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Agata Bloch
Instytut Historii im. T. Manteuffla
Polska Akademia Nauk
e-mail: agata.natalia.bloch@gmail.com

Marco Vallada Lemonte
Uniwersytet w Coimbrze, Portugalia
e-mail: marco.lemonte@gmail.com

Introduction to the Meteoric Political Rise of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro Under a Crisis of the “Brazilianness”

*Jair Bolsonaro w czasach kryzysu „brazylijskości”: rozważania nad
wzrostem jego politycznej popularności*

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to clarify certain aspects regarding the meteoric political rise of Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro, from the lowest echelons of the Brazilian Parliament, to prominence as the main catalyst of the diffuse anti-left wing sentiment spread throughout Brazilian society after four consecutive center-left wing governments led by Worker’s Party (PT). In our article, we try to understand whether his presidency is a result of a major crisis of the “Brazilianness”.

Keywords: Brazil, nationalism, populism, presidential elections.

Streszczenie: Celem artykułu jest wyjaśnienie podstawowych kwestii dotyczących nagłego awansu politycznego brazylijskiego prezydenta Jaira Messiasa Bolsonaro, od zajmowanego przez niego stanowiska w parlamencie brazylijskim do przedstawienia go jako głównego katalizatora rozpraszającego nastroje antylewicowe w społeczeństwie brazylijskim, po czterech kolejnych rządach centrolewicowej Partii Pracujących (PT). W naszym artykule staramy się zrozumieć czy jego prezydentura jest wynikiem poważnego kryzysu „brazylijskości”.

Słowa kluczowe: Brazylia, nacjonalizm, populizm, wybory prezydenckie.

1. Introduction

In our article, we plan to discuss the political trajectory of Jair Bolsonaro as a candidate for the President of Brazil, putting into perspective a crucial identity crisis underway. Under the crisis of the „Brazilianness”, we understand those contradictions in political views, the crisis between left- and right-wing parties as well as the political division of the Brazilian society. As it will be presented further in this article, over the past century, Brazilians have been trying to build their national political identity, whose crisis broke up during the last presidential election in 2018.

Mr. Bolsonaro, aged 64, is a former army Captain who has spent nearly three decades in Congress, ever since he assumed his first term as Rio de Janeiro’s State representative to the National Congress, in 1991, and has been repeatedly reelected, managing to keep his post until 2018. He was elected on October 28, 2018, and his presidential term started January 1, 2019. In spite of his victory by a significant margin of 55,13% against 43,87 % of his opponent, Worker’s Party Fernando Haddad, his candidacy was deemed to be an underdog in the Presidential Race and the outcome of the election was nothing less than astonishing. His election marked a breakthrough in the Brazilian political landscape, disrupting the de facto two-party presidential competition between the center-right Party of the Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB) and the center-left Worker’s Party (PT). Against Mr. Bolsonaro’s small Social Liberal Party (PSL), it was believed that either Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB) or Fernando Haddad (PT), in spite of their growing rejection, should have won walking away.

Our article is divided as follows. In the beginning, we will reflect on the political building of the “Brazilianness” concerning various historical concepts. Next, we will focus on the Brazilian political scene before and during the election campaign, showing drastic changes that have taken place. Finally, we intend to discuss the ideological foundations of Jair Bolsonaro’s political program of the government to better understand the principles on which his political discourse was based, and how it affected the Brazilian electors. We believe that these changes are strongly related to the Brazilian identity crisis.

2. The overlooked issue of nationalist-oriented construction of “Brazilianness”

Nationalism, encompassing the concepts of nations, ethnic groups, and nationalist movements is quite complex, variegated and subject to antithetical views among its body of scholars, drawing from their disparate theoretical and

