



## THE ALLOCATION OF PARTIES IN THE IDEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

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**Abstract:** Although there are several ways of classifying the parties on a Left-Right (L-R) scale, the analysis of the actual behavior is one of the most important methods since it's based on what is fundamental: the action of the political agents. Therefore, this article intends to compare the traditional classification of the Brazilian parties by analyzing 24 ideological roll-call votes held in the Chamber of Deputies from 2011 to 2015. A general classification was elaborated based on the actual behavior in the total number of votes analyzed and jointly the positioning in classical themes and in the so-called "new" themes. Some important dissonances with what is commonly envisioned by Political Science draw the attention. Workers Party (PT) remains on the left exceeded only by Party of Socialism and Liberty (PSOL). Democrats (DEM) is not the party to the right of the political spectrum, whereas Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB) places itself to the right of Brazilian Social Democrat Party (PSDB) and close to DEM which behaves like a right-wing party.

**Keywords:** Parliamentary behavior; Left; Right; Ideological classification.

### 1 Introduction

Dalton and McAllister (2015) argue that there are numerous empirical studies using varying methods to estimate party positions on a Left-Right (L-R) scale. The most common methods are the study of manifests and partisan programs, the evaluation of experts, the self-localization of political elites, and the perception of citizens. According to them, there is no single, definitive source for identifying a party's position and to a great extent all of them demonstrate consistent measures, logically taking into account the context and factors to be considered. In the Brazilian case, the process is similar. For Tarouco and Madeira (2013), there are many methods for locating parties on the Left-Right axis, usually using the image that public opinion constructs about them, expert assessment, statements by the parties themselves, as well as the performance parliamentary.

Although the evaluation of specialists is the most common method of insertion of the parties in an L-R scale, many are devoted to the study of manifests or the analysis of interviews and questionnaires applied to political actors, in both cases, there is a categorization that allows you to allocate parties on either side. Regarding partisan programs, analyzed in isolation, they can simply present themselves as a welcome menu for most voters, without necessarily reflecting the parliamentary performance of party members. Regarding the questioning of political actors, it can be assumed that a parliamentarian with minimal political sophistication can easily decipher what

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the applier wants to read or hear, without necessarily, as in the previous case, acting in a mirrored way. Therefore, the analysis of effective behavior is one of the most important methods to verify the positioning of parties in the ideological spectrum since, in the end, it verifies what is most relevant: political action.

Scheeffter (2016) verifies the weight of ideology in parliamentary behavior in current times based on the analysis of a set of nominal votes that took place during the government of President Dilma Rousseff in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, whether linked to classical themes or new themes, present in the contemporary debate. Substantive issues are analyzed from a political-ideological point of view and, in theory, would imply dissent among parliamentarians and left and right parties. The purpose of this article is to, if using these data, to review the classification of Brazilian parties based on the parliamentary action. The purpose is to propose a classification and compare it with what is most accepted in Political Science in modern times.

The present work begins with a brief contextualization of the meaning of left and right in present times and what would justify the allocation of the parties in different locations in the ideological spectrum. After this, the methodological procedures of the research in question are presented, followed by the analysis and discussion of the results.

## **2 Left, right, old and "new" themes**

To understand what is supposed to represent the concepts of right and left today, the first step is to understand the emergence of these terms. They came from the French Revolution (1789), when work began on the drafting of the first French constitution and when political representatives took up seats in different seats in the plenary. In a very simplified way, it is possible to affirm that to the left of the plenary sat delegates identified with egalitarianism and the search for a social reform, while on the right a group identified with aristocracy and conservatism (TAROUCO; MADEIRA, 2013). Although etymologically they bring a spatial connotation, in terms of political ideologies, they come to denote distinct political-ideological profiles.

As far as the meaning of these expressions is concerned in present times, it is possible to affirm that there are three great modes of interpretation. A minority of authors believe that the terms have the same meaning as they had in the French Revolution. There are defenders that the use of this nomenclature no longer makes sense, and a third group, the vast majority suggesting the updating of meanings, believing that the terms right and left represent something different from what they originally represented.<sup>2</sup> One of the best-known defenders of this belief is Norberto

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<sup>2</sup> Representing the first group, Sader (1995) affirms that the left represents the set of forces that fight, essentially, for transformations that result in the instituting of a different order of the capitalist, or transformations that result in a substantial reformulation of this one. The belief that the use of left and right nomenclature no longer makes sense in the thesis that we have reached the end of history, as evidenced in Fukuyama's (1992) famous work "The End of History and the Last Man". Having verified the defeat of all political alternatives to liberal democracy, according to him, the

Bobbio (1995). For the author, the right-to-left dyad continues to be used, in this sense we must adhere to the criteria proposed for its legitimization. So, for him there is a significant distinction between people in this respect. To the left, equality must be prioritized to the detriment of freedom (which to the right must be preserved, maintaining the inequalities between men, taken as natural). Equality and freedom characterize the whole network of practical and ideal relations of which the democratic project is woven. "The antithesis could not be more radical: in the name of natural equality, the egalitarian condemns social inequality; in the name of natural inequality, the non-egalitarian condemns social equality" (BOBBIO, 1995, p. 122).

Giddens (1996), in the same perspective, states that this contrast is real and remains relevant. The right accepts the existence of inequalities better than the left. According to him, neoliberals accept the importance of inequality and to some extent see it as a motivating principle of economic efficiency. Those who criticize neoliberals generally do so by considering the free-market models that produce an overly divided society. It is evident that nowadays the "more" or "less" dimension of the state has been a major part of the political debate, and therefore, social-democratic and neoliberal strategies account for the major political projects advocated in recent times. One of the theoretical-practical alternatives found (consciously or through "error and correctness") by the new left was Social-Democracy.<sup>3</sup>

For Giddens (2000), the right and left still represent distinct and divergent forces regarding the future of the welfare state. The majority of Social Democrats defend a State with high expenditure, whereas the neoliberals defend a minimal State. This seems to be the discrepancy and fundamental dispute between the "new left" and "new liberalism". On the one hand, in favor of justice, the "new left" abandons the initial goal of abolishing capitalism and instead is content to reform it or "humanize" it through an intervening State. Privileging individual freedom, neoliberalism becomes the face of the "new right," which, believing in the benefits of the market, defends a minimum State.<sup>4</sup>

Aggio (2013) presents some values that remain as axes of the political and cultural identity of the left today, which fits perfectly in the set of social-democratic principles:

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most advanced stage in the progression of human societies was witnessed.

