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FOREIGN POLICY IN THE BOLSONARO GOVERNMENT FOR ISRAEL: THE TWO-LEVEL GAME AND PENTECOSTAL INFLUENCE

Mohammed Nadir[1]
Pedro Henrique Thuler de Oliveira[2]

1. Introduction

Historically, it has always been in the interest of Brazilian diplomacy to achieve a position of prestige and respect in the international context, and the complex political framework of the Middle East region has been used more than once as a way to boost Brazil's projection on the international stage. Due to the constant tensions and antagonisms present in the region, any diplomatic or economic movement must be conducted with extreme caution and premeditation so as not to compromise relations in the region, and throughout its history, it can be observed that this zeal for equidistance figured in Brazil's priorities in cultivating relationships and partnerships with Middle-Eastern countries. During the governments of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and President Dilma Rousseff, one can observe the growth of animosity between Brazilian and Israeli diplomacy, although these animosities arose not due to Brazilian incapacity, but due to the practical impossibility of reconciling Israeli interests on the one hand, and Palestinian, Arab and Iranian interests on the other. During the government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro, however, there was a disproportionate reversal of the balance that elevated Israel as a point of extreme importance in Brazilian foreign policy (BFP), possibly second only to Donald Trump's United States. In this parallel, this article understands that the rapprochement with Israel was not just due to

1 Federal University of ABC, Santo André, Brazil. E-mail: mohammednadir2010@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9213-808X.

2 Federal University of ABC, Santo André, Brazil. E-mail: pedrohenriquethuler@hotmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2747-396X.

external factors, quite the contrary, it understands that domestic factors were crucial in determining the performance of the BFP, especially with regard to the interests of actors with a (neo)pentecostal denomination at the base of Bolsonaro's government. Therefore, a brief historical review of BFP will be made with regard to relations with Israel and the Middle East, followed by an analysis of Bolsonaro's political trajectory and the internal developments of his presidency to, subsequently, unravel the nature of the domestic pressures that mobilized this rapprochement with Israel, the consequences of this movement, and the reasons why it was not successful.

2. Historical contextualization

The relationship between Brazil and Israel formally began with the presidency of Oswaldo Aranha at the United Nations General Assembly in 1947, when the partition of Palestine was approved by Resolution 181, which paved the way for the establishment of a Jewish state. Defender of people's self-determination, Aranha favored the first diplomatic interactions between Brazil and the new Israeli state, aligning himself with the United States in this initial context (Casarões and Vigevani 2014).

Despite the geographic distance and differences in national interests, Brazil and Israel have developed a consistent diplomatic relationship. The presence of a Jewish community in Brazil and the Brazilian participation in debates about the Middle East contributed to this rapprochement. In 1948, Brazil supported the creation of the Conciliation Commission for Palestine, signaling its concern for a peaceful solution to regional conflicts between Arabs and Jews (Feldberg 2019).

In the following years, Brazil maintained a stance of equidistance in the Middle East, recognizing Israel and exchanging embassies in Tel Aviv and Rio de Janeiro in 1952. In 1956, the country sent the "Suez Battalion" to join the UN Emergency Forces, consolidating what Uziel calls "prestigious multilateralism", a policy that sought to strengthen Brazilian diplomatic projection (Uziel 2014).

This diplomatic balance began to change in 1967, after the Six-Day War, when Brazil supported Resolution 242, which demanded the withdrawal of Israeli troops from occupied territories. In 1974, during a visit by Lebanese Minister Fouad Naffah, Foreign Minister Mário Gibson Barboza stated that Israel should return these territories as a condition for peace, a position that marked Brazil's commitment to respecting the self-determination of the Arab peoples (Sochaczewski 2014).

During the presidency of Ernesto Geisel (1974-1979), Brazil adopted "responsible ecumenical pragmatism", moving away from automatic alignment with the USA and seeking a more independent role. The stance was emphasized by Chancellor Antônio Azeredo da Silveira at the UN General Assembly, defending the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. This position was consolidated in 1975, when Brazil voted in favor of Resolution 3379, which qualified Zionism as a form of racism (Spektor 2004).

During subsequent governments, including redemocratization under José Sarney, Brazil maintained its support for the Palestinian cause, defending the creation of a Palestinian State and the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. With the rise of Fernando Collor (1990-1992), there was a diplomatic realignment, and Brazil annulled its vote on Resolution 3379, reflecting a policy of rapprochement with the USA and Israel. Collor's decision was reinforced by his refusal to support the US-led military coalition in the Gulf War in 1991, maintaining the Brazilian tradition of non-intervention (Collor de Mello 2011).

During the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Brazilian diplomacy expanded with the presence of Chancellor Luiz Felipe Lampreia, who resumed contacts with Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (ANP). FHC, however, maintained the focus on symbolic diplomacy, including Yasser Arafat's visit to Brasília, but without an active role in resolving the conflict (Lampreia 1998).

With the arrival of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as president, foreign policy became more engaged in the Middle East. Lula proposed a multilateral approach and approached Arab countries and Iran, in addition to speaking out against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In 2009, Brazil formally recognized the Palestinian State, and Lula's visit to Israel and Palestine was a diplomatic milestone that reinforced Brazil's role as an interlocutor in the conflict. His visit to Iran in 2010 and the signing of the Tehran Agreement for external uranium enrichment demonstrated Brazilian interest in alternative diplomatic solutions (Casarões and Vigevani 2014).

During Dilma Rousseff's government (2011-2016), Brazilian foreign policy maintained the position of supporting a two-state solution to the conflict. However, the intensification of the conflict in Gaza in 2014 led to criticism from the Brazilian government of Israel's actions, including the return of the Brazilian ambassador to Tel Aviv. Michel Temer's government (2016-2018) continued this line, albeit in a more conciliatory tone, seeking to preserve relations with Israel, without modifying traditional positions, such as condemning settlements in Palestinian territory (Vigevani and Calandrin 2019).

With this diplomatic continuity, Brazil and Israel maintained a relationship that oscillated between pragmatic support for human rights and technological and commercial partnerships, resulting in a diplomacy that aimed both at projecting "soft power" on the international stage and at preserving their traditional alliances.

3. Bolsonaro

Jair Messias Bolsonaro, born in Glicério, in the interior of São Paulo, entered political life at the age of 33, when he ran for the position of councilor in Rio de Janeiro in 1988, for the Christian Democratic Party. Before that, he had gone through a troubled career in the army, where he reached the rank of captain and gained some notoriety in the press. On October 27, 1987, the newspaper *State of S. Paulo*[3] revealed an alleged plan by Bolsonaro and Captain Flávio Passos to install explosives in barracks if the Federal Government did not grant a salary increase to the troops. The episode came to light after an article written by Bolsonaro himself in the magazine *Look*,[4] where he publicly exposed these salary demands (Nascimento et al. 2018). The case was taken to the Supreme Military Court, which acquitted him after differences between expert reports. In his electoral debut, Bolsonaro attracted support from the military and ultra-conservative segments of Rio society. During his term, he presented seven bills, including one that proposed free public transport for military personnel.[5] Apart from these initiatives, his performance in the City Council was discreet, without much prominence in the media.

