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# BOLSONARO'S BRAZIL: A DEMOCRACY UNDER STRESS

*O Brasil de Bolsonaro: Uma democracia sob estresse*

*El Brasil de Bolsonaro: Una democracia bajo estrés*

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## ABSTRACT

The social resentment expressed in the June 2013 Journeys, resulting from frustrated expectations of ascending social sectors (who saw their progress stalled) and of higher layers in the social stratification (who lost their distinction), gave rise to anti-political affections. These, in turn, have fueled anti-party and anti-system sentiment conducive to the electoral success of outsiders and marginal politicians. In this context, several outsiders became mayors in the 2016 municipal elections, and Jair Bolsonaro won the presidency in 2018. His movement-government was characterized by extremist populism with a religious, exclusionary, and anti-pluralist background. This populism mobilized support for an abnormal government, which defies conventional institutionalist analysis as it undermines the existing framework instead of accepting it as given. This approach led to institutional stress, as the repeated attack on other branches of power (especially the judiciary) triggered hyperactivity within the institutions, generating a populist trap that undermined the legitimacy of institutions.

Keywords: extremism, populism, Bolsonaro government, political institutions, democracy.

***RESUMO***

*O ressentimento social manifesto nas Jornadas de Junho de 2013, resultante de expectativas frustradas de setores sociais ascendentes (que viram estancado seu progresso) e de camadas superiores na estratificação social (que perderam sua distinção), ensejou afetos antipolíticos. Estes, por sua vez, alimentaram o antipartidarismo e o sentimento antissistema, propícios ao sucesso eleitoral de outsiders e políticos marginais. Nesse contexto, tornaram-se prefeitos vários outsiders nas eleições municipais de 2016, e Jair Bolsonaro conquistou a Presidência em 2018. Seu governo-movimento caracterizou-se pelo populismo extremista de fundo religioso, excludente e antipluralista, que mobilizou apoios a um governo anormal e, por isso, incompreensível pela análise institucionalista convencional: em vez de tomar o quadro institucional como dado, atuou solapando-o. Isso gerou estresse no sistema, pois o ataque reiterado a outros poderes (especialmente o Judiciário) teve como resposta o hiperativismo institucional, gerador de uma armadilha populista, que minou a legitimidade de instituições instadas a atuar defensivamente.*

***Palavras-chave:*** *extremismo, populismo, governo Bolsonaro, instituições políticas, democracia.*

***RESUMEN***

*El resentimiento social manifestado en las protestas de junio de 2013, resultado de las expectativas frustradas de los sectores sociales ascendentes (que vieron frenado su progreso) y de las capas superiores de la estratificación social (que perdieron su distinción), dio lugar a afectos antipolíticos. Estos, a su vez, alimentaron el antipartidismo y el sentimiento antisistema, propicios al éxito electoral de outsiders y políticos marginales. En este contexto, varios outsiders se convirtieron en alcaldes en las elecciones municipales de 2016 y Jair Bolsonaro ganó la presidencia en 2018. Su gobierno-movimiento se caracterizó por un populismo extremista con trasfondo religioso, excluyente y antipluralista, que movilizó el apoyo a un gobierno anómalo y, por tanto, incomprensible para el análisis institucionalista convencional: en lugar de tomar el marco institucional como dado, actuó socavándolo. Esto generó tensión institucional, ya que el ataque reiterado a otros poderes (especialmente el Judicial) se encontró con un hiperactivismo institucional, que generó una trampa populista que minó la legitimidad de las instituciones exigidas a actuar defensivamente.*

***Palabras clave:*** *extremismo, populismo, gobierno Bolsonaro, instituciones políticas, democracia.*

## INTRODUCTION

I am finishing this essay on the last day of June 2023, a date when former President Jair Bolsonaro became ineligible for eight years by a decision of the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) in a Judicial and Electoral Investigation Action (AIJE) filed by the Democratic Labor Party (PDT). The reasons for revoking his political rights were the misuse of power and the abuse of political power. This was due to an incident in which the then-President convened a meeting with ambassadors and other foreign diplomatic representatives at the official presidential residence, the *Palácio da Alvorada*. During this event, Bolsonaro attacked the justice system, particularly the electoral justice system, and, based on false information, raised unfounded suspicions about the electronic voting process in Brazil. He did this to delegitimize it and create pretexts for later contesting its results.

