The Reputations Legislators Build: With Whom Should Representatives Collaborate?

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H *ow do legislators build the reputations they use in bids for reelection? Do they use their personal reputations or associate with other legislators? And how do parties, coalitions, and institutions affect these decisions? Research on how electoral systems affect parties in legislatures frequently focuses on the extent to which electoral rules make legislators more or less ideologically convergent with respect to other members of the chamber—copartisan and not. However, finding equilibrium strategies is often possible only under restrictive institutional and spatial assumptions. Instead of viewing ideology spatially, we conceive of ideological reputations as currencies, used to purchase electoral support in transactions we liken to auctions. In our test of the model, we use bill cosponsorship patterns as an indicator of the reputations incumbents use to purchase electoral support. We show that under relatively common institutional conditions, legislators may have strong incentives to cultivate reputations they must share with their toughest electoral competitors.*

C andidates win elections by establishing reputations popular with voters. These reputations can be based either on actions and characteristics unique to a particular candidate or on actions shared by a group, such as a party. We explore how electoral rules affect the kind of reputation legislators build. With which other legislators should candidates collaborate in order to construct the most effective shared reputation? The extent to which legislators are encouraged to work together, and with whom they are encouraged to collaborate, has implications for how representative democracy functions. For example, if legislators are encouraged to distinguish themselves from their copartisans, shared party labels are less informative for voters. If electoral rules encourage legislators to gravitate toward a single ideological position, proposals for major policy shifts are unlikely. If electoral rules discourage legislators from working with members of opposition groups, compromise may be impossible. While the propensity of legislators to support policies near to or far from one another is fundamental to the practice of representative democracy, explaining variation in position taking across institutional settings and ideological contexts of varying dimensions is actually quite complex. Although much of the previous research relies on spatial models of ideology, we develop an alternate means of conceptualizing theoretically, modeling formally, and measuring empirically ideology and position taking. We use our innovations

to explain patterns of cooperation and conflict among legislators that could not be predicted from the perspective of a traditional spatial model, and as a result, we facilitate research on ideology and representation in contexts where analyzing the spatial model may be intractable.

Spatial models of electoral systems have shown that some rules can lead parties or candidates to select positions in the middle of the ideological spectrum— centripetal incentives—while incentives in other systems lead parties or candidates to select positions at the relative extremes of that spectrum—centrifugal incentives (Cox 1990, 903). Conceptualizing ideology in terms of points on a spatial map has been a mainstay of thinking about position taking since Black (1958), Downs (1957), and Hotelling (1929). Indeed, this approach has been so successful that researchers rarely think about ideology in any other way. Spatial analyses, formal and empirical, have advanced our understanding of the specific features of electoral systems responsible for position taking incentives, their implications for voters' behavior, and their impact on the strategies candidates adopt.

However, the prevalence of spatial stories of ideology—especially unidimensional stories—often leads us to confound limitations of the spatial model with limitations to studying ideological position taking itself. For example, when more than one dimension of ideological positioning is assumed, cycling and instability prevail (McKelvey 1976, 1979). In addition, models of multicandidate electoral systems often fail to reveal equilibrium outcomes and, therefore, predictions about legislator or candidate behavior. Works that fruitfully combine formal models and systematic empirical work are often limited to systems, like the United States, where the assumption that ideology is unidimensional is generally justifiable (Poole and Rosenthal 1991) and where equilibrium strategies emerge from the institutional rules of the game.

We conceive of ideological positions not as points on a spatial map, but as currencies legislators may

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pool), increasing votes per voter, outlawing partial abstention, and decreasing district magnitude all increase centripetal incentives or the motivation to cluster in the center of a unidimensional policy space. On the other hand, where votes can cumulate, single member districts create centripetal incentives, while centrifugal incentives dominate where the magnitude is greater than one. Dow (1998) and Magar, Rosenblum, and Samuels (1998) have shown formally that despite the fear of extremism based on interpretations of events in the 1970s, the current, postauthoritarian Chilean electoral system is still characterized by a lack of centripetal incentives.

