Legislative Party Leadership:
Majoritarian Versus Utilitarian Incentives

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Introduction

In virtually every legislature, majority leadership makes procedural decisions that critically affect legislative outcomes. In the U.S. Congress important procedural decisions include bill referral, scheduling, amendment procedures, committee membership and conference proceedings. While many procedural decisions are made on the basis of longstanding norms, the influence of House majority party leadership is substantial (Cox and McCubbins 1993) and growing (Rohde 1991).

This paper develops a theory of how majority party leadership affects legislative outcomes. The theory requires a model of the goals that motivate leaders' decisions and a model of how the choice variables (procedures) affect the goals. Cox and McCubbins (1993) identified three aspects of the induced preferences of a majority party leader: the party maintenance goal, the reselection goal and the re-election goal. Specifically, the leader will try to maximize the probability that the party stays in power, the probability that he is reselected as leader, and the probability that he is re-elected from his district. (Following Cox and McCubbins, I use the term "reselection" to refer to re-election as party leader and the term "re-election" only to refer to election to the legislature.)

This paper builds on Cox and McCubbins work to understand how party leaders' induced preferences affect policy decisions. In particular, I identify circumstances which cause party leaders to be responsive to the median voter in the party, and those which cause leaders to be responsive to intense minorities within the party.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 1 below briefly reviews the literature on legislative procedures. Section 2 considers the behavior of an "ideal" party leader who only cares about keeping the party in power. Section 3 discusses the behavior of a second stylized type of leader, one who cares
only about reselection as leader. Section 4 studies the behavior of a leader who cares about both reselection and party maintenance, focusing in particular on cases when the two goals conflict. Section 5 extends the model to the include sophisticated behavior by the party's rank and file. Section 6 concludes.

1. Models of Legislative Procedures

Two earlier theories also emphasized the effect of procedural decisions on outcomes, but ignored the ability of majority party leaders to influence procedures. Both theories argued that legislative procedures evolve in ways that further the common interest of individual legislators. One theory focused on procedures surrounding the committee system and its ability to allow legislators to win on the issues they consider most important (Mayhew 1976, Shepsle and Weingast 1981, 1987, Denzau and Mackay 1983, Weingast 1989). In this sense, it is argued, the committee system and legislative procedures in general function to promote gains from trade within the legislature (Weingast and Marshall 1988).

A second model of congressional procedures emphasizes incomplete information and majoritarian control (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987, 1990, Krehbiel 1990). This model argues that procedures are designed to provide information about policy consequences and both policies and procedures are decided by majority rule. I will refer to this model as the "information-majoritarian theory."

Both theories can be easily modified to incorporate majority party leadership. It could be argued, for example, that procedural decisions are made to promote gains from trade within the majority party. Alternatively, procedures could be designed to provide information that gives
outcomes close to those desired by the median voter in the majority party. The two theories are not, however, mutually exclusive in their original party-free forms (Shepsle and Weingast 1994), nor in forms augmented to account for parties.

(Figure 1 about here.)

Figure 1 depicts a situation where a procedural decision of majority party leadership affects the policy choice. FM is the ideal point of the floor median voter, CM of the committee median, and SQ is the reversion point. If amendments are allowed to the bill (or section), the policy is FM; if not the policy is CM. Since the procedural decision is made by the leadership, the question is, which outcome does the leadership prefer? Let PM denote the ideal point of the median voter within the majority party, and PCM the ideal point of the median majority party committee member.

If we apply the logic of information-majoritarian theories to a model of party leadership, the implication is that the leadership will choose to allow amendments in order to obtain an outcome closer to the ideal point of the party median voter (unless there is a great deal of uncertainty about policy consequences). In contrast, the logic of the gains from trade model implies that the leader would be likely to not allow amendments in order to obtain an outcome close to PCM, the outcome most desired by the members of the majority party who have the most at stake in the issue.

The fundamental difference between the gains from trade theory and the majoritarian information-based theory is in the role of intensity of preference. Gains from trade theory claims that differences in intensity of preference across members is the primary force shaping legislative institutions. The information-oriented theory's emphasis on majoritarian decisions implies that intensity of preference is irrelevant. When decisions are make by majority voting, the vote of a person who is
almost indifferent counts exactly as much as the vote of someone who cares intensely about the outcome.

