

On behalf of the public: journalism and politics in *Jornal Nacional* interviews with presidential candidates

Afonso de Albuquerque

Abstract

Based on the analysis of the first round of interviews the National Journal, with the three best-placed candidates in the polls during the 2010 election campaign, the text discusses how the interviewers claim as representatives of the public interest, and how it relates with the classical liberal conception of journalism as Fourth Estate

Keywords

Interview. Jornal Nacional.
Electoral Campaign. Fourth Estate

1 Introduction

Between 9 and 11 August 2010, the Globo TV Network's (Rede Globo) prime time news, *Jornal Nacional*, carried out a series of interviews with the three presidential candidates who were leading the public opinion polls. In an order determined by the drawing of lots, Dilma Rousseff, of the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores - PT), Marina Silva, of the Green Party (Partido Verde - PV) and José Serra, of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira - PSDB) were questioned for about 12 minutes by television news presenters William Bonner and Fátima Bernardes. These interviews can be examined in two main different ways. The first one, in light of the political campaign, investigates the impact of the interviews on how the public regard the candidates and, as a consequence, on the voting intentions of the electorate. Here, the analysis rests primarily on the candidates, considered from the point of view of their political agendas, rhetorical strategies, empathy, among other aspects.

Interviewers, in turn, play a supporting role; their performance is noticeable only when they depart from the impartial behavior expected of them. The second focuses on journalism and considers the interviews based on a wider time frame: what do they reveal about the direction of Brazilian journalism, particularly as it is practiced by Rede Globo? This is the perspective that guides this article.

Considered in this light, the candidates play a supporting role relative to their interviewers. What is at stake is the authority these journalists claim for themselves as representatives of the public interest, commonly described using terms such as “watchdog” and Fourth Estate. In practice, however, such conceptions are vague and reveal little about how journalists fulfill this role. Specifically, throughout history and across cultures, journalists resort to different strategies to claim their authority as representatives of public interest. The interviews with the presidential candidates on *Jornal Nacional* opens an important window to understand how journalists on the most watched newscast in Brazil achieve this today. It is, of course, a quite small *corpus*, but that follows a clear methodological strategy. On the one hand, focus on interviews conducted on consecutive days and presented as parts of the same package in order to maximize comparability between them, as the standardization of circumstances in which interviews were conducted (the first

interview carried out on *Jornal Nacional* with the first round candidates) makes it easier to discriminate similarities and differences in the way interviewers address candidates. On the other hand, this article is an effort to develop an analytical model and aims at proposing a research agenda, rather than a systematic test of a hypothesis.

The article is structured in four parts. The first one is a critical review of the literature on the political coverage by Rede Globo since the end of military rule, establishing the main elements of continuity (and rupture) that characterize these analyses. The second part considers the liberal model, which serves as a normative referent to Brazilian journalism, from a comparative perspective, in view of its relation to the different types of partisan journalism. The third section of the present article examines similarities and differences between the questions asked by interviewers to three candidates, while its fourth part discusses what these findings reveal about the kind of authority *Jornal Nacional* interviewers claim as legitimate representatives of the public interest.

2 Politics in *Jornal Nacional*: from the military regime to the Lula era

In Brazilian research on political communication, few topics have received such long lasting and systematic attention as Rede Globo's - particularly *Jornal Nacional*'s, the flagship of its journalistic

programming – treatment of political phenomena. Founded in 1965 in Rio de Janeiro, TV Globo was able to take advantage of favorable conditions offered by the Brazilian military regime and became the dominant television network in the country - to the point that it was often said it held a *de facto* monopoly within Brazilian television - in exchange for unconditional political support to the regime (ORTIZ, 1989). The interests of Globo Organizations and the military regime remained convergent for most of the long process of democratic transition, as demonstrated by the coverage of direct elections for governor of Rio de Janeiro in 1982 and the campaign for direct elections for president in 1984 (LIMA; RAMOS, 1988).

The symbiotic relationship between Globo and the military regime was such that one could imagine that the end of this latter would inevitably entail the decline of the network. However, this was not what happened. On the contrary, redemocratization provided Rede Globo with the opportunity to outgrow its secondary role and take on a leading role in the country's political life. At the last moment, there was a shift in the network position toward the regime and, at the time of indirect elections for president in 1985, took a stand for the opposition candidate Tancredo Neves, of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), against the candidate of the ruling Social Democratic Party (PDS), Paulo Maluf. Supported by dissidents of the regime - among whom José Sarney, former president of the

PDS who became his running mate -, Tancredo Neves was eventually elected by the Electoral College as the new President. However, affected by a serious illness, he did not take office and died shortly after his election. The illness of the president, elected but not sworn in, produced a constitutional impasse: who should take office? The vice president-elect, José Sarney, or the president of the House, Ulysses Guimarães? In an agreement with Amaral and Guimarães (1988), Globo has played an active role in arbitrating the issue, mobilizing experts in support of the thesis that Sarney should be installed as president, as in fact occurred.

