



GENDER IN GEOPOLITICS INSTITUTE

Jair Bolsonaro's far-right policies in Brazil and their impact on gender issues

Emma Rinaudo | November 2020

Translated by Ananda Neves Marinho Paunovitch

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Introduction

After being governed for more than twelve years by the left and the Worker's Party (PT), Brazil – the ninth global economic power and considered an emerging country – has gone through an important political change since 2018. On the 1st of January 2019, Jair Bolsonaro and his far-right policies rise to power. Populism then changes sides and breaks a regional dynamic. The PT, a centre-left party, had been governing since 2003 with the successive institutions of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Dilma Roussef and led Brazil's political stage until 2016, when Roussef was impeached. From 2018 on, Michel Temer, a right-wing member of the social-democratic Brazilian party, became the interim president. In 2018, in a particularly tense social context, Jair Bolsonaro is elected. The social and economic context mostly explains this ideologic change, but also reveals important changes within Brazil's society. The population finds itself in the centre of new convergences and questions surrounding gender identities seems to divide them more than ever.

Before looking at gender issues in more detail, it is important to define the term populism, particularly in its Latin American sense. It is often a source of debate for its sometimes-abusive use, and it should be clarified. Populism defined as "the ideology or attitude of certain political movements that refer to the people in opposition to the governing elite ¹ " is a complex political phenomenon that is sometimes made of contradictory opinions. The main feature of populist rhetoric is that it places in its discourse a tension between democratic and non-democratic elements. In other words, the point of view of populists often amounts to defending a feeling of being excluded from the exercise of power, even though it was actually democratically elected.

Thus, populism refers mainly to those sectors that are considered to be the most disadvantaged by a representative democracy that is considered to be out of touch with reality. "Traditionally, there is a varied typology ranging from right-wing populisms associated with xenophobic and protectionist ideas that are more common in central countries, to those of a progressive nature linked to different types of peripheral nationalisms, and it has traditionally been the case in the Latin American region." ². Brazilian populism was initially left-wing, especially through the important figure of Lula and the PT. However, the Brazilian population is now making the opposite, right-wing democratic choice where xenophobic, racist and violent ideas are at the heart of their rhetoric. In a country where 21.5% of the population had African ancestry in 2010 and where women represent 51% of the total population, such a stance poses a problem and further questions the pillars on which this ideological change is based.

¹ <http://www.toupie.org/Dictionnaire/Populisme.htm>

² Maristella Svampa, « comprendre le populisme en Amérique latine », 2019, extrait d'un texte publié par la Fondation Rosa Luxemburg, Available at : <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article50348>

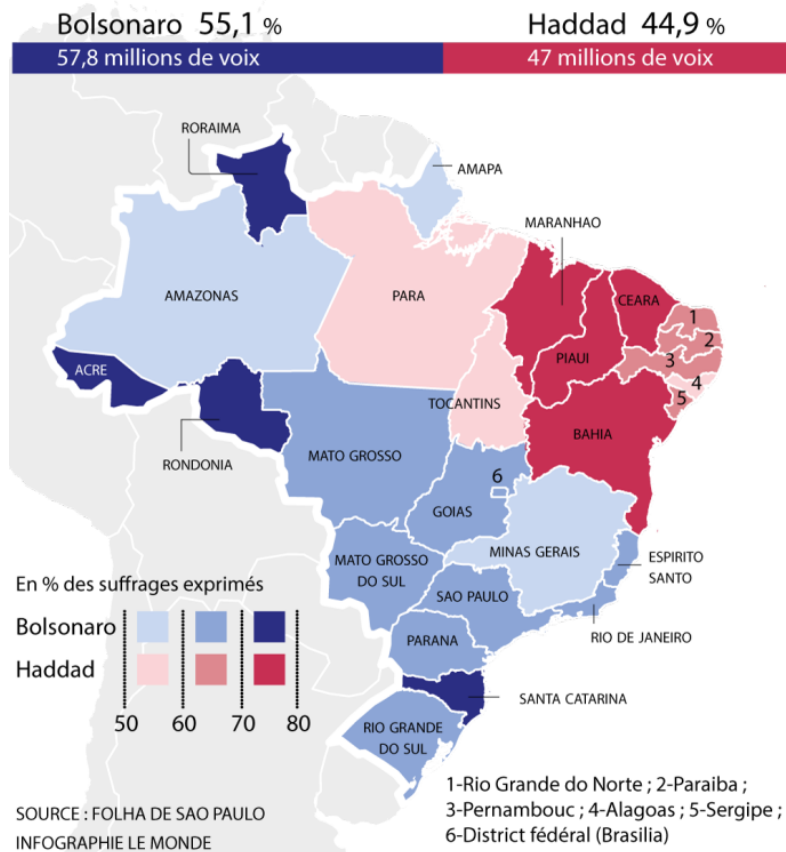
Hypothetically, the country's economic situation could have factored in Bolsonaro's victory. After two successive economic crises in 2015 and 2016, Brazil barely recovered from the great recession. The crisis, which came from many factors including a fall in commodity prices, political mismanagement combined with corruption scandals, notably the Petrobras scandal that brought down the well-known figure of Lula – the former president who was convicted for corruption and money laundering – have contributed to the division of Brazilian society. As the eleventh most unequal country, the main consequence of this crisis has been a great increase in unemployment: between 2014 and 2018, that number rose from 5%.

Thus, the economic demands of the population and the generalized fed-up feeling with the corruption cases have gradually favoured the anti-PT movement. This had positive effects on Bolsonaro's electorate in the 2018 election against Fernando Haddad (the PT's candidate). The failure of the left, and especially the impossibility of re-electing Lula, provided fertile ground for the far-right to rise to presidency. Although the majority of the working class kept their votes for the left, the economic crisis and Jair Bolsonaro's anti-corruption campaign gradually attracted voters. Indeed, in the 2018 election, the poorest regions, mainly located in the North-East, voted for Fernando Haddad, while the southern and western states, the country's economic engines, favoured Jair Bolsonaro³.

³ Vincent Guet, « Brésil : inégalités et marché du travail (note) », 2018, BSI economics, available at : <http://www.bsi-economics.org/929-bresil-inegalitaire-travail-vg>

Le Nordeste et le Nord résistent à la vague Bolsonaro

RÉSULTATS DU SECOND TOUR DE L'ÉLECTION PRÉSIDENTIELLE 2018



Source⁴

Moreover, the votes per region differ depending on gender. Because Jair Bolsonaro made gender issues his main enemy since the beginning of his campaign. Women and LGBTQ+ people massively opposed his election, since their rights were in danger. Their demands in the social space are therefore an important piece of data to understand how Jair Bolsonaro was elected despite this great number of voters. Laura Barros and Manuel Santos' analysis on gender norms that interacted during Bolsonaro's election constitutes a first interesting base to approach gender in Brazil. The pro-Bolsonaro votes seem to explain, in part, the way the economic crisis interacted with current gender norms⁵. More significantly, "in regions where men are fired more often, we note a rise in votes favouring

⁴ Les décodeurs, « Résultats de l'élection au Brésil : qui a voté pour Jair Bolsonaro, qui a voté contre lui ? », 2018, Le Monde, available at : https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2018/10/29/presidentielle-au-bresil-une-geographie-tres-divisee-sur-le-vote-pour-bolsonaro_5376127_4355770.html

⁵ Laura Barros, Manuel Santos, « Genre et populisme : ces hommes qui ont élu Bolsonaro », 2020, available at : <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2020/03/06/bolsonaro-election-masculinite-populisme/>

Bolsonaro. However, in regions where women lose their jobs more often, his votes are proportionally less numerous.”⁶

Gender, through its excessive use in Bolsonaro’s rhetoric but also in the PT’s for a few years, became its own social issue in Brazilian society. The impacts of the crisis, notably about men’s role, images of masculinity, the “logic of difference” or even the body liberation movements have had important ideologic repercussions. Because Brazilian society has many intergenerational changes, especially when it comes to sexuality and gender issues⁷. That tension is notably present between a predominance of a traditional culture within families, led by the role of the Church, and the youth that is more inclined to experimentation and demands. That way, modernity and tradition coexist within a very inegalitarian country, where a gendered hierarchy exists and lives on. The stake is understanding this tension through gender identities and the bigger bolsonarist movement.

The interest of bolsonarism is to go beyond the unique figure of Jair Bolsonaro to understand mechanisms and actors that participated to his election as a whole. Moreover, it “distinguishes itself by the plurality of those who support him and the diversity of types of mobilisation and justification that he manipulates for public opinion.”⁸ Regional dynamics, like the image of masculinity or the strength of some groups like the military and the Pentecostal church, will also be analysed.

