absurd. They defended that the election of Bolsonaro would be a problem not only for Brazil, but for the whole world.

Moreover, much was said that it was fascism. Many have said that Bolsonaro represents a fascist policy. Is it really that? Does the Bolsonaro government announce itself as a fascist? But what is Fascism?

Analysing the historical experiences, and especially the Italian case of Mussolini, the fascism presents itself from three main elements:

a) *The diffusion of prejudiced values*, which present people and groups as superior to others. Whether against Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, communists, black people, these values come from a connection with fascism.

b) *The nationalism and the protectionism*. The realization of internal economic investments and the creation of trade limits to imports, showing a national unity against external economic interests. For this, defences of national industrial and productive capital against international financial capital also took place;

c) *The link with unions and organizations of the national working class*. The dissemination of a defence of national workers against international exploitation and against

the occupation of work places by immigrants. Fascist propaganda uses nationalism as a solution to unemployment and thus manages to control working-class organizations.

The first quality is clearly presented in Bolsonaro's speech. But the other two appear rather confused. It is important to separate between a fascist candidate and a fascist power structure. In the Brazilian case, this situation is a bit more complicated. Due to the historical characteristics that mark the process of dependence and underdevelopment, the Brazilian case may even be more serious.

To reflect this process, several elements are essential. Among these, we can highlight: *a brief Brazilian history; the economic and political crisis and the impacts on the Workers' Party government; and the political manipulation through social networks.*

2 BRIEF BRAZILIAN HISTORY

According to the International Monetary Fund's 2015 data, Brazil is the ninth largest economy in the world. Brazil has a Gross Domestic Product of US \$ 1,772,589 billion (almost two trillion dollars). In the previous year, according to the United Nations, this value was US\$ 2,346,523 billion and Brazil was in seventh place. Also according to this institution (UN), in 2017, Brazil was the sixth most populous country on the planet, with 207,660,929 inhabitants. In relation to the territorial extension, Brazil is the fifth largest in the world, with 8.515.767 km².

However, the social data indicate that this reality is extremely inequitable. In the IDHAD (Human Development Index Adjusted to Inequality) of 2015, Brazil was in position number 76. But the worst economic data is in relation to the concentration of wealth. According to research by Thomas Piketty, Brazil is the country with the highest concentration of income in the world. This data analysis (2001-2015) indicates that almost 30% of all national income are in the hands of 1% of the population. The 10% richest have 55% of total Brazilian income.

For the UN, the Brazilian inequality is also increased by tax-free on profits and dividends. In worldwide, only in Brazil and Estonia there is no tax on what shareholders receive from companies. In addition, Brazilian taxation is extremely contradictory. Financial gains are less taxed than labour income. This reality makes Brazil a tributary paradise for the super-rich.

A simple calculation could indicate a very different situation. By dividing all national income by the Brazilian population and considering the cost of living in most Brazilian cities, everything would be quite different. The individual annual income would be nearly \$ 12,000. And, taking a family of four people, the annual family income would be more than \$ 46,000. The problem, then, is not the size of wealth, but its concentration.

The violence in Brazil follows the size of the economic inequality. Brazil is the thirteenth country with the highest homicide rate in the world. Of the fifty most violent cities in the world, 17 are in Brazil. But this reality is not new in Brazil. Its historical roots are very old.

The economic concentration in Brazil was based on violence. This process dates from the year 1500, with the Portuguese invasion of Brazil. Until then, the lands of this country were inhabited by hundreds of indigenous ethnic groups. These Indians were organized, for the most part, from the so-called *primitive communism*. The land was very fertile and abundant of food, compensating the little productive development.

With the arrival of the Portuguese invaders, a process of colonization began. But, in distinction to the colonization of the northern part of the American continent, which was for settlement, Brazil experienced only exploitation. This was known as *exploration colonization*. The general interest of the Portuguese State was simply to steal the riches of the Brazilian lands and to negotiate these with companies and States of Europe.

To facilitate these activities, the Portuguese aimed to use the work of the Brazilian Indians. They tried to enslave and train the Indians. Through violence, the sacrifice to work occurred. Through force, they imposed the Catholic religion as a sacrifice. All Indians should obey the leaders and gods of the white invaders. But there was resistance. Knowing the places where they were born and aware of their possession, the Brazilian Indians tried, and are still trying, to resist. They had an initial fate less brutal than the North America's Indians, which were almost all killed by the white invaders.

