Religiosity, Identity, and Non-material Politics in Brazil: The Role of Evangelical Christianity in the 2018 Presidential Campaign of Jair Bolsonaro

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According to the newspaper *A Folha de São Paulo*, approximately 26% of Brazilians considered themselves to be of evangelical faith in 2019. While this remains a lower proportion of the population than the approximately 51% who consider themselves Catholic—making Brazil home to the world's largest number of Catholics—evangelicals are a significant and growing group. As a result of its increasing demographic weight, this sizable minority has also become an important political force in Brazil. Following the 2018 elections, 107 deputies in the Chamber of Deputies and 81 senators in the Federal Senate were of evangelical faith, representing around a fifth of the total representatives in each chamber. This, added to the 67% electoral share that Jair Bolsonaro obtained within the evangelical community in 2018, reflects the increasing political importance of evangelicals in Brazil. In his 2018 electoral campaign, Bolsonaro, although of Catholic faith, agreed to participate in evangelical events on various occasions, and was even baptized in the evangelical faith. This represents Bolsonaro's broader personal and political tendency towards bringing the interests and positions of evangelical groups into the mainstream political arena. Bolsonaro characterized his 2018 campaign under the motto "Brazil above all, God above all," which sealed an evident relationship of mutual support that existed between him and the politically involved and conservative-leaning evangelical churches in Brazil, which have a stronger political mobilizing capacity than their Catholic counterparts. Ultimately, this

support catapulted Bolsonaro to victory in Brazil's 2018 general election, where his opponent was Fernando Haddad, a former mayor of São Paulo and a member of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), which had ruled Brazil throughout most of the twenty-first century.

In this article I examine the drivers behind this political alliance between Bolsonaro and Brazilian evangelicals, in particular the ideological overlaps that facilitated their shared agenda. I read this alliance through the lens of the 'material' and 'non-material' to explain the political situation in Brazil during the 2018 election. These terms are an original way to examine Brazilian politics, but the broad dichotomy they set up is developed from the work of Víctor Araújo, who has argued that the voting behavior of evangelical denominations in the Brazilian electoral landscape tends to be motivated by issues involving 'morality' and 'values,' or what he describes as 'identitarian guidelines.'[1] This article, consequently, is in dialogue with academic scholarship on identity politics, understood as the basing of political projects on identitarian aspects of a particular group of people (such as ethnicity, religious affiliation, etc.). Drawing on this scholarship, I define 'material' politics as focused on the economic and social benefits a candidate promises, such as improvements to infrastructure or public services, while I understand 'non-material' politics as focused on notions of morality and values. To make this argument, I focus on the overlaps between Bolsonaro and the evangelicals on issues related to the armed forces, other key groups (such as the agricultural export sector), and political rivals (such as the PT and the wider political left). I do this through an analysis of a diversity of sources related to the 2018 Brazilian presidential election, such as the government plans presented both by Bolsonaro and his rival, Fernando Haddad, as well as journalistic accounts and relevant academic literature. This approach builds on and expands the work of Taylor Boas and Amy Erica, who proposed that the PT's lean towards 'sexuality politics' during the 2010s pushed a majority of evangelical Christians into a deep-seated opposition to the PT and, by the 2018 election, into

[1] Araújo, "Pentecostalismo," 518–9.

providing decisive support for Bolsonaro.[2] In this article, I extend Boas and Erica's insight by examining the common grounds on which these evangelical groups found it logical to support the Bolsonaro candidacy, creating a programmatic alliance that proved decisive for Bolsonaro's victory in the 2018 Brazilian elections. This article will begin with a brief historical overview of the rise of evangelicalism in Brazil, followed by an analysis of three important sites of overlap between Bolsonaro and the evangelicals, and conclude with some brief remarks that summarize my key findings and relate them back to the central theoretical claim about material and non-material politics.

