Abstract

Since 2000, the Doxa/Iuperj Research Center on Political Communication and Public Opinion has developed and applied a specific methodology as well as acquired a significant database on journalistic coverage of elections in Brazil. We have studied three municipal (mayor) and two general elections (president and State governors) and their coverage by several Brazilian newspapers across states and capitals. Our methodology is based on exhaustive data on morphological and substantive news items, with quantitative and qualitative variables, and our goal is to observe the symbolic role played by Brazilian political press coverage in electoral contexts, building on the established perspective on the influence of media practices on political culture and behavior. This paper presents a comparative study of the main results of the 2002 and 2006 presidential elections, highlighting the disparity between the alleged objectivity and impartiality of newspapers, and their behavior as political agents during election campaigns. The analysis allowed us to draw conclusions on the behavior of three main Brazilian newspapers (O Globo, from Rio de Janeiro; and Folha de São Paulo and Estado de São Paulo) on the occasion of Lula’s first election, in 2002, and of his re-election in 2006. The study revealed differences among newspapers on specific political actors and campaign issues.

Introduction

Media behavior has become a central element in contemporary electoral studies. Presidential elections, with increased personalization and visibility of the contest, are significant occasions to observe the journalistic coverage, in order to understand and evaluate its political implications. This article analyses the news published by the three main daily newspapers in Brazil – O Globo, Folha de São Paulo and O Estado de São Paulo – about the presidential candidates to the last two general elections. Based on data collected by Doxa between February 1st and Election Day, we can define in general lines the position taken by each paper towards the candidates in the crucial moments of the campaign.

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The present paper intends to explain our methodology, using as examples the two last presidential elections, and detailing some interesting aspects of the coverage concerning the main candidates, but also some very illustrating “supporting actors”, that did not reach the second round but received great media attention, revealing more clearly the political preferences of the papers. After all, the greater visibility of the two main candidates has itself an effect of restraining news editors of being too partial. On the other hand, minor candidates may provide the occasion to, indirectly, attack other candidacies.

It is worth mentioning that Brazilian media does not show a tradition of media criticism, responding negatively to any attempt to regulate or publish media watch results. Although our research relates to other experiences on media watch, one of the main characteristics the observatories in general share is to set parameters in which journalism should perform, measuring and judging according to some normative expectations. On our part, we do not intend to say how journalists should behave. We present data rigorously collected and draw partial conclusions based on comparison – between different papers, different candidates on the same papers, the same papers across time – that allows us to identify patterns of behavior. This empirical approach, although it may seem conservative to some, provides us with a very solid standpoint from which to analyze Brazilian media, considered to have played a decisive role on many moments of our recent political history.

Methodology

The methodology we present was firstly developed by Doxa researchers for the municipal elections of 2000, and has been applied and refined during the subsequent elections. Its objective is to quantify, qualify and compare news and images published about each candidate. Quantification, over large time spans and with the possibility of comparing newspapers one to another and to data from past elections, allows us to identify tendencies, convergences and discrepancies in the editorial behavior of the papers – always accounting for the specific context of each election, of course.

4 As could be seen in several occasions, including the attempted creation, encouraged by Lula’s government, of a “Journalism Federal Council”, agency that would regulate the profession, which was received with violent rejection by the companies and professionals as well.
5 Part of this specific research, as well as articles and papers on Brazilian political communication by Doxa researchers, can be found at http://doxa.iuperj.br
All items – editorials, features, articles, photographs, graphics – with one or more of the candidates’ names were recorded. Our database was applied daily by Doxa’s research team, during election years, to Brazilian main newspapers\(^6\). Each piece was classified according to nine morphological categories; six additional categories refer to news content. The accumulated classified data is well beyond our scope in the present paper, forcing us to present an initial selection and to only outline future research possibilities. We present below, therefore, the main analysis categories, although the description of results is limited to visibility and evaluation.

1. Identification of each entry by date and paper title, and classification of news pieces according to page number, format\(^7\) and position\(^8\), elements that contribute to evaluate the prominence received by the electoral issue in general and by each candidate\(^9\).

2. Issue: the political agenda proposed by newspapers; allows the identification of electoral agenda, favoring the understanding of the context in which we find candidates’ names.

3. Frames adopted by newspapers, i.e. the main perspectives related to campaigns issues. Classified into horserace (opinion surveys, competition analysis, prospects); personalistic (profile, personality, personal record), issue (substantive treatment of issues) and episodic (facts, events, agenda).

4. Visibility: the number of times a candidate’s name is mentioned in each news story. Allows us to identify the volume of news on each candidate over time.

5. Qualification or evaluation – each item analyzed to determine whether it was positive, negative or neutral toward each candidate. This last variable is liable to a greater degree of subjectivity, and has been questioned even by journalists themselves; it deserves, therefore, further detailing of the criteria.

\(^6\) For the 2008 municipal elections, the included dailies were: O Globo, Jornal do Brasil, Estado de São Paulo, Folha de São Paulo, Gazeta Mercantil, Valor Econômico, Correio Brasiliense.

\(^7\) News story; Signed article; Editorial; Signed section; cartoon / photo / graphic; First page reference; Section comment.