In 1991, Jair Bolsonaro was elected federal deputy, returning to attract the attention of the media the following year after organizing the March for the Dignity of the Military Family, which brought together 800 military wives in Brasília to plead for salary adjustments for the category, an event in which he insulted the army minister at the time, Carlos Tinoco (F. de S. Paulo 1992). It was during his term as a federal deputy that Bolsonaro began to carve out increasing space in the media through attacks on a wide range of public figures. In addition to Tinoco, Bolsonaro's tirades targeted other deputies, members of the Catholic church, and other political figures such as presidents Fernando Henrique and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The detailed study of Jair Bolsonaro's media appearances published by PLURAL magazine

3 Jornal Estado de São Paulo.

4 Revista Veja.

5 Rio de Janeiro City Council (Câmara Municipal do Rio de Janeiro)..

in 2018 links the deputy's polemicism to greater media support:

> Over the 30 years of articles, verbal attacks make up a considerable part of the deputy's public image. Generally, after the publication of the article reporting the insult, letters from readers, opinion columns and reports about the "progress of the complaint and/or process" appear. In this way, the controversies triggered by insults end up fueling visibility, seeming to forge a kind of "style" that has become one of the most characteristic marks of the deputy's public image. (Nascimento et al. 2018, p. 37)

Bolsonaro's effort to remain relevant in the media through the aforementioned aggressive and resounding statements was characterized by what the American journalist and politician Sidney Blumenthal conceptualized as a "permanent campaign", that is: the development of electoral processes for a given politician elected during the term of his office while outside the electoral period (Blumenthal 1980 *at* Joathan and Rebouças 2020); in other words, during his years in politics, Bolsonaro was engaged in a permanent re-election campaign, making his future terms viable through the space he carved out for himself and his character in the media. This perspective explains the president's perennialities and inconsistencies throughout his political career, always positioned firmly on the conservative wings, but taking different stances during his career.

4. Bolsonarism

According to historians Daniel Aarão Reis Filho and Giovanna Soares, Bolsonarism is a phenomenon closely linked to the transformations of the digital revolution, characterized by technical-scientific advances that have reshaped contemporary society. In the socioeconomic field, Reis and Soares highlight the financialization of the economy, the prevalence of financial capital and the decrease in state control over the global flow of capital. The spread of social networks and the internet, the weakening of labor movements, the increase in inequalities and the rise of identity and reactionary groups are other features that permeate this new social dynamic (Reis and Soares 2020).

In the political sphere, phenomena such as the elitization of democratic institutions, the strengthening of a cynical and apolitical culture, and the growing influence of social media in elections have emerged. In Brazil, the governments of Lula and Dilma, although responsible for social advances,

adopted a conciliatory stance in relation to financial capital and conservative religious forces. We can also observe the global rise of a reactionary and anti-democratic nationalism, marked by the defense of conservative values and the articulation of different right-wing currents – from traditional to religious fundamentalists and neo-facist and authoritarian (Reis and Soares 2020).

For Reis, Bolsonarism reflects the development of this reactionary movement in Brazil, although it has its own particularities. He divides the origin of Bolsonarism into two periods: the first, from the Estado Novo to the Military Dictatorship, where Brazil's inability to challenge authoritarianism became clear, both at the time and in retrospect; and the second, from the New Republic until the 2018 elections, highlighting the aristocratization of the political sphere, polarized between PT (Worker´s Party) and PSDB (Brazilian Social Democratic Party), culminating in an election marked by the absence of an effective opposition, aggravated by the insistence of left-wing sectors on Lula's candidacy to the limit of his ineligibility, and the mutual inability to articulate a viable left by Ciro Gomes and Fernando Haddad.

The 2018 electoral period was crucial for the definition of Bolsonarism. At that time, distrust in relation to the electronic voting system exacerbated anti-PT sentiment, and right-wing digital activism stood out, which mobilized moral panic around issues of gender and sexuality. This context was intensified by the defeat of Aécio Neves in 2014, which cast doubt on the security of the ballot boxes, resulting in the PSDB requesting an audit from the TSE (Superior Electoral Court). Although the process confirmed the fairness of the elections, suspicion persisted, and gained strength again in 2018 and 2020, particularly among Bolsonaro supporters (G1 2014; Ruediger et al. 2022).

According to Reis, the New Republic represented a failed promise. The political structure, dominated by the PT and PSDB, seemed stagnant and incapable of responding to popular demands for improvements in public services, security and the fight against corruption, as demonstrated by the demonstrations in June 2013. The erosion of this political configuration fostered a desire for radical change, directed against the PT, which was seen as a symbol of immobility. This feeling of anti-PTism was channeled in different directions: towards Ciro Gomes, Geraldo Alckmin and, most significantly, towards Jair Bolsonaro, who emerged as the main challenger to the established order (Reis and Soares 2020).

The 2018 campaign highlighted the centrality of social networks, such as WhatsApp and Telegram, in the dissemination of political content, especially among Bolsonaro supporters. Many of these contents took on a religious tone, associating Bolsonaro's candidacy with a defense of traditional Christian values and promoting moral panic over issues linked to minority

rights. The Evangelical Parliamentary Front frequently took a stance against LGBTQIA+ rights, in defense of a traditional conception of family, while fake news reinforced this agenda (Coelho, Dias and Maranhão 2018).

Another point mobilized by Bolsonaro's campaign was the use of the economic situation of countries like Venezuela and Argentina as examples of what could happen in Brazil under a PT government. This argument simplified the crises faced by these countries, associating them with left-wing policies, while ignoring the failures of neoliberal policies in other Latin American nations (BBC 2022; G1 2019).

Thus, Bolsonaro's campaign in 2018 capitalized on latent social tensions and consolidated his figure as a solution to such dilemmas, promoting a narrative that presented Bolsonarism as a phenomenon not only Brazilian, but part of an international reactionary wave. Since 2010, Latin America was experiencing the end of the so-called "Pink Tide", with the rise of conservative leaders in several countries. This scenario strengthened political and religious conservatism, in addition to leading to the suspension of sexual and reproductive agendas, with marginalized people being portrayed as opponents of the State (Biroli, Vaggione and Machado 2020).

5. Political Trajectory of Pentecostals in Brazil: The Three Waves

To carry out a trajectory of Pentecostal politics in Brazil, one must first characterize the so-called three waves of Pentecostalism, the first, from the 1910s, represented by the Assembly of God; the second, from the 1950s and 1960s, represented by Quadrangular, Brasil Para Cristo, and Deus é Amor; and the third, which strengthened in the 1980s, represented by the denominations of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and the International Church of the Grace of God (Freston 1993).

In the first wave, we observed the trajectory of the Assembly of God (AD), with Swedish and Northeastern roots. In its origins, in 1911, it had a character of low education and theological erudition, anti-intellectualist, and with little emphasis on socioeconomic ascension, as it emerged from marginalized and peripheral Scandinavian missionaries, Daniel Berg and Adolf Gunnar Vingren. The AD was quite quick to expand, having offices in all Brazilian states by 1933, and in the Federal District in 1956. This rapid expansion, in addition to the characteristics brought by Swedish missionaries, solidified it as a popular and national church par excellence, which will be

reflected above all in the 1986 elections, which will be analyzed in the future (Castro 2020; Freston 1993).

