

POLITICAL BEHAVIOR OF AGRIBUSINESS DURING BOLSONARO GOVERNMENT

COMPORTAMENTO POLÍTICO DO AGRONEGÓCIO DURANTE O GOVERNO BOLSONARO

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RESUMO

O artigo analisa as diferentes posições políticas de setores do agronegócio brasileiro em relação ao governo de Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022) e ao movimento bolsonarista. Embora o agronegócio tenha sido frequentemente apontado como um dos principais beneficiários das políticas implementadas nesse período, destaca-se que ele não é homogêneo, sendo composto de frações burguesas com interesses e demandas distintas. Para explorar essas diferenças, são examinadas quatro associações: União Democrática Ruralista (UDR), Associação Brasileira do Agronegócio (Abag), Associação Brasileira das Indústrias de Óleos Vegetais (Abiove) e Associação Brasileira dos Produtores de Soja (Aprosoja Brasil). A análise, baseada em documentos oficiais, declarações públicas de lideranças dessas entidades e matérias jornalísticas, abrange o período de 2015 a março de 2023. Ela contempla não apenas o governo Bolsonaro, mas também o período de transição após sua derrota eleitoral. A hipótese é que UDR e Aprosoja Brasil, representando os produtores rurais de médio capital, aderiram amplamente ao bolsonarismo, apoiando o governo de forma irrestrita. Por outro lado, Abag e Abiove, vinculadas ao grande capital e a interesses internacionais, demonstraram reservas, especialmente em relação às políticas ambientais e às ameaças à democracia. A partir da caracterização do bolsonarismo como um movimento neofascista, o estudo conclui que a representação política dos médios produtores teve um papel crucial nesse fenômeno, sustentando ataques às instituições democráticas e aos movimentos sociais considerados progressistas e/ou de esquerda.

Palavras-chave: agronegócio; Bolsonaro; movimento bolsonarista.

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the different political positions of sectors within Brazilian agribusiness regarding the government of Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022) and the Bolsonarist movement. Although agribusiness was often identified as one of the main beneficiaries of the policies implemented during this period, it is emphasized that the sector is not homogeneous, as it consists of bourgeois fractions with distinct interests and demands. To explore these differences, four associations are examined: the Rural Democratic Union (UDR), the Brazilian Agribusiness Association (Abag), the Brazilian Association of Vegetable Oil Industries (Abiove), and the Brazilian Association of Soybean Producers (Aprosoja Brazil). The analysis, based on official documents, public statements by leaders of these organizations, and news coverage, spans the period from 2015 to March 2023. It encompasses not only the Bolsonaro government but also the transitional period following his electoral defeat. The hypothesis is that UDR and Aprosoja Brazil, representing medium-capital rural producers, largely adhered to Bolsonarism, supporting the government unconditionally. On the other hand, Abag and Abiove, linked to large capital and international interests, expressed reservations, particularly regarding environmental policies and threats to democracy. Based on the characterization of Bolsonarism as a neofascist movement, the study concludes that the political representation of medium-sized producers played a crucial role in this phenomenon, supporting attacks on democratic institutions and social movements considered progressive and/or left-wing.

Keywords: agribusiness; Bolsonaro; bolsonarist movement.

INTRODUCTION

During the government of Jair Bolsonaro, agribusiness was frequently identified as one of the main beneficiaries of the policies implemented during that period. Bolsonaro made it clear, both in his speeches and political decisions, that he intended to favor this sector. In a meeting with the Agribusiness Parliamentary Front (a political caucus in the Brazilian Congress) on July 4, 2019, he stated, “This government is yours,” referring to the agribusiness representatives present, and claimed that he had always voted in Congress in alignment with the so-called “ruralist bloc” during his tenure as a federal deputy. The appointment of Ricardo Salles as Minister of the Environment was also cited as evidence of the president’s alignment with agribusiness, as Bolsonaro stated that the minister would be “married” to the sector².

² Available at <https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,bolsonaro-a-bancada-ruralista-esse-governo-e-de-voces,70002904662>. Accessed on Aug 14, 2022.

However, agribusiness is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of sectors and activities. It gained prominence in Brazil during the 1990s, coinciding with the creation of the Brazilian Agribusiness Association (Abag) in 1993. From an economic standpoint, agribusiness includes activities strictly related to farming and what occurs within the farm, “from the gate inward”, as well as those that take place outside the farm, “from the gate outward”, such as grain processing, commercialization, exportation, and financialization. Therefore, agribusiness should be understood as comprising different bourgeois fractions with distinct interests and demands. Consequently, support for and adherence to the Bolsonaro government and the bolsonarista movement, as well as the impacts of the policies implemented during this period, cannot be analyzed by treating agribusiness as a homogeneous sector.

The objective of this article is to analyze the differences in the positions adopted by distinct sectors of Brazilian agribusiness in relation to the Bolsonaro government and the bolsonarista movement. To achieve this goal, the study examines four organizations that represent different segments of agribusiness: the Rural Democratic Union (UDR), the Brazilian Agribusiness Association (Abag), the Brazilian Association of Vegetable Oil Industries (Abiove), and the Brazilian Association of Soybean Producers (Aprosoja Brazil). Methodologically, the article employs qualitative content analysis, following the analytical framework proposed by Bardin (2016), which allows for the systematic examination of meanings, narratives, and recurrent patterns present in political and institutional discourse. The empirical corpus is composed of publications from the official websites of Aprosoja Brazil, Abiove, and Abag, as well as news articles collected through the Factiva Dow Jones database. In the case of the UDR, whose institutional website did not provide sufficient material, the analysis focused on 24 Instagram posts published by Luiz Nabhan Garcia, former president of the organization and one of Bolsonaro’s main political allies, in addition to news coverage. In total, the analysis includes 16 opinion articles and 97 news items from the Aprosoja Brazil website, alongside 930 news articles; 24 Instagram posts and 519 news articles related to the UDR; 34 publications from Abiove’s official website and 320 news articles; and 70 publications from Abag’s official website and 611 news articles. The materials were collected between 2015 and March 2023, encompassing not only Bolsonaro’s presidency but also the transitional period following his electoral defeat, including the events of January 8, 2023, when bolsonarista groups attempted to disrupt the inauguration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Workers’ Party). The collected material was systematized and coded using ATLAS.ti software, which supported the organization of the corpus, the coding process, and the identification of analytical categories in accordance with the principles of content analysis.

The hypothesis is that UDR and Aprosoja Brazil – representing predominantly medium-sized farmers – adhered to the Bolsonarista movement and offered unconditional support to the government, whereas Abag and Abiove – representing mainly large-scale and international capital—expressed reservations, particularly regarding environmental policies and the government’s discourse and actions aimed at undermining democratic institutions. Based on the characterization of Bolsonarism as neofascist, we argue that the political representation of medium-sized farmers constituted an important component of Bolsonarism, actively supporting attacks against democracy and left-wing movements.

2 AGRIBUSINESS, BOLSONARO GOVERNMENT AND BOLSONARISM: THEORETICAL APPROACH

Agribusiness is a concept first introduced in 1955 in the United States by Ray A. Goldberg and John H. Davis (Pompeia, 2021). It encompasses all stages of agricultural production, including pre-production and post-production activities, as well as the business and corporate environments connected to them. Taking soybean production as an example, agribusiness involves the chemical and biotechnology industries responsible for research and the production of fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds; on-farm production, where soybeans are cultivated and harvested; and the storage, processing, and commercialization of soybeans, activities largely dominated by transnational trading companies. From this perspective, agribusiness is permeated by distinct bourgeois fractions, shaped by factors such as the scale of capital, the position occupied by specific segments within production chains, and the origin of capital (national or foreign). These economic and structural differences may translate into divergent political positions.