In 1989, direct elections were again held in the country. Two candidates with a profile that was more alternative to the system - Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, of the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT) and Brizola, of the Democratic Labor Party (Partido Democrático Trabalhista - PDT) - seemed favorites in the dispute. In early 1989, however, they were overtaken in the polls by Fernando Collor de Mello, a member of a traditional Alagoas (North-eastern State) political family, who presented himself as an anti-system candidate, put up by the National Reconstruction Party (Partido da Reconstrução Nacional - PRN), which was formed to endorse his candidacy. In the first round of elections, *Jornal Nacional* news coverage was more generous to Collor than to Lula and Brizola (LIMA, 2004); however, as noted by Porto (2008, p. 265), he had less TV

time than Mário Covas, of PSDB and Ulysses Guimarães, of PMDB.¹

But the great controversy about the *Jornal Nacional* campaign coverage was around the second round of the election, disputed by Collor and Lula. In its edition following the last debate between the two candidates, and shortly before the polls, *Jornal Nacional* broadcasted an issue that was largely favorable to Collor, suggesting that he had “won” the debate with Lula. The episode led to a strong discomfort even among Rede Globo journalists, to the point that the network has allegedly decided not to broadcast edited versions of debates in future elections (MEMÓRIA GLOBO, 2004).

Criticism of *Jornal Nacional* partial coverage remained the dominant topic in scholarly analyses of 1994 and 1998 elections, both won by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, candidate of the PSDB. However, the *modus operandi* of the network was allegedly very different in these two cases. In 1994, there was a wide asymmetry between how the candidate of the party in power, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, of the PSDB, and Lula, his main opponent (ALBUQUERQUE, 1994), were treated, not only in the amount of attention given to each, but also as far as the point of view of the coverage was concerned: while Cardoso’s campaign was systematically associated with consensus values and the ability

to bring different political forces together around a project, Lula’s campaign was associated with controversial causes, conflict and specific stakeholders. Even more importantly, the largely favorable treatment given by Rede Globo to *Plano Real* - a plan aimed at economic stabilization launched in February 1994, and whose “paternity” was attributed to Cardoso, then Finance Minister under President Itamar Franco’s administration - helped secure Cardoso an easy victory in the first round of elections (KUCINSKI, 1998; RUBIM; COLLING, 2004; PORTO, 2008).

In 1998, the setting of the election campaign was totally different. For the first time, a democratically elected president was standing for re-election, thanks to a constitutional reform introduced during Cardoso’s administration. On the other hand, the government faced a series of economic problems. Available analyses point to two important features of the *Jornal Nacional* coverage of the campaign and politics during this period of time. On the one hand, it emphasized the international origin of the economic crisis, thus minimizing the responsibility of the federal government for it; moreover, it favored Cardoso’s campaign argument that, in situations of crisis, the country should rather rely on experienced leaders to run it. On the other hand, *Jornal Nacional* gave minimal attention to the campaign, thus helping to minimize

¹ According to Conti (1999) Covas, not Collor, originally was Rede Globo leaders preferred candidate.

controversies about Cardoso's administration performance (MIGUEL, 2000).

The treatment *Jornal Nacional* gave the 2002 election campaign was significantly different from the previous ones. Unlike what had happened in 1998, in 2002 the presidential campaign had great prominence in *Jornal Nacional*, which dedicated up to 30% of the total coverage time, against approximately 8% in the previous campaign (MIGUEL, 2003; PORTO, 2008). And differently from what had happened in the 1989 and 1994 elections, *Jornal Nacional* gave a remarkably equal treatment to candidates in terms of TV air time and TV speaking time, as well as from a qualitative point of view (MIGUEL, 2003; RUBIM; COLLING, 2004). Still, the *Jornal Nacional* effort toward impartiality should not be overestimated: it has allegedly adopted a restricted coverage framework, which emphasized the "market uncertainties regarding the outcome of the election" - that is, fear of consequences of a left wing victory – rather than pointing that the Cardoso administration was the key factor behind the economic instability the country was going through; at the same time, its coverage would allegedly have minimized the country's social problems as a campaign issue (PORTO, 2007b).

Furthermore, *Jornal Nacional* would have strongly demanded that candidates adhere to commitments made by the current

administration and stick to its economic policy guidelines (MICHAEL, 2003). This time, however, Lula emerged from the polls as the president-elect. Beyond its general historical significance, Lula's victory in the 2002 elections is particularly important for our discussion: for the first time, Rede Globo faced the prospect of having to deal with a historical opponent who is now head of government.