methodological perspectives on what is a nation and when does it historically emerge. The debate is nuanced and the mere attempt to clearly outline the different schools of theories on nationalism is a major challenge. There is dissonance among the main authors about the very definitions of nation, ethnicity, nationalism, and other forms of collective identity such as religious or even civilizational identities. Nonetheless, its centrality to the subjects of history and political science is universally accepted, whether in action or in the realm of study. In spite of the large and contradictory literature in the field, some authors have tried to tackle the main points of convergence and divergence in nationalism studies. A.D. Smith, for instance, while advocating for his own theory, the *ethnosymbolism*, conceived a roadmap of the field. According to him, regarding the context of a major body of literature on nations and nationalism, there are two Key Questions outlining opposing streams of thought. The first question is “why is the nation?”, while the second question is “when is the nation?” (Smith, 2002). On one hand, answers to the first question bring about a debate on primordialism versus instrumentalism, whereas answers to the second question give rise to a debate between perennial and modernist perspectives. Modernists such as Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson, and Ernest Gellner argue that nations are a recent phenomenon derived exclusively from modernity, rejecting the perennial notion that nations have existed ever since Antiquity. Modernists often have contending views about what were the main “engines” in the emergence of nations and nationalism. For instance, Marxists, like Hobsbawm, tend to associate nationalism with capitalism, especially in the early stages of capitalism (Hobsbawm, 2012). According to Hobsbawm, the unification of European national markets, following the decline of feudalism, has provided a strong impetus for the spread nationalist ideologies and the thought of the nation as an unbreakable whole.

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

temporary politics. The body of theoretical literature on nationalism is significant to help us locate nationalism in time and place.

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

At the beginning on the 20th century, the post-slavery and post-colonial young Brazilian republic needed to face a complex socio-economic situation, therefore the elite of this country opted for the political orientation called *nacionalismo integrador* – integrating nationalism. It aimed to transform a historically constructed nationality into a nationality in political terms. It is worth noting that this process had begun in Europe as early as the 18th century and only reached Brazil two hundred years later. Curiously, that time, in the 20th century, the integrating nationalism in Europe was being transformed into the imperialist nationalism. Nevertheless, one should not have any illusions that the Brazilian nationalism was only one of the forms of the public control over emerging new social groups, including workers, or over former slaves who, after the announcement of abolition in 1888, were abandoned to their own fate (Freitas, Luna, 2006: 328-358).¹

¹ Florestan Fernandes (1965) stated that Brazilian State had effectively abandoned the African-Brazilians to their own fate, which led to the extreme social marginalization and economic poverty of the former slaves, so that they were not ready to face the new hierarchy established by the white elite.

In the first half of the 20th century, nationalism became a leading doctrine in Brazil, initially on the political and socio-cultural levels, but from the thirties onward also on the economic one. The main slogans referred to the intensification of production in the internal market, the concentration of national capital, the creation of enterprises and the state monopoly in the oil and mining sector, as exemplified by Petrobras. In the political sphere, social justice, democracy, political neutrality and autonomy towards the United States and other European powers were demanded (Jaguaribe, 1958: 30-32).

The cultural nationalism aimed at transforming Brazilian society into one integrated and homogenous nation. The first step was to pay more attention to the inhabitants of rural areas from the remote political and administrative centers. This was reflected in such concepts as *regionalismo*, *sertanismo*, *ruralismo* and *caipirismo*, which successfully incorporated the rural element into an elitist vision of the society. This romantic dimension of nationalism was also noticeable in the literature of the authors such as Graciliano Ramos (*Vidas Secas*, 1938), José Lins de Rego (*Fogo Morto*, 1943) and Jorge Amado (*Terras do Sem-Fim*, 1943). According to José Aderaldo Castello, understanding of one's own country, divided into diverse natural regions over which different cultures overlapped, could lead to an interregional approach and, consequently, to the nationwide method of making politics (Castello, 1997: 109-113). "Integrating nationalism" aimed at creating new Brazilian citizenship in a utopian vision of the integrated and homogeneous society. Such Brazilian *tabula rasa* was reflected by Macunaíma, the character created by Mario de Andrade. Dorine Daisy Pedreira de Cerqueira saw in this caricature protagonist a humorous creation of the Brazilian individual who was deprived of foreign influence and a collective inferiority complex called in Brazil "Mongrel complex" (*complexo vira lata*) (Rodrigues, 1993: 51-52). Mario de Andrade was also the propagator of the concept of *brasilidade*, the collection of particular qualities for the Brazilian nation (Cerqueira, 1997: 127-132).

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

and *sertanejo* features as key elements of the Brazilian national character (Bastazin, Pinheiro, 1992: 8-9).

The beginnings of Brazilian nationalism as part of the political and economic governmental plan fell on the end of the First World War and gained momentum after the Great Depression in 1929. A year later, the nationalism became the official doctrine of the Getúlio Vargas government known later as “Estado Novo”, ideologically similar to fascist Italy, Nazi Germany or Portugal under Salazar. Unlike Hitler and his theory of the superiority of the “Aryan race” that was standing above other human races, the authoritarian government of Getúlio set himself the task of creating a new Brazilian race. He tried to convince the society that the miscegenation made the post-colonial Brazilian society different from other American countries. Getúlio Vargas was aware that the descendants of Africans or Indians were the majority in Brazil, while the white population – a minority. The miscegenation, however, was just a way to make it impossible for the non-white population to take power over the white Brazilians.

