

# The Role of Partido Dos Trabalhadores in the Democratization in Brazil

Hao Cui, Yinan Wang

School of Institute for Research on Portuguese-speaking countries, City University of Macau, Taipa, Macau, 999078, China

## Abstract

**The Workers' Party (Portuguese: Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) is an emerging leftist party in Brazil that grew from a small party led by metallurgical workers but hitherto has ranked the third largest party and became the ruling party in 2003. The PT grew rapidly during the third democratization movement. Through its position in power, the PT promoted the comprehensive development of Brazil and the progress of democracy by tackling series of domestic social problems. Correspondingly, the advancement of democracy has also provided opportunities and convenience for the development and management of the Labor Party.**

## Keywords

**Partido Dos Trabalhadores; Democratization; Role.**

## 1. Introduction

Contemporarily, various monographs focuses on democratization. Democracy and Democratization, written by Georg Sorensen in 2000, combs the process of democracy and democratization around the world and mentions the two major waves in the world over the past two decades, namely economic globalization and political democratization. Besides, it can be additionally regarded as a lighthouse pointing the valid path for democratic. The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century by Huntington (1991) systematically studies the causes, process, characteristics and trend of the democratization during that period, and analyzes the problems it confronted. From an international perspective, the democratization process can provide a macro, comprehensive, specific discussion on democratization of a country. When in fact, some blind spot still exists. Marx advocated concrete analysis of specific issues. Due to the variety of national conditions in different countries, democratization process presents diverse. Taking Brazil as an illusion, this paper makes a micro analysis on the role of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) in the process of democratization in Brazil.

## 2. The Role of PT in the Economy of Democratization in Brazil

### 2.1. The Economic Development and Democratization

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In a complex society, democracy can be defined as a political system, which provides a constitutional possibility for the replacement of government officials. It can also be treated as

a social institution that allows people to compete, choose and influence important decisions. Democracy is both a political system and a social mechanism. Local booming economy has contributed to the third wave of democratization. The relationship between economy and democracy indicates that the transition to democracy should be carried out in countries with moderate economic development. Some developed countries prefer democracy, while most developing countries with a transition to democracy will reach this level of economic development.

## **2.2. The Effort of PT in Improving Local Economic Environment**

Before Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (a Brazilian politician and former union leader who served as the 35th president of Brazil from 2003 to 2010) came to power, national economy was on the verge of recession and turbulence and experienced three great depressions. The global financial crisis in 1999, the energy crisis in 2001 and the domestic financial crisis in 2002 resulted in the reduction of the exchange rate of Brazil Real against the US dollar by 64%. Furthermore, the economic crisis in Brazil has caused the retrogression of industry and agriculture, the retrogradation of foreign trade and the devaluation of currency, thus leading into a series of chain effects such as financial storm, rising debt, rising inflation, unchecked foreign investment and irrational foreign exchange reserves. However, under the effort of government at that time, there was a significant growth of GDP by 1.4% based on that of 1.8% in 2001. What is more, agriculture and animal husbandry have become an important part of economic development.

The implementation of The Plano Real (A set of measures taken to stabilize the Brazilian economy in 1994, during the presidency of Itamar Franco.) has provided a relatively stable macroeconomic environment for the development of the national economy, but it also brought domestic market some inevitable loss. In order to keep inflation at an ideal level, the Brazilian government conducted a tight monetary policy, which resulted in long-term high interest rates, thus slowing down the economic development. At the same time, due to domestic political factors, major reforms such as social security and tax system reform were never put into practice, which were responsible for huge fiscal deficit afterwards. Faced with national debt of 60% of GDP, the external debt of 200 billion US dollars plus the annual interest of 22 billion US dollars, Brazilian government had to borrow 50 billion US dollars from the world financial market every year, which has caused serious dependence on external funds. In addition, the government has been forced to take power-off measures for the considerable short of national energy since 2001, leaving enormous impact on national production.

