Review Report – Version 1 (Pre-publication)

Manuscript: “Brasil, que país é esse? Cultura e Política

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Reviewer: Maracelo Sabbatini – ORCID: [0000-0001-7040-2310]

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Deadline for Version 2: 30 days after receiving this report

1. Introduction and Greeting

Hello, Maria de Fátima Bento Ribeiro, Naiara Souza da Silva, and Ângela Mara Bento Ribeiro. Thank you for sharing your work with me. Below are my initial impressions, suggestions for improvement, and the plan for review rounds. This report will be published as "Version 1 – Preprint" as soon as I confirm the minimum quality of the text and major revisions required.

2. Manuscript Overview

In general, your study explores the intersection of politics, culture, and democracy in contemporary Brazil (2013–2025), bringing relevant contributions to the fields of political science, cultural studies, and Brazilian history. I highlight the clarity of the research problem —examining how artistic and cultural manifestations serve as forms of democratic resistance—and the relevance of the documentary methodological approach adopted, which effectively weaves together political events, judicial proceedings, and cultural expressions such as carnival, cinema, and popular music.

The paper offers a compelling narrative that positions Brazilian culture as a form of "soft power" and symbolic resistance against authoritarian tendencies. The connection between

the January 8, 2023 attacks, the subsequent trials, and cultural responses through samba-enredo, the Oscar-winning film "Ainda Estou Aqui," and artistic mobilizations provides a rich tapestry of contemporary Brazilian political culture.

3. Detailed Evaluation

Criterion	Summary Comments	Score[1]
Scientific Relevance	The work addresses an important gap in understanding the role of culture in democratic consolidation in Brazil, particularly during the post-2022 period. However, it could benefit from comparing results with recent 2024 theoretical studies on cultural resistance in similar contexts (e.g., Latin American populism, European democratic backsliding).	3
Originality	The approach of documenting political events alongside cultural manifestations (carnival, cinema, music) as a "historical chronicle" is innovative, creating a valuable contemporary archive. However, the paper lacks discussion of parallel works that applied similar analytical frameworks to other countries or periods (e.g., cultural resistance during Argentina's dictatorship or Chile's transition).	3

Methodological Rigor	The methodology is described as "documentary" and the text functions as an "interpretive historical chronicle." I suggest adding a clearer methodological framework section explaining the criteria for selecting specific cultural events and political moments. A flowchart of the analytical process and explicit inclusion/exclusion criteria for the cultural expressions analyzed would strengthen the paper.	2
Data Presentation	The visual documentation (figures 1-10) is well-selected and contextually relevant. I recommend including a timeline graphic to facilitate understanding of the chronological relationship between political events and cultural responses. Additionally, a comparative table showing the themes of different samba-enredos mentioned would enhance the analysis.	3
Writing Quality	The text is fluid and engaging in Portuguese. For international publication, review literal translations and ensure academic tone consistency. Some passages read more journalistically than academically. Consider more precise conceptual definitions (e.g., "soft power" is mentioned but not theoretically grounded).	3
Theoretical Coherence	Solid empirical foundation in documenting events; however, the paper would benefit from deeper engagement with theoretical frameworks. Concepts such as "soft power" (Nye), "cultural memory" (Assmann), or "symbolic resistance" need theoretical grounding. The discussion could connect findings more explicitly to established theories of culture and democracy.	2

Bibliographic References	Citations are adequate but could be expanded. Update with 2024–2025 academic articles on democratic backsliding, cultural politics, and Brazilian studies. Include international comparative literature on cultural resistance and memory politics. Currently heavy reliance on journalistic sources—balance with peer-reviewed scholarship.	3

[1]Scale from 1 (very unsatisfactory) to 5 (excellent)

4. Section-by-Section Comments

1. **Title and Abstract**
    - The title "Brasil, que país é esse?" effectively evokes the classic song by Renato Russo/Legião Urbana, establishing immediate cultural resonance. The abstract provides a comprehensive overview of the study's scope (2013-2025), key events analyzed, and main argument.

      Suggestions: In title, include more details on the theoretical and methodological approaches to the paper. Title sounds as more journalistic than academic. In the abstract, include a brief mention of the practical implications for democratic consolidation. The abstract could more explicitly state the theoretical contribution (beyond documentation) and the methodological approach.
2. **Introduction**
    - Strengths: Clear positioning of the text as a "documentary function" and "interpretive historical chronicle". Effective opening with Lula's 2025 UN speech provides immediate contemporary relevance. Good contextualization of the political polarization and democratic threats.

- Suggestions: expand engagement with key 2024 academic literature on democratic backsliding and cultural resistance. State research hypotheses or guiding questions more explicitly. The theoretical framework could be introduced earlier rather than remaining implicit throughout.

