

DO ARMENIAN VOTERS MAKE POLICY-BASED DECISIONS IN ELECTIONS?

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Abstract

This study analyzes the effects political preferences on electoral choice, for the specific case of Armenia, and the 2018 Parliamentary elections. More specifically, I test to check whether or not proximity on the policy dimension is a significant determinant of party preference, as well as on electoral choice. In a separate section, I look to see if voters can differentiate between the policies of the current and previous governments. I find that spatial proximity is insignificant in determining both preferences of the parties, and the election outcome.

Keywords: policy, informed-voting, elections

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1 Introduction

This paper is aimed at answering the question of whether Armenian voters consider policy proposals when making electoral decisions, decisions which determine the direction of the country for several years at a time. In 2018, Armenia underwent the so-called "Velvet Revolution," led by long time opposition leader and journalist, Nikol Pashinyan. These protests resulted in the overthrow of the Republican Party of Armenia, who controlled both the government and the parliament since Armenia's independence from the Soviet Union. Snap Parliamentary elections were held in December of 2018, in which My Step Alliance, led by Pashinyan won in a landslide. The campaign period was vague and lacking in specific policy proposals. The electorate was firmly opinionated nevertheless. It was interesting whether or not people preferred certain parties over the others based on policy, or was policy insignificant in determining their preferences. This peaked my interest into the topic of uninformed voting, and the underlying process of Armenia's electoral behavior. This paper is aimed at answering the question of whether or not the proposed policies of competing candidates are significant determinants of election outcomes in Armenia. Do citizens take into account the policy stances of the candidates that they support? Will they support someone who has differing policy views? Are they aware of the proposed or implemented policies of their preferred candidates? This paper aims to study this question. For the purposes of this analysis, I use data from an online survey which I conducted, with 130 participants, in order to explore this question. I find that the spatial attribute of a voter's utility is an insignificant determinant of both his/her party preferences, and electoral outcome. Later on, I use cross tabulations to see whether or not people know which party proposed a policy on excise taxes, and I find that a majority of respondents ascribe the policy to the wrong party.

2 Literature Review

There is extensive literature on voting theory which study voting/electoral behavior predominantly in the United States. A large part of the literature on voting behavior references the utility model developed by Downs (1957) as a theoretic foundation. His model is founded on the axiom that "citizens act rationally in politics," meaning that citizens will vote for the candidate or the party that they believe will provide them with a higher utility than any of the other options. In this framework, the function of elections is to select a government, and therefore, rational behavior of an agent with respect to elections shall be nothing other than electing a government, and stating political preferences. What is relevant here is the definition of the utility. Downs (1957) defines utility income as the benefits the voter received, both knowingly and unknowingly from the incumbent government. This implies that the voter's utility is a function of the policies of the government, however peripheral the influence of these policies is on the voters. In this context, it is not important what the policy preferences of the voters are *per se*, but the utility income these voters get, directly or indirectly, from the policies. Using this definition, the voter should compare the utility income he or she is receiving from the incumbent party with the expected utility income streams he or she expects to get from the challenging parties.

Early empirical research is largely based on two propositions. First, that little policy-based voting takes place in American elections, and second, the onus of the lack of policy-voting falls on the electorate. Page and Brody (1972) challenge that premise, by considering several nuances these theories fail to address. First, they don't take into account retrospective voting and government performance assessment. Second, issue salience is not constant across the electorate. Third, they state that the research which suggests little policy-voting comes from the early 50s, and conjecture that with the passing of a couple of decades, these results could be challenged. Lastly, they argue that maybe the shortcoming of the candidates, rather than that of the electorate, and the difference between Democrats and Republicans is not as stark in policy differences as one might guess. The study focused on the 1968 U.S. Presidential elections, which "came at the height of the war in Vietnam... it seemed that if Americans ever voted on the basis of policy preferences, they would vote on their opinions on Vietnam in 1968" (Page & Brody, 1972). Page and Brody (1972) specified the necessary conditions for assessing whether or not policy voting had taken place. These calculations required understanding:

1. The perceived policy proximity between citizens and candidates on the policy dimension.
2. The relationship between the perceived proximity and the voting outcome.
3. The extent of issue oriented evaluation on the part of the citizens.
4. Separating issue oriented voting from rationalization, which is described as assuming that one's preferred candidate has similar policy positions, or altering one's policy position to match that of a preferred candidate.

They found that the Vietnam opinions could only explain 1-2% of the variation in the electoral behavior and outcome. However, it cannot be deduced that the Vietnam war was an insignificant issue in the 1968 elections. Page and Brody (1972) offer an alternative explanation as to why Vietnam explained such a small variation in the votes. On average, Nixon and Humphrey were only perceived to be 0.34 points apart on the 7 point scale. "One major explanation for the absence of Vietnam policy voting, therefore, is not that the public failed to perceive reality, but that in reality, there was little difference between the candidates." (Page & Brody, 1972) The paper reaffirmed the hypothesis that policy voting is low in America, however, it challenged the fact that this low policy voting is completely due to the shortcomings of the voters, and presented the added dimension of candidate ambiguity. They concluded that the candidates behaved in a way which made projection possible, and their behavior inhibited policy voting.

