# Candidate centred but party wrapped: campaigning in Ireland under STV

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The electoral system of the single transferable vote in multi-member constituencies provides the immediate institutional context for election campaigns. In this system voters indicate their choice by ranking candidates, who are listed in alphabetical order on the ballot paper, in order of preference. Provided that there are more candidates than there are seats available, all candidates in a constituency are thus put in competition with one another. However, the system also provides for support to be transferred between candidates. For this reason competition is not absolute, since candidates may benefit from alliances under which some candidates exhort their supporters to express subsequent preferences for other candidates. Hence while the electoral system provides incentives for candidate centred campaigns, it also can provide incentives for alliances between candidates.

Two elements of the political culture are critical in any understanding of the nature of those campaigns. The first is the existence of partisanship, at least in the sense that the party of a candidate serves as an important voting cue. The second is the existence of localism, under which the local roots and reputation for constituency service of the candidate also provide an important voting cue. It is the weight of these two elements, and the sometimes uneasy interrelationship between them, which gives Irish campaigns their particular character.

This paper begins by examining the evidence for the importance of these two elements, both individually and in combination. It then moves on to show how election campaigns are structured by the need to emphasise both partisanship and localism, and manage the potential conflict between the two.

**Partisanship**

There is no doubt that voters are influenced by the party labels of candidates. (Indeed, given the existence of a fairly stable party system over the past 70 years it would be remarkable if it were otherwise.) The evidence is quite clear. First, surveys testify to the existence of large numbers of voters who either admit that they think of themselves as being FF, FG, Labour or whatever (Marsh, 1985), or who admit to feeling 'close to' one or other of the parties (Sinnott, 1995). Whilst such data does not indicate that identification with any particular party is durable, it does testify to the existence of support for parties as such. Two aspects of partisanship can be distinguished. The first, 'party identification', denotes a long-term emotional identification with a party. The second, 'party voting', signifies simply that people are voting for a party rather than for candidates. Whilst the first implies the second,

the second does not require the first.

'Party identification' has probably declined in recent years. The Eurobarometer series of data on party attachment indicates that numbers feeling 'close' to parties has declined over the period since 1973 (Schmitt and Holmberg, 1995; Mair and Marsh, 1999). Nevertheless, party remains strong. There is normally relatively little change in the amount of support won by each party from election to election. 'Volatility', measured by the so-called Pederson index is often relatively low (Marsh, 1985, Mair, 1986) and the inter-election constituency level correlations between first preference votes cast for candidates of particular parties are high. Table 1 shows the correlations between levels of FF, FG and Labour support in the period 1982-97. This indicates that groups of candidates from the same parties, at national or constituency level, get similar levels of support, regardless of personnel, all of which serves to support the argument that party is an important voting cue. Moreover those correlations remain at much the same level whether between adjacent elections, or between pairs of elections separated by one or two other elections. The average correlation between adjacent elections is 0.73 for FF, 0.79 for FG and 0.79 for Labour. The average correlation between all pairs of elections in the table is only a little lower: 0.63 for FF, 0.72 for FG and 0.71 for Labour – not significantly different.

The lack of any general pattern of decay is similar to that observed by Converse (1964) in relation to attitude changes in panel studies. He explained it by positing a model in which a minority remained stable and the rest responded randomly. An alternative interpretation is a 'response error' model (Aachen, 1975), in which each observation only approximates the 'true' position. Each of these models are consistent with the data in Table 1, but the latter seems more plausible, especially if we see 'response error' as introduced by a short-term influences, such as campaign effects and candidates.

The evidence for some decline in 'party voting' comes from transfers. This topic has been dealt with at length elsewhere (Gallagher, 1978, 1979; Sinnott, 1995). It is sufficient here to say that transfer patterns indicate that most people who give their first preference vote to a candidate of one party go on to give their subsequent preference to another candidate from that same party when such candidates are available; that is, they appear to vote for parties rather than candidates. However, The structuring power of the party label is not quite as strong as it has been in previous years with the party solidarity of transfers within the two largest parties declining noticeably in the last two elections (Gallagher, 1993, 1999). Of course this

does not *necessarily* mean that party is any less important as a determinant of the first preference vote, but it does indicate that the overall preference set of voters is less determined by party than has previously been the case. In that sense at least, party is less important.

