

# Understanding Roll Call Vote Requests and their Consequences

Simon Hug\*

Département de science politique, Université de Genève

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\* Département de science politique et relations internationales, Faculté des sciences économiques et sociales; Université de Genève; 40, Bd du Pont d'Arve; 1211 Genève 4; Switzerland; phone ++41 22 379 83 78; email: [simon.hug@unige.ch](mailto:simon.hug@unige.ch)

## Final report

This project proposed to deal with the questions of when roll call votes are requested in parliament and what the consequences of such requests are. The motivation for these research questions reside in the increasing use by scholars of roll call vote records from various parliaments without taking into account the institutional rules under which these data were generated. This lack of attention to institutional details can be explained in part by the fact that since the publication of the Interparliamentary Union's (1986) compendium no updated information was available. For this reason the first goal of the research project was to collect with the help of an expert survey up-to-date information on parliamentary voting procedures. This data collection proved more demanding than anticipated, but in the meantime the data covering almost 200 chambers from more than 130 countries around the world have been made available to the consulted experts (see <http://www.unige.ch/ses/spo/Membres/Professeurs/Hug/parlproc.html>). As we solicit comments and corrections from the consulted experts the data is currently not openly available. Once the final corrections have been carried out and an article presenting and analyzing the data in detail published (Hug, Wegmann and Wüest, 2012),<sup>1</sup> the data will be made available through the Swiss data archive at FORS.

With the help of the information on the exact conditions under which roll call votes occur, a better understanding of their consequences becomes feasible. However, as there are different motivations for roll call vote requests, theoretical models are necessary to tease out the exact consequences. Hence, the second goal of the project was to develop such models to gain such a better understanding. Taking as stepping stone the theoretical model proposed by Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008a), Wüest (2013)<sup>2</sup> extends this model while our colleagues at Emory University and Washington University, with whom this project was coordinated, assessed the consequences of roll call vote requests under the assumption that they are requested for signalling policy positions.

Insights from these models were then evaluated as part of the third goal of the project at the empirical level. A first set of such evaluations dealt with the European parliament (EP) and built on the empirical analyses by Carrubba, Gabel and Hug (2008b). Results of these joint efforts have led to a joint invitation to participate at the Conference "Open Legislative Data in Paris. A Conference of the Third Kind with Hacktivists and Academics" at Sciences Po Paris (July

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is scheduled for publication in a special issue of *West European Politics* on changes in legislative procedures. Wegmann (2013), in the context of PhD dissertation related to this project, presents another analysis of this data, while Hug (2013b), based on work carried out in this project published a literature survey as a book chapter.

<sup>2</sup>Reto Wüest as part of his PhD project started in the context of this project will continue these extensions and proceed to further empirical tests.

2012). One part of the analyses were then extended in the paper by Hug (2012*a*),<sup>3</sup> showing that the introduction of automatic roll call votes in the EP has significantly affected the voting behaviors of legislators. In two additional papers on the EP these aspects are dealt with in more detail (Hug, 2010, 2011).

A second set of empirical analyses dealt with the Swiss parliament. On the one hand the forthcoming article by Traber, Hug and Sciarini (2014 (forthcoming)) assesses how roll call votes in combination with the closeness of upcoming elections affect party cohesion, finding effects for some of the parties, most notably the SVP. Relatedly, Hug and Wüest (2013), following the empirical approach of Hug (2012*a*) assess how roll call votes (both requested and automatic ones) affect the behavior of members of parliament and find that in general the latter vote in a more leftist way when their voting behavior is readily visible. Related to this set of analyses are broader studies on strategic behavior in the Swiss parliament (Bütikofer and Hug, 2008) and analyses of the effects of electoral systems on voting behavior and policy positions in the Swiss lower house (Hug and Martin, 2012) and in both chambers (Hug and Martin, 2011).<sup>4</sup>

A third set of empirical analyses deals with international voting bodies. In a first publication Hug and Lukács (2013 (forthcoming)) assessed how the voting behavior of members of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is affected by their human rights record, while controlling for the effect of who proposed the resolution voted upon. Hug (2013*a*) extended these analyses to allow for a comparison of the UNHRC with its predecessor, the United Nations Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR), finding that in the latter the polarization among members was less extensive. Drawing in part on similar data Hug and Wegmann (2013) assess in a published article where Switzerland positioned itself during its first 10 years as a member of the United Nations.<sup>5</sup> The latter article drew also on data on the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) collected by Hug (2012*b*), who could demonstrate that not taking into account that many votes in this assembly are adopted without a vote, may lead to misleading results when trying to explain voting behavior in this body. Häge and Hug (2013) extend this analysis and show that frequently used measures on foreign policy closeness based on UNGA voting are biased.

All the working papers written in the context of this research project have been presented at various international and national conferences. Apart the five already published or forthcoming articles and book chapters, three papers are currently under review (Bütikofer and Hug, 2008; Hug, 2012*a*; Hug, Wegmann

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<sup>3</sup> Earlier versions of this paper were presented at a conference at Academia Sinica (September 2012) and at an invited talk at McGill University/Université de Montréal (April 2013).

<sup>4</sup> More on the fringes of this project papers dealt with the strategic interactions in the Swiss parliament (Hug and Leemann, 2010), with the ideological positions of party switchers in the Polish parliament (Hug and Wüest, 2011), the representation of the poor in the Swiss parliament (Lloren and Wüest, 2013*b*), and the representation of opinion leaders (Lloren and Wüest, 2013*a*).

<sup>5</sup> Several newspaper articles on this set of studies were discussing these results.

and Wüest, 2012), while the other working papers will be submitted for possible publication in international journals shortly. In addition, apart the main data set on voting procedures, several additional datasets have been produced and will be made available to the public: data on the requests for roll call votes in the Swiss parliament (Hug and Wüest, 2013) and the EP (Hug, 2012*a*); data on voting behavior in the Polish Sejm (Hug and Wüest, 2011); data on voting and resolutions in the UNGA (Hug, 2012*b*); data on voting and resolutions in the UNHRC and the UNCHR (Hug, 2013*a*; Hug and Lukács, 2013 (forthcoming)).

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