Markus and Converse (1979) introduce a dynamic simultaneous equation model of electoral choice, which controls for three main variables assumed to be central to electoral choice. They are party identification, policy preferences and candidate personalities. Besides their direct effects on the vote, Markus and Converse (1979) also study their indirect relationship through secondary or circular channels. They show a model where these variables affect candidate evaluations, which in turn affect voting decisions. They show that policy differentials between candidates, perceived candidate personalities and party identification directly impact candidate evaluations. There are some overlapping findings with (Page & Brody, 1972), where they find that some projection is

present in the voting behavior. Candidates ascribe their own policy positions to the candidates that they prefer, and assume that the ones they dislike hold opposing views. There was also some degree of persuasion, where the voters would shift their own policy preferences to match those of their preferred candidates, or similarly, shift away from positions of candidates that they dislike. Markus and Converse (1979) use a set of five policies to assess policy preferences, as opposed to Page and Brody (1972), who only focus on Vietnam. The model incorporates present, as well as previous party identification. They argue that while factors such as persuasion or projection are election specific, party identification has higher persistence throughout the short term (from one election to the next), suggesting that previous predispositions to party ideas, and prior party identification are no less important than current party identification, since one's evaluation of current candidates might depend on some events specific to previous elections.

Enelow and Hinich (1982) make the case for the inclusion of non-spatial characteristics of the candidates into the voters' decision making calculus. That is, the utility function of the voters from voting for a certain candidate do not depend merely on the policies that this candidate adopts, but also on some other, non-spatial characteristics. These non-spatial attributes are described as anything that the candidate him/herself cannot affect, such as race, gender, ethnicity, but also, personal style, past performance, perceived personality, and so on. The main assumption here is, that even if a candidate is close to a given voter on the spatial policy dimension, that voter has a substantial probability of not voting for that candidate, based on the non-spatial attributes.

Jacoby (2010) explores questions about the significance of issue stances and ideology on election outcomes, using the 2008 American National Election Study. The survey asks respondents to place themselves on a 1 to 7 scale given a set of seven policy questions, constructed in a way that 1 represented the most liberal, and 7, the most conservative position. These policy questions include defense spending, private vs. public health care, women's rights, trade off between environmental sustainability and corporate interest, and a few other questions of similar types. These issues are not necessarily the ones that had high salience during the 2008 election, but rather general policy questions which would help understand the general attitudes of the respondents on a wide variety of issues. Jacoby (2010) argues that this approach has both its pitfalls and its benefits. According to him, while it might not capture the public debate which was taking place at the time of the election, these questions capture the essence of general policy orientations as opposed to policies that are election specific, which are easily influenced by campaign rhetoric. Also, Jacoby (2010) posits that this approach would help circumvent endogeneity traps which arise from projection and persuasion as described by Markus and Converse (1979).

Jacoby (2010) uses logistic regression, where 1 was a vote for McCain, and 0 was a vote for Obama. The independent variables included ideology, issue stances, partisan orientations, personalities of the candidates, retrospective opinions about economic improvement or decline throughout the previous year, and the Iraq war, and a measure of the extent to which the respondents were policy-informed, as assessed by the interviewers of the survey. The issue stances were measured as the mean location of each respondent for the set of 7 policy questions, on the 1-7 scale. This variable is included in the model by itself, as well as in the form of an interaction term with political sophistication. The results showed that the two retrospective variables, which captured the feelings of the voters on the economy and the Iraq war, all other variables showed significance

in their impact on the election outcome. For the economic performance indicator, this result was explainable, since 95% of respondents assessed the conditions as worsening compared to previous years, so this homogeneity would make it hard to capture any variation in the outcome based on the opinion of people. The insignificance of the Iraq war, however, could not be explained similarly, since the results were not homogeneous. Jacoby (2010) concludes that while the Iraq war and the financial crisis were the major issues at the time of the 2008 U.S. Presidential Elections between Barack Obama and John McCain, they were not important determinants of the election outcome. However, ideological differences, and differences in general policy positions (the 7 policies which respondents rated themselves on) played an important role in the election outcome, one that was not usual for other elections in the past. Their effect was specifically strong when taken with the interaction term of political sophistication.

Gant (1985) tests to see how U.S. citizens define certain ideologies, namely, liberal and conservative. The definition of ideology is separated into multiple categories, ranging from those who fail to define an ideology, to those who refer to specific foreign and domestic policies when defining liberal and conservative ideologies. In the middle are people who refer to conceptual or general ideas such as equality or patriotism when defining an ideology, people who refer to the daily lifestyles of those identified with one or the other of the ideologies, and people who refer to general economic policies such as deficits and spending, and the benefits they present to certain groups usually associated with one ideology or another. Gant (1985) then tests to see whether these different levels of abstractions in defining an ideology has an effect on whether or not a person is capable of policy voting. He finds that these abstract conceptualizations are irrelevant for the ability of casting policy-based votes. This finding is especially useful for our purposes, considering that unlike in the United States, ideologies are not strictly defined in the political environment of Armenia. While there are people who identify themselves or other as liberal or conservative, it is not a common focus of political discourse, and this paper can provide a basis that the lack of this ideological definition should not interfere with the methodology of this study.

Bartels (2000) uses election data from 1952 to 1996 to assess the impact of partisan loyalties on voting behavior in the United States, and finds strong evidence to support the claim that the impact of partisan loyalties has increased throughout the studied timeline in presidential elections significantly, as well as in congressional elections, especially among those who turn out to vote. Kriesi and Sciarini (2004) use similar methodology to that of the others to study the Swiss electoral process of 1999, and show that 4 out of the 7 policies they study have a significant impact on electoral outcome. Hsieh and Niou (1996) study the 1992 Legislative Yuan Election of the Republic of China on Taiwan. They use the Downsian model to show that issue stances are important determinants of party/candidate evaluations, which in turn are important determinants of electoral outcome. Lachat (2011) argues that policy-voting is more prominent in elections where there is strong competition. Competitive elections are defined as those which have a large number of parties competing in it, conditional on the fact that these parties manifest ideological differences, and on the representation threshold being lower. Lachat (2011) tests his hypothesis on data from the 2007 Swiss federal elections, where districts were drastically different from each other in terms of competitiveness. His results showed that the more competitive the elections were, the stronger was the impact of policy stances on the election outcome, and the weaker was the impact of partisan identification on the election outcome.

