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**BRAZILIAN DEMOCRACY UNDER ATTACK: THE POPULIST EXTREME RIGHT,  
THE ECONOMIC CRISES AND THE 2013 PROTESTS IN BRAZIL**

The present study aims to understand the role of the economic crises of capitalism, hate speech and populism in the rise of the extreme right in Brazil especially in the 2018 presidential election. For that, a theoretical-descriptive analysis of the causes of these factors was made according to the thesis of historical institutionalism, making use of the hypothetical-deductive method to better understand the crisis of democracy in Brazil and in the world. Finally, an understanding of these peculiar situations is proposed as a pathway to dissolve these tensions so that the population can free itself from these anti-democratic ties and seek the reconstruction of a more participatory, ethical and more democratic Brazil.

**Key words:** *hate speech, information society, public policies, political polarization, Brazilian democratic rupture.*

*Original article*

**INTRODUCTION.** This article examines the attacks on Brazilian democracy in recent years, with a particular focus on the global economic crisis of 2008, the Brazilian protests of 2013 and some of the reasons behind them. It begins with the assumption that the rise to power of the extreme right-wing government in Brazil did not happen suddenly or by coincidence, but was the result of general public discontent over issues such as corruption, the economic crisis and doubts about political representation. This situation became the object of rapid analysis and concern of the extreme right in Brazil, which began to “sell” itself as a populist alternative and “outside the *mainstream* of politics”.

To achieve this objective, an analysis was carried out from the perspective of historical institutionalism, aimed at understanding how the institutional organisations of a political community structure and influence people’s behaviour; in

this compass, economic crises and the emergence of the information society, which have strongly and directly connected people to each other, have proved to be crucial instruments in the institutional changes that have allowed the dangerous rise of the far right in the country. Marx’s understanding of the cyclical and systemic crises of capitalism was used to understand the effects of the 2008 global subprime mortgage *crisis* on Brazilian society, which created a fertile environment for the 2013 protests and what Castells calls the *rupture* of trust between the rulers and the ruled: a crisis of political legitimacy. This environment allowed the far right to gain strength in the national debate through hate speech and populism, and thus to win the 2018 elections, providing the time for the largest and most institutionalised attack on Brazilian democracy.

**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH.** This article deals with the weakening

of Brazilian democracy and the rise of the extreme right to political power in view of the crises of capitalism and the protests in 2013. The cyclical economic crises inherent in capitalism interfere with democratic institutions and people's ideas, creating an environment conducive to the emergence of populist leaders who, imbued with divisive and hateful rhetoric (hate speech), take advantage of the situation to come to power democratically. Although the victory was democratic, it resulted in an assault on democratic institutions, public policies and minorities, leading to authoritarian government projects that are illegitimate under the Federal Constitution. The shattered Brazilian political environment, reflected in the 2013 protests, demonstrated the process of democratic crisis, which manifested itself in a disgust with the political mainstream and the acceptance of reactionary and extreme right-wing ideas.

**METHODOLOGY.** The article presents itself as a theoretical study that uses bibliographic research in the online press and publications as a method, which materialises as an epistemological fragment of the study, a theoretical framework and a problematisation of how the crisis of capitalism affected the 2013 protests in Brazil and how this allowed the far right to seize power, albeit democratically, using populism and hate speech to divide the population and thus create narratives that support their own ideas. The hypothetical and deductive method was used to understand the hypothesis and problematisation described above.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Understanding the Brazilian reality: the crisis of capitalism and its influence on the Brazilian scenario

Brazil enters 2023 in shock, not only at the end of four years of sustained attacks on Brazilian democracy<sup>1</sup>, but also because, even with a new

government in place, with a clear democratic bias, it still witnessed coups and violence on 8 January, orchestrated by leaders who sought to cause institutional instability to the point of considering military intervention to prevent the installation of a new government. In an interview with the newspaper "Folha de São Paulo", Jorge Chaloub (2022), researcher at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), categorically stated the link between former president Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2022, Liberal Party) and the global Extreme Right, with the adoption of a posture that makes use of conspiracy theories, encouragement, affection and approach to military logic and aesthetics and, above all, the inability to accept defeat.

In addition to these characteristics, it is important to note that extreme right movements are also connected to populism. Populism in Brazil rests on markedly unstable foundations, as it has already been used both to designate the left and the political right, as well as showing itself sometimes as a positive adjective and sometimes as a negative one. In this sense, it was common to hear that President Lula (2003–2010, 2023–, Workers' Party) is a populist and that former President Bolsonaro is also a populist. In fact, the 2018 presidential public debate was marked by the use of the term "*populism*", however, among the many wrong associations that were made about this term, there is one extremely wrong that equates the listed rulers in equivalence. Although there are traces of populist discourse in both, they are totally different patterns of political-populist behavior, especially when the appreciation and respect for the country's democratic institutions is highlighted: "*In fact, it is difficult to compare Bolsonaro with any other democratically elected head of state in our history. Even before reaching the Presidency, his political career was already marked by explicit defenses of torture, sterilization of the poor and population control, by threats to close Congress and embargo the Judiciary, and by the propagation of the greatest homophobic, racist and misogynistic atrocities. Once in power, Bolsonaro repeatedly incited his militancy against parliamentarians and judges, was completely lenient, not to say conniving, with the spread of a deadly virus and isolated the country from the rest of the world [...]*" (Barros, Lago, 2022, pp. 14–15).

