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# **Understanding the pledge fulfilment of opposition parties using evidence from Portugal**

## **Abstract**

Under what conditions are opposition parties better at delivering on their electoral promises? Existing approaches to party mandates typically focus on governmental mandates and have disregarded the roles of other parties in parliament. However, such approaches encompass an imbalance regarding the comparison of pledge fulfilment between governing and opposition parties, and specially neglect the differences between permanent and alternating opposition. This article has the ambition to extend the mandate theory to opposition parties, exploring the conditions underlying their pledge fulfilment. Using a dataset of Portuguese opposition parties with more than 3000 electoral pledges for six different legislatures (1995-2015), our evidence suggests that: (1) alternating opposition parties have a significantly higher probability of fulfilling their mandate than permanent opposition; (2) opposition parties fulfill as much of their promises as the fulfillment costs decrease; (3) and the odds of opposition parties' mandate fulfillment is also increased when there is policy congruence between the pledge and a legislative initiative.

**Keywords:** Parties; parliamentary opposition; pledge fulfilment; parliamentary work; Portugal.

## **Introduction**

Existing literature has established that parties fulfil most of their electoral promises when they are in cabinet. However, most of the studies on mandate fulfilment strictly compare election manifestos with government policies (Thomson, 2001; Naurin, 2002, 2014; Mansergh and Thomson, 2007; Artés and Bustos, 2008; McCluskey, 2008; Moury, 2011a, 2011b; Hakansson and Naurin, 2014). These studies are mainly concerned with the mandates of governing parties, and while this is a good way to measure the extent to which government parties manage to put their pledges into action, it ignores the representative dimension of authorisation, most importantly the role of parliament and parliamentary mandates of opposition parties (Louwse, 2011). Although opposition parties are significant actors in exposing government to public challenges and oversight, they are least effective in significantly affecting the public policy process (Laver and Shepsle, 1996; Norton, 2008). This is even more evident for the so-called radical parties, which are usually excluded from cabinet. For these reasons, the mandates of opposition parties cannot be properly studied by looking only at (government) policy output (Louwse, 2011).

We classify as opposition all parties that do not form a government. The category thus extends beyond (but also includes) the second-largest party (Norton, 2008).<sup>1</sup> Considering these parties' legislative behaviour Louwse (2011) states that 'the mandate fulfilment test for opposition parties is not whether governments enact their pledges, but whether they stick with their manifesto policies in parliament' (p.2). Analysing the conditions that lead opposition parties to greater success in accomplishing their electoral

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<sup>1</sup> For a systematization of the different meanings of 'opposition', see Barker (1971) and Norton (2008).

program, as research has already done for government parties, is thus a relevant approach to comprehensively understand electoral mandate fulfilment.

Thus, we carry on an alternative way to look at the party mandate, by treating it as a parliamentary mandate. We go beyond extant research that focuses on whether political parties stick to their programmes in parliament after the election, by exploring the circumstances under which the parties excluded from government fulfill their parliamentary mandates. This is important, first, because parliament is usually the principal political arena and attests if the opinions and interests of the people are taken into account in the actions that parties take. Second, from the perspective of political representation, opposition parties' mandates are as important as government parties' mandates. The fact that opposition parties are not in government, does not alter the fact that their voters should be able to expect representation along the lines of the party's mandate. While they have failed to win a mandate to government, they still managed to gain a representative mandate in parliament (Louwerse, 2011). Moreover, when certain political and institutional conditions are met, opposition parties can potentially exercise influence during the legislative process (Forestiere, 2005).

To illustrate our argument we focus on pledge fulfilment in Portugal, comparing permanent with alternating opposition parties (that is, parties permanently in opposition versus alternating between government and opposition). The Portuguese case provides an excellent opportunity to explore party type (permanent versus alternating opposition) influence in pledges accomplishment. Its party system has remained quite stable over the last 25 years, evidencing the presence of a clear dividing line between the three mainstream parties alternating in office, with different sizes and ideologies, and the three radical (left-wing) parties, which have been permanently in opposition (Russo and De Giorgi, 2018). This case illustrates the observations of Mair (2011) of a divide between

‘ruling’ and ‘representative’ parties; that is: the parties that are more focused in taking responsibility for policy-making, and the parties more interested in voicing the interests of voters. Moreover, contrary to other legislatures, opposition parties in Portugal, regardless of their size in the parliament, have not only institutional opportunities to control the government, but also enjoy some policy influence in the parliamentary arena, for example, through the work on the committees (Strøm, 1990; Leston-Bandeira, 2009).). Finally, studying the Portuguese case allows to support in an unusually broad dataset for this kind of study. We cover six elections over 20 years, six parties, 21 manifestos, more than 3000 election promises, and close to 2,000 legislative initiatives to measure the parties’ parliamentary work.

The structure of the article is divided into four main sections: the first section provides an analytical framework; the second covers the hypotheses; the third section presents the methodological scope of the study and the operationalization of the main concepts; and finally, the fourth presents and discusses the results and conclusions.

### **Analytical framework**

Democratic theory normatively views representation in multiple ways (Mansbridge 2003). One of them is based on the idea that parties are given a mandate after elections that binds them to voters. In this vein, the party mandate model (also known as the "responsible party model") acknowledges the connection between manifestos' pledges and consequent decision-making (Downs, 1957; Budge and Hofferbert, 1990; Klingemann, et al., 1994). According to this model, parties are expected to be competitive and differentiated, and, after elections, they are supposed to fulfil the mandate that they have been given by voters. Parties are compelled to be responsive to voters' preferences in the extent that their (re-)election is dependent upon their performance in accomplishing

campaign promises. Notwithstanding this mandatory perspective of representation is far from undisputed (see eg. King, et al., 1993), its normative premises have been giving guidance to most of the research hitherto done on elite-citizen's correspondence. This is also the normative framework underlying this research.

Parties' resources are not, however, the same for all parties, and different circumstances condition their ability to fulfil their pledges (eg. a context of economic growth can enhance compliance more than a government in majority - see Lisi et al., 2019). Parties without previous governing experience such as the case of permanent opposition parties, are expected to have fewer resources to accomplish their electoral program than alternating opposition that have held the executive office before. Obviously, the parties in government have at their disposal greater resources to fulfil their program regardless of the institutional and political settings in place.