This was not an isolated or rare episode; it was just another in a series of events in which President Bolsonaro attacked the institutions of the democratic rule of law during his presidential term. His government has never conformed to the typical characteristics of a Brazilian coalition presidentialism that has been in place since the beginning of the re-democratization process in 1985. Until 2018, governments were evaluated as either better or worse, more or less successful, popular or unpopular, led by skilled or clumsy politicians. What had not yet occurred was a government characterized by daily abnormal events. When it comes to President Bolsonaro's government, it was not merely a case of discussing a crisis, as this implies a deviation from the norm. In this case, the deviation itself became the norm.

In this essay, I intend to delineate the significance of the four years of President Bolsonaro's government in Brazil. This essay comprises five sections, including this introduction. The next section delves into the precedents that paved the way for the far-right to ascend to the presidency. In the third section, I provide a profile of Bolsonaro and explore the ideological underpinnings of the political movement that fueled his victory in the 2018 presidential elections and informed his government's modus operandi. The fourth section examines the nature of the government established from 2018 to 2022, which I refer to as the "movement-government" (Couto, 2021a). In the fifth and concluding section, I point out the consequences of such a government for democratic institutionality, considering the institutions' resilience and ability to withstand attacks against democracy.

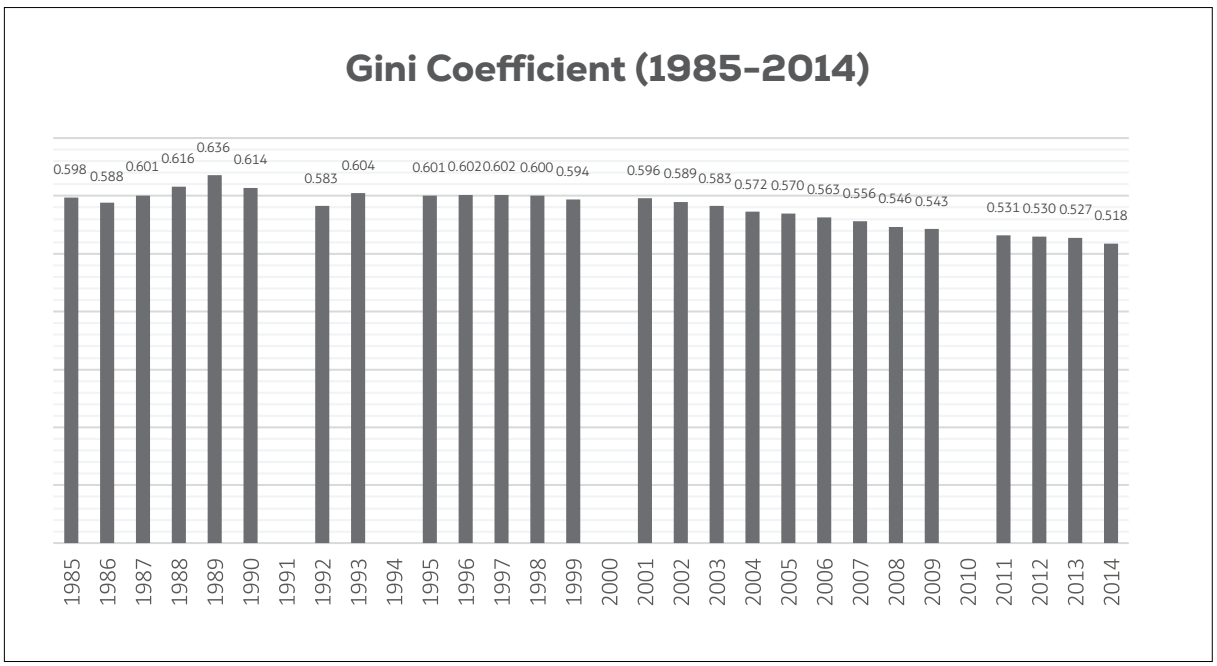
## PRECEDENTS: THE RESENTMENT AND TENSIONS OF 2013