The *Jornal Nacional* coverage of the 2006 presidential election has received less attention from researchers.² Its importance, however, should not be minimized: for the first time, it would be possible to test to what extent the much talked-about previous pro-government Rede Globo approach was due to structural bias, inherent to the news production process - which, as pointed out by numerous authors, tend to give preferential treatment to government authorities as privileged sources of information and thus largely echo their views (COOK, 1998; GANS, 1979; GITLIN, 1980; TUCHMAN, 1978) - or to a partisan alignment. Data reported by Souza (2007), considering four periods of the campaign - pre-conventions, the period between candidate registration and the start of political propaganda on television, the first round TV campaign, the second round - provides significant evidence to the latter. Systematically, the media coverage was more negative toward Lula than toward his opponents, especially in the campaign for

² The coverage of the 2006 election campaign was studied in a collection organized by Lima (2007). However, none of its texts pays great attention to the role played by *Jornal Nacional*.

the first round, although coverage was more balanced in the campaign for the second round.

Despite significant evidence of *Jornal Nacional* partisan political alignment, this does not concern all aspects of its election coverage. Besides discussing for and against whom Rede Globo stands politically, this evidence says little about the specific role the network claims to play in the process. In this scenario, Porto research on the changes in Rede Globo TV journalism from the mid-1990s is an exception. The first step in the process was the replacement of the two anchors, Cid Moreira and Sérgio Chapelin - the former presenting *Jornal Nacional* since its first edition in 1969 – with two journalists, William Bonner and Lilian Witte Fibe who, besides presenting the newscast, took on editorial duties. According to Porto, the change followed the network's investment in the credibility of their newscast, seeking to overcome its "pro-government" stigma. The anchors did not just present the news, but played a rather active interpretive role (PORTO, 2002), while government officials were significantly less often present in newscasts during this period (PORTO, 2007a). At first, changes translated in a tabloidization trend, emphasizing lightweight stories at the expense of political coverage, but this trend might have been reversed since 2000, as demonstrated by the coverage of the 2002 campaign.

Port argues that the changes introduced by Rede Globo in its main newscast can be explained neither as being an attempt to meet the demands

of the public - since the original anchors enjoyed great acceptance by the audience - nor merely as enhanced business logic of journalism - which explains, perhaps, the first move toward tabloidization, but not moving away from this line after 2000. The author describes it instead as an attempt to build new bases of legitimacy, more in line with the new democratic times. But what kind of authority did Rede Globo claim to exercise in election campaigns? The analysis of interviews with the presidential candidates in the 2010 elections may provide some important clues in this regard.

3 Journalists as political players

Broadly speaking, the way *Jornal Nacional* is treated is the same in most Brazilian studies that relate journalism to politics. These often consider journalism from the point of view of its product - the news coverage -, its effects on public opinion and / or its alignment with this or that political force, but say very little about journalists and news organizations as distinct social *players*, with their own goals and *modus operandi*. While the work of journalists and news organizations is influenced by their economic interests or the agenda of their political allies, it cannot be reduced to these. Journalists and news organizations address policy makers and the wide public from their own vantage point. In particular, journalists and news organizations claim to act as representatives of citizens' legitimate interests. The way they do this and the principles they resort to in order to support this claim varies widely, though.

The core values that guide journalism and practices associated with these values vary not only with different models of journalism, but also within the same model. This becomes clear when we consider the “independent” journalism model that prevails in the United States and serves as a reference for journalists and news organizations in a number of countries. Two sets of values can be identified behind this model that are, to a certain extent, independent from each other: the first one points to the tradition of journalism as a Fourth Estate, identifying journalism as being representative of ordinary citizens’ interests before state institutions; the second refers to the concept of journalistic objectivity, which states that journalist’s emotional detachment from the events they report on is a prerequisite for the production of reliable information (ETTEMA; GLASSER, 1998). In the first case, journalism is explicitly associated with a political role, described as a player who is essentially committed to the defense of freedom of expression and is an instrument to enhance citizenship, as it requires accountability from governmental authorities.³ In the second case, its political role is also present, but only implicitly. According to Cook (1998), it is precisely as long as they contend theirs is a highly technical, not political role – i.e., “just tell things as they happened,” following proven professional procedures - that journalists play a crucial political role as mediators of the communication process

between government officials and the public and between different governmental institutions.