From the perspective of external reasons, the sluggish economy of the United States and the strict trade protection measures put a great impact on Brazilian export. Successive economic crises in Argentina also largely influenced Brazil's exports, causing foreign trade deficit in Brazil and decline in the profits of Brazilian companies in Argentina. Apart from that, the backset of economy in Argentina was a reason for the decline in foreign investment in developing Latino countries. In this context, Brazil merely received US \$18 billion in foreign investment in 2002. The current financial crisis in Brazil is mainly caused by the internal and external environment mentioned above. Unfortunately, Brazilian government should take a heavy burden and embark on a long road to recover national economy under the lack of capital and funds. After Lula won the presidential election on October 17, 2002, he said he would continue to implement the agreement with the government to eliminate the doubts of the financial market about the radical policies after PT came to power. The government calculated strict fiscal expenditure, controlled inflation, implemented floating exchange rate and exercised all debt contracts. However, how to solve the financial market crisis remained the focus and problem of the international community. Traditionally, the measures taken by people for the difficulties of collective behavior are taken by the government. However, considering that the Brazilian government is now receiving rescue, they were unable to effectively solve the problem except

by the assistance from international organizations and international financial institutions. Although the Brazilian government did not have such strength, Lula was not discouraged. He still tried to seek loans and help from international financial organizations, and eventually has achieved certain results.

The PT took office on January 1, 2003 and was appointed during this crisis. After Lula step on the politician stage, he adopted "peaceful and moderate" reform measures and continued to implement the prudent economic policies of the previous government to prevent the increase of fiscal deficit and inflation. Lula decided to consolidate and rebuild his new economy and democracy. By lowering interest rates, reforming the tax system, promoting exports and strengthening infrastructure construction, national economy has resumed growth and reduced its dependence on foreign investment. In view of Brazil's economic performance in recent years, the responsiveness of international institutions, political stability and recent market development, Brazil can also survive the current debt crisis.

### **2.3. The Effort of PT on Improving Local Political Environment**

Democracy is the democratization of politics whose essence relies on the transformation of political power, political role and political system. In other words, political democratization is to build a democratic political system. Democracy can be achieved by economic development and political leaders. For example, the quality of political leaders and the strategies they adopt sometimes accelerate or delay the democratic process. From the beginning of its establishment, PT has established the goal of building socialism. This is a party representing the working class. It has never forgotten the people. It is committed to democratizing Brazil in order to serve the people. Political system and political party system in Brazil have been affected by redemocratization. In this reform process, an multi-party system appeared in politics, which made politics diversified.

In addition, with the increase of political party alliances, the formation of political party alliances in elections has become a landscape. President Cardoso won the general election, while Lula won in 2002 with the joint efforts of the PT and other parties. The party system formed in this context was a weak party system, so the first thing PT should do was to institutionalize the political system in Brazil. PT had good leadership and controlled over members of Congress. PT stipulated that the decisions of all parties are binding on members of Congress. In order to promote people's democracy and participation, PT developed the core of political parties, encouraged people to participate through people, and created activity space for the introduction of important policy-making institutions. Wide participation and control over candidates and members of Congress in PT are much stricter than other parties. PT's parliamentarians sometimes gave up voting for the sake of principle. PT's strict control over its members made its politicians take action for their own interests. They focused on working for PT and extended it to the national political system. This has played a great role in the democratization of Brazil, thus curbing the rise of dictatorship.

PT is a parliamentary party that strictly abides by the rules. Its party position emphasizes that parliamentarians should vote in a disciplined manner. All candidates must obey this system, in which parliamentarians must agree to support the platform of PT and the work of the public. Therefore, PT is more disciplined, united, loyal and capable of supporting democracy and grass-roots organizations in Brazil than other parties in Brazil. GOT has also developed a specific plan to democratize the decision-making process and a participatory budget to strengthen democratic results, that is, the budget terms and proposed investment plans are not in the office, but in public discussion. Based on the discussion of tripartite interests, participatory budget is an innovative experiment of democracy project of PT. It has accumulated rich experience in the process of democratization and has been affirmed and praised by the Pan American Development Bank, the world bank, the United Nations and the IMF. Local governments were

