



The Structuring Effect of Electoral Competition

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Abstract

Democratic politics are structured by elections. Governments come and go, campaigns come and go, policies come and go, and so forth. In representative democracy, the mere existence of elections strongly alters the behavior of representatives who are interested in re-election and of voters who are affected by political communication. Unlike many of our models, the real world structures politics through time, and especially through time between elections. When elections approach, democratic systems seem to be transformed to a degree that facilitates the analysis of a wide variety of campaign effects. Voters and parties do not change significantly through the electoral cycle. Their environment does. The aim of this book is to develop concrete theory for the functioning of political time and to demonstrate its effects with empirical data. At the core of the theory is a dual mobilization cycle. One leg of this cycle concerns the creation and decay of structure in voting behavior. The book traces the causal path preceding the result: the dynamics of voter perceptions, the determinants of party preference, and the logic of turnout and choice. The other leg of the dual cycle concerns the configuration of the party system. Here the causal path leads from the dimensions of conflict within parties over the ability of the leadership to enforce unity in parliamentary behavior to the implementation of campaign strategies. The book also spells out the connections between the two legs and locates them in political time. The methodology developed for this purpose, labeled “Quasi Time Series,” serves to transform cross-sectional data (which are available in abundance) in a way so that they fulfill functions of time series (which are exceedingly rare). The comparative approach exploits data from several decades, dozens of countries, hundreds of parties, thousands of legislators and about 100,000 voters.



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Bio

Till Weber holds a Diploma in political science from the Free University of Berlin, where he worked as a project manager and lecturer before joining the EUI. His research focuses on voting behavior, party competition, legislative politics and coalition government. His work has been published in such journals as *The American Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies* and *European Union Politics*. At the EUI he has served as founding chair of the Colloquium on Political Behavior and commander of the OLS Liberation Front.