

# ELECTORAL STRATEGIES IN 2018

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- *The case of evangelical candidates running for Brazilian legislatures* •

## ABSTRACT

*Views on the relation between religion and politics in Brazil vary. Religion has taken centre stage in electoral debates since the 2010 elections. On one side, we find a vision that defends the opposition and the autonomy of these spheres while denouncing what it perceives as a threat to the secular state. On the other side, we can identify social actors who defend the close ties between religion and politics as an affirmation of democracy and/or a “solution” to problems in politics and society. In the first case, humanist/universalist thought combined with negative perceptions of religion guide the narrative. In the second, a moral basis influences the narrative.*

*In this article, we seek to reflect on mechanisms of power during the 2018 elections and explore the convergences among religious and secular interests and narratives and their relative uses during the electoral process and immediately after it. In addition to ongoing research on national electoral processes since 2010, we use the study entitled “Evangelical candidates in the 2018 elections: mapping candidates running for legislative elections in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia and Minas Gerais” as an empirical basis. This study was conducted in 2018 and 2019 by the Institute of Religious Studies (ISER).*

## KEYWORDS

Religion | Politics | 2018 Elections | Evangelical candidates

## 1 • Introduction: The climate during the 2018 elections

The 2018 elections broke several records: the highest number of spoiled votes and abstentions at the national level (30.8%); the highest number of presidential candidates (13 candidates and a total of 34 political parties); the largest number of competitors for a seat in the Chamber of Deputies (8,207 candidates); not to mention that this was the election in which the issues of violence and religion were the most prominent. In this election, 79% of Brazilians wanted a president who believed in God and 30% wanted the president to be from the same religion as them.<sup>1</sup> Feelings of bewilderment and fear among the public, which were very present in the 2014 presidential elections,<sup>2</sup> had not dissipated by election time in 2018. On the contrary, they remained strong and took on many forms, as people felt threatened on at least four levels: physical, moral, economic and in relation to their property. This feeling of threat was exploited and fustigated by the majority of candidates vying for positions in the national and state-level executive and legislative branches.

In this article, we seek to analyse the strategies used during the 2018 elections and explore the convergences among religious and secular interests and narratives and their relative uses during the electoral process. In addition to ongoing research we have been conducting on national electoral processes since 2010, our empirical basis is the study entitled, “Evangelical candidates during the 2018 elections: mapping candidates running for legislative elections in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia and Minas Gerais”.<sup>3</sup> This study was conducted in 2018 and 2019 by the Institute of Religious Studies (ISER, for its acronym in Portuguese), with the support of the Heinrich Boll Stiftung.

In this study, we aimed to understand the supply of candidates from the evangelical world to legislative elections in the biggest electoral districts in the country. The goal is to verify if there has been an increase or decrease in the “confessionalisation”<sup>4</sup> of candidates and their profiles and to reflect on the power filters that end up enabling candidates with certain political profiles and of specific denominations to win. Secondly, we seek to identify and examine these candidates’ origins, motivations, political and religious alliances, priorities and positions.

In terms of methodology, we gave priority to the creation of a database on evangelical candidates running for election to the National Congress and state legislative assemblies in the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Minas Gerais.<sup>5</sup> Our primary sources were: data from the Superior Electoral Court (TSE),<sup>6</sup> party lists, the official lists of evangelical parliamentary coalitions in the 2015-2018 legislature and texts of reference and websites on the evangelical world. We also monitored TV and social media campaigns to identify elements of discourse, political positions and alliances.

## 2 • Profile of evangelical candidates per region

While monitoring the candidates’ campaigns, we interviewed candidates with different religious and political profiles to obtain a more in-depth understanding of

their political aspirations and motivations, projects, campaign formats and structure and ties to political parties.

In the four states examined in this study, 381 evangelical candidates running for the federal and state legislatures were identified. Of the 164 candidates for the Federal Chamber of Deputies, 42% were “confessional”. Bahia was the state with the highest percentage of confessional candidates among candidates for both the federal and state level (78% and 58%, respectively).

Of the candidates identified as evangelicals who ran for the National Congress in the four states, 32% were successful. As for the state legislative assemblies, of the 217 candidates, 27% were elected. The numbers varied from one state to another, as illustrated in the following tables.

**Table 1:** Total evangelical candidates identified

	State	Federal	TOTAL
BAHIA	34	19	53
MINAS GERAIS	38	31	69
RIO DE JANEIRO	73	60	133
SÃO PAULO	71	54	125

Source: “Candidaturas evangélicas nas eleições 2018: Mapeamento de postulantes ao poder legislativo no Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia e Minas Gerais” [Evangelical candidates in the 2018 elections: mapping candidates running for legislative elections in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia and Minas Gerais], ISER; Heinrich Boll Stiftung.

