

11 Hate speech and social polarization in Brazil

From impeachment to
Bolsonaro

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Introduction

Brazil has become a pioneer country in Latin America for the growth in its far-right political forces. After the rise of President Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, conflicts in Chile, Bolivia and election results in Uruguay in 2019 have indicated that an increasingly radical ideology is taking shape in the region's politics. The full breadth of political conservatism still embraces South America. In the Brazilian case, it is not possible to make a political reading dissociated from the colonial heritage that directly affects the patriarchal and racial structure of the country. This question is clearly illustrated in Santos's (2020) analysis, which states that "since the 17th century, the three *unicorns* have been capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy" (p. 12), and they continue to act shamelessly in Brazil today.

The hate speech in Brazil began in 2013 with the June protests (June Journeys) and then continued in 2014 with the Football World Cup. These were capitalized by the right-wing parties and supported by the media with the intention of creating, through what Charaudeau (2007) calls the *social-discursive imaginary*, an ideological polarization in the country.

This type of discourse, based on "total idealism that invalidates science", seems to have made Brazil a case study, how it shows Jair Bolsonaro's handling of the coronavirus, which gave him the title of the worst ruler to deal with the disease in the world.

This chapter aims to analyse the socio-political course, including mass media, that enabled the rise of Bolsonaro since Rousseff's impeachment in the context of hate speech. The methodological focus is on the semiolinguistics theory of discourse analysis. First, there will be an observation of the protest posters that took over the streets in 2015 against the Workers' Party; later, there will be an exhaustive analysis of opinion articles from *Veja*, the most widely read magazine at the time. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how the controversy portrayed by the magazine, according to the social-discursive debate, contributed to establishing a polarization of ideology in the country.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003109891-13

The June protests background

The so-called *June Journeys* (protests against public transportation fare increases in 2013) became powerful political capital for Brazilian right-wingers, based on transmedia narratives (Scolari, 2013) of activist and journalistic stories then used during the 2014 World Cup in Brazil – the same year that President Dilma Rousseff was re-elected (Meneguelli, 2015). The June 2013 demonstrations showed that occupation of the streets is an instrument of struggle for citizens and new forms of citizen participation. According to journalist Piero Locatelli (Mattos, 2014), the protests revealed that people can achieve their goals by taking over the streets, without the intermediation of institutions, and put an end to a deep-seated inertia in the country.

This sense of “empowerment” of the population extended to the 2014 Football World Cup, even though the protests were not as big. In Locatelli’s analysis (Mattos, 2014), this decreased participation was due to the lack of a specific proposal to unite the protesters. Cava (Mattos, 2014) agrees that the World Cup did not trigger larger demonstrations due to difficulties in organizing protests during the event, especially because Brazilians have a strong identification with soccer. In addition, the police were prepared to contain any wave of demonstrations during the World Cup, even if this required support from the army.

In 2014, demonstrators proposed a “renewed political discourse, outside the traditional institutions” (Bentes, 2014, p. 253), bringing the event to life and documenting it. They created a technological network of outrage that used a language of action with an “autonomous capacity to communicate and organize” (Castells, 2013, p. 24). The movement that began in 2013 transformed into a giant wave in 2015 as a result of Dilma Rousseff’s re-election as President. At that point, defence of polemic became a type of argumentation in the establishment of public conflict in Brazil.

To understand this wave, in terms of production of meaning within the method of discourse analysis, Meneguelli and Ferré-Pavia (2016) distinguish the concept of *communication situation*, which is commonly confused with that of *context*. The former refers to the physical-social environment of the language act, while the latter refers to the textual environment of the word. The context is therefore an internal part of the language act, while the communication situation is external to it, since it concerns all the conditions surrounding its production (Charaudeau & Maingueneau, 2014), which allow us to interpret a statement as a kind of *situational instruction*.

From a discursive point of view, this means that every language act is performed in a situation of standardized communication, organized in accordance with the restrictions imposed by the *mise-en-scène* of the discourse. This defines the position of legitimacy of the language subjects, that is, who is authorized to take the floor. Each situation is unique because it is included in a particular domain of communication (political, media,

academic, etc.) and embodies a certain purpose, which Charaudeau (2004) conceptualizes as *visées discursives* (discursive glances).

