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Mixed Motives: An Empirical Analysis of ILO Roll-Call Votes

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Non-technical summary

This paper provides an empirical analysis of roll-call voting at the International Labour Organization (ILO). Specifically, the paper looks at the final passage of 17 conventions on working conditions and employment adopted from 1977 to 1995. ILO conventions are interesting as examples of regulatory policy-making at the international level. Since many of them affect labour costs and competitiveness, countries voting on them will have distinct economic interests in their adoption or otherwise. At the same time, however, voting in favour or against them may also have a symbolic meaning. In particular, many issues dealt with by ILO conventions, such as the improvement of working conditions, trade union rights, or non-discrimination according to sex or nationality, involve ethical standards to which most delegates may wish to give their public support. There are thus two motives for voting, which may or may not coincide. Identifying them in actual voting data is one of the main purposes of this paper.

The econometric model uses individual voting decisions of government delegates to the ILO as the dependent variable. Voting decisions are explained by a number of economic or political variables. The main test for the presences of different motives of voting consists of a test of equal coefficients between two alternatives which have the same effect on the outcome of the vote. If voting were only motivated by the desire to reach a particular outcome, there should be no systematic differences in the way these alternatives are chosen by delegates, and hence no difference in the coefficient vector.

The estimated coefficients suggest that there is an instrumental component in governments' utility, since a number of economic variables enter the equation significantly. However, the "instrumental" account of voting which posits that voters are motivated solely by their (or their constituents') interests in the outcome of the vote is rejected. Instead, the results suggest that individual voting behaviour at the ILO is motivated by concerns which are unrelated to the aggregate voting outcome. We identify these concerns with reputation, since opportunity costs or other non-instrumental benefits seem to be of minor importance in this case.

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Abstract: In this empirical paper, we look at individual voting behaviour of government delegates to the International Labour Organization (ILO). We distinguish between the instrumental motive for voting, which consists in the chance that one's vote may turn the balance in favour of one's preferred outcome, and non-instrumental motives, such as a desire for good reputation. Empirically, the two can be identified because two alternatives, abstaining and not participating in the vote, do not differ in their instrumental value, but are likely to differ with respect to reputation aspects. The model is estimated by a multinomial logit with country-specific unobserved heterogeneity, using roll-call votes on the final passage of ILO conventions from 1977 to 1995. The hypothesis that voting is only instrumental is clearly rejected by the data.

JEL-Classification: D 78

Key Words: Voting, discrete choice, international labour standards, ILO.

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1 Introduction

In many treaty systems and international organizations, the most far-ranging decisions are made by majority vote. In the United Nations General Assembly, as well as in the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund or the Council of Minister of the European Union, many decisions are made by majorities strictly smaller than unanimity. Moreover, even where consensus is the rule, agreement is often only achieved under the threat of a majority decision. Therefore, an understanding of voting behaviour seems to be as important for the study of international relations as it is in the field of domestic politics.

This paper provides an empirical analysis of roll-call voting at the International Labour Organization (ILO). The general assembly of the ILO, the International Labour Conference, convenes annually to decide on issues such as the adoption of international labour standards, the finances of the organization, constitutional changes, decisions regarding the status of individual member countries, and non-binding political resolutions. In the empirical analysis, however, we will concentrate on voting on the adoption of ILO conventions. Specifically, the paper looks at the final passage of 17 conventions on working conditions and employment adopted from 1977 to 1995.

The ILO is chosen because, due to the regularity of its decisions, it provides a sufficient data base of voting decisions over comparable issues. More importantly, ILO conventions are interesting as examples of regulatory policy-making at the international level. Since many of them affect labour costs and competitiveness, countries voting on them will have distinct economic interests in their adoption or otherwise. At the same time, however, voting in favour or against them may also have a symbolic meaning. Voting in favour may, for instance, signal a commitment to a "level playing ground" in international economic relations. Furthermore, many issues dealt with by ILO conventions, such as the improvement of working conditions, trade union rights, or non-discrimination according to sex or nationality, involve ethical standards to which most delegates will wish to give their public support. There are thus two motives for voting, which may or may not coincide. Identifying them in actual voting data is one of the main purposes of this paper. The economic theory of voting, fol-

lowing Downs (1957) and Riker and Ordeshook (1968), provides the starting point for the analysis.

Compared to the large number of studies on voting in national legislative bodies, the empirical literature on voting at the international stage is relatively scarce. Concerning the ILO, the extensive study by Landelius (1965) still provides the only systematic account of voting outcomes, but it is more descriptive than analytical. Using factor analysis and multidimensional scaling techniques, Kim and Russett (1996) and Voeten (2000) analyse voting decisions in the UN General Assembly.[1] This approach has proved to be quite powerful since it uncovers both the underlying issue-dimensions and the voting preferences among UN member states. However, the calculus underlying the individual voting decision is not addressed explicitly in this literature. By contrast, studies on voting in the US Congress, such as Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) and Snyder and Groseclose (2000), focus on the determinants of the individual voting decision. Using discrete choice techniques, a distinction can be made between different motives of voting, such as constituent interest, party affiliation, or personal ideology. This is the approach followed in this paper.

The analysis starts with a discussion of individual delegates' voting decisions from a rational choice perspective. It then suggests a procedure for testing for the presence of different motives for voting. In the section 3, we introduce the institutions and procedures which form the context in which voting takes place. Part 4 develops the empirical model and discusses issues of specification. Finally, results are presented and conclusions to the question of voting motives are drawn.

According to our findings, the "instrumental" account of voting which posits that voters are motivated solely by their (or their constituents') interests in the outcome of the vote is rejected. Instead, the results suggest that the symbolic character of voting may play an important role in delegates' voting decisions. To the extent that these findings carry over to other international organizations, they possess important

[1] For a review of the earlier literature on voting in the United Nations General Assembly, see Kim and Russett (1996: 630-31).

implications for the choice of voting procedures. In particular, the publicity of the vote may matter for voting outcomes. For instance, in the presence of symbolic or reputational motives for voting the requirement (introduced by the Edinburgh summit in 1993) that the votes within the Council of Ministers of the European Union must be published may have influenced the decisions taken by the Council.

2 Different motives for voting

Since the seminal contributions of Downs (1957) and Riker and Ordeshook (1968), the economic literature on voting has been dominated by the question whether to vote, less so by how to vote (Kirchgässner and Pommerehne, 1993: 108). In the standard economic model of electoral participation, individuals decide rationally whether to go to the polls. Once they are in the voting booth, however, it is taken for granted that they vote in favour of the party or outcome which they prefer. The implicit assumption is that voting is instrumental: voting is exclusively seen as a means of achieving a desired electoral outcome. For instance, in committee voting on the adoption of proposal X, delegate i votes for X if and only if his or her net benefit U_X from adoption (i.e. utility if X is adopted minus utility if X fails to be adopted) is positive.

