Elections, Electoral Systems and Party Systems

A Resource Guide

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Elections, Electoral Systems and Party Systems

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This Resource Guide is part of a series designed for readers, including students and practitioners, interested in exploring further some of the themes and issues raised in the *The Global State of Democracy 2017: Exploring Democracy's Resilience* (International IDEA 2017). The contents of the series reflect the topics of each chapter in the larger report, presenting current and past debates and key concepts related to each topic. This Guide complements Chapter 4, 'The changing nature of political parties and representation' (Klaukka, Van der Staak and Valladares 2017).

Understanding the various ways in which electoral systems and political party dynamics can be evaluated is critical to enhancing electoral integrity and achieving more genuine representation, which are necessary when seeking to challenge the apathy, mistrust and scepticism felt by voters when democracy does not appear to adequately represent them or their interests.

This Resource Guide provides resources for understanding the complex effects of electoral systems on party systems and the implications for the role of elections in democracy. It addresses important questions concerning the core findings on these relationships, and features an overview of related International IDEA resources and references to scholarly research for further reading. It discusses why elections matter to democracy, the essential functions that they serve, and the variety of electoral systems and their typical effects on election dynamics, as well as the implications of elections for political parties and the quality of representation. Following a brief conclusion, the Guide's references serve as a short bibliography of scholarly research on these issues for further reading.

The Global State of Democracy aims to provide policymakers with an evidence-based analysis of the state of global democracy, supported by the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) indices, in order to inform policy interventions and identify problem-solving approaches to trends affecting the quality of democracy around the world. The first edition, published in 2017, explores the conditions under which democracy can be resilient and how to strengthen its capacity as a system to overcome challenges and threats.

The full report can be accessed online: <http://www.idea.int/gsod>.

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1. Introduction

Most countries in the world regard periodic and regular elections as a core attribute of democracy. In 2016, a total of 132 elections were held worldwide in presidential, legislative or local contests (International IDEA 2017). Electoral processes held under conditions that meet global and regional standards for being credible give meaning to democracy's core values of political equality and the accountability of those who govern. At a basic and practical level, elections are a critical element of an effective anti-corruption strategy, even if the fear of losing an election is not always enough to prevent elected officials from being corrupt.

Nonetheless, how far the underlying rules of the game of elections affect the practice of democracy is often under-appreciated. The rules embodied in an electoral system are critical to how democracy is practiced in a given setting. Electoral systems are the rules in constitutions or laws that describe how votes are translated into seats, such as a typical single presidential 'seat', a member of parliament's seat or a mayor or local councillor's seat. The electoral system is a strong determinant of the features of democracy, and how the game of politics is played in campaigns and mobilizations. Most importantly, electoral systems strongly affect who wins and who loses in terms of the number of 'seats won'—and who ultimately forms a government.

Equally under-appreciated is how electoral system choice and design affect the type, number and nature of political parties and their interactions within the policy space, or the range of issues and ideologies in the national, regional or local political arena. The effect of electoral systems as rules for translating votes into seats, which in turn affects how parties organize and arrange themselves in relation to one another in a party system, is highly complex and varies according to context. Scholarly research does show a high degree of patterned effects, however, as described in section 3. Winner-takes-all or majority systems are more likely to be associated with two-party systems—or perhaps two dominant parties—whereas proportional representation (PR) systems are said to provide incentives for a party system featuring, typically, four to six major political parties and often many (sometimes very many) smaller parties.