<sup>3</sup> Given this controversial scenario, Sader (2009) points out that the left ended up oscillating between reformist projects and projects of rupture. For the author, there is not necessarily an antagonism between these two strategies. It depends on the type of reform and, ultimately, on how it can shake power relations. If there is a consensus on the part of the left that capitalism alone does not allow equality of opportunity, the greatest obstacle is the possibility of "humanizing" or "domesticating" it. Even with this kind of reading knowledge, it was decided to reduce the left to the defense of social-democratic strategies and to discard the Marxist conception, not entering the merits of the limits of one or another model.

<sup>4</sup> Care should be taken to reduce the left-right dimension to greater or lesser state intervention since, as Couto (2014) points out, this is a great simplification. Some interventions may be right, for example. In the Brazilian case, this becomes evident, analyzing the period of development of the military regime. There was interventionism that, however, was not shown to be egalitarian, on the contrary. Growth is a priority and inequality is necessary to promote it and the proper functioning of the market. In this way, interventionism can only be associated with the left in its egalitarian side. Income distribution policies, as well as regulatory policies that oblige private agents to promote some kind of redistribution, are compatible.

1. The defense of social welfare rather than individual well-being;
2. The valuation of collective responsibilities;
3. The extension of equal opportunities for all;
4. The validity of a strong State capable of correcting social injustices through a distributive action of the material wealth produced by society and, finally,
5. The prospect of a change in power structures through democratization and political participation (p. 102).

Neoliberalism, according to Anderson (1995), is a phenomenon distinct from classical liberalism. It is an adaptation and updating of classical liberalism to the new social and historical conditions. It was born shortly after World War II, in Europe and North America. It was, according to the author, a vehement theoretical and political reaction against the interventionist and welfare State.

According to Hofling (2001), the actions of the State in the attempt to regulate the imbalances generated by the development of capitalist accumulation (state public policies) are considered one of the major obstacles to this same development and responsible, to a large extent, for the crisis that crosses society. State intervention would be a threat to individual interests and freedoms, inhibiting free enterprise and private competition, and blocking the mechanisms that the market itself can generate, with a view to restoring that balance. Once again, the free market is pointed out by neoliberals as the great equalizer of the relations between individuals and opportunities in the occupational structure of society. According to this ideology, the market is the matrix of wealth, efficiency and justice.

For Moraes (2002), the neoliberal narratives intended, and to some extent succeeded, to offer a palatable explanation for the problems derived from social policies or the Welfare State. Three arguments are central:

- the increasing (and unbearably) costs of social policies and their impact on public funds (inflation, indebtedness);
- the deleterious effects of these policies on values, behavior of individuals, social groups and companies;
- the disastrous results, on the decision-making process and on democratic institutions, of the political machinery required by the implementation of these programs (MORAES, 2002, p. 2).

In a very simplifying form and for didactic purposes, there is an attempt to systematize some differences of the left and the right in current times, justifying the choice of legislation analyzed, as well as the expectation of different behaviors among left and right parliamentarians.

**Table 1** - Disagreements on themes linked to classical ideologies

<b>Left</b>	<b>Right</b>
Economic intervention must take place whenever it is deemed necessary (KEYNES, 1985).	The State must abstain from economic issues, since the market regulates itself, as if there were an "invisible hand" guiding this process (SMITH, 1982).
Poverty is mainly caused by inequality of opportunity. As a social problem, it can be faced through social programs or overcoming order, in the case of a more radical left (SOUZA, 2009).	Poverty, when attacked, must be focused and limited. "Exaggerated" aid can lead to accommodation and the decline of "work ethics" (OLIVEIRA, 2003).
Crime can be explained, essentially, by insertion into a social context that offers inequality of opportunities (SOUZA, 2009).	Crime, to a large extent, is the responsibility of individuals (SOUZA, 2009).
The tax burden must be extensive to finance the state and provide quality services to those who need it (COUTO, 2006).	Taxes are evil, because they burden companies and disadvantage economic growth (MORAES, 2002; OLIVEIRA, 2003).
Defense of a broad labor legislation that regulates the world of work (COUTO, 2006).	The labor market must be deregulated, since the market regulates labor relations (OLIVEIRA, 2003).
The services, especially those strategic, must be offered by the State (AGGIO, 2013; SETEMBRINI, 1997).	To reduce the size of the state, a good strategy is to transfer services that are state - privatization to private initiative (MORAES, 2002; OLIVEIRA, 2003).

Source: author's elaboration.

As Heywood (2010a) points out, at the heart of the changes we are witnessing is the transition from industrial to post-industrial societies. In industrial societies class divisions were relatively clearer, which contributed, for example, to the structuring of the political process, party system, competition between interest groups, and the ideological debate itself. But post-industrial societies are different in many ways, and post-materialist issues arise. The famous defender of so-called post-materialism is Inglehart (1977). According to him, there would be, after the second half of the twentieth century, a slow and gradual change of a broad spectrum of human values. Such changes would represent profound changes in the world of work, in the religious field, in gender relations, in sexual orientation, and in political activity. In times of scarcity, human beings would tend to prioritize goals related to material development and put transcendental, subjective, or long-term issues in the background. In times of significant socio-economic changes that would characterize post-industrial societies, consequently, there would be significant changes in individual priorities. Economic issues lose space and give way to a differentiated effort to maximize well-being in the contemporary world. In short, once material security has been achieved, there is room for post-materialistic questions, such as the quality of life in its broad sense, environmental preservation, and the possibility of self-expression, among others.

The new fluid scenario proposed by a significant range of authors attempts to expose the complexity of a time when divergences and antagonisms go beyond the material world as well as the conception of the "best" possible State. Authors such as Heywood (2010b) and Rosas and Ferreira (2013), regarding the left and right dichotomy, choose to speak of "old" and "new" themes, option chosen here. Smith, cited by Mair (2007), emphasizes the plasticity of the left-right dimension, the ability of these terms to accommodate new issues and new patterns of

competition. According to Heywood (2010a, p. 28),

[...] there are "thick" or "fine" ideologies depending on the scope of its conceptual structure. While liberalism, conservatism, and socialism are based on a broad and distinctive set of values, doctrines, and beliefs, anarchism and feminism, for example, are "finer," generally having a "transverse" character, since incorporate elements of "thicker" ideological traditions. This also explains why confusions and debates about whether nationalism and multiculturalism are ideologies by themselves or just "adornments" of other "host" ideologies.