Hate posters

Analysing the posters used in the March 2015 protests in Brazil and considering the discursive construction of political polemic in the generation of public confrontation, Meneguelli and Ferré-Pavia (2016) took as a basis the concepts of *dissent* and *polemic* proposed by Amossy (2014). According to Amossy (2014), controversy is organized in the democratic sphere because it is part of public debate and political deliberation. In this sphere, dissent is a structuring category of conflict management, since it is a radical division of the feelings, interests, convictions that are in the thought and belief systems of those who disagree.

When analysing the posters, the researchers identified a paradox between a demand for the right to protest in public and a return of the military dictatorship, which reveals the argumentative limits of controversy and verbal violence as means to value the democratic environment. Despite their heterogeneous themes, the posters' background was the right to exercise public demonstration and disagreement. Methodologically, the posters were organized into the following four groups:

- 1 *Attacks*: Posters containing verbal and visual insults, threats, and death wishes against former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and then President Dilma Rousseff.
- 2 *Dichotomization*: Posters containing ideological polarization by constructing a dichotomy of “us” *versus* “them”, Marxism/communism *versus* liberalism, elite *versus* Workers' Party (PT).
- 3 *Impeachment*: Signs connecting political corruption to a single party, the PT; systematic use of the colour red (PT) *versus* the green and yellow colours of the Brazilian flag, symbolizing nationalism and militarism.
- 4 *Military intervention*: Posters calling for military intervention as a to save the country from *Petista* (PT) corruption, using verbs expressing a desire and demand for military intervention or a coup and/or external support from the United States.

In this wave of disruption, it is important to understand the discursive organization of the 2015 protests as a breeding ground that enabled the rise of the candidate Jair Bolsonaro in the 2018 presidential election, as well as his victory without having participated in the public debates with the other candidates.

Bolsonaro is a professional politician who remained a member of the Chamber of Deputies for almost three decades. He also established the political life of his three sons, who are now accused in the investigation of fake news produced by the so-called *Hate Office*. His son Flavio, who is a

senator, is still suspected of being involved with the militias that are supposedly behind the assassination of Rio de Janeiro city councillor Marielle Franco and involved in a corruption scheme known as *Rachadinha*. However, the “myth” was constructed by disassociating him from political life, as if he were a regular citizen angry with the corruption of the government. He gave the impression that corruption could only be contained by a strong, austere man, without fear of opposing powerful figures in politics and the media. According to Martins (2017), “politically, we are of a liberal vocation, a liberalism founded on the traditions of personal power and political patronage, its opponents” (p. 26). This tradition is not so much anchored in a social conscience as it is in a national conscience, a terrain which was ready for the 2015 right-wing demonstrations and, later, Jair Bolsonaro.

Amossy (2014) analyses the radical discourse from the perspective of demonization of the other, which presents the adversary as an absolute evil to be fought against. Demonization was used as a strategy of polarization, built using hyperbolic attacks, the object of a moral reproach convened to expel the evil, PT.

We need to expand the demonized figure beyond the PT, the Workers Party, itself. The PT, in its 13 years of government, produced a more inclusive social project, which meant giving representation to segments considered subordinate, especially people of African descent and women. This meant a change in social relations in Brazil because the elites and the white middle class began to feel that their privileges were threatened. Public policies invaded private spaces, as the so-called *subalterns* began to have new spheres of representation. The strategy to contain these social advances was to prevent the re-election of Dilma Rousseff. Since the ballot boxes did not endorse the financial and political elites’ plan, a legal-media script needed to be produced that would bring about impeachment with social support. Both for the impeachment of Rousseff and military intervention, the discourse was based on a far-right ideological matrix that was growing fast in Brazil and eager to change the country’s political course, either by force or by way of a white-collar *coup d’état*. The far-right entered the political game, as the posters show, with the aim of taking power by way of accusation, insult, and intervention, taking advantage of a context of economic recession that caused social discontent.

Moreover, polarization reveals the different world views that shape the identities of social groups. The fallacy of defamation was used as a strategy to undermine Rousseff in the 2015 protest (2013) and clarified that morality is one of the conditions on which legitimacy is based in the political domain.