**Table 2:** Total evangelical candidates elected in 2018 in four states  
(% of total evangelical candidates elected)

	State	Federal	TOTAL	Elected confessional candidates
BAHIA	14 (41%)	5 (26%)	19 (35%)	3
MINAS GERAIS	13 (35%)	15 (50%)	28 (41%)	0
RIO DE JANEIRO	17 (23%)	14 (23%)	31 (23%)	0
SÃO PAULO	15 (21%)	18 (33%)	33 (26%)	1

Source: “Candidaturas evangélicas nas eleições 2018: Mapeamento de postulantes ao poder legislativo no Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia e Minas Gerais” [Evangelical candidates in the 2018 elections: mapping candidates running for legislative elections in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia and Minas Gerais], ISER; Heinrich Boll Stiftung.

### 3 • Thematic framework

This study gives continuity to a line of research developed in previous ISER studies.<sup>7</sup> In all of them, we observed the narratives and strategies of religious leaders and politicians, especially ones from evangelical churches, in the National Congress. The need to re-establish the moral foundations of society by strengthening the participation of their religious groups in politics was a common thread found in the narratives emerging from the interviews and the public actions of the actors monitored in this study. For our observations on the intersections between religions, media and politics, we did not use approaches based on the supposition that secularism in Brazil was under threat or has never existed. We also did not base our work on views on what secularism should be or on the secularisation of the country.

As we indicated in our other studies,<sup>8</sup> we recognise the social importance of religions in different areas of social life, their contributions to historical political processes and how they have shaped the very concept of secularism in the country.<sup>9</sup> We also recognise the differences between the different religions' actions in the public sphere and the diversity within each one of the traditions. In other words, we have empirically identified different interpretations of doctrines that mark how religious leaders act in public in relation to politics.<sup>10</sup> This diversity of ideological positions and political-social behaviour is not new. It is a normal part of the process by which religions are established in Brazil, but not only here. However, the way certain, more theatrical evangelical leaders express themselves in the media<sup>11</sup> makes it appear as though among the evangelicals, it is the more extremist members who dominate politics and civil society.<sup>12</sup>

In this context, a highly negative perception of religion's presence in society is becoming increasingly commonplace, especially among the intellectual and economic elite. However, it should be noted that part of the prejudices towards evangelicals in the country comes from the fact that they are perceived as the cultural "other". The hegemony of Catholicism was exposed by the hierarchy of the Church of Rome's public *modus operandi* which promoted a "social accommodation of diversity" in a "unit" that was socially dominated by the Church itself.<sup>13</sup> Today, these elites contribute significantly to the tendency to think of religion as a problem that needs to be combatted. Thus, the idea that religion needs to "go back" to a space of belief or assume the private place it would normally be given in modern Western society is spreading, as Asad criticises.<sup>14</sup> The prominence of actors who base their actions on a very specific conjugation of the Theology of Prosperity and Dominion Theology,<sup>15</sup> together with the economic and political disputes now emerging between the main denominations in the media, end up strengthening these groups' efforts to drive religion out of public life.

There are many problems with this antagonism towards religions. The first one is, as we have already mentioned, perhaps the failure to recognise religious traditions' historical contribution to the defence of citizenship and human rights and to the country's social and political life in general. Secondly, there is the problem associated with the perception that sees one single religious unit where there is plurality. In other words, religious groups

– even the ones whose leaders present one single doctrinal and liturgical framework – are themselves diverse in not only doctrinal or liturgical, but also political and even moral terms. Thirdly, we observed how the two previous problems (blaming religions for all evil and one “imaginary unit”) help strengthen politically religious leaders and the politicians close to them who use religion to create a smokescreen to cover up economic and political interests. These interests include the complete assimilation of indigenous peoples into the “culture of the Christian majority”,<sup>16</sup> the priority given to agribusiness’s agenda over the food security agenda, the maintenance of tax exemptions on churches’ property and the increase of these and other exemptions, as well as the increase in the circulation of legalised weapons in the country, among others.

#### 4 • Rhetoric of loss in the context of “moral insecurity”

In parallel to laying the blame for all evil on religions, and perhaps as a result of this ostensive radicalisation, religious leaders – some of which are also political leaders – portray themselves as victims of persecution because they are (allegedly) the guardians of moral behaviour that make society feel secure. They primarily defend traditional gender roles, which they claim are fundamental to the organisation of social life in modern society. The rhetoric of loss can be considered a discursive tactic used by different social and political leaders (including religious ones) to achieve one essential goal: to restore order, predictability, security and unity.<sup>17</sup> It emerged in a context where there was growing recognition of diversity in the political sphere<sup>18</sup> and, at the same time, the visibility of actors and discourses identified as conservative increased – conservative understood here as the sense of the morality that regulates the shared notions of normality in society at any point in time.<sup>19</sup> The rhetoric of loss is therefore a narrative founded on the moral insecurity that people feel when faced with obvious social changes that seek recognition.