Unable to use the work of the Indians, the Portuguese invaders tried to find other sources of labour. In 1452, Pope Nicholas V predicted that slavery was a design of God against the infidels. But this was not restricted to the kingdom of Portugal. The entire European continent was also erected by black slave hands. The mercantilist economic phase also developed from slavery. In fact, modern slavery differs, in some important qualities, from the old. The main variation is that the slave also served as a commodity in the process of pre-capitalist accumulation. Not just as a labour, but the slave himself had a value of exchange.

In the Brazilian case, slaves were used in both directions: both to enrich the slave trader, and to expand the wealth of the exploiter of his labour. To the form of agricultural production - denominated of *plantation* - were also added other elements. Alongside the slave labour, was the big land property, the monoculture and the commodity exportation. The wealth produced by the slaves in Brazil was transported to Europe, to be negotiated as the other commodities.

The colonizing state transferred the control of those big lands to the Portuguese lords, where slaves produced essentially the same agricultural culture. The biggest examples were sugar and coffee. All these commodities came from the sweat and the blood of the African people, who were enslaved in Brazilian lands. In the beginning, when the most brutal was this exploration, more the sugar and the coffee became accessible in world and more wealth was accumulated by its explorers.

Slavery in Brazil was so widely used by Europeans that this was reflected even in literature. An example is the classic English book by Daniel de Foe entitled *Robinson Crusoe's Adventures*. In this work, the protagonist also makes use of the exploitation of the slaves in Brazil to accumulate riches. Alongside Protestantism and liberal asceticism, capitalist synthesis was made by using slavery. But, in this time, slavery was essentially in the colonies, outside Europe.

The use of slavery in Brazil served to the interests of European countries. When slavery became an obstacle to the accumulation of wealth of some of these countries, it began to be fought. With the industrial revolution, England needed machines, workers, raw materials and, as well, consumers. It also needed a formal equality relationship that would turn everyone into buyers and sellers of commodities. Slavery was an obstacle to that.

Thus was created the *Slave Trade Suppression Act* or, as it became known in Brazil, the *Bill Aberdeen*. Approved by the British Parliament in 1845, this law indicated that the British navy had the right to arrest or destroy any slave ship that was going to Brazil. This law represented a fight between European countries. But it represented more a dispute between dominant classes.

With the end of the slave trade approaching, the use of slave labour tended to end. Thus, in Brazil, landlords and slave traders would lose their economic power. However, to try to avoid this loss of power, some agreements were made. Since 1822, Brazil had become independent of Portugal. But the dominant classes were still practically the same. And agricultural production was still based on planting and voltage to supply European markets.

The abolition of slavery in Brazil dates from 1888. But, before that, two laws were important: the *law of the free womb* of 1871 and the *law of the sexagenarians* of 1885. The first considered free all the children of slaves born in Brazil. The second transmitted freedom to slaves over sixty. Therefore children and old people were free from slavery. However, one can ask a simple question: what are the costs that these laws have generated for the slave owners? Has that diminished their economic power?

The useful life of slaves in Brazil ranged from 10 to 12 years. Thus, a slave over sixty years old no longer had the strength and ability to work. Similarly, a new-born child would need some years to be able to work. The abolition of slavery did not represent a great defeat for the dominant classes in Brazil. They knew how to reduce that impact.

Another group would also be affected by abolition of slavery. The slave traders had much to lose. But, in 1850, the so-called *Land Law* was established in Brazil. Before that law, the Brazilian lands were owned by the State and only their possession was granted. But from that law, the land became commodities and could be sold and bought. A portion of the slave traders took advantage and bought Brazilian land. From merchants they became masters of lands. The big lands properties increased and made impossible the agrarian reform.

In Brazil, the most conservative groups have not been destroyed, but have remained stronger. And, along with these dominant classes, the prejudices against the population were also maintained. Until today, the worker in Brazil has a label and has a colour. The Brazilian economic elite have aversion to the workers and have hate of the black population. But this reality is not only an internal result of Brazilian history. This is also maintained because it serves to international economic interests.

