

THE LONG BRAZILIAN CRITICAL JUNCTURE SINCE 2013: CRISIS AND PUNISHMENT

A LONGA CONJUNTURA CRÍTICA BRASILEIRA DESDE 2013: CRISE E CASTIGO

LA LARGA COYUNTURA CRÍTICA BRASILEÑA DESDE 2013: CRISIS Y CASTIGO

ABSTRACT

The work aims at demonstrating the critical juncture in which Brazil has immersed since 2013 with street protests, including the 2014 election, Operation Car Wash, President Dilma's Impeachment, which culminated in the election of Bolsonaro. The elements of this situation are more related to a dispute between right- and left-wing positions, to a characterized way of life and centered on social networks, where politics and social life have been enthroned. In this sense, the idea of judicialized politics and institutions as elements that guarantee freedom of expression and the rule of law has been confusing and misinforming everyone.

Keywords: Critical juncture, political crisis, impeachment, corruption, car wash operation

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RESUMO

O trabalho tem o objetivo de demonstrar a conjuntura crítica que envolve o Brasil desde 2013 com as manifestações de rua, passando pela eleição de 2014, a Operação Lava Jato, o impeachment de Dilma, e que culmina com a eleição de Bolsonaro. Os elementos dessa conjuntura relacionam-se, mais do que a uma disputa entre direita e esquerda, a um modo de vida caracterizado e centrado nas redes sociais, em que a política e a vida social foram entronizadas. Neste sentido, a ideia de condenação da política e das instituições como elementos garantidores da liberdade de expressão e do Estado democrático de direito confunde e desinforma todos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Conjuntura crítica, crise política, impeachment, corrupção, operação lava-jato*

RESUMEN

El trabajo tiene como objetivo el demostrar la coyuntura crítica que envuelve a Brasil desde 2013 con las manifestaciones en las calles, pasando por la elección de 2014, la Operación Lava Jato, el impeachment de Dilma, y que culmina con la elección de Bolsonaro. Los elementos de esa coyuntura se relacionan más que a una disputa entre derecha e izquierda, a un modo de vida caracterizado y centrado en las redes sociales, donde la política y la vida social fueron entronizadas. En este sentido la idea de condena de la política y de las instituciones como elementos garantidores de la libertad de expresión y del estado democrático de derecho, confunde y desinforma a todos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Coyuntura crítica, crisis política, impeachment, corrupción, operación lava jato*

INTRODUCTION

The notion of critical juncture alludes to transformations in the political and economic routes of certain countries, such transformations being characterized by times of tension that result in variations in the established patterns (Lipset; Rokkan, 1967). Demonstrating the elements that constitute a critical juncture in a country represents an analytical chess of events and episodes that concur in understanding how tensions precede changes by changing patterns and building legacies.

This article aims to present the critical juncture which involves Brazil since 2013 with the street demonstrations, encompassing the 2014 election, Operation Car Wash, President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, and which culminates in President Bolsonaro's election. This juncture does not end with the beginning of Bolsonaro's administration (now in its 17th month), and thus remains open, especially after a more recent element was added to this critical juncture, which is

the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, Brazil is going through a critical juncture that involves several countries and has taken on a "Brazilian style" here. The elements of this juncture are less related to a dispute between right and left than to a way of life centered on social networks in which politics and social life were enthroned. This analysis will also cover the sociological elements linked to the Brazilian structure which combine with this way of life and are very important for understanding this critical juncture, such as the emergence of an idea of condemnation of politics and institutions as elements that guarantee freedom of expression and the democratic state of rights, thus confusing and misinforming everyone. This article is structured into six sections besides its introduction and final considerations. In the first section, the notion of critical juncture is discussed. Then, we focus on the critical juncture in Brazil which started in 2013. After that, we will address Rousseff's reelection and impeachment. In the following section, the post-impeachment period with Temer's administration. Then, the election of Bolsonaro and, finally, some as-

pects of his administration.

THE NOTION OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE

The notion that transformations in the political and economic routes of certain countries are characterized by times of tension resulting in variations in the established patterns (Lipset; Rokkan, 1967) seems intuitively simple to be stated (Collier; Collier, 1991). However, systematizing the elements that make up this statement is an analytical puzzle necessary to form the concept of critical junctures, so as to help understanding how tensions precede changes by breaking patterns and building legacies.

According to Collier & Collier (1991), critical juncture means: “periods of significant change which typically occur in distinct ways in different countries, and which are hypothesized to produce distinct legacies”. The concept’s systematization comprehends three components: the statement that a significant change has occurred; that it occurred in a distinct way, in distinct cases; and the explanatory hypothesis about its consequences. These components also incorporate elements that support the explanatory arguments: the antecedent conditions; the crisis; the mechanisms of production and reproduction; the stability of the legacy’s main attributes; rival explanations involving constant causes and the end of the legacy (Collier; Collier, 1991). However, the consistency of studies that aim to explain change patterns based on this concept should pay attention to the identification of the hypothetical critical juncture and the variations in which it occurs, thus recognizing that explanations for the same historical legacies in different countries (or another analysis unit) may not share the same

temporal sequence of events and results, depending on how the causal mechanisms interconnect.