Non-instrumental motives of voting, by contrast, arise because the act of voting itself, and not the outcome, influences voters' utility. Some non-instrumental motives, such as the "expressive" benefit derived from supporting one's favourite party,[2] have been discussed in the context of mass elections. The secret ballot used in mass elections, however, limits the applicability of non-instrumental motives for voting to psychic benefits, which are likely to be small for most voters. The picture changes dramatically once we are concerned with votes taken openly, as is common for parliamentarian or

[2] See, for instance, Brennan and Hamlin (1998). Alternatively, the voter benefits from the "warm glow" he or she receives from voting in line with his or her ethical views (see, most recently, Tyran, 2000). This is particularly relevant if the subject of the vote touches upon ethical values, as is true for redistributive or civil rights issues.

diplomatic decisions.[3] In this case, by voting in a particular way, legislators or delegates are given the opportunity to make a public statement. Considerations of reputation will, therefore, enter the voters' decision problem. To state this formally in an expected utility framework, delegate i votes for the adoption of the text if the net benefit from adoption U_X, weighted by the probability p that his or her vote is necessary for the adoption, plus the net reputational benefit $R^Y - R^N$, exceeds zero:

$$p \cdot U_X + R^Y - R^N > 0,$$

where R^Y is the utility from being seen as voting in favour of the proposal and R^N the corresponding utility from voting against.

The reputational aspect of voting may arise for two different reasons. The first is that one of the choices is more highly regarded socially. Kuran (1995: 26ff.) stresses that the respect an individual enjoys depends on the "public preferences" which he or she displays. Kuran distinguishes the intrinsic utility of an action (in our case, the instrumental benefit) from the reputational utility derived from the respect of others watching the action. An individual may refrain from choosing the action which maximises her own utility because, as a social being, she fears the disdain of others. [4] Applying this line of reasoning to the issue of voting, Kuran (1995: 91ff.) argues that social pressure may prevent individuals from voting their true preferences if the vote is public, unlike in a secret ballot.

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[3] For this reason, Rothenberg and Sanders (2000: 260) argue that tests of instrumental and non-instrumental theories should be based on data from legislative voting rather than from mass elections. The interesting point here is that both non-instrumental and instrumental motives of voting weigh more heavily, since the probability of being pivotal is also higher in committee voting than in mass elections.

[4] In a more formal treatment, Bernheim (1994) uses a game-theoretic model with incomplete information to analyse how the choice of actions by one person influences other individuals' beliefs about his or her unobserved character, and how the esteem that follows from these beliefs feeds back into the choice of actions.

Since the seminal work of Akerlof (1980), such behaviour has been discussed under the notion of a "social custom". Following an established code of honour increases an individual's utility, because it increases his reputation in the community. Conversely, individuals who violate the custom face social sanctions. The important point, however, is that the weight with which a "good" or "bad" reputation enters the utility function depends on how many individuals follow the social norm. In the words of Akerlof, a person who disobeys the norm undermines its acceptance in society. As a result, if it is costly to follow the norm (in terms of other utility components apart from reputation), there typically arise two Nash equilibria. In one of them, most individuals behave according to the norm, so that every individual is under strong pressure not to deviate. In another equilibrium, only few people accept the norm, and only individuals whose costs of adherence are low do adhere to it.

If the social customs model is applied to voting decisions, it becomes clear that even if the majority of delegates have a disinterest in the adoption of a proposal, reputational considerations may still lead them to vote in favour if a certain minimum number of delegates follow the same line of behaviour. Indeed, the reputational and the instrumental motive may reinforce each other. While the net reputational utility $R^Y - R^N$ depends positively on the number of delegates voting in favour, the probability of being pivotal decreases with it. This reinforces the Nash equilibrium where all delegates vote in favour since a delegate voting against when all others are in favour would suffer large reputational losses, without having the slightest change of changing the outcome.

A second reason for the effect of reputation on voting behaviour does not recur on social norms such as a consensus that voting in favour of A is inherently good, but arises from the need to communicate one's policy position to others. In the literature on voting in the US Congress, it has been stressed that imperfectly informed voters may use a Senator's or Representative's voting record to form an expectation of his or her future behaviour. Richardson and Munger (1990) cite a number of papers which treat ideology as a reputational mechanism by which legislators are judged and disciplined. Voting at odds with an established reputation devalues reputational capital and may, therefore, be avoided even if this means voting against the alternative

preferred by the legislators' constituencies. As Peltzman (1984: 183) stresses, this behaviour cannot be identified with "shirking" – following one's own ideological predilections at the expense of constituents' preferences – since it may actually be in the interest of less than perfectly informed voters.

We argue that both of these non-instrumental aspects may be applicable to delegates or governments acting at the international level.[5] Voting behaviour may help the government to communicate its stance on certain policies to other actors, such as interest groups, voters, other governments or actors at the international level. Concerning social customs, a government may wish to acquire a reputation to "play by the rules", to behave cooperatively in a specific policy area or international regime. The importance of norms in international relations has been stressed in particular by the constructivist school of thinking in international relations. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 904) even argue that the individual's desire for social esteem carries over directly to the behaviour of leaders of states. Moreover, they point out that adherence to international norms increases the legitimacy of the state's leadership as perceived by the country's own citizens (1998: 903).[6] In a quite different strand of the literature, going back to Axelrod and Keohane (1985/86), norms are seen as means to sustain international cooperation. In a prisoners' dilemma situation, a reputation for not cheating induces others not to cheat either, because this would damage their prospect for future transactions with a trustworthy individual. This behaviour is fostered by international institutions, because actors expect to act repeatedly and the scope of possible actions is limited. In our context, voting in favour of international policies could signal the intention for future cooperation. Moreover, as Keohane stresses, a reputation for

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[5] The presence of reputational motives in the case of the ILO is insinuated by the following statement of the director of the Swedish employers' confederation: „Government delegations often regarded the task of drawing up new ILO instruments as an opportunity for political manifestations" (Myrdal, 1994: 341).

[6] Contrary to this literature, in this paper we are not concerned with the question of how international norms emerge and are disseminated. In terms of the social customs literature, we do not try to describe the conditions under which a community moves from one Nash equilibrium to the other. Rather, we ask which of the Nash equilibria is actually being played.

cooperation may become an asset which can be brought into negotiations in other policy areas (Keohane, 1986: 104). In any case, the prediction is that if there is a norm to support international policies, there will be often consensus even if there is actually little common ground in the subject area of decision-making.[7]

The argument made thus far must now be applied to decision-making within organizations of the real world. One of the features that distinguishes real-world institutions from the model sketched here is that the number of choices is higher. In all bodies which make decisions by majority rule, apart from voting in favour or against a proposal, delegates may abstain, may not participate in the individual vote, or may walk away from the assembly altogether. Moreover, depending on the decision rules in force, voters may make counter-proposals or resort to filibustering tactics. Most of these choices will differ with respect to their impact on the outcome of the vote. At the same time, they will also influence delegates' reputation differently.