The picture is further complicated when we consider that the independent journalism model we are talking about is not globally dominant, and it is a relatively recent historical product even in the United States: throughout the 19th century and until the 1920s, a kind of fiercely partisan journalism prevailed in this country (KAPLAN, 2002; RYFE, 2006). Hallin (1994) puts this model’s heyday between the 1950s and 1980s, and associated it with the phenomenon called “Cold War consensus”. Since then, this model seems to have lost some of its force. In other countries, the independent journalism model has never played such a crucial role. In most cases, it is possible to say that what we see in these countries is a kind of “partisan journalism”.

The term “partisan journalism” has been commonly used in a simplistic way, presented as a homogeneous model opposed to the “independent” journalism model. In many cases, both models are presented as successive stages of an evolutionary process of journalism, whether defined in terms of evolving from the political model to the business model (GOLDENSTEIN, 1987; SILVA, 1990), or in terms of changes based on the global expansion of the American model of journalism (HALLIN; MANCINI, 2004). Usually, the use of this concept

3 This type of discourse plays a major role in the effort of journalists and news organizations self-legitimation; in practice, however, the role model he refers to plays a very limited role in journalism, given the strict ties between news organizations and key institutions of economic and political life (SPARKS, 1995; SPARROW, 1999).

extends to a global level aspects that only make full sense in reference to the specific experience of Western European countries. An example of this is the concept of “political parallelism”, commonly used to illustrate some important aspects of the partisan journalism model. The authors who use this concept (BLUMLER, GUREVITCH, 1995; HALLIN; MANCINI, 2004; SEYMOUR-URE, 1974) take for granted a number conditions that are not present everywhere, such as the existence of a competitive political party system, as well as of considerably institutionalized political parties, with well established identities and relatively strong ties with the electorate. Very often though, partisan journalism has no place in non-competitive political systems, such as the Soviet Union (ROUDAKOVA, 2009), in communist Poland (CURRY, 1990). On the other hand, in less stable party systems, the media vehicles are little encouraged to establish strong ties with political parties and factions, as McCargo (2003) suggests about the relationship between the media and politics in Thailand.

Rather than as mutually exclusive models, referring to different empirical realities, “partisan journalism” and “independent journalism” should be understood as normative principles - that are alternative in principle but complementary in practice - through which journalists and journalistic institutions seek to legitimize their public actions. For this article, the question is not whether, in a given country, journalists and news organizations follow one model or the other,

but rather how they trigger and combine two principles in their efforts at self-legitimation.

In Brazil, journalism would have appropriated the Fourth Estate discourse to legitimize a kind of political action that is quite different from its original context (i.e., the United Kingdom and the United States). This discourse would implicitly resort to an entirely different notion of fourth power, strongly rooted in Brazilian political culture: the moderating power. Established by the 1824 Imperial Constitution, it formally ceased to exist upon the proclamation of the republic in 1891. Still, the perception that a political system based on three independent powers would be essentially fragile and that the action of a fourth force would be required so that they could operate harmoniously remained influential (ALBUQUERQUE, 2005, 2010). The armed forces played this role between 1946 and 1964. After the end of military rule, journalism would have claimed to play the same role. The role played by Rede Globo in legitimizing José Sarney as President of Brazil, which we have discussed above, provides evidence of this. In particular, the exercise of this role would lead to the emergence of the opinion leader, in charge of educating the public about the true nature of problems facing the country and the best avenues to solve them.

In the next section we will approach the first round of *Jornal Nacional* interviews with presidential candidates in the 2010 election campaign as revealing the kind of authority the

Brazilian news organizations in general and *Jornal Nacional* in particular claim to exercise.

4 “The People Deserve to Know”: interviews, journalists and representation

The journalistic interviews garnered considerable attention from international researchers. Defined by Schudson (1995) as “the fundamental act of contemporary journalism”, interviews have been considered from different angles by researchers. To begin with, the objects of analysis are included under this heading vary widely. Schudson’s definition refers to interviews as a method for obtaining information that is applied by journalism in general (although he focuses specifically on press). Clayman and Heritage (2002) discuss interviews within the specific context of U.S. Presidents press conferences. For the vast majority of the texts, however, the preferred object are TV interviews. Still, this group of texts is far from being uniform. It includes analyses of in-depth interviews, in which interviewer and interviewee engage in serious dialogue (CLAYMAN, 1988, 2002; CRAIG, 2010; FETZER, 2006; MONTGOMERY, 2008), the use of short excerpts of interviews in TV reporting (EKSTRÖM, 2001; ERIKSSON, 2011; LUNDELL; ERIKSSON, 2010), and even off the record interactions between journalists and politicians occurring before and after the interviews (LUNDELL, 2010).