Regarding levels of pledges' fulfillment, previous research has indeed found that parties fulfil most of their electoral promises when they are in power. For example, in the US and the UK governing parties usually fulfil more than 70% of its electoral pledges. A recent comparative study of 12 countries, including Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, reached the same conclusion (Thomson, et al. 2017). This high level of fulfillment is even more evident in majority comparing to minority governments, where governing parties do not need to cooperate with opposition parties to pass bills on most issues (Moury and Fernandes, 2018). In contrast, research consistently shows that election promises made by parties in opposition are less likely to be fulfilled, especially in majoritarian systems (e.g Pomper and Lederman (1980) for the US; Rallings (1987) and Royed (1996) for the UK; see also Costello and Thomson (2008, p.252); Thomson et al. (2011), and Naurin, Royed and Thomson (2019)).

Moving beyond the different levels of compliance of governing and opposition parties, there is scarce knowledge about differences within parties in opposition, and most importantly, about the circumstances that lead parties in opposition to comply with their promises in parliament. Despite, few studies have addressed, at some extent, the mandate fulfillment by opposition parties but not in depth and often excluding the permanent parties in opposition (see for instance, Naurin for Sweden (2009); Artés (2011) for Spain).

According to Mair (2011), the capacity for ‘representation’ – or expression of the people’s voice – has become characteristic of a different group of parties that constitute the ‘new opposition’, when it has not moved outside the legislative arena entirely. Most of them never reach cabinet, as is the case of Portuguese permanent opposition parties. However, they are not anti-systemic in the sense of Sartori (1966) – that is, aiming for a fundamental change in the democratic constitutional order. Nevertheless, according to Mair they are populist in rhetoric and reluctant to take responsibility (semi-responsible, if not completely irresponsible) for major policy transformations. In Europe, where the division between parties that frequently constitute government and parties permanently in opposition is growing (Mair, 2011), it is crucial to also look at parties in opposition when testing the mandate theory.

## **Hypotheses**

Our *a priori* expectation regarding the ability of opposition parties to fulfil their pledges is to find differences between types of opposition parties, namely between alternating (i.e. with prior government experience) and permanent opposition parties (i.e. without prior experience). Alternating opposition parties are expected to behave in a more cooperative and less conflictual way than parties permanently excluded from cabinet, since they have governmental aspirations and are waiting to be called on to replace the

government in office (for a discussion of this argument, see Moury and De Giorgi, 2015; Russo and De Giorgi, 2018). An alternative explanation is that alternating opposition parties passively wait out for their turn in cabinet without being much involved in contributing to policy making activities (Louwse and Otjes, 2018). Notwithstanding these views, we can assume that the smaller the distance between the policy preferences of the government and those of opposition parties, the more likely we are to see less conflict on average, as the two sides will agree on more bills and initiatives (Tuttnauer, 2018)<sup>2</sup>. This is more likely regarding the parties that, although being in opposition, are regularly in government tending, for that reason, to adopt more moderate policy positions, and that are closer to those of the government (see Jalali (2007), for the Portuguese case).

The nature of existing parties constitutes a critical variable that, among other variables, explains the behaviour of the opposition in parliament (Duverger, 1954; Sartori, 1966). In this regard, recent research has shown that referring to two different types of opposition in Portugal is undoubtedly appropriate and even necessary. Permanent opposition parties (BE, PCP and PEV) are generally less cooperative than mainstream opposition parties (CDS-PP, PS and PSD), and tend to adopt a different strategy when deciding which activity to undertake in the parliamentary arena (Russo and De Giorgi, 2018). We believe this difference in the type of opposition, which ultimately expresses differences in the way parties behave in parliament, will affect the likelihood of pledges fulfilment.

Summing up, we expect lower fulfilment scores for Portuguese permanent opposition parties, not simply because they are smaller, but also because they are less

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<sup>2</sup> Thomson and colleagues (2017) also found that parties with no prior government experience are less likely to fulfil their election pledges than parties that were incumbents when they made their election pledges. At some extent, this relates with our dichotomy of alternating and permanent opposition parties.



consensual and usually radicalize their positions in the legislative arena (De Giorgi, Moury and Ruivo, 2015)<sup>3</sup>. This converges with the idea that this kind of parties tend to be narrower in its programmatic and electoral aims, intending to reach a specific clientele and lobbying for limited (and perhaps intense) reforms (Kirchheimer, 1966). Therefore, the first hypothesis expects to find different levels of fulfilment depending on the type of opposition in parliament:

*H1. Mainstream opposition parties are more likely to fulfil their promises than permanent opposition parties.*

Despite the strong research tradition on mandate theory and some conclusive studies about the factors that affect pledges fulfilment, opposition parties have been studied to a much lesser extent. Literature has mainly advance with the explanation that the fulfillment of opposition parties' pledges "can be explained at least in part by the fact that governing parties made the same or similar pledges on some issues, or that the pledges concerned uncontentious policies that any government would enact" (Thomson et al, 2017, p.3). As demonstrated for Irish parties, opposition pledges that are in agreement with governing parties' pledges and want to maintain the status quo stand a better chance of enactment than pledges that are not (Costello and Thomson, 2008). Based on this conclusion, we expect that the pledges characteristics and their relationship with governing parties' program affect the probability of opposition parties fulfilling their mandate, in the extent that the costs underlying fulfillment are lowered for these parties.

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<sup>3</sup> The Portuguese permanent opposition parties are as well radical left-wing parties which implies that we cannot control for these parties' left-right position. Although the non-variability of parties' ideology is a limitation, previous research has given little support for ideology as an explaining variable for parties' performance in accomplishing their electoral programs. As a consequence, we consider that this limitation has little impact on our results.

