What is left of the Brazilian Left?*

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Abstract

Lula da Silva emerged in the recent years as the icon of Latin America’s “responsible left”, one that “pursues the twin goals of growth and equality within the confines of a responsible economic policy” (Economist, 08/31/06). After running three times unsuccessfully, Lula was finally elected Brazilian president in 2002. As opposed to 1989, when Lula establishes the default on the Brazilian external debt and a comprehensive agrarian reform as his main policy goals, Lula’s 2002 program prioritizes labor de-regulation, respect to debt contracts and central bank independence. In many ways, a program claimed to be little distinguishable from the one historically promoted by the Brazilian center-right. In this paper, I conduct a preliminary content analysis of Lula’s TV campaign in 1989 and 2002, and highlight the major changes in Lula’s discourse in the period.

After twenty two years of existence, three defeats and eight years of systematic opposition to the Cardoso government, the Brazilian Workers’ Party finally managed to elect Lula with 61% of the votes in the second round of the 2002 presidential election. With the victory, Lula became the first Brazilian president from the working class, one whose political trajectory is confounded with the most important labor union emerged during authoritarianism, as well as with the history of the Brazilian most important leftist party.

Lula’s prospects of victory triggered a dramatic reaction among financial investors, reflected in the country risk[1] which doubled in the six months prior to the poll, and reached a ten year high of 2395 points two months before the election. During the Russian crisis, for the sake of comparison, this same index did not exceed 1100 points. Foreign capital also flew from the country, leading to a sharp devaluation of the Brazilian Real, from US$ 2.31 in January to US$...
3.89 in September 2002. Inflation rose far above the average of the previous years, and the annualized rate of 15% reached in mid-2002 led to fears that Brazil's ten-year long stabilization process was in jeopardy.

Once in office, Lula implemented tight monetary and fiscal policies, reflected in a 15% real interest rate and primary surplus of 5% of GDP during a recession, allegedly in order to restore macroeconomic equilibrium. Besides that, in the first year the PT government cut social spending, launched a social security reform which taxed retired public employees, as well as a project ceding independence to the Brazilian Central Bank, policies that contradicted not only the Lula's campaign promises but also party's historical positions. These reforms, while frustrating PT's traditional supporters and provoking the exodus of party members, were successful in restoring “confidence” among investors and creditor governments, as evidenced by the recovery of the Brazilian stockmarket a few months after Lula's inauguration.

Lula’s embrace of neoliberalism, while significantly affected by the crisis occurred during the 2002 election, is claimed to be the culmination of a trajectory started after his first defeat as a presidential candidate in 1989, and that could be identified already during the campaign period. In order to communicate the abandonment of the radicalism and “combativeness” of the past to the Brazilian elites and make his election viable, Lula’s campaign in 2002 adopted a motto that meant something like “Little Lula, peace and love” (Lulinha paz e amor). Most of Lula’s TV campaign in this year is targeted to leave behind his historical image of a radical labor leader, who in 1989 defended the renegotiation of the Brazilian public debt and a comprehensive agrarian reform as his major policy goals. That image is replaced by one of an optimistic and reasonable negotiator, able to lead a team of experienced specialists capable of tackling Brazil’s most pressing problems.

Lula’s move from the left, towards a moderate discourse, is not exceptional in Latin America. In other countries in the region, leftist politicians that had central roles before the 90s, eventually becoming presidents at that time, re-appeared in the political scenario with a different discourse years later. The earliest example of that phenomenon comes from Andrez Perez in Venezuela, elected in 1974 and widely known for the statization of Venezuelan oil and steel industries. Elected again in 1989, Perez adopted an austerity plan that led to popular up-rises, coup attempts and ended up on an impeachment in 1993. Others cases followed such as Alan Garcia in Peru (1985 and 2006), Oscar Arias Sanchez in Costa Rica (1986 and 2006), Ricardo Lagos in Chile (a diplomat in the Allende government and president in 2000), Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua (1985 and 2006), Leonel Fernandez in the Dominican Republic (1996 and 2006).
This paper aims to analyze changes in Lula’s discourse from the first election when he ran for presidency, in 1989, until the first one when he was effectively elected in 2002, with a focus on the major policies defended in each campaign, Lula’s self-definition as opposed to his competitor, as well as the terms on which he establishes the political debate. The framework developed here aims to constitute as a pilot for a wider project on left-wing discourse in Latin America, that will include the cases such mentioned above.