The focus of these studies also varies considerably. Some are focused on political discourse and how it is affected by the circumstances of the interview (CRAIG, 2010; FETZER, 2006). Others analyze the interviews from a formal point of view in order to classify them into different types (LUNDELL; ERIKSSON, 2010; MONTGOMERY, 2008); or decontextualization and recontextualization strategies used by journalists the way they use excerpts of interviews in their stories (EKSTRÖM, 2001). Finally, several texts take interviews as a privileged object to discuss more general aspects of journalism: the way journalists claim a position of neutrality in interviews (CLAYMAN, 1988), seek to legitimize their position when in confrontation with political authorities (CLAYMAN, 2002), and try to strike a balance between a respectful and a confrontational interview model (CLAYMAN; HERITAGE, 2002; ERIKSSON, 2011).

Our analysis of the *Jornal Nacional* interviews considers only those questions asked by interviewers William Bonner and Fátima Bernardes, its two anchors. This method is similar to that used by Clayman and Heritage (2002), whose comparative analysis of journalists’ performance in press conferences organized by Presidents Eisenhower and Reagan also focused on the design of questions asked by journalists before the interaction between interviewers and interviewees. This does not imply ignoring the fundamental differences between candidates’ contexts, which have an impact on the interview structuring logic. Dilma Rousseff, of the PT, not

only was the candidate of the situation but also played a strategic role in Lula's administration as Minister Chief of Staff. For this reason, the *accountability* dimension relative to the current administration was more relevant to her than to other candidates. On the other hand, the role of the opposition candidate seemed justifiably more suited to José Serra than to Marina da Silva. Not only Serra had already run (and lost) for election against Lula in 2002, but the PSDB, his party, had led the four last presidential campaigns in the country (1994, 1998, 2002, and 2006) against the PT (LIMONGI; CORTEZ, 2010); Marina Silva, on the other hand, not only was affiliated with the PT until very recently, but had been Minister of the Environment under the Lula administration.

When we consider the three interviews from a general perspective, we see interviewers are making an effort to format all interviews in the

same way (Table 1). This effort during explained in the first block of the three interviews. In all cases, interviewers stressed that conditions were the same for the three candidates, expressed by the 12-minute time each one had to speak, and that the order of the interviews was determined by the drawing of lots conducted in the presence of representatives of their parties. Furthermore, the interviews with the candidates were structured around the same three topics related to: 1) the nature of their candidacies and problems associated with these; 2) the problem of political alliances and how the candidates stand in relation to these alliances; 3) government performance (or the performance of the candidate when in post). However, the way these questions were organized and unfolded in different interviews varied significantly with interviews. This comes as no surprise, as candidates' political trajectories are different, their positions in the political campaign

Table 1: Summary of questions put to candidates by the Jornal Nacional anchors

Interview with Dilma Rousseff	Interview with Marina Silva	Interview with José Serra
Presentation, rules of the game.	Presentation, rules of the game.	Presentation, rules of the game.
Questions regarding the candidacy.	Questions regarding the candidacy.	Questions regarding the candidacy.
Questions regarding political alliances.	Questions regarding political alliances.	Questions regarding political alliances.
Questions regarding federal government: country's growth rate.	Ambiguity over the government/PT.	Questions regarding the choice of vice-president.
Questions regarding federal government: the basic sanitation problem.	Performance in the Federal Government: as Minister of the Environment.	Performance in São Paulo state government: the toll problem.
Closure – message to the voter.	Closure – message to the voter.	Closure – message to the voter.

are different, as is the specific dynamics of each interview. Thus, beyond these differences, we can notice an effort to standardize the questions interviewers asked three candidates.

Similarity in questions provides a common basis for checking for noticeable leading strategies, and allows to pinpoint great differences in the way candidates are treated. Let's start with questions interviewers asked about the three candidacies (Table 2). In all cases, interviewers explored potentially problematic aspects that would point to possible weaknesses inherent to these candidacies, so as that candidates would argue in their own defense. However, we can identify some differences in the way these question were treated in the three cases.

The first element that stands out in this process is the difference in treatment given to candidates: on the one hand Dilma and Serra, and, on the one hand, Marina. While the first two candidates' role is

that of relevant competitors in presidential election (Dilma, the situation candidate, and Serra, the opposition), the very purpose of Marina's candidacy is questioned, as she was defined as being monothematic – her theme being the environment - and asked if her intention was only to “state her views.” As for Dilma and Serra it can be said, at first glance, that their interviews are structured based on a common agenda: both are positioned in relation to Lula and their personality and / or personal style is questioned.