From this perspective, some studies can demonstrate this dynamics, such as the one by Fernandes & Wilson (2013), which analyzes the institutional change in metropolitan management by using the notion of critical juncture to understand why the expected effect of Brazilian municipal federalism did not cause the crisis, but the resumption of metropolitan management in Brazil since the 1990’s. There is also the study by Fernandes, Moraes and Nascimento (2015), which analyzes the administrative reforms in Brazilian states. The authors try to show that tax and fiscal decentralization and the Real Plan, which put an end to the “inflation game” of state financial institutions, constituted the critical point that introduced the new managerialism into the administrative reforms that followed in Brazil, mainly from 1995, with the creation of the Ministry of Administration and State Reform (MARE).

These studies illustrate how critical times become the starting point for changes by causing new conditions that disturb or overload the existing mechanisms (Hall & Taylor, 2003), thus leading to alteration in the operating patterns of these institutions that can be characterized by abrupt, short-term changes capable of bringing about substantial changes within these institutions, or to the beginning of a process of small changes, in a temporal series of gradual changes.

In the next section, we will observe how a critical juncture of “rupture” with what we call the world political order develops to the point of a crisis of democratic regimes, with the

emergence of reactionary leaders in several countries. This is the case even though we have advanced in international consensuses that aimed to strengthen important rights as we can see in the Charter for Sustainability and all environmental conferences.

THE WORLD'S CRITICAL JUNCTURE SINCE 2013

Antecedents – The World Order since the Post-war Period and the Beginning of “Disorder”

The concern of nations at the end of World War II was to prevent the free capitalism of large corporations and financial capital from driving the world back into totalitarian adventures. It was necessary to create an environment that would enable nation states to generate development, industrialization and progress. The role of the state in the economy had to be changed. Full employment and real wage growth would become the main goals of governments at national level. One of the milestones of this period is the Bretton Woods conference in New Hampshire, which, among others, is the stage for the creation of important multilateral organizations: the IMF and the World Bank (Boccanera, 2004). In addition, the State's economic roles are agreed upon: regulatory – exchange, interest, currency and price control; incentives to economic activity – industrial policy, infrastructure, technology, employment and income (Fernandes, 2007)

It was also necessary to change the social role of the State. Citizenship, which was originally constituted as a set of political and civil rights (both since the bourgeois revolutions), gains yet another set of rights: social

rights, in the 20th century (Marshall, 1963). This becomes a commitment with the creation of the United Nations (UN), in 1945, and the Declaration of Human Rights, in 1948. This protection from cradle to grave defined the global recommendations regarding the social roles of the State: education, health-care, social security, housing, unemployment insurance, various public services (water treatment and supply, urban cleaning, public transport, etc.) and fighting poverty. In other words, throughout the second half of the 20th century, when globalization is seen as something linked to the context of a concert of nations, one thinks of a global cosmopolitan state (Farias, 2001) that can be expressed through the UN itself.

One of the first world agendas to give form to this globalization beyond the economy and social roles is the environmental issue (<https://nacoesunidas.org/acao/meio-ambiente/>). A milestone in this regard is the National Conference on the Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden, in June 1972. Then, there is the ECO-92, held in Rio de Janeiro from June 3 to 14, 1992. We also witnessed, in 1997, the Conference of the Parties (COPs) – whose main result is the signing of the Kyoto Protocol (since the conference was held in the city of Kyoto), which defines some goals for reducing the emission of greenhouse gases. At the beginning of the 21st century, we witnessed the Rio +10 (2002) conference, which created the Agenda 21, which, despite its name, took place in Johannesburg, South Africa; and Rio + 20 (2012), held in Rio de Janeiro in order to discuss the renewal of sustainability agreements, attended by delegates from 183 countries (<https://nacoesunidas.org/conferencias-de-meio-ambiente-e-desenvolvimento-sustentavel-miniguia-da-onu/>). And,

five years ago, in 2015, a global agreement about a new consensus of over 150 world leaders was signed at the UN headquarters in New York to formally adopt a new sustainable development agenda. This agenda is formed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which should be implemented by all countries in the world over the next 15 years, until 2030 (<https://nacoesunidas.org/pos2015/agenda2030/>).

However, globalization also expresses many problems that show how poorly political regimes – even democracies – can do. One such case is the immigration zones with thousands of people (including many children) fleeing countries ravaged by poverty and/or civil wars and dictatorships led by authoritarian heads of state supported by countries or blocks of countries. Among others, recen-

tly, the case of Syria stands out. Worldwide, the number of migrants exceeds 243 million, which generates economic, social and political impacts on these nations.

The map below, which can be found originally on the metrocosm website (<http://metrocosm.com/>), attempts to show all flows registered by the United Nations Population Division from 2010 to 2015. The map shows the balance of people the country received (immigrants) and sent abroad (emigrants). In other words, if the country had an emigration of 100 people, but an immigration of 101 people, the result is a positive “1”. In the opposite case, it would be negative. In red, the countries with highest emigration figures (which send people abroad most); in blue, the countries with highest immigration figures (receivers).

Figure 1 – Immigration and emigration flows in the world from 2010 to 2015



Fonte: metrocosm (<http://metrocosm.com/>)

Globalization and multiculturalism stem from the ease of communication and travel provided by advancements in information technology and the expansion of markets – which have reduced the cost of tickets, customs duties and services. This is obviously a global phenomenon, but it continues with particular strength in Europe and the United States.

