

System-level Factors, Presidential Coattails and Mass Preferences: Dynamics of Party Nationalization in Contemporary Brazil (1990-2014)

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Abstract : Are electoral politics in contemporary Brazil still local in organization and focus? The importance of this question lies in its paradoxical trajectories. First, often coupled with institutional and sociological 'barriers' (e.g. the selection and election of candidates relatively loyal to the local party leadership, the predominance of territorialized electoral campaigns, and the resilience of political clientelism), the regionalization of electoral politics has been a viable and practical solution especially for pragmatic politicians in some Latin American countries. On the other hand, some leftist parties that once served as minor opposition forces at the time of foundational or initial elections have certainly expanded vote shares. Some were eventually capable of holding most (if not a majority) legislative seats since the 1990s. Though not yet rigorously demonstrated, theoretically implicit in the rise of leftist parties in legislative elections is the gradual (if not complete) nationalization of electoral support—meaning the growing equality of a party's vote share across electoral districts and its change over time. This study will develop four hypotheses to explain the dynamics of party nationalization in contemporary Brazil: district magnitude, ethnic and class fractionalization of each district, voting intentions in federal and state executive elections, and finally the left-right stances of electorates. The study will demonstrate these hypotheses by closely working with the Brazilian Electoral Study (2002-2014).

Keywords : party nationalization, presidential coattails, Left, Brazil

Conference Title : ICCPD 2021 : International Conference on Comparative Politics and Democracy

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : June 28-29, 2021