Punishing the Corrupt and Renewing Politics: The Candidacies of Federal Police Officers for the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies (2002-2018)[*][**]

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This article examines the changes in the profiles of candidates associated with the Federal Police over five elections for the Chamber of Deputies in Brazil, from 2002 to 2018, as well as the variations in their campaign discourses. To achieve this, the candidates were mapped using data from the Superior Electoral Court and other accessible sources. Campaign material available on the Internet was also collected. The data show that, in addition to the increase in the number of candidates linked to the Federal Police, there is a trend towards political professionalization, more participation from union and association leaders of the Federal Police in the analyzed elections, and a closer alignment of these candidates with center-right and right-wing parties. In 2010, Federal Police officers began using the 'fight against corruption' theme as an electoral asset in their election campaigns. We argue that these transformations occurred due to internal changes in the Federal Police, especially increased investment in the agency during Lula's first term (2003-2006), changes in the union activities of those linked to this agency, and the contextual effects of the Lava Jato operation.
Keywords: Political sociology; Federal Police; police-candidates; electoral campaigns; anti-corruption.

T he entry of certain individuals into politics can be explained by various factors, and it always depends on different 'presumed competencies' needed to rise to positions of power (DULONG, 1996). The political field is both a field of forces and a field of struggles, where the goal is to change power relations (BOURDIEU, 1981). This space is based on the separation between professionals (insiders) and the profane (outsiders), differentiated by the unequal distribution of propensities, capacities, and aptitudes for accessing politics. Thus, initiation into the political field, "much like joining a religion, requires a transformation, a conversion" (BOURDIEU, 2011, p. 195 – free translation).

Each election sees a variety of professionals seeking to convert their skills and resources to benefit from specific political contexts: from unionists to businesspeople, doctors to rural producers, church members to military personnel (CORADINI, 2001). Regarding this last group, which includes other members of the state's security forces, such as police officers, the social sciences literature dedicated to Brazil shows that they have always been connected to the executive and legislative branches in various contexts and power configurations (ENGELMANN and MENUZZI, 2020; ENGELMANN, MENUZZI, and PILAU, 2023). From the Empire to the New Republic, military personnel and police officers have remained closely involved in party politics and electoral processes (BONELLI, 2002; CARVALHO, 2019).

Since the transition from military to civilian government in the late 1980s, numerous police officers and military personnel have occupied positions in the legislative and executive branches. These actors, coming from various Brazilian police forces – Military Police, Civil Police, and Federal Police – are found in different positions, parties, and levels of government, whether at the municipal, state, or federal level. Regarding positions within the state bureaucracy accessed through political appointments, the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) identified a 59% increase in military personnel occupying civilian roles in the federal executive between 2013 and 2021 – notably, since 2019, they have taken on higher decision-making roles (IPEA, 2022).

Studies have highlighted the significant increase in the number of individuals linked to police institutions in the Brazilian political landscape. Between the elections of 1998 and 2014, 23,219 individuals ran for federal deputy in Brazil. Out of these, 927

candidates had ties to the state's repressive forces, making up 4.2% of the total (BERLATTO, CODATO, and BOLOGNESI, 2016). When considering all elective positions available in the country, these numbers become even more significant: between 2010 and 2020, at least 25,452 police officers and members of the Armed Forces ran for elective positions in Brazil. Of this total, 2,719 (10.6%) were elected. During this period, the number of police candidates tripled (LIMA, 2019). The 'police family' – estimated from the number of police officers and military personnel in the Brazilian electorate and their family members, based on the average family size according to IBGE (3.3 in 2008) – would encompass approximately 18.5 million people. These individuals either vote or contribute to disseminating the views and social representations that police officers and military personnel hold about the political landscape (LIMA, 2019).

Given the significance of this social phenomenon in shaping political leadership, several explanatory hypotheses have been presented in the social sciences to understand it. Cymrot (2014) investigated whether military police deputies in the Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo have formed a 'bancada da bala'[1] (bullet bloc) and found only partial confirmation of this hypothesis. He suggests that this designation might oversimplify a group engaged in multifaceted parliamentary activities. His research identifies a series of differences and similarities in the discourses of military police officers during their terms in office, with some expressing nostalgia for the military dictatorship, others making statements against identity issues, and all rejecting mechanisms for holding police actions accountable.

Novello and Alvarez (2022), in turn, compared the discourses and legislative activities of 'police-deputies' from the 'bancada da segurança' (security bloc) (1987-1991) and the 'bancada da bala' (2015-2019), both groups holding mandates in the Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo. The authors argue that these 'police-deputies' hold both consistent and conflicting views on the role of the police in crime control, as well as on human rights policies. In particular, they emphasize how these actors' discourses align with a punitive-moralizing logic within society, which tends to expand the language of police culture – rooted in the idea of a battle between

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[1]The term 'bancada da bala' refers to a group of legislators in the Brazilian National Congress who are typically aligned with conservative values and the right wing of the Brazilian political spectrum. Members of this group are known for advocating agendas that prioritize the corporatist interests of professions associated with public security and law and order. Furthermore, their reactions to public security issues often involve using punitive rhetoric (MIRANDA, 2019).

'good' and 'evil' – to various publics. Simultaneously, this logic restructures and modernizes a conservative social perspective in both the political and crime control fields, while being reinforced by the discourses produced by the 'bancadas evangélicas' (evangelical blocs).

