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ANALYSIS OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF ELECTION RESULTS TO THE FINNISH PARLIAMENT IN THE COURSE OF FOUR ELECTORAL CYCLES

Today, researches that analyze elections in various countries and the results of their spatial distribution are gaining popularity, because they reflect socio-political processes with the account for the territorial factor. It allows us to make certain forecasts about the country's political course in respect of other states, for example, neighboring countries, which is especially relevant for the Russian Federation. The article reviews the system of elections to the Parliament of Finland and analyzes the results of the last four electoral cycles in order to identify distribution of voters' votes depending on the electoral district. The main parties participating in the elections over the past four years are considered. At the end of the article, the results of the spatial distribution of the results of the parliamentary elections in 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 are presented. It can be concluded that Finland is characterized by an average regionalization of the party system with small deviations, which makes it possible to clearly trace the preferences of voters, taking into account the territorial factor.

Key words: Finland, Parliament, elections, spatial analysis, electoral cycle, regional distribution.

Recently, researches on the regional specifics of electoral processes are gaining interest. In the focus of a separate discipline – electoral geography – there is a question of how the voter's place of residence affects his political preferences. It is assumed that factors such as distance from the capital, proximity to the border, economic and geographical profile of the territory, its historical memory or cultural landscape have a direct impact on the course and results of election campaigns [6]. Election statistics allows us to conduct research using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, which strengthens analytical and predictive abilities, and allows us to identify non-obvious causal relationships between voters' preferences and socio-political factors that affect them and are projected into the future in the form of certain voting results. It is already possible

to identify individual studies that analyze the results of parliamentary and presidential elections in a local-country context, which can reflect more fundamental processes taking place in the society [13; 5]. Continuing this tradition, the article focuses on the dynamics of electoral cycles in Finland, neighboring Russia, in order to assess how significant regional disparities are for its domestic political life.

Finland is a country with one of the most developed democratic systems in the world, which is provided, among other things, by its electoral system, which guarantees the open expression of the citizens' will, protection of civil rights and freedom of the media [12]. The expert organization Freedom House confirms the status of Finland as a free democracy, giving it a rating of 1 out of 7 possible positions in 2018 [7].

The election to Eduskunta, the Finnish Parliament, is one of the most important events in the social and political life of Finland. Eduskunta occupies an exceptional position in the system of state power in the country: it issues laws, makes decisions on the state budget and approves international agreements. It represents the will of the Finnish people, who elect 200 of its members in a free vote every 4 years. During the parliamentary elections, the country is divided into electoral districts, each of which elects a certain number of deputies.

Finland adopted universal suffrage before other European countries, allowing women to vote in 1906 [9. P. 5]. Finnish citizens can vote at the parliamentary elections at the age of 18. Citizens living abroad also have the right to vote. Finland's electoral system has not changed much since independence. Parliamentary elections are held in 15 multi member constituencies by proportional representation [7]. The D'Hondt method is used for the allocation of seats in the legislature, meaning that citizens vote for national party lists with the additional determination by the voter of the priority of the candidate from the party list. The number of deputies from each district is determined by its population [8].

Professor S. Chernyshov writes, that such a vote for a party (or electoral bloc) and for a particular candidate implies "that each candidate in the voting list is assigned a number, and the voter notes in the ballot not only the party for which he votes, but also the number of the candidate from this party, which he prefers. Thus, the elector's vote not only determines the number of seats received by the party in the Parliament, but also who in the party list becomes an MP, so as not to create advantages for those candidates who are listed first in the party lists" [1].

Typical distribution of the parliamentary voting results in Finland are considered on the example of four main political parties that occupy leading positions over several electoral cycles [3]:

1. Social Democratic Party (SDP) was founded in 1899 in Turku as the workers' party of Finland. It is one of the largest "left" parties. The "core" of its electorate is made up of civil servants and the middle class. This party has a special influence in the southern industrial cities.

The party got its name in 1903 after the Congress in Forssa. In 1918, the party led the Finnish revolution, forming a revolutionary government in Helsinki.