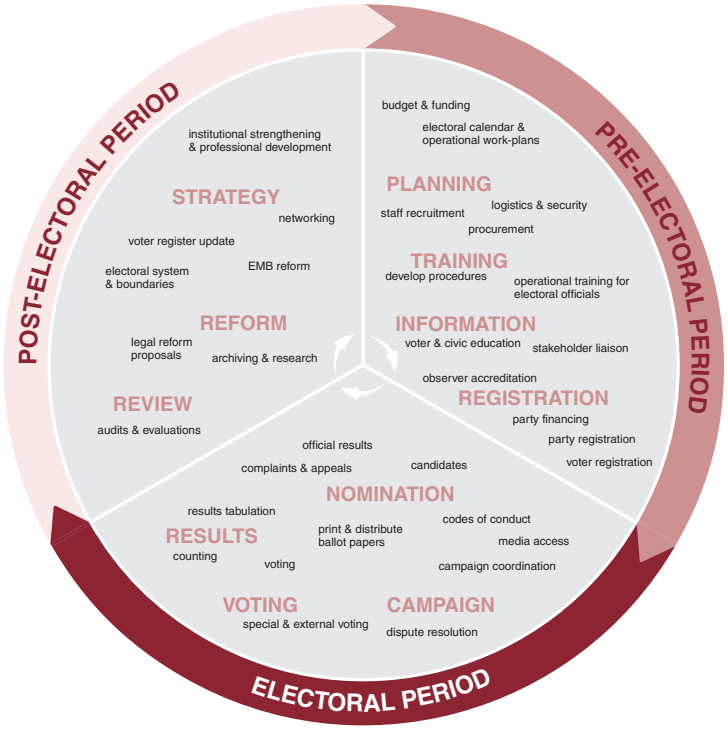
Today, there is much debate about the problems of elections and in particular how electoral systems affect turnout. Electoral systems and party systems are important factors in how democracy works in any given country or context where elections are held. From Hungary and Poland to the United States, populists from the 'nationalist right' of the political spectrum have taken power and sought to restrict rights—especially for migrants—and in some cases exacerbated divisions in society with highly ideologically driven policies. In some Latin American countries, such as Venezuela, electoral processes have led to the coming to power of ideologically driven populists from the 'socialist left' of the political spectrum, who appear antithetical to democracy's values or seek to thwart its institutions for narrow gains (Frantz and Geddes 2013).

Electoral systems and party systems are important factors in how democracy works in any given country or context

Studies on whether populism as a type of ideology is on the rise in Western European democracies have also raised concerns about how electoral system choices such as PR could enable, or magnify the influence of, illiberal nationalist leaders and parties that seek to undermine human rights (Norris 2017). Some analyses of populism in Western Europe argue that political actors from both sides of the ideological divide use the features of electoral democracy in anti-democratic ways (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013; Mudde 2013). Thus, to understand the phenomenon of populism, it is more important than ever to understand elections and electoral systems, and how they affect political parties and the nature and quality of representation.

FIGURE 2.1

The electoral cycle



Source: Wall, A. et al., *Electoral Management Design: The International IDEA Handbook* (Stockholm, International IDEA, 2005).

2. Why elections matter

Elections matter for many reasons. First, elections are not just elections: they are part of a process. Second, elections determine leadership, and either continuity or change in this leadership. Third, even flawed elections may have value in institutionalizing electoral integrity, provided that subsequent electoral cycles reinforce key democratic or electoral principles. With so much attention given to elections in the overall practice of democracy, it is important to step back and evaluate the functions they are theoretically and practically meant to serve. This section describes such functions and highlights some of the recent scholarly literature on elections-related issues.

Electoral periods are widely defined as a time of party candidate selection, campaigning, mobilization and voting, and then the announcement of the results. Those who specialize in elections, however, emphasize that an election is just a moment in a broader electoral cycle that involves many rule changes, decisions and activities well before the actual balloting and counting (see Figure 2.1). The voting, counting and proclamation of results are critical but not isolated moments in the continuing practice of electoral democracy.

An election is just a moment in a broader electoral cycle

Inevitably, elections signal a moment in time in which either an old order or set of rulers is confirmed, or there is circulation in ruling coalitions—either within or between parties—as new leaders are brought into government. This makes them turning points

in democracy. In many cases, they are quite dramatic. For example , the November 2015 elections in Myanmar were the first fully inclusive multiparty elections in the country since 1990. While the Myanmar military had organized elections in 2012, they were boycotted by the opposition. Despite the achievement of the 2015 elections, which brought a civilian government into power, democracy in Myanmar is still limited: some observers note that the military—through reserved seats—still controls considerable power in the country (Huang 2016).

