

Government and Opposition in foreign policy legislative voting: Brazil and the UK in a comparative analysis

Governo e oposição no voto legislativo em Política Externa: Brasil e Reino Unido em análise comparada

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Abstract: In this article I show that foreign policy voting patterns of Brazilian and British legislators depart from a government and opposition polarization. I reject the idea that the different nature of foreign policy compared to domestic policy incentivizes unified behavior in legislative voting and the behavior of political party deviates on domestic and international affairs. Rather, I demonstrate that legislative voting in foreign and domestic issues is similar, driven by the control of the Executive over the legislative agenda in Brazil and the United Kingdom. Additionally, it is shown some indicative suggestion of strategic voting in foreign policy. The legislators may prefer to compromise or oppose governmental propositions regardless of their most preferred policies.

Key-Words: Foreign Policy, Legislative Voting, Brazil and the UK

Resumo: No presente artigo argumenta-se que os padrões de votações em temas de política externa no Brasil e Reino Unido são estruturados a partir da dicotomia entre o governo e a oposição. Rejeita-se a ideia da influência das distintas naturezas da política externa e política doméstica no comportamento legislativo. Ao contrário, por meio da utilização da estimação de pontos ideais, demonstra-se que o voto legislativo em temas domésticos e internacionais é extremamente semelhante, estruturados pelo controle de agenda por parte dos Poderes Executivos no Brasil e Reino Unido. Adicionalmente, alguns indícios da ocorrência de voto estratégico em temas internacionais são exibidos. Legisladores podem apoiar ou não as propostas legislativas do governo independentemente de suas preferências políticas.

Palavras-chave: Política Externa, Voto Legislativo, Brasil e Reino Unido.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the main debates in international relations concerns to which extent domestic and systemic factors influence the behavior of states (Rose 1998). Although the controversy remains, there is a strong perception that domestic players, such as the bureaucratic corps, political parties, interest groups and public opinion, are important keys to understanding the foreign policy of a country (Hudson 2005). Adopting the relevance of domestic agents in foreign policy decision-making process as a premise, this article aims to examine one of the relevant domestic players: political parties. The legislative behavior in foreign policy issues will be used as dependent variable, instead of adopting legislative influence as an independent variable to understanding the political position of a country in international affairs.

The extent of influence of peculiar characteristics of foreign policy in legislative behavior is an important debate in the specialized literature. The presence of anarchy in international relations is argued to incentivize political parties to behave united in foreign policy, generally supporting the Executive's commitments in the international arena (Bjereld and Demker 2000). While the domestic arena is characterized by polarization between political parties and multiple divergent political disputes, the international arena is marked by consensus and low political polarization (King 1986). Recent studies have challenged this perspective when claiming that there are significant similarities between legislative behavior in both arenas (Milner and Tingley 2012). According to this view, foreign policy is similar to any other public policy, producing no specific effects on legislative voting.

This article compares legislative voting in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies (1995-2014) and the House of Commons of Britain (2005-2014) to further understand legislative behavior in foreign policy issues. How do Brazilian and British legislators vote on foreign policy issues? What influences their behavior regarding foreign policy? Roll call votes usually hold significant policy consequences and are relevant to the political parties. Interest groups, the media and constituents also tend to pay greater attention to this type of legislative behavior and their consequences than any other legislative activity (Alemán 2008: 79). Additionally, the analysis of legislative behavior in such different countries allows neutralizing possible confounding factors such as the political

system, electoral rules, the relative military force in the international system and the internationalisation level of the economy.

I show that government-opposition voting dominates the behavior pattern of Brazilian and British political parties on foreign policy issues. A main outcome stemming from this analysis is the similarity of legislative voting in foreign and domestic issues, rejecting the idea that foreign policy generates different incentives on legislative behavior when compared to domestic issues. This article also shows incipient evidence that cohesive government-versus-opposition voting patterns may be explained by strategic voting rather than the similarity of preferences within and between the government and opposition ranks in foreign policy issues.

This article proceeds as follow: in the next section I provide a brief overview of literature on legislative voting and foreign policy and also introduce the main research hypotheses that will guide the empirical study. In the following sections I present the data and analysis method of roll call, the case selection justification and the revision of some of the key findings. I conclude with a brief discussion of my findings.

2. LEGISLATIVE VOTING AND FOREIGN POLICY

The study of legislative voting behavior in foreign policy issues has a long tradition in the American political science literature (Baldwin and Meg 2000; Conley 1999; Dahl 1950; Mack et.al. 2011; McCormick et al. 1997; Meernik 1993; Prins and Marshall 2001). Two main perspectives can be observed in this debate: the bipartisan perspective, which says that politics stops at the water's edge, and the political perspective, which sees foreign policy subject to the same partisan and ideological disputes that characterize domestic policy-making (McCormick and Kegley 1990: 1077).

Regarding the bipartisanship perspective, Wildavsky (1966) concludes that presidents achieve more legislative success in the international realm than in the domestic arena due to the significant constitutional and institutional advantages they have over Congress in international issues. The Executive branch's bureaucracy well-developed expertise and superior access and control over information are also indicated as an incentive to Legislative delegation and unified

behavior in foreign policy affairs (Ripley and Lindsay 1993). Opposing the president on foreign policy can also be politically damaging for opposition party leaders as well as rank-and-file members (possibly even viewed as unpatriotic) bipartisan agreement on international affairs votes is more common than conflict (Sinclair 1993).

Although there is evidence of bipartisanship in the US foreign policy history (Holsti and Rosenau 1986), scholars argue that the end of Cold War has produced a significant decline in bipartisanship (Kupchan and Trubowitz 2007). Instead of unity among majorities of both American political parties, foreign policy issues have been characterized by an increasing polarization on the floor (Fleisher et al. 2000). Domestic factors such as conservative and liberal ideology (McCormick and Kegley 1992; Milner and Tingley 2009), economic characteristics of constituents (Heinz and Mansfield 2006; Hiscox 2002), organized interests influence (Fordham 1998) and public opinion (Burgin 1993) play an important role in shaping legislative votes regarding the decision making process of the US foreign policy.

