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IL TRUMPISMO COME NUOVO MODELLO DI GOVERNO

Tra neoliberalismo e neofascismo

A cura di
Davide Borrelli, Christian Laval e Nilton Ken Ota

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Rômulo Ballestê Marques Dos Santos

SURVEILLANCE AND INTERNAL WARFARE IN BRAZILIAN NEOLIBERAL POLITICS

Abstract:

This contribution examines large-scale global surveillance as part of a neoliberal warfare model that utilizes counterinsurgency tactics, such as the massive collection of population information through Big Data companies and/or security and intelligence agencies, which become psychosocial databases with information capable of reshaping politics. Private information operates the gears of neoliberal thought, transforming the entire structure of the State under the managerial logic of commercial operations. We argue that counterinsurgency warfare manuals can offer clues to understanding the contemporary internal warfare tactics practiced by neoliberalism. The control of such information, coupled with the growth of nationalist, anti-democratic, and neoconservative forces, creates fertile ground for the dissemination of disinformation (fake news) through thousands of WhatsApp groups (in Brazil) and for the manipulation of hatred and fear, among other emotions, as in the populist strategy in Donald Trump's first electoral campaign or in the Brazilian presidential election with Jair Bolsonaro's victory in 2018.

Keywords:

Neoliberal warfare; Counterinsurgency warfare; Psychosocial databases; Anti-democratic; Brazilian election.

1. *Introduction*

There are two outcomes from global vigilance in large scale that need exposure: 1) the geopolitical monitoring of leaderships in Latin America and 2) The strategic and massive increase in messaging in election campaigns, such as Donald Trump's first election campaign or the Brazilian presidential election with Jair Bolsonaro's victory in 2018. We see these procedures as part of the tactics of counterinsurgency warfare. The massive data mining in today's

globalized and connected world, organized by wide usage of social networks, is paramount in the counter-insurgent activities in political processes. The information is collected by security and intelligence agencies from imperialist countries together with great telecommunications companies and professionals dedicated to study data science, machine learning and behavioral and personality prediction with the purpose of algorithmic modeling capable of reproducing social situations accurately and anticipate behaviors of consume for the market or for the elections. They develop activities such as the mining and storing of data from millions of conversations, written messages, audio messages, videos, call, etc. off the users of telephone and social networks until the monitoring of state leaders with the goal of anticipate decisions and geopolitical stands in meetings with global relevance, or even, manipulate the political dispute in a country's election.

We adopt the theoretical approach of "surveillance culture" (Lyon, 2001, 2003, 2008), despite having multiple possibilities for conceptual delimitation. According to David Lyon (2018), surveillance can no longer be thought of as detached from the daily lives of individuals; on the contrary, its exogenous character from technologies has given way to a profound penetration into the totality of experiences and, therefore, can be seen today as a way of life. In Lyon's words (2018, p. 153), "today it is internalized and constitutes part of daily reflections on how things are and the repertoire of everyday practices", and this causes the vectors of surveillance to find a certain complacency in the subject, their active participation in the process of visibility of personal traits that are systematically exposed on social networks and many virtual spaces, where contemporary surveillance encounters daily life in the composition of the subjectivation of its subjects.

Furthermore, with Michel Foucault, we can think about power relations from his spatial understanding, in which power is exercised between two points, "transits between individuals" (2010, p. 26) in compositions within the game of visibility that is embedded in the conditions of appearance of a given historical object. The consolidation of the bourgeoisie as the dominant class from the 17th and 18th centuries onwards generated an interest in a whole set of techniques and surveillance apparatus, in which, "the micromechanics of power, which represented, constituted by the bourgeoisie, from a certain moment onwards, an interest" (Foucault 2010, pp. 28-9). In other words, in the case of the bulk collection of social media user data, the investment in a micromechanics of power that circulates in the composition and recomposition of everyday forces catalyzes what subjects do on social networks and captures in masse, imposing procedural decodings in terms of computer technology in conjunction with psychological decod-

ings, with the aim of manipulating the political-electoral game, destabilizing democracy, influencing economic markets, etc. There is therefore an implicit production of visuality in the power relations that collect, interpret, manipulate, and share mass data to construct personalized electoral profiles, with such a high level of personal information that it can practically reach a specific voter with great precision.

Since the World Trade Center attack, in September 11 of 2001, guerrilla or counterinsurgency warfare strategies have been elevated to a new paradigmatic dimension implicating in a change of the understanding of war, which is no longer seen by the logic of conflict between states – perpetrated by rival armies in the field – instead, a new logic: the counterinsurgency warfare. First, practiced as foreign politics, and then, done at home against its own citizens: the counter-revolution (Lyon 2001; Harcourt 2018). Therefore, if we see the principle of "politics as a continuation of war by other means" (Foucault 2010), the reflection on war is a way to understand how power works from the mechanisms and games as social historical conditions that develop as infinitesimal circulation by technologies and specific methods that reach general forms of domination. To do so, it is necessary to situate the political historical conditions in which war is fundamentally included. In the last twenty years, war have been organized itself as a permanent event generating new working ways in which surveillance gains new dimensions of importance.

The ultrasecret documents from NSA leaked by Edward Snowden and Wikileaks (Assange 2015) represent more than the continuation of the espionage system against terrorism, they show that espionage falls on the North American population in home soil with massive data mining (Assange et al. 2013, p. 56; Lyon 2018), monitoring of social spaces, infiltration in schools and private spaces of individuals and of target groups as well. The leaking brought up the rethinking on the surveillance in matters of privacy, freedom, constitutional and human rights. This side of surveillance gains new possibilities in face of the neoliberal and neoconservative strengthening, and the rise of populist leaders with strong authoritarian and fascist tendencies in many countries around the world.