In the 2018 elections, the rhetoric of loss overlapped the confessionalisation of politics strategy. In this study, we identified a higher number of religious, non-confessional candidates – that is, candidates who strongly identified with their religious groups and whose base of political support was the members of evangelical churches, but who presented themselves and/or registered as candidates based on their work identity: for example, as singers, broadcasters, military officials, police officers, teachers or digital influencers.

#### 5 • Gender of evangelical candidates in the 2018 elections

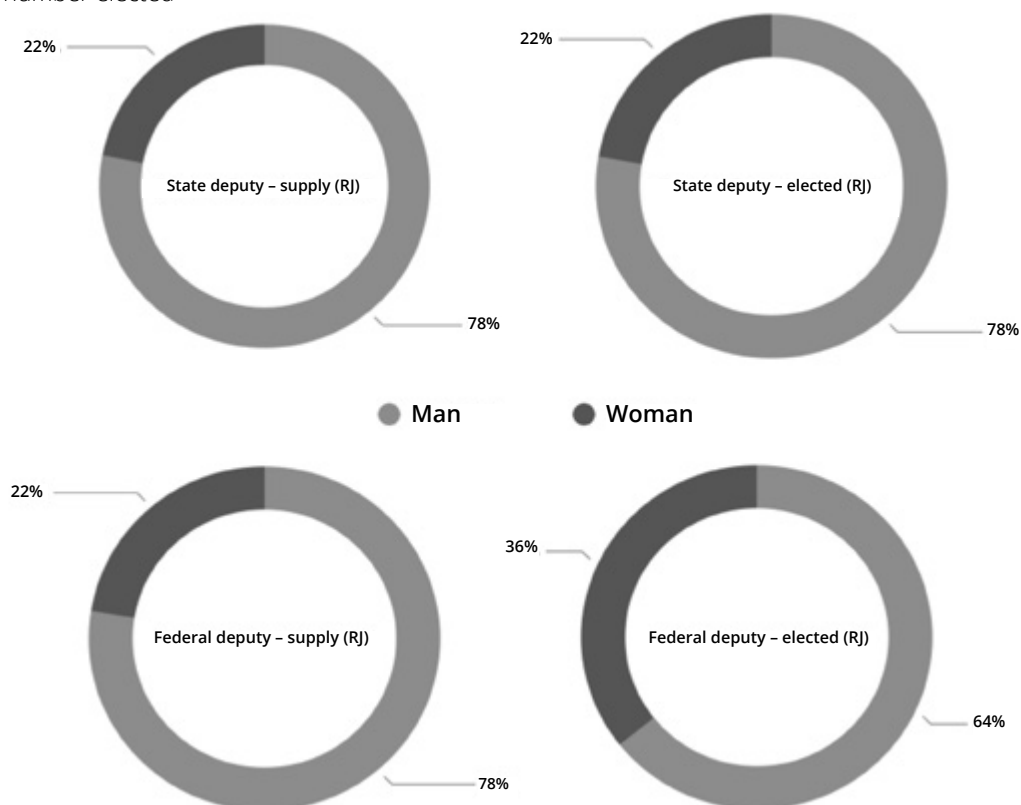
The majority of evangelical candidates were men. It is striking that in Bahia, no women were elected as federal deputies. It was only in Rio de Janeiro that women running for this position obtained almost the same number of votes as men. Considering that the number of elected women candidates was lower, we can say that proportionally, in Rio de Janeiro, women were more successful than men in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies.

**Table 3:** Total votes obtained by men and women in the 2018 elections in four states

STATES	Total votes for women elected as state dep.	Total votes for men elected as state dep.	Total votes for women elected as federal dep.	Total votes for men elected as federal dep.
BAHIA	93.524	622.287	0	637.162
MINAS GERAIS	220.118	867.685	85.663	1.333.733
RIO DE JANEIRO	257.294	541.416	477.132	532.469
SÃO PAULO	272.043	1.031.519	1.541.271	3.417.221

Source: "Candidaturas evangélicas nas eleições 2018: Mapeamento de postulantes ao poder legislativo no Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia e Minas Gerais" [Evangelical candidates in the 2018 elections: mapping candidates running for legislative elections in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia and Minas Gerais], ISER; Heinrich Boll Stiftung.

**Figure 1:** Rio de Janeiro – Comparison between the supply of evangelical candidates and the number elected



Source: "Candidaturas evangélicas nas eleições 2018: Mapeamento de postulantes ao poder legislativo no Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia e Minas Gerais" [Evangelical candidates in the 2018 elections: mapping candidates running for legislative elections in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia and Minas Gerais], ISER; Heinrich Boll Stiftung.