Identity Politics and its Non-Material Dimension

Identity politics has been defined by the historian Mark Mazower as a shift towards "political activism increasingly revolv[ing] . . . around issues of 'identity'" rather than social class, particularly "'national,' 'cultural,' [or] 'gender'" identities. This shift results in what Anthony Giddens defines as 'life politics,' the sense that communities are increasingly dealing with "biological, emotional and existential concerns" that appear to be repressed in more traditional ways of doing politics.[3] Explaining this further, the cultural theorist Todd McGowan opposes identity politics to the dominant politics of the twentieth century, in which individuals committed themselves to an abstract idea, such as socialism. Instead, McGowan argues, identity politics relates to an individual's self-perception and essential understanding of their ontology. By this, he means that identity politics sustains itself on the perceived risk of the disappearance of the traditional characteristics on which an individual builds their identity, such as religious or cultural traditions and norms. In contrast, McGowan argues, losing commitment to a political ideology such as socialism doesn't raise the same existential fears about the disappearance of an individual's foundational norms.[4] As a result, identity politics focuses less on improving the material conditions of various groups and more on issues that achieve

[2] Boas, *Evangelicals*, 142–4.
[3] Giddens, quoted in Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 169.
[4] McGowan, *Universality*, 149–52.

cultural salience in relation to the existential self-understandings of those groups.[5]

These characteristics of identity politics also relate to the concept of ideology, especially when analyzing identity in the context of national ideologies. As Knud Larsen argues, the key role of ideology in the context of a nation or, more broadly, in any collective context, is to provide individuals with a sense of belonging and security. Rules and beliefs are stressed across society, sometimes by force, to create a cohesive and integrated order within society and sustain the political practices occurring at the highest level of national administration. In addition, this sense of collective identity can be used to generate a clear line separating those who belong and those who do not.[6] Finally, ideology plays a role in providing individuals and collectives with a space for identification within the unstable arena of political life, creating a common base for the creation of a sense of belonging and therefore offering a 'non-precarious identity.' This 'non-precarious identity' serves as a key pillar for the development of what I am defining as the non-material in the realm of politics.[7] Ideology, therefore, plays an important role in determining the cleavages that identity politics may take, depending on the specificities of the context in which this type of political behavior is identified, and serves as a key driver for shaping identities and creating common ground amongst different communities.

Drawing on this understanding of the rise of identity politics, rooted in the self-perception and identity of groups, I propose to speak more broadly about the nature of non-material politics. In this form of politics, issues are born first from perceived threats to an individual's identity and cultural practices; hence, political positions express a desire for group protection. The critical component of non-material politics is that voting behavior is driven by policies that relate to identitarian concerns, for example around social issues such as abortion or LGBTQ+ rights. These can be regarded as 'values' or 'morality' issues, rather than policies focused on offering

[5] O'Neill, *Essentials*, 114.
[6] Larsen et al., "Ideology and Identity," 166.
[7] Warren, "Ideology and the Self," 617–8.

potential voters material improvements to their lives (e.g., the implementation of social welfare or poverty alleviation programs).[8] Non-material politics can create an 'us vs. them' situation in the political arena. In the 1933 Brazilian Constitutional Assembly election, for instance, evangelical Christians sided strongly with evangelical candidates, who feared the possibility of the new constitution making the country a secular state.[9] This fear led to the evangelical saying "brother votes brother" (*irmão vota em irmão*), reflecting the tendency of evangelical Christians to side with those with whom they shared a religious bond, rather than building alliances over specific political proposals.[10] As this tendency suggests, in the Brazilian context identitarian politics is often religiously inflected, and the rise of evangelicalism has therefore had a significant impact on the development of non-material politics. It is therefore essential to understand the genealogy of political evangelicalism to explain the non-material factors affecting the outcome of the 2018 election.