Party leaders face conflicting incentives. The party maintenance goal seems to create the incentive to consider member's intensity of preference in procedural decisions. A party leader trying to maximize party welfare will make decisions based on intensity of impact, just as welfare economics' benevolent dictator who tried to maximize social welfare does. In contrast, the reselection goal creates the incentive to make decisions by counting votes and essentially to ignore intensity of impact.

The following sections explore how the induced goals of leaders lead them to incorporate intensity of impact into procedural decisions. I will use the term "utilitarian" to describe decisions that consider intensity of impact, and "majoritarian" to describe decisions that do not. Utilitarian decisions attempt to obtain the highest possible level of net social benefits aggregated across individuals. In this context, "society" is the party. "Social welfare" and "net social benefits" are based on re-election probabilities. Utilitarian decisions require comparing negative impacts on some party members and positive impacts on others. Majoritarian decisions, in contrast, simply involve counting up the number of members helped and hurt.

2. Party Maintenance and Utilitarian Decisions

Consider first the behavior of leader who only cared about party maintenance. Such an leader is ideal from the party's point view, ideal in the sense of maximizing party interest. There are several ways to conceptualize party interest. In Cox and McCubbins' framework, party interest is maximized when the party's chance of remaining the majority is maximized. This definition is appealing because, in the face of competition, parties that do not maximize their chance of remaining the majority will be
replaced by those that do -- just as in a competitive market, firms that fail to maximize profits will be replaced by those that do.

There are, however, both conceptual and practical problems with using the probability of remaining in the majority as the party-oriented leaders' objective function. The primary conceptual problem is that it ignores the advantages of wide majority over a narrow one. A party with a wide majority can allow some members to vote against the party or abstain in cases where their individual reelection probabilities would be hurt by a party vote. A party with a narrow majority can only do this with the cooperation of minority members. Also, some decisions, such as veto overrides and invocation of cloture, require super-majorities. Thus, probability of remaining in the majority is an incomplete specification of the party's interest. In addition, there is the practical problem that the probability of remaining in the majority is mathematically a difficult objective function to work with.

Both the conceptual and the practical problem can be dealt with by defining party interest as the expected size of the party after the next election. In contrast to the probability of remaining a majority, this definition of the party's interest understates the difference between 49% and 51% of the seats. This issue will be partially dealt with later in discussing how real leaders balance the demands of party maintenance against competing goals.

**DEFINITION:** A party-oriented leader is one who maximizes the party's expected number of seats after the next election.

The reelection probabilities of the rank and file are affected by the outcomes of legislation. Broadly speaking, outcomes consist of the extent to which citizens are made better off or worse off by legislated policy. Procedural decisions affect outcomes by determining the legislative agenda and thus
affecting the content of legislation. Procedural decisions can also directly affect re-election probabilities by allowing members to take public positions (Mayhew 1974) or to cast a string of votes in a way that can be explained to constituents (Kingdon 1989). Member i is re-elected with probability \( R_i \), which procedural decision \( p \) affects both directly and indirectly through the outcome, \( x \), so that

\[
R_i = f(p, x(p)).
\]

Both procedural decision \( p \) and outcome \( x \) should be thought of as vectors of specific decisions and outcomes on a variety of policy dimensions.

Let the legislature consist of \( N \) members, the first \( M \) of which are the majority party. (So \( M > N/2 \).) Ignoring retirements and the possibility of primary defeats, the expected size of the majority party after the next election is maximized by

\[
\max_p \sum_{i=1}^{M} R_i(p) - \sum_{j=M+1}^{N} R_j(p)
\]

I am not concerned with the difference between the direct and indirect effects of procedures, so I will simply abbreviate \( R_i(p, x(p)) \) as \( R_i(p) \).

Suppose the party-oriented leader faces a decision between two possible procedural choices, \( p \) and \( p' \). For example, \( p \) could be to refer a bill to committee A and \( p' \) to committee B. Or \( p \) could be to give a bill a closed rule and \( p' \) to give it an open rule. In general, the leader will choose \( p \) if and only if

\[
\sum_{i=1}^{M} \Delta R_i \geq - \sum_{i=M+1}^{N} \Delta R_i
\]
where $\Delta R_i = R_i(p) - R_i(p')$.

