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1. OVERVIEW

Introduction

1. The choice of electoral system is one of the most important institutional decisions for any democracy. In almost all cases the choice of a particular electoral system has a profound effect on the future political life of the country concerned, and electoral systems, once chosen, often remain fairly constant as political interests congeal around and respond to the incentives presented by them. While conscious design has become far more prevalent recently, it has however traditionally been rare for electoral systems to be consciously and deliberately selected. Often the choice was essentially accidental, the result of an unusual combination of circumstances, of a passing trend, or of a quirk of history, with the impact of colonialism and the effects of influential neighbours often especially strong.

2. Any new democracy must choose (or inherit) an electoral system to elect its legislature. Equally, political crisis within an established democracy may lead to momentum for electoral system change: and even without political crisis, campaigners for political reform may attempt to put electoral system change onto the political agenda. Decisions to change, or indeed to keep in place, an electoral system are often affected by one of two circumstances:

- Either political actors lack basic knowledge and information so that the choices and consequences of different electoral systems are not fully recognized:
- Or, conversely, political actors use their knowledge of electoral systems to promote designs which they think will work to their own partisan advantage.

In either scenario, the choices that are made may not be the best ones for the long-term political health of the country concerned, and at times they can have disastrous consequences for a country’s democratic prospects.

3. The background to a choice of electoral system can thus be as important as the choice itself. Electoral system choice is a fundamentally political process, rather than a question to which independent technicians can produce a single ‘correct answer’. In fact, the consideration of political advantage is almost always a factor in the choice of electoral systems – sometimes it is the only consideration – while the menu of available electoral system choices is often, in reality, a relatively constrained one. Equally, however, that calculations of short-term political interest can often obscure the longer-term consequences of a particular electoral system and the interests of the wider political system. Consequently, while recognizing the practical constraints, the Handbook attempts to approach the issue of electoral system choices in as broad and comprehensive a manner as possible.

4. This Handbook is aimed in particular at political negotiators, constitutional designers and those involved in debate on political institutions in new, fledgling, and transitional democracies. However, as the crafting of political institutions is a critical task not only for new democracies but also for those established democracies seeking to adapt their systems to better reflect new political realities, this Handbook also seeks to address the likely concerns of those persons in both emerging and established democracies who may be designing or redesigning electoral systems. Given this target audience, much of the academic literature on the subject is necessarily simplified, while at the same time the Handbook attempts to address some of the more complex issues inherent in the area. If the Handbook appears to be sometimes overly simplistic and at other times unduly complex, the explanation will usually lie in the attempt to balance these two objectives of clarity and comprehensiveness.
5. While the context in which emerging and established democracies make constitutional choices can vary enormously, their long-term purposes are usually the same: to adopt institutions which are strong enough to promote stable democracy but flexible enough to react to changing circumstances. Both types of democracy have much to learn from the experiences of the other.

Institutional design is an evolving process, and this Handbook seeks to distil the lessons learnt from the many actual examples of institutional design around the world.

6. Much constitutional design has occurred relatively recently: the global movement towards democratic governance in the 1980s and 1990s stimulated a new urgency in the search for enduring models of appropriate representative institutions, and a fresh evaluation of electoral systems. This process was encouraged by the realisation that the choice of political institutions can have a significant impact upon the wider political system. For example, it is increasingly being recognised that an electoral system can be designed to provide both local geographic representation and promote proportionality; can promote the development of strong and viable national political parties, and ensure the representation of women and regional minorities; and can help to “engineer” co-operation and accommodation in a divided society by creative use of particular incentives and constraints. Electoral systems are today viewed as one of the most influential of all political institutions, and of crucial importance to broader issues of governance.

**How to Use this Handbook**

7. Through providing this detailed analysis of choices and consequences, and showing how electoral systems have worked throughout the democratic world, this Handbook aims to achieve two things: to expand knowledge and illuminate political and public discussions; and to give constitutional designers the tools to make an informed choice, and thereby avoid some of the more dysfunctional and destabilizing effects of particular electoral system choices.

8. The Handbook begins with a discussion of what electoral systems actually are (and what they are not), and why they are important to a nation’s political success and stability. The Handbook then suggests ten criteria to be used when trying to decide which electoral system is best for any given society; and, having set up this framework, describes in sections 2 and 3 the different systems and their possible consequences. The advantages and disadvantages of each system are drawn from historical experience and the writings of scholars in the field.

9. There are a large number of different electoral systems currently in use and many more permutations on each form, but for the sake of simplicity we have categorized electoral systems into three broad families: plurality/majority systems, proportional systems, and mixed systems. Within these there are nine “sub-families”: First Past the Post (FPTP), Block Vote (BV), Party Block Vote (PBV), Alternative Vote (AV), and the Two-Round System (TRS) are all plurality/majority systems; List Proportional Representation (List PR) and the Single Transferable Vote (STV) are both proportional systems; and Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) and Parallel systems are both examples of the mixed model. In addition, there are other systems such as the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV), the Limited Vote (LV), and the Borda Count (BC) which do not fit neatly into any particular category (see Figure One) and can be regarded as three further “sub-families”.

10. This family tree is designed to provide a clear and concise guide to the choice among systems. While rooted in long-established conventions, it attempts to take account of all the electoral systems used for national level legislative elections in the world today, regardless of
wider questions of democracy and legitimacy. The systems are classified by the process on which each is based, rather than their outcome: while results in countries using a proportional system are normally more proportional than results in countries using a plurality/majority system, this is not always the case.

11. After describing the mechanics and consequences of each electoral system, we move on to address a number of issues which can relate to all electoral systems, such as the representation of women and minorities, communal representation, election timing, compulsory voting and absentee or out-of-country voting. The focus of this Handbook is on electing legislatures such as national assemblies or lower houses of parliaments or congresses, but electoral system options for choosing a president, for electing an upper house of a legislature in bicameral systems, and for local government bodies are also discussed. We also examine the particular issues facing elections to supra-national bodies such as the European Union, as well as the electoral implications of different forms of federalism, both symmetrical and asymmetrical, and autonomous jurisdictions.

The final section deals with the important cost and administrative implications of electoral system choice, and we conclude with some advice for electoral system designers, culled from the experience of a number of experts who have helped draft constitutions around the world. The Annexes include a table listing the electoral system particulars of 213 independent countries and territories, a glossary of terms, an explanation of acronyms used, a bibliography of further reading and examples of electoral system and boundary delimitation effects.

12. Interspersed throughout the text are 18 case studies which attempt to root the abstract theory of electoral system design in practical reality. The authors of these case studies, experts on the politics of their assigned country, were asked to address the following questions: What is the electoral system and how did it come into being? How does it work in practice? What aspects of the system work well? On what grounds is it criticized? And, if there was a change at some stage, why was there a change, and does the new system fulfil the requirements expected of it?

13. This Handbook does not aim to provide all the answers to electoral system design; instead, the hope is to provide enough information to allow for an informed choice, and to open windows to a much broader discussion of which electoral systems may work best in a given country. The Handbook is not prescriptive: no formula exists, or can exist, to tell the reader for example that a society which is 60% Muslim, 40% Christian, and has a three-party system and a history of violent secessionism should have a particular type of electoral system. What it does do is to suggest parameters of the available choices and, in so doing, provide a structure for making an informed decision. Through the examples and case studies, the reader from one country should be able to identify how similar problems and needs have been addressed in other parts of the world. Every country is different, but the uniqueness usually rests on its different concoction of basic, widely-shared socio-political factors. For this reason the would-be electoral system designer is recommended to begin with the criteria for choice (paragraph xx) and try to prioritize the issues which are particularly important to his or her country; then he or she can move on to the options available and their likely consequences. The quest for the most appropriate electoral system thus involves the act of assessing the available choices against the chosen criteria (always with history, time, and political realities in mind), in order to reach one or more options which will suit the needs of the country concerned. It also involves following a process through which the final choice will be accepted as legitimate.
What Electoral Systems Are

14. At the most basic level, electoral systems translate the votes cast in a general election into seats won by parties and candidates. The key variables are the electoral formula used (i.e., whether a plurality/majority, proportional, mixed or other system is used, and what mathematical formula is used to calculate the seat allocation), the ballot structure (i.e. whether the voter votes for a candidate or a party and whether the voter makes a single choice or expresses a series of preferences) and the district magnitude (not how many voters live in a district, but how many representatives to the legislature that district elects). It must be stressed that although this Handbook does not focus on the administrative aspects of elections (such as the distribution of polling places, the nomination of candidates, the registration of voters, who runs the elections and so on), these issues are of critical importance, and the possible advantages of any given electoral system choice will be undermined unless due attention is paid to them. Electoral system design also affects other areas of electoral laws: the choice of electoral system has an influence on the way in which district boundaries are drawn, how voters are registered, the design of ballot papers, how votes are counted, and numerous other aspects of the electoral process.

The Importance of Electoral Systems

15. Political institutions shape the rules of the game under which democracy is practiced, and it is often argued that the easiest political institution to be manipulated, for good or for bad, is the electoral system. In translating the votes cast in a general election into seats in the legislature, the choice of electoral system can effectively determine who is elected and which party gains power. While many aspects of a country’s political framework are often included in the constitution and can thus be difficult to amend, electoral system change often only involves new legislation.

16. Even with exactly the same vote cast by each voter and exactly the same number of votes for each party, one electoral system may lead to a coalition government or a minority government while another may allow a single party to assume majority control. The examples presented in Annex D illustrate how different electoral systems can translate the votes cast into dramatically different results.

Electoral systems and party systems

17. A number of other consequences of electoral systems go beyond this primary effect. Some systems encourage, or even enforce, the formation of political parties: others recognise only individual candidates. The type of party system which develops, in particular the number and the relative sizes of political parties in the legislature, is heavily influenced by the electoral system. So is the internal cohesion and discipline of parties: some systems may encourage factionalism, where different wings of one party are constantly at odds with each other, while another system might encourage parties to speak with one voice and suppress dissent. Electoral systems can also influence the way parties campaign and the way political elites behave, thus helping to determine the broader political climate; they may encourage, or retard, the forging of alliances between parties; and they can provide incentives for parties and groups to be broad-based and accommodating, or to base themselves on narrow appeals to ethnicity or kinship ties.

Electoral systems and conflict management

18. These different impacts underline the important role that electoral systems often have in terms of conflict management. Indeed, it is clear that different electoral systems can aggravate or moderate tension and conflict in a society. At one level, a tension exists between systems
which put a premium on representation of minority groups and those which encourage strong single-party government. At another level, if an electoral system is not considered “fair” and the political framework does not allow the opposition to feel that they have the chance to win next time around, losers may feel compelled to work outside the system, using non-democratic, confrontationalist and even violent tactics. And finally, because the choice of electoral system will determine the ease or complexity of the act of voting, it inevitably impacts on minorities and underprivileged groups. This is always important, but becomes particularly so in societies where there are a substantial number of inexperienced or illiterate voters (see the Cost and Administration section).

Psychological and mechanical effects
19. Electoral systems are generally considered to have both ‘mechanical’ and ‘psychological’ effects. The mechanical impact of electoral systems is most apparent in the way different electoral systems tend to encourage different kinds of party system. Plurality/majority systems often tend to have a constraining effect on party numbers, while proportional systems tend to be more ‘permissive’, resulting in a greater diversity of parties. The psychological impact of electoral systems reinforces this mechanical effect: voters who wish to support a minor party are often faced with a dilemma under first past the post rules as to how best to avoid ‘wasting’ their vote, as only one candidate can be elected from any single-member district. The result of this dilemma is that many voters will not express their sincere choice, but rather will vote for another candidate (usually from a major party) whom they believe has a realistic chance of winning the seat. The overall effect of this is to strengthen larger parties at the expense of smaller ones. Proportional systems or systems that allow multiple ballot choices, by contrast, are more likely to facilitate the election of small parties, and hence the pressure to vote strategically is reduced.

The importance of context
20. It is important to realise that a given electoral system will not necessarily work the same way in different countries. Although there are some common experiences in different regions of the world, the effects of a certain electoral system type depends to a large extent upon the socio-political context in which it is used. For example, while there remains general agreement that majority systems tend to restrict the range of legislative representation and PR systems encourage it, the conventional wisdom that plurality/majority rules will produce a two-party system and PR a multi-party system is looking increasingly dated. In recent years, FPTP has not facilitated the aggregation of the party system in established democracies such as Canada and India: nor has it led to the formation of strong and lasting parties in Papua New Guinea. PR has seen the election of dominant single-party regimes in Namibia, South Africa and elsewhere. More broadly, electoral system consequences depend upon factors such as how a society is structured in terms of ideological, religious, ethnic, racial, regional, linguistic, or class divisions; whether the country is an established democracy, a transitional democracy, or a new democracy; whether there is an established party system, whether parties are embryonic and unformed, and how many “serious” parties there are; and whether a particular party’s supporters are geographically concentrated together, or dispersed over a wide area.

The Broader Democratic Framework
21. It is also important not to see electoral systems in isolation. Their design and effects are heavily contingent upon other structures within and outside of the constitution. Electoral systems are one square of an interrelated patchwork of government systems, rules and access points to power. Successful electoral system design comes from looking at the framework of political institutions as a whole: changing one part of this framework is likely to cause adjustments in the way other institutions within it work.
22. For example, how does the chosen electoral system facilitate or encourage conflict resolution between party leaders and activists on the ground? How much control do party leaders have over the party's elected representatives? Are there constitutional provisions for referenda, citizens' initiatives or 'direct democracy' which may trump the institutions of representative democracy? And are the details of the electoral system in the constitution, as an attached schedule to the constitution or in regular legislation - which will determine how entrenched the system is versus how open it may be to change by elected majorities.