These and other[2] studies offer relevant scientific contributions to enhance our understanding of the candidacies and electoral mandates of police officers in Brazil. However, their analyses focus on elected police officers, and their empirical research object are civil and military police officers. Therefore, we see a gap in the literature, the lack of in-depth studies on the candidacies of individuals linked the Federal Police[3]. These actors have been overlooked in the social sciences, with only a few analyses acknowledging their presence in the 2022 general elections (FBSP, 2022). From a broader perspective, the connections between the Federal Police and politics are becoming increasingly evident, as we can see from how members of the Federal Police relate to the phenomenon of Bolsonarism after Jair Bolsonaro became president in 2019. And they are also underscored by the fact that over 95% of a sample of Federal Police officers saw 'political interference' as a significant obstacle to their work (FBSP, 2021a; 2021b). Our study aims to address this gap in the literature – the relationship between the Federal Police and Brazilian politics – by analyzing the candidacies of individuals linked to the Federal Police in five elections for the Chamber of Deputies, held in 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2018.

The successor of the Federal Department of Public Security, established in 1944 during the Estado Novo regime, the Federal Police only succeeded in structuring its operations nationwide during the civil-military dictatorship (ROCHA, 2004). During the twenty-one years of military rule, the Federal Police played a secondary role compared to other repression agencies and was mainly engaged in censorship. Despite this, authoritarian values became entrenched within the institution, hindering its adaptation to the country's democratization process during the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s (ROCHA, 2004; SOARES, 2015). Following the promulgation of the Federal Constitution of 1988, the military solidified its influence within the institution by appointing successors to the position of director-

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[2]See FAGANELLO, 2017; NOVAES, 2023; SOUZA, 2019.
[3]In this article, the agency will be referred to simply as 'Federal Police'.

general, which they had previously alternated among themselves to maintain control (ROCHA, 2004; SOARES, 2015). It was not until the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government that this influence was broken, when Vicente Chelotti, then Federal Police 'delegado' (chief officer), was appointed the agency's director-general in 1995 (ROCHA, 2004; SILVA 2018).

During Chelotti's tenure, an internal conflict intensified: between 'delegados' (chief officers in charge of investigations) and members of other career tracks within the Federal Police, that is agents (rank-and-file investigators called 'agentes'), 'escrivãos' (in charge of documentation and formalization of police procedures), 'peritos criminais' (experts in evidence analysis and production of technical reports for investigations), and 'papiloscopistas' (fingerprint technicians). The confrontation between these professional categories began in the 1980s when a proposal for salary equality between 'delegados' and members of the Public Prosecution Office (Ministério Público) emerged (SILVA, 2018). With the promulgation of the Federal Constitution in 1988, this dispute intensified as trade unions for federal police officers, such as the National Federation of Federal Police Officers (FENAPEF), were created and strengthened. Additionally, the passing of legislation requiring the completion of higher education for all careers further contributed to the escalation of this conflict (SILVA, 2018).

After Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva assumed the presidency in 2003, the Federal Police received substantial investment from the federal executive. Overall, Lula's government, fulfilling a campaign promise, was characterized by financial and structural investments in secondary control institutions. Such as, the Office of the Comptroller-General (Controladoria-Geral da União, CGU), the Council for Financial Activities Control (Conselho de Controle de Atividades Financeiras, COAF), the Department of Asset Recovery of the Ministry of Justice (Departamento de Recuperação de Ativos do Ministério da Justiça), and the Federal Police itself (HAGE, 2010). During this period, there was an increase in resources allocated to the agency, new civil service examinations were held to fill internal positions (including 'delegado', 'agent', 'escrivão', 'perito', 'papiloscopista', and others), and the number of police operations grew (ARANTES, 2019; AZEVEDO and PILAU, 2018). Internally, this legitimacy was also recognized, and Federal Police officers began to see themselves as a kind of 'elite' police in two ways. First, they were a well-equipped and qualified force,

with decent salaries and good working conditions. Second, their policing duties were primarily focused on the more privileged sectors of society (BAJOTTO, 2009).

Within this context, we see the Federal Police playing a more prominent role in the Brazilian criminal justice system, particularly by conducting what is known in Brazil as 'inquérito policial' (criminal investigation). Rocha (2004) emphasizes that this instrument was heavily debated during the drafting of the Organic Law of the Federal Police between 2002 and 2003. ''Delegados', on one side, advocated for the 'inquérito' as an instrument for investigating crimes. On the other hand, agents and 'peritos' argued that the 'inquérito' is not an instrument for investigating crimes and advocated for its abolition. Rocha (2004) explains that after the 'delegados' lost the prerogative of issuing search and seizure warrants with the 1988 Constitution, the 'inquérito policial' became a tool for them to maintain power and corporatist control. Arantes and Moreira (2019) argue that in contrast to the 1990s, when impunity was attributed to the inefficiency of the criminal justice system, today this perception is changing mainly because the focus has shifted from the civil to the criminal domain. Moreover, evidence-gathering mechanisms like wiretaps, preventive and temporary arrests, and plea bargains have become more effective.

During Lula's first two terms, the Federal Police increased its political prominence by joining national and international 'anti-corruption' networks. This movement also elevated agents from other legal institutions, such as the Federal Attorney-General's Office (Advocacia-Geral da União) and the Federal Public Prosecution Office (Ministério Público Federal), as shown by studies from Engelmann and Menuzzi (2020), Engelmann and Pilau (2021), Engelmann, Menuzzi, and Pilau (2023), and Cornelius (2023). Costa, Machado and Zackseski (2016) explain that since 1999, when the Criminal Investigations Unit (Delegacia de Investigação de Inquéritos Especiais) was established, the Federal Police became invested in combating money laundering and criminal organizations. With the dissolution of that unit in 2022, the Division for the Repression of Financial Crimes and Money Laundering (Divisão de Repressão a Crimes Financeiros e Lavagem de Dinheiro) was created. Arantes (2011) analyzed the agency's operations and found that public corruption had become one of its main targets, affecting politicians and high-ranking members of the Republic's bureaucracy. Furthermore, Fagundes (2022) showed, based on endogenous aspects,

that the anticorruption theme was integrated into the agency through the same legal instruments employed to combat money laundering. There was also a dual movement: a shift in discourse towards improving the Federal Police's crime-fighting performance, and the institution's prioritization of 'anti-corruption', especially from 2011 onwards.

