

Policing Policies: Why Do Presidential Cabinet Members Monitor Each Other?*

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Abstract

In this paper, we aim to explain why and when presidential cabinet parties monitor the policy implementation actions of their coalition partners. Building on the literature on the loss of information that is inherent to the delegation of power in multiparty systems, we argue that cabinet members perform a continuous effort to reduce the deficit of policy information as the ideological heterogeneity of presidential cabinets increases. By using evidence from multiparty cabinets formed in Brazil and an objective measurement for policy control, we analyzed more than 20,000 requests for access to information by political parties that held ministries between 1995 and 2014. Our results support our argument, indicating that as the ideological heterogeneity of the cabinet increases, cabinet parties intensify their use of policy control on other ministries. Through the use of machine learning techniques, we were also able to reveal the policy issues and ministerial areas of higher interest for coalition and opposition parties.

Key-words: Cabinets, presidential systems, multiparty systems, policies, policy control.

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1 Introduction

In democracies where only one party occupies the executive power (single-party cabinets), the chief executive aims to align the preferences of her own party members according to the executive policy agenda. However, in multiparty democracies, the implementation of the government's program is only possible because the chief executive delegates authority over policy decision-making to other political parties (that comprise a cabinet coalition). In such cases, as each party that holds a portfolio in the cabinet bases its actions on their own (and expected different) utility functions (Przeworski, 2003), the act of delegation implies that the party will suffer a loss of information on policies that will be implemented by other cabinet members (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). Thus, the ideological heterogeneity and divergence on policy preferences among different cabinet members in multiparty governments lead to information deficit and asymmetry regarding policy decisions (Laver, 2008).

Studies on parliamentary multiparty democracies have shown that chief executives adopt strategies to increase their influence on policy decisions and reduce the costs of delegating ministries to different parties that comprise the cabinet coalition (e.g., information asymmetry). These strategies include analyzing the ideological profile of ministers and parties holding portfolios (Müller and Strom, 2003), the appointment of junior ministers to monitor and maximize the oversight on cabinet members (Thies, 2001; Lipsmeyer and Pierce, 2011), the appointment of officials aligned to the executive agenda to top ranks of the ministerial bureaucracy (Lewis, 2009), the issuance of regulatory decrees to limit the action of coalition partners (Bawn, 1995; Huber and Shipan, 2002), and the use of legislative commissions to scrutinize proposals originating from ministries controlled by other cabinet parties (Martin and Vanberg, 2011; Carroll and Cox, 2012).

Similarly, in presidential multiparty democracies, the use of strategies that may mitigate the consequences of delegation is expected. Through the legislative process (Freitas, 2016), presidential cabinet members try to influence the content of the policies sent by the executive, and, within legislative committees, parties also try to block the policy

proposals from other members of the cabinet that are not in line with their policy agenda (Inácio and Rezende, 2015). Also, according to Vieira (2013, Forthcoming), as the policy preferences of presidents get more distant from the median position of the cabinet, they tend to centralize bureaucracy agencies in the executive (presidential) structure. These studies, however, tend to focus on policy *formulation* within the legislature, disregarding the policy *implementation* stage within the executive cabinet. Moreover, studies on policy control has difficulty measuring empirically and objectively the strategies used by parties to reduce the information deficit resulting from the delegation of power. These strategies usually occur behind the scenes and through internal political bargains.

In this study, we aim to explain why and when presidential cabinet parties monitor the policy implementation actions of their coalition partners. We argue that the parties that comprise the government’s cabinet monitor the policies implemented by government partners, to reduce the information deficit coming from heterogeneous cabinets—i.e., cabinets formed by ideologically distant parties, having distinct preferences over policies. We empirically test our argument using evidence from Brazil, by means of a horizontal accountability mechanism available to Brazilian legislators, called “request for access to information” (RIC).

Using automated text analysis techniques, we analysed all RICs initiated by Brazilian legislators between 1995 and 2014 (comprising 22,688 requests), and classified the requests for access to information by policy areas in different government coalitions. Our analysis comprises 15 multiparty cabinets formed in Brazil, including the governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) (1995-2002), Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) (2003-2010) and Dilma Rousseff (Dilma) (2011-2014).

Our contribution to the literature on delegation in multiparty presidential governments, therefore, includes both theorization on why and when presidential cabinet members monitor each other, and empirical tests through the use of machine learning techniques—a powerful analytical and methodological tool that is still under-explored in the area of legislative studies.

Our results support our expectation, indicating that the greater the heterogeneity of

the cabinet (i.e., the greater the information loss resulting from delegation), the higher the number of RICs initiated by the cabinet's partners. In other words, when the cabinet comprises a greater ideological dispersion among party members—i.e., ministerial portfolios that are distributed to parties known to have distinct preferences for policies—these parties intensify their request to obtain information on the policies implemented by their cabinet peers.

In the next section, we present our argument and our contribution to the literature on delegation and information asymmetry in multiparty presidential governments. In section 3, we show how the composition of multiparty cabinets in the Brazilian presidential system creates incentives for parties to control the public policy implementation actions of their cabinet peers, justifying the use of this case for our empirical analysis. Our main results are interpreted and discussed in section 4. In section 5, we classify and discuss the policy issues of higher interest for coalition and opposition parties. Our final comments are presented in section 6.