23. There are two issues of this kind that are worth considering in more detail. The first is the degree of centralisation. Is the country federal or unitary, and if federal are the units symmetrical in their power or asymmetrical? The second is the choice between parliamentarism and presidentialism. Both systems have their advocates, and the traditions of different countries may influence which is chosen or even foreclose debate: but the different relationship between legislative and executive institutions has important implications for electoral system design for both. The frequent debates over the direct election of mayors and heads of the executive at local level combine both issues.

24. In most bicameral legislatures in federal systems of government, the two chambers are elected by different (or incongruent) methods. This makes sense for two prime reasons to do with the theory underpinning federalism. First, the second (or upper) house of a federal legislature is there to represent the regions or states of the country, and each state often receives equal representation regardless of population or territory size (e.g., the US Senate or South Africa's National Council of Provinces). Second, there is little point in creating a two chamber legislature unless there is a degree of difference between the roles and possibly also of the powers of the two chambers, and using the same electoral system for both is more likely to repeat and reinforce the majority power that controls the lower chamber – particularly if the elections to both chambers are simultaneous. Upper chambers provide the opportunity for some degree of electoral innovation to include communities of interest who may not be fully represented in national elections to a lower chamber. But when elections take place at three or more levels, to the upper chamber of the legislature, the lower chamber of the legislature, and the institutions of government at state level, it is crucial that the systems used are considered together. It may for example be possible to promote representation of minorities at regional level while discouraging or even prohibiting it at national level. Whether this is or is not desirable is a matter of political debate and choice.

25. Until recent years, there were few examples of enduring democracies using presidential systems. The commitment to presidentialism in for example Latin America and parts of South East Asia means that the question now asked is: What aspects of institutional design help make presidentialism work? There is some evidence from the Latin American experience that stability can be problematic in countries with presidential constitutions and highly fragmented party systems, and that there are tensions between divided executive and legislative branches when the presidential electoral system is over Two Rounds, the legislative system is list PR and the elections are not held concurrently. However, it appears helpful to adopt an electoral system which makes it likely that the party or coalition supporting an elected president has a significant block, although not necessarily a majority, of elected members of the legislature.

26. Plurality elections for the presidency and simultaneous presidential and legislative elections are often seen to help focus the party system into fewer and more viable challengers for power. However, there can be serious dangers in combining the large amount of power that is vested in
the hands of a directly elected president who is head of the executive and the use of a plurality method in a diverse or ethnically divided country where no single group has an absolute majority. The result can be devastating for legitimacy or indeed for the success of a peace process. A presidential election system may complement a federal system by requiring a successful candidate not only to achieve a winning vote nationwide, but also in a minimum number of the states of the federation (as in Nigeria or Indonesia).

**Criteria for Design**

27. When designing an electoral system, it is best to start with a list of criteria which sum up what you want to achieve, what you want to avoid and, in a broad sense, what you want your legislature and executive government to look like. The criteria which follow cover many areas, but the list is not exhaustive and the reader may add a host of equally valid items. It is also true that some of the criteria outlined overlap and may appear contradictory. This is because they often are contradictory: it is the nature of institutional design that tradeoffs have to be made between a number of competing desires and objectives.

For example, one may want to provide the opportunity for independent candidates to be elected, and at the same time to encourage the growth of strong political parties. Or the electoral system designer may think it wise to craft a system which gives voters a wide degree of choice between candidates and parties, but this may make for a complicated ballot paper which causes difficulties for less-educated voters. The trick in choosing (or reforming) an electoral system is to prioritize which criteria are most important and then assess which electoral system, or combination of systems, best maximizes these objectives.

**Providing Representation**

28. Representation may take at least four forms. First, *geographical* representation implies that each region, be it a town or a city, a province or an electoral district, has members of the legislature whom they choose and who are ultimately accountable to their area. Second, the *ideological* divisions within society may be represented in the legislature, whether through representatives from political parties, independent representatives, or a combination of both. Third, a legislature may be representative of the *party-political* situation that exists within the country even if political parties do not have an ideological base. If half the voters vote for one political party but that party wins no, or hardly any, seats in the legislature, then that system cannot be said to adequately represent the will of the people. Fourth, the concept of *descriptive* representation considers that the legislature should be to some degree a "mirror of the nation" which should look, feel, think, and act in a way which reflects the people as a whole. An adequately descriptive legislature would include both men and women, the young and old, the wealthy and poor, and reflect the different religious affiliations, linguistic communities and ethnic groups within a society.

**Making Elections Accessible and Meaningful**

29. Elections are all well and good, but they may mean little to people if it is difficult to vote or if, at the end of the day, their vote makes no difference to the way the country is governed. The “ease of voting” is determined by factors such as how complex the ballot paper is, how easy it is for the voter to get to a polling place, how up to date the electoral register is, and how confident the voter will be that his or her ballot is secret.
30. Coupled with those concerns is the broader issue of whether an individual’s vote makes a difference to the final results. If you know that your preferred candidate has no chance of winning a seat in your particular district, what is the incentive to vote? In some electoral systems the number of “wasted votes” (i.e., valid votes which do not go towards the election of any candidate, as distinct from spoiled or invalid votes, which are ballots excluded from the count) can amount to a substantial proportion of the total national vote.

31. Lastly, the actual power of the body being elected helps determine whether its election has any meaning. Hollow or choiceless elections in authoritarian systems, where legislatures have little real influence on the formation of governments or on government policy, are far less important than elections to legislatures which actually have the power to determine central elements in people’s everyday lives. Electoral participation – at least as a free choice - is also thought to increase when the outcome of elections, either at a national level or in the voter’s particular district, is likely to make a significant difference to the future direction of government.

Even within democratic systems, the choice of electoral system can influence the legitimacy of institutions. For example, the Australian Senate between 1919 and 1946 was elected by a highly disproportional electoral system (the Alternative Vote in multi-member districts), which produced lop-sided and unrepresentative results. This tended to undermine the actual legitimacy of the Senate itself in the eyes of both electors and politicians and, some observers argued, also undermined public support for the institutions of federal government in general. After the system was altered to a fairer proportional system (the Single Transferable Vote) in 1948, the Senate began to be perceived as more credible and representative, and thus respect for it and its relative importance in decision-making increased.

Providing Incentives for Conciliation

32. Electoral systems can be seen not only as ways to constitute governing bodies, but also as a tool of conflict management within a society. Some systems, in some circumstances, will encourage parties to make inclusive appeals for electoral support outside their own core vote base; for instance, even though a party draws its support primarily from black voters, a particular electoral system may give it the incentive to appeal also to white, or other, voters. Thus, the party’s policy platform would become less divisive and exclusionary, and more unifying and inclusive. Similar electoral system incentives might make parties less ethnically, regionally, linguistically, or ideologically exclusive. Examples of how differing electoral systems have worked as tools of conflict management are given throughout this Handbook.

33. On the other side of the coin, electoral systems can encourage voters to look outside their own group and think of voting for parties who traditionally have represented a different group. Such voting behaviour breeds accommodation and community building. Systems which give the voter more than one vote or allow the voter to order candidates preferentially provide the space for electors to cut across pre-conceived social boundaries. At the 1998 ‘Good Friday’ agreement election in Northern Ireland, for instance, vote transfers under the STV system benefited ‘pro-peace’ parties while still providing broadly proportional outcomes. At the 2003 election, however, a shift in first preference votes towards hardline parties tended to outweigh such effects.

Facilitating Stable and Efficient Government

34. The prospects for a stable and efficient government are not determined by the electoral system alone, but the results a system produces can contribute to stability in a number of important respects. The key questions are whether voters perceive the system to be fair, whether government can efficiently enact legislation and govern, and whether the system avoids discriminating against particular parties or interest groups.
35. The perception of whether results are “fair” or not varies widely from country to country. Twice in Britain (in 1951 and 1974) the party winning the most votes in the country as a whole won fewer seats than their opponents, but this was considered more a quirk of a basically sound system than an outright unfairness which should be reversed. Conversely, similar results in New Zealand in 1978 and 1981, in which the National Party retained office despite winning fewer votes than the Labour opposition, are credited as starting the reform movement which led to the change of electoral system.

36. The question of whether the government of the day can efficiently enact legislation is partly linked to whether it can assemble a working majority in the legislature or not, and this in turn is linked to the electoral system. As a general rule of thumb, plurality/majority electoral systems are more likely to give rise to legislatures where one party can outvote the combined opposition, while proportional representation systems are more likely to give rise to coalition governments. Nevertheless, it has to be remembered that PR systems can also give rise to single party majorities, and plurality/majority systems can leave no one party with a working majority. Much depends on the structure of the party system and the nature of the society itself.

37. Finally, the system should, as far as possible, act in an electorally neutral manner towards all parties and candidates; it should not overtly discriminate against any political grouping. The perception that electoral politics in a democracy is an uneven playing field is a sign that the political order is weak and that instability may not be far around the corner. A dramatic example of this was the 1998 election in Lesotho, in which the Lesotho Congress for Democracy won every seat in the legislature with only 60% of the votes under a FPTP system. The public unrest that followed, culminating in military intervention into the country by South African and Botswanan forces, demonstrated that such a result was not merely unfair but also dangerous, and the electoral system was consequently changed for future elections.

Holding the Government Accountable

38. Accountability is one of the bedrocks of representative government – its absence may indeed lead to long-term instability. An accountable political system is one in which the government is responsible to their voters to the highest degree possible. Voters should be able to influence the shape of the government, either by altering the coalition of parties in power or by throwing out of office a single party which has failed to deliver. Suitably designed electoral systems facilitate this objective.

Traditionally, plurality/majority systems like FPTP were seen as leading to single parties taking office, while proportional representation systems were associated with multi-party coalitions. While the broad logic of this association remains valid, there have been sufficient examples in recent years of FPTP elections leading to multi-party cabinets (eg in India), or of PR elections leading to the election of strong single-party government (eg in South Africa) to raise doubts about the automatic assumption that one kind of electoral system will lead to particular governance outcomes. But clearly, electoral systems do have a major impact on broader issues of governance, both for presidential and parliamentary systems.

Holding Individual Representatives Accountable

39. Accountability at the individual level is the ability of the electorate to effectively check on those who, once elected, betray the promises they made during the campaign or demonstrate incompetence or idleness in office – to ‘throw the rascals out’.
Plurality/majority systems have traditionally been seen as maximising the ability of voters to throw out unsatisfactory individual representatives. Again, this sometimes remains valid. However, the connection becomes tenuous where voters identify primarily with parties rather than candidates, as in the United Kingdom.

**Encouraging Political Parties**

40. The weight of evidence from both established and new democracies suggests that longer-term democratic consolidation – i.e. the extent to which a democratic regime is insulated from domestic challenges to the stability of the political order – requires the growth and maintenance of strong and effective parties, and thus the electoral system should encourage this tendency rather than entrench or promote party fragmentation. The role of parties as a vehicle for individual political leaders is another trend which can be facilitated or retarded by electoral system design decisions.

Most experts also agree that the system should encourage the development of parties which are based on broad political values and ideologies as well as specific policy programmes, rather than narrow ethnic, racial, or regional concerns. As well as lessening the threat of inter-societal conflict, parties which are based on these broad “crosscutting cleavages” are more likely to reflect national opinion than those based predominantly on sectarian or regional concerns.

**Promoting Legislative Opposition and Oversight**

41. Effective governance relies not only upon those “in power” but, almost as much, on those who oppose and oversee them. The electoral system should help ensure the presence of a viable opposition grouping which can critically assess legislation, question the performance of the executive, safeguard minority rights, and represent their constituents effectively. Opposition groupings should have enough representatives to be effective, assuming they warrant these members by their performance at the ballot box, and in a parliamentary system should be able to realistically present an alternative to the current government. Obviously the strength of the opposition depends on many factors other than the choice of electoral system, but if the system itself makes the opposition impotent, democratic governance is inherently weakened. A major reason for the change to a MMP electoral system in New Zealand, for example, was the systematic under-representation of smaller opposition parties under FPTP. At the same time, the electoral system should hinder the development of a “winner take all” attitude which leaves rulers blind to other views and the needs and desires of opposition voters, and in which both elections and government itself are seen as zero-sum contests.

In a presidential system, the president needs the reliable support of a substantial group of legislators: however, the role of others in opposing and scrutinising government legislative proposals is equally important. The separation of powers between legislature and executive effectively gives the task of executive oversight to all legislators, not only opposition members. This makes it important to give particular thought to the element of the electoral system concerning the relative importance of political parties and candidates, alongside the relationship between parties and their elected members.

**Making the Election Process Sustainable**

42. Elections do not take place on the pages of academic books but in the real world, and for this reason the choice of any electoral system is, to some degree, dependent on the cost and administrative capacities of the country involved. Although donor countries often provide substantial financial support for the first, and even the second, election in a country in transition to democracy, this is unlikely to be available in the long term even if it were desirable. A
sustainable political framework takes into account the resources of a country – both in terms of the availability of people with the skills to be election administrators and in terms of the financial demands on the national budget.

For example, a poor country may not be able to afford the multiple elections required under a Two-Round System, or be able to easily administer a complicated preferential vote count. However, simplicity in the short term may not always make for cost-effectiveness in the longer run. An electoral system may be cheap and easy to administer, but it may not answer the pressing needs of a country - and when an electoral system is at odds with a country’s needs the results can be disastrous. Alternatively, a system which appears at the outset to be a little more expensive to administer and more complex to understand may in the long run help to ensure the stability of the country and the positive direction of democratic consolidation.

Taking into account ‘International Standards’

43. Finally, the design of electoral systems today takes place in the context of a number of international covenants, treaties and other kinds of legal instruments affecting political issues. While there is no single complete set of universally agreed international standards for elections, there is consensus that such standards include the principle of free, fair and periodic elections that guarantee universal adult suffrage, the secrecy of the ballot, freedom from coercion, and a commitment to one person, one vote. While there is no legal stipulation that a particular kind of electoral system is preferable to another, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of issues affected by electoral systems, such as the fair representation of all citizens, equality of women and men, the rights of minorities, special considerations for the disabled, and so on. These are formalized in international legal instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and in the various conventions and commitments concerning democratic elections made by regional organisations such as the European Union and the OSCE.