3 Causal Relationship

The relationship, in explicit terms of variables, which I am trying to understand, is first, how does the distance between the voter and the party influence the preference of that voter towards that party, and second, the electoral choice of that voter. The three parties I analyze are the Republican Party of Armenia, Bright Armenia, and My Step Alliance, which will extensively be referred to in my analysis as RPA, BA, and MSA respectively. The latter went on to win the election and now controls both the executive and legislative branch of the government. For the first case, I use a simple linear regression model to estimate this relationship, one for each party:

$$Pref_{MSA} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Income + \beta_2 Education + \beta_3 Age + \beta_4 AvgDist_{MSA} + \beta_5 AvgDist_{RPA} + \beta_6 AvgDist_{BA}$$

$$Pref_{RPA} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Income + \beta_2 Education + \beta_3 Age + \beta_4 AvgDist_{MSA} + \beta_5 AvgDist_{RPA} + \beta_6 AvgDist_{BA}$$

$$Pref_{BA} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Income + \beta_2 Education + \beta_3 Age + \beta_4 AvgDist_{MSA} + \beta_5 AvgDist_{RPA} + \beta_6 AvgDist_{BA}$$

For the second case, I use a multinomial logistic regression model, with the dependent variable being the electoral choice out of these three parties (MSA is taken as the base group), and the independent variables being the same as the ones in the linear regression model:

$$\ln \left(\frac{P(Choice = BA)}{P(Choice = MSA)} \right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Income + \beta_2 Education + \beta_3 Age + \beta_4 AvgDist_{MSA} \\ + \beta_5 AvgDist_{RPA} + \beta_6 AvgDist_{BA}$$

$$\ln \left(\frac{P(Choice = RPA)}{P(Choice = MSA)} \right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Income + \beta_2 Education + \beta_3 Age + \beta_4 AvgDist_{MSA} \\ + \beta_5 AvgDist_{RPA} + \beta_6 AvgDist_{BA}$$

I will talk about each variable in further depth in the following section.

4 Data Sources

4.1 Survey Structure

As was mentioned in the beginning of the paper, I have designed and conducted an online survey, through which I was able to get my data. I will talk more about the limitations of this survey in later sections. The survey included:

- Demographic questions such as age, gender, income, electoral district, and education.
- Questions about party affiliations, such as whether or not they currently are, or ever have been members of any party, the length of membership (if applicable).

- Questions about the Parliamentary election of 2018 (and shortly about the Parliamentary election of 2017), questions such as whether or not they voted, who they voted for, who would they have voted for if they were to vote, what they thought was the most discussed issue during the election.
- Questions about their political preferences, in which I ask them to rate the competing parties on a scale from 0 to 10, 0 being that they view the party unfavorably, and 10 being that they view it favorably.
- Questions about policy preferences. I ask them the following set of policy propositions, and I ask them to locate themselves on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 will mean being opposed to the proposed policy, and 7 would mean being in favor of it:
 1. Paying higher in taxes, if it means increased spending in key sectors such as defense, health care, education, and other public goods.
 2. Military service in Armenia should be mandatory, not voluntary.
 3. Abortion should be legal under all circumstances.
 4. The church and state should be separate entities, and one should not interfere with the other.
 5. The government should provide free healthcare to everyone, not only to those who are socially disadvantaged.

**Note: I omitted the questions on abortion and military service from my analysis, given that they issues which are rarely discussed.*
- Lastly, I ask them one specific question about an excise tax policy, and I ask them to locate themselves, and three of the parties that have been in the government at one point of the other, on a scale of 1 to 7. I also ask them whether or not they know who proposed this policy. For those who said that they knew, I ask them to say who it was, and for those who say they don't I ask them to make their best guess.

For the last question, it is important to keep in mind that the policy was introduced under the Republican rule, as a result of joining the Eurasian Economic Union (members of which need to have a shared policy on such matters). Given that Armenia is till a part of the same union, the current government is also proposing the same policy of gradual increase of excise taxes, with minor modifications which are not important for our purposes.

4.2 Limitations

As is the case with any online survey, I faced a number of limitations:

- The survey was mostly shared through Facebook, which already cuts through a large sample of the population.

- Given the limitation of sharing platforms, the survey did not gather a sufficient number of respondents.
- Given that this was not an administered survey, I had to leave out interesting questions, such that the survey would be short enough for people to want to participate. Even so, for most respondents, the survey was too long already.

Aside from the limitations of the survey, I faced another problem. In order to calculate the average distance between the voters and the respondents, I needed to locate the parties on the same 1 to 7 scale, which was a difficult task. I tried to contact the parties themselves to ask for official positions, and I did not receive a response. My approach was a mixture of interviews and analysis of the campaign platforms of the competing parties. Specifically, I contacted two people, Dr. Yevgenya Paturyan, who is an Assistant Professor at the American University of Armenia, and is specialized in the sphere of civil society, political culture, democratization of post-communist countries, research methodology and corruption. My second point of contact was former National Assembly Deputy, and current Adviser to the President of the Republic of Armenia, Tevan Poghosyan. It is worth mentioning that Mr. Poghosyan was an independent during his time as a deputy. Mr. Poghosyan’s initial placement of the candidates were the following:

Table 1: Initial Location of Parties on the Policy Dimension

| | Taxes | Church and State | Healthcare |
|------------------|-------|------------------|------------|
| Civil Contract | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| Bright Armenia | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| Republican Party | 1 | 1 | 7 |

