

Electoral Manipulation as Bureaucratic Control

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April 2013

The problem of bureaucratic compliance

- Standard approach: emphasizes formal institutions
 - Contracts, administrative procedures, agency design
 - Example: increase wages, monitoring, punishments
- Under weak institutions, standard approach problematic
 - Ample discretion by those in power
 - Personalized promises and contracts
 - We argue: survival of political patron becomes paramount

Our argument

In weakly institutionalized environments

- For bureaucrat, success depends on picking sides well
- For politician, key to eliciting compliance is to convince bureaucrat that his grip on power is solid
- Electoral manipulation can be used as an instrument of bureaucratic control

Logic: manipulation and information

- Role of electoral manipulation:
 - Muddles information about ruler's grip on power
 - Pro: Weak ruler can appear to have strong grip
 - Con: Manipulating is costly and risky
- This is an *indirect effect* of electoral manipulation (Simpser 2005; 2013)

Example: Belarus

- “only with the certainty of a big first-round victory could he [Lukashenko] be sure of keeping his hold over state officials” (Belarussian newspaper editor, quoted in *MT*)

Bureaucratic autonomy from politics around the world

Bureaucratic Quality	4	3	2	1	0
Number of countries	23	28	50	28	11
Percent of sample	16	20	36	20	8
Representative cases	USA	India	China	Russia	DR Congo
	Japan	Indonesia	Brazil	Nigeria	Iraq
	France	Mexico	Pakistan	Ethiopia	Mozambique
	UK	Italy	Vietnam	Ukraine	Mali

Source: International Country Risk Guide Bureaucratic Quality Index for 2000.
 Reflects “autonomy from political pressure” among other things.

General model sketch

- ① Principal (politician) provides signal of hold on power
- ② Agent (bureaucrat) picks level of effort
 - Effort may (but need not) affect principal survival
- ③ Principal survives in office or is removed
- ④ Payoffs given out
 - Bureaucrat receives compensation only if principal survives

Players and assumptions

- Bureaucrat (b), Ruler (r), Citizen (opponent or *pragmatist*)
- Key assumptions:
 - Bureaucrat's compensation depends on ruler's survival
 - Ruler's hold on power hinges on the citizen's type
 - Ruler benefits from bureaucrat's cooperation
 - Model B: bureaucratic effort keeps ruler in office

Timing of events (model B)

- 1 Citizen's type realized, $\Pr(t = p) = q$, observed only by citizen
- 2 Simultaneously and independently:
 - Citizen votes against/for ruler, $v \in \{0, 1\}$, in non-binding vote
 - Ruler chooses whether to attempt manipulation, $m \in \{0, 1\}$

Vote and manipulation jointly determine outcome $\hat{v} \in \{0, 1\}$
- 3 Bureaucrat chooses $e(\hat{v}, m) \in \{0, 1\}$
- 4 Ruler survives/not

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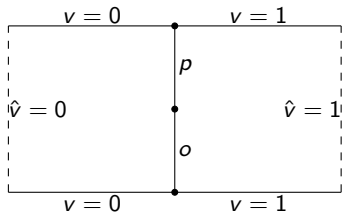
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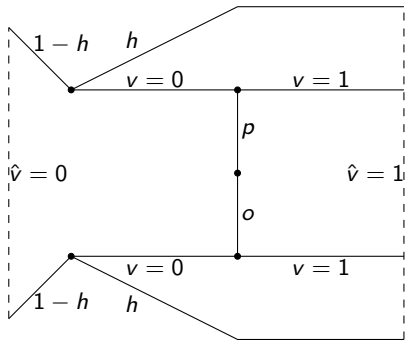
Non-binding vote

