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CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

13 Swing voters, core voters, and distributive politics

Gary W. Cox

How do political parties allocate targetable goods – such as private goods targeted to individuals, local public goods targeted to geographic areas, or tax breaks targeted to specific industries or firms – in order to optimize their electoral prospects? A continuing debate on this question pits those who lean toward Cox and McCubbins's (1986) "core voter model" against those who lean toward Lindbeck and Weibull's (1987) "swing voter model." Both models envision two parties competing to win an election by promising to distribute targetable goods to various groups, should they be elected. Cox and McCubbins argue that vote-maximizing parties will allocate distributive benefits primarily to their core voters. A typical response embodying the swing voter logic is Stokes's (2005: 317): "voters who are predisposed in favor of [a party] on partisan or programmatic grounds [– that is, its core voters –] cannot credibly threaten to punish their favored party if it withholds [distributive] rewards. Therefore the party should not waste rewards on them."

In this chapter, I first review the literature and then note that extant models focus solely on *persuasion* (defined as an attempt to change voters' preferences between given alternatives). Once one brings *coordination* (defined as an attempt to affect the number and character of alternatives from which voters choose) and *mobilization* (defined as an attempt to affect whether or not citizens participate in the election) into analytic view, the argument that vote-maximizing parties should focus their distributive benefits on core voters is substantially strengthened. Lowering the number of ideologically similar competitors on the ballot and mobilizing its base are often more important to maximizing a party's vote than is persuasion; in such situations, parties allocate distributive benefits primarily to individuals and groups providing key coordination and mobilization services, rather than to vote-brokers expert at identifying swing voters.

Another point I make is that parties are interested in votes not just in the electoral arena but also in the legislative arena. Thus parties may engage in "electoral targeting" (distributing benefits to optimize

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

electoral outcomes), "legislative targeting" (distributing benefits to optimize legislative outcomes), or a mixture of the two. Indeed, many studies of the allocation of distributive benefits ignore the core voter versus swing voter debate and focus entirely on legislative variables. Even in this part of the literature, however, an analogous debate appears between those who argue that legislative benefits flow primarily to senior figures in the governing coalition (the analogs of core voters) and those who argue that legislative benefits flow primarily to pivotal legislators (the analogs of swing voters).

The core versus swing debate is important to understanding how and whom parties represent. If parties focus exclusively on persuasion, and hence target swing voters in the electorate and pivotal legislators in the assembly, it is hard to see how they could be reliable agents of their core voters. Core voters could not credibly threaten to punish their party, because the party's vote-maximization strategy focuses solely on persuasion and the core voters are by definition already persuaded. In contrast, if parties focus primarily on coordination and mobilization, and hence target core voters in the electorate and party members in the assembly, there is much less tension between the goals of maximizing votes and serving the interests of core voters.

I. The previous literature on electoral targeting

A typology of transfers

A preliminary question regarding the electoral payoff of distributing targetable goods regards the nature of the exchange. There are three pure types of transfer that appear to have been used in elections: (1) benefits are delivered upon verification of an individual's vote; (2) benefits are given to a voter before s/he votes (and there is no subsequent effort to verify how s/he voted); (3) benefits are promised upon victory of the relevant candidate or party (again, no effort to verify individual votes).

The first type of transfer is what many think of when the word "bribe" is used. It appears to have become less widespread after the introduction of the secret ballot, simply because parties have a harder time verifying their purchases when ballots are cast secretly. Nonetheless, practices such as the Tasmanian dodge,[1] squeaky voting machines, and so on can make

[1] The Tasmanian dodge, invented soon after the introduction of a secret ballot in Australia (first in Victoria, 1856), entailed party workers first securing a blank official ballot, filling it in, and giving it to a voter. The voter then concealed the ballot, went to the polling place and got a ballot, cast the pre-marked ballot, and returned the unmarked ballot to

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

such bribes feasible even with putatively secret ballots. Moreover, bribes are certainly possible when the parties themselves print and distribute ballots, as in Argentina (cf. Stokes 2005).