This study adopts the concept of bourgeois fractions based on Poulantzas’s theoretical framework, as applied to the Brazilian political context by authors such as Boito Jr. (2018), Martuscelli (2018), and Farias (2009), among other researchers associated with the so-called “Campinas School”³. From this perspective, the bourgeoisie is understood as internally fragmented according to economic criteria, including the scale of capital (large, medium, and small enterprises) and the position occupied within the production process or chain (commercial, industrial, and financial sectors) (Farias, 2009).

³ The Campinas School is a group of researchers who have been trained or teach at the Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences (IFCH) of the State University of Campinas (Unicamp). They employ the theoretical framework of Poulantzas to analyze the Brazilian political context (Berringer, 2022).

In peripheral, underdeveloped, or developing economies, such as Brazil, an additional dimension of fragmentation must be considered: the relationship between domestic capital and external or imperialist capital. This is due to the fact that industrialization and economic development in these contexts are strongly conditioned by foreign trade and investment flows (Martuscelli, 2018). Within this framework, three main bourgeois fractions can be identified: the associated, the internal, and the national. The associated bourgeoisie is fully subordinated to the interests of foreign capital, functioning as a “transmission belt” for external demands. The national bourgeoisie, by contrast, has interests rooted primarily within the domestic economy and may, under certain conditions, adopt positions that conflict with foreign capital, positions that, when directed against imperialist interests, can be characterized as anti-imperialist. Positioned between these two, the internal bourgeoisie combines locally rooted interests and demands for state protection with a degree of dependence on foreign capital; as a result, it tends to avoid radical confrontations, engaging instead in occasional and limited conflicts with external capital.

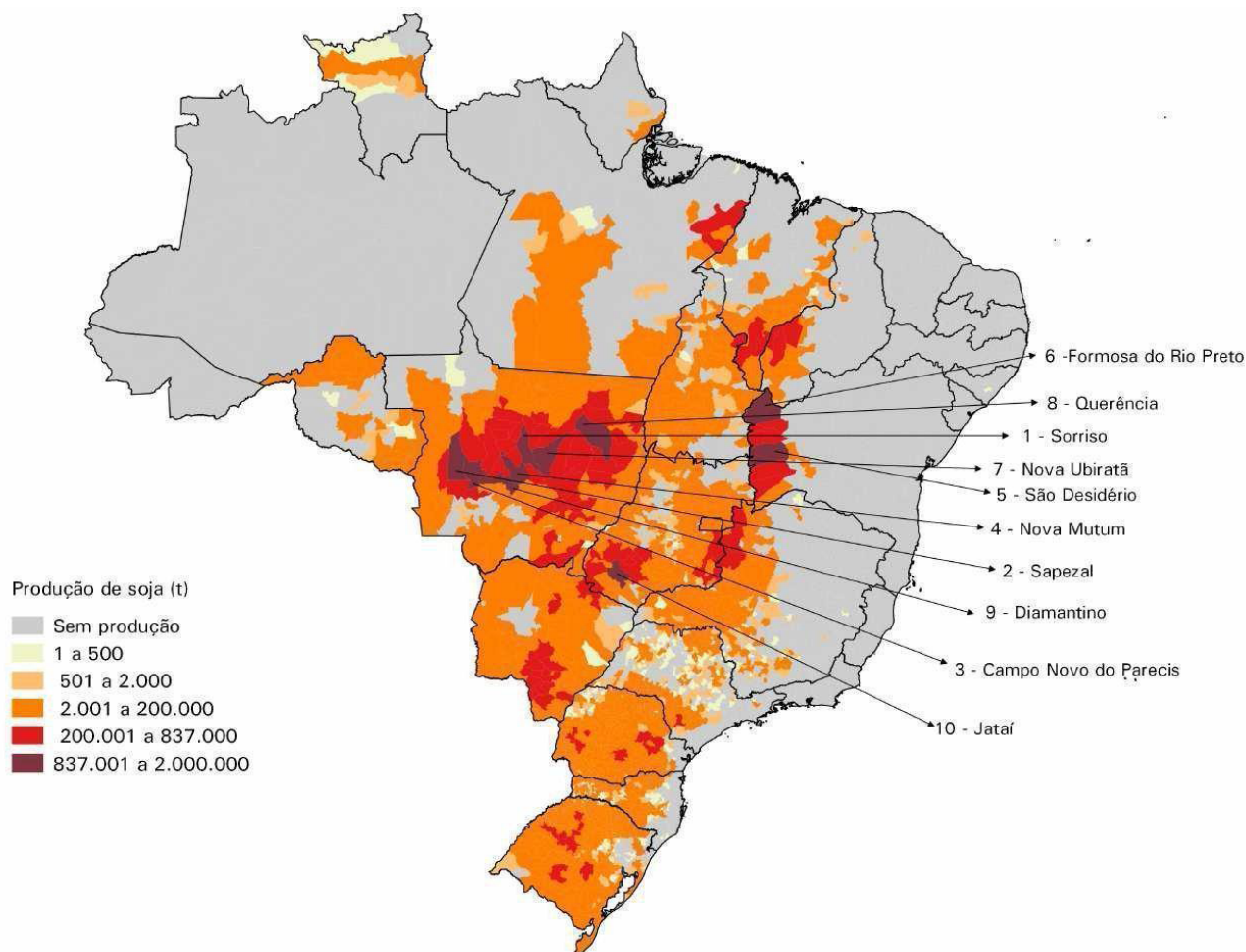
Research by Cyrino (2017), Ferreira (2021), Paraizo (2021), and Forlini (2020, 2021a, 2021b) shows that these bourgeois fractions permeate agribusiness, making it possible for different fractions with distinct political behaviors to coexist within the same production chain. As an illustrative case, Cyrino (2017) demonstrates that sectors within Brazil’s beef production chain adopted divergent political positions during the governments of Lula (Workers’ Party) between 2003 and 2010. These differences were closely related to variations in capital size, as large-scale beef producers displayed political positions that diverged from those of medium-sized producers. The author further concludes that large-scale beef producers exhibited political behavior characteristic of the internal bourgeoisie. Divisions and differences in political positions within agribusiness prior to and during the Bolsonaro government are also examined by Pompeia (2021). However, this article departs from that analysis by interpreting such divergences through the analytical lens of bourgeois fractions.

Other authors have also examined the political behavior of agribusiness during the Bolsonaro government. Elias (2021) addresses the existence of different sectors within agribusiness but treats them as having a homogeneous political representation. Madureira (2023), in turn, argues that “ruralists” were among the main influences on Brazilian foreign policy during the Bolsonaro administration. According to the author, ruralism constitutes the political expression of an agrarian bourgeoisie, a fraction composed of landowners, traders, and financial capital, while medium-sized landowners would not be part of this “ruralist” core. Nevertheless, Madureira includes the Rural Democratic Union (UDR) among the ruralists.

This article diverges from Madureira's argument in three main respects: (i) it contends that medium-sized landowners played a fundamental role during the Bolsonaro government, as they constituted the segment of agribusiness that most actively adhered to the bolsonarista movement; (ii) it understands the UDR as a political representative of medium-sized landowners; and (iii) it rejects the notion that landowners, traders, and financial capital formed a homogeneous fraction during the Bolsonaro government, arguing instead that these groups adopted distinct and, at times, conflicting political positions.

