

THE RHETORICAL RISE OF THE “MITO” AND “TROPICAL TRUMP”:  
HOW BOLSONARO USED A TRUMP PERSONA AND US IMAGERY IN HIS  
RHETORICAL APPEALS

By

Greice Figueiredo Markwith

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate’s thesis advisor, Dr. David Cratis Williams, School of Communication & Multimedia Studies, and has been approved by all members of the supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

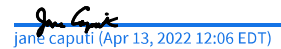
SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:



David Cratis Williams (Apr 13, 2022 11:24 EDT)

---

David Cratis Williams, Ph.D.  
Thesis Advisor



jane caputi (Apr 13, 2022 12:06 EDT)

---

Jane Caputi, Ph.D.



Matthew J Sobnosky (Apr 21, 2022 12:49 EDT)

---

Matthew Sobnosky, Ph.D.



---

Carol Bishop Mills, Ph.D.  
Director of the School of Communication  
& Multimedia Studies



---

Michael J. Horswell, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College  
of Arts and Letters



---

Robert W. Stackman Jr., Ph.D.  
Dean, Graduate College

May 2, 2022

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Date

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## ABSTRACT

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In the elections of 2018, Brazilians chose Jair Messias Bolsonaro, the first Far-Right candidate, to be the future President of Brazil. In a 28-year political trajectory, he changed political parties eight times. The constant change demonstrates his ability to use rhetorical devices and adapt to new appeals. The researcher of this work outlined Bolsonaro’s rhetorical rise, tested his rhetorical personae, “mito” and “Tropical Trump” based on the work of Ware in Linkugel (1982). No other foreign candidate mirrored Trump as much as he did. Bolsonaro also used US imagery in videos, borrowing images and terminologies found in the US culture. By analyzing his rhetorical strategies, the researcher identified Bolsonaro’s representative anecdote in his appeals that led to his rhetorical motivation as outlined by Burke’s dramatism.

## DEDICATION

For my son Yuri as a motivation to never give up on education and finish his Master's degree. To my husband Scott for being so supportive and believing in me more than I. To Modoc for always being there under my chair while I wrote this thesis. I love you all.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

During the 2018 elections, the majority of Brazilians chose Jair Messias Bolsonaro to be their future President of Brazil. Bolsonaro was the first Far-Right<sup>1</sup> candidate to win in a controversial and polarized Presidential Election in Brazil. In Bolsonaro's 28-year political trajectory, which began in 1989, he changed political parties eight times (Yoneshigue, 2021). The constant change of parties during Bolsonaro's political career not only revealed intolerance and amateurism, but demonstrated his ability to change, disguise, and adapt to new political trends.

Some two years before Bolsonaro's win, Brazil was in the midst of a political and economic crisis, with the largest-ever investigation of corruption and money laundering (i.e., the *Lava Jato* [Car Wash]) culminating in President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment as well as the arrest of former President Lula da Silva. During that impeachment year, Bolsonaro was announced as a pre-candidate for the Presidency by the PSC (Christian Social Party) (Braga, 2016). Amidst the uproar during the Chamber of Deputies' vote for Rousseff's impeachment, Federal Deputy of Rio de Janeiro, Jair Bolsonaro, voted in favor of impeachment and gave an electrifying speech that gained national attention (Oliveira, 2016). Bolsonaro also dedicated his vote to Colonel Ustra, who served during

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<sup>1</sup> Bolsonaro was in eight different parties during nine political terms; although, he continuously followed the ideals of the right, with conservative moral speeches that attacked and criticized any project that could be identified with the Left.

the dictatorship (1964-1985), and who became the first military official condemned by the Brazilian justice system as a torturer (Santiago, 2012).

As a presidential candidate, Bolsonaro maintained his outspoken speech with ultra-conservative ideas and inflammatory rhetoric filled with homophobic, racist, and misogynist statements (Sardinha, 2017). Bolsonaro also promised to end politicians' perks, claiming that he was never involved in any corruption case (Pompeu, 2017). The message that Bolsonaro put forward was ideal for what the Brazilian electorate wanted to hear in the angry aftermath of *Lava Jato* in 2016. As a result, most voters chose to ignore Bolsonaro's previous polemic declarations. A further occurrence was how, despite Bolsonaro's controversy, sympathizers bestowed upon him the nickname of *mito* (i.e., myth).

Similarities in Bolsonaro's straightforward and inflammatory communication style led him to be compared to former President of the United States (US), Donald Trump. This comparison led to international media providing him with another nickname, "Tropical Trump" or "Brazilian Trump." Bolsonaro also did not disguise his own admiration for Trump and his politics. Rather, Bolsonaro embraced the "international" nickname and even began to assume Trump's persona<sup>2</sup> as a tool for his own rhetoric. During his campaign, as well as after his election, Bolsonaro further echoed Trump's words many times. Bolsonaro also used imagery from the US in his appeals, borrowing images and terminologies found in US culture that his audience could quickly assimilate.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Ware and Linkugel (1982, p. 50), "Rhetorical personae reflect the aspirations and cultural visions of audiences from which stems the symbolic construction of archetypal figures." A persona can, thus, be understood as a mask worn or a character adopted by an actor or speaker.

By analyzing his discourses, the researcher of this work endeavored to identify Bolsonaro's terminologies, with the aim to find the representative anecdote that led to his rhetorical motivations<sup>3</sup>, as outlined by Burke's notion of dramatism. Through this endeavor, the researcher sought to discover the roots of Bolsonaro's language, as he "reflected," "selected," and "deflected" reality by choosing some terms rather than others. As a further part of this thesis, the researcher also investigated Bolsonaro's rhetorical rise in line with three moments, based on his nicknames "mito" and "Tropical Trump": 1) as a politician in Dilma's impeachment; 2) as Federal Deputy of Rio de Janeiro, one year before official presidential campaign; and 3) shortly after being elected President.

The first moment relates to when Bolsonaro appeared on national television during the impeachment of Rousseff in April 2016 as a foul-mouthed politician. The second pertains to an exploration of the year 2017, as detailed in Bolsonaro's YouTube videos "Bolsonaros in the USA" – this was where he began most of his work in changing his image from Deputy to a politician with the potential to win the Presidency. For the third moment, the researcher analyzed the potential of the most relevant rhetorical event in Bolsonaro's career, namely his election as President. As the newly elected President of Brazil, it was in this third moment that Bolsonaro had a meeting and held a press conference with US President Trump at the White House.

It should be noted that Bolsonaro's rhetorical rise from an unknown Deputy to an internationally known politician only occurred as a result of his ability to use rhetorical devices, language techniques, and new appeals. The researcher, therefore, used direct

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<sup>3</sup> Burke (1945) noted that motives are present in the language humans use to describe why people do things.

quotations taken from Bolsonaro's public speeches and media accounts, as well as the opinions and statements posted on his social media channels.

As indicated previously, Bolsonaro used US imagery as a visual argument in his YouTube videos. Bolsonaro also had a tendency to adjust his speeches so as to better reinforce extant associations with his "Tropical Trump" persona. Based on the work of Ware and Linkugel (1982), the researcher for this current study tested the rhetorical personae theory by applying it to Bolsonaro in a bid to determine how the appropriation of a pre-existing personae (i.e., "mito" and Trump) worked to strengthen Bolsonaro's own persuasive appeals.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature concerning Bolsonaro's rhetoric lacks articles associating Bolsonaro with Trump's rhetoric. One exception relates to media articles that articulated comparisons in the speech style of both politicians. Extant academic literature is also devoid of any rhetorical examinations of Bolsonaro's linguistic associations with the US. Some academics have, however, assessed the impacts that Bolsonaro's fascist narratives have had on society (e.g., Torres et al., 2021), with Costa and Silveira (2018) having analyzed the effects of authoritarianism in his social media posts.

Professors Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) from Harvard University further assisted in identifying tyranny in Bolsonaro's speeches. Of note is that these authors argued that modern-day democracies can die in new, subtle ways at the hands of democratically elected leaders. These authors, thus, offered warning signs to help citizens identify authoritarian tendencies in candidates.

Of further note is that, in an interview, Levitsky stated that Bolsonaro met all the warning signs and could, thus, be considered more explicitly authoritarian than any other leader recently elected in Brazil's history (Salgado, 2021). In their article regarding Michael Foucault's theories, Costa and Silveira (2018) analyzed the effects of Bolsonaro's undemocratic speech. These authors noted that Bolsonaro made it possible for authoritarian ideas circulate in a democratic system.

Several articles have, furthermore, been written about Bolsonaro's interaction with social media. As a candidate, it is essential to note that Bolsonaro already had millions of followers on his Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp groups who were dedicated to sharing his messages. Several scholars have, thus, considered Bolsonaro the first President elected mainly via social media, as he had only 8 seconds available on national television for free electoral propaganda. For example, de Araujo Mendes (2021, p. 1) made the following claim regarding Bolsonaro's Facebook posts: "...in 2018 the first digital presidential election took place in Brazil."

While studying Bolsonaro's populist discourse on Twitter, da Silva (2020) analyzed 110 Tweets posted by President Bolsonaro during his first year in office. As part of this analysis, da Silva (2020) invoked Foucault's notion of discourse so as to conduct a critical discourse analysis (CDA). Da Silva (2020) found that the interdisciplinary characteristics of CDA (i.e., when addressing language as a social practice) included semiotic data and were, therefore, disinterested in investigating linguistic units.

Professors Dias and Fernandes (2018) similarly wrote a relevant article about the image transformation of Bolsonaro during his 2018 campaign. Their article provided insights into better understanding how the nickname of *mito* emerged, as they analyzed the construction of political myths. The authors indicated that these myth constructions were "based on concepts of Personalization, Spectacularization, and the Myth of the Hero," wherein Bolsonaro's speeches positioned him as the "country's savior" (Dias & Fernandes, 2018, p. 477).

In a similar vein, David Nemer (2019a), a professor of Media Studies at the University of Virginia who specializes in the anthropology of technology, presented a work entitled *Uncovering hidden spaces of populism in Brazil: The case of Bolsonaro supporters in WhatsApp groups* at various conferences. As part of this work, Nemer (2019a) focused his research on WhatsApp, a messaging mobile app used in Brazil by more than half of the nation's population. WhatsApp became popular as a result of it allowing users the ability to create groups with shared interests where people can send voice and text messages, pictures, news, and fake news. Through monitoring WhatsApp group messages in 2018, Nemer (2019a, b) found that the application was often used to spread fake news and misinformation that helped Bolsonaro become elected. It should be noted, however, that despite being a professor, Nemer (2019a, 2019b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c) had not yet published these noted articles on Bolsonaro in academic journals. Rather, Nemer (2019a, 2019b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c) opted to write press articles related to WhatsApp, Instagram, and fake news in Bolsonaro's Brazil. Regardless of the lack of academic backing, both the da Silva (2020) and Nemer (2019a, 2019b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c) articles contained useful information for this current thesis, particularly in respect to discovering Bolsonaro's propaganda context and how his messages were distributed to target audiences.

One of the reasons for relying so heavily on media-related sources is that searches on platforms such as Google Scholar and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses returned no academic publications related to the search terms of Rhetorical Criticism on Bolsonaro in either English or Portuguese. Some of the speech analyses that do exist in academic words also did not apply to the aim of the current study. It was necessary, therefore, for



the researcher to conduct this current study in order to begin filling the analytical gaps regarding the rhetorical criticism of Bolsonaro's speeches and word use.

This project is, thus, significant in that the researcher opted to apply rhetorical studies of US academic authors such as Kenneth Burke and his work related to dramatism as well as works by Ware and Linkugel (1982) regarding *personae*. The current thesis is also unique in how no other work, to date, has involved a researcher analyzing Bolsonaro's rhetoric through both or either rhetorical *personae* and/or dramatism.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

In Burke's book, *A Grammar of Motives* (1945), the author described dramatism as involving more than simply describing the five key terms in an event (i.e., Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose).<sup>4</sup> Rather, the author argued that dramatism concerns the driving question of motives (i.e., what humans mean when they talk about what people are doing and why they are doing it; Burke, 1945). By describing what people are doing, Burke argues that humans choose terminologies that provide them with a *reflection* of reality. As a result, humans *select* aspects of an event and, in so doing, *deflect* other elements of reality. The words filter human perceptions which in turn shape how we understand and act in the world<sup>5</sup>. In these "terministic screens" in which language "uses us," Burke argued that persuasion occurs through the process of identification<sup>6</sup>.

Of further note is that Burke's understanding of dramatism (Burke, 1945) recognized an essential and powerful function of language that goes beyond scientific position and which is linked to humanity's attitudes and actions. In this understanding, then, it can be argued that social interactions of cooperation and competition help to develop human vocabulary and, from there, societies and cultures. Burke (1973, p. 44)

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<sup>4</sup> Burke (1945) provided the term "pentad" for these five terms (i.e., Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose) to better aid in identifying the motives that are present in what people say.

<sup>5</sup> Burke (1973, p. 45) affirmed: "Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function as a deflection of reality."

<sup>6</sup> "You persuade a man only insofar as...identifying your ways with his" (Burke, 1969, p. 55).

further attested that dramatism stresses language as an aspect of “symbolic action.” In this way, it could be asserted that if Act is inherent to humans as a result of making choices, rather than a motion for machines, then language is part of individuals’ choices and, thus, shapes both humans’ actions and perceptions of reality.

