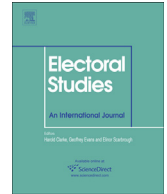




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Clientelism and the personal vote in Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

The personal vote literature proceeds from the assumption that personalism has an independent effect on policy outcomes. Institutions appear as exogenous variables that structure incentives for personalism, and the personalism of electoral competition effects legislator behavior once in office. This paper finds that existing state spending and prevailing patterns of policy implementation can have an *independent* effect on the personalism of political competition. When political fortunes depend on the personal vote, and candidates can promise to deliver clientelistic benefits to voters, both voters and candidates have an incentive to enter an enduring patron–client relationship. The clientelistic appeal, however, is only credible if voters expect the winning candidate will have goods to deliver once in office. The empirical section leverages cross-district variance in electoral personalism in Indonesia. It connects preference voting rates to pre-existing patterns of sub-national state spending. In electoral districts where the state played a dominant role in the economy, voters and candidates tended to form the type of patron–client bonds that resulted in high levels of preference voting.

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1. Introduction

An established literature connects the personalism of electoral competition to post-election partisan and policy outcomes. When a politician's pathway to power is dependent upon securing a personal vote, he or she must build a personal appeal among voters that goes beyond the platform and record of the candidate's party label. Existing work has identified variance in the incentives to cultivate a personal appeal across electoral systems (Carey and Shugart, 1995). A system's relative degree of personalism has been linked to partisan outcomes such as legislative cohesion and, to a lesser extent, party system nationalization (Carey, 2007; Morgenstern and Vazquez-D'elia, 2007). At the level of the individual legislator, candidate-centered electoral rules tend to increase the legislative presence of locally rooted candidates with experience in sub-national politics (Shugart et al., 2005; Tavits, 2010). These legislative outcomes have knock-on

effects on the formulation and implementation of public policy. For instance, the personalism of the electoral system correlates with the effectiveness of social service spending (Hicken and Simmons, 2008), perceived levels of corruption (Chang and Golden, 2006; Kunicová and Rose-Ackerman, 2005; Persson et al., 2003), particularism of transfers (Rickard, 2009), tariff barriers (Nielson, 2003), and even foreign direct investment flows (Garland and Biglaiser, 2009).

The current literature proceeds from the assumption that personalism has an independent effect on policy outcomes. Institutions appear as exogenous variables that structure incentives for personalism, and the personalism of electoral competition effects legislator behavior once in office. In this paper I argue that existing state spending and prevailing patterns of policy implementation can have an *independent* effect on the personalism of political competition. When political fortunes depend on the personal vote and candidates can promise to deliver clientelistic benefits to voters, both voters and candidates have an incentive to enter an enduring patron–client relationship. The clientelistic appeal, however, is only credible if voters expect the winning candidate will have goods to deliver once in office. The

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argument offered here, then, suggests that existing policy environments determine electoral personalism.

The evidence for the argument leverages cross-district variation in electoral personalism from the Indonesian case. In 2004, Indonesia introduced a flexible list-system that allowed voters the option of casting a preference vote for a candidate on a party's list. Preference voting rates varied widely by electoral district, with the percentage of the electorate choosing to cast a preference vote ranging from a high of 82% to a low of 33% in 2004 and from a high of 95% to a low of 51% in 2009. I connect preference voting rates to pre-existing patterns of sub-national state spending and the prevailing constraints on political behaviour. In electoral districts where the state played a dominant role in the economy, voters and candidates tended to form the type of patron-client bonds that resulted in high levels of preference voting. State resources have the largest effect on personal voting in areas with reputations for corruption, where politicians are known to abuse the power. The combination of state resources and weak constraints on behavior create the conditions for clientelism, which manifests itself in personal voting.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section II defines the personal vote and reviews the current literature on the consequences of electoral personalism. Section III provides a theoretical account as to how and why clientelism can increase electoral personalism. I argue that the credibility of a clientelistic appeal depends upon pre-existing patterns of spending and policy implementation, which I refer to as *rent opportunities*. Section IV justifies the selection of the Indonesian case and provides background on the country's institutions and campaign process. In Section V, I provide a statistical test of my argument connecting rent opportunities and preference voting. Section VI discusses the findings and broader implication for issues including party system evolution and legislative representation.

