



**THE DISCOURSE BEHIND THE FAKE NEWS: AN ANALYSIS OF
DISINFORMATION PROPAGATED AGAINST THE WORKERS' PARTY (PT)**

***O DISCURSO POR TRÁS DAS FAKE NEWS: UMA ANÁLISE DA DESINFORMAÇÃO
PROPAGADA CONTRA O PARTIDO DOS TRABALHADORES (PT)***

***EL DISCURSO DETRÁS DE LAS NOTICIAS FALSAS: UN ANÁLISIS DE LA
DESINFORMACIÓN PROPAGADA CONTRA EL PARTIDO DE LOS TRABAJADORES
(PT)***



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ABSTRACT: The term fake news has become complex and the literature has preferred the term misinformation because it is more comprehensive and encompasses all kinds of contents. This study investigates the discourse against the Workers' Party (PT), proposing a fake news typology to understand which themes were part of the political by cataloging the misinformation disproved by agencies/verification sites and the analysis of its content and discourse. Fake news is brought up to introduce specific topics for political debate. Methodologically, the work adopts Discourse Analysis to understand this phenomenon and applies Semi-linguistic Analysis as a form of analysis.

KEYWORDS: Misinformation. Fake news. Discourse analysis. Left. PT.

RESUMO: O termo “fake news” tornou-se complexo, e a literatura tem preferido o termo “desinformação” por ser mais abrangente e conseguir compreender todo tipo de conteúdo veiculado. O presente estudo tem como objetivo investigar o discurso propagado contra o Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), propondo uma tipologia das fake news utilizadas, a fim de entender quais os temas fizeram parte da agenda política, que foram desmentidas pelas agências/sites de checagem e a análise do seu conteúdo e discurso. As fake news são propostas por um sujeito interessado em trazer temas específicos para o debate político. Metodologicamente, o trabalho usa da Análise de Conteúdo e do Discurso Semi-linguístico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Desinformação. Fake news. Análise de discurso. Esquerda. PT.

RESUMEN: El término fakenews se ha vuelto complejo, y la literatura ha preferido el término desinformación porque es más completo y puede comprender todo tipo de contenido transmitidos. El presente estudio tiene como objetivo investigar el discurso propagado contra el Partido de los Trabajadores (PT) y proponer una tipología de las noticias falsas utilizadas para comprender qué temas formaban parte de la agenda política que fue refutada por las agencias/sitios de verificación y el análisis de su contenido y discurso. Las fakenews son sugeridas por un sujeto interesado en traer temas específicos al debate político. Metodológicamente, el trabajo emplea el análisis de contenido y el discurso semi-linguístico.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Desinformación. Fakenews. Análisis del discurso. Izquierda. PT.

Introduction

A party creates an evangelical church and makes its president a pastor. A video shows an electronic voting machine completing itself with the number 13. A PT leader defends the installation of the Wi-Fi network in prisons. A woman convicted of murdering her parents will be a candidate for the PT. This same party, along with other leftist groups, marches to Satan and shouts that Satan is their king. In the area of culture, this party finances the exhibition “The anus is beautiful”, in Salvador-BA.

The statements cited above, in addition to causing indignation to the unsuspecting reader, are examples of disinformation issued against the Workers' Party (PT) – the largest leftist party in Brazil². Some are fake news, but the concept is so complex that it has become small, and the term “disinformation” is the newest umbrella that encompasses “fake news” and all kinds of false content.

The research considered, for analytical purposes, the Workers' Party (PT). For the study of this clipping, the work makes a dialogue with three areas of knowledge: political science, communication and discourse analysis that, together, will provide a basis for understanding the theme. This study aims to analyze what is behind the disinformation discourse produced against the Workers' Party, and what are the recurring themes to which it is associated. The questions that guide this research are: Is there a disinformation model used to characterize the party? Are these themes new or just a new guise of what has already been propagated in the past? The present work is justified by the relevance of the theme in the political discourse. Although the lie has always been present in the political universe, it gained new airs with technology. Fake news pulverizes the electoral debate and always reappears as if it were current. Understanding this discourse is imperative to understanding how political communication works. Report produced by MIDIARS – Media Research Group. Discourse and Analysis of Social Networks - shows how there was an increase in disinformation in the COVID-19 pandemic, and how public agents are responsible for the legitimation and propagation of disinformation (RECUERO, 2021).

The present study aims to investigate the disinformation discourse propagated against the PT, proposing a typology of fake news used in order to understand which themes were part of the political agenda in the period studied (2013 to 2021) through the cataloging of disinformation (66 in all) that were denied by the checking agencies/sites and the analysis of

² Data from the Superior Electoral Court (TSE, 2023). Available in: <https://www.tse.jus.br/eleitor/estatisticas-de-eleitorado/filiados>. Access in: 14 Mar. 2023.

their content and discourse. Despite the effort to catalog the fake news produced over 8 years, this list is not exhaustive. Fake news is proposed by a subject interested in bringing specific themes to the political debate, imposing a new agenda setting not proposed by the media.

Agenda Setting or Scheduling Theory is a type of social effect of the media that involves the selection, incidence and distribution of news on topics that public opinion will discuss. Some themes will be laid out more emphatically. McCombs and Shaw (1972) showed that the mass media may not be successful in telling the public what to think, but they are effective in telling them what to think about. This happens because journalists act as gatekeepers of information, choosing what they want to publish or not. By imposing a selective menu of information, the media prevents other topics from being known and, consequently, commented on. The themes selected often meet the interests of the market. With the rise of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, agenda setting is no longer the prerogative of traditional media. (FERREIRA; TEIXEIRA, 2009).