## Candidates: localism and constituency service

There is also evidence that candidates get a significant personal vote. While inter-election correlations in the levels of party support may be high, there is little sign of any pattern of uniform swing (Gallagher, 1990, 1993). On the contrary, the normal pattern of swing is one of considerable diversity, perhaps a symptom of candidates' having personal followings which allow them to insulate themselves from adverse national trends or magnify positive ones. Table 2 shows the change in the FF vote at constituency level over the last four pairs of elections and makes it clear that gains in some places are outweighed by losses in others, even in 1992 when the national vote dropped by more than 4%. These non-uniform swings are unlikely to reflect realignments in partisan choice, given the patterns observed in Table 1. Again, they are more consistent with non-recurring short-term influences on the vote, such as variations in the quality of candidates on offer.

Survey evidence offers further support for this personal vote thesis. Since 1977 opinion polls have asked voters to choose between various options to indicate the most important influence on their vote. While such questions have been rightly criticised for failing to separate the choice of a party from the choice of candidates from that party the answers suggest consistently that the candidate matters. Yet what is it about the candidate that matters? A multivariate analysis of candidate performance at elections between 1948 and 1982 indicated that while party was a major factor, the political experience and personal characteristics of candidates also carried considerable weight (Marsh, 1987). Important characteristics are generally those most consistent with a demand for deputies who can fulfill a brokerage role. That is, those who can 'get things done' on behalf of individuals and the constituency. Further evidence suggests this role should be played on behalf of people in a specific locality. As has been said already, transfer patterns generally testify to the structuring power of party but to the extent that transfers do not follow party lines they suggest people are using a different decision heuristic. One such may be locality within the constituency. One study has shown a small but significant effect of locality on transfers (Marsh, 1981). Moreover, several studies have

identified the importance of locale on a candidate's first preference vote (Sacks, 1976; Parker, 1984). Such a preference may be put down to familiarity, but also to a desire that a deputy should represent a particular area within the constituency rather than the constituency as a whole (or more likely some other area within it).

The sort of candidate vote suggested by the evidence assembled to date is a combination of the partisan and the personal. This assessment is not simply an analytic distinction made by academics but it is also the conventional wisdom of political organizers and candidates, and so influences the election campaigns they become involved in. These campaigns have three elements. First, there is the national, essentially partisan campaign, run by party HQ and senior party figures and which seeks (subject perhaps to some constraints) to maximise the party's vote. Secondly, there is a nationally directed campaign in the constituencies. This seeks to organise the constituency campaigns with a view to maximizing the party's representation in the Dáil. Thirdly, there is the local campaign itself, where the party is brought into direct contact with the voter through the candidates, and the candidate employs his or her personal attributes to the full.

**The national campaign**

It is sometimes suggested that national campaigns are a relatively new phenomenon. Mair for instance (1988: p.111) argues that "none of the parties ran full-blooded and intensive campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s". Manifestos were considered unnecessary, and if they were drawn up this was done at the last minute and such proposals could be ignored by the local campaigns.[1] This can be attributed to two things. Firstly, the parties adhered to a fatalistic view about party loyalties that far exceed anything claimed by adherents of the Michigan School of electoral research.[2] Secondly, the parties lacked organisational and/or financial resources to run such a campaign even if they wished to do so. Thus Chubb (1970) commented that the "small and comparatively underdeveloped" resources of central offices left candidates dependent on their own efforts. If partisanship is seen as conditional, then parties need to make efforts to persuade people to their side. FF appeared to come round to this view following an electoral defeat in 1973 which ended 16 years of unbroken rule (for a discussion of the factors underlying such change see Mair and Marsh, 1999). The party put considerable national effort into its 1977 campaign (Farrell and Manning, 1978). The apparent success of its strategy, which secured for the party an overall majority of votes, provoked other parties to follow suit, and FG gained a huge increase in its vote at the next election in 1981. Henceforth the

national organisations of all parties have proselytized to the limit of their resources (and often beyond).