The Rise of Evangelical Politics in Brazil

The political importance of evangelicals in Brazil can be traced to the constituent assembly of 1986. Prior to the 1986 election, Brazil's non-Catholic Christian denominations had a stable but minimal representation in the country's different constituent elections. This representation was mainly organized around the perceived threat of increased national political influence by the Catholic Church, which was suspected of pressuring different political groups, such as political parties, to promote a preferential regime for the Catholic faith, or even to make Catholicism an official religion.[11] In the 1986 election, however, the Pentecostal denomination managed to place 14 representatives in parliament, helping to double the evangelical representation in this body and giving birth to the term 'evangelical caucus.'[12]

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[8] Araújo, "Pentecostalismo," 517–8.
[9] Boas, *Evangelicals*, 116.
[10] Rodrigues-Silveira and Urizzi, "Evangélicos," 563. [My translation]
[11] Boas, *Evangelicals*, 113.
[12] *Ibid.*

Although this evangelical caucus has sometimes had members sympathetic to the political left, its members have usually leaned towards more conservative political positions, linking the caucus with parties on the political right.[13] This is partly due to the good relations between evangelical leaders and the Brazilian dictatorship of 1964 to 1985, which was itself a product of the clientelist nature of the regime. To maintain support, the regime looked to evangelical leaders who could win public support for the regime from certain sectors of the population. Starting in 1968, for example, the regime subsidized local evangelical churches in the state of Pará in exchange for support from the leadership of said churches.[14] In other states, the government handed out radio broadcasting licenses to evangelical churches and placed members of these churches in key local administration positions.

With the arrival of democracy in 1986, various neo-Pentecostal denomination groups developed a strategy to attract followers and increase the financial strength of the evangelical churches. This strategy, known as 'Prosperity Theology,' continues to be based on the ritualization of donations (i.e., the tithe) in exchange for receiving economic benefits from God. This—added to the community roots of these churches—creates a mechanism of non-material exchange, spiritually sanctioning the individual and collective economic well-being of these churches' members.[15] Entering the twenty-first century, accumulation of capital through tithe donations allowed various evangelical groups to increase their ability to influence local politics. One venue for this influence is the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, a pressure or lobbying group founded in 2003. As a result of the fragility of the open list electoral system in Brazil, various candidates sought support from pressure groups—including the Evangelical Parliamentary Front—for their campaigns, allowing evangelical groups not only to influence these candidates but also to propose their own candidates.[16] As a result, it

[13] Brasil Fonseca, "Religion and Democracy," 164–5.
[14] Boas, *Evangelicals*, 106–7.
[15] Dengah, "Being Part of the Nação," 50; Lapper, *Beef, Bible, Bullets*, 156.
[15] Pagliarini, "Tongues of Fire," 6–8.
[16] Rodrigues-Silveira and Urizzi, "Evangélicos," 564; Lapper, *Beef, Bible, Bullets*, 156.

is easy for evangelical pressure groups to bring their agendas, based primarily on maintaining tax benefits and promoting a socially conservative agenda, into the political debate.[17] Additionally, they demonstrated an ability to direct the electoral preferences of their members towards specific candidates, leading the evangelical churches to emerge by 2018 as strong political actors in that year's elections, with both high levels of social loyalty and a sustainable financial situation.[18]

The Bolsonaro-Evangelical Alliance

When he stood for election in 2018, Bolsonaro was no newcomer to the mainstream Brazilian political scene. Bolsonaro began his political career as a member of the Rio de Janeiro city council, where he served between 1989 and 1991, and was subsequently a member of the lower house of the Brazilian parliament until the 2018 elections. Throughout these years, Bolsonaro made a name for himself in the political landscape as someone aligned with right-wing politics, and even ultra-conservativism. Bolsonaro was consistently opposed to the LGBTQ+ community in Brazil, and proposed legislation in favor of arming rural landowners to defend themselves from potential invasions by the Sem Terra movement.[19] Additionally, Bolsonaro presented a nostalgic view of the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil in the second half of the twentieth century.[20] In the twenty-first century, these positions allowed Bolsonaro to portray himself as a clear critic of the ruling PT, which, led by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, carried out a series of left-of-center policies, such as redistributing property and granting social protections to indigenous groups and sexual minorities, who are often perceived as vulnerable in Brazilian society. In 2016, however, Lula da Silva's successor as president and PT leader, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached following corruption accusations. Rousseff was opposed by the more conservative sectors of Brazilian politics,