Conclusions

44. The ten criteria outlined in this section are at times in conflict with each other or even mutually exclusive. The electoral system designer must therefore go through a careful process of prioritizing which criteria are most important to the particular political context before moving on to assess which system will do the best job. A useful way forward is to first list the things which must be avoided at all costs, such as political catastrophes which could lead to the breakdown of democracy. For example an ethnically-divided country might want above all to avoid excluding minority ethnic groups from representation, in order to promote the legitimacy of the electoral process and avoid the perception that the electoral system was unfair. In contrast, while these issues would remain important, a fledgling democracy elsewhere might have different priorities – perhaps to ensure that a government could efficiently enact legislation without fear of gridlock, or that voters were able to remove discredited leaders if they so wished. How to prioritize among such competing criteria can only be the domain of the domestic actors involved in the constitutional design process.

The Process of Change

45. The process through which an electoral system is designed or altered has a great effect upon the type of the system which arises, its appropriateness for the political situation, and the degree of legitimacy and popular support it will ultimately enjoy.
Electoral systems are very rarely designed on a blank slate where no precedents exist – even the design efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq have historical multi-party competitive precedents to draw on (albeit distant in time and shining little light on what may be successful in the future).

Some key questions of electoral system design are: Who designs? That is, who puts the idea of electoral system change onto the political agenda, and who has the responsibility for drawing up a proposed new or amended system and through what type of process? What are the mechanisms built into the political and legal framework for reform and amendment? What process of discussion and dialogue is necessary to ensure that a proposed new or amended system is accepted as legitimate? Once change has been decided upon, how is it implemented?

Who Designs?

46. Electoral systems come into being through a number of divergent paths. First, they can be inherited without significant alteration from colonial or occupying administrations (Malawi, Mali, the Solomon Islands and Palau being examples).

Second, they can result from peace process negotiations between communal groups seeking to bring an end to division or war (e.g., Lesotho, South Africa and Lebanon). In these circumstances the electoral system choice may not be open to full public scrutiny or debate.

Third, the system may be effectively imposed by the groups responsible for post-conflict political reconstruction (e.g., the Coalition authorities and the appointed Transitional National Council in Afghanistan).

Fourth, elements of a previous authoritarian regime may have a strong role in designing a new electoral system during their extrication from power (as in Chile).

Fifth, an expert commission may be set up to investigate the electoral system alone (as in the United Kingdom or Mauritius) or as part of the broader constitutional context (as in Fiji). This may lead to recommendations being put to a national referendum (as was the case in New Zealand) or a legislative vote on the commission’s recommendations (as in Fiji).

Sixth, citizens may be involved more widely in the design process by the establishment of a non-expert Citizens’ Assembly on the electoral system. This approach has been adopted by the Canadian state of British Columbia, which led to a recommendation for change from First Past The Post to Single Transferable Vote that would be put to a statewide referendum for decision (see British Columbia case study).

What are the Mechanisms for Reform and Amendment?

47. While electoral systems are an extremely important institution affecting the way in which a country’s system of government works, traditionally they have not been formally specified in constitutions, the highest source of law. In recent years, however, this has started to change. Today, a number of countries have “embedded” details about the electoral system in their constitution or in a separate schedule to the constitution. The significance of this for electoral reformers is that constitutionally entrenched laws are usually much harder to change than ordinary laws, usually requiring a special majority in the legislature, a national referendum or similar, which shield such systems from easy alteration. For example, the South African constitution states that the electoral system for the national assembly elections shall result “in general in proportionality” and so reform options are constrained to PR type systems unless a constitutional amendment were to be made.

However, the details of the electoral system are still more often to be found in regular law and thus can be changed by a simple majority in the legislature. This may have the advantage of
making the system more responsive to changes in public opinion and political needs, but also contains the danger of majorities in a legislature unilaterally altering systems to give them political advantage.

48. The opportunities for reform rely on both the legal mechanisms for change and on the political context within which calls for change are made. Not all movements for electoral system change are successful. Almost all recent examples of major change occurred in one of two sets of circumstances. The first is in the course of a transition to democracy or shortly afterwards, when the whole political framework is ‘up for grabs’. The second is when there is a crisis of governance in an established democracy. Two examples are the perceived illegitimacy of two successive majority governments elected with fewer votes than their major opponents in New Zealand, and the perception that high levels of corruption in Italy and Japan were endemic to the political system rather than the results of the actions of particular individuals. All three are illustrated in case studies in this Handbook.

49. Even when there is huge popular distrust and dissatisfaction with the political system, change still needs to be agreed by the current holders of power. Political elites are only likely to act if they can see benefit to themselves from change or if they are frightened of the electoral consequences to themselves of failing to change. Even when convinced, they will unsurprisingly and almost inevitably seek to choose a system that maximises the benefit to themselves. If they are unsure how this can be achieved or if different interests seek different solutions, negotiated compromises may be likely – perhaps involving mixed systems. However, agreements and changes may not turn out to have the effects intended by their proponents, or may produce other unintended effects. In Mexico, reforms in 1994 designed by the governing party to make concessions to the opposition led to the most disproportional result in recent years. (See Mexico case study).

50. South Africa and Chile illustrate that political realities and the desire of ruling parties to maintain their power and influence can be just as much a block on electoral system reform as legal hurdles. After widespread calls for South Africa to build in a district element of local accountability into their large district geographically detached closed list PR system, which were reinforced by the majority findings of a presidential commission which reported in January 2003, the South African government declined to entertain reform as they shied away from changes that would reduce their control over candidate selection and caucus voting behaviour. General Pinochet’s legacy was to rig the Chilean electoral system to advantage his allies. More than a decade after his removal from power, that system remains effectively unchanged.

51. In New Zealand, the use of referendums during the process of change resulted initially from a political move - an attempt by the leader of one major party to wrongfoot the other major party during a general election campaign. In the first referendum, the electorate was asked whether it wanted change at all, and to indicate its preferred new system from four options. In the second, the chosen new system was pitted against the retention of the previous system. As a result, the new multi-member proportional system was adopted with a clear expression of public legitimacy.

52. Electoral systems will inevitably need to adapt over time if they are to adequately respond to new political, demographic and legislative trends and needs. However, without a transition or a major political crisis as catalyst, it appears that change at the margins may well be a more likely event. Reformers may consider changed district size, threshold levels, or quota formulae, to try to engineer improvements within existing systems. Many significant reforms proposed in the past few years have involved adding a List PR element on to an existing FPTP system to create a mixed, more proportional system (for example, the changes enacted in Lesotho and Thailand).

**Advice on Debate and Dialogue**
53. It is the task of reformers not only to understand the legal form and the technical arguments and implications of potential change, but to understand and be able to explain the political arguments and the implications for the wider political framework of the country. Significant voices in civil society, academia and the media may contribute to developing a public perception that change is necessary. But a sufficient number of power holders will need to be convinced of the benefits, including to themselves.

54. Even with the current increased interest in electoral systems, the number of people, both in elite circles and in society generally, who understand the likely impact of changes may be very limited. This is complicated further by the fact that the operation of electoral systems in practice may be heavily dependent on apparently minor points of detail. Reformers may need not only to fully work through and explain the legal detail that would be necessary to implement change, but to make technical projections and simulations (often using data from previous elections) to show, for example, the shape and meaning of proposals on electoral districts or the potential impact on the representation of political parties. Technical simulations can also be used to ensure that all contingencies are covered and to evaluate apparently unlikely outcomes: it is better to answer questions when change is being promoted than in the middle of a crisis later!

55. Voter involvement programmes, for example inviting members of the public to participate in mock elections under a potential new system, may attract media attention and increase familiarity with proposals for change. They may also help to identify problems – for example, voter difficulty with ballot papers - which a new system may generate.

Advice on implementation

56. Voters, election administrators, politicians and commentators all tend to be comfortable with what is familiar. Years of use may have provided solutions for the rough edges of established systems. A new system can thus be a leap into the unknown, and problems in implementation can arise from its unfamiliarity.

While this cannot be avoided completely, the planners of change cannot sit back when legislative changes are in place. A process of change is complete only with intensive voter education programmes to explain how the new system works to all participants and with the design and agreement of user-friendly implementing regulations.

57. The most effective voter education – and election administrator education - takes time. However, time is often in short supply to an electoral management body organising an election under a new system. As all good negotiators use time pressure before a final agreement is reached, this is particularly true when the new system is the product of hard negotiation between political actors. An effective electoral management body will nonetheless prepare as much as possible as early as possible.

Assessing the impact of change

58. Having discussed the process of change in depth, a word of caution is needed. Because electoral systems have psychological as well as mechanical effects, the long term effect of changes may take some time to work through. Parties, candidates and voters may take two or three elections to fully observe and respond to the effects and incentives of particular changes. Judgment may be necessary as to whether problems in a new or amended electoral system are merely transitional, or whether they show that the system is fundamentally flawed and requires urgent amendment or replacement debate. In the aftermath of George Speight's 2000 coup, such a debate is currently taking place in Fiji: will the Alternative Vote settle so that parties and voters respond to incentives for interethnic moderation, or does the history since its adoption in 1997 indicate that it is fundamentally unsound in the Fijian context?

Trends in Electoral System Reform

59. The Italian referendum in early 2003 leading to a change to a Mixed Member Proportional System for the elections the following year marked the beginning of a series of several significant electoral system changes all over the world. In the vast majority of the
cases, changes have been made in the margins; with a new seat allocation formula, a new number of electoral districts, or an extra few appointed members in the legislature; but as many as 26 countries have since followed Italy’s example and gone through reform processes that have completely altered their electoral system from one to another.

As shown by the table, the trend is rather clear. Most countries that have changed electoral systems have changed them in the direction of more proportionality; either by adding a PR element to their plurality system (making it a parallel or an MMP system) or by completely removing their old system and replacing it by List PR. The most common switch has been from a plurality/majority system to a mixed system, and there is not one example of a change in the opposite direction. The new plurality/majority systems all come from within the same family except for the case of Madagascar, which moved from a List PR system, not to a pure plurality/majority system, but to a hybrid where the FPTP share is larger than the List PR share.

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<tr>
<th>Previous System (Family)</th>
<th>New System (Family)</th>
<th>Plurality/Majority</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Proportional</th>
<th>Other</th>
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18
Design Components

60. Once a decision has been made about the important goals to achieve – and the important pitfalls to avoid – in a new electoral system, there are a group of electoral system design tools which can be used to help achieve these goals. They include, among others, electoral system family and type, district magnitude, relative role of political parties and candidates, form of ballot paper, procedures for drawing electoral boundaries, electoral registration mechanisms, timing and synchronisation of elections, and quotas and other special provisions.

These tools will work differently in different combinations. Their effect will also depend on other institutional framework tools, such as the choice between parliamentarism and presidentialism, the requirements for registration and management of political parties, the relationship between political parties and elected members, and the role of direct democracy instruments - referendums, citizens’ initiatives, and recall. It is worth emphasising again that there is never a single ‘correct solution’ that can be imposed in a vacuum.

2. THE WORLD OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

61. As noted above, there are countless electoral system variations, but essentially they can be split into twelve main systems the majority of which fall into three broad families. The most common way to look at electoral systems is to group them by how closely they translate national votes won into legislative seats won; that is, how proportional they are. To do this, one needs to look at both the vote-seat relationship and the level of wasted votes. For example, South Africa used a classically proportional electoral system for its elections of 2004, and with 69.69% of the popular vote the African National Congress (ANC) won 69.75% of the national seats. The electoral system was highly proportional, and the number of wasted votes (i.e., those which were cast for parties who did not win seats in the Assembly) was only a small fraction of the total. In direct contrast in 2000, in Mongolia, a Two Round System only requiring a plurality of 25 per cent of the votes to be elected, resulted in the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP) winning 72 seats in the 76-member parliament with around 52 per cent of the popular vote. This result was mirrored in Djibouti’s Party Block Vote election of 2003 when all 65 legislative seats were won by the Rassemblement Populaire pour le Progrès with 62.7 per cent of the vote.

62. However, under some circumstances non-proportional electoral systems (such as FPTP) can accidentally give rise to relatively proportional overall results. This was the case in a third Southern African country, Malawi, in 2004. In that election the Malawian Congress Party won 30% of the seats with 25% of the votes, the United Democratic Front won 27% of the seats with 25% of the votes, and the Alliance for Democracy won a little more than 3% of the seats with just under 4% of the votes. The overall level of proportionality was high, but the clue to the fact that this was not inherently a proportional system, and so cannot be categorized as such, was that the wasted votes still amounted to almost half of all votes cast.

63. If we take the proportionality principle into account, along with some other considerations such as how many members are elected from each district and how many votes the voter has, we are left with the family structure illustrated in Figure One.
**Plurality/Majority Systems**

64. The distinguishing features of plurality/majority systems is that they almost always use single-member districts. In a First Past the Post system, sometimes known as a plurality single-member district system, the winner is the candidate with the most votes, but not necessarily an absolute majority of the votes. When this system is used in multi-member districts it becomes the Block Vote. Voters have as many votes as there are seats to be filled, and the highest-polling candidates fill the positions regardless of the percentage of the vote they actually achieve. This system – with the change that voters vote for party lists instead of individual candidates – becomes the Party Block Vote. Majoritarian systems, such as the Australian Alternative Vote and the Two-Round System, try to ensure that the winning candidate receives an absolute majority (i.e. over 50%). Each system in essence makes use of voters’ second preferences to produce a majority winner if one does not emerge from the first round of voting.