This way, the personal data mining with the development of microtargeting, which establish specific profiles and guide marketing campaigns of varied natures to target groups with strong accuracy, takes part in the machine of counter-insurgence warfare. Therefore, we can realize that Christopher Wylie's statement of making Steve Bannon's "psychological warfare tool" (Cadwalladr 2018) is not metaphoric and that its power is global. These tools are truly "psychological weapons of mass destruction" (Wylie 2019, p. 17).

The psychological weapons are made up using the psychosocial mapping from the, deeply settled, experience of people's daily habits of social networking online, such as in Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, feeding them with information. By doing so, psychometric and predictive analysis established by institutional psychology as much as the discourse and all the possible distortion generated in a political candidate's positioning, for instance, affect people creating emotions like fear, insecurity, disbelief and are capable of electoral and democratic ruptures. A fertile soil in which disinformation (fake news) flourish.

The handbooks written by Generals Roger Trinquier (1961), David Galula (2006), and David Petraeus (2006) are important primary sources for our work on counterinsurgency. As the reader will soon discover, Trinquier is one of the first commanders to theorize modern warfare based primarily on his experience in the Indochina War, where he learned Mao Tse-tung's insurgent guerrilla tactics.

Throughout this article, the reader will find key commentators, such as Peter Paret, who was responsible for disseminating the French counterinsurgency warfare doctrine in the United States since he was a young Ph.D. student in military history in the late 1950s. By examining the principles of revolutionary insurgency as well as revolutionaries fighting against colonial regimes in Indochina and North Africa, Paret demonstrated the emergence of the counter-revolutionary warfare doctrine developed by French commanders and refined within colonial territory itself. His thinking on the counterinsurgency warfare doctrine aligns with the central framework developed by both Trinquier and Galula, which is anchored in the revolutionary strategies found in the writings and practices of Mao Zedong. These strategies represent a paradigmatic shift in the very logic of combat. Revolutionary insurgency was founded on a war that depended much more on alliance with the population than with traditionally destructive military forces.

The work of Brazilian researchers, such as Professor João Roberto Martins Filho (2008, 2012), is important because it situates the problem of counterinsurgency warfare within Brazilian and Latin American territory, thus implying the adoption of this type of warfare doctrine by the high command of the Brazilian armed forces. Consequently, Martins Filho's texts, among many themes related to the armed forces, present a reflection on the long influence of the French military on the Brazilian military high command regarding the modern doctrine of warfare, counterinsurgency, the historical consequences of the 1964 coup, and its impact on democracy in Brazil. Another prominent researcher on this topic in Brazil is Rodrigo Nabuco de Araújo (2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2022). He has made impor-

tant contributions to understanding the impact of collaboration between the French military and the Brazilian armed forces, and the influence of guerrilla warfare tactics on colonial insurgencies in which France lost.

In the letter *Carta aberta ao povo do Brasil* (Open letter to the people of Brazil), Edward Snowden makes it clear that [Mass surveillance programs] are motivated by "economic spying, social control, and diplomatic manipulation" (Folha de São Paulo 2013). To operate the monitoring of Latin America leaders to anticipate their political-economic moves, to work in the destruction of elections, in the process of inciting racism, xenophobia, and religious extremism, has its goal in the complete favoring of this kind of machinery that fabricates forms of production and manipulation of fear, disinformation, lies, violence and racism. Several elections in the recent years have had its course, possibly, defined by this strategy and Brazil's election, that elected Jair Bolsonaro to presidency, was not different.

Our article aims to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of counterinsurgency in the following ways: 1) Insofar as the doctrine of counterinsurgency employs its tactics for the exhaustive control of information and is articulated with the contemporary surveillance culture, we are interested in explaining the dynamics of counterinsurgency, its mechanisms and effects, for example, from the mass collection of data available on social networks and the production of political-electoral profiles made from the application of micro-targeting technology, mass fake news campaigns, among others; 2) The guerrilla warfare of counterinsurgency served as inspiration for the method employed by the Brazilian dictatorial state against part of its own population. Patterns of action repeat themselves despite updates over time and due to historical circumstances. Therefore, it is important to highlight the connection between guerrilla warfare perspectives present in the repression against the Brazilian population, whether during the military-business dictatorship or today, in the so-called democratic period, in which the practices of the police state are reproduced and updated, among others, maintaining established forms that designate part of the population as the enemy, mainly young black people from the periphery and favelas, torture, extortion, assassinations and practices of violence, suspension of the presumption of innocence.

2. *Surveillance as central element in counterinsurgency*

The discovery made by Mao Tse-Tung may suggest a genealogical path of the counterinsurgency theory. Guerrilla warfare used in the revolutionary

war, registered in the writings about the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), managed to defeat the regime in 1949. Its main discovery had the people at the center of the revolution and consisted in giving fair treatment to the population to gain its support. In its revolutionary doctrine, therefore, the psychological aspects should be side by side with the guerrilla warfare. Around the 1960's, the growth of non-conventional wars spread out in the colonial context of the battles fought in Algeria (1954-1962) and in Indochina (1946-1954) by France, in Malaysia (1948-1959) and in the Palestine (1948-1949) by Great Britain and in Vietnam (1955-1975) by the U.S.A (Petraeus 2006: 14). To face the fighting fronts that claimed freedom, the colonizer countries, especially France, developed guerrilla manuals from the principles of the lessons by the revolutionary Chinese leader and applied them in the field.

