

Verba volant, scripta manent? Intra-party politics, party conferences, and issue salience in France

Party Politics
2019, Vol. 25(5) 701–711
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DOI: 10.1177/1354068819836034
journals.sagepub.com/home/ppq



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Abstract

Intra-party groups influence parties' policy priorities. However, scholars have yet to map the pathways with the greatest impact. We argue that party congresses serve as venues for decision-making, allowing speeches and motions to support differing priorities. Considering parties' internal process, we propose that deliberations and alternate motions independently affect resulting policy statements. We examine this perspective focusing on meetings of the French Socialist Party. We use Structural Topic Models to analyze the issues included in 74 motions, 1439 speeches, and 9 manifestos from congresses held between 1969 and 2015 to evaluate whether factional motions or individual speeches better reflect the content of manifestos and to assess the internal agenda-setting process. Results suggest that motions better predict the content of parties' manifestos. However, when focusing solely on majority faction, we find that both motions and speeches predict manifestos' contents. This supports a theory of intra-party decision-making and factional dominance.

Keywords

agenda setting, intra-party politics, issue competition, party congresses, Structural Topic Model

Introduction

Parties' election platforms and campaign materials contain appeals to potential voters while also managing the tricky task of maintaining policy support from an intra-party policy coalition. Scholars find that consequently, the content of these materials appeals to multiple audiences including both economic and valence issues (Greene, 2016). Although scholars have developed impressive and nuanced theories on the electoral incentives parties face in constructing their electoral platforms, questions remain over the ways in which intra-party groups influence the parties' policy statements. How does the party select its policy priorities from the distribution of goals expressed within? Do party members and groups have multiple tools for influencing the party's broad policy goals?

Furthermore, despite the existence of internal deliberative bodies, most literature on intra-party politics has overlooked potential agenda-setting¹ dynamics inside the party. Little attention has been devoted to explore how internal

debates involving majority and minority factions, individual politicians, or party leaders affect the salience of policy issues expressed in electoral manifestos. To overcome these limitations, we seek to integrate a theory of internal agenda setting to explain the effect of intra-group deliberation and proposals on parties' policy statements.

Connecting studies of party competition to intra-party politics, we propose that parties' election manifestos reflect a diversity of intra-party goals, and inclusively incorporate the stakes of the party's factions. However, party leaders can prioritize electoral concerns by exploiting agenda-setting powers. These procedures, like their influence on

Paper submitted 26 January 2019; accepted for publication 27 January 2019

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parliamentary party debates, are particularly effective in constraining the content of speeches delivered by members of the majority factions. Following this perspective, we explore the issues important to intra-party actors and factions by analyzing the debates held at party national meetings, that is, “party congresses.” Indeed, party factions and members express differing viewpoints over the party’s electoral and policy strategies at party national meetings as part of an internal representative and deliberative process. Although MPs and party leaders likely have substantial influence over the content of their manifestos, official rules often signify the party congress as the ultimate authority required for approval.

We propose that the debates expressed and the motions submitted at parties’ national meetings relate differently to parties’ election platforms (although the two sources likely exhibit some similarities): The content of members’ speeches at these meetings is likely less constrained than the content of factions’ motions. Whereas speeches likely reflect the distinct goals of politicians, intra-party groups, and even geographically centered interests, motions go through a central screening, or agenda-setting process in which current party and factional leaders constrain the content of motions to balance intra-party and electoral goals. Accordingly, we predict that the primary content of motions more closely predicts the distribution of parties’ manifestos than the content of speeches at these meetings. Notwithstanding differences between motions and speeches, we expect that the leadership’s agenda-setting powers lead both speeches and motions from the party’s majority faction to exhibit stronger relationships with manifestos. The dominant faction can in fact exert greater influence on the internal agenda-setting process and its priorities, as expressed through motions and speeches, should better represent the party leadership’s goals that will ultimately be reflected in the party manifesto.

To assess our hypotheses, we focus on the French Socialist Party (PS) and create a new data set containing 74 motions, 1439 speeches, and 9 manifestos from party congresses held between 1969 and 2015, thus mapping the intra-party structure from near to its creation to its recent breakdown (Clift and McDaniel, 2017). The PS, like many other parties in France, Italy, or Japan, is a highly factionalized party composed of several intra-party subgroups, therefore it represents a challenging test of our hypotheses as high levels of intra-party disunity should make it difficult for party leaders and factional leaders to exercise strong agenda control on the motions presented at the party meetings. In the case of limited agenda control, the relationship that speeches and motions share with the resulting manifestos would be similar regardless of the speaker’s or motion writer’s factional status. Given the large and extensive amount of textual content from these sources, we use unsupervised automated Structural Topic Models (Roberts et al., 2013) to measure the policy priorities expressed in

motions, speeches, and manifestos. The results suggest that motions generally better predict the issue content of parties’ manifestos. However, majority faction priorities derived from both motions and speeches strongly predict manifestos’ contents.

