

Geographical influence on voting pattern

Electoral geography is the study of geographical aspects of the organization, conduct and result of elections. In other words, it is the study of the spatial voting pattern / behaviour or the study of the spatial distribution of political phenomena of voting. In all democratic countries with multi-party political systems, the electoral battle is the first step in the process of coming to power. From this perspective the geography of elections would form the first stage in the study of the electoral geography in all modern democracies. Geographical study of elections is primarily oriented towards the study and analysis of spatial aspects of how politicians at different levels of authority - local, state and central, obtain, manipulate and maintain power. Voting remains the top basic priority in the democratic system of governance. A sound system of election is the backbone of a democracy. In modern times election is the only known means of securing representation. To this extent representation is effective; the government becomes more truly responsible. So, electoral engineering is therefore of utmost significance to the nature and health of a country's politics. It consists of the choice of right technology. The sociology of election is also important for the success of a democratic polity. Voting involves struggle of political parties against each other. In sociological sense, it is a group versus group competition. Political competition is an ecological process. Ecology of politics deals with the interactions of territory with political process. Every area has a long established political tradition. Some areas may be traditionally strongholds for one political party and some other area may be traditionally a stronghold for another political party. Political tradition leads the political trend and trends give out a pattern. The pattern can be defined as geometrical arrangements of various phenomena. Similarly politics may be defined as "the making of decision by public means in contrast to the making of personal decisions privately by individuals". The election system is a component part of the whole political structure of a country. The operation of the election system, therefore, is influenced by a variety of economic as well as social and political forces. In order to analyse electoral politics and voting behavior in a state, one should have a clear idea of the geographical, economic, socio-cultural and political aspects of the election. Electoral politics have dealt with a wide variety of factors which influence the voter's mind in the exercise of their right to vote.

Major factors involved are:

1. DEMOGRAPHIC-

A. **REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN VOTING:** socio-economic political complexion has tremendous impact on political behaviour of an individual. Hence electoral districts with higher population density, thus carry more weightage and that is why voters concentrated in larger districts feel more disenfranchised.

B. **RURAL-URBAN DISTRIBUTION OF VOTING PATTERNS-** source of income, age differentials, sex ratio of election participation, average years of schooling are the major differentials affecting voting patterns. These ultimately lead to regional realignments of political parties & political decisions of voter.

2. SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS AND VOTING PATTERNS:

A. CLASS is a major cleavage here

B. Such a cleavage makes the agenda of the party irrelevant and gives rise to an irrational voting behaviour.

C. **SOCIALIZATION PROCESS:** according to Siegfried's GEOGRAPHY OF SUPPORT of party is linked with geography of membership of relevant sections of society.

3. PHYSICAL: A. WEATHER CONDITIONS

B. **JOURNAL OF POLITICS-** voter turnout between 1987 & 2007 across 3000 countries correlated with 22,000 weather stations

C. Every 1" increase in rainfall correlated with 1% decrease in voter turnout.

GEOGRAPHIC INFLUENCES:

To understand the above mentioned influences following operational models are taken into account

1. STRUCTURAL EFFECTS: The NEIGHBOURHOOD EFFECT AND THE POLARISATION MODEL-

spatial structural process whereby partisan nature of a person's home district influences his or her voting decisions It reinforces voter segregation beyond socio-economic segregation. The core of the argument is that social networks, many of which are spatially clustered within households, families & neighborhoods are the locales within which there is much discussion about political issues & some people may be convinced to change their views and party they support- "CONVERSION BY CONVERSATION" Major criticisms came from Dunleavy as the neighborhood effect lacks adequate theoretical foundation. The original approach towards neighborhood effect involved considering it as a residual after socio- economic variables.

JOHNSTON's APPROACH: Involved 3 stages:

STAGE I- PREDICTION A national voter transition matrix is applied separately to each individual's constituency and with the help of first election result an estimate of new voting patterns is produced which assumes that every constituency changes in same way as a country.

STAGE2- Actual voting pattern can be assessed in second elections Now, actual- predicted= measures showing how each constituency differs from the national trend and hence neighbourhood effect infilled

STAGE3- if the neighbourhood effect operated the constituency different from national trends should be positively correlated to the level of party voting at first elections i.e. actual > predicted hence POLARISATION MODEL is established.

CANDIDATE VOTING AND CAMPAIGN EFFECTS: The friends and neighbours models postulates additional voting for a candidate in his or her home area. The involves a candidate's supposed knowledge of the area & the constituents special knowledge of candidate (evident in multi- member constituencies)- **DISTANCE DECAY MECHANISM** It involves a highly behavioral approach For ex- Ireland- case of single Transferable votes in Galway west. Success of this strategy indicated by correlation between votes for each candidates & distance from the candidates home- per capita communication distance.

GENERAL CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES- 1. Patterns of expenditure, local issues raised in campaign literature and canvassing allow for assessment of differential campaign intensity by parties.

2. Prime ex- influence of expenditure by all parties on turnout in 1979 European elections.
3. Minghi and Rumley (1978) prudently conclude, the relationships in this field are "highly complex" and are not uncovered as simple effects.

ENTROPY MAXIMISATION AND THE COMPONENTS OF ELECTORAL CHANGE: Johnston, Hay, Taylor (1982) considers all flows of votes and actual migration in and out of constituencies as well as changes in voter preferences. Identified 4 categories of voters and with both electoral and migration data estimated them using entropy approach.

LOYAL STAYERS- neither move nor change votes

LOYAL MOVERS- move but do not change votes

SWITCHING STAYERS- change votes but do not move

SWITCHING MOVERS- change both votes and district or regions Following hypotheses derived from above estimates. The neighbourhood effect hypothesis – a party will attract more SS the higher its initial vote. Differential Migration hypothesis- attract more LM the higher its initial vote.

MIGRATION CONVERSION HYPOTHESIS- attract more SM the higher its initial vote. This is strongest hypotheses according to Johnston which was important for Labour, values and social credit parties but not for National party. But this approach will be successful only where data is available.

RELOCATION EFFECT: Coz (1970) analysed in case the number of migrant voters is large, they may succeed in changing existing viewpoint in the destination region & vice versa.

Therefore, residential relocations or migration of voters involve alteration in voting behaviour of immigrant voters.