[17] Lapper, *Beef, Bible, Bullets*, 163.
[18] Lacerda, "Assessing the Strength," 8–10.
[19] Martín, "Os Gays Não São Semideuses;" See also: "Bolsonaro Chega a Cuiabá Defendendo."
[20] Melito, "Jair Bolsonaro Defende."

who disliked the increasingly progressive politics of her administration, including on issues such as the protection of indigenous communities and environmental leaders in the Amazon. The conservatives were also displeased with her administration for floating the idea that abortion be included as a right in the Brazilian constitution. In this context, Bolsonaro emerged as a prominent opponent who campaigned in the 2018 elections as the face of the opposition to the left-wing and, it was suggested, corrupt PT. The traditionally conservative evangelical Christian groups in Brazil saw Bolsonaro as a potentially attractive candidate, due not only to his own socially conservative stance, but also because of his record of fierce opposition to the PT, which saw its legitimacy eroded because of its ongoing corruption scandals. In this article, I argue that the alliance between evangelicals and Bolsonaro went beyond mere convenience, however, and was grounded in ideological overlaps, which I will examine in three key areas: their socially conservative agendas; a shared sympathy for the armed forces; and a similarly shared sympathy with another important group in the Brazilian context: the agricultural sector.

The Conservative Social Agenda

One reason for evangelicals' tacit and explicit support for Bolsonaro's presidential candidacy and subsequent administration is the ideological and programmatic similarities that these actors share. These similarities are evident in the socially conservative positions that exist in the discourses of Bolsonaro and evangelicalism. Although it is true that evangelical groups have had rapprochements with the governments of the PT for much of the twenty-first century, these relations have worsened over the years. It is important to mention that José Alencar, vice president during Lula da Silva's first governments, converted to the evangelical faith towards the end of his life, which could be considered a symbolic approach of the evangelicals towards Lula. The relationship between evangelicals and the PT, however, has eroded since 2009, driven in part by the PT's political shift toward a social agenda driven by identitarian claims around gender and sexual identity. The PT's 2018 presidential plan, for instance, includes sexual education and LGBTQ+ issues in the national education curriculum.

Furthermore, the plan gave a central role to issues around male-female equality, claiming, for instance that "all public policies, from design to execution, must have an analysis of gender impact, as well as the direct participation of the Ministry of Women's affairs."[21] The Bolsonaro candidacy, in contrast, gave an important role to defeating 'cultural Marxism' and its variants, which were proposed as a threat to the stability of the family and the values of the nation.[22] As a result, social conservatives found themselves closer to the positions proposed by Bolsonaro's plan than they did to the more progressive positions of the PT.[23]

The socially conservative positions preached by evangelical groups have been largely consistent over time, even as evangelicals have historically supported different parties. The leaders of evangelical groups, unlike their Catholic counterparts, have prioritized addressing issues related to the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, abortion, and gender, among others. In a survey carried out by Smith, the 'wrath of God' was amongst the punishments most feared by members of evangelical churches in Brazil, a punishment that they understood as being likely to 'fall' on members of the LGBTQ+ community and supporters of any of the identitarian rights listed above.[24] Support for LGBTQ+ rights, abortion rights, and gender equality, amongst other positions, considered contrary to the doctrine of their churches, have played a fundamental role in the construction of evangelical discourse in Brazil, leading members of evangelical churches to incorporate these opposing discourses and positions actively in their lives.[25] These discourses tends to have more influence because of the existence of a 'threat of exclusion,' under which evangelicals feel pressured to actively participate in their churches and defend their churches' doctrines, under the threat of being excluded from them.[26] This threat makes it easier for preachers to disseminate political messages, creating a collective negative moral judgment toward a more liberal social agenda and