The book *La guerre moderne*, from Roger Trinquier, published in France in 1961[1], is an important theoretical work for the understanding of the counterinsurgency war and brings forth a radical change in the nature of war, a new paradigm that could be called "subversive war or revolutionary war" (Trinquier 1961, p. 15). A new form of war appears in the end of World War II (Trinquier 1961; Petraeus 2006), a modern form, which operates by a system of interconnected actions – political, economic, psychological and military – that "aspires for the overcoming of the established authority in a country and its replacement by another regime" (Trinquier 1961, p. 15). As we shall see further, Petraeus will return to this idea when he states, "performing the many nonmilitary tasks in COIN (counterinsurgency) requires knowledge of many diverse, complex subjects. These include governance, economic development, public administration, and the rule of law" (Petraeus 2006, p. 10). Moreover, the definition of modern warfare requires more subtle aspects than the traditional forms, like the "manipulation of populations" (Trinquier 1961, pp. 17-18) and understands that "the essential way to win in modern warfare is the unconditional support of a population" (Trinquier 1961, p. 18).

General David Galula (Galula 2006) details how his experience in Algeria's colonial wars reinforces the importance of total information and conquering the hearts and minds of the general population as a strategy of counterinsurgency warfare. "The population is your new soil", writes Galula (2006, p. 4). As Trinquier, he takes Mao's main lesson as principle and divides society in three groups, in which the key to victory is to isolate

1 In 1964, few years after the first publishing, Roger Trinquier's book was translated to English under the title *Modern Warfare. A French view of counterinsurgency*.

and eradicate minority's activity with the purpose of gaining the alliance of the masses. The exercise of political power requires the use of techniques that allow the conquering of the emotional sensitivity of the minority who is favorable in order to gain individuals that are passive in the neutral majority and, from there on, neutralize or eliminate the hostile minority. In this manner, all the issue passes through the general population because the battle involves the psychological game of conquering support and, thus, "this principle represented the key political dimension of a new strategy of war" (Harcourt 2018, p. 30).

Thus, political struggle becomes more important and decisive. With the *Eight points for attention* for the personal army, Mao added two key principles for the first revolutionary doctrine. The first talks about "the importance of having a unified political and military power structure that consolidated, in the same hands, political and military considerations; and second, the importance of psychological warfare" (Harcourt 2018, p. 26). The latter would be responsible for the birth and the maintenance of the ideological cohesion amongst the revolutionary soldiers and the civilian supporters. Consequently, the revolutionary war can be presented in the simple equation: guerrilla warfare + psychological warfare (Harcourt 2018, p. 26).

Since the end of the Vietnam War the counterinsurgency doctrines would be neglected and would not receive updates (Petraeus 2006, p. 8), hence, this negligence is taken as an end to justify that the fundamental principles for the military operations of counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare be reset. *The U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual FM 3−24,* his published and highly disseminated work in 2006 is "designed to merge traditional approaches to COIN with the realities of a new international arena shaped by technological advances, globalization, and the spread of extremist ideologies - some of them claiming the authority of a religious faith" (Petraeus 2006, p. 8). As well as in Galula, for Petraeus, the political character is also paramount.

> Political power is the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies; each side aims to get the people to accept its governance or authority[2] as legitimate. Insurgents use all available tools – political (including diplomatic), informational

2 It is important to notice that, according to Petraeus, the insurgency is a destitution of authority and not popular ways of fight for independence and retaking the control of its country, institutions, sources of wealth against colonizing authorities, oftentimes, illegitimate, imposed by economic, military, territorial, religious, educational and social devices that dominate a territory and its people. Under the frail argument of the need for external intervention, so that normality can be

> (including appeals to religious, ethnic, or ideological beliefs), military, and economic – to overthrow the existing authority. This authority may be an established government or an interim governing body. Counterinsurgents, in turn, use all instruments of national power to sustain the established or emerging government and reduce the likelihood of another crisis emerging (Petraeus 2006, p. 12).

Hence, counterinsurgency (COIN) is a political theory that stands on three main principles. 1) the most important fight is for the support of the people; 2) the alliance of the masses can only be assured by separating the small revolutionary minority from the passive majority, isolating, containing, and finally, eliminating the active minority; 3) total information is essential to appropriately distinguish friend from foe and then extract the revolutionary minority. The counterinsurgency resorts to intelligence and as seen previously the emphasis on the political nature makes military actions secondary to the political ones (Harcourt 2018). In the words of Harcourt (2018, p. 34), "General David Petraeus learned, but more importantly popularized, Mao Zedong`s central lesson: counterinsurgency warfare is political. It is a strategy for winning over the people. It is a strategy for governing".

Being political, the counterinsurgency warfare employs much less bombs and cannons, but psychological tactics of data capturing and manipulation. Petraeus stipulates that "Today, he might have added, “and the modern insurgent”, though certainly the Internet and compact storage media like cassettes, compact disks, and digital versatile disks (DVD’s) have become more important in recent years" (Petraeus, p. 14). In the same line of thought, the author details more explicitly that

> Interconnectedness and information technology are new aspects of this contemporary wave of insurgencies. Using the Internet, insurgents can now link virtually with allied groups throughout a state, a region, and even the entire world. Insurgents often join loose organizations with common objectives but different motivations and no central controlling body, which makes identifying leaders difficult (Petraeus 2006, p. 15).

