

Legislative Coalitions in Presidential Systems: The Case of Uruguay

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes executive-legislative relations in Uruguay between 1985 and 2005. It demonstrates that even after controlling for ideological affinity and acknowledging that ideology affects presence in the cabinet, legislators whose factions hold ministerial positions behave in a more progovernment way than their ideology would predict. This result not only shows that coalitions “work” but suggests that they work because the presidents use resources under their control to attract support from legislators. This article presents a systematic analysis of executive-legislative relations in multiparty settings that builds on the finding that nonideologically contiguous coalitions often form to separate the ideological from the strategic determinants of legislative behavior. It also contributes to the literature by presenting a new set of roll call data and, more generally, highlights the risks of attempting to infer ideology directly from legislative behavior in presidential multiparty settings.

Legislators do not always behave ideologically. In many political systems, and more specifically in Latin American presidential multiparty democracies, presidents provide inducements to legislators, who respond by behaving in ways that depart from what ideology would predict. As a consequence, and unlike what occurs in U.S. politics, for instance, we cannot use observed legislative behavior to infer legislators’ ideology.

If all the evidence in support of these claims came from places where parties were devoid of ideological content or were in other ways feeble organizations, one could dismiss the problem as merely the consequence of a lack of institutionalized practices. However, this study shows that ideology might not translate directly into legislative behavior, even in places such as Uruguay, where the party system is highly institutionalized.

In fact, the Uruguayan party system is consistently ranked among the most institutionalized in Latin America (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Payne et al. 2007). Two of the three main parties have existed since the early twentieth century, and the third, currently in office, gradually emerged beginning in the late 1960s (Luna 2007).¹ It has also been widely documented that because of the parties’ factional organization, the country’s political system has functioned during much of the past 20 years as *de facto* a more extreme multiparty system, despite its two-to-three-party nominal structure (González 1991; Buquet et al. 1998).

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Because the president's faction typically lacked a legislative majority (until 2005), he was forced to negotiate alliances with other factions in the same party, as well as with factions in other parties (Altman 2000; Morgenstern 2001; Chasquetti 2001). As a consequence, despite Uruguay's highly institutionalized parties and disciplined factions, executive-legislative relations have turned out to follow a logic similar to what is found in other multiparty presidential systems, where party affiliations and discipline are much more fluid. In other words, not only do legislators not behave solely on ideological terms, but their behavior departs systematically from what their ideology would predict. This systematic component is the product of the influence exerted by the president, who induces legislator behavior by providing material incentives to some—but not all—factions. Coalitions “work,” and they work because the president provides resources that are important to the careers of all politicians.

Several studies of Uruguayan politics have analyzed both the patterns of coalition formation that characterized the first two decades after redemocratization and patterns of legislative behavior in the country's two-chamber legislature (e.g., Chasquetti 2000). This study lies at the intersection of these discussions and contributes to the literature by providing a new set of roll call data and a systematic analysis of the effects of executive-legislative bargaining on legislative behavior. It separates the effects of cabinet membership on legislative behavior from those induced by ideological affinity and provides comparable estimates of each of these effects, showing that even with institutionalized parties, presidents can induce legislative behavior by using resources at their disposal.

Because of the large influence exerted by legislative studies of the United States, scholars are often tempted to infer legislators' ideology from observed legislative behavior ideology. In a two party-system such as that of the United States, where legislators sort themselves into parties roughly along ideological lines and the same cleavage sorts legislators into government or opposition status, it is quite justifiable to treat ideal points and ideology interchangeably (see Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Shor et al. 2000 for examples from U.S. politics at the national and state levels). In other contexts, however, this approach is at least questionable, though this is not always acknowledged (Alston and Mueller 2006; Leoni et al. 2004). Granted, some scholars recognize that in non-U.S. settings, ideal points do not necessarily match ideology (e.g., Alemán and Saiegh 2007; Morgenstern 2001), but few have identified how observed legislative behavior systematically deviates from ideology (see Jones et al. 2009 on Argentina; Zucco and Lauderdale 2011 on Brazil). This study adds evidence of this process from Uruguay and strengthens the cautionary claim that interpretation of ideal points estimated from roll calls should not ignore the specific institutional context in which the votes were taken.

This article proceeds with background information on coalition formation and legislative behavior in Uruguay. It then presents the newly augmented dataset of roll calls in the Uruguayan Senate and contrasts ideal point estimates of senators with the ideological structure of Uruguay's party system. It conducts a systematic analysis of the effects of cabinet membership on legislative behavior.

LEGISLATIVE BEHAVIOR AND THE EXECUTIVE

In multiparty systems, coalition formation is intertwined with legislative behavior because cabinet and other high-level appointments are generally made in expectation of legislative support. Although the influence of the executive over legislators is most evident in parliamentary systems (Spirling and McLean 2006), it has been noted in the case of the United States (Chiou and Rothenberg 2003) and other Latin American countries (Zucco 2009; Jones et al. 2009). In fact, given that Latin American presidents typically control a considerable amount of the state's resources, their capacity to influence legislative behavior should be particularly strong.

Whereas the U.S. bureaucracy is accountable to Congress, which is responsible for budget elaboration and appropriation, Latin American presidents enjoy greater control over expenditures, and almost exclusively control the bureaucracy in their countries, except for a few independent agencies. Presidents appoint cabinet members and heads of major departments, semi-autonomous agencies, and public companies, but also may make political nominations, sometimes extending deep into lower levels of the bureaucracy. Moreover, the executive formulates the details of policy implementation, and can—with only mild limitations—establish when, where, how, and even whether or not to spend budgeted resources. Since all these resources can be used to influence legislators, their behavior will reflect a mix of ideological inclinations and government influence. This is true, it can be argued, even in places—such as Uruguay—where parties are “strong.”

Students of legislative behavior in Uruguay have shown beyond reasonable doubt that the Uruguayan party factions are very disciplined and stable entities (Buquet et al. 1998; Møgenstern 2004). In fact, it has also been shown that unlike what happens in other multiparty presidential systems, factions, and not parties, are the relevant agents in the Uruguayan legislature (Møgenstern 2004).

If one accepts that factions are the main players, then governments from 1985 through 2005 were akin to coalitions in multiparty systems. In this respect, Altman (2000) has shown that ideological distance, membership in the president's party, fairness of the coalitional arrangement, and especially timing in the electoral cycle affect the probability that a given faction will be in the government coalition in a single year. As the presidential term progresses and elections approach, the electoral incentives become more important, encouraging factions to jump ship to better position themselves for success at the polls.

The literature on Uruguay has advanced beyond the isolated study of legislative behavior and coalition formation; scholars have noted that some interesting patterns of behavior can, in fact, be traced back to the *quid pro quo* involved in the executive's coalition-building efforts. While observing that party discipline was usually lower than faction discipline, Buquet et al. (1998) conjecture that participation in the government's coalition was part of the determinants of voting behavior observed in the legislature. Møgenstern (2001) further elaborates on the topic, showing that while the factions of the party that holds the presidency tend to cooperate with each other more at the beginning of the term, factions in the party that is out of government tend to operate together as elections approach. Furthermore, Chasquetti (2001) shows that when majority coalitions were in place, the opposition was reduced to irrelevance in terms of legislative performance.