Therefore, we will explore how the victory of Bolsonaro’s far-right reveals a Brazilian society that is more and more divided. And to what extent does his presidency impact it, especially when it comes to gender identities?

⁶ Laura Barros, Manuel Santos, « Genre et populisme : ces hommes qui ont élu Bolsonaro », 2020, Le grand continent, available at : <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2020/03/06/bolsonaro-election-masculinite-populisme/>

⁷ Marie Garcia Castro, « Famille, genre, génération et sexualité au Brésil. », 2009, Recherches féministes, available at : <https://doi.org/10.7202/039207ar>

⁸ Ruy Fausto, « Nature du bolsonarisme », 2020, Sens public, available at : <http://sens-public.org/articles/1455/>

I. **Bolsonarism: between heterogenous support and political instability**

Bolsonaro's victory reveals the polarity of some political parties in the South American region. A right-wing populism rises to power in spite of a left-wing heritage that is deeply anchored in the region. Bolsonaro convinced the masses and seems to be well-supported. However, his election rests on very heterogenous types of support. There is more and more instability in the president's political representations.

1. A political instability

Elected with more than 57 million votes, meaning 55,17% of the total population, the result of this victory is a relevant piece of data to realise how important Bolsonaro's support was during this 2018 election. However, after a year as president, the nature of his government, ideology and social forces he represents are still difficult to interpret⁹. Moreover, his voter base is very heterogenous and complex to analyse as a whole. Indeed, Jair Bolsonaro was elected as a member of the Social-Liberal Party (PSL) in 2018, but after accusations of embezzlement from the party's leader, tensions have emerged within the party. Bolsonaro then left his party, despite having made anti-corruption his campaign's main spotlight, "creating even more instability in political representations"¹⁰. He founds his own party, "Alliance for Brazil" in November 2019 in the middle of his term that he placed under the banner of anti-corruption and the promoting of Christian values.¹¹ "As a whole, his party promotes the fight against communism, globalisation and all ideologies that go against human dignity and natural order"¹². The tryptic "family, God and nation" is therefore the base of his party and of bolsonarism. Through it, Bolsonaro hoped that most of the PSL's 53 MPs and 3 senators would follow him into his Alliance. More explicitly, Bolsonaro wanted to assert the strength of his ideas. However, to validate his party, Bolsonaro needed to get 492,000 signatures before August 2020 so that it could sign up at the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) for the month of August¹³, and the party only managed to obtain 3% of this goal, meaning 20,000 signatures. The Alliance for Brazil is a failure.

⁹ Douglas Estevam, « Émergence de l'extrême droite et menaces à la démocratie au Brésil », 2020, Ritimo, available at : <https://www.ritimo.org/Emergence-de-l-extreme-droite-et-menaces-a-la-democratie-au-Bresil#nb1>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Thomson Reuters, « Bolsonaro lance son propre parti, une stratégie à risque », 2019, Challenges, available at : https://www.challenges.fr/monde/bolsonaro-lance-son-propre-parti-une-strategie-a-risque_686024

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Rédaction, « Presidente admite fracasso na criação do Aliança pelo Brasil e tenta voltar ao PSL », 2020, Correio do Brasil, available at : <https://www.correiodobrasil.com.br/presidente-admite-fracasso-criacao-alianca-brasil-tenta-voltar-psl/>

These numerous inconsistencies, notably through authoritarian measures, or his mind games with the media, have increased Bolsonaro's political instability and have not allowed the party to prosper. In addition, in December 2019, a police investigation was launched for the murder of Marielle Franco, a Rio de Janeiro city councillor and human rights and LGBT activist. The police suspected the involvement of Jair Bolsonaro and more specifically of one of his sons. She was assassinated on the 14th of March 2018, and the two shooters, identified as former military personnel, were linked to Bolsonaro – following the leak to the media of certain elements of the investigation¹⁴. Other strange links between Bolsonaro and his sons with the investigation have been made, but they have not been legally successful, nor have they really impacted his popularity. In addition, he has been heavily criticised for his handling of the coronavirus crisis, which caused an estimated 150,000 deaths¹⁵, and its disastrous consequences on the economy. In the timespan between June and August 2020, more than half of the working age population was unemployed¹⁶, with a loss of 8.9 million jobs in the second trimester. Yet Jair Bolsonaro's approval rating among the Brazilian population has never been higher, rising from 32% to 37% since June 2020¹⁷. So, what support does bolsonarism mobilise? And what attitudes does it rely on to prosper in Brazilian society?

2. Heterogenous support forces

Bolsonarism relies on a group of different forces. On this subject, Ruy Fausto¹⁸ suggests the term “pentagon”, because in his opinion, it mobilises five forces: a fascist, neo-authoritarian core, a military group that is heavily mobilised, then religious, economic and legal groups.

¹⁴ Guy Pichard, « Féminicide politique : les étranges liens du clan Bolsonaro avec le meurtre de Marielle Franco », 2020, Bastamag, available at : <https://www.bastamag.net/Marielle-Franco-Bolsonaro-meurtres-feminicides-Bresil-Rio-de-Janeiro-milices-favelas>

¹⁵ Rédaction, « Coronavirus dans le monde : Italie, Angleterre, USA... Le bilan de l'épidémie en chiffres », 2020, Available at : <https://www.linternaute.com/actualite/guide-vie-quotidienne/2486227-covid-19-dans-le-monde-etats-unis-inde-bresil-les-chiffres-par-etat/>

¹⁶ Catherine Duthu, Sophie Delpont et Rédaction, « La pandémie de Covid 19 suscite une crise économique sans précédent au Brésil » (podcast) , 2020, available at : <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/journal-de-8-h/journal-de-8h-du-lundi-03-aout-2020>

¹⁷ Rédaction, « Brésil: Bolsonaro plus populaire que jamais, selon un sondage », 2020, Le Figaro, available at : <https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/bresil-bolsonaro-plus-populaire-que-jamais-selon-un-sondage-20200814>

¹⁸ Ruy Fausto, « Nature du bolsonarisme », 2020, Sens public, available at : <http://sens-public.org/articles/1455/>

The core representing bolsonarism is essentially made of Jair Bolsonaro, his three sons – Flavio Bolsonaro, senator of the city of Rio de Janeiro, Carlos Bolsonaro, council at the municipal chamber of the city of Rio de Janeiro and Eduardo Bolsonaro, MP of the city of São Paulo – as well as Olavo de Carvalho, a philosopher and Jair Bolsonaro's mentor, famous for his conservatist positions. Inclined to hate speech, their speeches are mostly misogynistic, racist and homophobic comments, but they are also very inclined to animosity towards democratic freedoms. For Jair Bolsonaro, these freedoms are obstacles to his political agenda, which is both retrograde and ultraliberal on the social aspect. The goal is to suppress all individual freedoms that could be in the way of the economy or Christian values. That way, syndicates, working rights, social rights, marriage for all, abortion, cultural or sexual diversity or gender equality are enemies to shoot down on the political chessboard.

In that regard, the military constitutes the first of Bolsonaro's supporting forces, the most powerful and influential. "The Brazilian army was formed during the Portuguese Independence War at the beginning of the 19th century. From then on, the military has always participated in politics, one way or another".¹⁹ Since the institution of the Brazilian Republic in 1889, ten presidents who were from the army have governed. Jair Bolsonaro, who is himself a former military, perpetuates this tradition and places seven other former militaries in his government out of 22 ministers²⁰. The spiral of the growing military influence in Brazilian politics have gotten newfound strength in the 1990s with the end result in 1999 with the creation of the Defence Minister. This recrudescence of the army happened in a context of social insecurity. It is in the legal context of the Guarantee of the Law and Order (GLO) that recourses to the military internally will slowly become general. Violence becomes normal and the number of indictments rises. That way, a heightened militarisation of urban security will progressively bleed through to the political sphere. In 2011, after the election of Dilma Rousseff, this will take its full meaning. Her election, her actions as the leader of the government and her destitution were notably decisive to form the current scenario: Bolsonaro's victory and his "military" government.