**Background - the 1989 and 2002 Elections**

The Brazilian presidential election of 1989 was the first when voters regained the right to choose their president directly, after 21 years of an authoritarian regime and one indirect election in 1985. It took place still in the aftermath of the debt crises when, after a decade when money flowed to Latin America at almost no cost, foreign investment was suddenly halted from the region after the Mexican default of 1982.

Contrary to the 30s crises which culminated in an inward oriented economic development model and defaults on countries’ foreign debt, the crises of the 80s confronted Latin American governments not with a pulverized group of bondholders but with a small group of strong banks and their governments’ willingness to protect the developed world from a financial crash.

Pressures for the repayment of foreign debt, and the incapacity of local leaders to negotiate as a block (in the same way as creditors did), led many governments in Latin America to adopt harsh macroeconomic adjustments, while IMF conditionality pushed governments towards market reforms. After years of high growth rates, most of the continent experienced sharp recession in that period.

Between 1980 and 1988 Brazil paid US$ 32 mi to foreign bankers and, despite that, the principal doubled and reached US$ 120 bi. Before the authoritarian regime, in 1964, the Brazilian foreign debt amounted to US$ 3.5 bi, going to US$ 17 bi in 1974, US$ 54 billion in 1980 and reaching US$ 120 bi in the year of election. After growing an average of 5.4% a year in the 60s and 8.7% in the 70, the average growth rate in the 80s was 3%, while the annual inflation rate reached 1430% in 1989.

Three candidates concentrated most of the votes in the first round of the presidential poll. The first was Fernando Collor de Mello, the prior governor of the state of Alagoas, running from the recently created Party of national Renewal2 with the support of Brazilian right-wing parties. Another candidate was Leonel Brizola, from the Workers Democratic Party3 a left-wing

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2PRN, Partido da Renovação Nacional  
3PDT, Partido Democrata Trabalhista
political leader that played a central role in the democratic government deposed by the military coup of 1964. The third candidate was Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a labor leader from the steel industry and founder of the Workers' Party. Brizola and Lula split the left wing vote, directly competing against each other in the first round of the 1989 election.

After a narrow victory over Brizola, Lula was finally able to negotiate the support of the PDT leader in the second round of the election, along with the Brazilian Social Democratic Party and part of the Party of the Democratic Brazilian Movement (national leaders, while regional “bosses” supported Collor). That allowed Lula to consolidate a center-left alliance, the Popular Front (Frente Popular), to dispute the second volte. The presidential campaign became, then, clearly polarized on a left-right spectrum, with Lula presenting himself as the representative of the working class, intellectuals and small businesses, while Collor was described as the candidate of the Brazilian century-old elites and big business.

The Brazilian presidential election of 2002 also took place within a crisis, but of a very different sort. While in 1989 economic problems were associated with the debt crisis and the inflationary spiral that resulted from it, in 2002 Brazil experienced a “confidence crisis”, typical of financially opened economies, where panicked investors took their money away from the country fearing the prospects of Lula’s election. Interestingly enough, in 1989 Mario Amato, the leader of the Industrialists Federation of São Paulo, the most important association of industrialists in the country, publicly affirmed that businessmen would take their money away from Brazil in the case of Lula’s victory. Thirteen years and a widespread liberalization later, this threat proved not to be necessary anymore.

At the beginning of the campaign year the country’s “sound economic conditions” were praised by national as well international market players, and reports stressed the substantial decoupling between the Brazilian and Argentine economies (Santiso & Martínez 2003). In March 2002, while Argentina was in the midst of debt renegotiation, the Brazilian central banker Armínio Fraga was elected Man of the Year by the Latin Finance Magazine, dubbed “the man who saved Brazil”. In that period, despite concerns about Brazil’s high level of indebtedness and successive current account deficits, the country’s economic prospects seemed promising in the medium/long term.