\(^8\) All page; Upper half; Bottom half; Upper right quarter; Upper left quarter; Bottom right quarter; Bottom left quarter.

\(^9\) Camargos (2000) suggests an index to evaluate the global editorial importance of a news piece for the newspaper, combining as indicators first page reference, page number and position.
we have deployed to diminish discrepancy in the application by different analysts.

In the first place, we decided for the impossibility of asserting the presence of intentional bias in each journalistic piece, considering that such purpose would allow a variety of subjective interpretations; so we decided to verify whether the information or opinion published, per se, is negative or positive for the candidate, regardless of the eventual intention to harm one or another. The publication of vote intention surveys, thus, does not represent an act of position taking by the newspaper, but will be classified as negative or positive for a given candidate according to his or her poll result. How may we, then, evaluate political position taking by the papers? We believe that this is possible when we compare and verify different behavior among the papers – given for example the same survey, one newspaper decides to emphasize the growth of a candidate, while another will spend many pages commenting the fall of another – or by the same papers over time. Each media player chooses to give more or less room to different events, issues and politicians, and to present these stories in a positive or negative light. It is also possible to analyze differences in the treatment given to candidates through the association to issues and through the frames displayed by news stories. In this sense, we confirm that news media do not reflect plainly an external reality, but interpret the political world for their readers. Through the process of selecting and framing events, owners, editors and reporters state their preferences, and we intend to measure them through quantification.

We consider as having positive evaluation stories with or about a candidate which publish his/her program; promises; declarations of the candidate or of the story’s author or of third parties (persons or institutions) favorable (containing moral, political or personal evaluation) to the candidate; reproduction of the candidate’s attacks to adversaries, poll results or favorable comments. Negative evaluation corresponds to stories about the candidate with criticism or attacks (containing moral, political or personal evaluation) from the story’s author, other candidates or third parties; poll results or unfavorable comments. We consider neutral stories on candidate agenda, or any mention of the candidate without moral, political or personal evaluation of the candidate, by the story’s author or third
parties, including his/her opponents. We also consider, in establishing the evaluation of a story, that editorial elements as title, subheadings and captions contain indicatives of the story’s orientation, and must be considered for categorization.

Partial totalizations of our data regarding visibility and evaluation were published every two weeks during election year on Doxa’s website, serving one of our research aims, namely to inform the electoral process itself, allowing for a broadened debate on the quality of electoral information available for the common citizen.

It is by the detailing of two cases, the elections of 2002 and 2006, that we intend to exemplify the possibilities of our methodology. Although our data allows manifold analysis, such as based on frames or issues, we will display the results for visibility and evaluation.

**High visibility of the 2002 Presidential elections: “The greatest coverage”**

The Presidential election of 2002 had great visibility in Brazilian media. Mainstream print newspapers with national relevance count only three dailies, published in the two most important cities: Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. This three papers – Folha de São Paulo, O Estado de São Paulo and O Globo – filled their pages over the whole electoral year with news, comments, editorials, sections, pictures and all kinds of journalistic stuff regarding the campaign that culminated with the election of Luis Inácio da Silva, the popular Lula, of PT (Workers Party), to the Presidency.

Besides Lula, the 2002 election brought up as candidates José Serra, of PSDB (Brazilian Social-Democrat Party, the same of reelected President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-1998 and 1999-2002), Ciro Gomes, of PPS (Popular Socialist Party), Anthony Garotinho (former governor of Rio de Janeiro, of the Socialist Brazilian Party), as well as two minor Communist candidates, Rui Pimenta and José Maria. The 2002 election

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10 In the case of equal amounts of favorable and unfavorable mentions, we included for the 2006 analysis the category “equilibrated”, whereas in 2002 we still marked those as neutral too. For scope of comparison, we present here, for 2006, aggregated results for neutral and equilibrated.

11 Or, at least, citizens who read print newspapers, a numerically limited public, but whose political influence in nonetheless relevant, for they are considered qualified to serve as reference for information and frames.

12 “The greatest coverage of all” was precisely the slogan of Rede Globo, the biggest Brazilian network, contrasting with the two latest presidential elections.
was the first one in which Doxa’s methodology was applied to monitor Presidential elections. Through this research we were able, besides observing the nature of newspaper coverage in its many nuances, to relate it to the election’s specific events.

All candidates had great visibility, increasing with the approach of Election Day and following some tendencies already noticed in other elections. Patterns of visibility are very similar on all newspapers studies, as can be seen in the graphs below.

The analysis of Lula’s coverage reveals, first of all, the enormous attention his campaign was able to attract. More significant, however, is the evaluation figures, that find
an expressive turning point on a definite biweekly period: newspaper go from a predominantly negative coverage to an openly positive one when all four candidates have a formal meeting with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and make a public agreement to maintain his orthodox economic policy. From that point on, all papers, as exemplified by *O Estado de São Paulo*, were more positive about the leftist candidate, previously associated to economic instability.

The most emblematic case, though, illustrating the symbiotic relation between media and campaign, is not that of the president to be, but of a secondary actor: the rapid rise in opinion polls, and subsequent press bombing, of Ciro Gomes. Young Ciro, a former governor of Ceará, a state in poor Northeast, was contending José Serra for the second position, which would lead to the second round dispute against favorite Lula\(^{13}\).