2 Delegation and Information Asymmetry in Multiparty Presidential Governments

Delegating the control of ministries to different political parties means losing privileged information access to important policy areas. Studies on parliamentary democracies have shown that mutual control among cabinet parties is a strategy to compensate for the loss of information inherent to the delegation of ministry control to other parties. [Martin and Vanberg \(2011\)](#), for example, argue that parties resort to law review within the parliament to obtain information on policies being proposed by government ministers. Similarly, by analyzing 19 parliamentary multiparty governments, [Carroll and Cox \(2012\)](#) show that coalition parties make strategic use of legislative committees to monitor policies drafted by cabinet members.

By analyzing presidential democracies, [Freitas \(2016\)](#) and [Inácio and Rezende \(2015\)](#) present evidence of policy control within the legislature among coalition partners. Brazilian legislators, as these authors assert, use the system of legislative commissions and

plenary meetings to monitor policy proposals drawn up in portfolios controlled by different parties. In sum, similar to what happens in parliamentary multiparty systems, presidential multiparty governments require a continuous effort by the cabinet members to mitigate the costs of delegating ministry control to parties with different policy preferences (e.g., information asymmetry and loss of policy influence). Also, recent studies on Brazilian democracy reveal a policy-seeking motivation among coalition parties (Rennó and Wojcik, 2015). Brazilian cabinet parties seem to mutually control the formulation of policies within the legislature (Freitas, 2013).

2.1 legislative Instruments for Policy Implementation Control

Although the *formulation* of policies within the legislature is an important stage of the policy-making process, the *implementation* stage within the executive cabinet is an additional source of information deficit. In this study, we focus on the latter; the oversight by cabinet members on policies being implemented in the executive cabinet. Instead of focusing on the analysis of the political control process of the law proposals, we investigate how cabinet parties use their prerogatives in the legislature to obtain information on the policy areas delegated to other parties in the coalition government. Hence, we assume that although conflicts within the cabinet are expressed in the legislative arena, parties that comprise the government's coalition are also interested in policies being implemented in executive ministries beyond their control.

According to our theory, as the distance increases between the ideological preferences of the parties that are members of the cabinet, there is an expectation of information asymmetry and, therefore, the greater the incentives of the cabinet members to oversight and monitoring policies being implemented by their government partners. We empirically test this argument using evidence from Brazil, from the use of a legislative prerogative (a horizontal accountability mechanism) available to Brazilian legislators, called "request for access to information" (RIC).¹ By anticipating the information deficit produced by

¹From a procedural point of view, any legislator from the Brazilian congress (federal deputies and senators) may initiate a request for access to information. Due to data availability, in this study we are focusing only on requests initiated by legislators within the lower house.

the delegation of ministry control in multiparty governments, we expect cabinet parties to increase their use of this legislative prerogative to seek information on policies that are being implemented by their peers in the cabinet.

An element in the list of accountability resources for the legislative branch, the RIC is a formal and low-cost mechanism for controlling policies implemented by the executive branch. By requesting access to information through RIC, Brazilian legislators are able to oversee any act, action or program related to the implementation of public policies from any portfolio of the cabinet.

The requested ministers must submit the information on the policy being implemented in the portfolio under their responsibility (e.g., Ministry of Education, or Ministry of Health). As prescribed by Article 116 of the Rules of Procedure of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, if a minister does not send the information requested within 30 days from the day the RIC was initiated, the minister becomes subject to prosecution by the Federal Supreme Court.

In this study, RIC is used as a measurement for policy implementation control for at least three reasons: First, the cost for filing the application to request access to information on policies being implemented within the executive cabinet is very low ([Lemos and Power, 2013](#)). To start an RIC, a legislator just needs to present the request in the legislative plenary.² The RIC is then registered within the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Deputies and goes directly to the requested ministry responsible for the policy. Second, the institutional rules of congress that prevent parties with a small number of legislative seats from effectively participating in the process of scrutiny of laws in legislative committees ([Freitas, 2013](#)) do not apply to the use of RICs. Therefore, parties do not need to negotiate their support in formal instances—e.g., leaderships, commissions, and blocs—to monitor policies of their interest ([Lemos, 2005](#)). Finally, RICs allow us to objectively measure strategies used by cabinet parties to reduce the information deficit resulting from the delegation of power, and to empirically test strategies that usually occur behind the scenes and through internal political bargains.

²Facsimilia of RICs can be viewed in Appendix C.

3 Brazilian Multiparty Governments and legislative Control

Due to Brazil's high party and electoral fragmentation, it is hardly possible for the president-elected party to form a legislative majority by itself. As a consequence, the formation of coalition governments has been a constant in Brazil's democracy (Figueiredo, 2007). In addition to a large number of parties, the cabinets formed in Brazil have been marked by a considerable ideological heterogeneity, comprising parties with multiple and divergent policy preferences (Gaylord and Rennó, 2015), making the Brazilian multiparty presidentialism an appropriate case to test our argument.

In this paper, we argue that the control over policy implementation (by the use of RICS) among cabinet partners will be higher in cabinets that have a higher number of parties with multiple and divergent preferences over policies (i.e., cabinets ideologically dispersed or ideologically heterogeneous cabinets). There are two situations in which we expect the number of RICs initiated to increase: 1. A larger cabinet size (measured by the number of parties that hold portfolios in the executive cabinet), and; 2. A more heterogeneous cabinet; that is, a higher degree of ideological distance among parties that hold portfolios.