Between 2001 and 2014, Brazil witnessed a significant reduction in economic inequality and a substantial decline in poverty levels. Figures 1 and 2 vividly illustrate these trends. Notably, the most substantial reductions occurred after 2002, with the election and the onset of the first mandate of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. These changes brought about one of Brazilian society's most profound structural transformations. A significant portion of the population, previously excluded from access to basic consumer goods and leisure activities, now enjoyed

these benefits, thus gaining entry into a social sphere that had hitherto been predominantly restricted to minority segments of the population. Individuals who were once outsiders in Brazilian society were now included (Arretche, 2018).

This inclusion did not happen without eliciting reactions. A considerable portion of the more affluent sectors of the Brazilian population viewed these changes negatively. They observed that certain goods and services that had set them apart from others became more expensive (for instance, domestic workers' services). Additionally, they noticed that spaces that had previously been exclusively theirs were now being shared with segments that had been absent before – a phenomenon sometimes referred to as the 'airport effect,' where even the poorest members of society gained access to air travel, a privilege once reserved for the wealthiest segments of the population (Pinto, 2014). These sentiments were reflected in the negative perceptions significant portions of the population held regarding the governments led by the Workers' Party (PT) (Aquino, 2020; Couto, 2013).

Figure 1. Income inequality in Brazil




Source: IPEA DATA/IBGE.

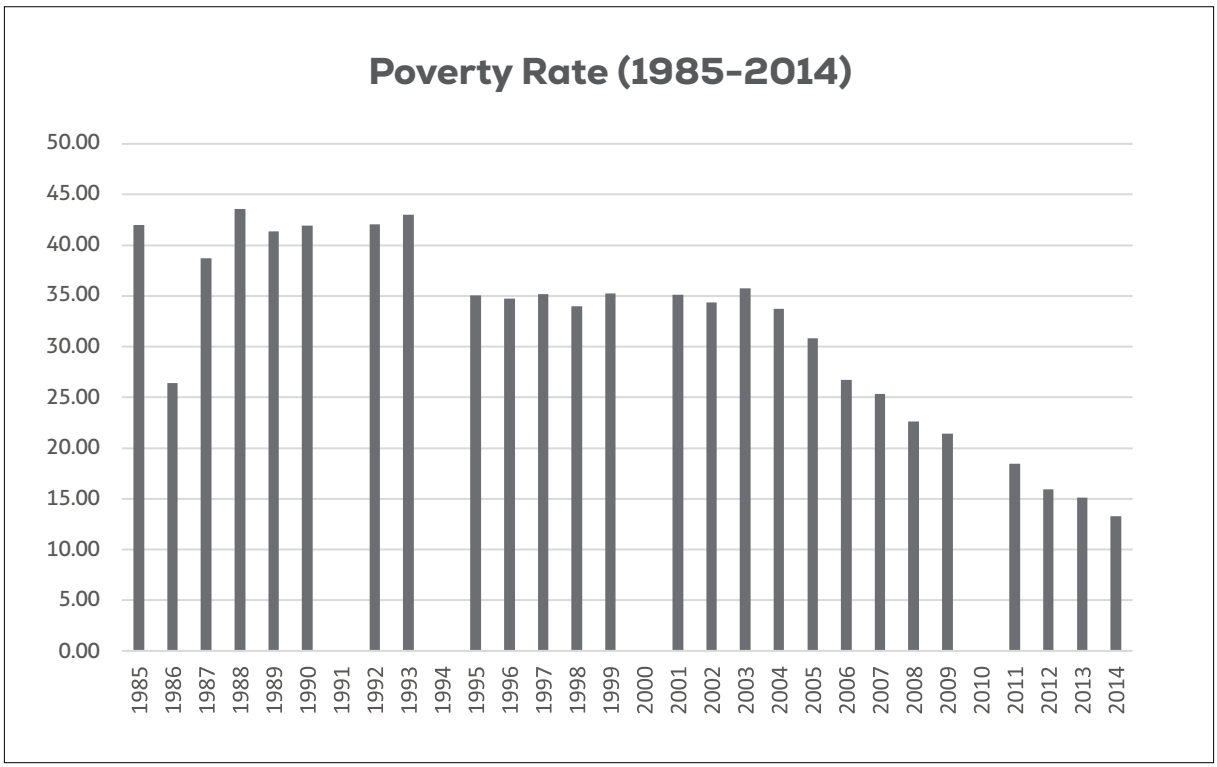
This change resulted in a loss of social distinction, which in turn paved the way for the rise of a populist discourse. This discourse was not aimed at those historically at a social disadvantage but rather at those who lost privileges or felt threatened to lose their distinctive status, which had long defined the material and symbolic inequalities within Brazilian society.