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

E. Bradford Burns noticed the transition of Getúlio’s government from the cultural and political nationalism to the economic nationalism. It is worth noting that both, Getúlio Vargas and later military junta (1964-1985) drew inspiration from the ideas of Alberto Tôrres (1865-1917), who was in favor of strengthening the federal government to take control over sources, wealth, industry and commerce. Following those concepts made Brazil become one of the most industrialized countries in Latin America until the middle of the 20th century (Burns, 1968: 77-81).

Nationalism in Brazil gained a more left-leaning character from 1956-1964 during the presidencies of Juscelino Kubitschek, Jânio Quadros and João Goulart, and became the leading doctrine of the leftist-wing political elite. Juscelino Kubitschek himself announced “50 years’ progress in 5 years”, and gave rise to the concepts of “developmental nationalism”. Brazil aspired to become more independent from the great European powers and the USA. This latter was, by that time, the largest investor in Brazil and was strongly politically, economically and ideologically associated with the right-wing oligarchy which accused João Goulart of communism-orientation and thus aroused fear in the US (Burns, 1968: 90-95).

The period of the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985) is the period of rebuilding the Brazilian, homogeneous national identity. Natalia Ap. Morato Fernandes drew attention to the strategic planning of the dictatorship related to the construction of the cultural industry and the acquisition of total domination over artistic production in Brazil. The military junta announced then that if one did not love Brazil, one should leave it, under the motto *Ame-o ou deixe-o* [Love it or leave it] (Fernandes, 2013: 173-192). The military regime was characterized by an authoritarian political model and a conservative social project, which severely curtailed the right of the popular masses to participate in the decision-making process. It was a period marked by intense economic growth, but also by the increase of social inequalities, as social inequality was considered a minor issue. As the economist Delfim Netto, Minister of Finance epitomized during the zenith of the regime’s fast-paced economic growth, from 1967-74, “a cake had to rise before it could be sliced and served up. If there was no cake, what could be divided? So, we made the cake grow.”

According to A. Cervo and C. Bueno, in spite of all the talk about the dangers of socialism Goulart’ administration supposedly represented, the Military Regime (1964-85) continued to pursue the major foreign policy’s tenets from Goulart’s administration, which in turn had been traced during the predecessor presidency of Jânio Quadros, in 1961 (Cuervo, Bueno, 2002) Jânio Quadros’ foreign minister, San Tiago Dantas, formulated a set of foreign policy principles known as “Independent Foreign Policy”. In line with A. Cervo and C. Bueno, Vizentini concedes that, given the specificities of the internal context, the regime has rescued many of the principles of the Independent External Policy (IEP) launched by Dantas (Vizentini, 1998). There is a significant degree of consensus among scholars in the analysis of the foreign policy guidelines of the first military government. The main body of scholarly literature tends to see the first military administration, that of Marshall Castelo Branco (1964-1967), as deviant in its foreign policy objectives due to its due to the automatic alignment with US interests.

During this period, the idea that in the face of communist danger, the idea that ideological frontiers should be preserved through US supremacy gained strength. Such a position did not last because it did not present concrete economic and political results. The hardliner sector of the Military represented by Costa e Silva (1967-69) defended a foreign policy that closely resembled the “Independent Foreign Policy” in order to defend greater autonomy of the country and the end of the automatic alignment with the US, derived from the pragmatic realization that Brazil’s international interests would not always be overlapped.

The foreign policy during Geisel’s Military administration (1974-1979) is certainly the one that has been most thoroughly analyzed by the scholarly, generally emphasizing the audacity of its actions in the international arena. It was in this term that the Military regime markedly distanced from the US. In the aftermath of the oil crisis knocking on the door, Geisel approached the Arab countries, exporting primary products in exchange for oil. Relations with regional powers such as Algeria, Libya, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, were strengthened, furthermore, through arms sales and scientific and technological bilateral cooperation agreements. The resumption of diplomatic ties and trade relations with Communist China in 1974 and the recognition of the Marxist government in Angola marked a realistic perspective on the assessment of circumstances. Furthermore, the confidential nuclear deal with Germany was one of the highest points of friction in the history of Brazil-United States bilateral relations (Pereira, 2010). It is noteworthy that the Military regime acted pragmatically and never severed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, not even during the 1964-67 period of closest alignment to the US and the Western bloc at the heyday of the Cold War. To sum up, it is clear that most of the way through the Military regime, Brazil’s kept on with its traditional ‘independent foreign policy’, and such stances were more or less observed by the Itamaraty ever since.