The degree of cabinet heterogeneity was calculated based on the scores from Brazilian legislative surveys conducted by Power and Zucco Jr. (2009) to estimate the ideological position of the parties represented in the Brazilian congress from 1990 to 2013 in a right-left spectrum.³ The level of ideological dispersion within the cabinet is the result of the sum of the differences between the ideological position of the *formateur* party (f) (i.e., the president's part) and the ideological position of the other parties that comprise the cabinet p_i , weighted by the number of parties in the cabinet (n).⁴

3.1 Hypotheses

From our argument, we empirically test the following hypotheses (H):

H1: As the number of parties holding portfolios in the cabinet increases, a higher rate

³<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/bls>

⁴ $\sum_{i=1}^n \left| \frac{f-p_i}{n} \right|$.

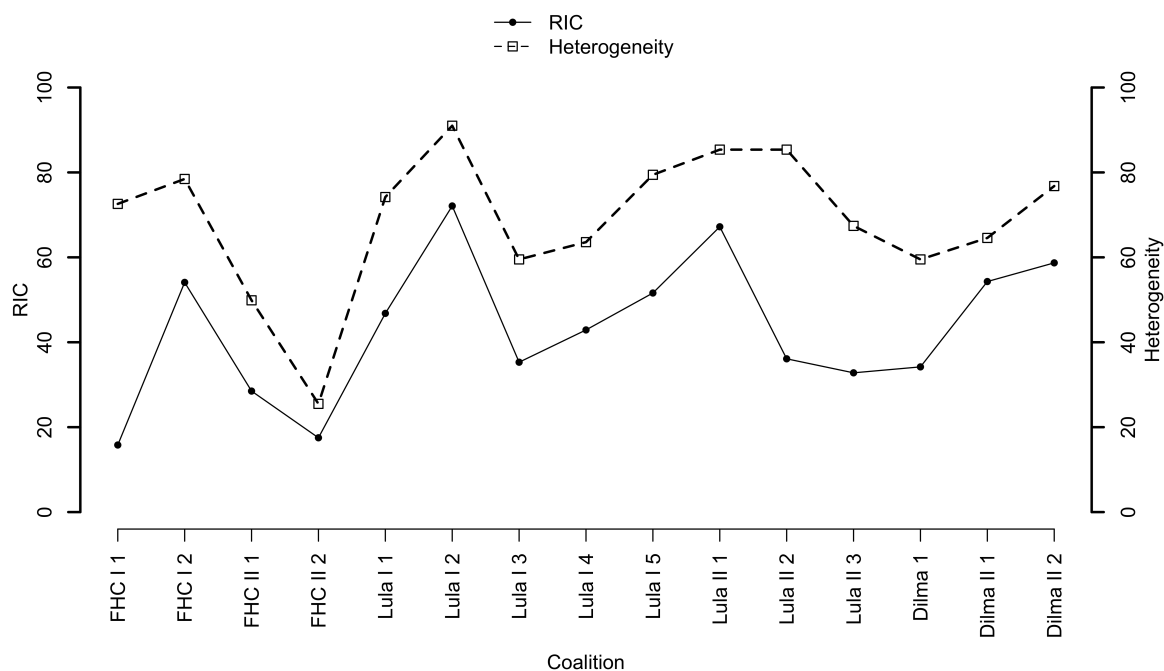
of RICs initiated by cabinet members is expected.

H2: As the ideological dispersion among the cabinet parties increases, a higher rate of RICs initiated by cabinet members is expected.

3.2 Ideology Preferences and Cabinet Partners' Control

In Figure 1, we can see the frequency of RICs initiated by cabinet parties contrasted against the ideological dispersion of the cabinet. In total, 22,688 RICs were requested between 1995 and 2014.⁵ The dashed line depicts the proportion of information requirements initiated by cabinet parties (left y-axis). The solid line depicts the degree of ideological distance (heterogeneity) among the parties that comprise the government (right y-axis).

Figure 1: Heterogeneity of Cabinets and Cabinet Partners' Control



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 1 reveals a strong correlation between the variation of the requests for access to information by cabinet members and the degree of ideological heterogeneity within

⁵The RICs with no information were withdrawn from the analysis.

the cabinets (a positive and significant Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.70). Between 1996 and 2002, there was a downward trend in the number of RICs initiated, consistent with a less heterogeneous cabinets being formed in the same period. An opposite trend can be seen between 2003 and 2014; an increasing number of RICs were initiated as the formation of larger and more heterogeneous cabinets increased.

The cabinets formed during the two mandates of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) (1995–2002) from the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), were composed of an average number of four parties. The distinguishing characteristic of the cabinets formed in this period was the relative ideological proximity of the preferences among the parties that comprised the government. FHC cabinets have an average heterogeneity score of 0.57 when compared to the cabinets formed by Lula (2003–2010) and Dilma (2011–2014), who were both from the Workers’ Party (PT). The average ideological dispersion observed in both Lula and Dilma’s governments were 0.76 and 0.67, respectively. These patterns seem to be affected by the high number of independent ministers (i.e, non-partisan ministers with a technical profile) appointed during the FHC government. The greater ideological dispersion in PT’s governments, in turn, seems to come from the formation of larger cabinets, with an average cabinet size of 7.3 parties.

4 Empirical Tests and Discussion

The distribution of our data presented in Figure 1 indicates a use of the control mechanism RIC associated with the expectation of information loss, due to parties that are more ideologically distant holding portfolios within the cabinet. Similar to what we expected, the trends presented indicate that the formation of ideologically-heterogeneous cabinets is associated with the strategy of cabinet members to oversee the implementation of policies under the responsibility of government partners.