Over time, the institution gained greater recognition. As demonstrated by Lopes (2013), data from the 2002 Brazilian Social Survey (PESB) indicated that 59.3% of the population stated they had little or no trust in the Federal Police. A survey by the Association of Brazilian Judges (AMB) showed that 75.5% of the population trusted the Federal Police in 2007, and 70% in 2008 – at the time the Federal Police were competing with the Armed Forces to be the most trusted institution in the country (LOPES, 2013). This pattern persisted. In 2019, the Brazilian Association of Business Communication found that the Federal Police was the second most trusted institution, only behind the Fire Department (ABERJE, 2019). Possibly due to the institution's growing recognition, in addition to other specific circumstances, an unprecedented event occurred during Jair Bolsonaro's government (2019-2022): a 'delegado' of the Federal Police was appointed Minister of Justice. This position had traditionally been held by lawyers and jurists and, since the country's redemocratization, had never been occupied by a member of the police forces.

This article thus presents the results of a study on the candidacies of Federal Police officers[4] for elective positions. To conduct this investigation, we focused on candidacies for the Chamber of Deputies in five elections – 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2018 –, exploring the major changes in the profiles and electoral campaigns of these candidates throughout the period under study. First, we identified the candidacies using data from the repository of the Superior Electoral Court (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, TSE), highlighting the main changes in these candidacies over time. Next, we analyzed the candidates' electoral campaigns using various sources, primarily focusing on videos published on YouTube.

The remainder of this article is structured into four sections. In the first section, we detail the methodological steps, specifically the data collection procedures

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[4] Although the union movement within the Federal Police considers only those fulfilling the roles of agents, 'escrivães', and 'papiloscopistas' as 'Federal Police officers', as noted by Silva (2018), we will use the term more broadly in this article to include all members of the agency. We will specify different positions (such as 'delegados', 'agents', 'escrivães', etc) only when analytically relevant.

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and the gathering of the study's empirical material. The second section outlines the profile of the candidates. In the third section, we analyze the qualitative data collected, including the positions adopted by the candidates during their electoral campaigns and the various meanings attributed to the 'fight against corruption' in their discourses. The last section concludes.

Constructing the study's data matrix

We used multiple sources and data collection techniques to gather the empirical material. In the first stage, we identified the Federal Police officers who were candidates in the 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2018 elections. Unlike members of other Brazilian police forces, most Federal Police officers typically identify themselves as 'federal public servants' in the TSE's[5] Electoral Data Repository. We needed to list all candidates in this category to identify those with links to the Federal Police. We verified each candidate's name through search engines, which returned publications from the Official Gazette of the Union, résumés, and other documents that helped us identify them. To list as many candidates as possible, we also used newspaper articles about Federal Police candidates, which most of the time identified candidates who had registered under other professional categories, such as 'lawyer', 'deputy', or 'others'[6]. Using this strategy, we identified 89 Federal Police officers, both active and retired, who ran for the Chamber of Deputies during the period under investigation.

After identifying their link to the Federal Police, we built our own database and collected the following information for each candidacy to the Chamber of Deputies: 01. state of the federation; 02. candidate's name; 03. candidate's ballot name; 04. political party; 05. date of birth; 06. declared occupation; 07. level of education (completed higher education, completed high school, incomplete higher education); 08. marital status (married, divorced, single, judicially separated); 09. election outcome (elected, not elected, 'suplente' (substitute deputy)); 10. whether they were seeking reelection; 11. valid votes received; 12. whether they had run in

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[5]This repository is maintained by the Brazilian electoral justice system and provides data on candidates from all regions participating in municipal, state, and federal elections in Brazil. Access through the link: <https://dadosabertos.tse.jus.br/> .

[6]Due to the limitations of the sources used for the search, some candidates with ties to the Federal Police may not have been included in this analysis. In any case, we aimed to include as many actors as possible.

previous elections. The database also includes the candidate's position in the Federal Police ('delegado', 'agent', 'escrivão', 'perito', 'papiloscopista', or administrative agent ('agente administrativo'), their background in leadership roles in Federal Police unions and associations (president, vice-president, director, etc). Whether they held political positions (city councilor, deputy, etc), positions in state bureaucracy (public security secretary, advisor in courts, etc.), and whether they were retired.

Finally, we collected data related to the electoral campaigns of these candidates. To define the period we consider as the 'electoral campaign', we used the official dates for each election when electoral propaganda is allowed on television, the Internet, and the print press. From August 16 to October 05 (2018); from July 06 to October 03 (2014); from July 06 to October 01 (2010); from July 06 to September 28 (2006); and, from July 06 to October 03 (2002).[7] Before collecting campaign materials for this group, we mapped the availability of each candidate's data on the Internet. We observed a significant variation in the availability of materials between 2006 and 2018, and we did not find any materials available for the 2002 elections. We attribute this difference to the increased use of social media over the past decade, particularly the rising trend of candidates creating individual and personalized YouTube channels, which was our main source for building the database of electoral campaigns.