The attacks on Rousseff in the 2015 protests were organized with the aim of destroying her image to the point of causing a crisis of political trust in Brazil, which has even paved the way for mistrust of public institutions and weakened Brazilian democracy. The type of argument used to deconstruct both Rousseff’s and Lula da Silva’s images was, in fact, an

ad hominem fallacy, aimed at disqualifying them personally. It sought to silence the PT and its public figures by excluding them from the political game, something that has become evident, *a posteriori*, with the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and the imprisonment of Da Silva, preventing him from participating as a candidate in the 2018 election.

A key aspect is that the *visée* that guides the discourse of the posters is one of incitements, given that the demonstrating “I” wants to “order” Rousseff to leave the function of head of state, but it does not have the authority to do so without providing evidence of what is illicit. While the incitement approach is dominant, the demonstration approach also comes into play when trying to establish that the PT is corrupt. In both types of discursive focus, the “you-citizen” is in the position of “having to believe” that Dilma Rousseff and her party should be excluded from politics. To do this, it is necessary to evaluate the image that is presented to them as true.

Validation of this truth was co-opted by the so-called traditional media, allied with the financial elite represented by the right-wing parties. Meneguelli (2017) analysed images of Dilma Rousseff in the online version of the most widely circulated national magazine, *Veja*, as well as part of the ethos that this medium built for itself in 2014 and 2015 (the period preceding the 2014 election until the beginning of Rousseff’s second term).

The main criteria for choosing the publication *Veja* is because it is one of the preeminent voices of public opinion in Brazil, as Maffesoli points out (Vasconcellos, 2014).

The 2016 Coup and the Brazilian media

To analyse and explain the construction of images of Dilma Rousseff, we propose an analysis of the role of the media in the 2016 Coup from a linguistic-discursive point of view, based on the abundant use of a connotative linguistic category: the adjective. Adjectives are understood as discursive mechanisms for intentionality. In this case, from the media outlet analysed: *Veja* magazine.

The main function of traditional media, since the beginning of the history of the press in Brazil, has been identified as “articulation between dominant groups, which centralize, discipline and ideologically organize ideas, and the public to which they must be disseminated”, according to Barbosa’s study (2010, p. 183). In this sense, as Miralles (2011) attests, the role of the media in building public opinion in democratic societies must be conceived from a pluralistic conception that is suitable for public debate. This can only happen by offering citizens different perspectives on issues of collective interest. In the case of *Veja*, the journalists explicitly took sides and did not reflect between pro- and anti-judgement (impeachment), but used simplification procedures, applied to something complex, and moved away from the role that the media should play in informing readers about what is happening in the public space.

Controversy is therefore extremely important because it allows for public confrontation and generates communities of protest, oversight, and regulation, as well as political action that drives social change. Both Amossy (2014), from studies on argumentation in discourse, and Miralles (2011), from studies on journalistic communication, agree that a culture of consensus can be threatening to democracy, as it creates the illusion that there is a homogenization of a plurality of identities. Thus, it can be dangerous for democracy to have a false idea of a society without conflict.

If an enemy – not an adversary – is introduced to the tense situation anchored in the slogan “the enemy must be destroyed or eliminated”, a path is opened for verbal (and sometimes even physical¹) violence to nullify the conflict. As stated by Amossy (2014), the nerve centre of democracy is not consensus, but the management of dissent. To assume that there is a consensus or to try to institute it as an ideal good is to establish a rhetoric that appeals to impartiality and neutrality with the aim of hiding conflict.

The danger of action-oriented discourse to eliminate the other is in creating an undemocratic principle that obstructs dialogue and the acceptance of differences. This threat has been evident since the re-election of former President Dilma Rousseff, when political, legal and media discourses explored corruption as being exclusive to a single political party, demonizing the images of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, personifying them as the evil faces of political corruption in Brazil.

From a linguistic point of view, polarization is established in lexical choices. The way in which the lexicon, and more particularly the names of the opponent, cast doubt on an opponent makes the speaker express his or her values in order to share them with his or her audience

Opinion in *Veja*

Twenty-eight opinion articles from the “Columnists” section in *Veja* were selected as a sample for research. Two of them are presented as examples in this article. The first was published before the 2014 presidential election. In it, Rousseff’s social-discursive image is that of someone who is undemocratic and unreliable. *Veja*, for many years, has been one of the most widely read magazines in Brazil. Until the end of 2016, it was the magazine that had the largest distribution in Brazil, with an average of 1,112,000 copies, ahead of *Época* magazine, in second place, with an average of 340,200 copies.