The second wave, which began in the mid-1950s, is, according to Freston, a São Paulo-based wave, initiated by the Foursquare Gospel Church (1951, originating from the practices of Aimee Semple McPherson, a Canadian preacher). The IEQ was the one who established the rules of the game for the second wave, with even more charismatic cults, greater dominance of mass media such as radio and newspapers, and a lesser chance of moral reprimand, more suited to the society of large urban centers. Following, and largely inspired by IEQ, the Brasil Para Cristo church emerged in 1955-1956, the first of the great Pentecostal churches founded by a Brazilian, Manoel de Mello, which further intensified the media participation of Pentecostals, filling stadiums, and being the first to appoint representatives to the congress, with federal deputy Levy Tavares, who served from 1962 to 1970, and state deputy Geraldino Santos, from 1966 to 1974, both can be considered the first deputies elected as evangelical representatives in the country's history (Freston 1993). Finally, in the second wave and, still citing Freston, true precursor of the third, we have the Pentecostal God is Love Church (IPDA), founded in 1962 by David Miranda. clothing, all with stipulated punishments (Freston 1993); the author also lists similarities between the practices of the IPDA and the upcoming Iurd

> Several elements anticipate the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God: the uniformed workers, the interviews with demons, the cry of "burning" to make the devil leave his home. But it is the amateur version, poor and culturally outdated (...) This is, in many ways, the precursor of the third Pentecostal wave, but chronologically and sociologically it belongs to the second wave. (Freston 1993, pg. 93)

At the end of the 1970s, the third wave of Pentecostalism, also called neo-Pentecostalism, emerged in Brazil, marked by the founding of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (Iurd) in 1977, and the International Church of the Grace of God (IIGD) in 1980, founded respectively by Edir Macedo and his brother-in-law, R. R. Soares, after an internal rupture within the Iurd. The new churches, which witnessed their growth in the 1980s, emerge in a scenario of more intense urbanization, new developments in the field of communication, economic crisis and, in the Rio context where both originate, coexistence with *bicheiros*.[6] Such elements, combined with the fact

6 "Bicheiros" refer to several (and different) organized crime groups that explore a popular

that, in contrast to the second and especially the first wave, the third had at its center people from a higher social stratum and higher education, caused neo-Pentecostalism to acquire a lot of traction in a scenario of advancing neoliberalism in Brazil (Freston 1993).

Castro lists important elements of neo-Pentecostalism, including: The construction of strong religious leadership, the use of mass media, and preaching centered on the victory of good over evil, intensification of the battle against Evil (Devil), emphasis on Prosperity Theology, active political participation, and construction of the church with business models. (Castro 2020). In addition, neo-Pentecostalism is also marked by hybridism and symbolism that until then were absent in previous waves, with various symbolic celebrations, and even the appropriation of elements of popular spirituality, being more malleable and therefore having a greater appeal to a broader social segment. The last position becomes even more notable when compared to the waves that preceded it, in which church leaders did not have such an inclination, or even the necessary knowledge for the definitive adaptation of the church to a political and economic business context; Manoel de Mello failed when trying to transform the BPC into something more than a Church, but a movement; and David Miranda, despite his investments, did not break with the logic of IPDA as a family business; Edir Macedo was extremely efficient not only in the internal structuring of the Iurd, but also in the diversification of its investments, which marks the effective management of the Iurd as a true company.

Another striking element for understanding the third wave is the so-called Prosperity Theology, a religious doctrine of American origin that equates reward and material abundance with the faithful practice of religion, at the same time that it relates poverty and misery to sin, that is, the practice that sees wealth not only as a reward but as a symptom of faith, and poverty as its opposite (Garrard-Burnett 2011).

6. Political Articulation: The "Evangelical Bench" in the National Constituent Assembly

Until the ANC, and with the exception of Manoel de Mello and the BPC, Pentecostalism was marked by a marked apoliticism and a prohibition on participation in public life, as it was considered something "of the world",

lottery in Brazil, that is illegal. Each group explores this form of gambling and other illegal activities in Rio and Brazil as a whole. Each group tends to exercise its influence in distinct territories, which are under their dominance.

which could interfere with the asceticism of its faithful, as Bruna Saraguay Dantas wrote:

> Classical Pentecostalism has always adopted a binary, dualistic and Manichaean logic when dealing with the relationship between religion and politics. In his perspective, both spheres should remain apart because their natures are absolutely opposite and exclusive. While the Christian religion appeared as a representative of the supreme good, institutional politics was seen as evil, a propagator of corruption and perversity. (Dantas 2011, pg, 22)

Despite this, the insertion of evangelicals in politics began to occur, with emphasis, in 1986, when the first elections of official representatives of evangelical churches took place. These elections were marked by a change in the Pentecostal way of thinking about politics, no longer having to avoid it, but with the intention of bringing Christian morality into the institution, in order to purify it and use it as a tool in the service of God (Dantas, 2011). The 1986 elections inaugurated a new phase in Brazilian religious politics, and an unprecedented multiplication of evangelical representatives in the legislature, jumping from a total of 3 parliamentarians between 1933 and 1987, to 27 parliamentarians between 1987 and 1992. In other words, in 5 years, representation increased by a factor of 9. (Freston 1993).

For Freston, the precursors of this change brought with them a new political profile, with lower average education, lower-class and lower-middle class social roots, in addition to a relatively considerable percentage of black and brown people; Not only that, another important element in evangelical candidacies is the fact that, unlike Catholicism which they saw as an adversary in the public space, Pentecostal politicians had their candidacies marked and shaped around their political confessions, to the extent that Catholic parliamentarians, despite being in the majority, did not position Catholicism at the head of their public life. Pentecostal candidacies were, in broad consideration, religious candidacies, and not candidate candidacies. In the mandates after 1987, it is possible to see a greater protagonism of historic Pentecostal parliamentarians, especially from the Assembly of God, which in itself already implies a great territorial dispersion of these candidates. Such candidacies can be understood not as the result of some theological change within the denominations, but as an attempt to reconcile contradictions, in which Pentecostalism in Brazil is still, in a way, new, and the power dynamics within the churches are not as crystallized as they are, for example, within Catholicism. Therefore, the entry into politics by evangelicals was an

attempt, through their positions as public figures, to give greater legitimacy and structure to positions within the church, in other words, an attempt to professionalize the Pentecostal ecclesiastical branch.

As an addendum, another route that public life granted access to was also the media, especially television, and as can be seen in phenomena present even today, presence in television media is often equated with political capital, to mention within Pentecostalism Bishop Edir Macedo, and outside of this, former president Bolsonaro, both in their respective ways being able to garner political support due to their marked presence in the media.

Two other elements that Freston places as motivating the great Pentecostal emergence in politics are both confrontational. The first, the competition with Catholicism for the role of mass religion, in search of public resources that would comment on its position in civil space; and the second being confronting what was seen, both at that time and today, as threatening to the family. These elections were successful due to a contextual issue, the hitherto demobilized large mass of evangelicals, a scenario of "opening the floodgates" of an electorate dammed with redemocratization, and the optimism of the New Republic.

