

*"I recommend this Handbook for those who are striving to promote and conduct effective, efficient and transparent elections. This publication will serve as an excellent tool for policy-makers, politicians and election administrators. It is also very useful for commentators, students and interested members of the public. The case studies and the rich comparative knowledge provided give practical information explaining how countries choose or inherit electoral systems as well as how and why they may be changed or modified. It describes how electoral systems interact with the larger institutional, political and social context and framework in a country, and how they can affect participation, assist in building consensus and managing conflicts and help instill faith in a sceptical electorate. This Handbook is a must read in order to understand and appreciate the complexity of the issues raised".*

**Dr. Brigalia Bam**

Chairperson, Electoral Commission of South Africa  
and Member of IDEA's Board of Directors

#### How to order:

The full text of the Handbook is available in electronic format at: [www.idea.int](http://www.idea.int)  
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#### About International IDEA

Created in 1995, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide.

#### IDEA's current areas of activity include:

- Electoral systems and management.
- Strengthening of electoral administration.
- Sustainability of electoral assistance.
- Political participation, including women in politics.
- Political parties, management and financing.
- Post-conflict democracy building and dialogue.
- Democracy at the local level.
- Democracy indicators and assessment.

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# Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook



Choosing an electoral system is one of the most important institutional decisions for any democracy. Electoral systems define and structure the rules of the political game, and their conscious design has recently become much more common. They help determine who is elected, how a campaign is fought, the role of political parties, and most importantly, who governs. An electoral system can help to engineer specific outcomes, such as encouraging co-operation and accommodation in a divided society.

In 1997, International IDEA published its first handbook on Electoral System Design. This New Handbook covers the process of electoral system change and the political and institutional context in which electoral systems work in much more depth than the original handbook. It is an easy-to-use guide, including new case studies, describing what factors to consider when modifying or designing an electoral system.

To provide policy-makers with options and comparative lessons from around the world, the New Handbook includes:

- A precise and simple to understand explanation and classification of the electoral systems in use in more than 200 independent states and related territories.
- An explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of using different electoral systems.
- A discussion of the political process involved in changing electoral systems and of trends in electoral system design.
- Case studies, written by regional experts, explaining how and why electoral systems were adopted and modified.
- An analysis of measures that can be taken to promote the representation of women and minorities.
- A colour-coded map showing which systems are being used where in the world.

IDEA has also published a complementary website ([www.idea.int/esd](http://www.idea.int/esd)) featuring an updated database of electoral systems in use around the world and links to new developments and initiatives.

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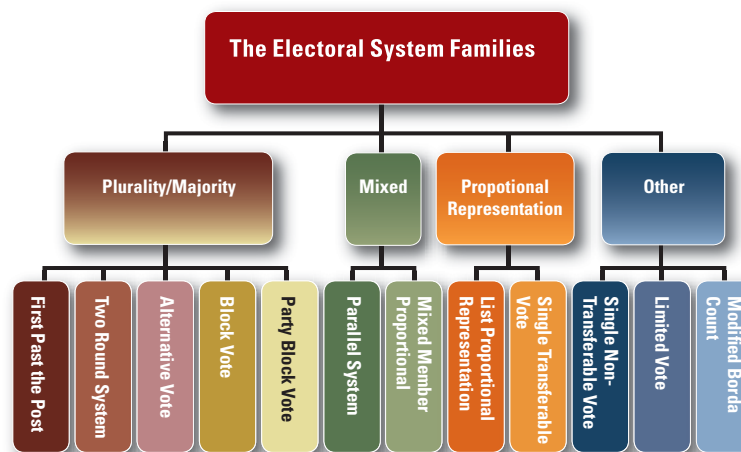
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### Chapter One: Overview

Discusses what electoral systems are and why they are important to a nation's political success and stability. Outlines criteria for those debating and trying to decide which electoral system is best for any given society. Discusses the political process of electoral system change.

### Chapter Two: The World of Electoral Systems

Describes the different electoral systems in use today. Categorises electoral systems in three broad families (plurality/majority, mixed and proportional), as well as a fourth group of 'other' electoral systems, and a total of twelve sub-families.



### Chapter Three:

#### The Systems and Their Consequences

Describes the consequences of different types of electoral systems, focusing on the election of legislatures – national assemblies or lower houses of parliaments.

Covers issues such as the representation of women and minorities, communal rolls and additional issues relevant to post-conflict and transitional elections.

### Chapter Four: Electoral Systems, Institutional Frameworks and Governance

Discusses electoral system choice for selecting a president, the upper house of the legislature in bicameral systems, local government and supranational bodies, as well as federal/state assemblies and autonomous jurisdictions. Discusses the role of electoral systems and political parties and of direct democracy options.

### Chapter Five: Cost and Administrative Implications

Discusses the cost and administrative implications of electoral system choice.

### Chapter Six: Advice for Electoral System Designers

Provides tips for electoral system designers culled from the experience of a number of experts who have helped draft constitutions and electoral laws around the world.

**Case studies:** Brazil, Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Mexico, New Zealand, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, South Africa, Thailand, the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly for Electoral Reform and the European Parliament.

**Annexes:** Table listing the electoral system particulars of independent countries and related territories; glossary of terms; bibliography for further reading; examples of electoral system effects on the translation of votes to seats; example of boundary delimitation effects in electoral system design; about the authors; acknowledgements; about International IDEA.