During which time when there was the broadening of the internet reach, the use of social networks and the expansion of electronic devices with the rise of the rooted consume in every individual’s life, the strategies of counterinsurgency turn to the collecting of the total information from the surveillance of this technology. Due to this, according to Petraeus’ points, if the modern insurgents make use of the global information technology, the coun-

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established and a government that ends the crisis, the counter-insurgent warfare advance over many countries.

terinsurgency will establish powerful transnational surveillance structures. When George W. Bush declares war against terror as reaction to the attacks of September 11, the development and the fruition of the counterinsurgency warfare happen and Petraeus' field manual predominates as military strategy in the U.S.A (Harcourt 2018, p. 20). If at first the war on terror legitimizes the increase of the surveillance, gradually it gains other objectives aimed not only to the foreign Middle-Eastern, but also to the common individuals of the native population. Harcourt's words (2018) give us a current dimension of the enrollment of the principle of gathering total information in the counterinsurgency warfare not as foreign policy, as a protection from the foreign terrorist, but as political strategy scattered around its own territory and people, as accommodation of the counterinsurgency.

> An elite group in the United States collects, monitors and mines all the data of our communications and personal information. These self-proclaimed leaders – high rank officers in the White House and in the Pentagon, directors of intelligence agencies and police departments, members of the national security apparatus and of congressional committees of intelligence, high level CEO's in social medias, private security and technology companies such as Google, Microsoft or Facebook – would be called counter-revolutionary minority. Taking the role of guardians, they put in place, by softwares like PRISM and UPSTREAM, Section 215 and surveillance of mosques, social media and data gathering, a system of awareness of the total information of the entire American population (Harcourt 2018, p. 200).

The structures engaged in collecting personal data were revealed by Edward Snowden in the ultrasecret files leaking, which show that the National Security Agency, during President Barack Obama's government, daily collected phone call recordings from millions of clients of one of the major telecomm companies, Verizon Business Services, a division of Verizon Communications (Greenwald, MacAskill, Ackerman 2013; Roberts, Ackerman 2013). The files went public in articles serialized by the newspapers *The Guardian* (*Greenwald, MacAskill, Ackerman 2013; Greenwald, Ball, Rushe 2013; Roberts, Ackerman 2013) and The Washington Post* (*Gellman et al.* 2013; *Ehrenfreund 2013; Nakashima 2013; Gellman, Soltani 2013*) detailing North American programs of "systematic surveillance of innocent citizens" (*Gellman et al.* 2013).

The efforts for establishing communication patterns and possible associations with the massive data mining gained strength immediately after the September 11 attacks. President Bush secretly authorized, in October 4th 2001, the NSA the implementation of a program of mass gathering of

landline phone recordings, internet and e-mail, thus the agency "secretly collected the recordings of phone calls of ten millions of Americans using data given by AT&T, Verizon and BellSouth" and "used the data to analyze patterns of calls in an effort to detect terrorist activity" (Greenwald, MacAskill, Ackerman 2013; Roberts, Ackerman 2013; Cauley 2006). This did not seem to have continued to Obama's administration because there was no indication that this government had implemented similar program (*Greenwald, MacAskill, Ackerman 2013*). Regardless, the suspicion rises with the report made by *USA Today* in 2006 (Cauley 2006). Subsequently, the disclosure of the ultra-secret files leaked by Snowden clearly reveals the continuation of the practice of massive data collection under President Obama's administration (*Greenwald, MacAskill, Ackerman 2013*; *Roberts, Ackerman 2013*).

The NSA amasses large volumes of communication recordings from the accounts of clients of the greatest internet companies of the world. Using the software PRISM (a data sharing program that allows the gathering of search history, e-mails, transferred files, photos, videos and live chats) (*Greenwald, Ball, Rushe 2013; Gellman et al.* 2013; *Nakashima 2013; Gellman, Soltani 2013*) it is possible to massively collect personal data. This program grants direct access to clients' accounts in Google and Yahoo. According to the article (Greenwald, Ball, Rushe 2013),

> Some of the largest internet companies in the world are part of the data-sharing program since its introduction in 2007. Microsoft was the first to participate since the start of the gathering in December 2007, Yahoo in 2008, Google, Facebook and PalTalk in 2009, Youtube in 2010, Skype and AOL in 2011 and finally Apple in 2012.

As a means to amplify the collecting service of the providers, the same article informs that there is evidence that the NSA plans to include the Dropbox (Greenwald, Ball, Rushe 2013). The authorization of the program PRISM happens because of Section 702 of FISA Amendments Act (FAA) and its supervision by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISA) (*Gellman, Soltani 2013*). FISA granted a court order to FBI between April 25 and July 19 "giving unlimited authority to obtain data in the specific period of three months" (*Greenwald, MacAskill, Ackerman 2013*).

NSA headquarters, in Fort Meade, daily receives millions of recordings sent from the internal network of Google and Yahoo. The capacity of processing and sending data, in one month, according to the ultrasecret file, was of "181.280.466 new recordings – including "metadata"", which indicates who sends and who receives e-mail and when, as well as content like texts, audios and videos (Gellman, Soltani 2013).

The exploring of the data link is done mainly by a project called MUSCULAR, which acts with the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) from Britain. Cooperatively, they copy entire data that run through the optic fiber cables of the internet greats. The weekly reports show that the British operators of the website allow NSA to contribute with 100.000 "selectors" (targets), or search terms. This number is more than the double the number used in the PRISM program (Gellman, Soltani 2013). A cooperative alliance called *Five Eyes* (Lyon 2016, p. 26) includes the United States, by the NSA, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand intelligence (BBC Brasil 2013).