The transformations in the profiles of Federal Police candidates over five elections

The collected data allow us to capture the transformations in the profiles of Federal Police candidates running for the Chamber of Deputies over the five elections analyzed in this study. During the period under investigation, there was a significant increase in the number of members of the Federal Police in representative politics. The number of Federal Police candidates tripled between 2002 and 2018, as shown in Table 01. The 89 candidacies for the Chamber of Deputies were distributed as follows: 11 candidates and none, elected in 2002; 07 candidates and 01, elected in 2006; 11 candidates and 02, elected in 2010; 22 candidates and 04, elected in 2014; and 38 candidates and 06, elected in 2018. In absolute terms, excluding reelection

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[7]Although some videos were uploaded to YouTube before or after these dates, we presume that many were part of the candidates' television electoral campaigns, given their format. For that reason, they were included in the analysis.

candidacies, 10 members of the Federal Police were elected over the entire period. The relative percentage of elected candidates in the five elections allows us to conclude that the number of elected candidates has increased only between 2010 and 2014; however, in absolute terms, the success of these candidacies continued to grow throughout the entire period (2002-2018). After 2014, despite the increased number of candidates, the percentage of elected candidates decreased. This increase in the number of candidates aligns with the sharp rise in candidacies from civil and military police forces over the past decade (BERLATTO, CODATO, and BOLOGNESI, 2016; LIMA, 2019).

Table 01. Federal police officers running for and elected to the Chamber of Deputies

Year	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018
Candidates	11	07	11	22	38
Elected	0	01	02	04	06

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on the study's database.

We observed that out of the 89 analyzed candidates, only 29 (32.5%) had attempted to run in at least one previous election. This shows that many individuals leaving the Federal Police to run for political office have no prior experience with elections. Table 02 shows that, for the most part, Federal Police officers who ran for the Chamber of Deputies were first-time candidates. In all elections, the percentage of first-time candidates remained above 60%. Only in the 2018 elections did we observe candidates making their third or fourth attempt, and some already in their fifth candidacy. This suggests that Federal Police candidates are gaining more political experience, a trend to be verified in subsequent elections.

Of the 29 candidates who have run at least once, 09 (31%) registered their candidacies exclusively for federal deputy, while 20 (69%) also ran for city councilor, mayor, and state deputy. Of the 13 successful candidacies during the entire period, 03 were from candidates who had previously run exclusively for federal deputy, while the other 10 were first-time candidates. This suggests that the path to national politics is accessible to candidates with ties to the Federal Police who invest their political capital to reach the lower house, without needing to run for other elective offices first or having any prior electoral experience. Table 02 summarizes the attempts at candidacies, indicating whether it was the first, second, third, fourth, or fifth time.

Therefore, for Federal Police officers, building a political career at the municipal or state levels is not necessarily an asset for achieving success in elections to the Chamber of Deputies. This statement highlights the need to better understand other aspects of these candidacies. To do this, we analyzed the candidates' associative background (leadership positions in associations and unions, such as president, vice-president, director, etc), political background (elected positions), and bureaucratic background (appointed positions – 'cargos de confiança' or 'indicação política' – within the Brazilian state). These backgrounds are often combined.

Table 02. Federal police officers' candidacies in previous elections (2002-2018)

Nº of candidacies	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018
Second Time	03	01	02	05	05
Second time (%)	27,3%	14,3%	18,2%	22,7%	13,2%
Third Time	01	0	0	01	05
Third time (%)	9%	0%	0%	4,55%	13,2%
Fourth Time	0	0	0	01	03
Fourth time (%)	0%	0%	0%	4,55%	7,9%
Fifth time	0	0	0	0	02
Fifth time (%)	0%	0%	0%	0%	5,2%
First-time candidate	07	06	09	15	23
First-time candidate (%)	63,7%	85,7%	81,8%	68,2%	60,5%

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on the study's database.

In the 2002 election, among the four candidates with experience in the mentioned positions, three had served as director-general of the Federal Police. Although not covered in this analysis, it is worth mentioning the successful candidacy of Romeu Tuma for the Federal Senate that year. He had served as director-general of the Federal Police from 1986 to 1992 (AGÊNCIA SENADO, 2002). In subsequent elections, only two former directors-general ran for office, indicating a trend in which directors-general would distance themselves from institutional politics. In 2002, most Federal Police candidates – 63.6% – had no previous experience in associative, political, or bureaucratic positions before running for office.

In the 2006 election, a new type of candidacy appeared and would reappear in subsequent years: that of a 'delegado' of the Federal Police who had served as secretary of public security (for Rio de Janeiro from 2004 to 2006). This candidate was the only successful Federal Police candidate that year. Of the other six candidates who ran in 2006, two had some associative, political, or bureaucratic background and had

already run in the 2002 elections, while the other four did not have any of these backgrounds.

In the 2010 election, of the eleven candidates, only two had prior experience as union leaders, one candidate was the former Federal Police director-general, and another was the former secretary of public security in Rio de Janeiro who had won a seat in the Chamber of Deputies in the 2006 election. In the 2010 election, only the two candidates who took part in well-publicized Federal Police operations were elected, as they described in their books (FRANCISCHINI, 2010; QUEIROZ, 2013). While one of these elected candidates had served as Special Municipal Secretary for Anti-Drug Policies in Curitiba, the other had no background in positions outside the Federal Police.

In 2014, the proportion of candidates with experience in union and associative leadership rose: 08 out of 22 candidates (36.3%) had this background. This contrasts with 02 out of 11 candidates (18.2%) in 2010, 01 out of 07 (14.2%) in 2006, and 02 out of 11 (18.2%) in 2002. Despite this, the four candidates elected in 2014 had diverse profiles, none of whom had prior experience as union or associative leaders. In this election, unlike the elections of 2010 and 2006, there were already four candidates with experience in public security secretariats, indicating a growing trend of Federal Police officers holding this position in their states' bureaucracies before running for office.