In this way, fake news propagators act as gatekeepers by listing the typology of disinformation that will be made available to the intended audience niche that, upon receiving the false information, will polemicize it due to the truth effect, being able to pass it on to others and amplify the reach of the message. For Political Science, this information is precious, since such themes end up monopolizing the electoral debate to the detriment of the proposals presented. Methodologically, the work uses Patrick Charaudeau's Semiolinguistic Discourse Analysis as a form of analysis, especially the concept of sociodiscursive imaginaries.

The Brazilian context, the crisis of democracy and populism

Almeida (2019) explains that evangelicals were mobilized by the tradition agenda, by the fear of the communist threat and by the honesty of good people. Allied to these factors, issues such as the economic crisis, the demand for a new policy and anti-PTism were also at stake. Since 2013, the conservative wave has gained strength in Brazil and it finds support in the evangelical discourse, although not all evangelicals are conservative. The liberal economic discourse is echoed in the theology of prosperity, which preaches that having and rising socially are signs of God in personal life. In this way, the discourse of material prosperity and an entrepreneurial individual attitude is valued by economic ethics. The discourse in favor of a smaller State, on the other hand, is based on the refusal of corruption and on the privileges of the public sector and not on neoliberal agendas.

In the first election against Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, the PT tried to appeal by showing scenes of torture, but did not get the expected support. This is perhaps due to the fact that during the dictatorship (1964-1985) many evangelicals were silent or even supporters of the regime under the biblical justification that the authorities must be obeyed and are there with God's permission. The most prominent protagonists of conservatism in recent years represent portions of the evangelicals who came out in defense of public morality “for the regulation of bodies, behaviors and family ties (same-sex marriage and adoption of children by gay couples)”. In the case of Bolsonaro, he embraced these guidelines that are considered a threat to the traditional family (ALMEIDA, 2019).

The Bolsonarist community is structured in a binary code that simplifies reality and activates high voltage feelings such as affection, fear and hatred. For them, the world is divided between “good and evil, sacred and profane, family people and indecent people, good citizens and criminals, ethical and corrupt, nationalists and globalists” (ALONSO, 2019, p. 38, our translation). Nationalism has already been used in Brazil by both the Left (Diretas Já) and the Right (Military Regime). The colors, flag and anthem are used in order to reinforce this nationalism. In binary there is no stratification, but homogeneity, so that talent and effort are the items that separate poor from rich and white from black. Violence is seen with legitimacy and social media are used to delegitimize the claims of minorities, justify the 1964 coup and torture to avoid the communist threat, in addition to associating corruption with “*petralhas*”.

Alonso (2019) shows that at the beginning of the Dilma government, ethics in politics and moralization of customs came up for debate. Conservative ears joined the fight against behavioral leftism that upset intolerant religious social groups, which united against “immoralities”, the gay kit, abortion and the decriminalization of drugs. The Bolsonarist discourse fought in the fields of private morals and public morals. In the first field, there is an ostentation of virility and a role of female subordination and against feminism. The family would be at risk for the doctrinaire and leftist school that could impose values, beliefs, lifestyle and sexual orientation different from those propagated by the family. In public morals, there is the defense of ethics in politics and the fight against administrative corruption. The anti-elitist discourse also divides society into a snobbish elite and an “*average-middle*” class that represents Brazilians. The ultraconservative camp has always been present since 1989, with Eneias, Garotinho, Eymael, Pastor Everaldo, Levy Fidelix, etc. This ultra-conservative policy and its supporters “see patriotism as rooting, the traditional family as a backbone of life, and

violence as self-defense. They believe in individual merit, hard work and God” (ALONSO, 2019, p. 51, our translation).

Bolsonaro showed that it did not take television time to win an election, much less an expressive political party. This, however, is nothing new, since candidates from the far right win votes by capturing the feeling of frustration and hopelessness, presenting a renewal and anti-systemic discourse, transforming dissatisfaction into an electoral power. There is the discourse that the parties are in crisis of the system and it is built from denial. It goes beyond anti-PTism. It is also antipartisan and antisystemic. The streets, formerly occupied by left-wing groups, were now occupied by right-wing groups. Protesters agreed with speeches that Bolsa Família would finance lazy people and that racial quotas generate even more racism. It was a rhetoric with traces of anti-leftism and anti-communism and already with the presence of fake news. Allied to the disapproval of politics, the narrative of meritocracy and hyper-individualism emerges with the return of the rhetoric of the red danger and the ghost of communism, in addition to a denial of intellectualism, putting teachers and intellectuals in doubt. Opponents go beyond the political sphere, but also in the religious and especially moral spheres, making the left a threat to children. The attack on the progressive field is also an attack on identity guidelines that are considered privileged by the heterosexual white man. The extreme right places emotion at the center of the debate, communicating with the values of denial, fear, hatred. The policy of enmity arises, in which the other is evil and must be exterminated. In this sense, anything goes to attack the progressive and academic field, especially the moral ones, instrumentalizing sexual repressions and fears. The left would not only be a threat to the social order, but also to the very integrity of children (GALLEGO; ORTELLADO; MORETTO, 2017; SOLANO, 2019).

Two other aspects must be considered to understand the context in which the discourse of disinformation that will be analyzed emerges: the crisis of liberal democracy and the third wave of right-wing populism. Castells (2002) explains that liberal democracy – which had been consolidated over the last two centuries – gradually collapsed. In different parts of the globe, such as Spain, the USA, Brazil, South Korea, different popular mobilizations against the current system were recorded. From this rejection, political leaders emerge who deny the parties and change the national and world political order. In this context, we see emerge figures such as Trump, Le Pen, movements such as Brexit and, making a parallel with the Brazilian case, emerged the figure of Jair Bolsonaro. Gallego, Ortellado and Moretto (2017) consider that the crisis in democracy does not surprise anyone and that politics is presented as something

expendable, dirty, shameful and one should seek the non-professionalization of the politician. As a result, voters are hostage to a technocratic policy or a demagogic policy that manipulates fears, anger and hatred. The case of former judge Sérgio Moro refers to the criminal proceedings of the show, with the judge who assumes the role of militant and savior of the country and makes operations a form of theatricalized criminalization, increasing the collective feeling that politics is despicable and this must be denied and fought (GALLEGO; ORTELLADO; MORETTO, 2017).

