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No (Visible) Victim, No Crime: How violence against Indigenous Communities in Brazil is enabled by state elite's veiling discourse

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Bachelor Thesis

No (Visible) Victim, No Crime:

How violence against Indigenous Communities in Brazil
is enabled by state elite's veiling discourse

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Table of Contents

1 Introduction	3
2 Literature review	5
2.1 Security studies.....	5
2.2 Perverse State Formation.....	6
2.3 Five Securitization Sectors.....	7
2.4 Theoretical Framework.....	8
3 Methodology	9
3.1 Research Design.....	9
3.2 Case Selection.....	9
3.3 Method of Analysis.....	10
3.4 Operationalization.....	10
4 Data Analysis	12
4.1 Military Sector.....	12
4.2 Environmental Sector.....	13
4.3 Economic Sector.....	15
4.4 Societal Sector.....	17
4.5 Political Sector.....	19
5. Discussion	22
5.1 Results.....	22
5.2 Strengths and Limitations.....	24
6. Conclusion	25
6.1 Implications and Recommendations for Future Research	25
References	26

1. Introduction

Violence against Indigenous Communities in the year 2020 acquired characteristics of perversity and inhumanity never seen before [in Brazil]. And they were carried out by invaders sponsored by the Brazilian government (...). Never before in the history of this country has a government acted so scandalously and premeditatedly, in the sense of stimulating devastation and the destruction of (...) Indigenous lands and environmental areas. (Paloschi, as cited in CIMI, 2021)

Above is the introductory paragraph of the Indigenous Missionary Council (Conselho Indigenista Missionário - CIMI) annual report regarding violence against Indigenous persons in Brazil. From the quote, two issues stand out: violence against Natives dramatically increased in 2020, and the state directly participated in such an outcome.

The accusation against the state is neither surprising nor new. In 2004 it had already been denounced by Kruijt and Koonings (2004) that the Brazilian state (irrespective of the specific government) was consistently involved in promoting abuses against Indigenous Communities – in some instances acting with perpetrators against the Communities and in others allowing offences to happen without intervention or consequences to the perpetrators (ibid). Nevertheless, the quote above shows that this mechanism of state exclusion was further pronounced in 2020.

More than just a perception of enhanced violence, Paloschi's (CIMI, 2021) concern is supported by data: the number of Indigenous persons murdered in 2020 was the highest in 25 years (ibid). According to declarations by Natives, the increase in violence has much to do with Jair Bolsonaro's ascent to the presidency in 2019 and, especially, the discourse he wields regarding the Communities. As argued by Marubo, the president's Speech Acts generated a heightened belief that crimes against Indigenous persons could go unpunished: "what we hear [from violent actors] (...) is: 'Now, we have the authority to do whatever we want!'" (as cited in Ardenghi, 2020).

Academically, the link between the elite's discourse and violence against marginalized communities is well known. For one, Pearce (2010) has argued that state elites in Latin America use securitized Speech Acts to shape whom the population should fear, and in turn, gain popular support for countering their threat. In other words,

the elite's discourse legitimizes the abuse of marginalized groups by state actors and their indirect alliances, such as landowners and militias. However, her argument focuses only on groups framed for traditional security threats that implicate physical dangers to the population (Buzan et al., 1998). Therefore, it fails to explain how Speech Acts facilitate the repression of groups that cannot be credibly perceived as "dangerous".

A good example is that of Indigenous Communities in Brazil. For one, the majority of Natives lives in demarcated lands outside urban areas thus cannot be credibly blamed for the increase in violence against civilians in such (IBGE, 2010). Thus, the traditional securitization discourse is not enough to validate the state's neglect of Indigenous Communities. Nevertheless, the state follows a securitized logic in their treatment. This is illustrated in the testimonial regarding the violent treatment by the police of Natives involved in illegal Cannabis plantations:

The state's practice has been solely and exclusively one of repression, it does not provide social projects that can actually change this reality. We, Indigenous persons, have suffered a lot from this (...). They collectively marginalize an ethnically differentiated group, socially differentiated as are the Indigenous persons... (dos Anjos, as cited in Ardenghi, 2020, p. 27)

This thesis attempts to look beyond the traditional understanding of securitization. By integrating Buzan *et al.* (1998)'s expanded understanding of security, it seeks to illustrate different ways through which the state elite justifies to the broader public the neglect of the needs of marginalized groups, analyzing, in particular, the treatment of Indigenous peoples. Accordingly, the following research question is proposed:

How does state elite discourse impact violence against Indigenous Groups in Brazil?

The thesis follows the upcoming structure: First, the securitization bibliography is re-visited, and the theoretical framework is laid out. Then, the reasoning for a qualitative single case study that uses critical discourse analysis is outlined. Next, President Bolsonaro's discourse is examined using the proposed framework. In doing so, it concludes that state elites use discourse to exacerbate indifference towards Natives instead of fear, and that is what legitimizes the state's neglect of their protection. Subsequently, the thesis's results, strengths, and limitations are discussed. Finally, the inclusion of marginalized voices in future studies is recommended in the conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Security studies

Inside the security studies academia, the primary debate is between "narrow" and "wide" ways of defining security (Buzan *et al.*, 1998). The narrow understanding of security focuses on the "threat, use and control of military force" (Walt, 1991, p. 212). Alternatively, "wide" understandings include other threats in the realm of security, such as pollution, child abuse and economic recessions (p. 213).