Unlike revolutionary processes that led to economic transformations, in Brazil an agreement was reached among the dominant classes. Unlike in the USA and France, where there was a war between feudal and bourgeois forces, an agreement was reached in Brazil. This agreement was essentially made through the State. Thus, a movement took place from up, far from the population. In fact, the various popular revolts that occurred in Brazil were hardly repressed by the State. The absence of democracy is a historical mark of the Brazilian State. And corruption develops through the absence of democracy.

To understand the Brazilian economic formation, the German case is better than the French case. In place of the *Bourgeois Revolution*, Brazil approached to a *Prussian Way*. But that happened with several differences for the German case. The Brazilian case, in addition to be later, it was more dependent. Germany was unified in 1871 and its capitalist economy

began to develop rapidly. In Brazil, it was only after 1930 that one can speak of capitalist hegemony. Until then, the economic and political power was with the rural oligarchies.

The twentieth-century capitalism was no longer the same as its birth. Initially, capitalism was marked by competition between companies. But with this development, monopolies were born. With the monopolies, financial capital was born. With financial capital, the new imperialism was born. When Brazil reconfigured itself economically, the central countries were already imperialists. The capitalist enterprises had already spread all over the world. It was impossible to build large independent capitalist enterprises in Brazil.

Unlike Germany, which built its capitalism with violence and nationalism, Brazil experienced almost only violence. In the agreement between the landlords and the Brazilian industrial capitalists, appeared a new leading actor: the international financial capitalist. Within the repressive and corrupt state and without democracy, another agreement was made. But this time the new and old dominant classes were subordinated to the interests of transnational corporations.

The corruption practices were natural to this agreement. The situation of the Brazilian population had to be subordinated to the interests of these three social classes. The wealth produced in Brazil, derived from economic exploitation, needed to be divided into three parts. The rural worker was exploited by the rural oligarchy. The industrial worker was exploited by the industrial capitalist. And financial capital received its economic rate from everyone, especially through profits and dividends.

To guarantee this process, the Brazilian State had to stimulate the economy and did it through creating debts. Brazilian public debt is also a result of the exploitation of Brazilian workers. As there were more exploiting classes, the amount explored needed to increase. This is called *super-exploitation*. It occurred in Brazil through the decrease in the value of the labour power and the increase in profits. The major sources for that are the reduction of workers' wages and the terrible working conditions.

In addition, with worse working conditions, there is a greater tendency to social revolts. The workers organized and protested. However, as the revolt increased, the repression increased too. And the state was the central element for that. It served both as a meeting room for the agreements of the dominant classes and as a repressive force against the workers. The absence of democracy in Brazil is not a cultural effect. It is a direct determination of economic exploitation and historical repression of the state.

And always one speaks of lack of democracy, one can speak of corruption. The old practices of personal favours were known as *patrimonialism*. This *patrimonialism*, instead of

having been destroyed, was reconfigured. One could say that Brazil was ruled by a *bourgeois autocracy*. It is a form addicted by practices of personal favour but used for the development of the concentration of riches. Capitalism in Brazil made great use of state corruption to develop.

The State has always responded with repression to the minimum social and democratic advances. This was the example of the *coup d'état of 1964* that existed until 1985. The attempt of social advances through reforms was destroyed by the bourgeois and military dictatorship. US imperialism joined with the dominant Brazilian classes and aborted any possibility of democratic advancement in Brazil.

Using the lie of a communist threat, this bourgeois and military organization killed and tortured several people. Several of the Brazilian torturers were trained directly by US government officials. One of the most famous torturers was Colonel Brilhante Ustra. Among other things, he was famous for participating in torture of children and women. There are several reports that he forced both children to witness the torture of their mothers, when were introduced mouse into women's vaginas.

It was Colonel Ustra who personally tortured the President Dilma Rouseff. It is this torturer that Bolsonaro likes to praise. His most famous public tribute occurred when Bolsonaro said his vote for the impeachment of Dilma. He said “by the memory of Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, the terror of Dilma Rouseff”² and voted for her impeachment.

3 THE CRISIS AND THE WORKERS’ PARTY GOVERNMENT

The Workers’ Party was founded in 1980. At that time, Brazil was still under a military-bourgeois dictatorship. Many political leaders were missing or exiled in other countries. Several social organizations were forbidden. But the acts of violence and the state repression declined in the late 1970s and there was a small democratic opening.