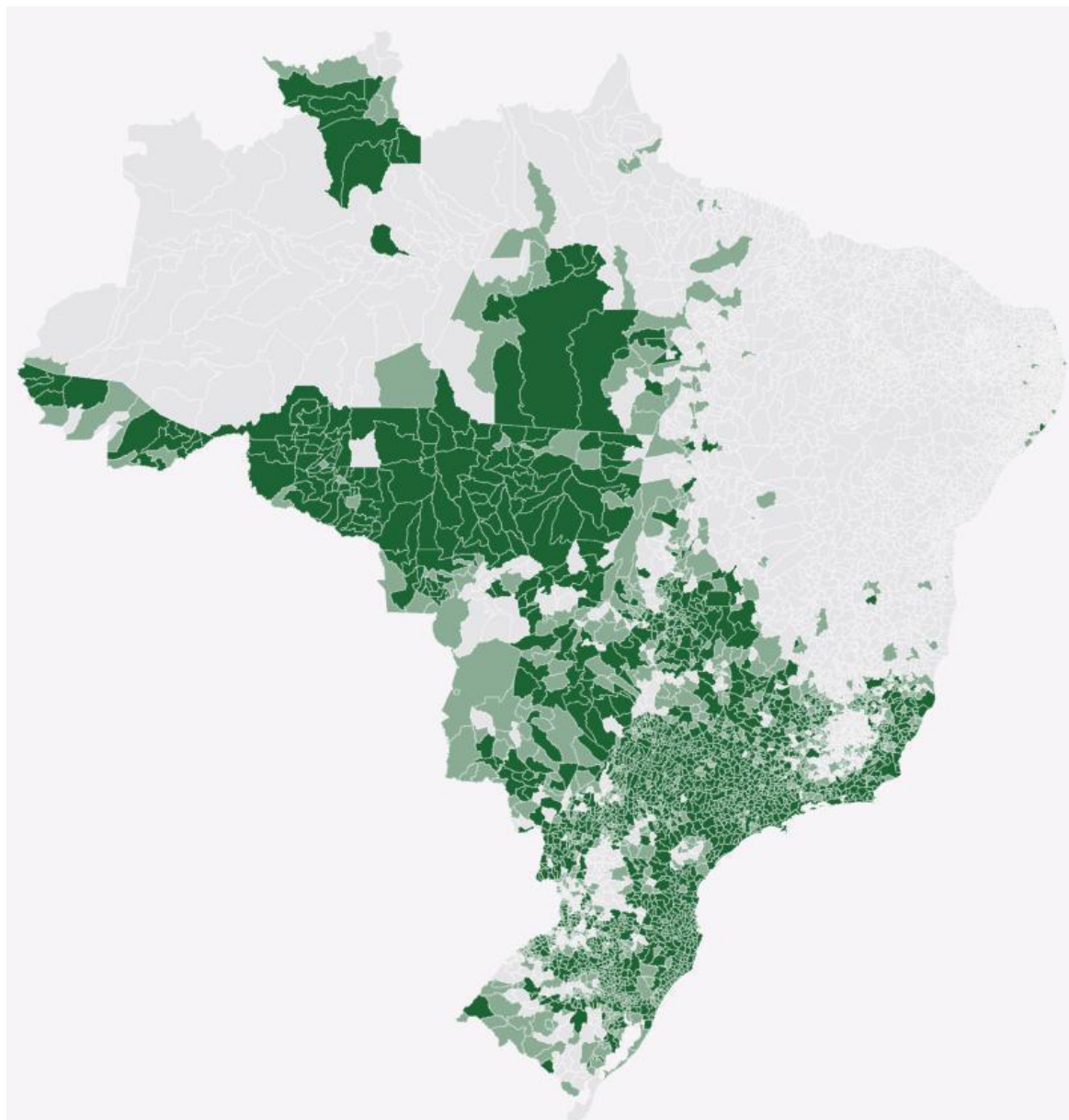
The relationship between agricultural actors and right-wing governments has been widely examined in the literature, particularly in studies analyzing Donald Trump's election and the Brexit process (Sconnes et al., 2018; Jadhav, 2021; Sheingate; Greer, 2021; Carolan, 2020; Brooks, 2020; Mamonova; Franquesa, 2020). However, this field still lacks studies that address this relationship in the Brazilian context. This gap is especially striking given the fact that votes from rural areas were fundamental to Bolsonaro's electoral performance in both the 2018 and 2022 elections, as illustrated in Figures 1, 2, and 3. Figure 1 depicts soybean production in Brazil, while Figures 2 and 3 show the municipalities in which Bolsonaro won in the second round of the elections.

Figure 1 - Soybean Production in Brazil (Santos; Glass, 2018).



Fonte: Source: reproduced from Santos and Glass (2018).

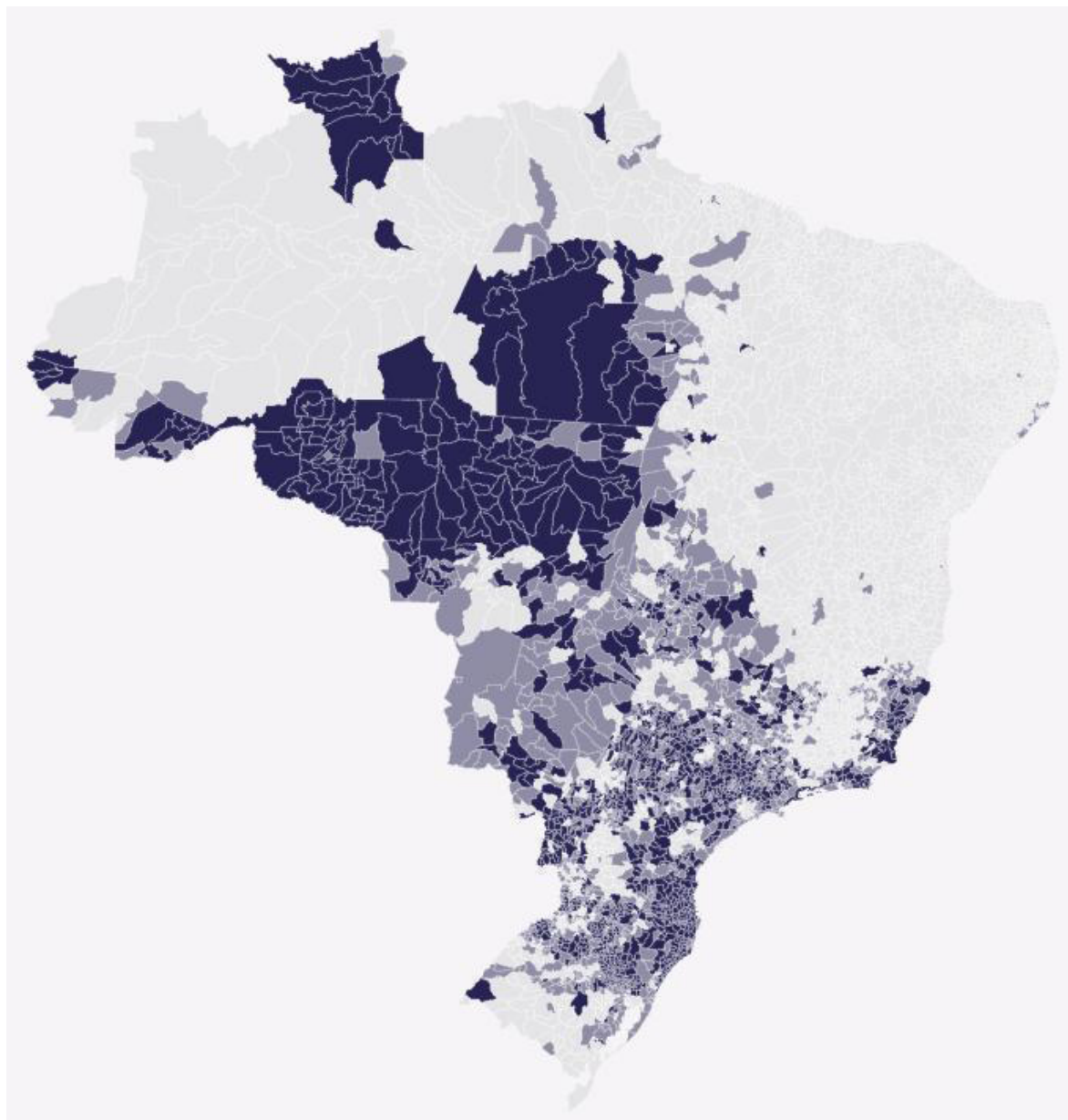
Figure 2 - Where Bolsonaro won in 2018 election (G1, 2018)⁴.



