

# JUNE 2013: AN *AFFECTIVE* HYPOTHESIS ON THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE BRAZILIAN ANTI-PT SENTIMENT

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## Abstract

The June 2013 demonstrations constituted a multifaceted series of events that significantly impacted Brazilian national politics, leaving a lasting influence over the subsequent decade. However, a decade later, it is possible to reassess the nature of these events, particularly examining their correlations with the unfolding political processes in 2015 and 2016. These processes ultimately led to the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and the subsequent arrest of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Taking a retrospective approach, this article delves into the complexities and diversity of the June 2013 demonstrations and seeks to establish connections with the later demonstrations in 2015 and 2016. In order to draw comparisons between the two cycles of demonstrations, this article uses the notions of reactive anti-partisanship, *antipetism* [anti-PT (Worker's Party) sentiment], and nonpartisanship (Poguntke & Scarrow, 1996; Tocal, Gunther & Montero, 2001) to bridge the gap between the events of 2013 and the political landscape in 2015. By exploring these notions, our objective is to offer insights into the interplay between the two periods, shedding light on the causal connections that shaped Brazilian politics during this crucial period.

**Keywords:** impeachment; Dilma; antipartidarism.

## Junho de 2013: uma hipótese *afetiva* sobre a consolidação do antipetismo brasileiro

### Resumo

As manifestações de junho de 2013 foram uma série de eventos, com alto grau de complexidade e diversidade, que marcaram a política nacional brasileira e os seus 10 anos subsequentes. Contudo, uma década depois, é possível reavaliar a natureza daqueles acontecimentos e, mais especificamente, questionar as suas correlações com os processos ocorridos em 2015 e 2016, que culminaram com o impeachment de Dilma Rousseff e a prisão posterior de Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Com interesse em estabelecer aproximações entre os dois ciclos de manifestações, este artigo utiliza-se das noções de antipartidarismo reativo, antipetismo e apartidarismo (Poguntke;

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Scarrow, 1996; Tocal; Gunther; Montero, 2001) para realizar aproximações entre 2013 e 2015. Busca-se desse modo a evidenciar uma leitura acerca dos períodos que pode lançar luz sobre as conexões causais entre ambos.

**Palavras-chave:** impeachment; Dilma; antipartidarismo.

## INTRODUCTION

The June 2013 demonstrations stand out as a pivotal series of events that, with a decade of reflection, now emerge as a significant turning point in Brazilian national politics. This period marked a shift in the political landscape, previously dominated by the Workers' Party (PT), which held the Presidency of the Republic from 2003 to 2016. This mass movement initiated a sequence of transformations that still echo through the present moment while this article is being drafted.

What, then, were the ramifications and inherent characteristics of the movement that sprouted from concerns surrounding public transport tariffs and quality across diverse Brazilian municipalities? Can these effects be interconnected with the unfolding events within institutional frameworks and democratic dynamics? This article embarks on an exploration to unravel these intricacies, aiming to present a compelling argument that underscores the emergence of a widespread protest cycle spanning from 2013 to 2016, intricately linked with the impeachment of former President Dilma Rousseff. Delving deeper, the article strives to articulate the central mechanisms fueling popular discontent towards the Brazilian political establishment, its leaders, and political parties. This discontent, as elucidated in the article, ultimately found its culmination in the candidacy and triumph of Jair Bolsonaro, a former retired Army captain, in the Presidential election, even amid challenging circumstances.

This article does not aim to dissect the events of 2013 but rather to propose a hypothesis concerning its causal interconnections with the subsequent years of 2015-2016. Specifically, it explores the amplification of anti-partisanship and anti-PT sentiments within the far-left, leading to a rejection of conventional channels of representation, political parties, and democracy as a whole. To fulfill this objective, we adopt the perspective of anti-partisanship (Poguntke & Scarrow, 1996; Tocal, Gunther & Montero, 2001), positing that this sentiment is a byproduct of a partisan dynamic with limited roots in the social sphere, despite its significant impact on State affairs. In essence, the argument revolves around political parties that struggle to establish meaningful connections with the general population but excel in organizing political elites to advance their power agendas (Pereira & Mueller, 2003). This hypothesis is anchored in the correlation between the protests and the underlying anti-partisanship fueling the anti-corruption and anti-government narratives. These narratives surfaced in the wake of scandals associated with the Workers' Party (PT) and other political forces within the ruling coalition, forming the backdrop against which this exploration unfolds.

This research hypothesis delves into the nuanced realm of reactive anti-partisanship, a critical facet of the two distinct attitudes opposing political parties, seeking to provide a comprehensive understanding that enhances the interpretation of the events in 2013 and the ensuing decade. This analytical study endeavors to move beyond inconclusive analyses that have characterized previous examinations of this phenomenon. Instead, it advocates for an interpretation that emphasizes the escalating rejection of political parties in the country, particularly gaining traction from the year 2015 onward. To achieve meaningful results, the research aims to pinpoint five key areas: (i) the intricate relationships within party representation; (ii) the diverse dynamics inherent in anti-partisan sentiments; (iii) the cycle of widespread dissatisfaction that reached its pinnacle in 2013; (iv) an exploration of social movements from the vantage point of organized civil society and their respective actors; and finally, (v) the consequential developments that emerged as a result of these complex interactions.