By late April, however, currency had slumped, while the risk premium on Brazilian bonds rose to Nigerian levels. One crucial change occurred in that period was the release of the first

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4 PT, Partido dos Trabalhadores
5 PSDB, Partido Social Democrata Brasileiro
6 PMDB, Partido do Movimento Democrata Brasileiro
opinion polls showing that Cardoso’s candidate was not likely to win the presidential elections (Santiso & Martínez 2003). At the end of May, BCP Securities issued a report entitled *Da Lula Monster*, describing the sense of panic spreading among economic agents as they realized Lula would win the elections. The fear associated with the candidate reflected the expectation that he might discontinue Cardoso’s economic policies, increase government’s social expenditures and even default on the country’s huge foreign debt. While reports were published by BBA and J.P. Morgan Chase on details of the Workers’ Party program or with the description of Brazilian political parties and candidates, Goldman Sachs developed a *Lulameter* - a model designed to quantify the likelihood of Lula’s victory through prices in currency markets.

The reaction of financial markets, reflected in stock and bond markets alike, brought foreign capital flows to a halt, and caused a sharp cut in credit lines for Brazilian government and companies. In July 2002 outflows reached US$ 1.1 billion, twice as much as in the previous month. The devaluation of the Brazilian Real led to a significant boost in the country’s foreign debt service of US$ 335 billion, 80% of which was linked to the dollar or accumulated interest at floating exchange rates. Inflation also reached 1.7% in July against 0.4% in June, leading to a widespread belief that the Brazilian stabilization process might be jeopardized in 2003.

In order to calm markets, in September the IMF approved a new US$ 30 billion loan to Brazil to be paid out by the end of 2003, while the World Bank announced intentions to lend US$ 7 billions to the country in 2003. In return for the IMF loan, the government was required not to depart from Cardoso major economic policies and to accept IMF’s quarterly surveillance. All potential winners of the electoral race were publicly asked to commit to IMF’s terms, and so they did.

In 2002 Lula’s main competitor was Jose Serra, previously a Health minister and unavoidably associated to the eight years of Cardoso’s government, despite recognized as to the “left” of the governments’ party, the PSDB. Lula’s strategy in this scenario was one of opposing the prior government policies, while enforcing Serra’s responsibility for them as a party leader. Lula’s criticisms, however, were made less from a political perspective (losers and winners) and more from a “managerial” one. In other words, economic problems are reported not as a result of class exploitation or oppression, but from the previous government’s incapacity to identify and solve them. After three unsuccessful attempts to become president of Brazil, Lula seemed convinced that in order to finally succeed he would necessarily have to get rid of the radical and somewhat angry, revolted image of the past. In 2002, he presents himself as an optimistic and reasonable leader, the only one capable of putting together an experienced team of specialists qualified to
tackle Brazilian’s main economic problems, namely unemployment and slow growth.\footnote{While in 1989 inflation was mentioned by 56% of voters as the most important economic problem in Brazil, in 2002 inflation disappears and is replaced by unemployment, with 69% of voters’ mentions (Tendencias 2002).}

**Changes in the period 1989-2002**

The victory of Collor de Mello initiated a period of widespread liberalization of the Brazilian economy which, coupled with the resume of capital flows to Latin America after 1994, finally led to the weakening of inflationary pressures. After a frustrated attempt to fight inflation through the temporary expropriation of domestic savings, in 1992 Collor was impeached on corruption charges, but the course of the economic liberalization during his short term did not change. Privatization, trade and financial openness, de-regulation of the Brazilian economy, all these measures were adopted both in the Franco and the Cardoso governments.

The end of inflation and the consequent effects of that on the income of the poor initiated and optimistic period in Brazil, when it was almost impossible to oppose Cardoso’s policies, and that lasted until the Asian and Russian crises occurred in the end of Cardoso’s first term. The beginning of his second term was marked by a financial crash that culminated in the devaluation of the Real, the significant loss of Brazilian international reserves and the slow down of economic growth. While in the period 1994-7 the country grew at an average 4% a year, growth rates in 1998 and 1999 were 0.1 and 0.8%, respectively. In the midst of the crisis, Cardoso reached an agreement with the IMF which, if from one side assured his re-election as by preventing the currency devaluation to occur before the poll, also forced a macroeconomic adjustment that imposed high economic and political costs during the president’s second term.