**Mixed Systems**

65. Parallel systems use both a PR element and a plurality/majority (or other) element running independently of each other. Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) systems also use two elements (one of which is a PR system), with the difference that the PR element compensates for any disproportionality arising under the plurality/majority or other system, normally leading to a much more proportional outcome than a Parallel system. Parallel and Mixed Member systems have been widely adopted by new democracies in Africa and the former Soviet Union.

**Proportional Representation Systems**

66. The rationale underpinning all proportional representation (PR) systems is to consciously reduce the disparity between a party’s share of the national vote and its share of the parliamentary seats: if a major party wins 40% of the votes, it should win approximately 40% of the seats, and a minor party with 10% of the votes should also gain 10% of the legislative seats. Proportionality is often seen as being best achieved by the use of party lists, where political parties present lists of candidates to the voters on a national or regional basis, but preferential voting can work equally well: the Single Transferable Vote, where voters rank order candidates in multi-member districts, is another well-established proportional system.
Other Systems

67. Three systems do not fit neatly under any one of the above mentioned categories. The Single Non-Transferable Vote is a multi-member district, candidate centred system in which voters have one vote. Limited Vote is very much like SNTV but gives voters more than one vote (however, unlike Block Vote – not as many as there are seats to be filled). Borda Count is a preferential system in single- or multi-member districts.

THE SYSTEMS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Plurality/Majority Systems

What plurality/majority systems are

68. The principle of plurality/majority systems is simple. After votes have been cast and totalled, those candidates or parties with the most votes are declared the winners, possibly provided that their support meets additional conditions. However, the way this is achieved in practice varies widely. Five varieties of plurality/majority systems can be identified: First Past the Post (FPTP), Block Vote (BV), Party Block Vote (PBV), Alternative Vote (AV), and the Two-Round System (TRS).

First Past the Post (FPTP)

69. The First Past the Post system is the simplest form of plurality/majority system, using single member districts and candidate-centred voting. The voter is presented with a list of candidates, and votes by choosing one, and only one, of them. The winning candidate is simply the person who wins most votes; in theory he or she could be elected with two votes, if every other candidate only secured a single vote.

70. To date, pure First Past the Post systems are found primarily in the United Kingdom and those countries historically influenced by Britain. Along with the United Kingdom, the most analysed cases are Canada, India and the United States of America, FPTP is also used by a number of Caribbean countries; in Latin America by Belize; by five Asian countries, Bangladesh, Burma, India, Malaysia and Nepal; and by many of the small island countries of the South Pacific. In Africa 15 countries, mostly former British colonies, use First Past the Post systems. In total, out of the 213 countries listed in Annex A (including transitional countries and countries with no direct elections) – 22 per cent – use FPTP systems.

71. Advantages. FPTP, like other plurality/majority electoral systems, is defended primarily on the grounds of simplicity and its tendency to produce representatives beholden to defined geographic areas. The most often cited advantages of First Past the Post are that:

a. It provides a clear cut choice for voters between two main parties. The inbuilt disadvantages faced by third and fragmented minority parties under FPTP in many cases make the party system gravitate towards a party of the “left” and a party of the “right”, alternating in power. Third parties often wither away, and almost never reach a threshold of popular support where their national vote achieves a comparable percentage of seats in the legislature.
b. It gives rise to single party governments. The “seat bonuses” for the largest party common under FPTP (i.e., where one party wins, for example, 45% of the national vote but 55% of the seats) means that coalition governments are the exception rather than the rule. This state of affairs is praised for providing cabinets which are unshackled from the restraints of having to bargain with a minority coalition partner.

c. It gives rise to a coherent opposition in the legislature. In theory, the flip side of a strong single-party government is that the opposition is also given enough seats to perform a critical checking role, and present itself as a realistic alternative to the government of the day.

d. It advantages broadly-based political parties. In severely ethnically or regionally divided societies, FPTP is praised for encouraging political parties to be “broad churches”, encompassing many elements of society, particularly when there are only two major parties and many different societal groups. These parties can then field a diverse array of candidates for election. In Malaysia, for example, the UMNO government is made up of a broad-based umbrella movement, which fields Chinese candidates in Malay areas and vice-versa.

e. It excludes extremist parties from representation in the legislature. Unless an extremist minority party's electoral support is geographically concentrated, it is unlikely to win any seats under FPTP. (By contrast, under a List PR system with a single national level district, a fraction of one per cent of the national vote can ensure representation in the legislature.)

f. It promotes a link between constituents and their representatives, as it gives rise to a legislature of geographical representatives. Elected members represent defined areas of cities, towns, or regions rather than just party labels. Some analysts have argued that this “geographic accountability” is particularly important in agrarian societies and in developing countries.

g. It allows voters to choose between people rather than just between parties. Voters can assess the performance of individual candidates rather than just having to accept a list of candidates presented by a party, as can happen under some List PR electoral systems.

h. It gives a chance for popular independent candidates to be elected. This may be particularly important in developing party systems, where politics still revolves more around extended ties of family, clan or kinship and is not based on strong party-political organisations.

i. Finally, FPTP systems are particularly praised for being simple to use and understand. A valid vote requires only one mark beside the name or symbol of one candidate. Even if the number of candidates on the ballot paper is large, the count is easy for electoral officials to conduct.

72. Disadvantages. However, FPTP is frequently criticised for a number of reasons. These include:

a. It excludes smaller parties from “fair” representation, in the sense that a party which wins approximately, say, 10% of the votes should win approximately 10% of the legislative seats. In the 1993 federal election in Canada the Progressive Conservatives won 16% of the votes but only 0.7% of the seats, and in the 1998 general election in Lesotho the Basotho National Party won 24% of the votes but only 1% of the seats. This is a pattern which is repeated time and time again under FPTP.

b. It excludes minorities from fair representation. As a rule, under FPTP parties put up the most broadly acceptable candidate in a particular district so as to avoid alienating the majority of electors. Thus it is rare, for example, for a black candidate to be given a major party’s nomination in a majority white district in Britain or the USA, and there is strong evidence that ethnic and racial minorities across the world are far less likely to be represented in legislatures elected by FPTP. In consequence, if voting behaviour does dovetail with ethnic divisions, then the exclusion from representation of ethnic minority group members can be destabilizing for the political system as a whole.
c. It excludes women from the legislature. The “most broadly acceptable candidate” syndrome also affects the ability of women to be elected to legislative office, because they are often less likely to be selected as candidates by male-dominated party structures. Evidence across the world suggests that women are less likely to be elected to the legislature under plurality/majority systems than under PR ones. The Inter-Parliamentary Union’s study of “Women in Parliament” found that, as at June 2004, on average 15.6% of the representatives in lower houses of legislatures were women.

d. It can encourage the development of political parties based on clan, ethnicity or region, which may base their campaigns and policy platforms on conceptions attractive to the majority in their district or region but excluding and hostile to others. This has been an ongoing problem in African countries like Malawi and Kenya, where large communal groups tend to be regionally concentrated. The country is thus divided into geographically separate party strongholds, with little incentive for parties to make appeals outside their home region and cultural-political base.

e. It exaggerates “regional fiefdoms” where one party wins all the seats in a province or area. If a party has strong support in a particular part of a country, winning a majority of votes, it will win all, or nearly all, of the legislative seats. This both excludes minorities in that area from representation and reinforces the perception that politics is a battleground defined by who you are and where you live rather than what you believe in. This has long been put forward as an argument against FPTP in Canada.

f. It leaves a large number of “wasted votes” which do not go towards the election of any candidate. This can be particularly dangerous if combined with regional fiefdoms, because minority party supporters in the region may begin to feel that they have no realistic hope of ever electing a candidate of their choice. This can also be dangerous where alienation from the political system increases the likelihood that extremists will be able to mobilise antisystem movements.

g. It can cause vote splitting. Where two similar parties or candidates compete under FPTP, the vote of their potential supporters is often split between them, thus allowing a less popular party or candidate to win the seat. Papua New Guinea provides a particularly clear example of this.

h. It may be unresponsive to changes in public opinion. A pattern of geographically concentrated electoral support in a country means that one party can maintain exclusive executive control in the face of a substantial drop in popular support. In some democracies under FPTP, a fall from 60% to 40% of a party’s popular vote nationally may result in a fall from 80% to 60% in the number of seats held, which does not affect its overall dominant position. Unless sufficient seats are highly competitive, the system can be insensitive to swings in public opinion.

i. Finally, FPTP systems are dependent on the drawing of electoral boundaries. All electoral boundaries have political consequences: there is no independent technical process to produce a single ‘correct answer’ (as illustrated in Annex E). Boundary delimitation may require substantial time and resources for the results to be accepted as legitimate.

In addition, there may be pressure to manipulate boundaries through gerrymandering or malapportionment. This was particularly apparent in the Kenyan elections of 1993 when huge disparities between the sizes of electoral districts – the largest had 23 times the number of voters as the smallest – contributed to the ruling Kenyan African National Union party’s winning a large majority in the legislature with only 30% of the popular vote.

[INSERT INDIA CASE STUDY ABOUT HERE]
Block Vote (BV)

73. The Block Vote is simply the use of plurality voting in multimember districts. Voters have as many votes as there are seats to be filled in their district, and are usually free to vote for individual candidates regardless of party affiliation. In most Block Vote systems they may use as many, or as few, votes as they wish.

74. The Block Vote is common in countries with weak or nonexistent political parties. In 2004, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Guernsey, Kuwait, Lao, Lebanon, the Maldives, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Tonga and Tuvalu all use Block Vote electoral systems. The system was also used in Jordan in 1989, in Mongolia in 1992, and in the Philippines and Thailand until 1997, but was changed in all of these countries as a result of unease with the results it produced.

75. Advantages. The Block Vote is often applauded for retaining the voter’s ability to vote for individual candidates and allowing for reasonably-sized geographical districts, while at the same time increasing the role of parties compared with FPTP and strengthening those parties which demonstrate most coherence and organisational ability.

76. Disadvantages. However, the Block Vote can have unpredictable and often undesirable impacts on election outcomes. For example, when voters cast all their votes for the candidates of a single party, the system tends to exaggerate most of the disadvantages of FPTP, in particular its disproportionality. When parties nominate a candidate for each vacancy in a Block Vote system and encourage voters to support every member of their slate, this is particularly likely. In Mauritius in 1982 and 1995, for example, the party in opposition before the election won every seat in the legislature with only 64% and 65% of the vote respectively. This created severe difficulties for the effective functioning of a parliamentary system based on concepts of government and opposition. The use of “best loser” seats in Mauritius and Singapore (see below) only partially compensates for this weakness.

77. In Thailand, the Block Vote was seen as having encouraged the fragmentation of the party system. Because it enables electors to vote for candidates of more than one party in the same district, members of the same party may be encouraged to compete against each other for support. The Block Vote is thus sometimes seen as being a contributor to inter-party factionalism and corruption.

78. In recent years, a number of countries have therefore abandoned the Block Vote in favour of other systems. Thailand and the Philippines both changed from the Block Vote to a mixed system in the late 1990s. In both cases, a major justification for this change was the need to combat vote-buying and strengthen the development of political parties (see Thailand case study).

Party Block Vote (PBV)

79. Under Party Block Vote, unlike FPTP, there are multi-member districts. Voters have a single vote, and choose between party lists of candidates rather than between individuals. The party which wins most votes takes all the seats in the district, and its entire list of candidates is duly elected. As in FPTP, there is no requirement to win an absolute majority of the votes. As of 2004, Party Block Vote was used as the only system or the major component of the system in four countries – Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti and Singapore.

80. Advantages. The Party Block Vote is simple to use, encourages strong parties and allows for parties to put up mixed slates of candidates in order to facilitate minority representation. It
can be used to help to ensure balanced ethnic representation, as it enables parties to present ethnically-diverse lists of candidates for election – and may indeed be designed to require them to do so. In Djibouti and Lebanon, each party list must include a mix of candidates from different ethnic groups.

In Singapore, most MPs are elected from multi-member districts known as Group Representation Constituencies. Of the candidates on each party or group list, at least one must be a member of the Malay, Indian or some other minority community. Singapore also uses “best loser” seats for opposition candidates in some circumstances. Other countries, for example Senegal and Tunisia, use the Party Block Vote as the plurality/majority part of their MMP system.

81. **Disadvantages.** However, the Party Block Vote also suffers from most of the disadvantages of FPTP, and may indeed produce “super-majoritarian” results where one party wins almost all of the seats with a simple majority of the votes. In Djibouti’s 1997 election, the ruling Union for the Presidential Majority coalition won every seat, leaving the two opposition parties without any representation in the legislature.

**The Alternative Vote (AV)**

82. Elections under Alternative Vote are usually held in single-member districts, like FPTP elections. However, AV gives voters considerably more options than FPTP when marking their ballot. Rather than simply indicating their favoured candidate, under AV electors rank the candidates in the order of their choice, by marking a “1” for their favourite candidate, “2” for their second choice, “3” for their third choice, and so on. The system thus enables voters to express their preferences between candidates, rather than simply their first choice. For this reason, it is often known as “preferential voting” in the countries which use it.

AV also differs from First Past the Post in the way votes are counted. Like FPTP or Two-Round Systems, a candidate who has won an absolute majority of votes (50% plus one) is immediately elected. However, if no candidate has an absolute majority, under AV the candidate with the lowest number of first preferences is “eliminated” from the count, and his or her ballots are examined for their second preferences. Each ballot is then transferred to whichever remaining candidate has the highest preference in the order as marked on the ballot. This process is repeated until one candidate has an absolute majority, and is declared duly elected. AV is thus a majoritarian system.