Women candidates also focused their campaigns on the rhetoric of loss, arguing that there was a need to restore security in all dimensions of life. This was not contradictory to their defence of greater respect for women, the fight against gender violence and women's importance in the labour market during the campaign and even before it began. It is interesting to note that none of the winning women candidates presented themselves as "housewives" – a mythical figure in the most patriarchal version of the rhetoric of loss. On the contrary, they positioned themselves as "victorious women" (to borrow the term used in the name of the ministry led by Elizete Malafaia, pastor and wife of pastor Silas Malafaia) who had jobs as media professionals and professors, for instance. However, the maternal figure associated with women and their success was heavily used.

## 6 • The evangelical territorial base: the Baixada Fluminense region in Rio

Another important strategy was the recourse to their territorial base. Numerous studies confirm the growth of evangelical groups mainly in cities and their geographic and social peripheries.<sup>20</sup> In Rio de Janeiro, the majority of inhabitants in the region known as 'Baixada Fluminense' identify themselves as evangelicals:<sup>21</sup> in nine of the 13 municipalities in the region, the majority of people are evangelical. The ones with the highest proportion of evangelicals are: Seropédica (44%), Duque de Caxias (35%), Nova Iguaçu (36.94%) and Belford Roxo (37.13%). The strong presence of evangelicals in the territory was reflected in the high number of winning candidates from all over the Baixada Fluminense region. Thus, as Decothé reminds us,<sup>22</sup> this region constitutes one of the main driving forces of the "political renovation" of the Rio de Janeiro State Legislative Assembly (ALERJ): 51% of the elected deputies are there for the first time. At the national level, 65% of positions in the National Congress for Rio de Janeiro were renewed. The base of evangelical candidates elected from the Baixada Fluminense region has grown and is the biggest in Rio's history. In 2018, 15 candidates whose electoral base was in the Baixada region were elected to federal and state legislatures, which represents an increase of 36% in comparison to the last elections in 2014.

Evangelical deputies from the Baixada Fluminense region hold 13% of the positions reserved for the state of Rio de Janeiro in the National Congress; they occupy the same percentage in the ALERJ. In the latter, aware of the political opportunity to increase organicity and empower their group, evangelical leaders decided to imitate what had been done at the federal level and form the Evangelical Parliamentary Coalition (FPE, for its acronym in Portuguese) in the ALERJ, with Fábio Silva (from the DEM party) as the coalition's president.

## 7 • Priorities on the agendas of evangelical candidates in 2018

In the evangelical universe we analysed, there were three main common issues on the winning candidates' agendas, which coincided with questions raised by the campaigns

of most of the candidates elected to executive and legislative positions all over Brazil. These issues were: the moral agenda (with an emphasis on the “gender ideology” and the defence of the nuclear family, referred to as the “traditional family”), public security (in relation to the “fight against violence” and “maintaining public order”) and the fight against corruption (which had strong moral overtones and promoted a cleansing/renovation of politics, often without, however, questioning the fundamental participation of companies owned by national and foreign capital or the financial system). All three issues gained strength in conservative activism, especially, but not only, of the religious type.<sup>23</sup> During the interviews with evangelical candidates from different political parties, we were able to observe an overlap between the evangelical identity and the affirmation of a moral cleansing to be carried out by people of this identity, which gave them more power and credibility to use the discourse on the fight against corruption. It was as though there was a line of continuity between being evangelical and moral and correct practices and behaviour in public and in private.

*For me, being evangelical is life! For me, it is everything. I discovered a different way of life. My gospel is not the one on TV. Gospel is Jesus Christ. The gospel they are preaching is to get rich. If we take the bible, the ones who had a lot of money and became poor - quote Zacchaeus and Pedro. Now, they are preaching a gospel that is different from the one that I believe in. For me, the gospel is transformation; if it does not change and transform life, it's not the real gospel. There is no point in accepting Jesus to get rich (or win the elections). I go to the mountain to pray every Wednesday morning to ask God to give me strength because I need it. I believe that the gospel that is being preached today, what many religious leaders are doing, is not what God taught me. (Pastor, candidate interviewed in Rio de Janeiro).*

*Spread the good news, 'new things', someone who went through a radical change in their life and plans to help their family and society more. Be a man of character, a fair man, someone who lives his life by moral and spiritual rules. Be a just man. It is like having a whole new life! (Pastor, candidate interviewed in Rio de Janeiro).*

*Live by the values of the reign of God: justice, peace, participation. Make life better. (Candidate interviewed in Rio de Janeiro).*

All interviewees cited the case of former federal deputy Eduardo Cunha<sup>24</sup> (MDB-RJ) to exemplify those that “call themselves evangelicals” but are labelled by this religious community as ones who “do not belong”. One of the interviewees emphasised that “Those guys have no shame. They said they were evangelicals and we discovered that they weren't. Then, it was discovered that that one (Cunha) was not evangelical”.