Therefore, notwithstanding the type of opposition, we expect that pledges promising no policy change (that is, status quo pledges) in a given policy area have a higher chance of being fulfilled due to policy inertia (Costello and Thomson, 2008; Roberts 2008; Royed, 1996; Thomson, 2011), as well as promises that are similar or equal to those made by parties in government (given that opposition parties take advantage of the government's efforts to fulfill the promise). Therefore, the second and third hypotheses are as follows:

*H2. Opposition party pledges that aim at maintaining the status quo are more likely to be fulfilled.*

*H3. Opposition party pledges that agree with governing party pledges are more likely to be fulfilled.*

Furthermore, we expected that the decrease in the costs of fulfilling promises has a greater effect in the success of permanent opposition in accomplishing their electoral mandate, than in alternating opposition. The latter reports to mainstream political parties that generally have a higher representation in parliament, which is a strong advantage over permanent opposition. Their parliamentary expression allows them to more easily fulfill their mandate, without necessarily depending on the lowering of the costs of fulfilling the promises. They can, therefore, fulfill a greater proportion of promises that are not status quo or promises that are divergent from those of government parties. Moreover, alternating opposition parties are interested in returning to government in the short run and, for that reason, their goals regarding promises accomplishment are expected to go beyond status quo pledges or pledges close to those of government. Strategically they have an electoral advantage if they somewhat differ from government regarding their electoral program, being seen by the public as an alternative to the government in office (according to the responsible party model, eg. Klingemann, et al.,

1994). Since permanent opposition parties are generally smaller and more ideological than alternating opposition and, for these reasons, do not aim at reaching government (eg. Przeworski and Sprague 1986), they have more advantages and less drawbacks than the latter in capturing the inertia of the status quo promises, as well as in taking the ride of government promises' accomplishment. The fourth and fifth hypotheses are therefore:

H4. *Permanent opposition parties are more likely to fulfill pledges that aim at maintaining the status quo than alternating opposition parties.*

H5. *Permanent opposition parties are more likely to fulfill pledges that agree with governing party pledges than alternating opposition parties.*

Additionally, the likelihood of pledges fulfilment of opposition parties is also expected to depend on the congruence of parties' legislative work in parliament with their electoral manifestos. That is, the odds of opposition parties fulfilling their mandate are expected to increase when they present parliamentary initiatives whose policy content better corresponds to that of the promises in their manifestos. Besides voting in favour or against government's proposals, opposition parties in Portugal have at their disposal a set of procedural tools to perform their parliamentary work and fulfil their political mandate (Russo and De Giorgi, 2018). One of the most important is the parliamentary legislative initiative<sup>4</sup>. Parties can use it to introduce new issues on the political agenda or to address the pledges made during the campaign and try to fulfil them. Therefore, we expect that opposition parties' pledges stand a better chance of enactment if they choose to introduce

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<sup>4</sup> See Regimento da Assembleia da República [Rules of the Assembly of the Republic], n.º.1/2007 (articles n.º. 8º and 64º).

a legislative initiative on the same issues, than pledges that do not receive that attention.

The sixth and final hypothesis is thus:

*H6. Opposition parties' pledges that are congruent with parliamentary legislative initiatives are more likely to be fulfilled.*

### **The scope of the study: Data and methods**

The research supports on a total of 3,563 electoral pledges retrieved from electoral manifestos published by five Portuguese parties (CDU, BE, PS, PSD and CDS), when in opposition, over six elections between 1995 and 2015. Data have been collected in the context of two projects: “Public preferences and political decision making” and the “Electoral pledges and democratic responsibility”<sup>5</sup>. The coding procedure of the Portuguese project followed the Comparative Party Pledges Group project (Thomson, et al., 2014).

#### *The Portuguese Party System*

Portugal has been a very stable multi-party system since the first legislative election in 1976 held after the revolution of 25 April 1974. It is characterized by a two-party dynamic in which the two largest parties (PS, or Partido Socialista, a centre-left party, and PPD/PSD, or Partido Social Democrata, a centre-right party) have alternated in government (either alone or in coalitions) since 1976 (Van Biezen, 2003). With a few one-off exceptions, the tendency has been for voting to be concentrated on these two largest parties. To the right of the PPD/PSD is the Democratic Social Centre/Popular Party (CDS/PP, or Partido do Centro Democrático e Social/Partido Popular). Despite its small size, the CDS/PP has managed to present itself as a party with the potential to be

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<sup>5</sup> At: <http://www.comparativeagendas.net/portugal>.

part of government coalitions and has been included in government as such on many occasions. These three parties have been alternating between government and opposition being therefore considered as alternating opposition parties.

The Communist Party (PCP - Portuguese Communist Party) and the Greens (PEV - “The Greens”), that formed a coalition since 1987 (CDU, United Democratic Coalition), and the Left Bloc (BE, formed in 1999), which are considered to be radical left parties, have never been in cabinet. Although after the 2015 parliamentary elections the PS formed government with the parliamentary support of these small radical left-wing parties, this parliamentary agreement did not really bound these two left-wing parties, who, in a great extent, maintained their rhetoric and opposition activity in parliament<sup>6</sup>. They are thus classified as permanent opposition parties. Note that being simultaneously permanent opposition and radical left-wing parties makes it difficult to discern which is the dominant explanatory factor in terms of fulfilling the promises: either the fact of being parties persistently in opposition, or the fact that they are small parties ideologically anchored in the radical left.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, these parties did not dispense with their role as government scrutineers, publicly criticizing government policy whenever it is not convergent with their own positions.