In addition to all these aspects, there was the media-driven narrative of Car Wash operations that culminated in the arrest of former president Luís Inácio Lula da Silva. In the operation, audios of the former president with then-president Dilma Rousseff were leaked to the press. The discourse of car wash partisans invoked moral terms in order to overcome a sober past of patrimonialism/corruption and refound the country due to the essential role of the Judiciary in the figure of heroes and the operation would clean up and fight corruption (BELLO; CAPELLA; KELLER, 2021). No wonder, most of the fake news against the left (which will be analyzed in the next chapter) is related to corruption and fraud in the elections, which shows disinformation that is easier to be assimilated by the population due to the height of the operation in Brazil.

The speeches of Solano (2019) and Bello, Capela and Keller (2021) refer to the informational politics of Castells (2002) where the politics of scandal is the weapon of the moment. To reach society, parties act through the media. The cost, however, is high and many resort to what the author calls under-the-table contributions. There is an information market concerned with destroying reputations. The judiciary unites with the media and leaks information and is often seen as a hero, and then the heroic figure is demoted to the antagonist. Politicians reduce the credibility of the media by inviting society to find alternative forms of expression and communication (web).

In the crisis of democracy, the State lost its sovereignty due to the dynamics of global flows and transorganizational networks of wealth, information and power. The State is unable to fulfill its commitments to the welfare state. There is a crisis of legitimacy associated with the lack of credibility of the political system. The bureaucratic system became a bureaucratic remnant devoid of public faith. Przerworski (2020) corroborates this thought by listing three signs that show that a democracy may be experiencing crisis: erosion of traditional party systems while there was support for the radical right, advances by racist, xenophobic and nationalist parties and the decline of support for the democracy.

In addition to the digital context that led to the rapid circulation of fake news, it is also possible to link them in the political context to the emergence of the last extreme right-wing populist wave in the world. Both coincide with the victory of Donald Trump in the United States, with the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union and with the rise of the extreme right in different countries of the globe (Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Sebastian Kurz in Austria, among others). It's as if the two contexts were twin brothers and it's hard to say who gained prominence first, since world events are used to describe both. The use of lies in politics is milenar, the emergence of populism dates back to the century before last, but fake news and the populist uprising of the extreme right in recent years share the same time³. Both attack science and politics and support each other. Tormey (2019) explains the relationship between populism and post-truth and says that in addition to challenging arguments, populism considers them false, creating so-called “alternative facts”, present not only in campaigns, but also in populist governments. “Populism thrives on the desire for a simplification of the world, a reduction of complexity to a few easy tasks to solve, and offering a vision, often nostalgic, of a world where order has been restored” (TORMEY, 2019, p. 153, our translation). Bernardi and Costa (2020, p. 386, our translation), when analyzing the populist extreme right leaders elected in the USA, Brazil and Hungary, add “the narrative of using the discourse of a common enemy, delegitimizing the opposition, repression and the use of networks social media and fake news as instruments of communication with the electorate, and later, with the citizens”.

Bruzzone (2021) shows that populist discourse is a combination of the people, the enemy and a leader. It's a speech that says what people want to hear by a guy who does not care about the language used and lies find believers willing to ratify them. Populism was renewed by networked digital communication and gave way to digital neo-populism or cyber-populism which, driven by digital technology, reaches a global scale. It is “capable of generating adherence to strong, simple and secure narrative identities, using micro-segmentation technologies that are only possible on a large scale with digital resources” (BRUZZONE, 2021 p. 64, our translation). Digital populism guarantees certainties where proof is not needed, simplistic solutions to complex problems, the return to traditions or beliefs that give us comfort. And to survive, it blocks the possibility of dialogue and polarizes politics (BRUZZONE, 2021).

In the discursive field, as Charaudeau (2018) rightly points out, populism also occurs when the people vote more for the politician because of his image and catchphrases than for the

³ American populism originated in 1829 and Russian populism in 1876 (DILUAR, 2020).

government program. The politician shapes his speech according to public opinion, oscillating between reason and passion. And in the political game there is a risk of populist drift, which occurs when the masses can be seduced by images that are not directly linked to the political, such as the virility manifested by the one who "means no mince words", the figure of the seducer who does not hide sexual adventures because, depending on social imaginaries, this ethos of strength, potency and virility ends up awakening veneration or fear of the politician. And it is no coincidence that this type of politician found support among Brazilian voters.

After this retrospective and contextualization of the Brazilian case, understanding the disinformational discourses associated with populism that were shaped in the Lula governments and consolidated from the reelection of President Dilma, it becomes clear the understanding of the themes involving the PT in the production of disinformation. Fake news related to human rights, the association of the left with criminality, corruption and fraud in elections, the destruction of Christian values and the "traditional family" with a clear incentive to homosexuality and pedophilia, the danger of communism, among other themes, were associated with the party. The themes are not new, but bring a return to time, and also raise the memories of those who had the discipline of Moral and Civic Education in their curriculum and saw communism as a real danger, so that they revive what was indoctrinated in the past and as a form of defense, they attack left-wing politicians and parties. The destruction of reputation in the political environment is not something new and Castells (2018) explains that negative messages are five times more effective in their influence than positive ones. Therefore, it is a question of inserting negativity of contents into the image of the person that one wants to destroy in order to eliminate the bond of trust with the citizens, since the manipulation and manufacture of materials increase the destructive effect.