As for the evangelical candidates from the Baixada Fluminense region, in the winning candidates' campaigns, the fight against violent crime was just as important or an even more important issue than the "moral agenda" was. The issue of public safety has been a sensitive one in that region for decades, as it has the worst indicators on violence in the region.

*According to the map of violence of 2018,<sup>25</sup> of the 10 most violent municipalities in the state, 8 are in the Baixada Fluminense region. Queimados deserves special mention for being the municipality with the highest rate of violent deaths in all of Brazil in 2016. There were 134.9 deaths for every 100,000 habitants, according to the survey published in the Atlas of 2018. [...] The centrality of the debate on violence is what guided most of the election campaigns in the region. As such, we were able to observe the correlation that exists between the most violent municipalities in the Baixada region and the amount of votes obtained by parties whose evangelical candidates appropriated public safety issues. PSL and MDB stand out for having won a significant number of votes in the municipalities that have the highest homicide rates in the Baixada region. They elected 3 evangelical federal deputies and 4 evangelical state deputies, respectively.<sup>26</sup>*

## 8 • Evangelicals and their party affiliations in the 2018 elections

The evangelical candidates we identified were found in all the political parties with the highest number of winning candidates: PRB (20), PSL (07), PP (06), PSC (05) and DEM (05). The predominance of evangelicals in certain parties and denominations is still similar to what we had observed in earlier studies: they are more concentrated in PSC and PRB, and the *Assembleia de Deus* and *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* churches. While fewer PSC candidates were elected in 2018 than in the 2014 elections, the party's candidate Wilson Witzel won the race for governor of Rio de Janeiro, a strategic state in the national political scene. The new element in the 2018 elections was the PSL, which managed to mobilise support among Youtubers, public security force professionals and evangelicals for its winning candidates.

Evangelical candidates were, thus, present in parties all along the political spectrum. They were, however, concentrated in the ones identified with the right. Among the winning candidates, this concentration in right-wing parties was even greater. Of the 46 federal deputies elected to the Chamber of Deputies for the state of Rio de Janeiro, 26% are evangelical and only one of these names is linked to a left-wing party (PT).<sup>27</sup> The same is true for the ALERJ: only one evangelical candidate was from a left-wing party (PSOL).<sup>28</sup> In both cases, the candidates were black, evangelical, lower class women: they both lived in favelas, which is where one of their main electoral bases was located. Based on our research, we can affirm that candidates who are identified as left-wing or progressive have more success due to their activism in social movements than among their "brothers of faith".

Very few cases of new, young, evangelical candidates linked to centre-left political parties were identified.<sup>29</sup> Other politicians who have a more consolidated base of support and had pursued progressive agendas during previous mandates did not get re-elected.<sup>30</sup>

## 9 • Final considerations

The 2018 elections were, on the whole, surprising. They were marked by the imprisonment of the leader of the opinion polls, former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, followed months later by the victory of Jair Bolsonaro who, until then, had been a niche candidate. Bolsonaro was catapulted into the presidency by a conservative base of support of different political shades, in which there was a strong presence of Christian (Catholic and Evangelist) groups and a line of supporters who sympathised with the military and the security forces in the country in general. Obviously, the votes that guaranteed Bolsonaro's victory did not come exclusively from these Christian religious groups, but they did serve as an important base of support and even engaged in activism. The strategies adopted in his campaign, including the rhetoric of loss, were centred on promises of a return to order, economic growth and family tradition. These strategies were activated by many of the candidates analysed in this study. The rhetoric of loss was a fundamental strategy of action that connected evangelicals, Catholics, legal practitioners and representatives of the area of public security to one another and to a broad social base that felt that its capacity for economic, social, physical and moral reproduction was increasingly under threat.

In general, as we highlighted earlier, the winning evangelical candidates were from political parties associated with the right and the majority of them hold religious positions in their churches. In addition to belonging to institutionalised religions, most of the elected candidates are radio broadcasters or TV programme hosts, entrepreneurs from the communications, agriculture and real estate industries and lawyers. Approximately 15% of FPE members are professionals from the area of public and national security, such as military officials and police officers.