Expanding the range of options opens a window for a simple but effective testing procedure for the presence of non-instrumental motives for voting. If voting is solely outcome-oriented, choices which do not differ with respect to their impact on the outcome are not perceived as different. Conversely, if some delegates systematically prefer one of these choices over the others, decisions cannot be solely be explained in terms of the instrumental motive. To illustrate this idea with a simple example, suppose that a public vote on a proposal is taken by electronic means, and there are three buttons which can be pushed. Pushing the green button counts as a vote in favour. Pushing either the red or the blue button counts as a negative vote, with equal consequences for the voting outcome. In this case, a delegate does not care whether he or she pushes the red or the blue button if the only motive for voting is to help producing the desired outcome. Put in another way, if there are systematic differences in the way delegates use the red and the blue buttons, this is proof that there are non-

[7] Scapple (1998) argues that there may be situations where there is little consensus on the definition of the problem (such as when interests diverge), yet high consensus at the decision stage. This comes about when "other factors besides the problem ... enter into the equation." Clearly, norms and reputation may be among these factors.

instrumental aspects to the vote, such as symbolic meanings and concerns for reputation. To apply this test to the rules of the ILO, we will now describe the choices open to delegates and verify that some of them have the same impact on the chances of adopting conventions.

3 Institutions and procedures

ILO conventions are the most binding form of labour standards at the disposal of the ILO. Once a country has ratified a convention, the government is under an obligation to apply its stipulations to the country's system of labour market regulation. To ensure compliance, the country is subject to a supervision procedure unique to international organizations. Although ratification is voluntary, there is a certain degree of informal pressure on governments to ratify conventions.[8] In the area of freedom of association, the ILO supervision system even applies to all countries, no matter whether or not they have ratified the corresponding conventions. Since its foundation in 1919, the ILO has adopted 184 conventions in many fields of human rights, labour legislation and social security.

The body which decides on ILO labour standards is the International Labour Conference (ILC), the supreme organ of the ILO. Once a year, the Conference convenes for a session of two weeks. Its composition follows, according to Article 3,1 of the Constitution, the principle of tripartism. Each member state is represented by two government delegates, one employer and one worker delegate, all of whom have equal voting rights.[9] While the government delegates represent their countries, the latter two vote in

[8] "A state is subjected to a good deal of direct, intensive and recurrent pressure to ratify. The Organization proceeds by a process of attrition, directed at wearing down the resistance of states" (McMahon 1966:185).

[9] Worker and employer delegates should be nominated by the member states' governments "in agreement with the industrial organizations ... which are most representative of employers or workpeople" (ILO Constitution, Article 3,5). If a government fails to nominate either a

a personal capacity. Government, employer and worker delegates form three "groups" which are sometimes used to coordinate voting behaviour, in particular among union and employer delegates (Haas, 1962: 341).

Decision-making on international labour standards follows a highly standardised procedure.[10] The agenda of the Conference is set by the Governing Body, the executive assembly of the ILO, which meets three times a year. The preparatory stages for the adoption of a convention usually last for two years before the issue reaches the Conference. In the majority of cases, a convention receives two readings at the Conference, usually in two consecutive years. Bargaining on the details of standards is conducted within Conference committees. Once a committee has adopted a report and a draft convention, the issue goes back to the plenary meeting which may then adopt the convention. It is entitled to discuss the contents in detail and make any amendments by simple majority rule. The adoption of a convention or recommendation, however, requires a majority of two-thirds (ILO Constitution, Article 18,2). The final vote is always a public roll-call. The individual delegate's voting decision is published and can be looked up in the Conference's Record of Proceedings, the data source for this study. Roll-calls as well as votes by show of hands are executed by electronic means.

A special feature of the voting procedure is the quorum rule. The ILO Constitution provides that, irrespective of the required majority or the voting procedure, voting in plenary session "is void unless the total number of votes cast is equal to half the number of the delegates attending the Conference" (Article 17,3). More precisely, Article 20 of the Standing Orders of the Conference stipulates that "a vote is not valid if the number of votes cast *for and against* is less than half the number of delegates attending the Conference and entitled to vote" (emphasis added). Therefore, delegates

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worker or an employer delegate, the other may still participate in the Conference but has no right to vote (Article 4,2).

[10] A more extensive account of the ILO's procedures for standard-setting is given by Bartolomei de la Cruz et al. (1996).

who have declared their abstention do not count towards the quorum.[11] In order to prevent a convention from being adopted, it may thus be equally effective to abstain or vote against. A blocking coalition either needs one third of the votes if all members of the coalition vote against, and assuming that every delegate votes, or half of the delegates' votes if they all abstain. Empirically, motions are hardly ever turned down by a negative vote, while a lack of quorum is not an infrequent voting result at the International Labour Conference, in particular at the committee stage.[12]

Apart from giving his or her abstention to the record, a delegate may also choose not to participate in voting. In both cases, he or she is counted in the denominator of the quorum figure. Only if a delegate reports his or her absence to the Conference chair-person, he or she does not affect the proportion of delegates voting. In fact, however, the vast majority of delegates do not report their absence when leaving the Conference session.[13] The effect of these "undeclared abstentions" on the chances of adoption is

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[11] The quorum rule is

$$\frac{votes\ in\ \ favour + votes\ against}{votes\ in\ \ favour + votes\ against + abstentions + non - participating\ delegates} > \frac{1}{2},$$

hence abstentions are treated in the same way as non-participation. The 1986 revisions to the ILO Constitution, which have as yet not come into force, changed the quorum rule in such a way that votes recorded as abstentions will in future count towards the quorum (Kruglak 1989; Maupin 1987). As before, they will not count towards voting outcomes: once a quorum is achieved, it is still the relation between votes in favour and votes against which determines the outcome. The object of the change was to make "strategic" abstentions more difficult. If the constitutional amendments enter into force, delegates trying to prevent a quorum will have to "vote with their feet", i.e. not participate in voting at all (Maupin 1987: 487).

[12] Even at the plenary stage, 14 of all 134 roll-call votes taken between 1975 to 1995 ended with this result. "Abstentions become a real weapon, more effective than negative votes for blocking a decision considered politically inexpedient" (Ghebali 1989: 184).

[13] In our estimation sample (introduced below), 90 delegates registered at the moment of voting were, on average, absent from the roll calls. The average total number of delegates who were absent from the roll calls, whether registered or not, was 119. In our data source, there is no information on whether individual delegates were registered at the moment the

thus the same as the effect of a declared abstention. Hence, if a delegate aims to prevent the adoption of the convention due to the lack of a quorum, both kinds of abstentions are equally likely to lead to the desired outcome. The quorum rule thus provides for two choices with the property that, from the point of view of instrumental voting, one should not be preferred over the other. Therefore, the test for non-instrumental motives described at the end of the previous section can be applied.[14]

For the 29 conventions adopted between 1975 and 1995[15], figure 1 shows the evolution of voting outcomes over time. We observe that in the 1990s, votes against have become more frequent, and the number of declared or undeclared abstentions has risen, too. These changes in behaviour can largely be attributed to employer delegates. A look at Appendix A reveals that the proportion voting in favour has decreased only slightly among government or union delegates.