Intra-party politics and party congresses

Scholars often claim that election manifestos balance goals of attracting voters and mobilizing intra-party groups. As elite-driven documents, substantial literature links election manifestos and campaigns to strategic electoral goals (Adams, 1999; Downs, 1957; Somer-Topcu, 2017). At least formally, parties’ rules often provide intra-party organs with opportunities to influence and perhaps even veto proposed election manifestos. In the French PS, for example, the party invites proposals on specific issues from its broader membership and as full motions from organized factions prior to a meeting of the party’s national congress. Members of a party committee (selected by the party leader) are then charged with organizing the proposals into a coherent set of motions or alternatives that, at least in principle, take into account the different political and ideological views existing within the party. During the congress, a number of prominent politicians who represent each faction take the floor to express their personal viewpoints often in support of the priorities in their most preferred motion. At points in the party’s history, the motions that resulted from this internal process were directly connected to candidates for the party’s leadership. Ultimately, the motions and leadership candidates are voted on at a meeting of the party’s national congress (Bergounioux and Grunberg, 2005). With some variation, this process is similar to parties elsewhere (Gauja, 2013), although the extent of intra-party participation varies across parties and over time within them.

Take the following example from France where the center-right Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) was also highly divided; six factions competed in the 2012 UMP congress and two candidates fiercely fought for the party leadership in an extremely tight race that generated internal strife lasting for months after until a new party congress was held to appease the competing factions. In this regard, party congresses present an opportunity for intra-party groups to express their goals and to build coalitions to support differing policy priorities at a fairly early stage prior to elections. At times, intra-party groups can reach an agreement due to consensual bargaining and compromise, strategic agenda setting, or loyalty and enforced discipline.

While internal factions openly compete for members’ support, the existing leadership seeks to settle internal disputes by reaching compromises that satisfy the greatest share of activists. Indeed, party competition creates pressure to display cohesion in the eyes of voters as unity may

enhance a party's electoral fortune, whereas the public appearance of internal disagreement during an election campaign likely holds negative impacts on the party's electoral success (Greene and Haber, 2015). Accordingly, members who support contrasting views about the party line and strategy should use contexts such as party congresses to resolve internal disagreements before parties express their positions through public documents such as party manifestos. This logic implies that apparent party unity from election campaigns and parliamentary behavior mask real internal divisions. This balance of factional deliberation and leader negotiation implies that party congresses serve as a deliberative body. Like other deliberative bodies, the rules and processes governing decisions play a prominent role.

In particular, party congresses provide at least three opportunities for members to affect the party's priorities. First, members vote for the party leadership and to adopt specific commitments. Second, they draft and mobilize support for factional motions, which are comprehensive policy documents issued by factions that present alternative ideological views (Giannetti and Laver, 2009). Third, activists and prominent politicians can take the floor and deliver speeches that express personal opinions or report their party faction's priority and persuade the audience.

Consequently, scholars have begun to evaluate intra-party ideological heterogeneity through parliamentary speeches (Bäck and Debus, 2016; Bernauer and Bräuninger, 2009; Proksch and Slapin, 2015), debates at party conferences (Greene and Haber, 2016, 2017), and documents drafted by intra-party subgroups (Ceron, 2015a; Giannetti and Laver, 2009). These studies show that, at least from a left-right perspective, the positions expressed inside the party are informative of the actual party positions as expressed on external sources. For instance, Bernauer and Bräuninger (2009: 399) show that "factionalism manifests itself in observable intra-party preference heterogeneity..." using analyzed parliamentary speeches released in the 15th German Bundestag. These studies largely focused attention on broad ideological left-right positions that exist inside the party. Yet, intra-party debates also potentially reveal useful information about differing issue priorities between MPs, members, and leaders of the same party. Furthermore, existing research has yet to directly explore the potential impact of leaders' procedural agenda-setting power on the content of intra-party debates, motions, or even manifesto creation process.

The salience of issues and their impact on parties' policy messages has been understudied in this context. This is an important omission as theories of issue competition and issue-focused theories of policy-making often continue to treat parties' policy messages as devoid of intra-party content (Greene, 2016; Hellwig, 2012; Petrocik, 1996; Van Heck, 2018), although some scholars have offered factional based explanations for the rise to prominence of specific

issues within parties (Harmel et al., 2018; Meguid, 2008; Spoon, 2011). From this perspective, the existence of agenda-setting powers inside the party has been overlooked. To the contrary, party leaders (and the party leadership at large), as well as factional leaders of minority factions exert influence on the party's agenda in many ways. For example, leaders exploit not only direct voting procedures (Bergounioux and Grunberg, 2005), but they also constrain the content of factional motions presented and discussed at the party congress, and by selecting the speakers allowed to take the floor during such party meetings (Greene and Sajuria, 2018).