The SDP almost collapsed after the defeat in the revolution, but was reorganized under the leadership of Väinö Tanner (party Chairman in 1918-1926 and 1957-1963). Representatives of the party have repeatedly served as Presidents of Finland: Mauno Koivisto (1982-1994), Martti Ahtisaari (1994-2000), Tarja Halonen (2000-2012). The goal of the Social Democrats is to create a society based on freedom, equality and solidarity. The party is supported by more than 40 thousand of its members, who interact in 65 divisions across the country. In 2007, the SDP won 21.4% of the vote and 45 seats, respectively. In the 2011 parliamentary elections, the party won 19.1% and 42 seats in the Parliament. In the 2015 election period: 16.5% (35 seats) and in 2019 – 17.7% (40 seats).

2. “True Finns” (PS). A relatively young party founded in 1995 in Helsinki. The Charter of the party defines its main goal – to unite on a Christian-social basis a group of the population whose interests in the social and economic spheres and social status have not received due attention from the state.

Since its creation, the party has gradually increased its electoral potential. If in the 2007 elections, it received 4.1% of the vote (only 8 seats), then in the 2011 elections the True Finns were supported by 19.1% of voters, which allowed them to get 39 seats in the Parliament. The results of the parliamentary elections in 2015 were less effective (17.6% of the vote), and the number of its representatives in the Parliament decreased to 38 deputies. However, True Finns received four Ministerial portfolios, and two of them are key posts: the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is also worth noting that the party's leader Timo Soini took part in the Finnish presidential elections twice. In 2006, he was supported by 3.4% of voters, in 2012 – by 9.4%. In 2017, there was a split in the party, some of the deputies left the parliamentary faction and founded a new organization – “New alternative” – which later changed its name to “Blue future”. The party adheres to nationalistic and conservative views, stands in favor of reducing the level of taxation and immigration control. As a result of the April 2019 elections, the True Finns received 17.5% of the vote and, accordingly, 39 seats in the Parliament (3).

3. National Coalition Party (KOK) was founded in 1918 as a result of the merger of the Young Finns Party (1894-1918) with the Finnish party (1863-1918). The party positions itself as a conservative party, representing the interests of entrepreneurs and patriots, and is popular among the military and in major cities. In the early 1920s, the Coalition Party focused on resisting communism and preventing the spread of the communist ideology. It should be noted that the party's program was repeatedly updated and reformed, later it switched to dynamic conservatism. The party professes center-right liberal conservatism, and its representatives are in favor of preserving the national traditions, language and culture of Finland. The fundamental principles are ensuring school education for all, gender equality, and respect for the environment.

In the 2007 and 2011 elections, the party was among the leaders, receiving 22.3% and 20.4% of the vote (50 and 44 seats in the Parliament) (3). The party's

Chairman during that period Jyrki Kainen became Prime Minister of Finland. In 2015, the Coalition Party received far fewer votes, gaining only 18.1% of the vote (38 seats). However, the party's candidate Sauli Niinisto was elected President of Finland in 2012 and re-elected in 2018. In the 2019 elections, the party retained the results of the previous vote, receiving 17% of the vote and 38 seats in the Parliament.

4. Finnish Center (KESK) was established in 1906, until 1965 it was called the Agrarian Union, and until 1998 – The party of the Center. It is based on the ideology of the center – left social liberalism. The party has more than 280 thousand members. From the moment of its foundation until 1995, it participated in the government, then, it moved to the opposition. It advocates an active environmental policy and the conservation of natural resources, supports the rural economy and increasing the number of jobs. The party's core is the rural population, representatives of small and medium-sized businesses. In 2007, it took the first place with a result of 23.1% (51 seats in the Parliament), in 2011 – the fourth place with 15.8% (35 seats). In 2015, the party again managed to win 21.1% of the vote, gaining 49 seats in the legislature. However, in 2019, the Finnish Center suffered a setback, it gained only 13.8%, losing 8 seats compared to the previous elections (3).

It can be concluded that the preferences of voters changed over the course of four electoral cycles (table 1). If in 2007 and 2015, the Finnish Center was in the first place, in 2011, it was the National Coalition Party, and in 2019 – the Social Democratic Party. It is interesting that in 2019, the votes were distributed between the three leading parties (SDP, PS и KOK) almost equally.