The 120 members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected to four-year terms in two-seat districts, and the seats are allocated using the d'Hondt formula—the two seats are divided among the top two lists unless the first-place list garners more than twice the number of votes as the second-place one. Thus, the low district magnitude and seat allocation formula combine to encourage parties to coalesce into pre-electoral coalitions.[6] As a result, formerly disparate parties have merged into two pre-electoral lists, and these lists have been exceedingly stable in their membership (Siavelis 2000). In addition, the electoral rules assure that a plurality of votes cannot be turned into a majority of seats because in most instances it requires an overwhelming majority for a single list in any one district to capture both seats. The new electoral formula favors the representation of the second largest coalition, correctly assumed by the authoritarian framers to be the center-right. By using open-list proportional representation rules, the Chilean electoral formula creates a situation in which competition can be defined along not only interlist competition but also intralist rivalries. Because lists are open, if a given list garners only one seat, the individual legislator on that list receiving the greatest percentage of votes gets that seat (if one list doubles the number of votes of the other list, regardless of the number of votes any individual candidate on either list may have gotten, both candidates on that list get seats while the other list gets no seats).

In the elections of 1989, 1993, and 1997, only three candidates from lists other than those registered by the two major coalitions won a seat in the Chamber of Deputies.[7] *Concertación*, the center-left list, and

Unión por Chile,[8] the center-right list, together averaged more than 88% of the vote nationally in Chamber of Deputy races (Siavelis 2000, 46—49). Consistency and predictability for lists, parties, and candidates have been the norm. *Concertación*—made up primarily of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), Party for Democracy (PPD), and Socialist Party (PS)— consistently held approximately 60% of the seats, while the center-right—primarily the Independent Democratic Union (UDI) and National Renewal (RN)— maintained about 40% of the seats. In addition to this interlist stability, there was considerable stability within lists. National Renovation, of the center-right, had the greatest variation in the percentage of seats held, with a high of 26.7% and a low of 19.2%. Seat and vote totals for other parties were even more stable. In the three elections considered here, in only about 15% of the 180 elections (60 two-member districts × 3 elections) did one coalition list win both seats in a district. On average, the top vote-getting coalition got 56% of the vote and the second-place coalition got 34% of the vote. In 1993 and 1997 about 75% of incumbents were renominated and about 60% won reelection (Carey 2002, 234).

The combination of a two-member district with d'Hondt seat allocation formula encourages coalescence into two lists and movement of those lists away from the median voter. Open-list competition should encourage members of the same list to occupy an identical point in the policy space but to be circumspect about cultivating a common reputation. However, this "noncentral pairing result" does not define predictions about position taking by legislators on the same (open) coalition list who, by definition, are in competition with one another from such a conceptualization. At best, we can predict that at least some candidates will take positions distant from the median voter (Dow 1998, 455–56). Dow (1998) uses survey results in four districts to spatially position parties and finds that across districts voters consistently disperse parties on a left–right continuum, with *Concertación* candidates clustered on the center-left (with the PDC at its right/centrist edge) and the *Unión por Chile*[9] parties clustered to the right. Respondents place individual candidates close to their parties, and voters' self-placement predicts for which pre-electoral list they will vote. What evidence is there regarding how these incentives influence the behavior of legislators?

Magar, Rosenblum, and Samuels (1998, 727–29) conclude that electoral incentives like those in Chile are noncentrist, with candidates positioning themselves at a given distance on either side of the median voter, but they are uncertain regarding the extent to which lists formed in the pre-electoral stage will hold in the

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[6] A comment on terminology is in order. As we detail below, Chilean politics is dominated by two major "coalitions"—*Concertación* and *Unión por Chile*. These coalitions present open "lists" of two members in each district—meaning voters can disturb the order of the candidates. Typically, listmates or "slatemates" come from different parties within the coalition. When referring to electoral dynamics in a particular district, we refer to "lists" and listmates or slatemates. These terms would apply in any multimember electoral system. When referring to Chilean politics more generally, we may use the broader term "coalition." In other contexts, electoral lists, open or closed, may be formed by single parties rather than pre-electoral coalitions of parties.

[7] Given questions about whether some parties would be legalized by the outgoing authoritarian regime, several candidates ran as independents (on major coalition slates) or under party banners they knew to be legal in 1989. The seat totals reflect the parties of which they later declared themselves to be members. The Socialist Party,

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in particular, was of questionable legality at the end of the Pinochet regime. Its members frequently ran under the Party for Democracy label.

[8] The center-right coalition has also used the label *Democracia y Progreso* and *Unión por el Progreso*.

[9] During the 1989 elections studied by Dow (1998), the center-right coalition used the label *Democracia y Progreso*.

opposition incumbent C_{1B} is referred to with masculine pronouns. The proof refers to C_{1A} as the coalition list incumbent and C_{1B} as the opposition list incumbent, but the proof holds for both incumbents by symmetry. The fact that rational legislators prefer to work with candidates that provide the most purchasing power[30] is straightforward. Further, candidates prefer to buy as few votes as possible because this allows them to maximize the amount they can bid for each vote given their budget constraint. The only reason the proposition would not be true, then, is if a legislator could buy votes to make another candidate a winner, when that candidate would otherwise lose. The proof rests on showing that this is not the case.