Dilma Rousseff is a former guerrillera who fought in the 1960s against the military regime. When Lula, at the time the outgoing president, chose her as the PT candidate for the presidential election, the military felt attacked and took this decision as a direct opposition to their institution. The fact that she was a woman who explicitly said she wanted to bring justice to the victims of the military dictatorship hurt the opposition. So on the 18th of November 2011, the elected Dilma Rousseff created the National Commission of Truth

¹⁹ Marcelo Aguilar, « Brésil-dossier. Le poids réel des militaires dans le gouvernement Bolsonaro », 2020, A l'encontre, available at : <https://alencontre.org/ameriques/amelat/bresil/bresil-dossier-le-poids-reel-des-militaires-dans-le-gouvernement-bolsonaro.html>

²⁰ Mourao, Netto, Heleno, Silva, Rosario, Ramos, Jorge Oliveira

(NCT) to investigate the human rights violations committed by officials or people who served them, with the support of the State between the 18th of September 1946 and the 5th of October 1988 (time period of the Brazilian dictatorship). The NCT was the project that was most heard of in the army. It was "interpreted by the military as a rewriting of their history, in which their role, in this "Gramscian domination" plan, was certainly that of the moral losers. That reactivated the feeling that they had won "the war", but that they were losing the battle of memory".²¹ From this date on, a great ideological work was done to reclaim this memory and evict Dilma Rousseff from power. So, the military work was mostly an ideological one, silent and wanting to destabilise on the long run. No arms-taking was done, or media attacks through that sphere. In the background, though, conservatory military groups start making noise in the middle of 2015.²²

Jair Bolsonaro emerged in this context, which was perfect for his ideologies. A fervent opponent to Dilma Rousseff, a former military officer and misogynistic, the electorate composed of the Brazilian armed forces will gradually embrace his candidacy for the 2018 presidential election. But even though he is a major player in the militarisation of the public scene with his far-right government, he does not have a monopoly on it. Dilma Rousseff was impeached on the 31st of August 2016 following a procedure by the Brazilian Parliament. Michel Temer, a right-wing candidate, then became interim president and was the first to institute a return of the military. "Surfing on the popularity of the armed forces in the context of discrediting the political system, he surrounded himself with generals"²³, to whom he was generous with many of their demands. In this particularly unstable context, where the economic crisis was growing, the armed forces will gradually extend their fields of action. Maud Chirio, in her analysis of 'The role of the military in the destabilisation of the Brazilian democracy', explains that under Michel Temer's presidency the generalised militarisation of public security, at both the state²⁴ and federal levels, became normalised. This has blurred the lines of reasoning on the positioning of the armed forces in the political stage. The deepening of the crisis, the growth of radical options within and outside the army, the flowering of anti-communist and anti-Petist detestations (against the PT), and the discrediting of the traditional political class, are all elements that have led the military to binary positions between the army and politics. Jair Bolsonaro was thus able to take advantage of this context. Moreover, the appointment of Hamilton Mourão - the main figure who initiated the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and later preached a military coup

²¹ Marcelo Aguilar, « Brésil-dossier. Le poids réel des militaires dans le gouvernement Bolsonaro », 2020, A l'encontre, available at : <https://alencontre.org/ameriques/amelat/bresil/bresil-dossier-le-poids-reel-des-militaires-dans-le-gouvernement-bolsonaro.html>

²² Maud Chirio, « Le rôle des militaires dans la déstabilisation de la démocratie brésilienne (2015-2018) », 2018, Brésil(s), available at : <http://journals.openedition.org/bresils/3029>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ De l'Etat

against Michel Temer as vice-president is not insignificant. "Mourão embodies the politicisation of the institution's base, which is part of the shift to the extreme right of part of the Brazilian middle and upper classes²⁵". Bolsonaro has been able to surround himself with the right people and take advantage of this militarisation under Michel Temer to accentuate his campaign on this axis. The support of the military is now his most important support, and his numerous proposals for the militarisation of education, notably with the creation of military schools, go in this direction, thus placing the military at the heart of Brazilian political life.

The second strong area of Bolsonaro's election has been the judicial sector. In order to channel the protests in favour of Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, Bolsonaro put corruption at the centre of his political agenda. "The deterioration of economic conditions has led to a widespread feeling of deep rejection of corruption and the political system. Malfeasance is currently cited as the reason for the crisis, rather than bad economic policy choices or the inability to govern.²⁶ "In 2017, corruption even became the main concern of the Brazilians, with 31% of them considering it the main national problem²⁷". Jair Bolsonaro embodies this relentlessness against corruption and the judicial sector becomes his first weapon to defeat it. The legal system is indeed a great ally, "in a system that has been collapsing since 2013, this sector is seen as a regenerative (and liberal) precursor of the Republic, acting against corruption²⁸". In particular, the adoption of the 'rewarded denunciation' law in 2013 played an active role in the crackdown on crime and an unprecedented role in gaining support from the working classes.

The evangelical axis has been another important support that Bolsonaro has relied on to win back the popular electorate. The support of evangelical leaders was crucial in reaching Brazil's initially pro-Lula lower class populations. Evangelicals are one of the most important religious forces in the country, and they are growing rapidly: they rallied 22.2% of Brazilians in 2010, compared to "a rate that is close to 30% today (2018)."²⁹ Bolsonaro was able to forge links with these institutions, which have a significant presence in the country, particularly on the outskirts of large cities – working-class areas – by mobilising the evangelical community and creating reception facilities for people in precarious situations.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jean Tible, « Les cinq piliers de la victoire de Jair Bolsonaro », 2020, Ritimo, available at : <https://www.ritimo.org/Les-cinq-piliers-de-la-victoire-de-Jair-Bolsonaro-I>

²⁷ <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/latinobarometro-corrupcao-aparece-pela-1-vez-como-principal-preocupacao-para-brasil-diz-pesquisa-21999964>

²⁸ Jean Tible, « Les cinq piliers de la victoire de Jair Bolsonaro », 2020, Ritimo, available at : <https://www.ritimo.org/Les-cinq-piliers-de-la-victoire-de-Jair-Bolsonaro-I>

²⁹ Chantal Rayes, « Derrière Bolsonaro, la main des évangéliques », 2018, available at : <https://www.letemps.ch/monde/derriere-bolsonaro-main-evangeliques>

The continental influence of the USA has also had a strong impact on the resurgence of the evangelical axis in Brazil. There is a "continental politico-religious dynamic that has led to the emergence of an evangelical axis"³⁰ that originates in the United States, the historical home of evangelicalism, which has been strongly integrated into the country's political life since 1960 with Richard Nixon's election. Donald Trump embodies the return of right-wing evangelicals to the White House, since 81% of them voted for him. This same support partly explains the victory of Jair Bolsonaro, even though Brazil was initially the first Catholic country in the world. A real strategy was put in place by the evangelical church to promote Bolsonaro and the far right. Indeed, "a political strategy developed by these churches over the years has been the massive purchase of communication media: hundreds of radio and television stations belonging to very extensive and influential networks"³¹. During the elections, they particularly contributed to discrediting the PT candidate, Fernando Haddad, through a major fake news campaign that accused him of wanting to awaken the sexuality of young people at an early age. The campaign denounced voting for the left as a sin: "You do evil, you commit a sin. An evangelical does not vote for the left".³² As a result, in the 2018 election Jair Bolsonaro received 57 million votes, of which more than 70% were from evangelicals. After correcting the voting results between the different religious denominations from the results obtained in the second round, it was observed that the evangelical vote for Bolsonaro was considerable. Indeed, about 21 million evangelicals voted for Bolsonaro against 10 million for Haddad, a difference of 11 million votes³³ that more than compensated for his unpopularity among Afro-Brazilian religions, non-religious, atheists and agnostics. Moreover, the preponderant political weight of evangelicals is explained by the weakening of the Catholic Church in Brazil, which in 1990 still constituted 92% of Brazilians, compared to 64% in 2012. Moreover, "the 11.6 million more votes that Bolsonaro received than Haddad among evangelicals were greater than the total difference between the two candidates in the final result (10.76 million)"³⁴. Thus, the support of evangelicals was essential for Bolsonaro's victory. Jair Bolsonaro embodies the religious transformation³⁵ that is taking place in Brazil between the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church.

³⁰ Anwar-Gabriel Boulal, « La naissance de l'axe évangélique américain » 2019, Le grand continent, available at : <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2019/01/17/laxe-evangelique/>

³¹ Chantal Rayes, « Derrière Bolsonaro, la main des évangéliques », 2018, available at : <https://www.letemps.ch/monde/derriere-bolsonaro-main-evangeliques>

³² Ibid.