If it is easy to see how much ideologies metamorphose over time, the great dilemma lies in knowing which are the "arms" of the former, or new issues and, therefore, independent.<sup>5</sup> Heywood (2010a; 2010b) seeks to present the main classical ideologies, as well as the "new" ideologies. The latter, according to him, differ from the "classic" for various reasons, with three main differences. First, there was a shift of focus from the economy to culture. Ideologies such as liberalism and socialism, for example, were primarily concerned with questions of economic organization. The "new" ideologies, differently, are more interested in culture than in economics. People's values, beliefs, and lifestyles overlap the search for economic comfort or social justice. Secondly, the term social class now gives way to identity. To speak in identity is to link people to social. The cultural, social and ideological context is not denied, while considering the possibility of choice and self-determination (individualization). Finally, universalism gives way to particularism. New ideologies emphasize factors such as gender, culture, and ethnicity. The "politics of difference" stands out and declines the policy of universal emancipation. From the 1960s, according to the author, not only would changes occur in well-established or "classical" ideologies, but there would also be a series of "new" ideological traditions. They may be considered new because they have given unprecedented notoriety to certain areas of ideological debate. According to him, the most significant are feminism, environmentalism, religious fundamentalism and multiculturalism. Each, in its own way, emphasized how fragmented the ideological debate becomes.

Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister (2011), similar to Heywood (2010b), emphasize that historically, the terms left and right were linked to contrasting positions on issues of economic and social well-being. A citizen identified with the leftist ideology would support an active role of government in the economy and broader social services to ensure the well-being of the working class. The right, distinctly, was synonymous with defending a minimal State, modest social programs, and defending the economic interests of the middle class. Today, however, the

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<sup>5</sup> Scheeffler (2016) presents some clues as to the (un) connection between "old" and "new" themes. When it comes to environmental issues, for example, there is a greater relationship with classical distinctions, since there are differences of opinion about a greater or lesser state regulation of the sector. The same does not occur with moral questions. An independence is evident that can be illustrated by the theology of liberation. A supporter of this current of Marxist inspiration could be considered as a leftist, taking into account classical issues, however right-wing, for defending the traditional family.

dichotomy extrapolates these socioeconomic issues. Several other issues entered the political agenda and became part of the left and right sphere. More than that, for a German worker, the left may mean social assistance policies, already for a young university student, can mean environmental protection and multiculturalism.

In seeking to go beyond the classical ideologies, it is important to be careful in the use of some terms that, in the case of new ideologies, may have different, if not totally contradictory, meanings. To speak of liberalism as a right-wing ideology, for example, only makes sense when it comes to the social and economic intervention of the State, which would violate individual freedom. In this case, we are referring to political and economic liberalism as a classical ideology that provides for the defense of a minimal State. In "new" themes, the so-called (neo) conservatism, denomination of the new right, would stand out in relation to the defense of individual freedom. When we talk about liberalism in non-economic terms, the correlation is reversed. We're talking about a left's defense. Almeida (2001) makes it clear that in the economic dimension, reducing state intervention and regulation is associated with being right-wing. The opposite is associated with the left. The reverse occurs when we try to understand the action of the State in relation to customs. Punishment or regulation of social and cultural behavior, such as criminalizing abortion, is associated with the right. Social non-action in this case is associated with the left. Levin (2014) states that today's left clearly displays a combination of collectivism and moral individualism, while the right a conservative liberalism. In the words of Heywood (2010a, p. 97),

[...] this new right is like a marriage between two seemingly antagonistic ideological traditions. The first is the classical liberal economy [...] a critique of "big" government and social and economic intervention. It is called the new liberal right, or neoliberalism. The second element of the new right is the traditional conservative social theory that emphasizes above all the defense of order, authority and discipline. This is called the conservative new right, or neoconservatism.

It follows a summary table with the purpose of demonstrating the positioning of the left and right positioning on some "new" themes present in the current scenario.

**Table 2** - Disagreements regarding the "new" issues

<b>Left</b>	<b>Right</b>
Decriminalization of abortion.	Illegal abortion.
Release of marijuana use.	Illegal use of marijuana.
Legalization of same-sex marriage.	Prohibition of the marriage of two persons of the same sex.
Defense of affirmative actions for groups considered underprivileged.	Affirmative actions taken as discriminatory measures.
Priority for environmental issues.	The restricted use of nature impedes economic growth.
Tendency to liberalism, when it comes to behavioral issues	Tendency to conservatism.

**Source:** Adapted from Almeida (2001)

As shown in table 2 and consistent with what one would expect theoretically, the left would be more liberal on moral issues, the right, conservative; the left, defender of multiculturalism, the right, most averse; left and right would diverge on the best form of political participation, the left would tend to be more environmentalist, the right, less to consider environmental regulation as an impediment to economic growth.

Central question in this discussion is to know how much the left-right positioning is adequate to differentiate the positions in relation to issues related to post-materialist issues. Several studies have suggested this link in several countries (CHARNOCK; ELLIS, 2004 (Australia); LAYMAN; CARMINES, 1997 (United States of America); BELCHIOR, 2010 (Belgium, France, Germany and Luxemburg); JOU, 2011 (Japan, South Korea, Philippines and Taiwan); THOMASSEN, 1999 (Netherlands); SCHEEFFTER, 2016 (Brazil)). In common is the presence of issues that extrapolate divergences about the important State / market and discard the thesis of a multidimensional system.<sup>6</sup>

Empirically, left and right attitudes are directly related to existing and different political divisions in each country. In Taiwan, these guidelines are linked to disagreements over the country's independence and relations with China. In Mexico, the issue of corruption and, more recently, the drug cartel are important. The cultural variable, such as gender equality and social tolerance, has practically the same weight as the economic variable and is a division strongly related to the positions of left and right today. The environmental variable has less weight. In general, the left and right dimension can map the political-ideological divergences, including internationally (DALTON; FARRELL; McALLISTER, 2011).<sup>7</sup>

### **3 Ideology and parliamentary behavior**

The importance of the terms left and right in the study of political parties is undeniable, specifically the implication of these concepts in the behavior of political actors. At the international level, several studies point to the validity of the use of this terminology in the present time (BUDGE ET AL., 2001; KLINGEMANN ET AL., 2006; DALTON; McALLISTER, 2015).