After that period, opposing voices started to be heard once again in Brazilian. The new opposing discourse, however, was very different from that of the 80s, and kept some important issues such as the default on the public debt out of the agenda. The trauma imposed by the freezing of domestic savings perpetrated by Collor right after his inauguration, as well as the increased vulnerability of the Brazilian economy to capital movements, created serious barriers even for mentions of terms such as “debt renegotiation” or “default”, under the threat of capital flight.

Nonetheless, a more comprehensive investigation of Lula’s motivations to “move rightward” is not among the goals of this paper for now. More than explaining the change, my main objective is to compare the major characteristics of Lula’ discourse in 1989 and 2002. The next section describe the research design, and after that the preliminary findings resulting from the
content analysis of Lula’s TV campaign in both years.

**Research Design**

This section describes the method and the data used to perform the comparison between Lula’s discourse in 1989 and 2002.

**Data**

In order to compare Lula’s discourse in the Brazilian presidential campaigns of 1989 and 2002, I obtained videos from TV campaigns Lula and his major competitors for both elections, and transcribed them in order to use computer based text analysis. Each campaign includes two rounds, but as Collor’s second round is still not fully transcribed, I’ll focus on the first round for now.

The 1989 campaign comprised a total of 22 programs between September 15th November 11th for each candidate, each program including little less than 700 words. The 2002 campaign included 20 programs of about the same size transmitted between August 28th and October 2nd.

TV campaign programs in Brazil are allowed to include music, actors and images of candidate’s rallies, besides candidates’ speeches, and are transmitted to the whole country in the afternoon as well as in the so-called “premium TV time”, between 8 and 9pm. I could not find that data for 1989, but in 2002 the night average audience of the “free electoral campaign on TV” (campanha eleitoral gratuita), was close to 50% , measured as a share of TVs turned on in São Paulo, Brazil biggest city. That amounts to something like 2.3 million residences in a total of 4.7 the region.

The TV campaign, also dubbed “electronic stage”, is by far the most expensive item in campaigns, as rallies have been loosing their relevance since 1989. In 2006 Lula declared to spend R$ 170 thousand in rallies in 2006, or 0.01% of total campaign expenditures, while candidates’ average share dedicated to TV and radio campaign go from 42-85% of total expenses.

**Method**

There are a series of methods currently used to measure “ideological position” and make comparisons between different entities such as parties and congressmen with regard to their ideological
leaning. The most traditional way to do that is the hand coding of party manifestos, classi-
fying sentences that fall into major groups of themes according to ideological lines. In order
 to identify ideological positions, analysis establish terms or expressions that fall into left and
 right categories and simply count the number of times they show up in the text - the percent
 value of these counts is the score for that given text. The major drawback of this method is the
effort required by hand coding, and the subjectivity involved in defining left and right, while the
method for scoring might also leads to significant distortions in the analysis. The Comparative
Manifestos Project, previously known as the Manifestos Research Group (Budge, Robertson &
Hearl 1987, Budge & Pennings 2006, Budge, Klingemann, Volkens, Bara & Tanenbaum 2001)
is a widely known project that adopts such method.

Another way to classify ideological positions is through surveys, where experts are required to
classify parties on a left-right continuum and inform salient dimensions. Among other problems,
the major drawbacks of surveys rely in their cost and the difficulties involved in changing
questions along time.

Recently, specialists have been starting to adopt computer based analysis of texts in order to
identify and compare ideological positions. One method to do that is to automatically compare
party manifestos or political discourses with hand-made “dictionaries” of terms designed to
identify left and right. The frequency with which these words are found in the texts of interest
assign them a position in the ideological spectrum. Another method proposed in Laver & Benoit
(2002a), Laver & Benoit (2002b) and Laver, Benoit & Garry (2003) is the adoption of “reference
texts” instead of dictionaries. In this case, analysts assign texts as ideological references for left
and right and then automatically classify texts of interest in the ideological spectrum according
to the frequencies of specific words observed in relation to reference texts.