The contrast between the style of modern and 'traditional' campaigns might be over-stretched. For instance, writing rather earlier Chubb (1970) noted that national campaigns were waged by leaders and through posters, with the leaders making tours of the country and major rallies in regional centres serving as as centrepeices for the campaigns. Gallagher argues that subjects like inflation and employment have always been staples of political argument, 'politicians being loath to leave idle any stick with which their opponents might be beaten…The real issues of Irish politics during the 1960s and 1970s, as during the 1950s, were relatively trivial ones like competence, credibility, personalities and the styles of political leaders' (1981: pp. 272-273). Moreover, parties also issued programmes and plans. In the absence of any systematic study of campaign rhetoric over the years it is hard to say how different in content are modern campaigns. However, there is no doubt that national campaigns are now much more professionalized. They tend to be planned well in advance, employ marketing and PR consultants to advise on presentation, brand image and areas of the electorate to target and make considerable use of advertising, especially in newspapers and billboards and even cinemas. While every effort is also made to use television and radio to best advantage, the legal restrictions on access means that parties must contend with interviewers, presenters and rival politicians to get their message across. The party leader and other senior figures travel the country, encouraging local activists but also providing photo opportunities for the national campaign.

To some degree the nature of the national effort depends on finance. In the absence of laws on the financing of political parties until 1997 (Laver and Marsh, 1999), there was little hard data on what parties have raised and from whom. All parties combined spent around £2 million in 1992 and £2.5 million in 1997 (Holmes, 1999), about 80p per potential voter. Major parties have accumulated significant debts as expenditure has become more substantial in recent years. A degree of direct public finding and controls at future elections may make life a little easier for the parties but will not lead to a new influx of cash to fund ever more expensive national campaigns. In fact, the limitations of what parties spend could actually serve to depress expenditure.

While all campaigns seek to mobilise the faithful, campaigns very in respect of the structure of the competition between parties. One factor determining the nature of

competition is the set of alternatives for government. Sometimes coalition deals are signed prior to the election and parties recommend their supporters to give lower preferences to coalition partners. This was done in 1973, for instance, when Labour and FG agreed terms for government. In 1982, the agreement was more tentative, but for both Labour and FG the main adversary was FF. As long as governments were either single party FF or FG/Labour coalitions this pattern of competition was natural, at least at national level. Indeed, such adversarial competition between the two alternative governments fits the 'Westminster' tradition of Irish politics. However, in the last few elections the lines of competition have sometimes been more complex. FF's decision to make itself available for coalition, first with the Progressive Democrats in 1989 and then Labour in 1992, has sundered the traditional mould, notwithstanding the fact that the 1997 election was for the first time fought between two alternative coalition governments. Such multilateral competition has so far not appeared to make for less adversarial campaigning.[3] FF ran a special series of advertisements attacking Labour in the last days of the 1992 campaign, yet then agreed a programme for government with them afterwards. However, if the current open structure of competition continues, it will be interesting to see whether this makes for less adversarial campaigning in the long run.

An alternative reason for particular competitive strategies is electoral. Parties can focus their campaigns on parties with who they share a significant potential vote. Recent research has suggested that there is wide scope for such competition in the Irish electorate as relatively high proportions of voters express a willingness to support more than one party. The figures in Table 3 come from the European election study of 1994 (van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996) and are based on responses to a question which probes the likelihood that a voter will 'ever' cast a first preference vote for a particular party.[4] Each column of the Table shows the extent to which the 'potential' electorate of a party - those who say they would consider voting for that party - is shared with other parties. So for instance, 16% of FFs potential support is shared with Sinn Fein, 45% with the PDs and 56% with FG. What is most striking here is the extent to which there is a wide overlap in the electorates of all major parties, including FF and FG. Possibly the electoral system contributes to this. However, it suggests that governmental consideration rather than electoral considerations have guided patterns of competition at national level. If electoral considerations were the guide, competition would simply be all-against-all.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

## National management of local campaigns

The national party has a strong interest in ensuring that local campaigns are efficiently run: that is, run to maximise the numbers of party deputies elected. This does not necessarily involve ensuring that the local campaign is run in strict accordance with the national one. What it does require is that there is a high quality field of party candidates, that the party fields the right number of candidates, and that those candidates organise their joint campaigning so as to maximise the number of seats won. The problem for national parties is that, in trying to ensure these things and failing, things may be made worse than they otherwise would have been.