Whether and to what extent they are conducted with integrity is the crux of the question when evaluating the overall process of any election (Norris 2004). Initiatives such as the Electoral Integrity Project engage in systematic analyses of electoral processes and score each major global contest against a wide range of indicators. Multilateral organizations such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Commonwealth, the European Union and the Southern African Development Community regularly monitor and observe the elections in their member states.

In more established or long-standing democracies, electoral processes are typically routinized and held in a regular, periodic fashion. Modern democracies are increasingly holding referendums to ascertain 'the will of the people'. In the context of democratization, each electoral cycle—beginning with founding elections, the first after a transition to democracy, and continuing with successive electoral cycles thereafter—is about institutionalizing and systematizing electoral processes. For example, scholars have evaluated trends in electoral cycles over time in sub-Saharan Africa to evaluate the effects of the second and third rounds of elections, as research has shown that in electoral processes there is the possibility of increasing integrity through learning by doing (Lindberg 2006). Others are less optimistic. Bogaards argues that electoral processes in Africa lack meaning because of the ubiquity of personality-driven or clientelistic appeals. On this point, see the exchange between Lindberg (2013) and Bogaards (2013) in the *Journal of Democracy*.

Because elections are widely held even by regimes that restrict democracy and control their outcomes—sometimes referred to as 'competitive authoritarian regimes' (Levitsky and Way 2010)—they should be closely evaluated for the ways in which they confer legitimacy on those who control government. References to the will of the people have become central to process legitimacy or justifying governmental authority, and elections or referendums are often the means of providing that legitimacy (OECD 2010). It is for this reason that even in tightly controlled authoritarian systems, there is often an attempt to hold elections, even if they lack integrity and are not officially monitored or observed by outsiders who can attest to their integrity.

References to the will of the people have become central to process legitimacy or justifying governmental authority

In general, elections in democracies serve four principal functions. These help to identify the most critical questions for understanding why and how elections matter. The four principal functions of elections are:

1. *Legitimization*. As noted above, the legitimacy of ruling elites in a democracy is ideally conferred through 'free and fair' or 'clean' electoral processes that are free of corruption, intimidation or restricted choice. An important assessment question for any electoral process is: how and in what ways does the electoral process confer on the government legitimacy to wield authority and to advance socio-economic development? Warren (2006) explores the complex relationships between democracy and the modern state, arguing that democracy emerged historically to provide such legitimacy for the coercive authority of the state.
2. *Exercising accountability.* It is through electoral processes that leaders are 'held to account' by the people, for providing security and fostering development—or providing critical

goods and services such as a stable environment for economic development. To what extent does the electoral process allow the exercise of accountability? The studies in Thomassen (2014) explore the relationships between electoral systems and exercising accountability. The relationship between elections and accountability is not automatic. Sun and Johnston (2009) found in their study of India and China that democratic processes have not worked well to curb corruption—and India is doing no better than China at curbing the problem of corruption at the local level.

3. *Choosing 'representatives'*. Representation happens in quite formal ways, such as through the nomination of candidates and lists of political parties, but representation also has a deeper meaning in terms of how such individuals or organizations portray what they seek to represent. In practical terms, representation can be presented ideologically (such as by a 'socialist' party), in geographic terms (such as by Italy's Northern League), along ethnic, racial, religious or sectarian lines (such as the political parties in Northern Ireland) or along other lines (such as the environmentalism of the Green Party in Germany). Constructing ideas of 'representation' is at the core of electoral processes in that they articulate visions of inclusion and exclusion in the political community, and its common values, purposes and goals. Dovi (2016) reviews the influence of the seminal work of Hannah Pitkin. Pitkin described: (a) formal representation, which includes authorization or a warrant to act, and accountability, or incentives and sanctions for performance; (b) symbolic representation, representing a concept such as class or gender; (c) descriptive representation, the accuracy of resemblance; and (d) substantive or issues-oriented representation.
4. *Exercising voice, aggregating preferences*. Electoral processes give meaning to the principles of political equality and popular control in democracy. In ideal conditions, they also help to 'educate' the voter by setting common agendas, defining the issues, articulating alternatives and options, and engaging in competition with others on the best way forward. The concept of 'voice' is essential to electoral processes, together with the aggregation of each citizen's views into a common social or public choice.