In Brazil, it is appropriate to state that populism manifests itself in degrees, that is, one should not make the analysis in terms of all or nothing, but in what degree the action of a certain politician

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<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that, according to Lopes, Meyer and Linhares (2020), the Bolsonaro government is, from the beginning, characterized by accusations of manipulation and concealment of data: "The little appreciation for transparency, correct and properly collected information for the formulation of public policies and the corollary of social control of their implementation warned experts even before the pandemic [...]. Its information management contributed to erode Brazilian democracy and placed the country in the epicenter of academic debates about a third wave of democratic reversion, taking as a reference the classic distinction of the early 1990s [...]. This slow and gradual erosion, masquerading as legality, affects - in different pro-

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portions and forms – both young and consolidated democracies, and is generally conducted by elected leaders".

conforms to a populist discourse or not. Barros and Lago (2022) state that there are three striking features of populism: a) the first is a discourse that opposes the “people” to the “elites”; b) the second is its own aesthetics, populism is transgressive and irreverent, appealing to a markedly popular culture; c) third, it has the power to change institutions.

In Brazil, the perception of crises and popular discontent led the extreme right to imprison public debate on issues that involve typical agendas of populist and hate speech, hijacking the agenda in favor of social polarization, persecution of minorities, racism – in its structural, institutional and recreational aspects (Almeida, 2020) – and other themes that were used to literally divide and conquer *Tupiniquim*<sup>1</sup> society. The populism of the Brazilian extreme right pays attention then to the three characteristics mentioned above: a) it calls itself a representative of reactionary conservatism, proposing the return of a repressive military government, aligned with capitalism and with guidelines of conservative customs – the so-called “patriots” or “good citizens” –, opposing to the maximum degree the other people who do not embark on the same ideas and are treated as left-wing and, therefore, enemies; b) it is popular, a right-wing movement that seeks to show itself through public figures that exalt ignorance, contempt for science, rudeness of character, humiliation of opponents, misogyny, racism, homophobia and many others negative characters that express themselves mainly in hate speech; c) using popular support and winning elected office, this populist extreme right-wing movement seeks to deconstruct public policies that had been in place for decades, causing institutions to be profoundly altered in their functioning and scope.

The democratic destruction that follows is silent and systematic, testing Brazilian democracy in its weak points, such as the assault against Law 12.527/2011 – Access to Information Law, an undeniable republican achievement in favor of transparency and collective auditability of government acts. In fact, the Bolsonaro government, taking advantage of the sanitary and public health crisis, edited the Provisional Measure 928 limiting access to information from public agencies during the State of Health Emergency declared due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In this sense, it suffers from serious material unconstitutionality: *“Article 6 of Law 13979/2020 provided for the suspension of*

*deadlines for answering requests for access to information in bodies whose employees were in quarantine or telecommuting and that depended on personal access by those in charge of answering after the end of the state of public calamity and ruled out the acceptance of appeals against denials of answers. With a manifestly anti-democratic character, Provisional Measure 928 suffers from material unconstitutionality. It restricts, in an unreasonable, arbitrary, and unnecessary way, the fundamental right to information and transparency, creates obstacles to the political participation of citizens, making it difficult to control governmental acts at a time that requires visibility. It points to a past in which there was a culture of opacity in the management of information of public interest, embedded in an authoritarian culture that permeates Brazilian history, especially in the context that preceded 1988 [...]”* (Lopes, Meyer, Linhares, 2020, pp. 99–100).

Friedrich (2022) similarly warned of continuous attacks on e-voting in Brazil during the 2022 elections, when then-President Bolsonaro insisted on spreading fake news about fraud in the electronic electoral process, without providing any evidence. The use of this type of narrative, which was also observed in the 2016 and 2020 elections of Donald Trump, is materialising as a global trend that involves the manipulation of the truth through electoral disinformation methods that aim, in extreme cases where weakened democratic institutions allow it, to overturn election results: *“This is not the first time Bolsonaro has resorted to election-denial techniques: federal police in Brazil determined that he had a “direct and relevant” role in spreading disinformation about electoral processes in the 2018 general elections, in which he ultimately won the presidency. But with polls indicating that he is more likely to face defeat this year, Bolsonaro is poised to test the resilience of Brazil’s democratic institutions in new and alarming ways”* (Friedrich, 2022).