In any electoral system involving local constituencies it may well be that national messages need to be adapted slightly for local consumption. As campaigns become nationalised in coverage, it is risky for parties to make different promises in different places for fear of some inconsistency being exposed on prime-time television. There can certainly be differences of emphasis, but it may be something of a fine line between the two things. National parties make posters, advertisements, and general campaign literature available to the local campaigns to providing a common 'look and feel' to the enterprise. However, what is more important is the management of the personnel.

The problem for parties in this respect is the difference of interest between local candidates and the national party on some matters and the fact that decisions on candidate selection and tactics are traditionally made locally (Marsh, 1981; Gallagher, 1987a). First, there may be differences on the matter of how many candidates should be run (Cohan et al, 1974). The national party will want to nominate at least as many candidates as there are seats it might win. However, the assessment of likely vote is never certain. In a case where the party has one seat and thinks it might win two, it will wish to nominate a second candidate. The incumbent deputy might be happy to take a running mate where two seats are certain, but may fear to do so where they are not, since the situation would then see two people fighting for the same seat, and the incumbent might lose what is a safe 'party' seat. Given too, that local party organisations are dominated commonly by supporters of the incumbent, in the absence of the national party's input only one candidate may be nominated. National parties have sought to impose their will on local parties in such situations. FG, for instance, under FitzGerald in the early 1980s sought to

impose a running mate on all 'quota sitting' TDs in the hope of extra seats.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Garvin (1970) suggested that FF was traditionally been better than rival parties at managing its candidacies. His evidence was that FF achieved a better seats/candidacies ratio than the others. As Table 4 indicates, this remains true when analysis is done of the era 1948-97 with FF's mean ratio at 1.60 much better than FGs 2.03 (t value=4.67, p< 0.0001). However, there is evidence that FG have tightened up, bringing their ratio much closer to that of FF, supporting the argument that nominations have been under stricter control since that time. The 1981-97 mean for FG IS 1.79, is lower than the 2.21 for 1948-77 (t value=3.04, p < .01), although it remains worse than that for FF in the 1981-97 period (t value=2.51, p < .03). There is no evidence of a significant improvement in the FF ratios, either from 1981 or from 1977 (t value=0.88, p< 0.39 post 1977; t value=0.76, p< 0.46 for post 1981).

A second aim is to achieve a slate of high-quality candidates. In the example already mentioned, the sitting TD might be tempted to take a weaker running mate. Such a candidate might pose no challenge to the incumbent, but equally might lack the personal qualities necessary to win the additional votes necessary to obtain the extra seat. National parties will want candidates who can win as many votes as possible. This tends to mean candidates with high local profiles, whether or not they have a record of local party activity. However, it is the activists in the local party who select the candidates, in conventions attended by substantial proportions of active members (Gallagher, 1987a). In FG currently, a one-member-one-vote principle operates where any member may attend the convention (Galligan, 1999). In such circumstances it is not easy for anyone to control the selection process directly. Parties therefore will seek to assist favoured candidates in the long term, perhaps by securing for them a seat in the Senate which will boost their local electoral appeal and make them more attractive to the selectors. National parties also have the power to impose candidates on selection conventions[5] (adding them to a list of selections), or to reject candidates chosen by the conventions, but usually seek to get selections legitimised by local parties where possible. However, in some cases this cuts across local sensibilities and generates internal friction, perhaps to the detriment of the local campaign. And there is always the danger of disappointed candidates, even incumbents, running as independent candidates and damaging the party in consequence. Mair (1986) demonstrates that since 1948 such candidates have kept almost two-thirds of their vote in such situations. Although this vote is not

necessarily at the expense of the party they left, the threat of defection is thus a serious one.