In addition, another serious problem has greatly shaken globalization: the severe 2008 economic crisis. There were several factors at play, and Krugman (2009) explains in detail the (political) economics of the 2008 depression. It was basically a systemic crisis in capitalism which started in the United States in the late 1990's, when American banks began lending money to thousands of people with no collateral required to secure payment; a typical moral hazard situation.

The consequences of the 2008 global crisis hit Brazil, since the Brazilian recession in 2009 was 0.2%. As a countercyclical measure, in 2010, the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC 2) was created in which investments in several sectors (cities, housing, transport and energy, among others) were planned as a countercyclical policy in the face of the 2009 recession.

The Crisis of Representative Democracies

Along with a series of world agreements that establish a new world order founded on social and environmental sustainability, a series of multilateral agreements has also taken place, especially in the last 25 years, in order to prevent and combat corruption, as well as to generate open, transparent governments. Many countries signed the three

international anti-corruption conventions – in 1996, with the Organization of American States; in 1997, with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and in 2003 – UN (Ramalho, 2017). Over the years, a number of countries have established important government control and anti-corruption agencies within their state structures. This was the case in Brazil with the creation of the Office of the Comptroller General (CGU). In some way, this new “era of investigations” makes ordinary citizens increasingly skeptical of partisan politics and political representation.

Politicians, who symbolically never enjoyed a good reputation among the population, with the uncovering of numerous cases of corruption worldwide, ended up putting political systems in crisis and making society increasingly skeptical about institutions and politics as a solution for social problems. Several former heads of state have been prosecuted for and/or convicted of corruption: Zuma in South Africa; Cristina Kirchner, in Argentina; Sul Park Geun-hye, South Korea; Elías Antonio Saca, in El Salvador; Nicolas Sarkozy, in France; Benjamin Netanyahu, in Israel; Silvio Berlusconi, in Italy; Ricardo Martinelli, in Panama; Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, Alessandro Toledo and Alberto Fujimori, in Peru; and Svetozar Marovic, in Serbia and Montenegro.

The current political crisis is not just a matter of the right and the left. The “rupture” is deeper; it is the gradual collapse of the political representation model around the world (Castels, 2018; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018, Mounk, 2018). It is a rupture between those in government and those governed by them. Distrust in institutions around the world delegitimizes political representation. This theme

was at the core of the so-called 2012 and 2013 marches which were witnessed in several countries. The Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States, Los Indignados in Spain, and the June 2013 protests in Brazil, among others, became widespread popular mobilizations against the political party system and parliamentary democracy (https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2013/06/130623_protestos_press-review_bg.shtml). Disbelief in liberal democracy arises as the professionalization of politics causes politicians to defend their own interests above common interests, leading the political class to despise programmatic ideologies and defend their own positions. Parties in an extreme bureaucratization process end up operating automatically in relation to citizens.

From this stems the emergence, in recent elections, of radical right-wing leaders, such as Viktor Orban, Hungary; Mateusz Morawiecki, in Poland; Sebastian Kurz, in Austria; Matteo Salvini, in Italy (who recently left power); Rodrigo Duterte, in the Philippines; Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in Turkey; Donald Trump, in the United States; Boris Johnson, in the United Kingdom; and, in Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro. According to Levitsky & Ziblatt (2017), these leaders end up wearing away the democratic institutions and principles that are more related to tolerance of opposition, freedom of expression and free thinking, thus leading to the death of democracies in a sense analogous to but distinct from what happened in the beginning of the 20th century, with the Nazifascist movement in Europe.

One of the elements that influence politics in the current critical juncture is the dissemi-

nation and consequent strength of social networks, which intensify, in Bauman's (2001) words, liquid modernity. For Bauman (2001), contemporary society can be classified as a liquid modernity, as opposed to a solid modernity, which would be the modernity of the post-war and Cold War era. Unlike the twentieth century, society in the current juncture does not possess great values that can engender projects of new societies. The pursuit of individual pleasure is the ultimate goal of liquid society.

In a context of liquid modernity, social media are gaining ground, thus leading to what Keen (2009) called the "Cult of the Amateur". The users of social networks in their magnitude (Facebook, Myspace, Instagram, Twitter, Sanapchat, Youtube, Whatsapp and Telegram, among countless others) are, in the vast majority, people without artistic talent who create mostly mediocrities in every sense. The perverse effect of this cult of the amateur is that politics was dominated by social networks since the 2010 decade, and this was decisive in many political processes of mobilization (addressed later) and enlisting of uninformed people who propagated fake news by posting on equal footing to the professional press, which brought about countless electoral processes around the world which were decisive to bring to power a number of radical right-wing leaders.

The Brazilian crisis and the 2013 demonstrations – the beginning of something much bigger

We can say that, in Brazil, the uninterrupted political crisis that has grown worse to this day begins with the 2013 protests resulting from demonstrations against the R\$ 0.20 in-

crease in bus fares in the city of São Paulo, led by the “Movimento Passe Livre” [Free Pass Movement]. Initially restricted to a few hundred participants, the demonstrations calling for lower public transport fares gained popular support in mid-June that year, mainly due to the strong police repression against protesters. As this process evolved, thousands of people began to take part in these demonstrations, which started in the streets of São Paulo and later extended to several Brazilian state capitals and large cities. However, when protests took over the country, they were no longer specific. They became demonstrations of a diffuse nature as to their goals, when suddenly millions of people were seen in the streets protesting on a wide range of subjects such as public spending on major international sporting events – the Football World Cup and the Olympic Games –, the poor quality of public services and the outrage at political corruption in general.