But the whole story of these radical changes in Brazilian politics, which at first takes the reader to the year 2018 and the rise of the extreme right in Brazil, does not reveal the whole truth behind these results. But the whole story of these radical changes in Brazilian politics, which initially takes the reader to 2018 and the rise of the far right in Brazil, does not reveal the whole truth behind these results. Brazil, as common sense dictates, has not become a country with radical, racist and fascist connotations year after year. It is a process that stems from the very political instability resulting from the transition from a military dictatorship to a democratic government (1964–1985) without a critical look at the past – with a

<sup>1</sup> The vernacular “tupiniquim” is commonly used in Brazil to refer to Brazilian society itself through the expression of its traditional peoples, in this case, the Tupiniquim indigenous people.

view to understanding mistakes, repairing damage and punishing excesses – having been done.

Soares, Simões and Romero (2020) explain that the social strain that drives countries like Brazil into the arms of the extreme right stems from the well-known cyclical crises of capitalism, which are established as ways of responding to the exponential increase in contradictions forged by capital itself. Using the words of Karl Marx (2013, p. 130), there is the idea that the capitalist system should cyclically enter periods of crisis and, above all, large and systemic crises, as societies become more economically dependent and interconnected: *“The movement of capitalist society, full of contradictions, reveals itself to the practical bourgeois, in a more forceful way, in the vicissitudes of the periodic cycle that modern industry makes up and in its culmination: the general crisis”*.

The methodological inflection point used to understand institutional changes in Brazilian politics is the use of the so-called *Historical Institutionalism*. Sanders (2006) explains that, after the institutional crises that followed World War II, political science began to be guided by analyzes borrowed from economics that center on the figure of people (and groups) as rational agents who make rational choices, hence it be called the *Rational Choice model*. In general terms, this way of understanding social and political interactions focuses on the fact that individuals have their preferences and, to achieve them, they make use of utilitarian strategies that aim to maximize them. However, Institutional Rationalism was not able to satisfactorily explain the recognized maladaptation of institutions to social and economic realities over the years, especially after long periods of stability. A proof of this can be found in the 1960s and 1970s, in the social and economic field, in which crises of customs and of the capitalist economy itself are documented, challenging the prevailing institutional model (Welfare State). This collapse gives rise to the rediscovery of the determinacy, in a State, of public institutions and their relative autonomy in relation to civil society: *“... the perception that public institutions were more than “black boxes” processing demands from Society by turning them into policies”* (Sanders, 2006, p. 42).

The historical institutional perspective is, therefore, more concerned with structural aspects that involve the constitution, maintenance, and adaptation of institutions than with the particular and individual integrations that make up the microcosm of study of the Rational Choice method. In this sense, the understanding of institutional structures must be operated in terms of objectives that are hidden under personal motiva-

tions, which makes the approach less selfish and more focused on a public dimension. In addition, when thinking about composite goals about collective action, results and persistence, one also comes to the perception that, in order to achieve them, it is necessary to equally reflect on ideas, which are a diametrically opposed category to individual preferences or awareness of the rules, because certainly *“Ideas are relational, and often embody normative a priori”* (Sanders, 2006, p. 42). But, the most important thing when thinking about ideas and not about personal preferences is the awareness that those have greater adherence to mobilize collective efforts by social groups that want to create or change a public institution. From this perspective, and for the study here in progress, an *institution* represents a construct developed for the purpose of controlling subsequent human actions. Then, for the historical approach, the institution must be evaluated as this normative construction that is historically strengthened, which implies that the investigator needs to “look at the past”, a concept that is well reproduced in the notion of *path dependence*: *“... the consequence or decision is formed in a specific and systematic way by the historical path that precedes it”* (Piaia, Cervi, 2018, p. 74).

Understanding Brazil today, its political polarization and the rise of the extreme right to power in 2018 requires looking to the past and, especially, to the economic crises that paved the way for these disastrous institutional results to occur.

Soares, Simões and Romero (2020) explain that the economic oil crisis of 1973 directly affected the popular justification of the Social Welfare State, creating an antagonistic movement that took shape mainly in the 1980s and that re-dimensioned the discussion of the collectivity in reference to democracy, human rights, and projects of social emancipation. Austerity policies and state reorganization in relation to the global capitalist system spread throughout the world's economies causing an undeniable setback in economic, social and cultural rights. Added to this conjuncture, as a factor influencing institutional change, was the financial crisis of 2008 in the USA and, likewise, the already installed security crisis – especially intensified after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 –, gradually importing restriction of civil and political rights and giving rise to a tense political environment that is naturally predisposed to the strengthening of extreme right-wing ideas, especially the rhetoric of hate.