When we compare the 2018 elections with previous ones, we observed that the supply of evangelical confessional candidates continues to increase. However, while the percentage of evangelical confessional candidates rose 40% between 2010 and 2014, it increased a little more than 8% between 2014 and 2018. Even so, the number of winning confessional candidates was much lower than the amount of non-confessional evangelical ones. In the four states monitored in this study – Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia and Minas Gerais – 164 evangelical candidates were identified. Of them, 70 were confessional candidates. Of this total of 164 candidates, 54 were elected. This means that these four states of the federation were responsible for electing 63.5% of the FPE in the Chamber of Deputies and 28.5% in the Senate.

Even though the moral agenda has been an important element in the electoral dispute, which has been inflated by candidates interested in mobilising religious bases in Brazil, evangelical deputies and the population's disapproval of the current presidential administration is growing. This indicates that the moral discourse cannot sustain popular support, as has

been noted in other studies. To maintain support, people need to see improvements in their daily lives, and this is true for the general public, and not only religious people. The main demands of the people – the fight against unemployment and guarantees for more security in cities and in rural areas – are not even mentioned in media coverage on the presidency, which increases feelings of helplessness and dissatisfaction among the population.

## NOTES

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1 • These data are from the *Retratos da Sociedade Brasileira – Perspectivas para as Eleições 2018* study conducted by Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião e Estatística (IBOPE) in March 2018 upon the request of the Coordenação Nacional da Indústria (CNI).

2 • To consult the analyses on this election, see Christina Vital da Cunha, Paulo Victor Leite Lopes and Janayna Lui, *Religião e Política: Medos Sociais, Extremismo Religioso e as Eleições 2014* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Heinrich Böll: Instituto de Estudos da Religião, 2017).

3 • The research team for this study was composed of Christina Vital da Cunha and Clemir Fernandes as consultants and Ana Carolina Evangelista as the coordinator. Felipe Lins, Marcelle Decothé, Gabriele Ribeiro, Vanessa Cardozo, Rafaela Marques and Rodrigo Camurça participated as research assistants. The project was elaborated and data were collected and analysed between July 2018 and February 2019.

4 • This phenomenon was originally identified by Maria das Dores Machado in research that led to the book *Política e Religião: A Participação dos Evangélicos nas Eleições* (São Paulo: FGV, 2006). Coined by this author, the term is used to refer to a process where candidates identify themselves with a religion as part of a strategy to strengthen their political capital and, consequently, their chances of obtaining positive results at the ballot box. In this process, candidates directly refer to their religious ties (brother, sister or missionary) or to their positions in the hierarchy of a church (pastor, minister, presbyter, Babalawo, mother, father, priest or cleric) when presenting themselves in

public when they register with the electoral tribunals.

5 • These states were selected because they are the largest electoral districts in the country. With these states, we arrived at a sample that corresponds to close to 50% of the country's electorate. More in-depth fieldwork was carried out in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

6 • "Divulgação de Candidaturas e Contas Eleitorais," TSE, 2019, accessed July 20, 2019, <http://divulgacandcontas.tse.jus.br/divulga/#/>.

7 • Christina Vital da Cunha, Paulo Victor Leite Lopes and Janayna Lui, *Religião e Política: Medos Sociais, Extremismo Religioso e as Eleições 2014* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Heinrich Böll: Instituto de Estudos da Religião, 2017); Christina Vital da Cunha and Paulo Victor Leite Lopes, *Religião e Política: Uma Análise da Atuação de Parlamentares Evangélicos sobre Direitos das Mulheres e de LGBTs no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Heinrich Böll; Instituto de Estudos da Religião, 2012); and Christina Vital da Cunha, "Televisão para Salvar: Religião, Mídia e Democracia no Brasil Contemporâneo," *Revista Antropolítica* no. 42 (1st sem., 2017): 199-235.

8 • Paula Montero, "Controvérsias Religiosas e Esfera Pública: Repensando as Religiões como Discurso," *Religião e Sociedade* 32, no. 1 (2012): 167- 183; Paula Montero, "Religião, Pluralismo e Esfera Pública no Brasil," *Novos Estudos CEBRAP* no. 74 (2006): 47-65; Emerson Giumbelli, "A Presença do Religioso no Espaço Público: Modalidades no Brasil," *Religião e Sociedade* 28, no. 2 (2008): 80-101; and Regina Célia Reyes Novaes, "Juventude, Religião e Espaço Público:

Exemplos 'bons para pensar' tempos e sinais," *Religião e Sociedade* 32, no. 1 (2012): 167- 183.

9 • Eduardo Dullo, "Política Secular e Intolerância Religiosa na Disputa Eleitoral," in *Religiões e Controvérsias Públicas: Experiências, Práticas Sociais e Discursos*, org. Paula Montero (São Paulo: Editora Terceiro Nome; Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2015): 27-48.