The 2013 demonstrations may be interpreted as a mix of crisis of expectations combined with the State’s inability to respond to all demands of society. Regarding the former aspect, the country was experiencing a moment of some individual financial prosperity, when consumption, income, employment and investment resources were taking place. However, public services in general did not correspond to the increase in people’s income. The country saw widespread protest from all sectors of society, especially from people who rose to middle-income strata (Neri, 2011). In other words, the people who prospered economically throughout the period from 1994 until then – due to Brazil’s economic stability and good position in the world arena owing to a commodities boom in the international market –, were the same

ones who engaged in protests for better services and intense fight against corruption. According to Unger (2018), in sociological terms, this “new middle class” is essentially based on pillars such as individual entrepreneurship and self-help, it went to private colleges, builds new homes in its own neighborhoods, joins evangelical or neo-Pentecostal churches, is conservative in customs and believes in individual effort and in each person’s responsibility for their own destiny.

In spite of that, the political crisis that led to the severe economic crisis – which has its origin in 2013, but starts strongly from 2015 onwards (we will return to this point later) – had a deep impact on the financial life of this new Brazilian middle class, thus generating resentment in this emerging part of the population towards the State, the political class and the institutions in general. This resentment has an explanation basis in Bourdieu (1983): “the resentment linked to failure only makes those who experience it more lucid in relation to the social world, while blinding them in relation to the very principle of this lucidity”.

From this follows that the emerging or new middle-class Brazilian man does not have a class identity. He has a middle income, but wants to consume and have habits similar to those of people considered “rich”. It is a behavior of cognitive dissonance from his position in society, because the more marginally one improves in consumption, the less one feels identified with what one really is. It is a crisis of class identity or social position in Brazil, hence the lack of empathy and solidarity that has taken over the country today, with so many people hating the poor. This sociological finding has its explanation, according to

Bourdieu (1983): “The consecration circuits are all the more powerful the longer, more complex and more hidden they are, even in the very eyes of those who participate in them and benefit from them.”

Another problem that adds to that of social networks, which had the perverse effect of individualism in its frequent social anomie, was that the fight against corruption became a Brazilian monothematic problem, something that begins in 2014 as a result of the wide disclosures of Operation Car Wash. And this is one of the elements that will be discussed below, regarding the critical juncture of 2013 in Brazil.

THE 2013 CRITICAL JUNCTURE AND ITS IMMEDIATE EFFECTS

The post-2013 period in the country was quite significant in how much critical junctures can destabilize political competition by triggering a process of weakening of parties which until then were the main players in the Brazilian political scene (the PT and the PSDB); it also weakened their political leaders, who, affected by the loss of public reputation, have seen their ability to influence votes and the country’s political destiny decline. In the Brazilian case, after Fernando Collor’s impeachment in 1992, the PT and the PSDB made the second round of presidential elections from 1994 to 2014, i.e., 20 years of stability.

Dilma Rousseff: Critical Junctures and the Impeachment Process

The 2014 electoral process, which still had the PT and the PSDB as protagonists, marks the change in a trajectory that had been

characterized by polarization between these two parties in presidential races since 1994. The reasons for the interruption of that trajectory and the beginning of a new political cycle were diverse, but they complement each other. And, among these, we should highlight: the implications of corruption scandals and Operation Car Wash; President Dilma Rousseff’s political inability; and a combination of the political and economic crises that crystallized a conducive environment to the impeachment process.

Before we examine the 2014 election, it is also worth remembering that, in 2010, Lula da Silva ends his second term with an approval rating of 87% (<http://datafolha.folha.uol.com.br/opiniaopublica/2010/12/1211078-acima-das-expectativas-lula-encerra-mandato-com-melhor-avaliacao-da-historia.shtml>) and indicates Dilma Rousseff as the candidate to succeed him. Rousseff won in the second round, after defeating José Serra, the PSDB’s candidate. However, Rousseff opens a political crisis with the parties of her coalition as a result of corruption scandals. In less than a year in office, she sacked seven ministers, including Antônio Palocci, one of her party’s leading figures. The PT ended up releasing a document entitled “generalized criminalization of the coalition.” The president’s political ability was poor to the point of being criticized by her own party.

This is largely due to what happened in 2012, when the Supreme Court ruled in criminal lawsuit n. 470, known as “mensalão,” which convicted 25 people for participating in a scheme to buy votes in Congress. Among them, two former PT chairmen: José Dirceu and José Genoíno. The opposition, which had largely used the mensalão as a strate-

gy to undermine the government and the PT, now has a Supreme Court conviction as a trump card to question the ethical behavior of PT administrations.

In 2014, as a candidate for reelection, Rousseff finds herself, after the 2013 protests and the challenge of organizing the Football World Cup, facing an episode that will directly affect the elections and later on seal her political fate: Operation Car Wash.

Operation Car Wash and its Political Dimension

Considered the largest corruption investigation case in the country, Operation Car Wash started in March 2014 in the Federal Court of Curitiba, led by Judge Sérgio Moro. Its developments still echo in 2020 in several states. Its culmination was the investigation of allegedly overpriced Petrobras contracts, which generated bribes for politicians. Then it branched out to encompass various contracts in federal agencies and state administrations.

