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14.74 Foundations of Development Policy

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Institutions (2): Is Parochial Politics a Fatality?

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Ethnic Politics and Corruption

- ▶ The identity of the policy maker (caste, gender) matter for the outcomes: women invest in goods better for women; low caste people invest in favor for low caste people.
- ▶ Perhaps as a result, many democracies in developing countries suffer from parochial politics: Voters vote along ethnic lines, even if it leads them to elect much worst politicians (corrupt, even criminals, not only in “failed States”. See politician’s criminal records in Uttar Pradesh, India, elections disputes in Kenya)
- ▶ One striking example from Benin. [▶ Details](#)
- ▶ This affects the poor and marginalized more, since they are less likely to be represented by mainstream politics.

Ethnic Politics in Benin

- ▶ A study by Leonard Wantchekon, a former student activist from Benin, now a professor of politics at New York University, well connected with Benin current political elites.
- ▶ Democratically contested presidential election, between 4 candidates.
- ▶ Experiment took place in 8 non-competitive districts. In each districts, 2 villages were chosen.
- ▶ One was selected to receive a “clientelist” message [▶ Example](#), and the other to receive a “public policy message” [▶ Example](#).
- ▶ Which message carries the most votes?

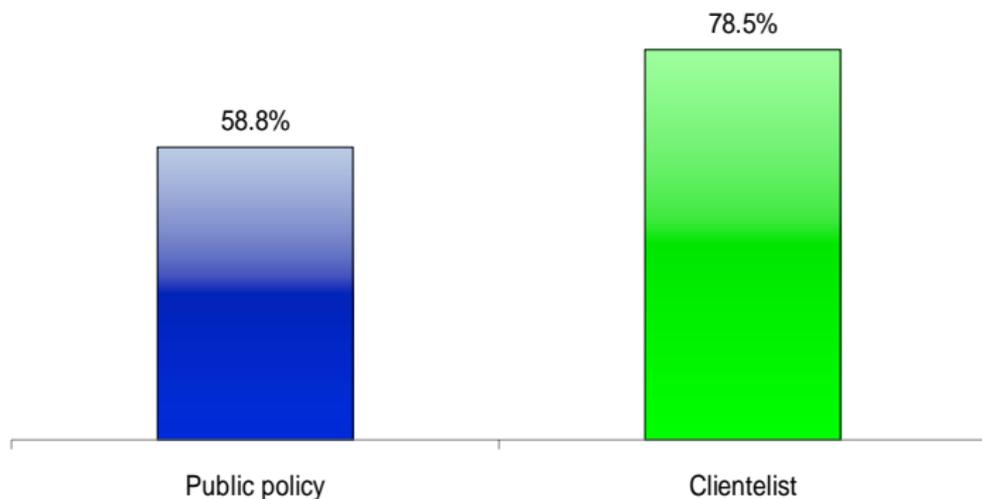
A Clientelist message

We are the representatives of the candidate Saka Lafia, who is running for president in the March 3, 2001, election. As you know, Saka is the only Bariba candidate, actually the first since 1960. Saka is running because the northeast region, Borgou-Alibori, is very underdeveloped: low literacy rates, poor rural infrastructure and health care, etc. . . . If elected, he will help promote the interests of the Borgou-Alibori region, by building new schools, hospitals, and roads and more importantly, hiring more Bariba people in the public administration.

A Public Policy message

We are representative of Saka Lafia, our party the UDS stands for democracy and national solidarity. Saka is running the opposition candidate in the North. If elected, he will engage in a nationwide reform of the education and health care system with emphasis on building new schools, new hospitals, and vaccination campaigns. In conjunction with other opposition leaders, we will fight corruption and promote peace between all ethnic groups and all the regions of Benin

Results: Average Support for the Candidate



How entrenched are political Attitudes?