The balance of the slate is also important to parties and when several candidates are selected they normally come from different parts of the constituency (Marsh, 1981), not least because activists tend to promote a local candidate. In one sense, there is an obvious reason why parties aim for a balance. If voters are motivated by local considerations, they will be more likely to vote for a 'local' candidate than for one from the other end of the constituency. However, what is less obvious is how the party will benefit from lower preferences indicated by such voters. Why should they transfer on party, rather than local grounds if the first choice was determined by locality? Mair (1986) argues that the strategy presupposes the existence of voters who will support a party's candidates on condition it provides at least one local candidate. This is akin to parties offering a balanced list in simple list-PR systems, ensuring there are representatives of different interests to help cement its electoral coalition. The strategy also helps the party, in as much as it spreads the candidates around the constituency and helps reduce friction between them during the campaign (see below).

Once the candidates are selected, the issue of running their individual campaigns to best joint advantage is likely to cause some difficulty. There are three ways to handle this. The first is the 'anarchy' option: do nothing, and allow each candidate to campaign across the whole constituency and let matters take their course. Conflict often arises between candidates competing for the same first preference votes. This can be handled by the second option: 'bailiwicking'. Here, each candidate is allocated a particular area of the constituency within which their campaign should be concentrated. Deals may be made about the extent to which any candidate is allowed, on certain days, out of a particular 'bailiwick' but essentially the solution consists of an agreement (or injunction) for the candidates to stay apart from one another. In many cases a weak 'bailiwick' system is agreed where the candidates agree to stay out of each other's 'home' areas but the remainder of the constituency is open to all. Such arrangements may avoid conflict, or at least constrain it, but it does not necessarily lead to an efficient outcome for the national party. The system may produce a fairly even division of votes between a party's candidates (Farrell et al, 1996) but variations in the strength of a party's candidates, and the strength of the opposition's candidates make it very uncertain.

The third solution is direct 'vote management'. Here the objective is to divide the vote up between the candidates so as to maximise the number of seats obtained. The need, or opportunity for such a strategy is the fact that preferences can only be transferred to a candidate who remains in the race. A party's candidates may sometimes win enough votes to expect two seats but fail to get them because too many votes go to one candidate and the second is eliminated before those votes can be transferred, or finishes as runner-up when the first candidate has votes to spare. Equalising votes between candidates is a difficult operation. It requires a fairly accurate assessment of the party's overall voting strength, both in terms of first and later preferences. (Local polling has been used, particularly in FG, to provide information in this respect.) It requires a set of voters who are willing to vote for the candidate that they are advised by the local party to vote for. And it requires the stronger candidate to give up votes by advising supporters to vote for a running mate - and risk defeat in the process. It does happen. In a notable case former FG party leader Garret FitzGerald succeeded in winning two seats in his constituency in 1989 by advising many of his supporters to vote for his running mate, on the assumption that FitzGerald could pick up transfers from all parties.[6] The ploy succeeded, but only just. Gallagher (1993: p. 70-71) estimated that in 1992 FF could have won nine more seats with perfect vote management, FG two and Labour one (plus a couple more where it should have run more candidates), and similar tales could be told about missed opportunities in other elections. Generally it seems such management can be undertaken only with the active support of the stronger candidate(s). National party executives lack the authority to impose it but Farrell (1993) argues the practice has become more widespread in recent years.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

There is no quantitative information on how widespread such strategies are. Certainly we know that management has not been perfect, since after each election it is possible to see where seats could have been won with a better vote distribution, although this can be done only by assessing the detailed results in individual constituencies. However, assuming that the aim of vote management is generally to produce an even distribution of the vote between the candidates of a constituency it is possible to assess how well different parties have accomplished this, and how things have changed over time. Table 5 compares several elections: 1973, 1981, 1987, 1992 and 1997. 1973 falls prior to the period which has seen greater centralisation in campaigning, whilst the remaining cases should enable us to see any trend which exists in recent years. The Table shows for each party the evenness with which the

constituency vote is spread between its several candidates. We have used the coefficient of variation, the standard deviation divided by the mean, to assess this. The standard deviation and mean is calculated for each constituency, and then averaged. This methodology is fairly crude. Vote management is less important in some constituencies than others, since all are not marginal (for that party). In addition, one candidate may be run merely as a spoiler in the home base of the candidate of a rival party, simply to damage the rival. Even so, such things should cancel out. [7] What matters is not so much the spread as variations in the spread between parties and over time. The analysis suggests that FF managed its vote better than FG in 1973 but that there has been no significant difference between the parties in more recent years. Both parties managed their vote significantly better in 1997 than in 1973 but FG's improvement, from a worse level, seems more consistent.