Beyond the US case, several studies have also analysed legislative voting in the European Union Parliament (Bailer et al. 2009; Faas 2003; Fink 2014 and Hix 2004). Hix et al. (2006: 509) argue that the main dimension of voting behavior both within and between the transnational political parties in the European Parliament is the classic left-right dimension of democratic politics. A second dimension is also observed capturing government-opposition dynamics at the European level, with parties represented in the Council voting one way and parties not represented voting the other way (Hix et al. 2006:509).

From a comparative perspective, studies have also associated domestic influences and legislative voting in foreign policy issues, especially foreign aid and trade policy. Thérien and Noel (2000) compare legislative voting in foreign aid issues in 16 countries from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). They contend that social democratic parties tend to favor higher investments in foreign aid when compared with more liberal parties. Focusing on foreign trade votes in South American countries, Ribeiro (2012) argues that Chilean, Colombian and Peruvian legislator's votes on the free trade agreement with the United States are highly associated with government and opposition dynamics and the location of the political party in the left-right ideological continuum.

Overall, existing research finds a significant similarity between voting behavior in foreign and domestic issues. Considering these findings, I hypothesize that foreign policy legislative behavior in Brazil and the United Kingdom is structured by the same explanatory features found in the domestic arena. More specifically, the control of the Executive over the political agenda is the main source of influence in foreign policy legislative voting in both countries. The null hypothesis here is a bipartisan or multi-partisan behavior in foreign policy issues in the United Kingdom (UK) and Brazil, respectively. Instead of associating domestic aspects with legislative voting in international affairs, the confirmation of the null hypothesis would highlight the different nature of foreign policy as a major influence in the behavior of the political party. In other words, political parties would give the Executive a freer hand in foreign policy and delegate foreign policy making (Canes-Wrone et al. 2008), presenting a unifying pattern of behavior on the floor. Below, I discuss the method of analysis of roll call votes, the case selection and the main findings.

3. FOREIGN POLICY VOTING IN BRAZIL AND THE UK

For an empirical test of the hypothesis I use new data sets that include all foreign policy roll call votes¹ for the British House of Commons between 2005 and 2014 and the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies between 1995 and 2014.² These periods of analysis are convenient because of the alternation of main political parties in the government in both countries. While in the 2005 and 2010 British term Labour Party was in cabinet, in the 2010 and 2014 period Conservative Party and the Liberal Democratic Party formed a government coalition. For the Brazilian case, in the 1995-2002 terms the Brazilian Social Democratic Party held the presidency, while in the 2003-2014 period the Workers Party was in government. Therefore, within this period of study it is possible to control for the political party holding the Executive office.

The House of Commons datasets contain 134 foreign policy divisions in the 2005-2010 term and 111 divisions in the 2010-2014 term. Members of Parliament (MPs) who participated in

¹ All votes with reference to or having known consequences for foreign entities were classified as foreign policy votes.

² Foreign policy roll call votes from the House of Commons between 2005 and 2014 were obtained by the author from www.publicwhip.org.uk. Foreign policy roll call votes from the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies between 1995 and 2014 were obtained by the author from www2.camara.leg.br. The author gratefully acknowledges the research assistance of Gisele Bellinati for the production of Brazil's data set.

less than 10 votes were excluded, which lead to two MPs being dropped from the 2005-2010 data and one from the 2010-2014 data. Following the standard practice, lopsided votes were excluded: votes with fewer than 5 percent on the minority side. This reduced the first sample from 134 to 132 votes and the second sample from 111 to 110 votes. The same criteria was applied to the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil. In the 1995-2002 periods from 51 foreign policy votes, 48 were analysed and 164 legislators dropped. In the 2003-2014 periods from 69 foreign policy votes, 50 were analysed and 237 legislators dropped.

Analysis of roll call votes in different institutional contexts frequently relies on ideal point estimation. The three most prominent methods are NOMINATE (Poole and Rosenthal 1997), Optimal Classification (Poole 2000) and IDEAL (Clinton et. al. 2004). In spite of the important differences between them (McCarty 2011), comparisons have shown a high degree of correlation among ideal points of the legislator estimated with the three techniques mentioned above (Carrol et.al. 2009: 589). The Bayesian method IDEAL will be applied to estimate in a two dimensional space the ideal points of the legislators for the foreign policy votes in Brazil and the UK.

Despite the use of ideal point estimation in different legislatures around the world, Spirling and McLean (2007) argue that in parliamentary systems, such as the British House of Commons, ideal point estimation might be able to identify differences between parties but cannot be used to extrapolate the relative ideal-points of members of parliament within parties. The presence of party discipline and whipped votes may affect the primary assumption of the spatial theory of voting, that elected officials support legislative outcomes that are closest to their own preferred policy positions (Rosenthal and Voeten 2004). Because I am interest in identifying differences between political parties in foreign policy and not within them, the use of ideal point estimation is appropriated for the present analysis.

3.1. Case Selection

The Most Different System Design (MDSD) method for small N comparison is adopted to select the United Kingdom and Brazil (Landman 2003). This method allows us to find the common variable that may explain a similar pattern of observation in the dependent variable, using

it as control for a set of other independent variables. Table 1 below describes the structure of the case selection approach.

Table 1

<i>MDSO Comparative Framework</i>			
<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Brazil</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Dependent Variable</i>
Institutional	1.Presidential 2.Electoral (PR) 3. Executive Control of Legislative Agenda	1.Parliamentary 2.Electoral (MAJ) 3. Executive Control of Legislative Agenda	
Systemic	1.Emerging Power 2.Low military capabilities 3. Low Internationalisation of the economy	1.Global Player 2.High military capabilities 3. Medium Internationalisation of the economy	Roll call votes in Foreign Policy Issues – Government- Opposition Split

The structure of the comparison conducted in this article follows two main dimensions that may influence foreign policy decisions: domestic institutional and international systemic. Some relevant features for each of these dimensions are listed in Table 1. In the institutional dimension, Brazil and the UK have variations on key elements that may influence legislative behavior in foreign policy such as the presidential and parliamentary systems (Waltz 1967) and the electoral rules (Hankla 2006).