Advocates of the "narrow" stream, referred to as "traditionalists", argue that the multiplicity of threats that arise by widening the concept ruins the intellectual coherence of the school (Walt, 1991). Furthermore, it allows states to broaden their usage to other issues and thus justify extra-legal measures (Deudney, 1990); because the understanding of security impacts political life, wide-ranging securitization could lead to the creation of intrusive states that limit civil society (Buzan *et al.*, 1998).

However, "wideners" argue that traditionalists have coherence issues between themselves, as the "use of force" criterion cannot be efficiently applied to set theoretical boundaries (Buzan, 1987). Therefore, the argument cannot be wielded to weaken the "wide" stream. Additionally, Buzan *et al.* (1998) agree that traditionalists are correct in worrying about potentially giving more power to authoritarian states. However, they argue that by expanding the scope of security threats, framing issues as such becomes less objective; it transforms it into a choice made by policymakers, lobbyists, and analysts that need to be justified (*ibid*). Therefore, it does not result in indiscriminate securitization by states.

Interestingly, Buzan *et al.* (1998) incorporate both streams into one framework. In their framework, the traditional understanding of security is assimilated into a broad security scope, which delineates five sectors prone to securitization. Identifying the securitization logic that binds all sectors together maintains intellectual coherence with traditionalists' understandings of security. Moreover, conceptualizing such logic establishes how an issue can be securitized, further addressing the concern regarding the indiscriminate use of the concept in political life.

Since Buzan *et al.*'s (1998) framework maintains intellectual coherence with traditional understandings of security, it can be included in traditional securitization theories. This thesis will test this assumption by incorporating their "new framework" into the "Perverse State Formation" theory (Pearce, 2010). Combining both works will be imperative for constructing a framework that fits the Brazilian context.

2.2. Perverse State Formation

Then, one must understand the "Perverse State Formation" theory. In the article "Perverse state formation and securitized democracy in Latin America" (2010), Pearce attempts to explore how democratization in Latin America has encouraged the multiplication of violence in civil society instead of its mitigation. Her main argument is that state elites, the main actors of state formation, have never intended to abandon the "violence that ultimately protects their interests" (p. 301) and consequently have never pushed for the monopolization of violence in such countries. Thus, local elites (such as landowners, *coroneis*, drug lords and militias) never lost their possession of the means of violence, legitimately sharing them with the central authority. For this reason, these actors are referred to as "indirect alliances" or "policing extensions" (Koonings & Kruijt, 2004) of the state.

Because violence reproduces over time, it encouraged violence in other societal sectors, which increased the rates and the multiplicity of offenders in civil society. Faced with such an increase, civilians grew increasingly fearful of their environment and desperate to alleviate their constant insecurity. Therefore, they allowed state elites to extrapolate official channels of action to combat such violence, consenting to repressive policing by the state and the use of force from the policing extensions. Consequently, the cycle of violence never stopped but became institutionalized (Pearce, 2010).

However, when there are multiple violent actors, there must be a way of differentiating those that wield "legitimate" and "illegitimate" violence. Then, state elites need to frame certain actors as the "sources of disorder" to the public eye (Pearce, 2010). In choosing which actors to blame, the obvious choice is to target actors who 1) are already marginalized from society and 2) inhibit the interests of both state elites and their indirect alliances. Thus, as Pearce (2010) puts it, "internal 'wars' with violent

youth, drugs traffickers, and the remaining insurgent forces of the region" (p. 299) became the new source of legitimacy for state elites' violence.

Consequently, marginalized groups become vulnerable to direct state repression, state complicity to its allies' violence and state negligence in preventing their abuse or supporting the victims of such (Pearce, 2010). This constant interaction between civilians and state elites creates a securitized logic to democracy, where security is prioritized over rights and participation. Therefore, it severely impacts democratic principles, which became institutionally undermined.

However, there is a critical flaw when applying this theory to the marginalization of Indigenous groups in Brazil: they were never blamed for the rise and perpetuation of violence in the Brazilian context (IBOPE, 2010; Lima & Andrade, 2010). Still, as illustrated in the introduction, this group is securitized, leading to their extreme vulnerability. Here is where Buzan *et al.*'s (1998) securitization sectors framework comes in.

2.3. Five Securitization Sectors

Following the Copenhagen School's conceptualization, securitization occurs when a topic is taken outside from the realm of "normal" politics into "emergency" politics (Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2021). Consequently, extraordinary measures that would otherwise not be allowed are available for political actors to implement.

Because "the senses of threat, vulnerability, and (in)security are socially constructed rather than objectively present or absent" (Buzan *et al.*, 1998, p. 57), securitizing actors need to convince the population that it is in danger before acting to extinguish the threat. Accordingly, as observed by Wæver, the securitization process is initiated through a "Speech Act", which is when an issue not previously dealt with as a security one starts being spoken as one by political actors of importance, opening thus the possibility of engaging in extra-legal methods of combating such threats (in Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021).

Therefore, securitization of issues leads to the legitimation of response actions by the state that the population would otherwise criticize. Because "the ability of the state to ensure the security and protection of its citizens" (Bonacker & Liebetanz, 2017) is of

extreme importance to the image of the state created by citizens, extreme measures by the state are far more readily accepted if accompanied by the excuse of providing security. Thus, securitization is an easy and sure way state elites can maneuver the official action channels without severe repercussions.