Four factors emerge as central to assessing an electoral process

Four factors emerge as central to assessing an electoral process. The first is ease of voting: the ability of qualifying citizens to register, become candidates and participate in voting should be as barrier-free as possible. Equally important is ballot design—whether traditional paper or electronic, the ballot must be clearly presented and designed to minimize mistakes or intentional manipulation. Second, determining which political parties and which candidates are eligible to run for office is a critical part of the process. Nominations, democracy within political parties, and official determination of candidacies must be fair, transparent and consistent with democratic principles. Third,

RESOURCES

International IDEA resources on elections

D. Tuccinardi (ed.), *International Obligations for Elections: Guidelines for Legal Frameworks* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2014), ‹http://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/international-obligations-elections-guidelines-legal-frameworks›

Kaufmann, B., *Global Passport to Modern Direct Democracy* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2017), ‹http://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/global-passport-modern-direct-democracy›

the process of campaigning is about mobilization, or rallying citizens around a candidate, party, programme or set of ideas. Campaigns are often extremely divisive precisely because elections are designed to be competitive. Candidates and parties seek to define what they are and what they believe, but also what they do not represent or believe. Fourth, perhaps the most important institution for ensuring a credible and, to the extent possible, free and fair election is the electoral management body (EMB).

International IDEA's 2014 guidelines provide a toolkit for evaluating an electoral process against international obligations and standards. Taking a process-oriented approach, users of the guidelines can explore the extent to which an electoral process measures up against the international obligations featured in United Nations Charter-based bodies and instruments, such as those articulated by the UN Human Rights Council, and treaty-based obligations, such as those featured in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The guidelines cover the essential building blocks of an electoral process, from the right and opportunity to vote, to universal and equal suffrage, freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of assembly. The resource covers all the components of elections, such as the electoral system, districting or electoral boundaries, political finance, gender equality, equal opportunities for minorities and marginalized groups, and the media environment. Checklists give the user the tools to conduct a review of an electoral process against international obligations, together with a glossary of key terms (International IDEA 2014).

3. Why electoral system rules matter

Among the most important factors in any election are the rules or laws under which elections are held, and the way in which the votes of citizens are aggregated to produce overall winners. This section provides an overview of electoral systems and some of their effects. One of the most enduring findings in the scholarly literature is that no electoral system can maximize all the desirable outcomes that should flow from an electoral process, such as legitimacy, inclusivity, accountability or producing a cohesive, responsive government (Gallagher and Mitchell 2005). Instead, it is often argued that electoral systems involve certain trade-offs; for example, that the principle of majority rule is at odds with the principle of inclusivity.

The electoral system is the formula by which votes are aggregated in a democracy to determine the winners and losers of seats in an assembly or office holding: see the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network website for more detailed information on electoral systems, including an 'Electoral System Quiz' designed to assist in the analysis of the potential

The electoral system is the formula by which votes are aggregated in a democracy to determine the winners and losers of seats in an assembly