Because I want to focus on how a party-oriented leader handles intra-party conflict, I will assume here that the procedural decision has a negligible impact on minority party members. That is,

**ASSUMPTION A:** $\Delta R_i(p) = 0$ for $i = M+1...N$.

Assumption A implies that the party-oriented leader's objective is to maximize the number of majority party members reelected.

Incorporating Assumption A, the leader will choose $p$ over $p'$ if and only if

$$\sum_{i=1}^{M} \Delta R_i \geq 0$$

that is, if the net impact on the majority party's reelection chances is positive.

This example shows that a party-oriented leader's procedural decisions will be based on the intensity of impact on reelection chances, not the number of members helped or hurt. In this sense, the decisions of a party-oriented leader are utilitarian, rather than majoritarian.

**RESULT 1:** There exist circumstances in which a party-oriented leader makes procedural decisions that hurt the reelection chances of a majority of party members.

**PROOF:** Consider the following case: (1) The median member of the majority party prefers $p'$ to $p$, so that $\Delta R_i(p) < 0$ for $i = 1...K$ where $K > M/2$. (2) The remaining $M-K$ members of the majority party who prefer $p'$ care much more intensely about the choice, so that

$$-\sum_{i=1}^{K} \Delta R_i < \sum_{i=M+1}^{M} \Delta R_i,$$

That is, the positive impact of procedural decision $p$ (relative to $p'$) on members $K+1$ through $M$ is greater in magnitude than the negative impact on members $1$ through $K$. Because
the party-oriented leader will choose p over p'. The fact that a majority within the party prefer p' is irrelevant.

Result 1 does not mean that party-oriented leaders will never make procedural decisions to the advantage of a majority within the party. For example, the party-oriented leader's decisions will favor the party majority when the intensity of the decision's impact is basically the same across party members (that is, when absolute value of $\Delta R_i$ is the same for all party members, but the sign is positive for some and negative for others). Even when significant differences in intensity of impact exist, ideal procedural decisions may favor majorities -- either because the majority cares more intensely or because the minority's greater intensity is not sufficient to overcome the majority's greater numbers. Utilitarian decisions are not always different from majoritarian decisions. When there is a difference, however, party-oriented leaders make utilitarian choices.

No mention has been made so far of the dimensionality of the outcome space. It is frequently assumed that the space of legislative outcomes is unidimensional. This can be justified because germaneness requirements and committee jurisdictions reduce a multi-dimensional policy choice to a sequence of one-dimensional choices (Shepsle 1979). These single-dimensional models of policy choice use exogenously-derived ideal points to characterize the preferences of the participants. The ideal point of individual agent i derives from the hypothetical multi-dimensional policy choices that i would make if the choice was i's to make unilaterally.
The goal of this paper is to characterize the induced ideal points of leaders. Unidimensionality is hard to justify in this context. Result 1 does not assume unidimensionality, but does apply to a one-dimensional as well as a multi-dimensional world.

In a one-dimensional world, differences across members in the intensity of impact cannot be interpreted as differences in the importance of issues in different constituencies. An alternative interpretation is that ∆R, differs across members because some members' reelection strategies depend more on policy choices than others. The impact of policy on reelection could be lower for member A than for member B because A relies on casework and district activities more than B. Alternatively, if A's baseline reelection probability is higher, diminishing marginal returns imply that the marginal impact of policy decisions will be lower.

A party-oriented leader's induced preferences will be entirely utilitarian. The party as a whole benefits the most from a leader whose choices take intensity of impact into account. Whether a particular procedural decision benefits a majority within the party is irrelevant.

3. Reselection and Majoritarian Decisions

This section explores the majoritarian influences that the reselection goal exerts on leader's decisions. As above, it is useful to consider the behavior of a hypothetical leader who cares only about reselection.

**DEFINITION:** A reselection-oriented leader is one who maximizes the probability of being reselected as leader by the rank and file.