To the extent that it does take place, the management of the vote at local level is achieved through territory. Picking candidates from different parts of the constituency, encouraging them to campaign within their own 'bailiwicks', and occasionally asking voters in different areas directly to vote for different candidates are all strategies which are geographically based. This provides some contrast to studies of the way in which votes are typically managed in SNTV systems, such as in Japan (until recently). Cox (1994) has argued that patronage networks serve a useful purpose in this respect, and the fact that the government party has a considerable advantage in this respect helps explain its superiority in operating the electoral system (cf Christiansen and Johnson, 1995). Opposition parties have been forced to employ alternatives, such as ideological niches, policy sectors and different interest group support. Territory in the Irish case is not simply a question of identity. Constituency service, both a record of work done and the promise of work to be done, is an important reason to vote for the local candidate. Governments have certainly not been averse to distributing benefits in such as way as to improve its chance of winning additional seats at the next election, but there is no indication that governments have an in-built advantage in vote management in consequence.

**The local campaign**

In practice, much of the management of the local campaign, including arrangements about 'vote management' and 'bailiwicks' are taken locally, although the national party often becomes involved when agreements break down. Whatever agreements are made the campaigns take a similar form almost everywhere, and have done so for some time. The candidate, ideally accompanied by people who know the

immediate area and can introduce him, will seek personal contact with as many voters as possible. This is done by knocking on doors, attending after-mass meetings (particularly outside Dublin) and frequenting other places where there is a significant assembly or procession of people: railway stations, shopping centres, sports events and so on. The scale of Irish elections makes this an onerous but quite reasonable strategy. With about 15,000 members of the electorate per seat, and less than 10,000 actual voters per quota the support base is quite small. Moreover, voters expect it. If they don't see a candidate campaigning, particularly if that candidate is from their part of the constituency, they may draw negative conclusions.

Candidates seek votes for themselves and their running mates. A candidate's literature will normally ask for a 'No 1' vote, and that the voter continues by giving subsequent preferences to running mates. Occasionally this rule is broken. A candidate's literature may ignore running mates, or in some cases may not even mention party. (This used to be quite common amongst rural Labour TDs.) This sort of thing tends to get the candidate hauled before local directors of elections, or even national HQ - but it still goes on. Candidates who find the doorstep conversation is not going their way are unlikely to give up altogether. At the least they will ask to be remembered when lower preferences are being given. Martin Cullen (1993: p.51) explained how canvassing a area known to favour an independent candidate and asking for 'No 2' votes made all the difference in his campaign. However adversarial campaigning at national level may become, at local level the incentives are more consensual as lower preferences may in some cases be decisive, though there is no hard data on how this affects individual campaigns.

The cost of much of this is born by the candidate and the local party. Even national party literature may have to be paid for. Many candidates, particularly in the smaller, poorer parties get little assistance from HQ. The work-force is somewhat personal. Certainly there are party activists, but also lots of personal helpers.

**Other elections**

Changes in the nature of campaigning have been explained as a response to the reality of government alternation after 1973 and the perception that party votes can no longer be taken for granted. There are many more potential supporters than there are guaranteed voters. However, the importance of localism and the candidate factor has probably not changed much, particularly outside Dublin. If we consider other types of election, the nature and balance between candidates and party, or what we

have here called localism and partisanship, may be different. Elections to the European Parliament are a case in point. In these elections no government is elected. Candidates to take their place in the European Parliament, which itself is generally perceived to be a weak assembly. Partisanship seems less important. Table 6 shows the votes in general and European Parliament elections and it is clear that new parties - often with no Dail deputies - and independent candidates have done much better in EP elections. The role of partisanship is arguably different in European elections in both senses of the term identified at the start of this paper. Localism - constituency service and a reputation in the immediate locality - is less significant since the constituencies are much larger (by a factor of about 10), but candidates are seen as important, particularly in the major parties.

