

Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences

Edited by

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List of Tables and Figures

<i>Tables</i>	<i>found on page</i>
2.1 Combined Influences of Party and Electoral Systems	61
4.1 Minimum Numbers of Voters Required to Alter Order of Election of Parliamentary Candidates	94
4.2 Sources of Interelection Turnover Among Parliamentary Parties	98
6.1 Electoral Formulas and District Magnitudes of Six Electoral Systems	115
6.2 District Magnitudes of Twelve Ethnic-Geographic Districts in Cyprus, 1960	117
6.3 Religiously Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Electoral Districts in Lebanon, 1960–1972	119
6.4 Ethnic Minority Over- or Underrepresentation in Six Electoral Systems	122
8.1 Analysis of PR Adoptions and Abandonment Votes	146
8.2 Analysis of Participation Rates in PR Cities Classified by Types of Elections Used in PR Adoptions and Repealers	148
9.1 Examples of Undernomination, Overnomination, and Unequal Vote Distribution in the Japanese House of Representatives Election, 1980	160
9.2 Seats Lost and Gained by Undernomination, Overnomination, and Unequal Vote Distribution in the Japanese House of Representatives Election, 1980	161
9.3 Examples of Undernomination and Prudent Nomination in the Spanish Senate Election, 1982	162
9.4 Votes, Actual Seats Received, and Three Hypothetical Seat Allocations in the Japanese House of Representatives Election, Excluding the Amami Islands, 1980, in Percent	164
9.5 Votes and Three Hypothetical Seat Allocations in Perfectly Apportioned Districts in the Japanese House of Representatives Election, Excluding the Amami Islands, 1980, in Percent	166
9.6 Adjusted Votes, Actual Seats Received, and Four Hypothetical Seat Allocations in the Spanish Senate Election, Excluding the Nine Plurality Districts, 1982, in Percent	167
9.7 Adjusted Votes and Three Hypothetical Seat Allocations in Perfectly Apportioned Districts in the Spanish Senate Election, Excluding the Nine Plurality Districts, 1982, in Percent	167
10.1 Hypothetical Example of the Operation of the Largest Remainder, d'Hondt, and pure Sainte-Laguë Formulas in a District with 100 Votes, 5 Seats, and 5 Parties	173
11.1 A Selection of Alternative Combinations of Spatial Components for Producing the "Cube Law"	185

Tables (continued)

found on page

12.1	The Effect of Double Plurality and Approval Voting on the Wasted-Vote Problem	198
12.2	Random Distribution of Voters' Preference and Consensus Majority Candidate	200
12.3	Abstentions and Consensus Majority Candidate	201
13.1	Representational Indices for Mixed Cities by Electoral Format	210
13.2	Representational Indices for Single Format Cities by Electoral Format	211
13.3	Representation Ratios for Southern Cities, 1970s and 1980	213
17.1	Years of Party Control in Selected States, 1947–1965	263
17.2	Years of Party Control in Selected States, 1965–1983	264
19.1	Election in Cork North-West, February 18, 1982	292
19.2	Irish Elections, 1948–1982: Electoral and Legislative Fractionalization	295
19.3	Irish Elections 1948–1982: Indices of Proportionality	296
19.4	Government Formation, 1948–1982	298
19.5	Average Vote-Seat Deviation by Constituency Size, 1977–1982	302

Figures

4.1	Proportion of Members Suffering Intrapartisan Defeats and Average Number of Members per Constituency	100
8.1	Experience with PR in 22 American Cities, 1915–1964	141
13.1	Relationship Between Black Percentage of Population and Black Percentage of City Council in Different Electoral Formats	208
13.2	Estimated Seats/Population Relationships with 90% Confidence Bands in Districted and At-Large Electoral Formats	209

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Contents

Acknowledgments		viii
List of Tables and Figures		ix
About the Editors		xi
About the Contributors		xi
Introduction	<i>Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart</i>	1

Part I. The Effect of Election Type on Political Competition

1. Duverger's Law Revisited	<i>William H. Riker</i>	19
2. The Influence of Electoral Systems: Faulty Laws or Faulty Method?	<i>Giovanni Sartori</i>	43
3. Duverger's Law: Forty Years Later	<i>Maurice Duverger</i>	69
4. Intraparty Preference Voting	<i>Richard S. Katz</i>	85
5. Thinking about the Length and Renewability of Electoral Terms	<i>William R. Keech</i>	104

Part II. Evaluating the Impact of Electoral Laws: Proportional and Semiproportional Systems Case Studies