Cabinet Formation as a Form of Collective Bargaining

As in other presidential systems where coalition government is the norm, the Uruguayan executive uses the resources at its disposal to attract and maintain legislative support. In a very comprehensive analysis of Uruguayan politics in the 1980s and 1990s, Buquet et al. (1998) identify more than three hundred jobs around which coalitions are built. These are the most visible prizes sought by politicians, and they were also almost uniformly listed by several former occupants of high-profile positions interviewed for the present study in Montevideo in 2005. These positions include directorships of state-owned companies, autonomous entities, national commissions, and above all, ministerial positions.

In retribution for “sharing” state resources with other groups, the government seeks favorable behavior from factions in the legislature. In this sense, it is widely believed that the government has the capacity to induce legislative behavior, and it has been pointed out that this interbranch bargaining creates a government-opposition dynamic in the legislature (Chasquetti 2001, 16).

Besides the capacity to appoint other party members to key posts, to deliver visible goods to the electorate, and to take credit for policies and projects, some of these positions are particularly valuable because they allow the hiring of hundreds of low-level temporary employees, or they manage projects funded by multilateral institutions that carry considerable hiring discretion. As a former Blanco minister bluntly stated,

In politics, the large ministries are the really interesting prizes. The ones with national projection, that act in the whole country, that have many jobs to distribute, that have visibility, and that grant the possibility of doing things. But fundamentally, where one can put reliable people, where there are more jobs to fill, a national scope, for instance, the Health Ministry or the Ministry of Transportation and Public Works, the ones that deal with more resources, because that is power. (Former Blanco Minister 2005a)

Ministries are so important for potential allies that even in a country with a very stable administrative structure, such as Uruguay, in the rare instance in which a new extra ministry was created, it was done mostly to accommodate political interests.² In the word of the same important Blanco politician,

The Ministry of Sports was created, and was given to a *Herrerista*,³ and that was a political solution because the *Herrerismo* has been left with fewer ministries than what corresponded to them proportionally. (Former Blanco Minister 2005a)

Exchanges between the executive and faction leaders are usually enough to assure support from the whole faction, at least in the medium term. Not only is factional discipline very high, but factions can demand the replacement of their appointee; and when factions break with the government, all their members leave the cabinet. While this might seem obvious, it need not be the case, as can be seen in neighboring Brazil, where ministers often remain in office even after their parties formally break with the government, and where ministers sometimes even change parties to retain their posts when their party breaks with the government.⁴

All accounts indicate that the distribution of these jobs is done behind closed doors, between the president and a handful of faction leaders. In this, the process of allocating cabinet positions is no different from what happens in countries with much less institutionalized party systems. What is different in the Uruguayan case is that this bargaining is always done with leaders, who bargain as leaders of their political groups and never as individual legislators.

Although this story has been told convincingly before, the general hypothesis that sharing resources leads to increased legislative support has not been systematically tested. This is not because of any lack of insight, but simply because of a lack of proper data and a framework to do so. The problem is more complicated than it seems at first glance, because it does not suffice to show, for instance, that parties in the cabinet vote more with the executive than parties outside of the cabinet, for both (cabinet membership and behavior) could be caused simply by ideological affinity. Before tackling this and other empirical difficulties, let us explore why it is reasonable to focus on cabinet appointments to try to identify the government's capacity to induce legislative behavior.

On the Absence of Individual Exchanges

As in other Latin American presidential systems, the Uruguayan president controls many of the state resources and, until 2005, typically lacked an automatic majority in the legislature.⁵ The president is forced to negotiate alliances with other factions in his own party, as well as factions in other parties. Also as in other multi-party presidential systems, the political resources controlled by the president are used as means to obtain and maintain legislative support from groups of legislators—which, in the Uruguayan case, amount to party factions.

Where Uruguay departs from less institutionalized party systems is that high-level appointments are the sole instrument the president has, besides compromising on policy initiatives, to put together a voting coalition in Congress. According to many interviews with former ministers, the Uruguayan president has little ability and few incentives to exchange resources for support with individual legislators. Here the comparison with Brazil is particularly striking. While parties there are also relevant legislative players (Figueiredo and Limongi 2002), there is quite a lot of evidence that exchanges between the executive and the individual legislators are common. Presidents, in fact, have a "toolbox" (Pereira et al. 2011) that extends beyond just cabinet and high-level positions and includes, very conspicuously, the provision of "pork" to individual legislators through an institutional mechanism known as individual amendments to the budget, which are selectively implemented using the executive's power to impound budget allocations (Pereira and Mueller 2004; Alston and Mueller 2006; Zucco 2009).

In Uruguay, exchanges at the individual legislator level simply do not happen regularly. Granted, a few of the interviewees for this study pointed to the same notorious politician from a small department who has quite a reputation as an avid bargainer. While these exchanges were not entirely on personal grounds, as the legislator in question was the leader of a party faction, the recurrence of this very same case also suggests that it is truly exceptional. It was clearly the case that this legislator was looked down on by the rest of the political establishment, which is quite a different attitude from the one prevalent in

Brazil, where pork and patronage-seeking behavior is generally regarded as a “fact of life” and openly discussed (Souza 2005; Krakovics 2004).

As a general trend, exchanges based on private goods that can be linked to a particular legislator or region are very rare in Uruguay. More generally, any bargaining between the executive and individual legislators is also very rare. In the words of a former Colorado minister,

This very rarely happens, except if it is a very special legislator, a very important legislator, the only one holding off, that the leader of the other party requests, “talk to this guy, he is a bit reluctant,” but this is not a usual thing. (Former Colorado Legislator and Minister 2005a)

A study of the reasons that this varies across countries is beyond the scope of this article, but the different approaches to executive-legislative bargaining can probably be traced back to specific institutional arrangements. For instance, the Uruguayan budgetary dynamic is very particular. Budgets span five years, and are passed during the first year of each presidency. There are yearly *rendición de cuentas* (expense account) bills, in which expenditures can be added, removed, or rearranged, and which sometimes function as de facto yearly budgets. Both the five-year budget bill and these yearly revision bills are great opportunities for Congress to attempt to extract more resources from the government.⁶ Through logrolling in Congress, legislators sometimes manage to include matters that interest them, as one Colorado leader commented on the inclusion of budgetary matters of interest to individual legislators.

It exists, and they are legitimate interests of each department. However, it is not normal that it be used as a type of blackmail. It is not as explicit, or as public as it is in the United States. Usually, parties handle this sort of thing internally. (Former Colorado Legislator and Minister 2005b)

But in Uruguay, there is no such thing as an individual amendment to the budget, and most legislators could not claim direct credit for particular budget items even if they could prove that they had been responsible for their inclusion. With half of the lower house elected from a single electoral district where 40 percent of the population resides, and with all senators elected in the country at large in a closed-list proportional representation electoral system, the great majority of the legislators are not accountable to any specific geographic location. Hence, it is not typically expected that the legislator will lobby the executive for local expenditures or seek to include narrow local measures in the budget. In comparison, legislators in Brazil are also elected in large districts, but the open-list system guarantees that members of congress know where their votes come from. Many have relatively concentrated constituencies, and much time and effort are spent on local politics (Ames 2001).