The design of this last systemic crisis of capitalism originates in the US but given the globalized

world political-economic organization<sup>1</sup>, it soon spreads to other democracies throughout the globe, both in Europe and in Latin America. The most direct consequence of the crisis is distrust in current political institutions and the search for new spaces for manifestation and construction of lost or denied social and economic expectations. There is a *breaking* point in prevailing institutions. Liberal democracies began to be questioned regarding the participation of large portions of the population in their benefits and, in a context in which progressive ideas had leveraged some minority rights (blacks, women, homosexuals, the LBTQIA+ population etc.), the great “loser” turned out to be the ever-dominant “white man”: “*Suddenly, white men realized that nobody talked about their identity. And more, that the other ones identities were defined as contesting the supposedly dominant identity: the patriarchal identity of the white man*” (Castells, 2018, p. 51). This leads to a counteroffensive that translates into the easy co-option of a large part of the population to extremist ideals, especially dictated by populist, nationalist, fascist and racist tones.

It is important to highlight once again, that the *subprime crisis* of 2008 began in the central US economy and spread throughout the world, also reaching peripheral economies such as Brazil. This is because it began with the crisis of bank borrowers who were classified as *subprime* that is, they did not have guarantees, proof of income or even a favorable credit history to guarantee loans linked to the purchase of real estate. When making such loans, financial institutions made use of mortgage contracts in which the guarantee was embodied in the mortgaged property itself. These contracts were also securitized and traded in the financial market. At first, bank fees were low and US consumers were able to maintain their compliance, however, given that they were supposed to rise after a certain period, such an increase caused the default of many borrowers – without

guarantees that the credit would be recovered – leading to, in a chain effect, the loss of value of securitization bonds as well. Its vertiginous fall initiates a movement away from risk and sequentially the established negative environment, which is known to guide investor decisions, begins the fall of other securities as well, also contaminating other economies throughout the planet (Lima, Deus, 2013).

In Brazil, although the government and the stability of a scenario of strong economic growth have lessened the effects of this crisis, two direct effects could be felt in the economy: the shortage of international credit and the rapid devaluation of the Brazilian currency, the Real. Due to the first negative effect, the Brazilian government severely restricted credit in the economy, making business activity must recalculate its production and investment plans, bringing about an immediate economic slowdown. The devaluation of the Real, in turn, caused considerable damage to sectors linked to exports, destabilizing the Brazilian economy (Lima, Deus, 2013).

In terms of analyzing measures that could be adopted to contain the crisis, it is possible to list seven outstanding adjustments that could be used to contain its effects (Lima, Deus, 2013): a) expansion of liquidity in the market; b) restructuring of the financial sector (bankruptcies, judicial reorganizations, mergers etc.); c) total or partial nationalization of financial agents; d) government guarantee of loans, deposits and financial investments; e) use of expansionary monetary and fiscal macroeconomic policies (reduction of interest rates and expansion of public spending); f) exchange currency control; g) measures aimed at mitigating the social impact of the recession (welfare policies in general). Brazil adopted its approach in all measures, but it is possible to highlight more actions aimed at: a) expanding liquidity in the market, e) expansionist monetary and fiscal macroeconomic policies and f) exchange currency control.

We have now reached an important turning point. By emphasizing government action to help agents who directly move a capital economy and who thus, quickly suffer the effects of a global jolt like that of 2008, the Brazilian government left aside the possibility of investing more generously in the seventh measure listed, the one aimed at mitigating the social impact of the recession. This is especially true when considering the years following the acute phase of the crisis, which culminated in a government that would face the increase in hate speech and political polarization and which, in the end, would end bitterly in an ill-fitting and clearly coup-like (Souza, 2022)

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<sup>1</sup> As pointed out by Lima and Deus (2013), one can identify three phases of what is called *financial globalization*: the first, from 1960 to 1979, characterized by being an indirect and limited process in which the international financial market coexists with other systems closed and already regulated monetary and financial markets; the second covers the period from 1980 to 1985 and stands out for being the time when the US implemented policies of deregulation and financial liberalization; the third, broader one, begins in 1986 and is characterized by the generalization of arbitration, opening and deregulation of stock exchanges.

impeachment of then-President Dilma Rousseff<sup>1</sup> (2011–2016, Workers' Party). This situation, compounded by corruption scandals, the demand for more democracy and the fulfillment of the democratic promises of the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988, instilled social forces, now brought together by emerging social networks, to take to the Brazilian streets in 2013 in protest. It is these protests that give the strength and essence of the political radicalization that already exists since the crisis of capitalism in 2008, and that would culminate in the victory of the extreme right in the presidential elections of 2018.