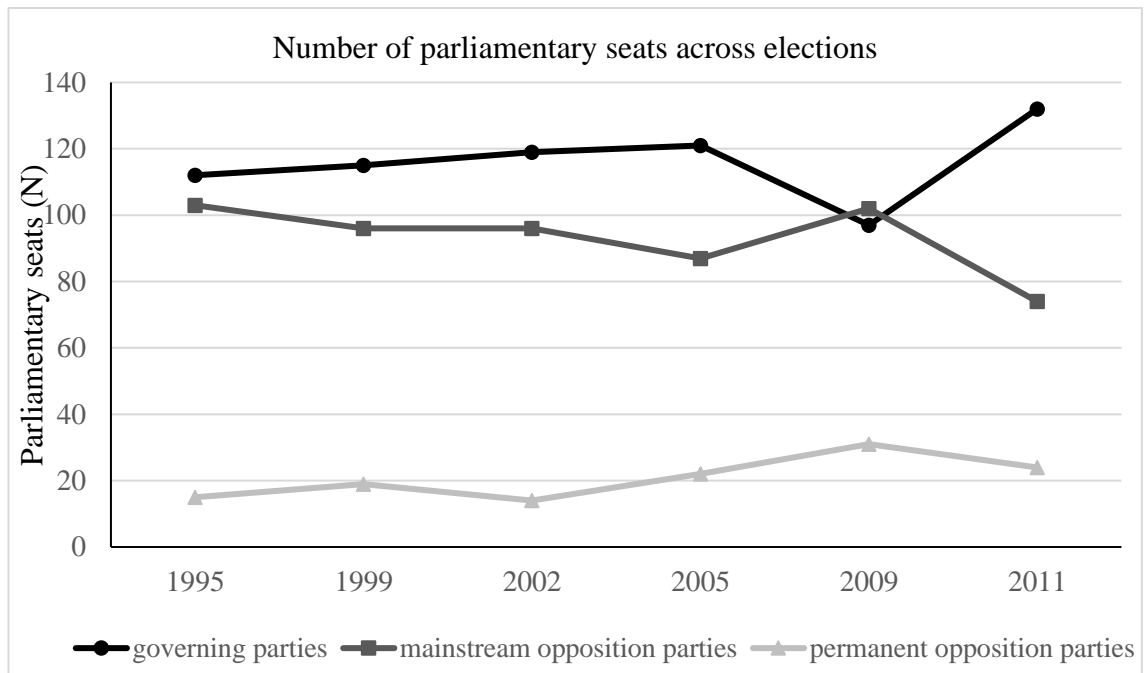


Figure 1 shows that alternating opposition parties (PS, PSD and CDS-PP) have been losing their share of seats, while permanent opposition parties (PCP, PEV, and BE) have been slightly growing since 1995, notwithstanding its low electoral expression. This picture not only shows the dividing line of Mair between ‘responsible’ and ‘responsive’ parties, but also shows the growing importance of the so-called radical parties in the Portuguese parliament, especially in recent elections characterized by the effects of the emergence of the economic crisis in 2010 (Magalhães, 2014).

#### *Electoral pledges definition and assessment*

Our unit of analysis is the pledge, which may have different extensions and structures (Naurin, 2011). For a statement to qualify as a pledge, it must contain language indicating commitment to a future action or outcome. We include both firm commitment language (Rose, 1984; Rallings, 1987; Royed and Borrelli, 1999; Thomson, 1999, 2001), such as “we will” or “we promise to,” as well as more broad and softly described intention (Royed, 1996; Artés and Bustos, 2008; Naurin, 2009; Artés, 2011; Moury, 2011a, 2011b),

such as “we support” or “we favour,” as long as parties indicate that they support the action or outcome referred to unequivocally. Statements in which parties promised to “analyse” or “look into” specific policy actions were not coded as pledges. What determines whether a statement qualifies as a pledge is the *testability* of the action or outcome to which the party is committing itself.

Some examples of pledges considered in the study are as follows: ‘revision of the law of finances in the Autonomous regions’ (Santana Lopes' government, 2005); and ‘giving to women’s associations the right to become assistants in a judicial crime process’ (Guterres' government, 1995-1999). The following were not considered pledges in this study: descriptions of reality, goals already reached by the party, wins and losses of the party, and rhetorical or emotional statements about the future, such as ‘we shall continue on the path of the reinforcement of family and community participation in the strategic direction of the school system’ (Sócrates' government, 2009-2011).

After selecting the electoral promises, the second step in the analysis was to retrieve data that allowed to determine the extent to which a particular pledge had been fulfilled. Therefore, the analysis was based on official documents published by the government (legislation, reports, ministerial directives and statistics, among others). Data obtained from secondary sources were not considered. As such, the fulfilment of a pledge was not analysed through press articles, blogs, opinion articles or other secondary source examples. The search for documents was performed mainly in governmental, ministerial and institutional websites.

Three categories are used to describe the fulfilment of pledges: ‘fully’, ‘partially fulfilled’ and ‘not fulfilled’. We included pledges in the latter category if we could not find any piece of legislation, cabinet decision or policy outcome indicating that the party worked towards that outcome or action. A pledge is considered to be ‘fully fulfilled’ when

a political action was taken to achieve full fulfilment and results were obtained. A pledge is considered to be ‘partially fulfilled’ when actions were taken towards the pledge without totally fulfilling it. To avoid selection bias, we have included pledges from all policy areas.

Regarding the pledges coding, several research assistants independently coded the same selection of pages of the manifestos to assess inter-coder reliability. The tests allow to reach a percentage of coding correspondence between the coders, by reference to the total of promises in the sample of pages. We found an agreement between 80 and 90 per cent in all cases, comparable with previous intercoder reliabilities (eg. Royed, 1996; Thomson, 2001). We also conducted a reliability test on the categorization of pledges as “fully,” “partially,” or “not” fulfilled. Similarly, samples of pledges randomly selected were re-examined by the research assistants in order to assess the level of coding correspondence. An average agreement rate of 90 per cent was reached across the coders. In both cases, the tests were repeated whenever the percentage of correspondence was far from 100 per cent. This inter-coder reliability tests were conducted using the procedures established for the comparative project.

### *The empirical models*

The analysis proceeds in two steps. In the first step, we resort to descriptive analysis to characterize parties' levels of pledges fulfillment. In the second step, we use multivariate analysis to assess the effects of a set of predictors in the probability of opposition parties fulfilling their pledges. Logistic regressions were performed with the fulfillment of pledges as dependent variable (coded as: "at least partially fulfilled" equals 1 and "non-fulfilled" equals 0). The models include the following set of predictors: pledges' characteristics (status quo versus change), their relationship with the governing parties' pledges (agreement between government and opposition pledges), and their relationship



with parties' parliamentary work (policy congruence between opposition parties' pledges and their legislative initiatives). In addition, a key predictor was included to assess the effect of the type of opposition on the likelihood of parties fulfilling their mandate (permanent versus alternating opposition party dummy). Furthermore, several control variables were added: electoral cycle dummies (i.e. election year) and pledge policy issue dummies. The inclusion of the first set of controls captures the changes over time and the second set of controls reports to the differences related to the pledges' policy issues. The appendix presents the coding decisions for all variables and provides data sources.

