



Brazilian left-right ideology and public perceptions of China's rise: a perspective of university students

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Left-right ideology has long been recognized among scholars as an informational shortcut for individuals to perceive and understand the political world (Freire & Kivistik, 2013; Fuchs & Klingemann, 1990). Much research has proved that individuals' understandings of foreign events are largely filtered by ideology, as they do in the domestic realm (Gries & Crowson, 2010; Martini, 2012; Nincic & Ramos, 2010). Although the politics of left and right is always an important focus in Brazilian political research, studies about ideology's influence on individuals' perceptions of international affairs remain unexplored. Considering Brazil's recent political scenario of the unprecedented ideological polarization and the "right turn", the importance of left-right ideology becomes prominent as it is believed to be a key factor for understanding Brazil in various dimensions of social science.

Theories developed by previous studies have provided a framework for us to study Brazilian's perceptions of foreign affairs. China has gained increasing scholarly attention since its economic boom that benefited Brazil's export economy and become its biggest trade partner globally. With the ascendancy of far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency, Brazilian diplomacy has subjected to a dramatic change as the ideological stand is reinforced by his pro-US and anti-China discourse (Azevedo, 2019; Fuser, 2019). Although China has claimed itself with a "peaceful rise" strategy, under the ideological polarization, it is important to ask how much the Brazilian public trust the rise of China and whether and how left-right ideology divides the public's perception of China.

To answer these questions, this research has conducted a web-based survey on students of the University of Sao Paulo (USP) to map out the relation between ideology and the degree of trust in China's rise in political, military, economic, and cultural aspects. University students' perspective is important as they represent the future leaders in different areas of the country. Preliminary results show that most USP students identify themselves as leftists, while this identification varies across different school unities. Perceptions of China's rise are moderately positive in general, and they do differ according to the left-right division, which confirms the hypothesis. Nonetheless, leftists and rightists display different levels of trust in different aspects, with leftist trust more on China's rise in political and cultural aspects while the rightist more on economic and military aspects.

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