With his entry into politics, the "bench[7] evangelical" that were broadly articulated on two fronts: social and economic. Socially there is what is known as the defense of the family, however this umbrella label omits the complexity of this defense, since the family is "the main means of socialization in the minority view of the world and a means of conservation across generations" (Freston 1993, 236). What this defense of the family implied, in practice, was opposition to a greater legal scope of abortion, a "defense" against advances in the rights of minority sexual identities (homosexuals), practically total opposition to divorce (93% of elected evangelicals), and the defense of religious freedom, a measure that Freston sees as symbolic since it was opposed to two non-existent political elites, a Catholic one that sought the repression of Pentecostalism, and an atheist that sought its extinction. of religion in general. In the economic sector, there was clear opposition to anti-capitalist measures. To this Freston attributes the very dynamics of Pentecostal social ascension, in which pastors attribute their success to the economic regime that thus favored them, while many believers observed a change in life for the better that, in perspective, opposes a more egalitarian social environment. Here we use the word "perspective" because it really is a point of view, since churchgoers come from poorer social classes, those who rise socially after

7 Bench is the name for an informal grouping of parliamentarians, both from the chamber and from congress, who represent specific interests. (Chamber of Deputies).

conversion find themselves surrounded by poverty, therefore believing that a more equitable social environment would result in their demotion. In other words, right from the start it is possible to see an alignment between political Pentecostalism and conservatism.[8]

The relative success of this group inspired a certain optimism in the Pentecostal political project. Freston cites the inclusion of God in the Constitution, expansion of religious freedoms - which the author sees as a symbolic victory - and the maintenance of religious teaching in the curriculum, as well as the rejection of the category "sexual orientation", the death penalty and district voting; however, it also mentions the bench's defeat on the issue of abortion and divorce (Freston 1993).

The aforementioned success inspired a large wave of Pentecostal candidates in the next election, in 1990, this large launch of candidacies, however, generated a large dispersion of votes and, therefore, a relative drop in the number of elected candidates (Dantas, 2011). A fact proven by Freston's analysis, which observed that, despite the AD's representation remaining the same with 12 elected candidates (5 re-elections, 4 substitutes, and 3 newly elected), the vote of those elected fell by 40%, and 35% compared to the average vote of candidates from all Pentecostal denominations. evangelical, which is also subject to social trends, incurred a large number of abstentions and invalid votes for deputies.

The only denomination that actually increased its representation in the 1990 elections was the Iurd, which launched a new candidacy model based on launching a few official candidates per state, as a way of not diluting votes (Sanches 1999 quoted in Dantas 2011). This model was adopted by other churches, which also began to concentrate their votes on candidates who, previously, occupied prominent positions within them and became, in fact, the rule of the game with regard to Pentecostal candidacies for decades to come.

7. The Evangelical Parliamentary Front (EPF)

Through Act No. 69/2005, the board of directors of the Chamber of Deputies created the register of parliamentary fronts, defined as a "supra-partisan association of at least one third of members of the Federal Legislative Branch, aimed at promoting the improvement of federal legislation on a certain sector of society" (Brasil, 2005). These formal groups are focused

8 It is worth noting that even at the time there were representatives of an evangelical left in the chamber, such as Lysâneas Maciel and Benedita da Silva (Melo, 2021).

on specific themes and can include both senators and deputies, with the same parliamentarian being able to join several fronts simultaneously. The Evangelical Parliamentary Front, for example, is made up of members of the Senate and the Chamber and its purpose is to promote and defend agendas linked to evangelical causes, such as tax exemption for churches, granting diplomatic passports to its members, alignment between politics and religious discourse, mandatory religious education in schools, in addition to opposition to abortion, same-sex marriage and divorce (Castro, 2020).

As previously mentioned, during the National Constituent Assembly (ANC), evangelical parliamentarians mobilized in defense of these agendas, even before the formal creation of the Parliamentary Fronts, through informal groups. These groups were called "benches", a term that continues to be used unofficially to this day (e.g.: evangelical bench, ruralist bench, among others). It is worth noting that in Congress there are also so-called "party benches", which should not be confused with informal groups. Dantas, in interviews with parliamentarians, clarifies the distinctions between "parliamentary front" and "party bench": while fronts are non-partisan organizations focused on specific debates, as in the case of the EPF, which focuses on moral and religious issues, party benches are formed by members of the same party and aim to discuss ideological issues. Thus, the EPF is configured as a space for religious discussion among its members, while the party benches focus exclusively on political issues internal to their parties.

In 2005, the board of directors established regulations to formalize the Parliamentary Fronts, motivated by the proliferation of informal benches in Brazilian politics. However, evangelicals had already anticipated this measure, officially creating a parliamentary front in 2003. The objective was to coordinate and organize the actions of the many evangelical representatives in the legislature, who until then had acted in a dispersed manner. Thus, the Evangelical Parliamentary Front emerged as a means of structuring and articulating its initiatives more effectively.

According to Damares Alves, legal advisor, the formalization of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front gave rise to the organization and systematization of activities and the construction of more effective action strategies. Since then, the distribution of proposals among parliamentarians and advisors has been stipulated so that each one is responsible for monitoring bills relating to a specific topic, always of interest to the evangelical community. Furthermore, deputies should free their advisors to map out propositions and select those considered most threatening to the moral order and good customs with the purpose of following them throughout the entire legislative process (Dantas, 2011).

With the formalization of the front, the political organization and decision-making processes began to take place officially. EPF gained its own cabinet, operational positions, board of directors and clear responsibilities for each member. Among the positions are the functions of president, vice-presidents, secretaries, treasurers, coordinators, legal and legislative advisors, as well as a chaplain and chaplaincy assistant (Dantas, 2011; Frente Parlamentar Evangélica, 2023). Dantas also highlights the importance of the legal apparatus, which now allows the legality of the EPF's proposals to be verified in a more consistent manner, in the same way that it seeks to delegitimize contrary proposals.

EPF's actions are more subtle than one might imagine. Unlike parties, the front cannot demand ideological obedience from its members. Its political function is to structure ethical norms and establish a moral duty that influences social movements. Thus, although it does not require absolute loyalty, the EPF affects the acceptance or rejection of parliamentarians, particularly impacting its own members.

In short, the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, formed in 2003, was in many ways the next step in the professionalization of evangelical political practice, coordinating the political power of parliamentarians and evangelical morality, playing at the same time in the defensive and offensive field, and creating pressures that have direct repercussions on society, especially with regard to the political acceptance of its members. Evangelical political power, previously present in a diluted and disordered form, has definitively come together as a powerful agent of power in the Brazilian legislature, although there are still elements of informality.

Having outlined the differences, it is now worth describing Pentecostal political activity in the legislature. The main objective of the EPF is to monitor and evaluate all bills that are processed by the chamber, and, within its capabilities, to block those that attack the country's project and the moral order to which it subscribes, reinforcing a notion of "vigilance", in which it is the duty of parliamentarians to ostensibly watch over the barrage of projects that violate the so-called Christian values, through observation and persecutory, almost police-like attention (Dantas, 2020).