However, after taking into consideration the pre-election campaign platforms of the parties, and my interviews with Dr. Paturyan, I have made the following modifications:

- Mr. Poghosyan takes into account Bright Armenias new role as opposition to the current government, which is why he leaves some room for differentiation between Bright Armenia and the My Step Alliance. While Mr. Poghosyan placed Bright Armenia at 1 when it came to taxes, the partys campaign platform includes many programs which would require government expenditure, so the perceptions might be less extreme. Based on this intuition, I have chosen to use 4 for their stance on paying taxes.
- The current government (My Step Alliance) has made several statements, which can make perceptions more ambiguous about their stances on this issue, than Mr. Poghosyans mentioned position (6) would imply. They have stated that they will gradually lower the income tax, and make it flat, they have announced that they will gradually increase excise taxes, and they have stated in their campaign platform that in order to achieve their goals, they need to continuously and productively increase public spending. Since people both expect lower taxes, and increased public spending, also considering the fact that the current government

is still viewed as being more populist than Bright Armenia, it would make sense to locate the current government higher than the average, but lower than the extreme, at 5.

- According to Mr. Poghosyan, all parties would be in favor of providing universal healthcare to all, if they had the resources to do so. Dr. Paturyan states that in terms of healthcare, Bright Armenia is more liberal (in the classical sense), the current government is more for equal treatment, in that they are more for government provided healthcare, and the Republican party is somewhere in between those two. However, the program of Bright Armenia states quite a few government provided treatment programs. So based on this information, and what can be inferred from the campaign platforms, as well as the actions of the current and previous governments, I will locate the RPA, BA and MSA at 6, 5, and 7 respectively.
- I have chosen to leave the assessment of the issue of separation as is, since the opinions of Mr. Poghosyan and Dr. Paturyan coincide. Dr. Paturyan also mentioned that "They [the Republicans] introduced mandatory religion classes in school, they introduced mandatory religious service in the arm The Republicans are clearly rather pro church, and they use the church for their state services, while the other two are clearly more pro separation."

After these considerations, my modified placements are the following:

Table 2: Modified Location of Parties on the Policy Dimension

| | Taxes | Church and State | Healthcare |
|------------------|-------|------------------|------------|
| Civil Contract | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| Bright Armenia | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| Republican Party | 1 | 1 | 6 |

4.3 Data Description

The data has 130 observations, and over 40 variables. However, since I am only interested in those who voted, or would have voted for either of the three parties (MSA, BA, and RPA), after filtering, I was left with 96 observations. I deleted some variables, such as current or past party affiliations, since I found that less than 5% of my respondents had ever been or currently were affiliated with any party, and this lack of variation would not have produced any meaningful outcome. I also faced the problem of missing values, as is the case with online surveys. For categorical variables, I filled in the missing values with their mode, and for the numerical variables, I filled them in with their means. For the distance variable, I calculated the distance of each respondent from the parties based on the three policies (taxes, church and state, and healthcare), and for the average distance, I calculated the average of the squares of these three distances, so as to amplify the effect of the distance. Lastly, for the purposes of this research, I merged the two variables which asked respondents who they voted for (if they voted), and who they would have voted for (if they did not vote) as my variable for electoral choice. This was done because both variables separately contained very few observations, which would have hindered the research process.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

It is important to take a look at the distributions of the key dependent variables.

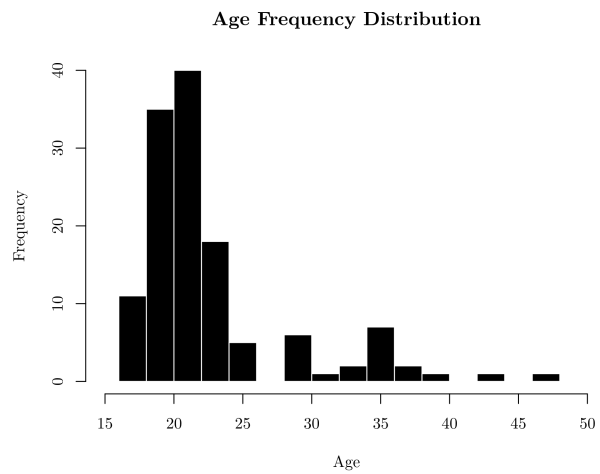


Figure 1: Age Distribution

For the age variable, we can see that this is highly skewed towards the younger people, which is one of the things that makes this dataset problematic.

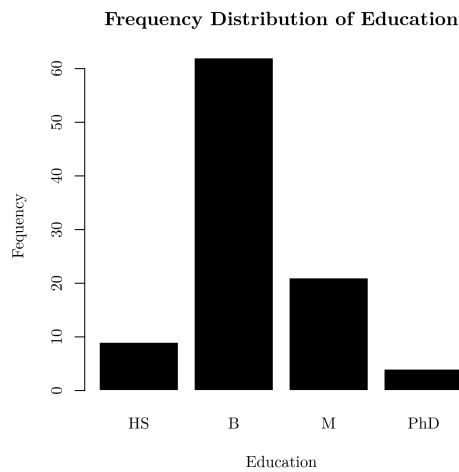


Figure 2: Education Distribution

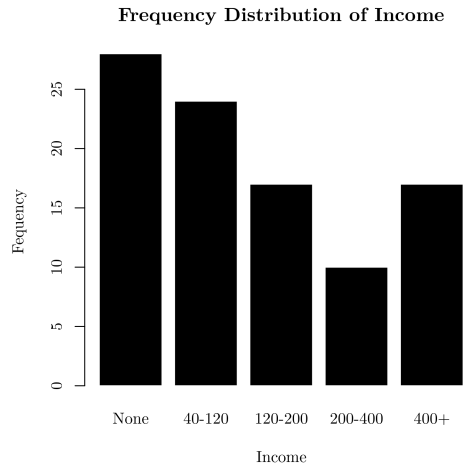


Figure 3: Income Distribution

Education is also highly skewed towards Bachelor's degree holders, which is intuitive given the age distribution. Income distribution is more variable, with the most frequent category being those who earn no personal income of their own.