Veja published a video about Dilma Rousseff’s March 31st anniversary speech in 2014. On March 31, 1964, a *coup d’état* overthrew the democratic government of President João Goulart and established a military dictatorship headed by Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco, which lasted until 1984.

In the first case (pre-election), the introduction, in which the voice of journalist Reinaldo Azevedo is framed as the *revealer* of truths giving

evidence (the video) that Dilma Rousseff is a poor speaker because she does not know how to use Portuguese properly. To maintain its credibility, it presents data that prove what is said by building an ethos of reporter credibility in line with the journalistic communication contract.

The columnist builds his ethos by asserting an identity as a critical subject committed to the truth, when he affirms that he is obliged to describe what he sees: “But then I wouldn’t be being me, okay”, “Because I am who I am, and because it is a speech on truth, so let’s go”. But then, in contrast to his image as the “subject of truth”, the discourse is related to expressions with negative values towards Dilma Rousseff. The explanation is as follows:

In (1) *rede suja* (dirty network), the columnist denounces the PT for going against freedom of the press; in (2) *Venezuelan regime*, Brazil is negatively associated with the governments of Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro, both described as authoritarian; in (3) *authoritarian governments*, Rousseff is associated with terrorist actions for evoking her past during the time of the dictatorship. Strategically, lexical elements are selected to shape an image of the President as a representative who is not committed to truth and democracy and therefore not credible to speak about such issues in a speech regarding March 31, 1964. We must also consider that the text “speaks” visually, both in the colours and the arrangement of the video at the beginning of the article, intentionally placed there to encourage people to read.

The text is written in two colours: red and blue. In social political imagery, red is associated with the left, socialism, communism and, in Brazil, the PT; blue represents freedom, the right and the social democratic party, the PSDB (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira), the main opposition to the PT. The columnist’s comments are marked in blue, which means he is aligned with the values of the right and freedom, as opposed to Rousseff’s speech, which is highlighted in red. In *Veja*, there is a tradition of using the colour red (even in its printed version), according to research by Jodelet (2001), which shows that, when used predominantly, the colour is connected to the breakdown of social order.

We have seen, therefore, that the ethos constructed by *Veja* is one of a revealing subject of truth – faithful to the title that defines it: a magazine with a “revealing and regulating vocation” – which has its sights set on the speech of Dilma Rousseff. Her image is constructed as that of someone who is unreliable due to her association with authoritarian governments and her past as a guerrilla and, also, incompetent to govern, because her linguistic shortcomings “indicate” a disorder of thought. In an interview with journalist Mário Prata in 2010, he comments on the “sick feeling” that some Brazilian media have against the PT.

As we know, an essential feature of social representations is their power of influence. They circulate through the language in an interactive process between *Veja*’s columnists and the magazine’s readers, thus creating

for Rousseff, in other articles, an image that “she speaks badly because she thinks badly”. Since the President would not have any communication skills, *Veja* builds her image as a politician unable to express herself and, as a direct consequence, unable to be an efficient ruler for Brazil.

A cultured subject ethos is created using a language of power in which a single valid norm is cultivated. Rousseff is responsible for distorting her language, to the extent that she has created a new one for herself, “dilmês”, because her thinking is inconsistent and chaotic.

There is no doubt that there is an ideological dispute that is materialized linguistically in the opposition between the *Veja norm* and the Rousseff *disorder*. The President’s disorder represents the disorder of her government and the country. Dilma Rousseff (and the PT) socially represents another (popular) culture, which is gaining space in the social imagination with its rise in concrete and symbolic terms, while *Veja* opposes this cultural renewal by maintaining a conservative, authoritarian and ironic discourse, appealing to the literary knowledge of a literate elite.

