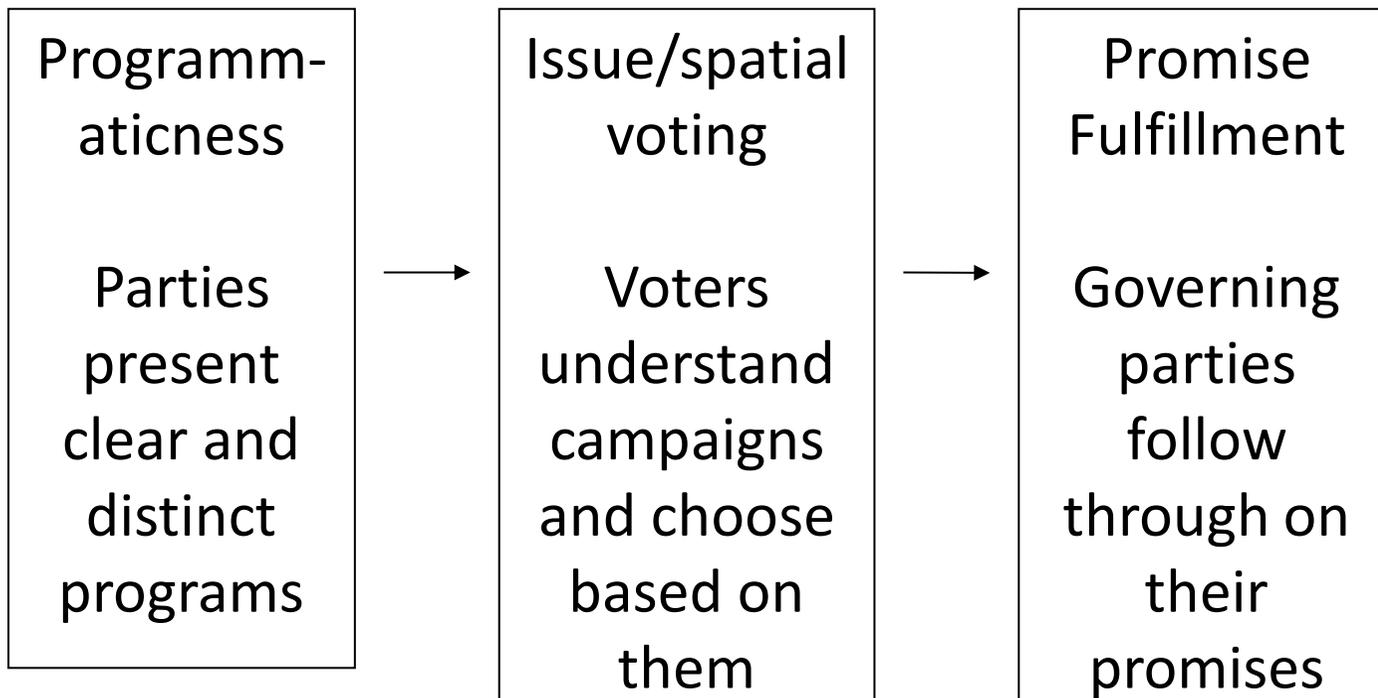# Mandate responsiveness

Lecture 4

Today

- Theory of mandate responsiveness
- Techniques for studying mandate responsiveness
- Results

1. Theory of mandate responsiveness

What is mandate responsiveness?

- Citizens control politicians by choosing among different programs offered by parties which those parties then fulfill in office
- Selection of types or programs
  - Selection of types: more honest, competent
  - Selection of programs
- Programmatic links: parties connect to voters through their proposals of public policies that will apply to all (collective goods)
  - Eg, raising taxes, environmental regulations

Elements of mandate responsiveness

Programm-aticness Parties present clear and distinct programs	→	Issue/spatial voting Voters understand campaigns and choose based on them	→	Promise Fulfillment Governing parties follow through on their promises

Where can it fail?

- Parties may not propose clear and distinctive programs
- Voters may not be aware of these programs or cast votes based on them
- Parties may not fulfill their programs while in office
  - Pursue own corrupt/personal interests
  - Institutions make it difficult
  - Situation changes
  - Parties make bad promises
- Other modes of linkage

Why do parties fulfill programs?