³³ José Eustáquio Diniz Alves, « La transition religieuse au Brésil et la victoire de Bolsonaro, président évangéliste pentecôtiste », 2018, available at : <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article46716#nh3>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Anwar-Gabriel Boulal, « La naissance de l'axe évangélique américain » 2019, Le grand continent, available at : <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2019/01/17/laxe-evangelique/>

The fourth point of support for the current Brazilian president is the economic powers, especially those that follow the liberal economy model. As a staunch opponent of the rule of law, Jair Bolsonaro advocates for an unrestrained economy. Liberal economics and support for agribusiness are thus intertwined in his programme, between violent positions against Indigenous populations, environmental issues or any other type of curbs on production. Bolsonaro's main supporter in this sector has been the agribusiness lobby, which is taking advantage of Bolsonaro's climate scepticism to expand its business. "Bolsonarism wants to serve the economic interests of the ruling classes in Brazil to the maximum"³⁶. Thus, it places itself on the border of neoliberalism while proving to be less liberal than some of its allies. Paulo Guedes, an ultra-liberal advisor to Jair Bolsonaro, who during the election campaign was the main referent and spokesperson for the future president's economic positions, is now Minister of the Economy. He has always defended the privatisation of Brazilian public companies, a tax reform and a pension reform which are the main features of the economic plan put in place since the election of Jair Bolsonaro. On the other hand, their relations remain tense, notably through the coronavirus crisis and the means of action available to improve the badly damaged economy. Since July 2020, the president, supported by part of his government, would like to increase public spending to finance major works and social projects to overcome the effects of the pandemic and thus strengthen his popularity in prevision for the 2022 elections. However, the Minister of the Economy is strongly opposed to this and even fears bankruptcy. These disagreements have led to resignations within the government, notably from political advisers, and that could be "'a symptom of a government that seems to be preparing to change its course', with a president who is anticipating his re-election campaign" and resorting to "economic populism by increasing spending and emergency aid in order to boost his popularity"³⁷.

The relations between the Brazilian president and his supports therefore seem to be particularly complex. All of those mentioned above have a complicated relationship with Jair Bolsonaro today. "Under these groups, if we can say it like that, there is the entirety of the great Brazilian bourgeoisie and its economic interests, represented within the government by several ministers and officials. The relationships between them are generally far from simple, as we've noted since Bolsonaro's investiture".³⁸ While the evangelical sector holds his inaction against him, Hamilton Mourão places himself more and more as a rival and wants to moderate his positions compared to Jair Bolsonaro. Then,

³⁶ Ruy Fausto, « Nature du bolsonarisme », 2020, Sens public, available at : <http://sens-public.org/articles/1455/>

³⁷ Rédaction, « Brésil. Jair Bolsonaro flirte avec le "populisme économique", 2020, Courrier International, available at : <https://www.courrierinternational.com/revue-de-presse/bresil-jair-bolsonaro-flirte-avec-le-populisme-economique>

³⁸ Ruy Fausto, « Nature du bolsonarisme », 2020, Sens public, available at : <http://sens-public.org/articles/1455/>

the judicial support is essentially affected by the popular judge Sergio Moro's resignation as Minister of Justice, who denounces the president's political meddling in numerous legal affairs. Thus, even though the current president managed to mobilise all this support for the 2018 election, these conflicts accentuate his political instability and could lead to his defeat.

II. Bolsonarism and gender: women's condition

Jair Bolsonaro is particularly violent when it comes to gender issues in the public sphere. He even places those issues at the core of his political rhetoric as a main enemy. However, in a country where women make up 52% of the electorate, it is important to analyse the repercussions that his investiture can have on that part of the population. What do Bolsonaro's gender-related policies feed on? What direct oppositions to bodies' liberation does he enact? And more particularly, what are the dangers of his victory for women and the LGBTQ+ community?

1. The bolsonarist attitude in terms of gender

First of all, let's define the elements that Bolsonaro uses when it comes to women's and minority issues. His attitudes are mostly focused on three points that constitute the bolsonarist rhetoric.

Bolsonarism is based on an ethical lexicon, notably when it comes to the hatred and scorn of minorities. "For a long time bolsonarism has revealed itself to be the sworn enemy of women, black people, poor people, Indigenous people, gay people, etc; a type of social Darwinism or vulgar Nietzscheism".³⁹ Through this rhetoric, bolsonarism differentiates humans by their skin colour, their gender, their wallet or even their sexual orientation. Moreover, he hierarchises and opposes charity, redistribution or rule of law. Jair Bolsonaro is a believer, baptised in Israel but "strongly anti-Christian, if we think of the original meaning of Christianity"⁴⁰, as Ruy Fausto wonderfully puts it. To quote him, bolsonarism is opposed to pity and the idea of "political correctness", meaning normative comments

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

that wouldn't displease anyone, to not upset any sensitive people, in particular minorities who are perceived as disadvantaged, and to avoid making anyone feel like their difference is inferior or an excuse to exclude them. Jair Bolsonaro proclaimed on the 23rd of October 2018 "Everything is coitadism.⁴¹ Pity the black, pity the women, pity the gays, pity the Northeasterns, pity the Piauiense.⁴² Let's end that".⁴³ On the contrary, bolsonarism feeds on violence and hate speech. "To put this 'ethics' style into practice, bolsonarists use different forces, including that of Christian instituted churches. Hatred of generosity, of good, if you will. That's where their love of violence is situated".⁴⁴

Add to that the relationship between Bolsonaro and the truth, more specifically his regime of truth. He uses fake news more explicitly, and they invest the media and social medias to discredit his political opponents and minorities. This system of false information is called "the hate cabinet" and is organised from the very top of the State, and massively airs racist and sexist attacks, false corruption accusations, all types of slander, and that thanks to cyber-militia and an army of trolls, cyborgs and bots.⁴⁵ LGBTQ+ people and women are thus at the centre of these attacks, that try at any cost to discredit them, and even demonise them.

On a larger scale, these mediatic attacks reflect Bolsonaro's government's anti-progressive stance. Indeed, another point of the bolsonarist rhetoric is its relation to modernity and history. As a true enemy of the gender ideology, Bolsonaro refuses that bodies be liberated. That way, the Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights, Damara Alves, had publicly declared that "boys [should wear] blue, and girls pink".⁴⁶ There is a naturalisation and a maintaining of heteronormativity in bolsonarist ideas. Bolsonaro values a certain type of masculinity that is seen as "the norm" through his homophobic speeches, jokes and attacks against the LGBTQ+ community. Heteronormativity is a societal norm that makes it so that heterosexuality is seen as the norm. Thus, when Bolsonaro declared in 2011 in a Playboy interview that "I would be incapable of loving my child if he were gay.

⁴¹ In Portuguese, "coitado" can be translated by "poor thing".

⁴² Inhabitant of the state of Piauí

⁴³ Yala Sena, « Bolsonaro diz que combaterá a política do "coitadismo" e nega que prejudicará o Piauí », 2018, Cida de verde, available at : <https://cidadeverde.com/noticias/285362/bolsonaro-diz-que-combater-a-politica-do-coitadismo-e-nega-que-prejudicara-o-piaui>

⁴⁴ Ruy Fausto, « Nature du bolsonarisme », 2020, Sens public, available at : <http://sens-public.org/articles/1455/>

⁴⁵ Silvio Caccia Bava, « Épidémie de « fake news » au Brésil », 2020, Le Monde Diplomatique, available at : <https://blog.mondediplo.net/epidemie-de-fake-news-au-bresil>

⁴⁶ Rédaction, « "Les garçons en bleu, les filles en rose" : au Brésil, la déclaration d'une ministre crée la polémique », 2020, France TV info, Available at : https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/bresil/les-garcons-en-bleu-les-filles-en-rose-la-declaration-d-une-ministre-bresilienne-cree-la-polemique_3129655.html

I'd rather my son die in an accident rather than bring home another man"⁴⁷, he relays this norm and this hatred towards LGBTQ+ people.

Sexuality, homosexuality and women are subjects that make modernity an enemy. The refusal of admitting the dangers that threaten the environment are also part of these subjects. Bolsonarism leads a crusade to honour a very traditional vision of family, of women and gender relations. History is used to value the good old "it used to be way better" rhetoric to rally people to their cause. Bolsonarism organises itself on these three axes and allows us to question the social situation and policies of gendered populations even more.

2. Gendered inequalities in Brazil

Gender inequalities in Brazil are very real and very visible. Although they represent the majority of the Brazilian population, women are the first to face social inequalities. According to the UN's latest projections for the 2020-2025 projections, Brazilian women have a life expectancy of 80,1 years at birth, while for their masculine counterparts, it's 73⁴⁸. However, in terms of statistics, that's where the advantages of being a woman in Brazil stop.

In an unequal country such as Brazil, being a woman can be a real struggle, synonymous with danger, inequality and precariousness. "The NGO Save the Children published a survey in 2016 that awarded Brazil the title of 'worst country in the world to be born a girl'. With rates of child marriage, child pregnancy and out-of-school children still very high, Brazil is approaching the figures of a country like Haiti⁴⁹". Gender inequalities can pile up and affect all areas of social life. Black and mixed women, in particular, who represent 52% of total women in Brazilian society, are subject to greater vulnerability. They accumulate the worst indicators in all areas of social life, such as education, health, science, work, access to public services and violence⁵⁰. Aside from skin colour, violence against women is a major problem. Brazil ranks fifth in the world in terms of violence and murders against women. In 2019, 1,310 women were murdered, an increase of 7.2% compared to 2018, when 1,222 cases were reported as feminicides.⁵¹.