In this context, it makes sense that Uruguayan legislators do not follow through and pay attention to the execution of the budget at all, and do not generally seek to guarantee that particular pieces of pork are implemented.⁷ It is curious that this is not because the government executes the budget exactly as approved by the legislature (Morales et al. 2005). Most legislators seemed very much aware of the budget cuts made by the executive, and most former ministers had “horror” stories about their budget being withheld by the Economy and Planning ministries. As a former Blanco minister described it,

Table 1. Ideological Ordering of Parties

Legislature 1985–1990	<u>PC</u>	<u>PGP</u>	<i>MNR</i>	CBI	<i>Herr</i>	UCB				
		<u>E90</u>	<i>PLP</i>	BU	<i>UNH</i>					
				VB						
Legislature 1990–1995	<u>E90</u>	<u>AU</u>	<i>NE</i>	<i>MNR</i>	FB	<i>Renovi</i>	L15	<i>Herr</i>	UCB	
	<u>VA</u>			<i>PLP</i>						
Legislature 1995–2000	<u>MPP</u>	<u>PC</u>	<u>E90</u>	<u>ER</u>	<i>NE</i>	PGP	<i>MNR</i>	FB	<i>Renovi</i>	L15
			<u>VA</u>	<u>AU</u>				<i>Prop</i>		C94
								<i>MO</i>		
Legislature 2000–2005	<u>E90</u>	<u>AP</u>	<u>AU</u>	<i>NE</i>	<i>AN</i>	<i>CW</i>	FB	<i>Herr</i>		
		<u>VA</u>			<i>Prop</i>		Battle			
							L15			

Key: Colorado factions shown in boldface, Blanco factions in italics, Frente Amplio factions underlined.

Notes: Stacked factions cannot be differentiated ideologically. This table comprises 51 factions and legislature observations, but the empirical analysis that follows uses only 47. ER, Prop, and C94 in 1995–2000 were excluded because they did not have any senators; Blanco factions AN and Prop in 2000–2005 were combined into a single faction (MO).

Source: Ideology data for 1985–90, González 1991. For 1990–99, Altman’s legislator survey data collected in 1997 (Altman 2000). For 2000–2005, four waves of the Elite Survey conducted by the Instituto de Ciencia Política (Buquet 2001–4); Aldrich and McKelvey 1977.

There is what the [budget] law says, there is what the [Economy] Ministry authorizes me to spend and that eventually is appropriated by decree, and there is what the [Economy] Ministry effectively hands me. It [the Economy Ministry] can say “yes, yes, I will give it to you, but now we do not have it, next month we will give it to you.” This way, it is the Economy Ministry that decides it all. (Former Blanco Minister 2005b)

Though it is clear that “the Economy Minister controls the tap” (Former Blanco Minister 2005a), most interviewees thought determining priorities in the budget was the exclusive right of the executive branch, that it was not done on political grounds, and that the economic and fiscal situation was the most important determinant of this decision.

Whatever the precise determinants of this type of behavior may be, the consequence for this study is quite straightforward. In attempting to understand the executive’s influence over legislators, we can confidently ignore any bargaining between the executive and individual legislators and focus exclusively on exchanges between the executive and the factions.

Table 2. Roll Calls in the Uruguayan Senate, 1985–2005

	Original Dataset	“New” Roll Calls	Total Roll Calls
1985–1990	44	7	51
1990–1995	22	15	37
1995–2000	0	21	21
2000–2005	0	16	16
Total	66	59	125

Notes: Original dataset was assembled by Scott Morgenstern. All data were collected from the Uruguayan Parliament’s legislative records (in electronic and paper format).

LEGISLATIVE BEHAVIOR IN URUGUAY

Despite a highly institutionalized party system, the Uruguayan executive provides inducements to factions that make their members deviate from strictly ideological behavior. Because there are no direct transfers from the executive to individual legislators in Uruguay, the provision of such inducements is restricted to exchanges between the government and the factions. Although cabinet positions—specifically—are not the only way such exchanges materialize, they provide a systematic snapshot of a bargaining process that extends to lower-level positions as well.

The empirical task at hand, then, is to compare legislative behavior with ideology and faction membership in the cabinet. This requires collecting roll call data, some measure of ideology, and cabinet membership information. Let us turn first to the issue of ideology.

This study argues that legislative behavior is not simply a direct reflection of ideology, so any measure of ideology used here must not be based on observed behavior in the legislature. The literature on Uruguayan politics has produced several, mostly coherent depictions of the country’s party system since its return to democracy, and this study relies on them to create a picture of the ideological structure of the country’s party system.

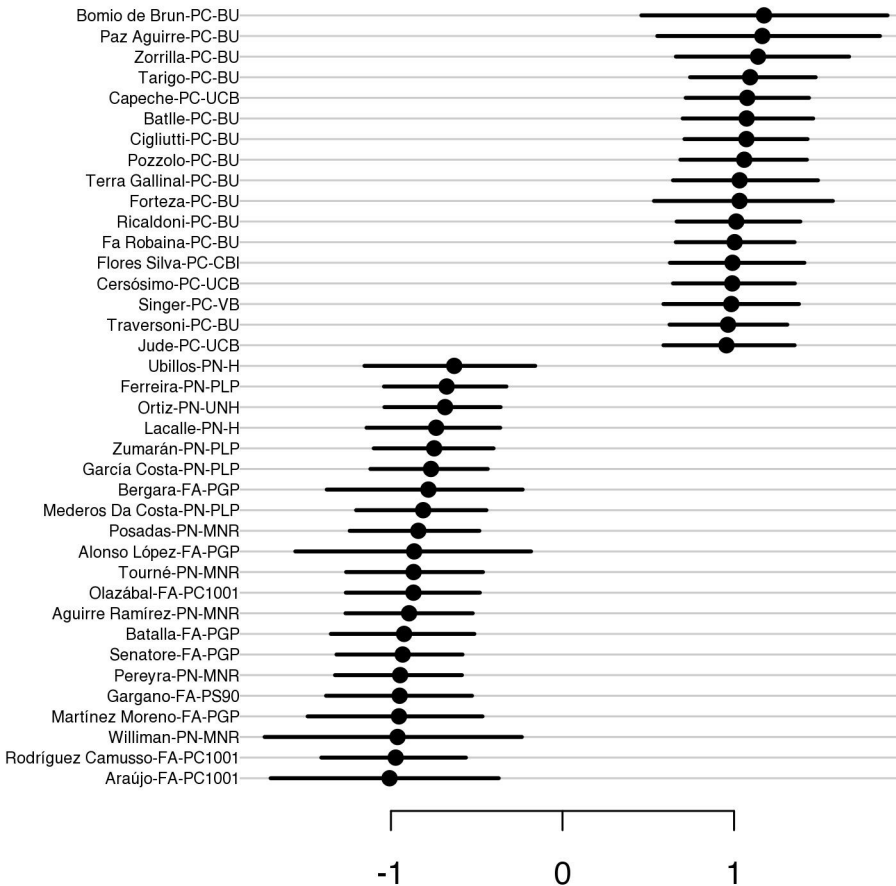
Table 1 reports standard ideological orderings of Uruguayan factions, from left to right, assembled from three different sources. For 1990–1999, I used David Altman’s legislator survey data collected in 1997.⁸ For 2000–2005, I used data from four waves of the Elite Survey conducted by researchers at the Instituto de Ciencia Política at the Universidad de la República.⁹ In both of these surveys, legislators were asked to place themselves and the most important factions on the same common left-right scale, which I rescaled to obtain estimates of the factions’ positions, following Aldrich and McKelvey (1977). For the first period (1985–90), Luis E. González had compiled very similar data from personal interviews with legislators, but since then the original individual codings have been lost.¹⁰ All that remains are the aggregate tables reported in his book (González 1991, 76).¹¹

The resulting ordering is relatively uncontroversial, with the Frente Amplio factions on the left and some overlap between the Colorados and Blancos on the center-right. But how does this ordering compare to how parties and factions behave in the legislature?