Operation Car Wash's interference could be seen as early as in the 2014 presidential election through the leak of testimonies to the press almost simultaneously with the presidential race and involving political actors or parties at the time of the race (<https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/veja-doleiro-diz-que-dilma-lula-sabiam-de-tudo-14341970>,). Still in 2014, on the eve of the election's second round, fake news circulated which linked a supposed death of black market money dealer Alberto Youssef to the PT. Approved by the Supreme Court in December 2014, Youssef's plea bargain statement allowed the Attorney General's Office (PGR) to indict several politicians, among them parliamentarians from

the PT, PSDB and other parties, including the then president of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha. Despite the spotlight on the PT, Car Wash took on a rather non-partisan tone.

Car Wash's activism raised three characters from the justice system to the political scene where they were hyped as champions of the fight against corruption: Judge Sérgio Moro and Attorneys Deltan Dallagnol and Rodrigo Janot. Of these, Moro became the main figure by winning the sympathy of a legion of PT opponents (including PSDB members) for undermining the party and a group that had been in government for four terms, and also for passing into political history in two moments of public clash with PT members.

The first was through his legally controversial decision to detain Lula da Silva for questioning (<https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2016/03/05/conducao-coercitiva-de-lula-e-considerada-excessiva-para-maioria.htm>). The second was on the occasion of Lula's own arrest warrant, issued by Moro in April 2018, an election year in which the PT planned to launch Lula's candidacy for president. Another decision that also interfered directly with the 2018 election took place six days before the second round between Haddad and Bolsonaro. In this decision, Moro overturned the confidentiality of Antonio Palocci's plea bargain statement, where Palocci said that "of the nearly one thousand Provisional Measures issued during the four PT administrations, at least nine hundred were in exchange for bribes" (<https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2020/05/02/moro-divulgou-delacao-de-palocci-para-favorecer-bolsonaro-diz-gilmar.htm>). Lula's detention for questioning and arrest were bro-

adcast live by radio and TV stations.

Dilma Rousseff: Reelection, Political and Economic Crises and the Impeachment Process

Rousseff was reelected in the second round with 51.64% of the valid votes, thus overcoming the then senator Aécio Neves, from the PSDB, in the most polarized presidential election since redemocratization. The end of the election did not cool political conflicts down. Contrary to expectations, it further intensified animosities between PT supporters and antagonists, a division that encouraged Neves to insist on delegitimizing the election. In an interview in December 2014, he raved, “I didn’t lose the election to a political party. I lost the election to a criminal organization that has settled at the heart of a few Brazilian companies sponsored by that political group which is [in government]” (<https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,aecio-diz-que-perdeu-para-organizacao-criminosa-e-pt-reage,1600719>). Neves even said he did not recognize the election’s result and asked for a recount of votes, alleging fraud suspicions reported on social networks, which was rejected by the Superior Electoral Court. Neves’ statement encouraged anti-PT groups with a strong presence in social networks to overtly advocate the impeachment process.

In office, Rousseff experienced intense popularity loss, which could be explained by the effect of Operation Car Wash and the economy’s rapid deterioration, reflected in an increase in the unemployment rate, which rose from 4.3% of the Economically Active Population in December 2014, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and

Statistics (IBGE), to 9.6% in December 2015. Inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (IPCA) jumped from 0.78% in December 2014 to 10.67% in December 2015. The negative impact of the crisis on Rousseff’s popularity was devastating. In December 2014, her administration was rated excellent or good by 42% of the people interviewed by Datafolha, while 24% considered it bad or very bad. In November 2015, the same institute revealed that only 10% considered her administration good or excellent, while 67% rated it bad or very bad.

As a whole, this set of data allows understanding the formation of a conducive environment to the filing of an impeachment process. Its trigger in the media was an episode with Sérgio Moro as the pivot, when he released, without any authorization, the recording of a tapped phone call between President Rousseff and former President Lula. At that moment, Rousseff was appointing Lula her chief-of-staff, which was supposedly meant, according to the Car Wash team, to protect him from prosecution by the operation’s task force, since cabinet members can only be tried by the Supreme Court.

Since Car Wash could not find any evidence against Rousseff, a technicality was used, i.e., an alleged criminal misconduct concerning fiscal results, which became known as “pedaladas fiscais” (Villaverde, 2016). The filing of the impeachment process was accepted by the Chamber of Deputies in December 2015. Her removal from office took place on August 31, 2016, when it was voted by the Senate.

The effects of Car Wash on politics did not decline with Rousseff’s removal. After her

vice president Michel Temer took office, the investigations continued, and not only Temer, but also Aécio Neves and the PSDB would be the next targets.

THE POST-IMPEACHMENT PERIOD AND THE TEMER ADMINISTRATION

Michel Temer takes office as president on May 12, 2016. And despite being an acting president with a short term ahead, analysts viewed him with some optimism, but also caution. His administration was anchored in a document written by the MDB – “A Bridge to the Future”, from 2015, mainly based on fiscal issues, with a strong emphasis on Pension Reform, public spending constraints, primary surplus and public debt reduction, as well as privatization and changes in labor law. It is worth noting that the document’s proposals had long been in course, from Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s administrations to Lula’s administrations. What’s more, the document had no details on the actions to be taken and how they differed from those of other administrations.