⁴⁷ Frédéric Martel, « Comment vivent les LGBT+ au Brésil de Bolsonaro », 2019, Available at : <http://www.slate.fr/tropical-trump/episode-3-homophobie-etat-bresil-bolsonaro-vie-lgbt-sao-paulo>

⁴⁸ <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2383448> - UN (World Population Prospects 2019 revision).

⁴⁹ Marina K. Maia, Flávia Castelhana, « Les mouvements de femmes au Brésil », 2019, Cause commune, available at : https://www.causecommune-larevue.fr/les_mouvements_de_femmes_au_bresil

⁵⁰ Linda Taranto Goulart, « Les femmes brésiliennes en lutte contre des siècles d'inegalite », 2019, Hommes & libertés, available at : <https://www.ldh-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HL185-Dossier-7.-Les-femmes-brésiliennes-en-luttre-contre-des-siècles-dinégalité.pdf>

⁵¹ Selon le Forum brésilien de la sécurité publique - Lena Lavinias, Sonia Correa, « Cómo Bolsonaro empeora la violencia de género en Brasil », 2020, Open Democracy, available at : <https://www.opendemocracy.net/es/jair-bolsonaro-violencia-de-genero-brasil/>

More generally, gendered violence is omnipresent: "in Brazil, a woman is raped every nine minutes, three women are victims of femicide every day, a trans or heterosexual person is murdered every two days and, in specialised police services, a woman reports an assault every two minutes".⁵² According to several sources⁵³, Brazil even tops the world ranking of homophobic murders. In a report published on 26 January 2019 on violent deaths of LGBT+ people during 2018⁵⁴, the NGO Grupo Gay da Bahia counted a total of 420 deaths, including 320 homicides and 100 suicides. Transgender people in particular face "endemic violence"⁵⁵. In other words, a harmful social phenomenon that is permanently present. Moreover, according to ANTRA⁵⁶, transgender people, 80% of whom are black or mixed and from underprivileged classes, are the main victims of gender-based murders in Brazil. Their life expectancy is estimated to be less than 35 years⁵⁷. And despite the considerable legislative developments on these issues, this violence is more and more present.

In 2012, the "Maria da Penha Law" is voted. Elected by the UN as the third best law in the world for the fight against domestic abuse, it creates mechanisms to fight against domestic and familial violence towards women and especially transgender women⁵⁸. It includes the creation of special tribunals and stricter punishments for the perpetrators of those crimes, and also plans prevention and the implantation of refuges for women in cities with more than 60,000 inhabitants. It showed to be quite effective according to a 2015 report published by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea). According to

⁵² Selon « Chronomètre de la violence » publiée par l'agence Patricia Galva - Linda Taranto Goulart, « Les femmes brésiliennes en lutte contre des siècles d'inégalité », 2019, Hommes & libertés, available at : <https://www.ldh-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HL185-Dossier-7.-Les-femmes-brésiliennes-en-lutte-contre-des-siècles-d'inégalité.pdf>

⁵³ Rédaction, « Le Brésil, champion du monde des crimes homophobes », 2015, Libération, Available at : https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2015/02/02/le-bresil-champion-du-monde-des-crimes-homophobes_1194256 ; Freedom House, 2019, Available at : <https://freedomhouse.org/country/brazil/freedom-world/2020> ; Andrew Jacobs, "Brazil Is Confronting an Epidemic of Anti-Gay Violence", 2016, The New York Times, Available at : <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/06/world/americas/brazil-anti-gay-violence.html>

⁵⁴ Eduardo Michels, Luiz Mott, Paulinho, « Grupo Gay da Bahia –GGB, Mortes violentas de LGBT+ », 2019, Available at : <https://grupogaydabahia.files.wordpress.com/2019/01/relatório-de-crimes-contr-lgbt-brasil-2018-grupo-gay-da-bahia.pdf>

⁵⁵ OFPRA, "La situation des minorités sexuelles et de genre", 2019, Available at : https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/1804_bra_lgbti.pdf

⁵⁶ Association ANTRA (Association nationale des travestis, transsexuels et transgenres) <https://antrabrasil.org/>

⁵⁷ Julia Canterini, « La communauté LGBT+ au Brésil entre (in)visibilité et rejet : Comment la communauté LGBT+ brésilienne est-elle au centre d'une rupture politique, culturelle et sociale ? », 2020, IGG, Available at : <https://igg-geo.org/?p=1007>

⁵⁸ A decision from the Brazilian Supreme Court confirmed it in 2020.

them⁵⁹, the law reduced the previous projection of increased domestic homicide rates by about 10% since 2006. Similarly, in 2019, the Supreme Court decided to criminalise homophobia⁶⁰. However, the numbers have been on the rise again since a few years, and the law seems to no longer be strong enough to reduce violence against women and LGBTQ+ people.

3. The bolsonarist government's role in the rise of gendered violence

The rise of evangelical influence could be part of the answer to this phenomenon. "Within Congress, the future of the defence of women's rights is worrying. The 'bancada evangelista', the name of the MPS linked to Evangelical churches, which is becoming more and more powerful, is firmly opposed to the progress of women's rights"⁶¹. The nomination of Damares Alves, an Evangelical pastor, in 2019 at the Ministry of Human Rights, Family and Women marks a real stop on the progress of gendered rights. These radical stances, notably on abortion or the "respect of a child's biological identity" set the tone on Jair Bolsonaro's government's stance on gender issues, and they don't fare well for the future.

The growing ignorance of politicians in terms of women's rights and the Brazilian government's more and more violent stances on gender issues are even more obstacles to social change, and they leave women and sexual minority at the front of violence. Many elements must be taken into account in this right-wing populist context in order to explain the return of this violence. Firstly, sexist and sexual violence is deeply linked to the war on drugs that accents violence and the criminalisation of poverty in every way. Jair Bolsonaro's new administration's policies against crime count many measures that are likely to worsen the vulnerable position women are in⁶².

The main danger is in the law that aims to facilitate the possession of firearms. Last January, Bolsonaro made firearm possession easier in homes, a measure that was presented as a means of effective self-defence against the growing crime rates. But femicides are often done within their homes, and thus it is rarely a stranger who kills, but

⁵⁹ Rédaction, « *Lei Maria da Penha reduziu violência doméstica contra mulheres* », 2015, Ipea, Available at : <https://www.ipea.gov.br/participacao/noticiasmidia/direitos-humanos/1223-ipea-lei-maria-da-penha-reduziu-violencia-domestica-contra-mulheres>

⁶⁰ Rédaction, « *Brésil : la Cour suprême criminalise l'homophobie* », 2019, Le Monde, Available at : https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2019/06/14/bresil-la-cour-supreme-criminalise-l-homophobie_5476012_3210.html

⁶¹ Rédaction, « *Les droits des femmes au Brésil : la double peine du sexisme et du racisme – fr* », 2018, Observatoire Pharos, available at : <https://www.observatoirepharos.com/pays/bresil/droits-femmes-bresil-double-peine-sexisme-racisme-fr/>

⁶² Lena Lavinias, Sonia Correa, « *Cómo Bolsonaro empeora la violencia de género en Brasil* », 2020, Open Democracy, available at : <https://www.opendemocracy.net/es/jair-bolsonaro-violencia-de-genero-brasil/>

rather a friend, a husband or a member of the family. This piece of data is very important because it raises the risks of violence for women even in their homes, and it even makes this violence worse since a firearm hardly ever lets anyone survive. Moreover, a firearm is an object of desire for men, it's a war instrument that gives them a certain power. This is a feeling that's even stronger in the Latin American region since Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela all together make up a fifth of global homicides. Therefore, "men kill men, men kill women"⁶³ and a policy that aims to ease the access to firearms won't help the situation, but it will worsen it since it gives men more power and control.

In addition to this idea of power, it is important to talk about this widespread idea that women get killed because they're provocative, because they haven't behaved correctly and therefore, they are punished by their husbands or raped in the middle of the street for behaving incorrectly. Provocation has long been a justification to absolve men in legal spaces, using the pretext of "crime of passion". While crimes of passion no longer exist in many countries, it is still entrenched in mentalities. This belief actually reflects a greater control of feminine bodies by men. Women shouldn't be killed because of love, and women's bodies should not be controlled like property and their murders should not be justified with "provocation from the victim". "Property isn't only the territory that must be protected from invaders: property is everything that's under the domination of men who kill women with firearms, before the right to buying firearms is even recognised as such. If today there are cases where women survive to these femicide attempts, it's mostly because the instrument of violence used in those cases were physical strength or weapons of low lethality like knives. In the case of firearm use, the chances of surviving are much lower. The crime policy when it comes to firearms has to take into account the gender norms of our country"⁶⁴. Firearms are truly part of a patriarchal reality, and the facilitation of their access accentuates the vulnerability of women. On a larger scale, accessible firearms put the entirety of sexual minority in an even more vulnerable position. In 2018, notably according to OFPRA⁶⁵ the causes of LGBTQ+ people are mainly firearms (29.5%). Even outside their homes, liberated bodies are in danger.