The second type of transfer has typically been used to boost turnout among known supporters. Upstate Republicans in New York used to convey their supporters to the polls in carriages well stocked with rum under the seat, for example. This sort of bribe is worth the money only if turnout among likely supporters can be significantly boosted by it. Turnout-enhancing bribery became less attractive after the introduction of the secret ballot worsened parties' ability to identify their supporters (cf. Cox and Kousser 1981).

The third category consists of outcome-contingent transfers. Promising to deliver benefits if and only if one wins avoids the cost of verifying either current or past voting behavior on an individual-by-individual basis. Most of the electoral targeting models in the literature focus on this type of transfer.

The Dixit–Londregan model

Dixit and Londregan (1995, 1996) provide a general model of how outcome-contingent transfers are targeted, from which both the Cox–McCubbins and the Lindbeck–Weibull models emerge as special cases. I follow their exposition here.

Dixit and Londregan envision a left-wing party, L, and a right-wing party, R, competing for votes (implicitly in a single-member district). Each party k announces a vector of transfers, $T_k = (T_{lk}, \ldots, T_{nk})$, where T_{jk} is the per capita transfer that party k promises to group j (voters are partitioned into n groups). Promises are credible ex ante, and if the relevant party wins honored ex post. Party k's transfer policy must satisfy a budget constraint, $\sum_j N_j T_{jk} = B$, where N_j is the number of voters in group j. Party k chooses T_k in order to maximize its vote total, $\sum_j N_j P_{jk}(T_{jL}, T_{jR})$, where P_{jk} (T_{jL}, T_{jR}) is the proportion of group j's members who will vote for party k, given the transfer promises T_{jL} and T_{jR}. Although the model accommodates other possibilities, for expositional ease I shall consider the special case in which $T_{jk} \geq 0$ for all j, k.

To formalize Cox and McCubbins's notion of "core support groups," Dixit and Londregan assume that the consumption benefit that members of group j will actually receive, when party k promises an amount T_{jk}, is

the party worker, whereupon he was paid. The process was then repeated. The same practice in the Philippines goes under the more evocative label of the "chain of love."

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

$t_{jk} = (1 - \theta_{jk})T_{jk}$. Here, $\theta_{jk} \in [0, 1]$ denotes the proportion of the subsidies that k intends to deliver to group j that will actually reach it. Group j is a core support group for party k when θ_{jk} is relatively small. As Dixit and Londregan (1996: 1134) point out, "A party's core constituencies need not prefer its issue position. It is the party's advantage over its competition at swaying voters in a group with offers of particularistic benefits that makes the group core." In practice, core groups tend also to provide solid support to their party, but it is important to recognize that there are two distinct notions of what makes a group core. For most of this chapter, I shall refer to voters with a strong preference for a particular party as its "core" voters; in the next few pages, however, a party's core voters will be those it knows well and to whom it can more effectively and credibly target benefits.

To provide some micro-foundations for the group response functions, $P_{jk}(T_{jL}, T_{jR})$, Dixit and Londregan proceed as follows. All voters in a given group are assumed to have the same income, denoted y_j for group j (so the groups can be thought of as income or occupational strata). Voter h is assumed to have an innate preference for party R, represented by a real number X_h. If voter h is in group j, then h votes for L if $U_j[y_j + (1 - \theta_{jL})T_{jL}] > U_j[y_j + (1 - \theta_{jR})T_{jR}] + X_h$, and votes for R otherwise. Here, $U_j[y_j + (1 - \theta_{jk})T_{jk}]$ represents the utility that a member of group j derives from his or her total income, $y_j + (1 - \theta_{jk})T_{jk}$. Letting Φ_j be the cumulative distribution function of X_h in group j, $P_{jk}(T_{jL}, T_{jR}) = \Phi_j[U_j[y_j + (1 - \theta_{jL})T_{jL}] - U_j[y_j + (1 - \theta_{jR})T_{jR}]]$.