In this election, Gomes was maimed the most by the editorial decisions of the majority of mainstream media. He became progressively newsworthy as he boomed in opinion polls, shortly after his party’s free propaganda was aired on all channels of Brazilian television. Following the rise in the preference of the electorate and his growth in the media, to the point of surpassing José Serra and threatening Lula’s hegemony, came

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\(^{13}\) Brazilian electoral system establishes a second round between the two candidates with most votes, in cities bigger than 200,000 inhabitants and when no candidate wins more than 50% already on the first round. In the first round results (valid votes) were: Lula (PT) 46,4%, Serra (PSDB) 23,2%, Garotinho (PSB) 17,8%, Ciro Gomes (PPS) 11,9%. Second round gave victory to Lula, with 61,2%, against 38,7% obtained by José Serra.
hard attacks and criticism. From that point, any false step of the candidate deserved many
days of headlines, stories and cartoons, amplified as it was by all communication means.

Actually, Brazilian press was giving publicity in its pages to the campaign strategy
of the candidate Gomes was menacing to beat: José Serra. Left behind in the polls, Serra
began a direct tactic of negative campaign, in which he was followed by mainstream media.
The anti-Ciro convergence works; attacks from the adversary campaign and from the media
manage to interrupt his ascent, transforming this episode in an emblematic case of
candidate “deconstruction” in the new scenario of professional electoral campaigns in
Brazil.

**Electoral news about candidate Ciro Gomes**

Third in the polls as far as the middle of the electoral year, Ciro Gomes experiences
a spectacular growth in his vote intentions in July, after his party aired two propaganda
programs on Brazilian television\(^\text{14}\). In this moment, the PPS candidate surpasses the second
placed José Serra, seeming to threat even Lula in second round projections. This attempted
new polarization promotes, at first, a positive effect on the journalistic coverage, as the rise
in the polls causes a wave of positive stories and graphs for Ciro Gomes.

His ascent in opinion surveys becomes the main election event during that month,
illustrating the influence of significant shifts on polls on generating visibility. We divided
the collection of news items on two weeks periods, and the analysis of this chronology is
useful to understand the dynamics of media-campaign relation. From the end of June to the
end of July (period 10 to period 12), Ciro’s visibility rises on all three newspapers. Folha
goes from 372 to 717 mentions of the candidate, and OESP goes from 202 to 514; O Globo
follows the tendency, rising from 393 to 903 mentions of his name. These apparitions
would continue to rise during the following weeks. Observing the graphics, it is possible to
identify an intense visibility wave for Ciro Gomes from June to the end of August.

\(^{14}\) Brazilian parties are granted free television airtime for party propaganda every year. On election years, this
amounts to half hour daily on all open channels, prime time. More information about Brazilian electoral rules
can be found on the website of the Superior Electoral Court (http://www.tse.gov.br/internet/index.html).
Ciro Gomes had not appeared very much on the papers until then. When he did, in the beginning of the year, his visibility was made positive by the solidarity he demonstrated towards his wife, the actress and star of Brazilian main television channel, Rede Globo – Patrícia Pillar, submitted to cancer treatment. It seemed like a promising campaign. In March, the candidate managed to articulate an alliance with two significant parties, PDT and PTB. Besides, he was approaching the main conservative party, PFL, which considered supporting Ciro’s candidacy. All these episodes generated positive stories on the media. Occasionally, however, one or another would focus on Ciro Gomes’ untimely temper, or amplify polemic declarations about abortion and quarrels with voters.

From the beginning of July, when Ciro jumped on the polls, the coverage given him by the papers increases in absolute terms, and is predominantly positive. There is good mentioning of the PTB television program, starred by Ciro Gomes in spite of legal restrain by electoral justice. Papers also publish praises made about him by Tasso Jeressaiti, one of the leaders of PSDB, party of José Serra, Ciro’s main adversary. Many PFL leaders declare their informal support. Prognostics show that Ciro could beat Lula on a second round. The candidate lives a moment of good news and positive agenda.

Nevertheless, the media soon finds an inexhaustible source of negative news about Ciro: Serra’s own campaign, engaged in attacking his competitor and able to have his arguments amplified by the press. It was the beginning of the deconstruction of the
One of the recurrent issues is the association of Ciro to ex-President Fernando Collor, who renounced his mandate in 1992 on charges of corruption, and supposed lies of the PPS candidate. Ciro, on his turn, contributed to his own negative image, being caught in dialogues, interviews and situations with elements that could be used against him in the pages of newspapers.

During the following months, Serra and Ciro go on exchanging accusations, for the later also blames Serra of mudslinging. Newspapers, on their turn, give relevance to mutual attacks, first in the candidates’ internet websites, then in the television ads. The result is bad for both, but especially disastrous for Ciro Gomes, who is forced to go defensive.

