

Nation, Class and Parties: The Electoral Mobilization of Social Identities in Imperial Austria

by

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Abstract

Under what circumstances does nationalist mobilization dominate over class-based mobilization in legislative elections? This paper draws on the nationalism and inequality, ethnic politics, and party politics literatures to argue that nationalist parties are not mere reflections of pre-existing societal structures, but actively create support by linking political issues to group identities in their electoral campaigns. We test this expectation on a case of mass mobilization in a multinational, industrializing society: the first elections to the Imperial Austrian parliament following the full implementation of universal manhood suffrage (1907 and 1911). This analysis combines district-level electoral and demographic data on the ethno-linguistic and socio-economic composition of the electorate with an original data-set that assesses German and Czech parties' issue claims and appeals to group identities, based on the systematic content analysis of historical programmatic and electoral documents. On this basis, the project contributes to our understanding of the causal relationship between social heterogeneity and party strategies in fostering nationalist versus class mobilization.