**DEFINITION:** A majoritarian procedural decision is one that leads to the outcome preferred by the median voter within the party.
The reselection motive would seem to cause party leaders to make majoritarian decisions because they need the approval of majority of party members in order to retain their leadership positions.

**ASSUMPTION B1:** Party leaders are selected by majority voting within the party.

**ASSUMPTION B2:** Leadership candidates can credibly announce before the selection process the procedural decisions they will make as leader.

**ASSUMPTION B3:** Legislators maximize reelection probability.

**ASSUMPTION B4:** Each legislator $i$ has an ideal policy outcome, $x_i^*$, that maximizes $i$'s reelection probability. Reelection probabilities decrease monotonically in the distance of the actual outcome from the ideal. Procedures only affect reelection probabilities through outcomes.

Assumptions B1-B4 are designed more to highlight the effect of reselection on leaders' procedural choices than to strictly correspond with reality. In particular, Assumptions B2 and B3 may seem overly stylized. Assumption B2 abstracts away from commitment and information problems in the selection process. In principle, both problems affect the way any electorate (including members of a legislative party) evaluates any set of candidates (including party leadership candidates). However, the high degree of repeated contact within the legislature implies that the inability of candidates to commit to post-selection decisions will be less of a problem in party leadership selection than in other elections.

Assumption B3 is quite restrictive, and will be explicitly relaxed below. Not only can legislators have individual goals beyond reelection (Fenno 1973), I will argue later in this paper that rational backbenchers care about the fate of their party. Assumption B3 thus defines an extreme case - indeed, the case most conducive to inducing majoritarian incentives.
Assumption B4 means that legislators have single-peaked preferences over outcomes and that their preferences over procedures derive entirely from outcomes. I thus ignore the an arguably important feature of leader's procedural decisions which is allow members to take positions on some issues and avoid doing so on others (Sinclair 1992).

RESULT 2: Given Assumptions B1-B4, a single dimensional outcome space is sufficient to guarantee that a reselection-oriented leader will make majoritarian decisions.

PROOF: Assumption B2 implies that procedural decisions made after the selection process will be the same as those announced before. Thus voting for a leadership candidate is equivalent to voting for a set of procedural decisions. Individual legislators vote for the leadership candidate whose announced procedural decisions give a outcome closest to their own ideal point (Assumptions B3 and B4).

Single-peaked preferences, a single outcome dimension and majority voting (Assumption 1) imply that the median voter's ideal outcome is a Condorcet Winner (Black 1958). This establishes sufficiency.

The important point in Result 2 is that in one dimension, a reselection-oriented leader makes procedural decisions that lead to the outcome favored by the party's median voter. Such a leader could not be defeated by any rival leadership candidate.

While few people would argue that the policy of the U.S. Congress, or any real legislature, has only one dimension, this case is important because it is widely used in formal models. Strictly speaking, a single dimensional outcome space is not quite necessary to guarantee that a reselection-oriented leader makes majoritarian decisions. The conditions under which the median voter's ideal outcome is a Condorcet winner are, however, very restrictive and sensitive (Plott 1967).

Because of the general absence of a Condorcet winner in a multidimensional space, I cannot predict the precise effect of the reselection incentive on procedural decisions. In order to make such a prediction, we would have to know more about the agenda in the leadership selection process. In
particular, we would need to know something about the number of rival leadership candidates and about constraints on their positions. For this reason, I offer no general result about the behavior of a reselection-oriented leader in the multi-dimensional case.

Cox and McCubbins (1993) point out that relatively recent results in social choice theory imply that even in multi-dimensional policy spaces, winning candidates are likely to adopt positions in a small, centrally-located area, such as the uncovered set (McKelvey 1986; Cox 1987, 1989). It is important to note that differences in intensity across dimensions will affect the shape and location of the uncovered set. This implies that in a multi-dimensional world, a reselection-oriented leader does take into account intensity of impact.

In contrast to the one-dimensional case, with a multi-dimensional policy space, a reselection-oriented leader's procedural decisions will have a utilitarian component. When procedural decisions affect the outcome on more than one policy dimension, party members presumably weigh dimensions according to the intensity of impact when deciding which leadership candidate to support.