Notably, Buzan *et al.* (1998) identify five dynamics of securitization. The military sector corresponds to the traditionalists' understanding, encompassing threats to the state, the populace, the territory, and the military capacity. However, it is not the only sector that can fall victim to securitization. The other four sectors include environmental, economic, societal and political. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that state elites have various ways to frame subjects as existential threats and extrapolate official channels of action in a legitimate manner. Consequently, it broadens the elites' scope of actors they can securitize.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

There are apparent similarities between Pearce's (2010) theory and Buzan *et al.*'s (1998). Both theories recognize that the public's perception is often a more crucial political factor than statistical data and highlight the critical role of powerful actors' discourse in shaping it. The main divergence is that Buzan *et al.* employ a wide understanding of security, while Pearce's theory employs a narrow one.

Nevertheless, as argued in section 2.1, Buzan *et al.*'s (1998) framework can be incorporated into traditional theories. Consequently, it is possible to add it to Pearce's (2010) theory without overlooking the conceptual difference. The amalgamation of both works then creates a new theoretical framework capable of broadly studying the securitization of vulnerable groups in the Latin American region, as it expands the scope of analysis of Speech Acts.

It should be noted that there is some discussion about how well Buzan *et al.*'s framework can be employed in contexts outside Europe (Wilkinson, 2007). Nevertheless, Ilgit & Klotz (2014) found that it can be applied to non-western democracies and recommend its inclusion in further contexts. Therefore, as a secondary result of this research, applying their framework outside of Europe will further prove its applicability to non-western settings.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Given that the research's findings will be based on interpretations of the state elite's discourse, the methodology will be qualitative (Halperin & Heath, 2020). A single case study was chosen as it is best to analyze the power of discourses and generate detailed accounts of how specific processes work (Lamont, 2017). Furthermore, the use of a case study is also recommended by Yin (2003), as the thesis attempts to answer a "how" question; has no influence on state elite's discourse; and the context studied is directly related to the phenomenon (as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2010).

3.2. Case Selection

The case of Brazilian Indigenous Communities under Bolsonaro's government is special due to its deviant nature. As it is argued by Mills *et al.* (2010), deviant cases test the limits of existing theories, as they contradict expected results inside specific frameworks. Hence, they allow for the extension of existing theories by introducing new concepts to them. Additionally, by adjusting existing theories, this type of sampling allows for greater generalizability of findings to broader contexts, increasing its external validity (*ibid*). Subsequently, deviant cases make essential contributions to academic understandings of phenomena, and their study is vital.

In addition, the time frame of Bolsonaro's presidency was chosen due to the rapid deterioration of Indigenous Communities' safety under his rule. As emphasized in the introduction, since he came into power, violence against this Community has increased to astonishing levels. Therefore, while it maintains the same state elite mentality from previous governments, its harshness differentiates his presidency from his predecessors'. Consequently, it fortifies the deviant nature of the case.

Notably, the general usage of the terms "Indigenous Communities" and "Natives" is contested, as there is a multitude of ethnicities facing different challenges encompassed by the terms (Beltrão, 2020). Nevertheless, because the state elite's discourse usually refers to the Community as one, it implicates all indigenous ethnicities. Therefore, the author chose to study how securitization speech affects the minority as a single group.

3.3. Method of Analysis

Since the research will draw conclusions based on the state elite's speeches, it is adequate to employ the critical discourse analysis method. According to Frey (2018), this type of analysis is ideal for revealing "how social power relations are constructed, negotiated, maintained, and reinforced through language usage" (p. 4). Thus, this is the ideal method to study the marginalizing effects of their speeches. Notably, formal measures of reliability do not apply to this method, and divergent interpretations of findings do not invalidate the research but promote helpful debates (Hardy *et al.*, 2004).

Additionally, Frey (2018) points out that this kind of analysis is most common when conducting a deductive approach to the research. Accordingly, this research developed a theoretical framework beforehand and tested its applicability in a specific case afterwards. Hence, the type of analysis matches the research approach.

Furthermore, the specific characteristics of the case make critical discourse analysis an exciting research method. For one, Bolsonaro is a populist leader (Gullino, 2021; G1, 2018), which means his connection to the public and his image as complying with their will is extremely important to his legitimacy. As a result, his discourse is always a political act that influences popular opinions. Therefore, critical discourse analysis is adequate to research the relationship between his speeches and the popular legitimization of violence against marginalized groups.

In addition, Bolsonaro's discourse carries an additional weight to his constituents due to messianic politics. As noted by Demuru (2020), Bolsonaro has built himself as Brazil's "Messiah", sent by God to "fix" the broken political and social system. Consequently, many are inclined to believe him when he signalizes to his constituency that Indigenous peoples are inhibiting Brazil's development (Verdélío, 2019). Thus, his discourse is highly influential, making critical discourse analysis imperative to understanding the relationship between elite Speech Acts and citizens.

3.4. Operationalization

According to Frey (2018), there is no standard for data collection in critical discourse analysis. This study will then use purposive sampling to gather data, where it will be selected based on its suitability to the research (Daniel, 2012).

To analyze the state elite's discourse, data was gathered from Bolsonaro's speeches, interviews and live streams from his electoral campaign in 2018 to present times, 2021. The author chose to include his electoral campaign as it delineates his government's promises and matches the public's expectations for his rule. As for assessing its consequences to the dependent variable, violence against Natives, data was gathered in a triangulation of testimonials of Indigenous people found in anthropological and NGO reports, and news vehicles. All quotes were translated from Portuguese to English by the study's author, who is fluent in both languages.