Roll call votes provide a convenient—if not completely unproblematic—source of data with which to assess legislative behavior. Several Uruguayan scholars and

Figure 1. Ideal Point Estimates for Uruguayan Senators

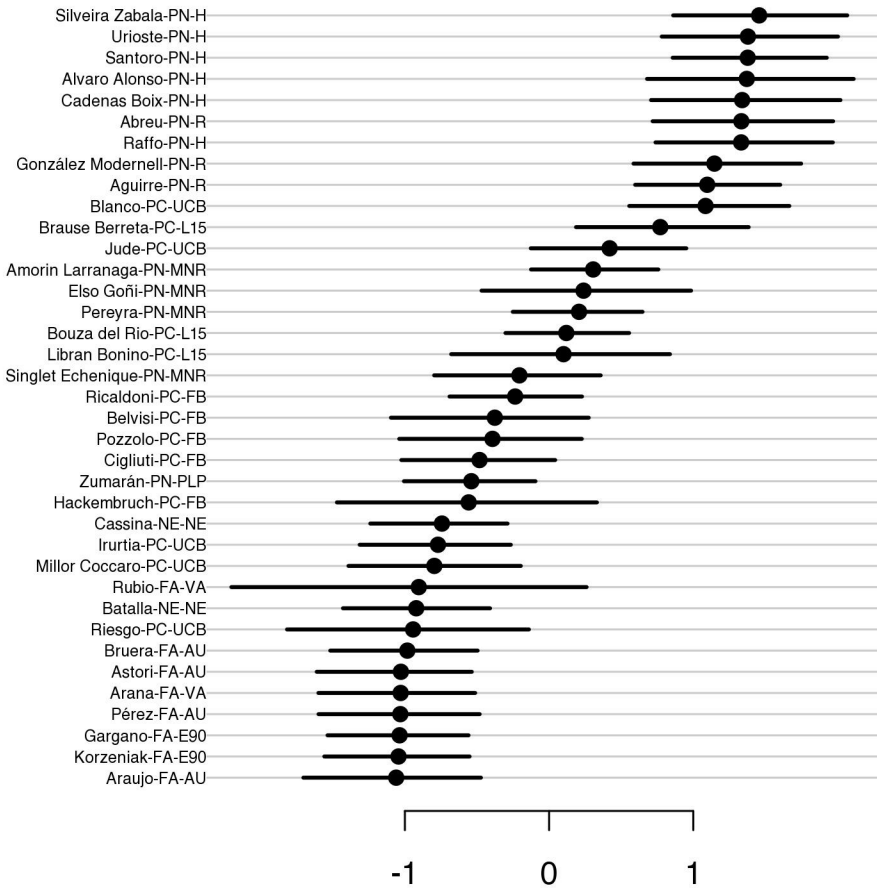
a. Sanguinetti, 1985–1990



specialists have already used votes taken in the legislature to analyze the behavior of parties and factions in Parliament. Data on a relatively large number of significant bills were compiled and analyzed, for instance, by Buquet et al. (1998). From these data it was possible to compile cohesion scores for factions and parties, but given the way votes were recorded in the legislative journals, it is not really possible to determine exactly which legislators voted, and consequently exactly how each and every legislator voted.

Complete roll calls for the Uruguayan legislature were originally only available for veto override votes taken during joint sessions of the upper and lower chambers, known as the General Assembly—which have become increasingly rare. These votes have been analyzed before, using special models similar to the ones used in this study (Morgenstern 2004), but the small number of votes limited any such attempt to the first two legislative periods after the country's transition back to democracy in the mid-1980s.

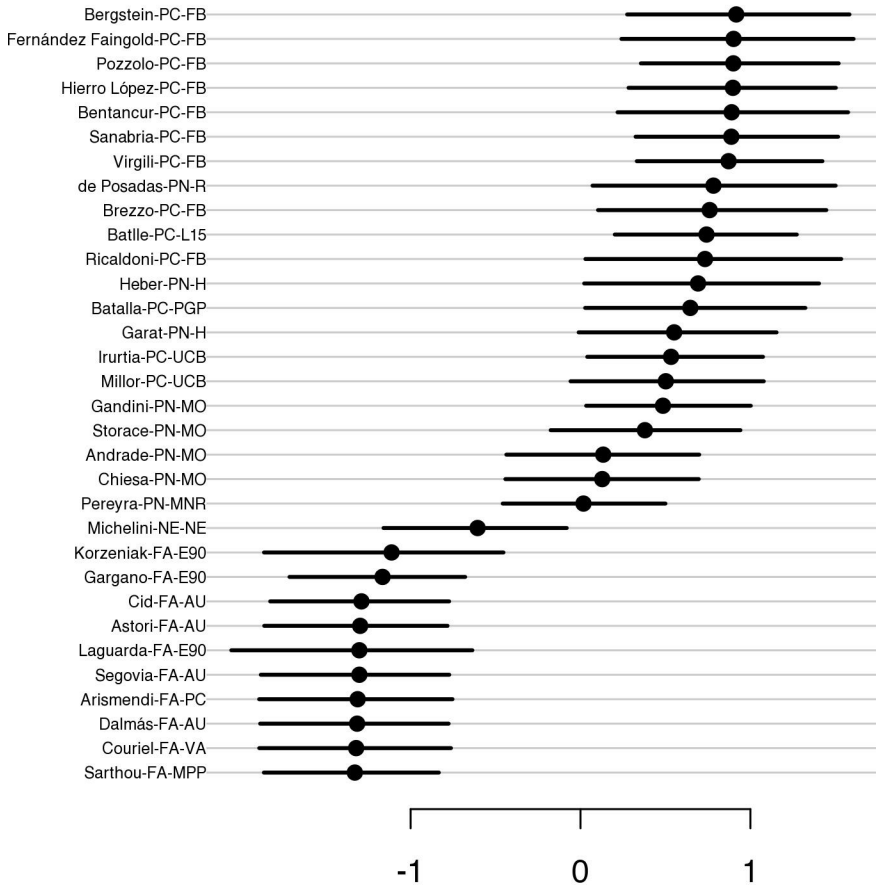
b. Lacalle, 1990–1995



Since then, improvements in the indexation of the Uruguayan Parliament's legislative records have allowed for expanding the existing set considerably. I collected data for two more legislative periods, but was also able to find roll calls on votes other than veto overrides (table 2). While the numbers are still small, the dataset was considerably expanded, and the use of Bayesian methods of ideal point estimation instead of the maximum likelihood framework provides a slightly more reliable method of estimation under these circumstances. Moreover, Bayesian methods produce easy-to-use measures of the uncertainty around ideal point estimates, and I am able to account for this uncertainty when using ideal points as variables in the regression models discussed here.

