

On the Workings of Tribal Politics (Assaf Patir, Bnaya Dreyfuss, Moses Shayo)

Abstract:

This paper tries to understand the workings of economies in which an (endogenous) subset of voters support certain (“tribal”) candidates regardless of their policies; and politicians choose whether or not to run on a tribal ticket. Two political regimes emerge. Non-tribal politics is characterized by centrist policies. Tribal politics produces extreme policies, typically from the right, despite the fact that the tribal base is from the lower middle class. Allowing policy in one period to determine the income distribution in the next, the economy either converges to a steady state or cycles between tribal and non-tribal regimes, depending on the vote share of the minority group, the scope for redistributive policy, and the salience of inter-group disparities