Systemic variables are represented by the relative position of the country in the international system, their military capabilities and the level of internationalization of the economy.³ These characteristics are important to explain the pattern of behavior of a State in the international system (Oneal and Russett 2001) and may affect the foreign policy agenda of both

³ To assess the level of internationalization of the economy, I use the average of the Trade/GDP for the 2003 and 2012 period, available at World Bank's web site: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/TG.VAL.TOTL.GD.ZS> (21,2% and 41,4% for Brazil and the United Kingdom, respectively).

countries. For example, international security issues may be more salient in the UK than in Brazil and the higher level of internationalization of the United Kingdom economy can generate more domestic distributive impacts from foreign policy decisions when compared to Brazil.

Despite all the differences between both countries described above, one similarity is observed in the pattern of behavior of political parties on the floor: government and opposition split in floor⁴. Following are the findings to support this claim.

3.2. Findings

Figures 1a-1d show the voting maps of the two-dimensional⁵ estimates produced with foreign policy votes for each legislative term. The distance between any two legislators illustrates how often they voted the same way in foreign policy roll-call votes. Consequently, if two legislators, for example, voted the same way in every vote, they would be located in exactly the same place, while if they voted differently in every vote, they would be located on opposite sides on the voting map.

Figures 1a and 1b represent the voting map of the British House of Commons of the 2005-2010 and the 2010-2014 legislative terms respectively. Members of parliament are represented by dots colored by their respective political party: Conservative party (Con) dark blue, Labour Party (Lab) red, Liberal Democratic (LDem) purple, Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) green, Sinn Féin (SF) light blue, Scottish National Party (SNP) black and Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) yellow. For the Brazilian case I have aggregated two legislative terms in figure 1c (1995-1998 and 1999-2002) and three legislative terms in figure 1d (2003-2006, 2007-2010, 2011-2014), both of them according to the political party in government. While figure 1c represents the

⁴ It is also important to notice that in both countries the legislative branch must approve an international treaty for its ratification. For the British case, this is the case since the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act of 2010.

⁵ I have opted for a two-dimensional voting map to improve comparison with similar studies of domestic policy in the British House of Commons (Hix and Noury 2010) and the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies (Zucco 2009). Following these studies, I use as priors the location of party leaders of the two main governmental and oppositional political parties in the left-right continuum to estimate ideal points in the first dimension for both countries. For the second dimension, I use the most leftist party in both countries for the period of analysis. The location of party leaders and legislators in the left-right continuum was obtained from survey data from Manifesto Project Data Base for the British case and Timothy and Zucco (2010) for the Brazilian case.

Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) government (under Cardoso's administration), figure 1d represents the Worker's Party (PT) government (under Lula's and Dilma's administrations). Legislators from government are represented by blue dots while legislators from opposition are represented by red dots due to the great number of political parties in Brazil and the difficulty of visualizing them on both voting maps. Additionally, the averages of the two main governmental and oppositional political parties' ideal points are represented in both maps by their respective abbreviations (PT, PDT, PSDB, and PMDB).