Two intervening factors are highlighted by the research: the population's perception of Indigenous marginalization and the role of the media. For one, the public's sanctioning of the state's neglect towards Natives is essential to its maintenance. The research will infer that the population legitimizes such violence based on the findings of Neto & Deus (2020), Lima and Andrade (2010) and Agüero (2002). Since constituents do not regard them as citizens, but as "third-class" citizens, or even "non-citizens" (Lima & Andrade, 2010, p. 30), it seems logical to assume the state would not lose legitimacy over their mistreatment. Such inference is imperative for the research's internal validity, as the "Perverse State Formation" mechanism (Pearce, 2010) depends on the acceptance of the broader public over state actions.

Furthermore, the media's portrayal of violence against Indigenous Communities and the state elite's discourse is imperative for the studied mechanism. First, if the media does not cover the crimes committed against the Community, it hides it from the population, thus inhibiting elites to face social accountability for their negligence and abuse (Bonner, 2019). Second, since the media is one of the primary mechanisms for the elite's social accountability, it has the social role of presenting views that challenge the ones pushed by state elites. When it fails to do so, it provides a forum for state elites to spread their discourse, disseminating their securitized logic (ibid). Consequently, the way it shapes the state elite's discourse is imperative for popular perception formulation and thus should be acknowledged in the research.

4. Data Analysis

According to Buzan *et al.*, security threats do not exist if they are not felt subjectively by the population (1998, as cited in Skidmore, 1999). Consequently, politicians need to credibly convince the population to fear such threats if they want to frame a particular issue or group as a security threat. Hence, to understand how issues are securitized, one needs to analyze their discourse. In this section, Bolsonaro's quotes will be analyzed based on Buzan *et al.*'s securitization sectors. The goal is to comprehend the mechanisms and strategies used by Bolsonaro to employ extra-legal measures in dealing with Indigenous Communities legitimately.

4.1 Military Sector

In the traditional understanding of security, military security was about identifying threats from other states and reacting to them by elevating military capabilities or creating alliances (Sheehan, 2019). However, Buzan *et al.* (1998) also expand it to internal contexts, encompassing the state elite's ability to promote civil peace and protection from violent harm.

As aforementioned, there are no relevant attempts to securitize Indigenous persons as violent actors by federal state elites. According to "Aos Fatos", an initiative that stores and categorizes Bolsonaro's quotes, none of the 75 related to security and defense mentions Indigenous persons (n.d.). However, they still suffer from violent policing and state neglect. As testified by Manuel, an Indigenous person:

.... repression has led many members from our Peoples... to be brutally murdered and (...) condemned, accused of being involved in situations [of which] state omission is a vital explanatory factor for why they happen... (as cited in Beltrão, 2020, p. 7)

Therefore, while police repression and imprisonment of Natives grew during Bolsonaro's government (CIMI, 2021), they were never discursively identified as criminals, and their repression was never justified as necessary for civil protection. Nevertheless, there is no widespread outcry against their mistreatment; multiple studies have shown Indigenous persons to be socially invisible in Brazil – as argued by Agüero (2002), they have the worse status quo of the country. Thus, we see they are introduced

in the perverse state mechanism theorized by Pearce (2010), just not in the traditional sense. Consequently, we must analyze the other securitization sectors.

4.2 Environmental Sector

The next sector to be analyzed is the Environmental one. According to Buzan *et al.* (1998), environmental security encompasses the maintenance of the biosphere. Usually, environmental security comes into play when threats to nature derived from human activities can potentially produce existential threats to civilization or at least part of it. Thus, the security logic focuses on an actor or group to blame for the environmental dangers affecting a population's way of life (Buzan *et al.*, 1998).

While this sector is usually employed in global settings to deal with borderless environmental issues such as global warming, Buzan *et al.* (1998) note that most environmental solutions are local governments' responsibility. Accordingly, although the protection of the Amazon is of global interest, jurisdiction over it falls mainly under the Brazilian government. Consequently, the international community blames the Brazilian government when the Amazon is threatened.

Similarly, in 2020, the magnitude of the Amazon fires called international attention to Bolsonaro's apparent disregard for protecting the area. In response, the president articulated at the opening of the 75th United Nations General Assembly:

The fires happen in practically the same places, in the eastern surroundings of the Forest, *where the 'caboclo' and the 'indian' burn their swiddens for their survival*, in already deforested areas.

Criminal outbreaks are fought with rigor and determination. I maintain my zero-tolerance policy on environmental crime (...).

I remind you that the Amazon region is bigger than all of Western Europe. Hence the difficulty in combating, not only fires, but also *illegal logging and biopiracy*. Therefore, we are expanding and improving the use of technologies and improving interagency operations, including the *participation of the Armed Forces*. (Bolsonaro, 2020, emphases added)

Two things are worthy of analyzing more deeply in the excerpt. First, although Bolsonaro cites other environmental crimes in the discourse, such as illegal logging and biopiracy, he does not name the culprits. The only actors he actively blames for environmental crimes are "caboclos and indians" for the fires, although the percentage of fires in Indigenous reserves (11%) is significantly lower than in rural lands (60%) (Monnerat *et al.*, 2020). Second, while Indigenous Communities and 'caboclos' are the only offenders named, Bolsonaro justifies their actions as being for their 'survival'. Therefore, even when pinpointing Natives as responsible for the fires, it is not his intention to frame these actors as 'bad guys'. In reality, Natives were cited as a means to deflect external demands to stop the real environmental threats, protecting the state's indirect alliances.