Ciro Gomes’ image, on the politics and elections pages of newspapers, becomes that of a distempered man, someone who attacks journalists and citizens, as in an episode at the University of Brasilia, when he discussed with a black student about affirmative action, that insistently republished. His political supporters are classified by the papers as “the powers of backwardness” and his program as contradictory. Their pages give room to negative pictures, as an elector of Lula who, arms folded, refuses the hand to Ciro. The candidate, on his part, criticizes Lula, the government and also the media. His “lies” as investigated and denied by the press, and his proposals criticized by specialists through arguments of authority.

In the beginning of August, in spite of already being attacked in the news, Ciro has his best score on the vote-intention polls, reaching 28%. The papers even mention his technical evenness with Lula in a theoretical second round between the two of them, as the PT candidate decreased slightly in voter preference. Gomes’ “small useless lies” receive great visibility, as when he stated having always studied in public schools, and was discovered he had, in fact, spent six months in a private high school. A declaration of September 1st, the his wife’s role in his campaign was “to sleep with him”, has enormous negative prominence in the news, dilating for many weeks, the candidate’s apologies on radio and TV electoral programs amplifying the resonance of the event.

What we see during the last months of campaign, thus, is the growth of the amount of citations of the candidate and, at the same time, the increase of negative news in
mainstream media. Worth attention are the opposite tendencies of the positive and negative evaluation curves (see graphs below) after his jump in visibility. From the moment he achieves the dailies pages, Ciro Gomes’ negative coverage increases, as well as positive news decrease. In Folha de São Paulo, for example, the candidate falls from 34% positive entries in the 10/07-23/07 period to 4% in the first weeks of September. Accordingly, his negative coverage rises from 10% in the first two weeks of July to a peak of 37% by the end of August.
On *O Globo* and *O Estado de São Paulo*, inflections are even more acute. In *OESP*, negative news about the PPS candidate go from 26% in the 10/07-23/07 period up to 49% by the end of August and first half of September. On *O Globo*, positive mentions fall from 44% in 10/01-23/07 to 16% during the last two weeks of September. Negative reference rise from 15% in the beginning of July to 40% in the beginning of September – in consonance with the other dailies and with José Serra’s campaign strategy.

**Journalistic coverage of the 2006 Presidential campaign: the “opposition media”**

Differently from Brazilian Presidential elections during the 90s, in which Lula was always the opposition candidate for PT, the next two elections – 2002 and 2006 – received great attention by national news media. 1994, year of Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s first election, was marked by an economic plan, the Real, which was responsible for his election, as former minister of finance. The news were all taken by good stories on economic performance, which aided Cardoso’s election, but showed little room for discussing election itself and its candidates. On 1998, news about the process the ended up reelecting FHC were even scarcer.

On 2002, as we have seen, the papers under analysis chose to give great visibility to the presidential election. The difference in regard to the previous elections was evident (see Miguel, 2003). Four years later, on 2006, electoral coverage was even more intense, judging by our research parameters. During the first two weeks, from February 1st, a long way before the electoral period, *O Globo* mentions 1129 times the name of possible presidential candidates. *OESP* counts 1206 mentions and *Folha de São Paulo*, 1301.

Such intense coverage would only increase in the subsequent periods – and in all newspaper sections. The methodology we developed allows data categorization; so, based on the different types of entry, we were able to separate the informative (stories, photographs, graphics, first page titles and internal titles and subtitles) from the opinion part (editorials, authorial sections, notes and humoristic drawings). On doing so, we verified that, for informative as well as opinion pieces – facts, versions, comments, speculations, projections and conjectures – the 2006 presidential campaign had an
impressive presence on national news all year long. Considering the whole period (from February to October), OESP mentions some candidate’s name 17,576 times on informative pieces, and 6,592 on opinion texts. As for Folha de São Paulo, the candidates are mentioned respectively 18,037 and 7,316 times; the figures for O Globo are 16,735 and 10,458.

Both categories aggregated, the last days before the second round (period from 13/9 to 01/10) and the first period after it (02/10 to 16/10), Lula candidate\textsuperscript{15} received respectively 570 and 672 entries. During the same period, O Globo mentioned Lula candidate 569 and 666 times; on OESP, he was mentioned 465 and 484. Geraldo Alckmim, the PSDB candidate and main adversary, with whom Lula contested the second round, was mentioned on 364 and 571 journalistic pieces on Folha; 300 and 535 on O Globo; and 225 and 384 on O Estado de São Paulo.

Visibility of the President-and-candidate

Lula, while exercising the Presidency (Lula president), also had high visibility during the electoral year as a whole\textsuperscript{16}. Doxa’s methodology allows us to affirm that the constant presence of the chief of the Federal Executive branch is a common tendency for all the newspapers researched. Adding the apparitions as candidate to the citations as president, more than two thirds of the total coverage dedicated to Lula. Even considering that part of this apparitions is due to participation in state affairs, for example in economic or international features, it is still massive coverage. As international research also shows, presidential systems like American and Brazilian also contribute to the focus on the President.

\textsuperscript{15} Our classification considered separately the mentions to Lula: when he appeared campaigning as candidate, in polls etc., and when he featured government functions (Lula president).