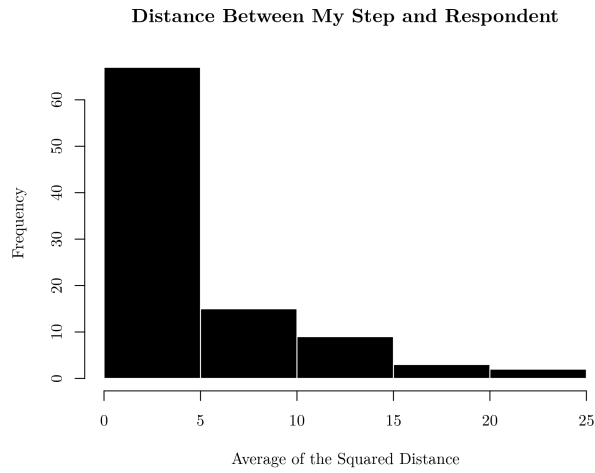


Figure 4: Distribution of Distance Between MSA and Respondent

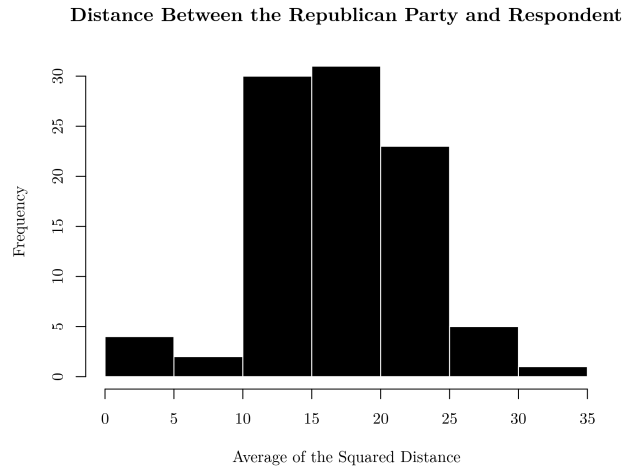


Figure 5: Distribution of Distance Between RPA and Respondentn

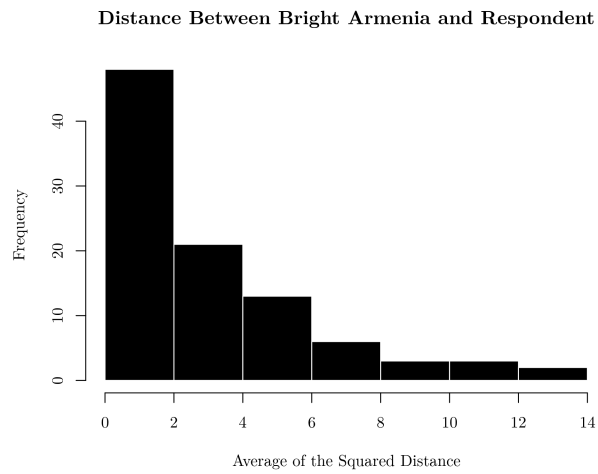


Figure 6: Distribution of Distance Between BA and Respondentn

The distribution of the distance between BA/MSA and the respondent is also highly skewed towards those with a smaller distance. The RPA has higher variation in its distance with the respondents.

5 Estimation and Discussion

The main regression results can be seen in Table 3. For income and educations, the base groups are taken as "No personal income" and "Bachelor's Degree" respectively. Most of the variables are highly insignificant for both the linear regression, and the multinomial logit, besides income in one case, and education in few others. Before proceeding, all linear models have been tested for homoscedasticity using the Breusch-Pagan test, and for all of them, the null hypothesis of constant variance was failed to be rejected (p-values can be seen in Table 3). The insignificance of age and education can be explained by the low variation in these variables themselves. It is interesting, however, to understand whether or not the distance variables are insignificant because of low variation in the variables, or they are simply not significant indicators of party preference. This would simply require better data to understand. However, if we simply look at the signs of the coefficients, we might find some interesting observations. First, let's analyze the linear regression model. For the preferences of the MSA and BA, we can see that those who have higher income are expected to prefer these two political forces less, and are expected to have higher preferences for the RPA, as compared to those who earn no personal income. As for education, those with higher education as compared to a Bachelor's degree, are expected to have higher preferences for the MSA, and lower preferences for the RPA. The distance variables, however, are of most interest to us. In the first model, the larger is the distance between the respondent and MSA and BA, the lower is their expected preference for the MSA, and the larger is the distance between the respondent and the RPA, the higher is their expected preference for the MSA. These signs are intuitive, especially given the high association between MSA and BA, who used to be in an alliance together in the previous legislature of Armenia. For the second model, we see the counter intuitive results, which show that a larger distance between the RPA and the respondent is expected to increase that respondent's preferences for the RPA, and the larger distance between the respondents and the MSA is expected to decrease the preferences between the RPA and the MSA. As for BA, we get that a larger distance between BA and the respondent is expected to decrease the preferences for BA, and a larger distance between the respondent and both MSA and RPA is expected to increase the preferences for BA. These three models are inconsistent with each other, in terms of the signs of the coefficients. In the first model, the distance between the MSA and BA has the same effect on preferences for the MSA, but they have opposite effects on the preferences of the RPA. The multinomial logit model shows that the larger distance between the respondent and both MSA and RPA would increase the log odds of voting for BA, as compared with the log odds of voting for the MSA, and the larger distance between the BA and the respondent would decrease those odds. For the case of the RPA, the model shows that the larger distance between the respondent and both the RPA and the MSA, the log odds of voting for the RPA as compared to those of voting for MSA would decrease, and the larger distance between the BA and the respondent would increase the log odds of voting for the RPA as compared to the log odds of voting for the MSA. Unfortunately, given the insignificance of these variables, we cannot do any rigorous analysis of these results. We can say that it is inconclusive, whether or not these variables are insignificant due to data limitations, or simply due to the fact that the Armenian populace does not engage in policy voting.