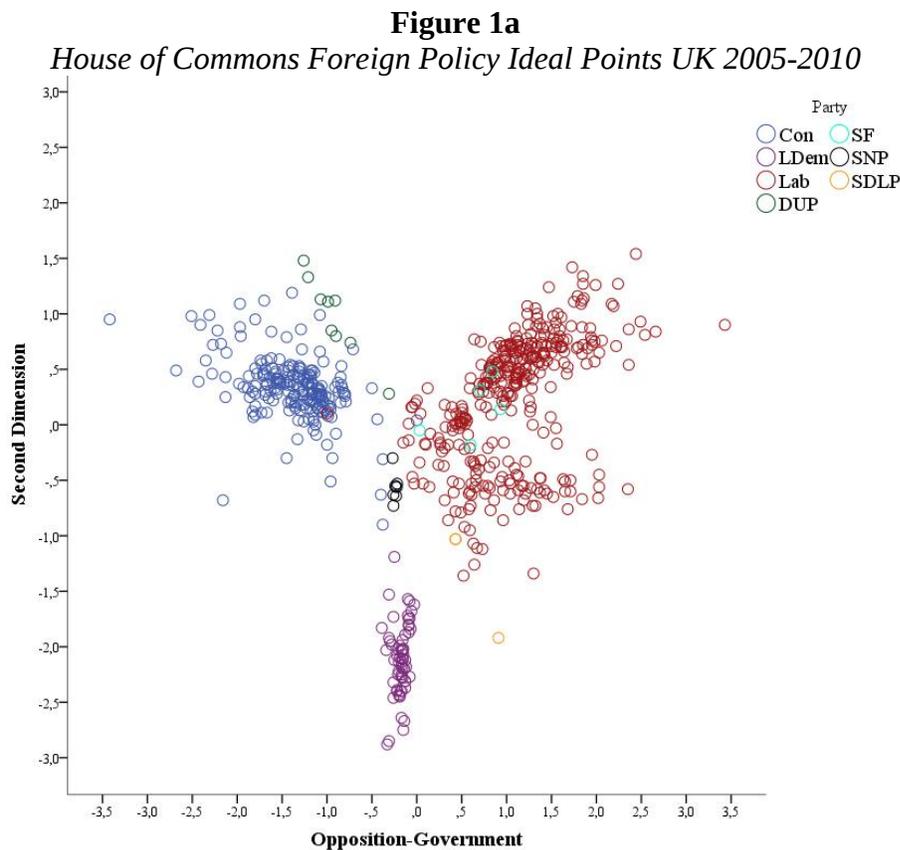


Figure 1b
House of Commons Foreign Policy Ideal Points UK 2010-2014

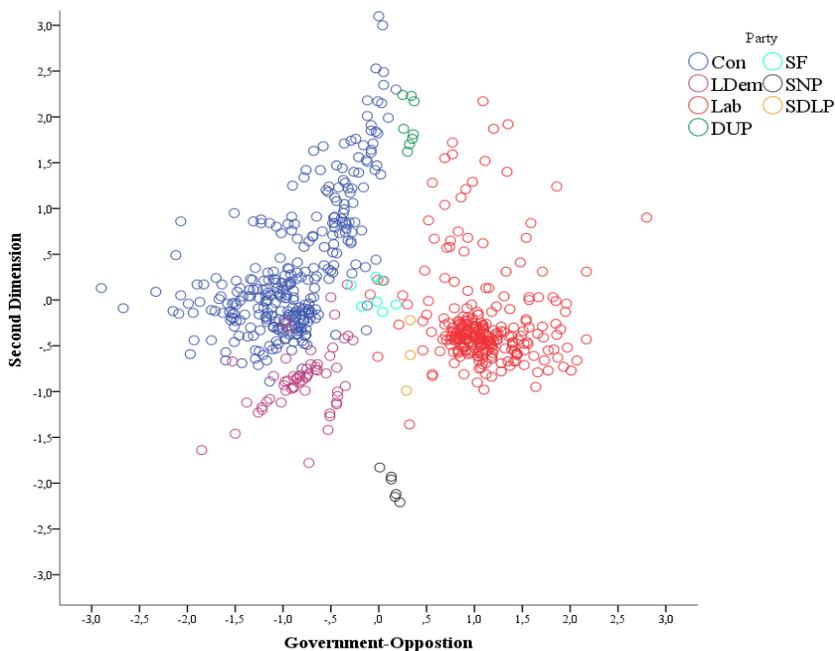
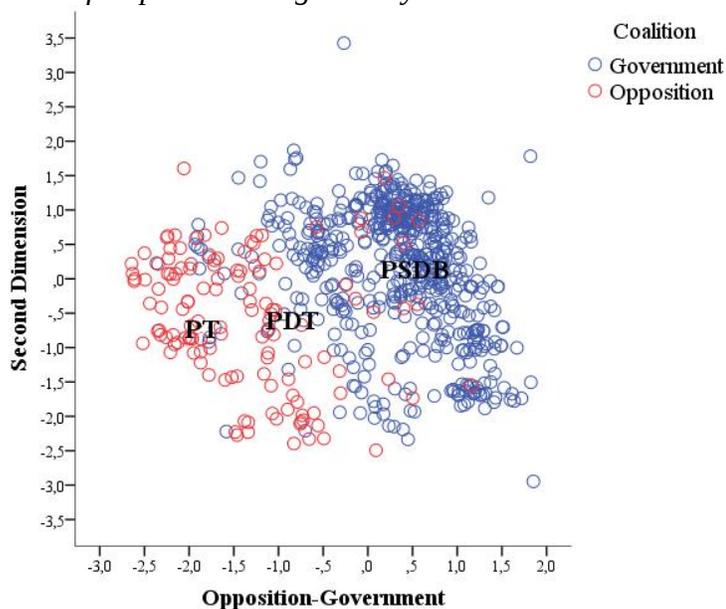
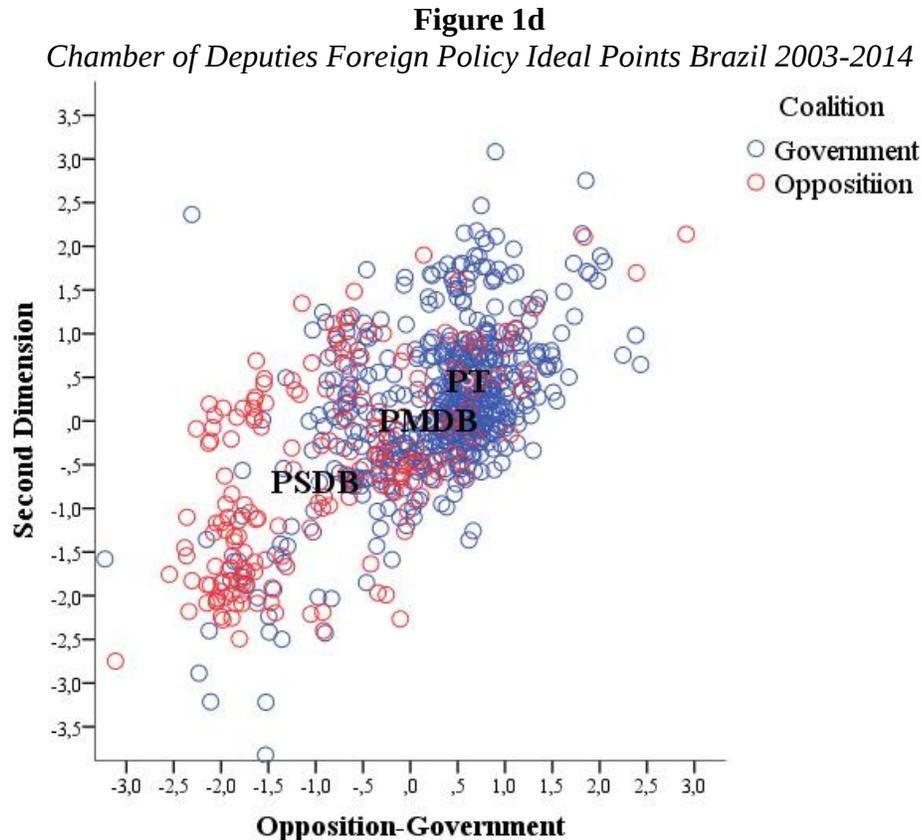


Figure 1c
Chamber of Deputies Foreign Policy Ideal Points Brazil 1995-2002





The spatial map of foreign policy legislative voting of the House of Commons in Figure 1a reveals that both governing (Lab) and official opposition (Con) parties are pushed at both extremes of the primary dimension (horizontal), while LDem, SP, SF and SDLP are somewhat located closer to the middle. The second dimension (vertical) seems to divide members of the non-official opposition parties, opposing DUP on the top side of the dimension, from SDLP and SP on the opposite side of it. While the first dimension is clearly a government-opposition split, the second dimension appears to capture divisions within the opposition group of parties.

