

Understanding Roll Call Vote Requests and their Consequences

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Abstract

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2 Scientific Information

2.1 Summary

Analyses of roll call votes have developed to form a mainstay of parliamentary research. By their development both in terms of methods used as in substantive (and geographic) areas covered, more and more researchers have become aware that in many instances roll call votes only give us a partial glimpse at parliamentary behavior. The reason for this is that in many parliaments roll call votes need to be requested or occur only on particular proposals. The proposed research project wishes to address the following main research question:

Under what circumstances are roll call votes requested in national parliaments and how do these circumstances affect our inferences on parliamentary behavior based on roll call votes?

To answer this research question the project is based on three interdependent goals. The first goal of the project is to establish a detailed inventory of the institutional rules under which roll call votes occur in all national parliaments around the world. To achieve this goal an internet-based survey will be carried out among experts of the various national parliaments following the lead example of a recent handbook.

Based on this inventory an existing theoretical model (Carrubba, Gabel and Hug, 2008*a*) will be expanded to consider different motivations for making roll call requests, namely the disciplining of party members, the signaling of party positions and shaming other parties for their voting behavior. This theoretical model will allow for a more precise assessment of the relationship of observed voting behavior in parliaments through roll call votes and unobserved behavior in secret (or voice votes).

The implications of this theoretical model will be submitted to empirical tests, which form the third goal. More specifically the empirical tests envision to study the consequences that the different rules and reasons for requesting roll call votes have on empirical analyses based on roll call votes. These empirical tests should also allow for insights how the results from roll call votes analyses have to be corrected for, given that they are based on only a (non-random) sample of all votes in most parliaments.

2.2 Research Plan

2.2.1 State of Research

(Describe the state of research in the field. Please mention the most significant publications written by other authors)

In recent years the analysis of roll call votes has experienced tremendous progress, both in terms of methodological innovations and substantive topics addressed. While early analyses of roll call votes (Rice, 1925, 1928) largely focused on measuring party cohesion, more recent work has innovated by covering very diverse topics, from addressing issues of representation and accountability (for a recent example see Carey, 2008) to the estimation of ideological positions of members of parliament (MPs) (for an overview see Poole, 2005). Similarly, for a long time roll call vote analyses prospered essentially in the United States with a strong focus on Congress (see for a historical perspective Poole and Rosenthal, 1997). Only recently roll call analyses have been published on as diverse countries as South Korea (e.g., Hix and Noury, 2007), Russia (e.g., Andrews, 2002), Poland and the Czech Republic (e.g., Carey, Formanek and Karpowicz, 1999), Latin American countries (e.g., Londregan, 2000; Desposato, 2003; Carey, 2007), etc., but also supranational bodies like the European parliament (e.g., Attina, 1990), the European Council of Ministers (e.g., Mattila and Lane, 2001), the UN Security Council (e.g., Voeten, 2002) and General Assembly (e.g., Alker, 1964, 1965), and the International Labor Organization (ILO) (e.g., Boockmann, 2003).

This geographic expansion in the coverage of parliaments being studied through roll call vote analysis alerted scholars only slowly, however, that roll call votes occur under very diverse rules and often for different reasons in different parliaments (Hug, 2009 (forthcoming)*c*). Some parliaments carry out their business systematically by roll call votes (e.g., the Polish Sejm and the Swiss lower house since the 1990s, see Kistner, 2006; Makowski, 2008; Hug, 2009*a*; Hug, 2009 (forthcoming)*c*), others only if some actor requests one (e.g., the European parliament, see Carrubba, Gabel, Murrain, Clough, Montgomery and Schambach, 2006; Thiem, 2009), and finally some parliaments require roll call votes on particular bills or never use them (see Interparliamentary Union, 1986).¹

So far, however, very little systematic information is available on the exact rules under which roll call votes are taken, under what circumstances roll call votes are

¹I will use the notion of “roll call votes” in this proposal in a loose fashion to designate all votes in parliaments for which there is a public record available allowing for information on how individual members of parliament have voted.

requested and what their consequences are. The Interparliamentary Union (1986) provides a more or less systematic but in the meantime dated source for institutional rules of voting in parliaments.² Two more recent datasets, though with partial coverage, are provided by Saalfeld (1995, West European countries) and Carey (2008, Latin American countries). A very recent handbook on national legislatures (Fish and Kroenig, 2008) neglects this important issue and focuses mostly on parliamentary power (see Fish, 2006) as do other such handbooks (e.g., Kurian, 1998; Norton, 1998).