In the same desire to control bodies, the stance of Brazilian society on abortion must be addressed. Abortion remains one of the most common women's rights issues in the Latin American region, as it is one of the most restrictive regions when it comes to allowing abortion. In Brazil, it is only allowed when the mother's life is in danger, the pregnancy is the result of rape or the child is at risk of malformation. However, Brazilian society is still

⁶³ Debora Diniz, Giselle Carino, « La política de armas de Bolsonaro y las mujeres », 2019, El Pais, available at : https://elpais.com/internacional/2019/01/16/actualidad/1547636987_572077.html

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ OFPRA, « La situation des minorités sexuelles et de genre », 2019, Available at : https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/1804_bra_lgbti.pdf

very resistant to abortion even when these conditions are met and the growing presence of the evangelical axis complicates legislative progress. The government's "values", as expressed by its Minister of Human Rights, Family and Women, seem to complicate the access to abortion in the authorised measures, which is already a struggle.

Last August, a 10-year-old girl who was raped by her uncle was denied an abortion. Damara Alves, the Minister of Human Rights, Family and Women, subsequently worked to prevent any recourse for the child to have an abortion. "They argued it was an objection of the child's conscience, but it is an omission of help to a child in a secular democracy, which, despite Jair Bolsonaro, is still one in Brazil⁶⁶". The story reverberated throughout the country and echoed a similar situation, eleven years earlier, when a 9-year-old girl had to abort twins after being raped by her stepfather, and which had received international attention during Lula's term. "It was quickly presented as a confrontation between President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and the Archbishop of Recife, José Cardoso Sobrinho, who had excommunicated the girl's mother and the obstetrician Olimpio Moraes, who was responsible for the abortion. The then president, although a devout Catholic, argued that the tragedy fell within the cases provided for by law for an abortion: in case of rape or risk of death for the mother - the Supreme Court later added the presence of foetal anencephaly.⁶⁷" The position of the government in power thus shows a more radical approach to this issue, which continues to accentuate the vulnerability of women and girls. Thus to another extent, in the name of mystical justification, sexist and sexual violence against girls is no longer a priority and takes a back seat to "the gift of life".

The job market is another very inegalitarian sector for women. In 2016, 44.6% of women were considered active, against 65.8% for men. Moreover, their activities are concentrated on some sector that are clearly delimited, like public administration, domestic work or services. Thus, although the presence of women in the workplace has increased in recent years, this has not overcome the obstacles to career advancement, such as access to higher levels or higher salaries, which still mainly benefit men.

Let's take the example of political institutions. Even though they've obtained important civil rights since 1930 with the right to vote, women are not as present in politics. According to a UN study, Brazil is 133rd out of 193 on an international list on the presence of women in politics, right behind Jordan, Azerbaijan, North Korea or Libya. The 2013 numbers reveal that only 51 women out of 513 MPs were present in the federal chamber. In the Senate, there were 16 women out of 81 senators. Those numbers haven't significantly

⁶⁶ Anne Vigna, « Brésil : le gouvernement de Jair Bolsonaro, un relais politique pour les anti-avortement », 2020, Le Monde, available at : https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2020/08/22/au-bresil-un-relais-politique-pour-les-anti-avortement_6049646_3210.html

⁶⁷ Ibid.

risen, they've even lowered. The election of Dilma Rousseff as president was an exception for female ascension in politics. However, her destitution also shows the population and the institutions' reticence to give women more power. Her eviction from power despite insufficient proof can attest to that. "Her accusation was a spectacle of aggression, sexism and stereotypes that force us to conclude that in Brazil, the rule of law is deeply gendered in favour of masculine domination in all areas, notably in politics."⁶⁸

Although legislation forces parties to present 30% of women candidates for all elected positions, internal barriers favour male candidates and do not encourage women to enter politics. A masculine culture is thus reflected in the structure of the market and politics, relegating women to the least qualified positions or those furthest from the exercise of power. The codes of femininity, what is expected of them, their roles in the social imagination continue to thrive. Thus, they are seen in their traditional role of "devotion", which prioritises domestic activities over a professional career.

As a result, women, who on average are better educated than men in terms of studies, are relegated to care-related activities such as education or health⁶⁹. On the other hand, management positions are littered with obstacles. Salaries reflect these inequalities even more, since "for the same job, women earn on average 30% less than men, according to data published in 2018 by the IBGE"⁷⁰. Similarly, according to the study Social Inequalities by Colour or Race in Brazil (IBGE), white men earn more than double the average salary of black women and white women earn 70% more⁷¹. Thus, in addition to gender inequalities, the structural racism inherent in Brazilian society increases their vulnerabilities. In addition, while working outside the home, in 2016 women spent an average of eighteen hours per week on care or domestic tasks. "Combining hours of paid work⁷² with hours of care and maintenance, they work, on average, 54.4 hours per week, compared to 51.4 hours for men."⁷²

⁶⁸ Lena Lavinas, Sonia Correa, « Cómo Bolsonaro empeora la violencia de género en Brasil », 2020, Open Democracy, available at : <https://www.opendemocracy.net/es/jair-bolsonaro-violencia-de-genero-brasil/>

⁶⁹ Linda Taranto Goulart, « Les femmes bresiliennes en lutte contre des siècles d'inegalite », 2019, Hommes & libertés, available at : <https://www.ldh-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HL185-Dossier-7.-Les-femmes-brésiliennes-en-luttre-contre-des-siècles-d'inégalité.pdf>

⁷⁰ Voir <https://agenciade-noticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia-noticias/2012-agencia-de-noticias/noticias/20234-mulher-estuda-mais-trabalha-mais-e-ganha-menos-do-que-o-homem> (site traduit en anglais).

⁷¹ Vivian Fernandes, « A crise tem rosto de mulher: elas são as mais afetadas pela precarização no país », 2020, Brasil De Fato, available at : <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2020/03/08/a-crise-tem-rosto-de-mulher-precariozacao-e-desmonte-de-politicas-afetam-mais-elas>

⁷² Linda Taranto Goulart, « Les femmes bresiliennes en lutte contre des siècles d'inegalite », 2019, Hommes & libertés, available at : <https://www.ldh-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HL185-Dossier-7.-Les-femmes-brésiliennes-en-luttre-contre-des-siècles-d'inégalité.pdf>

With this lesser salary, women are still given double the work. In the middle of the socio-economic and political changes that are happening in Brazil, women are still the most affected and turn to informal sectors to avoid unemployment, which is becoming stronger and stronger in Brazilian society. The unemployment rates for women in the fourth trimester of 2019 was 13.1%, while for men it was 9.2%. "The gap between the two is even more pronounced when it comes to women who are at the head of their family. For them, unemployment rises to 10.2%, which is double that of men".⁷³ Gender inequalities are therefore inherent to the workplace. Thais Lapa, professor at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) and researcher in the field of gender in the workplace, explains that "there is a structural inequality in working conditions and ways of hiring because of the gender segregation that leads women to be more present in precarious and insalubrious jobs"⁷⁴. Bolsonaro's election and the approval of his labour reform created even more instability for women. Through his liberal thinking and his opposition to the rule of law, workers' rights are suppressed and women, who were already victims of many job-related inequalities, feel it more than anyone else.

In addition to these workplace changes, the retirement reform, a great political project of Bolsonaro's, also disrupted women's condition. Retirement by age went from 60 to 62 years, with dues for a minimum of 15 years. However, since it is hard for women to get a job and there are many obstacles for them, like maternity, it makes the possibility of a proper retirement complicated. "According to a report by the Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies (Dieese), with lower incomes than men, women's contribution to social security in 2019 was also 17% lower, on average, than that of men, which has an impact on the value of pensions"⁷⁵. The 2020 health crisis, which had a particular impact on the economic sector and jobs, also had a greater impact on women, as they are the most present in areas particularly affected by the crisis and not easily replaced by remote working, such as service industries, "one of the sectors that was most affected was that of domestic workers, such as cleaners or child carers, with a 21% drop in the number of jobs compared to the first trimester of 2020."⁷⁶

Women are therefore accumulating inequalities on the economic level, and Bolsonaro's policy in this area, but also in terms of gender in general, does not improve

⁷³ Vivian Fernandes, « A crise tem rosto de mulher: elas são as mais afetadas pela precarização no país », 2020, Brasil De Fato, available at : <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2020/03/08/a-crise-tem-rosto-de-mulher-precario-e-desmonte-de-politicas-afetam-mais-elas>

⁷⁴ Ibid.