This does not, of course, mean that the reselection-oriented leader's decisions will be the same as the party-oriented leader's purely utilitarian decisions. The reselection-oriented leader's incentive to maintain the support of a majority within the party allows some party members to potentially be written off. Moreover, while party-oriented leaders take account of differences in overall impact as well as differences across dimensions, reselection-oriented leaders only consider the latter.

Although a reselection-oriented leader may take intensity of impact into account, a purely reselection-oriented leader's decisions will be less influenced by intensity considerations than a party-oriented leader's. This is because the reselection-oriented leader always has the incentive to discount
(or ignore completely) the preferences of some minority in the party in order to better win the votes of a majority.

4. A Single Objective Function for the Party Leader

Real party leaders, of course, are neither purely reselection-oriented nor purely party-oriented. We expect real procedural decisions to reflect both reselection and party maintenance, as well as the leader's own reelection and other personal goals. Real leaders' goals are a composite of the stylized types discussed so far.

DEFINITION: A composite leader's goals include reselection, party maintenance and reelection.

ASSUMPTION C1: Composite leader L maximizes

\[ U_L(p) = R_L(p)(M(p)[S_L(p)u_{11} + (1 - S_L(p))u_{10}] + (1 - M(p))[S_L(p)u_{01} + (1 - S_L(p))u_{00}]) \]

where \( R_L \) is L's probability of reelection, \( S_L \) is the probability of reSelection as leader and \( M \) is the probability that L's party remains in power. Parameter \( u_{11} \) represents the value to L of being leader of the majority party, \( u_{10} \) the value of being a majority party back-bencher, \( u_{01} \) the value of being minority party leader, and \( u_{00} \) the value of being a minority party backbencher. Thus,

\[ u_{11} > u_{10} > u_{00} \]

and

\[ u_{11} > u_{01} > u_{00} \]

This objective function is taken directly from Cox and McCubbins (1993), with the additional feature that \( R_L, S_L \) and \( M \) are explicitly functions of the leader's procedural decisions \( p \). Like Cox and McCubbins, I assume that utility of losing one's seat is the same, whether or not the party stays in power. This allows me to normalize the value of not being reelected to zero. In contrast to Cox and
McCubbins, I assume that the probability of reselection is independent of whether the party remains in power.

There is some tension between this objective function and the earlier discussion of a party-oriented leader. The literal interpretation of Assumption C1 as a von Neumann-Morgenstern utility function implies that M is the probability that the party remains in power. In contrast, the discussion of party-oriented leaders and utilitarian incentives assumed that party maintenance involves maximizing the number of majority party members reelected. The difference is the between maximizing the probability of maintaining party control of a particular majority of seats and maintaining control of any majority.

The difference turns out not to be too important, however, for the induced preferences of a composite leader. The issue here is how composite leaders balance reselection against party maintenance. Let party maintenance be defined as the party's chance of remaining in power. Obviously, a composite leader will not choose procedure p if an alternative procedure p' exists such that R(p') > R(p) and M(p') ≥M(p). That is, a composite leader's decisions will lie on a frontier such that no alternative decision can further one goal without damaging the other.

In practice this means that composite leaders maximize party maintenance in ways that best promote reselection as party leader. One way to do this is to focus on maintaining a majority by maximizing the number of party incumbents reelected. In choosing between various configurations of seats that all give the party a majority, a composite leader will strongly favor the majorities that involve reelecting the most party incumbents. This means thinking of party leaders as promoting party maintenance by promoting the reelection of party incumbents will not lead us astray empirically.
Two simplifying assumptions allow me to focus on the trade-off between party maintenance and reselection. First, I assume that the effect of procedural decisions on the leader's reelection probability is negligible.

**ASSUMPTION C2:** \( R_l(p) = R \) (a constant) for all \( p \).

Second, I assume that the incremental value of a position as leader rather than backbencher does not depend on whether the party is in the majority.

**ASSUMPTION C3:** \( u_{11} - u_{10} = u_{01} - u_{00} \).

Assumption C3 also means that the incremental value of being in the majority does not depend on whether the legislator is a leader or not. This obviously unrealistic assumption allows me to establish a benchmark result.