## **Empirical evidence**

### *Factors affecting opposition parties' pledges fulfilment*

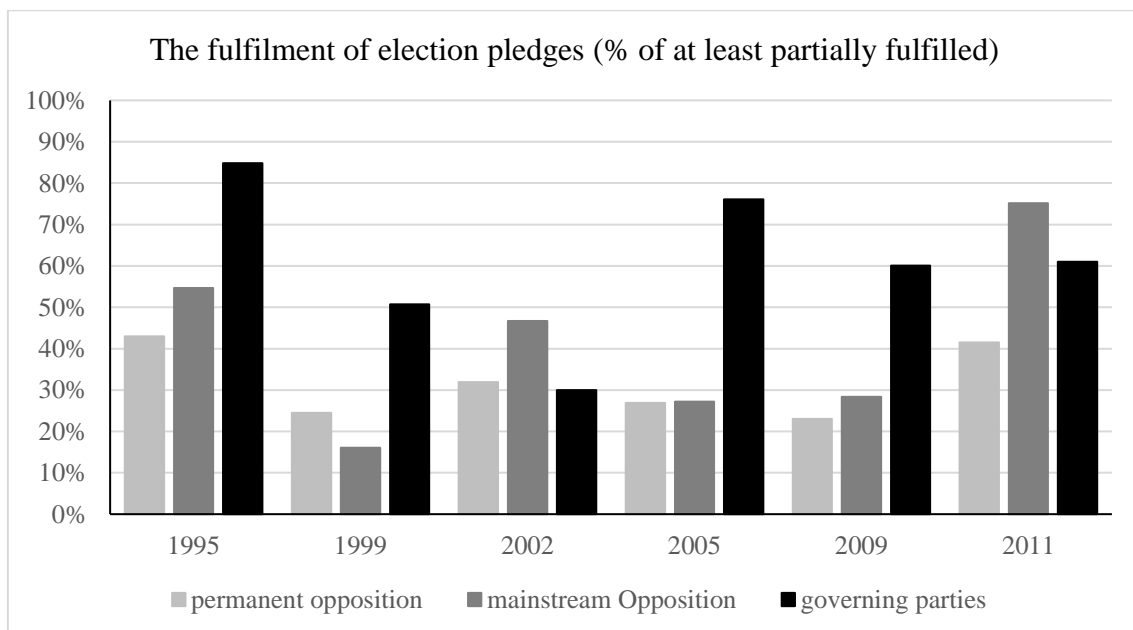
Figure 2 presents parties fulfilment scores comparing governing parties and opposition parties (alternating and permanent)<sup>7</sup>. First, as expected, governing parties fulfill more pledges than other parties: on average were able to fulfil 59 per cent of their pledges. Meanwhile, the parties permanently in opposition – BE, the Communists and the Greens<sup>8</sup> – were only able to accomplish 30 per cent of their electoral promises. The difference between these two groups of parties is enormous (almost 30 per cent), which illustrates the existent problem in the party pledge approach: it does not measure properly and justly the party mandate of small and permanent opposition parties, since they do not have the same opportunities and power to influence public policy as their counterparts in parliament. Second, in general, alternating opposition parties fulfil more promises than

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<sup>7</sup> This comparison is based on a larger dataset that also includes governing parties' pledges (with almost 6000 pledges).

<sup>8</sup> The Communist Party and The Greens have made pre-electoral coalitions under the name of “*Coligação Unitária Democrática*” (CDU) since 1987 and have presented a common electoral manifesto in most elections since the birth of the Green Party in 1982. For this reason, they are analysed together.

permanent opposition (except in 1999 and 2005). Hence, the hypothesis that the type of opposition plays a role in the likelihood of pledges fulfillment (H1) gains strong support in the tendencies represented in Figure 2. Next, we estimate statistical models for the opposition parties' pledges which in order to test if this finding resist to the introduction of several controls and asses the impact of others predictors on opposition parties fulfilment.



Two multivariate models were run in order to assess the importance of the factors affecting the odds of pledges fulfilment of parties in opposition. Table 1 presents the first multivariate model. Each of the 3563 observations refers to campaign pledges made by one or more parties in opposition after the election<sup>9</sup>. The headline finding is that

<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding the intention of controlling the effects in the models by the electoral strength/party size of each opposition party (share or the number of parliamentary seats), this was not possible as it introduces a problem of multicollinearity. The high correlation of the electoral share and the type of opposition party ( $\eta = 0.764$ ) forced to exclude the first variable from the models. This is due to the fact that in the Portuguese case, permanent opposition parties have a low electoral share when compared to alternating opposition parties. With the purpose of testing

alternating opposition parties' pledges are 32 per cent more likely to be fulfilled than those of permanent opposition, even when controlling for other factors such as the agreement with governing party pledges and the type of pledge. This result applies regardless of the issue of the pledges and the electoral cycle (in full extended model 3), supporting H1.

However, the most important predictors of opposition parties mandate fulfilment are the factors related to the characteristics of the pledges. In particular, the type of pledges and its relation with governing parties' pledges. First, opposition parties' pledges are 5 times more likely to be fulfilled if the pledges promise no change from the status quo in a given policy area. This result, supports the assumption in H2 and confirms previous studies that consistently have shown that status quo pledges have a higher chance of being fulfilled (Costello and Thomson, 2008; Roberts, 2008; Royed, 1996; Thomson, 2011). Second, opposition parties' pledges are 4 times more likely to be fulfilled if they are in agreement with governing party pledges, which confirms H3. The same conclusion was found among Irish opposition parties (Costello and Thomson, 2008).