[21] Partido dos Trabalhadores, "Plan de Governo," 20. [My translation]
[22] Partido Social Liberal, "Prosperidade," 5–8.
[23] Lapper, *Beef, Bible, Bullets*, 150.
[24] Smith, *Religion*, 64.
[25] *Id.*, 68.
[26] *Ibid.*

sometimes even "promising hell," as evangelical preacher Silas Malafaia once did, to liberals.[27]

Bolsonaro's popularity rose among these evangelical groups because of his own conservative stance on the same social issues. Despite not being evangelical, Bolsonaro developed campaign rhetoric like that of the evangelicals. The clearest example of this was Bolsonaro's campaign slogan, which was even present in all official documents, including his government plan: "Brazil above all and God above all." This phrase has been accompanied by statements where Bolsonaro even declared himself opposed to the secular state in Brazil, proposing to replace it with a 'Christian' one.[28] Moreover, the Bolsonaro campaign's government plan included an introductory section that presented "values and compromises." Amongst these, an assertion that respect for the family is 'sacred' and an argument that the state has no right to interfere in individuals' familial lives suggest Bolsonaro's social conservatism. Furthermore, Bolsonaro's campaign plan accused former PT governments of indoctrination and introducing 'precocious sexualization' to school-age children. The inclusion of these matters in the government plan, and the urgent tone with which the plan presents them (written with red highlighting or capital letters), denotes the hardline position of the Bolsonaro campaign, marking clearly its position on social issues in Brazil and allowing it to stand out from the PT.[29]

Shared positions on social issues allowed an understanding and then an alliance to be formed between Bolsonaro and certain evangelical leaders. A notable example is the case of pastor Malafaia. In 2018, Malafaia led the Rio de Janeiro branch of the neo-Pentecostal church Assambleia de Deus, which then had more than 12 million followers throughout Brazil. Malafaia, along with Michelle Bolsonaro, wife of the future president, was among the biggest critics of the National Human Rights Plan (PNDH3) presented in 2009. Malafaia's opposition stemmed from the fact that this plan contained a legal route to the decriminalization of abortion in Brazil. Malafaia referred to the PNDH3 as a "shame to

[27] "Silas Malafaia Afirma em Vídeo que Aborto é Pior do que Estupro."
[28] AJ+ Español, "¿Por qué Muchos Evangélicos."
[29] Partido Social Liberal, "Prosperidade," 4, 41.

humanity" and, in preparation for the 2010 elections, he personally financed propaganda in Rio de Janeiro calling to "defend the family and the human being."[30] Malafaia's church has a leading doctrinal document known as the *Declaration of Faith*, where the expected beliefs and behaviors of its members are clearly stated. In this document, for instance, homosexuality is firmly categorized as a sinful path and the family is defined as a sacred institution created by God. The previous links between Malafaia and the Bolsonaro family, exemplified by their shared rejection of the PNDH3, helped Malafaia to acquire proximity with the then-candidate Bolsonaro in 2018 and hence to appear as an initial potential supporter.

This alliance was sealed in the run-up to the 2018 presidential elections, when Fernando Haddad replaced Lula da Silva as the PT candidate, representing a major upheaval and a clear point of cleavage in the 2018 presidential race. During his term as mayor of São Paulo, Haddad blocked the construction of a university owned by a local evangelical church and opposed the construction of another evangelical church in the city.[31] Evangelical groups subsequently carried out a successful media campaign against Haddad, whom they described as an 'abortionist' and accused of distributing a 'gay kit' while mayor of São Paulo.[32] These groups also targeted Haddad's vice-presidential candidate, Manuela d'Avila, who was accused of wanting to abolish Christian festivities in Brazil.