Table 1

**Results of parliamentary elections in Finland
of three parties during the last four electoral cycles (1)**

	2007	2011	2015	2019
Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP)	21.4% 45 seats	19.1% 42 seats	16.5% 35 seats	17.7% 40 seats
True Finns	4.1% 8 seats	19.1% 39 seats	17.6% 38	17.5% 39
National Coalition Party	22.3% 50 seats	20.4% 44 seats	18.1% 38 seats	17% 38 seats
Finnish Center	23.1% 51 seats	15.8% 35 seats	21.1% 49 seats	13.8% 31 seats

Analysis of the regional distribution of parliamentary election results over four electoral cycles. Based on the results of the 2007 elections, the National Coalition was in the second place, losing less than 1% to the Finnish Center Party. The analysis shows that the regions voted for the Center with a clear regional reference: more to the North (Lapland and Oulu), support for the party also

grew (the range of 33-43%, depending on the district). In the southern regions, the National Coalition Party won from 23-30% of the vote, in the rest of the country – from 11 to 20%. The Social Democratic Party received most support (about 28% on the average) in the central regions (Hame, Satakunta and Kymi). In 2007, the results of the True Finns party were modest, it received no more than 6% of the vote, which is explained by its relative novelty in the party landscape.

Table 2

Regional distribution of parliamentary election results in Finland in 2007 (1)

Region	FC	SDP	NCP	Left alliance	Green	Christ. Dem.	SNP	TF
Helsinki	6.9	21.2	30.2	6.8	20.1	2.5	6.0	2.9
Uusimaa	12.4	20.2	28.7	6.7	10.9	4.1	9.5	6.0
Varsinais-Suomi	15.9	21.9	27.5	10.6	9.4	4.7	5.1	2.5
Satakunta	24.7	29.5	21.4	12.1	3.5	2.4		5.2
Häme	20.3	28.0	24.7	8.3	6.1	7.7		2.2
Pirkanmaa	16.3	23.8	25.1	9.6	8.7	6.2		4.9
Kymi	23.8	28.0	23.6	7.1	4.9	6.6		5.4
Etelä-Savo	37.4	27.6	18.9	1.7	7.0	3.6		3.2
Pohjois-Savo	35.8	19.5	17.1	11.2	4.0	8.1		3.4
North Karelia	35.7	31.5	11.8	2.6	11.7	3.1		2.8
Vaasa	32.5	12.7	14.1	4.7	1.5	7.0	20.6	6.0
Central Finland	33.2	24.5	14.8	7.4	6.9	7.9		2.6
Oulu	43.2	12.8	14.0	16.1	6.1	3.2		3.5
Lapland	43.1	15.1	11.9	23.1	3.2	1.0		1.8

Next, we will analyze the results of the 2011 elections. The vast majority of supporters of the National Coalition Party traditionally live in the South, so the best results were achieved in the southern regions-Uusimaa (28.4%), Helsinki (27.3%), and Native Finland (23.0%). Voters from Varsinais-Suomi, Häme and Pirkanmaa also made a significant contribution to the victory. In Northern regions like the North Karelia (10.5%), Oulu (11.9%), and Lapland (12.5%), the party did not receive significant support.

The Social Democrats again performed better in the Central districts: North Karelia (26.4%), in Kymi, Satakunta, and Kymenlaakso where the party received 24% of the vote. The Northern group of districts (Oulu, Lapland, Vaasa) continued to vote for the Finnish Center.

True Finns demonstrated a sensational result in this election, increasing the number of votes by 15% and taking the third place. More than 23% of the votes for the nationalists were cast in the regions of Satakunta, Kymi and North Karelia, which in the last election gave preference to the Finnish Center and SDP. In six

other districts, it received more than 20%. Only the urbanized, rich South and the Swedish-speaking West voted somewhat more modestly: Helsinki – 12.9%, Vaasa – 17%. Some experts believe that such a “breakthrough” was rather an isolated case, since the nationalists managed to successfully play on public sentiments, however, this did not lead to a significant expansion of its electoral base [4].

