

Abstract

Models of competition assume citizens as rational individuals who do not care about political issues. Political discourse, in particular, is not accounted for in such models. In this paper we take political discourse as endogenous and put forward that the discussion about politics is directly related to an effective political competition and inversely related to the level of corruption—understood as lack of political competition.

In the first part we discuss the relationship between political discourse and competition, highlight determinants of political discourse and compare these findings to the level of corruption. We hypothesize that the extent and quality of political discourse within a political system contributes to the the well-functioning of democratic political institutions. Through political discourse the constitutional checks and balances become binding. Therefore, we can expect to observe less corruption in political systems with an strong political discourse, and thus an intense political competition.

In the second empirical part, using data from the Eurobarometer and the World Values Survey, we perform an ordered probit estimation and analyze the level of discussing political matters. In the last section we run different multiple regressions and assess whether there is a systematic relationship between the level of political discourse and corruption.