In Brazil, in the same way, it has also been a focus of interest to verify the degree to which the supposed ideological differences between the parties imply different behaviors of the political actors. Part of the literature suggests that ideological issues do not explain the behavior of political actors today when they notice the presence of other more important variables, especially government / opposition membership (ZUCCO JR., 2009; 2011; LUCAS; SAMUELS, 2011). On the other hand, a series of other authors, based on the social composition of parties

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<sup>6</sup> For Tarouco (2011) and Tarouco and Madeira (2013), if there is a substitution of materialist values for post-materialists, this would be another dimension, without necessarily being related to the traditional dichotomy left and right.

<sup>7</sup> The information provided by the authors comes from an empirical basis from questionnaires applied in 36 countries from 2001 to 2006. The issues were grouped into three major dimensions: economic, environmental and cultural.



(RODRIGUES, 2002; MARENCO; SERNA, 2007), parliamentary opinion surveys (ROMA, 2006; MELO; CÂMARA, 2012), analysis of party manifests (TAROUCO, 2011) and parliamentary behavior (KINZO, 1990; 1993; LEONI, 2002; FIGUEIREDO; LIMONGI, 1995), argue that parliamentarians still guide their actions in the programmatic content and ideologies of their respective parties.

Zucco Jr. (2011) deals with ideology in a nuanced way in seeking to update the ideological positioning of the main post-Constituent Brazilian parties through PLB 2009<sup>8</sup>. In addition to the questions on ideological location present in the PLB, the question was included "which type of economic system would be most appropriate for Brazil", present in almost all editions of the research. Although it cannot be denied that the ideology measured by preferences about the economic system is more tenuous, however, the left and right are still clearly associated with greater and lesser State intervention in the economy, respectively, even though there is a significant retraction of the positions to the left.

Rodrigues (2002), referring to the social composition of Brazilian parties, points out that these differ not only in ideology and political orientation, but also in the social segments represented in them. Without discarding the internal dynamics of parliamentary disputes, conflicts and party choices in the Chamber of Deputies cannot be adequately understood without realizing the interests derived from the differentiated social composition of each party.<sup>9</sup>

Rome (2006), analyzing opinion surveys applied to parliamentarians, argues that the disagreement between the parties allows positioning them ideologically. In turn, the level of intra-party consensus and inter-party dissent is greater than assumed. According to the author, the parliamentarian generally chooses his party considering the affinity of beliefs, just as the electorate chooses those who have programmatic affinity with his party. Melo and Câmara (2012), in a similar sense, reject the thesis that the Brazilian party system is incoherent or, at least, more incoherent than before, even disagreeing that we would have today the "PT against the rest" (LUCAS; SAMUELS, 2011). Based on the analysis of surveys conducted in the Chamber of Deputies, they argue that, even though the PT is in good measure distinct from the other Brazilian parties, we would have three big blocs, not two. We would have the PT, PSDB / DEM / PPS and the existence of a bloc between the two poles (PMDB, PP, PTB, PR). Most opinions of the deputies, members of the bloc PMDB / PTB / PP / PR are closer to the bloc PSDB / DEM / PPS

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<sup>8</sup> The Brazilian Legislative Survey (PLB, 2009) is the penultimate of seven editions, a survey project started in 1990. It is the most complete database on Brazilian parliamentarians' thinking, resulting in the work of Power and Zucco Jr. (2011).

<sup>9</sup> Comparing PT (Workers Party) and PSDB (Brazilian Social Democratic Party), for example, the PSDB would be formed primarily by a high-income intellectuality and representatives of business sectors. The PT also has intellectuality, with more teachers than the PSDB, but also has members of the popular classes. Practically, there are no entrepreneurs among its members.

than the PT and its allies on most of the issues analyzed. In this sense, the tendency of a convergence to the center would not allow to annul the importance of the variable ideology.<sup>10</sup>

Tarouco (2011) points out that it is undeniable that party programs are routinely neglected in Brazil. From there he seeks to test his hypothesis that Brazilian parties emphasize distinct issues in their manifests. Through content analysis and the creation of analysis categories, he confirms that the programs do not have the same content and the differences do not occur randomly. The author presents a classification of parties on the Left-Right scale from the analysis of party programs and states that the fundamental differences are not necessarily in different answers to the same problems, but in the emphasis on different issues. Several themes are quite specific in some parties. The PSDB, for example, highlights issues about the political system and system of government. The PMDB turns primarily to economic issues. Surprisingly, the PP (considered a right-wing party) was the one that gave greater emphasis to welfare issues.

Taking a more specific look at parliamentary behavior, Kinzo (1990), based on the analysis of the most controversial issues of the “Cabral” Project submitted to the Constituent Assembly, proposed five categories to analyze the different positions: governism, conservatism, “democratism”, nationalism and opposition to the financial system. From the votes, she created a scale from 0 to 10 to measure the positions in each of the categories. As was to be expected from the theoretical point of view, the parties of the right had a better score in governism and conservatism, whereas the left parties were shown to be against these categories and with high scores in “democratism”, nationalism and with a clear posture anti-bank. There was congruence in the positioning of the right and left sectors.

Leoni (2002), in turn, sought to estimate the ideological positions of deputies based on preferences expressed in nominal votes held in plenary between 1991 and 1998. Analyzing the votes of the 49th and 50th legislatures and using the CEBRAP (Portuguese acronym for Brazilian Centre for Analysis and Planning) database, it is possible to affirm that in the Chamber of Deputies there is a basically one-dimensional ideological structure and the positions of the parties are predictable and stable over time. The disposition of parties of space form (center, left and right) is quite clear. Using this dimension, it would be possible to predict 85% of the votes in plenary. Figueiredo and Limongi (1995), in a seminal and similar study, analyzing the roll-call votes in the Chamber of Deputies in the period 1989-1994, 221 elections, affirm that it is clearly perceptible that the elections tend to divide the plenary according to the classical ideological patterns. An ideologically consistent vote is one in which parties belonging to the same field of the ideological spectrum behave in the same or similar way. Similar to the previous study, it is important to note that the content of the vote is not being analyzed in detail.