- Policies are important to parties
- Party activists/contributors want them to fulfill program
  - Parties that ignore program lose contributions, activists
- Afraid of being punished for not fulfilling promises
  - Parties that break promises lose votes

How else can parties link to citizens if not through their programs?

- Charisma: sympathize with personality of candidates
  - Is it a bad thing? Everyone wants strong, inspirational leader
- Clientelism: particularistic benefits in exchange for votes – vote buying
  - But how do you do it with secret ballot?
- Partisan hearts and minds: socialized through family to associate with party
- Competence/valence: politicians have skill and honesty to do a good job

Which of these are charismatic?

Or these

Proof that charisma is key?

- Students asked to rate competence of faces of real candidates (Todorov et al. 2005)

- Candidate whose face was viewed as more competent won 70% of the time

- What are the potential problems here?

- Selection effects
  - Parties choose more competent-looking candidates where they expect to win
  - More competent-looking reflects other factors like incumbency, ability to raise money

Case for mandate responsiveness

- Closest to standard civic ideal

- Citizens can directly set policy

- Forward-looking

- Functions even in between elections

- Control can be nuanced – individual policy areas

- Governments have mandate/justification for actions

Case against mandate responsiveness

- Requires voters to be fairly well informed
- Parties can only present a limited set of options
- How to enforce? Need to punish parties for broken promises
- Coalitions and veto points can prevent fulfillment
- What if conditions change?
- Limits leadership

"The Myth of the Mandate" – Robert Dahl

- If a party wins the election, do they have a mandate to implement their program?
- Parties often claim that they have a mandate from voters
- But:
  - How do we know what voters actually want?
  - What exactly are they voting for?
  - Do they really want party to do everything in their program?
- Can public opinion tell us the answer?

When does mandate responsiveness produce best policies?

- Some party platforms include the best policies

- Citizens are aware of platforms and choose those which will have the best consequences

- Conditions do not change substantially in between elections

2. Techniques for studying mandate responsiveness

Key issues

- Some measure of programs that parties are proposing
  - Clarity, distinctiveness, substance
- Determine whether they actual fulfill these programs
- Are voters voting based on these programs_

How to measure programs?

- Assumptions
  - Parties have positions
  - Parties are unitary – they have a single position
    - But can also try to measure divisions
  - These positions matter for policy, coalition
- Techniques
  - Surveys – public opinion, expert
  - Political texts – manifestoes
  - Promises
  - Roll call votes

Surveys

- Public opinion survey
  - Ask voters where parties are located on 7 point scale (left/right, pro-EU/anti-EU, high taxes-spending/low taxes-spending)
  - Or ask them them about their own beliefs and which party they support
  - Grandmother test: what would your grandmother say?
- Expert survey (eg, political scientists)
  - Experts knowledgable and unbiased
  - Takes into account lots of information: programs, voting
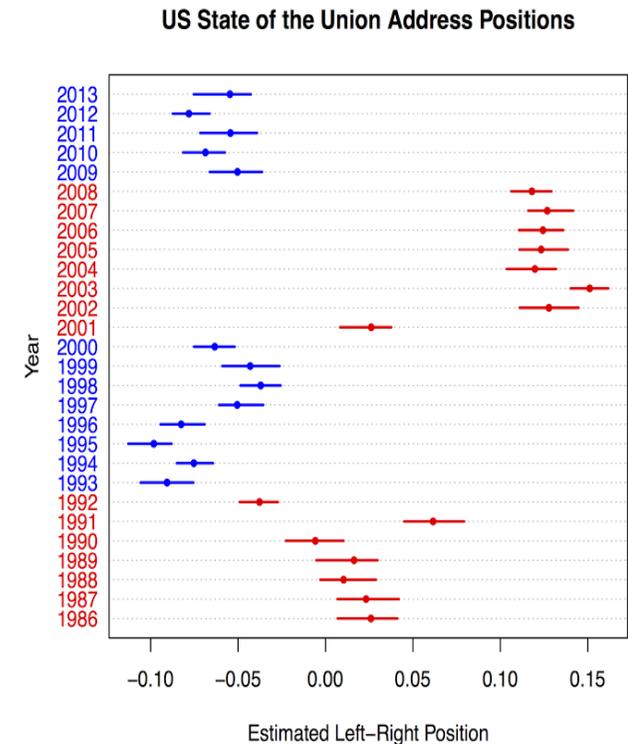
Political texts