\textsuperscript{16} We do not use the same distinction – Alckmin candidate and Alckmin governor, elected four years before – given our focus on the presidential election. A qualitative approach to the news, however, suggests that Não fizemos a mesma distinção entre Geraldo Alckmin como candidato e como governador de São Paulo, dado nosso foco na disputa nacional (Alckmin foi eleito em 2002 para 4 anos de mandato como governador). Uma análise mais qualitativa dos dados coletados pelo modelo proposto mostra que o candidato do PSDB esteve presente no noticiário como governador, principalmente nos jornais paulistas, até a definição da candidatura de seu partido. Além disso, diferentemente de Lula, Alckmin, por seu do executivo estadual, teve que se afastar do cargo para concorrer à Presidência.
One example of the effects of visibility is the behavior of *O Estado de São Paulo*. Although publishing overall less entries (6537) than *Folha* (7269) or *O Globo* (7019), *OESP* is the only paper on which in no period any other presidential candidate is more cited than Lula. The President-candidate is under focus all year long, and events related to other candidates, positive or negative, are unable to shift the attention of the daily: the focus on Lula by *OESP* is constant and inalterable.

The data for our other newspapers show that each journalistic company makes choices that reveal its editorial orientation. On the weeks from March 15 to 28 – period in which the PSDB, party of former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, finally defined that Alckmin would be the party’s candidate, and not José Serra, then mayor of São Paulo – the visibility of the governor of São Paulo surpasses Lula president on Folha de São Paulo. In O Globo, Alckmin is even with Lula, and only on OESP the president keeps absolute leadership in numbers of citations. This newspaper records 206 entries for the PT candidate, and 141 for the PSDB candidate.

Analyzing separately, once more, opinion and information entries, the tendency of OESP to concentrate coverage on Lula is even more evident. Adding entries as president and as candidate, Lula reaches 73% of the opinion space, and 71% of the informative pieces.
Observing aggregated data, we notice that the visibility given by OESP to Lula is different in the opinion and information sections. While in the informative part news about the president are dominant (43%, against 30% for the candidate), in the opinion sections Lula president has 27%, against 44% of Lula candidate. Our methodology offers elements to assert that also O Globo had a posture that was especially alert towards Lula, with high visibility, and strongly critical as well – displaying, together with OESP, a more positioned and editorialized posture.

The emphasis of informative entries on the government allows for a more critical tone, since it is possible, from the vast agenda of issues generated by the national State, to select and stress the accusations and government inefficiency in various occasions during the research period. On the other side, Lula as candidate produces less negative information, since he keeps always on top of opinion polls, increasing his range of formal and informal supporters and managing without significant problems his campaign. Turned into his number one priority, the campaign was thus more able to control its own agenda.

On the opinion part, the pictures is reversed: Lula candidate is the main focus of attention, with almost half the apparitions, allowing an even more clearly negative positioning from those newspapers, as becomes evident with the analysis of evaluations that follows.
**Position-taking and criticism: far from the manual**

In general lines, data collected on the evaluation of candidates by the newspapers allows us to assert that the Brazilian “editorial climate” was clearly unfavorable to President and candidate Lula during the electoral year of 2006. In no moment, since February 2\textsuperscript{nd} to Election Day the balance of news for Lula exceeded 11 negative points\textsuperscript{17}.

Most of the time (20 weeks out of 34), evaluation of Lula president fluctuates around –30%. This figure reflects a journalistic coverage that gave little space to government agenda and was critical of federal policies on many fronts, giving large space to corruption issues and episodes. Besides, Lula’s use of the Presidency mandate to fulfill candidate agenda was insistently denounced by newspapers, that stressed the electoral intention of announcements and speeches performed by the president. Political positioning of the newspapers under study makes itself clear with the constant negative evaluation of

\textsuperscript{17} The balance of aggregated evaluations considers the sum of positive (+1), negative (-1) and neutral (0) of all newspapers analysed, permitting to apprehend the general editorial climate. The suggestion of this use for evaluation data is of Borba, 2005. This totals and the resulting graph include a fourth newspaper, Jornal do Brasil, a traditional Brazilian newspaper we also analyzed, but have been losing readers and political influence, and was therefore not detailed in the present paper.
In regard to Lula candidate, there is significant change from the moment his candidature is made official by the Workers Party – it marks a negative inflection that will remain until the end of the first round, and that becomes even more negative as election day approaches and with the “Dossier scandal”\(^{18}\).

This critical, editorial and positioned perspective of mainstream Brazilian press in the coverage of the Presidential election is even more evident as we isolate for separate analysis information from opinion pieces. O Globo and OESP are more editorial and positioned, with a lesser percentage of neutral entries. The proportion of neutral (or equilibrated) entries keeps below 50% all over the period, indicating more position taking (more attention to negative and positive stories) than on 2002.

For Lula candidate, in the opinion part, the proportion of neutral on OESP and O Globo is only 38% and 24%, respectively. O Globo shows a frankly anti-Lula attitude, with most stories with negative evaluation. Towards the candidate, there are 53% negative stories, against 9% that show positive opinion. When Lula appears as President, the paper still shows a negative tendency, with 47% negative opinion pieces, and only 8% positive, the lowest score of all.

