1 Introduction

A country that supposedly has no right wing. That was how parts of the Brazilian political class saw the country in 1985, according to a survey of deputies participating in the Constituent Assembly, which was responsible for drafting a new constitutional charter that would mark the beginning of the Sixth (and "New") Brazilian Republic after the end of the civil–military dictatorship (1964–1985) (Rodrigues, 1987; Pierucci, 1987). After the transition to democracy, the hegemonic sectors of Brazilian society considered the issue of right-wing authoritarianism a thing of the past, limited to a few nostalgic military officers and radical civilians who insisted on rejecting the end of the dictatorship. But the following decades proved otherwise. The Brazilian far right survived and managed to rally and reinvent itself, building a rich, transnational network. This phenomenon affected even the most extreme corner of Brazilian right-wing movements: namely, neofascism.

The rights are now both a part of Brazilian history and a major element of daily political life. Since independence and the formation of a national identity, the right has been grouped into fascists, conservatives, authoritarians, liberals, traditionalists, Catholics, et cetera. In recent decades, new, more radical right-leaning groups and trends have emerged, a movement some studies have coined a "conservative wave" or "new right," among other terms.

In recent years, the election and presidential mandate of Jair Bolsonaro and its surrounding events have justifiably provoked growing concern in respect of this topic. After the end of the Bolsonaro government, a coup attempt on January 8, 2023 combined a set of actions inspired by international examples (e.g., the attack on the Capitol in Washington, DC), including patterns from the extensive history of the Brazilian far right. Thus, to understand the Brazilian context, one must explore aspects such as transnational circulation without ignoring the local and regional factors that influence this process. This integration between the global/international and the local/regional greatly helped in leveraging the extreme-right agendas in Brazil, as well as facilitating their reception.

This Element is grounded on the perspective that fascism is one of the most important points for comprehending the historical and current situation of Brazilian right wings, based on an analysis of Brazilian neofascism and its interactions with a part of the political field: the far right (Pirro, 2022; Mudde, 2019).

The importance of analyzing fascism arises from its historical framework and reverberations. The Brazilian Integralist Action, founded in 1932, was the main fascist organization outside Europe and had a strong presence in the Brazilian

political, religious, and military sectors. In fact, it was the first mass political organization in the country, even before entities such as the Brazilian Communist Party. Moreover, in addition to the institutional articulation and its green shirts and blouses, fascist groups and trends have enormously contributed to the amalgam that is the Brazilian – and even Latin American – political right-wing culture, centered around a radical political stance based on issues such as anticommunism and Catholicism (Boisard, 2014), as well as the defense of authoritarian values and regimes.

The analysis framework I use in this Element considers fascism as a global phenomenon – that is, not exclusively European nor restricted solely to the interwar period. By following this analytical and interpretative framework, I argue that fascisms developed autonomous trajectories outside Europe, particularly in Latin America (Finchelstein, 2019), establishing relations with the armed forces, the Catholic Church, and intellectuals and authoritarian regimes with a corporatist approach (Costa Pinto, 2019). This history did not end after the "era of fascism," and we can now effectively speak about a history of neofascism, with its new characteristics and political processes (Copsey, 2020). By extension, neofascism encompasses a wide-ranging universe of organizations, groups, intellectuals, and political initiatives that seek to recapture fundamental aspects of the organizations and/or core ideas of twentieth-century fascist movements.

The history of neofascism in Brazil developed at a different pace compared to countries such as Italy and France. Contrary to a certain "synchronicity" between fascisms in the first half of the twentieth century, the post-1945 context brought new challenges. In Latin America, some of the fascists adapted to the "postfascist" context, integrating themselves into authoritarian regimes such as Peronism in Argentina or the Brazilian New State (Estado Novo) lead by Getúlio Vargas. In Western Europe, with a few exceptions such as the Iberian Peninsula, the postfascist backdrop helped drive the first and second waves of the radical right. An essential turning (and starting) point for these waves was their departure from the "fascist condition" and the turn to radical right-wing populism (Von Beyme, 1988), in which the democratic condition became an imperative for political groups once associated with fascism and authoritarianism.

Being publicly associated with fascism was an issue due to the political and electoral risk it imposed. That was an immediate and common condition that fascist groups shared on both continents. However, after the initial postwar years, there was a distinction between political frameworks, especially from the 1960s onward. While a significant part of Western Europe was fully involved in a broad process of consolidating liberal democracy as a governmental benchmark, Latin America would undergo a new authoritarian wave in the form of

military dictatorships, which lasted until the 1980s. That is a highly important contextual element. It raises the following questions: How did neofascism develop in Brazil? And what is the impact of neofascism on the most recent rise of the far right in this country of undeniable regional importance? These questions are what I seek to answer in this Element.