2. The rise of the extreme right in Brazil: the democratic crisis, political polarization and hate speech in Brazil

Castells provides a clear and disturbing outline of the complex times in which we live, and in which multiple crises are flourishing around the world. Right at the opening of his work *Rupture*, he is dramatically prophetic: "Evil winds blow on the blue planet. Our lives falter in the maelstrom of multiple crises". When dealing with crises, he reports the existence of a global economic crisis, which culminates in precarious work and low wages; a security crisis, with fanatical terrorism, which spreads fear and admits, in the name of public security, the restriction/loss of important fundamental/human rights; an environmental crisis, with the constant degradation of the environment and the shaping of a future that is increasingly hostile to life; a peace crisis, with the return of wars in the detriment of diplomacy as a

means of conflict resolution; a crisis of equality, with increasing violence against women, who still seek space for material equality in a world created and dominated by men; an epistemological crisis of truth, with a *communication galaxy* governed by *lies* now known as post-truth; a privacy crisis, with the end of privacy and the insertion of humanity in an era of surveillance and economy of personal data, objectifying people; a cultural crisis, outlined and controlled by the notion of entertainment, which seeks to stimulate the most despicable instincts of human beings and constitutes itself under the commercialization of what is worst in humanity (Castells, 2018).

All these specters of crisis could be seen throughout the constitution of the Brazilian social and political debate, especially after the already reported protests of 2013. But there is yet another crisis which for Castells (2018), is even deeper, more decisive, and which makes it impossible to adequately address all these listed instabilities: the democratic crisis, tinged by the loss – *rupture* – of trust between rulers and ruled: "Distrust in institutions, almost everywhere in the world, delegitimizes political representation and, therefore, leaves us orphans from a shelter that projects us in the name of the common interest". Vieira (2018) highlights two conflicts in Brazil that were decisive, as they marked this democratic crisis: a) the growing tension in the so-called Brazilian coalition presidentialism, which deteriorated from 2005 onwards, and the system of control and enforcement of the law (Judiciary, in particular), which became more autonomous, creating a clash between the political and legal classes; b) dissatisfaction with the distributive nature of certain public policies, in which there is tension between what is spent on rights related to citizenship and social inclusion and what is spent on maintaining the privileges and interests of specific classes.

In Brazil, the 2008 crisis of capitalism and the measures taken by the government to contain its pernicious effects – prioritizing safeguarding the economic actors – seem to have contributed to the worsening of the political legitimacy crisis that the country faces to some extent since re-democratization. People especially the classes that lost power the most, or that least participated in the social and developmental promises arising from the Federal Constitution of 1988, became less and less patient with the changes that happened and that did not happen. Centered on a liberal-representative model, with a markedly formalist stamp, the Brazilian democratic model is content to obey the procedural links of legitimacy of this representativeness, leaving aside – or postponing as much as possible – the possibility

<sup>1</sup> Souza describes moralism and the quest for maintaining economic elites in power as the main reasons for the 2016 coup. In Brazil there is an elite owner of capital and power that insists on maintaining, directly or indirectly, its institutional power over other social classes: "The policies of the Workers' Party (PT) governments of social assistance, income transfer, social and racial quotas, and encouragement of university study have meant perhaps the greatest effort of social inclusion of the marginalized class in our country" (Souza, 2022, p. 102). For the author, this possibility of continuity of income distribution and reduction of social inequalities led to the reaction of the rich Brazilian elite, creating an environment in which moralism around improbable questions about corruption and taking advantage of the 2013 demonstrations plummeted the popularity of President Dilma and enabled her loss of strength with the Brazilian Parliament, allowing, in the end, an impeachment process based on unbelievable fiscal accounting issues. In other words, an accounting excuse was used to execute a cunning political removal of the then president of Brazil.

of participation or rather of real inclusion of minorities historically excluded from the political decision-making process from the acquisition of citizenship and rights and the concrete insertion in the benefits of a Democratic State: *“The important thing is to bear in mind that the hegemonic model of liberal-representative democracy, being centered on the exercise of voting, guarantees a very delicate bond between citizens and power, often resembling a “blank check” given to the political class and revised periodically, every four to eight years”* (Devos, Walker, Porciúncula, 2021, p. 119).

Although it is not appropriate to generalize given the complexity of the Brazilian political crisis, for the purposes of the present investigation it is quite correct to state that the growing immobility of *Tupiniquim* democracy in the matter of promoting effective popular participation was one of the causes – in addition to corruption, of the use of social media to propagate lies, of hate speech etc. – which leveraged the June 2013 protests. The lack of participation and political immobility gradually generated distrust among the people in relation to the political class (the result of the legitimacy crisis of liberal-representative democracy), a condition that it can be summarized in the slogan used by the people at the protest: “it doesn’t represent me”.