Evangelical groups' history of clashes with the PT and ability to wage a media war on PT candidacies bolstered support for Bolsonaro's candidacy.[33] Bolsonaro benefited from this media war against his opponent and from evangelical voters' resulting fears of showing explicit support for the PT candidacy, given that such support would mean breaking the discursive line proposed by some of the most powerful evangelical leaders in the country.[34]

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[30] Lapper, *Beef, Bible, Bullets*, 164–5.
[31] *Id.*, 166.
[32] Pagliarini, "Tongues of Fire," 11; Machado and Franco, "Eleições 2018."
[33] Lapper, *Beef, Bible, Bullets*, 168.
[34] Pagliarini, "Tongues of Fire," 12.

Shared Sympathy for the Armed Forces

Another factor that facilitated an alliance between Bolsonaro and evangelical groups is that both have special relationships with the armed forces in Brazil. This relationship is quite clear in the case of Bolsonaro. It is a product not only of the fact that Bolsonaro himself was a soldier but also of the nostalgic discourse used by Bolsonaro and his supporters to characterize the military dictatorship of 1964 to 1985. Bolsonaro's campaign plan, for instance, praised the armed forces as heroes for "stopping leftist forces" from carrying out a *coup d'etat* in Brazil in 1964.[35] This, combined with Bolsonaro's choice of vice-presidential candidate, Hamilton Mourão, also an ex-military man, suggests Bolsonaro's sympathy towards the armed forces. Moreover, Bolsonaro made clear in his government plan that military men and police officers should be seen as 'national heroes,' mentioning especially those who have died due to gang violence, and that they "should get their names engraved in the fatherland pantheon."[36] The Bolsonaro government plan even argued that violence in Brazil had a "sharp increase" in those states where the PT had ruled in the recent past, creating a discursive inclination towards blaming the PT and left-wing politics for surges of violence in Brazil.[37]

Evangelical churches in Brazil also have a close relationship with the military. As mentioned above, evangelical churches did not see their activities greatly affected during the military dictatorship. This was partly because the regime had a clientelist strategy rather than one based on ideology. As a result, evangelical churches in Brazil accessed financing and subsidies from the Brazilian state. Although the lack of central governing body to unify all evangelical faiths diminished the dictatorship's ability to establish a strong relationship with these churches, the fact that some pastors were able to receive support from the dictatorship was sufficient to build a nexus of closeness based on convenience—or, at least, tolerance—between both actors.[38] It is after the dictatorship, however, that a

[35] Partido Social Liberal, "Prosperidade," 33. [My translation]
[36] *Id.*, 29.
[37] *Id.*, 26.
[38] Boas, *Evangelicals*, 102–10.

convergence in the positions of the armed forces and the evangelical churches is most clearly seen—a result of debates over how the Brazilian state should carry out its human rights agenda.

The armed forces opposed the implementation of a truth commission to investigate human rights violations that occurred during the military dictatorship. During his time as a parliamentarian, Bolsonaro himself described this commission as "slanderous" and argued that it would lead to revenge against the armed forces, accusing the PT and its then-presidential candidate, Dilma Rousseff, of having links with terrorist organizations.[39] Bolsonaro's opposition to the Truth Commission was similar to that sustained by the most conservative groups within evangelicalism against the PNDH3, which was the plan presented by the PT government in 2009 to promote a human rights-centric approach to public policy across all levels in Brazil. These groups channelled their discontent with this plan through the 'evangelical caucus,' a group of evangelical members of parliament. In response to the publication of the PNDH3, the evangelical caucus proposed legislation to regulate decisions around gender identity and abortion rights, which were strongly rejected within the more conservative sections of the evangelical community.[40] The report of the aforementioned truth commission also included proposals to resolve doubts regarding human rights violations during the military dictatorship.[41] Although each group had its own motivations, evangelicals and the armed forces both opposed the PT's human rights positions, bringing them closer together, and therefore, closer to Bolsonaro. This, in turn, created the possibility not only for joint political action within the Brazilian parliament, which materialized in 2016 during Rousseff's impeachment, but also for the alignment of evangelical church members with the causes of the military, thus bolstering support for the military from the neoconservative bases of the evangelical churches.[42]

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[39] Machado, "From the Time of Rights," 11–12.
[40] Guerreiro and Nublat, "Bancada Evangélica."
[41] Machado, "From the Time of Rights," 11.
[42] *Id.*, 12.