Dixit and Londregan show that, when the parties have no special relationships with any groups (e.g., $\theta_{jL} = \theta_{jR} = 1$ for all j), the parties' allocations are driven by the density of swing voters in each group – as in the Lindbeck–Weibull model. As larger and larger asymmetries in the parties' abilities to deliver benefits arise, however, the parties' allocations are driven more and more by the core voter logic of promising benefits to those groups to which the party can most effectively deliver benefits.[2]

Multiperiod models

Stokes (2005) and Diaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni (2006) consider multiperiod models of distributive politics in which promises by parties

[2] Of less relevance for present purposes, the Dixit–Londregan model also predicts that parties should target poor voters – because their votes should be cheaper to buy. Note that poor voters' labor – in mobilizing or coordinating others – should also be cheaper to purchase.

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

to deliver benefits or by voters to deliver votes are not necessarily credible. Stokes views the voter–party exchange as a repeated prisoner's dilemma. In each stage (election), the voter would like to receive a bribe and then vote for her most preferred party, while the party would like to withhold any bribe and yet have the voter vote for it. In a single stage, the equilibrium outcome (between a party and a voter who does not rank the party first) would be mutual defection: no bribe for the voter and no vote for the party. In repeated play, exchange can arise – but the voters involved in the exchange will only be those who would not otherwise support the party and are cheap to buy (swing voters). Diaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni also consider a multiperiod model but allow voters' predispositions for one party or another to shift, depending on their past receipt of transfers. In their model, parties have a reason to target core voters, since if they give them no transfers they will become swing voters in the next election.

Multidistrict models

Distinct from the models reviewed thus far are the mostly empirical studies that look at the allocation of distributive goods across multiple electoral districts. The logic of targeting swing *districts* is particularly compelling, because doing a bit better in a swing district can, by definition, make the difference between losing and winning a seat. The same cannot be said about swing *groups* in the models reviewed above. Doing a bit better in a swing group just means that the party earns a few more votes. As the parties in the standard single-district models are vote-maximizers, they do not even consider how close the election is. In contrast, the (implicit or explicit) maximand in cross-district models is seat maximization, and so swing status is highly relevant.[3]

Note that whether swing *districts* are targeted is not particularly relevant to the debate over whether swing *groups* are targeted. The Cox–McCubbins, Lindbeck–Weibull, and Dixit–Londregan models address the allocation of benefits within a single district. In a multidistrict context, the core voter thesis would be that parties concentrate benefits on their core voters *within* whatever districts they target, swing or otherwise. For example, the Republicans certainly targeted resources toward the

[3] McGillivray (2004) notes some structural conditions that affect the extent to which swing districts are targeted, including district magnitude (with larger magnitudes, districts vary less in their marginality) and party strength (weak parties cannot convince members to run personal electoral risks for the sake of a more efficient overall campaign).

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

swing state of Ohio in the presidential campaign of 2004. However, by all accounts, they pushed those resources more into mobilizing their base than into persuading swing voters. Thus the targeting of Ohio in no way provides support for the swing voter thesis; it provides support for the quite different swing district thesis.

Empirical evidence

The empirical studies conducted to date yield mixed results on how much swing as opposed to core voters are targeted. Empirical studies cited as supporting the thesis that material benefits are disproportionately directed toward swing voters include Wright (1974), Stein and Bickers (1994), Bickers and Stein (1996), Denemark (2000), Herron and Theodos (2004), Stokes (2005), Dahlberg and Johansson (2002), and Case (2001). However, all but the last three studies consider the allocation of benefits across electoral districts rather than the allocation of benefits within districts. These cross-district studies provide evidence that parties target swing districts but do not shed light on who gets benefits within each district. Dahlberg and Johansson (2002) and Case (2001) study the allocation of benefits across municipalities lying in several different electoral districts, while Stokes (2005) examines the allocation of benefits to individual voters. These studies thus come closer to testing the vote-maximizing models considered thus far.[4]

Empirical studies supporting the thesis that material benefits are disproportionately directed toward core voters include Ansolabehere and Snyder (2003), Levitt and Snyder (1995), Balla, Lawrence, Maltzman, and Sigelman (2002), Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni, and Weingast (2000), Calvo and Murillo (2004), Bickers and Stein (2000), and Chen (2008). Most of these studies, too, examine the allocation of benefits across electoral districts. Thus they too fail to provide much evidence pertinent to