Research methodology and analysis

The research that characterizes this work is of a qualitative and quantitative nature and uses a case study approach, in the light of Content and Discourse Analysis, based on the Semiolinguistic Theory of Patrick Charaudeau (2016, 2018, 2019). The research *corpus* consists of fake news headlines and texts involving the PT between the years 2013 and 2021, which were denied by the following websites/checking agencies: Boatos.org, E-Farsas and Estadão Verifica.

Considering that fake news imitates news and resembles it, the adopted analysis followed the pattern of what is done in the study of print media. For the analysis, the work was not restricted to the restricted definition of fake news but went beyond and encompassed everything that is in the field of disinformation. Only was collected misinformation that was denied by websites and fact-checking agencies, namely: Aos Fatos, Boatos.org, E-farsas, Lupa and Estadão Verifica. It is possible that there are other fake news in addition to the table presented, but perhaps due to the restricted circulation they were not denied by the consulted agencies. The date that appears on the fact-checking board dates back to the period when the misinformation was disproved and not when it first appeared. Some survived a decade of existence and come to life close to the election period.

The intended analyzes were carried out with the aid of the Iramuteq program, version 0.7 alpha 2, which focuses on word analysis, based on the form of appearance and repetition of terms within texts, thus facilitating the identification of relationships proximity and similarity between words. In the case of the intended results, this analysis model allowed categorizing and listing the terms linked to the propagation of fake news, associated with the image of the actors and political parties analyzed.

For classification purposes, the subjects were divided into six major themes:

- i. CA (Culture and Arts): this framework includes rumors involving artists and cultural themes – always in a pejorative way – associated with left-wing politicians and parties;
- ii. CFE (Corruption and Fraud in Elections): In this set of themes are disinformation involving the left with practices of corruption and fraud in elections;
- iii. COMMUNISM: in this theme are the themes that link the left to communism;
- iv. DHCAT (Human Rights and Association with Crime and Trafficking): in this umbrella of themes are the subjects that associate the left with actions that link it to drug dealers and other types of criminals, in addition to those that negatively associate the theme of Human Rights with left agenda;
- v. IROFF (IPIH) (Religious Intolerance and Offense to Faith and the Christian Family: Gender Ideology, Pedophilia, Incest and Homosexuality): in this framework there are several aggregated themes that dialogue with each other and deal with taboo themes that supposedly offend religion and the traditional family, in addition to false association with topics such as incest and pedophilia;
- vi. OTHERS: here is all the misinformation that did not fit the above topics and has the most diverse aspects.

Below are the analyzed fake news, the graphs produced and the analyzes carried out.

Frame 1 – News (fake news), page, date posted and delimited topic

Fake News	Agency that denied	Theme
PT will organize fake attack against Haddad three days before the elections	Boatos.org (21/10/2018)	CFE
World hackers disclose electronic voting machine fraud and democracy hacked by PT	Boatos.org. (03/08/2021)	CFE
Protógenes Queiroz had to flee to Switzerland because he discovered PT fraud in electronic voting machines	Boatos.org. (02/08/2021)	CFE
Lázaro Barbosa appears in a photo with Lula and is affiliated with the PT	Boatos.org (18/06/2021)	DHACT
Joesley Batista writes thanks letter to PT after Friboi becomes JBS Foods Internacional	Boatos.org (24/04/2021)	CFE
Cidade Alerta Sergipe denounces audio of PT member against churches	Boatos.org (20/03/2021)	IROFF (IPIH)
Maria Flor won R\$ 10 million from the Rouanet Law in the PT era	Boatos.org (30/01/2021)	CA
PT strategist reveals that José Dirceu rules the STF and Brazil	Boatos.org (09/01/2021)	CFE
PT militants have the number 13 branded with an iron	Boatos.org (05/12/2020)	OTHERS
PT is in second place in the ranking of the biggest criminal organizations in history	Boatos.org (29/09/2020) E-farsas (28/05/2017)	DHACT
PT and PSOL went to court to prevent the PRF from combating drug trafficking and piracy	Boatos.org (01/08/2020) Estadão Verifica (17/08/20)	DHACT
PT goes to court to prevent Bolsonaro from ending the drought in the Northeast	Boatos.org (26/07/2020)	OTHERS
Photo shows exhibition in Salvador called “The anus is beautiful” and financed by PT	Boatos.org (11/07/2020)	CA
STF meets request from PT, PSOL, PCdoB, DEM and PSDB and prohibits military hospitals from treating patients with Covid-19	Boatos.org (18/05/2020)	OTHERS
BNDES black box reveals R\$ 576 billion embezzled during the PT government	Boatos.org (10/05/2020)	CFE
PT orders to bury empty coffins to strike Bolsonaro	Boatos.org (25/04/2020)	OTHERS
Anthropologist who was arrested on indigenous land was from the left and from the PT	Boatos.org (18/02/2020)	DHACT
Bolsonaro discovered BRL 23 billion of PIS/PASEP hidden by Lula and the PT	Boatos.org (21/12/2019)	CFE
Northeast PT governments and city halls hired machines to destroy asphalt made by the Army	Boatos.org (13/11/2019)	OTHERS
PT prepares party in Curitiba to celebrate Lula's release by the STF	Boatos.org (05/11/2019)	OTHERS
Serginho Groisman calls for Free Lula and encourages left-wing terrorism at PT rally	Boatos.org (03/11/2019)	CA
Deputy director of the PT in Porto Alegre, Mara Jaqueline, is caught stealing a cell phone	Boatos.org (16/10/2019)	DHACT
PT adviser who won the Mega-Sena bought a luxury car before the result of the draw	Boatos.org (19/09/2019) E-farsas.org (19/09/2019)	CFE
PRF seizes truck with millions of dollars from PT and other parties	Boatos.org (08/09/2019)	CFE