Finally, Slapin & Proksch (2006) develop a scaling technique to estimate positions based
on word frequencies in political texts, modeled as a Poisson process. Differently from the ones
described above, this method does not require the use of reference texts, the selection of which
may greatly influence the estimation process. It also produces party position estimates which
can be used accurately as time-series data.

Besides a qualitative analysis of campaign discourses, then, this paper implements the first
inductive step in the quantitative analysis proposed in Laver & Benoit (2002a), Laver & Benoit
(2002b) and Laver, Benoit & Garry (2003). First, I use the routine named wordscores for Stata

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9See (Slapin & Proksch 2006) for a review of the literature on methods for measuring ideological positions
from political texts.
in order to calculate words frequencies and identify a sample of most frequent words used in
Lula’s 1989 and 2002 TV campaign. Then, I classify these words into major categories such as
ideology, administrative efficiency, among others. Finally, I compare the the relative frequencies
of these words in each election, I order to observe what changed in Lula’s discourse in the period.
After that, I take Lula and Collor first rounds in 1989 as references texts for left and right wing
discourses, and use the same routine in Stata to rank other campaigns relative to these two in
dimensions representative of the categories already established [I still did not finish that part of
the work, which will hopefully be ready for the presentation].

Table 1 summarizes information regarding each presidential campaign/round analysed:

Table 1: Sample description - campaign discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Total words</th>
<th>Unique words</th>
<th>Mean freq.</th>
<th>Median freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ciro 2002.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12,626</td>
<td>2,414</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serra 2002.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17,410</td>
<td>2,510</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serra 2002.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28,786</td>
<td>3,008</td>
<td>9.57</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lula 2002.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16,224</td>
<td>2,554</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lula 2002.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13,381</td>
<td>2,410</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collor 1989.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>25,784</td>
<td>3,588</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lula 1989.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9,428</td>
<td>1,865</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lula 1989.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25,789</td>
<td>3,694</td>
<td>6.98</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Summary statistics for TV campaigns for the major candidates running for presidency
in Brazil, in 1989 and 2002.

Content Analysis - Preliminary Results

This section presents some preliminary results of the content analysis of Lula’s TV campaign in
the 1989 and 2002 Brazilian presidential elections. Major findings are divided into subsections,
that include a qualitative description as well as quantitative evidence aimed to illustrate my
claims.

Politics and the definition of the terms of the debate

Lula’s campaign reflects the ideological divide between the capitalist and communist worlds still
observable worldwide in the late 80s, adopting terms such as capitalism and socialism, left and
right, idealism and ideals. There is little space for win-win games in Lula’s political discourse,
especially in the first round of the election. The world he describes is one of class divide,
where politics are established along friend-enemy lines, denoted by terms such as exploitation,
domination, oppression (Figure 1). Expressions such as “Lula, defender of the poor, working
class and retired people”, and the use of verbs like “fight”, “denounce”, “confront”, “defend”,
“investigates”, ”defies” explicit the confrontational tone of the campaign.

Figure 1: **Ideology and class struggle in Lula’s discourse**

![Graph showing ideological terms frequency](image)

*Notes:* Relative frequency of ideological terms as well as words related to class struggle in Lula’s 1989 and 2002 TV campaigns, respectively.

In this context, Lula presents himself as “compañero” Lula, a term that suggests horizontality and informality, historically adopted by Latin American revolutionaries such as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara - President Chavez, from Venezuela, recently revived the term which hadn’t been used for long in Latin American politics. Lula establishes very clearly the groups he believes to represent (friends) from those that he is willing to confront (enemies).

Lula claims to represent the consolidation of popular forces, while his opponent Collor de Mello is the “candidate of speculators”. In this election, he urges voters to identify those who stand for the people from those who are against the people and allied to the “dominant class”, and also establishes very clearly what he stands for and against. Terms usually designated to represent friends, mentioned positively in Lula’s 1989 discourse, are: steel workers, clerks, public workers, labor leaders, workers in general, public servants. Conversely, the terms: bankers, oligopolies, oligarchies, privileged, the powerful, the rich, property owners, capital owners, sugar mill owners represent the “enemy”, and carry a negative connotation in Lula’s speeches. These are, in Lula’s words, “traditional oligarchies and a political class that held political power for decades and were responsible for the substantial income concentration experienced in the period” (10/21/89).