83. It is possible, but not essential, in preferential systems such as AV to require voters to number all, or most, of the candidates on the ballot. This avoids the possibility of votes becoming ‘wasted’ at a later stage in the count because they bear no further valid preferences. However, it can lead to an increase in the number of invalid votes, and it can sometimes give substantial importance to preferences between candidates to which the voter is indifferent or actively dislikes.

84. AV is used in Australia, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea. It is thus a good example of the regional diffusion of electoral systems discussed earlier: all national-level examples of the Alternative Vote at present occur in Oceania. However, a number of sub-national jurisdictions in Europe and North America also use variants of the Alternative Vote, and it is used for presidential elections in the Republic of Ireland.

85. **Advantages.** One advantage of transferring ballots is that it enables the votes of several candidates to accumulate, so that diverse but related interests can be combined to win representation. AV also enables supporters of candidates who have little hope of being elected to influence, via their second and later preferences, the election of a major candidate. For this
reason, it is sometimes argued that AV is the best system for promoting centrist politics, as it can compel candidates to seek not only the votes of their own supporters but also the "second preferences" of others. To attract these preferences, candidates must make broadly-based appeals rather than focussing on narrower issues. The experience of AV in Australia tends to support these arguments: the major parties, for example, typically try to strike bargains with minor parties for the second preferences of their supporters prior to an election – a process known as "preference swapping". Furthermore, because of the majority support requirement, AV increases the consent given to elected members, and thus can enhance their perceived legitimacy.

The experience of AV in Papua New Guinea and in Australia suggests that it can provide significant incentives for accommodatory and co-operative politics. In recent years AV, or its variant the supplementary vote, has also been adopted for presidential and mayoral elections in Bosnia, London and San Francisco.

86. Disadvantages. Nevertheless, AV also has a number of disadvantages. First, it requires a reasonable degree of literacy and numeracy to be used effectively, and because it operates in single-member districts it can often produce results that are disproportional when compared to PR systems – or even in some cases compared with FPTP. Also, the potential of AV for promoting centrist outcomes is very dependent on underlying social and demographic conditions: while it successfully promoted inter-ethnic accommodation in Papua New Guinea during the 1960s and 70s and has now been reintroduced there, it has been criticised in another Pacific country, Fiji, since its implementation there in 1997. Moreover, as the earlier discussion of its use in the Australian Senate from 1919 to 1946 noted, AV does not work well when applied to larger, multi-member districts.

87. The central feature of the Two-Round System (TRS) is as the name suggests: that it is not one election but takes place in two rounds, often a week or a fortnight apart. The first round is conducted in the same way as a single round plurality/majority election. In the most common form of TRS, this is conducted using FPTP. It is however also possible to conduct TRS in multi-member districts, using Block Vote (as in Kiribati) or Party Block Vote (as in Mali).

A candidate or party that receives a specified proportion of the vote is elected outright, with no need for a second ballot. This proportion is normally an absolute majority of valid votes cast, although several countries use a different figure when using TRS to elect a president.

88. If, however, no candidate or party receives an absolute majority, then a second round of voting is conducted, and the winner of this round is declared elected. The details of how the second round is conducted vary in practice from case to case. The most common method is for the second round of voting to be a straight "run-off" contest between the two highest vote-winners from the first round; this is called majority-runoff TRS. It produces a result that is truly majoritarian, in that one of the two participants will necessarily achieve an absolute majority of votes and be declared the winner. A second method, majority-plurality TRS, is used for legislative elections in France, the country most often associated with the Two-Round System. In these elections, any candidate who has received the votes of over 12.5% of the registered electorate in the first round can stand in the second round. Whoever wins the highest number of votes in the second round is then declared elected, regardless of whether they have won an absolute majority or not. Unlike majority-runoff, this system is not truly majoritarian, as there may be up to five or six candidates contesting the second round of elections.

89. Two-Round Systems are used to elect 22 national legislatures and are the most common method used worldwide for the direct election of presidents. Alongside France, many of the
other independent nations which use TRS were territorial dependencies of the French Republic, or have been historically influenced in some way by the French. In francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, the system is used by the Central African Republic, Mali, Togo, Gabon, Mauritania, and Congo (Brazzaville), and in North Africa by Egypt. Haiti, Iran, Kiribati, Vietnam and the Comoros Islands also use Two-Round Systems for their legislative elections, as do the post-Soviet bloc countries of Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Another few countries also use TRS to elect district representatives as part of a mixed electoral system.

90. **Advantages.** First and foremost, TRS allows voters to have a second choice for their chosen candidate, or even to change their minds on their favoured choice between the first and the second rounds. TRS thus shares some features in common with preferential systems like the Alternative Vote, in which voters are asked to rank-order candidates, while also enabling voters to make a completely fresh choice in the second round if they so desire. TRS can encourage diverse interests to coalesce behind the successful candidates from the first round in the lead-up to the second round of voting, thus encouraging bargains and trade-offs between parties and candidates. TRS also enables the parties and the electorate to react to changes in the political landscape that occur between the first and the second rounds of voting.

TRS lessens the problems of “vote splitting”, the common situation in many plurality/majority systems where two similar parties or candidates split their combined vote between them, thus allowing a less popular candidate to win the seat. Also, because electors do not have to rank-order candidates with numbers to express their second choice, TRS may be better suited to countries with widespread illiteracy than systems which use preferential numbering like the Alternative Vote or the Single Transferable Vote.

91. **Disadvantages.** TRS places considerable pressure on the electoral administration by requiring it to run a second election a short while after the first, thus significantly increasing both the cost of the overall election process and the time-period between the holding of an election and the declaration of a result. This can lead to instability and uncertainty. TRS also places an additional burden on the voter, and sometimes there is a sharp decline in turnout between the first round and the second.

In addition, TRS shares many of the disadvantages of FPTP. Research has shown that the Two-Round System in France produces the most disproportional results of any Western democracy, and that TRS tends to fragment party systems in new democracies.

92. One of the most serious problems with TRS is its implications for deeply divided societies. In 1992, in what was supposed to be a peace-making election, the Angolan rebel leader, Jonas Savimbi, came second in the first round of a TRS presidential election to Jose dos Santos by 49% to 40%. As it was clear that he would lose the runoff phase, he had little incentive to play the democratic opposition game and immediately re-started the civil war in Angola, which went on for another decade. Similarly in Congo (Brazzaville) in 1993, prospects of a government landslide in the second round of a TRS election prompted the opposition to boycott the second round and take up arms. In both cases, the clear signal that one side would likely lose the elections was the instigator of violence.

[INSERT KYRGYZSTAN CASE STUDY ABOUT HERE]
Proportional Representation Systems

What Proportional Representation Is

93. The rationale underpinning all PR systems is the conscious translation of a party’s share of the votes into a corresponding proportion of legislative seats. There are two major types of PR systems: List PR and Single Transferable Vote (STV).

PR requires the use of electoral districts with more than one member: it is not possible to divide a single seat elected on a single occasion proportionally. In some countries, such as Israel and the Netherlands, the entire country forms one multi-member district. In other countries, for example Argentina or Portugal, electoral districts are based on provinces, while Indonesia lays down the range of permissible sizes for electoral districts and gives the task of defining them to its electoral management body.

94. Proportional Representation (PR) systems are a common choice in many new democracies. Over 20 established democracies, use some variant of PR. PR systems are dominant in Latin America, Africa and Europe. Most of the 72 PR systems identified in this Handbook use some form of List PR; only 2 examples use STV methods.

95. The greater the number of representatives to be elected from a district, and the lower the required threshold for representation in the legislature, the more proportional the electoral system will be, and the greater chance small minority parties will have of gaining representation. In Israel, the threshold is 1.5%, while in Turkey it is 10% In South Africa, there is no legal threshold for representation and in 2004 the African Christian Democratic Party won 6 seats, out of 400, with only 1.6% of the national vote. PR systems are also differentiated by whether and how the voter can choose between individual candidates as well as between parties – that is, whether the lists are open, closed, or free (panachage). Other important choices involve the drawing of district boundaries; the way parties compile their PR lists (who chooses the list and what sort of social diversity it exhibits); the complexity of the ballot paper (e.g. the range of choice given to the voter – between parties, or between candidates and parties); arrangements for formal or informal “vote-pooling”; and the scope for agreements between parties, such as that provided by systems which use apparentement.

96. Advantages. In many respects, the strongest arguments for PR derive from the way in which the system avoids the anomalous results of plurality/majority systems and is better able to produce a representative legislature.

For many new democracies, particularly those which face deep societal divisions, the inclusion of all significant groups in the legislature can be a near-essential condition for democratic consolidation. Failing to ensure that both minorities and majorities have a stake in developing political systems can have catastrophic consequences.

97. PR systems in general are praised because of the way in which they:

a. Faithfully translate votes cast into seats won, and thus avoid some of the more destabilising and “unfair” results thrown up by plurality/majority electoral systems. “Seat bonuses” for the larger parties are minimized and small parties can gain access to the legislature by polling a small number of votes.

b. Encourage or require the formation of political parties or groups of like-minded candidates to put forward lists. This may clarify policy, ideology or leadership differences within society, especially when, as in Timor Leste at independence, there is no established party system.
c. Give rise to very few wasted votes. When thresholds are low, almost all votes cast within PR elections go towards electing a candidate of choice. This increases the voters’ perception that it is worth making the trip to the polling booth at election time, as they can be more confident that their vote will make a difference to electoral outcomes, however small.

d. Facilitate minority parties’ access to representation. Unless the threshold is unduly high, or the district magnitude is unusually low, then any political party with even a few per cent electoral support can gain representation in the legislature. This fulfils the principle of inclusion, which can be crucial to stability in divided societies and has benefits for decision-making in established democracies.

e. Encourage parties to campaign beyond the districts in which they are strong or where the results are expected to be even. The incentive under PR systems is to maximize the overall vote, regardless of where those votes might come from. Every vote, even from an area where a party is electorally weak, goes towards filling another quota and thus gaining another seat.

f. Restrict the growth of “regional fiefdoms”. Because PR systems reward minority parties with a minority of the seats, they are less likely to lead to situations where a single party holds all the seats in a given province or district. This can be particularly important to minorities in a province who may not have other significant regional concentrations or alternative points of access to power.

g. Lead to more policy continuity and stability. The Western European experience suggests that parliamentary-PR systems score better with regard to governmental longevity, voter participation and economic performance. The rationale behind this claim is that regular switches in government between two ideologically polarized parties, as can happen in FPTP systems, makes long-term economic planning more difficult, while broad PR coalition governments help engender a stability and coherence in decision-making which allows for national development.

h. Make power-sharing between parties and interest groups more visible. In many new democracies, power-sharing between the numerical majority of the population who hold political power and a small minority who hold economic power is an unavoidable reality. Where the numerical majority dominates the legislature and a minority sees their interests expressed in the control of the economic sphere, negotiations between different power blocks are less visible, less transparent, and less accountable (for example Zimbabwe during its first twenty years of independence). It has been argued that PR, by including all interests in the legislature, offers a better hope that decisions are taken in the public eye, and by a more inclusive cross-section of the society.

98. **Disadvantages.** Most of the criticisms of PR in general are based around the tendency of PR systems to give rise to coalition governments and a fragmented party system. The most cited arguments against using PR are that it leads to:

a. Coalition governments, which in turn lead to legislative gridlock and the subsequent inability to carry out coherent policies. There are particularly high risks during an immediate post-conflict transition period, when new governments have huge expectations resting upon their shoulders. Quick and coherent decision-making can be impeded by coalition cabinets and governments of national unity which are split by factions.

b. A destabilising fragmentation of the party system. PR can reflect and facilitate a fragmentation of the party system. It is possible that such polarised pluralism can allow tiny minority parties to hold larger parties to ransom in coalition negotiations. In this respect, the inclusiveness of PR is cited as a drawback of the system. In Israel, for example, extremist religious parties are often crucial to government formation, while Italy endured many years of unstable shifting coalition governments. Democratising countries are often fearful that PR will allow for personality and ethnic cleavage parties to proliferate in their undeveloped party systems.
c. A platform for extremist parties. In a related argument, PR systems are often criticized for giving a stage to extremist parties of the left or the right. It has been argued that the collapse of Weimar Germany was in part due to the way in which its PR electoral system gave a toe-hold to extremist groups of the extreme left and right.

d. Governing coalitions which have insufficient common ground – in terms of either their policies or their supporter base. These coalitions of convenience are sometimes contrasted with coalitions of commitment produced by other systems (for example through the use of AV), in which parties tend to be reciprocally dependent on the votes of supporters of other parties for their election, and the coalition may thus be stronger.

e. Small parties getting a disproportionally large amount of power. Large parties may be forced to form coalitions with much smaller parties, giving a party with the support of only a small percent of the votes the power to veto any proposal that comes from the larger parties.

f. The inability for the voter to exercise accountability by throwing a party out of power. Under a PR system, it may be very difficult to remove a reasonably-sized centre party from power. When governments are usually coalitions, it is true that some political parties are ever-present in government, despite weak electoral performances from time to time. The Free Democratic Party in Germany was a member of the governing coalition for 41 of 49 years from 1949 to 1998, although it never gained more than 12 per cent of the vote.

g. Difficulties either for voters to understand or for the electoral administration to implement the sometimes complex rules of the system. Some PR systems are considered to be more difficult than non-PR systems and may therefore require more voter education and training of poll workers to work successfully.

**List PR**

99. In its most simple form, List PR involves each party presenting a list of candidates to the electorate in each multi-member electoral district. Voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote in the electoral district. Winning candidates are taken from the lists in order of their position on the lists.

100. The choice of List PR is not in itself sufficient to completely specify the electoral system. The system used to calculate the allocation of seats after the votes have been counted can include either a “highest average” or “largest remainder” method (see glossary – Annex B). This formula has a small but sometimes critical effect on PR electoral outcomes. In Cambodia in 1998, a change in the formula a few weeks before polling day turned out to have the effect of giving the largest party 64 seats, instead of 59, in a 121 seat National Assembly. The change had not been well publicised, and it was with difficulty that the opposition accepted the results. This example clearly demonstrates the importance for electoral system designers of apparently minor details.