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

In this context the major parties have often put their faith in well-known candidates: former ministers, people with a high profile from the media, or from interest group activity. Two former Presidents of the Irish Farmers Association with little record of party activity have been selected. This might suggest voters are swayed by candidates more than they are by parties, but the success of unknown Green party candidates, notably in 1994, indicates that a label, if it is thought to denote something very different, can still be important. Transfers between candidates of a major party tend to be particular low in such elections, reinforcing the fact that party is a relatively weak cue. Variations in the results across the four constituencies used for such elections are also testament to this.

**Conclusions**

Under STV we might expect candidates to be highly significant, and campaigns to centre on them. Candidates can benefit in having a personal following independent of a party label. However, party is also strong in Ireland. While party is dominant within parliamentary politics, where very strong party discipline is the norm, the character of electoral politics remains something of a balance between the two elements with candidates seeking to build up a personal following as well as tapping into the reservoir of party support. Campaigns also have something of a dual quality. There are strong national campaigns, revolving around the near universalistic themes of government performance and leadership capacity, as well as the salient issues of the day, and there is considerable national intervention in the planning of local campaigns,

notably in decisions about the list of candidates who will run. National parties also seek to manage the local vote to best advantage, but parties need to control both candidates and voters to make this really effective, and the reality often falls well short of the intention in this respect. Election campaigns are still fought 'on the ground' by candidates pushing their own ambitions. This may sometimes be sub-optimal for the ambitions of the parties, but it is what voters expect, and they tend to respond well to candidates who demonstrate a strong local presence. In other types of elections, notable European parliament elections, but also local elections, the candidates matter more. Unlike general elections, European (and even local) elections are less concerned with government. Fewer voters will now, or even care about control over the assembly which is elected. Hence the 'party' outcome is less visible than the outcome for a candidate. This underlines the importance of partisanship in general elections. When partisanship becomes less important, for whatever reason, candidates become more so. However, while general elections remain occasions for selecting governments, parties will continue to structure the candidate choice that remains at the heart of the system. If elections become less decisive, and the trend is perhaps in this direction as parties coalition become somewhat more promiscuous in their coalition options, parties may become less important and voters may place their trust more in candidates.

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## Table 1 Selected constituency level correlations in party support 1982-97

| | FF97 | FG97 | LAB97 | FF92 | FG92 | LAB92 | FF89 | FG89 | LAB89 | FF87 | FG87 | LAB87 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FF92 | 0.58 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FG92 | | 0.76 | | | | | | | | | | |
| LAB92 | | | 0.63 | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FF89 | 0.37 | | | 0.78 | | | | | | | | |
| FG89 | | 0.79 | | | 0.87 | | | | | | | |
| LAB89 | | | 0.55 | | | 0.72 | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FF87 | 0.37 | | | 0.75 | | | 0.8 | | | | | |
| FG87 | | 0.78 | | | 0.83 | | | 0.88 | | | | |
| LAB87 | | | 0.57 | | | 0.72 | | | 0.92 | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FF82 | 0.40 | | | 0.80 | | | 0.71 | | | 0.75 | | |
| FG82 | | 0.58 | | | 0.41 | | | 0.61 | | | 0.66 | |
| LAB82 | | | 0.54 | | | 0.69 | | | 0.86 | | | 0.91 |

## Table 2 Change in FF constituency level vote percentage in adjacent elections 1982-97

| | 1997-92 | 1992-89 | 1989-87 | 1987-82 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean change | 0.06 | -4.95 | -0.26 | -0.59 |
| Standard deviation | 6.56 | 5.11 | 5.22 | 5.81 |

Table 3 Potential support and overlap between the parties, 1994

| Shared with: | Potential voters for: | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SF | DL | Lab | Green | PD | FG | FF |
| Sinn Fein | 1.00 | 0.49 | 0.24 | 0.22 | 0.25 | 0.19 | 0.16 |
| Democratic Left | 0.57 | 1.00 | 0.37 | 0.35 | 0.39 | 0.27 | 0.25 |
| Labour | 0.62 | 0.82 | 1.00 | 0.66 | 0.67 | 0.60 | 0.57 |
| Greens | 0.63 | 0.85 | 0.73 | 1.00 | 0.74 | 0.60 | 0.57 |
| PDs | 0.52 | 0.70 | 0.54 | 0.54 | 1.00 | 0.55 | 0.45 |
| FG | 0.52 | 0.65 | 0.64 | 0.58 | 0.74 | 1.00 | 0.56 |
| FF | 0.52 | 0.69 | 0.73 | 0.65 | 0.71 | 0.67 | 1.00 |