- Comparative Manifesto Project
  - 56 (or more categories)
  - Every sentence placed into 1 or more categories
  - % of sentences determines party's position
- Problems
  - Good for historical research
  - Do manifestoes matter?
  - Does # of sentences = priority?
  - Not a standardized document
  - Hard to get left-right measure

Categories for coding

- Anti-imperialism
- Military – positive
- Military – negative
- Peace
- Internationalism – positive
- Internationalism – negative

- EU – positive
- EU – negative
- Democracy
- Constitutionalism – positive
- Constitutionalism – negative
- Federalism
- …

Political texts 2

- Automated coding of relative word frequencies

- One US study finds 2 dimensions
  - Left-right: welfare, peace versus market, war
  - Style: folksy, simple words versus elevated rhetoric

- Maybe do this with New Year's speeches in CZ?

US State of the Union Address Positions

Year

Estimated Left–Right Position

Most common words of Democrats and Republicans in US Congress

- Rosa Parks
- Wildlife refuge
- Republican Party
- War in Iraq
- Middle class
- Trade deficit
- Poor people

- Stem cell
- Death tax
- War on terror
- Tax relief
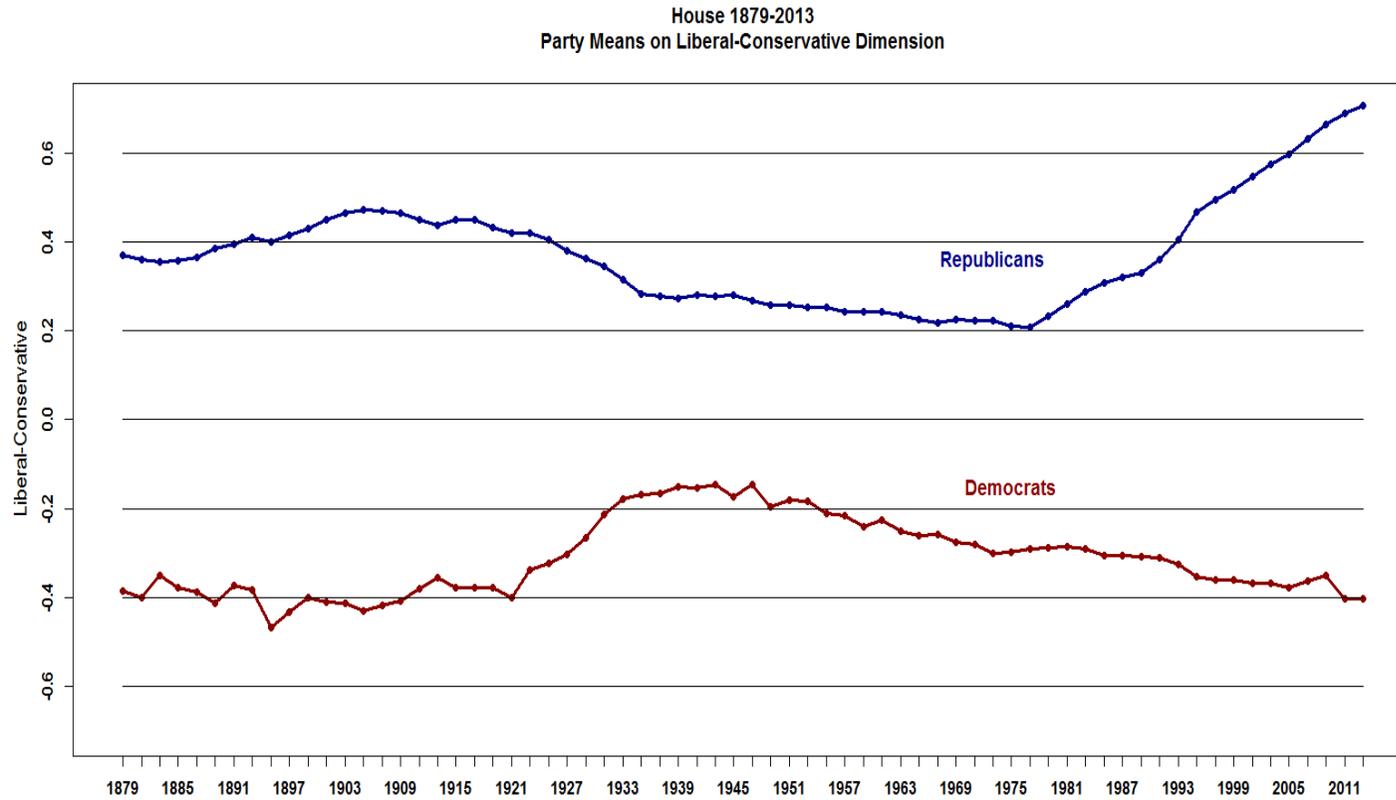- Illegal immigration
- Saddam Hussein
- Increase taxes