Fonte: Source: reproduced from G1 (2018), using data from the TSE.

4 Available at <https://especiais.g1.globo.com/politica/eleicoes/2018/mapa-da-apuracao-no-brasil-presi-dente/2-turno/> accessed on Nov 25, 2023.

Figure 3 - Where Bolsonaro won in the second ballot in 2022 (G1, 2022)⁵



Fonte: Source: reproduced from G1 (2022), using data from the TSE.

5 Available at <https://g1.globo.com/politica/eleicoes/2022/apuracao/presidente.ghtml> accessed on Nov 25, 2023.

Studies that examine the relationship between rural voters and right-wing governments frequently interpret the role of agriculture through the concept of populism, which appears in the literature in multiple and highly variable forms—such as right-wing populism, far-right populism, authoritarian populism, rural populism, among others. While a detailed debate on populism lies beyond the scope of this article, it is important to clarify that, following the arguments developed by Cassimiro (2021), Kaysel and Bianchi (2025), Boito Jr. (2023), and Traverso (2019), we consider populism to be an analytically imprecise concept for a rigorous examination of the Bolsonaro government and the bolsonarista movement. The concept encompasses a wide array of political phenomena that differ significantly in terms of historical context, geographical location, and ideological orientation, which renders it excessively porous and conceptually malleable. Figures as diverse as Bolsonaro, Lula, Hugo Chávez, Donald Trump, and Getúlio Vargas are frequently classified as populist, illustrating the problematic breadth of the concept. Rather than clarifying the specific dynamics of the Bolsonaro government and the bolsonarista movement, the use of populism tends to dilute them within a heterogeneous set of political experiences that are historically, ideologically, and socially distinct, generating conceptual confusion rather than empirical insight. Even when qualified by adjectives, the concept remains anchored in an imprecise analytical core, incapable of adequately distinguishing between political projects that operate with fundamentally different antagonisms, social bases, and ideological orientations. Consequently, framing Bolsonarism as a form of populism implies adopting a weak analytical framework that obscures its concrete historical determinations and limits a deeper understanding of its specificities.

In order to overcome the analytical limitations of the concept of populism, this article adopts the notion of neofascism as its central interpretive framework for understanding the Bolsonaro government and the bolsonarista movement. This choice does not imply an uncritical transposition of the historical fascisms of the twentieth century to contemporary contexts, but rather follows a body of theoretical work that conceptualizes neofascism as a specific political form, rooted in the capitalist state and adaptable to different institutional arrangements (Poulantzas, 1972; Boito Jr., 2020; 2021). Neofascism is understood here as a possible form of political regime within capitalism, distinct from but historically related to classical fascism. Its defining features do not lie primarily in the immediate abolition of democratic institutions, but in the articulation of a reactionary mass movement with authoritarian political practices, sustained by a specific social base and a coherent, though internally contradictory, ideological core. This distinguishes neofascism from broader and less precise categories such as right-wing populism,

authoritarian populism, or the “new right,” which often emphasize political style, discourse, or leadership without adequately addressing class relations, state form, and the dynamics of power within the ruling bloc.

Following Boito Jr. (2020; 2021), and drawing on Poulantzas’s theory of the capitalist state, neofascism is characterized by four interrelated elements. First, it is supported by a socially active reactionary mass base, composed predominantly of the petty bourgeoisie, sectors of the middle classes, and, in the Brazilian case, medium-sized landowners. Second, neofascism is ideologically structured around radical anticommunism, authoritarianism, and an exclusionary nationalism, which together legitimize political violence, the criminalization of adversaries, and the rejection of pluralism and democratic mediation. Third, although mobilized “from below,” neofascist movements are politically co-opted during their ascent to power by a fraction of the bourgeoisie seeking to (re)establish its hegemony within the ruling bloc. Finally, neofascism retains as its strategic horizon the establishment of an authoritarian regime, even if this objective is not immediately realized.

These characteristics allow neofascism to be analytically distinguished from other contemporary right-wing formations. Unlike right-wing populism, which is often defined primarily by a moral opposition between “the people” and “the elite,” neofascism entails a more systematic attack on democratic institutions, civil liberties, and organized social opposition, combined with the normalization of political violence and exceptional measures. Unlike authoritarian neoliberalism, neofascism is not merely a technocratic or elite-driven project of governance, but a mass-based movement that actively mobilizes resentment, fear, and reactionary identities. Finally, unlike the “new right” understood as a heterogeneous ideological constellation, neofascism constitutes a relatively coherent political project, rooted in specific class interests and state strategies.

A central theoretical question concerns the possibility of neofascism operating within contexts of formal democracy. Contrary to interpretations that equate fascism exclusively with overt dictatorship, the perspective adopted here emphasizes that neofascism can emerge and function under democratic institutional frameworks. As Poulantzas (1972) already noted in relation to fascism, the form of the regime (democratic or dictatorial) should not be conflated with the nature of the political forces and social relations that sustain it. In contemporary capitalism, neofascist movements may come to power through elections, maintain the formal structure of democratic institutions, and nonetheless progressively erode democratic content through the concentration of executive power, attacks on the judiciary and the press, the criminalization of opposition, and the expansion of state and para-state violence.

Conceptualizing Bolsonarism as neofascism thus allows for a more precise understanding of both its ideological structure and its social base, as well as its relationship with different fractions of capital. It makes it possible to explain how a movement rooted in the petty bourgeoisie and medium-sized landowners could sustain an authoritarian political project while governing in the interests of large international capital, and why democratic erosion can occur without the immediate installation of a fascist dictatorship. In this regard, neofascism is not treated as an anomaly or a deviation from capitalism, but as one of the possible political forms through which capitalist states respond to crises of hegemony, representation, and accumulation.

3 AGRIBUSINESS' SECTORS: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Having established the analytical framework for examining agribusiness sectors and their relationship with the Bolsonaro government and Bolsonarism, it is necessary to situate the associations analyzed in this study within their broader political and economic context. All of them have been shaped, to varying degrees, by the adoption of neoliberal policies in Brazil. In this article, neoliberalism is understood primarily in terms of its economic-policy dimensions, including financial deregulation, trade liberalization, and the reduction of the state's role in credit allocation.

According to Delgado (2012), the trajectory of modern agriculture in Brazil can be divided into three main periods. The first, spanning from 1965 to 1985, corresponds to the phase of conservative modernization. During this period, the military dictatorship promoted a state-led modernization of agriculture through massive public investment, particularly via subsidized credit and research and development, most notably with the creation of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa). In 1976, under the Geisel administration, public agricultural credit reached approximately US\$20 billion—an amount nearly equivalent to the sector's GDP at the time (Delgado, 2012). This strategy aimed to supply a rapidly growing urban population while supporting industrialization.

Above, the oldest association examined in this study, was founded during this period. It represents companies involved in grain trading, especially soybeans, and its board is predominantly composed of representatives of foreign-owned corporations—such as Cargill, Bunge, ADM, Louis Dreyfus, and Cofco—alongside a smaller presence of Brazilian firms, including Amaggi and CJ Selecta.

The second period, spanning from 1985 to 1999, was marked by the implementation of neoliberal economic policies and their effects on Brazilian agriculture; it was during the 1990s that the term “agribusiness” became widely used in the country. UDR, Abag, and Aprosoja Brazil were all established in this context.

The creation of UDR was closely linked to the debates surrounding the National Agrarian Reform Plan in 1985. At that time, the organization represented the most reactionary sector of Brazilian agriculture, bringing together landowners who opposed agrarian reform and the democratization of rural areas, while openly advocating the arming of landowners (Bruno, 1996). UDR’s emergence also constituted a direct response to the formation of the Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST), whose central objective has been the pursuit of agrarian reform and the democratization of the countryside.

During the 1990s, UDR gradually withdrew from the political arena, while the MST expanded its organizational capacity and political influence (Coletti, 2006). The organization reemerged in the 2000s, and in the following decade Luiz Nabhan Garcia became its main political leader, assuming the presidency of the UDR in 2012.

