

ARTICLE

Policy Positions in the Chilean Senate:

An Analysis of Coauthorship and Roll Call Data*

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This paper examines the policy positions of Chilean senators. The empirical analysis focuses on two different legislative activities: voting and coauthoring bills. The roll call analysis evaluates the degree to which coalitions act as cohesive policy teams on the floor of Congress, whether parties' positions match conventional ideological rankings, and the dimensionality of voting decisions. The coauthorship analysis provides alternative ideal points to examine similar questions. The findings of the voting analysis reveal a rather unidimensional world with two distinct clusters matching coalitional affiliation, while the analysis of coauthorship illuminates a more complex pattern of associations. Neither roll call votes nor coauthorship patterns, however, reveal substantive fissures within the governing coalition. In comparison, the opposition coalition appears more divided along partisan lines.

Keywords: Senate; Coalitions; Legislative politics; Roll call votes; Chile.

The transformation of the Chilean party system following the military dictatorship has attracted considerable attention among political scientists. Unlike most Latin American nations, Chile had a long tradition of parliamentary politics before the 1973 coup, and a wealth of research examined the evolution of the party system from its 19th century origins to the 1970s. For the most part, legislative studies focusing on the contemporary period support the view that a fundamental realignment of the party system characterized the most recent transition to democracy.¹ They reveal a bipolar mapping of legislators' preferences, with members of the Chamber of Deputies clustered around two coalitions. Such a distribution of partisan preferences differs from the conventional characterization of the party system in the pre-1973 era, which portrays a tripartite grouping along ideological lines. The earlier centrists, the Christian Democrats, are now depicted as close allies of socialists and radicals, who became their partners in the post-1989 governing coalition.

* The author would like to thank Sebastián M. Saiegh, Ernesto Calvo, Marina Lacalle, Aldo Ponce, Chris Nicholson and the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.

Notes

- 1 Carey (2002), Morgenstern (2004), Alemán and Saiegh (2007).
- 2 Its full name is *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia*.
- 3 Its full name is *Alianza por Chile*. The alliance had different names in the past (e.g., *Unión por Chile*; *Democracia y Progreso*).
- 4 Magar et al. (1998) and Dow (1998).
- 5 Carey (2002) and Rabkin (1996).
- 6 See, for example, Tironi and Agüero (1999), Torcal and Mainwaring (2003) and Carey (2002).
- 7 Most permanent committees in the Senate have five members.
- 8 Presumably such legislators are, in the long run, compensated for occasional losses with policy and/or electoral benefits.
- 9 Alemán et al. (2009).
- 10 This is the negative agenda power that Cox and McCubbins (2005) highlight in their influential book, *Setting the Agenda*.
- 11 A coalition (or party) is *rolled* when a majority of its members vote against a bill and the bill passes nonetheless. See Cox and McCubbins (2005).
- 12 Poole (2005), chapter 1.
- 13 See Poole and Rosenthal (1997), and Poole (2005), chapter 4.
- 14 Figures made with STATA 10.1 software.
- 15 When APRE = 0 the model explains nothing, while APRE = 1 means a perfect classification. GMP varies from .5 (no better than flipping a coin) to 1.
- 16 For instance, in an analysis of the U.S. Senate (90th Congress) commonly used as a W-NOMINATE example, APRE = .476 and GMP = .706.
- 17 The actual placement on the left or right is arbitrary. Here, it follows conventional ideological perceptions.
- 18 See Poole (2005), chapter 3.
- 19 He was replaced by Senator Vasquez.
- 20 The correlation with the first dimension is .350.
- 21 This is: $wnominate1 = \alpha + \beta_1 \times PC1 + \beta_2 \times PC2$, resulting in: $wnominate1 = -0.036 + 0.351 \times PC1 + 0.703 \times PC2$. The associated standard errors are 0.1948 and 0.2184 (both statistically

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