New roll calls were found both in the Senate and in the lower Chamber of Deputies. This analysis, however, concentrates only on the Senate, as the number of roll calls in the lower house is small relative to the number of legislators. This should not pose too many problems, as electoral rules are extremely proportional in both chambers (Buquet et al. 1998), and both are elected by closed-party lists. Lists of candidates for the lower house are nested under lists for the upper house,

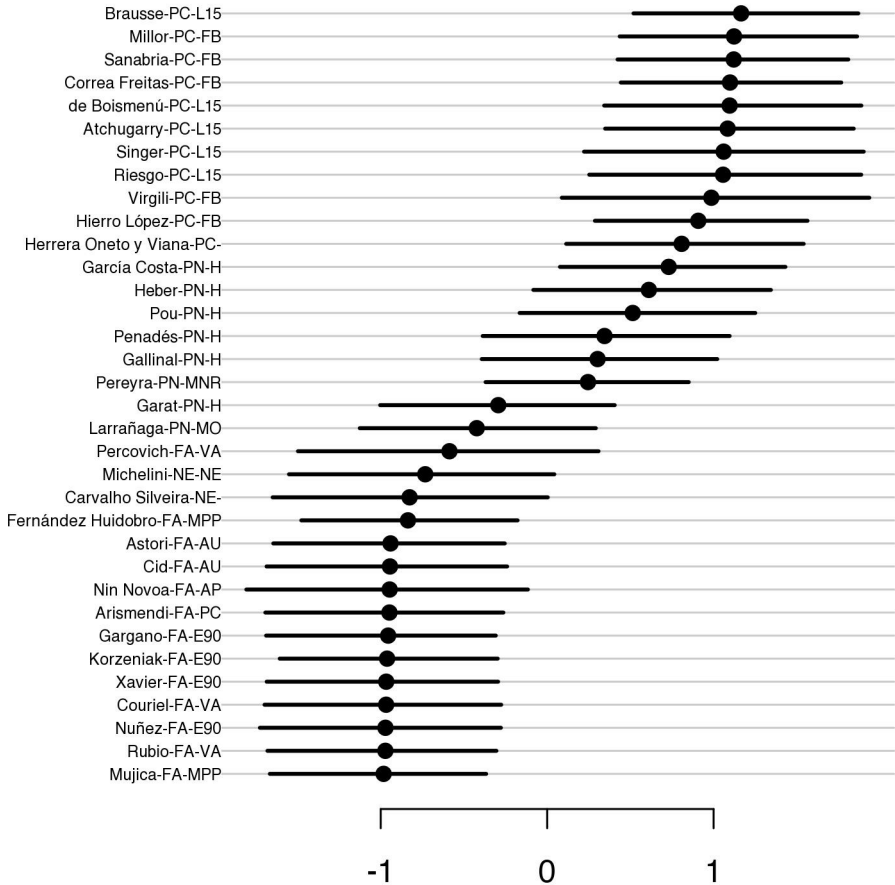
c. Sanguinetti, 1995–2000



so almost all deputies can be linked to senators, who are typically more senior politicians and higher up in faction hierarchy. Uruguay is also one of the few Latin American countries where any legislation can start in any chamber, on the initiative of any legislator or cabinet member. For this reason, the subject matter and the sequencing of votes should be very similar in both chambers. All things considered, positions in the Senate should correspond very closely to positions in the lower house. In fact, the Senate is arguably a tougher test for the theory proposed in this study than the lower house. Senators are usually more experienced politicians, more influential in their parties, and safer electorally, which would give them more leeway to vote according to their ideological and policy preferences.¹²

One immediate question is whether it makes sense to estimate ideal points if, as mentioned earlier, discipline is known to be very high. It is important to note that in Uruguay, discipline is high within factions but not necessarily within parties. Since several factions exist in a relatively small chamber like the Senate, many factions are really composed of very few individuals. Hence, even though we expect to find legislators from the same factions very close together,

d. Battle, 2000–2005



Notes: Figure reports ideal point estimates of Uruguayan senators with their respective 95 percent confidence interval, obtained by estimating a one-dimensional item response model using IDEAL for R (Clinton et al. 2004). There are 31 seats in the Uruguayan Senate, but a number of alternates typically serve in each legislature. Estimates are presented for all senators who voted more than nine times in any legislature.

there are enough different factions to make these estimates informative and meaningful. Overall, there will be relatively little redundant information.¹³

Figure 1 reports estimates of senators' ideal points in a single dimension, as well as the corresponding 95 percent confidence intervals. Each senator's name is followed by his or her party and faction. These are original estimates.

Consider panel a. Though Julio Sanguinetti appointed two ministers who were nominally Blancos in his first term as president, as well as one from the smaller Unión Cívica, they served as personal nominations, and the government was never really characterized as a cross-party "coalition."¹⁴ In fact, the leaders of the main opposition parties explicitly rejected being part of the government

(Chasquetti 2001, 79). Empirically, the clear clustering of legislators in two separate blocks, with all the Colorados (identified by PC) pitted against the Blancos (PN) and the *Frentampelistas* (FA), suggests that the government did not actually function as a parliamentary coalition. It is also noteworthy that while government and opposition are clearly different from each other, factions cannot be distinguished in terms of their voting patterns within each group.

This result might seem predictable, except that it does not correspond to the left-right ordering of factions and parties as previously reported in table 1. The *Herrerista* factions of the Partido Nacional (PN-H and PN-UNH) are ideologically to the right of the main faction of the Partido Colorado, but the ideal points of its members appear to be to the left.

While ideal point estimation methods impose no assumptions on the substantive meaning of the dimensions, a reasonable expectation would be to find that one-dimensional estimates return a left-right ideological dimension. Not only is this what happens in the United States, where ideal point estimation techniques have been widely employed, but the Uruguayan party system is the most institutionalized in the region, and therefore it is reasonable to expect it to be structured on ideological bases.

As it turns out, legislative behavior does not reveal ideology. For the period studied, a considerable ideological overlap existed between Blancos and Colorados, but the ideal points show a clear separation. A government-opposition dynamic, instead, supersedes ideological cleavages in the legislature.

This does not mean that ideology is not important. Instead, it seems to be the case that both ideology and executive influence combine to determine how legislators behave. Conceptually, this idea would imply that a two-dimensional depiction of legislators' behavior would be appropriate, with one dimension capturing government influence and the other ideology. A two-dimensional model, in turn, could allow for an evaluation of which dimension, if any, dominates.¹⁵ However, the reduced number of votes in the Uruguayan Senate makes estimating a two-dimensional model excessively taxing. An alternative way of estimating government influence and ideological determination using one-dimensional estimates is explored below.

The other three legislatures studied include considerable periods under formal coalition government. In all cases, the core supporters of the president appear cohesively at the right end of the distribution of ideal points. Note the *Herreristas* in panel b, the Foro Batllista in panel c, and the combination of Foro Batllista and Lista 15 in panel d. Nobody would argue that these factions have alternated their ideological positions, occupying the extreme right of the political spectrum at different times. The most likely explanation is simply that the ideal points are capturing a government-opposition dimension instead of simply an ideological one. Factions typically leave the cabinet as time progresses (Altman 2000). For instance, there were at least three different cabinets under Lacalle, one from 1990 to 1991, another in 1992, and the last one covering the last two years of his term. Ideally, there would be a different set of ideal point estimates for each of these periods, but the total number of roll calls is already quite small. Still, the degree of "governmentness" shown in panel b roughly matches the order in which factions "jumped ship": the main Colorado factions (Foro Batllista and Lista 15) were the first to leave, along with the PLP. The Blanco faction MNR left a year later, and the Colorados from UCB stuck with the *Herrerista* government until the end.