Setting the intra-party agenda: Speeches versus motions

The party congress provides diverse intra-party interests with the context to engage in diverse deliberation over the party's direction, and prominently over the party's priorities, through their (oral) debates, while offering the opportunity for the leadership to show support for a single policy compromise in the winning (written) motion. Both speeches and motions therefore reflect the latent priorities of individuals and factions within the parties and should reflect the ultimate policy compromises embedded in parties' election manifestos. Following this logic, we expect that oral speeches and written motions predict the salience of issues reported in parties' manifestos and shed light on intra-party dynamics.

The underlying processes leading to speeches and motions, however, likely mean that they contain differing content, although their intra-party roots imply similarities both based on the procedural rules and latent ideological goals. From a procedural perspective, for example, we find a strong correlation ($r = 0.96$) between the share of speech time allocated to speakers of the different factions of the PS and the relative size of each faction. Procedurally, motions should also reflect the distribution of factional goals as each major faction usually submits a distinct motion.

From an ideological perspective, party members likely join factions or internal subgroups for policy reasons. Preliminary studies seem to attest to a certain degree of similarity in the content of speeches and motions that would imply little procedural differences in the constraints imposed. For instance, in a case study concerning factional membership within the Italian Democrats of the Left (DS), Giannetti and Laver (2009) found that positions of members as expressed through their speeches closely mirrored the positions expressed through their faction's motion.

However, there are good reasons to expect differences between the content of congress speeches and motions. In particular, whereas motions must often be submitted by organized groups and therefore incur some agenda-setting process, content of speeches seems to be fairly unconstrained by the leadership. Although these two types of

texts come from the same internal debate (the congress), political speeches often contain more personal references and priorities than written motions (Poole and Field, 1976). For example, backbenchers, in many cases, are allowed to take the floor and use the context to advocate for distinct policy goals. In addition, the speaker knows that she will address a real audience, which can even travel outside the border of the party congress arena through the media's coverage, particularly after the 1980s.²

Unlike speeches, motions must be submitted through a fairly formal process. This process is exacerbated by the nature and structure of oral or written communication (Ceron, 2015b; Poole and Field, 1976; Staton, 1982). Motions, prior to the party congress, already reflect a collective deliberation involving multiple authors. This implies that not only will motions make greater use of precise and direct language, but are also more organized than oral speeches as the authors deliberately choose the most appropriate words to reflect the faction's internal compromises and strategy. Accordingly, motions are more likely to face deeper scrutiny from factional leaders (Dewan and Squintani, 2016) that transforms them into a thoughtfully, articulate and precise policy compromise, whereas the content of speeches remains more unconstrained in terms of contents.

Conversely, speeches also contain more spontaneous and impulsive statements and might be subjected to peculiar rules of speech. For example, speakers often run up against time limitations imposed by the congress President. In these contexts, speakers must condense their broader, more extensive comments to a much shorter and restrained set of statements.

Based on this discussion, we argue that procedural differences between spoken and written expressions of preference can wield implication on intra-party debates, particularly, in terms of their ability to set the party agenda. Both documents relate to internal debates with a common audience, composed of party members and activists. While, on the whole, we expect that the ideological leaning of intra-party debates relates to the party's ideological position expressed in electoral manifestos, the actual content can vary substantially across issues.

Individual speakers face incentives to use the floor to express differences in priorities with the party's leadership. From this perspective, despite limited access to the floor for less known party members and activists at many party meetings, a set allocation of speaking time to diverse intra-party groups would likely provide the space for individuals to outline their personal priorities, which can be focused on peculiar (national or local) issues. As such, individual speeches might emphasize more disparate concerns and complaints, which did not find an explicit place in any factional motion and will be consequently disregarded by the party leadership when drafting the final manifesto. Following this perspective, we argue that speeches are less affected by structured agenda-setting concerns and

can be used to signal topics that were left out from more formalized debate and motions.

Although motions may reflect greater intra-party leader screening, their carefully negotiated and crafted priorities are likely aimed to attract the largest possible policy coalition from within the party. The motion is structured as a platform that models the basis of a future manifesto. It implicitly accounts for topics deemed relevant by the electorate, as factional leaders purposefully incorporate topics that they believe will maximize their electoral fortunes. Furthermore, motions are subjected to the agenda-setting power of the leadership as well as the factional leadership that contributes to writing the motion (this moderating process also concerns minority factions: Dewan and Squintani, 2016). Forward-looking factional leaders should be aware of the importance of overcoming internal disagreements to influence a shared party manifesto. They therefore have an interest in constraining and selectively choosing the content of motions (Dewan and Squintani, 2016).