I consider that the existence of an authoritarian wave in Latin America from the 1960s onward was one of the fundamental factors for neofascism to have an effective presence in Brazil only after the democratic transition, which can be called a "late phenomenon," especially compared to the European continent. The authoritarian structures, which provided few possibilities for insertion into political society, as well as the few ways of mobilizing political life, were factors that made it impossible for neofascist groups to integrate into the regime. In addition, the context of the 1960s and the demands of the Cold War (and the discourses in defense of democratic freedom) provided a kind of impediment to the usual rhetoric derived from the neofascist camp. That brings about some fundamental implications, which can be divided into two main issues.

The first is the relationship of neofascism to a broader local political framework. Although it might seem paradoxical, neofascism had some opportunities during the democratic transition as it sought to become more autonomous regarding its actions and organization. In subsequent years, this autonomy made it more ambitious in the democratic political game, as some neofascist tendencies got closer to or integrated with radical-right political parties.

In other words, neofascism was not (nor is currently) a major political player, but rather is a recurring presence in the radical political scene, especially from the twenty-first century onward. This type of political capital would later be important in moments of political crisis, such as the process that culminated in the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff of the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT), and particularly in the development of Bolsonarism, as well as during the moments of crisis and the later part of Bolsonaro's government.

The second implication concerns the strategies that Brazilian neofascism employed to be incorporated into a broader framework of international neofascism. Regarding the European extreme right, after the "revivalism" phase neofascist organizations moved away from the institutional arena and articulated themselves based on strategies such as deterritorialization and European internationalization (Mammone, 2001), revisionism and Holocaust denialism, and metapolitics (Copsey, 2020).

This neofascist groupuscular right (Griffin, 2003), inspired by the ethnodifferentialist agendas of the Nouvelle Droite and similar movements, intensified continental cooperation based on a pan-national, Europeanist agenda. This

approach was immediately considered alien and inaccessible to the Brazilian context, not only due to its late rise but also because its identity agenda was dissociated from that of European neofascism. This is one factor that partially explains the most recent rise in internationalization seen in Brazilian neofascism. In short, neofascism is a late phenomenon in Brazil compared to Western Europe, and its capacity for internationalization results from an even more recent development: the impact of new technologies and the emergence of new groups in the Brazilian neofascist environment.

From this perspective, this work analyzes the history of neofascism in Brazil and its relationship with the Brazilian far right. The Element consists of three parts. The first section, "The First Neo-Fascist Wave (1980–2000)," provides an analysis of the birth of neofascism and its three main branches: neo-integralism, neo-Nazism, and Holocaust denialism. The second section, "The Second Neo-Fascist Wave (2000–2020)," presents the new forms of Brazilian neofascism, its initial internationalization process based on the incorporation of new strategies (such as metapolitics and identitarianism), and the search for new transnational spaces (such as the Fourth Political Theory), among others. The third section, "Dialogues between Neofascism and the Brazilian Far Right,"is a discussion of the Brazilian far right and how it interacts with neofascist groups, with an investigation of the strategies neofascist groups adopted during the most recent rise of the Brazilian radical right and the formation of Bolsonarism as a field of radical politics, as well as the impact of Bolsonarism on the neofascist camp. Finally, the conclusion points toward the new challenges that must be overcome to understand this constant and changing phenomenon in Brazilian radical politics.

2 The First Neofascist Wave (1980–2000)

2.1 The Origins of Fascism and Neofascism in Brazil

The impact of the "era of fascism" on the largest country in Latin America was evident. Inspired by European fascist movements and regimes and influenced by corporatism, anticommunism, and antiliberal discourses, Brazil's fascism started developing between the 1920s and 1930s. Some small organizations, such as the Brazilian Social Action (Ação Social Brasileira) group and the Ceará Legion of Labor (Legião Cearense do Trabalho), were the first fascist expressions in the country. In addition to grassroots groups, some parts of (notably German and Italian) immigrant communities were enthusiasts of the National Fascist Party or the Nazi Party (Bertonha & Athaídes, 2023). However, these initiatives were restricted to those immigrant spaces.