This research draws extensively from secondary sources, facilitating the formulation of a hypothesis that posits how certain key left-leaning social movements, already equipped with experience and organizational capacity, inadvertently contributed to creating a strategic opening for the emergence of a new right. This budding right found its formal organization in previously unoccupied spaces, notably on the streets of Brazil (Alonso, 2017; 2023) (Rocha, 2019). The structure of this work comprises four distinct sections, complementing the introduction and

conclusion. The first section delves into the conceptual foundations and political context, laying the groundwork for the subsequent analysis. The second section focuses on the pivotal events of the 2013 demonstrations. In the third section, we delve into the consolidation of the extreme right as a political force with overarching aspirations, primarily fueled by the dissemination of reactive sentiments toward the political agenda of the Workers' Party, prominently among them being resentment. The fourth section establishes a correlation between these factors and the consequential halting of the Workers' Party project, as exemplified by the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff. Thus, the objective is to underscore the causal and *affective* relationship between resentment and two other sentiments that surfaced between 2013 and 2016: Antipetism (the rejection of the Workers' Party) and anti-partisanship (the rejection of all political parties).

## **PARTY REPRESENTATION, ANTI-PARTISANSHIP, AND THE 'REJECTION OF THE WORKERS' PARTY IN BRAZIL**

The intricate dynamics of party representation and its interaction with society have long been focal points in political literature (Samuels & Zucco, 2018; Braga, 2013; Mair, 2001; Epstein, 1967; Sartori, 1980). From perspectives accentuating parties as vital conduits for citizen-State interactions, to their roles in organizing and mobilizing diverse social segments and their respective agendas, political literature has extensively examined these relationships. Recent scholarly discussions have introduced critical perspectives, particularly concerning the metamorphosis of associations and their impact on political landscapes.

A noteworthy shift has occurred within political parties, gradually moving away from their traditional representative functions towards procedural responsibilities. This transformation has brought about a weakening of partisan-ideological identities and has given rise to an argument that, increasingly, questions the efficacy of politics due to the diminished capacity for identification with party acronyms and the heightened emphasis on political careers (Mair, 2001). The seminal work *Political Parties and Democracy* by Peter Mair (2001) succinctly encapsulates this evolution:

The key conclusion drawn from a comprehensive examination of party functions is unmistakable: representative functions of parties are in decline, with other entities assuming, at least partially, these responsibilities, while procedural functions have not only been preserved but have gained heightened relevance. To elaborate further, as parties transition from being primarily society-oriented to State-oriented, the nature of their functions undergoes a profound transformation – from predominantly representative actions to primarily governmental actions (Mair, 2001, p. 285).

Mair's analysis also highlights a critical observation:

[...] as party identities fade and organizational structures and presentation methods undergo changes, voters are encountering increasing difficulties in perceiving these parties as effective representatives of their interests and concerns (Mair, 2001, p. 288).

In his examination of the transformative processes within political parties at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Mair not only provides a diagnostic and descriptive account but also instigates a series of inquiries into the parties' capacity to fulfill their pivotal role in the intricate relationship between representatives and the represented. Additionally, Mair's work creates space for studies on anti-partisanship and its various manifestations. In essence, Mair prompts critical reflections on how political engagement, partisan activities, and even democratic principles can be brought into question. This is particularly under the pretext of widespread indifference, concerns about corruption, and skepticism towards the actions of politicians perceived to exclusively serve their own interests, detached from the welfare of the broader populace.

Colin Crouch, in his book *Post Democracy* (2004), delves into what can be interpreted as the era of post-democracy. This phase is marked by the erosion of mass politics and the trend towards the personalization of leaders, accompanied by the pervasive influence of political marketing and the professionalization of political figures. In the landscape of post-democracy, the political sphere grapples with a profound shift away from its erstwhile position of authority and widespread respect. Simultaneously, it faces challenges in accurately deciphering the diverse demands emanating from the population.

These symptoms are not confined to developed countries or democracies typically perceived as stable in Europe and the United States of America. Rather, they extend into Latin America, and notably in the Brazilian context, where they become increasingly apparent through events like the June Days. The repudiation of political party symbols, the widespread discontent, and the prevailing perception that all politicians are indistinguishable contribute to the manifestation of these issues.

Authors such as Mariano Torcal, José Ramon Montero, and Richard Gunther have significantly contributed to the study of political parties by adopting a unique perspective – anti-partisanship. Despite claims by intellectuals in the 1990s regarding the existence of sentiments opposing associations, political scientists have brought further depth to the topic through extensive research, notably focusing on Spain, Italy, Greece, and Portugal over two decades. This effort culminated in the publication of the article *Anti-party sentiments in Southern Europe* (2001), which discusses the presence of two distinct types of anti-partisanship and their consequential impact on individuals' behavior (Torcal, Monteiro, Gunther, 2001). Challenging the prevailing notion that an increase in anti-partisan attitudes correlates with reduced support for democratic regimes, political parties, or the emergence of anti-systemic behavior, the authors aim to highlight that the confusion and inconsistencies in interpretations of partisanship stem from a lack of understanding about what they term *cultural anti-partisanship* and *reactive anti-partisanship*.