In this section, we conduct more rigorous methods to empirically test our argument. To test the effect of the heterogeneity of the cabinet on the number of RICs initiated, the 22,688 information requirements presented in the Chamber of Deputies between 1995 and 2014 were grouped in 80 units of time (i.e., number of RICs initiated per quarter).

The choice of this unit of time is justified by evidence that conflicts within the cabinet require time to manifest within the legislature (Figueiredo and Limongi, 1999). In our analysis, we assume that three months is enough time for parties to mobilize and seek information on programs and policies that interest them. In addition, grouping RICs by quarter provides a sufficient variation in our variables of interest.⁶

Our dependent variable is therefore a count variable (i.e., number of RICs initiated per quarter), and it ranges from 37 to 1219 RICs initiated. We estimate the effects of two main independent variables (“heterogeneity” and “coalition size”) on the number of RICs initiated. Following our hypotheses, we expect that as the ideological dispersion (heterogeneity) and the number of parties holding portfolios (coalition size) increase, the number of RICs initiated would also increase. We also include five control variables into our models, which we describe below.⁷

Heterogeneity. This variable measures the degree of ideological heterogeneity of the parties that comprise the executive cabinet. This is the same indicator used by Power and Zucco Jr. (2009), and described in Section 4 of this paper.

Coalition size. This variable indicates the size of the coalition government, i.e., the number of parties occupying portfolios in the executive cabinet.

Rice index for coalition. This variable measures the legislative discipline of coalition parties within the legislature, i.e., the rate of support by cabinet parties for executive policy proposals. This measurement is the absolute difference between the number of “Yes” and “No” votes of the members of the coalition in legislative roll call votes, divided by the sum of the “Yes” and “No” votes. We expect that “Rice index for coalition” will have no effect on the variation of the number of RICs initiated. Not supporting the policy proposals sent by the executive to the congress is costly for coalition members (e.g., they jeopardize their position in the executive cabinet, and may lose control of their portfolios). But, even if the coalition parties behave in a perfectly disciplined manner, given their goal of monitoring the cabinet partners responsible for the policies of their interest, we

⁶Descriptive statistics can be viewed in Table 6 of Appendix B.

⁷With the exception of the RICs—gathered by the use of machine learning techniques from the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies—most of the data used in our analysis were gathered from the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP). Data from different sources are indicated in the footnotes.

should expect that some RICs will be initiated by the coalition parties. In other words, parties have incentives for monitoring even policies they endorse in congress.

Rice index for opposition. This variable measures the legislative discipline (or cohesion) of opposition parties (i.e., parties not holding portfolios in the executive cabinet) within the legislature. This index is the absolute difference between the number of “Yes” and “No” votes of the opposition parties in legislative roll call votes, divided by the sum of the “Yes” and “No” votes. We expect no effect for the “Rice index for opposition” on the variation of the number of RICs initiated. In turn, given that opposition parties do not hold portfolios within the executive cabinet, a smaller (or absent) commitment of opposition parties to the executive’s policy agenda is expected.⁸

Honeymoon. This is a dummy variable, which indicates whether the specific number of RICs grouped by our unit of time (quarterly) occurs in the first year of the president’s term or not. The inclusion of this variable in our models controls the temporal effect of the government term, under the expectation that in the first 12 months of the president’s term the legislative oversight actions are less intense.

Cycle. This variable measures, in number of days, the proximity between each quarterly unit and the next presidential election. The use of this indicator is justified by the need to control potential bias arising from proximity of new elections. When new elections approach, we expect the formation of new coalitions (both pre-elections and post-elections coalitions).

President’s job approval. This is an indicator of the president’s popularity among voters. The measurement is built on the proportion of survey respondents that evaluate the president’s job approval as “great,” “very good,” or “good.” We included this variable into our model to evaluate whether our hypothesis is supported or not controlling for events exogenous to the cabinet.⁹

PSDB. In order to control for potential specificities of PT (Lula and Dilma) and PSDB

⁸Data for “Rice index for coalition” and “Rice index for opposition” were gathered from the Center for Comparative and International Studies (NECI/USP), available at <http://neci.fflch.usp.br/node/506>.

⁹The data for “president’s job approval” are based on surveys systematized by the Metropolis Studies Center (CEM/Cepid), and can be accessed at: <http://centrodametropole.org.br/avaliacao/presidentes/home>.

(FHC) governments, we also include a dummy variable for PSDB.

Table 1 presents the results of an adjusted Poisson model. The estimates for “heterogeneity” are positive and statistically significant at level 0.01. These results indicate that the greater the ideological dispersion (heterogeneity) within the cabinet, the greater the number of RICs initiated by legislative parties (without distinction in the authorship of the initiative, i.e., whether it is a member of the government coalition or the opposition). Although statistically significant in Model 2 (including the dummy variable for PSDB government), due to the small magnitude of the effect for “coalition size,” we don’t observe a substantive effect of the number of parties holding portfolios on the number of RICs initiated.

Regarding our control variables, we also did not observe a substantive effect of the variables “Rice index for coalition,” “Rice index for opposition,” and “cycle.” The negative and statistically significant estimate for “president’s job approval” indicates that, on average, as voters evaluate the president’s job positively, the number of RICs initiated seems to decrease. However, the magnitude of the estimate for “president’s job approval” is also small, with no substantive significance. These results indicate that the main predictor of the use of the RICs is the variation on the ideological heterogeneity of the cabinets.