This surveillance work is made possible through the EPF advisory body, a work described as uninterrupted, in which projects of interest are blocked and opposed at all stages of the legislature. This demonstrates that the EPF's actions were, for a long time, defensive, seeking not a purposeful political action, but rather aiming to obstruct and shelve progressive bills, a legal "iron dome". However, from 2018 onwards, the dynamics changed, and Pentecostals assumed a propositional stance. Quoting the statement by the

federal deputy for Rio de Janeiro, Sóstenes Cavalcante, at the time affiliated with the DEM (Democrats), now PL (Liberal Party): "Now, instead of holding the left's agenda, the left should try to obstruct to hold back our projects. The game has changed"; (Marini and Carvalho 2018). That is, the change in the political situation observed in 2018 empowered the FPE in such a way that, in the rhetoric mobilized by Cavalcante, "David became Goliath", in a context of the right-wing takeover of power, the defeat and weakening of the left-wing, Bolsonaro's combative discourse that largely set the tone of the political debate during his mandate, and the entry of evangelicals in force, no longer on the fringes, but at the center of Brazilian political power.

Throughout its political trajectory, the Evangelical Bench and, in the future, the EPF maneuvered skillfully through various alliances. Right from the beginning, they demonstrated support for right-wing forces, supporting Fernando Collor's candidacy; subsequently, they demonstrated a discreet movement by supporting the liberal wings and the candidacy of Fernando Henrique Cardoso; afterwards, they had a shift in conjunction with the center-left, supporting the Lula and Dilma governments; and finally, turning against the center-left by supporting the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff (Camurça 2020), when they then firmly established themselves on the right, supporting Michel Temer's government and, with emphasis, consolidating a strong base of support for the Bolsonaro government. It is also worth mentioning the presence of evangelical political power in candidacies in smaller instances of the executive power, among which Camurça highlights: Paulo Maluf's candidacy for mayor of São Paulo in 1992; in 1994 they supported Mário Covas, Márcio Allencar and Paulo Souto for the government of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, respectively; and in 1998, José Serra, Sérgio Cabral Filho, and Antônio Imbassahy for the mayors of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. This points to the already mentioned tendency that Pentecostal political forces have to persist in the political scene, crossing entire governments, but until then remaining on the edges of power.

This persistence was due to two factors. The first being the degree of evangelical penetration in the most varied subtitles, as candidates included a large number of Pentecostal representatives in their subtitles, in order to win the vote of the faithful; and the second, due to the relative discursive flexibility of Pentecostal politics, which allowed them to join different groups, even those of former adversaries, without arousing a high degree of disapproval.

A striking fact about the political activity of evangelicals is that, politically, they have always been defined less by their propositions, which have remained relatively consistent, and more by their oppositions, which have metamorphosed over the years. When they entered the constituency,

they were in opposition to a Catholic and atheist (and, according to Freston, non-existent) political elite; subsequently, during the election of Collor and later Fernando Henrique, they were in opposition to the "communist threat" that permeated Brazil, then concentrated in the demonized figure of Lula; then, in a trend that persists to this day, they oppose feminists, LGBTs+, black and indigenous activists and "cultural Marxism". On the other hand, the agendas they defended remained, in general terms, the same: defense of religious freedom, tax exemption, inclusion of religious education, among others that we have already discussed.

8. Israel for Pentecostals

Israel, a region of great importance for Abrahamic religions, is also the object of strong support among evangelical parliamentarians in Brazil, especially after the creation of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front (EPF) in 2003. Although initially Israel's relevance for Pentecostal denominations may seem secondary, these parliamentarians have shown broad support for the policies of the Jewish State and have defended a rapprochement between Brazil and Israel, seeing the country as a model of development, technology, democracy and tolerance. To this end, the FPE, together with entities such as the Confederation of Pastors' Councils of Brazil (Concepab), the Association of Evangelical Parliamentarians of Brazil (Apeb) and the National Evangelical Forum for Social and Political Action (Fenasp), have promoted rallies and regular visits to the Israeli embassy in Brazil, reinforcing ties of friendship between the two nations (Gonçalves 2015).

In 2007, the Brazil-Israel Christian Parliamentary Front for Peace (Frenpazbril) was established, with 214 parliamentarians and aiming to expand the participation of the Brazilian legislature in parliamentary diplomacy actions through international forums and organizations, including the UN and the World Trade Organization. The request for the creation of Frenpazbril also suggested periodic consultations between the Brazilian and Israeli Congresses, with the aim of promoting peace and tolerance, especially in the Middle East area (Frenpazbril Request 2007, 1-3).

This continued support for Israel reflects the interest of Brazilian Pentecostal forces in strengthening the alliance with the country. With the growing participation of Pentecostal representatives in the political sphere and a substantial evangelical electoral base, as well as the EPF's alignment with the political projects of the United States and Donald Trump, pressure on the Bolsonaro government to strengthen ties with Israel has increased

significantly.

In the religious aspect, Israel is considered the "promised land" and, in the Christian view, a blessed land inhabited by a people favored by God. For evangelicals, supporting Israel is a moral duty, based, according to theologian José Barbosa Júnior, on the dispensationalist current, a theology originating in the United States that associates the history of Israel with eschatological events and prophetic fulfillment, giving the nation a central role in the divine plan (Barbosa Júnior 2019). As Maynard explains, dispensationalism organizes biblical chronology into "dispensations", periods in which Israel plays a primary role. Many Pentecostal churches that adopt this theological perspective therefore place Israel at the center of their doctrine (Maynard 2016).

Maynard also argues that dispensationalism gained strength in Brazilian evangelical churches, especially among neo-Pentecostals, in the context of a secularization process that significantly affected Catholicism. This phenomenon generated an influx of ex-Catholics into evangelism, encouraging Pentecostal churches to develop symbols and rituals that contrasted with Catholic tradition. This movement led to a "Judaization" of Pentecostal cults, which incorporated Jewish symbols such as the Star of David, the menorah, and the shofar, in response to this demand for symbolic identity among new adherents (Maynard 2016). Marta Francisca Topel also observes the presence of items such as the tallit and replicas of the Ark of the Covenant, among others, in Pentecostal ceremonies (Topel 2011).

Thus, dispensationalism supports the adoption of Jewish symbolism among Brazilian Pentecostals, consolidating a type of Christian Zionism that strengthens the feeling of alliance with Israel. This mutual symbolic vision contributes to a religious identity that combines evangelical and Jewish elements.

In Brazil, this Zionist affinity manifested itself in demonstrations in support of President Bolsonaro, in which the flags of Israel were displayed alongside those of Brazil and the United States. This alignment with Israel also carries a political dimension, serving as a direct opposition to the left's historic support for Palestine, especially during Lula's governments, aligned with Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization, a topic covered in subsequent chapters. Zionism in the Brazilian context, therefore, fits into a logic of polarization – "us against them" – reinforced by the conservative perspective and the religious vision of dominant political Pentecostalism.

