



MP behavior in mixed-member electoral systems



Michael F. Stoffel*

University of Konstanz, Department of Politics and Public Administration, P.O. Box 92, Universitätsstraße 10, 78457 Konstanz, Germany

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has argued that representatives in mixed-member electoral systems adjust their behavior to the mode of their election, the so-called mandate divide. MPs elected in single-member districts focus on their district, whereas those elected through closed party lists focus on their party. Yet this ignores that candidates in mixed-member systems can run in a district and on their party's list concurrently. This paper presents a model of how the prospects of re-election in the district and through the party list affect the relationship between voters, candidates, and parties. It is shown that the dual candidacy option results in candidates focusing on their party in most instances. The model is applied to a novel data set on the allocation of federal road construction projects in Germany.

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1. Introduction

Mixed-member electoral systems have been on the upturn in the past two decades and are now operating in a variety of countries (Massicotte and Blais, 1999; Golder, 2005). Generally speaking, mixed-member systems combine two or more electoral formulas at different tiers within one electoral system. Thus, candidates can compete in a majoritarian tier (usually SMDs) and a proportional tier (closed party lists). A substantial number of these systems allow MPs to run in both tiers concurrently, which is referred to as 'dual candidacy.' Numerous studies ignore this fact, however, and classify MPs and their behavior according to the mode by which they are elected, the so-called 'mandate divide' (Lancaster and Patterson, 1990; Klingemann and Weßels, 2001; Lundberg, 2006; Haspel et al., 1998; Montgomery, 1999). This shortcoming has been identified in the seminal work of Ferrara et al. (2005), who argue that the different tiers 'contaminate' each other. While there are attempts to control for dual candidacy

(Kunicova and Remington, 2008; Thames, 2001, 2005; Stratmann and Baur, 2002; Sieberer, 2010; Zittel and Gschwend, 2008), these still treat the two tiers as being independent (but see Herron, 2002). Thus, we still lack a theoretical framework that explains how the dual candidacy option affects MPs' re-election prospects and electoral strategies, and how the stakes in the district and on the party list interact.

This article is to bridge this gap. It presents a model that illustrates the effects of dual candidacy and career prospects on MP behavior. The model predicts that most representatives focus on serving their party in their legislative activities. However, some MPs put emphasis on the representation of their districts. For this group claiming credit for district service is even more important than for representatives in pure first-past-the-post systems. The validity of the model is assessed by estimating the influence individual representatives take on the distribution of pork barrel projects using a novel data set on German federal road construction.

A central desire of representatives is to continue their career, an aim for which re-election is a prerequisite. The ways by which this goal can be achieved substantially differ depending on an MP's principal: the district electorate and/or the party. Representatives elected in majoritarian single-

* Tel.: +49 7531 882069; fax: +49 7531 884200.
 E-mail address: michael.stoffel@uni-konstanz.de.

member districts focus on representing the district electorate, trying to ‘cultivate a personal vote’ (Carey and Shugart, 1995) and develop their own ‘home style’ (Fenno, 1978). David Mayhew (1974, 49–77) gives three activities that serve this end: position taking, advertising, and credit claiming. Of these, credit claiming is the most effective since it refers to previous accomplishments benefiting individuals (casework) or larger groups (distributive politics).

In contrast, candidates in closed-list PR systems are dependent on their party. It is the party that decides on list positions and, thus, the chances of an MP’s re-election. Whereas their counterparts in SMDs have to differentiate themselves from district competitors by developing an individual brand name, candidates in closed-list systems do better by adhering to the party line. As parties want to provide an effective platform for legislating and campaigning (Cox and McCubbins, 2005; Aldrich, 1995), they hold their troops together and punish behavior that impairs legislative unity by refusing a good list position. Therefore, representatives adjust their actions and avoid taking positions against their party.