In the 2018 election, out of the 38 candidates, only 10 (26.3%) had experience in leadership positions within their professional associations or unions. However, despite this slight reduction compared to 2014, 03 of the 06 elected candidates had leadership experience, indicating that this type of background may have gained more significance for the success of Federal Police candidacies between 2014 and 2018. In 2018, the number of candidates who had previously held elective office increased: to 10 out of 38 candidates (26.3%), compared to 03 out of 22 in 2014 (13.6%), 01 out of 11 in 2010 (9.1%), 01 out of 07 in 2006 (14.2%), and 01 out of 11 in 2002 (9.1%). Therefore, in 2018, there were more professional candidates linked to the Federal Police in institutional politics. This is because the number of those who had previously held political offices increased while the number of first-time candidates declined, as indicated in Table 03. The predominant profile of candidates in the 2018

elections involved individuals linked to associations and politics. As for electoral success, the data indicate an increased influence of associations and unions, as half of the elected candidates were union and/or association leaders – although the number of candidates with this type of background has reduced.

We see changes in the candidates' profiles, allowing us to support some hypotheses. Firstly, the data show a shift in backgrounds within the bureaucracy, moving from former directors-general of the Federal Police to candidates who had previously served as public security secretaries. We argue that this can be explained by the increasing number of members of the Federal Police, particularly 'delegados', occupying these positions, as highlighted by Berlatto (2017). According to the author, one of the justifications for appointing a public security secretary from the Federal Police was the preference for an 'outsider'. "Someone from outside a particular state who is above local rivalries and detached from political conflicts at the local level", therefore promoting "a supposed 'depoliticization' of the position, reducing the perceived negative interference of politics on the state-level police forces" (BERLATTO, 2017, p. 135 – free translation). Another change in the candidates' profiles occurred in 2010, when individuals who had served as 'delegados' in widely publicized Federal Police operations were elected. We attribute this shift to the institutional changes in the Federal Police during the first Lula administration (2003-2006), a topic discussed in the literature. These changes enhanced the Federal Police's legitimacy in the eyes of society and brought it into the media spotlight (ARANTES, 2011; FAGUNDES, 2022; LOPES, 2013). As we will explore in the next section, the trend of using Federal Police operations as electoral assets in campaigns is confirmed in the following years.

Table 03. Associative, political and/or bureaucratic backgrounds of candidates (2002-2018)

| Background	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018
Associative	0	0	02	07	10
Political	0	0	0	01	05
Bureaucratic	02	02	02	03	01
Associative and political	01	01	0	0	0
Associative and bureaucratic	01	0	0	01	0
Political and bureaucratic	0	0	01	02	05
None	07	04	06	08	17
Total number of candidates	11	07	11	22	38

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on the study's database.

In 2014, compared to previous years, the number of candidates with ties to Federal Police associations and unions increased. We should therefore, consider the possible reasons for the increase in the number of candidates with this type of background. Silva (2018, p. 153), who focused on the internal conflicts between 'delegados' and other positions within the Federal Police, provided two insights into this phenomenon. Silva (2018) explains that the union movement of agents, 'escrivães', and 'peritos' weakened after a strike they organized in 2012. At the same time, in March 2014, the Lava Jato operation was launched. This operation, widely publicized in the media as a 'fight against corruption', became known for the legal actions brought by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office against executives of the largest construction companies in the country (such as Odebrecht and Camargo Corrêa, among others), 'doleiros' (illegal foreign exchange traders). And members of the political elite, including former presidents, cabinet members, and senators (LIMA, 2021). According to Silva (2018), since 2014, when Lava Jato gained public attention, there has been a shift in the unionism of Federal Police members (excluding 'delegados'). "The focus moved towards emphasizing the importance of the work done by the agents in major Federal Police operations, as the social benefits of these efforts were predominantly being credited to the 'delegados'" (SILVA, 2018, p. 153 – free translation).

Thus, instead of hindering investigations, the union movement began seeking "legitimacy for its demands by channeling the public recognition gained by the Federal Police operations and by the role played by federal agents in these operations, much like the 'delegados' did [...]" (SILVA, 2018, p. 153). The second factor linking unionism to the rise in Federal Police candidacies is that agents used the visibility of Lava Jato to leverage their demands. In 2018, the National Federation of Federal Police Officers (FENAPEF) supported Federal Police members running for office through the 'Front of Federal Police Agents', also known as the 'Lava Jato Front' (SILVA, 2018). In an interview with 'El País' (2018), the then-president of FENAPEF stated that Federal Police officers had formed a group of candidates "to try to take advantage of this moment of fighting corruption [...]". Thus, during this period, the "adoption of a realpolitik unionism, with the pragmatic goal of transforming police officers into political actors [...]" was consolidated (SILVA, 2018, p. 153-154 – free translation).

Additionally, the data in Graph 01 support this hypothesis, showing an increase in the absolute number of agents, 'escrivães', and 'peritos criminais' running for general elections starting in 2014. In relative terms, the number of 'delegados' running for office decreased over the period under study, losing their predominance among candidates with ties to the Federal Police: 08 (72.7%) in 2002, 04 (57.1%) in 2006, 06 (54.5%) in 2010, 07 (31.8%) in 2014, and 13 (34.2%) in 2018. The number of agents fluctuated over time: 03 (27.2%) in 2002, 03 (42.8%) in 2006, 02 (18.1%) in 2010, 08 (36.3%) in 2014, and 12 (31.5%) in 2018. The 'escrivães', who had no candidates in the 2002 and 2006 elections, presented a growing number of candidacies in 2010 (9.1%), 2014 (18.2%), and 2018 (26.3%). 'Peritos', despite increasing in absolute numbers, experienced a decline in relative terms: 02 candidates in 2010 and 2014 (18.2% and 9.1%, respectively) and 03 in 2018 (7.9%). The importance of associativism in the rise in the number of candidates is clear: nearly half (40.9%) of the 22 'escrivães' and 'peritos' who ran in 2010 had held leadership positions in unions and associations. This percentage is higher than that of agents (21,4%) and 'delegados' (18.4%) across all five elections we analyzed.