Table 3: Regression Results

| | <i>Dependent variable:</i> | | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | <i>OLS</i> | | | <i>Multinomial Logit</i> | |
| | <i>MSA Pref</i> | <i>RPA Pref</i> | <i>BA Pref</i> | <i>Bright Armenia</i> | <i>Republican Party of Armenia</i> |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
| Male | -0.463 (0.557) | 0.307 (0.541) | -0.127 (0.582) | 0.283 (0.554) | 1.944 (1.187) |
| Income (40-120) | 0.106 (0.697) | 0.021 (0.678) | -0.567 (0.729) | 0.633 (0.680) | 0.162 (1.843) |
| Income (120-200) | 0.586 (0.751) | 0.753 (0.730) | -0.321 (0.785) | -0.544 (0.910) | 0.733 (1.756) |
| Income (200-400) | -0.853 (1.055) | 1.675 (1.025) | -0.769 (1.102) | 0.931 (1.054) | 1.586 (1.814) |
| Income (400+) | -1.549 (1.033) | 2.522** (1.004) | -1.090 (1.080) | 1.828* (1.079) | 2.846 (2.048) |
| High School | -0.633 (0.865) | 2.433*** (0.841) | -0.058 (0.904) | 0.856 (0.857) | 4.448*** (1.712) |
| Master's | 0.401 (0.841) | -0.100 (0.817) | -0.265 (0.879) | -0.574 (0.920) | 0.603 (1.534) |
| PhD | 3.190* (1.642) | -3.040* (1.595) | 0.167 (1.715) | -2.471 (1.699) | -16.446*** (0.00001) |
| Age | 0.002 (0.063) | 0.019 (0.061) | 0.030 (0.066) | 0.024 (0.066) | 0.135 (0.096) |
| MSA Average Distance | -0.057 (0.097) | -0.002 (0.095) | 0.078 (0.102) | 0.065 (0.100) | -0.032 (0.175) |
| RPA Average Distance | 0.055 (0.048) | 0.017 (0.047) | 0.075 (0.050) | 0.034 (0.054) | -0.075 (0.084) |
| BA Average Distance | -0.083 (0.165) | 0.142 (0.160) | -0.154 (0.172) | -0.087 (0.186) | 0.350 (0.317) |
| Constant | 6.416*** (1.685) | -0.227 (1.636) | 4.199** (1.760) | -2.480 (1.803) | -8.562*** (3.256) |
| Observations | 96 | 96 | 96 | | |
| R ² | 0.161 | 0.229 | 0.060 | | |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.040 | 0.118 | -0.076 | | |
| Residual Std. Error (df = 83) | 2.393 | 2.325 | 2.500 | | |
| F Statistic (df = 12; 83) | 1.331 | 2.060** | 0.443 | | |
| Breusch-Pagan Test (P-Value) | 0.9541 | 0.1043 | 0.9159 | | |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | | | | 180.989 | 180.989 |
| Accuracy | | | | 0.7188 | 0.7188 |

Note:

In order to understand whether or not respondents were informed about a certain policy that was proposed by the previous government, I cross tabulated their correct guesses with the parties they voted for, and the parties they ascribe the policies to with the parties they voted for (or would have voted for), and the results were the following. In Table 4, I filtered those who asserted that they knew who proposed the policy, and cross tabulated the correctness of their answers with the party that they voted for, and I found that for all parties, the majority of their voters had the wrong answer. Table 5 Shows the same thing, but for those who said that they did not know who proposed the policy, and simply guessed. The results were similar.

Table 4: Proportion of Party *i* Voters Who Knew Correctly

| | <i>Party Voted for</i> | | |
|---------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Answer | My Step Alliance | Bright Armenia | Republican Party of Armenia |
| Wrong | 0.79 | 0.88 | 0.67 |
| Correct | 0.21 | 0.12 | 0.33 |

Table 5: Proportion of Party *i* Voters Who Guessed Correctly

| | <i>Party Voted for</i> | | |
|---------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Answer | My Step Alliance | Bright Armenia | Republican Party of Armenia |
| Wrong | 0.91 | 0.59 | 0.60 |
| Correct | 0.09 | 0.41 | 0.40 |

Next, (Tables 6 and 7) I cross tabulated to see, based on who the respondents voted for (or would have voted for), and found out that, out of those who claimed they knew, the majority wrongly ascribed the policy to the current government. Out of MSA, RPA, and BA voters, 21%, 33% and 12% ascribed the policy to the Republican Party of Armenia, respectively. Out of those who guessed, they had a higher rate of correctness, where 9% (MSA), 41% (BA) and 40% (RPA) of the voters ascribed the policy to the Republican Party.