[4] Although the study has many strengths, there is reason to doubt that Dahlberg and Johansson (2002) provide an appropriate test of the swing voter and core voter models. The main problem is that the program they study had a strong programmatic content which appealed to core interests within the Social Democratic Party, whereas the models all assume completely policy-neutral transfers of funds. As Dahlberg and Johansson (ibid.: 27) note, the grants they investigate were "intended to support . . . local investment programs aimed at an ecological sustainable development and at increasing municipal employment." It is possible that the primary beneficiaries of these grants were Greens and public-sector union locals in each municipality, regardless of what the overall Socialist percentage was in the municipality. Violation of the assumption that funds are "policy-neutral" is a general problem with using data on spending that has programmatic content.

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

the Cox–McCubbins, Lindbeck–Weibull, and Dixit–Londregan models. When such studies find that distributive benefits flow to the strongholds of the governing party or parties, rather than to swing districts, they may be discovering that governments are sometimes probability-of-majority maximizers rather than vote-maximizers: if a government allocates benefits to maximize its probability of retaining a majority, then it may sometimes decide that retaining a vice-like grip on a small majority is the optimal strategy. Alternatively, the targeting of benefits to government strongholds may reflect a purely legislative, rather than electoral, logic (on which more below).

II. Extending the electoral targeting model(s)

Two key aspects of the Cox–McCubbins, Lindbeck–Weibull, Dixit–Londregan, Stokes, and Diaz-Cayeros–Estévez–Magaloni models are: (a) all voters vote; and (b) the number of parties is exogenously fixed at two. The first assumption puts aside all issues of mobilization and turnout. The second assumption puts aside all issues of coordination. Thus, in all current electoral targeting models, parties can increase their vote shares *only by persuasion* and the means by which they can persuade voters is limited to offering transfers (there is no endogenous spatial competition, for example).

Let us consider the terms coordination, mobilization and persuasion more carefully, following Cox (2005). We shall consider what actions L, the left-wing party, can take to increase its total vote. The probability that voter h votes for party L depends on whether h participates in the election; whether L is the only left-wing party on the ballot; and whether h prefers L to R. Efforts to ensure that voter h actually participates in the election – a necessary but not sufficient condition for h to support L – fall under the heading of mobilization. Efforts to ensure that there is just one left-wing party on the ballot fall under the heading of coordination. Finally, efforts to ensure that voter h prefers L to R fall under the heading of persuasion. In general, parties can persuade by repositioning themselves along the left–right spectrum by convincing voters that they are more competent at providing valence goods, by slinging mud at their opponents, and so forth. In the models under consideration here, the method of persuasion is offering transfers.

To generalize the Dixit–Londregan model, we could rewrite the proportion of group j's members voting for party L as $P_{jL}(t_L, t_R) = Q_j(t_L, t_R)S_{jL}(t_L, t_R)/M_j(t_L, t_R)$, where $Q_j(t_L, t_R)$ is the turnout rate in group j, $S_{jL}(t_L, t_R)$ is the proportion of group j's participating members who prefer L to R, and $M_j(t_L, t_R)$ is the number of left-wing parties that campaign

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

for votes among group j's voters. If $M_j(t_L, t_R) = 1$, then L gets votes from all citizens who participate and prefer it to the right-wing alternative, R. If $M_j(t_L, t_R) = 2$, then L gets half the votes of citizens who participate and prefer it to R; implicitly, the new entrant on the left is equally attractive to left-wing voters, and vote coordination fails utterly on the left. This particular functional form embodies the largest possible losses due to miscoordination. A more flexible formulation would be that L receives a fraction of the left-wing vote, with that fraction declining as the number of left-wing parties increases.[5]

What happens if one extends the model(s) in the literature so that the transfers party L offers to group j affect not just how many voters in that group prefer L to R but also how many left-wing competitors L faces within group j and how many citizens in group j participate in the election?

Let us consider adding mobilization and turnout first. The transfers offered in the current models affect only the vote choices made by voters, rather than their participation decisions. If turnout is invariant with respect to transfers, then transfers should indeed go to groups where the marginal persuasive effect will be greatest. Lindbeck and Weibull (1987) and Cox and McCubbins (1986) disagree about which groups will yield the biggest persuasion bang for the transfer buck, but they agree on focusing just on persuasion.