From that moment on, Brazil began to strengthen its national identity on the international scene. This is of particular importance considering Brazil’s leadership role in Latin America, being the region’s biggest economy and most populous country. Yet, it is important to notice that such leadership was traditionally observed by all sorts of governments, from democratically-elected center-left wing Goulart (1961-64) and the Worker’s Party (2003-2016) to center-right wing presidencies such as Dutra (1946-51), Collor (1990-92), Franco (1992-94), Cardoso (1995-2003), Temer (2016-2018), and what is more interesting is that some major foreign policy guidelines were followed even throughout the Military Regime (1964-85).

One of the manifestations of this process was the South American bloc Mercosur that has been a keystone of Brazilian foreign policy since its inception in the early 1990s. At first, its main goal was the establishment of a cohesive trade bloc and customs union involving Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Some years later, however, the government began to develop a strategy of enlargement to bring into the fold of Mercosur all the other South American countries. In the Brazilian view, South America is not just a specific geographical region (different from Latin America as a whole) but also an autonomous political-economic area, given that US influence recedes as the distance from Washington increases. Brazil's political elites consider this subregion to be within its natural sphere of influence (Souza, 2008). Hence, it is noteworthy that it was Cardoso's administration that organized the first summit of South American presidents in Brasilia in September 2000.

Beginning under Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's (2003–2010) Minister of Foreign Affairs, Celso Amorim, who had also acted in the same post under the presidency of Itamar Franco, and set the goal that Brazil should take on a more proactive role in global affairs, starting by projecting its influence over Latin America. Amorim stayed in the post throughout Lula's two consecutive presidential terms and had time to implement what he labeled a return to San Tiago Dantas' principles of the 'Independent Foreign Policy'. Lula da Silva deepened this strategy from 2003 onwards, leading to the creation of the South American Community (SAC, or CASA as in its Portuguese and Spanish acronym, meaning home in both of these languages) at the Cuzco presidential summit of December 2004. The name was later changed to the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the constitutive treaty of which was signed in Brasilia on May 2008. Mercosur arguably constitutes the inner circle of UNASUR. Mercosur was initially a pragmatic integration project that dealt with trade, customs, and market access, but which has become increasingly a symbol for progressive and leftist ideologies. In Brazil, it has turned into the flagship of those who stand for developmental, anti-imperialist, or left-wing nationalist ideas. To the most vocal of its supporters, Mercosur is not simply an economic association or an instrument, but rather a supranational identity that provides its member countries with the only way to survive in a globalizing world (Malamud, 2005: 421-436). Mercosur's position as South American as the core for an ambitious Brazil – led Latin-American integration project was officially established by Lula's administration, as the inaugural speech of its foreign minister unequivocally demonstrated:

Under Lula's government, South America will be our priority. The relationship with Argentina is the pillar upon which Mercosur is built. [Without] the Common External Tariff and the Customs Union [...] any pretension to negotiating together with other countries and blocs is a mere illusion [...]. We consider it is essential to deepen integration among the countries of South America [...]. The process of democratic change that Brazil is undergoing with Lula's government might be a source of inspiration and stability for the whole of South America [and] we will not shirk from contributing to the solution of conflicts [...]. A political stable, socially just and economically prosperous South America is a goal that must be pursued not just from a natural sense of solidarity, but also for the benefit of our progress and well-being (Amorim, 2003).

It would seem that during the successive governments, the "Brazilianness" had great chances to consolidate. Unfortunately, as it turned out next, it was slowly moving towards its downfall, while the Latin American specialist Michael Reid called this period from the hope to the disappointment. The PT party's inability to conduct economic policy during the first reign of Dilma Rousseff (2011-2015) led to increased unemployment, lower family income, and lower exports to China. The outbreak of the *Lava Jato* corruption scandal in March 2014, which involved politicians from various sides of the political barricade, including Lula da Silva, contributed to a sharp decline in the popularity of Dilma and the PT government. The beginning of her next term in 2016 was judged to be the worst since Fernando Collor (1990-1992). Eventually, Dilma shared the same fate as Collor himself and in 2016, she was removed from the office in the consequence of the impeachment. On the wave of the unpopularity of the Workers' Party, the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) and the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB) hoped to win the next elections in 2018 (Reid, 2016: 423-435). However, the last presidential election was won by a completely unexpected candidate representing a minor political party, which was at the moment the Social Liberal Party (PSL). But that will be discussed in the next section of this article.