In light of what has been exposed until now, we identify an activity of counterinsurgency done in foreign soil, against the external enemy, to a surveillance spread internally. The counterinsurgency strategies are the updating and refinement of the counter-insurgent principles; however, they are accompanied by current conditions of spectacularization of life by the media, the amalgamation between the routine use of gadgets and the subjectivation experiences. In the words of Harcourt,

> Meanwhile, the counterrevolutionary minority works to pacify and assuage the general population in order to ensure that the vast majority of Americans remain just that: ordinary consuming Americans. They encourage and promote a rich new digital environment filled with Youtube, Netflix, Amazon Prime, tweets, Facebook posts, Instagram, Snapchat, and reality TV that consume attention while digitally gathering personal data – and at times, pushing enhanced content. They direct digital propaganda to susceptible users. In addition, they shock and awe the masses with their willingness to torture suspected terrorists or kill their own citizens abroad. In the end, entertaining, distracting, entrancing, and assuaging the general population is the key to success – our new form of bread and circus (Harcourt 2018, p. 201).

Harcourt's analysis states that counter-revolution updates and perfects the counterinsurgency principles, but even though with efforts turned against the own American population. Having said that, it does not limits itself to the United States, although it would be essential to have a much more profound analysis on the historical, political, legal and geographic exactitudes of each case, what would surpass the limits of this article.

3. *Latin America as target of espionage*

NSA spied Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff, her main advisors, ministers and ambassadors (BBC Brasil 2013; Viana, Truffi 2015). The ultrase-

cret files leaked by Snowden unveil that the espionage had Brazil within its reach. In total, the espionage marked 29 "targets", amongst which were important members or ex-members of the government in economic, financial and diplomatic domain. In particularly, the then chief of the Civil House, Antônio Palocci; the Minister of Planning, Nelson Barbosa and the current ambassador in the U.S.A. (BBC Brasil 2013; Viana, Truffi 2015). The personal advisor of the President, responsible for managing her communications, Anderson Dornelles and even the presidential airplane, the Air Force 1 Airbus, equipped with satellite communication system from the British company Inmarsat were targets of espionage.

This monitoring selected ten telephones connected to Dilma. Landlines, cell phones, which identification in the file marked as *Dilma relations*" and the very landline of the *Palácio do Planalto* (Palace of the Plateau - seat of the Brazilian government). The document named *Bugging Brazil* was leaked by WikiLeaks[3]. As reported by a document leaked by Snowden, the espionage system worked with a terminology that designed as "seeds" the phone numbers and e-mail addresses that were monitored. One of the programs utilized, DNI selectors, is responsible for collecting all the actions of the user online (Bridi, Greenwald 2013). Such espionage operation called "Goal" had the objective of "improving the comprehension of the communication methods and the interlocutors of Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff, and her main advisors" (Bridi, Greenwald 2013). Once the target are selected the monitoring of the telephone, e-mails and computer IP begins. This monitoring stretches to the people who communicate with the target. In the terminology of the ultrasecret document, all communication made with the target and its advisors is called a "hop" and when the advisors communicate amongst themselves is called "a hop and half" (1.5 hop). "Two hops" is the term used when they connect with other people (Bridi, Greenwald 2013).

Based on the article (BBC Brasil 2013), the document had the goal to train NSA agents to access private networks from different institutions, for instance "Petrobras, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Google and Swift Networks that includes various banks". The reason that Petrobras could be the target of espionage is the technology developed for the exploration of the pre-salt in deep waters. Largely, because it was the moment when the Brazilian government was preparing the auction of the great Libra oil field (BBC Brasil 2013).

3 See information on the webpage https://wikileaks.org/nsa-brazil/selectors.html. [Accessed January 27, 2026].

Several Latin American countries are on the sight of North American espionage. In 2012, it was divulged that both President Dilma Rousseff and candidate to Mexico presidency, Enrique Peña Nieto were wiretapped (Bridi, Greenwald 2013). "The secret presentation is called: “Intelligent data filtering: Mexico and Brazil case study”. As attested by the presentation, the program enables to find, anytime as desired, a needle in the haystack" (Bridi, Greenwald 2013). Earlier, in 2011, WikiLeaks (Viana, Truffi 2015) had already published a list of 69 names of NSA targets in Germany, including besides the personal advisor of Chancellor Angela Merkel (Viana, Truffi 2015). In new disclosure[4], WikiLeaks stated that the target was the French President François Hollande and two ex-Presidents, Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, besides ministers of finances and executives (Viana, Truffi 2015).

Accordant with the article (Bridi, Greenwald 2013), the NSA used two programs to spy on the Mexican candidate Peña Nieto, codified as S2C: "One of them is called “Mainway”, and collects the big volume of information that passes through the communication networks". Another program, “Association”, intercepted text messages from the candidate’s phone and sent to a second filter, “Dishfire”, which makes a search for determined keywords (Bridi, Greenwald 2013). The document, entitled "interesting messages" (Bridi, Greenwald 2013), show that before the elections come to, the espionage learned the names of the ministers that would be named only six months after the election (Bridi, Greenwald 2013).

There are no doubts that the real interests that motivated the North American espionage are profitable and financial (Bridi, Greenwald 2013). The indisputable justification, in the heat of the events on September 11, which allowed any measure in the name of protection against possible new attacks from Muslim terrorists does not uphold itself anymore. The letter (Greenwald, Gomide, Souza 2013), in which Thomas Shannon, American ambassador in Brazil, thanks the information supplied by more than one hundred reports to the NSA, which made possible for the team of diplomats to be well prepared to advise President Obama in the 5th Summit of the Americas, in 2009, makes it clear. Something of similar nature occurred in the G-20 meeting, in which NSA, jointly with the Canadian agency, conducted political and economic espionage activities on the leaders that gathered to discuss possibilities of overcoming the great recession of 2008.

4 The document mentions the note: "Multi-country: international financial developments" from NSA, making it clear that this type of surveillance over varied countries had the financial market as goal (Viana, Truffi 2015).