On the whole, the number of votes in favour of conventions is much higher than the number of delegates abstaining or voting against. As in many international organizations, there is a high degree of consensus at the decision stage. Indeed, in the observation period there has not been a case of a convention failing at the final record vote. In some cases, however, the outcome was close. The most striking example is Convention No. 172 on Working Conditions in Hotels and Restaurants, the adoption of which was secured by a number of votes exceeding the quorum by only three.

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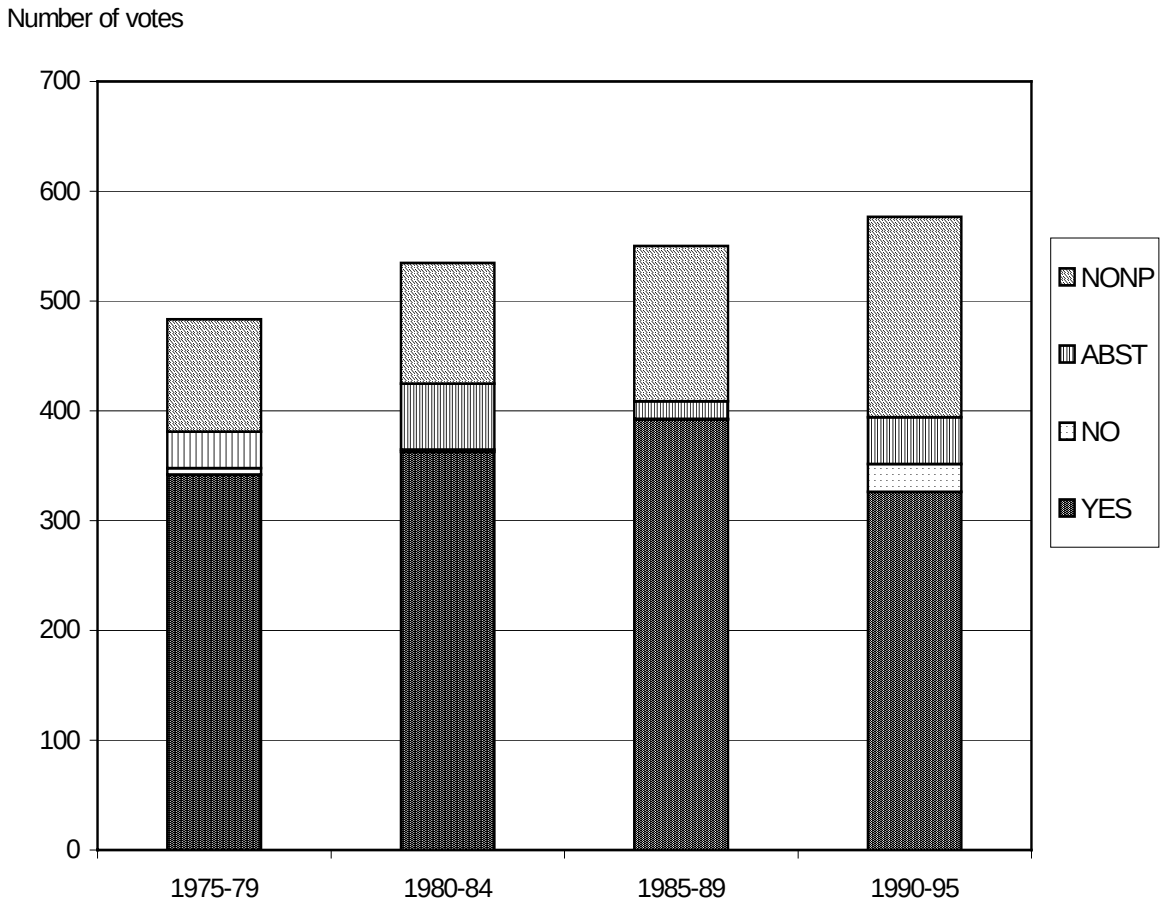
vote was taken. We can only gather from it whether or not they participated in the Conference as a whole. To check whether de-registrations influence the results, we performed separate estimations for votes where the number of de-registrations was above and below average. We did not detect any qualitative differences between these two groups of conventions. In particular, the LR test statistic for pooling choices introduced in the next section had practically the same size in both sub-samples.

[14] There may be doubts whether non-instrumental behaviour can be explained solely in terms of the reputational motive. This issue is discussed in the next section.

[15] This excludes conventions adopted at separate Conferences for the maritime sector.