On the one hand, if the point of internal speeches is to persuade fellow party members of an issue's importance then intra-party debates involving prominent politicians can indirectly increase the salience of issues discussed in manifestos. On the other hand, precisely because intra-party debates are primarily addressed to party members, activists, and to frontbencher politicians we expect to find differences as well. Party manifestos should mostly be addressed to a broader audience composed of citizens and voters, balancing the priorities of intra-party groups with the practical needs to win elections to implement those policies (Harmel et al., 2018). In contexts with greater leadership dominance, factional leaders encouraging deliberation intended to resolve internal conflicts may even purposefully remove those issues from motions designed to appeal to both voters and intra-party groups (Steiner and Mader, 2017).

Following this perspective, we expect that such electoral concerns (Adams, 1999; Downs, 1957; Somer-Topcu, 2017) will be purposefully internalized when drafting motions due to the prominent role that party and factional leaders play in writing motions. This process will be less likely to occur in individual speeches. Given the incentives and constraints on motions to create an intra-party policy coalition, they will more closely reflect the content of the resultant electoral manifesto than speeches aimed at representing diverse interests as well as personal priorities and concerns.

We summarize this logic in our first hypothesis.

H1: Motions better predict the issue content of parties' election manifestos than party congress speeches.

So far, we assumed that party manifestos take into account the stakes of all subgroups (according to the relative size of each group). Yet, in parties with rules strongly favoring the leader, particularly in the face of reserved

procedural agenda-setting powers for the party or floor leader, the majority faction could be more greatly represented than less central groups (Ceron, 2012; Schumacher and Giger, 2017). Accordingly, we propose that speeches and motions produced by the majority faction are more relevant for the party's ultimate behavior. This perspective implies that within these texts the screening power of the party leadership is stronger. Therefore, these texts will be more closely related to the consequent party manifesto. This perspective holds for motions but also for the content of speeches as the party leader can more easily constrain the autonomy of speakers belonging to her faction, exerting career-related pressure or restricting access to the floor (Giannetti and Pedrazzani, 2016). Therefore, we expect that leaders of the majority factions will strictly set the agenda of the majority motions and coordinate the content of speeches delivered by members of dominant factions, shaping these two types of document and influencing the final manifesto's content accordingly.

Ultimately, this discussion implies a stronger congruence between the majority faction's priorities as revealed through motions and speeches to the resultant manifesto than the broader party congress floor. The line that the party follows in the next electoral race will therefore closely match the issues discussed in the majority's documents.

H2: Motions and speeches related to the majority faction better predict the issue content of parties' election manifestos than the broader texts of motions and speeches from the party congress.

Data on intra-party politics and the French *Parti Socialiste*

To empirically assess this perspective, we combine data on national congress meetings and manifestos from the French PS. We collected speeches given and the motions submitted to a vote at the party's national congress. Both have been found to be important predictors of parties' behavior by work focused on intra-party politics (Ceron, 2012; Greene and Haber, 2015). Based on the availability of parties' speeches, motions, and manifestos, we consider party congresses from 1981 to 2015 (nine congresses).

The PS is a reasonable test case for our perspective as the party is historically divided, but has had periods of strong leadership control (Clift and McDaniel, 2017). Due to its historical divisions, the leaders must work to keep diverse factions within the party content at these meetings. A history of deliberation and close internal elections at the party's congresses limit the likelihood that a single faction's priorities as expressed through speeches and their motions submitted will be able to dominate the content of the party's manifesto (Bergounioux and Grunberg, 2005). Yet, the leaders of each faction must also develop a

manifesto that is attractive beyond intra-party groups to win voter support. Failure to find internal compromise likely predicted the eventual party division prior to the 2017 elections.

Indeed, the case of PS is particularly intriguing. Its factional structure and the shape of internal bargaining that take place during party congresses align with the institutional setup described in the theoretical background. The party has been highly factionalized since its birth and, although in five congresses we observed perfect unity (no competing motions were presented), in the other 15 cases we observed intra-party competition involving a minimum of two and a maximum of seven factions. Historically, the most long-lasting division was between the supporters of Mitterrand (mainstream) and the left-wing faction Ceres, headed by Chevènement; however, at times, either splits occurred inside the mainstream or alliances between the mainstream and Ceres formed a majority. More recently, a similar cleavage was created between the supporters of Hollande and the left-wing faction *Gauche Socialiste*. Overall, the majority faction has often tried to synthesize different positions to enlarge its support beyond the actual share of votes won in the party congresses. This is quite evident even in the most recent years when, although the strife seems to have increased, we still observe attempts to increase the level of consensus and unity. Indeed, the mainstream motions received an average support of 77.5% from 1981 to 2015 (the average slightly decreased following reforms to directly elect the party leader). Support for the party leader, elected at the end of the congress after debates and negotiations, was usually stronger than that of the leader's faction itself.