In wealthy countries, the populist discourse of the far-right found resonance among those worse off in the context of an industrial economy undergoing transformation, eroding previously secure jobs (as seen in the American Rust Belt, which, contrary to the usual Democratic Party

support, contributed to the election of Donald Trump in 2016). In Brazil, the more affluent segments resented the loss of privileges, mainly because of the ascent of poorer populations and the resulting reduction in the wealth gap. Thus, fertile ground was created for an odd form of populism, which thrived among those at the top but also found support beyond their ranks.

Unresolved issues persisted among the emerging sectors and the lowest-income population (the primary beneficiaries of wealth redistribution and social policies). The first set of issues extended beyond purely economic matters and encompassed moral and cultural concerns. The governments led by PT were associated not only with economic and social policies but also with a cultural agenda that diverged from the more conservative views of a significant portion of lower-class Brazilians, especially those of evangelical faith. This group was particularly resistant to left-wing identity and gender rights agendas. Within these communities, fertile ground was cultivated for the dissemination of an ideology that was both conservative and reactionary (Gracino et al., 2021).

Figure 2. Poverty in Brazil




Source: IPEADATA/IBGE.

In the realm of morals, "*antipetismo*" (a political and social sentiment in Brazil characterized by opposition or strong dislike of the Workers' Party – PT) was fueled for years due to repeated corruption scandals that plagued PT-led governments. It is worth mentioning two of these

prominent cases: the "*mensalão*" (a corruption scheme where the executive branch bribed legislators with allegedly regular cash payments in exchange for their support on government initiatives and votes in Congress) during President Lula da Silva's tenure and the "*petrolão*" scandal, revealed in the well-known Operation Car-Wash (*Petrolão* involved a web of corruption, kickbacks, and embezzlement of funds within the state-owned oil company Petrobrás, implicating numerous politicians, business executives, and contractors) and occurred during President Dilma Rousseff's mandates.

Consequently, for those deeply entrenched in religious conservatism, PT became associated with immoral conduct in private life. For those aligned with social conservatism, the corruption cases provided a much more convenient pretext to oppose PT than criticizing policies to reduce class inequalities. It was no longer necessary to attack conditional cash transfer programs (such as *Bolsa Família*), the high cost of domestic workers, or the presence of "different people" in luxury shopping malls, hotels, and airports, as seen in the case of the news article's headline "Psychologist denies having said that the subway attracts beggars, 'different people'" (our translation) (Psicóloga nega ter dito que Metrô atrai "mendigos, gente diferenciada", 2011). All it took was pointing to PT corruption (supposedly the most extensive of all) to reject the party and its governments with a clear conscience. After all, who would not be against corruption?"