Cultural anti-partisanship is delineated as a specific form of anti-partisanship, the origins of which are deeply ingrained, or, as the authors articulate, rooted, in the political culture of a country. Unlike anti-partisan sentiments triggered by transient factors like corruption scandals or economic crises, cultural anti-partisanship is considered a relatively enduring characteristic (Torcal, Monteiro, Gunther, 2001, p. 6). The examination of cultural anti-partisanship involves linking it to the historical experiences of countries and their citizens, particularly in the context of dictatorial and authoritarian regimes. This analysis encompasses the enduring consequences of such historical periods on how politics, political parties, and their representatives are perceived, as Maravall's perspective suggests:

[...] experience of dictatorships and pseudodemocracies, a history of political turbulence and discontinuities, manipulated elections over lengthy periods, and a prolonged negative socialization into politics” (Maravall, 1997, p. 237 apud Torcal, Monteiro, Gunther, 2001, p. 6).

These adverse outcomes may be traced back to deliberate attempts to dismantle the political competition within a State, achieved through targeted advertising and the formal incorporation of such narratives into school education. These multifaceted factors collectively aimed to undermine the foundational values and mechanisms of democracy as a governing system, as well as the efficacy of political parties and politicians as authentic representatives of civil society. This interpretation still finds support across various regions globally and resonates with diverse segments of the population.

While the authors confine their examination to southern European countries, their insights into the interplay among cultural anti-partisanship, the historical presence of authoritarian regimes, and the pervasive skepticism individuals hold toward political parties offer valuable points of contrast with the realities and political cultures of diverse regions. However, it is crucial to distinguish cultural anti-partisanship from reactive anti-partisanship (Torcal, Monteiro, Gunther, 2001). Reactive anti-partisanship, in contrast to its cultural counterpart, is characterized by its critical stance and immediate response to the current performance of the government, institutions,

and the respective political elites. In this context, the focus shifts away from questioning the inherent *nature* of democracy and its functionality to scrutinizing the present actions and the perceived inconsistency between electoral promises and the actual fulfillment by representatives.

The authors Torcal, Monteiro, and Gunther shed light on the consequences engendered by each of these models on the political behavior of individuals. On one hand, there is a cascade of criticisms, societal mobilizations, and discernible impacts on voting patterns driven by reactive anti-partisanship. Conversely, cultural anti-partisanship has “[...] far-reaching effects pertaining to psychological attachments to parties and various forms of conventional participation” (ibid., p. 42). It is essential to underscore the profound influence of party identification, extending well beyond the act of voting. This factor significantly shapes the behavior of voters, impacting their perceptions of the economy, inter-party relations, and their interactions with individuals (Paiva, Krause, Lameirão, 2016). The example of the Workers' Party (PT) serves as an illuminating case study to comprehend the existence of these electoral preferences and the organization of the country's political landscape. The delineation between PT supporters and those who reject it (anti-PT) becomes a pivotal factor in shaping the broader political logic of the society.

According to an October 2022 survey by the DataFolha Institute,<sup>1</sup> the Workers' Party emerged as the most identified political entity, garnering support from 35% of surveyed voters. Following closely was the PL<sup>2</sup> with 20%, while other parties received less than 5% each in terms of identification. However, a notable aspect is that a significant portion of respondents, constituting one-third of the interviewees (35%), expressed a lack of identification with any political party. This phenomenon aligns with the prevalent logic of anti-partisanship and a widespread rejection of institutional actors. In terms of negative sentiments, specifically concerning which party respondents adamantly would not vote for, PT also topped the list with 39%.

Building upon interpretations and data related to anti-partisanship and the anti-PT sentiment, the investigation pivots towards discerning which of these patterns manifest within the Brazilian context. Specifically, we delve into the dynamics witnessed during the 2013 demonstrations and the subsequent cycle in 2015 and 2016, as identified by Angela Alonso as the “patriotic cycle” (Alonso, 2017). This denotes a second wave of protests intricately linked to their contested and autonomist roots from three years prior.

## THE 2013 DEMONSTRATIONS: PRELUDE TO YELLOW-GREEN PROTESTS

Emerging from the autonomist left, a faction grounded in anti-capitalism and the prioritization of workers' autonomy over institutional organizations such as trade unions and political parties (non-partisan) (Lovatto, 2016), the 2013 demands were initiated by the Movimento Passe Livre<sup>3</sup> (MPL). This group, as highlighted by Alonso (2017), raised concerns about the rising transportation tariffs in São Paulo. Noteworthy is their decentralized organization, facilitated through collective decision-making assemblies and the incorporation of anarchist principles into their political framework. However, as the June Days unfolded, the movement quickly evolved beyond its initial focus on the 20-cent fare hike, expanding to encompass a diverse array of social agendas. Crucially, it became a platform that revealed the emergence of new social actors.

To gain a deeper understanding of the sequence of events, it is crucial to highlight the chronological progression of the June 2013 movements. The series commenced on June 6 with confrontations in Avenida Paulista, where the Movimento Passe Livre (MPL) occupied the space, prompting intervention by the Military Police. Simultaneously, a parallel event in Rio de Janeiro drew approximately 2,000 participants. As time elapsed, the movement gained momentum, culminating in a significant turnout on June 11, with more than 5,000 people taking to the streets. However, the pivotal moment occurred on June 13 during the fourth protest in São Paulo, regarded as the turning point in the June Days. This shift in perception was primarily due to the forceful repression by the Military Police. Notably, at this critical juncture, the mayor of São Paulo at the time declared his decision not to rescind the public transport tariff hike.