The leaders debated over possible measures that included the strengthening of the international development, the banking reform and the opposition against trade protectionism (Weston 2013).

Three ultrasecret documents leaked by Snowden, published by *Fantástico* (Brazilian television program of news and variety) on September 1, 2013, indicate that Brazil is target of a global system of espionage (Bridi, Greenwald 2013; Fantástico 2013). These documents compose a secret presentation shown to an internal audience in NSA, in which is explained in detail the espionage against President Dilma Roussef (Fantástico 2013). The second document, also in the form of a presentation for the inside audience of the agency, brings a rating of the challenges in the international field where the USA will be exposed in the next years. Brazil is regarded by North American diplomatic circles as a cause for concern: "Friends, foes or problems?" (Bridi, Greenwald 2013; Fantástico 2013). The commercial interest of NSA's espionage against Brazil is clearly expressed in the third document, in what seems to be an internal memo between departments of the agency (Bridi, Greenwald 2013; Fantástico 2013). Brazil's growth in the geopolitical dispute mainly during the two administrations of the President Lula can be a reason for the interest of the USA. Besides Brazil, Egypt, India, Iran, Turkey and Mexico are mentioned (Bridi, Greenwald 2013).

The disclosure of these documents shows that the USA monitor countries of Latin America with commercial and financial interests, anticipating decisions and diplomatic and geopolitical stands. Thus, the privileged access to information capable of guiding Obama's position in the Summit of the Americas in 2009, or about the information discussed between Dilma, still as the minister of Mines and Energy (Weston 2013), and diplomats over the Regulatory Compliance Mark (Viana, Truffi, 2015) favors unilaterally the USA in the strategic game of world politics. On the other hand, espionage and leaking do not target only country leaders, but it also acts as a strategy of internal politics in the familiarization of the counterinsurgency. The access to millions of psychosocial profiles, the boost of thousands of deceitful messages to WhatsApp groups and the manipulation of fear were important elements in Jair Bolsonaro's election for President of the Republic. On the words of Snowden, "the major part of the espionage they do has nothing to do with national security, it is to obtain unfair advantages over other nations in their industries and trading in economic deals" (Bridi, Greenwald 2013).

Brazil gained significant prominence on the global economic and diplomatic stage during the first decade of the twenty-first century and challenged the hegemonic influence that the United States has historically exerted over Latin American countries. Consequently, pressure from the neoliberal agenda

concentrate on Brazil to take over the control of the oil sources, the pre-salt, refineries and distributors, the resources of the Amazon, land expansion for the agribusiness, increase in the usage of agrichemical, incentive to banks, speculation and rising financialization. Thereby, to establish the control of the directions in an election is a decisive step to the articulation of neoliberal processes in the boldest governmentality possible.

4. *WhatsApp and Bolsonaro's election*

Spying and leaking work as foreign policy tactics of countries that maintain the power in global imperialism. The USA monitor Latin American countries with financial and commercial goals in mind anticipation decisions and diplomatic or geopolitical directions. This type of control is organized with the growth of nationalist and anti-democracy movements, neoconservative discourse (Brown 2006; Cooper 2017) and entrepreneurship as apolitical alternative to the political matters within the neoliberal rationality (Foucault 2007; Dardot, Laval 2016). All these elements are alive in the experience of sociability arranged by the online posts, shares and likes that the users perform in social networks, and are operationalized by data scientists in favor of the manipulations elaborated by "engineers of chaos" (Empoli 2019). Conversely, espionage and leaking are also applied in internal politics, in a domestic form of counterinsurgency such as surveillance of populations historically and socially build to be considered dangerous or undesired. Gathering of total information from these populations is allied with the repression of the police with a higher militarized facet and discourse that amplify social tensions (Dardot et al. 2021).

Moreover, the access to millions of psychosocial profiles, the boost of thousands of disinformation via WhatsApp groups and the manipulation of fear, anger and resentment, amongst others were presented as part of the customization of the campaigns like the Brexit referend, Donald Trump's election campaign in the United States or the Brazilian election of Jair Bolsonaro to presidency of the Republic in 2018.

Documents attesting the work of Cambridge Analytica in Brazil between the years 2015 and 2018 were shared by Brittany Kaiser using the Twitter account *Hindsight Files* with a download link, right after the turning of the year 2020 (Cadwalladr 2020). Such documents and e-mails exchanged amongst the directors of Cambridge Analytica, SCL Group and the marketing company Ponte Estratégia reveal the partnership that made possible the arrival of Cambridge Analytica in Brazil in 2017.

CA Ponte, name adopted for the operations in Brazil, found a way to improve their methods when Brazilian Congress approved, early 2017, a bill determining the usage of internet *posts* sponsored for political campaigns. Facebook is the single platform that will allow advertisers to specify what kind of users will see their *posts* – but it is not the only social network targeted by the CA Ponte in the months preceding the elections. Twitter (currently named X) was definitive in the United States' election, but in Brazil, WhatsApp is potentially more relevant because it was one of the first communication platforms and social network in the country, gaining the trust of a big part of the user population. WhatsApp global public policy and election manager, Ben Supple, says in a speech at the Gabo Festival, "in Brazil, many people use WhatsApp as primary source of information and don't have means to check the veracity of the content" (Mello 2018).

The article of The Brazilian Report announces, "Torretta says that he has created a copycat WhatsApp app, where voters will be able to interact and share the content of candidates across all social networks, including WhatsApp itself. This will help campaigns overcome public preference for engagement with candidates rather than political parties, and Torretta believes that even a minimal app membership will boost candidate chances" (*Long 2017*). In May 2018, Andre Torretta affirms that the partnership with Cambridge Analytica was not renewed due to the open investigation in which they are accused of collecting personal data from Facebook without agreement. This broke out with the denouncements made by Christopher Wylie.