- ▶ The Indian reservation example shows that voting behavior is not necessarily deeply entrenched: people who have never voted for a woman become more willing to do it after seeing one.
- ▶ This opens up the possibility that political attitudes could be affected by other things: information, campaigning.
- ▶ Many groups (usually NGOs, rather than political parties) try to convince citizens not to vote along ethnic lines, without regards for other aspects of the candidates
- ▶ Two examples which suggest that political attitudes are malleable:
 - ▶ Anti-Violence Campaigning in Nigeria [▶ Details](#)
 - ▶ Campaign against corruption and castes votes in India. [▶ Details](#)

Campaign Against Election Violence in Nigeria

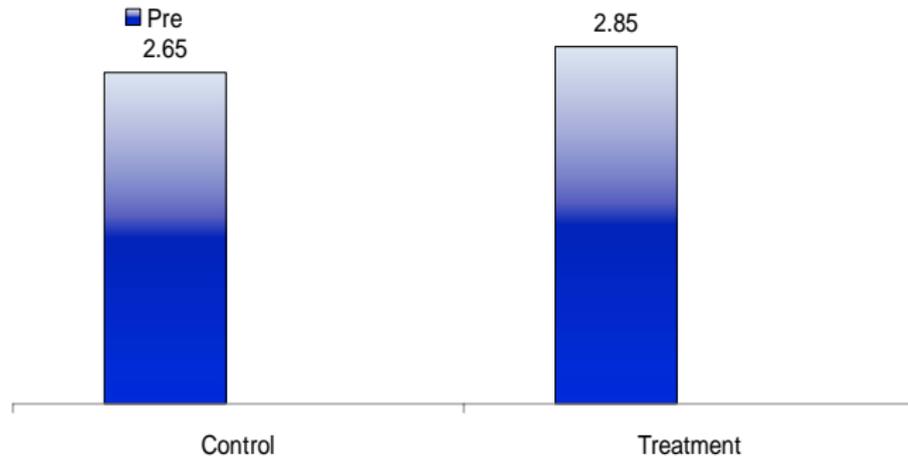
- ▶ Run by ActionAid: street theater, speeches, meeting, to resist election violence in Nigeria. [▶ Poster](#)
- ▶ Evaluated by Paul Collier and Pedro Vicente.
- ▶ Randomized in 12 out of 24 areas.
- ▶ Journalists were hired to report incidents of election violence
- ▶ Households were interviewed before and after the campaign in treatment and control areas.
 - ▶ In treatment are, electoral violence and perception of violence went down,
 - ▶ Anticipated turnout increased,
 - ▶ And voters were confident that the election was free and fair.

[▶ Results](#)