Despite prominent examples of divisive congresses in 1990 and 2005, party leaders seemed to have attempted to foster unity. Even in the aftermath of the extraordinary intra-party strife in 1990, rival factions agreed on ruling the party jointly to restore unity. This supports the idea of party congresses as deliberative assemblies. Precisely for this reason, the PS also represents a suitable case to test the agenda-setting power of its leadership. Note we account for the internal divisiveness and potential failure to find a unitary agreement (and implicitly the willingness to reach it) in the empirical analysis by controlling for the share of votes won by the majority faction, which also represents a proxy for the ability of mainstream factions to build an inclusive intra-party environment.

Method

To assess their similarities across speeches, motions, and manifestos, we use automated content analysis to estimate the topics contained in the motions, speeches, and manifestos. We use Roberts et al.'s (2013) Structural Topic Model as it allows us to use a variable or each party congress or year to then predict the expected topic proportions in that

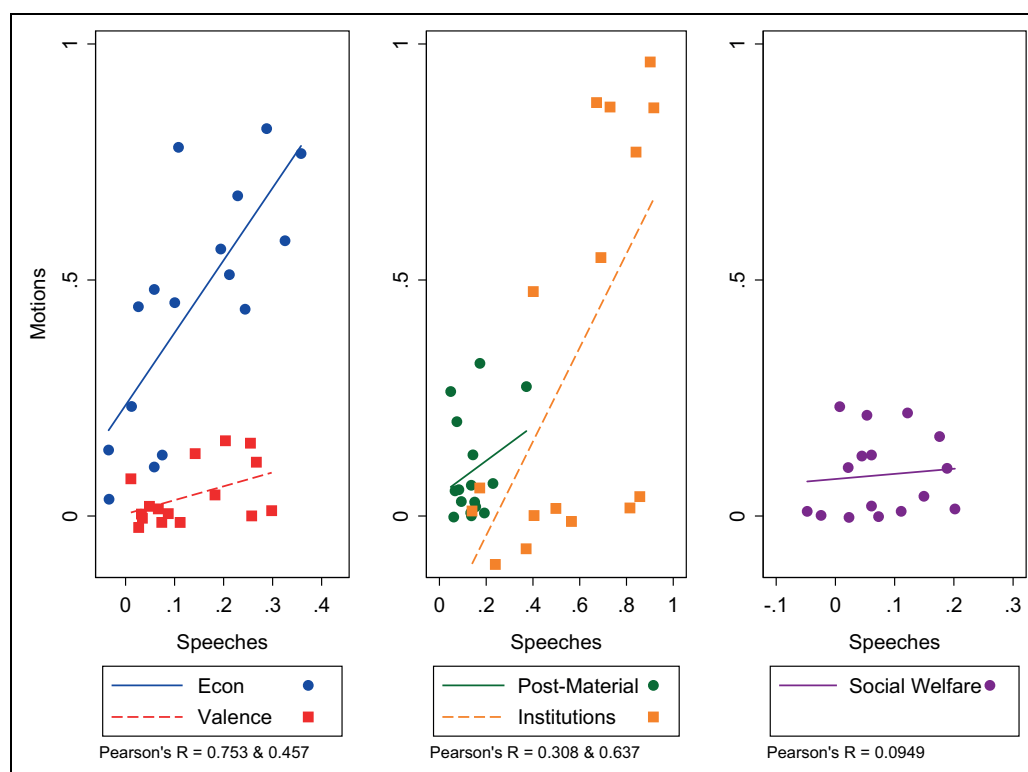


Figure 1. Correlation between the topics of motions and speeches.

year.³ Unlike scaling models (Wordfish or Wordscores) focused on revealing the relative “positions” of texts on an underlying dimension of conflict, topic models estimate the relative attention to issues on underlying topics. The Structural Topic Model builds on previous topic models by allowing us to predict the relative predicted proportion from groups of documents based on external characteristics of the documents such as the congress or year they derive from. We include indicators for each year (conceptually similar to covariates in a regression model) that allow us to predict the expected topic proportions at each congress for each type of text. These topic proportions become our primary independent and dependent variables.⁴

Once we estimate separate topic models for the motions, manifestos, and speeches, we then use the words associated with each topic to determine the substantive meaning of that category. See the Online Appendix for a summary of these words.⁵ We then construct five types of salience scores following a “maximalist” strategy (Bäck et al., 2011); we include all topics that hold at least some relevance to the main category. We identify the following categories: Economic, Valence, Institutional, Post-Material/Law and Order, and Social Welfare policy areas. The Online Appendix lists the most frequent and exclusive words for the categories we use for each policy area.