On June 17, street demonstrations spread across more than 12 capitals, including Brasília. A survey by the Globo portal at that time indicated a staggering participation of over 250,000 people nationwide, advocating for a myriad of agendas, encompassing issues such as health, education, and demanding standards akin to those associated with FIFA in light of the ongoing Confederations Cup. On June 19, responding to the mounting pressure, the mayor at the time and

governor of São Paulo, Fernando Haddad, and Geraldo Alckmin, respectively, decided to revoke the tariff hike. However, the mobilization persisted, and on June 20, the largest demonstrations of June 2013 transpired, with an impressive turnout of over 1.5 million people spanning at least 100 Brazilian cities. This continued even after measures were taken to reduce bus fares. As the street protests persisted, their character evolved, embracing a more diverse range of issues, including campaigns against corruption, advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights (opposing "gay healing" on June 21), and concerns related to public safety.

In tandem with hyperexposure and the gradual legitimization process by prominent Brazilian media outlets such as *Folha de São Paulo*, *O Estado de São Paulo*, *O Globo*, and various international correspondents keenly observing police violence as part of the government's response to street events (Alonso, 2023), June 2013 evolved into one of Brazil's pivotal manifestations. What initially commenced as a niche event predominantly led by the left and university students now garnered support across diverse ideological spectrums, rallying against corruption, advocating moral agendas, or championing the defense of public policies. As Alonso aptly synthesizes:

This changed after June 3<sup>rd</sup>. There was diversification within each of the currents, with new organized movements joining, previously absent from the streets. And what used to be rare became frequent: movements from all three currents in the same demonstration. An increase in the mixture (2023, p. 186).

Despite the various placards denouncing corruption, highlighting the low investments in crucial sectors like education and health, and invoking national symbols, it was in 2015 that the repercussions of the political-partisan rejection from preceding years became notably more pronounced. However, to grasp the potential developments of 2015, a retrospective analysis of 2013 allows us to discern that the stance adopted by certain collective actors within the progressive sphere during that period played a direct role in the subsequent invalidation process of Dilma Rousseff's government, even after her re-election in 2014. In a stark contrast to the approval rating of 79% Rousseff enjoyed in March 2013, with the average dollar rate falling to two Brazilian Reais, and the country experiencing its historically lowest unemployment rate at 4.3%.

What began as a protest centered around a 20-cent fare increase evolved into a movement with increasingly resonant undertones. It transformed into something that, as articulated in the words and posters, was "not only about 20 cents" but also extended to the pursuit of improved conditions and even called for the cancellation of major sporting events like the Confederations Cup and the Olympics. The discontent initially expressed by a group primarily comprising young university students paved the way for a growing pluralization of voices, partly fueled by the impact of media coverage and the utilization of social networks.

Against the backdrop of this unfolding scenario and the escalating scrutiny regarding the competencies of the Federal Government, state authorities, municipal city halls, and even President Dilma herself, a palpable rejection emerged toward political parties, their symbols, and what was perceived as "opportunists" aligning themselves with the demonstrators' cause. The act of threatening to remove flags affiliated with left-leaning and PT affiliations played a vital role in elucidating the nature of the events. It underscored how, in 2013, the protests manifested as an anti-partisan movement, while by 2015, the focus had shifted to an explicitly anti-PT sentiment. In this context, the profile of the protesters, once predominantly composed of party members, trade unionists, public workers, and students, underwent a transformation. It made way for individuals who had little or no association with these traditional niches. This shift, as portrayed by the media, brought the emergence of the "peaceful" demonstrators in contrast to the "vandals of the left" (Alonso, 2023).

Despite the emergence of a new socialist left and the autonomist field, both did not view the PT's pro-government demonstrators as legitimate mobilizers. Take the *Movimento Passe Livre* as an illustration; it stood out as a non-partisan organization, devoid of any political party orientation or preference. This distinction is crucial – being non-partisan is different from outright anti-

partisan sentiments that reject any political party. However, this non-partisan stance may have contributed to subsequent rejection from the right-wing field. Their understanding seemed to be that no position favoring a government or conjuncture should be adopted, even if it was the Workers' Party, a traditional left-wing party associated with progressive ideals and recognized social advances. In essence, whether it was the government or organized movements of the left, there was a delayed understanding of the true essence of the streets. This crisis surpassed mere criticisms of PT, Dilma, or structural guidelines, which, despite being its origin, evolved into a broader and initial crisis of legitimacy and representativeness.

Identifying the three currents of segmentation in the demonstrations – socialists, autonomists, and the right, as categorized by Alonso (2023) – it becomes evident that criticism from the first two, rooted in civic culture and social movements, is directed towards the PT government. Conversely, those aligned with the moral agenda, anti-corruption sentiments, and a desire for reduced State intervention can be characterized as a group that, despite participating in demonstrations and marches related to religious affiliations (such as the Marches to Jesus<sup>4</sup>), anti-abortion stances, and other agendas, had not been acknowledged as a political force. Their criticism extends beyond PT and is more generalized in nature.