PCC publishes repudiation note after PF cites link between PT and faction	Boatos.org (11/08/2019)	DHACT
PT and left are digging holes in roads in the Northeast to get funds	Boatos.org (06/08/2019)	CFE
PT files suit in the STF to prevent Bolsonaro from reducing the price of cooking gas	Boatos.org (06/08/2019) E-farsas.org (06/08/2019)	OTHERS
Sergeant Manoel Silva Rodrigues, arrested with cocaine in Spain, is a member of the PT	Boatos.org (27/06/2019) E-farsas.org (27/06/2019)	DHACT
Gleisi revela, em vídeo, que PT quer o desemprego em massa no Brasil	Boatos.org (30/05/2019)	OTHERS
PT , PSOL and PCdoB turned Praia Vermelha (Urca) into a nudist beach	Boatos.org (30/04/2019)	IROFF (IPIH)
Marcelo Odebrecht says PT government gave money to drug dealers in Rio and FARC	Boatos.org (21/04/2019)	DHACT
PT has just created an evangelical church with Gleisi as pastor	Boatos.org (16/04/2019)	IROFF (IPIH)
PT went to court to end the 13th salary for Bolsa Família	Boatos.org (12/04/2019)	OTHERS
Attacks in Ceará are chaos planned by Lula, José Dirceu and PT in Curitiba	Boatos.org (15/01/2019)	DHACT
João de Deus has been a member of the PT for 20 years and gives BRL 40,000/month to the party	Boatos.org (23/12/2018) E-farsas (26/12/2018)	DHACT
Campinas shooter, Euler Fernando Grandolpho, was affiliated with the PT	Boatos.org (12/12/2018)	DHACT
Avaaz website is PT 's spokesperson in Brazil and funded by George Soros	Boatos.org (19/11/2018)	OTHERS
Ipsemg has 540 PT advisors who earn more than R\$ 10,000	Boatos.org (11/11/2018)	CFE
TCU discovers BRL 20 billion shortfall in FIES caused by Haddad and PT	Boatos.org (07/11/2018)	CFE
Resistance girl sells virginity to pay PT debt	Boatos.org (05/11/2018)	IROFF (IPIH)
The company responsible for counting the elections is linked to the PT	Boatos.org (26/10/2018)	CFE
Gerson Florindo, from the PT , pretended to be a Bolsonaro voter and cursed Haddad	Boatos.org (19/10/2019)	OTHERS
Roberto Carlos supports Bolsonaro and says PT cannot return to power	Boatos.org (13/10/2018)	CA
Palocci denounces fraud in the electronic voting machines made by the PT in 2014	Boatos.org (05/10/2018)	CFE
PT , PCdoB, PSOL and REDE march to Satan and shout Satan is our king	Boatos.org (11/09/2018)	IROFF (IPIH)
Man who tried to kill Bolsonaro received R\$ 350,000 from PT , says PF	Boatos.org (07/09/2018)	DHACT
Adélio Bispo de Oliveira, the man who tried to kill Bolsonaro, is affiliated with the PT	Boatos.org (06/09/2018)	DHACT
Journalist says shooting attack against Lula and PT bus “was set up”	Boatos.org (28/03/2018)	DHACT
Suzane Von Richthofen will run for federal deputy for the PT	Boatos.org (07/03/2018)	DHACT
Video shows Lula saying that the PT is fascism, Nazism, less democracy	Boatos.org (28/09/2017)	COMMUNISM
JBS denounce was released to elect Lula and the PT	Boatos.org (19/05/2017)	CFE
Abin chief denounces Lula and PT 's plan to shoot down Teori's plane	Boatos.org (20/01/2017)	DHACT

Camila Pitanga pushed Domingos Montagner into the water to help Lula and the PT	Boatos.org (21/09/2016)	CA
Fátima Bezerra, from the PT , wants to install Wi-Fi in prisons	Boatos.org (13/06/2016)	DHACT
PT announces communist domination plan	Boatos.org (19/05/2016)	COMMUNISM
PT pays BRL 100.00 per person in protest on 03/31 in Brasília	Boatos.org (30/03/2016)	OTHERS
90% of those approved in public tenders are from the PT	Boatos.org (03/02/2016)	CFE
Fake video: PT arrests pastor for homophobia in São Paulo	Boatos.org (09/11/2014)	IROFF (IPIH)
PT uses free software to defraud electronic voting machines, says hoax	Boatos.org (05/11/2014)	CFE
Hoax: PT bought and violated the electronic voting machines in the 2014 elections	Boatos.org (03/11/2014)	CFE
Fake news: PT president suggests end of Bolsa Família in 2017	Boatos.org (29/10/2014)	OTHERS
False information: PT brought 50,000 Haitians to vote for Dilma in the elections	Boatos.org (01/07/2014) E-farsas.org (17/05/2014)	CFE
Hoax: former PT -journalist reveals the rottenness of Lula and the PT	Boatos.org (20/09/2013)	CFE
Video shows urn autocompleting with the number 13! Is it true?	E-farsas.org (07/10/2018)	CFE
Did João Figueiredo foresee that the PT would try to institute communism?	E-farsas.org (24/03/2021)	COMMUNISM
Rumor exaggerates salaries received by PT members with party fund resources	Estadão Verifica (20/06/2020)	CFE

Source: Prepared by the author

Analysis of fake news about the PT

This section will analyze false news found on different internet pages linked to the PT. The party was founded in 1980 and is seen as linked to the country's own history and political maturation. According to the official page of the party, “the PT emerged as an agent promoting changes in the lives of city and rural workers, left-wing militants, intellectuals and artists. The political party was made official on 10 February 1980, by the Superior Court of Electoral Justice” (PT, 2023). Changes were made to the corpus, in order to favor the interpretation of data and results collected by the Iramuteq program. The wording of the term “petista” was also changed, which appears in the singular in only one text: in all the others, it appears as “petistas” (three cases; two in the same text, and one isolated in another), having all been changed to the singular form. The Worker's Party also appeared in abbreviated form, “PT”, and in its extended form, with four cases in a single text (denoting the considerable size of the texts in this corpus) and five cases, scattered among different texts, in which it was written the party title in full. Other variations of terms linked to the description of the party or its members were maintained, such as “petralha” and “petezada”, both terms with few appearances. Throughout the corpus, in

all mentions of Jair Bolsonaro, “Bolsonaro” was chosen, given that most of the texts investigated in other analyzes mentioned only his surname.