Proving this for coalition listmates is straightforward. We assume that legislators share equally the number of votes the legislator buys with the coalition reputation's purchasing power. Therefore, C_{1A}'s choice to cooperate with[31] multiplier μ_A (the multiplier associated with her own coalition) has no effect on the differences between the votes incumbent C_{1A} receives and the votes the challenger/listmate C_{2A} receives. Therefore, buying votes for coalition listmates will never result in the listmate winning a seat when the incumbent loses a seat. If the incumbent has more votes prior to the purchase, the incumbent will obviously continue to have more votes. If not, the incumbent may lose (provided the purchase does not provide the list with both seats), but that had been the case prior to the purchase, anyway.

Proof for opposition list members relies on the rule in Chilean electoral system that the opposition must receive more than two-thirds of the votes cast ($\frac{2}{3}\omega + 1$) to win both of the district's seats.[32] C_{1A} prefers to buy only enough votes to assure victory, since doing so allows her to pay the highest price for each group of votes,[33] done most efficiently with the reputation (μ_i) with the most purchasing power. Further, this value is $\frac{1}{3}\omega + 1$,[34] since at that value, the opposition list (here assumed to be list B) cannot buy enough votes to win both seats for list B. What is more, incumbent C_{1A}'s listmate C_{2A} cannot win more votes than C_{1A}, thereby winning the election, without assuring that *both* of list A's candidates win seats.

If an opposition candidate does not buy $\frac{1}{3}\omega + 1$ votes, list A wins both seats. Now suppose opposition incumbent C_{1B} successfully buys $\frac{1}{3}\omega + 1$ votes.[35] There are then two possible cases. Either the opposition list multiplier μ_B is greater for all groups of voters summing to $\frac{1}{3}\omega + 1$ or there is some group of voters summing to $\frac{1}{3}\omega + 1$ using a multiplier other than

the opposition's μ_B. If the latter is the case, the coalition incumbent C_{1A} buys votes using the other multipliers μ_i. In this case, coalition incumbent C_{1A} can buy only the remaining $\frac{2}{3}\omega - 1$ votes. Therefore, the incumbent cannot, in this case, buy enough votes to make another candidate the winner, thus proving the proposition in this case.

Now suppose the former is the case: C_{1B} successfully buys at most $\frac{1}{3}\omega + 1$ votes, but the opposition list B offers the most purchasing power for all groups of voters summing to $\frac{1}{3}\omega + 1$. In this case, the coalition incumbent C_{1A} is forced to buy votes with the opposition list's multiplier only (μ_B). As before, there is only a maximum of $\frac{2}{3}\omega - 1$ votes left to buy. But again, the opposition incumbent buys $\frac{2}{3}\omega - 1$ votes, keeping one-third of the votes for herself. In this case, coalition list A has one-third of the votes, and opposition list B has a total of two-thirds of the votes. Therefore, opposition list B does not exceed the two-thirds threshold for winning both seats, and coalition incumbent C_{1A} retains the remaining seat. This proves the proposition in this case. ∎

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[30] "Purchasing power": The value μ_i is a measure of a party's or list's vote-purchasing power or "multiplier." A list's reputation has purchasing power to the extent that it is associated with ideas, positions, and actions popular with the district's voters. Therefore, if $\mu_A > \mu_B$, then party or list A has greater purchasing power than party or list B.

[31] "Cooperating with": A legislator is assumed to be *cooperating with* another candidate when the legislator buys votes with that candidate's multiplier, μ_i. This could entail any number of activities including advocating the same policy position through cosponsorship, casting identical votes in a roll call situation, or making a campaign appearance together.

[32] This assumes only two lists. Regardless of the number of lists competing, the first-place list must win more than twice as many seats as the second-place list to obtain both seats. Therefore, our logic applies in all circumstances but is easiest to explain making the simplifying assumption of two lists.

[33] Remember that the votes go to the highest bidder.

[34] Note that the model requires only that the legislator be *able* to pay the highest value for $\frac{1}{3}\omega + 1$ of the votes. The legislator may not have to do so, if his or her slatemate purchases some votes.

[35] If opposition incumbent C_{1B} does not do so, coalition list A assures winning both seats.