I did not fathom the depth of the transformation derived not only from economic stabilization but also from political democratization, and from the social policies initiated in my government and deepened in subsequent administrations.

You have stated that Brazil has major issues that it needs to address, among them energy, education, infrastructure development, and the environment. Would you provide an overview of your vision for what needs to be done in these areas to ensure Brazil’s continued leadership?

In the field of infrastructure, we need to overcome, once and for all, the ideological bias against privatization.

In the field of education, we need to go through an authentic revolution regarding the reshaping of the school curricula, teacher training programs, effective learning of basic skills, and the extension of the number of hours that students stay at school, especially at the elementary level. The same applies to higher education, which should give greater priority to the acquisition of scientific knowledge relevant to the challenges of daily life and work in a complex society.

We have also to make a final decision regarding the role of ethanol in our energy matrix in order to define a consistent policy to promote its use. In addition, we need greater clarity about Petrobras’ financial viability regarding pre-salt oil drilling. We must also achieve greater transparency regarding the public/private relationship, without the recurring inconsistencies in the treatment of capital, with government either deciding to be the only investor or opting for lukewarm forms of partnership with the private sector. The same goes for the modalities of exploring hydroelectric energy that remains unclear to this day. In the environmental field, these clarifications will also serve the purpose of creating the conditions for a low intensity carbon economy.

What were the main issues that you wanted to highlight with your most recent book, A soma e o resto, which was published in 2011, and have you been happy with the way the book has been received?

The last book that I published – “The sum total and what is left” – is an open and candid conversation with someone who has reached 80 years of age and, released from any concerns related to the functions he has exercised or to his academic status, delves into controversial themes such as narcotic drugs, the fear of death, and the value of friendship. In this book, I also share my understanding of the great challenges facing today’s world in the aftermath of the informational revolution and the balances or imbalances coming from the shift of economic power towards Asia: Will the West be capable of responding to this trend? Which position will be occupied by Brazilians, inhabitants of the farthest shores of the West, in this changing world? All this and more is dealt with in a colloquial and straightforward language. The book has been on the top 10 best-seller lists in Brazil since its recent publication.

The world is facing many challenges and leadership is needed to address them. How do you define what makes a successful leader?

The key attributes of a leader are having a vision for the future, the courage to take risks, the ability to stay the course and persevere, and the capacity to nurture trust and persuade others to follow.

What do you miss the most about being President?

The inability to continue being an active and direct agent of change in Brazil.