The Workers’ Party was founded by three main groups: workers and unions; religious groups linked to the *Liberation Theology*; intellectuals and artists of the left wing. Among these, their greatest strength came from the trade union movement. During the Brazilian dictatorship, unions were forbidden and virtually destroyed. Beginning in the 1970s,

² PLENÁRIO - sessão deliberativa extraordinária - 17/04/2016. Brasília, DF: TV Câmara, 2016. Available in: <<https://www.camara.leg.br/evento-legislativo/43397?video=1460937304907>>. Accessed on: 22 oct. 2019.

some other union experiences began to emerge. They built a position on the margins of the state and with a negotiating propose with the capitalists.

On that time, big strikes began to be organized and a great leader began to stand out: Luís Inácio Lula da Silva. Lula became famous for two main qualities: his great capacity of communication that reaches the simplest people, and his belief in the idea of negotiation between the parties to reach an agreement. Several advances in the conditions of the workers were resulted through their actions.

On the other hand, from the moment of its origin, some criticisms were made to the Workers' Party and its form of social struggle. The main criticism was its instrumental character. Often, in the struggle through negotiation, the strategy and horizon of the organization were abstracted. This criticism was also added, both internally and externally, by the absence of a deeper analysis of the Brazilian reality. However, the Workers' Party, since the 1980s, has begun to stand out as the most important political force of the Brazilian left.

In Brazil, after the dictatorship, the first presidential election occurred in 1989. Several parties and candidates participated in this dispute. Many political leaders had returned from exile and many organizations of the left were reorganizing. Lula managed to reach the second round of these elections and represented many hopes of social change. But a great economic and media investment made this impossible. Fernando Collor de Mello, a little-known candidate, ended up being elected.

For the dominant classes, a right-wing stranger would be better than a candidate known for his relations with the left. Collor's government lasted less than two years. Several allegations of corruption were announced, and popular pressure came on. He ended up undergoing an impeachment process. Itamar Franco, the vice-president, took his place. He made a liberal government, with emphasis on the stabilization of the Brazilian currency. The so-called *Plano Real* (Real Plan) both reduced the high rates of inflation and allowed the greater development of financial capital in Brazil.

For two more consecutive elections, Lula tried again the dispute for president in Brazil. But, both in 1994 and 1998, Lula lost in the first round to Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Cardoso had been one of the main actors for implementing the *Plano Real*. He was also a world-famous university professor. His academic nickname was the *prince of sociologists*.

As his publications showed, he had a vast knowledge of sociological and Marxist thought, and especially of dependency theory. He has published several analyses of the historical roots of dependence and underdevelopment of the Brazilian economy.

However, in his governmental practices, Cardoso did exactly what he criticized in his theoretical analysis. He was a critical theorist of Brazilian subordination to international financial capital. In his government, he increased the dependent situation of Brazil through the adoption of the neoliberal model. The contradiction between his governmental practice and his theoretical analysis was so great that Cardoso said to rip everything he had written.

The privatization practices made by Cardoso temporarily stimulated the Brazilian economy. But, in general, it was a direct transfer of public property to private companies, especially for international ones. The most famous case was the *Vale do Rio Doce*, the world's largest iron ore miner. This company was privatized for R\$ 3.3 billion. It was an extremely small value. Only the natural reserves of this company had a value of R\$ 100 billion.

This privatization occurred without any consultation with the population. Its buyers were members of international financial capital networks. As in colonial times, the privatization of the *Vale do Rio Doce* was a clear example of the exploitation of Brazilian wealth by international companies. Several denunciations were presented on this process, including the practices of corruption. But the Brazilian media and the judiciary did not give much importance to it.

But even with these economic resources, Cardoso's government has experienced several crises. At the end of his government, the majority of the Brazilian population rejected his president and wished for social changes.

In the presidential election of 2002, Lula faced Jose Serra, who was the main economic representative of the Cardoso government. The elections were for the second round and Lula, after three defeats, was victorious. Lula had a great popular support because it represented an alternative of social change. On the other hand, Lula also had a decisive support of the capitalists. Its vice president, José Alencar, was a representative of Brazilian industrial capital.

In addition, a document became quite famous in Brazil. During a meeting to present the Workers' Party Political Program, Lula read the so-called *letter to the Brazilian people*. Unlike its title, the public target of this document was the representatives of international financial capital. It was an attempt to calm and receive support from these people. Lula made a defence of economic stability and a promise to keep the power of financial capital in Brazil.