Lula’s project in 1989 is one of an egalitarian society, advanced through the people’s will,
and this will is to decide the electoral result. Popular support is a key term all along the campaign, and Lula emphasizes the huge popular presence in rallies as a major symbol of what he represents (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Mentions to “the people” in Lula’s discourse

Notes: Relative frequency of words that refer to “the people” in Lula’s 1989 and 2002 TV campaigns, respectively.
This tone could not have changed more in 2002. Thirteen years later Lula takes away any sign of confrontation from his TV campaign, and moves towards a “managerial” discourse, characterized by the de-politization of the public debate. The term “Lula candidate” is replaced with “Lula president”, the most frequent expression to designate the candidate in 2002, in a clear attempt to present Lula as “viable”, “acceptable” to the country as a whole. The friend-enemy frame disappears in name of values like union, peace, a reality where workers and businessmen join in order to develop the country, reflected in the relevance of the term “pact” in the 2002 campaign, as observed in Figure 1.

Within the “administrative efficiency discourse” advanced in 2002, conversely, Lula is claimed to “clearly specify the direction of his government” and to be the only one capable of solving the Brazilian problems, since the country needs a president with “maturity, political experience and balance, that puts the real interests of the Nation beyond his personal ambitions” (09/19/02). It is worth noting that Lula is now the president of the whole Nation, and while references to “the people” were frequent in 1989, in 2002 the word “all” shows up as the most commonly way to address Lula’s constituency (see Figure 3).

Figure 4: Administrative efficiency in 2002

![Graph showing administrative efficiency in 2002](image)

Notes: Relative frequency of words that refer to administrative goals and efficiency in Lula’s 1989 and 2002 TV campaigns, respectively.

The 2002 TV campaign is organized by subject matter, and every program starts with the presentation of Lula’s team specialized in issues such as education, health, violence, development. The team is usually constituted by area specialists, with Ph.D in Universities such as
Yale and Michigan, often mentioned in the program. Specialists sit in a type of cubicle or cell, in an environment that could easily hold an investment bank or consulting firm, as their projects and priorities are established in an orderly manner.

Instead of the divisive and highly political expressions associated to Lula’s name in the 1989 campaign, the most frequent terms associated to Lula’s name in 2002, then, are “Lula’s team”, “project”, “priorities”, “proposals”, mostly absent from the 1989’s discourse (Figure 4).

**Business and Labor in Lula’s discourse**

Changes in the way Lula represents the relationship between workers and capital owners are among the most significant observed between the 1989 to 2002 presidential campaigns.

In 1989, and mentioned above, the world described by Lula is one of class struggle, dominant elites on one side and the oppressed on the other. The candidate refers to elites in a permanent negative way, and promises to “put an end on bankers’ easy life” paid with the people’s misery, and to advance a significant change in banks’ role in the Brazilian economy”. Businessmen from the financial sector are usually described as greedy speculators, responsible for the economic problems of the country, with no commitment with its development or the well-being of the people. Instead of investing their profits in the country, they are claimed to speculate in the financial markets, buying dollars in the black market or investing in gold, therefore “provoking more inflation and misery” (10/17/89).

Lula slightly changes his discourse when it comes to industrialists, or “businessmen that invest in productive activities”, claiming that contrary to a small minority that threatened to take their money away from Brazil in a case of Lula’s victory, the majority of industrialists had some level of political consciousness. In any case, Lula does not reduce his tone while explaining that such consciousness should help industrialists to understand that Brazil needs to change and income need to be distributed. The small minority that threats to leave won’t need to do it, as the country will “make it easy for them to go away” (10/10/89).