101. **Advantages.** In addition to the advantages attached to PR systems generally, List PR makes it more likely that the representatives of minority cultures/groups are elected. When, as is often the case, voting behaviour dovetails with a society’s cultural or social divisions, then List PR electoral systems can help ensure that the legislature includes members of both majority and minority groups. This is because parties can be encouraged by the system to craft balanced candidate lists, which appeal to a whole spectrum of voters’ interests. The experience of a number of new democracies (e.g., South Africa, Indonesia, Sierra Leone) suggests that List PR gives the political space which allows parties to put up multi-racial, and multi-ethnic, lists of candidates. The South African National Assembly elected in 1994 was 52% black (11% Zulu, the rest of Xhosa, Sotho, Venda, Tswana, Pedi, Swazi, Shangaan, and Ndebele extraction),
32% white (one-third English, two-thirds Afrikaans), 7% Coloured and 8% Indian. The Namibian parliament is similarly diverse, with representatives from the Ovambo, Damara, Herero, Nama, Baster, and white (English and German speaking) communities.

List PR makes it more likely that women are elected. PR electoral systems are almost always more friendly to the election of women than plurality/majority systems. In essence, parties are able to use the lists to promote the advancement of women politicians, and allow the space for voters to elect women candidates without limiting their ability to vote with a mind on other concerns. As noted earlier, in single-member districts most parties are encouraged to put up a “most broadly acceptable” candidate, and that person is seldom a woman. In all regions of the world PR systems do better than FPTP systems in the number of women elected and 15 of the top twenty nations when it comes to the representation of women use List PR.

102. Disadvantages. In addition to the general issues already identified relating to PR systems, the following additional disadvantages may be considered:

a. Weak links between elected legislators and their constituents. When List PR is used, and seats are allocated in one single national district as in Namibia or Israel, the system is criticized for destroying the link between voters and their representatives. Where lists are closed voters have no ability to determine the identity of the persons who will represent them, and no identifiable representative for their town, district, or village; nor do they have the ability to easily reject an individual representative if they feel he or she has behaved poorly in office. Moreover, in some rural-based developing countries, voters’ identification with their region of residence is sometimes considerably stronger than their identification with any political party or grouping. This criticism, however, may relate more to the distinction between systems in which voters vote for parties, and systems in which they vote for candidates.

b. Excessive entrenchment of power within party headquarters and in the hands of senior party leaderships – especially in closed list systems. A candidate’s position on the party list, and therefore his or her likelihood of success, is dependent on currying favour with party bosses, whose relationship with the electorate is of secondary importance. In an unusual List PR twist in Guyana parties publish their list of candidates not ranked but simply ordered alphabetically – this allows party leaders even more scope to reward loyalty and punish independence because seats are only allocated to individuals once the vote is known.

c. The necessity for some kind of recognised party or political groupings to exist. This makes List PR particularly difficult to implement in those societies which do not have parties or have very embryonic and loose party structures, for example many of the island countries of the Pacific.

[INSERT SOUTH AFRICA CASE STUDY ABOUT HERE]

The Single Transferable Vote (STV)

103. The Single Transferable Vote (STV) has long been advocated by political scientists as one of the most attractive electoral systems, but its use for legislative elections has been limited to a few cases – the Republic of Ireland since 1921, Malta since 1947, and once in Estonia in 1990. It is also used in Australia for elections to the Tasmanian House of Assembly, the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly, and the federal Senate; in local elections in Northern Ireland; and was chosen as the recommendation of the British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly.

104. The core principles of the system were independently invented in the nineteenth century by Thomas Hare in Britain and Carl Andræ in Denmark. STV uses multi-member districts, with voters ranking candidates in order of preference on the ballot paper in the same manner as the Alternative Vote. In most cases this preference marking is optional, and voters are not required to rank-order all candidates; if they wish they can mark only one.
After the total number of first-preference votes are tallied, the count then begins by establishing the “quota” of votes required for the election of a single candidate. The quota used is normally the Droop quota, calculated by the simple formula:

\[
\text{Quota} = \frac{\text{votes}}{\text{seats}} + 1
\]

105. The first stage of the count is to ascertain the total number of first-preference votes for each candidate. Any candidate who has more first preferences than the quota is immediately elected. If no-one has achieved the quota, the candidate with the lowest number of first preferences is eliminated, with his or her second preferences being redistributed to the candidates left in the race. At the same time, the surplus votes of elected candidates (i.e., those votes above the quota) are redistributed according to the second preferences on the ballot papers. For fairness, all the candidate’s ballot papers are redistributed, but each at a fractional percentage of one vote, so that the total redistributed vote equals the candidate’s surplus (except in the Republic of Ireland, which uses a weighted sample). If a candidate had 100 votes, for example, and their surplus was 5 votes, then each ballot paper would be redistributed at the value of $1/20^{th}$ of a vote. This process continues until all seats for the electoral district are filled.

106. **Advantages.** The advantages claimed for PR generally apply to STV systems. In addition, as a mechanism for choosing representatives, STV is perhaps the most sophisticated of all electoral systems, allowing for choice between parties and between candidates within parties. The final results retain a fair degree of proportionality, and the fact that in most actual examples of STV the multimember districts are relatively small means that a geographical link between voter and representative is retained. Furthermore, voters can influence the composition of post-election coalitions, as has been the case in Ireland, and the system provides incentives for inter-party accommodation through the reciprocal exchange of preferences between parties. STV also provides a better chance for the election of popular independent candidates than List PR, because voters are choosing between candidates rather than between parties (although a party-list option can be added to an STV election; this is done for the Australian Senate).

107. **Disadvantages.** The disadvantages claimed for PR generally also apply to STV systems. In addition, STV is sometimes criticized on the grounds that preference voting is unfamiliar in many societies, and demands, at the very least, a degree of literacy and numeracy. The intricacies of an STV count are themselves quite complex, which is also seen as being a drawback. This has been cited to be one of the reasons Estonia decided to abandon the system after their first election. STV requires continual re-calculation of surplus transfer values and the like. Because of this, votes under STV need to be counted at counting centres instead of directly at the polling place. Where election integrity is a salient issue, counting in polling places may be necessary to ensure legitimacy of the vote, and there will be a need to choose the electoral system accordingly.

STV, unlike List PR, can at times provide pressures for political parties to fragment internally, because at members of the same party are effectively competing against each other, as well as against the opposition, for votes. This could serve to promote “clientelistic” politics where politicians offer electoral bribes to groups of defined voters.

STV may lead to a party with a majority of votes nonetheless winning fewer seats than its rivals. Malta amended its system in the mid-1980s by providing for some extra compensatory seats to be awarded to a party in this event.
Many of these criticisms have, however, proved to be little trouble in practice. STV elections in the Republic of Ireland, Malta and Tasmania have all tended to produce relatively stable, legitimate governments comprised of one or two main parties.

[INSERT REPUBLIC OF IRELAND CASE STUDY ABOUT HERE]

PR-Related Issues

District Magnitude

108. There is near-universal agreement among electoral specialists that the crucial determinant of an electoral system's ability to translate votes cast into seats won proportionally is the district magnitude; which is the number of members to be elected in each electoral district. Under a system such as FPTP, AV or the Two-Round System, there is a district magnitude of one; voters are electing a single representative.

By contrast, all PR systems, and some plurality/majority and other systems such as Block Vote, Limited Vote, PBV and SNTV, require electoral districts which elect more than one member. Under any proportional system, the number of members to be chosen in each district determines, to a significant extent, how proportional the election results will be.

109. The systems which achieve the greatest degree of proportionality will use very large districts, because such districts are able to ensure that even very small parties are represented in the legislature. In smaller districts, the effective threshold is higher. For example, in a district in which there are only three members to be elected, a party must gain at least 25% +1 of the vote to be assured of winning a seat. A party which has the support of only 10% of the electorate would be unlikely to win a seat, and the votes of this party's supporters could therefore be said to have been wasted. In a nine seat district, by contrast, 10% +1 of the vote would guarantee that a party wins at least one seat.

The problem is that as districts are made larger – both in terms of the number of seats and often, as a consequence, in their geographic size as well – so the linkage between an elected member and his or her constituency grows weaker. This can have serious consequences in societies where local factors play a strong role in politics, or where voters expect their member to maintain strong links with the electorate and act as their “delegate” in the legislature.

110. Because of this, there has been a lively debate about the best level of district size. Most scholars agree, as a general principle, that district magnitudes of somewhere between three and seven seats per district tend to work quite well, and it has been suggested that odd numbers like three, five and seven work better in practice than even numbers, particularly in a two-party system.

But this is only a rough guide, and there are many situations where a higher number may be both desirable and necessary to ensure satisfactory representation and proportionality. In many countries, the electoral districts follow preexisting administrative divisions, perhaps state or provincial boundaries, which means that there may be a wide variation in their size. However, this approach both eliminates the need to draw additional boundaries for elections and may enable electoral districts to relate to existing identified and accepted communities.

111. Numbers at the high and low ends of the spectrum tend to deliver more extreme results. At one end of the spectrum, a whole country can form one electoral district, which normally means that the quota for election is extremely low and even very small parties can gain election. In Israel, for example, the whole country forms one district of 120 members, which means that election results are proportional, but also means that parties with small vote shares can gain representation, and that the link between an elected member and any geographic area is extremely weak. At the other end of the spectrum, PR systems can be applied to situations in
which there is a district magnitude of only two. For example, a system of List PR is applied to two-member districts in Chile. As the case study indicates, this delivers results which are quite disproportional, because only two parties can gain representation in each district.

This has tended to undermine the benefits of PR in terms of representation and legitimacy.

112. Both of these polarised examples serve to underline the crucial importance of district magnitude in any system of proportional representation. It is arguably the single most important institutional choice when designing a PR electoral system, and is also of crucial importance for a number of non-PR systems as well. The Single Non-Transferable Vote, for example tends to deliver moderately proportional results despite not being in essence a proportional formula, precisely because it is used in multi-member districts. Similarly, the Single Transferable Vote when applied to single-member districts becomes the Alternative Vote, which retains some of the advantages of STV but not its proportionality. In Party Block Vote and Block Vote systems, as district magnitude increases, proportionality is likely to decrease. To sum up, when designing an electoral system, the district magnitude is in many ways the key factor in determining how the system will operate in practice, the extent of the link between voters and elected members, and the overall proportionality of election results.

On a related note, the party magnitude (the average number of successful candidates from the same party in the same district) is an important factor in determining who will be elected. If only one candidate from a party is elected in a district, that candidate may well be male and a member of the majority ethnic or social groups in the district. If two or more are elected, balanced tickets may have more effect, making it likely that more women and more candidates from minorities will be successful. Larger districts (seven or more seats in size) and a relatively small number of parties will increase the party magnitude.

The Threshold

113. All electoral systems have thresholds of representation: that is, the minimum level of support which a party needs to gain representation. Thresholds can be legally imposed (formal thresholds), or exist as a mathematical property of the electoral system (effective or natural thresholds).

114. Formal thresholds are written into the constitutional or legal provisions which define the PR system. In the mixed systems of Germany, New Zealand and Russia, for example, there is a 5% threshold in the PR section: parties which fail to secure 5% of the vote nationwide are ineligible to be awarded seats from the PR lists. This concept had its origins in the desire to limit the election of extremist groups in Germany, and is designed to stop very small parties from gaining representation.

However, in both Germany and New Zealand there exist “back-door” routes for a party to be entitled to seats from the lists; in the case of New Zealand a party must win at least one constituency seat, and in the case of Germany three seats, to by-pass the threshold requirements. In Russia in 1995 there were no “back-door” routes, and almost half of the party-list votes were wasted.

115. Elsewhere, legal thresholds range from 0.67% in the Netherlands to 10% in Turkey. Parties which gain less than this percentage of the vote are excluded from the count. A striking example of this was the 2002 Turkish election, in which so many parties failed to clear the 10 percent threshold that 46 percent of all votes were wasted. In all of these cases the existence of a formal threshold tends to increase the overall level of disproportionality, because votes for those parties who would otherwise have gained representation are wasted.

In Poland in 1993, even with a comparatively low threshold of 5% for parties and 8% for coalitions, over 34% of the votes were cast for parties and coalitions which did not surmount it.
116. An effective, hidden or natural threshold is created as a mathematical by-product of features of electoral systems, of which district magnitude is the most important. For example, in a district with four seats under a PR system, just as any candidate with more than over 20% of the vote will be elected, any candidate with less than about 10% (the exact figure will vary depending on the configuration of parties, candidates and votes) is unlikely to be elected.

Open, Closed and Free Lists

117. While the List PR system is based on the principle that parties or political groupings present candidates, it is possible to give voters a degree of choice within List PR between the candidates nominated as well as between the parties. There are essentially three options that can be chosen, open, closed, or free lists.

118. The majority of List PR systems in the world are closed, meaning that the order of candidates elected by that list is fixed by the party itself, and voters are not able to express a preference for a particular candidate. The List PR system used for South African elections is a good example of a closed list. The ballot paper contained the party names and symbols, and a photograph of the party leader, but no names of individual candidates. Voters simply choose the party they prefer; the individual candidates elected as a result were pre-determined by the parties themselves. This means that parties can include some candidates (perhaps members of minority ethnic and linguistic groups, or women) who might have difficulty getting elected otherwise.

However, the negative aspect of closed lists is that voters have no say in determining who the representative of their party will be. Closed lists are also unresponsive to rapid changes in events. In East Germany's preunification elections of 1990, the top-ranked candidate of one party was exposed as a secret-police informer only four days before the election, and immediately expelled from the party; but because lists were closed, electors had no choice but to vote for him if they wanted to support his former party.