9. Religious tourism and Israeli soft power:

Michel Gherman (2009) observes that, from the second millennium onwards, the presence of Brazilian evangelical churches in Israel increased, with emphasis on the Christian Congregation in Brazil (CCB), associated with the first wave of Pentecostalism, and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (Iurd), representative of the third wave. According to their official websites, the CCB has only one headquarters in Israel, located in the Old City of Jerusalem, while the Iurd has two, in Tel Aviv and Nazareth. This international expansion of Brazilian churches is part of a well-structured project, not only of evangelization, but also of diplomacy, in line with the growth of relations between Brazil and Israel and the importance of Israel in dispensational practice, thus strengthening the identification between evangelicals and Jews. As disclosed on their respective websites, Iurd is present in 97 countries, and CCB in 87, consolidating the internationalization of Brazilian headquarters.

In terms of tourism, there is a growing number of Brazilians visiting Israel, according to data from the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, presented in the table below.

Table 1: Number of Brazilians visiting Israel

Year	Total (in thousands)	Growth compared to the previous year
2017	54,8	3,9 (7,7%)
2018	62,5	7,7 (14,5%)
2019	82,1	19,6 (31,4%)
2020	13,4	-68,7 (-83,7%)
2021	68	54,6 (407,5 %)

Source: Israel Ministry of Tourism

The sharp drop in 2020 is attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic,

which reduced international travel due to safety and social isolation protocols. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the pandemic caused a 73% drop in global tourism; Still, in 2021, the number of Brazilian tourists in Israel surpassed those in 2018.

In a detailed analysis of Brazilian evangelical tourism in Israel, Magno Paganelli de Souza (2018) highlights the "professionalization of tourist activity" and the economic interests of Pentecostal groups in Israel. According to Souza, the first caravans organized by Brazilian pastors occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, with a significant increase in the 1980s and 1990s, in part due to the stability brought by the Real Plan. Ubiratan Martins, founder of the US Travel agency, reported in an interview that the caravans, initially formed by pastors seeking in-depth theological understanding in Israel, today consist mainly of groups of believers led by pastors, who determine the itinerary according to the group's profile (Souza 2018).

To maintain the tourist flow, Israel's Ministry of Tourism offers incentives such as "continuous marketing", "building sub-brands", "niche tourism", and "financial incentives to airlines that create new routes to Israel" (Souza 2018, pg. 304). Partnerships with tour operators specializing in the caravan market, such as Brazilian companies Terra Santa Viagens, El Gibor and Hebron, are also encouraged; the first two have the seal of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism on their websites. Israel also invests in influencers: data from 2017 indicates that more than 3000 content producers, bloggers and celebrities were hired to promote the country's image.

Souza also investigated the cost of caravans, finding that, in 2016, the cost for a 12-day excursion reached R$9,500 per person, equivalent to approximately US$2,932 at the exchange rate at the time. In a November 2011 update, it was found that operators maintain the price in dollars, and the most affordable packages are around US$3,000 (R$14,605.80). The recent instability between Israel and Gaza has resulted in the cancellation of several caravans, with the last tour scheduled by the Hebron company for February 2024.

The Israeli Ministry of Tourism also prioritizes the Latin American market, offering support to film and documentary productions that are recorded in the country, such as the film "Nada a Perder", a biopic of Iurd leader, Edir Macedo, according to Souza. The country uses tourism to promote "soft power", positioning tourists as "ambassadors" of the Israeli narrative, especially in the context of the conflict with Gaza.

Thus, it is concluded that Brazilian Pentecostal groups involved in religious caravans establish a symbiotic relationship with the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. They receive incentives to organize these tours, which are sold to

the faithful, generating profits and strengthening Israel's soft power. Religious caravans to Israel therefore represent a profitable and effective means of disseminating Israeli influence, benefiting both the country's tourism and Brazilian religious tourism operators.

10. Messianic phenomenon

In this study, "messianic phenomenon" refers to the religious elements that permeate both the campaign and Jair Bolsonaro's term as President of the Republic. To understand this facet of Bolsonarism, it is necessary to define the concepts of "messianism" and "populism".

Lísias Nogueira Negrão explains messianism as the belief in a savior, who could be God or a divine envoy, whose coming would bring the end of an order seen as oppressive, establishing a new era of justice. The messianic movement involves a collective mobilization that seeks to realize this new order under the leadership of a charismatic leader (Negrão 2001, 119). In short, messianism is a belief, while the messianic movement is the practical result of this belief, a collective action to bring about the new order. This mobilization is often associated with eschatology, which is pertinent to understanding the messianic elements present in the Bolsonaro government.

On the other hand, populism has different approaches. Here we will adopt Margaret Canovan's concept of "authoritarian populism". For Canovan, the authoritarian populist leader is characterized by his charisma and his attempt to distance himself from the intellectual elites and the political system itself, seeking to appeal to the reactionary feelings of the population, positioning himself as a representative against the established system (Canovan 1999). Thus, authoritarian populism is a political configuration in which a charismatic and anti-intellectualist leader garners support by intensifying the people's discontent in relation to the system, of which he himself is a part, even if he distances himself discursively.

Messianic movements and authoritarian populism converge in the high degree of personalism, both centered on the charisma and personality of a leader. Furthermore, they share a vision of a "beyond", a definitive state to be achieved. For the messianic movement, this state would be the "eschaton", a new divine order; for authoritarian populism, it represents a promise of political order where corruption would be eliminated. In the messianic movement, the rise of a leader emerges from the bottom up, with a community that legitimizes the leader's charisma; in authoritarian populism, the movement occurs from the top down, with the leader attracting followers

through his speech and personality.

In 2018, Brazil had favorable conditions for the convergence of these two forces. Politically, there was great dissatisfaction with the New Republic, a scenario of elitism in politics and a lack of alternation of power, while the strengthening of the right globally intensified cohesion between heterogeneous groups. On the messianic level, Pentecostal denominations, mainly neo-Pentecostalism, achieved strong social and political influence, without yet having a representative with a conservative profile who could reconcile elements of charisma and authority from a Judeo-Christian perspective. Bolsonaro then emerged as a figure who fit, and was fitted, into the messianic narrative by his supporters (Reis and Soares 2020).

It is worth mentioning that, although the best-known Brazilian messianic movements, such as Canudos and Contestado, took place in rural and Catholic contexts more than a century ago, the country was also the scene of urban messianic phenomena, with elements of varied beliefs, such as the Aladino Félix group in the 1960s, which mixed esotericism and Judaism, and the "Blue Butterflies" in the 1970s, in Campina Grande, who integrated traditional Catholicism with spiritualism (Negrão 2001). Such examples demonstrate that messianism, although rarer, remains in the Brazilian imagination.

Around Bolsonaro, his followers created the image of a "myth" through social media, with a moralistic and public security discourse that distinguished the "good citizen" from the "criminal". The first was portrayed as a worker oppressed by systemic corruption, personified in anti-PTism; the second, as a representative of old politics and an enemy of society's traditions and values (Ferreira Dias 2020). In the evangelical movement, support for Bolsonaro was reinforced by the historical opposition to the Workers' Party (PT) and progressive groups, especially in relation to racial, sexual and gender minorities. This evangelical project incorporated Jewish symbolism in support of Bolsonaro, consolidating a solid base of support that included elements of dispensational theology, an eschatological doctrine aligned with populism and messianism.