- Can understand non-binding vote as election where ruler is guaranteed victory (i.e. for any v , m)
 - Hence, manipulation m cannot be aimed at winning
 - Nevertheless, in equilibrium manipulation can be useful to ruler
- Outcome $\hat{v} \in \{0, 1\}$ is determined thus:
 - If no manipulation then $\hat{v} = v$
 - If manipulation:
 - If $v = 1$ then $\hat{v} = 1$
 - If $v = 0$ then $Pr\{\hat{v} = 1\} = h$

Manipulation technology



$m = 0$



$m = 1$

- h = “effectiveness” of manipulation

Outcomes and payoffs

- Ruler's survival technology:

$$\pi = \begin{cases} e & \text{if } t = p \\ \beta e & \text{if } t = o; \beta \in (0, 1) \end{cases}$$

- Payoffs:

- Ruler: $u_r = \pi\zeta - m\kappa$
- Bureaucrat: $u_b = \pi w - e\eta$
- Pragmatist: prefers ruler to survive \Leftrightarrow bureaucrat exerts effort
- Opponent: strictly prefers to vote against ruler, $v = 0$

Preliminaries

- Bureaucrat's expected payoff from $e = 1$:

$$[\hat{q} + (1 - \hat{q})\beta]w - \eta,$$

where $\hat{q}(m, \hat{v})$ represents posterior belief citizen is pragmatist

- Bureaucrat prefers to exert effort iff

$$\hat{q} \geq \bar{q} \equiv \frac{\eta - \beta w}{w - \beta w}$$

- By assumption, $q < \bar{q} \Rightarrow$ no effort in pooling equilibrium (true even with manipulation)

Pooling equilibria

- “Pooling”: pragmatist and opponent both choose $v = 0$
 - Bureaucrat: no learning and therefore no effort
 - Ruler: no manipulation, falls anyway
 - Pooling ruled out by intuitive criterion:
Off-the-path deviation to $v = 1$ would reveal citizen to be pragmatist

Separating equilibria

- “Separation”: pragmatist chooses $v = 1$, opponent $v = 0$
- No manipulation:
 - Bureaucrat knows citizen's type with certainty
 - Effort if and only if $\hat{v} = 1$
- Manipulation:
 - Plebiscite outcome is noisy signal: $\hat{v} = 1$ possible if pragmatist or opponent
 - Effort if and only if a) $\hat{v} = 1$, and b) signal not too noisy

Separating equilibria, cont.

- Choice to manipulate is a choice between two lotteries:

	Pragmatist (q)	Opponent ($1 - q$)
No manipulation	ς	0
Manipulation	$\varsigma - \kappa$	$h\beta\varsigma - \kappa$

- If manipulation does not contribute to victory, why does the ruler manipulate?
 - Allows 'weak' ruler to elicit effort from bureaucrat, by making it seem likely that he is 'strong'

Separating equilibria, cont.

Proposition

There exists a separating equilibrium in which a pragmatist chooses $v = 1$, an opponent chooses $v = 0$, and the bureaucrat exerts effort iff $\hat{v} = 1$ (any m). If

$$\frac{q}{q + (1 - q)h} > \frac{\eta - \beta w}{w - \beta w}$$

and

$$k < (1 - q)h\beta\zeta$$

then the ruler manipulates in this equilibrium. If either condition fails to hold (weakly), the ruler does not manipulate.

Model A: effort unrelated to survival

- Bureaucrat's effort benefits ruler, but does not affect survival
- Examples:
 - Effort yields corrupt rents to ruler
 - Effort yields policy that ruler likes
- To elicit effort, ruler pays bonus conditional on observable output
 - But contract binds only if ruler survives
- Result:
 - Separating equilibrium with manipulation exists here too

Main points

- 1 Electoral manipulation as tool for bureaucratic control
 - Bureaucrats often depend on fate of patron
 - Effort depends on perceived likelihood of patron's survival
 - Electoral manipulation influences such perceptions
- 2 Non-electoral motivation for electoral manipulation
- 3 Generalization:
 - Vanishing principals: job mobility, bankruptcy, etc.
 - Signaling likely survival as key control variable