Procedural decisions that further L's reselection chances will often also contribute to party maintenance. In these cases, the composite leader faces no conflict. Moreover, in these cases, the procedural decisions of a composite leader will not be different from those of a party-oriented leader or a reselection-oriented leader.

Result 3 discusses the more interesting case in which reselection and party maintenance conflict.

**RESULT 3:** Given Assumptions C1, C2 and C3, party maintenance is more likely to dominate reselection in the procedural decisions of composite leader L, ceteris paribus,
(a) the greater the impact of procedural decisions on party maintenance,
(b) the smaller the impact on reselection, or 
(c) the greater the incremental value of being in the majority.
(d) the smaller the incremental value of being leader.

**PROOF:** Consider two procedural bundles, \( p \) and \( p' \) such that
\[ S_L(p) > S_L(p') \]

but

\[ M(p) < M(p') \]

so that L’s reselection probability is higher with p but the party’s chance of remaining in the majority is higher with \( p' \).

Denote \( S(p) \) by \( S \), \( S(p') \) by \( S' \), \( M(p) \) by \( M \), and \( M(p') \) by \( M' \). Composite leader L chooses \( p' \) over p if

\[
M'[S'u_{11} + (1 - S')u_{10}] + (1 - M')[S'u_{01} + (1 - S')u_{00}] > \\
M[Su_{11} + (1 - S)u_{10}] + (1 - M)[Su_{01} + (1 - S)u_{00}]
\]

which simplifies to

\[
(M'S' - M'S)(u_{11} - u_{10} - (u_{01} - u_{00})) + (M' - M)(u_{10} - u_{00}) + (S' - S)(u_{01} - u_{00}) > 0
\]

Assumption C3 means that we can let \( \Delta u_M = u_{11} - u_{10} = u_{01} - u_{00} \), so that \( \Delta u_M \) is the incremental value of a leadership position. Similarly, let \( \Delta u_S = u_{11} - u_{01} = u_{10} - u_{00} \) represent the incremental value of being in the majority. This reparameterization combined with Assumption C2 simplifies the above equation to

\[
(M' - M)\Delta u_M + (S' - S)\Delta u_S > 0
\]

or

\[
\frac{\Delta u_S}{\Delta u_M} < \frac{M' - M}{S - S'}
\]

Equation (1) gives the conditions under which L chooses \( p' \) to further party maintenance over p, which would have improved L’s reselection odds. Ceteris paribus, Equation (1) is more likely to hold

(a) the greater the difference between \( M' \) and \( M \) (the impact of the procedural decision on party maintenance),

(b) the smaller the difference between \( S \) and \( S' \) (the impact of the procedural decision on reelection)

(c) the greater is \( \Delta u_M \) (value of being in the majority)

(d) the smaller is \( \Delta u_S \) (value of being leader).
An additional assumption facilitates the derivation of empirical hypotheses.

**ASSUMPTION C4:** Procedural decisions have diminishing marginal impact on individual reelection probabilities $R_i$ and party maintenance probability $M$.

Assumption C4 says that the lower the leader's reselection probability, the more sensitive it will be to procedural decisions, and that the same is true for party maintenance. The most natural way to think of this is that the effect of procedures on outcomes is linear, or (more likely) highly discontinuous, but the effect of outcomes on $S_L$ and $M$ is concave. Assumption C4 is necessarily true for high values of $S_L$ and $M$ because both represent probabilities, and are therefore bounded above by one.

**RESULT 4:** Given Assumptions C1-C4, party maintenance is more likely to dominate reelection in the procedural decisions of composite leaders, ceteris paribus,
(a) the greater the probability of reselection,
(b) the lower the party's chance of remaining in power.

**PROOF:** According to Result 3, the smaller the impact of procedural decisions on reselection, the more likely the leader is to make procedural decisions on the basis of party maintenance. Assumption C4 says that the higher the reselection probability, the smaller the impact of procedural decisions. Parallel logic applies to the party's chance of remaining in power.