The questions put to Dilma and Serra challenged their passivity in relation to President Lula. As far as Dilma is concerned, criticism refers to the process through which she was chosen as candidate, bypassing party bases; as to Serra, it highlights his hesitation in acting as opposition's candidate. In both cases, the authoritarian and threatening presence of Lula in the election campaign stands out as a subtext. Moreover, it should be stressed

Table 2: Questions regarding candidacies

Interview with Dilma Rousseff	Interview with Marina Silva	Interview with José Serra
Authoritarian nomination by President Lula.	Experience specifically focused on environmental issues.	Avoids criticizing President Lula. Does not adopt an oppositional stance.
Lack of electoral experience.	Just stating her views.	Fear of Lula's popularity.
Difficult temper – Mistreats other politicians.		Compares biographies, not administrations.
		Delay in appointing running mate Índio da Costa: profile of a centralizer.
		Inexperienced running mate – career at the municipal level.

that interviewers told Serra he should more actively assume his role as opposition's candidate and compare current and previous administration in voters' best interest.

In terms of temperament / personal style, Dilma was described as a "difficult person" and Serra was characterized as being a "centralizer", which, in principle, could be considered as an equivalent treatment given to the two candidates. However, here too we can pinpoint significant differences in the way the two candidates were treated. In Serra's case, his being characterized as a centralizer by his critics is softened by Fátima Bernardes' observation that "in your farewell address from São Paulo state government, you explained this reputation." In Dilma's case, her characterization as being a difficult person is attributed by Fátima Bernardes to "some critics, many critics and even some allies." And Bonner still adds the president, who "mentioned mistreating". When the interviewee said he had misquoted the President, Bonner says that "his speech is available." Thus, the candidate's version is dismissed based on empirical evidence presented as absolute truth. In summary, while questions addressed to Serra made him rise above his reputation - since he "explains it" -, questions put to Dilma led her to a position of inferiority - because her interpretation is contradicted by the reference to evidence that, being recorded, would allegedly be indisputable.

Questions were also addressed to the three candidates about political alliances. Here too, the

comparative analysis reveals interesting patterns in interviewers' performance, summarized in Table 3. Once more, the question is asked differently in interviews with Dilma and Serra, on the one hand, and Marina on the other. While in the first two cases the existence of heterogeneous alliances is seen as a problem, as evidence of political contradiction, in the interview with Marina, the absence of political alliances is questioned, in view of the potential risks this might imply for governance in case the candidate were to be elected. Formally speaking, this topic was treated in a very similar way in Dilma and Serra interviews: in both cases, alliances forged during the election campaign is contrasted with past hostile relations between the candidate's party and forces that now support him/her. Upon asking this question, the interviewer asks provocatively whether the party's candidate was mistaken in the past or is mistaken now.

Once more, beside formal similarities in addressing the issue of alliances in interviews with Dilma and Serra found, we found a number of important differences. On the one hand, while the question put to Dilma focuses on the personal dimension of her alliances - the interviewer mentions the names of Sarney, Renan Calheiros and Jader Barbalho, but not PMDB, party of which they are all members, officially allied with PT in the election, and the support of Fernando Collor de Mello -, in the question addressed to Serra the controversy revolves around the support of PTB, party that was involved in the monthly allowance

Table 3: Questions regarding political alliances

Interview with Dilma Rousseff	Interview with Marina Silva	Interview with José Serra
Alliances with personalities PT dismissed in the past. Mistaken now or mistaken in the past?	No alliances with other parties. How to form a basis of government?	Contradictions in political alliances: PT allied with foes; PSDB allied with PTB, which was involved in the PT monthly allowance affair. Mistaken now or mistaken in the past, when criticized PTB?
	Absence of alliances increases the risk of patronage?	There is a very extensive list of PTB affiliates (involved in the monthly allowance affair)...
	Is PV membership large enough to govern the country?	Is it not embarrassing to side with a PTB leader whose impeachment was voted for including by PSDB representatives?
	Left the Ministry due to disagreement with PT on environmental issues, but did not disapprove of the monthly allowance. Collusion with mismanagement?	
	Not uneasy enough to resign from the post of minister?	
	What did you think of your colleagues who, outraged, left the party at that time?	

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scandal in 2005. The only name was mentioned in relation to this issue (Maurício Marinho) is that of a person with no significant career within this party. Secondly, in the interview with Dilma, contradictions in her political alliances are stressed in a straightforward, blunt way, whereas in Serra's interview contradiction is put in a broader framework and compared with the alliance between the PT and "its historical foes." Finally, while in questions addressed to Serra the interviewer establishes a direct association between PT and corruption, the PSDB is portrayed as a party that "investigated" and "condemned" corruption.

The PT was also questioned in the interview with Marina Silva: former member of the party for many years, she was often questioned about her passive behavior during the monthly allowance episode, and requested to talk about what she thought of her colleagues who, "outraged, left the party crying at that time". Dilma was asked no direct question about the behavior of the PT, although she was the candidate whom it would be more appropriate to ask about it from the accountability point of view.