Abag was founded in 1993 and played a central role in disseminating the concept of agribusiness in Brazil. According to Lacerda (2011), the association’s core agenda was structured around themes such as sustainable development, environmental protection, integration into the international economy, and the reduction of social inequality. These priorities clearly distinguished Abag from organizations such as the UDR and have remained central to its discourse up to the present. By 2022, Abag’s membership included not only export-oriented business associations, such as the Brazilian Association of Meat Exporting Industries (Abiec), but also major financial institutions, including Banco do Brasil, Itaú BBA, and Santander, as well as large corporations operating in Brazilian agribusiness, such as JBS, Bayer, Cargill, AGCO, SLC Agrícola, and Syngenta⁶.

Aprosoja Brazil was founded in 1990, initially focusing on demands related to infrastructure and logistics, value-added processing of traded grains, and the renegotiation of rural producers’ debts. Until the mid-2000s, the association’s activities were limited in scope and involved a relatively small number of producers. This situation changed with the creation of Aprosoja Mato Grosso in 2005 and the rapid expansion of soybean production, which has since become the cornerstone of Brazil’s export agenda. Soybean cultivation in Brazil currently covers approximately 35 million hectares, accounting for about one third of the global area dedicated to soybean production (Conab, 2018). More recently, Brazil has consolidated its position as the world’s leading soybean exporter,

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Available at <https://abag.com.br/associadas/> accessed on Nov 25, 2023.

responsible for roughly 42% of global production. At present, Aprosoja Brazil is composed of sixteen state-level associations⁷.

Returning to Delgado's periodization (2012), the third period (1999-present) is marked by the return of high credit values released to agribusiness and land appreciation. Between 2001 and 2010, the public credit available to agribusiness increased 9,5% per year and from 2000 until 2006 land's price had an evaluation on an average of 10,16% per year (Delgado, 2012). This happened because, due to the 1999 currency crisis, the export of primary products was used as a mechanism to regulate the trade balance. This period was also marked by the commodities boom and the growth of Chinese demand for primary products⁸, such as soybeans. However, unlike during the military dictatorship governments, the focus on expanding agribusiness production is geared towards primary exports⁹. Sayer and Barbosa (2020) argue that the expansion of agribusiness production and the revenues it generated for Brazil during the commodities boom were pivotal to the implementation of the social policies promoted by the Workers' Party governments.

Despite the high level of land concentration in Brazil and the existence of very large estates (*latifúndios*), this article argues that Aprosoja Brazil and UDR primarily represent medium-sized producers and nationally based capital. Agribusiness comprises a wide range of activities, including seed commercialization, farming, agricultural technology, fertilizers, pesticides, machinery, and commodity trading. When these segments are considered as a whole, the largest corporations operating along the agribusiness value chain are predominantly controlled by foreign capital. In agricultural technology, for instance, two of the six largest companies are based in the United States (including AGCO), two in Europe, one in Japan, and one in India. In the fertilizer sector, four major companies are headquartered in North America (the United States and Canada), four in Europe, one in China, and one in the Middle East. Commodity trading is similarly dominated by multinational firms, such as the U.S.-based Cargill, ADM, and Bunge, the Dutch Louis Dreyfus, and the Chinese Cofco. The same pattern is observed in seed commercialization,

7 Available at <https://aprosojabrasil.com.br/sobre-nos/historia/> accessed on Nov 25, 2023.

8 China's involvement in agribusiness since the year 2000 can be divided into three periods: 1) between 2000 and 2008, during which the country emerged as a major player in commodity trade, and its dependence on the import of such products became evident; 2) between 2008 and 2012, after the global financial crisis, a period in which Chinese companies chose to buy and invest in land; 3) from 2012 until now, when companies' strategy shifted from land acquisition to investment in company assets, aiming to control all stages of the soybean chain, for example (Escher; Pereira; Wilkison, 2018).

9 The growth of exports of primary products was also motivated by the implementation of the Kandir Law (Complementary Law 87/96), which exempts the collection of the Tax on Circulation of Goods and Services (ICMS) on the exports of primary and semi-processed products.

where Syngenta stands as the largest company in the sector. By contrast, within on-farm production, the largest agricultural enterprises operating in Brazil include SLC Agrícola (approximately 733,000 hectares), the Golin/Tiba Agro Group (around 300,000 hectares), and Amaggi (about 400,000 hectares) (Santos & Glass, 2018). Data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) indicate that the vast majority of rural establishments (81.4%) encompass up to 50 hectares, while only 0.3% exceed 2,500 hectares (IBGE, 2020). In this context, it is noteworthy that Luiz Antônio Nabhan Garcia, former president of the UDR, owned approximately 1,500 hectares of land in 2006¹⁰. As this overview indicates, large-scale companies are more frequently affiliated with associations such as Abag and Abiove. Accordingly, this article argues that Aprosoja Brazil and UDR do not represent large-scale or foreign capital, but rather predominantly medium-sized and nationally based capital.

4 THE DEFENSE OF LAND OWNERSHIP AND THE ANTIDEMOCRATIC OFFENSIVE

The demands articulated by the associations analyzed in this study vary significantly, reflecting the distinct forms of representation through which they operate. In the case of organizations representing medium-sized landowners these demands are shaped by two interrelated processes: (i) the interest in expanding landholdings to increase production and ensure land tenure security; and (ii) the structural dependence of farmers on input suppliers and commodity buyers, given that they do not control the prices at which they sell their products or purchase inputs. This dependence is particularly evident in relation to large, internationally capitalized corporations that dominate the supply of pesticides, machinery, and equipment, as well as international trade. As a result, these associations simultaneously prioritize the defense of land ownership as a central political demand and express tensions with large domestic and foreign corporations operating within agribusiness value chains. It was precisely through the mobilization of these two issues, land security and opposition to powerful market intermediaries, that Bolsonaro was able to secure the support of farmers and foster their adherence to Bolsonarism.

To examine the political positioning of the Rural Democratic Union (UDR), this article focuses on the political trajectory of Luiz Antônio Nabhan Garcia. After serving as UDR's president, he left the organization in 2019 to assume the post of Special Secretary

¹⁰ Available at <https://deolhonosruralistas.com.br/2018/11/28/sogro-de-nabhan-garcia-comprou-67-mil-hectares-de-terras-indigenas-no-mato-grosso-nos-anos-80/> accessed on Nov 25, 2023.

for Land Affairs in the Bolsonaro administration, a move that illustrates the close articulation between the association and the federal government during this period. UDR had already distinguished itself earlier as one of the first agribusiness organizations to publicly oppose Dilma Rousseff's second Workers' Party government (2014–2016) and to support her impeachment.

During the Workers' Party administrations, UDR also promoted confrontational actions against large agribusiness corporations and their ties to those governments. A notable example was its participation in the National Movement Against the Monopoly of Meatpacking Companies, organized in conjunction with the Association of Breeders of Mato Grosso do Sul (Acrissul) (Pompeia, 2022). This pattern of political behavior – marked by early opposition to the PT and explicit conflict with large, internationally capitalized agribusiness firms – reinforces the interpretation that UDR represents predominantly medium-capital farmers, whose interests and grievances differ from those of large-scale agribusiness.

During the 2018 electoral campaign, and even prior to it, Bolsonaro sought to articulate and amplify the demands of medium-sized farmers who, until then, perceived themselves as marginalized by the Workers' Party governments for two main reasons. First, the Workers' Party had historically maintained close ties with the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) and, while in office, implemented policies aimed at supporting small-scale agriculture, such as the strengthening of the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (Pronaf) and the creation of the Food Acquisition Program (PAA)¹¹. Second, Workers' Party administrations also adopted policies that favored large-scale agribusiness capital, particularly through the “national champions” strategy, which promoted companies such as JBS and Marfrig by granting access to subsidized and preferential credit (Cyrino, 2017).