Graph 01. Candidates by career track at the Federal Police (2002-2018)[8]
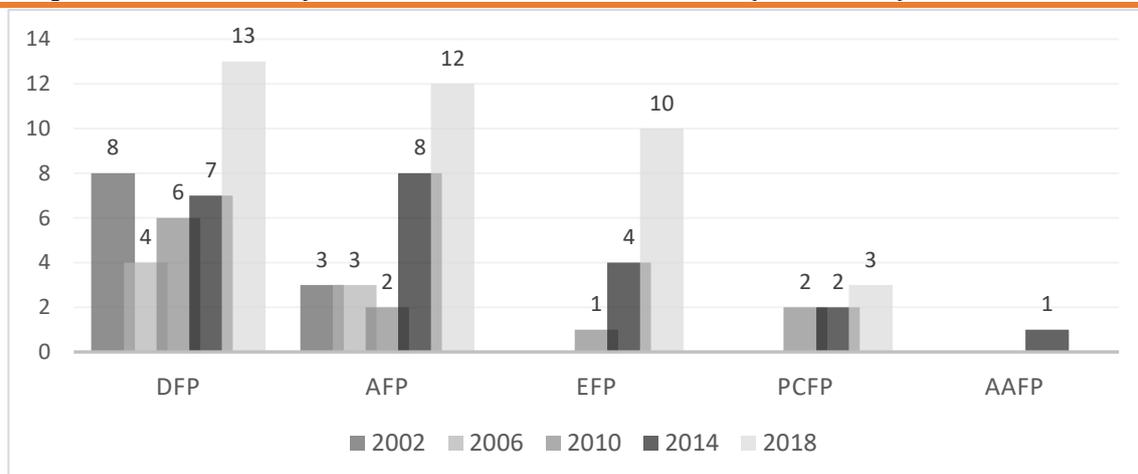
Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on the database built for this study.

We argue that internal disputes within the Federal Police influenced the union strategies of its members. This factor, combined with the context of the Lava Jato

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[8]The graph presents four of the five positions within the Federal Police: 'Delegado' of the Federal Police (DFP); Agent of the Federal Police (AFP); 'Escrivão' of the Federal Police (EFP) and 'Perito Criminal' of the Federal Police (PCFP). And one of the administrative careers: Administrative Agent of the Federal Police (AAFP).

operation, encouraged Federal Police officers to enter the political arena. Another significant change was the choice of parties by Federal Police candidates running for the Chamber of Deputies. Table 04 shows that these candidacies can be divided into two periods. In the first period, the choice of parties was more diverse, with candidates aligning with a broad range of parties including the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), the Workers' Party (PT), the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), and the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), among others. The second period began in 2014, with candidates primarily concentrating in center-right and right-wing parties such as Patriota, NOVO, Solidariedade, and especially the Social Liberal Party (PSL), chosen by nine candidates in the 2018 elections. This data suggest that while political scandals expanded opportunities for these candidates to run for office, they also restricted their party choices, particularly since some parties were involved in Federal Police investigations. A statement by the president of FENAPEF supports this hypothesis, as he said that the PT's involvement in scandals such as the Mensalão and Lava Jato led affiliated Federal Police officers to cut ties with the party or avoid running for office (EL PAÍS, 2018).

The election of former Army captain and then federal deputy Jair Bolsonaro, with his discourse against corruption and the political system, likely caused more Federal Police candidates to align with the right of the Brazilian political spectrum (LOPES, ALBUQUERQUE, and BEZERRA, 2020). The data demonstrate that this shift had immediate effects on the electoral success of these candidacies. The seven successful candidacies up to the 2014 election came from various parties: Brazilian Democratic Movement (01), Communist Party of Brazil (01), Brazilian Social Democracy Party (01), Social Christian Party (02), Christian Social Democratic Party (01), and Solidariedade (01). In 2018, out of the 06 victorious candidates, 05 were from Jair Bolsonaro's party at the time, the PSL, and 01 was from Podemos. It is important to note that one of the candidates elected with a record number of votes in 2014, who sought re-election in 2018, was an 'escrivão' of the Federal Police and the son of Jair Bolsonaro. It was expected that he would run with the same party as his father that year.

Table 04. Political parties of candidates linked to the Federal Police (2002-2018)

Party Acronym	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018
PFL/DEMOCRATAS	01	0	0	0	0
PMDB/MDB	01	01	0	02	01
NOVO	0	0	0	0	04
PCdoB	0	0	02	01	0
PDT	01	0	0	01	01
PEN/PATRIOTA	0	0	0	02	0
PHS	0	01	0	01	01
PL	03	02	0	0	0
PMN	0	0	0	01	01
PODEMOS	0	0	0	0	02
PP	0	0	01	01	01
PPL	0	0	0	0	02
PPS	0	0	0	0	03
PR	0	0	0	01	01
PRB	0	0	0	0	01
PROS	0	0	0	0	02
PRP	0	0	01	01	0
PSB	01	01	0	01	0
PSC	0	0	0	02	0
PSD	0	0	0	02	02
PSDB	02	01	02	01	0
PSDC	0	01	0	01	0
PSL	0	0	01	0	09
PSOL	0	0	01	0	0
PT	0	0	01	0	0
PTdoB/AVANTE	01	0	0	01	01
PTB	01	0	0	0	01
PTC	0	0	01	01	01
PV	0	0	01	0	0
REDE	0	0	0	0	01
SD	0	0	0	02	03

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on data provided by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE).