By making use of Burke’s methods in the current study, the researcher was assured that the rhetorical criticism presented in this dissertation could help in the identification of Bolsonaro’s motives; that is, how he used language to interact with others as well as how he used language to persuade his audience. It should be noted that Burke used the word “identification” as a more complete term to describe persuasion; namely that it functions as a process that occurs both unconsciously and consciously. In *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Burke, 1969, p. 20-21), for example, Burke observed that “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B.... To identify A with B is to make A ‘consubstantial’ with B.” At its essence, this quote indicates that individuals who share common interests, and who identify with each other, do not deny their differences.

As noted by McGeough and King (2016, p. 149), “Burke recognized the power of identification in shaping our actions.” If identification shapes human action, then persuasion (i.e., identification) implies conflict. This assumption was confirmed by Burke, who stated that “[i]dentification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division” (Burke, 1969, p. 22). By associating Burke’s statement with events that took place both before and after Bolsonaro’s election to office—a period perceived as the most polarized since the beginning of Brazil’s democracy—it was possible to determine how the country became

divided between and across two groups. On the one side were those who identified with Bolsonaro and idolized him so much that they would begin behaving like him in tone and expression when political discussions occurred among families and friends. On the other side, there was those who did not identify with Bolsonaro and who were concerned with his authoritarian speech style that they found threatened democratic values. This division resulted in violence between the groups; especially when marches for and against Bolsonaro met in the streets<sup>7</sup>.

Supplemental to dramatism in this study was the rhetorical personae theory put forward by Ware and Linkugel (1982). Through the adoption of this method, the researcher was able to analyze Bolsonaro's rhetorical rise, from the moment he gained his first nickname (i.e., *mito*) to the moment he became associated with the nickname "Tropical Trump." Ware and Linkugel's theory on rhetorical personae further assisted the researcher in testing and evaluating Bolsonaro's trajectory as from when he first put on the "mask" and assumed his *mito* and "Tropical Trump" personae. Bolsonaro's personae were present in his rallies, his electoral campaign, and across all anecdotes he presented in the videos that he posted on his YouTube channel.

Another relevant method that the researcher adopted in respect to analyzing Bolsonaro's rhetorical rise was identifying the representative anecdote that underpinned the stories he told. In particular, the researcher adopted the method to better align Bolsonaro's stories with the Four Master Tropes, which Burke (1945) previously described as a vocabulary constructed with representative anecdotes that can synecdochically encapsulate a broader story. The aim of this method was to determine

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<sup>7</sup> Several marches in Sao Paulo and other Brazilian cities required police intervention when groups in favor of Bolsonaro clashed with groups set against Bolsonaro (G1 Globo, 2020).

what the representative anecdote identified in Bolsonaro's videos on his YouTube<sup>8</sup> channel might be.

It should be noted that Crable (2000) has argued that while a representative anecdote can be used as a critical method in and of itself, it may require other supports in order to provide vocabulary for the study of motives. As the researcher for the current study sought to discover the representative anecdote that bolstered Bolsonaro's stories during the three rhetorical moments explored in this thesis, it was deemed necessary to combine more than one method, as described in the preceding discussion. The chosen methodology was, thus, able to provide a more comprehensive and thoroughly explained understanding of Bolsonaro's rhetoric, as detailed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

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<sup>8</sup> Barry Brummett (1999) in his article argue that there is nothing in Burke's "theories which disqualify them for application today to all forms of mass media, including electronic media" (480).

## CHAPTER 4

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The military coup of 1964 marked the beginning of an asperous period in Brazil. Under the command of a military government, the regime censored and controlled media contents, and jailed, tortured, and exiled Brazilian dissidents in the name of nationalism and development, with targets mainly against Communism. A further reality during the dictatorship, was that Brazilians experienced the period known as the *Milagre Economico* (Economic Miracle) between the years 1968 and 1973. This period was marked by economic development and falling inflation (Sanz and Mendonca, 2017). One of the expansion programs undertaken by the government during this time was known as the Program of National Integration. This program's main objective was land occupation in the north of the country through the construction of the *Transamazônica* (Amazon region; Getulio Vargas Foundation Center for Research and Documentation of Contemporary History of Brazil [FGV CPDOC], n.d.). A result of this program was the death of thousands of indigenous people (Brasil and Farias, 2014).

The year 1977 was further marked by student protests against the dictatorship (Gaspar, 2017). Subsequently, in that same year, the Brazilian military dictatorship put hundreds of university students in jail. It was around this time that Bolsonaro graduated from a boarding school, Military Academy Agulhas Negras, at the age of 22.

The 21-year military dictatorship ended on March 15, 1985, when the New Republic began giving Brazilians the right to vote. A compulsory voting policy also came

into effect at this time, with minimal sanctions for citizens who did not vote. Since then, during every election period and the announcement of a new President, Brazilians have sought a new starting point for their country through the promotion of economic progress and an ordering within the generally unruly political system. These aspirations are evident on Brazil's flag: "*Ordem e Progresso*" (Order and Progress).

After experiencing part of his youth in army barracks and serving the Brazilian Army in the artillery and parachute units, Bolsonaro left his military career a few years after the dictatorship's end. Bolsonaro's aim was to enter politics in a newly democratic Brazil. In 1988, he joined the Reserve Military Force<sup>9</sup> after being elected *vereador*<sup>10</sup> of Rio de Janeiro as a member of the now extinct Christian Democratic Party (PDC). In 1990, Bolsonaro was elected to be Federal Deputy of Rio de Janeiro for the first time; thereafter, he was re-elected a further six times. During the 2014 election, Bolsonaro became the Federal Deputy who received the most votes<sup>11</sup> in Rio de Janeiro. It was at this time that Bolsonaro declared that he would become a Right-wing candidate for the 2018 Presidency (de Moraes, 2014).

Upon the second-round of 2018 elections, 55.13% of Brazilians voted for Bolsonaro (Máximo, 2018). This was the first time that a Far-Right populist had been elected to office, effectively ending the 16-year cycle of Left-wing party governance. Brazil thereby joined the increasing list of nations with populists winning elections in democratic systems, the likes of which included Donald Trump in the US, Matteo Salvini

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<sup>9</sup> A group of troops made up of citizens who combine military careers with civilian careers. These individuals are available to be called in to fight in case of a war.

<sup>10</sup> A politician chosen by the people, through a direct vote, to represent a local municipality. A *vereador* is a city councilor who holds both executive and legislative functions.

<sup>11</sup> According to the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), Bolsonaro received 464,565 votes in 2014 (Planto, n.d.).

in Italy, Mauricio Macri in Argentina, and Narendra Modi in India. The 2018 election in Brazil was also the most polarized since the end of the dictatorship period, with the expected turnaround generating positive expectations in those who voted for Bolsonaro. The opposite was true for opponents, who expressed concern about the future of Brazil's democracy.

It should be noted that before he was elected President, Bolsonaro spent 28 years in the Chamber of Deputies, served nine terms, and participated in eight different political parties (Yoneshigue, 2021). As noted earlier, Bolsonaro first announced his intention of becoming a presidential candidate in 2016, when he was part of the PSC (Christian Social Party). Bolsonaro changed affiliation in the interim, however, and was ultimately elected President of Brazil in 2018 as a member of the Social Liberal Party (PSL). It was only until November 2019 that Bolsonaro was affiliated with this party; thereafter, up until the time of writing in 2021, he has remained without a political party and has, instead, been investigating the possibility of joining a party with small representation. This attempt can, however, only occur within the *janela partidaria* (party window)<sup>12</sup>.

Of note is that Bolsonaro has not only regularly changed parties, but he also has a tendency to switch between religions. For example, while he was born Catholic, he was rebaptized in the river Jordan by an Evangelical pastor, without denying his previous baptism. In response to this, Romi Bencke, a Lutheran pastor, stated that Bolsonaro is “skilled at manipulating faith.... [He] is a kind of religious hybrid” (Veiga, 2021a). It

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<sup>12</sup> This event is regulated by law and takes place every election year. At this time any and all parliamentarians have 30 days to change political party without losing their mandate. (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, 2021)



should be noted that Bencke is one of the 380 religious leaders who petitioned the 62<sup>nd</sup><sup>13</sup> request for impeachment against President Bolsonaro in 2021.

Bolsonaro has also been seen to constantly be reinventing himself according to the political moment in order to fulfill his interests. For example, over 27 years at the plenary of the Chamber of Deputies, Bolsonaro's speeches often changed in form and substance. As Bolsonaro expanded his electorate and gained popularity on social media, he changed terminologies, tone, and areas of interest (Shalders, 2017). Even though his views continuously remained aligned with conservatism, his constant political partisan and religious changes may indicate instability in Bolsonaro's personality, with his ability to reinvent himself to suit any circumstances indicative more of his personae *mito* and "Tropical Trump" than of the person he truly is.

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<sup>13</sup> The 62<sup>nd</sup> impeachment was filed at the Chamber of Deputies and signed by 380 religious leaders from across 17 different Christian movements, including Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist representatives.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE RHETORICAL RISE OF BOLSONARO TO THE PRESIDENCY

In this thesis, the researcher tested the persona as a critical method in Bolsonaro's unfolding of his rhetorical trajectory to the presidency, as presented both nationally and internationally. Of particular interest was the researcher's examination of the discourses that identified Bolsonaro with the two "aliases" of *mito* and "Tropical Trump". As part of this analysis, the researcher noted how Bolsonaro embraced these personae, which, in turn, aided in his growth and visibility until he became elected as Brazil's president.

The concept of a persona originated in Greek and Roman dramaturgy, and originally referred to the masks worn by actors while playing different characters. The following statement was made by Ware and Linkugel (1982, p. 50) regarding rhetorical personae:

When a speaker's rhetorical self becomes so closely associated with some set of human experiences or ideas that it becomes virtually impossible for an audience to think of one without the other, then that individual stands in a symbolic relationship to those ideas or experiences and may wear the mask of a rhetorical persona.

It should be noted that Ware and Linkugel (1982) explored the concept of a persona in respect to its use as a tool to aid rhetorical critics' analysis of discourses. The persona in this sense, then, relates to a character adopted by a speaker with the intent to promote persuasive power. A specific persona reminds their auditors of an archetypal hero through the association of previous experiences and symbolic characteristics (Ware & Linkugel, 1982, p. 50-51). Inspired by philosophical orientation, and following the

categories of “form,” “particulars,” and “participation,” Ware and Linkugel (1982) expressly explored Marcus Garvey’s Black Moses persona.

Through their research, Ware and Linkugel (1982, p. 51) determined that “immanent” and “transcendent” were two forms derived from Aristotle and Plato, respectively. The immanent form is based on observation, and generates a perception of similarities despite not being identical in nature. The transcendent form is likewise associated with similar characteristics to an archetype, norm, or some other representation that transcends reality. In the category of particulars, the word itself already denotes reference to a peculiar set of characteristics related to the form (i.e., immanent or transcendent). A rhetor is then able to participate in the rhetorical persona when he or she connects the forms and particulars by employing specific terms and characteristics in his or her rhetoric (Ware & Linkugel, 1982, p. 52).

In respect to the current study, the researcher used the critical method established by Ware and Linkugel (1982) as a supplement to Burke’s notion of dramatism. Both these approaches assisted the researcher in evaluating Bolsonaro’s discourses, as and when he “put on” the respective masks and assumed the roles of *mito* or “Tropical Trump.” In respect to Burke’s theory, it is necessary to understand that the author indicated his methodology to be inspired by the dramatic forms present in narratives. Specifically, Burke described a vocabulary constructed with representative anecdotes that synecdochically encapsulates a broader story and reveals a speaker’s motives<sup>14</sup>. According to Burke, then, words have the power to shape how humans understand and act in the world.

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<sup>14</sup> Motives, as presented in and by a speaker, according to Burke (1945), relate to his or her underlying worldview that forms in its symbolic expression (i.e., in the language used).

As part of this thesis, the researcher explored Bolsonaro's personae by visualizing his *mito* persona as the transcendent form of a religious archetype (e.g., Messiah Bolsonaro), while his "Tropical Trump" persona was viewed as the immanent form based on perceived similarities in style between Bolsonaro and Trump. Both critical methods—namely personae and dramatism—aided this researcher in explaining Bolsonaro's rhetorical rise through the examination of his characters (or personae) through the adoption of terminologies and stories that ultimately disclosed his motives. In this way, the researcher sought to establish Bolsonaro's representative anecdote that best captures his political moments.

With regard to this particular chapter, it should be noted that the work has been separated into two distinct sections. The first addresses the rhetorical rise of Bolsonaro's *mito* persona, as bestowed on him by his Brazilian supporters, in respect to how various rhetorical situations fitted into this transcendent form. The second section presents the researcher's investigation into Bolsonaro's rhetorical rise on an international level by making a connection with his immanent form through the "Tropical Trump" persona, as bestowed on him by the international media. In this way, the researcher has been able to offer discussions regarding Bolsonaro's rhetorical rise at both the national and international level.