In the second example (post-election), observing discourse after the 2014 elections, we will take as a case study an article published in *Veja* in which we can see the construction of an image that Dilma Rousseff and the PT are not reliable. The article is called *Did Cunha create the economic crisis? The political crisis? The crisis of confidence? Poor Dilma! Cunha is a solution for her!*² Its author is Reinaldo Azevedo, and it was published on July 21, 2015.³

In this article, 19 adjective expressions are used against Dilma Rousseff and the PT, including:

- 4 Poor Dilma.
- 5 Apocalyptic language of war.
- 6 Pure political terrorism.
- 7 Economic crisis.
- 8 Political crisis.
- 9 Crisis of confidence.
- 10 War image.
- 11 Flag of peace.
- 12 Withdrawal of the mandate.
- 13 Government executioner.
- 14 Hope factor.
- 15 Government without an agenda.
- 16 Type of solution.
- 17 Scapegoat.
- 18 Incompetence of the person.

The title of the article posits several crises in the Brazilian setting: economic, political and of confidence. The repetition strategy, as we have seen,

is used to create a simplified reality effect, to be crystallized in the readers' cognitive structure. It should be noted that, as in other articles published around the same time, *Veja* creates a gradation of the seriousness of the crisis: economic, political and of confidence, as if the latter were the biggest problem afflicting Brazil.

It is necessary to take into account that by denying the relationship between the then President of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha, and the political crisis that had taken hold in Brazil, by silencing the political plots in which he had been shown to have participated, *Veja* not only simplifies reality, but also manipulates it.

By supporting Cunha, holding him up as (14) *a factor of hope*, *Veja* takes on the risk of losing face, that is, its positive image, becoming the image of an unethical and irresponsible media for its audience. Although *Veja's* text agrees with the norms, values and attitudes socially shared among its readers, who are outraged by the PT government, most of them do not agree with Eduardo Cunha's actions because they are against acts of corruption.

It is indisputable that Eduardo Cunha started a political war against the government of Dilma Rousseff, and this conclusion did not come only from an (15) *agenda-free government* that wants to use him as (17) *a scapegoat* to be (18) *a solution for its own incompetence*, which, yes, can and should be criticized by the opposition, since dissent should be a discursive practice in democracy.

The expression *crisis of confidence* must also be noted, and it appears repeatedly in many other *Veja* texts. It contains *Veja's* judgement of the Dilma Rousseff government and of Rousseff herself as a political figure. It is not surprising that the expression is repeated in several texts and even within the same text, and it has the discursive function of crystallization, transforming the problem of the crisis of confidence in Dilma Rousseff into a truth that can only be countered by her dismissal from the presidency. Perhaps such a reader would not read it because he was persuaded by propaganda spread by his or her community that the magazine is fake. But the explicit repetition of adjectives is reinforced by digital journalism. If we think about the circulation of a text on the web and the various ways it can be accessed by a reader, the repetition of a word/expression is a powerful resource in establishing a truth.

Nogueira (2013) states that when politics is deformed by the absence of a confrontation of ideas, the stigmatization of others occurs through discourse, which is structured in a hyperbolic, angry and resentful narrative. *Veja's* discourse adopts this kind of strategy by portraying Dilma Rousseff as intellectually unprepared and linguistically disjointed, with no real evidence of the relationship between such shortcomings and her government. Before the 2014 elections, *Veja's* discourse contained a tone of humour that ridiculed Dilma Rousseff's public persona through selected clippings from her parliamentary speeches, taken out of context. The images constructed with

the analysed adjectives assign Rousseff the image of a non-democratic, unreliable and illiterate person, a characteristic that does not allow her to think.

The attributes amalgamated in an image of Dilma Rousseff were designed to undermine her legitimacy as President of Brazil. Through a legitimization process, the social body acknowledges someone as acting on its behalf. In the profile constructed by *Veja*, the candidate would not be competent to act legitimately on behalf of Brazilians, since she does not know how to do so. On *Veja*'s side, its ethos has been formed by intellectual capacities, representative of high literacy and the "good" and "pure" Brazilian culture, and, therefore, capable of making a critical analysis that reveals Rousseff's inability to preside over the country.

An intentional media project created an illegitimate image of Dilma Rousseff so she would not win the 2014 presidential election, yet the re-election candidate won a majority of the votes to govern Brazil for another four years. It is not the intention here to spread the idea that *Veja* (or other media) constructed Dilma Rousseff's image based solely on the fabrication of lies. Many narrative facts selected by *Veja* refer to events that actually existed. Bad decisions on economic policy and corruption crimes did occur during the *Petista* administration, but the selection of those chosen to be narrated and discussed, the highlights, the implications of the subjects involved and those who were forgotten, contributed to linking negative aspects to the public image of Dilma Rousseff and the PT.

