Abstract

We show that the outcome of indirect elections under PR, where party platforms are endogenously determined by their supporters' preferences, may lead to an outcome that is Pareto-dominated by the direct elections outcome even when no group of supporters of one party has an incentive to leave that party and join another one.

Party-list Proportional Representation

- Representative democracy combines two levels of choice: 1) How citizens' votes are transformed into assemblies. 2) How decisions are made within assemblies.
- Party-list proportional representation (PLPR) works as follows: 1) Political parties design a list involving as many candidates as positions to be filled. 2) Citizens vote for a single party.
- Each of the parties gets a proportion of seats equal to its vote share, which can be given two meanings: 1) How citizens' votes are transformed into assemblies. 2) How decisions are made within assemblies.

Endogenous political supply, does the inconsistency prevail?

- Our analysis is based on a model where the platform of each party emanates from the preferences of its supporters. Numerous examples support this approach.
- In both US and French primary presidential elections, parties running for office design their programs according to their party's views.
- In Turkey, the recent evolution of the leading party AKP regarding the Kurdish Peace Process may be attributed to voters taking "more nationalist" positions.
- It is often claimed that PR absorbs the attention of politicians.
- It is claimed that PR is the best device in terms of faithful accounting of the citizens' wills, which can be given two meanings:
- The ability of assemblies to represent the full diversity of opinions within a nation:
  - "The system of proportional representation ensures that virtually every constituency in the country will have a hearing in the national and provincial legislatures. Bishop Desmond Tutu, The Rainbow People of God (1994)
  - The portrait is excellent in proportion to its being a good likeness, the legislature ought to be the most exact transcript of the whole society...the faithful echo of the voices of the people." (James Wilson, at the Constitutional Convention)

Main Features of Our Model

- Each voter is characterized by an ideal platform: vector of YES or NO positions regarding a given number of mutually independent issues.
- Party platforms are multichotomous, designed by issue-wise majority voting within the set of partisans.
- Each voter ranks platforms by means of the symmetric (Hamming) distance: distance 0 of disagreements.
- and votes for the party with the platform closest to her ideal.
- Given the resulting set of party platforms, parliamentary seats are distributed proportional to vote shares.
- The final outcome is determined by issue-wise majority from the parliamentary profile.

Definitions

- A partisan map is called consistent when no partisan of some party votes for another party.
- We call preferentially stable a partisan map \((a^x, S)\) where no subset of supporters of a party can by jointly supporting another party contribute to this new party platform that is closer to their ideals.
- Preferentially stability ignores the effect of voters' moves on the final outcome. Getting closer to party platform may be at the cost of a less preferred final outcome.
- We call strategically stable a partisan map where no subset of partisans of one party can by jointly supporting another party get a final outcome that they all prefer the initial outcome.
- A preferentially and strategically stable partisan map faithfully accounts for the diversity of opinions.

Main Result

- Proposition 1: Our main finding is that the final outcome of a preferentially and strategically stable partisan map, may be unanimously less preferred to the outcome of direct elections.
- Proposition 2: The PLPR paradox may also hold at an optimal and strategically stable partisan map.

Further Remarks

Optimal Partisan Maps

- Preferential stability aims at describing a platform set that best represents the diversity of voters opinions.
- An alternative way to capture the same idea is to consider partisan maps with a subset of voters where the platform set is at minimal distance to voters profile.
- An optimal partisan map need not be preferentially stable and visa versa.

Number of parties?

- Proposition 3: For any consistent political landscape with only two parties (with any number of issues), the PLPR paradox occurs only if ties are broken in a specific way.
- As many parties as different ideals → no paradox.
- Similarly, a unique party → no paradox.

- Call balanced a consistent partisan map where merging or splitting parties either increases the distance between one partisan's ideal and her party platform, or increases the distance between the direct and the indirect outcome.
- Studying the structure of balanced maps may be interesting.

Domain restrictions to avoid the paradox?

- Which domain restrictions makes partisans immune to the PLPR paradox? An easy answer relates to the size of issue-wise majority margins.
- Proposition 4: Suppose that in the voter profile \(x^i\), for each issue majority is strictly more than 75%. Then no partisan map \((a^x, S)\) faces the PLPR paradox (strategic or preferential).

Pro and Con Arguments - PLPR

- Two-party politics less probable; higher voter turnout.
- Overcome gerrymandering, malapportionment and pork barreling.
- Makes “a majority for a single party” less probable.
- May cause political instability and cause unexpected elections to absorb the attention of politicians.
- Endow small parties with too much bargaining power in the search for a government coalition.

Inconsistency between PR and direct elections (fixed political supply)

- Three possible decisions \(a, b, c\) and three political parties 1, 2, 3.
- Party preferences are linear orders: \(a > b > c \) or \( c > b > a \) or \( b > c > a \).
- Voters rank parties lexicographically:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Vote shares lead to majority cycle in parliament: \(a \rightarrow b \rightarrow c \rightarrow a\).
- By contrast, citizens’ preferences: \(b\) is the Condorcet winner.

References


Endnotes

- In both US and French primary presidential elections, parties running for office design their programs according to their party's views.
- In Turkey, the recent evolution of the leading party AKP regarding the Kurdish Peace Process may be attributed to voters taking "more nationalist" positions.
- It is claimed that PR is the best device in terms of faithful accounting of the citizens' wills, which can be given two meanings:
- The ability of assemblies to represent the full diversity of opinions within a nation:
  - "The system of proportional representation ensures that virtually every constituency in the country will have a hearing in the national and provincial legislatures. Bishop Desmond Tutu, The Rainbow People of God (1994)
  - The portrait is excellent in proportion to its being a good likeness, the legislature ought to be the most exact transcript of the whole society...the faithful echo of the voices of the people." (James Wilson, at the Constitutional Convention)

- A partisan map is called consistent when no partisan of some party votes for another party.
- We call preferentially stable a partisan map \((a^x, S)\) where no subset of supporters of a party can by jointly supporting another party contribute to this new party platform that is closer to their ideals.
- Preferentially stability ignores the effect of voters’ moves on the final outcome. Getting closer to party platform may be at the cost of a less preferred final outcome.
- We call strategically stable a partisan map where no subset of partisans of one party can by jointly supporting another party get a final outcome that they all prefer the initial outcome.
- A preferentially and strategically stable partisan map faithfully accounts for the diversity of opinions.

- Proposition 1: Our main finding is that the final outcome of a preferentially and strategically stable partisan map, may be unanimously less preferred to the outcome of direct elections.
- Proposition 2: The PLPR paradox may also hold at an optimal and strategically stable partisan map.

- Call balanced a consistent partisan map where merging or splitting parties either increases the distance between one partisan’s ideal and her party platform, or increases the distance between the direct and the indirect outcome.
- Studying the structure of balanced maps may be interesting.

- Which domain restrictions makes partisans immune to the PLPR paradox? An easy answer relates to the size of issue-wise majority margins.
- Proposition 4: Suppose that in the voter profile \(x^i\), for each issue majority is strictly more than 75%. Then no partisan map \((a^x, S)\) faces the PLPR paradox (strategic or preferential).

- Two-party politics less probable; higher voter turnout.
- Overcome gerrymandering, malapportionment and pork barreling.
- Makes “a majority for a single party” less probable.
- May cause political instability and cause unexpected elections to absorb the attention of politicians.
- Endow small parties with too much bargaining power in the search for a government coalition.