## THE RISE OF THE RIGHT: AN AFFECTIVE HYPOTHESIS

In her article *"Imposto é Roubo!" A Formação de um Contrapúblico Ultraliberal e os Protestos Pró-Impeachment de Dilma Rousseff*<sup>5</sup> (2019), Camila Rocha identifies 2013 as a pivotal moment, serving as a window of opportunity for mobilizing an existing but hitherto unorganized right and extreme right. Rocha characterizes this emerging public as an "ultra-neoliberal counterpublic," capable of disseminating their ideals to a new and broader audience through the very streets once dominated by the Movimento Passe Livre. Despite the prominent role played by student figures, who would later be associated with the Movimento Brasil Livre<sup>6</sup> (MBL), it is essential to take a brief journey into the origin and organization of the new Brazilian right.

The genesis of the new Brazilian right, particularly discernible from 2015 onward, is intricately linked, as per Rocha's insights (2019), to the involvement of young university students and liberal professionals. These individuals actively propelled discussions on greater economic freedom, reduced State intervention, and other liberal tenets within online forums and social networks – essentially confining their impact to the digital realm. The same social networks, amid the burgeoning landscape of applications and online communities like Orkut and Facebook, served as platforms for pages such as "Vem pra Rua"<sup>7</sup> and "Revoltados Online"<sup>8</sup> to convene and mobilize demonstrations in March 2015. These events, as reported by the Datafolha Institute, managed to gather over 250,000 people. Embracing the colors yellow and green, these gatherings further undermined the Dilma government amidst mounting accusations related to the Operation Car Wash scandal.

Against this backdrop, what 2013 facilitated was a collective catharsis, unleashing various sentiments, notably the resentment harbored by those disillusioned with the incomplete nature of the inclusion process experienced since 2003 (Pinheiro-Machado & Scalco, 2023). This emotion, constituting a mobilizing force inherent in the global emergence of populist right-wing leaders, served as the catalyst for subsequent processes. In alignment with the premise of this text, the understanding is grounded in demands from the perspective of citizens rather than political elites. As articulated by Starling (2022): "Resenting – the emotional amalgamation of individualized inequality and the sense of injustice – is an emotion with sufficient vigor to connect people, irrespective of their position in the social structure" (p. 80). Therefore, according to the author: "The resentful individual clings to the idea of being someone who has been deprived of their rightful place; for this reason, they identify themselves with the condition of a victim" (ibid.).

This argument aligns with the framework we elucidated in Gracino Jr., Silva and Frias (2021) regarding the pivotal role of resentment in shaping the bonds of belonging among political subjects spawned by right-wing populist leaders, notably what we term as *bolsonarism*. Revisiting this argument holds paramount significance for the objectives of this article, aiming to establish a causal connection between the events of 2013 and the formation of this specific political subject (the *bolsonarist*). It posits hypotheses grounded in the realm of emotions, presenting resentment as a catalyst for content imbued with another emotion: nostalgia. In this perspective, resentment

is incited by a perception of deprivation, an unjust loss that necessitates recovery through a return to a pre-loss situation. The lost aspect, in turn, pertains to the prospect of privilege – a distinction to which the subject perceives themselves as entitled, stimulated by a process of social inclusion that, however, remains incomplete. From the viewpoint of those who see themselves as victims, this incompleteness diminishes the differences with those who were previously in a worse situation, without affording effective access to the upper echelons of the economic pyramid.

In this context, resentment particularly impacts those who sense exclusion in terms of purchasing power and social prestige vis-à-vis traditional middle classes. Simultaneously, they observe an apparent convergence of the popular classes benefiting from transfer programs and minimum wage hikes. The notion that they have forfeited a privilege and the yearning for a genuine or imagined moment when it was accessible constitute the mobilizing emotions of June 2013, alongside the protests of 2015 and 2016, as noted by Starling.

"Bolsonaro's language is able to surprise because it catalyzed the reactionary energy generated by a large slice of society, between the years 2013 and 2016, with political force to take the streets [...] Without following collective leadership and without a commonly agreed agenda, the protests shook up power, but they brought, at the edges, individuals and organizations of the extreme right, and an imaginary of a reactionary nature that expanded from the margins to the center" (2022, p. 80).

It is in this sense that it becomes possible to understand not only the cycle of manifestations of 2015, but also its direct correlations with the affectivities and resentments that would appear among the majority of the Brazilian population, a new middle class that was consolidated after 10 years of PT management, during the impeachment process of Dilma Rousseff. This subject will be addressed in the upcoming section of the text.

### **FOLLOWING 2013: THE IMPEACHMENT OF DILMA ROUSSEFF.**

The years subsequent to 2013 witnessed renewed upheavals in the streets and squares across the country. However, this time, the backdrop was different: Dilma Rousseff's second term and a solidified history of demonstrations. With a backdrop of previous protests and growing concerns about the legitimacy of the presidential election that secured Dilma's victory over Aécio Neves, the streets quickly became the stage for a new "cycle" (Alonso, 2017; 2023) of patriotic protests. This cycle was characterized by the recurrence of the yellow-and-green and the involvement of various movements advocating for patriotism, an end to corruption, the militarization of national politics, privatizations, and various other – at times contradictory – agendas. Despite the diverging nature of these agendas, they shared a common characteristic, as highlighted by Alonso (2023): "The adoption of the same style of activism, anchored in the national symbols, distinguished this field in relation to those of the left and made the contrast with the PT government. They claimed patriotism, with "patriot" defined as synonymous with anti-left" (Alonso, 2023, p. 270).