Following Dilma Rousseff's victory at the polls came a rhetoric of resignation that led to the discrediting of the President's image. *Veja* is no longer interested in attacking the legitimacy of Dilma Rousseff; her image of credibility must be destroyed, completely removing any trust in her, led by an idea of evil. While *Veja*'s spirit was previously built up as a denouncer, a critic attentive to the evils practised by Rousseff and her party, it then became more combative, giving Dilma Rousseff the opportunity to surrender for her "crimes": resignation. However, the accused subject did not surrender because there was no crime, so *Veja*, from February 2015 onwards, began accusing her repeatedly.

As the crisis of confidence wore down the Rousseff government and the PT, the judge who coordinated the *Lava-Jato* operation, Sérgio Moro, gained legitimacy. With the help of the traditional media, Moro's image as a hero was built up. His mission was to overthrow Lula da Silva, which meant in practice preventing him from participating in the 2018 election, since the *Petista* represented a real risk to Bolsonaro's candidacy.

The political-legal-economic-media orchestration used Bolsonaro, a military man expelled from the Armed Forces who for almost three decades made a career in politics as a member of the Chamber of Deputies to the extent of forming a political clan with his three sons. As Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) state, "while family businesses and army squadrons can be governed by orders, democracies demand negotiations, compromises and concessions" (p. 80).

Popularization of hate

Social representations, as a great discourse of quotations presented to society, disconnect the text and separate it from its context. The dynamic process of social representations entails changes that can influence the behaviour of a community, as shown by several sociological studies (Jodelet, 2001; Moscovici, 1989, 2001; Schutz, 1999). The media helped to promote the change in social behaviour that occurred in Brazil with the reports on Operation *Lava Jato*⁴ by stoking dissent, which highlighted the problem of the false consensus that seemed to unite the country.

This would be explained, in part, by Solano Gallego's diagnosis (2016) that a set of reasons influenced the fall of the PT and the collapse of the Brazilian left. The first of these is related to the disastrous economic results implemented in Rousseff's second term and her lack of political leadership to get out of the crisis, as well as her party's corruption scandals, which were also decisive in polluting trust in the *Petista* government.

The second set of elements is linked to the political decisions made by the PT, according to the researcher, since *lulism* (from Lula) has opted for conciliation rather than for confrontation of the economic, political and media oligarchies. The cost of approaching this group led to the social-discursive idea that the PT is just "another party", provoking discredit in the political representation itself.

Finally, the third set of elements concerns respect for the concept of class. While the PT's policy enabled the integration of millions of historically marginalized citizens, using policies to promote consumption and redistribute income, a fraction of the privileged classes did not feel contemplated by the government and therefore sought to maintain their class privileges – which in Brazil also include ethnic and gender privileges.

Solano Gallego (2016, 2018a, 2018b) has been studying the growth of the extreme right in Brazil. In her research, which includes surveys, she concludes that votes for Bolsonaro in 2018 were anti-system, which is a consequence of the second set of elements above. The denial of policy is a result of a collective anger that formed a dispersed, pro-authoritarian network. According to the researcher (Solano Gallego, 2016, 2018a, 2018b), the problem with the election of Bolsonaro is how it is reflected in what she calls the "Bolsonization of public life", that is, the popularization of hatred and intolerance was forged over the years by hate speech and political polarization.

However, it is necessary to contextualize Bolsonaro's political rise within a broader international spectrum. Since the Euro crisis in 2010, Europe has followed an austerity plan coordinated by neoliberal-oriented political and financial institutions. This model finds a paradigmatic political figure in Brazil to act in a polarized scenario. This tense situation began to be forged in 2013, creating a new neoliberal chapter that some consider to be neofascist.⁵ Despite all this, Donald Trump came to power in the United

States in 2017, bringing with him a real imperialist threat in Brazil. According to Bandeira (2016), since Wall Street has lost its power in the face of China and Russia, the destruction of large Brazilian companies that have expanded throughout the world makes it easier for US multinationals to enter the Brazilian and Latin American markets.