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<sup>10</sup> We would have a clear ideological distinction between PT and PSDB, especially with respect to the role of the State in the economy, foreign policy and opinions on issues such as same sex unions and abortion.

#### 4 Methodological procedures

The period under analysis was the Dilma Rousseff government (2011-2015). Having access to the database of the Nucleus of Studies on the Congress (Portuguese acronym: NECON), with all the roll-call votes made in the Chamber of Deputies in the period, were chosen those with a clear ideological content, that is, those in which it was possible to suppose an expected behavior of left and right parties.<sup>11</sup> Preferably, specific parts of the laws, less consensual parts and more divergent, have been favored since the final texts, in many cases, are the result of a series of concessions and agreements. The analysis included the 24 roll-call votes set out below.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 3 – Legislation analyzed**

"Old" themes		Behavioral expectation	
		Left	Right
Economy	<b>Provisional Measure/MPV 532/2011/</b> Extends the areas of operation of the Brazilian Postal and Telegraph Company (Portuguese acronym: ECT) - PSDB highlight (authorizes the creation of subsidiaries and adapts the Post Office Company Correios to Law 6,404, of Corporations) – 17/08/2011.	No	Yes
	<b>Bill to the National Congress/LN 36/2014/</b> Provides for the guidelines for the elaboration and execution of the Budgetary Law of 2014 (formula for calculating the primary surplus) – 04/12/2014.	Yes	No
	<b>Bill/PL 6726/2013/</b> Sharing of the pre-salt – urgency for consideration – 06/10/2015.	No	Yes
Social security	<b>Bill/PL 1992/2007/</b> Institutes the supplementary pension scheme for federal civil servants – global substitute sub-amendment – 28/02/2012.	No	Yes
Education	<b>Bill/PL 8035/2010/</b> Approves the National Education Plan for the 2014-2024 decade – highlight application 10% GDP (public / private) – 03/06/2014.	No	Yes
	<b>Proposal for Constitutional Amendment/PEC 395/2014/</b> Collection by specialization in public universities – substitute of the special commission – 21/10/2015.	No	Yes
Labor rights	<b>Bill/PL 382/2011/</b> Minimum wage R \$ 600,00 – highlight PSDB – 11/02/2011.	Yes	No
	<b>Bill of the Complementary Chamber/PLP 302/2013/</b> Provides for the domestic labor contract - amendment n No. 38 (highlights installments of unemployment insurance) – 17/03/2015.	No	Yes
	<b>Bill/PL 4330/2004/</b> Provides for the contract to provide services to third parties and the employment relationships arising from them - agglutinative contract no. 15 (outsourcing of the final activity) – 22/04/2015.	No	Yes
	<b>Provisional Measure/MPV 665/2014/</b> Establishes new rules for the granting of unemployment insurance and salary bonus – conversion bill – 07/05/2015.	No	Yes

<sup>11</sup> The period in question is due to the fact that, in this period, there is a database with all the roll-call votes in the Chamber of Deputies. This avoids, therefore, that the criterion is only accessibility.

<sup>12</sup> As previously discussed, the so-called "old" themes are those in which the basic distinction is in a greater or lesser degree of economic and social intervention. "New" themes are those that have recently come to the agenda and related to post-materialist issues.

Land reform	<b>Proposal for Constitutional Amendment/PEC 438/2001/</b> Establishes the penalty of loss of the land ownership where the exploitation of slave labor (expropriation of land) is diagnosed) – 22/05/2014.	Yes	No
Political / electoral reform	<b>Proposal for Constitutional Amendment/PEC 182/2007/</b> Business Campaign Financing - Amendment No. 28 – 27/05/2015.	No	Yes
Safety	<b>Proposal for Constitutional Amendment/PEC 171/1993/</b> Reduction of the criminal majority to 16 years - substitute of the Special Commission – 02/07/2015.	No	Yes
Taxes	<b>Bill of the Complementary Chamber/PLP 306/2008/</b> Creation of Social Contribution for Health (Portuguese acronym: CSS) – highlight DEM – 21/09/2011.	Yes	No
	<b>Provisional Measure/MPV 675/2015/</b> Raises the rate of Social Contribution on Net Income (Portuguese acronym: CSLL) of financial institutions – Bill law on conversion – 03/09/2015.	Yes	No
International relations	<b>Draft of Chamber’s Legislative Decree 2600/2010/</b> Increase in allocation Paraguay (Treaty of Itaipu – 06/04/2011.	Yes	No
<b>“New” themes</b>			
Environment	<b>Bill/PL 1876/1999/</b> Provides for the protection of native vegetation – amendment No. 164 (regulates the situation of illegal occupations in PPAs until 2008) – 24/05/2011.	No	Yes
	<b>Bill/PL 4148/2008/</b> Stipulates that the labels of foods intended for human consumption inform the consumer of the transgenic nature of the food – 28/04/2015.	No	Yes
Multiculturalism	<b>Bill/PL 6738/2013/</b> Reserve for blacks of twenty percent of the vacancies offered in public tenders – 26/03/2014.	Yes	No
	<b>Bill/PL 1057/2007/</b> Provisions on combating harmful indigenous practices – global substitute sub-amendment – 26/08/2015.	No	Yes
Social participation	<b>Draft of Chamber’s Legislative Decree/PDC 1491/2014/</b> Sounds the application of Decree No. 8,243, dated May 23, 2014, establishing the National Social Participation Policy - PNPS and the National System of Social Participation - SNPS – 15/07/2014.	No	Yes
Conservatism	<b>Bill/PL 7699/2006/</b> Establishes the Statute of the Disabled Person and gives other arrangements – text "the specificity of gender and sexual orientation of the person with disabilities will be respected", item VI of paragraph 4 of art. 18 – 05/03/2015.	Yes	No
Gender / feminism	<b>Proposal for Constitutional Amendment/PEC 182/2007/PEC</b> of party loyalty – agglutinative amendment No. 57 (quota for women) – 16/06/2015.	Yes	No
Human Rights	<b>Bill/PL 7376/2010/</b> Creation of the National Truth Commission – REQ 1548/2011 (urgency for assessment) – 21/09/2011.	No	Yes

Source: prepared by the author

Having examined the proposals that are the object of analysis, roll-call votes were analyzed in plenary to investigate the behavior of the parliamentarians. From what was theoretically discussed in topic 2 and best explored by Scheeffler (2016), an expectation of behavior was generated.