3. The presidential race, the victory of Jair Bolsonaro, and the crisis of the Brazilian political scene

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

zilian Social Democracy (PSDB). It was this feeling of frustration among key sectors of the electorate that propelled Jair Bolsonaro as a relevant candidate.

During the presidential race, Bolsonaro used a political language of hatred, openly calling for the annihilation of the Left. On September 1, 2018, during a rally in the northern state of Acre, Bolsonaro picked up a camera tripod, and, pretending it was a machine gun, yelled: "Let's shoot down Acre's PT supporters!". Afterward, he said: "We will chase these crooks from Acre!". The declarations caused so much outrage in Brazil as well as abroad that the candidate later disclaimed that he was not instigating political violence. "There is a figure of speech, hyperbole, it was used, nothing more besides, what's the problem, I do not want to kill anyone".

A few days later, on the ensuing September 6, during a rally in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais, a man suddenly approached and stabbed Bolsonaro in the stomach (Jair Bolsonaro, *Brazil's Presidential Front-Runner...*, 2018). Ironically, from that moment onwards, his campaign definitely took off. Although by that time he was already the frontrunner of the presidential race according to Datafolha and Ibope, Brazil's two biggest polling research institutes, with 20% of voting intention. After the attack that nearly killed him, his voting intention grew almost twofold.

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

In our opinion, the Brazilian leftist parties committed serious strategic mistakes. First, they did not manage to establish any political alliance with left-oriented parties, nor allowed the emergence of a "new" candidate who could represent them and oppose to Bolsonaro. Lula da Silva, two-term president of Brazil during 2003-2010, decided to run again the presidential race in 2018. They mistakenly assessed their chances in the presidential election and did not realize the scale of rejection. In April, Lula was convicted of a second-instance court due to corruption and money laundry. It was the moment when his Workers' Party should put up a new candidate. Nevertheless, Lula da Silva decided to conduct his electoral campaign from prison, which led to the major rejection of his party by the Brazilian electors. From the moment when Lula was arrested, the party focused primarily on the defense of the former president in court and public opinion instead of looking for some alternatives. In August 2018, the Workers' Party

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

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

Before the second round of the election, Haddad tried again to form an alliance with Ciro Gomes (PDT), Marina Silva (Rede) and former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (PSDB), but with no results. Cardoso decided to remain neutral, Marina Silva declared that she would only give support in the final stage of the campaign of the second round. Ciro Gomes, as one of the few parties, finally agreed to support Haddad in his presidential race. However, in the social media, Ciro Gomes has repeatedly criticized Bolsonaro and expressed his concerns about the Bolsonaro's protofascist attitudes, but never even mentioned Haddad. In the final election period, the Workers' Party decided to change its strategy from highlighting the close link between Lula and Haddad and to put itself in the role of defender of democracy, which they believed was threatened by Jair Bolsonaro. Thus, the Workers' Party (PT) candidacy tried to brand itself at a cross-party dimensional level, as the only one able to stop Bolsonaro's undemocratic aspirations, by leading a multiparty democratic front. That way, they managed to convince some voters who in the first round voted for smaller political parties and were hesitant in the second round between Haddad and Bolsonaro. Even political actors deemed to be antagonistic to the Worker's Party (PT), such as Alberto Goldman, a prominent leadership at the Party of the Brazilian Social Democracy

(PSDB), publicly announced that he would vote for Haddad out of disgust with Bolsonaro's remarks that he would jail or force into exile PT supporters immediately after his electoral victory. Goldman, a former governor of the state of São Paulo, released a video on his Facebook profile claiming that, sadly, there was no other option than Haddad (Ex-governador Alberto Goldman, do PSDB..., 2018). The video was later deleted from his Facebook profile due to the controversy it sparked among right-wing voters, who flooded his comments timeline in outrage, in spite of his video containing many critical remarks on Haddad and his party, and clearly stating that his support was reluctant.