Similarly, Figure 1b also reveals a significant polarization between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, both located on opposite sides of the first dimension (horizontal). The Liberal Democratic Party, on the other hand, presents a different location in the first dimension of Figure 1b when compared with Figure 1a. Instead of occupying the center of the first dimension, LDem is much closer to Con and consequently more distant from the official opposition party

(Lab). Because the Liberal Democratic Party composes the government coalition in the 2010 and 2014 legislative period, this observation corroborates with the identification of the first dimension as a government-opposition cleavage, especially if the ideology of the political parties is considered.

According to data from the ideological self-placement of the elected MPs in 2005 of the Manifesto Project Database, Labor Party is the most leftist party, followed by Liberal Democrats in the center-left and Conservatives in the far right. This scenario coincides with the location of those three major political parties in the first dimension of Figure 1a, at least in their relative positions. This could indicate a correlation between the ideology of political parties and government-opposition dynamics. Nevertheless, in Figure 1b this correlation disappears. The same data on MPs ideological self-placement for the 2010 elections generates a quite similar order of political parties in the left-right spectrum. Though, this ideological order can no longer be observed in the first dimension of Figure 1b, where LDem MP's are located at the same space of the Conservative Party. Additionally, the second dimension (vertical) of Figure 1b, as in Figure 1a, also appears to capture divisions within the opposition parties.

Both maps show a similar pattern of voting behavior in foreign policy issues: the dichotomy between government and opposition political parties. Since the second dimension in both Figures 1a and 1b explains less than 3 percent of the votes in foreign policy, it is reasonable to assume that it does not represent an important legislative conflict in the House of Commons. Therefore, the government-opposition split is the main pattern of legislative conflict in British foreign policy legislative voting. This finding is very similar to previous studies of domestic legislative voting in the House of Commons (Godbout 2010, Spirling and McLean 2007). Hix and Noury (2010) also applied the Bayesian ideal point estimation (IDEAL) for the House of Commons roll call votes during the Labor Party government of the 1997-2001 and 2001-2005 legislatures terms. Their voting maps are extremely similar to Figure 1a, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party are located in opposite extremes of the first dimension, while the Liberal Democratic Party is positioned between those two major political parties. This similarity indicates no difference between legislative voting in domestic and foreign policy issues in the House of Commons of Britain.

Moving to the Brazilian voting maps, Figure 1c also depicts a clear government-opposition split in the first dimension (horizontal), where official legislators (marked in blue) are concentrated on the right side and opposition legislators (marked in red) are grouped on the opposite side. The mean position of PT and PDT, the two major opposition parties, are located on the opposite side of the mean position of the president's party PSDB. It is also worthy to note that the mean position of other major governmental political parties such as PMDB and PFL were not displayed in Figure 1c because they overlap with PSDB's position, making visualization very difficult. Even though, the coincidence of the mean position of those governmental parties and the significant distance between them and the opposition parties enacts the interpretation of a government-opposition conflict in the first dimension. While the first dimension accounts for 85 percent of voting variation, the second dimension only accounts for 9 percent in Figure 1c. The interpretation of the second dimension is not clear. However, this does not imply a problem for the overall interpretation of foreign policy voting in Brazil because foreign policy votes are mainly one dimensional.

Although the government-opposition camps are identifiable in Figure 1c, there was considerable independent voting behavior by legislators, and some variance within the government and opposition blocs. This issue appears more salient in Figure 1d. Nonetheless, for the 2003 and 2014 period where PT is the governmental party, it is also possible to identify a government-opposition dynamics in foreign policy legislative voting. A great number of governmental legislators (marked in blue) are located on the right side of the first dimension (horizontal), while opposition legislators are more concentrated on the left side. The mean positions of political parties also validate this interpretation, where governmental parties overlap with PT's position in Figure 1d. Because of this overlap, only PMDB and PT from the government side are shown. On the opposition side, the mean position of DEM (former PFL) also overlaps with PSDB. To maintain a better view of the voting map, there is no plotting of the overlapping political party's means. The most important feature to point out, however, is the clear distance between the mean position of governmental parties and opposition parties, dividing the first dimension in these terms.

Resembling the British case, Brazilian voting maps in foreign and domestic policy are very similar. After estimating ideal points from the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil, Zucco and

Lauderdale (2011) argue that in president Cardoso's legislative terms (1995-2002) the ideological dimension was highly correlated with government and opposition dichotomy, while in Lula's administration legislative terms (2003-2010) this correlation disappears. Because of this collinearity, ideology was a good predictor of legislative behavior in Brazil before 2003. Nevertheless, the authors highlight that there is considerable evidence that government-opposition rather than ideology is currently the dominant dimension of conflict in legislative voting (Zucco and Lauderdale 2011: 395).

According to legislator's ideological self-placement (Power and Zucco 2009), PT and PDT are classified as left parties, while PMDB, PSDB and DEM center-right and right parties. In Figure 1c, representing the Cardoso administration (1995-2002), it is possible to detect this ideological classification in the first dimension, also pointing to a correlation between left-right and government-opposition political parties' position in foreign policy issues. In turn, since PT and PMDB (and other rightist overlapping parties) are very close to each other in Figure 1d (Lula and Dilma's administrations), ideology no longer structure party position, emphasizing government-opposition dynamics as the main source of conflict between political parties in foreign policy voting.

The voting maps in both countries provide suggestive evidence that legislative voting in foreign policy issues is mainly driven by government-opposition splits. The similarity between the behavior of the political party in foreign and domestic affairs is also another important conclusion derived from the empirical evidence described above. The results strongly support the hypothesis that foreign policy legislative behavior in Brazil and the United Kingdom is structured by the same political cleavage found in the domestic arena. The significant polarization between government and opposition parties rejects the hypothesis of a unifying behavior in foreign policy issues. Foreign policy does not provide specific incentives for the behavior of the political party. Rather, foreign policy is subject to the same political conflict present in the domestic arena. Bipartisan or multi-partisan behavior in international affairs is significantly far from the reality of the positions of Brazilian and British political party on the floor. Below, the possible explanations for a government-versus-opposition voting pattern in Brazil and the United Kingdom will be discussed.

4. GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION STRATEGIC VOTING ON FOREIGN POLICY

It is reasonable to assume that government and opposition polarization are motivated by the same reasons in both policy arenas given the observation of a similar pattern in the behavior of political parties in domestic and foreign policy voting. Although the British and Brazilian political systems differ in various aspects, they share one key institutional element: Executive control over the legislative agenda. In the British House of Commons the party or parties who form the cabinet control the legislative agenda (Benedetto and Hix 2007: 759). This control refers to the proposing and passing of legislation, and also to the timetabling of the debate on bills (Spirling and Quinn 2010: 447). Also, the governing party can offer promotion to ministerial office or key committee positions as well as a threat of a vote-of-confidence incentivizing a governing party ‘backbencher’ to vote for a government proposal even when the policy on offer is further from her ideal point than the status quo (Hix and Noury 2013). These institutional elements would lead parliamentary voting to a government –opposition split.

Similarly, the control of the Brazilian president over politically important resources is also argued to be the source of a government-opposition pattern of legislative roll call voting (Zucco and Lauderdale 2011). The Brazilian president can control the legislative agenda by formal constitutional powers, including timing for legislative approval of a bill, exclusivity on central administrative and budgetary legislation and considerable control over access to pork by the legislators (Limongi and Figueiredo 2000). Electoral incentives for particularistic politics are neutralized in the legislature by the internal distribution of legislative rights, approximating the pattern of legislative voting in Brazil to the British case.

From an empirical perspective, it is important to distinguish strategic and sincere voting regarding government and opposition voting dynamics. Legislators may join political parties that advocate the policies they prefer and thus naturally find themselves agreeing and opposing the same sets of policies considered on the floor of the legislature (Dewan and Spirlin 2011: 337). Thus, government and opposition dynamics under sincere voting would account for similar preferences of legislators rather than institutional incentives. On the other hand, in a strategic voting situation, political parties in the opposition would vote together against the party (or parties) in

government, regardless of whether they prefer a government proposal to the existing status quo. In other words, opposition members vote against the government to signal their opposition rather than their discontent with a particular proposal (Godbout and Hoyland 2008).

To empirically observe that the government and opposition legislative split is strategic rather than sincere voting, there must be a degree of “overlap” in the preferences of government and opposition legislators. Conditions that give rise to sincere and strategic voting are not the same: sincere voting should be (relatively) higher when government and opposition are completely polarized and strategic government-opposition voting is higher when there is a degree of convergence in underlying preferences (Dewan and Spirlin 2011: 338). Following Dewan and Spirling (2011: 357) strategy, I display below, in Figures 2a-2d, the overlapping densities from the foreign policy ideal point estimation in the first dimension of the 2005–2010 and 2010–2014 British legislative terms and the 1995-2002 and 2003-2014 Brazilian legislative periods. Nevertheless, as Dewan and Spirlin (2011) argue, it would be relevant to select for this analysis non-whipped votes. Unfortunately, according to the Parliamentary Information List from the library of the House of Commons⁶ there is no record of free votes for foreign policy issues. In the Brazilian case, party leader’s indication of a vote varies between political parties within the same voting issue, also turning it difficult to establish a non-whipped vote sample.

⁶ www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN04793.pdf.