The analysis of data from OESP also shows explicit “anti-Lulism”. Among opinion pieces, as president, 49% are negative, and 10% positive. Lula-candidate receives 60% negative entries in the form of editorials, essays and humoristic drawings, and 16% positive.

But it is in the analysis of the informative part, which is allegedly, in the discourse of journalists and media owners as well, the space for objective and impartial narrations of

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\(^{18}\) Eighteen days before election, two PT members were arrested when buying a dossier about the candidate to governor of São Paulo, José Serra, of PSDB, party of Lula’s main adversary on the national front, Geraldo Alckmin. The dossier contained mainly exposure against Serra, and also some about Alckmin. News coverage on all mainstream media, from then on, was focused on investigating the origin of the money used by the men to buy the documents, ignoring completely the negative content regarding PSDB candidates. Besides choosing a specific constant frame to treat the episode, a grande mídia, inclusive, viola segredo de justiça ao publicar as fotos do dinheiro apreendido pela Polícia Federal. O vazamento do material foi realizado por um delegado da própria PF que, com a intenção manifesta de interferir na conjuntura eleitoral, procura determinados veículos de comunicação, recomenda a divulgação e instruiu os repórteres a publicar a versão que seria dada por ele mesmo de que o cd com as fotos teria sido roubado de sua mesa. Esse episódio, com suas implicações políticas e a participação comprometida da grande imprensa brasileira, daria um paper.
reality, that the anti-Lula tendency is particularly striking. On O Globo, Lula candidate has 40% negative and 19% positive stories. Lula president, alike, has 43% against 11% positive. Informative pieces found on the pages of O Estado de São Paulo shares the same characteristics of strong criticism towards the President and PT candidate. As president, Lula has almost half of the entries where his name appears, 47%, with negative evaluation, and only 12% positive ones. This adverse tendency is less intense with regard to Lula candidate, who receives 43% negative news against 24%. Even so, these data confirm the strong anti-Lula perspective of mainstream Brazilian press.

To correctly understand such unilaterality, it is important to consider that Lula and his campaign produced a quantity of objectively “good news” during the electoral year: the candidate kept always on top of opinion polls, and almost won already on the first round – such facts, by themselves, could grant Lula considerable positive coverage; as President, on the other hand, he showed positive figures and achievements in many fronts (all well publicized through government, party and electoral propaganda) and finished his mandate well evaluated, in spite of corruption charges.

Through the application of our methodology we were able to point out the strong partidarism of electoral coverage by two of the main newspaper in Brazil. This tendency combined a great attention to Lula, the candidate-president, to a negative perspective. In their opinion part, O Globo and OESP chose not to giver room for opinions in favor of Lula. On the informative side, both dailies were positioned and gave great salience to negative news about Lula. There is clearly a barrier to the penetration of this government’s positive agenda on the papers. Especially on the family dailies of the Mesquita (OESP) and the Marinho (O Globo), the successes of the Lula Presidency, mainly economic, are attributed to previous governors and to the international context, that was favorable on that moment.
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<th>Table 2. Evaluation by candidate – Information</th>
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Folha de São Paulo, on its turn, shows an editorial line more open and plural. In this sense, we can consider it a more engaged in publishing the diversity of the social and political world, and more effectively committed to the typical journalistic professional
code, which in Brazil has been for the last decades the banner if democracy and pluralism, submitted to objectivity and impartiality (see Aldé and others, 2005).

Folha de São Paulo is also more sensitive to the electoral reality, in which Lula leads survey results from the very beginning of the race. The paper still shows some 30% negative entries for Lula-candidate, but this figure is balanced by 33% positive entries, acknowledging that his campaign had a positive agenda, ignored by the other newspapers. News with Lula-president were also more equilibrated: 35% negative against 25% positive.

In the opinion part, Lula-candidate receives 23% positive, 30% negative and 47% neutral – the biggest neutral proportion for all papers studied. This figure, in addition to the relative balance pointed above between positive and negative, confirms Folha’s more pluralistic posture.

However, the opinion pieces about Lula-president follow the tendencies of the other papers. 49% are negative entries, while only 12% are positive ones. When the paper follows a lead initiated by the government, it is usually with a negative or neutral evaluation, disqualifying them – many times, building this negative evaluation on the criticism of specialists selected by Folha as arguments of authority. The critical perspective also appears through the deliberate use of adjectives, as the subtitle for a first page picture of the President, on February 4th: “President praises bio-diesel in boasting discourse”.

This means that the more pluralistic and equilibrated face of Folha’s coverage disappears in the evaluation of the president as the nation’s chief, and of his programmatic agenda. In this case, Folha also opened up few spaces for debate, sharing the anti-Lula in its editorialized sections. The possibility of separating the appearances of Lula as candidate and as chief of the State allows us to assert that mainstream Brazilian media, structured in familiar enterprises, is critical towards Lula’s government.

**Other candidates on national press**

Taken jointly, the analysed newspapers show a more positive balance for PSDB’s Geraldo Alckmin. His worst moment, with a -18.5 balance, was during the security crisis in
São Paulo, which involved the terrorist attacks by PCC\textsuperscript{19}. Although Alckmin had been governor of the state of São Paulo since 2001 and responsible for security matters until 2006, the critical tone of newspapers about the episode is surpassed by the large positive coverage the candidate receives all year long, ending up with more positive than negative entries, considering the aggregated data.