119. Many List PR systems in continental Europe use open lists, in which voters can indicate not just their favoured party, but their favoured candidate within that party. In most of these systems the vote for a candidate as well as a party is optional and, because most voters plump for parties only rather than candidates, the candidate-choice option of the ballot paper often has limited effect. However, in Sweden, over 25% of the voters regularly choose a candidate as well as a party, and a number of individuals are elected who would not have been if the list were closed.

In Brazil and Finland, voters must vote for candidates: the number of seats received by each party is determined by the total number of votes gained by its candidates, and the order in which the party’s candidates are elected to these seats is determined by the number of individual votes they receive. While this gives voters much greater freedom over their choice of candidate, it also has some less desirable side effects. Because candidates from within the same party are effectively competing with each other for votes, this form of open list can lead to internal party conflict and fragmentation. It also means that the potential benefits to the party of having lists which feature a diverse slate of candidates can be overturned. In open-list PR elections in Sri Lanka, for example, the attempts of major Sinhalese parties to include minority Tamil candidates in winnable positions on their party lists have been rendered ineffective because many voters deliberately voted for lower-placed Sinhalese candidates instead. In Kosovo a switch from closed to open lists actually enhanced the presence of more extremist candidates. On the same note, open lists have sometimes proven to be disadvantageous for the representation of women in highly patriarchal societies, although in Poland voters have shown themselves willing to use open list to elect more women that would have been the case from the nominations made by the parties if closed list had been used.
120. Other devices are used in a small number of jurisdictions to add additional flexibility to open-list systems. In Luxembourg and Switzerland, electors have as many votes as there are seats to be filled, and can distribute them to candidates either within a single party list or across several party lists as they see fit. The capacity to vote for more than one candidate across different party lists (known as panachage), or to cast more than one vote for a single highly favoured candidate (known as cumulation), both provide an additional measure of control to the voter and are categorized here as free list systems.

**Apparentement**

121. High effective thresholds can serve to discriminate against small parties – indeed, in some cases this is their express purpose. But in many cases an inbuilt discrimination against smaller parties is seen as undesirable, particularly where several small parties with similar support bases “split” their combined votes and consequently fall beneath the threshold, when one aligned grouping would have gained enough combined votes to have won some seats in the legislature. To get around this problem, some countries which use List PR systems also allow small parties to group together for electoral purposes, thus forming a cartel – or apparentement or stembusaccoord - to contest the election. This means that the parties themselves remain as separate entities, and are listed separately on the ballot paper, but that votes gained by each party are counted as if they belonged to the entire cartel, thus increasing the chances that their combined vote total will be above the threshold and hence that they may be able to gain additional representation. This device is a feature of a number of List PR systems in continental Europe, in Latin America (where the umbrella parties are called lema), and in Israel. They are nevertheless a rarity within PR systems in Africa and Asia, and were abolished in Indonesia in 1999 after some small parties discovered that although their cartel gained representation, they as a party actually lost seats.

**Mixed Systems**

122. Mixed electoral systems attempt to combine the positive attributes of both plurality/majority (or ‘other’) and PR electoral systems. In a mixed system, there are two electoral systems using different formulae, each running alongside the other. The votes are cast by the same voters and contribute to the election of representatives under both systems. One of those systems is a plurality/majority system, usually a single member district system, and the other a List PR system. 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 upon what happens in the plurality/majority (or other) district seats and compensating for disproportionality, the system is called a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system. Where the two sets of elections are detached and distinct and are not dependent upon each other for seat allocations, the system is called a Parallel system. While an MMP system results in general in proportional outcomes, a parallel system is likely to give results whose proportionality falls somewhere between that of a plurality/majority and a PR system.

**Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)**

123. Under Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) systems, the PR seats are awarded to compensate for any disproportionality produced by the district seat results. For example, if one party wins 10% of the national votes but no district seats, then they would be awarded enough seats from the PR lists to bring their representation up to 10% of the legislature. Voters may get two separate ballot papers, as in Germany and New Zealand, or they may receive only one
ballot paper, with the party totals being derived from the totals for the individual district candidates.

Table: MMP Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th># of PR Seats</th>
<th># of Plurality/Majority (or Other) Seats</th>
<th>Plurality/Majority (or Other) System</th>
<th>Total # of Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>40 (29 %)</td>
<td>100 (71 %)</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>62 (48 %)</td>
<td>68 (52 %)</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>299 (50 %)</td>
<td>299 (50 %)</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>210 (54 %)</td>
<td>176 (46 %)</td>
<td>TRS</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>155 (25 %)</td>
<td>475 (75 %)</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>40 (33 %)</td>
<td>80 (67 %)</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>200 (40 %)</td>
<td>300 (60 %)</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>55 (46 %)</td>
<td>65 (54 %)</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>65 (39 %)</td>
<td>100 (61 %)</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

124. MMP is used in Albania, Bolivia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lesotho, Mexico, New Zealand and Venezuela. In all but one of these countries, district seats are elected using FPTP: Hungary uses TRS and Italy’s method is considerably more complicated: one-quarter of the seats in the lower house are reserved to compensate for wasted votes in the single-member districts.

In Venezuela there are 100 FPTP seats while the rest are National List PR seats and extra compensatory seats. In Mexico 200 List PR seats compensate for imbalances in the results of the 300 FPTP seats, which are usually high. Lesotho’s post-conflict electoral system contains 80 FPTP seats and 40 compensatory ones.

125. Although MMP is designed to produce proportional results, an exception can occur when its PR electoral districts are defined not at national level but at regional or provincial level. A party can then win more plurality/majority seats in a region or province than its entitlement from its party vote in the region. This can be dealt with by slightly increasing the legislature size: the extra seats are called overhang mandates or Überhangsmandaten. This has occurred in most elections in Germany and is also possible in New Zealand.

126. **Advantages and Disadvantages.** While MMP retains the proportionality benefits of PR systems, it also ensures that there are elected representatives linked to geographical districts. However, where voters have two votes - one for the party and one for their local representative - it is not always understood that the vote for the local representative is less important than the party vote in determining the overall allocation of seats in the legislature. Furthermore, MMP can create two classes of MPs—one group primarily responsible and beholden to a constituency, another from the national party list without geographical ties and beholden to the party.

127. In translating votes into seats, MMP can be as proportional an electoral system as pure List PR, and therefore shares many of the previously-cited advantages and disadvantages of PR. However, one reason why MMP is sometimes seen as less preferable than straight List PR is that it can give rise to what are called “strategic voting” anomalies. In New Zealand in 1996, in
the constituency of Wellington Central, some National Party strategists urged voters not to vote for the National Party candidate, because they had calculated that under MMP his election would not give the National Party another seat but simply replace an MP who would be elected from their party list. It was therefore better for the National Party to see a candidate elected from another party, providing he was in sympathy with the National Party’s ideas and ideology, than for votes to be “wasted” in support of their own candidate.

[INSERT LESOTHO CASE STUDY ABOUT HERE]

**Parallel Systems**

128. Parallel systems also use both PR and plurality/majority components, but unlike MMP systems the PR component of the system does not compensate for any disproportionality within the majoritarian districts. (It is also possible for the non-PR component of a parallel system to come from the family of ‘other’ systems, as in Taiwan.) In a parallel system, as in MMP, each voter may receive either one ballot paper which is used to cast a vote both for a candidate and for his or her party, as is done in South Korea, or two separate ballot papers, one for the plurality/majority seat and one for the PR seats, as is done in for example Japan, Lithuania and Thailand.

Parallel systems are currently used in 21 countries and are a feature of electoral system design over the last decade and a half – perhaps because, they appear to combine the benefits of PR lists with single-member district representation. Albania, Cameroon, Guinea (Conakry), Japan, South Korea, Madagascar, Panama, the Philippines, Russia, the Seychelles, Thailand, Timor Leste and Ukraine use FPTP single-member districts alongside a List PR component, while Armenia, Azerbaijan, Chad, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania and Tajikistan use the Two-Round System for the single-member district component of their system.

Andorra uses the Block Vote to elect half its legislature, while a number of representatives in Ecuador, Senegal and Tunisia are elected using PBV. Taiwan is unique in using SNTV alongside a PR system component.

129. The balance between the number of proportional seats and the number of plurality/majority seats varies greatly. Only in Andorra, Russia and Ukraine is there a 50/50 split. At one extreme, 88% of Tunisia’s representatives are elected by Party Block Vote, with only 19 members coming from PR lists. At the opposite end, 75 of Timor Leste’s seats are proportionally elected and only 13 are based on First Past the Post districts. However, in most cases the balance is much closer. For example, Japan elects just over 60% of its representatives from single-member districts, with the rest coming from PR lists.

Table: Parallel Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th># of Seats</th>
<th>PR # of Seats</th>
<th>Plurality/Majority (or Other) Seats</th>
<th>Total # of Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andorra</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>PBV</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>TRS</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>TRS</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>TRS</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Korea, Republic of  56  243  FPTP  299  
Lithuania  70  71  TRS  141  
Monaco  8  16  BV  24  
Pakistan  70  272  FPTP  342  
Philippines  52  208  FPTP  260  
Russian Federation  225  225  FPTP  450  
Senegal  55  65  PBV  120  
Seychelles  9  25  FPTP  34  
Taiwan  49  176  SNTV  225  
Tajikistan  22  41  TRS  63  
Thailand  100  400  FPTP  500  
Timor-Leste  75  13  FPTP  88  
Tunisia  152  37  PBV  189  
Ukraine  225  225  FPTP  450  

130. **Advantages.** In terms of disproportionality, parallel systems usually give results which fall somewhere between pure plurality/majority and pure PR systems. One advantage is that, when there are enough PR seats, small minority parties who have been unsuccessful in the plurality/majority elections can still be rewarded for their votes by winning seats in the proportional allocation. Lastly, a parallel system should, in theory, fragment the party system less than a pure PR electoral system.

131. **Disadvantages.** As with MMP, it is likely that two classes of representatives will be created. Also, parallel systems do not guarantee overall proportionality, and some parties may still be shut out of representation despite winning substantial numbers of votes. Parallel systems are also relatively complex, and can leave voters confused as to the nature and operation of the electoral system.

**Other systems**

132. In addition to the plurality/majority, proportional representation, and mixed systems – there are a number of other systems that do not fall neatly into any particular categorisation. Among these are the Single Non-Transferable Vote, and the Limited Vote. These systems tend to translate votes cast into seats won in a way that falls somewhere between the proportionality of PR systems and the majoritarianism of plurality/majority systems.

**The Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV)**

133. Under Single Non-Transferable Vote, each voter casts one vote for a candidate: but unlike FPTP there are multiple seats to be filled in each district. Those candidates with the highest vote totals fill these positions.
SNTV can face political parties with a challenge. In, for example, a four member district, a candidate with just over 20% of the vote is guaranteed election. A party with 50% of the vote could thus expect to win two seats in a four member district. If each candidate polls 25%, this will happen. If however one candidate polls 40% and the other 10%, the second candidate may not be elected. If the party puts up three candidates, the danger of ‘vote-splitting’ makes it even less likely the party will win two seats.

134. Today, SNTV is used for legislative elections in Afghanistan, Jordan, Pitcairn Islands and Vanuatu, for second chamber elections in Indonesia and Thailand, and for 176 out of 225 seats in the parallel system used for the Taiwanese legislature. However, its most well known application was for Japanese lower-house elections from 1948 to 1993.

135. **Advantages.**

a. The most important difference between SNTV and the plurality/majority systems described earlier is that SNTV is better able to facilitate the representation of minority parties and independents. The larger the district magnitude (the number of seats in the constituency), the more proportional the system can become. In Jordan, SNTV has enabled a number of popular non-party pro-monarchist candidates to be elected, which is deemed to be an advantage within that embryonic party system.

b. SNTV encourages parties to become highly organized and to instruct their voters to allocate their votes to candidates in a way which maximizes a party’s likely seat-winning potential. While SNTV gives voters a choice among a party’s list of candidates, it is also argued that the system fragments the party system less than pure PR systems do. Over 45 years of SNTV experience, Japan demonstrated quite a robust “one party dominant” system.

c. Finally, the system is praised for being easy to use and understand.

136. **Disadvantages.**

a. Small parties whose votes are widely dispersed may not win any seats, and larger parties can receive a substantial “seat bonus” which propels a national plurality of the vote into an absolute majority in the legislature. Although the proportionality of the system can be increased by increasing the number of seats to be filled within the multimember districts, this weakens the voter-MP relationship which is so prized by those who advocate defined geographical districts. Multi-member districts of up to 18 members in Thailand, for example, are at the very top end of manageable SNTV constituencies.

b. As with any system where multiple candidates of the same party are competing for one vote, internal party fragmentation and discord may be accentuated. This can serve to promote “clientelistic” politics where politicians offer electoral bribes to groups of defined voters.

c. Parties need to consider complex strategic considerations of both nominations and vote management; putting up too many candidates can be as unproductive as putting up too few, and the need for a party to discipline its voters into spreading their votes equally across all a party’s candidates is paramount.

d. As SNTV gives voters only one vote, the system contains few incentives for political parties to appeal to a broad spectrum of voters in an accommodatory manner. As long as they have a reasonable core vote, they can win seats without needing to appeal to “outsiders”.

e. SNTV usually gives rise to many wasted votes – especially if nomination requirements are inclusive, enabling many candidates to put themselves forward.
The Limited Vote (LV)

137. Like SNTV, the Limited Vote is a plurality/majority system used in multi-member districts. Unlike SNTV, electors have more than one vote - but fewer votes than there are candidates to be elected. Counting is identical to SNTV, with the candidates with the highest vote totals winning the seats.