RESOURCE

The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network

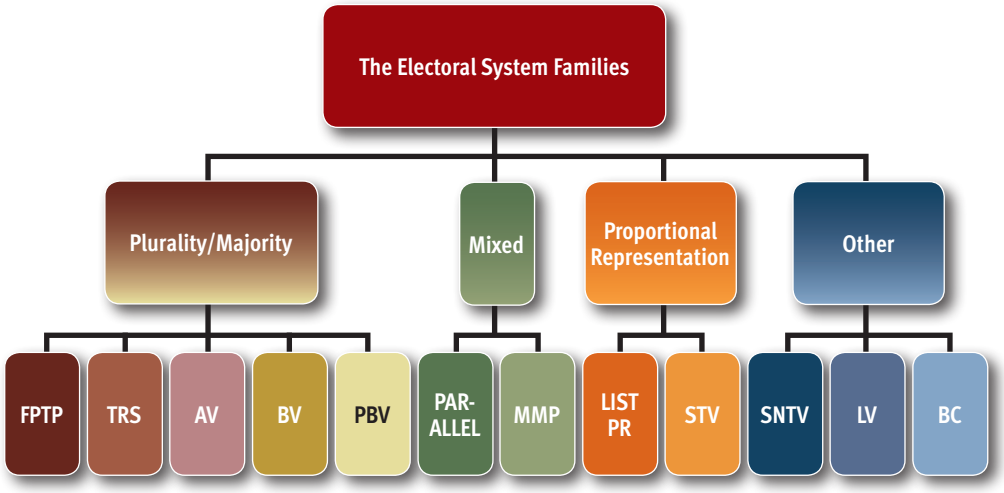
Established in 1998 the ACE Network is a collaborative effort between eight organizations: the Carter Center, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, Elections Canada, IFES, International IDEA, the National Electoral Institute of Mexico, the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, and the United Nations Development Programme.

The ACE website is an online knowledge repository that provides comprehensive information and customised advice on electoral processes. The website is complemented by the ACE Practitioners' Network which is available to registered users.

‹http://www.aceproject.org›

FIGURE 3.1

Families of electoral systems



Source: Reynolds, A. et al., *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2005), ‹http://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/electoral-system-design-new-international-idea-handbook›.

workings and effects of an electoral system). Seats might be a single position, as is the case in most presidential systems, or a multiplicity of seats, such as in a parliament or local council. The classic scholarship on electoral systems focuses on the variety of systems available, their effects, and the specific 'devil-in-the-detail' aspects of the mathematical conversions that occur when multiple votes are integrated in various systems to determine the winners and losers (Lijphart and Grofman 1984).

While each electoral system is complicated and contains features that are unique to the circumstances on the ground, there are three main families of electoral systems in use. Figure 3.1 presents the major types of electoral system across a spectrum from those that are the most majoritarian, or based on the principle of plurality, where the candidate or party with the most votes wins, to simple majority rule, where the winners must gain at least 50 per cent of the votes, to those based on the principle of proportionality. A proportional share of the vote is one that is roughly equal to the proportion of seats won, typically in legislative elections.

Plurality or majoritarian systems

The most common plurality or majoritarian systems are those known as first-past-the-post (FPTP), the alternative vote and the lesser used block vote. FPTP is used, for example, in the United Kingdom and the USA, but can also be found in countries such as India, Malaysia and Pakistan. The two-round system (TRS) features a first-round poll, from which two winners emerge who then compete in the second round of elections. Long associated with France, the TRS is also used, for example, in Liberia.

One advantage of these systems is that they generally produce clear winners or winning coalitions (majority coalitions). One disadvantage is that TRS systems can result in so-called manufactured majorities and disproportionate outcomes because of the number

of votes cast for parties or candidates eliminated in either round. Other disadvantages have been widely explored, and research has found that majoritarian systems can inhibit minority representation (depending on factors such as the spatial distribution of minority groups), work against smaller political parties and lead to tactical (or manipulative) voting (Reynolds 2011). There have been systematic calls in recent years to reform the FPTP electoral system in both the UK and the USA and move to a more proportional system (e.g. as advocated by Fair Vote in the USA).