Since the beginning of his government, he tried a realization of a social pact. He tried an agreement among social classes in Brazil to develop the economy. The two most extreme economic poles would be the manifestation of this agreement: the poorest and the richest

people. For the poorest, the government would expand social assistance policies. For the richer, the government would give more space for financial capital.

Economically, in the first moment, this deal worked well. Two examples prove this. In the area of housing, a program called *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* (*my house, my life*) was created. The government subsidized and gave credit to the poorest people to buy houses. These houses were built by large capitalist companies, which also expanded the financial speculation. In this cycle, the government gave subsidy and credit, the poor people bought the house, and the capitalists accumulated a lot of profit.

In the area of university education, a policy was formed with three programs: *Reuni*, *Prouni* and *Fies*. *Fies*, which was created in 1999, but had great impetus in the Lula administration, gave credit for students to pay their costs at the private universities. *Reuni* increased vacancies in Brazilian public universities, where education is free. *Prouni*, by means of tax-free, transformed vacancies not used of private universities for public uses.

In both cases, the government made investments in the economy, either through subsidies or through tax-free. In both cases, some poor families had access to new goods. Some of these families used government credits and got into debt. In both cases, the capitalists made a lot of money. Moreover, as Lula himself liked to say, financial capital had never made so much money in Brazil. And, for this, the Brazilian State has become more indebted.

That increased when Brazil prepared to hold the *Football World Cup* and the *Olympics Games*. The government invested a lot of money on these. Many people were employed. Much profit has been accumulated by international companies. Too much money has been received through corruption.

However, the social pact seemed to work well. The poorest families had finally achieved a better life. International capitalist firms seemed satisfied with their profits. In the economic part, the so-called *liberal tripod* was maintained: *inflation targets*, *floating exchange rate* and *primary surplus to pay interest on debt*. Almost half of the entire budget of the Brazilian State is used to the payment of such interest. All of this was fundamental to financial capital. On the other side, there were assistance policies and consumer incentives. This served the needs of the population, especially the poorer people.

So, even with some reports of corruption, the prestige of the government was very high. The first major allegation of corruption occurred in 2005. An allowance of about R\$ 150,000 was paid for deputies to vote in favour of the government. The most important vote was for the pension reform. According to denunciations, members of the government bought

votes of deputies to destroy rights of the Brazilian workers. José Dirceu, who was the most important minister of the Lula government and a historical person of the Workers' Party, was denounced as the organizer of this corruption.

The media have used this corruption case to criticize the government. It also took advantage of this to suppose links of corruption with the president. However, despite this, Lula had a lot of social support. At that moment, the image of corruption related to the Workers' Party did not reach him. He was re-elected in 2006 and maintained a great popularity. At the end of his second term in December 2010, Lula had the highest popular approval in Brazilian history. It was approved by about 90% of the population.

At that time, the capitalist crisis of 2007/2008 did not have large impacts in Brazil. In the US, this crisis led to bankruptcy of large financial companies, like the *Lehman Brothers*. But Brazil seemed safe in economic development. The government stimulated and subsidized consumption. The population bought their commodities. The capitalists made profits. The idea of a democracy based on commodity seemed work well.

In 2010, as Lula had already been re-elected, he could no longer run. But with such great prestige, he had the strength to nominate a favourite candidate for the upcoming elections. He chose Dilma Rousseff, who had been minister of his government. Rousseff was considered a technical staff and highly praised for her character and her discipline. On the other hand, even within his party, this choice was criticized for her lack of political capacity.

Quite different was the case of her vice candidate. Michel Temer was famous for his political articulations, in which he used various means to achieve success. He was also linked to his party's more conservative wing (PMDB) and to international capitalist interests.

In the second round of the 2010 elections, Dilma Rousseff was elected. In 2011, she became the first woman to govern Brazil. But, from the beginning of her government, the situation began to get worse. She continued to advance with the previous economic and social policies. On the economic side, she privileged the capitalists. On the social side, she tried improvements for the poorest population. However, the impact of the capitalist crisis in Brazil got deep.

The credit policies implemented succeeded in postponing the impacts of the 2007 crisis. But this postponement also increased the problem. Several people became indebted. As some rights had become commodities, it was also more difficult to access them. The money invested in the *Football World Cup* and in the *Olympics Games* increased the debt of the Brazilian state. Many capitalists had increased these government costs to make more money through corruption.