Even if there were an attempt to securitize Natives as threats to nature, it would probably not be credible or enough to sanction violence against these groups. According to nationwide research made by Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (2011), no one of the 2.600 people interviewed identified Indigenous persons as the primary culprits of the Amazon's deforestation, and only 2% identified them as one of them. Furthermore, there was considerable backlash from media outlets, who criticized his scapegoating attempt at the UN (Calgaro *et al.*, 2020; Betim, 2020; Monnerat *et al.*, 2020). Thus, it is plausible to affirm that securitization in the environmental sector would not be a sufficient legitimizing factor for the state omission of this Community.

Nevertheless, securitizing measures were taken in the environmental sector. For example, the "Amazon Council", which decides the agenda for the Amazon region, was minimized from including both federal government ministers and local governors to only including ministers. Furthermore, it was taken out from the competency of the environmental ministry to the care of the vice-government (Matoso & Castilhos, 2020). Evidently, this move gives the president more power over the Amazon, drowning out local concerns. In the official announcement of the measure, the president affirmed:

I make it very clear that no one is against giving proper protection and land to our 'indian' brothers, but (...) today it reflects 14% of the national territory demarcated as Indigenous land, it is somewhat abusive. (Bolsonaro, as cited in Matoso & Castilhos, 2020)

While he affirms to respect Indigenous rights (albeit using a slur again to refer to the Community), he frames the demarcation of their lands as 'abusive', a word usually associated with violence (Oxford Languages). Then, instead of considering Indigenous persons as dangerous, he establishes land demarcations as the security threat. This angle will be further expanded in the analysis of the following sectors.

4.3 Economic Sector

Then, we move on to the economic sector. Buzan *et al.* (1998) recognize that it is difficult for liberals to invoke security measures regarding the economy beyond threats concerning the supply of goods to feed its population – their commitments to openness and competition makes securitization attempts incoherent with their ideology. As the liberal logic is already one marked by insecurity, it is difficult to elevate concerns of this sector from the political arena.

Nevertheless, Bolsonaro explores the exception, going for food security to vilify the protection of Indigenous communities. In an announcement he made supporting a measure that would minimize Indigenous reserves in Brazil, known as the "Marco Temporal", he stated:

If Brazil has to demarcate new Indigenous reserves, equivalent to 14% of the national territory, the price of food will soar. And that's not all; we can have shortages in the world. (Bolsonaro, as cited in Xavier, 2021)

Here, we see him shifting the blame for the heightened food prices to Indigenous reserves. The demarcation of lands, which he attempts to defame, is a right protected by the Indigenous People's Statute (Estatuto dos Povos Indígenas), in article 15, section 1. Nevertheless, by slighting this practice to the public, who is suffering from the lack of food security, he hopes to gain consent to omit this constitutional right and remove lands from these communities.

The perception of economic conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is not new. As found in multiple studies (Torres *et al.*, 2007; Lima & Andrade, 2010), the sentiment of competition for resources causes cities in which there is close contact between both groups to have more discrimination and negative feelings towards

Natives. Then, Bolsonaro attempted to stretch this effect and create a feeling of material competition throughout the territory.

Additionally, another strategy he uses to produce this feeling is the exacerbation of the actual extent of the Indigenous reserves. For example, he emphasizes that the demarcated lands represent 14% of the national territory; in reality, according to Funai, the main governmental organ concerned with Indigenous matters, the area occupied corresponds to 12,7% (Bolsonaro, 2021, as shown by TVNBR; Aos Fatos, n.d.).

This is further emphasized by the exaggerations Bolsonaro makes about the process of demarcation, inferring that it indiscriminately takes away land from the 'Brazilian people'. In one instance, he exclaims: "In your city's football field, if an 'indian' appears there laying down, that is now Indigenous territory. It will have to be demarcated" (Fernandes, 2021). By enlarging its size and distorting the land demarcation process, he attempts to aggravate the perception of resource competition and thus facilitate the population's sanctioning of the state's omission of Indigenous rights to their lands.

Regarding the last quote presented, it is noteworthy that the news article from which it was taken, sourced from the fifth-largest media outlet in Brazil (Poder360, 2021), did not question the president's quote. Furthermore, it repeated the incorrect data given by the president concerning the size of Indigenous lands (Fernandes, 2021). This is only an illustration of how the media distributes elite discourse without fact-checking it, thus inflaming popular perception on the subject.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the main enemy outlined by Bolsonaro is Indigenous reserves and not persons; even if the practice is intimately related to Indigenous culture and traditions, land demarcation is viewed as an issue on its own. Consequently, he eliminates Native's fight for their lands and the consequences of the expropriation of such lands from the equation. By doing so, Bolsonaro erases this Community from the discourse, contributing to their invisibility. It is then not surprising that there was scarce support from the public and media for the Indigenous protests against the "Marco Temporal" (Moura, 2021).