The Public Security crisis in São Paulo reveals sharply the disparity in the coverage of the candidates. The peak of the crisis happens between may 10\textsuperscript{th} and 23\textsuperscript{rd}, and corresponds to the most negative moment of the coverage on Geraldo Alckmin – always better than -20\%, considering the balance of all newspapers.

Besides this criticism towards the ex-governor of São Paulo, it is interesting to notice the priming, identifiable especially on OESP, to frame the PCC attacks. The paper relates Lula to the episode and to violence in general, criticizing in incisive manner the “electoral exploitation” of the case by the PT leader. Such priming is noticeable in the qualitative analysis of the entries under the issue “Criminal attacks in São Paulo”. The summaries of some opinion pieces show the frame of the newspaper for the episode.

\textit{“Nobody expected to see the scenes in SP. The greater guilt is the of federal administration, the present and past ones. The state, after the Carandiru trauma\textsuperscript{20}, is afraid to hurt the prisoners. The city, can do little. This way, neither Alckmin nor Lula will be able to count on SP to elect themselves”}. Section note on May, 16\textsuperscript{th}.

\textit{“The politician who best incarnates the ‘misery of politics’ already mentioned in this section is Lula. He profited from the most dramatic week for Brazilian society (as far as memory can reach) to intensify his non declared reelection campaign. Lula tried to take advantage of Lembo’s complaints towards PSDB and PFL members. The president has been riding the country, spending the taxpayers’ money to make campaign, in the effort to show off for the electorate. Recently, as one more insult by the misery of politics from Brasília, Thomaz Bastos received Daniel Dantas off hours, at the banker’s lawyer home“\textsuperscript{21}. Editorial on May, 23\textsuperscript{rd}.}

\textsuperscript{19} Around mid May, a criminal faction named Primeiro Comando da Capital (Capital First Command, or PCC), froze the country’s largest city with coordinated terrorist attacks, aiming especially at Police targets and panicking the population.

\textsuperscript{20} A tragic event when, in 1992, 111 prisoners of the Carandiru prison complex, in São Paulo, were slaughtered by police forces.

\textsuperscript{21} Cláudio Lembo was mayor of São Paulo at that momento. Tomaz Bastos was Minister of Justice. Daniel Dantas is a banker at the time under investigation, and Bastos had been his lawyer.
We must also observe that an important proportion of negative news about Alckmin from the newspapers under study is due to their effort to analyze the candidate’s strategy, criticizing the choice of his name by the party, his campaign and his attitude – almost enticing, as if indicating the correct course for the presidential candidature of PSDB. This is the case for several political columnists analyzed, especially on OESP and O Globo. Through our database, we were able to detect such tendency analyzing qualitatively the opinion part with negative evaluation towards Alckmin – observing the summaries, issues and frames of entries.

In regard of other candidates, national press was curiously benevolent towards Heloisa Helena, an extreme left candidate that had been usually derided by mainstream media. Of the 17 periods studied before election’s first round, she only had a negative balance in two, against 5 negative periods for Alckmin, 7 for Lula candidate and 17 of Lula president\(^2\). Obviously enough, we must consider that for a candidate with less apparitions than the two main ones, as is the case of Helena, it is easier to have a positive balance of evaluations. However, this evidence does not diminish the fact that mainstream media, traditionally contrary to radical left organizations, critical of Lula and of his party, PT, and favorable towards Alckmin, has treated the socialist candidate in essentially positive fashion.

In the informative part of all three papers, the candidate has positive figures greater than the negative ones: 37% against 18% in Folha de São Paulo, 32% against 17% in O Globo and 36% against 16% in OESP. In the opinion part, the discrepancy is even more striking: OESP displays 45% positive, against 16% negative entries, and O Globo shows 30% positive, against 15% negative ones. Folha de São Paulo, more equilibrated, marks 30% positive and 32% negative entries for Heloisa Helena.

Part of the explanation for this positive coverage lies on Helena’s electoral success: as she mounted in voter preference, our methodology attributes positive evaluation to entries informing electoral polls and tendencies that displayed her performance. However, 

\(^{22}\) Results (valid votes) on first round were: Lula (PT) 48,6%, Alckmin (PSDB) 41,6%, Heloisa Helena (PSOL) 6,8%, Cristóvam Buarque (PDT) 2,6%. Second round brought the reelection of Lula with 60,83% of valid votes, followed by Geraldo Alckmin with 39,17% of v.v.
qualitative observation the journalistic pieces which mentioned Heloisa Helena, other explanations also appear.

Analyzing the issues marked in association to entries which brought Helena’s name, we verify the predominance of “metacampaign”\textsuperscript{23}. The majority of news in which Heloisa Helena appears is related not to the government program, political platform or policy matters of the socialist candidate. Little room, in fact, is given to politically substantive issues. Instead, newspapers opened their pages so that the candidate could comment the election developments, especially corruption accusations against Lula and her former party, PT. That’s why the issues related to her entries are “metacampaign” themes, such as “supports”, “attacks”, “campaign”, “alliances”, “candidature” and “election”, or scandal issues such as “corruption”, “corruption of PT”, “CPI\textsuperscript{24}”, “crisis”, “dossier”, “Lula”, “Mensalão”\textsuperscript{25} and “sangue-sugas”\textsuperscript{26}.