Figure 2a
Density of Ideal Points House of Commons 2005-2010

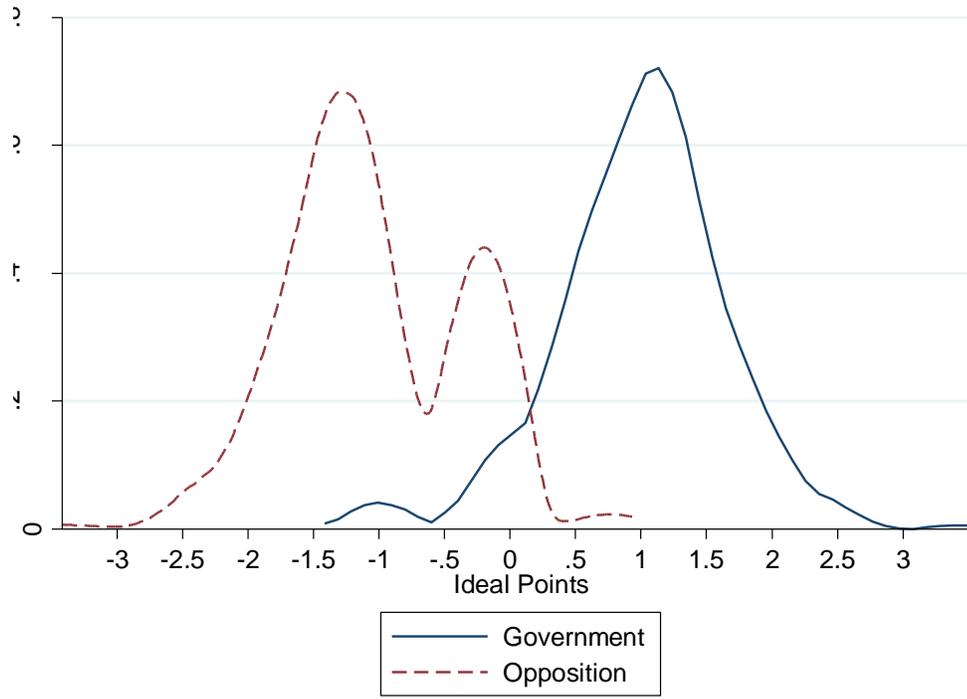


Figure 2b
Density of Ideal Points House of Commons 2010-2014

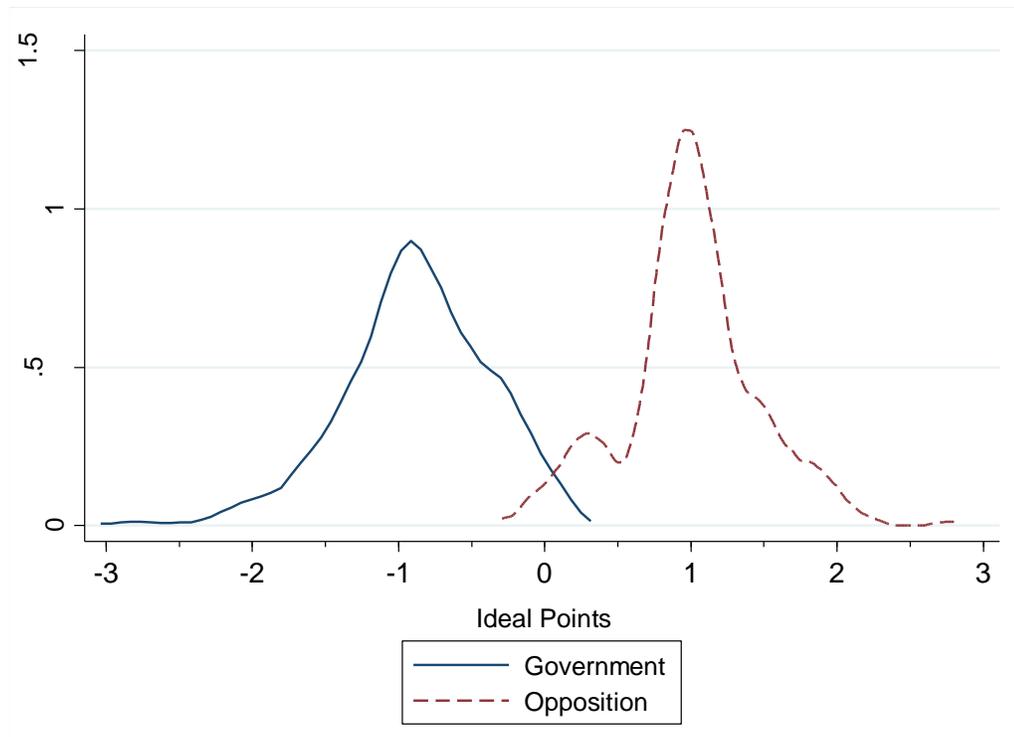


Figure 2c
Density of Ideal Points Chamber of Deputies 1995-2002

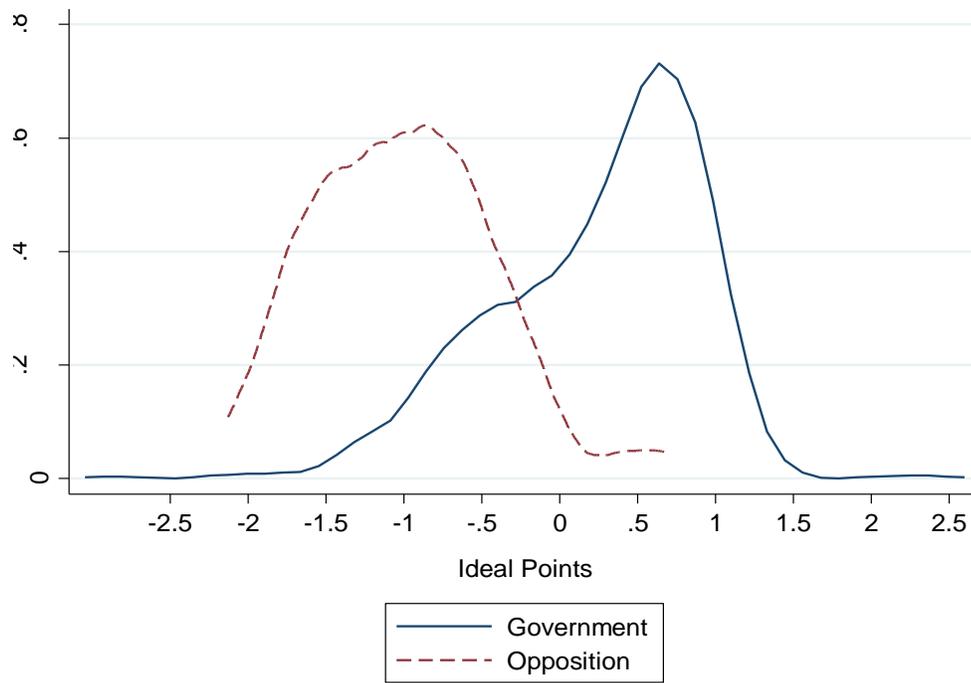
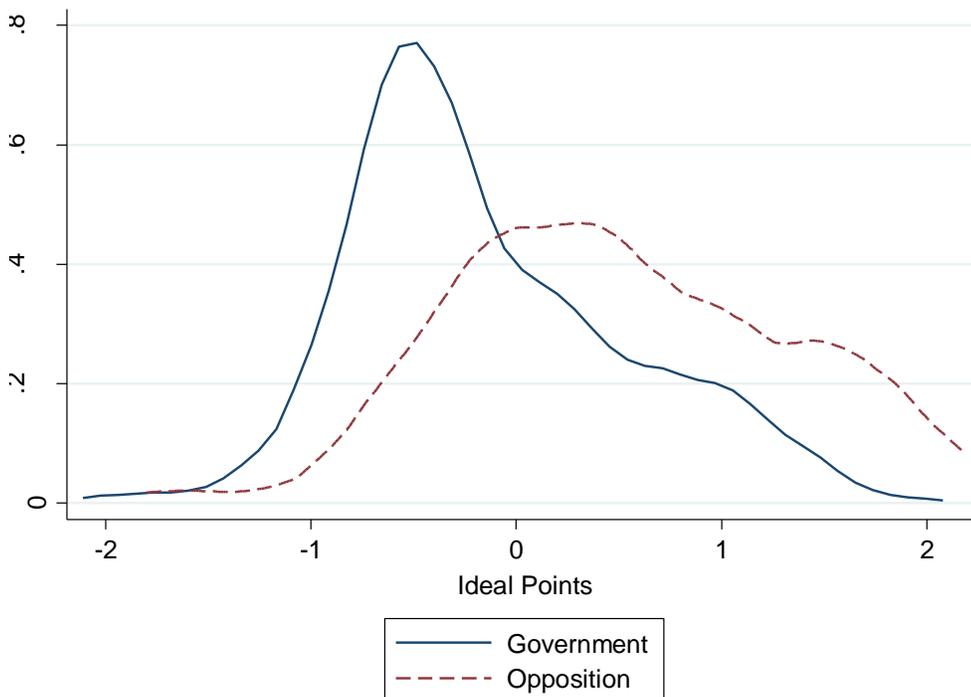