Several studies highlight the differing incentive schemes electoral systems place on candidates (Bowler and Farrell, 1993; Crisp et al., 2004; Heitshusen et al., 2005; Scholl, 1986). Studies also have sought to provide evidence for the mandate divide through the analysis of mixed-member systems. Germany as one of the longest-existing mixed-member systems has received particular scholarly attention in this respect. ‘To a great extent the German case provides a naturally ‘controlled’ environment for this test, given the country’s dual system of representation in which half the country’s parliamentary representatives are elected from single-member districts and the other half from multimember districts’ (Lancaster and Patterson, 1990, 461). This, however, is a misreading of mixed-member electoral systems because candidates can and do compete in both tiers at the same time. The dual candidacy raises effects that do not correspond to the mandate divide as Herron (2002, 367) suggests in a study of voting behavior in the Ukrainian parliament:

[The] characteristics of mixed-member systems, particularly the dual candidacy option, break the link between seat type and behavior. [...] Specifically, dual candidacy, combined with the safety of the list position or district, should influence how closely a legislator conforms to factional positions, regardless of the seat that the legislator occupies.

It is, therefore, essential to consider how likely the re-election of a candidate is. This likelihood is determined through *joining* the probabilities of re-election in the district and through the party list. The behavioral predictions from models acknowledging this fact are substantially different from standard and extended mandate divide models. More specifically, candidates in stronghold districts behave in the same way as candidates with a top list position, that is, they focus on serving their party. In a nutshell, the logic is that both are guaranteed re-election and can, thus, concentrate on promoting their career within parliament, which is dependent upon their party.

Candidates who face a narrow district race and are not backed up by their list position, however, have to focus on their constituency in order to achieve re-election.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. The next section introduces a theoretical model of MP behavior in mixed-member systems. Section 3 introduces a novel data set on the allocation of German federal pork and discusses the empirical research strategy. Section 4 presents the results of the empirical analysis. The final section concludes and draws implications for future research.

2. Theory

A legislator is endowed with resources, which she can use for her activities in parliament and her district as well as for private consumption. These resources encompass a variety of things, such as the time an MP invests in her activities, the number and quality of staff she commands, or money available for individual campaigning. Let the total amount of the resources available to a representative in a legislative period be given by R . The representative can decide on how to use these resources by allocating an amount d to district affairs and an amount l to affairs related to her party list. The remaining resources $R-d-l$ are left for private consumption.

The allocation decision does not only affect the well-being of the MP in the present legislative period, but also her career prospects. It does so in two ways: by influencing whether or not the MP can continue her career in the upcoming legislative period; and by determining how her future office is endowed given that she enters parliament again.

A representative is re-elected with probability p , where this probability depends on how her actions in the legislative period are evaluated by her principal. In simple electoral systems, the principal is either the party (closed-list PR) or the district electorate (majoritarian SMDs). In mixed-member systems, however, a candidate serves two competing principals, each of whom is courting the attention of the prospective legislator (cf. Carey, 2007, 2009). The probability p , thus, needs to be discerned into two constitutive elements, the probability of being re-elected in the district p_D and the probability of being re-elected through the party list p_L , where $0 \leq p, p_D, p_L \leq 1$.

The overall re-election probability can be obtained from the distinct re-election probabilities in the following way. Let the event of being elected in the district be given by \mathcal{D} and the probability of being elected through the party list be given by \mathcal{L} . The overall probability results from standard probability theory.

$$p = \Pr(\mathcal{D}) + \Pr(\mathcal{L}) - \Pr(\mathcal{D} \cap \mathcal{L}) \\ = p_D + p_L - \Pr(\mathcal{D} \cap \mathcal{L}), \quad (1)$$

where $\Pr(\mathcal{D} \cap \mathcal{L})$ denotes the probability that an MP is elected both in the district and through the party list. Assuming that p_D and p_L are independent from each other, the expression equals the more traceable form

$$p = p_D + p_L - p_D \cdot p_L. \quad (2)$$

The probability of re-election in the district is determined by the electorate. Voters either directly observe the

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