The estimate for “honeymoon,” in turn, is positive and statistically significant at level 0.01 in both models. Contrary to our expectation of less legislative oversight during the president’s first year, the estimates for “honeymoon” suggest that, given parties’ willingness to monitor policies of their interest, the use of the RIC occurs even in the first year of the president’s term.

In Model 2 of Table 1, the negative and statistically significant estimate for PSDB suggests that during FHC governments, the number of RICs initiated was, on average, smaller than during PT governments. This result is in accordance with our discussion in the previous section in which we noted that FHC government formed less heterogeneous cabinets, while Lula and Dilma governments formed more heterogeneous cabinets.

Table 1: The Effects of Cabinet Heterogeneity on Policy Control

	<i>DV: Number of RICs</i>	
	(Model I)	(Model II)
Heterogeneity	0.795*** (0.065)	0.404*** (0.067)
Coalition Size	-0.0002 (0.0002)	0.002*** (0.0002)
Rice Index for Coalition	-0.010*** (0.001)	-0.008*** (0.001)
Rice Index for Opposition	0.004*** (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)
Honeymoon	0.398*** (0.023)	0.405*** (0.023)
Cycle	-0.00000 (0.00003)	0.0001*** (0.00003)
President's Job Approval	-0.005*** (0.001)	-0.011*** (0.001)
PSDB		-0.433*** (0.021)
Intercept	5.929*** (0.071)	6.096*** (0.074)
Observations	80	80
Log Likelihood	-3,873.737	-3,651.329
Akaike Inf. Crit.	7,763.475	7,320.657

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

4.1 Testing Results' Consistency: The Probability of Policy Control Initiated by Coalition Partners

In order to test the consistency of the results, we conducted a binomial logistic regression model on the probability of the use of RICs by coalition partners (i.e., distinguishing the authorship of RIC initiatives). This change in the dependent variable is necessary for testing hypothesis 1, in which we expect that the greater the cabinet heterogeneity, the higher the rate of RICs initiated by cabinet partners.

For the construction of the logistic regression model, we performed a stratified random selection, taking into consideration the following criteria: 1. Number of parties in the cabinet; 2. Duration of the cabinet, and; 3. Weight of each party in the cabinet (legislative size of the cabinet party). From the total of 22,688 RICs initiated in the Brazilian lower house between 1995 and 2014, 817 RICs among 15 cabinets comprise our sample.

Our unit of analysis in this case is the RIC itself, and the dependent variable assumes a value of 1 when the legislator initiating the RIC belongs to the coalition government (her party holds a portfolio within the executive cabinet). If the legislator belongs to any other legislative party not holding portfolios, our dependent variable assumes a value of 0. With the exception of the variable “size of the coalition” (used as one of the criteria for the selection our stratified sample), the probability of event occurrence (i.e., when our dependent variable assumes a value of 1) is a function of the same variables used in our previous models.

The results for the logit model presented in Table 2 indicate that the increase in cabinet heterogeneity is associated with an increase in the probability of a coalition partner making use of the RICs. Although positive and statistically significant in both models (at level 0.01 in Model 3, and at level 0.05 in Model 4), the magnitude of the estimate for the effect of “heterogeneity” on our dependent variable is smaller when we include “PSDB” as a control variable into our model (Model 4). We believe that this reduction in the magnitude of the estimate for “heterogeneity” can be explained by the less-heterogeneous cabinets formed during the FHC’s government. In a scenario of lower

expectations of information loss, coalition parties have less incentives for controlling the policy implementation of their cabinet partners.

With the exception of the estimate for “Rice index for opposition,” none of the control variables included in the model were found to be statistically significant.¹⁰ These results support our argument that the parties that comprise the executive cabinet monitor the policies implemented by government partners, in order to reduce the information deficit coming from heterogeneous cabinets.

Table 2: Why Do Presidential Cabinet Members Monitor Each Other?

	<i>DV: RICs Initiated by Coalition Parties</i>	
	(Model 3)	(Model 4)
Heterogeneity	2.086*** (0.663)	1.598** (0.766)
Rice Index for Coalition	0.012 (0.013)	0.029 (0.019)
Rice Index for Opposition	-0.022 (0.014)	-0.050** (0.025)
Honeymoon	0.096 (0.285)	0.165 (0.292)
Cycle	0.0004 (0.0003)	0.0004 (0.0003)
President’s Job Approval	0.012 (0.008)	0.013 (0.008)
PSDB		-0.619 (0.477)
Intercept	-2.653** (1.184)	-2.269* (1.222)
Observations	817	817
Log Likelihood	-532.967	-532.122
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,079.933	1,080.245

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

¹⁰Although statistically significant at level 0.05, the magnitude of the estimate for “Rice index for opposition” is close to zero, indicating no substantive significance.

In sum, the results found in our study corroborate our theoretical expectation. The greater the ideological dispersion of the cabinets, the greater the likelihood that legislative parties will request RICs in pursuit of control over policy implementation. This finding reinforces the idea that the expectations of informational losses resulting from the delegation of power in multiparty systems are higher in contexts where the policy preferences of political parties are more divergent (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Przeworski, 2003; Laver, 2008). Moreover, the positive and significant effect of cabinet heterogeneity on the likelihood of a RIC being initiated by a cabinet’s member (Figure 2), indicates mutual control over policy implementation among coalition partners, which supports hypothesis 1.