With the support of Luiz Antônio Nabhan Garcia, Bolsonaro began to tour different regions of Brazil and to participate in agribusiness fairs and sectoral events, where he consistently emphasized the defense of private land ownership and openly attacked the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) (Pompeia, 2022). Among his campaign promises was the proposal to classify the actions of the MST as terrorism, a position that was explicitly included in his 2018 government platform. Another pledge that resonated strongly with farmers was the expansion of the right to carry guns¹², considered by the sector as

11 Available at <https://pt.org.br/no-dia-da-agricultura-familiar-veja-o-legado-de-lula-na-area/>. Accessed on November 13, 2023.

12 Available at <https://g1.globo.com/rs/rio-grande-do-sul/eleicoes/2018/noticia/2018/08/29/bolsonaro-diz-que-atos-do-mst-tem-de-ser-tratados-como-terrorismo.ghtml>. Accessed on November 13, 2023.

essential for the security of their lands against “invaders”. At that time, after a meeting between Bolsonaro and farmers at the candidate’s home in Rio de Janeiro, Nabhan Garcia reinforced that legal security, property rights, and a “National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) that is really for everyone and not just for some friends of the king”¹³ (referring to the credit offer made by BNDES to large-sized agribusiness capital during the “national champions” policy) were issues that Bolsonaro committed to. Following the same line, Bartolomeu Braz Pereira, then president of Aprosoja Brazil, stated that Bolsonaro was unanimous among farmers, mainly for his promises regarding security and land¹⁴.

After the elections, Nabhan Garcia sought appointment as Minister of Agriculture; however, Bolsonaro opted to accept the nomination put forward by the Agribusiness Parliamentary Front and appointed Tereza Cristina to the post, favoring a more technocratic and less controversial profile. Nabhan Garcia was then appointed as Special Secretary for Land Affairs of the Ministry of Agriculture. During his time as secretary, the main agenda was to facilitate land expansion for farmers and weaken social movements in rural areas. He helped create the “Título Brasil” program in December 2020, which outsourced the regularization of public land to municipalities, effectively facilitating the transfer of public land to the private sector¹⁵. In this same year, Nabhan Garcia helped to remove Franklimberg Ribeiro de Freitas of National Indian Foundation’s presidency, which is the main public institution of indigenous policy in Brazil¹⁶. Marcelo Xavier was nominated the new National Indian Foundation’s president and with his help Nabhan Garcia managed to implement “Instructional Normative number 09”, allowing certifications and registration of farms within indigenous lands that had not yet been certified by the government. In practice, two years after the publication of this measure, the Bolsonaro government certified 239,000 hectares of farms within these lands, i.e, indigenous lands¹⁷. In addition, there was a suspension of land reform and the countryside’s democratization. According to Nabhan Garcia, there were no available resources to carry it out.

13 Available at <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/eleicoes/2018/noticia/2018/10/24/bolsonaro-recebe-representantes-do-agronegocio-e-defende-agricultura-familiar.ghml>. Accessed on November 25, 2023.

14 Available at <https://exame.com/brasil/com-receio-da-esquerda-agricultura-fecha-apoio-a-bolsonaro/>. Accessed on November 25, 2023.

15 Available at <https://ojoioeotrigo.com.br/2022/04/titula-brasil-faz-parte-da-maior-ofensiva-de-grilagem-pos-ditadura/>. Accessed on November 25, 2023.

16 Available at <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-estado/2019/06/15/general-deixou-fu-nai-por-incompetencia-diz-nabhan.htm?cmpid=copiaecola>. Accessed on November 25, 2023.

17 Available at <https://apublica.org/2022/07/governo-bolsonaro-certificou-239-mil-hectares-de-fazendas-dentro-de-areas-indigenas/>. Accessed on November 25, 2023.

Aprosoja Brazil consistently supported the Bolsonaro government throughout its term. This support is evidenced by the active involvement of both organizations in protests and demonstrations in favor of the government and its political agendas, which were often marked by antidemocratic content. Antônio Galvan, identified as one of the main financiers and organizers of these mobilizations—such as the Independence Day protests in 2021—served as president of Aprosoja Mato Grosso between 2018 and 2020 and as president of Aprosoja Brazil between 2021 and 2024. In an interview with the Brazilian newspaper *Estadão*, Galvan stated that Aprosoja Brazil also supported the Independence Day demonstrations¹⁸. Galvan is also known to be in Bolsonaro's social circles and was one of the candidates to take over the Ministry of Agriculture before Tereza Cristina nomination¹⁹. According to Pompeia (2022, our translation),

The rural producer Antonio Galvan sought to win small and medium-sized soybean farmers by adopting a combative tone against soybean-related transnational corporations and against state and federal governments. Unlike giant soybean producers (who operate with tens or hundreds of thousands of hectares planted with the oilseed), smaller soybean farmers keenly felt the losses in distributive disputes with corporations and resented the difficulties in interacting with the state.

Luiz Antônio Nabhan Garcia and Antônio Galvan emerged as key figures in the articulation of the Movimento Brasil Verde e Amarelo (MBVA)²⁰, a political network that brought together medium-sized landowners, sectoral associations, and rural leaders aligned with Bolsonarism. The movement publicly supported Nabhan Garcia's appointment to the Ministry of Agriculture and incorporated the participation of organizations such as Aprosoja Brazil and Aprosoja Mato Grosso, reinforcing its character as a political expression of medium-capital landowners within agribusiness (Pompeia, 2022; 2024). The MBVA originated in 2017 under the name Abril Verde e Amarelo²¹ initially mobilized by Aprosoja Brazil and UDR in response to the Supreme Federal Court's ruling that reinstated the constitutionality of the Rural Workers Assistance Fund (Funrural). This decision was interpreted by rural producers as a direct threat to private property and as evidence of institutional hostility toward landowners.

18 Available at <https://www.estadao.com.br/politica/antes-de-ser-alvo-da-pf-presidente-da-aprosoja-confirmou-apoio-a-ato-de-7-de-setembro/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

19 Available at <https://www.canalrural.com.br/diversos/entidades-do-agro-indicam-nabhan-garcia-para-ministerio-da-agricultura/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

20 Which translates to Green and Yellow Brazil Movement.

21 Which translates to Green and Yellow April.

From its inception, the MBVA combined demands related to tax relief and land tenure security with a broader ideological discourse marked by anticommunism, hostility toward the judiciary, and criticism of large agribusiness monopolies. In 2018, the movement coordinated protests against the payment of Funrural debts, mobilizing several state-level Aprosojas and medium-sized farmers, while simultaneously strengthening its political ties with Bolsonaro, then a presidential candidate. Nabhan Garcia and other MBVA leaders accompanied Bolsonaro at agricultural fairs and rural seminars, presenting him as the political actor best suited to defend private property, confront social movements such as the MST, and challenge both left-wing governments and large corporate groups perceived as monopolistic and politically protected (Bruno, 1996; Cyrino, 2017; Pompeia, 2021).

The MBVA was responsible for mobilizing protests to show support for Bolsonaro government in 2021, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and after the annulment of Lula's condemnation confirmed by the Supreme Federal Court (STF) in April of that year²². Augusto Heleno, who was Bolsonaro's Minister-Chief of the Institutional Security Office, appeared in a video with Nabhan Garcia and Antonio Galvan requesting that the protest should be virtual to avoid more conflicts and controversies during the pandemic, since Bolsonaro government was being criticized by public opinion for refusing to take measures to slow down covid spread. Even so, the protest took place on May 15 and was entitled "O agro e o povo pela democracia"²³. Antidemocratic manifestations were made against STF and the electronic voting system. Flags supporting dictatorship and asking for military intervention could be seen all over the protest. Bolsonaro made a speech on the occasion, endorsing the protesters' agenda²⁴.