Table 6: Propotion of Party *i* Voters, Based on Who They Ascribe the Policy to (*From those who said they knew*)

| | <i>Party Voted for</i> | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Party Ascribed | My Step Alliance | Bright Armenia | Republican Party of Armenia |
| Armenian Revolutionary Federation | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Bright Armenia | 0.04 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| My Step Alliance | 0.75 | 0.75 | 0.67 |
| Prosperous Armenia | 0.00 | 0.12 | 0.00 |
| Republican Party of Armenia | 0.21 | 0.12 | 0.33 |

Table 7: Proportion of Party i Voters, Based on Who They Ascribe the Policy to (*From those who said they **guessed***)

| Party Ascribed | Party Voted for | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| | My Step Alliance | Bright Armenia | Republican Party of Armenia |
| Armenian Revolutionary Federation | 0.03 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Bright Armenia | 0.21 | 0.24 | 0.20 |
| My Step Alliance | 0.62 | 0.35 | 0.40 |
| Prosperous Armenia | 0.06 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Republican Party of Armenia | 0.09 | 0.41 | 0.40 |

Based on the second part of this analysis, we can state that given the data we have, the majority of voters are uninformed on the policies of the governments. However, more policies need to be accounted for before that claim can be asserted confidently.

6 Conclusion and Further Steps

To conclude, this paper tried to analyze whether or not policy preferences had any influence on candidate preferences, and electoral outcome, and in both cases, the results were inconclusive. The distance variables were found to be insignificant, however, it was unclear whether this insignificant result was due to data limitations, or reality. In a later part, I tried to analyze the level of information voters have when it comes to the policies of the government, and I found that most of the time, voters ascribed the policies to the wrong parties. Given the limitations of this paper, there are a lot of directions in which it is possible to expand this analysis. Here, I name a few:

1. Accounting for issue salience. Understanding whether the policies that are being discussed are important to the voters.
2. Do parties inhibit policy voting? Analysis of the parties' policy proposals, how much information do they put out there? Can there be policy voting based on the publicly available information?
3. Where do these voters get their information? How often do they follow the news? Do they fact check the information that they receive?
4. What are their perceptions about the revolution? Did they participate?
5. It would also be interesting to analyze the personal attributes of specific candidates (leading party members), as opposed to the entire party.

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A Appendix A - Survey Instructions

General Questions

Q.1. Age

Q.2. Gender

- Male
- Female

Q.3. Electoral District

- Yerevan (Avan, Nor Nork & Kanaker-Zeytun)
- Yerevan (Ajapnyak, Arabkir, Davtashen)
- Yerevan (Malatia-Sebastia, Shengavit)
- Yerevan (Erebuni, Kentron, Nork-Marash, Nubarashen)
- Ararat
- Armavir
- Aragatsotn
- Gegharkunik
- Lori
- Kotayk
- Shirak
- Vayots Dzor & Syunik
- Tavush

Q.4. Education

- High School
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Ph.D
- Other (*please specify*)

Q.5. Personal Income

Considering your income the last month, to which of the following groups do you belong?

- Up to 40,000 AMD
- 40,001-120,000 AMD
- 120,001-200,000 AMD
- 200,001-400,000 AMD
- 400,001+ AMD
- No personal income

Q.6. Are you currently a member of a political party?

- Yes → **Go to Q.7.**
- No → **Go to Q.9.**

Q.7. Which party are you a member of?

- Civil Contract
- Republican Party of Armenia
- Prosperous Armenia
- Bright Armenia
- Mission Party
- Armenian National Congress
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation
- Other (*please specify*)

Q.8. For how many years have you been a member of the party?

Q.9. Have you been a member of a different political party in the past?

- Yes → **Go to Q.10.**
- No → **Go to Q.1. in Elections.**

Q.10. Which party were you a member of?

- Civil Contract
- Republican Party of Armenia
- Prosperous Armenia
- Bright Armenia
- Mission Party
- Armenian National Congress
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation
- Other (*please specify*)

Elections

Q.1. In your opinion, which of the following was the most discussed issue during the campaign period?

- Unemployment
- Tax Reforms
- Corruption
- Artsakh Conflict
- Education
- Justice Reforms
- Environmental Protection
- Other (*please specify*)

Q.2. Did you vote in the 2018 snap Parliamentary Elections?

- Yes → **Go to Q.3.**
- No → **Go to Q.4.**

Q.3. Who did you vote for?

- Republican Party of Armenia
- Citizen's Decision
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation
- My Step Alliance (Civil Contract, Mission Party)
- Bright Armenia
- Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party
- National Progress Party
- We Alliance (Free Democrats, Hanrapetutyun Party)
- Orinats Yerkir
- Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party
- Prosperous Armenia

Q.4. Was this your first time voting?

- Yes
- No

Q.5. Did you vote in the 2017 Parliamentary Elections?

- Yes → **Go to Q.6.**
- No → **Go to Q.1 in Favorability**

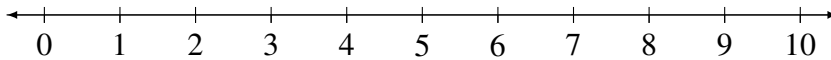
Q.6. Who did you vote for?