Frame 2 – Average summary, number of texts, occurrences, forms and hapax⁴ about PT

Number of texts	90
Number of occurrences	8482
Number of shapes	2024
Number of hapax	1177 (13.88% of occurrences, 58.15% of forms)
Average occurrences per text	94.24

Source: Prepared by the author from data analyzed in the Iramuteq software

The corpus focused on fake news about the PT had 90 texts, which can also be seen when considering the frequencies of appearances for the terms. The term “*pt*” appeared 125 times, followed by “*não*” (no), with 66 repeated appearances, “*lula*”, with 64, in addition to “*ao*” (to), with 53, “*brasil*”, 38, “*presidente*” (president), 36 and “*bolsonaro*”, 35. Other terms of relevance to the analyzes should be emphasized, in this list: “*partido*” (party), with 26 repetitions, “*brasileiro*” (Brazilian), “*dinheiro*” (money) and “*governo*” (government), with 25 appearances each, “*federal*” and “*pais*” (country), with 21 repetitions, “*petista*”, with 20, in addition to “*ministro*” (minister), 19 and “*eleição*” (election), with 17 appearances.

Frame 3 – Terms repeated throughout the investigated texts about the PT

Term	Frequency of appearances (repeats)	Term	Frequency of appearances (repeats)
<i>pt</i>	125	<i>dinheiro</i> (money)	25
<i>não</i> (no)	66	<i>governo</i> (government)	25
<i>lula</i>	64	<i>ex</i>	21
<i>ao</i> (to)	53	<i>federal</i>	21
<i>brasil</i>	38	<i>pais</i> (country)	21
<i>presidente</i> (president)	36	<i>petista</i>	20
<i>bolsonaro</i>	35	<i>ministro</i> (minister)	19
<i>mais</i> (more)	33	<i>ano</i> (year)	18
<i>como</i> (how/as)	26	<i>eleição</i> (election)	17
<i>partido</i> (party)	26	<i>já</i> (now)	17
<i>tudo</i> (all)	26	<i>ai</i> (then)	16
<i>brasileiro</i> (Brazilian)	25	<i>dar</i> (give)	16
<i>dinheiro</i> (Money)	25	<i>dia</i> (day)	15
<i>governo</i> (government)	25	<i>Maior</i> (Bigger)	15
<i>ex</i>	21	<i>Vídeo</i>	14

⁴ Palavra que aparece somente uma vez ao longo do texto.

<i>federal</i>	21		
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Source: Prepared by the author from data analyzed in the Iramuteq software

The cloud of terms allows observing the large number of words that appeared throughout the corpus. The amount of words, notably higher than in other analyzes presented here, can be understood due to the existence of a large number of texts and terms. The central term, “pt”, is very similar to the term “lula”. This may denote the proximity of quotes made about Lula, the former president, within the texts that focus on the PT. One can see the importance of Lula's figure for the party's image built in fake news, noting the existence of many news that mention him, among the investigated fake news. Thus, the name “lula”, a word that had 64 mentions throughout the corpus, appears in 28 different texts, which reinforces the attempt to link the two concepts (“pt” and “lula”), in the process of, possibly, devalue the image of both. It must be borne in mind that these news are constructed to confuse and devalue the image of the political party.

There is an important methodological consideration: it should be emphasized that some texts have a much higher number of terms and sentences than others. This may have influenced the results that indicate such a rapprochement between “pt” and “lula”, given that in one of the analyzed fake news texts, 24 mentions were made of this political leader, a number that represents 37.5% of the total number of 64 mentions of it throughout the corpus. This repetition is also seen in other fake news. In other words, one of the texts was responsible for most of the citations about Lula. A small part of the content of this fake news is quoted below:

While thousands of Brazilians starve and have no jobs, and the fleet of buses in our large urban centers is scrapped, Lula ordered BNDES to give money to Cuban dictator Fidel Castro to buy thousands of new buses produced in China for them! We all know that we will never see the color of that money again and that it could have been much better used in financing buses to cities here in Brazil, after all, the money is ours, buying vehicles produced right here, activating the national automobile industry, perhaps so there wouldn't be thousands of metallurgists here being laid off every day, generating growth, employment and income, which is what the people need!

But Lula is deceiving the people with a handout called Bolsa Familia, which does not reach most needy Brazilians, leaving it in the hands of corrupt intermediaries (LIRA, 2020, n.p., our translation).