In 2002, conversely, Lula takes effort to show that he is the candidate of all, of union, not confrontation. In that line, while he reports meetings with artists and intellectuals as well as public demonstrations in his favor, TV programs are filled with examples of Lula’s good acceptance in the business community. In 08/20/02, a narrator describes: “From North to South, from West to East, Lula is embraced by the people as the future president of Brazil. In São Paulo, the stockmarket applauded Lula president. In Belo Horizonte, there is a party in the streets. In the FIESP (Federation of Industries of São Paulo, that represent the largest the
most important industries of the country), the most important Brazilian businessmen applauded
Lula’s proposals. Salvador is happiness, happiness. Now it is Lula president”.

Contrary to the view of an egalitarian society achieved via workers’ struggle, promoted in
1989, Lula’s goal in 2002 is to establish what he describes as a “social contract” between
government, businessmen and workers, aiming to resume economic growth, job creation and a
better income distribution. In his words, “I want to tell businessmen that Brasil needs them
for the big challenge of resuming economic growth, creating jobs and exporting, and that I will
provide them with all the incentives necessary to do so” (09/28/02).

In the video of 09/21/02, an important cattle rancher (pecuarista) explains that when a PT
governor was elected in his State, cattle ranchers were all very concerned. Four years later,
however, “they find themselves having the governor as an ally, always attentive to the problems
of the industry. Knowing him then, he is sure that Lula president will mean a significant advance
to the Brazilian cattle industry and will bring peace to the countryside.”

**Land Owners, small agriculturists and land reform**

In the same fashion as occurred with industrialists and factory workers, where clear confronta-
tion was replaced by an idea of pact, Lula’s stance on land distribution and problems in the
countryside changes radically from 1989 and 2002.

In his first presidential campaign, Lula defended a comprehensive agrarian reform as a major
priority of his future government. In his words, “for us in PT the agrarian reform is as necessary
as the air we breathe, because it is not only a matter of fixing people in the countryside, but also
of solving the problems of unemployment, life quality of urban population, of one of our major
problems which is infant mortality. The agrarian reform is one of the most important things
that can happen in this country, and that is why we will advance it, regulating the principles of
productive property established in the Constitution. Independently from the will of the largest
land owners (latifundiários), we want to clearly state that we will implement an agrarian reform
in Brazil” (09/21/1989).

Lula’s vice president, José Paulo Bisol, from the Brazilian Socialist Party (Partido Socialista
Brasileiro, PSB), goes as far as to say that he does not see any violence in property invasions.
As land reforms are regulated in the Constitution and the government does not advance expro-
priations, the people should do it themselves. “That is the most saint, fair and correct thing to
do” (09/21/1989).

In 2002, conversely, every time Lula refers to land reform he uses terms such as “pacific,
organized, well-planned”. Land reform is not anymore a major priority, but something that requires government’s “incentives”, altogether with tourism, agribusiness, agriculture, among others. In Lula’s words, “it is a question of honor to bring peace to the countryside, with an organized and pacific land reform, perpetrated in unused land, as regulated in the Constitution”. He, then, sends a message to land owners: “If you have your own land and produce, the government will provide you with incentives to produce even more because, of course, Brazil needs that” (09/21/02). The idea of an agrarian reform is disconnected from any reference to social justice or income redistribution, and turns into one more policy initiative to solve the problem of unemployment and productivity. Figure 5 displays Lula’s main terms associated to land reform in 1989 and 2002. Mentions to agrarian reform drop significantly from Lula’s discourse in 2002, while the word “latifúndio”, which carries a negative connotation for land property, simply disappears.

![Figure 5: Lula’s Perspective on agrarian reform](image)

**Notes:** Relative frequency of words that refer to agrarian issues in Lula’s 1989 and 2002 TV campaigns, respectively.

**Economic discourse - diagnosis and solutions**

As already mentioned, the 1989 presidential election took place in the aftermath of the debt crises of 1982, when the most pressing problems of the Brazilian economy were the exponential growth of foreign debt since the late 70s (and the high social burden imposed especially on the poorest) and an inflationary spiral in parallel with recession.
In that context, Lula’s economic discourse was centered on his diagnosis of the causes of the inflationary crisis experienced by the Brazilian economy and possible means to solve it. As in the other issues described above in 1989 both diagnosis and solutions were essentially political, and reflected Lula’s zero-sum perspective. In Lula’s view, Brazil was tricked by international creditors into a never ending debt, and for that reason he felt absolutely no moral obligation towards external debt. When it comes to domestic debt, the word default is never used, instead the mentions to “renegotiations” show up frequently.