Another factor that made the alliance between Bolsonaro and the evangelical groups in Brazil possible was the existence of shared good relations with other actors and a shared rivalry with Lula da Silva and the Workers' Party. As already seen, Bolsonaro and the evangelicals were both nostalgic for the military dictatorship in Brazil. These shared affinities, however, were not only for the military. Such affinities also proliferated toward other groups in society. A clear example is the affinity that the evangelical churches and Bolsonaro had towards the livestock sector, an increasingly powerful group in Brazil also known for its role in the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. For their part, evangelical churches have developed a logistical capacity to reach some of the most remote regions of the Amazon with the primary goal of evangelizing marginal and indigenous communities. Evangelical churches have a massive presence in the Amazon, and even provide certain basic services to Amazon communities, especially healthcare, although always under the premise of "spreading the message of Jesus."[43] This presence of evangelical groups in the Amazon coincided with the presence of groups related to livestock and agricultural activities, who often had regional political weight.

An example of the affinities between Bolsonaro and agricultural groups can be seen in the case of Antonio Denarium, a businessman dedicated to soy who was elected governor of the state of Roraíma in 2018 by the Social Liberal Party (PSL), then Bolsonaro's party. Denarium and other regional politicians carried out a discursive war against the protection of the environment under the pretext that environmental protection impedes the development of a region rich in natural resources.[44] By joining the PSL, politicians such as Denarium were not only able to pursue their personal goals of implementing agroindustry-friendly policies, but also to serve as regional allies of the Bolsonaro campaign. The PT's 2018 campaign plan clearly opposed the interests of large landowners and large-scale farming. The plan—making reference to "the right of land and territory" of indigenous communities and poor peasants with no

[43] Pacheco, "Missões Evangelizadoras." [My translation]
[44] Cowie, Costa, and Prado, "Brazil Votes."

access to arable land, and to how the PT would protect the human rights of these groups and "severely" use violence against those who threatened them—put the PT into a position of opposition to the interests of agribusiness entrepreneurs such as Denarium.[45] Partly as a result of debates like these, agroindustry interest groups have adopted an 'anti-globalist' discourse similar to that of evangelical groups. But rather than opposing the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, agroindustry instead calls positions such as indigenism and environmentalism 'illogical' and argues they contribute little to the development of the regions of the Amazon.[46] While the goals of evangelicals and Amazon agroindustry interests are different, these groups use compatible methods. In the 2018 election campaign, this compatibility created a relationship—or at least an understanding—through which the groups became closer to each other and, therefore, to Bolsonaro's candidacy.

As already mentioned, these evangelical groups had, like Bolsonaro, a fierce opposition to the Workers' Party, a tendency called *anti-petismo*. This phenomenon was linked with a broader 'anti-communist' sentiment, which linked the PT with extreme left politics and was born in the anti-government protests of 2013. The rise of *anti-petismo* is generally understood to be the result of the combination of an international economic crisis, brought about mainly by a fall in commodity prices, and a growing perception of corruption in Brazil, which came to be associated with the PT as the governing party in 2013, hence leading to the aforementioned protests in that same year.[47] Hence, *anti-petismo* arose as an umbrella term under which the different opponents to the PT governments of Lula and Rousseff could identify with.