On the map showing the distribution of votes on Haddad and Bolsonaro in the second round, it is clear that it was uneven. The PSL candidate won significantly in the southern, south-eastern and central-western states, i.e. everywhere where is the highest income per capita. Haddad won in the north and north-east part of the country, especially in smaller towns, far from big urban centers. The inhabitants of these regions are the beneficiaries of the government program Bolsa Família, granting minimum income to families living in extreme poverty.

Interestingly, Mr. Bolsonaro was able to gain significant support even among LGBT groups or Afro-descendent communities, which were the minorities that he insulted in his ultra-conservative, nationalist, and populist speeches, and in his controversial stances on multi-culturalism, sexuality, racism, feminism, migration and his nostalgia for the nationalist, right-wing Military Junta which ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985. Not by chance did he choose as his campaign motto "Brazil above everything, God above everyone" (Homossexuais, negros e pobres votaram..., 2018). It is difficult to explain why the minorities decided to support the PSL candidate. There are no published studies on this phenomenon, however, in our opinion, three points can be distinguished. First, they decided to do so, because they rejected the Worker's Party and its all possible candidates as Lula or Haddad. The second issue is the problem of class and social identity in Brazil. Bolsonaro was mainly supported by the upper-middle class, to which many Brazilians aspire to belong. The statistics launched by DataFolha in October 2018, showed the following features of the Bolsonaro's electorate: the majority are men (55%), electors are between 25 and 59 years old, of which the majority (24%) is in the range of 25-34, mostly with secondary education (47%) coming from the richer southeastern states of Brazil (Pesquisa Datafolha: veja perfil..., 2018).

The third important factor was the neo-pentecostal churches in Brazil that openly supported the candidacy of Bolsonaro and urged their followers to vote on him. A significant segment of the population voting for Mr. Bolsonaro was indeed the evangelicals. Although they formed one of his core electorates, Brazilian

sociologist Alexandre Brasil Fonseca explained that they were crucial more in terms of quality than quantity. After the first round of elections, the data published by the IBOPE and Datafolha (October 25 and 27) revealed that out of the 42 million evangelical voters, less than half, that is, 20 million, voted for Mr. Bolsonaro, while 10 million elected Fernando Haddad. In percentage terms, including all the valid votes, Mr. Bolsonaro obtained 67% votes from the evangelicals, while Haddad received 33% of them. However, it should be emphasized that many parties from all sides of the political scene, including PSOL, Rede, PSDB, and MDB, were looking for such an alliance with evangelical communities. The Worker's Party candidate Fernando Haddad took up this dialogue too late, yet this does not mean that such an alliance had not existed before between the evangelicals and the left-wing party nor that the PT was rejected by them. This might be evidenced by the re-election of an evangelical politician from the PT, Rejana Dias as a Piauí deputy to the National Congress in 2018. Mr. Bolsonaro successfully reached the middle-class evangelicals, defined as groups with secondary education and income ranging between 2-5 times more the minimum wage. These groups have changed their political views radically and voted differently than four years before (*Foram os evangélicos que elegeram Bolsonaro?*, 2018).

4. Jair Bolsonaro's Government Plan

In this part of the article, we intend to focus on the techniques used by Jair Bolsonaro to convince the Brazilian electorate to his election program. We will not evaluate it in terms of substance or merit, we will rather focus on his form of expression and the message format. Its most striking defect is its non-unified character. The first part reflecting the values, the reorganization of state structures seems more like a public speech than a political program itself. One can notice lots of populist slogans followed by the exclamation marks which give the impression that the candidate is shouting to his potential electors. However, we will not notice this expansive form of his expression in the last part, where the economic program is included, as it was written by Bolsonaro's economic adviser Paulo Guedes. Guedes's statements are clear, condensed, balanced and detailed.

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

your savings, your home, your motorcycle, your car, your land are the fruits of your work and your choices” (Bolsonaro, 2018: 4).

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

Bolsonaro stresses that his goal is “to drive away the populism” (Bolsonaro, 2018: 51), and assures “less space for the populists and their lies”, (Bolsonaro, 2018: 5) although he himself promises a social, economic and political miracle in a country that is immersed in multidimensional crisis. One of these miracles is, for example, to improve education to compete with the countries such as Japan or Asian Tigers, like Taiwan and South Korea. The argument that applies here is that he personally visited these countries, which gives the voter the wrong understanding that visiting them is equal to understanding their social politics. One should remember, that the problem of the Brazilian education system is very complex and requires huge investments and reforms to be able to match the level of those mentioned countries.