The Brazilian fascist scenario lacked a nation-encompassing entity that considered the country's specificities, a gap filled in 1932 when Brazilian Integralist Action (AIB) was founded. This institution was the flagship of integralism and consolidated itself as the primary fascist reference in Brazil and outside Europe. Wearing green shirts and blouses, the integralists formed an intensely bureaucratic, authoritarian, and paramilitary structure aimed at emulating what would later be a corporate totalitarian state inspired by the Italian experience (i.e., the Integral State).

Between 1932 and 1937, the AIB – led by the journalist and writer Plínio Salgado, alongside the intellectuals Gustavo Barroso and Miguel Reale – brought together hundreds of thousands of activists in a country with continental dimensions. Integralism was one of the main vectors for the spread of anticommunism, anti-Semitism, and antiliberalism in Brazil, and thus quickly consolidated itself as a mass political organization with strong representation among the urban middle classes, capable of establishing dialogues with sectors of the armed forces (especially the Navy) and strands of conservative Catholicism. Despite not assuming power, integralism was a critical ideological vector of fascism and a training ground for prominent political activists in subsequent decades.

In 1937, integralists supported the coup that led to the onset of the dictatorship – that is, the authoritarian New State (Estado Novo) of Getúlio Vargas – by helping spread anticommunist and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories (the Cohen Plan). Although some integralists joined the authoritarian regime, a significant part of the activists and ideologues sought to build a more radical alternative that culminated in a coup attempt. In March of 1938, the integralists were deemed politically illegal after a further failed coup.

The integralist leader was arrested and subsequently exiled to Portugal, where he stayed until the end of the Second World War (Gonçalves, 2014). During this period, he grew closer to the Portuguese New State and tried to adapt to his new surroundings and influences, such as Salazarism and Portuguese Christian democracy (Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto, 2022). When Salgado returned to Brazil (1946), he took over the People's Representation Party (Partido de Representação Popular), the main integralist entity in the postwar period.

The integralist/fascist allegiance was not a consensus inside the party but rather a contended subject among the base-level activists and the upper echelons of the hierarchy. At first, the party joined the anticommunist discourse of the Cold War, but without assuming a proper neofascist tone. At times, the party organized events that celebrated the fascist past (using the Sigma [i.e., the AIB symbol], public demonstrations with green shirts, etc.). However, these clashed with the "defascistization" discourse that the integralist leadership advocated.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the main agents of right-wing radicalization in Brazil were parts of the military and some areas of organized civil society that were calling for a coup. The fascist alternative did not gain prominence, so it was up to the integralists to articulate themselves as secondary participants in major public demonstrations – the "Marches of the Family with God for Liberty" – which helped mobilize the movement that culminated in the 1964 coup. With the beginning of the civil–military dictatorship, the process of political curtailment gained power, leading to the end of multipartisanship and the closure of all political parties, including the Integralist Party.

The bipartisanship established in 1966 based on the legal framework of the military regime (Napolitano, 2018) led to the creation of the National Renewal Alliance (Aliança Renovadora Nacional) party, bringing together several right-wing movements that supported the coup, including the integralists. However, during the dictatorship, the right-wing party was never markedly integralist, and the former leader of the Green Shirts was a politically irrelevant figure from the perspective of the majority. Still, Salgado was the undisputed leader of the Brazilian fascists. The creator of integralism was a synthesis of ideology, leadership, and activism – in short, a typical fascist leader in a postfascist era.

Salgado died in 1975, and the integralists lost their political figurehead and were left with no representatives who could immediately articulate the movement amidst the national neofascist camp. It must be taken into account that, during the 1970s and 1980s, the Brazilian political scenario was undergoing a slow process of political opening supervised by the military, which involved issues such as amnesty for military personnel, including torturers, and standstills and obstacles around topics such as transitional justice and politics of memory.

Even so, small non-neofascist extreme right-wing groups – such as the Anticommunist Movement (Movimento Anti Comunista) and the Communist Hunting Commando (Comando de Caça aos Comunistas) – came together in reaction to the democratic transition, using bomb attacks as a radicalization strategy (Farias, 2023).

Some military circles were pressuring the democratization movement, characterized by internal tendencies in the armed forces (Chirio, 2018) and the creation of pressure groups and military right-wing press vehicles, such as the newspapers *Ombro a Ombro* (*Shoulder to Shoulder*), *Letras em Marcha* (*Marching Letters*), and so forth. In fact, this was when the figure of Bolsonaro emerged as a political leader among low-ranking military personnel (Santos, 2022).

It was a time when integralism had to reinvent itself. Without Salgado, there were disputes over his political legacy: arguing over distinct interpretations of