Based on these categories, we construct a measure of economic salience for the motions. These topics include terms such as “industrial,” “productive,” “small and

middle-sized businesses.” Our measure of valence topics includes clusters with terms such as “competence” and “weird” and words about instituting policies. The institutions measure includes topics with words such as “suffrage,” “referendum,” and “congress.” Given that issues related to law and order likely reflect the materialist end of a post-materialist dimension, we combine both in a single category. Our measure of post-materialist salience includes terms such as “sustainable development” and “peace,” as well as “freedom” and “penal.” Finally, our social welfare category includes terms linked to labor movements and the structure of the welfare state. Terms such as “work,” the names of the trade unions (CNFP), “job training,” “pensions,” and “health” fall into this category. Although many of these topics include more than a single issue dimension (e.g. some include welfare policies linked to economic terms), our measurement strategy is intended to capture as much economic attention as possible from the topics.

Figure 1 reports the relationship between motions and speeches for each policy area to highlight similarities and differences. Intriguingly, we find a positive relationship for all issue areas suggesting that the two sources capture similar content to some extent at these meetings. However, economic, institutional, and valence categories evidence substantially closer relationships than post-materialism and social welfare issues. The slope for the valence issues though is relatively weak. As speeches exhibit greater

Table 1. Stacked OLS models predicting manifesto salience.

	(1) Motions	(2) Speeches	(3) Full	(4) Majority motions	(5) Majority speeches	(6) Majority full
Motions salience	0.766 (0.394) ⁺		0.466 (0.564)			
Speech salience		−0.070 (0.497)	−0.101 (0.500)			
Majority motions salience				0.489 (0.183)*		0.474 (0.219)*
Majority speech salience					1.971 (0.765)*	1.479 (0.759) ⁺
Government	0.036 (0.137)	0.060 (0.159)	0.060 (0.160)	0.020 (0.132)	0.116 (0.147)	0.079 (0.140)
% vote for winning motion	0.000 (0.004)	0.000 (0.004)	0.000 (0.004)	0.000 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)
Constant	−0.150 (0.424)	0.360 (0.412)	0.090 (0.528)	−0.090 (0.375)	0.014 (0.385)	−0.316 (0.395)
R ²	0.208	0.116	0.135	0.267	0.268	0.364
RMSE	0.389	0.416	0.418	0.374	0.379	0.359
N	45	40	40	45	40	40

Note: All tests of significance are two-tailed.

⁺p < 0.10; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

valence content, it only associates with a small increase in motions, given that most motions exhibit almost no valence content. Based on the similarity of institutional content, these estimates may suggest political reforms to the state and broad electoral goals are likely uncontroversial across intra-party factions. Yet, salient divisions within the PS, as exhibited by Macron's, Mélenchon's, and Chevènement's choices to form new parties, tended to distinguish themselves from the party on post-material policies and issues involving the role of government in providing an extensive welfare state. The weak correlations on these topics may suggest that party leaders limited the inclusion of this discussion in the motions at these meetings, whereas these topics emerge in individual speeches, perhaps highlighted by members wanting to emphasize their dissenting voices.

On the whole, the relative salience attached to different topics in congress speeches is rather similar to that expressed in motions. Yet, their exact content diverges, potentially at key points. In the following section, we perform a regression analysis to evaluate how speeches and motions are able to predict the salience of different issues in party manifestos.

Analysis and results

In Table 1, we present the results of OLS regression with fixed effects for the type of issue.⁶ We include all issue categories “stacked” in a single model to predict the proportion of the manifestos on each issue.⁷

Model 1 tests the positive agenda-setting power of motions on manifestos, model 2 tests the role of speeches, and model 3 the influence of both documents jointly. Models 4 to 6 replicate these analyses using only the content of the majority faction's motions and speeches (factional membership of individual speakers was ascertained from the signatures on majority factions' motions). We control

for the percentage of vote for the winning motion (based on intra-party electoral records) and include a dummy variable equal to one when the party is in government to account for broad internal processes that might also influence the proportion of manifesto issues. Removing these controls has no substantive impact on the coefficients of interest. The primary findings hold for additional analyses that include alternate control variables, a lagged dependent variable, or following an Error Correction approach (see Online Appendix).

Overall, the results suggest a somewhat more consistent effect of motions than speeches. Consistent with our first hypothesis, we find that motions, to a certain extent, tend to predict manifesto salience. The coefficient for motion salience is weakly statistically significant, though only at the 90% level in model 1, indicating that motions predict the content of manifestos. In the models using full congress data, the coefficients for the content of speeches are never statistically different from zero.

These results point to a slightly stronger similarity between manifestos and motions, rather than speeches. Motions, therefore, likely represent a synthesis of stances that outline, at least to some extent, the content of the manifesto on a variety of policy dimensions; this is less likely to occur (at least based on these preliminary results) when considering individual speeches as each single speaker has the innate opportunity to also highlight her own divergent views on peculiar aspects that will not be included in the final party's manifesto.