Similarly, the literature is seriously underdeveloped when it comes to understanding under what circumstances roll call votes are requested. Fennell (1974) is an early study on Argentina highlighting the role roll call requests play for the accountability of MPs. Carrubba and Gabel (1999) discuss in the context of the European Parliament a series of reasons why roll call votes are requested, while Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008*a*) provide a theoretical model for one of these reasons, namely to discipline members of a party group.³ Kreppel (2002) also argues that roll call requests in the European parliament are made for disciplining purposes, while Thiem (2009) contests this argument by suggesting that roll call votes mostly serve as signaling devices.

Why roll call votes are requested is also discussed increasingly in the context of US studies, where Jenkins and Stewart (2003) assess the historic context, while Roberts (2007) shows how different rules for roll call vote requests have changed the behavior in Congress. This has also alerted scholars that many votes on bills in Congress have not occurred as roll call votes (see Clinton and Lapinski, 2008). Finally, Chiou and Yang (2008) try to infer empirically from a sophisticated empirical model why parties in the Taiwanese legislature request roll call votes. A similar strategy is deployed by Stecker (2009) when analyzing the occurrence of roll call votes in the German *Landtage*. While these studies show quite some diversity in approach and methodology, it is surprising that Carrubba, Gabel and Hug's (2008*a*) model is, to my knowledge, the only theoretical account of roll call requests.

Quite similarly desolate is the situation when it comes to analyzing the consequences of roll call vote requests. At the empirical level Roberts's (2007) and Hug's (2009 (forthcoming)*c*) articles are the only published studies (to my knowledge)

²Hug (2009 (forthcoming)*c*) used, among others, this source to provide an overview over the rules under which roll call votes occur.

³Carrubba, Gabel, Murrar, Clough, Montgomery and Schambach (2006) provide strong evidence that roll call votes are requested only for very specific votes, while Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008*b*) provide considerable empirical evidence in support of their theoretical model from the European parliament.

demonstrating that MPs behave differently when votes are roll called than when they are not.⁴ These two studies demonstrate as a consequence also that when using roll call votes from a parliament that does not systematically record all votes (and make them available to the public or at least the researcher) inferential problems loom large. Hug (2009 (forthcoming)*c*), for instance, shows that in roll call votes Swiss parties differ in terms of their cohesion, compared to votes which were also recorded but which were not made publicly available (see also Schwarz, 2005). Hence, clearly basing our inference on parliamentary behavior (like cohesion of political parties) on only roll call votes is likely to give us biased information.

While Hug (2009 (forthcoming)*c*) provides some initial steps in the direction of possible corrections, the theoretical model by Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008*a*) provides theoretical foundations for such corrections. The latter model, however, focuses only on one possible reason why roll call votes are requested. More precisely, Carrubba, Gabel and Hug's (2008*a*) model is based on the assumption that party leaders request roll call votes in order to discipline their party members in votes where passage of proposals depends on cohesive parties.⁵ Hence, in order to assess the consequences of the strategic use of roll call votes and thus to be able to correct for potential biases, additional theoretical models have to be developed and tested empirially dealing with other motivations for requesting roll call votes, namely foremost signaling party positions and divulging voting of adverse parties.

In summary, we have almost no up-to-date systematic information on the rules under which roll call votes are requested. We also fail to have any good and complete theoretical assessment under what circumstances roll call votes are requested. And finally, we hardly have the tools yet, to assess the consequences of roll call votes and to correct the biases in inferences we might incur.

2.2.2 Research by grant proposer

(For each applicant, elaborate on the research fields. Please mention the most important publications)

Simon Hug has done research on several aspects of how institutions affect decision-making and societal conflicts. A large focus in this research is on the role of referendums in developed and developing societies (Hug and Tsebelis, 2002; Hug, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2009*a*, 2009*b*, 2009*c*)⁶ as well as the role of federalism (Hug, 2003, 2005*b*)

⁴Schwarz (2005) provides a similar analysis for the Swiss lower house.