On December 2, 2015, the impeachment process against Dilma Rousseff was initiated by Eduardo Cunha<sup>9</sup> and other opponents who believed they were championing the will expressed by the right in the streets. The "patriotic" current solidified its claim as the "owner of the street" by assembling 1.4 million people on Avenida Paulista on March 13, 2016. The anti-corruption banner, which not only unfurled its colors in 2013 but was further emphasized in the statements of former President Dilma Rousseff, as highlighted by political scientist Fernando Limongi in his book *Operação Impeachment: Dilma Rousseff e o Brasil da Lava Jato*<sup>10</sup> (2023). Cunha's speeches were in line with the investigations conducted by Operation Car Wash and the team led by Judge Sérgio Moro at the time. The confluence of scandals involving Petrobras, the PT administration, the momentum from the 2013 demonstrations, and the widespread societal demand to combat and eradicate corruption resulted in the outcome anticipated since the early autonomist protests: the surge of an anti-PT sentiment.

In contrast to Limongi's focus on explaining Dilma's impeachment and the coalition's breakdown through the lens of political elites and their power dynamics, this article diverges by



examining the phenomena from the perspective of citizens and their emotions. The key to comprehending Dilma's impeachment, according to this perspective, lies in the streets and the rekindling of the reactive anti-PT sentiment, a feeling that was already evident in 2013. The article aims to provide an explanation centered on the demand side (civil society) rather than the supply side (political elites and their discourses). While acknowledging the role of traditional political parties and leaders in shaping and echoing these sentiments in various contexts, they alone are insufficient to elucidate the surge in street demonstrations. Therefore, the article contends that political figures like Jair Bolsonaro have functioned as resonant voices, engaging in a symbiotic relationship with popular sentiments – acting as both spokespeople for pre-existing feelings and catalysts that enhance their visibility and perception.

According to the established impeachment model proposed by scholars (Pérez-Liñan & Polga-Hecimovich, 2016), (Sallum Jr., 2015), (Brossard, 1992), presidents are typically ousted due to external factors such as scandals, street mobilizations, and various processes that elicit a reaction. The concept of *reactive antipetism*<sup>11</sup> (Levandoski, 2020) – representing a feeling of negative identity towards the Workers' Party (PT) and stemming from a series of critiques regarding its leadership decisions and involvement in scandals – introduces an interpretation that has been largely overlooked in the existing critical literature on Brazilian politics.

Here, the suggestion is that rallying cries such as "Come, come to the streets against the government" and speeches by demonstrators proclaiming their presence in the mobilizations "against genocide," "against the government," and "for all that is wrong in the country" served as fuel. This, coupled with the Movimento Passe Livre's isolation from the leadership position in the protests, paved the way for a July 17 event that would mirror the pattern observed two years later. In this context, Kim Katagui, a federal representative from the União Brasil Party, expressed in an interview with *Folha de São Paulo*: "*I came in contact [with the protests] when they had already extrapolated, when they were already significant, the crowd rising in the National Congress, the demonstrations were massive in São Paulo [...] the perception I had is that things were going to happen very fast and very positively, that it was going to change things for the better in the country*"<sup>12</sup> (2023).

In Kim Katagui's statements, we find an interpretation that supports our argument, suggesting that the June 2013 demonstrations were both emblematic and inspirational for subsequent mobilizations, specifically those orchestrated by the Movimento Brasil Livre (MBL) during Dilma's second term. Contrary to Fernando Limongi's assertion, the pre-mobilization pro-impeachment scenario and the rupture of the political-electoral coalition did not solely transpire in 2015 with Eduardo Cunha's involvement and the defection of other politicians, such as Michel Temer, from Rousseff's government. As Limongi puts it: "Explaining the impeachment requires understanding the implosion of a ruling coalition and its replacement by an alternative alliance" (2023, p. 9).

The rupture within the political landscape was markedly evident on the streets from 2013 to 2015, encapsulated by widespread criticism of politicians, as reflected in the following statements:

One thing was noticeably clear at the march, which impressed with its civility: non-partisanship. That's why politicians who were there were booed and called opportunists. Those who attended are calling for ethical, dignified, and competent politicians. Nobody can stand to see this country being undermined by theft any longer. What PT insists on not understanding, when it divides Brazil between us and them, is this new way of seeing Brazilians (Commentator A, <sup>13</sup> 2016, emphasis added).

In practice, our fragile democracy only works with impactful revelations like the ones made this week. With this, the facades and word games fall away. The population, and especially the press, have a vital responsibility at this time in our country, not to let the opportunity

slip away to clean up the corrupt, from any party (Commentator B, 2016, emphasis added).

Thus, criticisms of the political system, political parties, Workers' Party supporters, corruption, and other systemic issues have become recurrent themes in the expressions and statements not only of demonstrators present in 2015 and 2016 but also in the rhetoric of figures like the then Federal Representative Jair Messias Bolsonaro during the impeachment proceedings against Rousseff (Levandoski, 2020), demonstrating a pronounced anti-PT stance.