Source: Adapted from van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996: Table C.8

Table 4  Candidate/Seat ratios for FF and FG

| | | 1948-97 | 1948-81 | 1981-97 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FF | Mean | 1.60 | 1.63 | 1.58 |
| | St dev | (0.13) | (0.11) | (0.15) |
| FG | Mean | 2.03 | 2.21 | 1.79 |
| | St dev | (0.34) | (0.33) | (0.17) |

Table 5 Spread of votes within constituencies in selected elections: average constituency coefficient of variation. (Entries in italics are standard errors).

| | 1973 | 1981 | 1987 | 1992 | 1997 | Diff 1997-73 | t value | p (one tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FF | **0.46** | **0.46** | **0.33** | **0.45** | **0.33** | -.13 | 2.43 | .01 |
| | *0.04* | *0.04* | *0.04* | *0.04* | *0.04* | | | |
| FG | **0.56** | **0.49** | **0.33** | **0.40** | **0.38** | -.18 | 2.75 | .004 |
| | *0.04* | *0.04* | *0.04* | *0.05* | *0.05* | | | |
| Difference | +.10 | +.03 | .00 | -.05 | +.05 | | | |
| t | -1.88 | -0.54 | -0.06 | 0.80 | -0.79 | | | |
| p(one tailed) | .03 | .30 | .47 | .21 | .22 | | | |

Note: analysis excludes constituencies where a party ran only a single candidate

## Table 6 Average votes in general and European Parliament elections 1979-99

| | Traditional Parties FF/FG/Lab | New Parties WP/DL/ Green/SF | Others |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1981(GE) | 91.9 | 1.7 | 6.4 |
| 1982(GE) | 93.7 | 2.3 | 4.0 |
| 1982(GE) | 93.8 | 3.5 | 2.7 |
| 1987(GE) | 77.7 | 16.1 | 6.2 |
| 1989(GE) | 82.9 | 12.0 | 5.1 |
| 1992(GE) | 82.9 | 11.3 | 5.8 |
| 1997(GE) | 77.7 | 12.9 | 9.4 |
| General election Average | 85.8 | 8.5 | 5.7 |
| | | | |
| 1984(EP) | 79.8 | 4.8 | 15.4 |
| 1989(EP) | 62.6 | 23.2 | 14.1 |
| 1994(EP) | 70.3 | 22.8 | 6.9 |
| 1999(EP) | 72.0 | 13.0 | 15.0 |
| European election Average | 71.2 | 16.0 | 12.9 |

[1] One canvasser in 1973 was quoted as saying that at least national (policy) campaigns "give us something to discuss with the voters" (Baxter-Moore, 1973).

[2] Mair (1988: p.111) cites Jack Lynch (FF leader 1969-79) as telling him:"In the old days you were either pro-de Valera (the FF leader) or anti-de Valera ... or neither, and then you supported Labour".

[3] This is my impression. There is no systematic analysis which would support it or otherwise.

[4] While the question was asked in the context of a European election study, no type of election was given as a referent. Previous work with this question indicated that results were almost identical, whether national or European Parliament elections were specified. For more analysis of this question wording see Tillie, 199?

[5]This power is not necessarily a new one. It existed in FF as early as 1953 and FG in 1970, but it has become used more widely.  FF has regularly imposed several candidates since 1977, and FG since 1981 (Farrell, 1995).

[6] Vote management is usually taken to imply a strategy of first preference vote equalaisation (Farrell et al, 1996) but it may take some other form. In this case the plan actually required FitzGerald's running mate to lead him on first preferences.

[7] The direction of change in the FF figure between 1992 and 1997 goes some way to validate this measure. More detailed analysis by Gallagher (1993) demonstrated that FF's vote management was particular poor in 1992, perhaps because all deputies were conscious that the party's share of the vote would be well down on 1989, but 1997 marked a big improvement for that party (Gallagher, 1999).