What if voters' preferences are immutable but their turnout decision can be affected by transfers? Suppose, for example, the electorate is highly polarized (almost no swing voters in any group) but not everyone has a high probability of participating. In this case, each party should clearly target transfers to its core support groups. The most valuable voter for a party to offer a transfer to is one with a high probability of voting for that party, conditional on participating; and a probability of participation that is highly responsive to transfers. Thus, the party should target core support groups (in the sense of groups with large proportions of members who strongly prefer L to R) with malleable turnout rates.

Now let us consider adding coordination. The transfers offered in the current models do not affect the decisions of political entrepreneurs or young Turks to start a rival party which caters to the same core groups as one of the existing duopolists. If there is some chance that one of the duopolists might face competition on its home turf, then transfers to the core groups have another value, as they presumably help to depress the probability of internecine competition.

[5] Another approach, in which both persuasion and mobilization – but not coordination – are brought into analytic view, is that of Bartels (1998).

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

Do the claims just made about the importance of coordination and mobilization founder on the canonical swing voter objection, quoted at the outset of the chapter, that core voters "cannot credibly threaten to punish their favored party if it withholds [distributive] benefits" (Stokes 2005: 317)? First, the explicit or implicit threat of sitting the election out is credible, because the individuals issuing the threat must bear private costs to participate in the election. It is true that their abstention raises the probability that the other (and dispreferred) party will win the election; but the change in the probability is negligible. Thus, on an individual calculus, it is rational to abstain and a threat to abstain is by no means empty. Second, the explicit or implicit threat of running a rival candidate in the election can also be credible if the group threatening to split has some chance of forcing a re-coordination of the party system and emerging as the dominant party in its ideological niche. Thus, although only occasionally manifest, threats by core groups to sit the election out or to launch new parties are always possible. Indeed, the better way to view it is that coordination is a full-time job and so is mobilization, so that the party needs full-time "employees" or "consultants" working on these problems, and that these agents then receive a regular and large flow of distributive benefits as compensation for their services.

In a combined model, in which transfers can increase a party's vote share, either due to persuasion or to mobilization or to coordination, one should find: (1) the less persuasion a party thinks possible, and the more mobilization it thinks possible, the more it concentrates its transfers on its core supporters; (2) the less persuasion a party thinks possible, and the more its leaders are worried about splintering, the more it concentrates its transfers on its core supporters; (3) the less able a party is to deliver credible promises to swing groups, the more it concentrates on its core groups.

III. Maximizing votes in the electoral and legislative arenas

In this section, I argue that the debate over whether parties target swing voters or core voters is similar to the debate in legislative studies between those who view pivotal legislators as the primary determinants of legislative outcomes (Krehbiel 1998) and those who view senior majority-party legislators as the primary determinants (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Aldrich and Rohde 2001; Kim 2006).

First, note that swing voters and pivotal legislators share a crucial similarity. It is true that the Lindbeck–Weibull model is distributive, while Krehbiel's model is spatial. Nonetheless, both swing voters and pivotal legislators end up being indifferent in equilibrium and thus cheap

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

to buy. Swing voters are by definition indifferent on ideological grounds. Pivotal legislators are those whose support may be crucial in overcoming super-majority requirements in the legislative process, such as invoking cloture in the US Senate. Sometimes securing sixty votes in the Senate to invoke cloture is not a problem – when the status quo is far enough away from the legislative median. In this case, the pivotal legislators are not indifferent. When cloture (or other super-majority) requirements do bind, however, then the pivotal legislators are in equilibrium indifferent between passage and rejection of a bill – and are thus cheap to buy with side payments. As with swing voter models, Krehbiel's pivotal legislator model assumes away both any need for mobilization (all legislators vote) and any need for coordination (there are no fights over which bills and amendments will be considered), leaving parties with only persuasion as a strategy.