Another interesting significant predictor is the congruence between the pledges made during the electoral campaigns and the introduction of legislative initiatives on the same issues in parliament, which has never been tested before. It shows that a higher congruence between the pledge's and the legislative initiative increases the likelihood of fulfillment of that pledge, thus supporting H6. The pledge-initiative congruence increases the likelihood of pledges fulfilment in 85 per cent. This is an interesting result since

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the importance of the electoral share, we run the models with this variable but without the type of party variable and found that the electoral share is statistically significant, i.e. opposition parties with higher electoral share have more likelihood to fulfil their pledges than parties with less electoral share. This result corroborates, at least for the Portuguese case, the finding that alternating opposition parties have more chances to fulfil their pledges than permanent opposition parties.

opposition parties, contrary to governing parties, do not have the same resources to fulfil their campaign promises. Besides, this result highlights that opposition parties' pledges fulfillment also depends on their parliamentary work.

Finally, all these effects remain significant in the full extended model with the control variables. Besides, opposition parties' pledges made between 1999-2009 electoral campaigns are more likely to be fulfilled than the 2011 election campaign pledges. This might be explained by the fact the 2011 electoral campaign was the period that opposition parties have pledged more status quo promises (15,5 per cent)<sup>10</sup>. Finally, the fulfillment likelihood of opposition parties' pledges is lower for labour and employment issues and higher for justice and defense issues. This makes sense since the latter were the policy area where we found a greater agreement between opposition parties and governing parties (13,2 per cent), and employment is a much more divisive issue among parties.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> We also checked if this result drives from a high congruence between opposition and governing party pledges during 2011-2015. We found that in this period of time the level of congruence was only 6,5 per cent -the smaller congruence found between opposition and government.

<sup>11</sup> This significant result compared to the lack of significant results found for governing parties (shown in appendix), stresses again the importance to distinguish opposition parties and governing parties in the mandate fulfilment approach.

Table 1. Likelihood of opposition parties' pledges to be at least partially fulfilled

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	e <sup>b</sup>	b (s.e.)	e <sup>b</sup>	b (s.e.)	e <sup>b</sup>	b (s.e.)
Status quo pledges	5,457	1,697*** (0,164)	5,186	1,646*** (0,170)	5,163	1,641*** (0,171)
Agreement between party and governing party pledges	4,197	1,434*** (0,121)	4,366	1,474*** (0,125)	4,266	1,451*** (0,126)
Alternating opposition parties	1,402	0,338*** (0,076)	1,387	0,327*** (0,078)	1,327	0,283*** (0,080)
Pledge-initiative congruence	1,945	0,665*** (0,083)	1,824	0,601*** (0,087)	1,850	0,615*** (0,088)
Election Year ( <i>reference=2011</i> )						
1995			,815	-0,204 (0,168)	,819	-0,199* (0,169)
1999			,229	-1,474*** (0,191)	,235	-1,447*** (0,191)
2002			,534	-0,627*** (0,172)	,546	-0,606*** (0,173)
2005			,288	-1,245*** (0,170)	,293	-1,228*** (0,170)
2009			,284	-1,258*** (0,170)	,286	-1,250*** (0,170)
Issue ( <i>reference=others</i> )						
Environment and Agriculture					,981	-0,019 (0,165)
Economics and Finance					,848	-0,165 (0,140)
Health					1,021	0,020 (0,151)
Education and Culture					1,010	0,010 (0,128)
Government and Public Administration					1,035	0,034 (0,142)
Labour and Employment					,700	-0,356** (0,141)
Justice and Defense					1,306	0,267* (0,136)
	<b>Constant</b>	0,281***		-0,391**		-0,360*
	<b>Log pseudolikelihood</b>	4228,552		4044,860		4027,350
	<b>Chi<sup>2</sup></b>	354,661***		538,353***		555,863***
	<b>N</b>	3563		3563		3563

Note: \*p≤0.10. \*\*p≤0.05. \*\*\*p≤0.001

The Election year and type of government for each election year: 1995 and 2005 – single party majority; 1999 and 2009 – single party minority; 2002 and 2011- coalition majority

Moving to the comparison between mainstream and permanent opposition, the main finding is that the likelihood of opposition parties to fulfill their mandate is overwhelmingly different if the party in opposition has some previous governmental experience or not. Table 2 shows that permanent opposition parties fulfillment likelihood are more dependent on the characteristics of the pledges to fulfil their electoral mandate than alternating opposition parties; which means the later have more room for maneuver to fulfill their mandate. Permanent opposition pledges are 13 times more likely to be fulfilled if is a status quo pledge; while alternating parties' pledges are 3 times more likely to be fulfilled in this case. This confirms the expectation in H4. Regarding the agreement with governing parties' pledges, both parties in opposition have the same probability to fulfill their pledges; i.e. the likelihood to be fulfilled is 4 times more if the pledge is in agreement with the governing parties' pledges. Therefore, the data do not corroborate our fifth hypothesis.

Regarding the congruence with parliamentary initiatives, Table 2 shows that this predictor is also important for both permanent and alternative opposition parties; however, its explanatory power is greater for the latter. Again, this finding stresses the relevance of alternative measures of mandate fulfillment for opposition parties and needs to be further explained. Indeed, results show a higher congruence between the structures of the electoral and parliamentary spaces of competition for the permanent opposition parties: circa 1/3 of their electoral pledges originated at least one legislative initiative introduced in the parliament. These results seem to be in line with recent international and national research regarding the effort devoted to asking questions in parliament, which found that permanent opposition parties are more active than other parties (Russo and Giorgi 2016; Christiansen 2016).