6. Proportionality by Non-PR Methods: Ethnic Representation in Belgium, Cyprus, Lebanon, New Zealand, West Germany and Zimbabwe	<i>Arend Lijphart</i>	113
7. Australian Experience with Majority-Preferential and Quota-Preferential Systems	<i>Jack F. H. Wright</i>	124

8. The Rise, Decline and Resurrection of Proportional Representation in Local Governments in the United States	<i>Leon Weaver</i>	139
9. The Limited Vote and the Single Nontransferable Vote: Lessons from the Japanese and Spanish Examples	<i>Arend Lijphart Rafael Lopez Pintor and Yasunori Sone</i>	154
10. Degrees of Proportionality of Proportional Representation Formulas	<i>Arend Lijphart</i>	170

Part III.

Evaluating the Impact of Electoral Laws: Plurality Systems

11. The Geography of Representation: A Review of Recent Findings	<i>Peter J. Taylor Graham Gudgin and R. J. Johnston</i>	183
12. Social Choice and Pluralitylike Electoral Systems	<i>Peter C. Fishburn</i>	193
13. The Effect of At-Large Versus District Elections on Racial Representation in U.S. Municipalities	<i>Richard L. Engstrom and Michael D. McDonald</i>	203
14. The Nonpartisan Ballot in the United States	<i>Carol A. Cassel</i>	226
15. Ballot Format in Plurality Partisan Elections	<i>Howard A. Scarrow</i>	242
16. Cross-Endorsement and Cross-Filing in Plurality Partisan Elections	<i>Howard A. Scarrow</i>	248

Part IV.

Redistricting

17. Whatever Happened to the Reapportionment Revolution in the United States?	<i>Gordon E. Baker</i>	257
18. Constituency Redistribution in Britain: Recent Issues	<i>R. J. Johnston</i>	277
19. Districting Choices under the Single-Transferable Vote	<i>Peter Mair</i>	289
References		309
List of Court Cases		333
Index		

Introduction

Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart

The aim of this book is to provide an overview of recent research on electoral laws and their political consequences by scholars who have helped shape the field. After several decades of virtual neglect (except for Douglas Rae's seminal work), the comparative study of electoral systems is undergoing a lively revival. In the past five years, over a dozen books on electoral systems have been written by scholars from many nations and from many disciplines (see reviews of a number of these in Lijphart, 1984a). Political geography, long moribund, is undergoing a remarkable renaissance (see reviews in Grofman, 1982d; Taylor, Gudgin, and Johnston, this volume). Social choice theorists have begun to link axiomatic criteria for representative systems to practical political issues in choosing an election system (see especially Brams and Fishburn, 1983, 1984a, 1984b; Fishburn, this volume). In the United States, sparked in large part by the efforts of the section on Representation and Electoral Systems of the American Political Science Association, the history of American electoral experimentation with proportional representation, weighted voting, and limited voting is being rediscovered (see Grofman 1982a; Weaver, this volume).

This renewed scholarly attention to the study of electoral systems is long overdue. The late Stein Rokkan wrote as recently as 1968, "Given the crucial importance of the organization of legitimate elections in the development of the mass democracies of the twentieth century, it

is indeed astounding to discover how little serious effort has been invested in the comparative study of the wealth of information available" (Rokkan, 1968, p. 17). The long past neglect of electoral systems by social scientists is especially surprising since election rules not only have important effects on other elements of the political system, especially the party system, but also offer a practical instrument for political engineers who want to make changes in the political system. Indeed, Sartori aptly characterizes electoral systems as "the most specific manipulative instrument of politics" (1968b, p. 273).

No single volume can do justice to the range of issues which ought to be dealt with in a complete study of the political consequences of electoral laws. For example, the independent variables analyzed by Rae (e.g., ballot structure, election type, number of representatives to be elected from each district, and total number of representatives in the legislature) are only a partial inventory of those that can have a critical impact, and the principal dependent variables he considers (proportionality of party representation and creation of legislative majorities), while among the most important elements of a proper analysis of electoral laws and their political consequences, omit a large number of relevant concerns. In particular, in addition to

1. Electoral formulas [e.g., proportional representation (PR) vs. majoritarian systems; for alternative typologies see Rae, 1967, 1971; Grofman, 1975]
2. Ballot structure (e.g., nominal vs. ordinal)
3. District magnitude (number of seats)
4. Size of legislature
5. Number of candidates/parties

we should consider (cf. Fishburn, 1983):