Election promises

- Do parties fulfill their election promises?
- Find concrete promises in manifesto
  - Hardness: "We will" or "We promise" versus "We support" or "We are for"
  - Specificity: Definite outcome (raise minimum wage) versus General principle (help the poor)
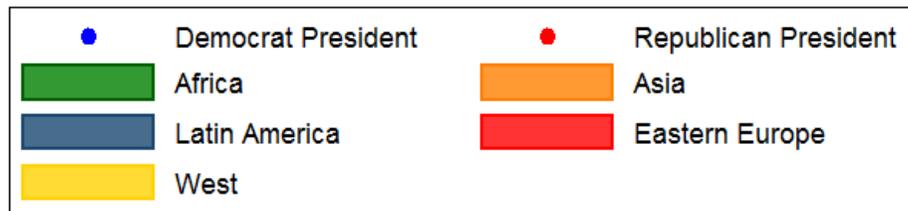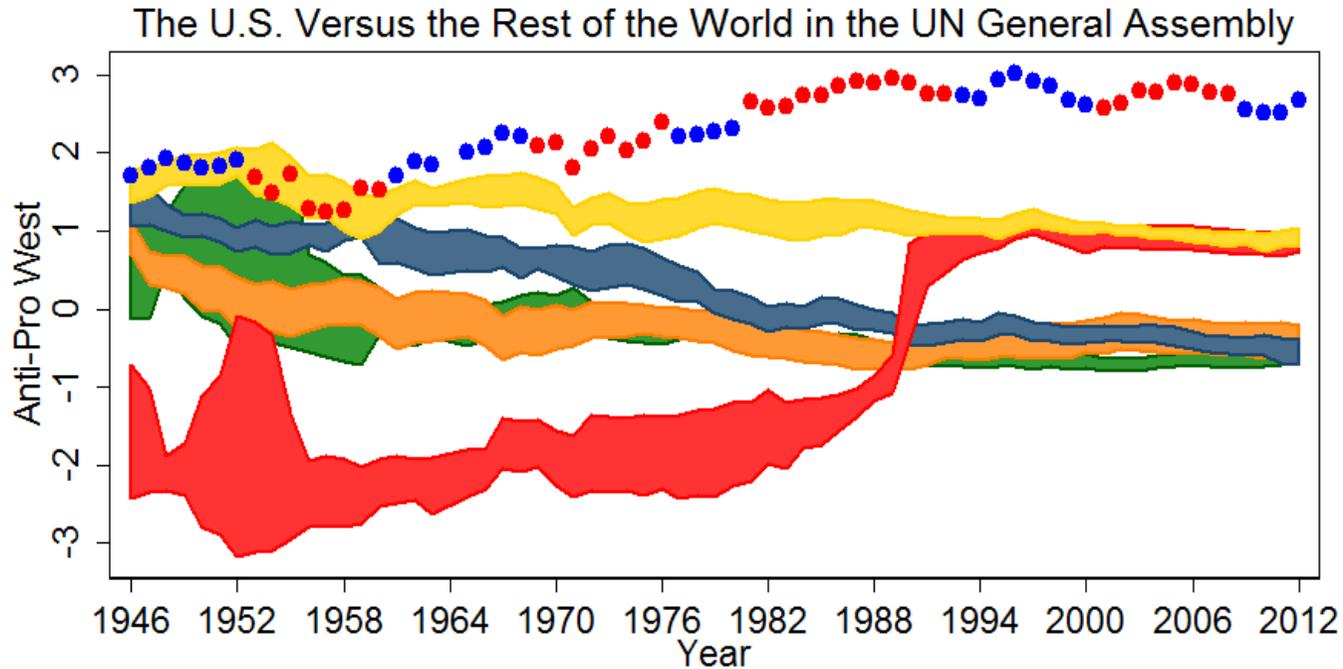 - Policy (lower taxes) versus Outcomes (increase economic growth)