Moreover, the economic stagnation during President Rousseff's mandates played a pivotal role in the PT's downfall, intensifying public discontent and inspiring massive protests that began in June 2013. Initially led by young leftists from the *Movimento Passe Livre* (MPL) (or Free Fare Movement) and focused on transportation costs, these protests quickly evolved into widespread demonstrations without a specific agenda. Participants voiced grievances ranging from corruption and the quality of public services to Brazil's hosting of the 2014 FIFA World Cup and their dissatisfaction with the established political system, particularly political parties. When party activists appeared at the marches with their flags and symbols, protesters sometimes responded by shouting slogans like "No party!" and "Put down the flag!" (Pacheco, 2022).

Notably, the movement prominently displayed large yellow banners proclaiming: "My party is my country" (Machado, 2023). However, these banners soon gave way to yellow t-shirts with a slightly modified slogan: "My party is Brazil." This attire gained fame when the then Federal Deputy from the state of Rio de Janeiro and future President Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022) and his family (three of his children are also politicians) wore it during public appearances. The rejection of political parties, whether through shouts or signs, revealed the prevailing sentiment of those days: opposition to the political system and its institutions. It was as if a spontaneously mobilized nation considered itself self-sufficient and more authentic, dispensing with hierarchical organizational structures, oligarchic representatives, political parties, and unions. This paradoxical form of anti-political political activism (Avritzer, 2020), which involved rejecting professional politics, its primary instruments (political parties), and the institutional mechanisms of liberal democracy, created fertile ground for the rise of populism. This activism, associated with *antipetismo* and characterized by conservatism, if not outright reactionaryism, provided a favorable environment for the growth of far-right populism.

An early example of this prevailing sentiment occurred during the 2016 municipal elections, coinciding with Dilma Rousseff's impeachment and the election of Donald Trump in the US. Apart from the significant defeat suffered by PT and the left as a whole (except for the state of Maranhão, which was governed by Flávio Dino, from the Communist Party of Brazil – PC do B. The party performed well in the municipal election in that state), political outsiders began to emerge, positioning themselves as "non-politicians." In São Paulo, event promoter João Dória Junior was elected in the first round, campaigning under the motto "I am not a politician, I am a manager" (Dória, 2016). Similarly, in Belo Horizonte, businessman and president of a popular football club, Alexandre Kalil, employed a similar slogan: "No more politicians, it is time for Kalil" (Mendonça, 2016). If genuine outsiders had the opportunity to make electoral headway in an increasingly hostile environment to traditional establishment politicians, it raised the question of why potential outsiders, capable of embracing an anti-system discourse, would fail. A scenario was taking shape that would ultimately favor the unexpected presidential candidacy of Jair Bolsonaro.

## JAIR BOLSONARO'S ANTI-SYSTEM LEADERSHIP AND RELIGIOUS POPULISM

The label "outsider" is inadequate when defining the political profile of Jair Bolsonaro. He had been a seasoned parliamentarian, serving eight consecutive terms (one partial term as a councilor and seven as a deputy). As mentioned before, three of his sons were pursuing political careers at various levels of government, effectively establishing a successful family political dynasty. The youngest of the three, Eduardo Bolsonaro, strategically changed his electoral domicile to São Paulo to avoid running against his father in their political stronghold of Rio de Janeiro and was elected as a federal deputy in 2014. The eldest, Flávio Bolsonaro, was already in his fourth term, transitioning from state deputy in Rio de Janeiro to a successful run for the senate in 2018, following an unsuccessful bid for mayor of Rio in 2016. The middle son, Carlos, had served as a councilor in Rio de Janeiro for five consecutive mandates.

However, if the term "outsider" fails to describe Jair Bolsonaro, a more fitting characterization would be that of a marginal politician. He never held a prominent institutional position throughout his seven terms in the Chamber of Deputies. Instead, he gained notoriety for his unconventional behavior, provocative statements, and consistent presence in the media, particularly in the entertainment sphere, where he was often treated as a sensationalist curiosity. Bolsonaro's institutional marginality becomes evident when considering that he never secured a seat on the leadership of the Chamber of Deputies despite his extensive parliamentary career. He never chaired a permanent committee, never led his party's caucus, nor played a pivotal role in advancing significant legislation. He rarely adhered to party discipline (he moved from one party to another quite often) and behaved as a maverick, pursuing his own agenda centered around advocating for the interests of the police and military forces while promoting right-wing extremist views.