Also in 2021, MBVA, therefore Aprosoja Brazil and UDR, were behind another anti-democratic demonstration on September 7, Brazil's Independence Day. Antonio Galvan even appeared alongside Sérgio Reis²⁵ (pointed out as one of the main actors and organizers of antidemocratic attacks against STF) in a video in which the singer attacks STF. This

22 Lula was the main left-wing candidate for 2018 elections, but he wasn't able to participate due his condemnation and imprisonment in 2017. Lula left the prison in 2019 and in 2021 had an annulment of his condemnation. After this, he was able to be a presidential candidate in 2022 elections.

23 Which translates to "Agro and the people for democracy".

24 Available at <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2021/05/15/bolsonaro-participa-em-brasilia-de-atos-pro-governo-promovidos-por-religiosos-e-agronegocio.ghtml>. Accessed on December, 2025.

25 Sergio Reis is a popular brazilian singer who was also a congressman and a right-wing exponent, supporting Bolsonaro.

video was recorded at the Aprosoja Brazil's office in Brasília²⁶. On the eve of the protest, Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes ordered the freezing of the bank accounts of Aprosoja Brazil and Aprosoja Mato Grosso, on suspicion that the associations had transferred financial resources to support the organization of antidemocratic demonstrations²⁷.

MBVA and especially Antonio Galvan are identified as orchestrators of the attacks on institutional buildings and democracy on January 8, 2023, after the victory and inauguration of the current Brazilian president, Lula. According to the report from the Brazilian Intelligence Agency (Abin), accessed by newspapers such as the UOL agency, the MBVA and Antonio Galvan appear in the STF inquiry into antidemocratic attacks²⁸. Furthermore, in a section of the same report, the MBVA is identified as the controller of the “Sucesso no Campo” program used to disseminate its agendas. The program's website²⁹ features numerous articles and news items that explicitly express support for Bolsonaro and his political positions, actively call for demonstrations, and portray the events of January 8 in a favorable or justificatory manner. It also reproduces an article claiming that, should then-candidate Lula win the election, such a result would necessarily be the product of fraud and should therefore be annulled³⁰. After Lula's victory, the articles criticized the government. The site reproduced an official statement from Aprosoja Mato Grosso, in which the entity expressed concern about the first measures of Carlos Fávaro, Minister of Agriculture of Lula's government, because “the proximity of the current government to agendas focused on large-sized economic groups and also organizations such as ... Landless Rural Workers Movement for example, raises doubts about the actions for the vast majority of the country's rural producers, who are small and medium-sized.”³¹

26 Available at <https://www.intercept.com.br/2021/08/21/ruralistas-financiam-manifestacoes-golpistas-7-setembro/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

27 Available at <https://www.poder360.com.br/justica/moraes-determina-bloqueio-de-contas-da-aprosoja-para-rastrear-apoio-a-atos/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

28 Available at <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2023/07/30/com-apoio-logistico-e-does-serie-b-do-agro-articulou-golpe-desde-2019.htm>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

29 Available at <https://www.sucessonocampo.com.br/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

30 Available at <https://www.sucessonocampo.com.br/algumas-observacoes-sobre-as-eleicoes-presidenciais-de-2022/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

31 Available at <https://www.sucessonocampo.com.br/nota-a-imprensa-2/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

5 THE ISSUE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

While medium-capital farmers' political representation embraced Bolsonarism, becoming one of its main organizers for protests and attacks on democracy, associations linked to large-sized companies, mostly from the financial and trading sectors, presented demands in favor of sustainability and democracy. This occurs because these associations represent companies concerned about the image of Brazilian agribusiness abroad and how it could impact product sales. Abag demonstrates this concern in all annual reports for the period (2019-2022), and Abiove expresses the same concern in an official statement released in 2020, which is also signed by Abag. In this document³², there is also a proposal to combat illegal deforestation in the Amazon region and promote the economic and social inclusion of local communities to ensure environmental preservation. Abag even evaluated Ricardo Salles' departure from the Ministry of the Environment positively. Marcelo Britto, then-president of the association, stated that the replacement of Ricardo Salles by Joaquim Leite could improve Brazilian agribusiness' image³³.

Abag and Abiove experienced significant disagreements with Aprosoja Brazil during the period analyzed. Until 2020, Aprosoja Brazil was affiliated with Abag; however, in September of that year, it announced its withdrawal from the association, citing dissatisfaction with Abag's handling of environmental policy issues. One of Aprosoja Brazil's central criticisms concerned Abag's participation in the Brazil Climate, Forests, and Agriculture Coalition, a multi-stakeholder initiative that also includes environmental NGOs. In the same month, the coalition submitted a document to the federal government proposing measures to curb deforestation in the Amazon, a move that further intensified tensions between Aprosoja Brazil and segments of agribusiness more aligned with environmental governance frameworks³⁴. Aprosoja Brazil's then-president, Bartolomeu Braz Pereira, classified the coalition's proposal as "politicking" and called the group "opportunists"³⁵.

Aprosoja Brazil also entered into conflict with Abiove over the Soy Moratorium, an agreement established in 2006 among companies, NGOs, and governments that commits its signatories to refrain from purchasing soy produced on areas illegally deforested

32 Available at <https://abiove.org.br/abiove-na-midia/comunicado-do-setor-empresarial-brasileiro/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

33 Available at <https://globo rural.globo.com/Noticias/Politica/noticia/2021/06/abag-nao-ve-mudancas-na-politica-ambiental-mesmo-com-saida-de-salles.html>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

34 Available at <https://www.sna.agr.br/aprosoja-se-desliga-da-abag-apontando-diferencas-de-interesses-e-objetivos/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

35 Available at <https://sna.agr.br/aprosoja-se-desliga-da-abag-apontando-diferencas-de-interesses-e-objetivos/>. Accessed on November, 2023.

after 2008. Beginning in 2019, the moratorium became a central target of criticism by Aprosoja Brazil, which argued that the agreement imposed restrictions on producers that were more stringent than those established by Brazilian law and the Constitution. Bartolomeu Braz Pereira, in an interview with Bloomberg³⁶, pointed out that “farmers are not engaging in illegal deforestation to expand soy planting, and there is no longer an ‘environmental motivation’ for the moratorium since Brazil’s environmental law has evolved with the implementation of the new Forest Code.” Forbes³⁷, in an article on the subject published in November 2019, reports that Aprosoja Brazil’s demand to end the moratorium gained momentum with Bolsonaro’s government, which would support the association’s request. According to Antonio Galvan, who was serving as president of Aprosoja Mato Grosso at the time, “In the name of the government, Secretary Lupion [Secretary Special of the Civil House for Matters of the Chamber of Deputies of Bolsonaro government] declared that he does not agree with the soy moratorium because it represents a threat to national sovereignty at a time when the trading companies associated with Abiove are ignoring the Forest Code and Brazilian laws.”³⁸. Abiove, in contrast, maintained its support for the Soy Moratorium, emphasizing the risk of losing international market share to competitors should Brazilian soy exports forgo the environmental credibility provided by the agreement.

We also argue that positions regarding the democratic regime constitute a central analytical dimension for understanding the political behavior of agribusiness during the Bolsonaro government. As demonstrated in the previous section, Aprosoja Brazil and UDR openly supported antidemocratic actions and aligned themselves with the bolsonarista movement, with their leaders playing prominent roles in organizing demonstrations. Abag and Abiove, by contrast, sought to publicly affirm their commitment to democracy through official statements and institutional initiatives.

In August 2021, amid the mobilization surrounding the Independence Day protests, Abiove and Abag—along with five other business associations—published a manifesto explicitly defending democratic institutions³⁹. In the document, the signatory organizations underscore the centrality of the Brazilian Constitution and express concern over the adverse economic consequences that democratic destabilization could entail.

36 Available at <https://www.bloomberg.com.br/blog/investidores-pedem-manutencao-da-moratoria-de-soja-na-amazonia/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

37 Available at <https://forbes.com.br/last/2019/11/europa-alerta-para-riscos-de-fim-da-moratoria-da-soja-na-amazonia/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

38 Available at <https://aprosojabrasil.com.br/comunicacao/blog/noticias-brasil/2019/11/13/governo-alega-ameaca-a-soberania-nacional-e-apoia-fim-da-moratoria-da-soja/> Accessed on November 20, 2023.