### **Rhetorical Rise of Bolsonaro's *Mito* Persona**

In this section, the researcher explores the national rhetorical rise of Bolsonaro by analyzing a crucial speech that formed the starting point of the creation of his first nickname, *mito*. The speech was made in April 2016; in March of that same year, Bolsonaro announced his intention to run for Presidency with the backing of the PSC

(Christian Social Party). In April, national television broadcasted the voting process of Rousseff's impeachment in the House of Representatives. Bolsonaro made a less than 1-minute speech at this time, but it was deemed remarkable in that it generated both controversy and popularity for himself. The researcher, thus, analyzed this speech in respect to the emergence of Bolsonaro's transcendent form (i.e., *mito*).

A political and economic crisis, which began in 2014, led to hundreds of thousands of Brazilians taking to the streets in and across different cities to protest governmental corruption. These protests continued into 2016, when street movements supported the *Lava Jato* initiated by the Federal Police. This movement was seen as the most significant corruption and criminal investigation involving politicians and large industries in Brazil. In this scenario of population discontent, some politicians identified an opportune moment to make a name for themselves. Among these politicians was Federal Deputy Bolsonaro from Rio de Janeiro, who was seen at some of the organized street protests of the *Vem Pra Rua* (Come to the Street)<sup>15</sup> with supporters wearing T-shirts with the statement "Bolsonaro for President."

The year 2016 started problematically for Brazil, as the first woman elected as President of Brazil, Rousseff's, impeachment had support from the majority of the population. Bolsonaro then stood out in the political scene as well as in the national media thanks to what he said before voting for Rouseff's impeachment. In particular, on April 17, 2016, the open and televised impeachment process allowed politicians such as Bolsonaro to make short speeches before voting. When it was his turn to vote, Bolsonaro

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<sup>15</sup> *Vem Pra Rua* (Come to the Street) is a Brazilian social-political movement, supra-partisan, founded in October 2014. The movement emerged as a result of the political and economic crisis during the Dilma Government, organizing peaceful demonstrations on the streets in more than 250 cities, accumulating a record number of participants in the years of 2015 and 2016.

first congratulated the President of the House, Eduardo Cunha, for coordinating the impeachment process and then made a speech before voting “yes” for impeachment.

The context of his short discourse represented the essence of what Bolsonaro’s rhetoric would be as President: austere, homophobic, misogynistic, and insensitive. The electorate ignored all these signs, however, as the impeachment represented changes for Brazil. The end of 14 years of governance under the same ruling political party began with Rousseff’s impeachment. It also indicated the beginning of Bolsonaro’s *mito* persona.

One month before voting for Rousseff’s impeachment, Federal Deputy Bolsonaro had changed his political affiliation and joined the PSC as a pre-candidate to run for Brazil’s Presidency in 2018. In respect to this change, Snyder and Wolff (2019, p. 87) wrote that Rousseff’s impeachment “laid the groundwork for the 2018 election of ultra-conservative Jair Bolsonaro.” Bolsonaro’s speech before voting for Rousseff’s impeachment brought him a great deal of national attention, with some intellectuals and politicians perceiving Rousseff’s impeachment as a coup of the Right-wing party (i.e., a patriarchal coup). Bolsonaro endorsed these perceptions by stating the following during is noted speech:

...they lost in 64, and now they lost in 2016. For the family and the innocence of the children in the classroom that the PT<sup>16</sup> never had; against Communism, for our freedom, against the Forum de Sao Paulo, for the memory of Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, the dread of Dilma Rousseff. For the Army of Caxias, for the Armed Forces; for Brazil above everything and God above all; my vote is yes (ImCbrayan, 2016/2021).

At this point, it is necessary to explain the historical context of this speech. In the first sentence, Bolsonaro paired two different periods, namely 1964 and 2016. The

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<sup>16</sup> The Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT; Workers’ Party) was run by former President da Silva. This was a left-wing party founded in 1980.

reference to 1964 marked the military coup in Brazil, and 2016 was the year of Rousseff's impeachment. Bolsonaro further compared those years as relating to the same political act (i.e., both as a "coup"). In this scenario, then, if "they lost in 1964," the implication would be that the military coup "won" against Communism. Similarly, the 2016 impeachment meant that that the Right had "won" over the Left party. By association, then, Bolsonaro considered the Left to be essentially Communist.

When Bolsonaro stated, "...for the family and children, the PT never had...," he made reference back to the accusations against PT, indicating that this party attempted to teach gender identity in schools. Bolsonaro made a related video on his Facebook page, wherein he accused the Left of creating a "kit gay," in his derogatory terms (G1 Globo, 2011), a "gayness kit" to promote early sex to children in schools<sup>17</sup>. In actuality, this "gayness kit" was the PT government's social program, "Schools without Homophobia", and was launched in an effort to combat violence and discrimination against people in the LGBT community (Veiga, 2021b). Bolsonaro's video, however, garnered thousands of views and raised the support of conservatives and religious peoples on one side, while on the other side opponents accused Bolsonaro of homophobia.

Continuing with an analysis of his words, Bolsonaro stated "...against Communism, for our freedom, against the Foro Sao Paulo." In this instance, the *Foro of Sao Paulo*, which was founded by Luiz Inácio Lula and Fidel Castro in 1990, refers to an organization created to bring together socio-democratic political parties and Left-wing activists from across different Latin American countries as well as the Caribbean. *Foro*

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<sup>17</sup> The TSE ordered the removal of six posts on Facebook and YouTube in which Bolsonaro, at the time a presidential candidate, criticized educational material distributed in public schools aimed at combatting homophobia in schools. (Conteudo, 2018).

*Sao Paulo* has been mentioned in other of Bolsonaro's speeches, wherein he often accused this organization of being a group of Communists financed by drug trafficking<sup>18</sup>.

Further outrage was garnered in opposition circles when Bolsonaro honored the "memory of Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra" (the full name of one of the Brazilian dictatorship's colonels) in the noted speech. In this case, Bolsonaro referred to Ustra as "the dread of Dilma Rousseff," which referenced Rousseff's torture, at 22 years of age, at the hands of the authoritarian government for being a dissident during the dictatorship. Rousseff had generally avoided mentioning the names of those involved in her torture, but had admitted having met Colonel Ustra. Brazil Justice recognized and condemned Colonel Ustra as an executioner who used horrifying torture techniques on prisoners. Bolsonaro's reference to Colonel Ustra could, thus, be seen as a taunt, whereby Rousseff countered that Bolsonaro had opened the door to intolerance and hate with that kind of statement (Watts, 2016).

A further important factor to consider in Bolsonaro's speech was his homage to the Army of Caxias as well as the Armed Forces. In this respect, Bolsonaro highlighted his own past in the armed forces as well as Brazil's past when he mentioned the Caxias Army, named after Duque de Caxias. During the period of Brazil's monarchy, Caxias was a conservative general who operated between 1831 and 1840. Caxias played a fundamental role in suppressing significant popular uprisings that marked Brazil's regency period (Ferreira, 2018). Bolsonaro's reference to the Brazilian Army, thus, symbolized Caxias's image as a peacemaker fighting regional revolts. This reference also

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<sup>18</sup> Bolsonaro wrote on his Twitter account, on October 10, 2019: "Foro de Sao Paulo makes use of the livelihoods of terrorist groups." The minister of the Superior Federal Court (STF), Luis Barroso, demanded an explanation from Bolsonaro regarding this statement (Coelho, 2019).



provided Bolsonaro with an example of discipline and his association therewith. Historians have highlighted, however, that Caxias's Army participated in genocide rather than peacekeeping during regional insurgencies such as those that occurred in Cabanagem (1835-1840) and Balaiada (1838-1841) in the north of Brazil, as well as in the Paraguay War (1864-1870).

Bolsonaro closed his speech off before calling "yes" for the impeachment with the phrase, "*Brasil acima de tudo, Deus acima de todos*" ("Brazil above everything, God above all"). This slogan was not initially created for Bolsonaro's campaign; rather it is an appropriation of the Army Parachute Infantry Brigade's mantra that emerged during the military dictatorship in the late 1960s (Seto, 2018). A group of parachuters had created this slogan to rescue nationalist values when Brazilian society experienced the military regime and Communist ideas from dissidents. The first part of the slogan can be seen as an allusion to the phrase "*Deutschland über alles*" ("Germany above everything"), which was the motto of Hitler's Nazi party in Germany. When Hitler brought together the military and the German public in stadiums, he would raise his arm from the podium and shout: "Germany," and the crowd would reply, "above everything" (Hanson, 2013). This type of phrasing used to garner support inspired Bolsonaro's own campaign slogan of "Brazil above everything, God above all."

In summarizing the historical context of Bolsonaro's speech, it became evident to the researcher that he supported the coup, attacked the Left party by calling it Communist, criticized a government-based social program aimed at preventing homophobia, and complimented the dictatorship and armed forces. These findings confirmed Bolsonaro's austere, homophobic, misogynistic, insensitive, and dangerous

speech style. The public curiosity surrounding Bolsonaro was also found to grow despite negative media repercussions and a lawsuit related to his impeachment speech (Barba & Wentzel, 2016). As a result, Bolsonaro's rhetoric actually led to increased public outspokenness and fury, with many Brazilians ignoring the danger present in his rhetoric due to them also being angry about the status quo. The country was already in crisis by the time Bolsonaro made his speech, with street protests and many problems being attributed to the government of the day. The political polarization that had already divided the country proved fertile ground for Bolsonaro when he had the opportunity to step more deeply into the political scene with his conservative Right-wing, *mito*-affirming speech style.

With regard to Bolsonaro's impeachment speech, Snyder and Wolff (2019, p. 94) stated that Bolsonaro's speech

...linked both coups to a moral question of family and children's innocence, which is a conservative defense politicians often raise, and justified these actions as necessary to combat Communism; an accusation mobilized to discredit the Worker's Party and Dilma Rousseff.

These authors' observations confirmed Bolsonaro's speech triumph by highlighting that he was able to discredit the PT in the moment of a corruption investigation and party member impeachment when he successfully connected the coup of 1964 to the happenings in 2016, and used this connection to call for changes. When Bolsonaro said: "...for the family and the innocence of the children," he used the term "innocence" to refer to the kind of purity that extends the heroism of the *mito* character, who is ultimately responsible for protecting humankind.

Once a myth embodied forces and played a role in Brazilian society, sometimes with a religious perspective, it was possible for Bolsonaro, through the rhetoric employed

during the impeachment trial, to establish the existent need for a hero-politician to solve the problems of disorder present in Brazil. While the researcher could not find the exact date or first event in which Bolsonaro's followers started calling him *mito*, the concept of a *messias* (messiah) already existed. For example, *Messias* is Bolsonaro's middle name, which may have offered a direct link to supporters naming him *mito*. In Hebrew, a messiah is considered to be "the chosen one." More specifically, in Judaism, a messiah is a figure who holds characteristics of both a priest and a king; a national hero who will defeat a nation's enemies. In Christianity, the Messiah (also called Christ) is seen as the Son of God, who exists as the savior of humankind (Kedmi, 2013). The particulars of the messiah concept, then, held an immediate association with *Messias* in respect to Bolsonaro's own name. In this way, it could be argued that the *messias-mito* conceptualization of Bolsonaro already existed in the mind of Brazilians, the majority of whom belongs to varied Christian-based religions.

It should be further noted that Bolsonaro reinvented himself directly after Rousseff's impeachment, and that he did so through the related media uproar. For example, many of his discourses or interviews post-impeachment speech would contain inflammatory statements that were rare to hear from other politicians. Bolsonaro, however, thrived through these statements and grew in both traditional media and social media visibility, as his words favored the mythic form. In essence, it could be argued that his speeches transcended his own identity. Bolsonaro also strategically added elements of uniqueness to his rhetoric, which made him further stand out among other politicians. For

example, he would constantly state that he was the only non-corrupt politician<sup>19</sup> and challenge the media to prove the contrary.

The noted particulars in Bolsonaro's rhetoric, such as being the only politician who was not involved in corruption, were immediately associated with honesty by the public. Such claims, combined with his middle name, *Messias*, helped Bolsonaro participate in the form of his own myth creation. While other factors may also have been involved, it was primarily the economic crises, political disorder, and general frustrations on the part of the Brazilian population that contributed to the rhetorical rise of Bolsonaro's *mito* persona.

According to Dias and Fernandes (2018), it was necessary to analyze the structure of the image of Bolsonaro as a candidate. To this end, the scholars noted that Bolsonaro "embraced the discourse of the hero myth that heralds a new age, who can read in history the signs that others still cannot perceive" (Dias & Fernandes, 2018, p. 478). The authors further state that Bolsonaro positioned himself as someone "inside" the politics, who was working "backstage" while ruling "for" the people and seeing what Brazilians could not see. These were the kinds of claims Brazilians wanted to hear in a year when corruption scandals headlined the news cycles.