- Yelq Alliance
- Free Democrats
- Armenian Renaissance
- Tsarukyan Alliance
- Armenian National Congress
- Armenian Communist Party
- ORO Alliance
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation

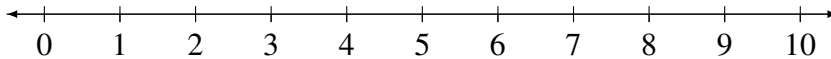
Favorability

In the following section, you will be given a scale from 0 to 10. Please rate your attitude towards each party or alliance on this scale, if 0 is "Highly Unfavorable", and 10 is "Highly Favorable"

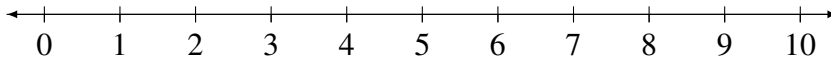
Q.1. Republican Party of Armenia



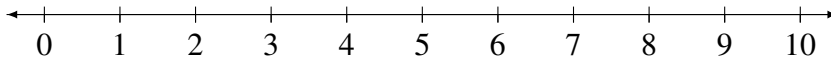
Q.2. Citizen's Decision



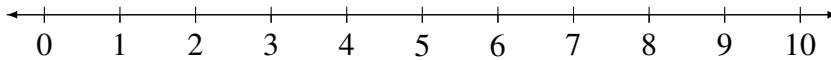
Q.3. Armenian Revolutionary Federation



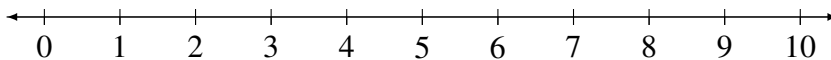
Q.4. My Step Alliance (Civil Contract, Mission Party)



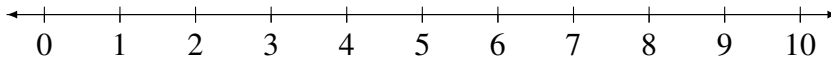
Q.5. Bright Armenia



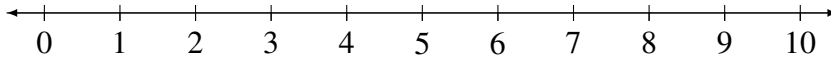
Q.6. Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party



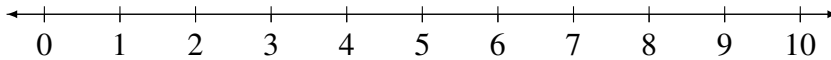
Q.7. National Progress Party



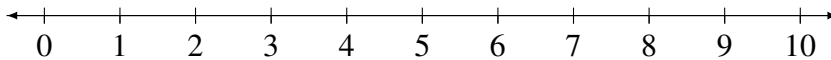
Q.8. We Alliance (Free Democrats, Hanrapetutyun Party)



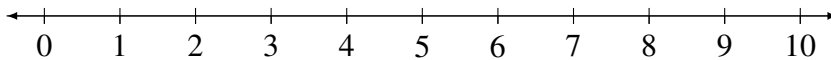
Q.9. Orinats Yerkir



Q.10. Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party



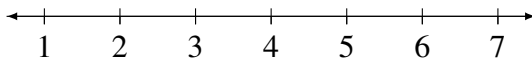
Q.11. Prosperous Armenia



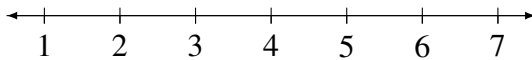
Policy Attitudes

In the following section, you will be given a scale from 1 to 7. For each question, this scale will represent a policy spectrum, where 1 will mean being opposed to the given policy, and 7 will mean being in favor of it. Please locate your own policy positions on the mentioned scales

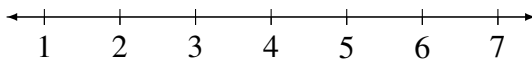
Q.1. Paying higher in taxes, if it means increased spending in key sectors such as defense, health care, education, and other public goods



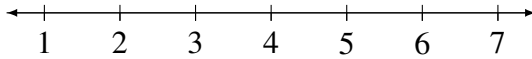
Q.2. Military service in Armenia should be mandatory, not voluntary



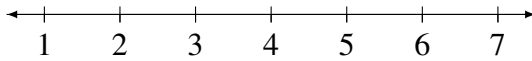
Q.3. Abortion should be legal under all circumstances



Q.4. The church and state should be separate entities, and one should not interfere with the other

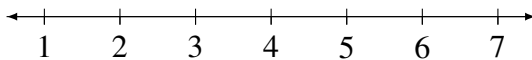


Q.5. The government should provide free healthcare to everyone, not only to those who are socially disadvantaged

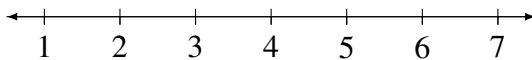


For the next four questions, which proposes a gradual increase of excise taxes on goods such as cigarettes and alcohol through the year 2023. (an excise tax is an indirect tax, levied on the producers/importers of the goods, and passed on to the consumers through the prices of the taxed goods). You will be given a scale from 1 to 7, where one will mean being opposed to the mentioned policy, and 7 will mean being in favor of it. Please locate your own policy position on the scale, as well as those of the mentioned parties.

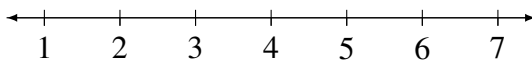
Q.1. Yourself



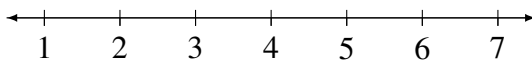
Q.2. Republican Party of Armenia



Q.3. Armenian Revolutionary Federation



Q.4. Civil Contract Party (My Step Alliance)



Q.5. Do you know which party or alliance proposed this policy?

- Yes → **Go to Q.6, do not answer Q.7.**
- No → **Go to Q.7.**

Q.6. If you know, which party or alliance was it?

- Republican Party of Armenia

- Civil Contract (My Step Alliance)
- Bright Armenia
- Prosperous Armenia
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation
- Other (*please specify*)

Q.7. If you don't know, which party or alliance do you think it was?

- Republican Party of Armenia
- Civil Contract (My Step Alliance)
- Bright Armenia
- Prosperous Armenia
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation
- Other (*please specify*)