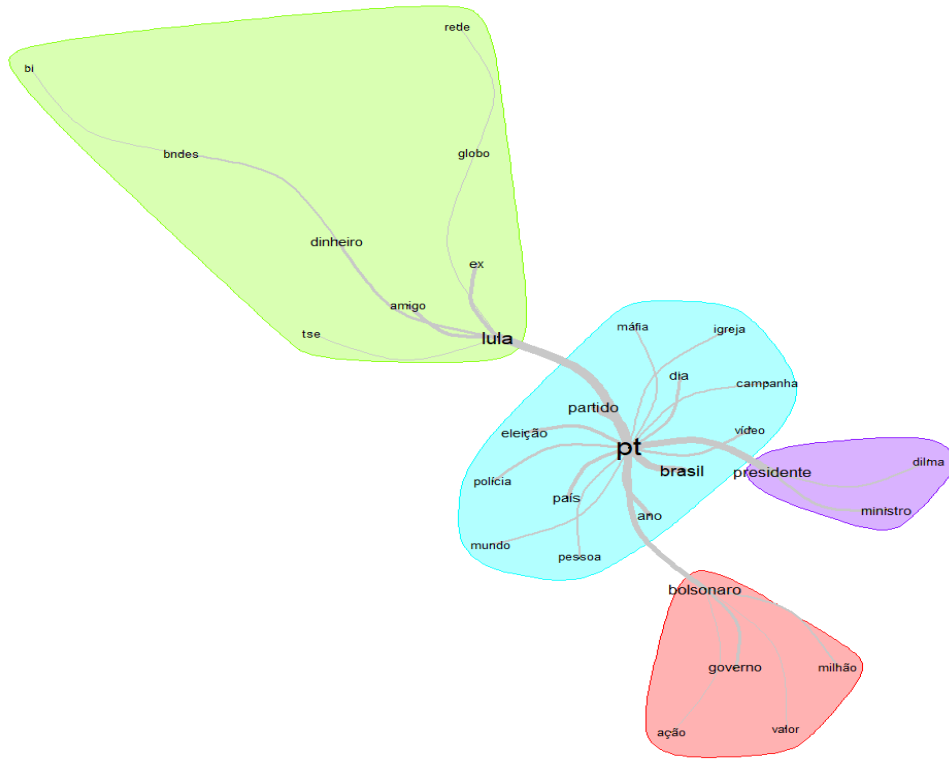
From the aforementioned example, there is an intention to build a text that has the format of a news bulletin or a virtual page aimed at professional journalism. Despite this, the content of fake news is confusing and clearly has a political bias and weaves opposition to left-wing figures. It can be said that this unilateral tendency, which defends one side and criticizes the

other, is not found, with the same intensity, regarding the construction of criticism, in most of the journalistic texts found on the net, in official pages and that have some credibility. These usually contain content that seeks neutrality, or at least strives to inform about political perspectives, which definitely differs from what was found throughout this corpus. Although it is argued that some vehicles reveal their political bias and criticize certain politicians, this is not done with the same intensity and language used by fake news.

Other words stand out in the cloud. The terms “*presidente*” (president) and “*bolsonaro*”, despite having a different degree of proximity to the central term “*pt*” (where “*bolsonaro*” is closer to “*lula*”, and “*presidente*” (president) is directly closer to “*pt*”) seem to have great relevance to the investigated news, as well as “*brasil*”, “*dinheiro*” (money), “*governo*” (government) and “*partido*” (party). The number of terms allows identifying a number of ideas that are linked, in different ways, to fake news about the PT. When analyzing the terms, it is possible to notice the intention to devalue the PT and its actors. Terms such as “*primeiro comando da capital*”, famous national criminal faction, “*joão de deus*”, spiritist who was convicted of rape and abuse, in addition to terms such as “*droga*” (drug), “*mafia*”, “*traficante*” (drug dealer) or “*narcotraficante*” (drug dealer), mentions to Suzane Von Richthofen, convicted and imprisoned for involvement in the murder of her own parents, among others who are still part of the population's collective memory. Thus, the intention to devalue the image of the party and its figures is confirmed, through false information that is linked to the texts shared by the networks.

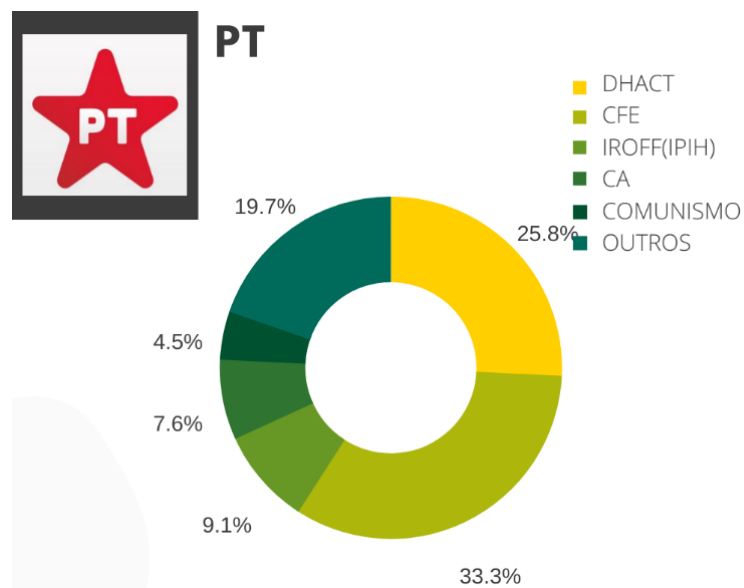
these, it was cited as “*Globalixo*”, in criticism. Thus, in some texts there is an attempt to approximate the terms, or concepts.

Figure 2 – Word similarity graph of fake news about the PT



Source: Prepared by the author from data analyzed in the Iramuteq software

Figure 3 – Fake news about PT according to themes



Source: Prepared by the author

One third of fake news refers to Corruption and Electoral Fraud. Fake news involving corruption reverberates because the party has already been involved in the past, in the Mensalão scandal. There is a resumption of what is said elsewhere to support and shift the meaning, in order to bring to the reader's memory elements that will support his belief.