⁵While this is obviously a simplifying assumption the empirical tests carried out with data on the European parliament (EP) (Carrubba, Gabel and Hug, 2008*b*) suggest that the model can explain important features of roll call vote requests and cohesion of parties in the EP

⁶This research has been funded in part by the Swiss National Science Foundation through the

and democracy (Cederman, Hug and Wenger, 2008; Cederman, Hug and Krebs, 2009 (forthcoming)) in conflict resolution.

Research more closely related to the present proposal dealt with roll call requests and their effects on party discipline (Carrubba, Gabel and Hug, 2008*a*; Hug, 2009 (forthcoming)*c*; Hug and Sciarini, 2009; Hug, 2010 (forthcoming)*d*).⁷ Related to this research Simon Hug has also been selected to serve on the scientific board of Voteworld (<http://voteworld.berkeley.edu/>) and the editorial board of *Legislative Studies Quarterly*.

2.2.3 Detailed Research Plan

(Establish a detailed research plan. Please mention the objectives and goals, the methods of investigation, the available data, the data to be collected)

The proposed research project has three main goals which all are subsumed under one main research question, namely under what circumstances are roll call votes requested in national parliaments and how do these circumstances affect our inferences on parliamentary behavior based on roll call votes.

The first goal is to collect systematic and time-specific information on the exact rules under which national parliaments vote and under what circumstances roll call votes occur. To collect this information the project envisions to carry out an internet-based expert survey, collecting information on all national parliaments covered by Fish and Kroenig (2008).⁸ The authors of this volume have given us permission to contact the experts they have consulted in their expert survey (see Fish and Kroenig, 2008, List of expert consultants). The questionnaire will comprise questions concerning the main method of voting in parliament (see for instance Rasch, 1995; Middlebrook, 2003), the rules under which roll call votes occur and some subjective assessment by the experts of the latter's frequency and the reasons for which they are requested. In addition, expanding on an element covered by Fish and Kroenig's (2008) expert survey, a set of questions will deal with the initiation of bills and more specifically the role of parliamentary committees.⁹ All this informa-

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⁷This research is funded in part by the Swiss National Science Foundation through the Grant 100012-111909 and has produced in addition the following working papers under review or in preparation for publication: Bailer, Bütikofer, Hug and Schulz (2007), Bütikofer and Hug (2008*a*), Bütikofer and Hug (2008*b*), Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008*b*), Bailer and Bütikofer (2009), Hug (2009*a*), Hug and Martin (2009).

⁸In a previous project dealing with the Swiss parliament we have already employed this strategy of an internet-based survey and have generated considerable expertise.

⁹This latter, important, aspect of parliamentary organization is not covered Fish and Kroenig's (2008) expert survey. Some information is available from earlier studies (see for instance Mattson and Strom, 1995; Strøm, 1998; Döring, 2001). As the theoretical model presented in Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008*a*) demonstrates and as Londregan (2000) argues as well, information on the role of committees in agenda setting is crucial.

tion will be collected with a clear time dimension. More specifically, all questions will ask what the current rules etc. (as of June 2010) in the national parliament are, but in addition request the expert to document changes in the recent past (at the time of writing we consider the time period of the last 30 years, i.e., 1980-2010¹⁰) and provide information on the sources (laws, standing orders etc.) s/he employed.. The collected data, once consolidated and checked against other sources (mainly constitutions and standing orders of parliaments), will be made available to researchers through the Voteworld website (<http://voteworld.berkeley.edu/>) and the Swiss data archive SIDOS.

The second goal of the project is to gain a better theoretical understanding of the motivations that lead to roll call vote requests. While Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008a) propose a theoretical model for roll call vote requests motivated by disciplining purposes, other motivations are likely to be present as well in some parliaments and for some parties (see for a more detailed discussion Carrubba and Gabel, 1999; Stecker, 2009). For this reason the project proposes to expand Carrubba, Gabel and Hug's (2008a) model to cover two main additional motivations identified in the descriptive literature, namely signaling and shaming. When a roll call vote is requested a party (or some members of parliament) may want to signal to particular groups or individuals its stances on particular issues. This might have to do with electoralist considerations and issues of accountability (see for instance Carey, 2008). The party or individuals requesting a roll call vote might also want to shame the members of parliament of another party when voting in a particular way. In this situation a party does not necessarily want to signal its own position but is more interested in making public the voting behavior of its political adversaries.

