

Introducing

Fernando Brancoli

Associate Professor at the Institute for International Relations and Defense, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Fernando is an Associate Professor at the Institute for International Relations and Defense at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He is also an Associated Researcher at the Orfalea Center for Global Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Specializing in South-South relations, Brancoli's research delves into governance, security, and development. He conducted extensive fieldwork across three continents, exploring the interplay between local communities and transnational entities and their collective impact on governance.



Hello Fernando! Your research spans multiple continents, focusing on the interaction between local communities and transnational entities and their collective impact on governance. Do you have any key insights to share with us regarding governance dynamics across continents?

In my research, I'm particularly fascinated by the dialectic between local and global dynamics in governance. This interplay reveals how local groups leverage international platforms to engage in governance practices while still deeply influenced by localized elements and practices. This duality is instrumental in recognizing the specificities of different groups and their governance tactics.

A compelling example of this interaction can be seen in my recent studies on indigenous communities in the Brazilian Amazon. These communities are developing unique local governance practices to confront modern challenges, such as global warming and the rise of organized crime. They have crafted a complex constellation of terms, concepts, and practices deeply rooted in their localized reality. These strategies and conceptualizations are distinctly indigenous, reflecting their deep connection to their land and culture.

Yet, intriguingly, these same groups are also deeply engaged with similar groups in Africa and the Middle East, such as those in Egypt and Angola. This engagement is not merely superficial; it profoundly influences their governance practices and worldviews. These connections demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of governance, constantly negotiated between local and global dimensions. It's at this intersection that, in my opinion, the richness of governance practices truly emerges, reflecting a nuanced, layered approach that transcends conventional boundaries.

This dialectic is both a theoretical concept and a lived reality for these communities. It highlights the importance of understanding governance as a fluid, dynamic process continuously shaped by both local imperatives and global influences. It is a testament to the resilience and adaptability of these communities in the face of evolving global challenges.

Your book, *Bolsonarismo – The Global Origins and Future of Brazil's Far Right*, offers a nuanced examination of the diverse ideologies and actors shaping the far-right movement in Brazil. Could you elaborate on how "Bolsonarismo" has forged alliances with various groups and ideologies domestically and internationally?

In my book, I delve into the intricate alliances and ideologies that shape this political movement in Brazil, a particularly challenging task given the context of my research. As a Brazilian researcher from a university historically perceived as progressive, hence targeted by far-right groups, I encountered unique perspectives and complexities.

"Bolsonarismo," which initially revolved around the figure of former President Jair Bolsonaro, has grown into a broader movement encompassing diverse groups. These include agribusiness leaders, professionals advocating for meritocracy and state reduction, evangelical leaders seeking a return to conservative morality, members of the armed forces, and, as my research uncovered, leaders of organized criminal groups exerting governance in Brazilian cities.

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A significant focus is on how these groups have adopted international logics to reinforce their agendas, find allies, and effectively promote their ideas. This aspect of the movement is not just about forming alliances but also about leveraging global narratives and frameworks to bolster their domestic political goals. By tapping into international discourses and networks, Bolsonarismo has amplified its influence and aligned itself with similar movements and ideologies worldwide. For instance, neo-Pentecostal Christian groups advocating for the "protection of Western values" have formed alliances with groups in Israel. This internationalizes the domestic Brazilian dichotomy of progressives versus conservatives into a global battle framed by the West against terrorist groups. Interviews with Bolsonaro's government officials revealed beliefs equating the Brazilian left with Middle Eastern terrorist groups, drawing parallels between the "Holy Land of the Middle East" and the "Holy Land of Latin America."

This rhetoric, far from being mere discourse, has tangible implications, including a significant increase in security equipment purchases from Tel Aviv and joint security operations with Israel's security forces. This pattern also extends to significant figures in economics, the military, and other sectors. The exploration in the book thus uncovers the complex and often surprising ways in which Bolsonarismo has forged a wide range of domestic alliances and extended its reach internationally, impacting Brazil's foreign relations and security policies.

Beyond academia, you have a background in international journalism and humanitarian work across Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. How does your hands-on experience in these regions complement your academic research, and vice versa?

My multifaceted background significantly complements my academic research. Firstly, my commitment to qualitative research, often involving semi-structured interviews and deeper engagement with local populations, is significantly enriched by my field experiences. Being on the ground, interacting with various communities, and understanding their local dynamics has been invaluable, particularly concerning my work on how groups create governance strategies and concepts. The hands-on experience gained outside academia informs and enhances my research methodologies, allowing for a more nuanced and authentic understanding of these local governance practices.

Secondly, I believe there is an urgent need to bridge the gap between academic findings and the general public. This is crucial, not only in the Brazilian context, but everywhere there is a growing crisis in understanding the role of science and the interpretation of scientific data by the public. I have actively engaged with national and international media to share and translate my research findings for a broader audience. This effort to disseminate academic insights in an accessible manner is not just about public education; it's also about contributing to a more informed public discourse on these critical issues. My journalism and humanitarian work support this goal by providing practical insights and connections, enhancing the reach and impact of my academic work.

Listen to Governance Uncovered with Fernando!

In March 2024, Fernando was a guest on GLD's podcast in a conversation about his book *Bolsonarismo – The Global Origins and Future of Brazil's Far Right*.

Scan the QR-code to listen to the episode via Acast



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