Semi-proportional systems

Some systems seek to balance the advantages and disadvantages of various systems. In parallel voting, plurality or majoritarian systems and proportional systems are used side-by-side. These are known as mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) systems and mixed-member proportional (MMP) systems. According to the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network:

> There are *two forms of mixed system*. When the results of the two types of election are linked, with seat allocations at the PR level being dependent on what happens in the plurality/majority (or other) district seats and compensating for any disproportionality that arises there, the system is called a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system. Where the two sets of elections are detached and distinct and are not dependent on each other for seat allocations, the system is called a Parallel system. While an MMP system generally results in proportional outcomes, a Parallel system is likely to give results the proportionality of which falls somewhere between that of a plurality/majority and that of a PR system (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network 2017).

Mixed systems are used in Japan and South Korea, and are also seen in some subnational units in Russia and in countries such as Azerbaijan and Georgia. One of the best known MMP systems is in Germany, where each voter votes for a candidate in a district or region and for a political party on a national list. Bolivia, Lesotho and New Zealand have also adopted MMP.

RESOURCES

International IDEA Databases and Tools

Direct Democracy Database: ‹http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/direct-democracy›

Electoral Management Design Tool:
‹http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/electoral-management-design›

Electoral System Design Database:
‹http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/electoral-system-design›

Voter Turnout Database: ‹http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout›

Interactive Overview of Combinations of Electoral Systems and Quota Types:
‹http://www.idea.int/data-tools/tools/interactive-electoral-systems-quota-types›

Digital Parties Portal: ‹http://www.idea.int/data-tools/tools/digital-parties-portal›

Proportional systems

Systems of proportional representation (PR) are designed to match the percentage of votes cast in an election for a particular party or candidate with the percentage of seats gained within a body. For example, South Africa's National Assembly features 400 members chosen through a closed-list PR system, in which voters choose among political parties that provide lists of candidates. In such systems, the parties go down their lists until all the seats won by their percentage share have been filled. In 2014, 29 parties were certified for the election but only 13 won enough votes to be represented in the National Assembly.

Other examples are the single transferable vote (STV) system used in elections in Northern Ireland (and also in the Republic of Ireland). Voters rank the candidates by their order of preference. After each round, the second-preference votes of the eliminated candidate are transferred among the political parties until enough winners emerge to fill the seats. For an analysis of how STV worked in the 2017 elections in Northern Ireland, see Quinlan and Schwartz (2017). The advantage of PR systems is that they can contribute to inclusive politics and facilitate minority representation. The disadvantage commonly cited is that they create incentives for the proliferation of political parties, leading to messy and often protracted coalition negotiations that, in turn, lead to non-cohesive governments.

Electoral systems should be consciously designed to fit the country or context

Electoral systems should be consciously designed to fit the country or context (such as a city) in a manner that is consistent with the most important needs of the community. In practice, because countries and especially urban areas are highly diverse, many scholars and practitioner specialists argue that such systems should be designed to balance inclusivity with other aims, in particular accountability. Some 20 years ago, International IDEA published one of the first Handbooks for practitioners, *Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiators* (Harris and Reilly 1998), which sought to provide an in-depth overview of the ways in which choosing electoral systems (and a wide range of other institutions) affects the management and resolution of deep-rooted conflict. The January 2017 edition of the journal *Ethnopolitics* featured a review of research on the past two decades of ethnic conflict globally, with analysis, reflection and a synthesis of key findings.