Figure 1: Aggregate voting outcomes by year of adoption

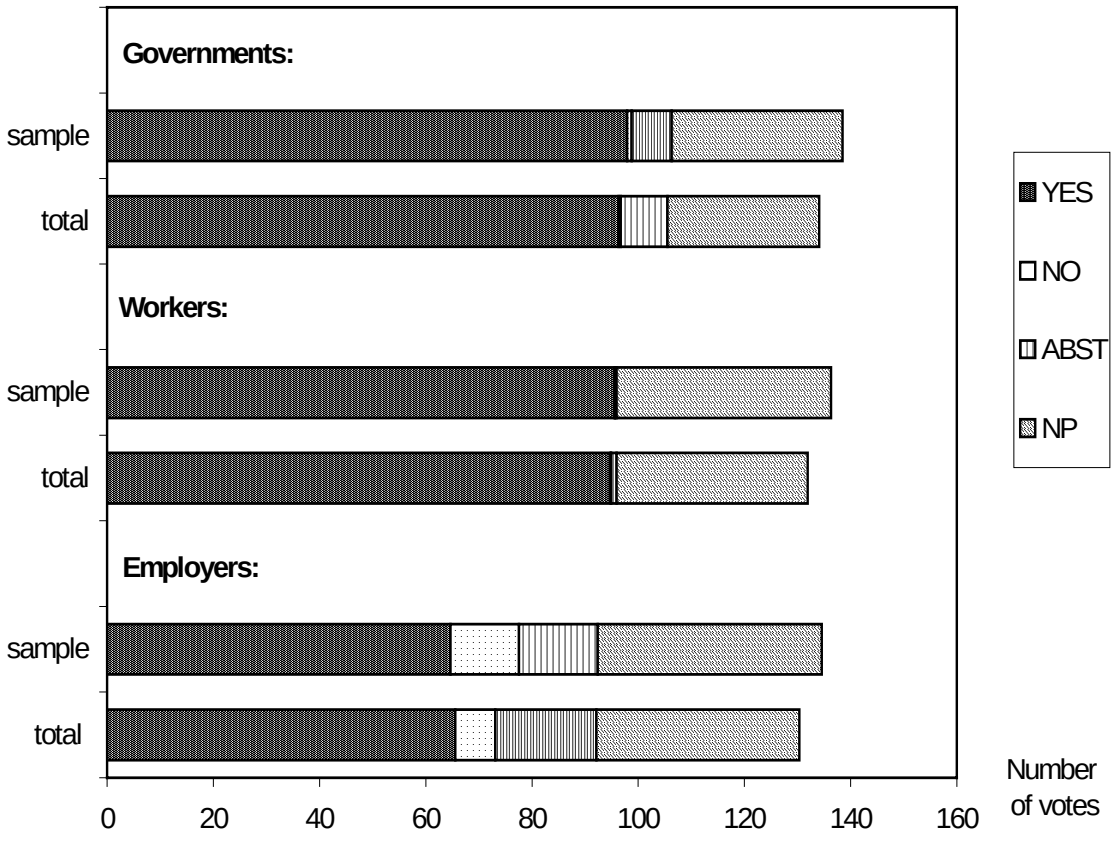


For estimation, only conventions on working conditions (including health and safety issues) and employment policies are used. The other conventions, such as conventions on trade union rights, industrial relations or labour administration, have a less obvious impact on member states' economic interests and are, therefore, excluded. Figure 2 shows the distribution of voting outcomes across delegate groups, both for all 29 conventions and the 17 conventions form the estimation sample.[16] We observe that voting differs across delegate groups. While union delegates almost never vote against conventions or abstain, there is a sizeable amount of abstentions from governments and employers. Moreover, members of the latter group sometimes vote against

[16] Appendix A lists all sample and non-sample conventions adopted from 1975 to 1995.

adoption. From figure 2, we also note that the sample conventions do not differ from the others with respect to aggregate voting outcomes.

Figure 2: Aggregate voting outcomes by delegate groups



Note: To facilitate comparisons across groups, the number of government votes have been divided by two.

In the remaining parts of the paper, we will be concerned with government delegates only. The reason is insufficient information on trade unions and employers' associations, in particular concerning their freedom vis-à-vis governments, the nature of their constituencies and their ideological attachments. By contrast, there is much more comparative evidence on governments and, hence, we will restrict attention to delegates from this group.

4 The empirical model

In this section, we develop the empirical model for explaining voting behaviour of government delegates to the International Labour Conference. The relevant actors are taken to be governments, not individual delegates. The reason is that government delegates do not vote in a personal capacity at the ILO but are accountable to their governments for their voting decisions. Government decisions are predicted by a number of independent variables, using a multinomial logit specification. The empirical test for the presence of non-instrumental motives described earlier concerns the determinants of declared and undeclared abstentions. The null hypothesis is chosen such that voting is purely instrumental. If it can be shown that abstention and non-participation are statistically different from one another (in the sense that the observed characteristics of the delegates predispose them to prefer one over the other), then non-instrumental motives for voting must matter, too.

We identify non-instrumental motives of voting with the effect of reputation. Since one of the alternatives is not participating in the vote, delegates' opportunity costs may also enter the decision problem. Put very crudely, one might argue that some delegates will prefer a trip to the Alps, shopping in Geneva or a meeting with colleagues from other countries to attending the Conference sessions, and governments may differ in the degree to which they punish or tolerate delegates' shirking. However, since the time when a final record vote on a convention will be taken is known in advance of the vote, it appears that opportunity costs are not very high. More importantly, the authority to vote may always be delegated to a substitute or advisor.

In tendency, the importance of the instrumental benefits of voting will increase with the expected closeness of the vote, since the probability of being pivotal rises. Moreover, in the social customs framework discussed above, the positive reputation effect of voting in favour depends on the aggregate number of positive votes. Conversely, the non-instrumental aspect should weigh less heavily if the expected number of votes against rises and, hence, the expected outcome of the vote becomes closer. We account for these differences by splitting the sample into close and lopsided votes. As a measure of expected closeness (or, equivalently, a measure of the expected number of

votes against), we use the voting intentions of the employers' group. As mentioned in section 2, delegates form three functional groups which are used to coordinate voting behaviour. Among employers, the group leader in the Conference committee in which the convention was drafted regularly gives an overall evaluation of the proposed convention, together with a statement which can be read as a voting recommendation. This statement is made in plenary session, hence it can be observed by Government delegates.[17] Since delegates from trade unions can be relied on to vote in favour, we take the voting outcome to be close if and only if the employers oppose the proposed convention. Accordingly, we divide the roll-call votes into two categories: those for which the employers' committee vice-chairman issued a positive or a negative voting recommendation.

The dependent variable

Delegates can choose among the following actions: voting in favour, voting against, abstention, non-participation in the vote and non-participation in the Conference as a whole. The first three of these choices are listed in the official Record of Proceedings. In order to obtain information on non-participation, we compared the lists of voting delegates with the lists of delegates registered at the Conference, also printed in the Record of Proceedings. All delegates found in the latter but not in the former record were classified as not participating in the vote. Governments not represented in Geneva at all were excluded from the estimations. Since there are many issues dealt with at the Conference, we assume that this choice does not reflect the government's position vis-à-vis the particular convention voted on. Hence, our sample is based on all government delegates whose names are printed in the official list of delegations to the Conference.

[17] Some doubts may exist as to the exogeneity of the voting recommendation. When making his voting recommendation, however, the employers' vice chairman does not know how the government delegates will vote, although he may have a rough idea of whether or not most governments accept the proposed convention.

Since governments, not delegates are taken to be the relevant actors and governments usually send two delegates to the Conference who may cast their votes differently from one another, there are not four but 14 different alternatives. Table 1 provides a cross-tabulation of voting behaviour by the two government delegates in the estimation sample. In 82.7 per cent of all cases, delegates voted together and are thus represented on the diagonal of the matrix. In all but three of the off-diagonal cases, one delegate did not participate or had not registered for the Conference. With only 30 cases, it is very rare that governments are represented by only one delegate at the Conference. By far the largest category is formed by delegations who unanimously voted in favour of the convention. This is followed by the category for delegations that were split between a positive vote and non-participation.

Table 1: Coherence of voting within government delegations, estimation sample

	YES	NO	ABST.	NOT PART.
YES	1017			
NO	1	9		
ABSTAINING	2	0	86	
NOT PARTICIPATING	228	5	28	220
NOT REGISTERED	12	0	0	18

To perform estimation, one needs to have a sufficient number of observations in each choice category. Therefore, government (not delegate) choices are defined as follows. The government is classified as voting in favour (yes, *Y*) if and only if both delegates cast their votes as yes. A second category (yes/non-participation, *S*) is formed if one delegate voted in favour while the other did not participate in the vote. The third category, *A*, is formed by delegates who abstained. Since the number of observations does not allow for a separate category, a government is contained in the same category if one delegate abstained and the other did not participate. The fourth category (non-participation, *N*) contains all cases in which both delegates were absent from the vote. The votes against were dropped, as were the three cases in which one delegate was in

favour and the other voted against or abstained. If one delegate was missing from the entire Conference, we classify the government's vote as if the second delegate had voted in the same way as the one who was registered at the Conference. As mentioned before, governments not represented at the Conference are not included in the analysis.