10 • To illustrate the diversity of positions among Christians, we can note, for example, the large divide between federal deputies Flavinho and Eros Biondini, Catholic representatives linked to the Charismatics, on one side, and the Catholics for the Right to Decide organisation, on the other. Another example, this time among evangelicals, is the difference between the positions of federal deputies Sóstenes Cavalcanti and Marcos Feliciano, on one side, and federal deputy Benedita da Silva and groups such as Feministas Cristãs (Christian Feminists) and Frente de Evangélicos pelo Estado de Direito (Evangelical Coalition for the Rule of Law), on the other.

11 • Magali do Nascimento Cunha, "Religião e Política: Ressonâncias do Neoconservadorismo Evangélico nas Mídias Brasileiras," *Perseu: História, Memória e Política* 11 (2015): 147-168; *Magali do Nascimento Cunha, Do Púlpito às Mídias Sociais. Evangélicos na Política e Ativismo Digital*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Curitiba: Prismas, 2017); and Ana Carolina Evangelista, "Mais que um Rebanho." *Revista Piauí*, 2018, accessed July 20, 2019, <https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/mais-que-um-rebanho/>; and Ana Carolina Evangelista, "Evangélicos sem Bancada." *Revista Piauí*, 2018, accessed July 20, 2019, <https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/evangelicos-sem-bancada/>.

12 • Using the concept proposed by Lindgren Alves, we consider the behaviour of ministers who receive considerable media attention, often appearing in radio or TV programmes, and who are well-known for using their religious intolerance to promote themselves or their churches as extremist. Likewise, members of churches led by these ministers and who directly reproduce their intolerant practices when confronted with anything that differs from their interpretation of the bible are also considered

extremists. "[...] extremism, in broader terms, advocates the use of radical measures to achieve political objectives" (José Augusto Lindgren Alves, "Coexistência Cultural e 'Guerras de Religião'", *Revista Brasileira e Ciências Sociais* 25, n° 72 [2010]: 32).

13 • On the public modes of legitimisation of religious sectors in Brazil, see Emerson Giumbelli, "A Presença do Religioso no Espaço Público: Modalidades no Brasil," *Religião e Sociedade* 28, no. 2 (2008): 80-101.

14 • Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," in *Genealogies of Religion. Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

15 • The Theology of Prosperity promotes discipline in various areas of life, not only in relation to one's finances. According to this theological perspective, which abandons the "old message of the cross" that resigns people to suffering, believers are destined to be prosperous, healthy and happy in this world. Thus, instead of rejecting the world, neo-Pentecostals began to embrace it. In the pursuit of divine blessings and to "do well in life", believers must strictly observe the rules of the bible. One of the main sacrifices that God demands of his servants, according to this theology, is of a financial nature: pay your tithe faithfully and give generous offerings with joy, love and detachment. The Dominion Theology can be characterised by an emphasis on spiritual battles against inherited and territorial demons and breaking family curses, and doctrinal concepts forged and popularised by the Fuller Theological Seminary. For more on this, see Ricardo Mariano, *Neopentecostais: Sociologia do Novo Pentecostalismo no Brasil* (São Paulo: Loyola, 1999); and Jacqueline Moraes Teixeira, *A Mulher Universal: Corpo, Gênero e Pedagogia da Prosperidade*, 1<sup>a</sup> ed., v. 2 (Rio de Janeiro: Mar de Ideias, 2016), among others.

16 • This political affirmation of a Christian-majority culture in Brazil was mentioned in a document issued by the Ministry of Women, the Family and Human Rights on January 21, 2019 in commemoration of the Day against Religious Intolerance, which was officially recognised through a presidential decree in 2007. See Damares Alves and Sérgio Augusto de Queiroz,