Concern about democracy being vulnerable to extreme ethnic or nationalistic appeals is long-standing in the literature. Concern about the role of 'ethnic entrepreneurs' in

RESOURCE

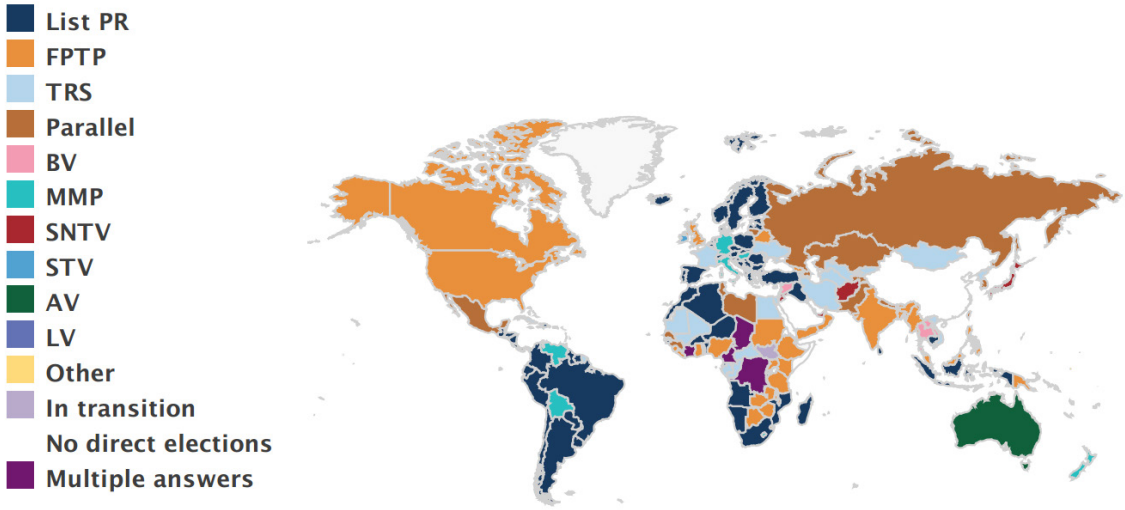
Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook

Reynolds, A. et al., *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2005), ‹http://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/electoral-system-design-new-international-idea-handbook›

This Handbook is a definitive guide to electoral systems and the expected effects of each system. It evaluates the world of electoral systems and provides accessible descriptions of such systems as well as more detailed or technical analyses in its appendix. The consequences of electoral system choice for representation are explored in detail, as well as the best wisdom on the effects on political parties, voting behaviour and issues such as the inclusion of minorities. The Handbook concludes with recommendations and guidance for those crafting 'the rules of the electoral game'.

FIGURE 3.2

Electing national legislatures: global distribution of electoral systems, 2017



Source: International IDEA, Electoral System Design Database, ‹http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/electoral-system-design›, accessed 20 June 2017.

democracy dates to 1972, when Rabushka and Shepsle used formal theory (or deductive approaches) to show how vulnerable a moderate centrist core is to outbidding along identity lines. Much of the extensive scholarly work of Lijphart (2008), who championed proportional representation, departed from the premise that majority-rule elections are not well suited to highly multi-ethnic, diverse societies. Nonetheless, recent research would suggest that ethnic politics and ethnic parties are enduring, and that bans on ethnic parties work against the countervailing principle of freedom of association. In the evaluation of any system or party, it is important to understand how identity interacts with other factors such as culture, patronage, class or economic conditions as a mobilizing force in electoral politics (Horowitz 2016; Birnir 2007). Moreover, many countries have wrestled with the issue of 'ethnic' or identity-based political parties, and some countries such as Nigeria have banned parties from organizing along identity lines. As well as being exclusive in identity terms, ethnic parties also typically feature greater gender-based exclusion (Holmsten, Moser and Slosar 2010).

4. Elections and party systems

Electoral rules can have a major effect on the evolution of a party system or the constellation and workings of political parties, or how they are constituted and relate to each other. Gunther and Diamond (2003) have sought to provide a new organizational framework for political parties, describing 15 common types of parties based on three evaluative criteria: (a) whether they are 'elite-based' (leader or leadership-centred) or mass-based; (b) whether their programmatic orientation is around ideology or identity; and (c) whether they are tolerant and pluralistic or hegemonic.