The results for the subset of motions and speeches from the majority faction offer stronger insights. Intriguingly, motions significantly correlate with the content of manifestos (as in the analysis of the full sample), and this effect remains significant also after controlling for speeches. What is more, we also find a strong relationship between majority speeches and manifesto content, which is significant at the 95% level in model 5 and the 90% level in model

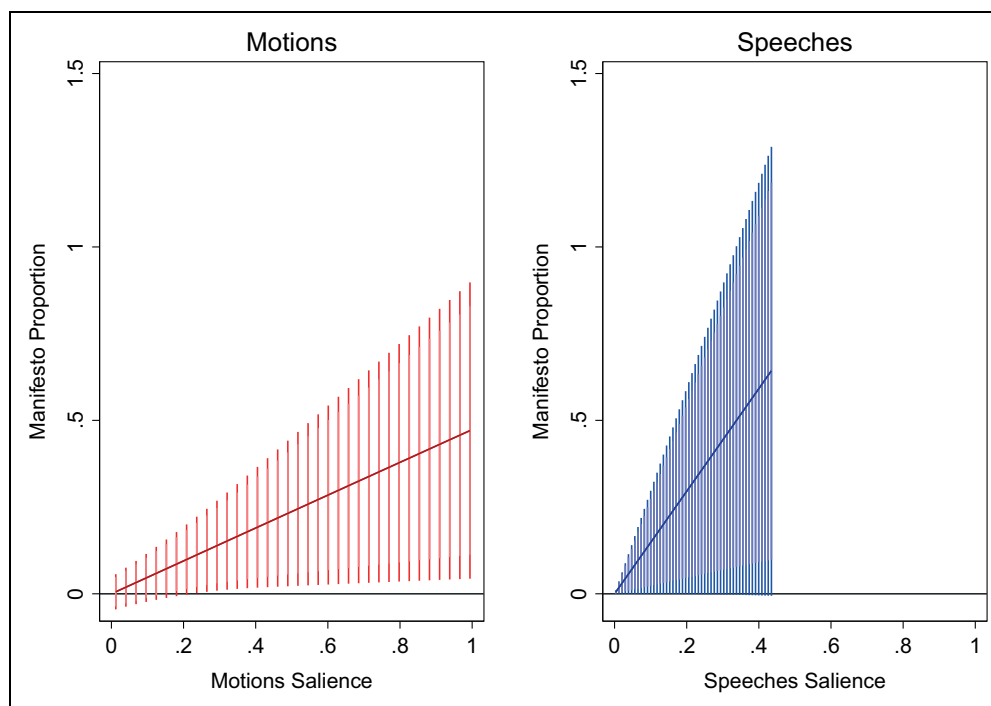


Figure 2. Marginal effect of motions and speeches salience on manifesto content.

6. These results support our second hypothesis (particularly with respect to speeches) and suggest, as a theory of party agenda setting might predict, that the speakers belonging to the majority factions better represent the party's priorities in manifestos in comparison to the content of all speeches (which also include discourses delivered by backbenchers, marginal politicians, and leaders of internal minority factions, as discussed before outlining hypothesis 1).

We present marginal effects of speech and motion content in Figure 2 (based on model 6).⁸ As we hypothesize, both an increase in the salience of a topic from the majority faction's motions and speeches positively increases the proportion of the manifesto on that topic. The marginal effects are relatively strong over the range of both variables.

In summary, scholars have long argued that manifestos are written primarily for an external audience. Our analyses show that manifestos, at least partially, reflect intra-party priorities as expressed through internal motions and (the majority faction's) speeches. Overall, motions significantly predict the salience of issues in parties' manifestos. Conversely, speeches given at these meetings predict manifestos only when the speaker belongs to the party's majority faction (i.e. when the leaders influence the agenda of the congress' speakers).

In summary, when we observe agenda-setting constraints imposed by the leadership on a document, we notice that such document predicts the final manifesto content, this happens not only for majority factions' speeches

and motions, but also for motions on the whole, as even minority motions already underwent a process of scrutiny from factional leaders.

Conclusion

In this article, we seek to understand the differential influence of intra-party speeches and motions from party congresses on consequent electoral platforms. Despite containing similar content, we propose that motions will be more closely linked to manifestos than speeches. Motions are more directly constrained by the internal party decision-making process and linguistically follow a similar format. From this perspective, they likely better reflect the goals of the (collective) party leadership than the content of speeches at these meetings. Through an automated content analysis of party congress speeches, motions, and election manifestos, we find some, albeit preliminary, evidence that motions exert some influence on the issues contained in party platforms. Evidence that speeches and motions reveal distinct intra-party decision-making processes suggests that scholars use caution in considering the exact process they seek to study, intra-party deliberation or more electorally oriented content. What is more, when focusing solely on documents belonging to the majority factions, we show that speeches also predict manifesto content. This is in line with a theory of agenda setting suggesting that majority factions exert a certain degree of dominance when drafting manifestos and such dominance is reflected in the ability to

constrain the autonomy of speakers belonging to majority factions, exerting career-related pressure or restricting access to the floor to produce speeches that toe the party line and end up reflecting the final content of party manifesto.