MR. JAIR BOLSONARO (Group/PSC-RJ. No review by the speaker.)  
– Congresswoman, the Right is coming! Captain Bolsonaro is coming! You won't have peace in 2018, no! Dear Mr. Carlos Manato, I would like to congratulate you, who is presiding over the proceedings, for inviting me to visit your state next Thursday and Friday. We'll be landing at the airport at 7:30pm. Afterwards, we'll have a big impeachment rally on Camburi Beach. It's an act that is neither mine nor yours, but that of the Brazilian people, of the people of Espírito Santo, who can no longer stand so much theft sponsored by PT, can no longer stand so much incompetence, can no longer stand a government that wants to take us to a Cuban dictatorship – which, yes, is a dictatorship (Jair Bolsonaro, 2016, emphasis added).

MR. JAIR BOLSONARO (Group/PSC-RJ. No review by the speaker.)  
– Mr. President, my comrades, I have a question: why does PT hate democracy so much? Why does PT hate our freedom so much? Why does PT hate the middle class so much, which survives on its own and depends on nothing from the government? Why does PT hate minorities so much and play them off against each other? My comrades, when PT says there will be no coup, the message it is giving to its militants is this: "If Dilma Rousseff is impeached, anything goes against those who impeached her". PT hates the law (Jair Bolsonaro, 2016, emphasis added).

Despite the evident differences between the 2013 demonstrators and those who took to the streets between 2015-2016 in terms of ideological positions, perceptions about public policies, and societal projections, common elements can be identified. The shared desire for social transformation through alternative means to conventional actors and entities, such as unions, political parties, and even the State, unites these movements. On one side, the MPL is characterized by collective actions, horizontality, nonpartisanship, and a lack of leadership figures, along with no affiliation with unions. On the other side, the MBL, despite having a similar acronym, is composed of young university students with clear leadership, equally nonpartisan, anti-PT, and engaged in digital mobilization.

This overflow was favored by the existence of diffuse discontent, which until then had not found the channels to turn into revolt. The discrediting of the powers that be and the mechanisms of representation (parliaments, parties, unions, associations, etc.), which apparently led to apathy or acceptance of the status quo, was transformed into indignation once a window had opened for all the dissatisfied. The June Days had the peculiarity of bringing together left-wing, right-wing, and undefined sectors on the streets for the first time, with the common conviction that institutional channels were not enough to express their revolt (Gondim, 2016, p. 44, emphasis added).

It is evident that the June 2013 demonstrations were successful in mobilizing agents from both the left and right wings, each with distinct agendas but converging on a shared objective: to scrutinize the competence and performance of the incumbent Federal Government. This scrutiny was manifested through criticisms of formulated public policies or accusations of corruption, all encapsulated under the slogan "The giant has woken up." This shift, marked by the rejection of the PT's national government project and the reluctance to align with unions and parties as decision-making entities on the streets, later intensified in 2015-2016. It was further fueled by the entrenched anti-PT reaction, which radicalized in response to economic and institutional scandals exposed by Operation Car Wash.

## **CONCLUSIONS: ONE UNIVERSE, TWO PARALLELS**

In modern science, analytical study grounded in hypotheses and the formulation of theses based on observations are fundamental components. This holds true for the field of Political Science, particularly when examining extensive social phenomena, as seen in the events of June 2013. The quest to establish causal connections poses a challenging endeavor within the scientific enterprise, especially given the relatively short interval of only 10 years from the events of the preceding decade.

However, transcending observational research projects, events descriptions, and the identification of pertinent factors and the actors, nowadays it is imperative to scrutinize not only studies conducted in the heat of the moment but also the hypotheses established and the common sense that occasionally shapes the understanding of the period. In the midst of a national effervescence upheaval, the emergence of reactive hypotheses in defense of the social movements active on the streets, emphasizing that the demonstrations were not exclusively led by the right, inadvertently contributed to overlooking potential connections between the anti-government protests and the solidification of an organized extreme right in political and social spheres. This analysis delves into anti-party sentiments, reactions to the Workers' Party, and the potential co-option of an originally left-wing movement by right-wing actors.

Rooted in the initial objection to the escalation of subway and bus fares in the city of São Paulo, hiking from R\$3.00 to R\$3.20, the protests were initially orchestrated by the Movimento Passe Livre. These demonstrations endured over several consecutive days, characterized by an autonomist stance and a heightened level of police brutality directed at the youth organizing in the streets. As media scrutiny and civil society members questioned this violence from June 13 onwards, the movement began to accrue increased legitimacy and support. This was particularly evident as the movement expanded its scope, assimilating other agendas that surpassed the realm of public transportation, addressing issues such as corruption, education, health, and broader criticisms of existing public policies. According to Linda M.P. Gondim (2016), dissenting movements against the government at the time "[...] began to multiply, branching out to hundreds of cities in the 27 states of Brazil and attracting thousands of people" (2016, p. 44).