1. Suffrage and registration requirements
2. Ease of voter access to the electoral process (e.g., availability of bilingual ballots, polling hours, number and location of polling stations, and enforcement of voter rights against intimidation)¹
3. Ease of party/candidate access to the political process (e.g., candidate eligibility requirements, signature-gathering rules, nominating fees, party-slating procedures, and bans on "antisystem" parties)
4. Structure of political competition (e.g., partisan vs. nonpartisan ballots and availability of intraparty preference voting)
5. Special features of ballot format (e.g., office block vs. party check-

- off, machine vs. paper ballot, open versus secret, and sequencing rules for candidate/party ballot position)
6. Special features for transforming votes into outcomes (e.g., the U.S. electoral college and electoral thresholds in PR systems)
 7. Districting procedures (e.g., rules which constrain districts to satisfy equal population guidelines or compactness norms, or to provide representation of ethnic or other communities of interest)
 8. Campaign financing rules (limits on donations and spending, nonconfidentiality of information on donors, and provisions for public financing)
 9. Campaign timing rules (e.g., fixed vs. variable interval elections and length of term in office)
 10. Other features of campaigning (e.g., rules on media access, rules prohibiting "unfair" advertising, rules on sites where campaigning is forbidden, and restrictions on the period during which a campaign can be conducted)
 11. Number and type of offices which are subject to electoral choice (e.g., appointive vs. elective vs. administrative mechanisms for various policy domains, number of different elections voters are expected to participate in annually, and regularity of election dates)
 12. Degree of "bundling" of elections (e.g., sequencing of dates for local, state, and national elections and for executive and legislative elections; and regularity of election dates)
 13. Mechanisms for voter intervention (e.g., initiative, referendum, and recall)

Similarly, while the degree of seats-votes proportionality and facilitation of majority legislative control are among the most important political consequences of electoral laws, also relevant are (1) the effects on ideological polarization of the electorate; (2) the structure of party organization; (3) intraparty versus interparty competition; (4) regional and national integration; (5) the interaction of political and economic "cycles"; (6) voter participation and sense of voter efficacy; (7) incentives to strategic voting; (8) perceived regime legitimacy; and (9) representation of racial, ethnic, and other group interests.

Since we could not cover all the variables and issues enumerated above, our selection of topics has been guided by three principles. First, we commissioned review essays on topics where there is a substantial body of research which could usefully be summarized and which may not be well-known to specialists in comparative election systems. Thus Engstrom and McDonald write on the effects of at-large

elections on minority representation; Cassel writes on nonpartisan elections; Weaver considers PR in the United States; Taylor, Gudgin, and Johnston take up political geography; and Fishburn reviews social choice approaches. Second, we commissioned articles on various electoral institutions which are not well researched, as a spur to further work. Included are Lijphart, Lopez-Pintor, and Sone on limited voting in Spain and Japan; Lijphart on proportionality by non-PR methods; Scarrow on ballot format and cross-endorsement in plurality systems in the United States; Katz on intraparty preference voting; and Keech on the length and renewability of electoral terms. Finally, we sought to avoid duplication of the literature surveys in such excellent compilations as Butler, Penniman, and Ranney (1981), Cadart (1983), and Bogdanor and Butler (1983).

Effects of Election Type on Political Competition

We are especially pleased to begin this volume with a set of three complementary essays on one of the most important issues in the analysis of the effects of electoral laws: the relationship between type of electoral system (e.g., simple plurality, plurality with double ballot, and various forms of proportional representation) and the number of political parties contesting elections. All three articles take as their starting point the formulation in Duverger (1951a) that the plurality system favors the two-party system, commonly referred to as "Duverger's law," while PR methods and the double-ballot system favor multipartyism, referred to as "Duverger's hypothesis."

The first of these chapters is by William Riker, "Duverger's Law Revisited."² After discussing the ambiguities in Duverger's original formulation concerning the deterministic or probabilistic nature of the claimed relationships, Riker reviews evidence unfavorable to both Duverger's hypothesis and Duverger's law and then seeks to reformulate the latter so as to be able to account for the apparent counterexamples of Canada and India. His proposed modifications focus on a distinction between localized versus national two-party competition, on the one hand, and the presence or absence of a party capable of regularly commanding a majority against any probable *single* opponent, on the other. Riker then goes on to discuss the rationally grounded motivations for voter and party leaders which could explain the empirical fit of Duverger's law.

Sartori's chapter, "The Influence of Electoral Systems: Faulty Laws or Faulty Method?" deals with the scientific status of assertions about the link between election type and party number. After first clarifying