In his program, Bolsonaro guarantees:

[A] decent government, unlike (...) [former government] that has thrown us into an ethical, moral, and fiscal crisis. A government without taking-for-granted, without spurious agreements. A government made up of people who have a commitment to Brazil and Brazilians. That meets the expectations of citizens and works for what really makes a difference in everyone's life (Bolsonaro, 2018: 2).

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

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

In the form of slides and more statistics, PSL candidate described the reality of this country, in which crimes, murders, rapes and sexual abuse of children have been a problem throughout the decades. Simple numbers without further explanation or analysis arouse fear among Brazilians, for whom security was and is one of the most important political postulates. One of the forms of combating the crime, according to Jair Bolsonaro, is the legalization of weapons and he argues that in countries such as the US, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Israel, Switzerland or Canada the open access to weapons did not increase the number of crimes (Bolsonaro, 2018: 24). Again, he gave clichéd examples of so-called countries of the "First World". We use this word consciously because, although the division into the "first" and the "third world" has long been out of use, it is still widespread in Brazilian public discourse. The same slogans were applied in the part concerning the improvement of the country's economy, aiming at reaching for the level of economies of the developed countries, promising that his "strategy will be to adopt the same actions that work in countries with [economic] growth, employment, low inflation, income for workers and opportunities for all" (Bolsonaro, 2018: 13).

It is worth noting that the statistics in the PSL program are not only provided by the official institutions, among others, IBGE, IEPA, but his source of information was two TV reports launched by the *Globo* "A Guerra do Brasil" and "Julgamento da Revolução – About *Globo*, 7 de outubro de 1984". The *Globo* station has a certain stigma in Brazilian society because during the military dictatorship it was responsible for propagating the regime's ideological, anti-democratic political stances (Souza, 2017: 227-228).

Referring to *Globo*'s reports is also contradictory to what Jair Bolsonaro proclaimed, namely that he would announce a government deprived of any ideo-

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

Another enemy pointed out by the PSL candidate was a conference of leftist political parties and other organizations from Latin America and the Caribbean, known as *Foro de São Paulo*, founded by the Workers' Party in 1990, aimed at looking for alternatives to neoliberal politics. According to Jair Bolsonaro, *Foro de São Paulo* was supposed to have weakened the democracy, and, by showing more statistics, he tries to persuade that the crime is higher in the regions ruled by the members of this conference (Bolsonaro, 2018: 26).

One should remember that the problem of crime and poverty in the given regions is supra-structural, over-institutional and is the results of long-term socio-economic inequalities. Consequently, the enemy for the PSL candidate is any elite that professes “cultural Marxism” (Bolsonaro, 2018: 7).

Interestingly, in contradiction to such an ideological political program, Jair Bolsonaro hails a Brazil “of diverse opinions, colors, and orientations” (Bolsonaro, 2018: 4), and also promises a “Brazil free from crime, corruption, and perverse ideologies” (Bolsonaro, 2018: 5). It is worth mentioning here the theory of the Dutch political scientist, Cas Mudde who claimed that the populist leaders divide society into two antagonistic groups, “pure people” and “corrupted elite” (Molly, 2018). This division is visible in the PSL political program in which, he positioned himself belong “pure people”, while Lula’s party represents the “corrupted elite”. Jair Bolsonaro promises also to restore the dignity and the hope for a better future, in a country that does not believe to be a “land of the future.”² He claimed that “WE ARE MUCH STRONGER than all these problems (Bolsonaro, 2018: 15) and the government itself “will trust the citizen” (Bolsonaro, 2018: 19). Unfortunately, it seems that PSL candidate takes advantages of the ignorance of some of his voters about the history of their country (Bôas, 2000: 265-269). An

² In 1941, Stefan Zweig published a book titled “Brazil, Land of the Future”. Nowadays, Zweig's notion Brazil as being the land of the future is frequently scorned by Brazilian intellectuals in media outlets

example of that is the statement saying that “The Armed Forces of Brazil has a history that makes us proud. For example, the Brazilian heroes fought against National Socialism during World War II. We were the only country in Latin America to fight against the Nazis. Subsequently, other heroes prevented the seizure of power by leftist forces planning a communist coup in Brazil in 1964, according to the editorial: Julgamento da Revolução, *O Globo*, 7 de outubro de 1984.” [The Revolution under review, *O Globo*, October 7th 1984] (Bolsonaro, 2018: 33)³