working hard to implement this plan. By the end of 2002, the participating budget had been expanded to more than 100 cities. Brazil was undergoing democratization and rapid political, economic and social changes. Political pluralism in Brazil became increasingly prominent, and various political groups representing various interest groups emerged one after another and involved in the political life of the country. The president's policies were often constrained by the Constitution and did not receive sufficient support from Congress. Despite the power of command, the president gave the impression of dictatorship and non-democracy. In order to maintain its democratic practice, PT expanded its position in Congress and won the support of Congress. In the subsequent government reform, PT constantly sought support from the opposition and implemented policies without obstacles. On January 23, 2004, PT government announced the reform of public institutions to adapt to the democratization process. Six ministers were dismissed, nine ministers were replaced, and the Ministry of social development and the eradication of hunger was established. Lula appointed two members of the opposition party to join the PT government and become ministers in the cabinet reorganization. The Brazilian Democratic Movement (Portuguese: Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, MDB) holds 77 seats in the Brazilian parliament, which made the PT alliance had an absolute advantage in Congress. In this way, PT can realize the sustainable development of democracy in the process of consolidating democracy and promoting democratization.

#### **2.4. The Effort of PT on Solving Social Issues**

PT represents the interests of the working class. Democratic politics has also found many social problems in the process of democracy, which has brought great obstacles to democracy. Since its inception, PT has regarded anti-corruption as an important topic, advocated strengthening the political transparency of the government, established and strengthened the legal supervision system, and supervised the media and corruption. In view of the prominent poverty problem in Brazil, PT government has made hunger and poverty a top priority, because PT was well aware of the sufferings of the people, and it always takes developing the economy and improving people's livelihood as its mission. After PT took office, it still took economic development as its primary task to cope with the financial crisis and inflation at that time. Unfair distribution in local society is an important obstacle to democracy in Brazil. According to the data of the Department of geography and statistics in Brazil, 20% of the rich people in Brazil took 63% of the country's assets, 0.9% of the population took 35% of the country, and the proportion was the highest in the world. Income distribution was the most uneven. In order to eliminate the gap between the rich and the poor, PT government took famine and poverty as its top priority. PT government implemented hunger Eradication Action to realize social justice, expand employment and improve social welfare. Brazil is the ninth largest country in the world and an economic power, but more than 35 million people were still below the poverty line, accounting for 31.2% of overall population. Unfair distribution is detrimental to strengthening democracy and promoting democratization. In addition to implementing the hunger Eradication Action, the social welfare foundation also implemented the financial aid scheme in Cardoso government, increasing the subsidy standard and expanding the scope of funding, so as to alleviate the unfair social distribution to some extent and comply with the trend of democratic transformation.

The low level of education was a persistent issue of Brazilian society. It has not only caused great obstacles to the economic development in Brazil, but also had an adverse impact on the development of democratization in Brazil. The existing education system includes basic education, higher education, additional education, vocational and technical education and special education. Overall enrolment in primary schools remained high, but regional differences are significant. Among pupils aged 7-14, the proportion in the south, northeast and West was 3%, and that in the northeast and north is 10%. In addition, the school infrastructure was very

poor. A survey by the Ministry of education indicates that the level of higher education in Brazil is far behind the global average. Only 11.3% of people aged 18-24 have higher education. The emergence of this situation is bound to reduce the quality of work, which left an adverse impact on political and economic development and the reduction of people's democratic consciousness. In order to improve the education situation in Brazil, PT government adhered to the purpose of education reform in previous dynasties, continued to improve the education system, increased education investment and the content of science and technology so as to meet the new situation of modern education and the development of science and technology, and provided direct employment and career development for future graduates.

### 3. Conclusion

Process of democratization in Brazil has certain similarities with the global democratization process while special national conditions in Brazil determined its democratization process. Although the current situation in Brazil has a great impact on national democratization, from the perspective of its policies and measures, the government was still committed to developing the economy, coordinating various political organizations and dealing with major social problems. In the process of democratization in Brazil, the government were trying to remove all obstacles. Lula's government made some progress during its term of office.

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