The choice of electoral system has strong implications for the system of political parties that evolves

A long-standing finding is that the choice of electoral system has strong implications for the system of political parties that evolves. Known as Duverger's law, the finding is that plurality or majoritarian systems tend towards two-party political systems, whereas

PR leads to multiple parties (Duverger 1954). The effects of electoral systems on party systems appears to be more long term as consolidated democracies have more stable and consistent party systems than democratizing countries, which have more fluid systems and less institutionalized parties. Since Duverger's pioneering work, the literature on the effects of electoral systems on party systems has found three additional effects that the structure of electoral rules have on the system of party politics (Grofman 2008).

The first effect is on candidate and party behaviour. Those contesting elections typically have a fairly clear understanding of how the rules of the political game are structured, and in many ways campaigns and mobilization efforts are about seeking to maximize vote share within the rules. Candidates and parties are acutely aware of what it takes to 'win' and they may change their behaviour or choices in relation to this strategy. Efforts to 'engineer' electoral systems may be geared to affect the ways candidates or parties may behave in relation to the rules. Reilly (2006) shows how political party regulations can help build a basis for inter-ethnic harmony in deeply divided societies through 'centripetalism', or by generating a centrist spin on the political system. In Nigeria, for example, presidential elections require the winning candidate to have at least 25 per cent of the votes in two-thirds of the states, in an effort to minimize the extent to which any candidate can attempt to focus their strategy around narrow identities such as ethnicity or religion in such a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse country.

Second, electoral systems have strong effects on the timing, nature and scope of political coalitions. While in plurality systems, coalitions are often forged in campaigns and the run-up to elections, in which voters are presented with a stark choice of national programmes, in PR systems coalition negotiations typically happen after an election event. Cobbling together a ruling coalition can be challenging. In India prior to the elections in 2014, for example, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance was formed from 46 centre and centre-right parties that were geographically dispersed but held a combined majority of 283 seats in India's lower chamber.

Third, electoral laws may have unintended consequences, such as promoting strategic voting behaviour or 'gaming' the system. Voters may cast ballots that are strategic—voting

RESOURCES

Relevant online resources

Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES): ‹http://www.cses.org›

Electoral Integrity Project: ‹https://www.electoralintegrityproject.com/›

ACE Electoral Knowledge Network: ‹http://www.aceproject.org›

Global Elections Database: ‹http://www.globalelectionsdatabase.com/›

IFES Elections Calendar: ‹http://www.electionguide.org/elections/›

Inter-Parliamentary Union 'Parline' Database on National Parliaments: ‹http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp›

Inter-Parliamentary Union 'Parline' Database on Electoral Systems: ‹http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/ElectoralSystem.asp?REGION=All&typesearch=1&LANG=ENG›

Parties and Elections in Europe Database: ‹http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/›

for another candidate or party first in order to affect the overall outcome by preventing a less desired candidate or party from winning. While there is nothing inherently wrong with such voting, which can be a useful tactic available to voters, strategic voting can become problematic in a democracy when it leads to outcomes that are perceived as illegitimate or that undermine the will of clear majorities. Strategic or tactical voting, which has been widespread in recent elections as diverse as Hong Kong, Slovenia and the USA, can engender an overall feeling of mistrust in the political system.

5. Conclusion

To know how electoral processes work, it is essential to understand the nature of elections and their relationship to political parties and political behaviour. This knowledge can also provide a greater understanding of the alternatives and their advantages and disadvantages when opportunities for reform arise. A greater understanding of the meaning of elections among citizens would show that they are not just associated with majority rule. More knowledge and awareness of electoral systems would allow for more meaningful democracy that combines desirable outcomes such as inclusivity, transparency and accountability. Seeing an electoral process as a process and not an event can help to prevent fraud, manipulation and violence. Awareness of the role that electoral systems play in political party systems can arm citizens against the dangers of exclusionist, often empty, appeals to populism that can endanger democracy over the long term.

Seeing an electoral process as a process and not an event can help to prevent fraud, manipulation and violence

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