Second, note that core voters and majority-party legislators share some similarities. The party knows the preferences of core voters and its own legislators better than it knows the preferences of swing voters or independent legislators. Moreover, the party may look to core voters and its own legislators to help coordinate electoral candidacies or the legislative agenda; and to help mobilize voters or whip legislators.

Cox and McCubbins (2005) argue that legislative parties are not primarily mechanisms to purchase votes on the floor. Rather, they are primarily coordinating and mobilizing devices: they distribute benefits to members primarily to buy their agenda-setting (coordinating) and whipping (mobilizing) services, and only secondarily to buy their votes (persuading). I would argue that electoral parties are similar. Their main purpose is not to buy votes on the spot market on the day of the election, or otherwise persuade during the election. Rather they are primarily coordinating (Cox 1997) and mobilizing (Cox 1999) devices.

As evidence for this view, consider the allocation of offices – e.g. committee chairs in the legislative arena or postal sub-masterships in the electoral arena. Offices are the largest *private* benefits that parties distribute. In the legislature, they go almost exclusively to members of the party (i.e. to its "core voters"); and the recipients are being "paid" mostly for their coordinating and mobilizing services. In the electorate, the consistent finding is that political machines allocate patronage jobs almost exclusively to core supporters, who are then expected not simply to vote for the party but also – and more importantly – to coordinate (prevent rivals from emerging) and mobilize (get out the vote).[6]

[6] See e.g. Rakove (1975), Cox and McCubbins (1986), Calvo and Murillo (2004).

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

IV. Models of legislative targeting

When investigating the allocation of distributive benefits to multiple districts, one might argue that benefits are not targeted solely in order to optimize electoral outcomes but also – or even instead – in order to optimize legislative outcomes. Indeed, many studies seeking to explain the distribution of targetable government expenditures across districts focus on *legislative* considerations. They examine whether districts represented by powerful senior figures, especially those in the government, get more pork (e.g. Levitt and Poterba 1999; Denemark 2000; Golden and Picci 2006), whether districts represented by members of the relevant committee(s) get more pork (e.g. Hird 1991; Alvarez and Saving 1997), and so on. Occasionally, such legislatively focused studies will include a variable measuring how marginal a particular legislator is, on the theory that more marginal incumbents should work harder to bring home benefits to their districts. But the model is one in which individual legislators pursue benefits in order to maximize their own electoral chances, not one in which a party allocates benefits in order to maximize votes.

Other scholars have suggested that parties play a more consequential role in the allocation of legislative side payments. Cox and McCubbins (1993, appendix 1), Evans (2004), and Kim (2006) argue that distributive benefits are used as side payments to clinch broader legislative deals. Kim stresses that these are payments not so much to buy pivotal votes on the floor – the legislative analog of swing voters – but rather to pay committee chairs for their agenda-setting services – the legislative analog of electoral coordination. For example, Claude Pepper, then chair of a key committee, received numerous distributive benefits for his district in the "transition rules" attached to the Tax Reform Act of 1986. Ideologically, Pepper was nowhere near being pivotal on the floor (indeed, the bill passed by a large margin) and thus he did not need to be paid to vote for the bill. Rather, he was collecting his customary "toll" for allowing the bill to pass through his committee and consume scarce (and valuable) committee time (Kim 2006). In other words, he could slow down the bill or speed it up and the proponents were willing to pay for the latter rather than the former.

Another model of legislative targeting, which corresponds better to the swing voter model in the electoral arena, focuses on the side payments used by Speakers in the US House when they arrange "vest pocket" votes. As explained most clearly by King and Zeckhauser (2003), Speakers regularly negotiate "vote option contracts" with certain members before a close vote. The contract gives the Speaker the option of calling on the member to change his or her vote in exchange for a consideration

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

the two have agreed upon. The important things to note about the side payments conveyed via vest pocket arrangements is that (a) they go to swing legislators; but (b) they are small potatoes compared to the flow of pork controlled by committee actors.