By studying Bolsonaro's electoral campaign, which took place between August and October of 2018, Dias and Fernandes (2018) similarly hypothesized that Bolsonaro built his political image on attributes that supported and enunciated him as the country's savior. The scholars did not, however, specifically analyze Bolsonaro's speech that he

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<sup>19</sup> When opponents in the plenary called Bolsonaro homophobic, misogynist, or racist, he would dare them to "call me corrupt." Alternatively, Bolsonaro would challenge reporters and opponents with statements such as "Call me anything, just don't call me corrupt." Campaign T-shirts were similarly made with these kinds of phrases for supporters of Bolsonaro to wear.

presented at Rousseff's impeachment. Of additional note is that one professor from Rio de Janeiro, Christina Vital da Cunha, did unravel, in her research regarding rhetoric surrounding the 2018 elections, two kinds of discursive political strategies. These she respectively named "Rhetoric of Loss" and "Allies of Evangelicals" (Vital da Cunha, 2020, p. 125). With respect to the first strategy, the author argued that narratives of "disorder," "insecurity," and "moral dangers" were central to winning candidates who emphasized demands for a return to the past and a rescue of moral values. In the second strategy, Vital da Cunha (2020) highlighted Bolsonaro's specific discursive strategy of "playing" with two major religions in Brazil. As noted previously, Bolsonaro was a Catholic by birth, while his wife and children are Evangelicals. In adulthood, Bolsonaro was baptized by an Evangelical pastor in the Jordan River, but he never denied his Catholicism. Of note was that his Evangelical baptism took place only a month after his controversial speech (i.e., in May 2016).

This baptism was broadcast on YouTube and shared via other social media platforms. The result was that many Evangelical leaders, pastors, and priests publicly supported Bolsonaro's campaign and actively aided him to garner more votes<sup>20</sup> in and across churches. Vital da Cunha (2020, p. 125) further indicated:

In that election (2018), Christian's grammar and perspectives were presented and defended in the light of narratives that emphasized tradition and security that produced hope about a rescue of authority from lifestyles and social values that were under threat in modern society.

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<sup>20</sup> Professor and researcher at the Universidade Federal Fluminense, Christina Vital da Cunha coordinated a survey to investigate religious candidacies in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo during the 2018 elections. This research was conducted via the Institute of Religious Studies, in partnership with the Heinrich Foundation Böll and the Instituto Clima e Sociedade.

As confirmation, Vital da Cunha (2020) noted that Bolsonaro's campaign allied with various religious entities; wherein he promised a return to older times and a rescuing of the traditional Brazilian family by adding back conservatism.

Bolsonaro also maneuvered his rhetorical strategy to be associated with a social archetype, namely as God's envoy. In this way, Bolsonaro transcended his own identity by bringing special awareness to his name, Messiah and, thereby becoming a *mito*. By combining the symbolical form of a messiah with the discursive strategies present within the 2018 elections, Bolsonaro was able to establish a persona that "reflect[ed] the aspirations and cultural visions of audiences from which stem[med] the symbolic construction of [an] archetypal figure" (Ware & Linkugel, 1982, p. 50). Bolsonaro, as the *mito* archetype, brought about results, which, according to various surveys, led to many Evangelical votes guaranteeing his election<sup>21</sup>.

A survey conducted in March 2018 by the Brazilian Institute of Opinions and Statistics (Ibope), which consisted of 2,000 respondents across 127 municipalities presented the perspectives and expectations of Brazilians regarding the 2018 elections (Gazeta do Povo, 2018). The researchers who conducted this survey found that the vast majority of respondents considered it very important for a candidate to be honest (87%), to never have been involved in corruption (84%), to believe in God (67%), and to have a "steady hand" (78%). Bolsonaro's direct and unfiltered way of speaking was often interpreted by respondents as denoting honesty and presenting someone with determination and firmness. His statements about not being corrupt, alliances with

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<sup>21</sup> A Datafolha survey cross-referenced voting intention with religious denomination 3 days before the second round of elections (Alves, 2018).

religious leaders, and the slogan “Brazil above everything, and God above all” further made Bolsonaro stand out to many voters.

At the same time that Bolsonaro’s *mito* rhetoric continued to rise, Brazil witnessed the worst polarization ever seen in the country, with the division between Right and Left parties becoming ever-wider. The result was that Bolsonaro gained supporters who exhibited fanatical behavior and who would defend his rhetoric in the same way they believed he would (i.e., with a “steady hand”). Burke (1935, p. 267) explained that what makes people attached to one group and divided against another is a complex set of emotions and attitudes that cannot be clearly described or highlighted as objects. It was Burke’s understanding that groups are bound for and to things beyond reality or what is individuals can see and describe. Burke (1935, p. 267) called these attachments “myths,” and described the concept as follows:

Myths may be wrong, or they may be used to bad ends but they cannot be dispensed with. In the last analysis, they are our psychological tools for working together. A hammer is a carpenter’s tool; a wrench is a mechanic’s tool; and a “myth” is the social tool for welding the sense of interrelationship by which the carpenter and the mechanic, though differently occupied, can work together for common social ends. In this sense a myth that works well is as real as food, tools, and shelter are.

Ware and Linkugel (1982, p. 51) similarly observed:

Such symbols or rhetorical personae naturally wield moral authority over those who assist in their construction. To achieve their cultural vision, a people stand ready symbolically to transcend its physical reality and enter into the world of myth.

It should be noted that due to Burke’s conceptions preceding those of Ware and Linkugel (1982), the presented quotes work together to aid in a better understanding of how Bolsonaro used rhetoric to transcend himself. From this understanding, it is possible to claim that at the moment Brazilians experienced a need for a religious politician, a

savior connected to God in both name and religious affiliation arose in the form of Bolsonaro. The surrounding symbolism and myth prevailed in and through many of Bolsonaro's chosen words and actions (e.g., his baptism in the Jordan River). People who placed all their hope and confidence in his candidacy, in turn, greeted him at rallies with repeated shouts of "*Mito! Mito! Mito!*"

### **Stabbing Incident**

An attempt on the life of Bolsonaro further raised his transcendent *mito* form. Much in the same way that the ancient Grecian tragedies have been associated with the construction of mythical heroes, the transcendent form of Bolsonaro's *mito* persona gained even more symbolic meaning on September 6, 2018, when, at a rally in Minas Gerais, while supporters carried him aloft, a man approached him from out of the crowd and stabbed him in the stomach. Bolsonaro was immediately taken to hospital. The attack was considered severe, and he was hospitalized for 23 days.

Dias and Fernandes (2018, p. 478) highlighted that this event "won huge visibility and became a political-media spectacle, rewriting the electoral narrative." The attack occurred less than a month before the elections and 1 day before a national holiday celebrating Brazil's Independence (i.e., September 7). All these factors made the event ripe for coverage on the national television circuit.

Having suffered a stabbing boosted Bolsonaro popularity. In August 2018, Ibope noted an 18%<sup>22</sup> voting intention for Bolsonaro, behind former President da Silva, who held 37%. A more extensive survey by Datafolha (2017), which consisted of 8,433 voters and which was conducted between August 20 and 21, similarly noted that Bolsonaro held

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<sup>22</sup> Ibope conducted the survey across 142 municipalities by interviewing a total of 2002 people (G1 Globo, 2018).



approximately 19% of all voter intention<sup>23</sup>. A mere few weeks later—after the stabbing incident—another Ibope survey highlighted what the researchers termed *Efeito Facada* (the Stabbing Effect; Kadanus, 2018). In this survey, the researchers found that 3 days after the attack (i.e., between September 8 and 10), when the survey was conducted, Bolsonaro had gained 6% within a month. In the southern regions, the intention to vote for Bolsonaro had risen significantly, from 23% to 37%. According to the later Datafolha survey, 71% of all Evangelicals in Brazil stated that they, too, would vote for Bolsonaro in the second round (Machado & Luiza, 2018). Among Bolsonaro supporters, and especially among Evangelicals, there was a sense that Bolsonaro had emerged for a reason. These supporters had a tendency of associating Bolsonaro with being a kind “God’s envoy.”

It is not unusual that attacks against the life of public personalities elevate the ethos in their personae. For example, the same thing happened to Martin Luther King, Jr. when he was stabbed by Izola Curry (Klein, 2021), and Marcus Garvey, when a former employee shot him but, despite being hurt, he chased the attacker. In further support, Ware and Linkugel (1982, p. 55) quoted Cronon’s notion that “[t]he assault assumed heroic proportions in the Negro Press and Garvey became overnight a persecuted martyr working for the salvation of his people.” The attack on Bolsonaro took on similar proportions as it presented an outrage to Brazil and its democracy.

With regard to the knife attack on Bolsonaro, newscaster Renata Vasconcellos of *Journal Nacional*<sup>24</sup> stated that the incident had “stained the electoral campaign with

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<sup>23</sup> Datafolha included former president Lula da Silva and other candidates in the poll scenario (Gielow, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> *Jornal Nacional* is a popular news network that is broadcasted by the Globo TV Channel during prime time on open television.

blood, outraged the country, and provoked immediate reactions of repudiation and defense of democracy” (de Fora, 2018). Political analysts further argued that the stabbing helped elect Bolsonaro for two reasons: “[F]irst, because it turned him into a martyr, a myth protected by a God who saved him; [second], because it prevented him from participating in electoral debates with the other candidates” (Arias, 2021). Having survived an attempt on his life, validated Bolsonaro with messiah-like qualifications.

Although it was not in the scope of this current study for the researcher to argue about conspiracy theories and statements by political opponents that the stabbing was false<sup>25</sup>, there was some evidence of declarations on the part of Bolsonaro in which the stabbing was used to boost his transcendent power and resilience. When asked by journalists if he would undergo a Covid-19 test to detect the disease, for example, Bolsonaro replied: “After the stabbing, it won’t be a little flu that will knock me down.”<sup>26</sup> On a Twitter post in September 2021, Bolsonaro similarly remembered the 3-year anniversary of the incident by placing it in a transcendent position:

- Exactly three years ago they tried to kill me.
- I thank God for the survival.
- Today, if need be, life for freedom (Bolsonaro, Twitter, 2021).

Bolsonaro’s post was made in three sentences, separated by dashes in a bid to emphasize each statement. First, Bolsonaro stated that “they” tried to kill him. In this instance, Bolsonaro does not clarify who “they” were. The crime was, however, framed in the National Security Law and Federal Police investigations as personal aggression,

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<sup>25</sup> Paulo Pimenta, Deputy of the PT made various open statements in interviews related to how Bolsonaro supporters had planned the stabbing (Bronzatto & Mattos, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> At the time of the interview in March 2020, Bolsonaro had returned from a trip to the US with his advisors. At least 20 people who accompanied him on the trip tested positive for Covid; yet, Bolsonaro continued to say that he had tested negative (Mazieiro, 2018).

where the criminal, Adelio dos Santos, acted alone<sup>27</sup>. Second, Bolsonaro makes mention of the belief that God helped him survive; thereby placing him in the transcendent form (i.e., he survived for a reason). Third, Bolsonaro ends by offering an heroic tone to the stabbing by linking it to the notion of being in a battle (i.e., he would give his life “if need” “for freedom”). Bolsonaro also generalizes freedom, which, albeit unclear, can be understood as the country’s freedom, even though, as a democratic country, Brazil has already been freed from the restrictions of the dictatorship that Bolsonaro so admires.

Through this kind of rhetoric, Bolsonaro was able to step into the *mito* persona in order to cover up his statements’ absurdities. For example, his campaign slogan “Brazil above everything, and God above all” was also used as an addition of the *mito* persona. More specifically, Bolsonaro projected himself as godhead by using two ideal rhetorical strategies. First, he used *mito* persona, and second he used a slogan associated with God (i.e., who is omnipotent) that could be applied to his totalitarian style. Bolsonaro’s audience understood from this message that he was doing everything as a warrior for Brazil in the name of God. The result was that Bolsonaro did not have to worry about filtering his words and, in doing so, he was able to gain more visibility in the media.

It should be noted that, as a candidate, Bolsonaro’s rhetorical style remained authoritative, with a great penchant toward belittling minorities, discrediting science, and attacking media outlets and opponents with slander. Similarities to Donald Trump are, also, not a mere coincidence. The first articles in the international media in 2017 highlighted the similarities between the then-US President and the Brazilian candidate.

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<sup>27</sup> Federal Police investigations concluded in a second inquiry that there was no partisan participation or masters in the stabbing of Bolsonaro. A federal court report concluded that Adelio dos Santos, the criminal, suffers from paranoid disorder and cannot be criminally punished. (Zuba & Ragazzi, 2020)

The international media provided Bolsonaro with nicknames like “Brazil’s Trump,” or “Trump of the Tropics.” Bolsonaro had found a way to capitalize on the comparisons. He saw in Trump a type of rhetorical mirror, which ultimately led him to assume one more persona, the “Tropical Trump”. The rise and consequences of this persona are presented in more detail in the following section.

### **Rhetorical Rise of the “Tropical Trump” Persona**

As an ambitious politician, Bolsonaro did not disguise his admiration for Trump. Rather, he saw in Trump a way to acquire international notoriety. The result was that he embraced the “Tropical Trump” persona as a rhetorical tool that could contribute to his electoral victory. This immanent form of Bolsonaro’s personae carries tangible characteristics. For one, “Tropical Trump” holds an inherent statement and tonal style easily associated with the real Donald Trump, already a public figure known internationally, even before entering politics.