In this situation, in which several factors produce a feeling of abandonment and mistrust in relation to liberal democracy, these feelings are assimilated by segments of the extreme right which take advantage of general discontent to seduce parts of society with their ultraconservative, xenophobic, homophobic and racist ideas. The polarization between conventional politics and ultra-rightist ideas colored elections around the world, especially after the 2008 crisis, and can be easily seen in the rivalries between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, Angela Merkel and the AfD far-right party and, in Brazil, by the election of Jair Bolsonaro (Soares, Simões, Romero, 2020).

Together with this political crisis therefore, a promising environment for hate speeches is established, especially those that take advantage of the loss of cultural identity due to globalization. The crisis grows because there is no political intention to insert everyone in a world that is economically, socially and culturally guided by new technologies and other ways of commodifying everyday life, especially by transforming personal data into economic assets. Castells (2018, p. 19), astutely points out that excluded from economics and politics individuals tend to take refuge *“... in an identity of their own that cannot be dissolved by the vertigo of global flows”*. Their identities then converge on dangerous crutches: the nation – and

nationalism; the territory – and xenophobia; the personal god – and to religious intolerance; the prejudice – and the resulting racism.

Social and progressive changes proved insufficient for some and caused a sense of loss in others. Public policies based on material equality and on the inclusion of minorities aimed in the Lula and Dilma Governments at composing the classes most alien to democratic progress with the benefits that were completely denied to them before, but this also caused an opposite effect of revolt in the country’s middle and upper classes: “It can be seen that, in 2013, the demonstrations that took place throughout Brazil gave rise to the so-called *new right*. [...] an extremist right... that makes any dialogue or promotion of human rights unfeasible, because it is linked to an agenda, purely, of customs” (Soares, Simões, Romero, 2020, p. 217).

In view of this a division was increasingly established in political discourse, a dichotomous classification that guided by hate, dominated by new media and quickly apprehended by the extreme right became toned among “good citizens”: patriots, conservatives, Christians, liberals etc.; and the others, no matter what they are: the enemies of the country, the communists, the left, in short, those who do not conform to the new hegemonic discourse.

Chetty and Alathur (2018, p. 110) conceptualize *hate speech* as any speech that attacks an individual or a group with the intent to hurt, harm or disrespect because of their identity as a person. There is a clear connection between hate speech and prejudiced practices such as racism and Islamophobia, for example (Lima Jr., Hogemann, 2023). The European Court of Human Rights points out a very expressive definition of what can be considered hate speech: *“... covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin”*.

In this sense, hate speech must also be understood within the limits of its relationship with the Right to Freedom of Expression, which is a Human Right expressly enshrined in the Brazilian Constitution and, therefore, made a Fundamental Right in Article 5, IX: “the expression of intellectual, artistic, scientific and communication activity is free, regardless of censorship or license”. However, the use of freedom of expression cannot be an instrument for attack and violence against other individuals due to race, ethnicity, gender, as this would be against the very democratic nature of the State, incurring a serious threat to the

rights of these people and groups. It would also incur in the so-called *paradox of tolerance* described by Popper (2018), given that an unlimited tolerance in the name of freedom of expression would entail the certain disappearance of tolerance itself and, consequently, of freedom of expression.

In Brazil, in addition to the already mentioned succession of economic crises and the rupture resulting from a serious democratic crisis – materialized in the distrust of people about the *mainstream* of politics, the politicians by profession –, hate speech was without a doubt the mortar that conferred robustness to the movement of ascension to the extreme right. And in this, the role of a character Olavo de Carvalho<sup>1</sup> was essential for the replacement of critical debate of ideas by cursing, by the posture of war and destruction of those who are “on the other side”. Even today, the national debate around controversial issues, such as crime and public security policies, for example, is soon absorbed by the hate speech that rises against blacks, homosexuals, transsexuals, transgenders, immigrants and all sorts of figures that are on the agenda listed as enemies of the homeland.

Rocha (2021) explains that the Brazilian extreme right materialized in the then Bolsonaro government imposed a cultural war that made (and still makes) intense use of the rhetoric of hate in the way taught by Olavo de Carvalho since the 1990s to create an environment of social chaos, paralysis of important public policies and the so-called *ideological illiteracy*: “...the denial of reality and contempt for science...”. In addition, the author alerts to what he calls a *generational rift* (2021) that imposed a new situation: the unexpected emergence of a right-wing youth, capable of making good use of social networks and capable of organizing popular street movements. The growth of this discursive logic replaces what is a fact with what is a personal belief, creating a so-

cial environment in which people do not accept being contradicted, do not delve deeper into the investigation and understanding of the facts, creating a status of belief in these figures that propagate the rhetoric of hate.

Although not extinguished in these propositions, these were some of the conditions that led the extreme right to power in Brazil. Hate speech and fake news still has its strength and presence in the Brazilian public debate, especially now as it is primarily done without intermediaries through social networks and fast and direct communication over the internet.