The fact that so many factions gradually left office explains the diagonal aspect of panel b. In Sanguinetti's second term, by contrast, the coalition arrangement lasted longer, thereby producing more separation between government and opposition. Under Batlle, the Blancos formally broke with the government during the rough aftermath of the Argentine economic crises, which had devastating ripple effects in Uruguay. Hence, these factions of the PN occupy the center of panel b.

In general, the hypothesis of this study is that legislators in the center of the behavioral scales reported in figure 1 were not "moderates" in the ideological sense, but rather members of factions that were in government for part of the term and then shifted to the opposition. This is compatible with the idea that being part of a faction that holds a cabinet position affects one's behavior, and it is the most fundamental piece of evidence suggesting that the direct mapping between ideal points and ideological preferences that is often assumed to be the case in the analysis of U.S. politics is probably not an adequate assumption in other political contexts. The more systematic empirical tests carried out in this study intend precisely to show that along with a left-right cleavage, a government-opposition dynamic is central to Uruguayan politics.

EXPLAINING LEGISLATIVE BEHAVIOR SYSTEMATICALLY

This section systematically assesses whether being part of the government coalition affects legislative behavior. This analysis is possible only because Uruguayan coalitions are often not ideologically contiguous, so that separate ideological behavior can be separated from behavior induced by membership in the coalition. One could conceivably carry out such an analysis using data at the level of the legislator. But the behavior of different legislators in the same faction is very similar, and more important, ideology data are not available at the individual level, and cabinet participation is necessarily measured at the level of the faction. Hence, the unit of observation for the rest of this study is the faction or legislature, and the complete dataset consists of 47 observations, spanning the four legislative periods discussed and listed in table 1.

The dependent variable is legislative behavior. Since we theoretically want to assess whether being in the cabinet brings legislators' behavior closer to what the president would desire, the variable is measured relative to the president's position. Hence, it is operationalized as the average absolute difference between the ideal points of faction members and that of the president. The president's ideal point is assumed to coincide with that of the vice president, who serves as president of the Senate and votes regularly.¹⁶

The first independent variable is an exogenous estimate of the faction's average ideological distance from the president. This variable was constructed directly from the ideology estimates described earlier and reported in table 1. These estimates were simply differentiated from the president's faction to obtain a measure of ideological distance from the president. The result is a variable that ranges from zero to 5.41, with a mean of 2.09 and standard deviation of 1.76. The use of different data sources to construct this variable is not a problem because the analysis that follows is based on relative distances between the factions and the president, requires no direct comparison across periods, and includes controls for period-specific effects.

Evidently, any measure of ideology is an extremely synthetic summary of preferences over a wide range of issues. Few policies get voted on, and even fewer

votes get recorded. Although legislative behavior could depart from ideology simply because of an idiosyncratic selection of recorded votes, the ideological position of parties should be a reasonable baseline predictor of actual behavior.

The other main independent variable is cabinet membership, operationalized as the share of roll calls—if any—in which the faction held a ministerial post. It ranges from zero (factions never in the cabinet) to 1 (factions that were in the cabinet during every roll call taken in the term). It is important to note that factions are selected for the cabinet before behavior is effectively observed and that changes in the composition of the cabinet are relatively dramatic events, so cabinet composition cannot be easily adjusted to account for behavior. Hence, the variable cabinet presence is realized before legislative behavior. Ideally, one would estimate different sets of ideal points for each different “cabinet.” However, there is hardly enough data to estimate one set of ideal points for the whole legislative period, so this option is not viable.

One additional complication for the empirical analysis is that as the dependent variable is bound at zero, the linear models will be predicting lower-than-observed values when the dependent variable is close to its lower bound. For this reason, Tobit models are estimated instead of traditional OLS. Tobit allows for data censored from below at the expense of harder-to-interpret coefficients. Table 3a reports the actual Tobit regression results with robust standard errors clustered by party, but table 4 shows first differences for ease of interpretation.

The dependent variable used in all regressions, the average ideal point distance between faction members and the president, is itself estimated from roll call data. This adds an additional layer of uncertainty to the regressions and requires a correction of the standard errors. All results reported in the rest of this article do include such a correction.¹⁷

Furthermore, while this paper focuses on the president’s power to induce legislative behavior by offering membership in the cabinet, it is clear that cabinet membership is not a “treatment” that is randomly dispensed. Factions that are more ideologically distant from the president are never in the cabinet, so in empirical terms, the identification of cabinet effects on behavior relies on the contrast between in and out factions that are relatively close to the president. In particular, the vexing question is why the Frente Amplio did not join previous governments, particularly during the 2000–2005 period, in which the traditional parties lacked an automatic majority in Parliament (Chasquetti 2001). While this study does not provide an explanation for this behavior, its empirical strategy attempts to pin down the independent effect that being in the cabinet has on legislative behavior and to ensure that this effect is not driven by undue extrapolation.

To deal with the nonrandom assignment of cabinet membership, I reestimated all models in table 3a using a reduced dataset obtained by matching factions in the cabinet to factions not in the cabinet, based on their ideological distance from the president and on the party they belong to (Ho et al. 2007). This, in effect, discards those factions that are very far from the president and that could not be compared with any in-cabinet faction.

Balancing the dataset through matching leaves a reduced dataset in which treatment is almost “as if” randomly assigned. Matching is no silver bullet. The desirable “as if” random assignment of treatment is conditional on the variables that were used in the matching process. If nonobservables correlated with the treatment-assignment rule exist, then the observed differences between treatment and

Table 3. Determinants of Legislative Behavior, 1985–2005 (Tobit)

Model	A. Complete Sample					B. Balanced Sample (Matching)				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Cabinet	-0.553	-0.566	-0.647	-0.333	-0.521	-0.491	-0.442	-0.213	-0.216	-0.424
SE	0.169	0.158	0.211	0.168	0.221	0.145	0.126	0.233	0.119	0.239
p-value	0.001	0.000	0.002	0.047	0.019	0.001	0.000	0.362	0.070	0.077
Ideology	0.314	0.308	0.302	0.244	0.226	0.482	0.511	0.601	0.431	0.416
	0.052	0.047	0.047	0.049	0.055	0.071	0.089	0.127	0.123	0.126
	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001
Cabinet × Ideology			0.095					-0.237		
			0.136					0.126		
			0.484					0.061		
PresParty				-0.734	-0.903				-0.735	-0.920
				0.188	0.206				0.245	0.274
				0.000	0.000				0.003	0.001
Cabinet × PresParty					0.347					0.374
					0.233					0.220
					0.136					0.088
Intercept	0.799	0.823	0.834	1.159	1.222	0.616	0.668	0.584	1.045	1.109
	0.207	0.329	0.328	0.140	0.128	0.148	0.330	0.290	0.137	0.122
	0.000	0.012	0.011	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.043	0.044	0.000	0.000
χ^2	50.615	55.345	55.729	73.747	75.142	19.996	24.870	25.822	41.945	43.482
Log-lik	-35.150	-32.785	-32.592	-23.584	-22.886	-26.596	-24.159	-23.683	-15.622	-14.853
N	47	47	47	47	47	32	32	32	32	32

Notes: Table shows results of Tobit regressions on a dataset of 47 faction and legislature observations. Standard errors account for clustering of legislators by parties and for the uncertainty in the dependent variable, which is, itself, an estimate (see note 18). Results are reported for the full dataset and for a balanced dataset that matched factions in and out of the cabinet on exogenous (pretreatment) ideology measures. This, in effect, drops factions that are too ideologically distant from the president and for which there is no corresponding in-cabinet faction. χ^2 is reported for a likelihood ratio test for each model relative to a null model consisting of just the intercept. Ideology and the legislative behavior are measured relative to the president.

control groups become a biased estimate of the effect of the causal variable. Even though the main determinants of cabinet membership were used in the matching process, the assumption that no other biasing omitted variable exists continues to be an assumption. Only if the reader considers it justifiable does this procedure isolate the potential effect of ideology on presence in the cabinet.¹⁸

Results from this analysis, reported in table 3b, show slightly smaller effects for cabinet membership and a larger effect of ideology, but are, on the whole, substantively very similar to the results using the full, unbalanced sample.