This section is, thus, organized according to three key points. First, the researcher approaches, in detail, the international rise of Bolsonaro when he was first compared to then-US President Trump by the international media. Second, the researcher outlines Bolsonaro’s journey to the US through media observations. The methodology for this section was applied through the analysis of a series of seven domestic videos found on Bolsonaro’s YouTube channel entitled *Bolsonaros nos EUA* (Bolsonaro in the US). These videos were recorded in 2017 during his and his three sons’ trip to the US. In the videos, Bolsonaro explains life in the US, visits different places and institutions, and speaks to Brazilians living in the country. Third, the researcher sought to determine the representative anecdote embodied in the videos.

Burke's notion of the representative anecdote was used as the methodological tool in this study in order for the researcher to analyze the noted videos without exploring them individually but, instead, to incorporate them into one "whole." The following subsection presents selected key excerpts from Bolsonaro's speeches in these videos that aided the researcher in identifying the overall representative anecdote. In the next subsection, then, the researcher argues that Bolsonaro embodied his "Tropical Trump" persona in the videos and used imagery and symbolic elements from US culture to persuade the public and to legitimize his political ideas.

### ***"Tropical Trump" in the Media***

The earliest article that the researcher for this current study could find which compared Bolsonaro to Trump was published by *US News* in January 2017, with the title *Brazil's Trump? A congressman with presidential ambitions is being compared to Donald Trump. Can he win?* (McLoughlin, 2017). In this article, McLoughlin wrote, "Like Trump, Bolsonaro is a prolific user of social media who rejects political correctness outright and has a knack for controversial statements that have made him as much loved as he is hated."

Another article from the *Washington Post*, with the title "Brazil's ex-president fears the rise of a Brazilian Trump" (Tharoor, 2017). The international media then went on to call Bolsonaro various iterations of "Trump of the Tropics" (e.g., *The Guardian*<sup>28</sup>, *BBC News* (2018), and the *New York Times*<sup>29</sup>), "'Tropical Trump'" (e.g., Weizenmann, 2019), or "Brazil's Donald Trump" (e.g., *The Economist*, 2017). Bolsonaro was viewed as anti-establishment and a rejector of political correctness in these various publications,

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<sup>28</sup> Phillips (2018)

<sup>29</sup> Duvivier (2020)

and his rhetorical style contained an authoritative tone loaded with conservative statements. The publications also highlighted how he had often said misogynistic, racist, and homophobic statements during rallies or interviews. These descriptions seemed to be indistinguishable from those applied to Trump.

The different media outlets and publications were also found to hold similar rhetoric, tone, and style in respect to their statements about both individuals. For example, during his first presidential debate in 2015, Trump said, “I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct” (Chow, 2016). In a presidential debate organized by a newspaper in 2018, Bolsonaro similarly stated, “This is not the problem in Brazil...this issue of hate is secondary...it has to leave political correctness aside” (Carvalho & Dias, 2018). A scholar from Harvard, Moira Weigel (2016), further researched the use of the expression “political correctness” by Trump and found that this term could be applied to other candidates who similarly qualified themselves as “outsiders” (e.g., Bolsonaro), but who, in actuality, hold authoritarian aspirations. Weigel (2016) established that those against “political correctness” often claimed to also be against authoritarianism; however, their sentiments generally resulted in populist authoritarianism. This style could, thus, be viewed as allowing politicians to make outrageous comments and rebut any criticism against them by criticizing political correctness and spreading fake news.

In addition to discrediting the scientific community and attacking solid media outlets, Bolsonaro was also found to be as diligent a user of social media as then-President Trump. Specialists in political science, therefore, consider Bolsonaro to be the first Brazilian President elected with and through social media support (Volpatti & Lima,

2018). In a CNN interview, Trump said “declines to disavow racists” (Bump, 2016). In an interview with Roda Viva, Bolsonaro similarly “denied that Brazil has a historical debt to the Black population because of slavery” (Salgado, 2018). As a further comparison, Trump has made several (often derogatory) statements regarding women (Lange, 2018). As he said about Hillary Clinton “She doesn’t have the look. She doesn’t have the stamina...” (Prasad, 2019). Bolsonaro, in turn, has also made statements such as the following: “I had four sons, but then I had a moment of weakness, and the fifth was a girl” (Brum, 2018). Such and other statements made by Bolsonaro and Trump eclipsed political formality. Their vernacular style created a type of connection with their voters. Both succeed exactly because their public perceived them to be frank politicians who were not afraid of telling the truth. For their voters, these individuals “spoke their minds.”

Before the election year, in 2017, Bolsonaro also caused his particulars to become more associated with his immanent form, the “Tropical Trump”. To this end, Bolsonaro traveled to the US in order to raise his international persona in realistic scenery. The “Tropical Trump’s” symbolic construction, included in the noted videos, both rhetoric and imagery related to US culture that Brazilians could quickly assimilate into their desires and aspirations for Brazil. Bolsonaro’s rhetorical similarities to Trump during his candidacy were, thus, not entirely coincidental but rather strategic.

### ***“Tropical Trump” Goes to the US***

In October 2017, Bolsonaro and three of his sons took a tour across four destinations around the US, namely Florida, Massachusetts, New York, and Washington DC. The purpose of the trip was to seek foreign support for Bolsonaro’s 2018 presidential bid, connect with influential people, and make contact with US-based Brazilian voters.

Bolsonaro gave open lectures and talked to the local press, religious leaders, and business owners. A series of seven videos entitled *Bolsonaros nos EUA* was posted on his YouTube channel and narrated the story of his trip to the US. These videos included Bolsonaro's speeches and interviews.

While Bolsonaro would have participated in a conference at the George Washington University on this tour, that was ultimately canceled due to protests from academics who claimed that his appearance "would be helping a racist, sexist, homophobic Right-wing extremist to achieve international recognition and solidify the political viability of his candidacy" (Weisbrot, 2017). A member of Massachusetts Peace Action, Michael VanElzakker, also helped to organize protests against Bolsonaro's visit to the US and claimed that "Bolsonaro wants the opportunity to be photographed in Boston with the air of a respected statesman, not the banal misogynist and violently homophobic fascist that he is" (Higgins, 2017). One of the largest newspapers in Brazil, the *Folha de S. Paulo*, had a journalist write about Bolsonaro's visit. In this article, the journalist stated that Bolsonaro wanted to prove to investors and entrepreneurs in the US that he was evolving toward greater liberalism (Bilenky, 2017).

The candidate's press assistance further affirmed to the newspaper that the objective of Bolsonaro's trip was to undo his image of being a "nationalist." This statement, however, appeared contradictory, as among his scheduled meetings was a breakfast with the Evangelic Brazilian community in Boston as well as a meeting with Olavo de Carvalho, a conservative intellectual who formed a new generation of Far-Right Brazilians through his online course managed from Petersburg, Virginia (Auerbach, 2019). Higgins (2017) wrote that Bolsonaro sought donors and to gain international



legitimacy though his tour of the US. Despite such concerns, one of Bolsonaro's advisors confirmed in a *BBC News* interview that Bolsonaro's agenda in visiting the US was to dissociate himself from any Far-Right political image or extremist labels with which the international journalists had framed him (Bilenky, 2017; Senra, 2017).

Bolsonaro realized that being compared to a Far-Right president as powerful as Trump could be profitable for his campaign. He, thus, reinvented himself with that discovery and maneuvered his rhetoric into Trump's persona, adding to the videos imagery of US culture and lifestyle. Those strategies helped to establish Bolsonaro's consistency in changing and adapting to political circumstances.

#### ***“Tropical Trump”'s Representative Anecdote***

In this study, the researcher considered the representative anecdote to be a well-grounded method to connect Bolsonaro's stories (i.e., in his YouTube videos) with Brazil's problems and concerns at the time of his campaign and election. This concept was presented through survey data and newspaper articles wherein the researcher briefly reviewed Brazil's political and economic situation before the 2018 elections. Through this process, the researcher ultimately found that the representative anecdote was embodied in the different types of stories put forward by Bolsonaro in his YouTube video series *Bolsonaros nos EUA*. For example, in these videos, the researcher found that Bolsonaro used US imagery as backgrounds, put on the mask of “Tropical Trump”, and applied arguments that touched on Brazilian culture by emphasizing the population's concerns in and during a time of crises and disorder.

The researcher, thus, argues that Bolsonaro's tour of the US, and the associated videos posted on YouTube, relied on a rhetorical and imagist strategy that added visual

elements of US values in order to empower his political discourses. Bolsonaro also sought to develop his status and solidify his candidacy by using the “Tropical Trump” persona in the videos. These findings align with what Burke introduced in *A Grammar of Motives* (1945, p. XV), namely “[w]hat is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?”

According to Burke, words shape the ways in which we see and act in the world. “Action” is what differentiates humans from machines that have “motion.” Humans also reflect on a position on any subject by selecting different aspects and deflecting others. According to Burke, reflecting on the world through vocabulary differentiates humans from other animals, as it relies on linguistic rationalization. Words can, however, also “use” humans; that is, it is possible for the persuasion process to occur unconsciously. Another way this is possible is through identification; a term that Burke (1969, p. 55) used as more adequate in the place of “persuasion”:

You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his. Persuasion by flattery is but a special case of persuasion in general. But flattery can safely serve as our paradigm if we systematically widen its meaning, to see behind it the conditions of identification or consubstantiality in general.

Based on the research findings, it became clear that Bolsonaro found his way toward identification using YouTube videos and shaping his stories according to audiences’ opinions and desires. For example, it could be argued that he used US-specific background images also, as he implicitly wanted to be associated with his “Tropical Trump” persona, both locally and internationally. In several instances across the videos, Bolsonaro also used the rhetoric of “comparing and contrasting” between Brazil and the US; yet, he continuously presented the US as the “better place” by complimenting that population’s lifestyle and explaining how he was learning from the American people.

These findings align with the following claims made by Burke (1945, p. 59)

regarding the aforementioned representative anecdote:

Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a *deflection* of reality. Insofar as the vocabulary meets the needs of reflection, we can say that it has the necessary scope. In its selectivity, it is reduction.

It should be noted that Burke attributed the importance of his method of the representative anecdote to the words that rhetors choose in order to tell stories or “anecdotes.” In Burke’s theory, words shape the ways in which humans understand life and influence how we act (i.e., through reflections and deflections). In this sense, then, a person reflects the world through the vocabulary that he or she chooses. This reflection, thus, becomes a selection and, “in certain circumstances,” a deflection of reality, as and when the person views and accepts certain aspects and leaves others behind.

Through the researcher’s analysis of Bolsonaro’s anecdotes in the noted videos, it was possible to identify whether or not his word choices and constructions in laying out these anecdotes either captured (i.e., reflected) or/and deflected realities. It is important to note that Burke’s dramatism, as pertaining to the current study’s analysis, involved “the search for a ‘representative anecdote,’ to be used as a form in conformity with which the vocabulary is constructed” (1945, p. 59). Thus, it was necessary for the vocabulary to conform with the anecdote itself as, in such cases, it could reveal the speaker (i.e., Bolsonaro’s) motives. Burke further emphasized the importance of representative anecdotes to dramatism studies by stating that “the anecdote is in a sense a summation, containing implicitly what the system that is developed from it contains explicitly” (Burke, 1945, p. 60).

Some scholars have, furthermore, argued that the representative anecdote could be used as a critical method in and of itself. For example, rhetorical scholar, Bryan Crable (2000, p. 318-319) argued that “the representative anecdote—taken in conjunction with the pentad—supports Burke’s claim to provide the most adequate vocabulary for the study of motives.” Brummett (1999, p. 480) made a similar note regarding the method for use in the criticism of mass media content:

The anecdote is a macroscopic tool in the array of Burkean methods, in contrast to the pentadic, cluster agon, or other more word-specific approaches. And we shall see that this is a method that represents well what happens in the media because the media are anecdotal.

Based on these assertions, the researcher for the current study opted to follow this methodological orientation by searching for the representative anecdote present in Bolsonaro’s YouTube videos, as this identification could aid in highlighting the media’s dramatic form that contextualized Brazil’s economic and political situation at the time of Bolsonaro’s rise to power.

The historical context previously referenced in this thesis indicated that Bolsonaro emerged nationally during a period of political and economic crises in Brazil. Scandals pertaining to governmental corruption led to the impeachment of Rousseff in 2016, and later culminated with the arrest of former President Lula<sup>30</sup> before the 2018 elections. Brazilians were, thus, living in a period of emotional uncertainty.<sup>31</sup>

A survey related to crisis perceptions (Neri, 2018), published by FGV CPDOC Social<sup>32</sup> offered a clearer picture of Brazilian citizens’ opinions regarding the realities

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<sup>30</sup> The arrest of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva took place on April 7, 2018, after he turned himself in to the Federal Police.

<sup>31</sup> The Brazilian economy shrank by 3.6% in 2016, and experts indicated that the political crisis of 2016 further hampered the economy (Trevizan, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> The FGV CPDOC is a Brazilian higher education institution that was founded in 1944.

present in 2018. This survey was based on the Gallup World Poll, which compared Brazilians' perceptions to 124 other countries surveyed in 2017. As part of this survey, citizens were questioned about issues such as fear of violence; disbelief in the political system, including honesty in the elections; and their potential lack of confidence in the Federal Government. Brazil was found to have a high percentage (68%) of citizens, when compared to other countries, who indicated that they felt "unsafe walking at night." This ranking was second highest in the world, behind only Afghanistan.