In this sense, it is possible to affirm that our main contribution in this study is showing that the use of mechanisms of legislative policy control among coalition partners occurs not only at the policy formulation stage within the legislature (Martin and Vanberg, 2011; Carroll and Cox, 2012; Freitas, 2013, 2016; Inácio and Rezende, 2015; Rennó and Wojcik, 2015; Vieira, 2013, Forthcoming), but also at the stage of policy implementation within the executive cabinet.

5 What do Cabinet Members Control?

In the previous section, we found that the presence of heterogeneous preferences within the cabinet seems to be associated with more RICs initiated by coalition members (i.e., more control over cabinet’s policy implementation). But what are the policy issues monitored by coalition and opposition parties? Is there a difference in the ordering of policy issue preferences between the two groups? What are the most salient ministerial areas for these parties? To answer these questions, in this section we analyze the content of the RICs initiated between 1995 and 2014 through the use of machine learning techniques.

To classify and analyze the contents of the RICs initiated by the legislators, we use structural topic models that allow us to analyze how often specific terms appear in the RIC documents. For statistical inference purposes, we conduct the Gibbs sampling method (Chang, 2012), a Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) algorithm derived from the latent

Dirichlet allocation (LDA). LDA is a Bayesian probabilistic model used for the extraction of discrete data (words) from a data matrix based on an underlying set of topics (Blei, Ng and Jordan, 2003).¹¹

Our text corpus is composed of all information requirements (RICs) initiated by Brazilian Federal Deputies from 1995 to 2014 ($N = 22,688$). The individual information request (RIC) document is the unit of analysis in our data matrix, which also contains a column with the text of the document, and a column that describes the content of the document by topic. Each RIC document details the policy program and the ministerial area from which the legislator wants to obtain information. Although choosing the number of topics is arbitrary, we vary this number between 2 and 100 and performed cross-validation test procedures. The results from these tests indicate that the number of topics chosen has no impact on the fit of our models. As such, following Chang et al. (2009), the number of topics used in our analysis was defined according to the consistency and validation of terms extracted from the word matrix.

Below we present four examples of RICs initiated by Brazilian legislators in the Chamber of Deputies related to the following issues: 1. Infrastructure and Technology; 2. Transport; 3. Environment and; 4. Education:

1. Infrastructure RIC: “Request information from the Minister of Defense on PAC [Growth Acceleration Program] projects on airport infrastructures”;
2. Transport RIC: “Request information from the Minister of Transport on the National Logistics and Transport Plan (PNLT)”;
3. Environment RIC: “Request information from the Minister of Agriculture Livestock and Supply on planting of transgenic soybeans”;
4. Education RIC: “Request information from the Minister of Education on the Implementation of the National Program for Restructuring and Acquisition of Equipment for the public pre school system of education.”

¹¹To estimate the collapsed Gibbs sampling method, we used the R package *topicmodels*, available at <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/topicmodels/index.html>. Following the procedure indicated by Hornik and Grün (2011), we set the Gibbs sampling method stipulating the maximum value of 15 topics with 1000 iterations.

In Table 3, we present the number of RICs initiated by coalition parties (i.e., parties holding executive portfolios) and opposition parties (i.e., legislative parties not holding executive portfolios) by government (FHC, Lula, and Dilma). On average, from 1995 to 2014, parties in opposition to the government were responsible for more RIC initiatives than coalition parties (in the period analyzed, 36.31% of RICs were initiated by coalition parties). But it is important to note that the number of RIC initiatives vary depending on the heterogeneity of the cabinets formed by the government. During Lula’s government, the period in which the cabinets with the highest degree of heterogeneity were formed (with an average heterogeneity degree of 0.76) is also the period with the highest number of RIC initiatives by the coalition parties. Lula’s government is followed by Dilma’s government, in which 35.91% of RICs were initiated by coalition parties (a government with an average heterogeneity degree of 0.67.). FHC, with an average heterogeneity degree of 0.57, had an average of 32.57% of RICs initiated by coalition parties. These results are in line with our hypothesis, in which parties tend to perform more policy control when there is a greater expectation of information loss (i.e., when the cabinet ideological heterogeneity is higher).

Table 3: Number of RICs initiated by Coalition and Opposition Parties, by Government

FHC (1995–2003)				
Coalition	%	Opposition	%	Total
2890	32.57	5984	67.43	8874
LULA (2004–2010)				
Coalition	%	Opposition	%	Total
3882	40.45%	5716	59.55	9598
DILMA (2011–2014)				
Coalition	%	Opposition	%	Total
1507	35.91	2689	64.08	4196

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In Table 2, we present a list of topics ranked from higher frequency to smaller frequency. The analysis of the most recurring topics allows us to understand what are the

most important issues and the most salient ministerial areas for the coalition parties.¹²

In the three governments analyzed in this study (FHC, Lula and Dilma), the terms “health,” “development,” “finance,” and “budget” always appear in the top five policy issues within the RICs’ content. Policy programs related to “education,” “environment,” and “energy” are also subject to intense scrutiny by parties both from government coalition and from the opposition. This is another indication that the parties seek to inform themselves about the specific policies implemented by their coalition members.

Nevertheless, as the rankings in Table 3 (and Table 5 in appendix) reveal, government and opposition parties have distinct policy preferences. Although the same policy issues are controlled by the government and opposition parties, they rank their policy preferences differently. While “economy,” “health,” and “planning” are issues of greater interest to coalition parties, the opposition tends to give more attention to policy areas such as “education” and “foreign trade.” There are also policy areas in common to both groups, such as “energy,” “environment” and “infrastructure.” Parties that are members of the cabinet government are not indifferent to ministerial areas delegated to their coalition partners.