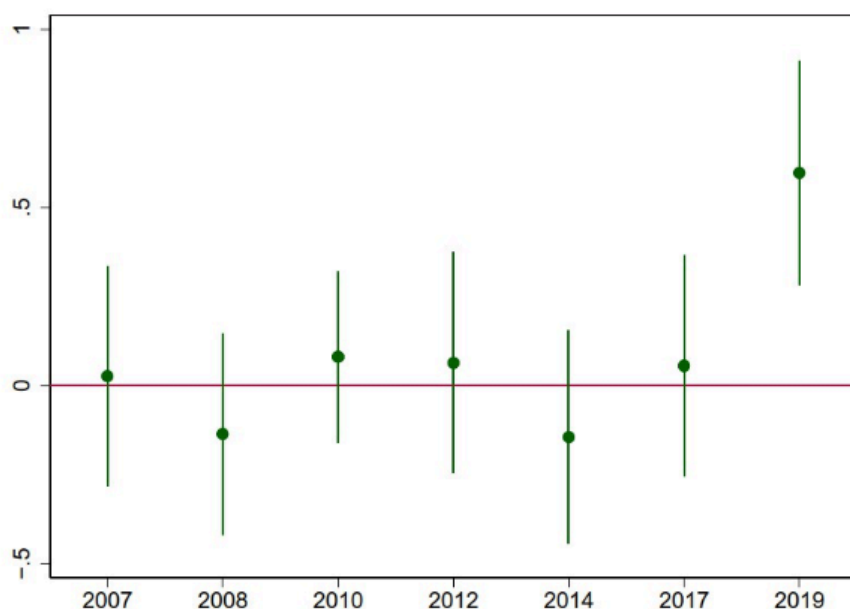
⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Rédaction, « Brésil : le chômage au plus haut en 3 ans, 8,9 millions d'emplois perdus », 2020, La Presse, available at : <https://www.lapresse.ca/affaires/economie/2020-08-06/bresil-le-chomage-au-plus-haut-en-3-ans-8-9-millions-d-emplois-perdus.php>

their situation. This deterioration of women's conditions is in line with the analysis presented above by Laura Barros and Manuel Santos, who analysed how the economic crisis interacted with the gender norms in force during the 2018 election. While women and men were both affected by the economic crisis, the impact on their votes was opposite, with men voting more for Jair Bolsonaro and women for Fernando Haddad.

4. Gender norms that participated to the social and political divide

To explain this phenomenon, basing ourselves on comparison surveys on political preferences on the 2007-2019 period, it is interesting to use their own arguments, especially codes of masculinity. According to Laura Barros and Manuel Santos, Jair Bolsonaro's presidency is closely linked to the emergence of an unprecedented ideological gap between men and women. The graph below indicates that during the 2018 election, men were more right-leaning than women, and significantly more so than in the previous elections. This graph shows the evolution of the average difference between men and women on an ideological, self-evaluated left-right scale. The highest values on the scale show a right-leaning ideology. Thus, the evaluations that are above zero mean that, on average, men lean more to the right than women, which is in accordance with Bolsonaro's victory in 2018. "For all the previous years, the gap between sexes in ideologies is clearly smaller and, actually, statistically impossible to distinguish from zero."⁷⁷



⁷⁷ Laura Barros, Manuel Santos, « Genre et populisme : ces hommes qui ont élu Bolsonaro », 2020, Le grand continent, available at : <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2020/03/06/bolsonaro-election-masculinite-populisme/>

With this result, the authors of the analysis suppose that the masculine, pro-Bolsonaro votes can be explained by the authoritarian and sexist rhetoric and the economic crisis. "Men feel more inclined to vote for someone who embodies masculine stereotypes to compensate for the drop in economic and social status. (...) This 'compensation mechanism' conforms to scientific literature on the role of the relative loss of social status in the context of the recent rise of populism"⁷⁹. Thus, this justification allows us to clearly picture the gender norms that exist through the lens the economic situation in Brazil. These norms participate and perpetuate gender inequalities that exist in the professional world in Brazil. Jair Bolsonaro's election shows how powerful and dangerous they are for women.

Thus, bolsonarism regresses significantly in terms of gender issues. This political direction can be explained by the "logic of difference" that was adopted by left-wing movements since the end of the 1960s. Historically, according to Camila Rocha in her analysis in "Jair Bolsonaro's Brazil and the traps of identity progressivism"⁸⁰ two discursive logics have oriented the demands of political movements from both the left and the right. On one side, the logic of equality linked to the left, puts an accent on the common points between people, and "the logic of difference, on the other side, usually used by the right, which systematically points out the irreducible differences between populations"⁸¹. However, since the 1960s and 1970s, the Brazilian left oriented itself more towards a logic of difference to defend the rights of specific groups: women, LGBTQ+ populations, black or mixed people. Thus, to defend the rights of these groups that are particularly impacted by Brazilian society, this logic was massively mobilised. It uncovered dilemmas that were difficult to solve within their society.

The logic of difference has facilitated 'the fragmentation of groups and demands' but also the interpretation of a possible 'form of hierarchy and therefore the valorisation, or devaluation, of certain physical and/or behavioural characteristics, according to which the right usually operates: men are worth more than women, heterosexuals more than homosexuals, white people more than black people, locals more than immigrants, etc.',

⁷⁸ Écart hommes-femmes sur l'échelle idéologique gauche – droite (échelle de 10 points, 0 étant la valeur la plus à gauche et 10 la valeur la plus à droite) Note : Le coefficient du modèle masculin est indiqué avec un intervalle de confiance de 95 %, sous réserve des variables de contrôle socio-économiques standard et des modèles d'État. Source : LAPOP (2007-2019).

⁷⁹ Laura Barros, Manuel Santos, « *Genre et populisme : ces hommes qui ont élu Bolsonaro* », 2020, Le grand continent, available at : <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2020/03/06/bolsonaro-election-masculinite-populisme/>

⁸⁰ Rocha Camila, « Le Brésil de Jair Bolsonaro et les pièges du progressisme identitaire », 2020, Ritimo, available at : <https://www.ritimo.org/Le-Bresil-de-Jair-Bolsonaro-et-les-pieges-du-progressisme-identitaire>

⁸¹ Ibid.

multiplying the rhetoric traps that prevents communication and pushes larger sectors of society towards demands that become identity-related, and the link with any type of economic oppression is little to non-existing”⁸². These more specific elements linked to that rhetoric and its effects on gender and racism issues are important to take into account. Mainly to avoid the traps of identity progressivism that pushes governors like Jair Bolsonaro to use excessive violence in their speeches. The social context feeds into political speeches, and Bolsonaro’s investiture is the proof of that. It shows how the accession to power of a group with extreme demands (whether it be right-wing or left-wing) is a danger. Therefore, we must stay vigilant on the ways that political parties use rhetoric to favour their beliefs, especially on social issues. In Bolsonaro’s Brazil, it is women, black people, Indigenous people and LGBTQ+ populations who are the most fragile, however the entirety of their democracy is in danger. The way the government has been backtracking on a number of subject questions Brazil’s social and political future, notably through workers’ rights, individual freedoms, etc.

III. What future for 2022 ?

We have laid out the dangers of bolsonarism, but what of its prosperity? As we’ve seen, the numbers of voting intention for Bolsonaro are still high, but the president’s popularity is at an all time low compared to his predecessors. Therefore, does bolsonarism have a future in Brazilian society? Does he have a tangible opposition? Can the Workers’ Party remobilise the voters? Do women have a role to play?

1. The real influence of bolsonarists in politics

There are many groups that directly oppose Bolsonaro and his government. All of them have roles to play to try and counter the president’s power. The stakes of the presidential election in 2022 already seem to concern the president, but also part of the population. Before those elections, there are the municipal elections that should have taken place on the 4th of October in Brazil but were reported to November. They could already constitute an opposition, or on the contrary a strengthening of bolsonarism in positions of power.

Even though Bolsonaro and his government have been the source of many laws and changes since 2019, the Workers’ Party is still the first parliamentary group. The oppositions to Jair Bolsonaro in political institutions are still present. It is yet to be determined if they will have enough influence to stop the authoritarian movement launched by Bolsonaro or

⁸² Ibid.

if it will only get stronger. Even though it's impossible to analyse the future, it is still possible to consider the groups that could be able to change Bolsonaro's political representation.