In 2016, the Military Police registered the largest street protest ever undertaken by Brazilians in and across several cities (G1 Globo, 2016). Protesters held placards against corruption, refusing Rousseff as President, and denouncing the Left-wing PT party. In August that same year, with the fall of Rousseff, Michel Temer took over governance of the country, and the Brazilian economy closed for a second consecutive year of recession (Campanato, 2016). Even with a new president in 2017, Brazilians did not have reasonable expectations for the future, and the vast majority believed that the country was on the wrong track (Ipsos, 2017)<sup>33</sup>. In the first quarter of 2017, Brazilians took to the streets in the main capitals to protest reforms proposed by the Temer government. These protests led to a stoppage of public transport (i.e., metros and buses) and the use of gas bombs by police in order to contain the protesters (Mendonca & Martin, 2017; UOL, 2017).

Despite these instabilities, former President Lula da Silva led all polls related to voting intentions during the second round of the 2018 election campaign when compared to Bolsonaro. A 2017 Ipsos survey was used to analyze the population approval of 26

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<sup>33</sup> An Ipsos survey conducted between 1 and 15 March 2017. Ipsos is a multinational market research company.

politicians, and Lula da Silva was the one with the highest public support (38%; Ipsos, 2017). Results from a survey from *Confederação Nacional do Transporte/MDA* (CNT/MDA) in September 2017 similarly indicated that Lula da Silva was leading vote intention in three scenarios, with Bolsonaro in second position (Reuters, 2017). A further survey by Datafolha (2017) indicated findings related to interviews with respondents in respect to what candidate they would reject voting. The results revealed that Bolsonaro held a 33% rejection rating as late as September 2017 (Gazeta do Povo, 2017).

Only one month after the noted survey indications, however, Bolsonaro took the aforementioned tour to the US. As noted in the subsection, “*Tropical Trump*” *Goes to the US*, Bolsonaro used this tour as a way to reinvent his image as a Far-Right extremist, and recorded and posted the trip in series of videos on YouTube. The opening of the seven videos, titled *Bolsonaros nos EUA*, included photographs of his tour, with a closing digital image of the US flag followed by the Brazilian flag and the slogan “Democracy is what united us.”

For the purposes of the current study, some photos from parts of the videos have been included as illustrative proof of the described scenarios. These photographs have also been used as a form of enrichment of the speech analysis. The addition of these images was deemed acceptable, as some scholars, such as Cara Finnegan (2001, p. 134), have indicated the value of studying the functionality of visual images when participating in arguments:

...the study of visual argument may enrich our understanding of argument ... because it has potential to enrich our understanding of fundamental questions in visual and media studies: How do images embody codes of power, domination, spectatorship, or surveillance?

While it was not a formal part of this study for the researcher to analyze the images as visual arguments, such an attempt could be undertaken in future research. For the purposes of the current study, the researcher, instead, recognized the power of the images employed by Bolsonaro in the videos in respect to his broader rhetoric, and how they were not chosen by accident. The video's prominent US-related imagery as backdrops (e.g., a typical American-style house, the country's flag, residential streets, and even a police station) all held a relationship to the verbal arguments presented by Bolsonaro's international "Tropical Trump" persona. The elements in the background also aided the audience in capturing the transition from the national *mito* to the even more powerful internationally contextualized "Tropical Trump" persona.

Bolsonaro's speeches that were presented in the noted videos (i.e., with the establishment of the "Tropical Trump" persona) had to maintain a connection with his Brazilian public. It was for this reason, the researcher in this study found out that Bolsonaro used *Ordem e Progresso* (Order and Progress) in a non-verbal dialectical frame. The slogan from Brazil's flag, *Ordem e Progresso*, was inspired by the political motto of positivism, put forward by the philosopher Augusto Comte, who wrote that "[I]ove as a principle and order as a basis; the Progress at last" (Cartha Magazine, 2019). In line with this understanding, however, each word is antimonious to the other. When used together in the same sentence, they become paradoxical.

For a more specific argument, "order" in the dictionary relates to orderly arrangement or the practice of being organized. It can also relate to commanding an action. By contrast, "progress" pertains to movement toward a goal, growth, or development, which is inherently at odds with order or maintaining the status quo. It

should be noted, however, that while the words *ordem* and *progresso* may be opposed, they both still represent key ideas for Bolsonaro. This remains true despite neither words being used explicitly in his speeches, as they were, rather, dialectical in nature. Burke (1969, p. 55) explains dialectical terms as referring

...to *ideas* rather than to *things*. Hence they are more concerned with *action* and *attitude* than with perception (they fall under the head of *ethics* and form rather than *knowledge* and *information*). You define them by asking how they *behave*.

The ideas expressed by *Ordem e Progresso* were found in the “Tropical Trump” arguments, as presented in the noted videos, as those words have been present throughout Bolsonaro’s life, particularly when he was a military student during the dictatorship. The Military Regime propaganda was based on implied nationalism (e.g., “Love Brazil or leave it” and “Nobody holds this country”) (Rodrigues, n.d.). In many parts of the videos, Bolsonaro complimented Americans for their patriotism, for displaying their flag, and for being proud of being Americans.

The videos were seen as simple in editing and production value, with the aim of allowing Bolsonaro to speak the vernacular of social media and present himself on a trip to the US in the same way as any other Brazilian medium-class traveler might take a vacation. As part of this display, Bolsonaro (2017e) appears genuine in one of the videos, wherein he made a statement about the tour being financed with his own money. In many of the videos, Bolsonaro also slowly adjusts his appeals and adopts political stances. For example, he makes reference to the US’s “right to bear arms” and makes various attacks on “corruption” and “Socialism.” Bolsonaro further associates his persona to the American Dream by using US images as backdrops to his videos and adopting Trump’s rhetorical style (e.g., attacking the opposition and requesting “pride”). It could be argued



that Bolsonaro employed these elements in order to amplify his global image and lead his “Tropical Trump” persona into international locations.

The first video of the series took place in Florida, and formed the focus of this researcher’s analysis. In the first three videos, Bolsonaro visited a police station in Fort Lauderdale, a gun store in Miami, and spoke to Brazilians in an open event at the restaurant Padano Bar & Grill, located in Deerfield Beach.<sup>34</sup> Figure 5.1, offers a still of the video’s Part I, where Bolsonaro stood in a residential street and spoke in front of an average Miami house.

**Figure 5.1**  
*Bolsonaro speaking in Miami*



Hello Brazilians. Sunday, October 8, Miami. I’m here in a condominium that in Brazil would be middle class... I didn’t see trash on the street, I don’t see anyone walking around. It is something completely different from our standards in Rio de Janeiro. But one thing catches my attention too. The flag of their

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<sup>34</sup> Hundreds of people were present in the Padano Bar & Grill restaurant in Deerfield, FL, to see the presidential candidate (Gazeta News, 2017).

country, a people who are proud to be American. Unlike us (Bolsonaro, 2017a/2021).

Bolsonaro then pointed to the US flag in front of the house and continued describing what he deemed to be other people's rhetoric:

Nobody criticizes who is bad. In Brazil, who criticizes the Left? They criticize the Americans—imperialist, dominator, Capitalist fathers. The good thing is, it's a country like Venezuela, Cuba, where everyone is equal in the misery of poverty, on top of Socialism.

... We have to rescue the pride of being Brazilian. This depends on the actions of each one of us (Bolsonaro, 2017a/2021).

From the still presented in Figure 5.1, it is clear to see that Bolsonaro selected a middle-class house that would be viewed as the closest thing to a Brazilian home for ordinary people—he did not select a mansion. Bolsonaro also mentioned not seeing any trash or suspicious activity (i.e., “anyone walking around”), which indicated his perception of what order and respect for people's property entails. It should be noted that at the same time that he selected these arguments and images, Bolsonaro also deflected away from the actual poverty and crime present in Miami. He then praised US citizens for being proud of their country by pointing to the flag.

From there, Bolsonaro reduced the Venezuela and Cuba contexts to solely ones of misery and poverty. This was done in a bid to offer the opposite idea to that of *progresso*. When non-verbally referencing *Ordem e Progresso*, Bolsonaro compared and contrasted the concept of American's “pride to be American” with Brazilians' lack of such pride in their own nation (i.e., “unlike us”). Bolsonaro then invited Brazilians to step into this nationalist identity: “We have to rescue the pride of being Brazilian. This depends on the actions of each one of us.” His affirmation in this regard parallels Burke's conceptions regarding dialectical terms, namely that “...they are more concerned with *action* and

*attitude* than with perception” (1969, p. 55). Bolsonaro’s utterance was, thus, an attempt to place himself as *the* Brazilian ready to act in accordance with “rescuing” Brazilians’ “pride of being Brazilian.”

This act can be referenced back to what Burke (1945, p. XV) queried in the introduction of his book regarding the discovery of motives, namely “[w]hat is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” In light of this concern, Bolsonaro can then be seen as adopting appeals in his videos that reproduce what people say and do. This is evident in his statement, “Nobody criticizes who is bad. In Brazil, who criticizes the Left? They criticize the American—imperialist, dominator, Capitalist fathers.” In this instance, Bolsonaro again selects, deflects, and reflects on Capitalism and Socialism through his perceptions of *progresso* by indicating to whomever might criticize the US as a dominator and Capitalist the goods of the US’s progress through exemplifying that countries ruled by the Left are driven into poverty (e.g., Cuba and Venezuela, which are Communist countries). By taking this approach, Bolsonaro selected those countries while deflecting other aspects surrounding the concepts of countries being “developed” and “underdeveloped.”

Of further note is how, when Bolsonaro spoke of *ordem*, he associated this idea with his attacks on Corruption (i.e., specifically with respect to his labelling the Left PT party as being “corrupt”). His attacks against PT’s corruption and calling those in the party Communists were based on appeals of both *ordem* and *progresso*, with the understanding that Corruption and Communism are “disorders” and “regressions” within his anecdotes. This concept is additionally evidenced in how, at the Padano Bar & Grill in Deerfield Beach, Florida, Bolsonaro spoke once again about patriotism, with the US

flag in the background. In this instance, Bolsonaro (2017/2021) praised the US flag by stating: “My salute to the American flag.” Bolsonaro also repeatedly chanted a reference to the country, along with the audience at the restaurant: “USA! USA! USA!”

**Figure 5.2**

*Bolsonaro Salutes the US Flag as a Sign of Subservience to the Country*



Note: Still taken for Progressista (2017).

While the scene depicted in Figure 5.2 is no longer available on Bolsonaro’s YouTube channel due to negative media repercussions, several other sites, such as *Intercept Brasil*, published images of Bolsonaro saluting the US flag and chanting (Ghedin, 2019; Higgins, 2017). Bolsonaro also admired and praised the US lifestyle as being the life he wants for those in Brazil; this despite how saluting another country’s flag represents submission to said country. At the same event (i.e., at the restaurant), Bolsonaro made the following statement:

I’m proud to see in people’s homes, certainly a home maybe even yours, to see a US flag. And this flag, these people are proud of it. And we have to go back to being proud of our flag too (Bolsonaro, 2017d/2021).

This is an important statement, as Brazil’s patriotic values were fragile at that particularly politically uncertain time. Bolsonaro’s appeals of being “proud of our flag” had, thus, the potential to bring about a new identity to Brazilians through a “rescuing” of national values. By using the US flag as the backdrop, Bolsonaro was able to offer an example of his understanding of progress and order as they aligned with his “Tropical Trump” rhetoric. A similar example can be seen in Bolsonaro’s visit to a gun store in Florida (Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3**  
*Bolsonaro Speaking in a Gun Store*



As part of the video presented in Figure 5.3, Bolsonaro made the following statement as he stood next to a gun seller:

It is unbelievable what happens in Brazil. It’s unbelievable! When I talk about arming people, it’s because you don’t have self-defense and you only have one life. Either you react, or you die.... So, there is a huge difference. That’s why here it’s First World. I’m here to learn something, right. In the House of Arms, as in the prison, in the American Congress, talk to businessmen, talk about economics, or better yet, hear about economics. If I were what the Left says I am,

or the big media, I would be going to North Korea or Cuba or some other Socialist country, any communist country. That's why I'm here to learn, we have to have good examples to learn. Why does the Left [party] beat the Americans so much? Because it works here! Are you going to criticize the poor Venezuelan people? You will not. They are poor people, they don't even have freedom. The Venezuelan people were disarmed in 2012 with the support of the Brazilian government and look at the situation there. And Brazil is, unfortunately, heading in the same direction (Bolsonaro, 2017b/2021).

Bolsonaro's key phrase in this excerpt was "That's why here it's First World."

With specific reference to this statement, Bolsonaro can be seen as selecting a place and an anecdote in order to reflect on his idea of *progresso*. His selection of history in the US is also a deflection of current reality (i.e., his notion that "arming people" for "self-defense" "works here"). In this narrative, then, Bolsonaro implants fear so as to persuade his audience of his ideas—namely that "either you react or die"—and that in the US people have the option to buy a gun. Bolsonaro's aspirations for Brazil's *progresso* and "development" toward a "First World" nation, thus, relies on learning from the US (i.e., "I am here to learn...hear about economics") and his visit to a gun store implies learning about arming citizens for "self-defense."