However, it was from June 17 onwards that the protesters reached a massive scale, exemplifying what could be characterized as reactive anti-partisanship, or simply "rejection of institutional politics and corruption" (Gondim, 2016). This shift often coincided with nationalist and broad-spectrum demands, eventually becoming common in the banners of a right-wing movement that demonstrated unprecedented level of cohesion and social outreach. This association between the right and corruption is deeply rooted, with the term functioning as an empty signifier employed by the elites to mobilize the middle classes against popular governments. As Zeman and Lago (2022, p. 43) assert, this tactic has historical precedence in movements directed against "governments that expand the rights of the subaltern classes", associated with figures such as Getúlio Vargas, Juscelino Kubitschek, João Goulart, Lula and Dilma. In these instances, the middle classes were incited by the belief that the corruption of the rulers was responsible for any deprivations imposed on them in favor of the working classes, who reciprocated their support. This diffuse resentment/sentiment is at the core of the criticism directed towards programs labeled as welfare and electioneering, as seen with initiatives like Bolsa Família<sup>14</sup> and other public income distribution policies implemented by PT.

From this juncture, we can initiate an exploration of the correlations between established social movements and organized actors with a history of expertise and tradition in street protests, and

segments of the right that entered into contention. However, it is insufficient in this paper to merely assert that this transformation was an outcome of the right co-opting a movement initiated by the left. It is imperative to delve into the mechanisms at play, ones that were already inherent in the mobilization tactics of these traditional actors: the shift from non-partisanship to anti-partisanship, representing distinct conceptual paradigms.

The year 2013 emerges not only as a turning point in the trajectory of national politics for the ensuing decade but also as the catalyst for the consolidation of an already nascent, albeit less conspicuous, right-wing presence. This right-wing faction now stood as an active political player with a discernible agenda. Over the next few years, it played a central role in orchestrating demonstrations in favor of Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, championing the investigations of Operation Car Wash and the imprisonment of former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

This turn of events was facilitated by the opening of a window of opportunity, a circumstance rendered likely due to the absence of prominent political figures, a lack of dialogue with trade union centers, and the limited involvement of left-wing parties as intermediaries between civil society and the movements. The notion of absence emerged as a viable pathway for those who solely relied on the internet and closed forums as their means of communication.

Certainly, this article does not intend to oversimplify the richness of the events in 2013 by framing them solely within the dynamics of the Movimento Passe Livre and the Movimento Brasil Livre. Moreover, it refrains from reducing the complexities to rigid categories of right and left, recognizing the existence of a highly intricate continuum among the involved actors. Nevertheless, the article seeks to highlight the presence of causal links between those who protested at the onset of June 2013 and those who took the streets in 2015 and 2016, with crucial emphasis on the transitions from non-partisanship to anti-partisanship. The conclusion is that there are discernible similarities between these two cycles of demonstrations, underscoring the imperative of acknowledging the commonalities that characterize each period and converge over the ten years that ensued.

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## EXPLANATORY NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The survey was carried out between October 25 and 27, 2022 with 4,580 people, and its data can be accessed via the link available on the Folha de São Paulo website: <<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/10/datafolha-pt-tem-mais-simpatizantes-mas-tambem-e-o-partido-mais-rejeitado.shtml>>.

<sup>2</sup> T.N.: Liberal Party.

<sup>3</sup> T.N.: Free Fare Movement.

<sup>4</sup> On the importance of the march in this context, see: Sant'Ana, Raquel. "A Igreja acordou, a Igreja foi pra rua": representação, manifestação e o fazer dos "evangélicos" nas Marchas para Jesus." *Etnografias das instituições, práticas de poder e dinâmicas estatais*: 117. [""The Church woke up, the Church went to the street": representation, manifestation and the doing of "evangelicals" in the Marches for Jesus. *Ethnographies of institutions, power practices and State dynamics*].

<sup>5</sup> T.N.: Tax is Theft! The Formation of an Ultraliberal Counterpublic and Dilma Rousseff's Pro-Impeachment Protests.

<sup>6</sup> T.N.: Free Brazil Movemen

<sup>7</sup> T.N.: Come to the Streets

<sup>8</sup> T.N.: Online Outraged

<sup>9</sup> T.N.: Eduardo Cunha is a Brazilian politician who gained notoriety as the former speaker of the Brazilian Lower House and a key figure in the impeachment process against President Dilma Rousseff.

<sup>10</sup> T.N.: *Operation Impeachment: Dilma Rousseff and Brazilian Car Wash*, in free translation.

<sup>11</sup> T.N.: Anti-PT sentiment.

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- <sup>12</sup> Transcript of a speech given by Kim Kataguiuri to the podcast “Cafê da Manhã - Junho de 2013: o que houve nas ruas” [Breakfast - June 2013: what happened on the streets], an initiative of the newspaper Folha de São Paulo.
- <sup>13</sup> The answers were collected from a survey carried out by the author of this article in 2020 in the newspapers Folha de São Paulo and O Estado de São Paulo, referring to the period of the opening and installation of the impeachment process against Dilma Rousseff. For the protection and anonymity of the participants in the reading panel for each period, their original names have been omitted.
- <sup>14</sup> T.N.: The Brazilian program "Bolsa Família" is a social welfare initiative that provides financial aid to low-income families, conditional on factors such as children's school attendance and healthcare utilization. It aims to alleviate poverty and improve the overall well-being of vulnerable households.

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