The independent variables

Since reputational or instrumental benefits from the adoption of a convention cannot be measured directly, the independent variables relate either to governments or to conventions, but not to alternatives.[18] While most of them cannot unambiguously be associated with the reputational or the instrumental motive, some variables are believed primarily to influence the economic interest in the adoption of ILO conventions.[19] The openness of the economy, measured as the sum of exports and imports divided by the level of GDP, is included as an independent variable to capture the effect of foreign competition. The higher the dependence on foreign trade, the more concerned will a government be about the level of labour costs in relation to the country's competitors, and the higher may be the opposition of certain domestic constituencies (in particular, employers in the exporting and import-competing sectors

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18 Data on the dependent variable as well as on ILO technical cooperation was obtained from the ILO. Most of the data for the independent variables are taken from the World Development Indicators (WDI) of the World Bank. GDP per capita is from the Penn Tables described in Summers and Heston (1990); the series is extrapolated beyond the year 1992 using WDI data. The federalism dummy is from Vaubel (1996). The left party dummy is from Beck et al. (2000) while the democracy dummy is taken from Alvarez et al. (1996). These authors classify 152 countries into the following regime types: autocracies, bureaucracies, presidentialism and parliamentarianism. For our purposes, the former two and the latter two categories are merged to "dictatorships" and "democracies". Furthermore, we extend the end of the observation period from 1990 to 1995, using the criteria given in Alvarez et al. We change the classification of the following countries from "dictatorships" to "democracies" after 1990: Benin, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Paraguay, Poland and South Africa. The democratisation of most of Eastern Europe is already noted in Alvarez et al. (1996).

[19] For a more extensive discussion of the effect of international labour standards, see, for instance, Brown et al. (1998), Krueger (1996) and Srinivasan (1997).

of the economy) to international labour standards. The second independent variable is income per capita. It is reasonable to assume that good working conditions and social protection are normal goods in the economic sense, such that the demand of domestic actors for labour standards rises, or, conversely, their opposition to standards concluded at the international level declines, with the level of income. We use the level of GDP per capita to test for this relation. Third, we include the proportion of the labour force working in the agricultural sector. Due to the seasonal nature of the work and the preponderance of informal labour relationships, applying ILO conventions may be particularly problematic in this sector.

A second group of variables captures economic dependence. Countries receiving development aid, technical cooperation grants or other forms of assistance may be anxious to support measures initiated by donor countries. We include two variables to test for this link: the amount of official development aid received by the country and, more narrowly, technical cooperation grants administered by the ILO itself.[20] Both variables are measured in per cent of GDP. While their impact on voting choices is mediated by the reputation motive, these variables may also have an instrumental interpretation, since they may capture under-development. Countries with a high share of foreign aid in GDP may be those which have the most severe problems in improving their labour standards.

Thirdly, there are variables relating to the internal political process. First, we use a democracy dummy. Again, this variable could be given both an instrumental and a reputational interpretation. Democratic politicians may be more accountable to the working population which profits from labour standards. On the other hand, a non-democratic government might vote in favour to compensate (in terms of international reputation) for a bad record in human rights violations. Furthermore, we use a dummy variable for government ideology which takes the value one if and only if the government chief executive is a member of a left-wing political party. By voting in favour of

[20] Since the Declaration of Philadelphia of 1944, providing technical assistance has been the second important task of the ILO. An overview is given in ILO (1993).

conventions, governments formed by left-wing parties may try to strengthen their pro-labour or pro-union reputation. Right-wing governments, by contrast, will usually not accumulate the same kind of reputational capital, and may thus be more inclined to oppose a convention. Finally, we also use a dummy variable for federal states. Delegates representing federal states may abstain more often if the subject of the convention does not fall into the central government's competencies, due to the costs of coordination with lower-level governments and possible diversities of interest.

Besides these variables, we include a set of seven regional dummies. [21] Finally, two dummy variables are used to define three groups of conventions.[22] The first comprises health and safety conventions, such as the Asbestos Convention (C162) or the Safety and Health in Mines Convention (C176). They are believed to be the most "technical" and least "political" of the conventions in the data set. The second group of conventions deal with working conditions more generally, such as night work (C171) or part-time work (C175). These conventions do not only have a much greater scope of application, they deal with subjects which are often form the quintessence of long-term union demands. Indeed, as we see from the voting results listed in Appendix A, voting results for these conventions are much less unanimous than those for health and safety conventions. The two conventions on employment policies in the data set are used as the base group in the estimation.

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[21] Middle East and Northern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, North America, East Asia, Pacific Region, and Europe (including former communist states). In principal, one would also have to control for a separate effect of COMECON countries. Given that for a number of countries, such as the Soviet Union, the GDR and Czechoslovakia, comparable information on covariates is hard to obtain, however, we chose to eliminate this group of countries (prior to 1990) from the data set.

[22] To group conventions, we used the ILO's own system of classification.

5 Estimation results

To estimate the model, we use a multinomial logit (MNL) specification with random effects. The random effects are estimated using the method of simulated maximum likelihood (SML); see appendix B for details. MNL estimation makes the assumption of the independence of irrelevant alternative (IIA)[23], an issue to which we return below. If there are k choices, MNL results in the estimation of $(k - 1)$ coefficients for each variable, which give the influence of the variable in question on the utility of choosing choice j rather than a base category. In our case, the coefficients listed in the table indicate the difference in choice-specific coefficients compared to the choice category „voting in favour". Thus for example, a positive coefficient in the column for the alternative „abstention" means that the variable in question predisposes a government relatively more to abstaining than to voting in favour. Results from estimation with the whole sample are given in table 2.

In general, the observed country-specific variables seem to explain the choice of the alternative "non-participation" (column 2) better than declared abstentions (column 1). Among the coefficients relating to the latter alternative, only one them, ILO technical cooperation, is sigificantly different from zero at the five per cent level, while another one (left party government) is significant at the ten per cent level. By contrast, the openness of the economy, the share of agricultural employment, development aid and ILO technical cooperation all enter singificantly (at the five per cent level) in the equation for non-participation.

In line with the instrumental account, a higher degree of trade openness significantly increases the probability of non-participation vis-à-vis voting in favour, because this raises the chances that the convention will not be adopted due to the lack of a quorum. Also in line with the instrumental account, the share of agricultural employment is positive. Both development aid and ILO technical cooperation enter positively. This indicates that these variables serve as proxies for low levels of development. Countries

[23] See, for instance, Maddala, 1983: 59ff.

Table 2: Results of multinomial logit estimation: all record votes

	declared abstentions (A)		non-participation (N)		yes / non-participation (S)	
	coeff.	t-stat.	coeff.	t-stat.	coeff.	t-stat.
Openness	0.175	0.50	1.510	3.69	0.757	2.52
Real GDP per capita	0.030	0.52	0.010	0.13	-0.025	-0.43
Agricultural employment	-0.981	-0.61	3.687	2.47	2.911	2.60
Development aid	0.891	0.45	4.967	3.60	0.649	0.52
ILO technical cooperation	0.916	2.34	0.915	3.24	0.608	2.10
Federal state	-0.358	-0.92	-0.771	-1.43	-1.705	-3.75
Democracy dummy	-0.414	-1.16	0.041	0.11	0.071	0.24
Left party in power	-0.368	-1.75	-0.047	-0.22	0.078	0.45
Health and safety	-1.908	-5.25	-0.063	-0.20	-0.033	-0.13
Working conditions	0.398	1.33	0.355	1.10	0.130	0.47
Regional dummies	YES		YES		YES	
Constant	-4.340	-4.10	-6.359	-4.44	-3.812	-4.63
σ_Y	-0.672	-5.92				
σ_S	0.285	1.28				
σ_A	-0.438	-2.33				
σ_N	-1.162	-5.60				
Log likelihood initial	-2230.5					
Log likelihood final	-1271.6					
number of observations	1609					

in this group are averse to conventions, because they may reduce their comparative advantage. By contrast, the potential loss of international reputation (and the implicit threat of reduced future assistance) due to their lack of support for ILO conventions does not seem to be a dominating motive for voting for governments of the recipient countries.