- "Nota em Celebração ao Dia Nacional de Combate à Intolerância Religiosa." Ministério da Mulher, da Família e dos Direitos Humanos, January 22, 2019, accessed July 20, 2019, <https://www.mdh.gov.br/todas-as-noticias/2019/janeiro/nota-em-celebracao-ao-dia-nacional-de-combate-a-intolerancia-religiosa>.
- 17 • This notion is explored in more depth in Christina Vital da Cunha, "A 'Invisibilidade Ativa' das Religiões na Política: dos Subterrâneos à Centralidade Pública de Evangélicos no Brasil Contemporâneo" (forthcoming).
- 18 • Regina Célia Reyes Novaes, "Em Nome da Diversidade. Notas sobre Novas Modulações nas Relações entre Religiosidade e Laicidade," *Comunicações do ISER* no. 69, year 33 (2014).
- 19 • Petrônio Domingues, "Democracia e Autoritarismo: Entre o Racismo e o Antirracismo," in *Democracia em Risco? 22 Ensaios sobre o Brasil Hoje* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019); Ronaldo Almeida, "Deus Acima de Todos", in *Democracia em Risco? 22 Ensaios sobre o Brasil Hoje* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019); Daniel Aarão Reis, "As Armadilhas da Memória e a Reconstrução Democrática", in *Democracia em Risco? 22 Ensaios sobre o Brasil Hoje* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019); Heloisa Murgel Starling, "O Passado que Não Passou," in *Democracia em Risco? 22 Ensaios sobre o Brasil Hoje* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019); Guilherme Boulos, "A Onda Conservadora", in *A Onda Conservadora: Ensaios sobre os Atuais Tempos Sombrios no Brasil*, orgs. Felipe Demier and Rejane Hoeveler (Rio de Janeiro: Mauad, 2016); and Felipe Demier, "A Revolta a Favor da Ordem: A Ofensiva da Oposição de Direita," in *A Onda Conservadora: Ensaios sobre os Atuais Tempos Sombrios no Brasil*, orgs. Felipe Demier and Rejane Hoeveler (Rio de Janeiro: Mauad, 2016).
- 20 • César Romero Jacob et al., "Território, Cidade e Religião no Brasil," *Religião e Sociedade* 24, no. 2 (2004): 126-151; Christina Vital da Cunha, "Pentecostal Cultures in Urban Peripheries: A Socio-anthropological Analysis of Pentecostalism in Arts, Grammars, Crime and Morality," *Vibrant* 15, no.1 (2018); Amanda Lacerda, André Brandão and Christina Vital da Cunha, "Mapeando Religião na Cidade: Reflexões sobre a Criação de Templos Religiosos na Cidade do Rio de Janeiro entre 2006 e 2016," *Revista Debates do NER* (forthcoming); and Ronaldo Almeida, "Os Deuses do Parlamento," *Novos Estudos CEBRAP* 36, fasc. 107 (June 2017): 71-79.
- 21 • "Censo 2010," IBGE, 2010, accessed July 23, 2019, <https://censo2010.ibge.gov.br/>.
- 22 • The full version of her article on the Baixada Fluminense region and the evangelicals, produced as part of the research project on which this article is based, is available at Marcelle Decothé, "Candidaturas Evangélicas na Baixada Fluminense nas Eleições 2018." Relatório "Candidaturas Evangélicas nas Eleições 2018: Mapeamento de Postulantes ao Poder Legislativo no Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia e Minas Gerais," 2019, accessed July 23, 2019, [www.iser.org.br](http://www.iser.org.br).
- 23 • Brenda Carranza and Christina Vital da Cunha, "Conservative Religious Activism in the Brazilian Congress: Sexual Agendas in Focus," *Social Compass* 65, no. 4 (2018): 486-502; Ricardo Mariano, "Expansão e Ativismo Político de Grupos Evangélicos Conservadores, Secularização e Pluralismo em Debate," *Civitas: Revista de Ciências Sociais* 16 (2016): 710-728; Maria das Dores Campos Machado, "Aborto e Ativismo Religioso nas Eleições de 2010," *Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política* (Print) (2012): 25-54; and Almeida, "Deus Acima de Todos", 2019.
- 24 • Cunha was elected federal deputy in 2002 with 101,495 votes and re-elected in 2006 and 2010. In 2014, there was a significant increase in the number of people who voted for him: having obtained 232,708 votes, he ranked fifth in the list of federal deputies who won the most votes. Eduardo Cunha stood out as the leader of the opposition to president Dilma Rousseff, as he was one of the main authors of the impeachment process against her in the Chamber of Deputies. In early September 2016, Cunha's term of office was revoked for breach of parliamentary decorum after being accused of lying to the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry on Petrobras (CPI da Petrobras). He is currently serving a prison term as a result of the investigations of Operation Car Wash (Lava-Jato).

25 • "Atlas da Violência 2018," Ipea and Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública (FBSP), June 2018, accessed April 12, 2019, [http://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/images/stories/PDFs/relatorio\\_institucional/180604\\_atlas\\_da\\_violencia\\_2018.pdf](http://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/images/stories/PDFs/relatorio_institucional/180604_atlas_da_violencia_2018.pdf).

26 • Decothé, "Candidaturas Evangélicas na Baixada Fluminense...", 2019, p. 5.

27 • Federal Deputy Benedita da Silva (PT).

28 • State Deputy Mônica Francisco (PSOL).

29 • Alessandra Monteiro (REDE) and Caio

Cunha (PV), who was already a city councillor in Mogi das Cruzes (SP).

30 • Carlos Bezerra (PSDB), former state deputy, minister of the Igreja Comunidade da Graça and former president of Comissão de Direitos Humanos na ALESP (Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo). Patrícia Bezerra (PSDB), São Paulo city councillor and former Secretary of Human Rights in the City of São Paulo during the João Dória administration.



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