From public security to anti-corruption: the electoral campaigns of Federal Police Officers

Changes were observed not only in the profiles of the candidates but also in their electoral campaigns throughout the period under study. Between 2006 and 2010, a predominant discourse in the electoral campaigns of candidates with ties to the Federal Police was their portrayal as experts in public security, similar to what members of other Brazilian police forces usually do (CYMROT, 2014; MACAULAY, 2019; NOVAES, 2023). One representative example was a 'delegado' candidate in 2006 who used the following motto as his campaign slogan: "The place for children is in school, and the place for criminals is in jail" (ITAGIBA, 2006)[9]. In one of his television ads, this same candidate claimed that during his tenure as secretary of public security in Rio de Janeiro, "R$ 150 million were invested in security" and "80 drug lords were

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[9]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.

taken off the streets" (ITAGIBA, 2006)[10], showing that his main focus in the campaign was public security. Other discourses were also present in the campaigns, such as promises to reform the public security and investigation systems in Brazil.

There was a shift starting from the 2010 elections, when candidates began to focus more on the discourse of 'combating corruption', with increased emphasis in the 2014 and 2018 elections. Despite this shift, the punitive aspect behind their discourses did not disappear; it simply changed focus. In the case of anti-corruption, candidates promised that their presence in the Chamber of Deputies would lead to the creation of stricter laws against those who embezzle public funds. The relationship between security and anti-corruption is clear: "One of São Paulo's biggest concerns is security. There's no doubt about that. On the streets, at home, the feeling is one of fear. Another problem is corruption [...]" (QUEIROZ, 2010)[11].

"Corruption feeds into violence, drug trafficking, prostitution, abandoned children, and robbery. Embezzled money is needed for security, health, and education. For a Brazil with justice and without corruption. I ask for your vote. Together we will win" (QUEIROZ, 2010)[12].

> This is one of the great evils I seek to address, the issue of impunity. Today in Brazil a guy commits a crime, a citizen commits a common crime, a thug commits a common crime, and he remains calm because he knows he will have a custody hearing. The white-collar thug who embezzles millions of reais stays calm because he has good lawyers who will come up with crazy defenses so he can get out with an ankle monitor, serve house arrest, or something like that. Our criminal law must be reviewed because Brazilians are starting to have faith, or lose faith, I mean, in our justice system. "Wait a minute, how does this work? I can commit a crime and then just go back home?" "So, it's worth being a criminal?" That's what we have to change. This feeling among our people, they can't take it anymore. Not just the people, the police too, there are serious officers who are quitting because they don't believe in the system anymore (SOUZA, 2018)[13].

Although focused on the political class, this rhetoric also aligns with the broader punitive rhetoric often used by police-deputies in Brazil. In the case of some of these police-deputies, the language of police culture – based on the war or

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[10]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.
[11]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.
[12]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.
[13]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.

crusade of 'good' against 'evil' – disseminates through a punitive-moralizing logic in society (NOVELLO and ALVAREZ, 2022). At times, candidates directly reference their activities as police officers, aiming to leverage this experience as a demonstration of political capacity to voters:

> When I was the Superintendent of the Federal Police, operations were conducted that led to the expulsion and arrest of deputies and other politicians. As a Federal Deputy, I will draft bills to impose harsher penalties for crimes committed by politicians, eliminating the *foro privilegiado* (original jurisdiction of the higher court) and severely punishing those who steal from public coffers (LUNA, 2010)[14].

> The Federal Police conducted operations that directly helped you. Remember those crooks who stole your child's school meals? Or the bloodsuckers involved in the ambulance mafia? And the notorious *taturanas*, who stole 300 million of your money? You won't elect those guys anymore! You have an option! For Federal Deputy, vote […] Let's put the feds on them! […] (LUNA,2010)[15].

As we can see, the speeches delivered by these candidates during their electoral campaigns are rooted in a punitive approach. But a second dimension that emerges from their speeches is the emphasis on their own virtuousness. When making reference to their virtuousness, the idea of 'probity', or the appeal to honesty, is linked to their corporative sense of belonging to the Federal Police, which is contrasted with the political realm. This contrast mirrors that seen in anti-corruption operations, where police officers in charge of investigations often stand on one side and high-ranking political or business figures under investigation stand on the other. Sometimes, these candidates try to distance themselves from the image of professional politicians, as illustrated by this statement from a 'delegado': *"For the past two decades, I have worked directly in operations combating organized crime and corruption as a Federal Police Delegado. Deputy I am, Federal Delegado I remain"* (CÂMARA DOS DEPUTADOS, 2024)[16]. In the cases analyzed, this attempt to escape the image of a professional politician appears when candidates

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[14]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.

[15]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.

[16]This discourse is similar to that of Olímpio Gomes, a state deputy from São Paulo, who, according to Cymrot (2014, p. 223), claimed to take more pride in being a military police officer than in being a deputy.

justify their candidacies as an opportunity for voters to choose presumably honest representatives:

> What people ask for the most is what is most lacking in politics today, which is honesty. People can't take being fooled anymore. Everyone says that politicians only show up at election time, everywhere I go people talk about how politicians appear full of promises and in the end they show up, they prove to be full of lies because they promise things they can't fulfill, they promise things they know they won't deliver, and he also says, the people is very upset, as we've already said, with corruption. About that, I have nothing to worry, I lay my head in peace on my pillow because unlike other politicians who say they are against corruption, I don't usually say I'm against corruption, I have a job. I have a job fighting corruption. I've been working against it for ten years. And not just by working with the Federal Police, I got the opportunity to organize many events, symposiums, and races to bring the people of our state together to talk about the issue, look for alternatives and solutions, within what each of us can do, because we are all capable of fighting corruption (SOUZA, 2018)[17].