Of further note with respect to this particular video is how Bolsonaro explored one of the biggest concerns of the Brazilian population, namely terms surrounding security and vulnerability to violence, which included armed robberies and the like (Neri, 2018). Brazil has a federal law (No. 10826 of 2013), known as the Disarmament Statute, that prohibits the possession of weapons by civilians. This law established some of the most challenging requirements in the world for citizens to buy and carry a gun, and it requires the Federal Police to authorize or refuse each citizen's registration for gun possession (Soares, 2013). Bolsonaro proposed changes to this law, and his presidential campaign continued with strong appeals about making Brazil's gun possession laws more

flexible. In this way, Bolsonaro's anecdote in the presented video aligned his presidential campaign with those of Trump, who never denied his own support for every US citizen to bear arms and who did not make regulations related to tighter gun control (Colvin, 2015). By drawing this alignment, Bolsonaro, in an international context (i.e., inside a gun store in Florida) was able to speak as "Tropical Trump" about his national aspirations of turning Brazil into a country with the "First World" *progresso* of protecting people's liberties (including the freedom to own and carry arms). By contrast, Bolsonaro indicates that Venezuelans, for example, "don't even have freedom."

Bolsonaro's *mito* further reinforced his attempts to facilitate gun possession back in Brazil. For example, as Bolsonaro found more sympathizers, his campaign became more littered with pictures of him and his followers making gun signs with their index fingers and thumbs; thereby representing their favor toward the flexibility of gun possession laws (Passos, 2018). Paiva and Jose (2019, p. 67) noted that as part of this rhetoric, "...[Bolsonaro] defended the possession of firearms in order to guarantee the right to self-defense for whom he classified as 'citizens of good'; consequently, the flexibilization of gun ownership would result in a more violent scenario" (*sic.*).

Bolsonaro also presented strong arguments regarding that matter of gun ownership when he stated that Brazilians "don't have self-defense" and "you only have one life." In Brazil, however, that argument would have to remove the government's responsibility to provide the minimum level of security for its citizens. Here, again, it is possible to see how Bolsonaro selected one aspect of the problem and directed his public's attention to their "one life" while leaving out other important considerations (e.g., the potential for "a

more violent scenario”) related to the need for Brazilians to comply with other aspects of national security.

In a third video shot in Florida, Bolsonaro visited the Fort Lauderdale Police Department, where he recorded a speech while sitting inside a vehicle for special operations (Figure 5.4).

**Figure 5.4**

*Bolsonaro Visiting the Fort Lauderdale Police Department*



As part of this video, Bolsonaro made the following statement:

... it's interesting. I didn't see bullet damage anywhere in this vehicle. You go there in the BOPE's Caveirão<sup>35</sup>, there are dozens of perforations, shot marks. I told about this to the Americans, they laughed at us. And with good reason. Only here when someone shoots, you can shoot and kill, and you get a medal. In Rio de Janeiro you get jail. That's what our federal and state authorities are for; to go after the civil and military police officer who, by chance, retaliates the criminal's shot. There is a very big difference between Brazil and the United States. Let's change that, the penal code. We are together, right?! (Bolsonaro, 2017c/2021).

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<sup>35</sup> The Special Police Operations Battalion (BOPE) is a police force tactical unit deployed in Rio de Janeiro. Caveirão (Big Skull) is the nickname of the special police cars used for BOPE operations.



Through the statements made in the noted video, “Tropical Trump” put forward his representative idea of order while sitting inside a US police car. He observed that this car was not damaged by bullets and used this specific “moment” to encapsulate social order by stating that “no one shoots on police cars in the US” in his anecdote. “Tropical Trump” continued his anecdote by stating that “I told about this to the Americans, they laughed at us.” With this allusion to how police cars in Brazil are full of bullet holes, Bolsonaro further exposed a situation that Brazilians might deem embarrassing by noting the irony of how the Americans “laughed at us.”

For Burke, “[i]rony arises when one tries, by the interaction of terms, upon one another, to produce a development which uses all the terms” (Burke, 1945, p. 432). By using this language strategy of irony, Bolsonaro was able to approach the problem that Brazil faces with regard to violence and security, based on a perspective that matched his audience’s views presented in social media. Bolsonaro then continued with this representative anecdote by narrating that a police officer cannot shoot back or they go to the jail in Brazil. He then contrasts this by stating that this reality is different in the US: “...here when someone shoots, you can shoot and kill, and you get a medal.”

Bolsonaro’s anecdote in this regard is, then, that US police officers are rewarded for retaliating against criminals. In Brazil, however, there is a law that a police officer can be investigated and go to jail for acting with excessive force or an abuse of authority. By making this comparison, Bolsonaro selected one anecdote to make not only a comparison to Brazil but to expose a broader problem he had with the regulation of police officers in Brazil. This issue is evident in how one of Bolsonaro’s projects as a candidate, and now

as president, has been to change one of the Penal Code Articles<sup>36</sup> to protect police officers and member of the Army from being investigated in cases of excessive force or abuse of power.

With respect to Bolsonaro's anecdotes in this regard, it is helpful to consult Williams (1986, p. 7): "A representative anecdote, as a representative form, should create a desire in the reader/audience for the totality represented and should simultaneously satiate that desire by creating the illusion of plenitude, of the presence of the totality." To this end, Bolsonaro's anecdotes could be seen as having selected aspects pertaining to security and economic growth in the US in a bid to reflect on the order and progress to which he aspires for Brazil. Bolsonaro's representative anecdote in the videos were, furthermore, that Brazil could be a "First World" country if only its citizens would do things in the same way as what is done in the US.

To expound on this notion, Bolsonaro first puts forward the idea that Brazilians have to be patriots, love their homeland, and display their flag in the same way that Americans do. Second, Brazil's laws should give Brazilians the "right to bear arms" and to solve their concerns regarding security. Third, in addition to security, Brazil's penal code should be changed in order to allow the police and army forces to defend the country freely, as is the case in the US (e.g., "you can shoot and kill, and you get a medal"). By using *Ordem e Progresso* as synecdochical support, Bolsonaro was able to both explicitly and implicitly, within his anecdotes, declare that Brazilians should do

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<sup>36</sup> The Brazil Penal Code, Article 23, provides an exclusion of illegality related to how it is no longer considered a criminal offence if a police officer kills someone in the course of his or her work. The code does not, however, protect police officers from being criminally investigated in a confirmed case of excessive force or an abuse of power (e.g., if a police officer shot the same person 10 times or otherwise acted violently; Fortuna, 2018).

things as they are done in the US in order to become a “First World” nation. In contrast to the crises and chaos that Brazilians were experiencing at this time, both Bolsonaro’s “Tropical Trump” and *mito* personae offered an alternative of escape and presented a solution toward progress (i.e., “let’s love [our] country” as this is how we get to become a “First World” nation).

It should be noted that the chosen videos represented only a few, but some of the more relevant excerpts, related to the series of videos Bolsonaro made in Florida. These videos were sufficient for presenting the dramatic nature of Bolsonaro’s rhetoric, which he repeated across the remainder of his US tour (i.e., present in videos recorded in Massachusetts, New York, and Washington, DC). By the time Bolsonaro and his sons undertook this tour together, they had already amassed over 10 million followers on their respective Facebook and YouTube channels<sup>37</sup>. Bolsonaro had 4.5 million followers on his Facebook page alone. YouTube Brazil further disclosed that five out of 10 channels in the country that managed to grow most during the 2016-2018 period included content devoted to promoting Bolsonaro and the Far-Right (Ghedin, 2019). His YouTube series *Bolsonaros nos EUA* might have helped Bolsonaro win some votes in the 2018 elections. Polling stations installed in embassies and consulates worldwide registered Bolsonaro as the most voted candidate by Brazilians living abroad. Bolsonaro was also found to be the only candidate who won in every city with a voting station for Brazilians in the US (Moreno, 2018).

Of particular note is how, in the US, the number of votes reached record highs, with Bolsonaro receiving 81.7% of the 52,554 valid votes from Brazilian residents living

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<sup>37</sup> Based on the follower and subscription numbers of Bolsonaro’s YouTube and Facebook pages.

in the US. In Miami alone, Bolsonaro received 91.04% of the votes (Sayuri, 2020). Due to his only having approximately 8 seconds-worth of screen time on national television dedicated to free electoral propaganda, Bolsonaro's use of social media platforms and the analyzed YouTube videos could be deemed as having played a significant role in his election campaign. In the following section, the researcher turns attention to Bolsonaro as the elected President of Brazil, and highlights how he went about putting into action the dramatic events that he envisioned for Brazil in his political appeals during his candidacy run.

### ***“Tropical Trump” Meets the Real Trump***

On March 17, 2019, the then-newly elected President of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, arrived in the US for his first meeting with then-US President Donald Trump. The Brazilian ministers and office advisors' delegation arrived in Washington, DC for a two-day visit to the US. It was at this time that Trump received Bolsonaro at the White House, where they held a diplomatic meeting. In a subsequent joint press conference, both presidents announced their plans to intensify diplomatic relations between their countries.

As part of this thesis, the researcher has argued that Bolsonaro used Trump as a rhetorical tool by putting on a Trump-like persona of his own. Bolsonaro did this by, at times, echoing Trump's own words and/or using US imagery to legitimize his discursive acts (as depicted in the preceding sections of this chapter). By focusing primarily on Bolsonaro's speech, the researcher in this present section analyzes the first press conference of “The Trumps” through the adoption of Burke's approaches pertaining to dramatism.

As noted previously, dramatism can be studied and applied in and across diverse areas such as philosophy, sociology, or theology. Many scholars have indicated that Burke's pentad could be used as a methodology to support rhetorical critics in finding rhetors' motives. For example, according to Brummett (1979, p. 251), Burke's "pentad may also be used in critical inquires to reveal and explain ideologies." McGeough and King (2016, p. 149) similarly wrote that "Burke developed pentadic criticism to make visible how persuaders use language to change our beliefs and influence our actions." Burke's pentad could, thus, be seen as a method that provides both audiences and interpreters tools to be more critical and able to discern motives and structures underlying texts (or rhetoric).

Different scholars have, however, indicated different positions regarding Burke's ideas or tools pertaining to dramatism. For example, Crable (2000, p. 318) argued that "the representative anecdote taken in conjunction with the pentad supports Burke's claim to provide the most adequate vocabulary for the study of motives." Drawing on Madsen's work, Crable similarly suggested "that anecdotal analysis should be considered a necessary component to all dramatic criticism, a standard operation to be followed prior to pentadic analysis." (2000, p. 318) Madsen (1993, p. 215) specifically said "This phase (*pentadic analysis*) of analysis is both logically and temporarily posterior to the selection of a representative anecdote." With respect to the current study, Williams (1986, p. 5-6) offered the simplest and most complete explanation of the method:

The representative anecdote is, quite simply, a synecdoche: it is a part which stands for the whole, just as the whole may stand for the part...[it is] thus both a theoretical construct, a statement of what a motivational complex is, and a methodological procedure, or a way of discovering the motivational complex.

As noted earlier, Burke (1945, p. 59) suggests that dramatism involves the search for a representative anecdote. Burke attributed the importance of finding the representative anecdote through the construction of vocabulary and presented this construction as forming “a part which stands for the whole” (Williams, 1986, p. 6). The argument holds, then, that if that part is in conformity with the anecdote, it is possible for analysts to “read out” the whole.

In order to effectively analyze the first public discourse of “Tropical Trump” and the real Trump, the researcher determined that the representative anecdote approach was an acceptable and appropriate critical method due to its being both a “theoretical construct...and a methodological procedure” (Williams, 1986, p. 5-6) that could help locate Bolsonaro’s motives as presented within his ascendancy to the Presidency.

Only two months after coming into office, President Bolsonaro, chose the US for his first bilateral meeting outside of other South American countries. His primary objective with this visit was to strengthen foreign policies between Brazil and the US. The researcher for this current study found, however, that this event was also a deliberate attempt at legitimizing Bolsonaro’s approaches during his campaign as the “Tropical Trump” who would transform Brazil into a place similar to the US. The researcher also determined that the bilateral meeting was more a symbolic media event than actually diplomatic meeting between the two countries. In this sense, it could be asserted that Bolsonaro used US imagery, once again, to empower his own political image and discourse.

It could be argued, then, that both the meeting itself and the joint press conference presented in the Rose Garden thereafter, were specifically arranged to feed Bolsonaro’s

ideology. At the joint press conference, the parties discussed their mutual priorities as presidents of the two largest democratic countries in the western hemisphere. Standing side by side in the Rose Garden, Trump welcomed Bolsonaro and made the first announcement of the event, then passed the floor to Bolsonaro, who primarily echoed Trump's speech.

In the same way that Trump congratulated Bolsonaro at the beginning of the event, Bolsonaro opened his speech by voicing admiration for the US, which he noted had increased with Trump in the Presidency. Part of his speech is presented as follows:

This meeting of ours today restores an old tradition of partnership.... It is time to overcome old resistance and explore the very best potential between Brazil and the United States.... Brazil does have a President who is not anti-American, which is unprecedented in the past few decades.

The reforms we are currently undertaking have changed Brazil into an even more attractive country.... US support to Brazil's accession to the OECD<sup>38</sup> will be clearly interpreted or constructed as a gesture of mutual understanding....