In so-called old issues, a classic distinction between left and right, it was expected that left-wing parties would position themselves in favor of expanding public services and the role of

the State, both politically and economically. The right, on the other hand, would defend the opposite, that is, the defense of a smaller State in both planes. Still part of the old themes, we would have a left with an agenda for labor rights and land reform. In relation to foreign policy, the left would tend to prioritize relations with developing countries, while the right would be supportive of the free-trade and, consequently, against the exacerbation of protectionist measures between countries. (OLIVEIRA; ONUKI, 2010).

Regarding the "new" issues, we would have substantial differences between left and right, as shown in table 2. Regarding the environmental issue, we would have important divergences regarding the role of the State in protecting the environment and regulating the use of natural resources (HEYWOOD, 2010b). Regarding multiculturalism, the left, in the name of defending multicultural rights or minorities, would advocate "positive" discrimination to ensure equality. The right, based on the principles of political liberalism, sees multiculturalism and diversity with reservations, based on the central belief that shared values and a common culture are prerequisites necessary for the good progress of society (FERNANDES, 2013; HEYWOOD, 2010b). Post-materialist theme and connection with the Left-Right polarity is that of participation and with a very peculiar meaning in Brazil. We would have the contrast between the liberal or minimalist conception and the defense of societal mechanisms of participation. As already stated, in relation to moral issues, one would expect a more conservative right and a more liberal left. The right seeks to keep the tradition, most averse to issues such as abortion and homosexuality. The left, in this sense, in the name of individual freedom, ends up being more favorable to issues of this nature.

A Left-Right scale was developed from the positioning in plenary, taking into account the total of the analyzed laws, as well as the effective behavior in relation to old and "new" themes. The scale is built on 100 as the expected percentage of right-wing votes, yes or no, depending on the law, and allocating the other parties on this *continuum* (0-100). For an election in which the right parties would be expected to vote yes, for example, a party that was mostly favorable would be to the right of the party that did not adhere to the proposal in question. Taking as an example PEC 395/2014, which would change the wording of section IV of article 206 of the Federal Constitution, which guarantees "free public education in official establishments," by allowing the collection of *lato sensu* postgraduate courses and professional master's degrees, 446 parliamentarians voted (318 favorable and 129 contrary). By waiting for the adhesion on the part of the right parties and the contrary vote by the left, the percentage of votes yes on the part of the DEM and PSC (100%) would put them in the extreme right, having in the extreme left parties like REDE and PSOL (100% contrary) and in the center parties like PDT and PSB (55.5% and 36.6% of votes yes, respectively). The same process occurred in all votes and considering the total number of laws analyzed.

It was decided to present the data of the parties that had elected representatives in all the elections with at least 2 parliamentarians. PSD, PROS and SD, did not have representatives in all the elections because they were new parties. They were included since, after being created, they counted on significant benches.<sup>13</sup> The database was built based on information provided by the website of the Chamber of Deputies and the responsibility of the Documentation and Information Center (Portuguese acronym: CEDI).

## 5 Analysis and discussion of results

In the sequence, the reference values constructed from the parliamentary performance are presented and as exposed in the methodological procedures.

**Table 4** - Reference values for the construction of the R-L scale

Parties	Overall Scale	Positioning on old themes	Positioning on "new" themes
PSOL	4,1	6,2	0
PT	26,7	38,8	2,3
PCdoB	29,4	38,3	11,5
PDT	32,4	23,2	50,8
PPS	33,4	27	46,4
PV	38,5	48,6	18,4
PSB	41,7	43,6	37,9
PROS	48,2	41,9	58,7
PR	55,7	50,9	60,9
PRB	57,3	51,3	69,4
PSC	61,1	55,8	71,8
PTB	61,6	62,5	59,9
PSDB	62,9	64,1	60,7
PMDB	63	63,1	62,9
DEM	63,8	63	65,2
PP	65,4	65,3	65,5
PSD	65,7	62,5	72,1
SD	68,5	64,6	75

Source: Research data (author's elaboration)

In advance, different positions stand out on the "old" and "new" themes that are part of the political debate. A clear example is the PT, in this case, the ideological component is impacted by strategic positioning, as highlighted by Scheeffler (2016). In themes involving financial resources, ideology is placed in the background. We would have, in this case, the emergence of the PT government to the detriment of the PT left.<sup>14</sup>

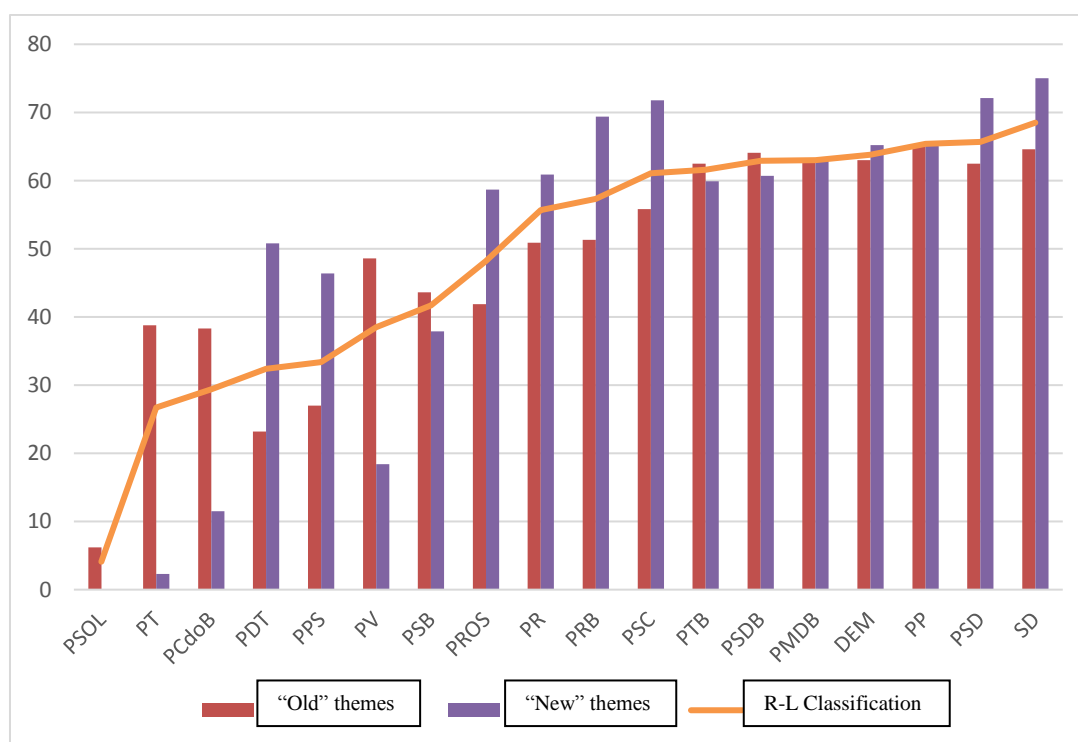
From the data presented in Table 4, an R-L scale follows from the positioning in the plenary. From the data presented in Table 4, an R-L scale follows from the positioning in the