Brazil imposed however and under the effort of millions of people, an important defeat to the extreme right and to the anti-democratic discourse. But there is still much to be done to disrupt a model of democratic subversion such as the one we see today. As Friedrich explains “*Democracy’s resilience depends on the ability of its various, decentralized components to rally to the defense of any single institution that comes under attack. To turn back an antidemocratic assault on Brazil’s elections, the judiciary, civil society, the media, and tech companies must commit to working together to ensure that Brazilian voters have access to reliable information and are protected from online harms – including disinformation, intimidation, and incitement – that could have grave consequences for their political rights and physical security*”. So, only freedom of expression, polite debate about ideals, ethics and respect can provide some way in this direction.

**CONCLUSIONS.** Like most of the nations of the Global South and North, Brazil is also experiencing a serious institutional crisis today. Although the worst has passed and the condition of true international pariah has remained with the past government, there is still a long way to go for the trail of destruction over Democracy to be erased.

The present study reveals how the systemic crises of Capitalism alter public institutions – also modifying relevant public policies – making the population submit themselves to cycles of losses, reflections and not infrequently of revolt. These uprisings, when led by populist and anti-democratic ideas and people, are directed against the State institutions themselves creating an environment conducive to the emergence of hateful rhetoric that instead of quelling social and economic problems focuses on maintaining the people in a constant state of excitement, looking for fictitious culprits: enemies to be fought with the use of verbal violence (hate speech) and, sometimes, even physical violence (hate crimes, terrorism). In short, historical institutionalism was a major tool for the perception of a great influence

<sup>1</sup>A short biography can be found at [www.ebiografia.com](http://www.ebiografia.com): “Olavo de Carvalho (1947–2022) was a Brazilian writer and journalist. He was considered a controversialist and one of the few representatives of conservative thinking in Brazil. He was an influencer of supporters of Jair Bolsonaro. Olavo de Carvalho wrote and edited the online newspaper *Mídia sem Máscara*. His criticism focuses on the fight against communism, the Brazilian intellectual milieu, left-wing groups and the so-called New World Order”. (2023, March) Ebiografia. [https://www.ebiografia.com/olavo\\_de\\_carvalho/#:~:text=Olavo%20de%20Carvalho%20%281947-2022%29%20foi%20um%20escritor%20e,Brasil.%20Foi%20influenciador%20of%20supporters%20of%20Jair%20Bolsonaro](https://www.ebiografia.com/olavo_de_carvalho/#:~:text=Olavo%20de%20Carvalho%20%281947-2022%29%20foi%20um%20escritor%20e,Brasil.%20Foi%20influenciador%20of%20supporters%20of%20Jair%20Bolsonaro).

of the economic, social, and political conjunctures of the past (path dependence), responsible for the creation of a social ethos of institutional acceptance of a capitalist elite that remains in power at any cost, and that does not admit any type of public policy tending to alleviate the effects of Brazil's historic social inequality, can be seen in the conduct of the 2013 protests that triggered all the democratic problems faced years later with the election of the extreme right in 2018.

In addition to taking the focus away from the real problems – the crises of capitalism, the inadequacy of public policies, the lack of material equality and social inclusion, among many others – hate speech takes advantage of the bad and animosity environment to leverage the populist homily of the Far Right, eager to seek out culprits, to curb behavior, to discriminate etc. Also it was noticed the appearance of a whole generation of individuals who became familiar with the thinking of the Right, which since 2003 had been assuming a never before seen role of opposition in Brazil. The polarization of politics and the rhetoric of hate on the other hand, contributed to the dichotomous division that disregards intermediate positions (such as the center-right and the center-left ones), with the democratic right being practically engulfed by the extreme right, identified with the reactionary, with aesthetics and military culture, with speeches against science and many times with racism, homophobia, misogyny etc., acting in disfavor and placing several minorities in the condition of enemies of the homeland. The identity of this Brazilian extreme right with thinkers with pedantic and messianic discourses, such as Olavo de Carvalho, and with supporting religious movements, made the aversion to science even more acute and created a plethora of followers who are not so concerned with *what it is*, but with what *they believe* it to be, thus showing the aura of *belief* that surrounds part of Brazilian society even today, supporters of this still very strong extreme right.

The solution to a crisis such as the one described in Brazil must, finally, observe the various problems highlighted and then seek the best possible solutions. On the one hand, there are the democratic institutions that have been severely hamstrung over the last four years and yet have remained intact in defense of the rule of law and the 1988 Federal Constitution. One of these institutions is the Judiciary itself, materialized in the example of the Brazilian Supreme Court, the Federal Supreme Court, object of constant attacks by hate speech

and fake news and, in the extreme, through direct violence of the invasion and depredation of January 8, 2023. The constant strengthening of these institutions is necessary for them to remain firm in times when democracy is being stressed. A clear example of this is the maintenance of job stability for public servants, people who are responsible for supervising the actions of citizens and politicians; they are public agents who must have their conviction and personal will guided by impersonality and by the law, never by the passing will of the rulers.