The messianic phenomenon in Bolsonarism, therefore, results from the convergence between authoritarian charisma and emerging messianism. Bolsonaro became the representative of a radical restructuring in a scenario of dissatisfaction and polarization, and the messianic movement, present in the popular imagination and driven by Pentecostals, gathered around him, validating his leadership from a dispensationalist perspective.

Recent studies investigate the messianic elements in Bolsonarism through different approaches, such as semiotics (Brito and Lara 2023),

theology (Bonfim 2020) and sociology (Ferreira Dias 2020). Evandro Sousa Bonfim highlights that the charisma of a messianic leader, although seen as innate, is a construction carefully managed through the insertion of the leader in the religious context and the management of his image by religious leaders who support him. Clebson Luiz Brito and Gláucia Muniz Proença Lara (2023) and João Ferreira Dias (2020) argue that, despite not being new, the presence of religious elements in political discourse takes on new contours in the context of the new right, integrating different ideologies. These messianic phenomena can even be interpreted as part of a "re-enchantment of the world" in light of Weberian theory, where secular leaders take on the charismatic aura of religious leaders (Ferreira Dias 2020).

11. Two Level Game

In 2016, Jair Bolsonaro began to strengthen ties with Pentecostal leaders, as exemplified in his trip to Israel and the baptism in the Jordan River carried out by pastor Everaldo Pereira, president of the Christian Social Party and leader of the Assembly of God (Extra 2016). This approach was consolidated at his inauguration, where he counted on the prayer of the senator and campaign coordinator Magno Malta and the almost unanimous support of the main Pentecostal leaders, including Silas Malafaia of the Assembly of God, Edir Macedo of the Universal Church, Valdemiro Santiago of the Worldwide Church of the Power of God, and Romildo Soares of the International Church of the Grace of God (Camurça 2020). This support was reflected in the occupation of key positions by evangelical leaders in the Bolsonaro government, as Magali Cunha (2019) points out.

Among the appointments, Pastor Damares Alves took over the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights; the Lutheran Onyx Lorenzoni was responsible for the Civil House; the Ministry of Tourism was led by the member of the Maranata Church, Marcelo Álvaro Antônio; the Presbyterian pastor André Luiz Mendonça held the Office of the Attorney General of the Union; and General Luiz Eduardo Ramos, a Baptist, took over as head of the Government Secretariat (Cunha 2019).

With significant evangelical support, Bolsonaro committed to maintaining a series of policies so as not to contradict this influential political base, which, in addition to being crucial to his election, now occupied strategic positions in the government. To analyze this dynamic, we will apply Robert D. Putnam's theory of the "Two-Level Game".

The Two-Level Game, according to Putnam (2010), is an analytical tool

that explores the interactions between domestic and international politics, and how political leaders must manage these spheres to build a favorable position on the global stage while meeting internal demands, preserving their legitimacy and avoiding political destabilization, such as impeachment. Putnam argues that foreign policy cannot be understood in isolation from domestic pressures, since both are intertwined in a complex game of interests.

In the domestic context, Putnam highlights the constant conflict between parties, social classes, interest groups, legislators, public opinion and the Executive branch (Putnam 2010, 150). Internationally, the Executive seeks to satisfy the interests of the groups that supported its election, often granting them important positions in government and influencing foreign policy to represent their interests. Schutte, Da Fonseca and Carneiro (2019) point out that, in the Bolsonaro government, although the composition of key ministries such as Economy, Agriculture and Mines and Energy has maintained similarity with previous administrations, the appointments of Hamilton Mourão as vice-president and Walter Souza Braga Netto in the Ministry of Defense highlight the strong presence of military interests in the government. This group, historically aligned with national economic elites, defends a foreign policy focused on economic pragmatism (Schutte, Da Fonseca and Carneiro 2019, 96).

The authors identify a tension in the Bolsonaro government between a pragmatic wing, focused on traditional economic conduct, and another inspired by the political philosophy of Olavo de Carvalho, who sees foreign policy as a tool to strengthen Bolsonaro's domestic position. This contradiction reflects a clash between a pragmatic foreign policy and an ideological vision.

During the Bolsonaro government, internal and external dynamics provided a context that influenced his political decisions. Domestically, Brazil was experiencing a conservative wave, characterized by the rejection of the New Republic project and the strategic use of new mass communication tools by right-wing forces. This climate of aversion to traditional politics created space for an anti-establishment discourse, which Bolsonaro adopted and directed at those dissatisfied with the republican structure. Internationally, the scenario was largely dominated by the figure of Donald Trump, president of the USA, whose government served as a model and inspiration for several of Bolsonaro's actions.

The analysis of Bolsonaro's policies allows us to observe explicit attempts to align with the Trump administration. In a study published by Sul Global in 2021, Thomaz, Vigevani and Ferreira examined how the Bolsonaro government made unilateral concessions to the United States, many of which did not result in concrete benefits for Brazil, reinforcing a posture of

subservience. Two prominent examples were the failed sale of Embraer to Boeing and the visa exemption for citizens of the USA, Canada, Australia and Japan.

In the case of Embraer, Bolsonaro abdicated his veto power to allow negotiations with Boeing to proceed, despite domestic resistance, especially from sectors that saw the sale as a threat to the national economy and technological sovereignty. The agreement was justified as a way to position Boeing in the small aircraft sector, in response to the partnership between Bombardier and Airbus. However, the process was interrupted in April 2020, with Boeing canceling the purchase and Embraer suffering large losses, leading it to seek compensation from the International Center for Dispute Resolution (Thomaz, Vigevani and Ferreira 2021).

Another example of a unilateral concession was the visa exemption for citizens of the USA, Canada, Australia and Japan, according to decree No. 9731, of 2019. The measure was adopted shortly after President Trump imposed visa restrictions on several nationalities, including Brazilians. Although defenders claimed that the exemption would stimulate tourism, the decision was criticized for breaking Brazil's tradition of diplomatic reciprocity, being classified by former chancellor Celso Amorim as an attitude of a "mutt complex" (Amorim, Correio do Povo, 2019).

To reinforce this unilateral opening, Bolsonaro signed decree No. 10269 of 2020, allowing Brazil's entry into the US Global Entry program, a system that facilitates the entry of frequent travelers, although it does not replace the full American visa. This decree was seen as an additional concession, as Brazilians continued to need a visa to enter the USA, and Global Entry only benefits a specific audience (US Embassy and Consulates in Brazil 2020). In May 2023, Brazil revoked visa exemptions, with the new rule coming into force in January 2024 (Valor Econômico 2023; Folha 2023).

These actions indicate Bolsonaro's efforts to please the Trump administration, demonstrating what Thomaz, Vigevani and Ferreira describe as adherence to the Monroe Doctrine, which reinforces US hegemony on the American continent. For professor Igor Fuser, the concept of "diplomacy of subservience" captures this posture of dependence, which was manifested from the first months of the Bolsonaro government and was based on Trump's unconditional approach to the USA (Fuser 2019).