Still, in a country struggling with recession as a result of the political crisis that divided Brazil, no one could find therein a mechanism to realize the reforms hitherto virtual, which were many, with Congress cornered by corruption charges – particularly regarding illegal campaign contributions – brought up by Car Wash and filed by the Attorney General’s Office. According to Limongi (2017) the vice president’s support to operation impeachment sent the right signal to politicians threatened by Car Wash. Cunha and Temer risked everything.

Temer had to take over to do what Rous-

seff had proved unable to, i.e., to protect his friends and himself. Indeed, in the acting president’s first few months in office, the then Attorney General Rodrigo Janot tries to get warrants to arrest Temer’s allies based on a plea bargain statement by a former state company CEO which incriminated: Renan Calheiros, Romero Jucá, José Sarney and Eduardo Cunha (then president of the Chamber of Deputies), all of whom from the MDB. They were accused of obstructing Car Wash.

After Temer’s inauguration, the relationship between the executive and legislative branches seemed as clientelistic as those in previous administrations, since almost 80% of parliamentarians directly or indirectly involved in illegal contribution schemes in past electoral campaigns remain in Congress. However, the government’s relationship with the Attorney General’s Office seemed quite conflicted, since the Office also tried to get a warrant to arrest Temer in October 2017, which was examined by the Chamber of Deputies and rejected by 251 votes to 233. Thus, the Temer administration, with no popular legitimacy or a strong coalition in Congress, eventually got, as a balance, the passing of highly unpopular measures, such as a limit to public spending and over a hundred changes in the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT). However, the Pension Reform, which required a second round of voting in Congress, was aborted due to a federal intervention in Rio de Janeiro, which legally impeded the voting of Proposed Amendments to the Constitution (PECs).

In short, the Temer administration intensified the focus on fiscal matters, particularly with the spending limit, but failed to achieve further reforms in that agenda. This stemmed from his lack of popular appeal for such un-

popular reforms, since the fight against corruption had become voters' mantra, and also his lack of a strong coalition in Congress – a necessary condition, as seen in the Pension Reform. One element that emerges clearly as a pathology of Brazilian political institutions is the maintenance of coalition presidentialism (Abranches, 2018).

The 2018 election was underway. Hate and polarization intensified on social networks. Only this time, the way of doing politics changed, and the political establishment was unable to understand what was going on. The relational gap between politicians and voters looked huge. A scenario, moreover, that in world history has already led to the emergence of leaders and politicians never before imagined as capable of winning an election. That is what we will see in the next section with Bolsonaro's victory.

THE ELECTION AND BOLSONARO'S 17 MONTHS UNTIL NOW

The 2018 election raised several doubts. The first was whether Lula would actually be a candidate. The second concerned the strength of a new competitor in the race – Jair Bolsonaro, still without a party or a campaign structure. The third was about the electoral viability of political actors already known from other elections, such as Ciro Gomes, Marina Silva and Geraldo Alckmin, in a scenario that looked grim for traditional names.

The first doubt was settled close to the election's first round. On August 31, by six votes to one, the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) rejected the registration of Lula's candidacy on the grounds of the "Clean Record

Act" (LC 135/2010), since in the beginning of that year a court of appeal maintained his conviction for passive corruption (concerning a beachfront apartment allegedly used as a bribe) and money laundering, both charges being a development of Operation Car Wash.

The PT's solution was to launch Fernando Haddad, former mayor of São Paulo, and Manoela D'Ávila (PC do B) as his vice-president candidate. Marina Silva was running for the third consecutive time, now as the Rede Sustentabilidade's candidate – she had tried in 2010 (PV) and in 2014 (PSB). Ciro Gomes, in turn, was running as the PDT's candidate with the support of small parties. The PSB sit out the race and made strategic alliances with the PT, PDT and PSDB in different states.

Cornered by the involvement of its 2014 candidate Aécio Neves in Car Wash investigations, the PSDB brought in former São Paulo governor Geraldo Alckmin to run with the support of a fragmented Democratas, which saw some of its main leaders support Jair Bolsonaro in various states.

Bolsonaro, who had left the PSC and negotiated a candidacy with the Patriotas, eventually became the Social Liberal Party's (PSL) candidate in an alliance with the PRTB, joined by General Antonio Amilton Mourão, who was nominated his vice-president candidate. Jair Bolsonaro emerged as a second-round name even though he had very little TV time and reduced campaign funds. This was the context that the long critical juncture started in 2013 produced.

To many, disheartened by the corruption scandals, there was no way out through par-

ties, and the country needed a regenerator. The political race started marked by an anti-politics feeling. On the one hand, groups that were highly organized on social networks reiterated facts that discredited parties and politicians and pointed out a solution in a candidacy outside the system. The fact that Bolsonaro did not belong to any large party, despite having been from the PP (now Progressistas) for a long time, corroborated that narrative.

The individual figure was exalted to the detriment of parties, institutions and collective action. This situation consolidated when Jair Bolsonaro suffered an attempted murder during a public event – he was stabbed at a campaign rally in the city of Juiz de Fora, in the state of Minas Gerais. The images of the attack were broadcast across the country. His supporters disseminated the idea that his adversaries had tried to take him out of the race.

Jair Bolsonaro ended up getting 46.03% of the valid votes in the first round. Fernando Haddad was second, with 29.28%, and Ciro Gomes had 12.47%. Alckmin, the PSDB's candidate, was fourth, with less than 5%. Marina Silva, who nearly made the second round in 2014, got only 1%.