The last portion of the interviews dealt with government performance - or the performance

of the candidates when in post - considered from a critical perspective. However, the way the topic was framed also varied widely between the interviews with the three candidates (Table 4). This topic is explored more in-depth in Dilma's interview than the other candidates' – she is asked two questions, whereas the other candidates, one only - which makes sense when one considers that she is the official federal government candidate. Let's not forget, too, that interviews followed different dynamics and that this has an impact primarily on the last block of questions. Even more importantly, questions asked the three candidates follow different logics. Dilma is questioned about the *performance* of the current government, but not about her participation in government. In the two questions she was asked - on the country's economic growth and basic sanitation policies -, the optimistic governmental discourse is contrasted with data suggesting much more modest outcomes. Criticism takes here the form of an objective fact, not subject to challenge. Marina,

in turn, is questioned about her role as Minister of the Environment. In particular, the interviewer points to many criticisms “from government officials and otherwise” with regard to the delay in the release of environmental licenses, which might create “bottlenecks” in economic production. Serra, finally, is asked about his mandate as governor of São Paulo state, governed by his party for 16 years and, in particular, about the state-level toll system. While there also is an element of criticism involved here, it takes a different form from interviews with other candidates. To begin with, the question is preceded by a preamble, in which Serra is shown as being the target of criticism against the Brazilian federal model for toll road concession. Then the interviewer states that many users complain about the price and the number of toll booths along São Paulo roads and asks the candidate if he intends to export the São Paulo model to the federal level. After Serra's answer, praising the quality of São Paulo roads, as opposed to federal highways, the

Table 4: Questions regarding performance of / in government

	Interview with Dilma Rousseff	Interview with Marina Silva	Interview with José Serra
Object of the question	Performance of the federal government.	Performance in the federal government.	State government policies.
Tone of the question	“Objective” criticism (facts).	“Subjective” criticism (opinions).	“Subjective” criticism / comparison.
Status of the candidate in question	Absent (focus on government).	Object of criticism.	Subject of criticism / object of criticism.

interviewer insisted, asking whether there would be a middle ground between a good and expensive road and another one that is inexpensive and bad. This way the interviewer introduces a positive enunciation associated with the Serra model, which offsets the negative statement: roads are expensive for consumers, but they are good, whereas federal roads are inexpensive, but bad. Thus, what in principle would be criticism turns into a comparison between two possibilities and a question on which one the candidate, if elected, would choose.

5 Discussion

What does a comparative analysis of these three interviews reveals about *Jornal Nacional* interviewers' *modus operandi* and the kind of authority they claim to exercise as mediators of the relationship between citizens / voters and candidates? Regarding the first aspect, interviews with the three candidates send contradictory signals, in some cases related to a kind of journalism that could be labeled as "partisan" and, in others, as "independent" journalism.

On the one hand, interviewers' efforts to present themselves as being in a transcendent place relative to the electoral competition. These efforts were based on: 1) the insistence on the rules of the game, identical for the three candidates; 2) a similar (at least from the formal point of view) list of questions to be put to them; 3) an aggressive questioning attitude toward all candidates

(although not necessarily to the same degree); and, last but not least, 4) an appeal to the public interest as the foundation of this kind of attitude. These elements point to a rhetoric based on the principles of independent journalism and, more specifically, of Fourth Estate, in order to justify interviewers' actions.

On the other hand, and in contradiction to this claim of neutrality, the analysis of this set of interviews shows that Serra received a more favorable treatment than the other candidates: Marina was presented as a non-competitive candidate, ambiguous in her relationship with the government and PT; questions put to Dilma highlighted her "difficult" character and minimized her participation in the federal government, whereas Serra was urged to assume more clearly his role as opposition's candidate and compare the Lula administration performance with his party's administrations at federal and state levels. In addition, a number of angles unfavorable to Dilma were presented in more than one interview, such as the emphasis on Lula's threatening presence in the campaign (in the interviews with Dilma and Serra) and the identification of the PT as a fundamentally corrupt party (in the interviews with Serra and Marina).

Regarding the kind of authority *Jornal Nacional* interviewers exercise by interviewing presidential candidates, two aspects can be highlighted. The first one points to the quasi-official role, similar to government, that Rede Globo claims to play

during electoral processes. With the American case as reference, Cook (1998) also describes news organizations as performing government functions, in that these play essential roles in communication not only between government and citizens, but also between the three branches of government. However, he points out that this role can only be exercised as long as journalists do not claim a political role, and as that role is projected trans-organizationally onto journalism as a whole (SOLOSKI, 1993). In interviews, on the other hand, Rede Globo journalism claims to itself - rather than to journalism in general - to have a public function, and does so in a politically active way. In this sense, Bonner's claim - expressed during the interview with Marina - that he acted "on behalf of the public" seems to appeal to a notion of representative mandate.