However, one thing cannot be denied: Jair Bolsonaro is, and has always been, an anti-system politician. This is evident in his explicit aversion to the democratic regime and the rule of law. He has expressed this sentiment countless times by openly supporting the military dictatorship, endorsing coups, advocating for torture, endorsing police violence, advocating for the physical elimination of opponents, displaying intolerance, rejecting pluralism, and showing disregard for the laws. It is his fearless rejection of democratic norms and civility (what is often referred to as the "system") that earned him the nickname "myth" among his most passionate followers.

In a climate characterized by widespread rejection of professional politics, political parties, representative institutions, and the left, the ultra-radical discourse targeting all these "enemies" had the potential to thrive electorally—and indeed, it did. This is despite Bolsonaro himself being a professional politician with an extensive parliamentary career and the leader of an extensive family political enterprise. His institutional marginality and ideological extremism created the perception that he was an outsider, even though he was not.

During his campaign and time in office, Bolsonaro's populist discourse took on a pronounced religious tone. Two main campaign slogans, repeated extensively, prominently featured religious elements. One slogan declared: "Brazil above everything, God above everyone," while the other quoted a biblical passage: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free," from the Gospel of Saint John (8:32). These slogans not only resonated with the deeply devout electorate, especially among evangelicals who overwhelmingly supported Bolsonaro at the polls, but they also associated nationalism with religiosity, serving as a fundamental element of "Bolsonarist" discourse.

"Bolsonarist" populism embraces an exclusionary concept of the people. It positions non-Christians as outsiders, i.e., those who openly reject the Christian faith or adopt other religious behavior or beliefs, would not be considered part of the Brazilian people. According to the most conservative – if not reactionary – perspective of Bolsonarism, Brazil is a "Christian country," and as such, Christian values should dominate. Consequently, those who do not align with this notion are expected to conform to the will of the majority. According to Bolsonarist discourse, being included in the nation requires adherence to a specific religious faith.

Thus, such an exclusionary notion of Brazilian people is primarily rooted in religion. While populism in other contexts, such as Europe and the US, may target specific religious groups like Muslims, Bolsonarist Brazil adopts a more generic approach: the exclusion of non-Christians based on its own criteria. Nonetheless, there remains a possibility for conversion and subsequent inclusion in the category of "the people"—those who "accept Jesus" and behave following the principles of such acceptance, which typically align with conservatism, intolerance, and devout faith.

This perspective was evident in numerous statements made by Jair Bolsonaro during his electoral campaign and throughout his presidency. During a campaign event in the state of Paraíba in February 2017, he stated, "God above all. There is no such thing as a secular state. The state is Christian, and the minority that opposes it must change. Minorities must yield to majorities" (Agence France-Presse, 2018). Once in office, Bolsonaro distinguished between the state and the government, softening his rhetoric but maintaining his profession of faith. On

Twitter, the president wrote, "O Estado é laico, mas nosso governo é CRISTÃO" (2020), i.e., the state is secular, but his government is Christian, saying also that the government respects everyone. During the 2022 presidential campaign, the president-candidate reverted to a more radical stance, emphasizing the subjugation of dissenting voices: "My God in heaven. Where will we end up by capitulating to minorities? In my view, laws exist to protect the majority. Minorities must adapt" (Behnke, 2022).

This form of exclusion within Bolsonaro's populist discourse is not unique but a recurring theme in populist rhetoric worldwide. Even in European and American cases where Muslims are often stigmatized, there is a narrative that Islam threatens the Christian identity (European or American). In these instances, Muslims are also frequently associated with immigrants, who perceive mass migration as a potential threat to the local culture.

In the Brazilian context, immigration is negligible, and the perceived "enemy" is internal. It comprises non-Christians within the population and corrupt elites (although Bolsonarist discourse does not use the term "elites"). These perceived enemies can take the form of artists, intellectuals, communists, or homosexuals, essentially any group seen as deviating from the majority's values on a daily basis. Consequently, they are viewed as candidates for elimination or subjugation. There is little room for pluralism within this framework, as expressed in Bolsonaro's words: "Minorities must adapt or simply disappear" (Abrucio et al., 2020).