Table 3

Regional distribution of parliamentary election results in Finland in 2011 (1)

Region	NCP	SDP	TF	FC	Left alliance	Green	SNP	Christ. Dem.
Helsinki	27.3	17.5	12.9	4.5	10.4	16.7	5.8	2.4
Uusimaa	28.4	19.3	18.8	6.4	5.1	9.1	8.3	2.8
Varsinais-Suomi	23.0	19.6	18.1	11.6	9.6	7.3	5.5	2.9
Satakunta	17.6	24.0	23.7	16.1	10.9	3.8		3.4
Hame	22.4	24.1	20.6	13.2	6.9	4.5		6.8
Pirkanmaa	22.3	21.6	21.1	10.4	8.3	8.3		5.0
Kymi	17.9	24.6	23.3	16.8	5.7	4.2		6.6
South Savo	14.1	24.0	20.5	26.8	2.2	7.1		4.5
North Savo	16.4	18.3	20.8	25.4	8.4	5.5		3.9
North Karelia	10.5	26.4	23.1	26.2	4.2	5.4		2.8
Vaasa	14.1	14.0	17.2	22.7	3.7	1.4	19.4	6.6
Central Finland	15.0	21.2	18.1	21.9	9.0	6.5		6.4
Oulu	11.9	11.0	20.2	33.4	14.5	4.9		2.7
Lapland	12.5	11.8	20.5	32.2	16.7	3.4		1.6

According to the results of the 2011 elections, the National Coalition Party was the winner. The highest turnout was shown in the capital region, Helsinki (70.54%), while the lowest was observed in remote territories – the Åland Islands and Lapland. The turnout in the parliamentary elections in the autonomous region is usually much lower than the country-wide turnout. In the past elections, it was registered at the level of 41.18%, but in 2007 it was 45.86%. It is obvious that in the South-Western part of the country, electoral activity is higher than in the North-Eastern part. Urbanized Western territories are characterized by a much higher population density, concentration of industrial enterprises, research centers, and universities. As a result, their socio-economic indicators are higher than in the East, which probably affects the civil activity.

Let's analyze the results of the 2015 elections. The Center Party has traditionally achieved the best results in the Northern and North-Eastern regions (42% in Oulu and Lapland, 32.5% in North Karelia), while receiving the least support in the Southern regions (for example, only 7.2% in Helsinki). The election results for the True Finns were distributed almost evenly, only in Satakunta 25% of

voters voted for the party, which is the maximum result. The party failed to develop success either in the Northern districts (it lost more than 15% of support in Lapland and Oulu) or in the Central districts (for example, in Hama, Pirkanmaa). The largest share of votes NCP again received in the Southern part of the country: in Helsinki, Uusimaa, Varsinais-Suomi. The maximum result of the Social Democratic Party has also recorded in Satakunta and Hama, which are consistently supporting it, with an indicator of 22.6%.

Table 4

Regional distribution of parliamentary election results in Finland in 2015 (1)