The second aspect concerns the authoritarian behavior of *Jornal Nacional* interviewers. This type of behavior should be differentiated from an aggressive or antagonistic stance of journalists toward their interviewees. Generally, the antagonistic stance can be taken as a direct consequence of the principle of the Fourth Estate, which implies that journalists should cultivate an arms-length relationship with authorities so that they can perform their role satisfactorily, informing citizens about publicly relevant issues. On the other hand, aggressiveness has been closely associated with interviews since its beginnings, to the extent that, in the nineteenth century, interviews were often dismissed by

Europeans as "barbaric" American practices, in that in interviews, journalists did not show due respect for political authorities (SCHUDSON, 1995). Furthermore, several studies have stressed an increase in aggressiveness and antagonistic stance of journalists toward political authorities in developed Western democracies (EKSTRÖM, 2001; ERIKSSON, 2011; HALLIN, 1994). In particular, Clayman and Heritage (2002) suggest that this trend seems to point both to a decline of the aura that surrounds the institution of the presidency in the United States, and to journalists' efforts to legitimize themselves as social agents in charge of fostering accountability of political authorities. From this point of view, the performance of *Jornal Nacional* interviewers would be in agreement with a general trend for journalist aggressiveness toward their interviewees.

The story does not end here, though. Literature on the United States and Western European countries highlights that interviewers struggle to cultivate a low profile at the same time as they question political authorities about controversial topics, in view of the goal of "introducing viewpoints that contradict their interviewees', not to express their personal views, but as a means to clarify interviewees' ideas" (CLAYMAN, 1988, p. 490). *Jornal Nacional* interviewers, in contrast, played their role much more actively than their American counterparts. They do more than question: they claim the power to overtly confront candidates, as in the question "mistaken in the past or mistaken now?" they asked candidates Dilma and Serra.

Behind it we can discern a value judgment taken for granted, expressed in the idea that, at some point in time, a mistake was actually made. Other examples include assertions that there was “mismanagement”, due to a “a number of moral deviant PT members”, expressed during the interview with Marina, and that “there are very clear contradictions” in the alliance between PT and PSDB, uttered during the interview with Serra. In all these cases, the *Jornal Nacional* interviewers act as if their interpretive authority were self-evident, a straightforward expression of a truth that is presented to the viewers as being absolute. Likewise, the efforts of interviewers to lead interviewees’ answers to the “right direction” also draw our attention. In the interview with Marina, for example, between questions clearly formulated in an attempt to disrupt her argument - by means of incomplete sentences like “Just one thing, candidate...” – Bonner intervenes ten times in a row, in an attempt to extract from her an explanation for not having left the PT during the monthly allowance scandal.

Together, this evidence suggests that the performance of *Jornal Nacional* interviewers deviates from the liberal model of the Fourth Estate in two important respects. While in this model the role of the interviewer is to propose questions which would encourage interviewees to openly state their views so as to help viewers to form their own opinion on the issues in question, the *Jornal Nacional* interviewers strive to

control interviews, thus reducing interviewees’ autonomy to state their answers and leading viewers to consider matters in their “right dimensions.” On the other hand, the exercise of this authority seems much less subject to constraints than in American interviews. Far from appearing as mere “neutral” and “objective” intermediaries between citizens and political authorities, the *Jornal Nacional* interviewers claim for themselves a political (but not partisan) status: that of representatives par excellence of popular interest. Taken together, all this points to the - fundamentally authoritarian - *Jornal Nacional* interviewers’ claim that they play the role of “opinion leaders”.

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Em nome do público: jornalismo e política nas entrevistas dos presidencialistas ao Jornal Nacional

En el nombre del público: periodismo y la política en las entrevistas de los candidatos presidenciales para el *Jornal Nacional*

Resumo

Com base na análise da primeira rodada de entrevistas do Jornal Nacional, com os três candidatos mais bem colocados nas pesquisas durante a campanha eleitoral de 2010, o texto discute o modo como os entrevistadores reivindicam como representantes do interesse público, e o modo como ela se relaciona com a concepção liberal clássica do jornalismo como Fourth Estate.

Palavras-chave

Entrevista. Jornal Nacional. Campanha eleitoral. Fourth Estate.

Resumen

Basado en el análisis de la primera ronda de entrevistas el Diario Nacional, con los tres candidatos mejor colocados en las encuestas durante la campaña electoral de 2010, el texto analiza cómo afirman los encuestadores como representantes del interés público, y cómo se relaciona con la concepción liberal clásica del periodismo como Fourth Estate.

Palabras-Clave

Entrevista. Jornal Nacional. Campaña Electoral. Fourth Estate.

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