3. **Methodology**
   - Critical Issue: The methodology section is essentially absent as a formal section. While the authors describe their approach as "documentary" and a "historical chronicle," this needs development. As required additions:
     - Explicit statement of methodological approach (documentary analysis, discourse analysis, visual analysis?).
     - Detail the criteria for selecting specific events, cultural expressions, and sources.
       Explain the time frame selection (why 2013-2025 specifically? What happened in 2013?, necessary for international readers).
     - Insert a schematic flowchart showing the analytical process in the Appendix.
       Clarify the relationship between the authors' interpretive stance and the "documentary" claims.

4. **Results**
   - Compare the January 8 events more explicitly with January 6 in the US or other similar incidents internationally. The discussion of the "anistia" project and "PEC da Blindagem" needs more context for international readers.
   - A comparative table of samba-enredos with their political themes would strengthen the presentation.
   - Include a sensitivity analysis: could alternative cultural expressions have been selected? Why these specifically?

The connection between "Ainda Estou Aqui" and the broader argument about cultural resistance could be more theoretically developed.

5. **Discussion and Conclusion**
    - Connect findings more explicitly to practical implications for policymakers, educators, and cultural institutions. Discuss methodological limitations (selection bias in cultural expressions chosen, temporal limitations). The reference to Petra Costa's documentary "Apocalipse dos Trópicos" appears only in the conclusion —integrate earlier or develop more fully. Address potential counterarguments: Is culture always progressive/democratic? What about conservative cultural mobilizations? The conclusion introduces new material (Celso Lafer, Evangelical Neopentecostals) that should be developed in the main body
6. **References**
    - Improvements:
        - Expand to include 2024-2025 academic literature on Democratic backsliding, Brazilian political culture, cultural memory theory, soft power theory, Carnival studies.
        - Balance journalistic sources with peer-reviewed scholarship

5. Questions and Dialogue

- Methodological Clarification: did you consider using a more formal discourse analysis or content analysis framework to systematically analyze the cultural expressions? How were the specific events and cultural manifestations selected for inclusion?
- Theoretical framing: the concept of "soft power" is mentioned but not theoretically developed. did you consider engaging more directly with Joseph Nye's framework or other theories of cultural politics (Gramsci's cultural hegemony, for instance)?

- Temporal scope: the text mentions events from 2013 but the analysis focuses primarily on 2022-2025. What was the significance of beginning with 2013? Would a more in-depth treatment of the 2013-2022 period strengthen the argument?
- Comparative dimension: what is the feasibility of expanding this research to include comparative analysis with other Latin American contexts (e.g., Argentina's experience with cultural memory of dictatorship, Chile's recent constitutional process)?
- Counter-evidence: how do you account for conservative cultural mobilizations that also occurred during this period (e.g., gospel music, evangelical cultural production supporting Bolsonaro)? Does cultural resistance only move in progressive directions?
- Replicability: could this research framework be replicated for analyzing cultural-political dynamics in other geographic or temporal contexts?

6. Rounds and Publication Plan

Round	Reviewer's Action	Author's Action	Publication	Deadline
1	Preliminary Report and Quality Check	Revise text according to suggestions	Version 1 – Preprint[2]	30 days
2	Evaluation of Revised Version 2	Incorporate feedback, submit Version 2	Version 2 – Revised	15 days
3[3]	Final Report and Approval	---	Final Version + Complete History	Immediate

[2]Published online with its own DOI and metadata in six languages after my approval of the minimum quality.

[3]Only if major revisions are requested; otherwise, skip to final publication.

7. Final Recommendation for Version 1

- [ ] Publish Version 1 – Preprint
- [ ] Request minor revisions
- [x] Request major revisions
- [ ] Reject

The manuscript presents valuable documentary material on the intersection of Brazilian politics and culture during a critical period of democratic challenge and consolidation. The empirical contribution—bringing together political events, judicial proceedings, and cultural manifestations—is significant and timely.

However, the paper requires substantial strengthening of its methodological framework and theoretical grounding to meet academic publication standards.
I recommend the authors:

- Develop a clear methodology section
- Ground the analysis in established theoretical frameworks
- Expand engagement with peer-reviewed literature
- Address the identified gaps and limitations

8. Closing

I appreciate the opportunity to review this manuscript and congratulate you on the relevance of the topic. I look forward to Version 2 for final evaluation and definitive publication.

Sincerely,

Marcelo Sabbatini

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Note: This report will be published in its entirety along with the article in open access, promoting full transparency and valuing the review process of Scientia International Journals.