It is also worth highlighting the contrast of the most frequent agendas in the RICs proposed by coalition members during the PSDB and PT administrations. As can be seen in Table 3, during the more right-leaning FHC governments, mutual control over policy implementation among coalition partners was more concentrated on economic issues such as budget and finance policies. On the other hand, in the more left-leaning governments of Lula and Dilma, the social agenda was stressed, with health and education as the most-frequent policy issues being controlled by coalition parties. Apparently, the emphasis of the coalition parties on the implementation of social policies during the Lula and Dilma governments indicates a greater concern in changing the *status quo* by the PT administration (see Table 5).

¹²Table 5 presents the words for the classification of each RIC in topics. The topics were automatically ranked by the Gibbs sampling algorithm, which allows us to evaluate patterns in policy control exercised by the parties using the RIC. The algorithm calculates the probability that the terms together represent a specific topic.

Table 4: What do Political Parties Control?

FHC					
Coalition			Opposition		
Ranking	Term	Frequency	Ranking	Term	Frequency
1	budget	913	1	finance	1152
2	finance	477	2	social security	677
3	health	293	3	energy	667
4	social security	267	4	development	474
5	energy	224	5	education	395
6	planning	214	6	budget	392
7	development	209	7	communication	365
8	health	191	8	health	360
9	environment	180	9	labor	341
10	education	169	10	transport	313

LULA					
Coalition			Opposition		
Ranking	Term	Frequency	Ranking	Term	Frequency
1	health	688	1	amazon	1724
2	amazon	547	2	development	693
3	energy	464	3	health	611
4	development	350	4	energy	606
5	finance	344	5	finance	432
6	social security	286	6	defense	425
7	justice	274	7	education	350
8	education	272	8	social security	349
9	communication	227	9	transport	327
10	defense	221	10	foreign	319

DILMA					
Coalition			Opposition		
Ranking	Term	Frequency	Ranking	Term	Frequency
1	health	166	1	energy	624
2	education	153	2	amazon	436
3	development	133	3	education	376
4	transport	91	4	health	374
5	finance	90	5	development	352
6	energy	77	6	budget	265
7	technology	74	7	municipalities	231
8	science	71	8	planning	231
9	culture	68	9	justice	228
10	social	67	10	finance	209

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

6 Conclusion

In this study, we argued that the incentives for policy control among cabinet parties is greater as the cabinet size and the cabinet ideological dispersion increases. To empirically test the hypotheses derived from our argument, we used two strategies. First, we analyzed the variation of the number of RICs initiated quarterly without distinction of the RICs' authorship (whether from the coalition or the opposition party). Second, each individual RIC was analyzed, where we distinguished whether the author of the RIC initiative was a member of the coalition or from an opposition party. Through the use of machine learning techniques, we were also able to reveal which policy issues legislative parties (from the coalition or from the opposition) seek to exercise more policy control.

The results support our argument. At first, the higher incidence of RICs initiated by legislative parties without authorship identification are present in context of higher cabinet heterogeneity. Then, looking at the variation in the authorship of the RIC initiatives by members of the coalition or the opposition, the association between the use of RICs as a mechanism of mutual policy implementation control among coalition partners and the degree of cabinet dispersion becomes clear. As such, the probability of a RIC being initiated by a member of the coalition is higher when the cabinet is more heterogeneous, suggesting strong and consistent evidence that policy control among coalition partners occurs not only in the policy formulation stage within the legislature (an expectation commonly supported by the literature), but also in the stage of policy implementation within the executive cabinet.

The quantitative analysis of our qualitative data (the content of RICs), in turn, reveals the contrast in policy issues controlled by coalition and opposition parties. While the coalition parties of the more right-leaning governments of PSDB revolved mainly around budget and finance issues, the coalition parties of PT administrations placed a greater emphasis on social issues such as health, education, and social security.

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Table 5: Policy Issues of Parties' Interest by Government, and Between Coalition and Opposition