Even giving more space to conservative groups, the pressure on Rousseff did not decrease. And the victory in the second round of the 2014 election served to further expand the attacks on her. The small difference in votes showed that a social change was needed. However, with more pressure from the right wing, the government transferred more political power. Since 2015, Brazilian economic policies have been explicitly controlled by neoliberal interests.

Beside the economic crisis, corruption accusations also have increased. The media echoed the various allegations of corruption. But that did not happen in general. There was a selection of both the media and the judgment of corruption cases. Corruption involved several political parties. But the media tended to show only the cases of Workers' Party corruption. In this struggle, many tried to link Dilma Rousseff to these practices of corruption. They did not succeed.

Rousseff have participated democratically in all rites and judgments. But some subterfuges were used to create the process of *impeachment*. This became known as *fiscal pedals*. This is a Brazilian historical practice. The union budget could be used differently from what was approved, since the Federal Senate approved those changes. But that year, the Senate reproved the public accounts and allowed Rousseff to be indicted for corruption.

Temer, the vice president, joined with several corrupt politicians and managed to make the *impeachment* move forward. The media also created a lot of pressure. On April 17th of 2014, the *impeachment* was voted in the House of Deputies. 367 deputies voted in favour of impeachment and 137 against. The decision was not final, but it indicated the result to be expected.

When they voted, several deputies made speeches and honours. It was at that vote that Bolsonaro paid his tribute to the colonel who had tortured Dilma Rousseff.

4 POLITICAL MANIPULATION AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

The impacts of the capitalist economic crisis became stronger. This got worse in the Rousseff government. The unemployment rate had fallen during Lula's governments. But these data began to get worse during the Rousseff government. The number of unemployed has increased dramatically over the past few years. At the beginning of 2018, the unemployment rate of some Brazilian cities reached 26%. The policies of credit also have putted several families with debt.

Several popular critiques demonstrations began to emerge. Initially these demonstrations were against the increase in the price of some commodities, such as bus tickets. Then they began to turn against corruption. The most immediate target was money used in the *Football World Cup* and the *Olympics Games*. The media tried to transform these in a moralist criticism. Instead of targeting social change, it was created a sense that all political parties were corrupt. The social view was that there was no alternative within the political system.

On the other hand, the organizers of the *Football World Cup* and the *Olympics Games* have made international pressures on the Brazilian government. They demanded that these events be held in a peaceful manner. In 2013, the Brazilian government complied with these requests and created the law 12,850. This law seeks to combat criminal organizations that do acts of terrorism.

In Brazil, the last acts of terrorism occurred during the military dictatorship. And, as was recently proven, it was military and government officials who began these acts. With the end of the dictatorship, the terrorist actions were over. Unlike the US or European countries, Brazil is not a target for international terrorist actions. Law 12,850 was then used against groups and social movements that protested against the Brazilian government.

In addition, during the Workers' Party government, important trade unions and social movements were passive. In order to not criticize the government, they have reduced their demonstrations on the streets of Brazil. Only more independent and critical organizations continued to manifest on the streets. But the increase of police repression has also diminished the action of these left organizations.

Even so, several demonstrations took place on Brazilian streets. Millions of people went to the streets to protest. These people had different goals. From anarchist groups to fascist organizations. From unemployed workers to people from the Brazilian elite. Some right-wing groups have tried to use these manifestations to create a particular meaning for them. To do so, these groups have used a lot of the *social networks*.

The Brazilian media was also important to put an instrumental meaning to these manifestations. Initially, they tried to criminalize the most radical groups. Then they changed their strategy and started supporting the demonstrations. But the support was only for criticism the corruption. Several politicians have been reported as being responsible for these problems. The most famous was the governor of Rio de Janeiro state – Sérgio Cabral - who today is arrested for corruption.

At that time, the right-wing groups were organizing, but they did not have much political force. However they had an open path ahead. In the class struggle, there are no empty spaces. If some political force withdraws from some space, the other political force will seek to occupy it. Because of these pressures, the government's tactic was to pacify the population. With this, large syndicates and social movements have withdrawn in their manifestations and social actions. They had also diminished their role of critical social formation.