Such evidence is consistent with a perspective that party leaders and prominent members likely constrain the priorities expressed in manifestos, as would be suggested in strategic electoral theories of party politics (Adams, 1999; Downs, 1957; Somer-Topcu, 2017). However, the limited evidence for the effect of motions from diverse factions suggests that the need to win over a majority of the congress to support the motion also leads factions to incorporate the goals of diverse groups within their motions. This finding also suggests that scholars could discriminate between speeches delivered by mainstream frontbenchers belonging to the majority factions and those delivered by marginal politicians belonging to minority factions.

The results presented here, however, are only suggestive. Further analyses are required in order to fully answer our research questions. From this perspective, this work will certainly benefit from a comparison across parties and countries in order to improve the robustness of these preliminary findings. The extent of leadership influence through intra-party agenda setting likely depends on the exact structure of parties' decision-making procedures and the protections for organized groups and factions. Parties that choose to allow or are legally obligated to include wider selectorates in their leadership elections will likely face differing incentives to encourage and allow diverse opinions in their national meetings through speeches and motions than those which are more centralized (Ceron, 2012; Schumacher and Giger, 2017). In particular, while the French PS (and French political parties more generally) are usually factionalized, further inferences require analysis of parties that are less historically divided, as the absence of stable and organized intra-party groups likely affect the agenda-setting process. Along these lines, the analysis on the impact of decentralization of internal decision-making powers as well as the role of regional party branches (considered as intra-party subgroups) in influencing the final manifesto will offer clear insights (see Bäck et al., 2014). Future comparisons will give a more conclusive answer to whether speeches and motions express the same content and whether either speeches or motions exert an agenda-setting effect on forthcoming electoral manifestos. On the one hand, this will allow researchers to further open the black box of intra-party decision-making. On the other hand, this will reveal the extent that intra-party debates reflect or characterize the logic that the party leadership adopts when drafting an electoral manifesto.

Authors' note

Previous versions of this article were presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions (Nottingham, 25–30 April 2017), the 7th EPSA Annual Conference (Milan, 22–24 June 2017), the Party Congress Research Group Annual Meeting (Milan, 26–27, June 2017), and at the 2017 APSA Annual Conference (San Francisco, California, USA, August 31 to September 3).

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the discussants and the participants at these meetings for their feedbacks and suggestions as well as the support and insights from members of the Party Congress Research Group. The authors also wish to thank the anonymous *Party Politics* reviewers and the special issue editors for their helpful suggestions.


Declaration of Conflicting Interests


The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Portions of this research were supported by the C2 project of the German Research Council funded SFB 884 "Political Economy of Reforms" at the University of Mannheim, Germany.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. We refer to agenda setting as the formal control of voting procedures, timing and screening of motions available to the party's leadership through the party's official rules (e.g. Döring, 2003).
2. The PS famously discovered this the hard way as their first publically televised congress in 1990 was widely perceived as a disaster for the party's image.
3. Like previous unsupervised, automated content analyses of party speeches, motions, and manifestos, we stem the documents using the Porter stemming algorithm, remove stop words, convert all words to lower case, remove a number of words with no policy content, and combine a number of connected phrases such as peoples' first and last names as well as commonly used phrases such as the "*lutte contre l'exclusion*" to aid the substantive interpretation of the results.
4. Because these are predicted values, it is possible for the predicted amount of attention to an issue to be less than zero in a year.
5. We primarily use the top 10 words with the highest probability of being in a topic and the words that are most frequently used, but also the most exclusive (FREX) to that topic. Determining

the content of the topics is always tricky; future analyses will explore the details of each topic in greater detail to validate their policy content.

6. Models using Huber–White corrected standard errors lead to identical conclusions with slightly stronger levels of significance on those variables marked as having p values below standard levels of significance.
7. Durbin–Watson and Breusch–Godfrey tests reveal weak evidence that one or two of the topics exhibit first-order serial autocorrelation depending on the exact model specification. Results from OLS regression including a lagged dependent variable and Error Correction Models (e.g. McDonald and Best, 2006) with a lagged dependent variable lead to substantively similar inferences (see the Online Appendix).
8. We estimate the smoothed 95% (darker bars) and 90% (lighter bars) confidence intervals from 1000 draws of the variance–covariance matrix in model 6.

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