The spread of misinformation (fake news) is compatible with the alt-right political project Steve Bannon sets in course of politics transformation with the cultural change inflaming the emotions. A study conducted by MIT researchers outlines that "whereas the truth rarely diffused to more than 1,000 people, the top 1% of false-news cascades routinely diffused to between 1,000 and 100,000 people" (*Vosoughi et al. 2018, p.* 1148).

Cambridge Analytic has a Behavioral Microtargeting program capable of generating insights that are sent by the digital marketing tool as accurate online messages to the individuals. The document, leaked by Brittany Kaiser, clearly affirms that these operations grant access to a significant finding of behavioral insights and publicity technology. The convergence of psychometric and scientific knowledge from the Big Data scientists and the application in election campaigns in many countries around the world result in strategies of the voters' - or consumers of a product – profile mapping and the transmission of a customized message. The digital marketing operation is a "simplified ecosystem" that boosts data collected from various sources both online (Websites, ads, e-mails, surveys, marketing

media platforms, social networks, income and demographic data, shopping behavior, interests and type of personality) and offline (clients list, voters' files, donors' list, geographic locations).

The document of the presentation from Brazil's meeting, entitled *Target Audience Analysis* (TAA), claims to be the only methodology able to comprehend the opinion and motivations of key audience groups. TAA researches are quantitative and qualitative and include surveys in large scale, focal groups, and online tests which goal is to identify important segments of the population that could become target. The SCL Group was the technical-scientific branch responsible for the researches and analysis in Brazil. The team of Big Data scientists analyze the information collected to spread the profile of the audience. This profile is composed by descriptions of segments of the population that can be classified according to its characteristics. To identify tendencies and population groups accordingly, they use the following parameters: narrative, behavior, identity and communication. The personalization consists in posting a message and create adhesion and, in line with the TAA methodology, what is important for this to happen is the source of the message. It is certainly possible to question the credibility of the message's source or the ethical questions and the content of the message, which are all dependent on reaching the target audience.

The presentation states that

> once we have all the parameters and the result of the data, we will be able to break the audience in a varied number of groups with their KPIs. (…) We research to create a scientifically validated sampling that gets to be modeled by our data scientist and can identify what is important for a group and how to deliver it. What, when and how to deliver the key message (Target Audience Analysis).

The production company AM4 worked in the campaign of the elected President Jair Bolsonaro, and hired Yacows, an enterprise specialized in digital marketing that acted together with two other companies: Deep Marketing[5] and Kiplix. Regardless, the scheme of massive messages boost sees daylight in an article published by the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* in October 18th 2018 (Mello 2018[6]; Mello, Cunha, Nunes 2018; Carta Capital

5 The presidential candidate, Henrique Meirelles, hired Deep Marketing to send messages exclusively to the party's database or entries voluntarily submitted (Mello and Rodrigues 2018).

6 After publishing the article of *Folha*, the WhatsApp blocked the accounts connected to four media agencies cited by the newspaper for making the massive shooting of messages: Quick Mobile, Croc Services, SMS Market and Yacows (Mello, Rodrigues 2018).

2018). This report exposed that executives, Bolsonaro supporters, paid up to twelve million reais for each contract to mass publication of news that defamed PT (Workers' Party) via WhatsApp. The purchase contracts of the service of massive boost of messages were for hundreds of millions of messages. The piece reveals that amongst the agencies that rendered this service are Quickmobile, Yacows, Croc Services and SMS Market and "the prices vary from R$ 0,08 to R$ 0,12 for each message shooting to the candidate's base and R$ 0,30 to R$ 0,40 when the base is brought by the agency" (Mello, Cunha, Nunes 2018). An ex-employee from Quickmobile says that the company made use of a software to pan out telephone numbers that were in social networks. Thus, it was possible to make the geographic segmentation and by habits of consume of the shootings (Rebello et al. 2018).

According to ex-employees of AM4, consulted by *Folha*, it was used in Bolsonaro's campaign a tool capable of automatically generate foreign telephone numbers in sites like TextNow. "With area codes from other countries, these managers escape the spam filters and the limitations imposed by WhatsApp – the maximum of 256 participants in each group and the repassing of a same message to up to twenty people or groups. The same administrators also use algorithms that separate the members in supporters, detractors and neutrals, and, in that way, they manage to customize more efficiently the content they send" (Mello, Cunha, Nunes 2018).

A week after the publishing of the *Folha* article exposing the purchase of boosts of anti-PT content (Mello, Cunha, Nunes 2018), "*UOL* (Universo Online) had access to registers of AM4 in the message service called Bulk Services. The data revealed that on October 18th, hours after the article was published, information about the AM4 campaigns were deleted in the Yacows' system" (*Rebello et al. 2018*).

The information brought by Hans River do Rio Nascimento, an ex-employee from Kiplix that filed a labor grievance against the company, helps to understand the operation of the scheme of boosting messages to millions of people. According to him, "the companies register cell phones with names, CPF's (National Tax Roll for Individuals) and birth dates of people that neglected the use of their data". He sent the reporters a list of ten thousand names of people born from 1932 to 1953 (65 to 86 years old) that was distributed by Yacows to the operators of the messages shooting. (Mello, Rodrigues 2018). In these massive message-shooting operations, they utilized several computers connected to cell phones attached to equipment able to emulate WhatsApp using a cell phone chip activated with illegally acquired information to shoot the messages (Mello, Rodrigues 2018).