## What kind of government was this?

The Bolsonaro government deviated from the norm and cannot be analyzed using the same parameters applied to typical governments in stable political periods. In fluid regime transitions, institutional structures are not well established, challenging institutional analysis (Couto, 1998). A similar dynamic occurs during deep political crises when the political structure becomes highly volatile (Dobry, 2015). In the case of an extremist government that consistently undermines institutions and, consequently, the democratic framework itself, the constitutional structure faces continuous challenges and erosion. The conventional criteria used to comprehend how institutions function and how public policies are developed, implemented, and evaluated (including the evaluation by constituents), lose their analytical effectiveness because the government operates outside the established institutional parameters and actively seeks to subvert them.

The constant attacks on democratic institutions by the executive branch compel other institutional actors to respond defensively and with greater intensity than they would during regular times. In essence, within the context of an extremist government, institutions operate under significant stress, often pushed to their limits. This situation forces leaders to adopt more radical behaviors than they would under typical circumstances. The executive's systematic abuse of power normalizes attitudes seen as abusive by other branches of government to the extent that these actions may not only become accepted but even indispensable. Consequently, the entire democratic political system operates inconsistently, with both those attacking and defending democracy exhibiting unusual behaviors.

This is why there are so many questions about whether or not institutions are functioning under a government with such characteristics. This is a poorly posed problem: It is not so much a case of whether institutions are functioning but under what conditions they are operating. Just like a living organism affected by a disease, which starts to operate under stress and produces organic reactions that are different from the usual ones, the institutional structure also starts to function outside of its regular rhythm, with some organs needing to compensate for the insufficiency or dysfunctionality of others. The interaction of the executive branch with the other powers (especially the judiciary) and with subnational governments during Bolsonaro's government (Abrucio et al., 2020) is an example of how this phenomenon occurs.

The repeated violations of constitutional limits, attempts to encroach upon the jurisdiction of others, the abandonment of the coordinating role of the presidency in its relationship with Congress, recurring neglect of governmental duties, institutional harassment, and the dismantling of public bureaucracy (Cardoso et al., 2022) have resulted in chaotic political relations. These transgressions frequently compel the justice system to intervene with extraordinary intensity. Failure to do so would risk allowing an excessive concentration of power in the hands of the executive, which would constitute a new dysfunction, severely detrimental to the functioning of democracy and potentially capable of undermining it altogether. However, when the judicial branch acts as a check on such excesses, judicial actors find themselves caught in a circular populist trap: they are compelled to act more because they are increasingly provoked. Yet, their increased actions lead to accusations of encroachment upon the jurisdiction of others, necessitating their own defense. This, in turn, results in new accusations of judicial overreach and bias, perpetuating a spiral of radicalization.

## The "movement-government"

This *modus operandi* of Bolsonarism in the government occurs because it is not a government especially occupied with producing public policies. This is a characteristic, perhaps the main one, of its abnormality. Instead, the government is constantly mobilizing its militant base and activating its supporters, who are instrumental in its strategy of continued attack on other powers. I refer to this phenomenon as "movement-government" (Couto, 2021b).

The movement-government characteristic of Bolsonaro's administration is related exactly to the non-mediated or institutionalized aspect of populism in the terms posed by populism's political-strategic perspective (Weyland, 2017, 2021a, 2021b). Rather than operating through institutions and adapting to them, a populist government aims to circumvent institutions, weaken them, and bend them to its own preferences.

For this reason, Bolsonarism disregards the role of parties and operates more effectively without the institutional limitations that party dynamics impose. The Bolsonarist movement serves as the operative logic of action in the executive and legislative branches. As a marginal politician during his decades as a Federal Deputy, Jair Bolsonaro operated embryonically as this movement leader. However, his marginality and individualism in the Brazilian parliament did not offer him a stage to lead any effective movement. This only became possible after

the institutional crisis triggered in June 2013, which eroded the foundations of the Brazilian democracy established during the period known as the New Republic (from 1985, when the Military Dicatorship ended and a new democratic order was established, to the present day).