Combining Result 4 with Results 1 and 2 gives the prediction that party leaders are most likely to make utilitarian decisions when the reselection process is relatively uncompetitive (perhaps based on seniority, for example) and when the party's chances of staying in power are relatively low. Leaders are most likely to make majoritarian decisions when the reselection process is highly competitive and the party's majority is electorally safe.

5. Sophisticated Backbenchers
Consider now the effect of relaxing the assumption that backbenchers care only about their own individual reelection probabilities (Assumption B3). This assumption is arguably naive, because the rank and file reap a variety of rewards when their party is in the majority. Not only do majority party members stand a much a higher chance of sponsoring successful legislation, only majority members can become sub-committee and committee chairs, gaining prestige, power and additional resources. Party maintenance should thus be a part of any rank and file member's objective function.

**DEFINITION:** A sophisticated legislator is one who considers party maintenance in evaluating leaders' procedural decisions.

**ASSUMPTION D1:** Sophisticated legislator $i$ prefers the procedural bundle $p$ that maximizes

$$V_i(p) = R_i(p)[M(p)v_M + (1 - M(p))v_m]$$

where $R_i$ is $i$'s reelection probability and $M$ is the probability that $i$'s party stays in power. Positive parameters $v_M$ and $v_m$ are the utility of being a member of the majority party and the minority party.

As above, I assume that utility of losing one's seat is the same, whether or not the party stays in power. Also, I continue to focus on cases in which there is conflict between partisan and personal goals. Result 5 discusses the induced preferences of a sophisticated backbencher when reelection and party maintenance conflict.

**RESULT 5:** Given Assumption D1, when sophisticated backbenchers evaluate leaders' procedural decisions, party maintenance is more likely to dominate reelection, ceteris paribus,

- (a) the greater the impact of procedural decisions on party maintenance,
- (b) the smaller the impact on reelection, or
- (c) the greater importance $i$ places on being in the majority.

**PROOF:** Without loss of generality, consider two procedural bundles, $p$ and $p'$ such that
\[ R_i(p) > R_i(p') \]

but

\[ M(p) < M(p') \]

so that i's reelection probability is higher with p but the party's chance of remaining in the majority is higher with p'.

Denote \( R(p) \) by \( R \), \( R(p') \) by \( R' \), and \( M(p) \) by \( M \), \( M(p') \) by \( M' \). By Assumption D1, legislator \( i \) prefers procedural bundle \( p' \) if

\[
R_i[Mv_i + (1 - M)v_\alpha] < R_i[M'v_i + (1 - M')v_\alpha]
\]

or

\[
\frac{M(v_i - v_\alpha)}{M'(v_i - v_\alpha) + v_\alpha} < \frac{R'}{R}
\]

Both sides of Equation (2) are less than one by hypothesis. Equation (2) is more likely to hold

(a) the greater the difference between \( M \) and \( M' \) (the impact of the procedural decisions on party maintenance),

(b) the smaller the difference between \( R \) and \( R' \) (the impact of the procedural decisions on reelection)

(c) the greater the difference between \( v_i \) and \( v_\alpha \) (importance of being in the majority.)

Result 5 defines conditions under which party-oriented leaders (or composite leaders who make utilitarian decisions) can retain the support of those sophisticated party members who end up on the losing side of procedural decisions. In particular, Result 5(b) contains good reselection news for party-oriented leaders. As discussed in Section 2 above, a party-oriented leader will make a decision to the advantage of those party members most intensely affected at the expense of those least affected.

Result 5(b) says that those least affected are also least likely to punish the leader by supporting a rival.
In this sense, if party members are sophisticated, the reselection incentive can induce leaders to behave in the interest of the party. Results 5(a) and 5(c) imply that partisan goals are most efficiently transmitted through the reselection process when leader's decisions have a large effect on the party's fate and when members place a high premium on being in the majority party.

ASSUMPTION D2: Procedural decisions have diminishing marginal impact on individual reelection probabilities $R_i$ and party maintenance probability $M$.

Assumption D2 extends Assumption C4 to the sophisticated backbencher. It says that the lower a legislator's reelection probability, the more sensitive it will be to leaders' procedural decisions, and that the same is true for party maintenance. Like Assumption C4, Assumption D2 is necessarily true for high values of $R_i$ and $M$ because both represent probabilities, and are therefore bounded above by one.