In common sense, the capitalist economic crisis has been transformed into a crisis of corruption. The liberal media hid that social problems had their causes in inequality and economic concentration. Unemployment and violence appeared to be caused only by corruption. And even if that corruption was practiced by several politicians and parties, the media gave much more attention to the Workers' Party. And within this party, Lula was at the centre of the accusations.

The trials of these cases became known as *Lava Jato* (*car wash*). Sérgio Moro, the judge responsible for the trial, became quite famous. At the trial, Lula was charged personally with some corruption crimes. The main ones were the illegal receipt of an apartment and a renovation on his farm. The first case was tried in 2017 and Lula was sentenced to almost ten years in prison. He was the first Brazilian president to be arrested.

It is very difficult to analyse the merits of Lula's trial. There are some signs of personal favour. But the evidences are quite questionable. For a person to be arrested, his crime must be proved. And for this happen, his judgment needs to be impartial. In the case of Lula, there are several doubts about the impartiality of his judgment.

These doubts expanded recently, when Moro accepted the invitation of Bolsonaro to be his minister of justice. He will work for a person who was elected using Lula's judicial conviction. The biggest problem, then, is not whether Lula did a crime or not. The central question is whether he had a correct judgment.

Judge Moro's strategy to keep the trial was to use the media to create an appeal in society. At various times he passed on information to the press, which was daily published. The Brazilian and international media showed the stages of his trial. The feeling of anger was also stimulated. With that, the most part of the Brazilian population did not think about justice, but only about revenge. The hate against Lula and the Workers' Party grew a lot from these facts.

The Brazilian election of 2018 was marked by hate. This was efficiently used by the Bolsonaro's team. A few years earlier, it was very difficult to imagine Bolsonaro's strength growing so much. His popular support was not great. His fascist words received more

criticism than support. Most people did not seem to agree with their hate of women, black people, homosexuals and communists.

Bolsonaro was the first to announce his candidacy. His team began their political campaign long time before the other parties and candidates. Bolsonaro travelled in and out of Brazil to seek alliances. In one of those trips he had a meeting with Steven Benon. Benon became world famous for his fascist ideas and for being strategist of the campaign of Trump in the US. During the Brazilian election, Benon declared his support for Bolsonaro. There is also evidence that he has contributed to the strategic political manipulation through *social networks*.

But, at that moment, few politicians gave him a public support. On the other hand, Bolsonaro began to appear in the media and in *social networks*. He focused his communication on *facebook* and *whatsapp* groups. He also has appeared on several television shows. His prejudiced words began to stand out. Initially they were criticized. Then they started to be repeated and their sense was changed through the actions of their staff.

It was created the idea that he spoke these aggressive things because he was honest and had nothing to hide. The idea was that he spoke what he thought and he was a truly person. Even having been a deputy for almost thirty years, he was presented as an outside of politics. Bolsonaro was transformed into a virtual phenomenon. Much of what he received from criticism was used in an opposite way in the *social networks*.

His team tried to turn their ignorance into a positive quality. This worked well on the internet. In the communication in these spaces it is always difficult to develop a critical analysis. In *social networks*, the practice of repeating information is much stronger than information analysis. But that would be more difficult to do it in interviews and debates on television. In these spaces, he would need to develop his thinking better and present more concrete arguments.

Bolsonaro has participated in some of these events at the beginning of his campaign. His performance was not positive. His limitations could not be hidden by the manipulation of the internet. So, he began to refuse to participate of the television debates. At that time, he suffered a knife attack and he was almost killed. One person stabbed him in the street during a demonstration of political support. Bolsonaro had to stay in the hospital for several days.

The attack increased his popularity. He got politically stronger. His rejection rates decreased a little. Before the attack, he was a favourite to win the first round of the election. But in the second round, he would be defeated by all the other candidates, even by the Workers' Party candidate.

Bolsonaro's electoral campaign grew more and expanded its force through the internet. And he also did this in an illegal way, as denounced by the Brazilian press. Several capitalists who supported him paid for companies to send messages by *whatsapp*. In the US, this practice had already occurred through *facebook*. In Brazil, this happened more by *whatsapp*.

Some Bolsonaro's supporters have paid for companies to use the data sources of these *social networks* and send messages against the Workers' Party. Fernando Haddad, who was its candidate, was also the target of these messages. Millions of messages have been sent. These messages, for the most part, were terrible lies. Some said that the Workers' Party government was teaching children to engage in homosexual relationships at school. Others said that Haddad had raped a 12-year-old girl.