Figure 2d
Density of Ideal Points Chamber of Deputies 2003-2014



Although Figures 2a-2d do not account for legislators “free” votes, it is possible to detect overlap areas between the densities of the governing and opposition legislators ideal point estimation. In other words, if it is not conceivable to argue that preferences of the legislators overlap, at least it is very clear that government and opposition polarization is not perfect in both countries. It is also noteworthy that government and opposition polarization is higher in the UK than Brazil, probably because the Westminster political system produces more cohesive political parties than the Brazilian democracy. This empirical result offers an indication that strategic voting may structure government and opposition legislative voting patterns in foreign policy issues in Brazil and the UK. To further explore this matter, two roll call votes will be qualitatively described below.

Two examples of roll call votes which clearly fit into a strategic voting are the national referendum on the membership of the United Kingdom in the European Union and the approval of the entrance of Venezuela into the MERCOSUL regional bloc. These two votes have been selected for three main reasons. First, both of them deal with the issue of regional integration, improving the comparison between Brazil and the UK. Second, both votes are key substantive matters to foreign policy agendas of both countries. Third, government and opposition political party votes are not completely cohesive in those two roll calls.

Regarding the national referendum on the membership of the United Kingdom in the European Union the focus here is on the Liberal Democratic Party. This party manifesto advocates a favorable position concerning the referendum (Chatham House 2010: 11). In March 2008, Liberal Democrats put forward a motion which would have allowed a provision holding a referendum on the membership of the United Kingdom in the European Union (EU) to be inserted into the European Union (Amendment) Bill. Opposing the Labour Party during this legislative term, 51 Liberal Democrats voted for the approval of the motion without any rebels.

In October 2011, when the Liberal Democratic Party was no longer the opposition, Conservative MP David Nuttall put forward another proposal to call upon the Government to hold a referendum on the membership of the United Kingdom in the European Union. This time Conservatives were divided, although the majority of the party, including ministers and front benchers MPs, voted against the proposition (208 voted “no” and 79 “aye”). Liberal Democrats

voted cohesively against the proposal (50 to 1), indicating support for the prime minister's position. It is plausible to consider this change of behavior of Liberal Democrats, standing against their own party manifesto and previous revealed preferences, as a strategic voting. Almost all MPs of the party preferred voting with the governmental coalition than choosing what seemed to be a most preferred policy option.

With respect to the approval of the entrance of Venezuela into the MERCOSUL, governing party leaders indicated to their benches voting "aye" to the issue, while the two main opposition party leaders (PSDB and DEM) indicated a rejection of it. Venezuela represents a great deal of economic interest for the northern states of Brazil. This is why almost all regional governors, including those of PSDB, publicly declared themselves in favor of the entrance of the country into the MERCOSUL (Goldzweig 2013: 15). With the exception of two northern legislators from DEM, the great majority of those two opposition party representatives from the northern region voted against the measure. Since their constituencies would benefit from the ingression of Venezuela into the MERCOSUL this position clearly indicates a strategic voting, choosing opposition to government rather than a most preferred policy.

5. CONCLUSION

This research uncovers one essential dimension of legislative behavior in foreign policy issues in Brazil and the UK: government and opposition splitting dynamics. Countries with such different institutional and systemic characteristics show a very similar behavior regarding the voting of political parties in international affairs. The control of the legislative political agenda by the Executive in both countries shapes the votes of political parties on foreign policy issues in a government-versus-opposition split. Additionally, both countries also exhibit a similar legislative behavior in foreign and domestic roll call votes. I suggest that national interest or compromising with the head of executive's international agenda have considerably less significance in determining the will of political parties to politicize foreign policy issues than have the parties considerations regarding government and opposition strategic posture. Instead of a bipartisan or multi-partisan type of conduct in foreign policy legislative voting, an expressive polarization

between governmental and opposition political parties is found. Although some improvement must be conducted in the empirical demonstration, suggestive indications are found that British and Brazilian legislators tend to support or reject governmental foreign policies regardless of their most preferred policy. In other words, opposition political parties will tend to reject governing foreign policy proposal irrespective to their substantive content.

The distinction between foreign and domestic policy in legislative voting cannot be sustained empirically. The approximation of foreign policy to any other public policy, both empirically and theoretically, may improve our understanding of the foreign policy making process. The findings of this article advocate that foreign policy does not impact the behavior of the parties any differently from domestic issues. Thus, domestic configurations such as a narrow governmental majority coalition and the decrease of cohesion within government political parties ranks may compromise the international commitments and foreign policy direction of the head of state. The similarity of legislative behavior drawn through a comparison of different countries like Brazil and the United Kingdom suggest that foreign policy political polarization is not an exclusivity of presidential or parliamentary systems, nor of major or mid power States in the international system. One important aspect to develop in this research agenda is to disaggregate the foreign policy issues to verify possible differences between themes of the international agenda of the country. To conclude this step it is necessary to enlarge the votes sample in order to guarantee sufficient variability between foreign policy themes such as defence and trade policy. Additionally, the inclusion of more countries in the comparative research design, as well as the analysis of other sources of legislative behavior, would offer a broader understanding of the behavior of political parties regarding foreign policy issues.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article draws on research funded by the University of Birmingham under a Brazil Visiting Scholarship.

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