While Chiou and Yang (2008), Stecker (2009) and Thiem (2009) provide some empirical evidence for these different motivations for roll call vote requests in very different contexts (i.e, the Taiwanese legislature, the European parliament, and ther German *Landtage*), a theoretical understanding of these motivations is still missing. Hence, the project envisions, based on the model proposed by Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008a), to develop two extensions which cover these two additional motivations for roll call vote requests.

If these two extensions should prove sufficiently compatible with the model on which they draw (Carrubba, Gabel and Hug, 2008a), a final step would consist of developing a comprehensive model considering all three motivations at the same

¹⁰Whether this is feasible, or whether a longer time horizon can be considered, will depend on pre-tests of the questionnaire with the help of the regional experts mentioned above.

time. The advantage of such a comprehensive model would be to allow for explanations under what conditions parties or individuals request roll call votes for particular motivations.

To assess whether these theoretical models are of any value, and this is the third goal of the project, empirical tests of the implications from these models will be carried out.¹¹ As the theoretical model proposed by Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008*a*) clearly shows, the implications are wide-ranging and often concern aspects that at the outset did not seem too important (see also for a discussion of this issue Carrubba, Gabel and Hug, 2008*b*). The required data is, as the empirical study by Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008*b*) shows, quite varied. First and foremost, empirical tests require information on roll call votes and the rules under which they have occurred. The latter information will be available in this phase of the project through the expert survey (see above) and roll call vote data already available for some parliaments (see <http://voteworld.berkeley.edu/dbase/index.html>). Given previous research, a first set of empirical tests will rely on roll call data from the Swiss parliament, which has undergone important changes in the rules under which roll call votes occur over the last 30 years (see Hug, 2009 (forthcoming)*c*). A second set of empirical tests will rely on data available from the European parliament which uses different rules for roll call vote requests and in addition has introduced in 2009 the rule that all final passage votes will be by roll call vote. These empirical tests will follow the template of Carrubba, Gabel and Hug's (2008*b*) study and be carried out with Clifford Carrubba (Emory University) and Matthew Gabel (Washington University). A third existing dataset to be employed stems from the Polish Sejm, which makes all its voting records publicly available (see Noury, Dobrowolski and Mazurkiewicz, 1999; Zielinski, 2001; Kistner, 2006; Makowski, 2008; Hug, 2009*a*). The data covering the period 1997-2007 has been already collected and used by Makowski (2008) and Hug (2009*a*) for other research questions. Extending the dataset to cover more recent votes and the legislative period before 1997 based on Noury, Dobrowolski and Mazurkiewicz's (1999) data should yield additional insights.

Apart these existing dataset, empirical tests of the theoretical model will require additional information. First of all, as the empirical tests presented in Carrubba,

¹¹While at this point I might present some hypotheses derived from Carrubba, Gabel and Hug's (2008*a*) theoretical model, this would not be a very honest way to proceed, since the additional theoretical models to be developed might yield to more complex hypotheses, given that they allow for various motivations for roll call vote requests. Hence, it is more honest to simply refer to Carrubba, Gabel and Hug's (2008*a*) paper for possible hypotheses to be tested in this empirical part.

Gabel and Hug (2008*b*) on the European parliament demonstrates, roll call vote information is not sufficient to test all the theoretical implications. First of all, to understand the requests for roll call votes information on all other votes is also necessary. Ideally, the information on votes taken by show of hand or by secret ballot should cover the exact content of the two options submitted to a vote and, if at all possible, be coded as values on a continuous scale (see for such an attempt Carrubba, Gabel and Hug, 2008*b*). In addition, the identity of the requester of the roll call vote and the proposer of the two options needs to be identified. This vote-specific information will be requested following the lead by Matthew Gabel (Washington University, St. Louis, USA) who has developed an interface to enter this relevant information on votes in parliament.