While the protests were not in vain – the vote for the "Marco Temporal" has been suspended – the government has found a way to act around it, guaranteeing more areas for its allies' exploration. Two months after the suspension, the Executive Secretary of

the National Defense Council, General Heleno, authorized seven gold-mining projects in a frontier area known for its natural preservation and a high Indigenous population. Twenty-three Indigenous communities will be affected by the measure that, while part of the General's competency, has not been applied in ten years, outlining its rarity (Sassine, 2021).

Therefore, while the protests delayed a sizeable government action against Indigenous Communities, the lack of support from the non-Indigenous constituents for their strife inhibits any effective barriers for measures that stifle them. As long as the general population does not show signs of caring for the Natives' situation, the government will continuously be awarded legitimacy to maintain their repression, favoring the indirect alliances such as landowners and miners, which actually compete with these communities for resources. For this reason, state elites benefit from maintaining their invisibility.

4.4 Societal Sector

The next sector identified by Buzan *et al.* (1998) is the societal sector, which considers the security of a nation. In this sense, societal insecurity occurs when the Community's survival and identity are threatened. In multicultural societies where different group ideologies blended into one, such as the Brazilian, threats usually arise when one group attempts to reinforce its cultural and racial distinctiveness (Buzan *et al.*, 1998). Thus, Indigenous Communities' attempts to retain their cultural characteristics and ownership of their traditional lands can be perceived as threatening the general Brazilian identity.

Nevertheless, Bolsonaro never actually took this clear pathway to vilify Indigenous Communities. In reality, his discourses on the subject infer that Natives want to be a part of the Brazilian society and are impeded by their physical isolation. According to "Aos Fatos", a company specialized in investigative journalism and fact-checking, as of 2021, Bolsonaro mentioned eleven times Native's marginalization from the Brazilian society as something against their wishes that needed to be remedied. Examples include:

The 'indian' is a being just like you and me. (...) he wants television, he wants the internet (...) he wants to do what we do (...). That's what we want for the 'indian', to integrate him to society. (Folha, 2018, emphasis added)

Today our 'indian' brothers, in their majority, live or are condemned to live like pre-historic men inside Indigenous lands. (Bolsonaro, 2019)

The 'indians' do not want to be isolated. They want to work, want to progress, and increasingly integrate themselves into society. (Uol, 2021)

In the situation painted by the president, Natives are restrained by land demarcation, which gets in the way of their full integration with the urban Brazilian society. Thus, they are portrayed as passive and defenseless, contradicting their framing as security threats. Instead, they are negatively impacted by land demarcation.

Notably, the content of the quotes is highly problematic. For one, Bolsonaro speaks for a minority of which he is an outsider and which he has an extensive record of being racist towards (Survival, n.d.). Moreover, his reference to their traditional way-of-life as "pre-historic" and his affirmation that Natives want to integrate into Brazilian society to "progress" resemble European imperial powers' 'civilizing' discourse. And history is aware that bringing 'progress' to other regions was not the primary objective of these nations, but resource exploration for their profit (Hobson, 2011).

Additionally, the media does little to contradict this view. For example, regarding the quote presented by Folha (2018), the biggest newspaper in Brazil, both in national reach and audience (IVC Brasil, as cited in Folha, 2021), there were no attempts to present indigenous views on the subject. Instead, it just reports Bolsonaro's discourse, serving thus as a propagation tool of his Speech Act.

Contrarily to what he states, most Indigenous persons would disagree with this assessment that Natives are caged in demarcated lands and live like "pre-historic men" against their will. When searching for the opinion of Indigenous persons on the subject, we find that land demarcation does not hinder their "true wishes"; what produces this effect is the non-stop invasion of their reserves:

...the consequence of all this [successive invasions], [is that] today we [have] great difficulty in performing cultural activities and rituals (...) We, Indigenous People,

(...) 100% depend on the land, and when the invasions start we are obliged to get into other customs (...) although you [are not obliged] to do it, you [need] to do it, get it? (José Maria, as cited in Beltrão, 2020, p. 4)

4.5 Political Sector

Finally, Bolsonaro's discourse will be analyzed through the lenses of political securitization. Political threats are described as those that implicate the political order. Because they can impact the state's structure, territorial integrity, and existence, one could also say that political threats jeopardize its sovereignty. This is important, as "anything that can be portrayed as a violation of sovereignty can be presented as a security problem" (Buzan *et al.*, 1998, p. 150). Thus, this sector is susceptible, and even minor violations are prone to be securitized.

There are two types of political threats: internal and external. On the one hand, the government can face challenges to its rule from its citizens, causing internal political destabilization. On the other hand, political security threats can also come from other states, especially regarding recognition and reputation in the international arena. Nevertheless, external actors are always related to the issue; if not directly causing external political threats, they are often perceived to inflame other states' internal vulnerabilities (Buzan *et al.*, 1998).

a. Internal Threats

Regarding internal threats, there is an apparent prominence of the topic of land demarcation – almost half of his quotes gathered by "Aos Fatos" concerning Natives touch upon the extent of their lands, and all of them exaggerate the relative size of the reserves. Because demarcated reserves are led autonomously by Indigenous tribes and are of their exclusive use, they could be seen as a violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Thus, it would explain the extreme and diverse efforts state elites take to shed a bad light on the constitutional right seen in the previous sectors.