Fuser notes that, historically, Brazilian foreign policy has oscillated between periods of autonomy and alignment with Washington's interests, as in the "independent foreign policy" of Jânio Quadros and the "responsible pragmatism" of Ernesto Geisel, contrasting with the dependence adopted by Bolsonaro (Fuser 2019, 108). Anticipating that the link with the USA would

end at the end of Trump's term, Fuser identified decisions that reinforced this stance of dependence, such as the request to join the OECD, Brazil's attempt to join NATO, the support for interventionist measures against Venezuela and the handover of the Alcântara base to the USA.

The "diplomacy of subservience" represents a move away from multilateralism and the defense of national sovereignty, exchanged for an alignment with US interests. At the diplomatic level, the Bolsonaro government intensified its rapprochement with Israel, reflecting the bond between the USA and its greatest ally in the Middle East. Thus, alignment with Trump inevitably led to closer ties with Israel, showing how Brazilian foreign policy was shaped by international and domestic pressures, in line with Putnam's Two-Level Game theory.

12. BFP in the Bolsonaro Government for Israel

The Bolsonaro government's foreign policy was marked by several breaks with Brazilian diplomatic traditions. According to Mônica Hirst and Tadeu Maciel (2022), the orientation of Brazilian foreign policy (BFP) under Bolsonaro was based on three pillars that, although they cooperated at times, often competed with each other: the ideological core, divided between Pentecostals and "Olavists"; the liberal-conservative economic policy, represented by agribusiness and the financial sector; and the security and defense complex, supported by the military. In the Brazil-Israel relationship, the ideological pillar had undeniable prominence.

The proposal to transfer the Brazilian embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem is an example of a decision driven by ideology. This movement was driven by strong pressure from the Pentecostal base, as a response to a similar gesture made by the USA in 2017, under the government of Donald Trump. In Brazil, the Brazil-Israel Parliamentary Group pushed for this transfer to be a symbolic gesture of partnership between the two countries, becoming a campaign promise from Bolsonaro. The president even expressed his intention to close the Palestinian embassy, stating that Palestine "is not a state" and, therefore, would not have the right to an embassy, in an interview with the Israeli newspaper Israel Hayom (Bolsonaro 2018; Schutte, Pidone and Correa 2020).

The "Olavista" wing of the government, formed by supporters of Olavo de Carvalho's theories, such as former chancellor Ernesto Araújo and the president's sons, Carlos and Eduardo Bolsonaro, also supported the transfer of the embassy. According to Schutte, Fonseca and Carneiro, the Olavista

project is based on the idea that Brazil is a deeply conservative nation and that the regular alternation of power between left and right is a fundamental characteristic of democracy, a characteristic that Olavo attributed exclusively to the USA. In Olavo's view, Brazil only experienced true democracy with the election of Bolsonaro, a representative of "pure and legitimate" conservatism (Schutte, Fonseca and Carneiro 2019).

The Olavista project sees the fight against globalism as one of its central bases, understanding globalism as a system that aims at cultural homogenization, eliminating Christian values and national sovereignty. For Olavists, globalism is supported by Islam, Russian-Chinese Marxism and anti-Christian technocratic capitalism. The rapprochement with Israel, from this perspective, is a consequence of the alignment with the USA, considered the main defense against the advance of the East — represented by China, Russia and Islam —, where Israel is seen as the front line in the "Western defense" against Islam (Carvalho 2019 quoted in Schutte, Fonseca and Carneiro 2019).

This stance breaks with the tradition of Brazilian support for Palestine and often tense diplomatic relations with Israel, in tune with anti-PT sentiment and domestic political polarization (Schutte, Fonseca and Carneiro 2019). However, while ideological groups supported the transfer of the embassy, other sectors, such as the economic and military sectors, expressed concerns. The Arab League criticized the proposal, indicating that the measure could threaten Brazil's lucrative trade partnerships with the Middle East, a crucial region for the export of Brazilian chicken meat, especially halal meat, in which Brazil leads in the global market (Saraiva and Costa Silva 2019; Schutte, Pidone and Correa 2020). In 2022, Brazil exported US$2.9 billion in chicken meat to Arab countries, a value higher than total exports to Israel, which totaled US$1.8 billion, representing just 11% of Brazilian exports to the region (Comex Stat 2022).

Faced with these pressures, Bolsonaro retreated, adopting a more ambiguous stance. In 2019, Eduardo Bolsonaro opened a Brazilian commercial office in Jerusalem, reiterating his father's intention to move the embassy. In the same year, Agriculture Minister Tereza Cristina hosted a dinner with ambassadors from Arab and Islamic countries, including representatives from Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, and others, in an effort to mitigate potential diplomatic damage (Dianni 2019).

Ultimately, the failure to transfer the embassy exemplifies the internal contradictions of the Bolsonaro government and demonstrates how the rapprochement with Israel was fundamentally motivated by ideological issues and the domestic context, with significant pressure from Pentecostal and Olavist groups, each with their own national projects and world views.

13. Final Considerations

The research shows that the rapprochement between Brazil and Israel during the Bolsonaro government resulted from complex pressures, both internal and external, which intertwine as explained by the Two-Level Game Theory. In a chronological analysis, it is noted that, traditionally, Brazil maintained a stance of neutrality between Israel and Palestine, gradually leaning towards the Arab side, especially during the military governments and that of Collor, motivated by ideological and economic reasons, as commercial relations with the Arab world were more advantageous than with Israel. During the Geisel government, this relationship was reinforced as part of an independent US foreign policy, while during the Collor government, although with free market rhetoric, Brazil maintained tensions with Israel due to its military partnership with Iraq, which distanced it from a position of diplomatic leadership in the Middle East. During the FHC government, there was an attempt at greater Brazilian involvement in the Arab-Israeli issue, hampered by the worsening of tensions after 9/11. During the Lula government, Brazilian diplomacy reached its peak of activity and projection in the region, especially in the Middle East, intensifying tensions with Israel; This scenario persisted, albeit in a reduced form, during the Dilma government.

Internally, in addition to the anti-PT sentiment and political disillusionment, the political strength of the Pentecostals, already widely infiltrated in the spheres of power, was decisive for the rapprochement with Israel. With Bolsonaro's election, these pressures gained strength, converging with anti-PTism and creating a shift away from the Palestinians in favor of Israel, also motivated by the government's unconditional affinity with the United States and ideological influences such as those of Olavo de Carvalho.

Despite the ideological alignment with Israel, the project to transfer the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was blocked by strong economic pressures, especially from agribusiness. This episode demonstrates not only the weight of economic interests on the Brazilian government, but also the subordination of ideological issues to these interests, with agribusiness maintaining its dominant position, even with Bolsonaro's strong ideological rhetoric.

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ABSTRACT

President Jair Bolsonaro's government saw several ruptures in relation to the political tradition of Brazilian diplomacy, and nowhere was this as clear as in the changes that occurred in the long relationship between Brazil and the State of Israel. Using Robert Putnam's Two-Level Game theory, this work aims to understand the influence that changes in the domestic context caused by Bolsonaro's election motivated this rapprochement with the State of Israel, especially taking into account the influence that Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal groups exerted throughout this process.

KEYWORDS

Bolsonaro, Israel, Brazilian Foreign Policy

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