



Winners, losers, and protest behavior in parliamentary systems



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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I examine the impact of winning and losing in parliamentary systems on protest behavior. I argue that losers in parliamentary systems with single party, majority governments are more likely to protest than losers in systems with coalition governments. In the empirical analysis, I provide support for my argument using data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) survey from 2001 to 2006. The results suggest that losers in single party, majority systems were more likely to protest than their counterparts in coalition systems. In addition, while it is unclear whether winning and losing had an effect on protest behavior in coalition systems, losers in single party, majority systems were more likely to protest than winners.

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1. Introduction

The extent to which voters are satisfied with democratic outcomes depends on factors such as the age of a country's democratic institutions, government performance, and economic conditions. Whether or not a voter's preferred party receives a cabinet position after an election also influences satisfaction. Not surprisingly, research on this topic suggests that following parliamentary election outcomes, "winners" (or voters who voted for parties that received cabinet posts) are more satisfied with democratic outcomes than "losers" (or voters who voted for parties that did not receive cabinet posts). In addition, this research also suggests that losers are less satisfied with democratic outcomes if they live in a majoritarian democratic system versus a consensus system (Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan, & Listhaug, 2005; Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Anderson & Mendes, 2005; Chang, Chu, & Wu, 2014; Conroy-Krutz & Kerr, 2015; Davis & Hitt, 2016; Holmberg, 1999; Lijphart, 1999; Singh, 2014).

If losers in majoritarian systems are less satisfied with democracy than losers in consensus systems, this may influence the extent to which these different types of losers engage in post-election political behavior. In this paper, I examine the effect of losing in different types of parliamentary systems on whether losers engage in a specific type of political behavior: protest activity. I argue that losers in parliamentary systems with single party, majority governments are more likely to protest than losers in parliamentary systems with coalition governments.

Single party, majority government systems allow ruling parties to dominate the policymaking process. This allows ruling parties to exclude opposition parties from the decision making process. Hence, losers' interests are not well represented in these systems (Anderson et al., 2005; McDonald, Mendes, & Budge, 2004; Powell, 2000). As a means to increase their representation, losers may take to the streets in order to encourage the public to support their causes and pressure the government to acknowledge losers' concerns. On the other hand, ruling parties in systems with coalition governments are more inclusive when it comes to policymaking. This implies that losers are slightly better represented in coalition systems than

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in single party, majority systems (Anderson et al., 2005; McDonald et al., 2004; Powell, 2000). As a result, losers in consensus systems have less incentive to protest than losers in single party, majority systems.

In order to provide support for my argument, I use data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) survey from 2001 to 2006. I find that losers in single party, majority parliamentary systems are more likely to protest than losers in coalition systems. Additionally, it is unclear whether losers are more likely to protest than winners in coalition systems. However, in single party, majority systems, losers are more likely to protest than winners.

This paper proceeds as follows: I review the literature that examines factors that influence protest behavior. Then I build an argument to explain why losers in single party, majority parliamentary systems are more likely to protest than losers in coalition systems. Next, I provide empirical support for my argument. In the conclusion, I discuss implications for future research.

2. Factors that influence protest behavior

Citizens in parliamentary systems have several options when they want to influence the policymaking process. Enfranchised citizens have the opportunity to influence the process through voting for parties or candidates that will represent their interests in government. In off election years, citizens can influence policy *within* parliament by contacting their representatives in government. Alternatively, citizens can influence policy *outside* of parliament by peacefully protesting (Lipsky, 1968; Machado, Scartascini, & Tommasi, 2011). A peaceful protest is an event without violence where citizens make an organized appeal to the public and to policymakers to represent the protesters' interests in the policymaking process (Lipsky, 1968; Murdie & Bhasin, 2011; Opp, 2009; Opp et al., 1995; Powell, 1982).

Although protesting may not result in sweeping policy changes, studies suggest that lawmakers often respond to protesters' demands, albeit in small ways (Almond, 1989; Brettschneider, 1996; Burstein, 1979; Hobolt & Klemmensen, 2005; Monroe, 1979; Opp et al., 1995; Page & Shapiro, 1983; Powell, 1982; Stimson, MacKuen, & Erikson, 1995; Tarrow, 2011; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). Legislators can respond to protesters' interests by holding a hearing on an issue, introducing a bill, altering the language of a bill, passing an existing bill, or failing to pass a bill. Officials can also slow down the implementation of a new law or influence how it is specifically implemented (Kolb, 2007; Kriesi, 2012; Schumaker, 1975).

Although protesting can have some impact on the policymaking process, citizens often do not protest, as it is a costly activity. In order to protest, a citizen either has to organize one themselves, or find others who are organizing a protest. In addition, it takes time to attend a protest, which could be costly if a protester is missing work for the activity. Hence, often citizens are unlikely to protest since the costs to protest are prohibitive. In addition, even if a protest does have an impact on the policymaking process, the individuals who want a policy change but do not protest still reap the benefits of the protest without having to pay

the costs of protesting. Hence, the "best" course of action is to not protest and free ride off the contributions of others. This creates a collective action problem, where few people protest.

While protesting is an uncommon political activity, several studies have identified factors that make it more likely for protests to occur. First, the collective action problem may be overcome if protest leaders provide selective incentives to protesters in order to encourage them to protest (Olson, 1971). Nevertheless, even if there are no leaders to pay off citizens to protests, individuals may actually enjoy protesting, which may provide a personal incentive to protest (Tarrow, 2011).

Next, a group's history of protest activity can encourage future protest activity. It is possible that a certain group, such as a labor union, has a history of protesting and younger generations continue to protest since it has been a successful strategy. Another related factor that could influence protest activity is social networks. Groups who have large social networks within their organization and with other related organizations can effectively coordinate a large scale protest. This applies to global networks as well. Non-governmental organizations, for example, can help coordinate protests across countries (Tarrow, 1996, 2005, 2011).

Next, in terms of microlevel factors that encourage individuals to protest, several studies have demonstrated that individuals at the higher end of socioeconomic ladder are more likely to protest than individuals at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder because it is costlier for lower class citizens to protest (Dalton, VanSickle, & Weldon, 2010). While lower class citizens have the willingness to protest, they do not have the resources to protest. Individuals with higher levels of education have the skills to successfully organize and participate in protests. In addition, individuals with higher levels of income are likely to have the resources to communicate with others about protests. They also have the ability to travel for longer distances to attend protests. They also can take more time off work to protest without it affecting their livelihood. Hence, the cost for citizens of higher socioeconomic status to protest is smaller than for citizens with lower levels of socioeconomic status, making wealthier citizens more likely to protest.

Other microlevel factors that might influence protest propensity are age and gender. Older citizens may be more politically experienced, and as a result, may be more likely to know how to protest. In addition, older citizens may be more politically informed. Hence, as a person's age increases, the likelihood they will protest should also increase. In addition, previous research also finds that men are more likely than women to protest (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Anderson & Mendes, 2005; Dalton et al., 2010).

Macrolevel factors can also influence protest activity. Some research suggests that the age of democratic institutions can influence whether citizens protest. The opening up of political freedom in a country could have a positive effect on protest behavior, especially among groups with longstanding, unresolved grievances against the government. Nevertheless, citizens of younger democracies

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