The second round was no different than the first. The digital war intensified and “bolsonarism” resorted to arms to discredit the PT's candidate among evangelical churches and conservative voters. Negative mention of gender policies, LGBT groups and family values were constantly associated with the PT. Added to this is the fact that Ciro Gomes, who was third in the first round, blatantly declined to support the PT's candidate.

In this scenario, Jair Bolsonaro found no obstacles. With 55.13% of the valid votes (57 million voters), Bolsonaro, a candidate without a party, without proposals and with just a rhetoric based on corruption and the values of country, family and God, became president of the Republic. Spoiled ballots and abstentions totaled over 42 million, i.e., a figure enough to overcome the 10.7 million votes that separated Bolsonaro from Haddad. In 2014, abstentions and spoilt ballots totaled 37 million; in 2010, 36 million. In other words, an increment of about 5 million voters. And that significant number of voters who did not vote for anyone helps understanding the size of disheartenment about politics and the names available.

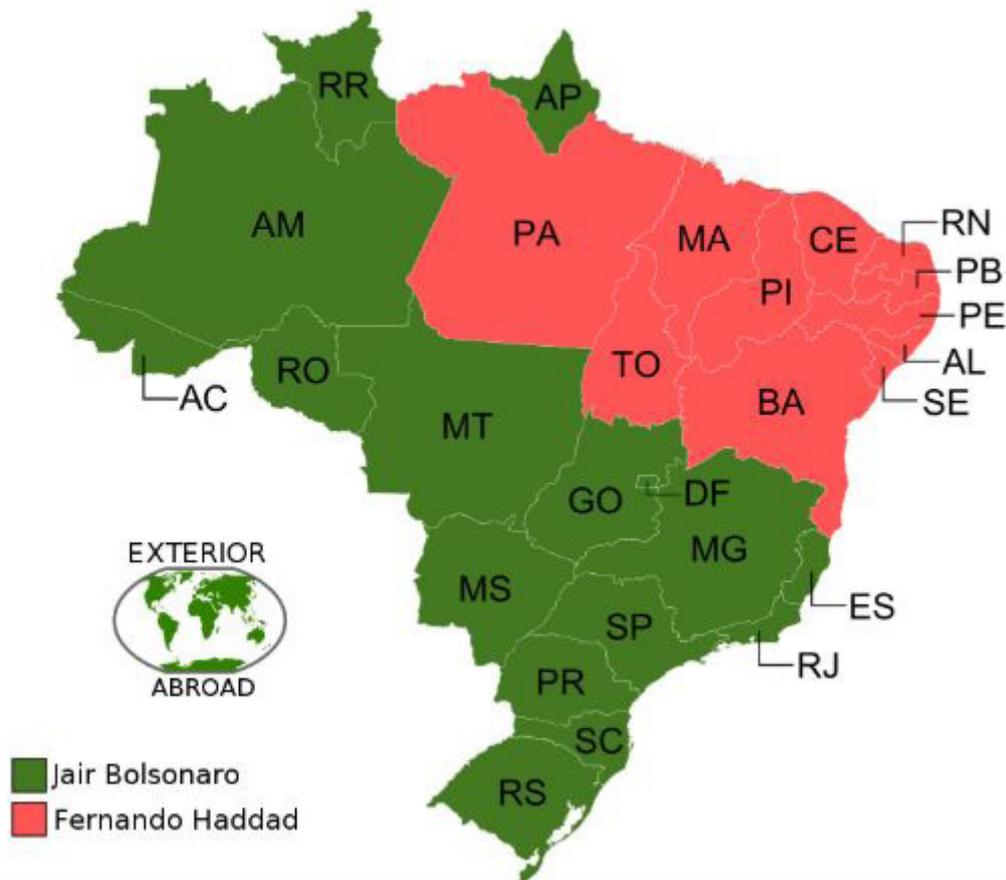
Bolsonaro's campaign was practically entirely carried out on social media. And the fact that he was the victim of a nearly fatal attack made him heroic. Thus, social networks were overwhelmingly the virtual-real locus of political campaign (<https://g1.globo.com/mg/zona-da-mata/noticia/2018/09/06/ato-de-campanha-de-bolsonaro-em-juiz-de-fora-e-interrompido-apos-tumulto.ghtml>).

The party from which Bolsonaro was elected, the unknown PSL, was little more than a small, “for-rent” party. With Bolsonaro's arrival, the PSL attracted various politicians who were then elected, thus making the party the second largest in the Chamber of Deputies, with 52 seats (<https://g1.globo.com/politica/eleicoes/2018/eleicao-em-numeros/noticia/2018/10/08/pt-perde-deputados-mas-ainda-tem-maior-bancada-da-camara-psl-de-bolsonaro-ganha-52-representantes.ghtml>).