There is some indication that declared abstentions are used less frequently by delegates from left-wing governments, although the coefficient is significant only at the ten per cent level. By contrast, the democracy dummy and the dummy for federal states seem to have no impact on participation or abstention at the ILC, although delegates from federal states (perhaps paradoxically) show greater unity in behaviour since a split vote (between voting in favour and non-participation) occurs significantly less frequently.

Among the regional dummies (not reported in table 2), delegates who abstain have a higher likelihood coming from Asia (outside East Asia) and South America. These also have the highest degree of non-participation, while North American delegates and delegates from Australian and New Zealand delegates are almost always present at the vote. Finally, the contents of the convention matters for the probability of abstention. There are significantly fewer abstentions on health and safety conventions than for the base group (employment policies). By contrast, participation seems to be independent of the subject of the convention.

In sum, the results give some support both to the presence of outcome-oriented or instrumental and of reputational motives. At the same time, they indicate that participation and abstention should be seen as different choices, which can only be explained in terms of non-instrumental motives. To confirm this impression more rigorously, we perform a test of the hypothesis that the coefficients for explicit abstentions and for non-participation are statistically equal, such that both choices can be merged into one. Thus, the null hypothesis is that voting is purely instrumental. The test is implemented as a likelihood ratio test, as proposed by Cramer and Ridder (1991).[24] The test statistic

[24] To implement the test, one needs to obtain the likelihood value of the model with the observed and unobserved heterogeneity terms equal to each other between the two alternatives. As Cramer and Ridder show, the restricted likelihood value can be calculated from the likelihood of the pooled model which merges the two alternatives into one:

$$\log \hat{L}_R = n_A \log n_A + n_N \log n_N - (n_A + n_N) \log(n_A + n_N) + \log \hat{L}_P ,$$

where $\log \hat{L}_R$ is the log likelihood of the restricted model, $\log \hat{L}_R$ is the log likelihood of the pooled model, and n_A and n_N are the number of abstentions and non-participations, respectively.

has a value of 189.1, which exceeds the critical value of $\chi^2_{(17,0.05)}$ = 27.59 by far. The test thus resoundingly rejects the null hypothesis that voting is only motivated by the instrumental component, i.e. the interest in the voting outcome.

A likelihood ratio test is performed to test whether the random effect terms are jointly significant at the five per cent level. The tests statistic is $LR = 2(\log \hat{L} - \log \hat{L}_D) = 137.0$, far above the critical level of $\chi^2_{(4,0.05)}$=9.49. This proves that accounting for country-specific heterogeneity is important. The IIA assumption implicit in the MNL procedure can be tested using a Hausman test. It consists of eliminating individual choices and comparing the coefficients to those obtained for the full model. If coefficients do not change, the IIA assumption is not rejected. The Hausman test statistics were 4.96, 21.13 and –3.31 after the elimination of choices Y/A, abstain and non-participation, with 17 degrees of freedom. Since the critical value at the five per cent level is again 27.59, the IIA assumption is not rejected by the data. The small negative value of the last statistic contradicts the asymptotic assumptions of the Hausman test, but occurs frequently in relatively small samples. We conclude that the IIA assumption is innocuous in our case.

As we argued above, the relative weight of the instrumental component in the decision problem rises with the expected closeness of the vote, which would lead to different coefficient values in close and lopsided roll-calls. Therefore, we performed the same estimation as before, but using only votes on conventions which the employers had announced to oppose. Results are found in table 3.

There is little change qualitatively in the coefficients as compared to the full sample. One exception is that agricultural employment ceases to be significant in the non-participation category (column 2). The left majority dummy is now statistically significant at the five per cent level in the abstention equation. The higher value of the constant in the same column reflects the higher proportion of abstentions in this sub-sample (12 per cent as compared to 8.2 per cent for the sample of all 17 conventions).

Table 3: Results of multinomial logit estimation: close record votes

	declared abstentions (A)		non-participation (N)		yes / non-participation (S)	
	coeff.	std. err.	coeff.	Std. err.	coeff.	std. err.
Openness	0.302	0.77	0.994	2.09	0.417	1.05
Real GDP per capita	0.049	0.70	0.031	0.33	0.086	1.11
Agricultural employment	-0.465	-0.25	0.737	0.40	1.742	1.15
Development aid	-0.203	-0.07	6.909	3.37	3.744	1.86
ILO technical cooperation	0.924	1.78	0.917	2.06	0.379	0.84
Federal state	-0.861	-1.80	-0.662	-0.95	-2.496	-3.09
Democracy dummy	-0.459	-0.99	0.610	1.14	-0.236	-0.52
Left party in power	-0.648	-2.22	0.097	0.31	0.055	0.20
Health and safety	-1.912	-2.33	-0.057	-0.10	0.087	0.19
Working conditions	0.401	0.99	0.520	1.15	0.130	0.34
Regional dummies	YES		YES		YES	
Constant	-4.785	-3.70	-7.796	-4.11	-4.200	-3.64
σ_Y	-0.721	-3.59				
σ_S	0.122	0.31				
σ_A	-0.313	-1.07				
σ_N	1.105	4.48				
Log likelihood initial	-931.5					
Log likelihood final	-597.5					
number of observations	672					

With an LR test statistic of 28.9, the random effects are again jointly statistically significant. Most importantly, the null hypothesis that non-instrumental benefits do not matter is again strongly rejected. With a likelihood test statistic of 92.0, the test statistic is lower than before but the null hypothesis is still rejected at all conventional significance levels. Thus even for conventions which the employers had announced to

oppose in the vote, the non-instrumental component of the voting decision appears to carry a large share of explanatory power.

6 Conclusions

Our empirical tests show that individual voting behaviour at the ILO is motivated by concerns which are unrelated to the aggregate voting outcome, such as the effect of voting behaviour on reputation. This holds true both for lopsided and for close votes. However, the estimated coefficients suggest that there is also an instrumental component in governments' utility. In particular, the impact of the openness variable and the share of agricultural employment on the participation decisions is much in line with the economic interest hypothesis. Furthermore, the results suggest that the dissatisfaction of countries which oppose a convention for economic reasons is reflected only in their participation behaviour, not in the use of explicit abstentions (let alone votes against). If anything, explicit abstentions seem to have a public statement character, given the impact of the left-right dummy variable on this choice.