Coalition			Opposition		
FHC					
Ranking	Area	Terms	Ranking	Area	Terms
1	Planning	budget, management, administration, planning,	1	Foreign trade	development, foreign, industry, trade
2	Energy	energy, oil, electricity, petrobras	2	Economy	finance, economy, taxation, revenue
3	Economy	finance, economy, revenue, taxation	3	Education	education, research, technology, school
4	Communication	communication, privatization, culture, radio	4	Environment	environment, amazon, water resources, ibama
5	Social Security	social, security, assistance, ins	5	Work	work, work relation, employment
6	Health	health, hospital, expenses, fundation	6	Social security	social, security, assistance, ins
7	Foreign trade	development, foreign, industry, trade	7	Energy	energy, oil, electricity, petrobras
8	Environment	environment, amazon, water resources, ibam	8	Transport	transport, port, department, road
9	Agribusiness	farming, trade, agrarian, import	9	Planning	budget, management, planning, resources,
LULA					
Ranking	Area	Terms	Ranking	Area	Terms
1	Environment	environment, amazon, region, security	1	Transport	transport, port, recovery, maintenance
2	Health	health, infantil, child, mortality	2	Energy	energy, oil, electricity, petrobras
3	Transport	transport, system, works, road	3	Corruption	misuse, purchase, works, grant
4	Planning	management, budget, planning, resources	4	Environment	environment, water resources, region, security
5	Justice	justice, police, investigation, death	5	Health	health, sanitation, service, care
6	Foreign trade	development, foreign, industry, trade	6	Agrobusiness	farming, trade, agrarian, revenue
7	Energy	energy, oil, electricity, petrobras	7	Foreign trade	foreign, trade, industry, agreement
8	Communication	communication, deployment, fundations, radio	8	Planning	budget, planning, resources, management
9	Education	education, dropout, teaching, school			
DILMA					
Ranking	Area	Terms	Ranking	Area	Terms
1	Social development	development, social, famine, assistance	1	Education	education, school, basic, program
2	Infrastructure	transport, infrastructure, works, port	2	Public security	violence, rights, human, police
3	Planning	planning, management, budget, pac	3	Health	health, assistance, hospital, health minister
4	Communication	technology, science, communication, radio	4	Infrastructure	transport, port, work, road
5	Economy	finance, revenue, taxation, budget	5	Foreign trade	development, foreign, industry, trade
6	Health	health, care, resources, hospital	6	Planning	budget, planning, administration, pac
7	Education	education, culture, school, education minister	7	Economy	finance, revenue, employment, taxation
8	Foreign Trade	development, foreign, industry, trade	8	Social development	family, cash transfer, famine, system
9	Energy	energy, oil, electricity, petrobras	9	Energy	energy, trasmission, electricity, generation

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Appendix B

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Included in Model 1 and Model 2

Variables	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	N
Dependent variable:					
Number of RICs	313.01	193.77	37	1219	80
Independent variables:					
Heterogeneity	0.4912	0.1363	0.1301	0.7065	80
Coalition Size	6.26	1.76	3	8	80
Control variables:					
Rice Index (Coalition)	0.8291	0.109	0.4848	0.989	80
Rice Index (Opposition)	49.127	13.68	0.1301	0.7065	80
Honeymoon	0.25	0.4357	0	1	80
Cycle	693.21	423.71	2	1397	80
President's Job Approval	42.98	16.05	13.75	83	80
PSDB	0.4	0.4929	0	1	80

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Included in Model 3 and Model 4

Variables	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	N
Dependent variable:					
RIC Initiative	0.378213	0.4852382	0	1	817
Independent variable:					
Heterogeneity	.7237	0.1164	0.2549	0.91	817
Control variables:					
RIC Initiative	0.378213	0.4852382	0	1	817
Rice Index for Coalition	83.41517	7.515952	69.19	92.07	817
Rice Index for Opposition	54.52809	8.89268	38.57	67.62	817
Honeymoon	0.3170135	0.4655978	0	1	817
Cycle	695.5887	436.4113	18	1454	817
President's Job Approval	49.3687	13.04575	37.69	77.7	817
PSDB	0.1738066	0.3791752	0	1	817

Appendix C

Figure 2: Facsimile of a RIC initiated by a Legislator from a Coalition Party (2006)
Source: Brazilian Chamber of Deputies.

REQUERIMENTO DE INFORMAÇÃO Nº DE 2006
(Da Senhora Vanessa Grazziotin)

Solicita ao Senhor Ministro da Educação informações sobre o repasse de verbas para a educação indígena.

Senhor Presidente,

Com fundamento no art. 50 da Constituição Federal e no art. 115, inciso I, do Regimento Interno da Câmara dos Deputados, solicito de V. Exa., que seja encaminhado ao Ministério da Educação o seguinte pedido de informação:

Segundo matérias veiculadas nos jornais locais, o Ministério de Educação anunciou que investirá cerca de R\$ 5 milhões em ações voltadas para a educação indígena. Ainda de acordo com a matéria, aproximadamente R\$ 2,6 milhões serão gastos com a construção de escolas. O restante da verba será aplicado em cursos de formação inicial e continuada de professores.

Nesse sentido, solicito a seguinte informação:

- Especificar por Estado o repasse de verbas, bem como descrevendo a quantia destinada para cada programa;
- No estado do Amazonas, especificar o valor do repasse por município.

Sala das Sessões, 23 de maio de 2006

Deputada: Vanessa Grazziotin
PCdoB/AM

Figure 3: Facsimile of a RIC initiated by a Legislator from an Opposition Party (2011)
Source: Brazilian Chamber of Deputies.



**Requerimento de Informação nº , de 2011
(Do Sr. Rodrigo Maia)**

*Solicita informações ao Sr. Ministro de Estado da Justiça,
José Eduardo Cardoso, sobre a entrada de turistas
estrangeiros no Brasil nos últimos cinco anos.*

Sr. Presidente,

Com fundamento no art. 50 do § 2º da Constituição Federal de 1988, e no inciso I do artigo 115 do Regimento Interno da Câmara dos Deputados, solicito a Vossa Excelência seja encaminhado ao Senhor Ministro de Estado da Justiça o seguinte requerimento de informações:

1. Quantos turistas estrangeiros registraram entrada no Brasil nos anos de 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 e 2010? Favor enviar os dados separados por ano de referência.

J U S T I F I C A T I V A

A obtenção dos dados acima solicitados se mostra absolutamente imprescindível para que o Congresso Nacional continue exercendo a sua típica função de fiscalizar as ações do Poder Executivo.

Sala das Sessões, em 02 de agosto de 2011.

**Deputado RODRIGO MAIA
DEM/RJ**