In Brazil, the process filed by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Consumer Defense and Protection Department investigated is there were violation of consumers' personal data and if anyone obtained improper access to these information. The investigation found that there were abuse by the Facebook and according to the decision, "it is made evident that data of about 443,000 users of the platform was in improper disposal of the developers of the application thisisyourdigitallife". The application is a psychological test that measures personality traits using answers of thousands of people and obtain data from their profiles on the social networks. Thusly, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security decided to fine Facebook in 6.6 million reais (Rossi 2019).

5. *Conclusions*

We highlight a strong principle that was widely developed by the authors of the counterinsurgency warfare and tested in the fields of guerrilla: gather as much information as possible about the insurgent minority and establish defaming propaganda, capable of staining the image of this group making the majority of the population, generally neutral, turn against the insurgent group. Win hearts and minds of the population becomes the main goal of the counterinsurgency warfare and to accomplish it, gathering information is paramount. After the fall of the Twin Towers, such practices gained updates and are once again implemented, however, is inserted in a world where people systematically share their opinions, photos, video, aesthetical preferences, political inclinations in virtual platforms connected in networks.

These platforms, on the sight of the engineers of chaos, become databanks with information capable of remodeling politics. As it is globally connected by the use of social networks and the connectivity of daily life gives away data for the comprehension of the thoughts, attitudes, emotions and ideologies of the users. The psychosocial data collection is done largely by Big Data companies and, or, agencies of security and intelligence be either by access to psychological profiles of social network users or result of the purchase of multiple databanks.

Why do we consider it appropriate to use the notion of counter-insurgency in our work, even today? Firstly, counter-insurgency or counter-revolutionary tactics were widely used by governments during the years of the military-business dictatorship in Brazil; secondly, there is a certain particularity in the case of the end of the military-business dictatorship in

Brazil, in which the broad and unrestricted amnesty produced a way of maintaining the apparatus that operated throughout the dictatorship without those responsible for various crimes being identified and judged after redemocratization. It is in this moment of transition in the country, the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, that neoliberal dictates plague the politics of Latin American countries. It is also worth mentioning that counter-insurgency tactics figure in the process of data collection and the production of accurate identification of voter profiles so that campaigns have maximum effectiveness.

The growth of populism, of political figures of "post-ideological techno-populism" (Empoli 2019, p. 40), of the institutionalization of antidemocratic and apolitical agendas and strategies strengthen the neoliberal thinking. The private information operates the gears of neoliberal thinking (Dardot, Laval 2016) as it transforms the whole structure of the state under the managing logic of the business functioning. In this perspective, the democratic state of law become a tool in the changing of the role of the State to invest and secure the access to social public policies for the individual that becomes more and more in debt (Lazzarato 2014). As follows, we see the implementation of a post-democratic state (Crouch 2004) favoring global monetary interests, the taking of rights and social guarantees, the precariousness of work, the rise in unemployment and informality, the control of an unwanted part of the population destined to underemployment, allowance programs of misery and genocide caused by police violence.

Jair Bolsonaro's campaign used strategies similar to the ones from Donald Trump's and had broad circulation by mass distribution of misinformation. In March 2019, right after taking office, Bolsonaro was present of a dinner in the Brazilian ambassador's house in Washington, Sergio Amaral, with the participation of conservative leaderships and with the presence of Olavo de Carvalho and thinkers of the North American Right wing. Amongst them, Steve Bannon, the academic Walter Russel Mead, the columnist of the *Wall Street Journal*, Mary Anastasia O'Grady and the editor of the literary magazine *The New Criterion*, Roger Kimball. In this occasion, the recent President stated "I have always dreamed of freeing Brazil of the nefarious ideology of the Left (…). Brazil is not an open ground where we intend to build things for our people. We have to deconstruct many things. Undo many things. To, later, start doing" (Mendonça 2019).

Bolsonaro's speech is somewhat a repetition of Andrew Breibart's thought. Since the death of Breibart in 2012, Bannon became executive director of Breibart News LLC, continues to promote the agenda of the Right and supports Breibart's theory: politics is downstream from culture

and that to change politics you must change culture (Cadwalladr 2018; Wylie 2019, 64). Changing the culture implies in a destruction of the pillars of democracy and politics itself. The ways in which Cambridge Analytica managed to shape the customization of the political messages to bring individuality to them are a combination of three elements: Big Data analysis, behavioral science based on the psychometric method of the Big Five personality traits (OCEAN) and marketing driven to specific targets. This style of marketing accurately aligns the addressing to consumers' individual demands.

Such tools become considerably relevant in the gears of surveillance and domination with an impact on global politics because they operate in the individual level accurately. They are counterinsurgency tactics working as a way of manipulating the population's subjectivity. Tactics that can be labelled as a war mercenary. As Wylie states,"Millions of people's personal information was stolen and used to target them in ways they wouldn't have seen, and couldn't have known about, by a mercenary outfit, Cambridge Analytic" (Cadwalladr 2018). Mercenary because it is not part of the State, but offers service for a State or a political campaign that pays more or ensures futures gains in the game of world politics.

We witness a war fought with critical psychological tools in the counterinsurgency and the neoliberal thinking, built with the massive gathering of data from social network users and the robotic spreading of misinformation. As it explores all dimensions of life using financial strategies and semantics this war reaches degrees that go far from the interests of the State. Articulations as the one that occurs between agencies of surveillance and Big Data produce interests that operate as mercenaries, in other words, without commitment to ethics or identity as a nation, offer services to who pays for them. Services that can shatter the democratic order, spring up ethnical, religious and social conflicts, overthrow leaders or cause the death of people.

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