Roll call analysis

- How similar are voting records of different MPs and party groups
  - Real and consequential actions
  - But also strategic: quid pro quo
- Usually low number of dimensions
  - Simple left-right divisions
  - Each vote is yea/nay and high discipline

Roll call history of the US

House 1879-2013
Party Means on Liberal-Conservative Dimension

Roll call history of the UN

The U.S. Versus the Rest of the World in the UN General Assembly

95% confidence intervals of mean ideal points within regions. Graph by Erik Voeten

3. Results

Policy Switches in Latin America

- Carlos Menem (Argentina) and Alberto Fujimori (Peru) campaign against neo-liberal reforms

- Immediately after elections they introduce massive neo-liberal reforms – privatization, spending cuts, deregulation, etc.

- Common in Latin America: 12 of 44 presidents do the same
  - Always in same direction: anti-reform campaign => reform policy

- Is it a failure of democracy?

How to explain these switches?

- Politicians can't win with neo-liberal program (cf., Vargas Llosa)
- But know that anti-reform policies will lead to economic disaster
- Therefore lie in campaign and then switch when in office
- Evidence
  - Switch immediately after elections
  - Presidents are punished for switching
  - But reform leads to more growth
  - Presidents also rewarded for growth
- Prospective mandates fail, but retrospective accountability works

What is the problem?

- Politicians do try to "represent"
  - Representation = do what is best for society
  - Responsiveness = do what people want
- Voters oppose neo-liberal reform, uninformed about necessity
  - Are they stupid?
  - Should politicians teach them?

Switches in post-communist Europe

- Fewer clear cases of switches
  - Hungarian Socialists in 1994 & Polish SLD in 1993?
  - Gyurcsany 2006: "I had to pretend for 18 months that we were governing. Instead we lied morning, noon, and night"
  - Any changes in opposite direction: reformist programs => anti-reformist policy?
- What about Czech governments?
  - Klaus 1992: Reformist program =>
  - Zeman 1998: Anti-reformist program =>
  - CSSD 2002:
  - ODS 2006: Reformist program =>
  - ODS 2010:
  - CSSD 2013:

What is different in postcommunist Europe?

- Citizens accept necessity of neo-liberal reform
  - Parties can win with reformist program and then carry out reform
- Why?
  - Failure of communism
  - Transition associated with national freedom (in Latin America, reform associated with dictatorship)
  - European Union as prize

More general tests of mandate conception

- Typical design: regression analysis of cross-national time-series data
  - Partisanship and macroeconomics (growth, inflation, unemployment)
  - Manifesto data (emphasis on policy area) and government spending on that area
- Results:
  - Left-wing governments do seem to devote more attention to poor
  - Governments that emphasize a particular policy area do spend more
- But
  - Many other influences on economy besides government
  - Government has to respond to previous government

Election promises in advanced democracies

- High levels of promise fulfillment
  - Typically over 50% for governing parties
  - Often 70-80%
  - One review of 21 studies finds average of 67%
  - Is this a surprise?
- Higher for parties with control over government
- Strong economy helps
- Status quo promise easier to fulfill than promise of change

Czech anecdotes

- Klaus in 1996: Average incomes will reach 20,000 Kcs by 2000

- Zeman in 2002: Promises infrastructure projects at each campaign stop equal to 1/5 of budget
  - Sobotka in 2002: "The promises were not put in a realistic economic framework… We'd be fools to insist on what isn't economically feasible and push the country into a bigger deficit just to fulfill our promises"
  - Skromach in 2002: "We got 30% of the vote in the last elections and we certainly fulfilled that much of our program."