Table 2. Likelihood of alternating and permanent opposition parties' pledges to be at least partially fulfilled

	Alternating opposition parties pledges				Permanent opposition parties pledges			
	e <sup>b</sup>	Model 1	e <sup>b</sup>	Model 2	e <sup>b</sup>	Model 1	e <sup>b</sup>	Model 2
		b (s.e.)		b (s.e.)		b (s.e.)		b (s.e.)
Status quo pledges	3,983	1,382*** (0,164)	3,466	1,243*** (0,203)	13,000	2,565*** (0,358)	13,149	2,576*** (0,365)
Agreement between party and governing party pledges	4,128	1,418*** (0,123)	4,265	1,450*** (0,174)	4,309	1,461*** (0,180)	4,344	1,469*** (0,186)
Pledge-initiative congruence	2,405	0,877*** (0,063)	2,121	0,752*** (0,134)	1,655	0,504*** (0,114)	1,688	0,525*** (0,120)
Election Year ( <i>reference=2011</i> )								
1995			,528	-0,639* (0,250)			1,127	0,120 (0,249)
1999			,094	-2,360*** (0,299)			,478	-0,737** (0,268)
2002			,435	-0,833** (0,264)			,641	-0,444 (0,247)
2005			,156	-1,860*** (0,256)			,532	-0,632** (0,246)
2009			,179	-1,720*** (0,253)			,411	-0,889*** (0,250)
Issue ( <i>reference=others</i> )								
Environment and Agriculture			1,007	0,007 (0,225)			,994	-0,006 (0,251)
Economics and Finance			,917	-0,087 (0,201)			,913	-0,091 (0,200)
Health			1,078	0,076 (0,231)			1,026	0,025 (0,203)
Education and Culture			,977	-0,023 (0,175)			,954	-0,047 (0,195)
Government and Public Administration			,833	-0,182 (0,198)			1,325	0,281 (0,213)
Labour and Employment			,676	-0,391 (0,222)			,748	-0,290 (0,186)
Justice and Defense			1,073	0,070 (0,179)			1,779	0,576** (0,219)
	<b>Constant</b>	-0,953***		0,445		-1,238***		-0,791**
	<b>Log pseudolikelihood</b>	2241,126		2065,444		1972,012		1911,820
	<b>Chi<sup>2</sup></b>	191,849***		367,530***		155,686***		215,878***
	<b>N</b>	1832		1832		1731		731

Note: \*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.001.

The Election year and type of government for each election year are: 1995 and 2005 – single party majority; 1999 and 2009 – single party minority; 2002 and 2011-coalition majority

Finally, all these effects remain statistically relevant in the full extended models. Moreover, permanent opposition parties' pledges on justice and defense issues have more chances to be fulfilled than others. This result is noteworthy since it means the type of opposition plays in fact a decisive role in the likelihood of pledge fulfillment, considering that this variable is only statistically significant for the permanent opposition parties.

Furthermore, Table 3 clearly shows the importance of the comparison between what parties promise in electoral campaigns and what they do to fulfil their promises in the parliamentary arena. It is now quite clear that the pledge approach to the party mandate model is less applicable to permanent opposition parties and that it leaves many dynamics unexplored. Besides looking at the parliamentary arena to assess the mandate fulfilment we gather a picture of how parties in opposition, through parliamentary scrutiny, try to control, influence or monitor the government decision-making process.

Table 3 Predicted probabilities of pledge fulfilment of opposition party pledges

	Probability that a pledge is at least partially fulfilled by:					
	All opposition parties		Permanent opposition parties		Alternating opposition parties	
<i>Pledges characteristics</i>						
'Change' pledges	0.33	(0.27, 0.39)	0.29	(0.22, 0.37)	0.36	(0.29, 0.44)
'Status quo' pledges	0.72	(0.64, 0.79)	0.82	(0.69, 0.91)	0.68	(0.58, 0.77)
<i>Relationship with governing parties' pledges</i>						
No agreement	0.32	(0.26, 0.38)	0.28	(0.21, 0.36)	0.35	(0.28, 0.43)
Agreement with governing pledges	0.65	(0.58, 0.72)	0.62	(0.50, 0.72)	0.68	(0.58, 0.77)
<i>Pledge-initiative congruence</i>						
Not congruent	0.31	(0.26, 0.37)	0.27	(0.20, 0.35)	0.34	(0.27, 0.42)
Congruent	0.44	(0.38, 0.51)	0.37	(0.29, 0.47)	0.55	(0.46, 0.64)
<i>Type of opposition</i>						
Permanent opposition party	0.31	(0.25, 0.37)				
Alternating opposition party	0.39	(0.33, 0.45)				

Note: Predicted probabilities calculated from Model 3 in Table 1 and 2, holding other independent variables at their mode values. 95% confidence intervals in parentheses.



Table 3 illustrates the net impact of the four main predictors (pledges' type, relationship with governing pledges, pledge-initiative congruence, type of opposition) by representing the models' predicted probabilities of pledge fulfillment (calculated based on Models 3 of Tables 1 and 2, with all other variables held constant). The figures corroborates our previous findings. Alternative opposition parties have a higher probability (0.39) of fulfilling their pledges than permanent parties in opposition (0.31). The probability of opposition parties complying with their mandates especially increases for 'status quo' pledges (0.72), and for pledges that converge with those of government parties (0.65).

In addition, permanent opposition parties have more probabilities to fulfill their pledges if they cost less to comply; that is: if they are aimed at maintaining the status quo (0.82), and if they are in agreement with the governing parties' pledges (0.62). Furthermore, the probability also increases if a legislative initiative was introduced in the parliament in the same policy area (0.37). This means that permanent opposition is much more constrained (because it depends on the costs of pledges compliance) in the fulfillment of their mandate than alternating opposition. This result highlights once more the need to revisit the mandate theory and rethink how the mandate fulfillment of opposition parties is assessed, especially of those permanently excluded from the executive.

## **Conclusions**

This article explores the party mandate in Portugal, focusing on the comparison between alternating and permanent opposition parties. Existing approaches to the party mandate have focused on the mandates of governing parties ignoring the mandates of opposition (Louwarse, 2011). These approaches are very 'generous' with winning parties when

assessing their fulfilment scores (Moury, 2011b) and consequently, they do not produce real scenarios of what opposition parties do to fulfil their mandates. Focusing on opposition parties, the approach followed in this research aims at contributing to fulfil this gap by offering a more comprehensive analysis of party mandates.