In addition, information on the preference heterogeneity of parties on the issues dealt with should be available¹²

Second, while the three parliaments mentioned above already cover some of the variance in rules under which roll call votes occur, clearly additional cases have to be studied.¹³ While for an increasing number of parliaments roll call vote data is made available (see <http://voteworld.berkeley.edu/dbase/index.html>) it is likely that additional data will have to be collected and entered in databases.¹⁴ This data will again be made available to the research community both through the Voteworld website (<http://voteworld.berkeley.edu/>) and the Swiss data archive SIDOS.

2.2.4 Timetable

(Note the timetable for the project duration)

April 2010-July 2010 development of internet expert survey, implementation and testing with the help of colleagues specialists of parliaments in several regions (e.g., Fang-Yi Chiou (Academia Sinica, Taiwan, Asia), Brian Crisp (Washington University, USA, Latin America), Joel Barkan (University of Iowa, United States, Africa, tbc), Thomas Saalfeld (University of Bamberg, Germany, Europe, tbc), Asbjorn

¹²Expert surveys (e.g., Laver and Hunt, 1992; Benoit and Laver, 2006; Marks, Hooghe, Steenbergen and Bakke, 2007), analyses of party manifestos (e.g., Budge, Klingemann, Andrea and Bara, 2001) or surveys of members of parliament (Thomassen, Noury and Voeten, 2004; Bailer, Bütikofer, Hug and Schulz, 2007) yield such information and will be used as available.

¹³The selection of these cases depends on the implications we will derive from the proposed theoretical models. If the model proposed by Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008*a*) can serve as guide, the rules for requesting a roll call vote and the possibility to overturn it, the rules for agenda-setting, etc. will prove as central selections criteria. In addition, for obvious reasons, we will focus this empirical analyses on democratic legislatures.

¹⁴Many parliaments make this information available on their website and for the Polish Sejm we have developed a Java-tool allowing for extracting the relevant information from this parliament's website. This tool might be adapted for other parliaments, if information is available on the web, if not archival work will be necessary.

Skjæveland (University of Aarhus, Denmark, Europe, Scandinavia), Christopher Kam (University of British Columbia, Canada, North America), Abdul Noury (New York University, Abu Dhabi, Arab countries).

August 2010-September 2010 Deployment of internet expert survey (under the main responsibility of the first PhD candidate), consolidation of responses and checking of conflicting responses with experts. In parallel, development of theoretical models addressing the motivations of roll call vote requests.

October 2010- December 2010 Write-up of article presenting data and preliminary analyses for presentation at an international conference in 2011. In parallel, development of theoretical models addressing the motivations of roll call vote requests and possible development of an integrated model explaining what motivations are important in what contexts and for which party.

January 2011-June 2011 collection and systematizing of roll call vote data for the relevant cases and periods identified with the help of the internet expert survey (under the main responsibility of the second PhD candidate). Presentation of a research paper at international conference and subsequent submission to international peer-reviewed journal for publication.

July 2011-December 2011 coding of bill- and vote-specific information employing the interface developed by Matthew Gabel (Washington University, St. Louis, USA) (under the main responsibility of the second PhD candidate).

January 2012-June 2012 Analysis of data, testing of theoretical models, and write-up of two scientific papers to be presented at two international conferences and subsequent submission to international peer-reviewed journal for publication.

July 2012- March 2013 setting up of final datasets, writing up of final report as at least one book (probably co-authored with Clifford Carrubba and Matthew Gabel) to be submitted to a University Press.

2.2.5 Significance of planned research

(Explain the significance of the planned research to the scientific community and to eventual potential users. Describe which steps could be taken to convey the research results to the industry, economy, administration, political world and to the general public.)

The project will yield important new information on aspects of parliamentary life. The systematically collected information on voting in parliament will be of great interest to the research community and practitioners at large. Given that the Interparliamentary Union has published such information, we will also seek contacts

with the secretariat in Geneva to assess whether this organization is interested in disseminating the collected information through their publications. Given that additional datasets on roll call votes will be generated and made available in data archives (Voteworld and SIDOS) both the scientific community and practitioners will profit from our research endeavour. And finally, the new insights that the project will generate on how roll call votes can be used to infer aspects of parliamentary life will allow researchers to improve their data analyses of roll call votes.

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