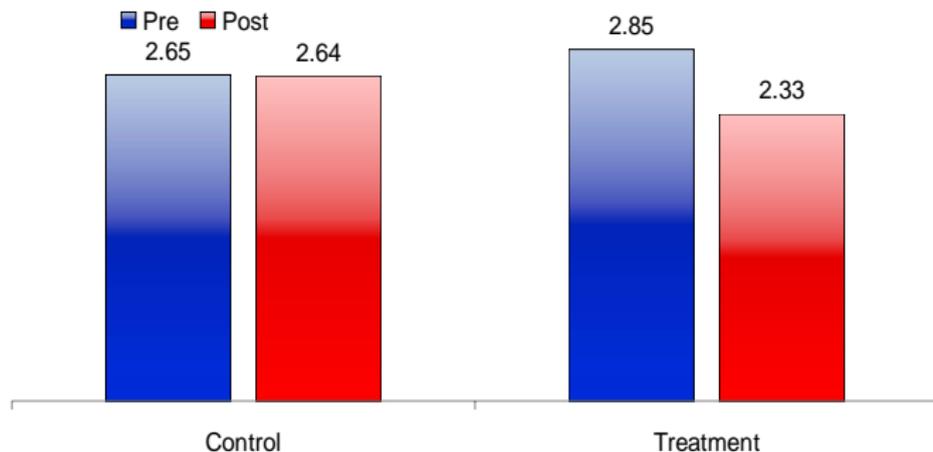
A Poster

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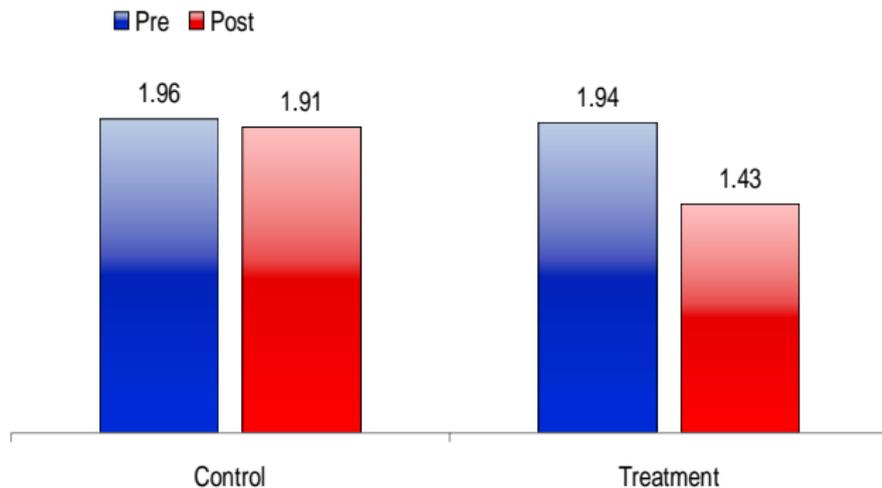
Reported Incidents of Electoral Violence: Before



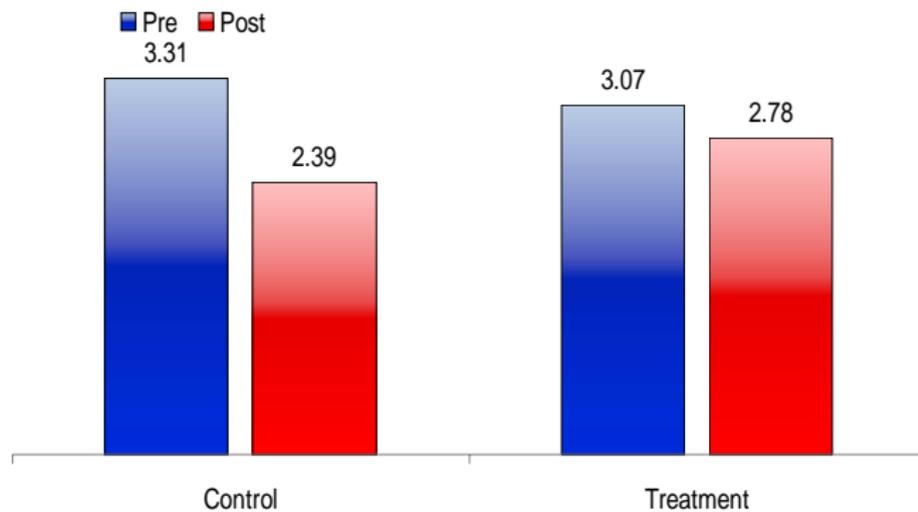
Reported Incidents of Electoral Violence: Before and After



Perception of Violence



Perception that election is free and fair



Electoral Campaigns in Uttar Pradesh

- ▶ Abhijit Banerjee, Rohini Pande, Don Greene, Jennifer Greene
- ▶ In Uttar Pradesh, a State dominated by caste politics (Chief Minister is the leader of BSP, the low caste party), and criminal politics (large number of MP who are convicted criminals).
- ▶ Two campaigns, involving rallies, puppet shows, children's meeting. Conducted by NGOs familiar with political campaigning of this type.
 - ▶ Urge women to vote, and use their power to hold politicians accountable.
 - ▶ Urge people to vote on issue, not on caste.

Results

- ▶ Both campaigns increased female turnout.
- ▶ For high-castes voters, the anti-caste campaign decrease caste voting: they were more likely to vote for BSP, the low-caste party (who was trying to reach out).
- ▶ For low-caste voters, turnout tended to decline: may be they were convinced not to vote on caste-lines but were then not sure how to exercise their choices.

Conclusion

- ▶ The poor are the first victims of poor governance and corruption: poor quality of local services, don't receive the benefits they are entitled to.
- ▶ In the end, everything we discussed in this course is moot without the ability to implement programs: good governance is key.
- ▶ Paradox of democracy: Even democratic institutions do not ensure good governance at the local level.
- ▶ Government efforts to improve allocation over the market is inherently prone to corruption.

Conclusion

- ▶ There is no miracle solution, but there is definitely hope:
 - ▶ Corruption can be controlled by incentives and electoral discipline.
 - ▶ The rules of democracy influence political outcomes, both in the short run and in the medium run: institutions can be designed to be (more) robust to capture and tyranny of the majority.
 - ▶ Political preferences are sensitive to experience and information.