



Are Politics Local? Party Nationalization and Local Politics Around the World

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Introduction

The political maxim “all politics is local” refers to the importance of politicians focusing more time and effort in their local districts. By identifying patterns in electoral data, we aim to test this idea and explore the extent to which support for political parties is rooted in local concerns as opposed to national politics.

Methods

Using the statistical analysis software Stata, we analyzed previously collected electoral results data from various countries. By transcribing and graphing the data, we were able to uncover patterns and unusual changes in the voting trends of each country’s individual districts. We then read into the possible causes of these patterns by collecting news reports from past election seasons and scholarly articles about each district. We looked for characteristics specific to the people of these districts in order to uncover why they might be voting the way they are.

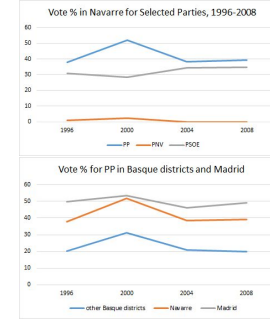


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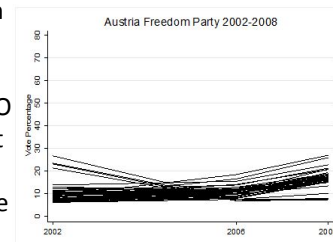
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Results

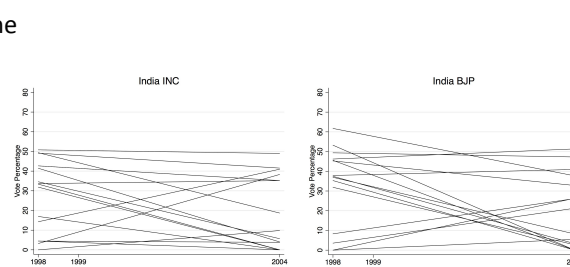
Spain A Spanish district with notable voting trends is Navarre, a district in the Basque Country region, which showed very low support for the Basque Nationalist party (PNV) compared to other Basque districts. From 2000 to 2004, Basque districts also showed an average decrease of 32.5% in electoral support for the People’s Party (PP) while Navarre showed only a 26.1% drop in support during the same period and then actually increased in support by the 2008 elections.



Austria The Austrian electoral data tended to show that national politics influenced voting patterns in each district because they all followed a similar trend. However, there was an odd pattern in the Austria Freedom Party (FPO) graph from 2002 to 2008. The FPO received a fair amount of votes from the southernmost state, Carinthia prior to 2006, despite having little support in the rest of the country. However, during the 2006 elections, the FPO lost a significant amount of support from Carinthia.



India Before the 2004 election the right-wing Bharatiya Janta Party began their India Shining campaign. Because this favored wealthier Indians in urban areas, they lost significant support from rural districts. In the graphs to the right I compared the BJP with their liberal counterpart the Indian National Congress, the INC.



Discussion

The Spanish district Navarre considers itself an entity external to the Basque Country, often avoiding association with Basque nationalist movements and parties (PNV) and instead opting for right-wing parties (PP). This divide is rooted in decades of identity debates between Navarre, Basque country, and Spain as a whole.

The Austrian party, FPO, was led by Jorg Haider, who had served as governor of Carinthia. However, in 2005, a moderate splinter of the FPO established their own party, The Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZO), and Haider became their Chairman. Carinthia now votes for the BZO over the FPO in elections.

The BJP’s India Shining plan impacted the election by polarizing the nation based on their district’s socioeconomic state. Urban areas favored the BJP’s promises to grow India’s economy while the rural districts confided in the left-wing INC.

Conclusions

We can conclude that, in all three countries of interest, local concerns did influence electoral results. When complete, access to trends in party support in specific districts could be used to campaign more effectively, guide efforts to a certain area, and give parties a better idea of where they stand in the eyes of voters. Analysts and journalists should be careful in talking about national trends in voting, because in many countries elections are determined by local factors. Parties probably know this, but analyses often discuss more general trends. This also affects our thinking of how parties work, because politicians representing regions which behave differently than others in elections will have less reason to collaborate in the legislature.