We have found that considerations other than the instrumental benefit of voting weigh on voting decisions. We have identified them with reputation, since opportunity costs or other non-instrumental benefits seem to be of minor importance in this case. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that the fact that the ILO votes by public roll-calls does affect the voting outcomes. It seems clear that public roll-call voting brings motives into decision-making that distract from the economic interests vis-à-vis international labour standards. This will be even more true for the ILO's human rights conventions than the conventions on labour standards which were the subject of this analysis, and it is likely to apply, mutatis mutandis, to other international organizations as well.

Putting these results into a broader perspective, while other authors have stressed the merits of reputational considerations for sustaining international cooperation, in our view reputational mechanisms may also be counter-productive. The concern for reputation may induce countries to conceal their economic interests at the highly

symbolic voting stage. However, this is not the stage at which binding decisions are made. The ultimate decision on the accomplishment of international standards is made individually by states, by ratifying or not ratifying them. Seemingly cooperative behaviour at the adoption stage, combined with opportunistic behaviour at the ratification stage, will inevitably produce a low ratification record and a low level of commitment to international standards.

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Appendix A: Voting outcomes at the ILC, 1975-1995

Title of Convention	Voting outcomes (Government delegates)			
	YES	NO	ABS	NP
C141 Rural Workers' Organizations Convention, 1975	184	0	8	36
C142 Human Resources Development Convention, 1975	187	0	2	39
C143 Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975	136	0	42	50
C144 Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976	143	0	51	47
C148 Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 *	213	0	3	30
C149 Nursing Personnel Convention, 1977 *	175	0	34	37
C150 Labour Administration Convention, 1978	220	0	0	31
C151 Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978	162	0	39	48
C152 Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work) Convention, 1979 *	198	0	2	63
C153 Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Convention, 1979 *	168	2	38	55
C154 Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981	198	0	33	39
C155 Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 *	214	0	2	53
C156 Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981	210	0	12	48
C157 Maintenance of Social Security Rights Convention, 1982	208	0	18	44
C158 Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 *	201	2	22	45
C159 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983	209	0	8	56
C160 Labour Statistics Convention, 1985	224	0	4	48
C161 Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 *	209	0	3	63
C162 Asbestos Convention, 1986 *	220	0	0	54
C167 Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 *	223	0	0	57
C168 Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 1988 *	196	0	18	66
C169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989	171	0	34	74
C170 Chemicals Convention, 1990 *	209	0	0	68
C171 Night Work Convention, 1990 *	200	0	9	68
C172 Working Conditions (Hotels and Restaurants) Convention, 1991 *	169	0	43	64
C173 Protection of Workers' Claims (Employer's Insolvency) Convention, 1992 *	190	0	25	79
C174 Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 *	199	2	6	93
C175 Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 *	150	18	30	116
C176 Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 *	197	2	21	86

* Convention contained in the estimation subsample

Appendix B: Estimation technique

To estimate the model, we use a multinomial logit with random effects, based on a model of expected utility maximisation. In the vote on convention $j = 1,...,J$, government i (where $i = 1,...,I$) will choose action l from its choice set $m = 1,...,M$ if and only if

$$z_{ij}'\gamma_l + \mu_{il} + \varepsilon_{ijl} > z_{ij}'\gamma_m + \mu_{im} + \varepsilon_{ijm}, \quad \forall m \neq l . \tag{1}$$

Here, the z_{ij} are the characteristics of the government or country at the time convention j is voted upon, as discussed in section 4 in the text. The γ's are parameters to be estimated, the ε's are i.i.d. errors and the μ's are country-specific random effects such that

$$\mu_{im} = \sigma_m u_{im} , \tag{2}$$

where the σ's are standard errors which will be estimated. The random effect terms differ according to the alternatives. They pick up unobservable components of the government's decision problem which are constant over time, such as a generally sympathetic stance towards the ILO, cultural factors etc. The effects are assumed to be statistically independent from any of the covariates z.

The multinomial logit identifies M-1 coefficient vectors. The coefficients give the impact of the z variables on choosing alternative l relative to a base category. We choose the base category as voting in favour of the convention (Y). Using the multinomial logit assumption, the choice probabilities for alternative l and base category Y derived from (1) can be written as

$$P_{ijl} = \frac{\exp\left(z_{ij}'\gamma_l + \mu_{il} - \mu_{iY}\right)}{1 + \sum_{m \in \{S,A,N\}} \exp\left(z_{ij}'\gamma_m + \mu_{im} - \mu_{iY}\right)} \tag{3}$$

$$P_{ijY} = \frac{1}{1 + \sum_{m \in \{S,A,N\}} \exp\left(z_{ij}'\gamma_m + \mu_{im} - \mu_{iY}\right)} \tag{4}$$

The introduction of random effects complicates the estimation procedure. The usual multinomial logit model rests on the assumpton that all observations are independent. If there are

unobserved country-specific effects, one may integrate them out from each country's likelihood contribution:

$$\hat{E}\,P_i = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty}\int_{-\infty}^{\infty}\int_{-\infty}^{\infty}\int_{-\infty}^{\infty}\prod_{j=1}^{J}\prod_{l\in\{Y,S,A,N\}} P_{ijl}^{\,d_{ijl}}\ \varphi(u_{iY})\varphi(u_{iS})\varphi(u_{iA})\varphi(u_{iN})du_{iY}du_{iS}du_{iA}du_{iN} \qquad (5)$$

where the d_{ijl}'s are dummy variables which take the value one if government i chooses alternative l in voting over convention j. The problem with estimating (5) is the computational impossibility of calculating the multi-dimensional integral contained in it. Our solution consists in simulating the random effects by repeatedly drawing pseudo-random numbers for the u's and inserting them into the probabilities (3) and (4) (see Stern, 1997, for an overview of simulation estimators, and Phu et al., 2000, and van Soest et al., 1996, for applications of the technique). The simulated likelihood contributions of the governments are

$$\hat{E}\,P_i = \frac{1}{R}\sum_{r=1}^{R}\prod_{j=1}^{J}\prod_{l\in\{Y,S,A,N\}} P_{ijl}(r)^{d_{ijl}} \qquad (6)$$

where the simulated choice probabilities are formed according to

$$P_{ijl}(r) = \frac{\exp\left(z_{ij}'\gamma_l + \sigma u_{il}^r - \sigma u_{iY}^r\right)}{1+\sum_{m\in\{S,A,N\}}\exp\left(z_{ij}'\gamma_m + \sigma u_{im}^r - \sigma u_{iY}^r\right)} \qquad (7)$$

for the choices S,A and N; the probability for Y is constructed similarly, using (4). The u_{il}^r are pseudo-random numbers drawn from the standard normal distribution. The number of replications R is set to 50. The simulated log-likelihood of the sample is finally given as

$$\hat{L} = \sum_{i=1}^{I}\ln\hat{E}\,P_i\ .$$

It is maximised with respect to the parameter vectors γ and σ.