<sup>13</sup> The registration of the PSD in the Superior Electoral Court (SEC) occurred on 09/27/2011, PROS and SD on 09/24/2013 (TSE, 2015). Therefore, out of a total of 18, the PSD was present in 16 elections, PROS and SD in 14.

<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that Scheeffler (2016) seeks to verify the weight of ideology in the Chamber of Deputies and notes that, in addition to the ideology overlapping the strategic positioning, in the so-called "new" themes, ideology prevails in all cases.

plenary. In orange, there is the general classification based on the effective behavior in the total number of elections analyzed (24). Together, in red, is the positioning in the classic themes, in those (16) that involve mainly discussion about a greater or less presence of the State in the life of the people. In purple, the positioning of parties in the so-called "new" themes, those (8) that extrapolate this dimension. As described in the methodological procedures, it was chosen to present the data of the parties that had elected representatives in all the elections with at least 2 parliamentarians, with the exception of the PSD, PROS and SD, who did not participate in all the elections because they were new parties, however they were included since, after being created, they counted on significant benches.

**Graph 1** – Left-Right scale from positioning in plenary



**Source:** author's elaboration

According to Tarouco and Madeira (2013, 2015), the Brazilian parties have been classified without much controversy. The arrangement of PT and PDT in the left, PMDB and PSDB in the center and PP, PTB, DEM, among others, in the right, can be verified in several classifications adopted. Figure 1 shows a left-right scale from the positioning of parties in plenary and draws attention to some important dissonances compared to what is commonly glimpsed by Political Science. A first interesting fact is the placement of the PT still in the field of the left, only being overtaken by PSOL, the leftmost party in the political spectrum. Even the non-ideological positioning in themes that involved financial impact, the positioning in themes that

extrapolate the discussion on a larger or smaller size of the State, made the PT still to the left.<sup>15</sup> This data diverges from criticisms such as those pronounced by Genro and Robaina (2006). Considering the set of laws analyzed, it is not possible to affirm, as predicted by the authors, that the PT radically changes its nature, that is, it ceases to be a force with progressive characteristics to become a reactionary political force. It still presents itself as a social-democratic party, a path chosen by significant leftist parties worldwide.

Although PDT and PPS are just to the right of PCdoB, the positioning on the "new" themes would push them further into the center. PROS, PR and PRB practically fit the center, parties consensually allocated in the right in other classifications. Unlike what one might imagine, the DEM is not the party to the right of the political spectrum. This unexpected positioning is supposedly due to its strategic choices. The party voted in 88% of cases in line with the minority leader. The PSDB is located in a similar position, seeming to be in an analogous situation to the DEM. It was the party that voted the most according to the leader, 94.4%, even if in some cases it possibly involved a non-programmatic vote. Walking to the right is the PP. PSD and SD are the parties with greater tendency to the right of the political spectrum.

With respect to the parties that have been polarizing the political dispute at the federal level, PT and PSDB, it is clear the great discrepancy of position in plenary, especially in the "new" themes (2,3 – 60,7 The PSDB is located to the left of the PMDB, but still both much closer to the right than to the center. Probably the most surprising finding is the positioning of the PMDB. The behavior of the bench made the party stand on the scale to the right of the PSDB and to the left of the DEM. A recent document presented by the PMDB to the nation and titled "A Bridge to the Future", perhaps explains this movement. Serving as a kind of prescription for the end of the crisis, it presents initiatives to overcome what they call "political immobility". It advocates, among other things, the reduction of public expenditures, a reduction in the tax burden, suggesting an end to established constitutional links, an increase in the primary surplus, and a more effective participation of the private sector. It suggests the relevance of a "leaner" State to face the deep recession and severe fiscal crisis (PMDB, 2015). In general, it makes clear the direction of the changes, averse to the historical origins of the party and the struggles and flags of the old MDB. An expressive identity change that is not yet satisfactorily embraced by Political Science.

Tarouco and Madeira (2015) present data from a survey applied to political scientists at the Meeting of the Brazilian Association of Political Science (Portuguese acronym: ABCP) in 2010. Participants in the thematic areas of elections and political representation and institutions were asked to rate political parties on a 7-point scale, with 1 representing the extreme left and 7