In addition to the 'punitive approach' and the 'emphasis on virtuousness', there is a final dimension, 'political renewal', which is one of the meanings attributed to the anti-corruption efforts in the campaigns of Federal Police officers. This idea is also reflected in the reasons these individuals give for running for elective office. On the one hand, some project their candidacies as an opportunity to renew the political arena and facilitate the passing of anti-corruption laws, offering voters their transition from working in law enforcement to drafting legislation. On the other hand, some use the discourse of political renewal to discredit a 'corrupt political class' that no longer deserves to hold office. Thus, they present their candidacies as the solution:

> For more than a year and a half, we've been discussing public security and solutions to this crisis we're facing in Brazil. What is missing is commitment and political will. We, Federal Police officers, are running as candidates for federal deputies in every state in Brazil. Have you ever thought about what it would be like if we had ten Federal Police officers elected, each with two officers in their offices? That's terrible news for the bad politicians we have in the National Congress. These bad politicians tried to shut down major operations, adding more bureaucracy to the investigations. Over the next fifty-three days we will present the problems and solutions and show you where in Brazilian legislation we need to make changes so we can have peace again. We are getting inside the National Congress to look for laws and examples of laws that can help investigations, not to do what others have

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[17]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.

been doing: trying to shut down Lava Jato, cutting the budget for the investigations, and preserving the *foro privilegiado*. On the contrary, we are committed to change, committed to the relentless fight against corruption. Enough with thugs on the loose roaming the streets while we, the citizens, are trapped inside our homes (MENEGUELLI, 2018)[18].

Federal Police officers are essential in the fight against corruption. And now, they've also decided to make their contribution from within the National Congress. I am running for Federal Deputy, and I represent the National Front of Federal Police Officers here in the state. Enhancing the work of the Federal Police in combating corruption is crucial to prevent more embezzlement of public funds. Just like you, we want concrete and immediate measures to fight corruption, penalizing not only the corrupt but also the corruptors. We need to bring morality to Brazil, and your vote will be crucial in this process of renewal (SANDERSON, 2018)[19].

The fact [is] that we realize our work in the Federal Police, despite being very good work, very honorable, very serious, and necessary to combat crimes, to identify when money is embezzled, and to arrest the thugs who steal our money, this work gets there late. It gets there after the money was taken, after the thugs have already spent much of the money, and then we go there and arrest the criminal. What we want is to change politics so these kinds of things don't happen again, because all these years while money is being stolen, people are not getting their medication, people are leaving the hospitals mutilated, health workers aren't receiving their salaries, people are dying. And this cannot be undone. We need to replace the politician, we need to change our conception of what politics is, to ensure that this kind of situation does not happen again (SOUZA, 2018)[20].

A typology of discourses is therefore being proposed here, involving three dimensions: discourses based on a 'punitive approach', discourses emphasizing *virtuousness*, and discourses claiming for 'political renewal'. This typology represents an attempt to organize the candidates' discourses, which are varied and complex. Most of the time, these discourses are mixed and revert to more fundamental issues of police activity, such as operations in which they have participated, views on the fight against drug trafficking, corporatist and public security agendas, and more. In any case, data show that starting from 2010, election campaigns of candidates with ties to the Federal Police began to incorporate anticorruption as an electoral asset. Discourse mentioning corruption had already been used to legitimize the mandates of police officers in the Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo (CYMROT, 2014). Two explanatory hypotheses can be formulated to explain this phenomenon. First, the investment in the

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[18]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.
[19]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.
[20]Available at Harvard Dataverse <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZSRZDA>.

Federal Police during Lula's first term resulted in greater legitimacy for the agency's operations, as indicated by Lopes (2013), Arantes, (2011), and Fagundes (2022). Second, internal struggles within the agency and changes in Federal Police unionism appear to have directly influenced candidates' adoption of the anticorruption discourse, allowing them to politically benefit from the outcomes of Lava Jato and other anticorruption investigations (SILVA, 2018)[21]. Therefore, three elements reinforce each other and help explain how Federal Police officers use anti-corruption for electoral purposes: two are historical, marked by significant investment in the Federal Police during Lula's first two administrations (2003-2010) and internal conflicts in Federal Police unionism; the third is circumstantial, with the emergence of the Lava Jato operation starting in 2014.

Conclusions

We highlighted the changes in the profile of candidates linked to the Federal Police and their electoral campaigns over the course of five elections. The data show that, in addition to the increase in the number of candidates linked to the Federal Police, there is a trend towards political professionalization, more participation from union and association leaders of the Federal Police in the analyzed elections, and a closer alignment of these candidates with center-right and right-wing parties. In 2010, Federal Police officers began using the theme of 'combating corruption' as an electoral asset in their election campaigns. We argue that these transformations occurred due to internal changes in the Federal Police, especially increased investment in the agency during Lula's first term (2003-2006), changes in the union activities of those linked to this agency, and the impact of the Lava Jato operation.

It is interesting to note that in the post-redemocratization context, while judicial institutions and the Federal Police often sought autonomy and political independence, this effort to establish boundaries with politics and its inner workings may have provided a foundation for strategies aimed at winning elected positions. This means that while Federal Police 'delegados' claim their activities and agency are independent of political dynamics, their candidacies reveal other

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[21]It is important to note that other key figures in this anticorruption operation, such as the federal judge and the federal prosecutor in charge of the judicial cases, also entered politics during the 2022 elections.

connections to Brazilian politics through their involvement in electoral campaigns and their occupation of positions in the executive and legislative branches. Although this study is original in mapping and analyzing the profiles and electoral campaigns of members of the Federal Police for the Chamber of Deputies, there are still some open questions related to this research object. Federal police officers have entered politics to implement union or association strategies and even to use the political capital accumulated by certain individuals. However, there has been a public debate about rules, that could prevent Federal Police officers from running for office. In addition to mapping the discourses of these actors on social media and outside the electoral period, it is important to analyze the political activities of the elected Federal Police officers during their terms in office. Therefore, new perspectives and future research are needed to delve more deeply into the dimensions of political power within the Federal Police.

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