These *fakenews* were disseminated in a professional and unscrupulous manner. Companies that work with this indicate the profile of people who may be most influenced. They have a complex information system of the people. They know the tendencies of behaviour and consumption. People more conducive to feelings of hate and irrationalism were more easily influenced by the right-wing. The efficiency of political manipulation is based on emotional manipulation.

But other ingredients contributed to the increase of Bolsonaro. It was not just the hate. It was also prejudice and ignorance. Historical roots demonstrate the behaviour of the Brazilian elite. The prejudices of these people are unified around social class. They are against Brazilian workers, poor and black people. They are also against any form of equality between people. In fact, the Brazilian elite prefer to live in Miami and explore the Brazilians people.

Bolsonaro also had important religious support. Most of the Brazilian population still follows the Catholic religion. However, the increase of *neo-Pentecostal churches* has been very big. These churches have a great capacity to influence people. Some also reproduce various prejudices, especially against homosexuals. Some important pastors of these Protestant churches supported Bolsonaro a lot. Some of them gave him television spaces. Others gave him his loyal people.

But the most important support came from financial capital. Initially, the candidate preferred by the majority of this group was Geraldo Alckmin, of the Brazilian Social Democrat Party. But Alckmin failed to increase his votes. His chances of going to the second round finished soon. The agents of the finance capital then decided to negotiate with

Bolsonaro. In answer, Bolsonaro showed Paulo Guedes, an agent of the interests of that group, to control the economy policies.

Thus, financial capital indices have advanced. With the expectation of Bolsonaro's victory in the first round, the Brazilian currency had a record appreciation. Between September 13rd and October 09th of 2018 (two days after the first round vote), the Brazilian currency appreciated more than 11% against the Dollar and the Pound, and more than 13% against the Euro. During this period, the *Bovespa* shares (the main index of shares traded in Brazil) increased more than 15%. These data demonstrated who the international capitalists supported in the Brazilian elections.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

If Bolsonaro promised to give the control of economic policies to financial capital, what will be his main function in the Brazilian government?

The answer of this question indicates how complicated is the Brazilian situation. The problem in Brazil is not to have a fascist system. That is almost impossible, because of the dependent economic structure. For Brazil to become fascist, it would take a nationalist struggle against international financial capital. The Brazilian reality is worse than that.

By giving its economic policy to financial capital, Brazil will expand its international dependence. New conditions will also be created to increase the profit of the internal and external dominant classes. The agreement between the dominant classes will take a new stage. The State will again be used to increase that. Workers' conditions will be worse in Brazil. The few social rights will be targets of destruction. The exploitations of national wealth by foreign invaders will increase.

But that's not enough. Bolsonaro will not create a fascist system in Brazil. But Bolsonaro represents fascist values. As he promised, Brazilian repression will increase. His first target will be organizations, people and ideas of the left-wing. He aims to destroy the critical thought at schools and universities. He intends to arrest, exile and kill people who are critical of his government. This appears very clearly in their political projects.

He will use violence as intimidation and destruction. And this violence will not be made only through institutional entities such as the police force and the army. This will also occur by paramilitary groups. In fact, this is already happening in Brazil. Several cases have

already occurred. A lot of people have already been beaten, raped and killed by Bolsonaro supporters.

However, the story is not linear. History is dialectical. There is no history without contradictions and without movement. And this is also true for the Brazilian case. Future years will be terrible. But moments of great resistance can also appear.

O ATUAL ENIGMA BRASILEIRO

RESUMO

Originado de questionamentos de acadêmicos ingleses (principalmente da University of Kent) sobre a realidade política brasileira, buscou-se, com base em elementos históricos e sociais, analisar a eleição presidencial de 2018. Esse texto, que foi apresentado em novembro de 2018 num seminário em Canterbury, possui, além da introdução e das considerações finais, três partes: um breve histórico da formação brasileira, uma análise da crise capitalista e dos governos anteriores, e uma abordagem das manipulações políticas realizadas através de redes sociais. Por fim, também se abordou o leitmotiv fascista da campanha de Bolsonaro, refletindo as suas nuances num país dependente e subdesenvolvido.

Palavras-chave: Eleições brasileiras. Capital financeiro. Capitalismo dependente. Fascismo. Manipulação midiática.