Consequently, there are apparent attempts of security acts regarding land demarcation. As mentioned before, there is a still-pending vote in the Supreme Court regarding the "Marco Temporal", which, if approved, can be used to nullify

demarcations made after 1988. In a speech regarding the subject, Bolsonaro stated: "If we lose [and the thesis is denied], I'll have to make a decision because I understand that [its denial would] bury Brazil" (Isto É, 2020). He securitizes Indigenous reserves by clearly stating he will "make a decision" to maneuver the judiciary resolve and violate demarcated lands irrespectively.

However, Indigenous persons are curiously not blamed for how the right for land demarcation is implemented. Instead, Bolsonaro blames third parties. For example, in 2019, he proclaimed the French president was responsible for demands regarding this right because "'indians' don't lobby, don't have money, don't speak our language" (Bolsonaro, as cited in Quintella, 2019) and thus are incapable of actually influencing political decisions. Therefore, Natives are not identified as internal political threats.

Concerning the role of the media in countering such disregard, their coverage of Indigenous political activities is insufficient. For one, in response to the "Marco Temporal" proposal, Natives organized the biggest Indigenous protest post-democratization in the Brazilian capital. Nevertheless, as Moura (2021) analyzed, newspaper articles were scarce and lacked Indigenous perspectives. Television news outlets performed even worse, giving shallow or sensationalist accounts of the events. Overall, there were weak attempts to showcase indigenous political action and counter the narrative being pushed by elites, isolating their protests and decreasing its political impact (ibid).

b. External threats

Many political stances from Indigenous persons that could cause internal destabilization are framed as external threats. By alleging that Natives are mere 'pawns' of external actors who are out to damage Brazil's reputation and sovereignty, Bolsonaro avoids the classification of Indigenous persons as threats themselves. As a result, he maintains their political relevance to a minimum.

An excellent example of the mechanism can be seen in his speech at the opening of the 24th UN General Assembly. In response to Cacique Raoni - who is an internationally renowned Indigenous activist - and his accusations against the

president's environmental policies and treatment of Indigenous populations, Bolsonaro declared:

The views of one Indigenous leader do not represent those of all Brazilian 'indians'. Many times, some of these leaders, such as Cacique Raoni, are used as *pawns by foreign governments in their informational war to advance their interests in the Amazon.*

(...) I want to reaffirm my position that any initiative for assistance or support to the preservation of the Amazon Rainforest or any other biomes *must be conducted in full respect to Brazilian sovereignty.* (Bolsonaro, 2019; emphases added)

Because he refers to a violation of sovereignty and a 'war' being waged against Brazil for control of the Amazon, Bolsonaro is conceiving the foreign governments that criticize his environmental policies as external security threats. In turn, by stating that these external threats manipulate the Indigenous opposition, Bolsonaro is 1) again removing agency power from Natives and 2) identifying Indigenous opinions as being sourced from threats to the Brazilian state, which therefore should not be absorbed by the non-Indigenous Brazilian population but resisted.

This mechanism is repeated in his response to the Indigenous activist Txai Suruí, who spoke against his policies at COP26. After her speech, he complained to his followers in front of the "Palácio da Ávorada", the executive branch building: "They took an 'indian' there (...) to attack Brazil. Has anyone seen any Germans attacking Germany's fossil energy? (...) Nobody criticizes their own country" (Coletta & Holanda, 2021).

Besides denying her any agency – the activist did not go but was sent there by an unknown foe – there is also an apparent attempt to securitize his government's international reputation, evidence in his usage of the word 'attack', which brings a clear image of threat. Consequently, the Indigenous activist is framed as a tool that threatens the country's pride to the international community and thus should be disdained.

5. Discussion

5.1. Results

After analyzing President Jair Bolsonaro's Speech Acts through the five securitization sectors, it is clear that none stands out in particular as the leading sector through which he mobilizes popular consent to neglect Natives' protection. While the economic and political sectors seem more often emphasized and receive fewer backlashes from the media, he does not attempt to vilify Indigenous persons through any of the securitization possibilities.

Instead, the expansion of the security concept is employed to vilify land demarcation. In the environmental sector, the 'abusive' land demarcations demanded a larger federal state intervention. Similarly, in the economic sector, the demarcation was blamed for food insecurity and the reduction of lands available for distribution to non-indigenous people. In the societal sector, land demarcation is blamed by Bolsonaro to inhibit the integration of Natives into urban Brazilian society. Finally, in the political sector, reserved areas are considered to violate the country's territorial integrity. Thus, land demarcation was the securitization Speech Acts' focus, not Natives.

According to Pearce's (2010) Perverse State Formation theory, governments securitize certain groups to employ extra-legal measures against them and gain popular support, securing advantages for their alliances in the process. Similarly, by demonizing land demarcation, the government can neglect the surveillance and protection of the reserved lands and even promote their reduction in size without much backlash from the population (and even extending its popular support as a result). In turn, its indirect alliances, such as landowners and miners, can keep and expand their illegal activities in Indigenous lands while facing little repercussions.

However, in contrast with Pearce's (2010) theory, Indigenous Peoples as a social group are not framed as the villains in the discourse, but their constitutional right to own their traditional lands is. So, Indigenous repression is a secondary effect of the securitization speech against their reserves. Because Indigenous peoples are not framed as 'sources of disorder' that must be contained, Pearce's framework falls short in explaining why the population passively accepts the state's continuous omission of Indigenous protection.