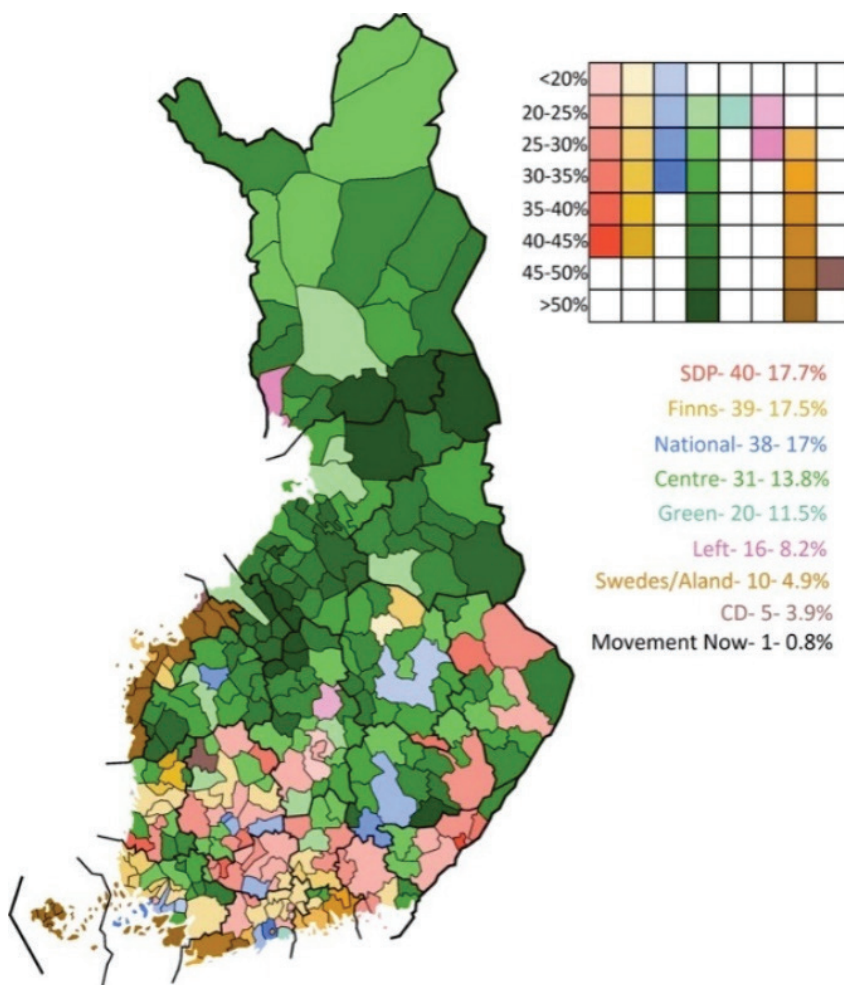
Region	Christ. Dem.	FC	Green	Left alliance	NCP	SDP	SNP	TF
Helsinki	1.8	7.2	18.8	9.8	26	15.5	6.8	11.3
Uusimaa	2.6	11.5	10.0	4.4	24.0	16.6	10.2	18.0
Varsinais-Suomi	2.4	16.2	8.7	10.3	21.0	15.5	5.0	19.3
Satakunta	2.9	20.6	2.7	9.6	15.0	22.6	0.3	25.0
Häme	6.1	17.8	5.1	6.0	21.5	22.1		19.5
Pirkanmaa	4.9	16.6	10.3	7.8	19.7	19.5		17.8
Kaakkois-Suomi	4.5	25.2	6.4	3.0	15.9	22.2	0.3	21.1
North Karelia	6.3	32.5	6.7	5.9	11.5	16.0		19.7
Vaasa	5.7	27.4	2.5	2.9	11.9	11.8	20.7	15.9
Keski-Suomi	4.4	26.9	9.0	6.7	13.1	19.0		19.3
Oulu	1.1	42.7	6.2	11.8	10.9	9.0	0.6	16.2
Lappi	1.1	42.9	2.6	13.7	10.1	10.8	0.5	16.5

It can be noted that a distinctive feature of the 2015 parliamentary elections is the fact that no party in the final count won more than 20% of the vote, although the voters' turnout was 72%, which is one of the highest figures for all years.

In conclusion, let's look at the 2019 parliamentary elections. The Social Democratic Party received the largest number of votes (17.7%) and seats, while the NCP received approximately the same results: 17.0% and 17.5%, respectively. The Finnish Center Party gained only 13.8%, losing 18 seats, which is the worst result in 100 years [3]. According to N. Plevako, the 2019 parliamentary elections demonstrated the political fragmentation of the country, since none of the parties gained more than 20%, raising the question of an agreement among the parties to form a common course of action [11].

Speaking about the spatial distribution of voting results, it can be noted that it is again similar to the previous outcomes: the Northern regions again voted for the Finnish Center, while the South, on the contrary, preferred the Social Democratic Party.

The above review shows that the distribution of parliamentary election results in Finland over the course of four electoral cycles shows a fairly definite commitment in the choice of the parties, depending on the territorial situation of the region.



Drawing 1. Regional distribution
of parliamentary election results in Finland in 2019 (2)

This trend can be seen throughout the four electoral cycles under consideration. The North, for example, the regions of Lapland and Oulu traditionally support the FC, where it has consistently received from 30 to 40% of the vote over four electoral cycles. The southern regions (Helsinki, Uusimaa, Varsinais-Suomi) continue the trend and express maximum support for the NCP or SDP.

It can be concluded that Finland is characterized by an average regionalization of the party system with small deviations, which makes it possible to clearly trace the preferences of voters, taking into account the territorial factor. Despite certain surprises that may occur during the elections, such as the results of

the True Finns party in 2011, such changes are rather exceptions, depending on the current socio-political situation, rather than on fundamental conditions such as territorial affiliation.

NOTES:

- (1) Compiled by the author based on news monitoring and electoral statistics. https://www.stat.fi/til/vaa_en.html.
- (2) Electoral geography. <https://www.electoralgeography.com/new/ru/countries/f/finland/finlyandiya-parlamentskie-vybory.html>.
- (3) Parliamentary elections. Statistics Finland. https://www.stat.fi/til/vaa_en.html.

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