In the 1989 campaign, the default on the Brazilian foreign debt is established, altogether with land reform, the major priority of Lula’s government. Both initiatives were deemed necessary to overcome the inflationary crisis and necessary conditions to the construction of an egalitarian, socialist society. In order to achieve these goals, Lula proposes that the capital that would be used to the payment of the foreign debt is diverted into the creation of a “development fund”, designed to invest that money on the creation of new jobs, high-tech research and other projects he considered essential to Brazilians. Lula also promises to investigate the origins of the foreign debt and to put an end on financial speculation.

Figure 6: Lula’s perspective on public debt

Notes: Relative frequency of words that refer to the question of public debt in Lula’s 1989 and 2002 TV campaigns, respectively.

Terms as “loan sharks”, “speculators” and “speculation”, as well as high frequency of mentions to “banks” reflected Lula’s perspective on public debt (Figure 6). According to Lula, “those who want to make money in the country are to do so investing in productive activities,
in the industry or agriculture (...) we will finish with inflation ending up this business on dollar black markets and gold being the main destination of Brazilian money. In other words, we will finish inflation ending up with the unashamed speculation in the country and moralizing the State” (09/19/89).

Although the speculative attack (see references to “crisis” in Figure 7), occurred in 2002, led to some recovery of inflationary pressures, that was not a major problem in the Brazilian economy anymore at that time. Instead, unemployment turned into the central concern of voters in 2002, and that was clearly reflected in Lula’s discourse. Contrary to what mentions to debt would apparently suggest, that is still a very important matter in the Brazilian economy, as public debt reached about 55% of the Brazilian GDP in that year. Lula’s perspective on the matter, however, was de-politicized in 2002 as happened to many other subjects discussed above. Without even mentioning the word “default” or “renegotiation” in his campaign, the simple fact that these policies were defended years ago led to a financial market panic only comparable to the crash of 1999.

Figure 7: **Salient issues in the economy - from debt and inflation to unemployment**

![Bar chart showing relative frequency of economic issues in Lula's 1989 and 2002 TV campaigns.]

*Notes:* Relative frequency of words that refer to economic problems in Lula’s 1989 and 2002 TV campaigns, respectively.

The strategy of assuring markets of Lula’s intentions to respect “contracts” (meaning, pay the public debt and respect the privatization advanced by the Cardoso government) culminated in the “Letter to the Brazilian People”, where “respect to contracts and obligations of the country” are pointed as a the basis on which the future government will promote the development and change desired by the population.
Lula’s path towards a “responsible” left

Conclusions and Future Steps

This paper presented the preliminary results of a content analysis of Lula’s TV campaign in the 1989 and 2002 presidential elections, including both qualitative description and quantitative evidence of the changes in Lula’s discourse in the period. The major aspects of that change were grouped as terms of the political debate, including Lula’s self definition as opposed to his main competitor, capital/labor relations including agrarian reform, as well as economic perspectives and the debt issue.

My conclusion is that the most important change in Lula’s discourse cannot be classified simply as a “move to the right”, although that is certainly part of the story. More than that, however, the change occurred in the terms of the public debate reflected in a de-politicization of Lula’s discourse, which is central to the understanding of Lula’s path towards a currently so-called “responsible left”, one that “pursues the twin goals of growth and equality within the confines of a responsible economic policy” (Economist, 08/31/06). There is no zero sum game in Lula’s current view of governmental problems. There are no winners and losers, no domination or exploitation. There is just one country, where workers, industrialists and investors should firm a pact in order to build a win-win path to development.

Lula ceased to be the candidate of a group, necessarily opposed to others, to be the candidate of all. The reason why he claims to be the best option for the majority of Brazilians is not because they should identify with him as in 1989, but because he is the only one capable of leading the team of technical specialists that understand the countries’ problems and are capable of proposing priorities, projects and programs that will tackle these problems efficiently.
References