The data collected, thus, allowed us to verify how journalistic enterprises make politically relevant choice when covering elections. Heloisa Helena, likewise the other candidates, made daily campaign acts, producing events and political-electoral discourses. From this offer, newspaper chose to publish according to a definite political framework. In the case of the socialist candidate, they chose to practically ignore thematic issues, emphasizing, instead, her attacks towards the favorite candidate.

**Regularities of press behavior during electoral times**

Comparing our results for the two elections presented here to other elections analyzed through the same methodology, we can confirm some common tendencies that mark the behavior of Brazilian press during electoral times. As we saw in both elections, political-electoral news of the three newspapers studied always give great visibility to candidates well positioned in the opinion polls. This trend is accentuated by another

\textsuperscript{23} Category involving issues about the campaign itself, its strategies and tendencies.
\textsuperscript{24} Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito: Parliamentary Investigation Commission, established by the Congress to pursue accusations regarding deputies and other political authorities.
\textsuperscript{25} “Allowance”: Label used by the press to name an accusation of corruption in which Lula’s government would pay monthly sums to grant the vote of Congressmen.
\textsuperscript{26} “Leeches”: Label used by the press to name an accusation of corruption in Lula’s Ministry of Health.
common tendency, which is to give visibility to the situation candidate. In this sense, newspapers follow a conservative bias, giving room for the favorites and little opportunity for minor or new candidates.

Confirming the first tendency, Geraldo Alckmin, which was the second placed in the results, is also the second with greater visibility in all papers after his name was made official by his party. His first peak of citations on all newspapers occurs precisely between May 15th and 28th, when his name is finally decide by PSDB – until then, he divided attentions with the other pre-candidate, José Serra; together, attention to the PSDB electoral definition was as great as Lula’s. On Folha de São Paulo, Alckmin goes from 96 entries, on the period first two weeks of March, to 197 on the second half of the month. On O Estado de São Paulo, he rises from 64 to 141 entries during the same periods and, on O Globo, from 92 to 154.

As in other elections analyzed by Doxa’s researchers, Brazilian press also gave attention to abrupt shifts on public opinion polls. The most interesting case, in 2006, is of Heloisa Helena in the biweekly period that goes from July 19th to August 1st. Compared to the previous period, the candidate of PSOL has a visibility jump in all papers, a fact that can be attributed to the increase of her vote intentions on July. She rose from 23 to 106 entries in Folha, 37 to 130 on O Globo – surpassing even Lula-president during this period – and from 37 to 81 entries on OESP.

Conclusions

The main conclusions we draw from this continued monitoring of Brazilian press confirm some patterns already observed in other contexts, and set some expectations about its behavior. Although the papers follow some predictable lines, they also have clear political preference that mould their journalistic coverage. For example, it is notable that mandate holders receive extra coverage – but it is not necessarily positive.

We are able to assert that the journalism practiced in Brazil, although it professes an ethics of objectivity and impartiality, has political preferences that shape electoral

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27 In the 2000 and 2004 elections, the same tendency was noted in the municipal elections studied by Doxa. Although we do not have our won numbers for the 1998 reelection of FHC, the most comparable context, a similar research done by Datafolha Institute shows a similar trend for Folha de São Paulo.
coverage. There is nothing essentially wrong with politically marked editorial lines and with newspapers choosing who they consider the best candidate running for government. American newspapers, for example, have a tradition of publicizing their electoral preferences. Position-taking towards issues and public policies contributes to feed the information available for the citizens to build their opinions and take decisions. Nevertheless, it is democratic that the offer of information and opinions for the public is a plural one. This pluralism may be internal – when each medium intends to bring itself all political versions and interpretations possible – or external, when various journalistic companies share the public according to their political opinions, offering explicitly different editorial lines. Historically, communications systems have varied from country to country and from time to time, on what regards political positioning as a journalistic value.

The problem is that mainstream media in contemporary Brazil adopt a hybrid between those two models of pluralism. Formally, newsmedia build their marketing and ethical discourse on the impartiality paradigm, qualifying themselves before their readers and striving to associate their practices to the concepts and rituals of objectivity. This can be verified in the slogans, official guidelines, editorial manuals, journalism undergraduate courses. However, in the production of daily news, what we see are differences in the treatment given to candidates, amplifying certain issues and events negatively associated to candidates, contrasting with the benevolence in the treatment of issues that could be negative for preferred actors.

After the 2006 elections, there was some commotion about these attitudes, especially in the small media criticism surroundings, on websites like Observatório da Imprensa and others. Most of mainstream media, though, reacted violently to the analysis that Lula and PT had won the elections “against the media”. Even our research was disqualified as “not scientific”, and out methodology as not proper to analyze journalism. As a matter of fact, there is still a long way to travel until the exercise of pluralism is actually accepted by Brazilian traditional newspapers, contributing more effectively for a democratic public sphere.
Bibliography