39 Available at <https://abag.com.br/agronegocio-faz-manifesto-pela-democracia/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

Democracy is presented as a fundamental condition for economic stability and long-term development. Blairo Maggi, founder of the Amaggi Group and current former president of Abiove, criticized Antonio Galvan and Aprosoja Brazil's role in organizing antidemocratic demonstrations at the time. In an interview with Gazeta Digital, he said, "My position is contrary to that of President Antonio Galvan. Our class entity should not participate in this type of protest. We cannot defend the president's agenda but rather the interests of our category"⁴⁰. In 2022, also in the context of Brazil's Independence Day, Abiove signed another letter⁴¹ in defense of democracy, which was organized by the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (Fiesp). In this document, democratic stability is cherished and considered one of the main purposes of that date, the bicentennial of the declaration of independence. Furthermore, there is emphatic support for the role of the STF and the Brazilian judicial system, which were widely attacked by the Bolsonarista movement's demonstrations.

6 THE POLITICAL POSITIONING OF ASSOCIATIONS IN LIGHT OF THEORY

It is important to mention that the Bolsonaro government did not change the power structure within agribusiness—the farmers continue to be dependent and subordinate to large companies, mostly of international capital. In broad terms, the main economic policies continued and deepened what had already been implemented since the Michel Temer government (2016-2019), such as the privatization of public companies, increase of economic opening, the passive alignment of foreign policy with the United States, and neoliberal reforms such as pension reform (Boito Jr, 2020). However, Bolsonaro had to respond to his social base, the Bolsonarista movement, and, for that, he made moves such as the deregulation of environmental policies, relaxation of gun control, and weakening of social movements in rural areas.

This analysis diverges from Firmiano's (2020) interpretation, which argues that the Bolsonaro government produced a new configuration of the agribusiness "power bloc," in which conservative fractions, represented by organizations such as the Rural Democratic Union (UDR) and the Brazilian Rural Society (SRB), would have attained hegemony. It is important to note that Firmiano does not explicitly conceptualize the notion of a power

40 Available at <https://www.gazetadigital.com.br/editorias/politica-de-mt/blairo-maggi-critica-atuao-da-aprosoja-em-manifestao-pr-bolsonaro/664047>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

41 Available at <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/politica/entidades-do-agronegocio-e-associacoes-da-industria-medica-aderem-a-manifesto-pro-democracia-da-fiesp/>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

bloc, nor does he clearly define the bourgeois fractions involved or the representational scope of the associations he cites. According to his argument, the alleged hegemony of these agribusiness fractions is evidenced by the prominence of three actors within the Bolsonaro administration: former Minister of Agriculture Tereza Cristina, former Minister of the Environment Ricardo Salles, and Nabhan Garcia.

While it is true that Ricardo Salles and Nabhan Garcia advanced and supported policy measures that resonated strongly with farmers—often running counter to the stated preferences of large agribusiness corporations and international capital, particularly in the realm of environmental policy—these initiatives did not translate into material losses for agribusiness trade and exports. On the contrary, Brazil’s agribusiness exports continued to expand during the period. According to data from the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock (CNA), agribusiness exports reached a record high in 2022, growing by 32% compared to the previous year⁴².

To explain this complex relationship between the Bolsonaro government and the political behavior of the rural sector, we use the characterization of the Bolsonaro government and Bolsonarism as neofascist. As explained before, the neofascist government is supported by a mass-based movement which has two main features: i) it opposed and attacked “communist/socialist” and/or “left-wing” movements and parties and ii) it constantly attacked the democratic regime and had as one of its main objectives the implementation of a dictatorship. Both Aprosojas and UDR, with an active posture of its main exponents, Nabhan Garcia and Antonio Galvan, as well as its participation in the MBVA, sought to attack the democratic regime organizing violent protests. Also, one of the main reasons for the support that these associations had given to Bolsonaro in the first place was because the then-presidential candidate promised to frame the Landless Rural Workers Movement as terrorist. The Landless Rural Workers Movement is a left-wing movement and supported Lula’s candidacy. Both the relaxation of gun control and the repression of rural social movements help farmers expand their lands for production. So we can say that the political representation of medium-sized landowners adhere to Bolsonarism because they supported an authoritarian government, attacked the democratic regime and supported a position that openly attacks left-wings movements.

However, as emphasized by Boito Jr. (2020, 2021), drawing on Poulantzas’s (1972) theory of fascism, the existence of a mass-based neofascist movement does not imply that its social base becomes hegemonic within the power bloc once the movement reaches

42 Available at <https://cnabrazil.org.br/noticias/exportacoes-do-agro-batem-recorde-em-2022>. Accessed on November 20, 2023.

government. On the contrary, both historical fascism and contemporary neofascism are characterized by a process of political cooptation, through which a fraction of the dominant class incorporates the movement into the state apparatus in order to (re)establish its own hegemony. While in the fascisms of the twentieth century this role was played by monopolistic imperialist capital, in the Brazilian case the cooptation of Bolsonarism was carried out by international capital and the bourgeoisie associated with it (Boito Jr., 2020).

This dynamic helps explain the apparent contradiction between the radicalized, authoritarian, and anti-institutional discourse of Bolsonarism—strongly embraced by medium-sized landowners—and the concrete orientation of government policies, which consistently prioritized the interests of large international capital, including within agribusiness. As argued by Arcary (2019), Filgueiras; Druck (2020), and Cox (2021), neofascism in contemporary peripheral capitalism does not emerge in opposition to neoliberal accumulation, but rather as a political form compatible with, and functional to, the deepening of neoliberal restructuring under conditions of crisis. In this sense, the Bolsonaro government illustrates how a neofascist movement rooted in the petty bourgeoisie and medium-capital landowners can be politically instrumentalized by dominant fractions of capital, even when elements of its ideological discourse appear to clash with the interests of international capital.

Therefore, while Aprosoja Brazil and the UDR constituted a central component of the social base of Bolsonarism, they did not occupy a hegemonic position within the power bloc. Their role was that of an active and mobilized support base for an authoritarian project, whereas the principal beneficiaries of the Bolsonaro government's economic, foreign, and regulatory policies were large international corporations and the bourgeoisie associated with them. This asymmetry between social base and hegemonic fraction is not an anomaly, but rather a constitutive feature of neofascist dynamics, as theorized by Poulantzas and systematically applied to the Brazilian case by Boito Jr.

CONCLUSION

As we sought to highlight throughout the article, agribusiness should not be considered a homogeneous sector in terms of its political positioning. The different sectors within it, derived from various locations within the productive system of agro-industrial complexes and with different scales, may belong to diverse bourgeois fractions that permeate the entire agribusiness. Concerning the Bolsonaro government, business associations

representing medium-sized farmers, such as Aprosoja Brazil and UDR, actively embraced the Bolsonarista movement, with their leaders participating in antidemocratic demonstrations. Additionally, they supported the deregulation of environmental policies and the freezing and weakening of indigenous land demarcations, aiming to expand land for agribusiness production. On the other hand, business associations representing large-sized capital and international capital, Abiove and Abag, expressed concerns about environmental and sustainability issues, fearing negative perceptions of Brazilian agribusiness production abroad. They also issued official publications and statements in favor of democracy.

Through the characterization of the Bolsonaro government and the bolsonarista movement as neo fascist, we aimed to explain that the political representation of medium-sized farmers adhered to the bolsonarista movement. At the same time, large-sized capital, represented by Abag and Abiove, was not a part of bolsonarista movement, since these associations and its exponents openly disagreed with attacks against the democratic regime, defending democracy. Also, Abag and Abiove had great differences with Bolsonaro's policies and positions regarding environmental policies.

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