The municipal elections will be taking place on the 15th of November 2020. The voters will choose their mayors, deputy mayors and councillors of the country's 5,570 municipalities. In total, 67,800 people will be elected. These elections count 147.9 million of voters, among which the majority are women who are high school graduates and aged 35 to 39 according to the Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE)⁸³. Voting is mandatory except for those aged 16 to 18, those older than 70 and illiterate people. Therefore, there are real stakes behind these elections with three great political forces. The first group is the traditional right and the centrist parties. The second is made of bolsonarist candidates and other far-right variants, spread across different names depending on municipalities. Then finally, there is the group of left-wing candidates, notably counting the PT but also other groups who represent alternatives linked to the working class, as well as centre-left candidates. In most capital cities, it was impossible to create a left-wing Front, which should be important for the political struggle against bolsonarism and the old right. The parties' specific interests became more important. The PT in particular wants to keep its hegemony on the left, which is slowly backtracking. Its main failure is indeed its reluctance to ally with the other political forces.

Add to that a speech that is not appropriate for the economic context and doesn't seem to be up to date with the Brazilian population's social considerations. Lulism notably is criticised by its opponents because of its refusal to consider the hypothesis that his country may be irreconcilable, divided in two Brazils, one being traditionalist and the other preaching the liberation of bodies. Therefore, even though the PT isn't completely off the political stage, it has trouble keeping up with the times.

In addition, the result of the municipal elections will probably be influenced by the conflict between bolsonarists and anti-bolsonarists. "The opinion surveys show that, even though Bolsonaro has had a new spike in popularity, the rejection of Bolsonaro is high in many capital cities. According to the Ibope (Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística), in São Paulo, the largest city in the country, Bolsonaro's government is considered bad or very bad for 48% of the population, while 27% consider it good or excellent"⁸⁴. In general, Bolsonaro seems to be more rejected in large capital cities, according to the initial scenario. Estimates suggest a victory of the traditional right and

⁸³ Welton Maximo, « Eleições 2020: Brasil tem 147,9 milhões de eleitores aptos a votar », 2020, Agência Brasil, available at : <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/politica/noticia/2020-10/eleicoes-2020-brasil-tem-1479-milhoes-de-eleitores-aptos-votar>

⁸⁴ Rédaction, « Brésil. Le paysage électoral et les défis de la gauche », 2020, A l'encontre, available at : <https://alencontre.org/ameriques/amelat/bresil/bresil-le-paysage-electoral-et-les-defis-de-la-gauche.html>

centre, considering the political scenario on the State's scale. The left and bolsonarism, however, fight for some key cities. The stakes are to see if the opposition to bolsonarism, but also the old right, who united in the application of a neoliberal programme that is against workers' rights, will manage to contain the votes.

2. The stakes of democracy

The municipal elections are the first political scale that is in contact with the population, so the results are a first draft of what the presidential elections of 2022 may bring. Within the bolsonarist clan, the presidential elections are a major issue and the priority seems to be to destroy a potential rival to Bolsonaro within the party itself. The shocking resignation of Justice Minister Sergio Moro, who was seen as Bolsonaro's main rival, taints the current government. As we have already discussed, Bolsonaro has had a complex relationship with his supporters and in particular with these ministers for some time. Sergio Moro's resignation comes eight days after the resignation of Health Minister Luiz Henrique Mandetta, who is also very popular and in favour of a lockdown, unlike the president⁸⁵.

Many experts fear that the Minister of Economy Paulo Guedes will resign as a result of increasingly tense relations. "For Sylvio Costa, founder of Congresso em Foco, a website specialising in the Parliament, the departure of Sergio Moro could deal a serious blow to Jair Bolsonaro's popularity ratings, while 'propelling a rival for the 2022 presidential election to the forefront'"⁸⁶. Ruy Fausto⁸⁷, faced with the future of bolsonarism, showed two hypothetical situations. One where bolsonarism loses momentum, which he believes is the product of several factors. First of all, the quarrels mentioned between the different pillars of bolsonarism, which could prove to be "devastating" for the movement. The mediocrity of Bolsonaro's character would be another factor, combined with the numerous scandals and affairs affecting the bolsonarist clan. Finally, "bolsonarism lacks any kind of social policy, even a fictitious one. In fact, most right-wing populisms practice left-wing populism in small doses, implementing limited or outright illusory initiatives. With Bolsonaro and the bolsonarists, there is no trace of any "social" gesture, however demagogic or empty it could have been. They are simply going their own way"⁸⁸. But for an unequal social structure like Brazil, social policies are essential. For 13 years, the PT has been heavily

⁸⁵ Rédaction, « Brésil: un ministre claque la porte, Bolsonaro dos au mur », 2020, available at : https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/bresil-un-ministre-claque-la-porte-bolsonaro-dos-au-mur-25-04-2020-2372794_24.php

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ruy Fausto, « Nature du bolsonarisme », 2020, Sens public, available at : <http://sens-public.org/articles/1455/>

⁸⁸ Ibid.

involved in implementing a substantive policy in this area. Women, the LGBTQ+ movement, black and indigenous people, but also workers are at the heart of these policies. Although he is opposed to all these groups, Bolsonaro cannot simply exclude them from his political agenda.

However, another scenario is possible, a more pessimistic one for the Brazilian democracy, because despite these circumstances, bolsonarists are winning more positions little by little. "In a few months, they had already obtained quite a few things: the law of pseudo-legitimate self-defence, brutal budget cuts for universities, political persecution of teachers, privatisations (...) Then, they multiplied threats to the Supreme Court (STF), the attacks on universities and the press, the project "school without party"⁸⁹; all of this could make the current situation shift from, generally, a "transitioning" authoritarian power to a fully-fledged authoritarianism, meaning a "democratorship" like Hungary or Poland"⁹⁰. Therefore, it is important to see how bolsonarism will evolve in Brazilian society. The main danger remains the escalating of violence within the Brazilian society. Jair Bolsonaro relays a strong and violent message of opposition to gender identities, as well as all ethnic and cultural minorities. This violence is shared by a large part of the population and it places these groups in a vulnerable position that is growing greater and greater on a simple local scale. The laws that are established against the rule of law constitute the second escalating of violence that should be stopped.

⁸⁹ qui s'oppose en particulier aux études de genre et à la lutte contre l'homophobie à l'école

⁹⁰ Rédaction, « Brésil. Le paysage électoral et les défis de la gauche », 2020, A l'encontre, available at : <https://alencontre.org/ameriques/amelat/bresil/bresil-le-paysage-electoral-et-les-defis-de-la-gauche.html>

Conclusion

The political shift to the far-right since 2018 in Brazil can be explained by a great number of factors. The economic crises of 2015-2016, the corruption scandals and the failure of the Workers' Party are elements that paved the way to President Jair Bolsonaro's victory. He managed, despite a great political instability, to rally many influential supporters during his 2018 campaign. The military, the evangelical axis, the legal power and the agribusiness lobby all participated in his election. However, a year after his investiture, the tensions between Bolsonaro and these groups are palpable. The many accusations and suspicion of the implication of Bolsonaro or his sons in corruption or murder scandals, as well as his poor handling of the Covid crisis tainted his political representations little by little.

However, bolsonarism composed of essentially Bolsonaro's family circle and the ideologist Olavo de Carvalho did not lose its Brazilian voters, on the contrary. The voting intentions for him have only risen. More specifically, the bolsonarist attitudes were analysed to understand how Bolsonaro prospered in surveys. The falsification of the truth, his opposition to modernity, his relationship with hatred and the scorn of minorities as well as his scorn for gender issues and bodies' liberation are the attitudes on which the bolsonarist rhetoric builds itself. This political strategy mobilises violence and the logic of difference to feed social conflicts that were already inherent to Brazilian society.

Gender issues specifically divide the country. The return of evangelical movements brought back the ideology of a "traditionalist" family, attached to the moral values of a woman and her body. Therefore, since the investiture of Jair Bolsonaro and his military and evangelical government, the escalating of violence towards women and LGBTQ+ movements only rose. The laws that were created only made women who were already affected by social inequalities more vulnerable. Moreover, with the self-defence law making access to arms easier in people's homes, the new retirement or work laws reduce the potential rights that they could have had, and therefore accentuate their precarity.

Thus, Bolsonaro's government is making a great backtrack on the rights that were obtained for gender equality, and his violent ideas towards them impacts the femicide rates and the tensions between different social movements. The bolsonarist rhetoric must be seen as a logic of difference that feeds into the idea of a hierarchy between social groups. The PT, which governed Brazil for 13 years, has fed this logic through the defence of LGBTQ+, black or Indigenous minorities, and this logic was mobilised by Jair Bolsonaro and the far-right in a far more hostile way. This new government accentuates their vulnerabilities, but also makes democracy as a whole more fragile. Thus, the municipal elections from this November could lower Jair Bolsonaro's influence in politics and give us

a snapshot of the presidential elections of 2022. However, even though we can't analyse the future, the fracture that this investiture created in Brazilian society will be a challenge, whether Bolsonaro is re-elected or not. Brazil is going through not only a political shift, but a social and economic one as well, and it does not fare well for the future of women's and minorities' rights.

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