

LSE Economics PhD Placement: Job Market Candidates

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PRIMARY FIELDS Development Economics
Political Economy

SECONDARY FIELDS: Experimental Economics
Applied Econometrics
Public Policy

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JOB MARKET PAPER:

The Unintended Consequences of Internet Diffusion: Evidence from Malaysia

ABSTRACT:

Can the internet promote democratization by weakening government control of the media? To examine this question, I develop a model where internet penetration decreases incumbent party vote share by greatly increasing the cost of buying off the media. I test the model against evidence from Malaysia, where the incumbent coalition lost its 40 year monopoly on power in 2008. I use data matching IP addresses with physical locations to construct a measure of internet growth in Malaysia from 2004 to 2008. Using an instrumental variable approach, I find that areas with higher internet penetration experience higher turnout, higher turnover and tighter races, with the Internet accounting for a third of the 10% swing against the incumbent party in 2008. In fact, the results suggest that in the absence of the internet, the opposition would not have achieved its historic upset in the 2008 elections.

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