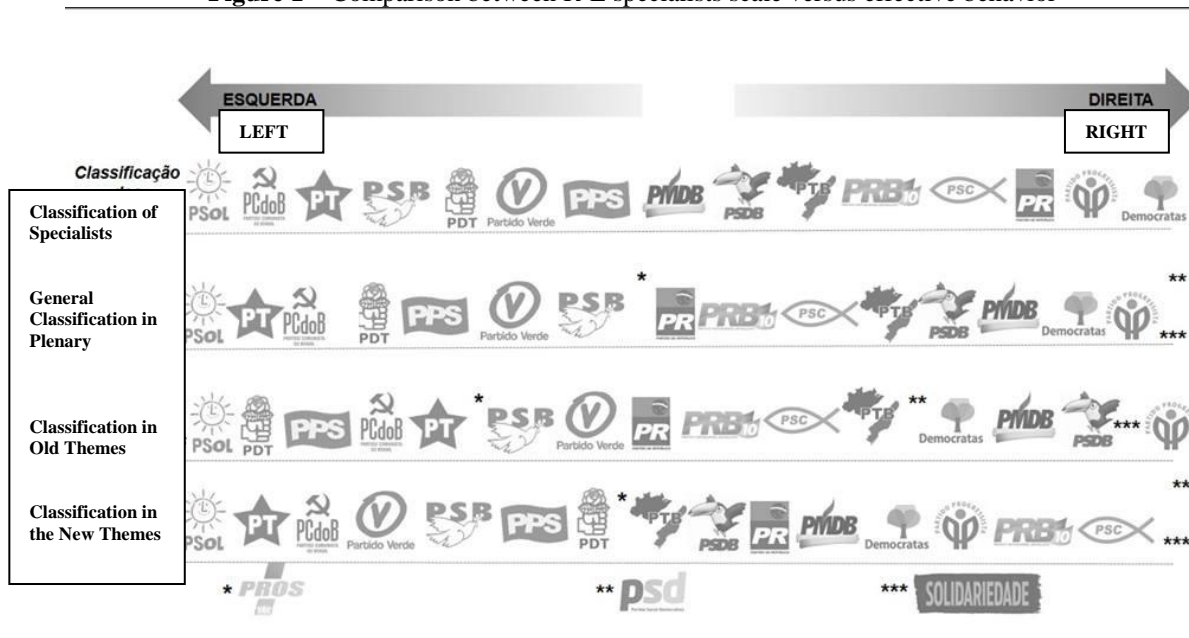
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<sup>15</sup> Scheeffler (2016) notes that when robust financial resources are at stake, significantly burdening or generating high revenues for the federal executive, the strategic positioning (government / opposition) stands out. Examples are the measures that were part of the fiscal adjustment package conducted by the government and with clear interest in balancing the public accounts. In these cases, the PT government prevails and not the PT left.



the extreme right. More precisely, Table 4 presents the results of the survey answered by experts, as well as the classification of parties from the behavior in plenary (general and from the positioning in "old" and "new" themes). Although the experts were asked about the positioning of 27 parties, by way of comparison, the most relevant and present parties in graph 1 were considered.

**Figure 1** – Comparison between R-L specialists scale versus effective behavior



Source: expert classification: adapted from Tarouco and Madeira (2015) / other classifications: survey data

It is interesting to see to what extent the classification made by specialists coincides or diverges from the classification based on the performance of the parties in the Chamber of Deputies. In the case of parties traditionally considered right, excluding the new PSD and SD, the PP is shown more of right than the DEM. PR is more of left than expected, probably by voting with the government at various times. In the left field, PT, PCdoB, PDT, PPS, PV and PSB end up being in slightly differentiated locations, noting that, from the positioning in plenary, the PPS is located to the left of PV and PSB, against the assertion that the party would be walking to the right. In general, it is not possible to affirm that the differences between the classification of specialists and that of parliamentary activity are very substantial.

Disregarding the positions in "old" and "new" themes, one can see how different patterns impact on party behavior. Considering the parliamentary behavior in classical themes, PV and PR are located at the center of the political spectrum and the PP more to the right. Of fundamental importance is the location of the PMDB and the PSDB, both on the extreme right of the scale, just to the left of the SD and the PP. When it comes to "old" themes, it is possible to say that PMDB and PSDB behave as they would expect from right-wing parties. In relation to the PSDB, what was verified allows us to verify that although the party originated as a center-left party, its

behavior reveals an apparent adherence to the right, mainly, in classic themes that guided the left and right division.

Differently, in relation to the "new" themes, the PV appears to the left of the scale, with a verified impact of the party's stance on themes related to the environment, and other post-materialist issues. In turn, the PSC is on the extreme right. Just as the environmental issue is for PV, (neo) conservatism on moral and behavioral issues lies with the PSC. The SD was the party that behaved in a way that was more consistent with what was expected of the right-wing parties in contemporary issues. It voted in a corresponding way with a very significant adherence rate (75%).

## 6 Conclusion

It is important to note the degree to which parties of the left and the of right differ significantly in relation to agenda and priorities, and it does not make sense in advance to consider parties located on the same political spectrum as similar. How to compare, for example, right-wing parties like DEM and PP with PSC and PRB? The first two are clearly concerned with classical issues such as the defense of a less intervening State. The last two, differently, are born and self-declared as defenders of the family and customs, that is, have an explicitly conservative character.

If in relation to the "old" themes the PSDB behaves like a right-wing party, the same does not happen in relation to the "new" themes, being situated much more to the left, in the center, as would be expected. As was seen in the vote on Bill No. 7699/2006 (gender identity), it is not feasible to argue that the party behaves conservatively. Still, as pointed out by Tarouco and Madeira (2013), it must be considered that parties end up over time also welcoming other issues, especially post-materialist issues that even gain space in public opinion.

In addition to partisan programs, responses from political agents surveyed, or expert analysis, the measurement of effective behavior is an important indicator of the political-ideological similarities and differences of the Brazilian parties. Even in the face of the huge range of variables that ultimately interfere in political decisions, the question arises whether, after all, what matters most is not political behavior, in the case of legislation, the position in plenary.

Although the allocation of parties on a Left-Right scale takes place linearly and, on a continuum, this does not imply disregarding that the discussion is multifaceted and labyrinthine, and it is up to the Political Science to concentrate the energies to re-qualify the use of the terms. It is worth highlighting the myriad of variables competing for ideology, such as pressure from public opinion, attention to interest groups, and perhaps the most important of them, strategic positioning, that is, membership of the government / opposition. In any case, it is undeniable that the left and right categories serve as important informational shortcuts, although, as with any attempt to simplify the world, they have limits.

The fact that in many cases the left and right dichotomy does not account for the diversity of ideological themes that are the fruit of the complexity of modern societies does not allow us to infer that we are witnessing the end of ideologies or even that we have reached the "end of history". This claim, instead of bringing indications of the weakening of the explanatory power of ideologies, emphasizes its elasticity and possibility of transforming with the passage of time. This may be the main reason for their still liveliness.

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