Conclusions

The results of the research show the leading role of the traditional Brazilian media in building a social-discursive imaginary that circulated hate speech to further weaken agitations that had already been underway in Brazil since 2013. Hate speech gave a sense of legitimacy to Rousseff's impeachment and to all the following chapters of Brazil's recent socio-political history. The discourses that led to polarization were circulated largely through the media as part of a political game that had been defined in the 2014 election. Some of the right-wing parties were unsatisfied with the election results thus the media and judicial support gave legitimacy not only to the organization of Rousseff's impeachment, but to the creation of a character who would fit the role whose script was ready: Jair Bolsonaro.

In 2013, when the first displays of contempt for Dilma Rousseff's government began, it failed to deal with one aspect of democracy: dissent. However, in 2015, the controversy was expertly managed by the right wing and the Brazilian elite, who knew how to use it to promote hate speech. Once hate speech is established as a social pattern, the ability to overcome dissent through language is lost. Discourse requires a minimum of agreement so that the subjects of the language build an arena in which each of them puts forward and defends their points of view, and attacks those of their adversaries. Controversy, as Amossy (2014) has taught us, allows democratic life to be organized through public debate and political deliberation. It is dissent, then, that structures the management of conflicts of opinion rooted in the thought and belief systems of the members of a society.

The protests against Rousseff were among the most interesting examples of hate speech, at least in Brazil, as shown by the posters from demonstrations. When hate speech becomes popular and constitutes the day-to-day mismanagement of political dissent, life in a democracy becomes poorer. The findings explained in this chapter also show how the dominant media, with the example of *Veja*, participated in a drift that led to the victory of the extreme right. It is essential to highlight the use of social networks, especially WhatsApp, in the propagation of fake news against the PT candidate, Fernando Haddad, which was decisive in the election result. Fake news manipulated socio-discursive imaginaries, for example, among young people, to whom Bolsonaro presented himself as an anti-system candidate; among evangelicals, for whom the discourse was oriented towards a risk of degenerating customs; or among the middle class, for whom the discourse was oriented towards class resentment, as social policies became clientelism for them (Arruda, 2020; Solano Gallego, 2018a).

With the fall of Sergio Moro from the Ministry of Justice,⁶ Bolsonaro did not lose popularity. It has oscillated during the pandemic, but has recovered, and he already has his eyes on the 2022 electoral dispute.

Notes

- 1 It is important to remember the assassination of Rio de Janeiro councillor Marielle Franco in 2018 and the self-imposed exile of former federal deputy Jean Wyllys for suffering threats and not receiving protection from the Brazilian state, and so many other cases similar to his.
- 2 Eduardo Cunha was President of the Chamber of Deputies at the time. In March 2018, a judge sentenced Cunha to 15 years in prison for corruption, money laundering and tax evasion.
- 3 Retrieved from: <https://veja.abril.com.br/blog/reinaldo/cunha-fez-a-crise-economica-a-crise-politica-a-crise-de-confianca-pobre-dilma-cunha-e-para-ela-uma-solucao/>
- 4 *Operation Lava Jato* is a set of judicial investigations involving thousands of search and seizure and arrest warrants, with the aim of investigating a money laundering scheme that moved billions of *reais* in bribes. *Lava Jato*'s legitimacy fell under suspicion, since the main judge for the operation, Sérgio Moro, accepted to be a Minister of Justice in Bolsonaro's government, acted illegally in the process according to a series of reports by *The Intercept Brasil* (<https://theintercept.com/2019/07/05/scandal-for-bolsonaros-justice-minister-sergio-moro-grows-as-the-intercept-partners-with-brazils-largest-magazine-for-new-expose/>).
- 5 There is a controversy among analysts and theorists about the suitability of the term *fascist* for Jair Bolsonaro's government. On that discussion see Fernando Haddad's interview with Spanish sociologist Esther Solano Gallego (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjwwxsHs2Y>) and an interview with Portuguese historian Manuel Loff (available at <https://apublica.org/2019/07/o-bolsonarismo-e-o-neofacismo-adaptado-ao-brasil-do-seculo-21/>).
- 6 Caused by Bolsonaro's intervention in the election of the chief of the Federal Police, an action that would have repercussions on the investigation of his son Flavio Bolsonaro in a corruption case.

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