- CSSD in 2006
  - Changes webpage from 2002 to eliminate promises
  - Tries to pass legislation at end of term to improve fulfillment

Skromach again

Taková malá dovolená bez mobilu, s kafíčkem, nafukovacím bazénkem a pár dobrými lidmi. Trochu mě zarazila debata v rádiu, že je snad nějaké divné nosit v sandálech ponožky, Prý snad nějaká národní podivnost. No nevím, ale bez ponožek si sandále neumím představit. A co Vy? Hezký večer.
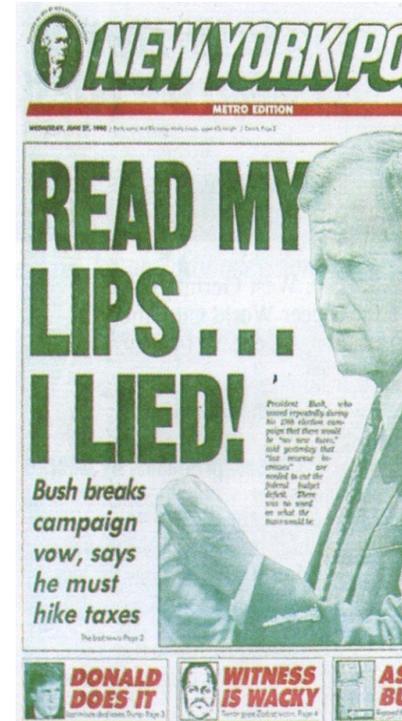
Promise fulfillment in the Czech Republic
(preliminary results)

	1992	1998	2002
ODS	**65% (26)**	24% (74)	44% (32)
CSSD	14% (7)	**35% (107)**	**58% (40)**
KSCM	50% (6)	12% (115)	27% (97)
KDU/CSL	**41% (63)**	32% (119)	
ODA	**45% (40)**		
US		36% (135)	
Koalice (KDU + US)			**25% (113)**
Total (all parties)	46% (142)	28% (551)	32% (282)

What sort of promises should parties make?

- George H.W. Bush in 1988: "Read my lips: No new taxes"
  - Later he raises taxes and loses in 1992 to Bill Clinton
- What should he have done?
- What was the problem? A bad promise or bad fulfillment?
- What should politicians promise?
  - Specific policies or outcomes?
  - Avoid populism? Avoid vagueness?
- What should they do when conditions change?
  - Need to explain why they are changing?
  - In Latin America, they blame former government for misinformation

What do voters think of promises?

- Widespread belief that politicians never fulfill their promises
  - Even in Sweden 2/3 of citizens think that parties usually break their promises
- Are you surprised that governing parties usually fulfill promises?
- Why do voters not trust promises?
  - Psychological biases: we remember promises that were broken?
  - We don't trust politicians?

Summing up

Tradeoffs

- Can we have everything?

- How should voters vote?
  - Sanction governments for past behavior (economic accountability)
  - Choose best options for future (mandate responsiveness)?

- How should politicians behave?
  - Listen to public (policy responsiveness)
  - Follow through on promises and manifesto (mandate)?
  - Try to produce the best outcomes (substantive representation)

But maybe some complementarities

- Voters can punish politicians for not fulfilling promises or not listening to public
    - Electoral accountability helps mandates and responsiveness
- If promises reasonable and public opinion stable, then mandates and policy responsiveness go together

Do we want the people to rule?

- Citizens uninformed or misinformed
  - Later: think about the quality of citizens
- But politicians greedy and self-interested
- If not the people, then who?
  - Technocrats – Economists? Judges? Bureaucrats?
- Who do you fear more: state or market?