Charaudeau's notion of sociodiscursive imaginary (2019) helps to understand why one third of fake news is related to corruption and electoral fraud. An imaginary that is very present and aggravated by the Car Wash Operation and anti-PTism is that corruption is something exclusive to the Left and especially to the PT. Although the Car Wash reached other party associations, the PT was the focus of former judge Sérgio Moro (SCHREIBER, 2022). Therefore, good people do not vote or belong to this party group. Thus, any false news that links the party to an act of corruption finds an echo in part of the voters' imagination. The other recurring theme in disinformation against the PT refers to the association of human rights linked to trafficking and crime (25.8%). As seen in the graph and in the chart, there is a falsely constructed imaginary that assumes that Human Rights are at the service of the criminals. It is also present in the imaginary that was built that the PT is a party associated with crime. And once again here, the figure of the scapegoat fits well in order to demonize a guilty person. The PT in this case would be the worst thing in politics and for that it would need to be extirpated. Therefore, speeches like that of Jair Bolsonaro, who preaches the elimination of the left, are celebrated by a portion of the electorate. What would be absurd in a democracy, gains the appearance of acceptable and a view of credibility.

In way of conclusion

Fake news is a problem that directly affects democracy, and necessarily passes through the lens of Political Science, Communication and other areas. It is necessary to understand that, politically, fake news is linked to the emergence of right-wing populism, to a crisis in the democratic system and that in Brazil they emerge with the so-called shamed right (SOUZA, 1988) coming out of the closet and potentiate with the feeling of antipetism.

The democratic regime – in an increasingly accentuated crisis – must live with fake news for a long time to come. Although it emerged in a very specific political context, fake news should have a long life in the world and in Brazil.

Rego and Barbosa (2020) point to an intentional construction of ignorance. Disinformation is no longer just something to deconstruct the adversary's image, but a threat to

science, to life. The greatest example of misinformation in this regard was related to the pandemic. COVID-19 was treated like a simple flu, vaccines devalued and sanitary measures treated as an attack on the working class. Before, false information could be easily disproved by the media and science. Now, politicians are taking advantage of this post-truth scenario enhanced by digital communication to deny science and attack the press, naming everything that displeases their ears as fake news.

The architecture of the discourse behind the fake news against the Workers' Party showed something engendered, well orchestrated and with very well selected themes. They were not simple rumours, but coldly calculated lies and/or stories taken out of context to give the expected truth effect. This thematic structuring shows the level of organization of fake news producers: in addition to being organized, the theme is also very well thought out, as it brings subjects that arouse the attention of users and promote a sharing effect.

Old rumors are resurrected as if they were new and are widely shared across social media. The apex of fake news in Brazil always occurs during the election period. Although fake news occurs at any time of the year, it returns to circulate with force as each election approaches. Major themes of the electoral process were overshadowed by the avalanche of propagated disinformation. Although there was a concern on the part of the media to deal with issues of public interest such as social security, labor, tax reform, the public's interest turned more to issues of the moral-religious field, often ignored or not treated with the same importance by the press.

The discourse against the left finds support in the religious, conservative, moralist discourse and touches on sensitive themes of the Brazilian population. The cataloging of fake news revealed that seventy percent (70%) of the disinformation spread was restricted to three major themes: Human Rights and Association with Crime and Trafficking, Corruption and Electoral Fraud, and Religious Intolerance and Offense to the Christian Faith. These themes transform the PT into a dangerous enemy, an evil that needs to be fought. It is satanization through a scapegoat pointed out by Charaudeau (2016).

Therefore, the discourse behind the disinformation shows that voting or being left-wing is taking a position that goes against Christianity and the Brazilian family. This is not a discourse that only circulates in fake news, it ends up being legitimized by them. This same speech is also seen in the pulpit of churches, gatherings, in short, it has always existed, in addition to being also publicized by the press (MARIANI, 1998).

If, on the one hand, the path of fake news seems to have no return, on the other hand, democracy is finding alternatives to live with them. The press, although under attack, has developed fact-checking mechanisms that confront the disinformation discourse. Social networks began to block false content and suspend users propagating fake news. There are those who bet on education in schools and universities, as is the case of Charaudeau (2019), as institutions capable of providing intellectual tools that enable people to understand and identify fake news.

The discourse of disinformation needs to be understood similarly to what happens with the political and the media. As in the political, the discourse of disinformation presents evil (political opponent) and the one who can overcome evil (political), for this it uses strategies to disqualify the opponent, in addition to using short and easy-to-understand sentences, thus producing conditions of veracity. Disinformation discourse, like the media, uses sensationalism to sell and often uses political or religious leaders as guarantors to support the discourse.

Regarding this point, the work presented how the discourse of disinformation is structured by analyzing the PT. Corruption discourse and the moral agenda also gained notoriety as a reflection of the extreme right thinking that defends the patriarchal and heteronormative family, the resurgence of nationalism and brings topics such as abortion, gender identity and LGBTQIA policies to the center of the political agenda.

Political Science, when focusing on fake news, manages to understand the context of its emergence and the reasons for its expansion, always associated with the disbelief of institutions, the media, in short, a reflection of the crisis of democracy. Populism flirts better with the crisis and offers simple answers to complex problems. In this context, explains Charaudeau (2018), the politician shapes his speech in line with public opinion and it is common to vote for someone based on his image as a politician rather than his government program.

Regarding Charaudeau's Discourse Analysis used as a methodological support for this work, it was important for serving as a basis for the formulation of the disinformation discourse, providing important concepts of media and political discourses, in addition to bringing the concept of purposes (themes) and of *how* their existence and credibility are not important, but the truth effects they bring, which depend on each person's social and imaginary representations. The imaginary of tradition, in particular, uses phobic discourses (almost a rule in disinformation discourses) to justify itself.

The work managed to systematize the pattern of fake news produced against the PT, even creating categories of analysis of the themes involved. With the election of President Lula

(PT) for his third term (2023-2026), new fake news will be created, but regardless of the subject to be addressed, the article will provide a basis for framing them in the developed categories and analysis of how they work in people's imagination.

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