The peak of this movement-government took place after the end of President Bolsonaro's term, following the confirmation of his defeat in the 2022 general elections—an outcome that was not unexpected given the characteristics of such a government. On January 8, 2023, Bolsonarist activists, emboldened by their leader's repeated attacks on democratic institutions, forcefully stormed the headquarters of all three branches of government in Brasília. These activists had been encamped in front of military buildings for two months following the election results, pleading for a military coup. Their intended coup was not solely aimed at thwarting the elected and already sworn-in President, Luiz Lula da Silva, but also entailed an intervention against the entire institutional structure, with a particular focus on the judiciary. The activists demanded that the armed forces remove judges from the Supreme Court and the Electoral Court who were perceived as antagonistic to their leader.

## EXTREMISM IN GOVERNMENT: DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS UNDER STRESS

The typical analysis of the functioning of polyarchic political institutions assumes that the relevant political actors operate without the intention of undermining the institutions themselves. In essence, disputes occur within the established constitutional frameworks, with a degree of respect for the fundamental rights of various actors and at least a minimal adherence to the rules of the competitive political game. Even behaviors that may violate the law, such as corruption, do not inherently aim to dismantle democratic institutions; they often observe the limits necessary to preserve the overall political system. In polyarchies, it is generally expected that key actors exercise a degree of self-restraint to maintain the integrity of the democratic competitive process.

A borderline situation within this logic of preserving polyarchy is what is known as "constitutional hardball" (Balkin, 2008; Tushnet, 2004) or, as Glezer (2020) says in Portuguese, "*catimba constitucional*." In this context, political actors, instead of merely bending or transgressing the rules while upholding the "spirit of the law," engage in actions that violate their opponents' political and civil rights but without undermining democracy as a whole. The breach of democratic rule of law norms occurs in a localized and non-systemic manner.

However, this limit is exceeded by those who deliberately seek a rupture in the regime, either by establishing a full autocracy or introducing what have been called "illiberal democracies." This is the case with extremist populists like President Jair Bolsonaro.

Like other national leaders with a similar profile who emerged in recent years, Bolsonaro did not act openly to break the democratic institutional structure, which he could do through a self-coup or the decree of a State of Siege or Emergency that would escalate more quickly toward implementation of a full autocracy or an illiberal regime. Instead, he acted to continually stress the structure of checks and balances, wearing down other institutional actors, converting

them into political enemies, and producing a continued process of delegitimization. Thus, the cost of imposing brakes and preventing actions from disrespecting democratic institutions became increasingly high – even when perpetrated in the name of a supposed defense of the constitutional order or, in the peculiar "Bolsonaresque" political language, within the "four lines of the Constitution" (meaning "within the limits of the constitution" in Bolsonaro's odd constitutional understanding).

Between 2019 and 2022, the strain on the rule of law's institutionality weakened it and posed severe risks of de-democratization in Brazil. The rupture of democracy did not occur due to substantial institutional and social resistance against the then-president's attacks, particularly from the judiciary, subnational governments, sectors of the press, and civil society organizations.

The attack on public buildings on January 8, 2023, marked the culmination and most dramatic moment of this assault on democracy – a desperate, last-ditch effort to secure the institutional disruption that had not been achieved during the preceding four years. The failure of this coup attempt can also be attributed to the ongoing resistance from institutions, even in the face of evidence suggesting sabotage by elements within the security forces, which facilitated the aggressors' actions on January 8.

Just as Bolsonarism's intent to stage a coup d'état has extended beyond the conclusion of President Bolsonaro's term, measures to resist must remain in place continuously. The legal action that led to Jair Bolsonaro's ineligibility on June 30 was only another step in this process, and it cannot be the last.

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Cláudio Gonçalves Couto: Conceptualization, data curation, Writing – original draft; Writing – review and editing.