This section has argued that while evangelicals and the agribusiness sector opposed the PT for reasons with different origins, these forms of opposition ultimately led both toward Bolsonaro. In the case of the evangelicals, opposition to the PT was linked to evangelical rejection of socially progressive policies.[48] For

[45] Partido dos Trabalhadores, "Plan de Governo," 59. [My translation]
[46] Lapper, *Beef, Bible, Bullets*, 171.
[47] Davis and Straubhaar, "Producing *Antipetismo*," 86.
[48] Araújo, "Pentecostalismo," 518–9.

the agricultural sector, on the other hand, the PT was perceived as a party with a strong environmental and pro-indigenous stance, threatening the profitability of large-scale agriculture in Brazil, specifically in the Amazon.[49] Both evangelical and agricultural groups found themselves in opposition to the PT, which helped them find in Bolsonaro and his candidacy a kind of bridge between the two, given that he was a political embodiment of the *anti-petismo* that first arose in 2013.

Conclusion

This article has analyzed three factors that fueled an alliance between Bolsonaro and evangelical groups in Brazil ahead of the 2018 presidential elections. First, there was a similarity between the conservative social agenda of Bolsonaro and that of the evangelical churches. This element explains the close relationship between Bolsonaro's opposition to the expansion of rights for the LGBTQ+ community—as well as to other progressive stances such as the legalization of therapeutic abortion—and the similar opposition of the evangelicals. This shared program created the basis for a political alliance. Second, I examined a shared sympathy for the armed forces. Here it was determined that Bolsonaro's nostalgia for the military dictatorship, although not exactly shared by the evangelical groups—who during the dictatorship had a primarily clientelist relationship with the regime—was related to the opposition of both to the implementation of a broader human rights agenda proposed during the government of Rousseff. Although at a discursive level the opposition to this agenda was different, given that the evangelical groups opposed aspects of the agenda related to health and reproductive education, Bolsonaro and evangelicals found sufficient similarities to support their shared opposition and used this common position to support Rousseff's impeachment process in 2016. Finally, favorable relations between evangelical groups and agricultural business groups, also important allies of Bolsonaro, were analyzed. This analysis suggests that although evangelicals and agricultural groups had different agendas, the conditions were right for them to coexist in the most peripheral

[49] Lapper, *Beef, Bible, Bullets*, 188–92.

regions of Brazil, particularly the Amazon, and find shared objectives in their opposition to the so-called 'globalist' agenda of the PT. This, combined with the wider opposition that both had towards the PT, known as *anti-petismo*, allowed evangelicals and agricultural business groups to together support the candidacy of Bolsonaro, who presented himself as friendly to the agendas of both groups and as the best option to defeat the PT.

This analysis suggests that the non-material features of the Bolsonaro campaign, those pertaining to 'values' and 'traditions,' were attractive to evangelical voters in Brazil, who found in his candidacy compelling positions regarding the turn they felt the country should take. Moreover, these shared positions were also common ground for evangelical Christians and other groups that would end up supporting the Bolsonaro campaign. Opposition to the PT was a common ground allowing evangelical Christians to find understandings and create alliances with other groups based on their non-material or ideological opposition to the PT and left-wing politics in general. These alliances with other groups would form part of the broad base of support for Bolsonaro's ultimate victory in the 2018 presidential election.

The proposed concept of non-material politics can therefore offer a new approach on the impact of identity politics in contemporary political debates. As identity politics encompass issues involving the protection of the traditional characteristics that compose the identity of an individual or a community, non-material politics can be seen as a way in which politicians like Bolsonaro reach potential voters through the issue of protecting their identity. Non-material politics promises to protect certain voters' 'values' or 'customs' in a context where these voters perceive the identity-based claims of other groups—such as women or the LGBTQ+ community—as a threat to their own self-identity. This suggests that a non-material turn can be used to backtrack on the material advances of politics in the twentieth century. The non-material represents a new source of political alliances on both the right and the left in the shifting terrain of contemporary politics.

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