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

The argument of a “corrupt elite” has also been used to shift economic policy from the socialistic oriented to the neoliberal. While Mr. Bolsonaro openly admitted his lack of knowledge on the matter, he chose Paulo Guedes for the leader of the Brazilian economy, who like him – according to the German channel *Deutsche Welle* – was considered to be a sort of 'outsider'. Guedes was not supposed to be associated with any previous governments of the PSDB and PT, in which economists represented various research centers in Rio de Janeiro (PSDB) and Campinas (PT). Guedes' main intention was to privatize the largest state-owned companies as a means of repaying the state debt. The second target was to reform the pension, which would be replaced by a capitalization system. This program, however, ran counter to the values proclaimed by Mr. Bolsonaro over his recent terms of office, during which he supported the interests of the state, civil servants, and the military (Que programa econômico, Bolsonaro?, 2018).

³ The editorial from the newspaper *O Globo*, referred by the text, was published 20 years and some months after the 1964 Coup that established an authoritarian political regime under military tutelage, during the initial stages of democratic transition. In the editorial, the owner of the gigantic media corporation 'Organizações Globo', Roberto Marinho, claimed that the events of 1964 were not a Coup but rather a Revolution, and that it was a necessary step to fight the corruption and economic mismanagement of Goulart's government. Only in 2013 did the corporation release an editorial using the word 'Coup' and publicly apologized for its institutional support.

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

5. Final Considerations

In our article, we tried to analyze the attitudes of Jair Bolsonaro in the pre-election period given the broader social and political context. We believe that his election for a president was strongly associated with the identity crisis prevailing in Brazil. The Brazilian electorate was looking for an alternative to certain established political and institutional schemes. This coincided in time with many strategic errors committed by the mainstream political parties, complex social, political, economic, institutional crisis in the country, as finally due to his populist attitude and great charisma.

We believe that Brazilian national identity was based on inaccurate utopian theories about racial democracy, non-existent racial conflicts and harmonious relations between various ethnic and racial groups, as well as religious or sexual minorities. As we have shown, in reality, many of these theories were created “from above” and were part of a nationalist trend aimed at integrating society. The contemporary Brazilians are demanding “from bottom” their voting rights on political and social issues that are decisive for them.

We came to the conclusion that Mr. Bolsonaro's political discourse strongly represents the far-right, however, his current government might be characterized more by sheer populism. Bolsonaro's rhetorical persecution of leftist parties polarizes the society and intensifies the political conflict in the country. As a result, Brazilian society is subject to further political, ideological, racial, gender and ethnic divisions, and Mr. Bolsonaro in earlier assumptions of his government's program did not prioritize a social integration of the Brazilian nation. According to Müller, the conflict based on cultural war is important for populists who want to show what the nation is (Müller, 2017). Additionally, by introducing some historically relevant or new reforms, as in the case of the *Bolsa Família*, that was strongly debated in the pre-election period, Mr. Bolsonaro tries to convince the supporters of the leftist Labor Party. By facilitating access to weapons, he

makes the society feel that everybody has the right to decide and rule over himself. Müller warns, however, that populism is never the way to greater participation of the society in politics (Müller, 2017).

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

Thus, we believe that Jair Bolsonaro is partly populist, partly far-right, but still very different from his nationalist-orientated predecessors, other contemporary populists, and the far-right politicians. We shall remember that populism affects always a society that feels unrepresented. Maybe this is a moment for the mainstream parties in Brazil to think about what mistakes were made, and at what point significant parts of the society distanced themselves from politics to choose an outsider with an aggressive far-right speech as President. We suspect, that the biggest challenge for Mr. Bolsonaro will be the social, ethnic and racial integration of the strongly divided Brazilian society, which is probably going through the biggest identity crisis ever.

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Nota o Autorach

Agata Bloch – doktorantka w Instytucie Historii im. Tadeusza Manteuffla Polskiej Akademii Nauk; magister historii imperium portugalskiego na Uniwersytecie Nova w Lizbonie; magister kulturoznawstwa w CESLA Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

Marco Vallada Lemonte – doktorant na Uniwersytecie w Coimbrze, absolwent na kierunku Nauk Społecznych ze specjalizacją politologia na Uniwersytecie w São Paulo.