2. The personal vote and its consequences

2.1. Defining the personal vote

Definitions of the personal vote range from more narrow conceptions emphasizing the support a politician gains through personal efforts (Cain et al., 1987; Kitschelt, 2000) to a broader understanding which encompass all support attracted through either efforts or reputation (Carey and Shugart, 1995; Marsh, 2007). For this study I adopt the latter, more expansive definition that contains both a *credit-claiming* portion and an *attributional* portion. To tweak Kitschelt (2000: 852) definition, the personal vote is defined as the effect of a candidate's *attributes and actions* on his or her electoral success, net of aggregate partisan trends that affect partisans as members of their parties.

2.2. Institutions, the personal vote, and policy outcomes

Electoral institutions directly link personal appeals to successful electoral outcomes. There have been several attempts to measure the 'personalism' of electoral systems (Carey and Shugart, 1995; Johnson and Wallack, 2008). In general, plurality systems provide a strong motivation for personal appeals because winners are determined by the

individual candidate's total vote share. Incentives for personal appeals within proportional systems can vary widely depending on their specific features. In open-list electoral systems there is a strong incentive to pursue a personal vote as a candidate's victory is determined by the preference vote count (Carey and Shugart, 1995). This is especially true in high magnitude electoral districts; however, even when lists are closed there can be incentives for personal appeals if the district magnitudes is low (Shugart et al., 2005).

Electoral institutions have an independent effect on policy outcomes. A range of institutional variables have been used to capture the underlying concept of a candidate-centered electoral institution, including district magnitude, electoral formula dummies, and various 'personalism' indexes. The choice of variables reflects underlying assumptions about the causal process that leads from personalism to outcomes. In some versions of the causal story, personalism is a consequence of electoral district size. In the small-district story, electoral districts with low district magnitudes increase the visibility of the sitting legislator(s). High visibility provides a strong incentive for politicians to engage in pork-barrel spending which they can credibly claim credit for. Small districts are also thought to make sitting legislators susceptible to lobbying by concentrated interest groups. One optimistic account of small districts suggests high visibility also facilitates the public's ability to punish inefficient and/or corrupt public officials (Persson et al., 2003). The common theme, however, holds that a legislator's dependence on a geographically defined constituency affects the policies they choose to pursue.

A second mechanism proposes that legislator behavior in candidate-centered systems is shaped by the anticipation of intra-party competition. Legislative candidates competing against co-partisans are restricted in the policy positioning that can distinguish them to the voters. To build and maintain a personal base that can set them apart from co-partisans, candidates focus their activities on particularistic distribution. This may involve gifts and bribes, either provided directly before an election or between election periods. Beyond the simple distribution of patronage, legislators also abuse their office to raise funds to distribute to their base. As Golden and Chang note, "corruption and the search for the personal vote go hand in hand" (2006: 134). Fundraising activities include contract rigging, salary padding, and the looting of state funds. For instance, Hicken and Simmons (2008) find that the pursuit of the personal vote has a negative impact the implementation of state policies. Systems with a high degree of personalism do not spend less on service delivery, but the manipulation of funds by vote-seeking politicians does cause states to get less 'bang for their buck' in such areas as health and education.

The unifying theme for both strands of the personal vote argument holds that institutions shape incentives which impact policy outcomes. Still, gaps remain in our knowledge. Theorizing typically takes place at the level of the politician. While we have a solid grasp on when and why candidates pursue the personal vote, we have less knowledge about the strategies of voters. Why express support for a particular candidate? The question has implicitly been taken on by authors studying *personal vote earning attributes* [PVEA] (Shugart et al., 2005; Tavits, 2010). Voters seem to have a

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