The private sectors of both countries should remain a high-profile player in our relations. We also intend to attach priority to relaunching an energy forum with an emphasis on oil, gas, and other sources of energy (Trump White House Archives, 2019).

With respect to the notion of dramatism and the concept of the representative anecdote, the nature of language should be seen as "derivative" (i.e., having the power of describing and defining) while also being essential in function as pertaining to attitude and hortatory (Burke, 1973, p. 44). Bolsonaro's first announcements at the event could, thus, be seen as re-emphasizing himself as "not anti-American." This sentiment became most apparent in his social media posts and general praises aimed toward Trump; but it

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<sup>38</sup> Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

took on new meaning in the address, by becoming a request for Brazilians to trust in Americans in the same way that he does.

Bolsonaro further used terms and phrases such as “reforms;” “changed;” “attractive country;” “US supports;” “relaunching an energy forum;” and “oil, gas, and other energy sources.” He opted to use these words despite how with only two months into his Presidency, Bolsonaro not yet made any such “reforms” toward changing Brazil into something he deemed more “attractive”. Simply by employing these noted terminologies, however, Bolsonaro was able to convey an idea of “doing things” to bring Brazil’s economic growth, regardless of how accurate the statements were in reality.

Like Trump, Bolsonaro also communicated agreements and concessions made with respect to these presidents’ partnership. In this instance, Bolsonaro used vocabulary such as “technology agreement,” “relaunching forum,” “military cooperation,” and “development of defense system”—all of which were words that represented the steps toward a future of progress and order that “Tropical Trump” had envisioned for Brazil back in the time of his pre-candidacy (i.e., as presented in his aforementioned YouTube videos). Such notions were further evident in the following excerpts of his speech:

The Brazilian government, as a sign of goodwill, granted whole visa exemption to US nationals, with a view to further encourage tourism and business travels.

On the defense and space cooperation work front, we have signed a Technology Safeguards Agreement, which will, in turn, enable the Alcantara Satellite Launch Center.

Military cooperation has also expanded as we seek our partnerships in the development of defense systems. Science, technology, and innovation activity can certainly be expected to take on an increasing role as part of our bilateral agenda... (Trump White House Archives, 2019).



A comparison of Bolsonaro’s two announcements presented in this section with statements made by Trump illustrated that an “agreement” between the two countries was, furthermore, beneficial to the US. Trump did not mention facilitating visas and, instead, communicated the technology agreement as follows:

We have signed a Technology Safeguard Agreement. This agreement will allow the US. to use the Alcantara Satellite Launch Center, which would help the US save a tremendous amount of money (Trump White House Archives, 2019).

It should be noted, though, that it was unclear in the noted statements what Brazil received in exchange for “allowing” the US to “use” the Alcantara Center and help them “save money.” Rather, Bolsonaro chose to focus, instead, on the presidents’ mutual concerns regarding Venezuela:

Reestablishing democracy in Venezuela is also a shared interest between our two administrations. The dictatorial regime in Venezuela today is part of a broader international coalition, known as the ‘Sao Paulo Forum<sup>39</sup>,’ which nearly conquered power throughout Latin America in recent times. However, by democratic means, we were able to rid ourselves from that project in Brazil (Trump White House Archives, 2019).

The attacks made during the address regarding the political problems in Venezuela could be seen as symbolically representing the ways in which Bolsonaro attacked Left-wing parties in general. For example, Bolsonaro attributed the problems in Venezuela as being the result of a “dictatorial regime”— this despite his earlier praise of the dictatorship in Brazil. Bolsonaro further extended the problems in Venezuela to the Sao Paulo Forum, wherein he indicated that “we were able to rid” Brazil of that project.

It should be noted that Bolsonaro’s remark at the joint press conference exemplified language in terms of what Burke termed “symbolic action.” As Burke noted:

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<sup>39</sup> The Sao Paulo Forum was a seminar created in the 1990s for left-parties located across Latin America where they discussed experiences and nurtured ideologies.

“Even if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology, it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality” (Burke, 1973, p. 45). With this understanding, it was possible to assert that Bolsonaro, during the joint address, selected a problem in a Communist country in order to direct attention to “the Left” and his (“we”) ending that “project.” The Sao Paulo Forum did not, however, end, although it had, over the years, weakened itself due to the defeat of Left-wing governments, disagreements, and political leadership absences at its annual meetings (Mangione, 2020).

As Bolsonaro drew his speech to a close, he noted:

In conclusion, may I say Brazil and the United States stand side-by-side in their efforts to ensure liberties and respect to traditional families’ lifestyles, respect to God, our creator, against the gender ideology or the politically correct attitudes, and against fake news.... We want to have a great America, yes, and we also want to have a great Brazil...we seal a promising alliance between the two most promising and largest democracies in the western hemisphere. May God bless Brazil, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, Mr. President (Trump White House Archives, 2019).

With the end of his speech, Bolsonaro stood side-by-side with Trump and extended this action through his words regarding the countries standing side-by-side and sharing the same moral values. Bolsonaro’s word choices such as “traditional families” and adding “God, our creator” before saying “against gender ideology, politically correct attitudes, and fake news” signaled, respectively, that while part of his rhetoric relied on conservatism, intolerance, and falsehood<sup>40</sup> his use of “God our creator” before these inflammatory sentiments were meant to define his motives for making these claims. This

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<sup>40</sup> Bolsonaro’s stance “against” fake news is actually a falsehood, as investigations have proved the contrary. In particular, according to Avaaz, 98% of Bolsonaro’s voters were exposed to at least one or more cases of fake news during his 2018 election campaign. Bolsonaro has also been accused of illegally benefitting from a fake news service financing a campaign to bombard WhatsApp users with lies about the opposition candidate (i.e., Weizenmann, 2019).

approach aligned with Burke's notes regarding theological terminologies of motives: "[T]he Bible solves the problem by putting 'God' into the first sentence" (Burke, 1973, p. 46). A further moment in his speech where Bolsonaro stepped into "Tropical Trump's persona was when he paraphrased Trump's "make America great again" (MAGA) slogan as: "[W]e want to have a great Brazil."

As noted previously, the joint press conference was more media spectacle than diplomatic in nature. Any presidential press conference can be viewed as a dramatic event itself. The presence of many journalists, special guests, security personnel, politicians, committees are expected. Bolsonaro's formal speech was expected, and he used this event to legitimize the approaches presented previously in his videos. Such legitimization extended to his desire to make Brazil a "First World" country and, as such, in his joint press conference speech, Bolsonaro selected terms that would represent progress and economic growth for Brazil. In respect to what Burke describes as "terministic screens", it is possible to align Bolsonaro's speech with the following statement: "[T]he nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the attention to one field rather than to another" (Burke, 1973, p. 46). In other words, Bolsonaro shaped his discourse by using terminologies that would emphasize Brazil's stepping toward becoming "First World" rather than revealing that Brazil was actually making concessions and submitting to a "greater nation" (i.e., that the bilateral agreement was not, in actuality, advantageous for Brazil).

The representative anecdote found in Bolsonaro's speech was, thus, that he was working on taking Brazil toward becoming a "First World" nation. In this sense, Bolsonaro wanted to be associated with Trump as the first demonstration of his own

power. The problem was, however, that he ultimately had to accept Trump's terms and ended up making statements similar to those that Trump had said previously. Brazil would, as a consequence, have to do what the US required of them in the bilateral agreement.

It should be noted that when Bolsonaro chose the US for his first bilateral agreement instead of a country from Latin America (e.g., Chile or others), he knew the imagistic importance of being in the Global North. While both the Palacio da Alvorada and El Palacio de La Moneda hold the same functionalities, they do not have the same visual power as the White House. It was for this reason that Bolsonaro appealed to his audience by applying visual arguments directly from the "First World."

Bolsonaro also used US imagery as well as then-President Trump, who was already internationally known as a businessman, to empower his discourse and political image internationally. His motives were, thus, ideological in nature. The field of ideology is essential for understanding the rhetorical purposes present in political speeches. As Brummett (1979, p. 251) observes: "Ideologies motivate and guide political rhetoric and give it purpose." The White House could, therefore, be seen (at least for Bolsonaro) in the same light as the Cinderella Castle that a child wants to visit when going to Disneyland. In the same way that Disney is good at contriving myths and tales, Bolsonaro's rhetoric is good at contriving *mitos* and anecdotes. That is to say, by being present at the White House, Bolsonaro was able to use the event, which took place a mere 2 months after taking office, to legitimize his *mito* and "Tropical Trump" personae. The results and aftermath of the bilateral meeting could, however, not be measured at the time of writing, as less than a year later, the Covid-19 pandemic occurred.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the researcher tested and analyzed the rhetorical appeals of Bolsonaro when he embraced and applied the personae *mito* and “Tropical Trump”. Findings indicated that Bolsonaro’s transcendent persona (*mito*) helped him gain national attention and align himself with diverse religious institutions. The *mito* rhetoric also aided in elevating Bolsonaro to the status of “God’s envoy,” especially after surviving a stabbing, which worked to further his employment of the “God’s chosen one” rhetoric. The effective use of the *mito* persona, furthermore, enabled Bolsonaro to be “pardoned” by voters from the consequences of his absurd speeches (i.e., the demonstration of misogynist, racist, and homophobic ideas).

Similarly, the use of the immanent persona (“Tropical Trump”) helped Bolsonaro gain international visibility and votes from Brazilians living abroad. The adoption of this persona was particularly useful for Bolsonaro, as no other foreign candidate mirrored Trump as much as he did. Bolsonaro, thus, extended this persona even to the point of going to the US and seeking out visual elements to reinforce the rhetoric associated with this persona. Upon gaining the presidency, Bolsonaro further bolstered his “Tropical Trump” persona by arranging a diplomatic meeting in the US, where he used the real Trump as a type of supporting actor and the White House as a backdrop in a symbolic press conference designed to legitimize both the “Tropical Trump” persona and Bolsonaro’s related appeals.

The researcher further found that the representative anecdote of “let’s do things in the same way that they do in the US so that we can become a First World country” was constructed by Bolsonaro in his video series, *Bolsonaros nos EUA*. This sentiment further aligned with the notion of “Tropical Trump” in the US, wherein Bolsonaro’s anecdotes, appeals, and vocabularies were “*selections* and *reductions*” of realities experienced by citizens of both Brazil and the US. When “Tropical Trump” made comparisons and contrasts between the two countries, his representative anecdote carried the dialectical frames of *Ordem e Progresso* with regard to perspectives that could be associated with his own background. The representative anecdote found in Bolsonaro’s speeches, as analyzed by the researcher for this current study, also met the language requirements of scope and reduction by adding other dialectical perspectives in a bid to enrich its representativeness. In other words, the representative anecdote as well as the terminologies Bolsonaro chose to employ indicated his ultimate and underlying motives.

For example, Bolsonaro held the motive of wanting Brazil to hold the title of a “First World” country. This motive is evident in Bolsonaro’s calls on Brazilians to do things in the same way that citizens of the US do. This call extended not only to citizens’ behaviors, but for Brazil to actually include laws and a Constitution that reflected that of the US. It could be argued that Bolsonaro’s motive in this regard was so strong that he would call for it at any cost—as demonstrated in his repetitive chant of “USA!”, his saluting of the US flag, and his signing of a bilateral agreement that was not advantageous for Brazil (i.e., all actions which, ironically, undermined his own nationalists appeals).

The international media's filming and photographing of Bolsonaro in the White House next to Trump further assisted Bolsonaro in gaining powerful visual elements to support his rhetoric. The bilateral agreement and related press conference were purely symbolic in nature, and Bolsonaro's proposal was solely ideological—neither the conference nor the agreement would lead Brazil toward becoming an actual “First World” nation. Rather, the agreement held the potential to keep the country in the same position as it found itself before with regard to post-colonial arguments (i.e., any move toward becoming “First World” will remain a mere illusion so long as the Global North continues to dictate the rules and exploits the Global South).

Based on the presented analyses, it became possible to answer the question of Bolsonaro's ultimate motivation. More specifically, through the understanding presented in this study that dramatism is guided by the attempt to answer “[w]hat is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” (Burke, 1945, p. XV), it became clear that Bolsonaro's motive is ideological: he wants omnipotence, he admires power in Trump, and he desires sovereignty over Brazil. Bolsonaro wants the Brazilian public to adopt his conservative worldview, that the good old days of Brazil coincide with the times of the military dictatorship. The researcher came to this conclusion based on how Bolsonaro came from lower clergy in the Chamber of Congress and ultimately gained international notoriety due to being an ambitious politician. The popularity of Bolsonaro's impeachment discourse also made it possible for him to more readily circulate authoritarian ideas and hate within a democratic system. Based on the analyzed rhetoric, there was evidence that Bolsonaro desires the same kind of control that the previous Brazilian dictatorship used to have, even if that means arming the general

population while also enabling the police and army officers to freely use the same kind of violent strength that they employed during the aforementioned military period. When comparing and contrasting his statements across the analyzed videos and speeches, it was possible to determine that Bolsonaro does not want “patriotism.” Rather, he is seeking the same kind of nationalism that was propagated during the dictatorship: “Brazil, love it or leave it.”



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