Jair Bolsonaro was an answer that the ma-

majority of the population found to the critical juncture we have been experiencing since 2013, based on fighting corruption and reducing crime. But it also means the search for a demonstration that the “new” middle class mentioned earlier found in this figure a supposed leader capable of taking it out of the

failure the economic crisis sank them in. Bolsonaro only lost in the states in the Northeast Region and in Pará. In the other Brazilian states and in the Federal District, he won as shown in the map below which describes the second round of the presidential election:



Fonte: <https://www.valor.com.br/eleicoes-2018/analises?turno=2>

Bolsonaro, a former army captain, has a rough track record. He retired as a military after being nearly discharged for indiscipline in 1988 (Carvalho, 2019), the year he got himself elected to the city council in Rio de Janeiro. In 1990, he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies, where he remained for seven terms, i.e., 28 years. In the Chamber, he was known for being a member of the so-called “low clergy” and for his fierce defense of the Brazilian military dictatorship and dictatorial regimes. He used to express himself always and explicitly with all the possible mottoes of a radical reactionary. He presented himself as a solution to the corruption crisis that plagued the political establishment as mentioned earlier, mainly due to Car Wash’s developments, which made corruption the main topic of discussions in the country. As a deputy, he was an isolated politician who never played any leading role and was never chosen to be the rapporteur of any bill. Even so, he got a little more than 1/3 of votes of the Brazilian electorate. Politically, Bolsonaro’s election was an illiberal backlash (Hunter & Power, 2019).

There is clear evidence that the Car Wash “party” saw Bolsonaro as support to promote its permanent fight against corruption. Judge Sérgio Moro – who was central to Car Wash’s task force of federal attorneys in Curitiba, and who had ruled a series of preventive detentions of businessmen and politicians with great legal heterodoxy – was invited to be Minister of Justice and Public Security and accepted the invitation. He led the Ministry from January 1, 2019 to April 24, 2020, when he resigned.

BOLSONARO IN PRESIDENCY

President Bolsonaro’s administration has been marked by incoordination, disorganization and lack of expertise regarding the management of state apparatus. In addition, the president constantly insists on interfering via the social networks by giving opinions that compromise decisions. It is an errant administration which was the result of an atypical electoral process, with an administration composition that fragmented government into pieces and promoted its incoordination and a relationship with the institutions of democracy marked by constant antagonism, which destroys any collaborative spirit.

With regard to this last issue, there is no need for a set of examples to illustrate the disrespect of the president and part of his allies for the institutions of democracy. We could return to the elections, when a threat to the Supreme Court came from one of his sons. Or when, in his vote in favor of President Rousseff’s impeachment, he exalted a colonel who was a torturer during the military dictatorship. We could also remember a time when he said no election result would be accepted but victory. In office, the episodes have multiplied: from negative hints about Congress and the presidents of both Houses to his attendance at demonstrations advocating the closure of both the Supreme Court and Congress, often accompanied by the “no more negotiation” rallying cry.

The management of the economy is marked by an attempt at anachronistic neoliberalism that has yielded nothing but more unemployment, recession, currency devaluation, no in-

vestments and a meager 1.23% growth rate in 2019, with no industry-specific goals. Furthermore, the simple management of state resources is inefficient, as seen with the queues of retirees waiting to receive their benefit from the national pension system. In areas more closely related to education, culture, citizenship and human rights, in addition to inefficiency, there is a prevailing ideologization in a cultural war declared to anything or anyone (institutions or leaders) who represents any form of solid knowledge or enlightened debate. Not to mention the fact that a good part of ministries is formed by retired generals. Finally, the most explicit lack of coordination is in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The whole world adopts social distancing rules as an indispensable policy to deal with this disease. In Brazil, the Ministry of Health and most state governors follow this direction. Paradoxically, the President of the Republic sabotages the campaign by breaking distancing rules to attend public demonstrations in favor of his interests. In sum, we have no president, since this one is not viewed as such. We have no government, since each ministry follows a different direction without a common goal to coordinate and lead them.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The events that started in 2013, such as the invasion of the Supreme Court and Congress buildings, which had their windows broken, as well as the burning of party flags and the use of large dolls depicting politicians to symbolize violence against them were largely seen during the demonstrations in favor of the impeachment process and even during the 2018 election period. And we cannot forget recent attacks on jour-

nalists or even threats such as a “shut up” said by Bolsonaro himself. In short, all these events translate into the criminalization of politics and freedom of expression, accompanied by the smiles and waves of a democratically elected president.

The incoordination and lack of government expertise are also seen explicitly. The rise of a political group without a project based on collective action and on the minimally civilized principle that government should work for all and not just for its supporters, in addition to being an administration guided by a moral rhetoric that is anti-corruption and favoring the so-called Christian family values, could not take us anywhere else. It has been very common for government decisions, increasingly made by a few, to try to be viewed as the will of the people, as if the people were one in values and demands. They criminalize differences, whether regarding sexual option, religious option, or even different views on democratic politics. It has become unsafe to be a minority in Brazil lately. The loss of a sense of tolerance has grown deeper and has been incorporated into the discourse of some officials who confuse what is public with their own personal options, which have a lot to do with moral and religious choices. The insistence on projects like Nonpartisan School and the fight against the gender debate expresses the growth of intolerance.

The 2013 movements started to build an idea founded on morals and in opposition to institutions, as if the latter were an evil in itself. Part of the protesters did not know then – and perhaps still do not know – the difference between institutions and individuals, which is why they propose to destroy and close these institutions on the grounds that

individuals mismanage them. However, what we are experiencing now is the limit effect of all this: someone who confuses the institution of presidency of the Republic with himself, the President.

Finally, the legacy of this critical juncture may be the overcoming of the political crisis in a plural environment and the strengthening of democratic institutions. But it may also be the opposite; we will meet tyranny, and then everything the country has built since redemocratization and the 1988 Constitution may be thrown away, as if the last 35 years had been worth nothing, as if they had become just an intermediate cycle of an obscure result for Brazil with no defined time to end.

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