

Understanding Roll Call Vote Requests and their Consequences

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June 6, 2011

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First intermediary report

a) Summary

The first year of the present research project has been devoted to three main tasks. First of all the PhD student Reto West has developed an extensive questionnaire to gather information on voting procedures and additional details on parliamentary proceedings. This questionnaire has been discussed with several colleagues (most notably, Fang-Yi Chiou (Academia Sinica, Taiwan), Brian Crisp (Washington University, USA, Latin America), and Stephannie Bailer (ETH Zurich). This task has been started later than planned, as the PhD student could be hired only with some delay due to his civil service obligations. In addition, it has proved much more labor intensive than anticipated, as the questionnaire is designed to balance our interest in gathering a maximum of information and making answering the questionnaire as user-friendly as possible. In the next months the questionnaire will be tested and evaluated and with some delay compared to the original planing be fielded with experts.

The second task carried out by a research assistant has been to collect as much detailed contact information for the experts solicited by Fish and Kroenig (2008) for a similar global survey. Again this has proved much more arduous than planned, as we had to compile the list of names (without any information on institutional affiliations) from Fish and Kroenig (2008) and search the internet for additional experts. With the help of our regional experts we will complement this list in the next weeks to have an extensive list of experts to be contacted. Again, compared to the initial timing envisioned in the project proposal there is some delay

The third task consisted in starting our collection of roll call vote and related information for the empirical part of the project. Compared to the initial planning we were able to move forward some of this data collection, which allowed us already to obtain some initial results. First, with the PhD student initially assumed to work on this project (she has accepted an offer to start the PhD program at the University of Michigan, the project leader has continued work on the Swiss parliament which will play an important role in the empirical part of this project. In a first study (Hug and Martin, 2009, currently under review after an offer to revise and resubmit) we were able for the first time to place, based on behavioral data, members of parliament (MPs) and their constituencies in the same political space. This allows us to demonstrate that the electoral system affects considerably the ideological positions of MPs. More precisely, MPs elected in proportional representation systems are much more widely dispersed around the median position of their constituency, while MPs elected in plurality elections cluster much more around this median position.

In a follow-up paper (Martin, 2008, in the process of being revised, expanded, and prepared for submission) the empirical coverage has been expanded from the Swiss lower house to include also to the upper house. As most members of

the latter chamber are elected in plurality elections, this allows us a much firmer assessment of our hypothesis. The results obtained so far for one legislative period confirm the results obtained in the first paper.

Taking advantage of a workshop at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops (St.Gallen, April 2011) we have also advanced our data collection on roll call votes from another parliament which will play an important role in our empirical work, namely the Polish Sejm. We now have a complete voting record for three full legislative periods¹ of this parliament and have used it to assess an important question in the literature, namely whether party-switching allows us to identify in a more convincing way the effect of party discipline in roll call votes. Our initial results show that party-switchers, depending on the government configuration, are either moving considerably to the left or the right when switching parties (Hug and Wüest, 2011). This study will be pursued in the next months and the final version will be submitted to an international journal.

An additional foray into the data collection has been undertaken with a master student writing a thesis on the United Nations Human Rights Council. Also this international body resorts to voting and useful information to assess voting patterns is only available for certain votes. Based on this a paper has been written and presented at an international conference (Hug and Lukács, 2011). The empirical results show that the way in which countries vote in the Human Rights Council is strongly affected by the country/countries submitting the resolutions. While obviously in this case one can not speak of “party discipline” it suggests empirical patterns in line with Carrubba, Gabel and Hug’s (2008*a*) theoretical work, which forms part of the theoretical basis of the research project.

Relatedly, and using mostly techniques developed to collect the data for the Polish Sejm we have also collected a complete set of votes from the United Nations General Assembly for the period between 1946 and 2010. While data exists on the recorded votes (e.g., Voeten, 2000) no one has bothered to collect information on non-recorded votes, which form a considerable majority of all votes in the General Assembly. In a paper in preparation (Hug, 2012*b*) we can demonstrate that the share of recorded votes varies dramatically over time, with the role of the cold war playing a significant role. On the other hand, the number of participating countries in the votes does not play a significant role.

Finally, in preparation of a more extensive testing of some implications from Carrubba, Gabel and Hug’s (2008*a*) model additional detailed information on recorded and non recorded votes in the European parliament have been collected. This will allow to go beyond the first initial tests proposed by Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008*b*), and the results will be presented at a conference later this year (Hug, 2011).

In addition to these initially planned data collections and empirical papers, a

¹This data has already been shared with other researchers (Magda Staniak, Trinity College, Dublin; Bill Bianco, Indiana University).

survey chapter (Hug, 2012*a*) will allow us to present empirical results obtained in our project to a wider audience.

- b) Publications
- c) Forthcoming publications
- d)

References

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