

Postelection Bargaining and Voter Behavior: Towards a General Spatial Theory of Voting

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Abstract

This paper derives a general spatial theory of voting based on Down's concept of a pure policy-oriented rational voter. Applying a modified Baron-Ferejohn model we include voter's perception of postelection bargaining in voter's evaluation of a party to derive a unified model of voting. Main results are: (i) our theory includes the original proximity model of Downs, the directional model of Rabinowitz as well as Kedar's compensational and Grofman's discounting model as special cases. However, especially Kedar's compensational model corresponds to rather unrealistic assumptions regarding voters' perception of postelection bargaining. (ii) The relative weight of the proximity component varies significantly across majoritarian and power sharing systems, and (iii) is additionally determined by party characteristics, i.e. party size, discipline and extremism, as well as voter characteristics, i.e. the organization of voters in social groups or networks. (iv) according to our theory party leaders have less incentives to take extreme party platforms due to the negative impact of extreme platforms on voters' perception of party's performance in postelection bargaining contradicting partly conclusions drawn by Kedar. (vi) existing empirical analyzes support our theory.

Keywords: spatial voter theory, unified model of voting, Downsian theory of democracy

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