On the other hand, there is still the serious problem of citizens who appear to live in a parallel reality, absorbed by bubbles of false information and the half-truths that the internet and social media spread so much. Here we have a clear case of the need for improvement in education for freedom and citizenship. This means that people need to understand the social and moral values of living in a democracy, as well as becoming aware of the horrors that autocratic regimes – which preached racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. – have imposed on humanity stripped of its rights. The State needs to strengthen educational public policies aimed at clarifying democratic values, the importance of truth and facts, the need for free and critical thinking and the formation of a citizen spirit in Brazilian people. Without this there will be no strength in the institutions that permanently protect them from the anti-democratic assaults of the most varied groups, among which, the extreme right.

Hate speech and fake news must be made further clarified to the citizens through governmental advertising campaigns and public policies that aim to elucidate people about those matters, giving them digital education so that they can understand the value of truth in a free and rational debate, understanding that living in society is always seeking agreement through civilized debate and not through lies and violence (physical and verbal). For this, it is too necessary that there be better regulation and more inspection over the individuals and groups that disseminate and finance fake news and hate speech, also understanding the need for schools, colleges, and other social agents of values dissemination, such as the press, to elucidate the important debate between freedom of speech and hate speech. Social actions must be rethought by governments, the press, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and other public and private agents who can adopt active postures in the fight against these evils and in the engagement of citizens in more democratic and cordial actions.

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#### **БРАЗИЛЬСКАЯ ДЕМОКРАТИЯ ПОД УДАРОМ: ПОПУЛИСТСКИЕ УЛЬТРАПРАВЫЕ, ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЙ КРИЗИС И ПРОТЕСТЫ 2013 ГОДА В БРАЗИЛИИ**

Целью этого исследования является понимание роли экономического кризиса капитализма, языка вражды и популизма в росте ультраправых в Бразилии, особенно во время президентских выборов 2018 года. Для этого был проведен теоретико-описательный анализ причин этих факторов в соответствии с тезисом исторического институционализма с использованием гипотетико-дедуктивного метода для лучшего понимания кризиса

демократии в Бразилии и мире. В итоге понимание этих особых ситуаций предложено как путь к решению напряженности, чтобы население могло освободиться от этих антидемократических связей и стремиться к восстановлению более активной, нравственной и более демократической Бразилии.

**Ключевые слова:** *язык розни, інформаційне общество, государственная политика, политическая поляризация, бразильский демократический разрыв.*

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**БРАЗИЛЬСЬКА ДЕМОКРАТІЯ ПІД УДАРОМ: ПОПУЛІСТСЬКІ УЛЬТРАПРАВИ, ЕКОНОМІЧНА КРИЗА ТА ПРОТЕСТИ 2013 РОКУ В БРАЗИЛІЇ**

Метою дослідження є зрозуміти зростання ультраправих у Бразилії впродовж останніх чотирьох років, зокрема під час президентських виборів 2018 року. Було використано теорію історичного інституціоналізму, описану Сандерсом, щоб зрозуміти, що це не раптова зміна у бразильській політиці, а наслідок дій у минулому (залежність від шляху), пов'язаних із кризами капіталізму, кризою субстандартного іпотечного кредитування 2008 року, напруженістю у відносинах між судовою, законодавчою та виконавчою гілками влади, кризою демократії та ультраправим популізмом, координованим мовою ненависті в соціальних мережах. Це актуально, оскільки цей авторитарний поворот у Бразилії був абсолютно безпрецедентним, оскільки відбувся не за допомогою сили чи танків на вулицях, а за допомогою демократичних інструментів, демонструючи, що крайні антидемократичні праві використовують інші інструменти для здобуття політичної влади, вводячи в оману, переконуючи, поляризуючи та усуваючи будь-яку можливість щирих і раціональних дебатів. Таким чином, у статті продемонстровано, що сценарій кризи капіталу і невиконання демократичних обіцянок Федеральної конституції 1988 року послабили бразильські демократичні інститути до такої міри, що створили покоління людей, незадоволених самою демократією і схильних до прийняття політичних стандартів, пов'язаних із крайніми правими і авторитаризмом, а також те, що бразильський народ спокушений мовою ворожнечі, яка є головним інструментом знищення демократичних дебатів у країні. Як засіб припинення цієї битви наративів у статті запропоновано зміцнення демократичних інститутів, регулювання соціальних мереж із необхідністю стримування мови ворожнечі, роз'яснення населенню через освіту і побудову демократичних та етичних шляхів, які можуть привести до прямої участі народу в політиці.

**Ключові слова:** *мова ворожнечі, інформаційне суспільство, державна політика, політична поляризація, бразильський демократичний розрив.*

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