

How Princeton contributed to my work

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In democracies, public opinion has the capacity to influence the formulation of public policies, either as an input in the development of these policies, or by acting as an accountability and legitimacy agent to which rulers are constantly subjected. Even though foreign policy cannot be considered a traditional public policy, academics and policymakers have been interested in how it affects public opinion.

With this framework in my mind, I switched my focus from human rights studies to public opinion. During my master's degree, I analyzed the characteristics of the new democracies associated with ratification to international human rights treaties. The findings of that research was that new democracies' commitment to international human rights regimes is highly associated with the capability for a bottom-up strategy.

Therefore, when I was designing my PhD project, I decided to analyze how this bottom-up strategy can alter domestic politics in ratifying an international treaty. The conclusion of my work showed that in democracies, public opinion can play an important role in the formulation of foreign policies. As such, for my doctoral thesis, I decided to analyze the relationship between political parties, foreign policy and public opinion.

In this sense, the main objective of my PhD project is to answer the following questions: How do political parties address foreign policy? How do politicians internalize the policy guidelines of party platforms in their speeches? And finally, how does public opinion identify a party or an ideological spectrum (left-right) as the most effective way to solve foreign policy problems?

To answer these questions, I will apply an experimental survey to identify how the public evaluates parties' foreign policy. This step will allow us to see if there are ownership issues in Brazilian politics, that is, if there is a foreign policy issue that the public believes is best solved by a particular political party, regardless of the ideological position of the person.

Given that experimental surveying is new in Brazilian academia, I went to Princeton University to be supervised by Professor Helen Milner. Her tutelage was of utmost importance given her vast experience in conducting empirical

research involving survey applications. Working together with her methods, I enjoyed an incredible dynamic academic environment.

During my period overseas, I went to weekly seminars that discussed Political Methodology, Comparative Politics, and International Relations. These presentations were given by professors from other major American universities, including participants from the Ivy League. For my project, the most interesting presentation that I saw was given by Professor Jacob Montgomery (Washington University). He showed an adaptive way to measure knowledge, instead of a fixed questionnaire. I will apply his method to my research so that I can build a survey that adapts itself to the knowledge of the person that is answering it.

Another characteristic of Princeton University, especially at the Niehaus Center/Woodrow Wilson School that was helpful for my research was my interaction with post-doc students and visiting scholars in the department. I presented my project to them and received suggestions and critiques that improved my work. Finally, I took a course entitled "Quantitative Analysis I" given by Professor Kosuke Imai. This class gave me more knowledge about causal inference and how to apply statistical methods for social science.

In sum, the importance of my doctoral research is to shed light on the perception of public opinion in foreign policy and how that perception impacts on the assessment of politicians and political parties in Brazil. My main contribution can be divided into two elements. First, given that the current literature focuses its analysis on US public perception of foreign policy, my work will fill a deficit regarding this relationship in the Brazilian case. Because previous focus of these studies was related to US politics, we cannot generalize the results of these studies for Brazil, but we can use similar variables.

Second, the use of experimental methods has expanded into the field of Political Science and International Relations. Even as the field has welcomed more experimental methodology, we experienced a large demand for experimental methodology in recent years. It is currently widely accepted and influential approach. However, such studies are still scarce in developing countries, specifically in Latin America. Therefore, my PhD theses will bring a theoretical contribution to understand better how Brazilians and their political parties behave when considering foreign policies. My empirical contribution is sound due to the application of a method not widely used in Brazil.