Model 1 and model 2 are versions of the basic model, without and with period fixed effects. Simple inspection of the coefficients shows that estimates are all but identical, which is evidence that there are little, if any, period-specific effects left to explain and that the main explanatory variables are doing most of the work. As both models (and all others) show, while greater ideological distance between factions and the president is associated with greater “behavioral” distance, being in the cabinet and staying in for longer significantly reduces the latter. In short, factions that hold cabinet positions follow the president much more than would be predicted solely in terms of ideology. Substantive interpretation of these results will follow.

Model 3 tests whether ideology ceases to matter for legislative behavior once parties are included in the cabinet by including an interaction term between cabinet membership and ideology. A negative effect here would counteract the effect of ideology and would suggest that when a party is in the cabinet, the ideological effect is smaller. A coefficient of about the same size, but with opposite sign from the one found in the ideology, would indicate that ideology has no effect for parties in the cabinet. However, the small and insignificant coefficient actually observed on the interaction term shows that the ideology effect cannot be said to differ for parties in or out of the cabinet. This suggests the resilience of ideology even under conflicting strategic incentives, but the evidence here is not conclusive. Model 3 is the only one for which there are different results for the full and reduced sample, results that suggest that this more ideological behavior might be driven by the FA legislators. For the reduced sample, which excludes most *Frenteampartista* factions, it does seem to be the case that once in the cabinet, ideology ceases to predict behavior.

Model 4 explores the effect of partisanship in the peculiar Uruguayan party system. It shows that even after controlling for ideological distance, factions from the same party as the president act more in line with the executive than their ideology and even their cabinet membership would predict. So while Uruguay exhibits “organized factions and disorganized parties” (Morgenstern 2001), parties still have an independent effect, which is likely to have increased after electoral reforms eliminated the possibility of multiple presidential candidates per party.

But what do these numbers mean? Because both scales—ideological and behavioral—are arbitrary, and because the models are not linear, the actual magnitude of these effects is not intuitive. In all models, greater ideological distance is associated with greater behavioral distance, which basically implies that ideology is part of the story in explaining behavior. However, it is clearly the case that other factors matter as well.

Awarding any given faction a cabinet position reduces its distance from the president on the behavioral scale. Moreover, this reduction is statistically significant and substantively large. The first row in table 4 reports the changes in behavior associated with full inclusion in the cabinet as estimated in model 2.¹⁹

Table 4. Estimated Changes in Behavior for Changes in Cabinet, Ideology, and Party Variables

		Ideological Distance			
		Average		Extreme	
		Baseline (X = 0)	Change	Baseline (X = 0)	Change
Model 2	Cabinet 0 → 1	1.43	-0.53*	2.50	-1.60*
	Cabinet 0 → 0.5	1.43	-0.27*	2.50	-1.33*
Model 4	PresParty 0 → 1	1.50	-0.77*		
Model 5	Cabinet 0 → 1 (“In” Party)	1.51	-0.50*		
	Cabinet 0 → 1 (“Out” Party)	2.46	-0.50*		

* $p \leq .05$

Notes: Table reports the predicted behavioral distance to the president of moderate and radical factions and the changes caused by changes in variables indicating cabinet membership and membership in the president's party. Columns labeled “Baseline” report the predicted behavioral distance from the president when the variable of interest is zero. Columns labeled “Change” report the change in predicted behavioral distance when the variable of interest takes on a value different from zero (either 1 or 0.5, as indicated in the row). All quantities of interest were computed based on models 3, 4, and 5 for the full sample, reported in table 3a. Simulations were run for each legislature to compute predicted values, and the table reports average effects across all legislatures.

For a faction with average ideological distance to the president (a “moderate” faction), being included in the cabinet for all roll calls in the term reduces its predicted behavioral distance by just over one-third. For an extreme faction, inclusion in the cabinet causes greater attraction, reducing the predicted behavioral distance to the president by almost two-thirds.

Maintaining these factions in the cabinet for half the roll calls in the term reduces the effect on the moderate faction to about half of the full effect, but reduces the effect only slightly for the more extreme faction. In concrete terms, these differences are quite substantial. For 1995 under Sanguinetti, for instance, a change from 1.43 to 0.9 in the behavioral scale, reported in table 4, would imply moving the *Herreristas* more or less to the position of the Lista 15.

Similarly, being part of the president's faction can lead to behavior substantially closer to the president's preferences than what would be predicted for a faction not in the president's party, but with similar ideological distance. The case described in table 4, estimated from model 4, shows the behavioral distance being reduced to half.

Furthermore, model 5 includes an interaction term between a dummy indicating that the faction is affiliated to the same party as the president and the cabinet membership variable. A positive sign on this interaction term would indicate that “power of attraction” of cabinet positions is smaller for factions in the same party as the president than for the factions of other parties. However, the interaction term is not significant, suggesting that effects are essentially the same for both types of factions, a result that is corroborated by the first differences in table 4.

CONCLUSIONS

This study presented a simple systematic test of the effects on legislative behavior of being part of the executive's coalition. The test was carried out on an original set of Uruguayan roll call data that are now made available. The study shows that there is an association between cabinet membership and progovernment behavior in Uruguay, and that this cannot be explained away by ideology. If one is willing to accept that the relevant variables were used in the matching procedure, the results indicate that this association might, indeed, be a causal one. Membership in the cabinet brings the behavior of legislative factions closer to the president's preferences than would be expected solely in terms of ideology. Moreover, this effect is stronger for factions that are farther away in ideological terms from the president, and for factions of parties other than the president's.

This article has argued that cabinet membership is a blunt but systematic measure for the "resources" the president uses to buy support, and the narrative of country specialists and of politicians involved in the process backs this interpretation. Hence, the broader claim is that the executive uses resources at its disposal to influence legislators, and by doing so, succeeds in inducing progovernment behavior.

In more precise terms, this "attraction" could be produced by two different mechanisms. On the one hand, parties might retain their original preferred positions but "sell out" and support the president's agenda because of resources they receive. On the other hand, the observed "attraction" could be driven by policy concessions from both sides. Unfortunately, the data used here do not allow us to distinguish between these two mechanisms. Behavior and ideology are measured in arbitrary scales, so no absolute comparison is possible. This study relied on relative comparisons of the distances between factions and the president, and this type of measurement does not allow us to determine whether the president himself also "moved." While the discrimination between these two alternatives is left for future work, both mechanisms imply that the president was able to attract opposition members and induce changes in behavior. For the purposes of this study, it suffices to show that this effect exists.