This thesis found that Bolsonaro attains the population's acceptance by downplaying Indigenous existence. First, they are often entirely neglected from his discourse – of 4572 quotes from Bolsonaro registered by “Aos Fatos” since his electoral campaign, only 132 mentioned Natives. Moreover, more than half of them focus exclusively on the size of reserved lands. In the rare occasions Indigenous actions are mentioned, there is always some powerful non-Indigenous actor behind them, so they are not thinking actors themselves. Consequently, they are never perceived as relevant, often neglected by the public and the media for their lack of political importance.

Such invisibility of Indigenous Communities in Brazilian society exists long before Bolsonaro came into power. In 2002, Agüero pointed out their position as non-citizens, who are excluded from the process of national identity formation and thus not recognized as belonging to the same group as other Brazilians. Consequently, as argued by Lima and Andrade, a “non-relationship” (2010, p.20) is established, where Natives are not even conceived to be human by most Brazilians. Accordingly:

When a political unit is not recognized by others, its sociopolitical institutions are not considered to embody legitimacy, and its territory is considered politically empty and available for occupation. (Buzan *et al.*, 1998, p. 61)

By building on that already existing prejudice, Bolsonaro's speech maintains and exacerbates this “non-relationship” with Indigenous communities, using that to feed an aggressive stance against their territorial rights written into the Constitution. Hence why the effort to transfer the Natives' agency and will to third parties, as a more pronounced invisibility facilitates popular support to diminish Indigenous reserves and thus provide advantages for his indirect alliances (landowners and miners, for starters).

In addition, his continuous use of the term ‘indians’ to describe Natives further outlines his effort to obscure Indigenous Communities. They have long expressed their interpretation of the term as pejorative since colonizers introduced it. Therefore, by repeatedly employing the term, Bolsonaro is not only disregarding the voices of the Communities concerning their denomination (Popa-Wyatt & Wyatt, 2018), but he is maintaining the power relations constructed in the colonial period that established their invisibility.

Finally, the big media outlets fail in countering the perpetuation of their invisibility. As shown in the analysis, the country's primary outlets often only reproduce Bolsonaro's discourse, without fact-checking the information brought by it or acknowledging Indigenous opinions (Moura, 2021). Thus, they act as tools for the continuation of the "Perverse State" mechanism. Fortunately, the increase of the public's online engagement allows Indigenous leaderships, personalities and NGOs to counter such invisibility by spreading Indigenous strife and narrative (ibid). Nevertheless, without featuring in the main outlets, the challenge of changing established popular conceptions remains (Doran, 2017).

5.2. Strengths and Limitations

The main strength of this thesis is the incorporation of unconventional understandings of security. Including other security sectors into Pearce's (2010) framework allowed a deeper analysis of how state elites' discourse frames indigenous vulnerability. Without it, it would have been challenging to show the alternative pathways the mechanism acts to maintain violence against Indigenous persons in Brazil legitimately, as the military sector alone offers insufficient clues.

Nevertheless, some limitations need to be discussed. For one, the social invisibility of Indigenous persons also translates to academia, popular polls, and other tools often used to gather accurate perceptions from the population. Therefore, the data and citations used to substantiate assumptions about popular consent might be outdated and not be representative of the population's actual feelings. In turn, this may affect the internal validity of the research.

In addition, although the research also included Indigenous testimonials to substantiate its analysis, it still focused on the state elite's speech. Thus, it contributes little to a more significant inclusion of Indigenous voices into discussions. Furthermore, epistemological considerations must be made, as the knowledge produced comes from the qualitative interpretations of a White Brazilian who grew up in the studied context and subsequently inadvertently contributed to Indigenous repression. As a result, while the author made a conscious effort to nullify any racially-based biases, they could have interfered with the research's findings.

6. Conclusion

In sum, contrary to what Pearce (2010) observes in other instances where minorities were excluded from government protection, Indigenous groups are not legitimately repressed due to their infamy. Instead, their vulnerability to violence is allowed due to their invisibility – the population sanctions their treatment as third class citizens by not actively resisting it. Thus, the main finding of this thesis is that Bolsonaro’s speech acts to aggravate Indigenous invisibility, prompting civil society to ignore the consequences of governmental legal and extra-legal measures in the Amazon region to Indigenous Communities. In turn, their disinterest allows for the continuation of state omission of this group, resulting in overbearing violence against them.

6.1. Implications and Recommendations for future research

All in all, there are three main implications of this research. Evidently, it sheds light on the strategies employed by Bolsonaro to repress Indigenous persons and outlines ways that civil society and the media can disrupt it. However, more broadly, it showcases the importance of expanding what academia usually understands of security, demonstrating how other security sectors can impact politics and people’s lives.

Since Buzan *et al.*’s (1998) framework is older than Pearce’s (2010), this research illustrates how ignoring their framework was a gap in Pearce’s theory. Hopefully, by proving the importance of applying a broader security framework, this study will aid future investigations on how other groups in Latin America are excluded through the state elite’s discourse, such as religious minorities. Additionally, it proves the compatibility of Buzan *et al.*’s framework to other contexts than the European one, demonstrating its external validation.

Regarding recommendations for future research, the author suggests that studies focus on the marginalized perspectives of their securitization. As aforementioned, this research focuses on the state elite’s discourse to uncover how the “perverse state” mechanism is put into practice in Brazil, consequently omitting Indigenous voices. Nevertheless, their accounts are also imperative for studying the subject, as they experience firsthand the impacts of the process. Besides, the inclusion of their voices would also aid in countering marginalization and thus de-legitimizing their abuse.

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