Our study has an important caveat inherent in its case study nature. There are, however, three important conclusions that can be drawn for the Portuguese case and for comparative literature. Firstly, we find that there is a divide between the mandate fulfilment of governing parties and opposition parties, but specifically between permanent parties represented in parliament and alternating opposition parties. This finding needs to be further assessed with data from other contexts and political systems. Nevertheless, this finding stresses the effect of the type of opposition on parties' chances to fulfill their mandate. Secondly, we disclose that opposition parties fulfill as much of their promises as the fulfillment costs decrease, which is more visible in parties permanently in opposition. Thirdly, the odds of opposition parties' mandate fulfillment increase when there is policy congruence between the pledge and legislative initiatives. Hence, when the party presents a legislative initiative to the parliament which matches the policy content of a promise included in its campaign manifesto, the resulting pledge has a higher probability of being fulfilled.

These main findings confirm the existing cleavage between these three groups of parties (governing parties and permanent\alternating opposition parties) and stresses the importance on extending and updating the mandate theory to explicitly include and problematize opposition parties and their efforts to fulfill their electoral commitments.

Existing approaches on the mandate fulfillment (pledge and salience approach) have provided interesting empirical results. However, the way these approaches conceptualize and operationalize the party mandate has led to a limited view of party

mandate fulfilment as they choose the government as the political arena where parties fulfill mandates (Louwse, 2011). By focusing on government decisions or policy outcomes, the mandate of opposition parties is ignored. This study has shown that opposition parties naturally have far less maneuver over government policies, especially parties which are permanently in opposition. Therefore, it is pointless to blame the opposition for being unable to translate their pledges into policy outputs. Hence, the real test for the opposition parties' mandate fulfilment relates to their actions in parliament (Louwse, 2011), which might be accomplished by looking at parties' parliamentary behavior and efforts to fulfill their pledges (such as legislative initiatives, questions, voting behaviour and so on).

In the future, one of the possible drawbacks of looking only at parties' parliamentary behaviour rather than governments' policy output is that it would be relatively easy to "pledge similar things" before and after elections, whereas translating pledges into actual policies is a more genuine test of parties' willingness to stick to their mandate. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the cost of presenting a legislative initiative in parliament for discussion, certainly not in a parliamentary setting and for permanent parties that usually have limited resources. The linkage between electoral programs and parliamentary work and behaviour is only a part of the 'representative chain' (Müller, 2000), but it is an extremely important one when studying (permanent) opposition parties. Therefore, in the future, studying parties' parliamentary mandate rather than their government mandate might provide new insights into the process of party representation for all parties exerting a political mandate.

## **Appendix. Description of variables and sources**

### **A.1 Dependent variable**

Fulfilled or partially fulfilled electoral pledges coded as one (1) and not fulfilled as zero (0).

### **A2. Status quo**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge is called for keeping the status quo and zero (0) otherwise.

### **A3. Permanent opposition party**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge was made by a permanent opposition party, i.e. without previous governmental experience, and zero (0) if a pledge was made by an alternating opposition party, i.e. with governmental experience.

### **A4. Agreement between party and governing party pledges**

Coded as one (1) when a pledge made by a party that ended up in opposition agreed with a pledge made by at least one of the parties that entered the government and zero (0) otherwise. Each opposition party pledge was compared to pledges made by parties that entered the government in the same election, e.g. 1995 CDS pledges were compared with those made by PS during the 1995 election campaign. Such coding is consistent with others pledge study literature (Konstadinova, 2003; Costello and Thomson, 2008).

### **A.5 Election Year – 1995**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge was made during the electoral campaign of 1995 and zero (0) if otherwise.

### **A.6 Election Year – 1999**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge was made during the electoral campaign of 1999 and zero (0) if otherwise.

### **A.7 Election Year – 2002**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge was made during the electoral campaign of 2002 and zero (0) if otherwise.

### **A.8 Election Year – 2005**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge was made during the electoral campaign of 2005 and zero (0) if otherwise.

### **A.9 Election Year – 2009**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge was made during the electoral campaign of 2009 and zero (0) if otherwise.

### **A.10 Environment and Agriculture**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge concerns environment and agriculture issues and zero (0) if otherwise. This coding was based on the Comparative Agenda project codebook.

### **A.11 Economics and Finance**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge concerns economics and finance issues and zero (0) if otherwise.

### **A.12 Health**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge concerns health issues and zero (0) if otherwise.

### **A.13 Education and Culture**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge concerns education and culture and zero (0) if otherwise.

### **A.14 Government and public administration**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge concerns the government and public administration and zero (0) if otherwise.

## **A.15 Justice**

Coded as one (1) if a pledge concerns the justice system and related issues and zero (0) if otherwise.

## **A16. Pledge-initiative congruence**

There are also several ways to measure the linkage between electoral pledges and the work parties do in parliaments. We have proceeded to analyze legislative initiatives because, considering the legislative procedure in Portugal, the parliamentary legislative initiatives offer parties more space and opportunities to present their policy proposals. Legislative initiatives rest with individual assembly members, parliamentary groups, the government, regional assemblies<sup>12</sup> and, under certain conditions, groups of 35,000 registered voters.<sup>13</sup> For each legislature, we analysed what parties did in parliament, taking into account the electoral pledges made in their manifestos. We did this by examining the legislative initiatives presented by parties or individual assembly members in parliament to fulfil their electoral promises. We categorized each initiative as partially or fully congruent with an electoral pledge (when the policy content of the initiative represents the only partially the content of the promise or the whole content of the promise analysed).

It was coded as one (1) if a pledge originated a related (partially or fully) parliamentary legislative initiative and zero (0) if otherwise (e.g. if the PS promised a 15 per cent reduction on taxes, we searched the archive to assess whether or not the party presented some legislative initiative to fulfil that promise).

Source: The online archive of the Portuguese parliament.

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<sup>12</sup> Article 167(1) of the Portuguese Constitution and Article 131 of RAR.

<sup>13</sup> Article 167(1) of the Constitution in conjunction with Article 6(1) of *Lei no. 17/2003* of 4 June 2003 regulating the citizens' legislative initiative.

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