Parties are relatively strong in Uruguay and considerably more institutionalized than in most other countries that have multiparty presidential systems, making the country a "least likely case" for the type of quid pro quo identified in this study. This suggests that multiparty presidential systems might actually all operate under a similar logic, by which political conflict gets reduced to a government-opposition dynamic that frequently does not map directly onto what is perceived as the left-right ideological cleavage.

This leads us to the more general point of the study: one must exercise extreme caution when applying ideal point estimation techniques to multiparty presidential systems. Actual behavioral patterns in the legislature are shaped by the executive, and therefore do not necessarily reflect just the underlying ideological structure of preferences. As a corollary, to assume that ideal points estimated from roll calls reveal the ideological disposition of parties is to ignore other crucial political processes that are at work and that will frequently lead to error. In some settings, such as the United States, ideal point estimates obtained from roll calls might match the underlying ideological dimension quite well. With only two parties, one necessarily has to be in government, and consequently the government-opposition dynamic might induce more or less separation between the poles but will not

“scramble” the ideological map. Where several parties coexist, the inclusion of nonideologically adjacent parties in the coalition—or the simple election of a president from a party that is not on the extreme of the ideological dimension—will produce conflicting incentives for at least some legislators and cause observed patterns of roll call votes to deviate from what ideology would predict.

NOTES

The author acknowledges support from the Social Sciences Research Council in the form of an International Dissertation Research Fellowship. A previous version of this article was presented at the 28th International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Rio de Janeiro, June 11–14, 2009. This article benefited from the generosity of many colleagues: Antônio Cardarelo provided initial faction affiliation data and helped to pin down faction membership for a few difficult cases; Daniel Buquet and Daniel Chasquetti shared their knowledge of Uruguayan politics in several opportunities, as well as their legislator survey data for 2000–2005; David Altman shared his legislator survey data for the 1995–2000 period and provided the initial data pertaining to cabinet positions; and Scott Morgenstern shared his original set of roll call data. Daniela Vairo provided excellent research assistance. Errors and omissions are the sole responsibility of the author. All data used in this article are available online at <http://hdl.handle.net/1902.1/18355>.

1. The “traditional” parties are the Partido Colorado (PC) and Partido Nacional (PN), also known as Blanco. The third party is the Frente Amplio (FA).

2. In 1995, President Jorge Batlle created the Ministry of Youth and Sports to assign an extra cabinet seat to former president Luis Alberto Lacalle’s faction in the National Party.

3. *Herreristas* refers to the members of an important faction of the Partido Nacional.

4. During Lula da Silva’s first term, for instance, Helio Costa provides an example of the former, and Ciro Gomes and Miro Teixeira of the latter. Such a move is unheard of in Uruguay.

5. Uruguayan presidents exercise much control over the executive branch. It should be noted, however, that the main state companies are autonomous entities, for which the president can appoint, but not discharge, directors. Additionally, a constitutional mandate grants the opposition representation on the boards of these entities. Furthermore, ministers are, at least in principle, subject to censure by Congress. Though all this limits presidential discretion, the constitution also ascribes to the president the power to dissolve Congress under very special circumstances.

6. Moraes et al. (2005) have shown that the congress in Uruguay greatly affects the final composition of the budget, while Morgenstern writes that legislators commonly combine requests for certain expenditures with threats to make cuts in parts of the budget that are dear to the executive (Morgenstern 2004, 178).

7. Some legislators, in fact, were surprised to find out that this is an important part of what legislators do in neighboring Brazil. One Colorado legislator even took note of it, and commented that he thought it was a good suggestion and something to be pursued.

8. I used Altman’s data for 1990–95 (Altman 2000), because no survey was available for that period. This usage is warranted because the relevant factions were essentially the same as in 1995–2000. The PLP was not in Altman’s data, but I assigned it the same value as MNR because they had been allied and because Senator Zumarán was a member of both.

9. For 2000–2005, the ideology data were collected in four waves, each of which interviewed one-fourth of the legislature. The first three waves had a category for *Nacionales non Herreristas*, which was then subdivided Alianza Nacional, Propuesta, and Correntada Wilsonista. Before the rescaling, I used the *Nacionales non Herreristas* placements to complete the series for both Alianza and Propuesta, the latter of which has no effect, as that faction was not present in the behavior dataset for that period. I kept the CW separate (hence, without a placement for the first three waves) because it was significantly more to the right than Alianza, Propuesta and the non-*Herreristas* taken as a group. In the behavior data for that period I considered Gallinal as the sole representative of CW, even though he was elected on a *Herrerista* list.

10. Personal communication with the author, April 2009.

11. I matched the 11 factions in my behavior and cabinet data for that period to the 6 position groupings González (1991) reported. I used the ratings based in the average faction placements that he computed from “all” respondents (as opposed to only members or only nonmembers). Following information given in the book, I assigned the values reported in table 5.1 (p. 76) as follows: “PC right wing” was assigned to Pacheco’s UCB; the “PC left wing” score was attributed to BU, CBI and VB; the “PN right wing” score was attributed to *Herrerismo* and the Unión Nacionalista Herrersita; the “PN left wing” was attributed to MNR and PLP; the “FA right wing” score was attributed to PGP and E90; and the “FA left wing” score was attributed to the Partido Comunista.

12. This is equivalent to the argument made by Fenno (1978) when comparing U.S. senators’ home style to that of representatives. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

13. In fact, Spirling and McLean (2006) have shown that extreme discipline considerably complicates ideal point estimates. However, a large part of the issue in their work, based on the British Parliament, is that few parties and extreme discipline make it impossible to separate the effects of being in the ruling government or opposition from those of being on the right or on the left, and produce very strange results.

14. The Unión Cívica did not elect any senators, and for this reason is not included in the empirical analysis.

15. See Zucco and Lauderdale 2011 for an example of such a model.

16. The observed values range from 0.03 to 2.42, with a mean of 1.26 and standard deviation of 0.87. It is important to recognize that the vice president’s positions do not necessarily coincide with those of the president. However, given that votes are not typically brought to the floor if there is great disagreement in the inner circle of government, it is unlikely that their positions would differ too much in matters that are actually voted on. Empirically, using the vice president’s ideal point or the average ideal point of the president’s faction as the reference point produces negligible differences in the results.

17. Uncertainty in the dependent variable was incorporated by assuming that there were one thousand different datasets (one for each draw of the posterior distribution of ideal points) and estimating the same regression for each set. Estimates were then treated as in multiple imputation procedures: point estimates were simply the average point estimates across all regressions, and standard errors were computed from average variance of point estimates plus the variance of the point estimates across the multiple regressions, as proposed by King et al. (2001).

18. The same problem can be dealt with in the context of mediation analysis (Imai et al. 2011). Ideology should have a direct effect on ideological behavior, but

also an indirect effect mediated through presence in the cabinet. Partitioning ideology's effect this way suggests that approximately 10 percent of its total effect is channeled through presence in the cabinet. However, from the point of view of this study, the important issue is that since ideology does not perfectly predict presence in the cabinet, we know that cabinet presence also has an independent effect on behavior. The full set of results from mediation analysis can be obtained from the author.

19. Recall that the variable cabinet can vary from 0 to 1 depending on the fraction of roll calls in each term that the faction held a ministerial position.

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