RESULT 6: Given Assumptions D1 and D2, when backbenchers evaluate leaders' procedural decisions, party maintenance is more likely to dominate reelection, ceteris paribus, (a) the greater $i$'s probability of reelection, (b) the lower the party's chance of remaining in power.

PROOF: According to Result 5, the smaller the impact of procedural decisions on a member's reelection probability, the more likely the member is to evaluate procedural decisions on the basis of party maintenance. Assumption D2 says that the higher the reelection probability, the smaller the impact of procedural decisions. Parallel logic applies to the party's chance of remaining in power.

Result 6 seems sensible -- members will be less likely to accept a decision that works against their own reelection (even in a small way) when they are in serious electoral trouble. Similarly, they will be more likely to tolerate a decision that works against them for the good of the party when the party is in genuine electoral trouble.
When the rank and file want leaders to make utilitarian decisions, even leaders don't themselves care about party maintenance will do so. The existence of sophisticated backbenchers never increases a leader's propensity to make majoritarian decisions.

One way in which conditions (a) and (b) in Result 6 could simultaneously be satisfied when if the party's current majority is quite slim. Here, most of the rank and file could face reasonably safe reelection odds, while at the same time, the party's chance of remaining the majority would be low. In this situation, Result 4 tells us that a composite leader would make more utilitarian decisions (holding reelection odds constant) than when the party has a wide majority. Result 6 reinforces this result by predicting that the punishment (lower reelection odds) for utilitarian decisions would be lower because the rank and file who were not themselves at high electoral risk would favor decisions made to promote party maintenance.

6. Conclusion

The overall implication of this paper's results is that under a wide range of conditions, party leaders base procedural decisions on the intensity of impact. If the leader cares about party maintenance, if backbenchers are sophisticated, or if the policy space is multi-dimensional, leaders will make decisions in favor of those party members who care most intensely about the issue at stake. In contrast, the conditions under which a party leader's decisions implement the party median voter's ideal point are very restrictive. Essentially, leaders respond to the party median only when they are purely reelection-oriented and the issue space is single-dimensional.

The problem is that credible information about intensity of preference is difficult to obtain. Presumably backbenchers understands that leaders' respond to party members most intensely impacted.
Backbenchers thus face the incentive to exaggerate the impact of any decision on themselves and their constituents. In this sense, the situation of a party leader is similar to that of any benevolent central authority faced with allocating scarce resources in the absence of a functioning market (Starret 1988). Legislative party leaders and the benevolent dictators of welfare economics are best able to accomplish their goals if institutional arrangements promote truthful revelation of intensity of preference.

Indeed, Bach and Smith (1988) emphasize that congressional procedures help leaders manage uncertainty. Informational-majoritarian models generally assume that procedural choices in legislatures are designed to reveal information about policy consequences. Starting from a model of leader's induced preferences, this model concludes that the more important informational problem is uncertainty about intensity of impact. The implication is that leaders should use procedures in ways that either cause members to truthfully reveal the intensity of their preference, or that automatically allocate extra influence to party members with high intensity. For example, Bawn (1995) shows how multiple referral of bills allows leaders to obtain credible information about which committee's majority party members are more intensely impacted by a new policy issue.

The more weight party leaders give to the goal of maintaining control of a majority of seats, the more procedural decisions will be based on intensity of impact rather than number of party members in favor. When substantial differences in intensity of impact exist within the majority party, rational leaders will attempt to promote gains from trade within the party, and sophisticated members will support them. Under realistic conditions with many policy dimensions and sophisticated rank and file, party leaders will target the party median primarily in cases when the impact of a decision is roughly the same across members.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


1. While the information-based theories place a great deal of weight on majoritarian control, they do not presume that majorities are drawn along party lines, and have been extended to imply that parties are not important in legislative decisions (Krehbiel 1993).

2. In the House of Representatives, this decision would be made by the Rules Committee, which I am here treating as part of the leadership.

3. See Dion and Huber (1992) for a careful analysis of this choice in the information-majoritarian framework.


5. Alternative solution concepts are the yolk and the heart (Schofield 1991).