My interpretation of results that show powerful individual legislators getting more benefits than would seem justified on a vote-maximizing calculation is that parties need both electoral and legislative votes; and they pay those skilled at coordinating and mobilizing votes in both arenas. Thus, powerful legislators receive additional benefits to pay them for their legislative services. I am not arguing that all parties in all contexts perfectly control the allocation of distributive benefits and trade off electoral vote-maximizing against legislative vote-maximizing at the optimal rate. I am just pointing out that, if a party is a long-lived entity with both electoral and legislative goals, then one cannot take the electorally irrational bonuses that senior figures get – e.g. the notorious "bridges to nowhere" in Alaska or Japan – as convincing evidence that the party as a whole is weak or poorly organized.

V. The role of coordination and mobilization in spatial models

As explained above, in electoral targeting models sans mobilization and coordination, parties are more likely to target swing voters; but when mobilization and coordination are brought into the analysis, parties cater more to their core groups. A similar pattern emerges in spatial models.

The pure Downsian model – which ignores coordination (the number of parties is exogenously fixed at two) and mobilization (all voters vote) – predicts that both parties will adopt a platform that coincides with the ideological position of the median voter. They both "target" the median voter. When voters can abstain (e.g. Smithies 1941), the parties may not converge, because when they contemplate a move toward the center, they anticipate more vote losses due to abstention on their extreme wing than vote gains from centrists. When the number of parties is not fixed, one can add another reason for non-convergence: each party's worry that it might be outflanked by a splinter or new party if it moves toward the center (Palfrey 1984).

Spatial and distributive models both focus on persuasion. They differ in their conception of the tools that parties use to persuade voters. In spatial models, parties announce a platform of policies that they will enact if elected. In distributive models, parties announce a package of transfers that they will implement if elected. Regardless of the technology of persuasion, the necessity of coordinating and mobilizing induces parties to

P1: SFK Trim: 152mm × 228mm Top: 0.491in Gutter: 0.747in
CUUK808-13 CUUK808/Shapiro et al. ISBN: 978 0 521 11127 0 August 11, 2009 13:14

cater more to their core groups – either in the sense of advocating policies that appeal to the core groups or in the sense of advocating transfers that appeal to the core groups.

VI. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered how vote-maximizing parties might allocate benefits within a district – the purview of the Dixit–Londregan and other models. The first main point I have urged is simply that the extant models of electoral targeting focus too narrowly on a single vote-getting strategy – offering transfers to voters who have already decided to participate in an election with an exogenously fixed number of competitors in order to persuade them to vote for a particular party (persuasion). It is conceptually easy to extend these models to include other vote-getting strategies – in particular, offering transfers to voters or groups, in order to pay them for either (1) their efforts in mobilizing support for the party; or (2) their efforts in coordinating the menu of choices that appears on the ballot. I argue that empirically the bulk of distributive benefits should flow to those who are crucial in lowering the number of ideologically similar competitors a party faces on the ballot and to those who are crucial in getting out the vote. Experts at buying votes on the spot market on the day of the election can sometimes be important, too, but need not be. Since the key agents in coordination and mobilization are typically the leaders of core groups within the party, I expect that distributive benefits should flow to core groups and their members.

The second point I have urged is that the parallel literature on legislative targeting – in which allocations of benefits across electoral districts are explained in terms of the "clout" that individual legislators wield by virtue of their committee positions, leadership positions, or majority status – also should (and implicitly does) pay attention to coordination and mobilization, in addition to persuasion. The legislative analog of Lindbeck and Weibull's swing voter hypothesis would be Krehbiel's pivotal politics thesis, according to which all the action in side payments should center on legislators whose votes are (or will be) pivotal to the outcome on the floor. The argument that benefits should be targeted to "core groups" within the legislature – that is, the majority party's senior figures – relies on points similar to those made above about maximizing votes in the electoral arena: senior party figures are crucial in setting the agenda (coordination) and whipping (mobilization), and a vote-maximizing party should certainly wish to pay for these important services, in addition to buying pivotal votes on the floor when needed.

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Finally, I have noted that the necessity of coordination and mobilization drives parties' spatial positions away from the center to more robust left and right positions; and drives their distributive strategies away from swing voters to core voters. These are abstractly similar responses, in that in both cases more benefits flow to the party's base, as a recognition of its crucial role in maximizing votes.

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