This system is used for various local-level elections, but its application at the national level is restricted to Gibraltar and Spain, where it has been used to elect the Spanish upper house, the Senate, since 1977. In this case, with large multi-member districts, each voter has one less vote than the number of members to be elected.

138. **Advantages and Disadvantages.** Like SNTV, LV is simple for voters and relatively easy to count. However, it tends to produce less proportional results than SNTV. Many of the arguments relating to internal party competition, party management issues and clientilistic politics apply to LV in a similar way as to SNTV.

Borda Count (BC)

139. A final – and unique – example of electoral system design is the modified Borda Count used in the tiny Pacific state of Nauru. The Borda Count is a positional voting system in which electors rank candidates as for the Alternative Vote. This can be used in both single- and multi-member districts. There is only one count, there are no eliminations and preferences are simply tallied as “fractional votes”: in the modified Borda Count devised by Nauru, a first preference is worth one, a second preference is worth half, a third preference is worth a third and so on. These are summed and the candidate(s) with the highest total(s) are declared victorious.

Electoral System Tiers and Hybrid Systems

140. Many electoral systems, both plurality/majority and proportional, have a single tier of representation – each voter in the country votes once and there is one set of elected representatives. In one-tier list PR systems, the lists may be at national level, as in Namibia and the Netherlands, or at regional level, as in Finland and Switzerland.

In mixed systems, there are usually two tiers of representatives, those elected under the plurality/majority system and those elected under the proportional system. In Hungary, however, there are three tiers of representatives, plurality/majority representatives of single-member districts elected using TRS, and representatives at both regional and national levels elected using List PR.

It is also possible for an electoral system to have two tiers without being mixed in character. Two-tier proportional systems may have both national and regional lists, like South Africa, or regional lists only, like Denmark. In the two-tier plurality/majority system of the British Virgin Islands, there are representatives elected from single-member districts using FPTP and representatives elected from the Islands as a whole using Block Vote.

141. Electoral systems with two or more tiers need to be distinguished from hybrid systems, in which one part of a country elects its representatives using one electoral system, and another distinct part of the country elects representatives using a different system. In Panama, about two thirds of the representatives are elected from multi-member districts using List PR, while the remaining third are elected from single-member districts using FPTP.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>List Proportional</strong></td>
<td>Proportionality</td>
<td>Weak geographic representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation (List PR)</td>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td>Accountability issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minority representation</td>
<td>Weaker legislative support for president more likely in presidential systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Few wasted votes</td>
<td>Coalition or minority governments more likely in parliamentary systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women representatives</td>
<td>Much power given to political parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No (or less) need to draw boundaries</td>
<td>Can lead to inclusion of extremist parties in legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No need to hold by-elections</td>
<td>Inability to throw a party out of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitates absentee voting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restrictions growth of single party regions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher voter turnout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Past the Post</strong> (FPTP)</td>
<td>Strong geographic representation</td>
<td>Excludes minority parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Excludes minorities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple to understand</td>
<td>Excludes women</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear choice for voters</td>
<td>Many wasted votes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coherent opposition</td>
<td>Often need for by-elections</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Excludes extremist parties</td>
<td>Requires boundary delimitation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Allows voters to choose between candidates</td>
<td>May lead to gerrymandering</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strong legislative support for president more likely in presidential systems</td>
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<td>Majority governments more likely in parliamentary systems</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Two-Round System</strong> (TRS)</td>
<td>Gives voters a second chance to make a choice</td>
<td>Requires boundary delimitation</td>
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<td>Less vote splitting than many other plurality/majority systems</td>
<td>Requires costly and often administratively challenging second round</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Simple to understand</td>
<td>Often need for by-elections</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parallel System</strong></td>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td>Disproportionality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Representation of minorities</td>
<td>May fragment party systems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Less party fragmentation than pure List PR</td>
<td>May be destabilising for deeply divided societies</td>
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<td>Can be easier to agree on than other alternatives</td>
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<td><strong>Mixed Member Proportional</strong></td>
<td>Proportionality</td>
<td>Complicated system</td>
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<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td>Requires boundary delimitation</td>
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<td>Often need for by-elections</td>
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<td>Can create two classes of representatives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strategic voting</td>
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<td>More difficult to arrange absentee voting than with List PR</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Doesn’t guarantee overall proportionality</td>
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Five Electoral System Options

Advantages and Disadvantages

NB: Some advantages and disadvantages of five electoral systems.

Considerations on Representation

Representation of Women

142. There are many ways to enhance the representation of women. As discussed above, proportional systems tend to result in the election of more women. Electoral systems which use reasonably large district magnitudes encourage parties to nominate women on the basis that balanced tickets will increase their electoral chances. Some List PR countries require that women make up a proportion of the candidates nominated by each party. In plurality or majority systems, seats can be set aside in the legislature for women.

143. In addition to the choice of electoral system, there are also a number of other strategies that can be used to increase the number of women representatives.

First, there are reserved seats, where a certain number of seats are set aside for women in the legislature. These seats are filled either by representatives from regions or filled by political parties in direct proportion to their overall share of the national vote. Reserved seats typically exist in plurality/majority electoral systems, and are often entrenched in a country’s constitution. This happens in a handful of countries, including Afghanistan (two women for each of the 32 provinces or roughly 25% of seats), Uganda (one woman for each of the 56 districts or roughly 18%) and Rwanda (24 women are elected by a women’s only ballot accounting for 30% of the seats).

In India, seats on local authorities in some states are divided into three groups: at each election, only women may be nominated for one group of seats, thereby guaranteeing a minimum of one-third women elected, with the side effect of a two term limit for elected men.

Second, the electoral law can require political parties to field a certain number of women candidates for election. The law stipulates a minimum target of women candidates in political parties for election, and generally applies to PR electoral systems. This is the case in Bolivia (30%), Namibia (30% at the local level) and Peru (30%). However, the laws do not always guarantee that the target is met unless there are strict placement mandate and enforcement mechanisms guaranteeing that women are placed in electable positions on party lists, i.e. every second or third place on the list. This is the case in Argentina (30% in winnable positions), Belgium (30% with placement mandate) and Costa Rica (40% of winnable positions).
Thirdly, political parties may adopt their own internal quotas for women as legislative candidates. This is the most common mechanism used to promote the participation of women in political life, and has been used with varying degrees of success all over the world: by the ANC in South Africa, the PJ and the UCR in Argentina, CONDEPA in Bolivia, the PRD in Mexico, the Labour parties in Australia and the United Kingdom, and throughout Scandinavia. The use of women-only candidate short-lists by the Labour Party at the 1997 United Kingdom elections almost doubled the number of female MPs, from 60 to 119.

In 2004, 12 countries had quotas entrenched in the constitution (including most recently Afghanistan), 30 countries had legislated quotas, and at least 125 parties in 61 countries had adopted their own voluntary party quotas.

144. Systems guaranteeing women representation in the legislature vary in their success and consequences. For example, reserved seats may help guarantee that women make it into elected positions of office, but some women have argued that quotas end up being a way to appease, and ultimately sideline, women. Being elected to a legislature does not necessarily mean being given substantive decision-making power, and in some countries women legislators, particularly those elected from reserved or special seats, are marginalised from real decision-making responsibility. Yet in other countries, women have used the position afforded to them by quotas to make significant contributions to policy making and influence ‘traditional’ policy making.

For further details and data see the IDEA/Stockholm University Global Database of Electoral Quotas for Women at www.quotaproject.org

Representation of Minorities

145. There are also many ways to enhance the representation of minorities and communal groups. Again, electoral systems which use reasonably large district magnitudes encourage parties to nominate candidates from minorities on the basis that balanced tickets will increase their electoral chances. A very low threshold, or the elimination of a formal threshold entirely, in PR systems can also facilitate the representation of hitherto underrepresented or unrepresented groups. In plurality/majority systems, seats can be set aside in the legislature for minorities and communal groups.

146. Reserved seats can be used to ensure the representation of specific minority groups in the legislature. Seats are reserved for identifiable ethnic or religious minorities in countries as diverse as Colombia (“black communities”), Croatia (Hungarian, Italian, Czech, Slovak, Ruthenian, Ukranian, German and Austrian minorities), India (scheduled tribes and castes), Jordan (Christians and Circassians), Niger (Taurag), New Zealand (Maori), Pakistan (non-Muslim minorities), Palestine (Christians and Samaritans), Samoa (non-indigenous minorities), Slovenia (Hungarians and Italians) and Taiwan (the aboriginal community).

147. Representatives from these reserved seats are usually elected in much the same manner as other representatives, but are sometimes elected only by members of the particular minority community designated in the electoral law. This requires a communal roll. While it is often deemed to be a normative good to represent small communities of interest, it has been argued that it is a better strategy to design structures which give rise to a representative legislature without overt manipulation of the electoral law, rather than through legal obligation, and that quota seats may breed resentment on the behalf of majority populations and shore up mistrust between various cultural groups.
148. Instead of formally reserved seats, regions can be over-represented to facilitate the increased representation of geographically concentrated groups. In the United Kingdom, Scotland and Wales have more MPs in the British House of Commons than they would be entitled to if population size alone were the only criteria. The same is true in the mountainous regions of Nepal. Another possibility is the “best loser” system currently used in Mauritius, in which some of the highest-polling losing candidates from a particular ethnic group are awarded seats in the legislature in order to balance overall ethnic representation.

Electoral boundaries can also be manipulated to promote the representation of particular groups. The Voting Rights Act in the United States has in the past allowed the government to draw weirdly shaped districts with the sole purpose of creating majority Black, Latino, or Asian-American districts; this might be called “affirmative gerrymandering”. However, the manipulation of any electoral system to promote or protect minority representation is rarely uncontroversial.

Communal Representation

149. A number of ethnically heterogeneous societies have taken the concept of reserved seats to its logical extension. Seats are not only divided on a communal basis, but the entire system of representation in the legislature is similarly based on communal considerations. There is a separate electoral register for each defined community, which elects only members of its “own group” to the legislature.

In Lebanon, multi-member districts are defined, in each of which an allocation of seats between confessional groups is determined. Representatives are elected by Block Vote from communal rolls separately to the seats allocated for each confessional group. In Fiji, electors are able to vote both for their own communal candidates and also for candidates in ‘open’ districts.

150. Most communal roll arrangements were abandoned after it became clear that communal electorates, while guaranteeing group representation, often had the perverse effect of undermining the path of accommodation between different groups, since there were no incentives for political intermixing between communities. The issue of how to define a member of a particular group, and how to distribute seats fairly between them, was also strewn with pitfalls. In India, for example, the separate districts which had existed under colonial rule – for Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and others – were abolished at independence, although some reserved seats remain in order to represent scheduled tribes and castes. Similar communal roll systems used at various times in Pakistan, Cyprus and Zimbabwe have also been abandoned. Despite a controversial history of use, Fiji continues to elect part of its legislature from separate communal rolls for indigenous Fijian, Indian, Rotuman and “general” electors.

151. The predominant example of a communal roll system left among contemporary democracies is the optional separate roll for Maori voters in New Zealand. Maori electors can choose to be on either the national electoral roll or a specific Maori roll, which now elects seven Maori representatives to the legislature. The results of New Zealand’s first PR elections since 1996 could, however, be said to have weakened the rationale for the communal system: twice as many Maori representatives have been elected from the general rolls as from the specific Maori roll.

Timing of elections

152. Elections – whether they be for national, executive, legislative, state wide, or local bodies - may not necessarily be held on a single day (or specific days) but can instead be staggered. The reasons for separating elections over a significant period of time can be both practical and political. Staggering of elections usually occurs when there are major logistical preparations
involved (e.g., elections to the lower house of India, the Lok Sabha) or when security concerns require partial elections. Administrative and security considerations mean that it is far easier for the Indian Electoral Commission to sequence the holding of legislative votes across both time and States. Legislative elections from state to state can be weeks apart. The difficulties facing staggered elections include ballot security. In order that areas voting later are not influenced by areas voting earlier, ballots need to be held at a secure centralized point until all voting has taken place.

153. More common is the staggering over time of presidential, legislative and federal state elections. There is evidence to suggest that holding presidential and legislative elections on the same day can advantage the president’s party, can make executive-legislative fragmentation less likely and thus make government more coherent – especially in embryonic democracies. However, if there is a desire to accentuate a separation of powers or there are logistical capabilities to consider then the separation of presidential and legislative elections may be necessary.

Remote Voting

154. Remote voting is used in many countries, both old and new democracies, around the world, to broaden participation. Remote voting may take place in person elsewhere than an allotted polling station, or at another time: or votes may be cast through the mail or by an appointed proxy. When the requirements to qualify as a remote voter are minimal, remote voting can make up a significant proportion of the total vote. In Finland it has been as high as 37 per cent of all votes cast and in Sweden 30 per cent. In Sweden voters can also change their pre-cast vote if they subsequently travel to their allocated polling station on election day. However, its use may have implications for electoral system design, with issues of election integrity being salient.

Remote voting is easiest to administer under a nationwide List PR system with only one list per party, and most complicated under a system using single member districts. Particularly if out of country voting is to be implemented, the practicalities of getting the right ballot paper to each elector need to be considered carefully. Requiring a country’s embassies to issue ballot papers may not sit easily with a system with a significant number of electoral districts, because of the logistic challenge of ensuring each embassy receives the right selection of ballot papers and gives the right ballot paper to each elector. If ballot papers are to be despatched by post, there will be an impact on the election timetable.

Once cast, out of country votes can be included in the absentee voter’s home district (as in New Zealand); counted within single (or multiple) out of country districts (as in Croatia); attached to one or more particular districts (as in Indonesia); or merely added to the national vote totals when seats are allocated under a nationally based List PR system (as in the Netherlands).

Turnout Issues

155. There is an established relationship between the level of turnout in elections and the electoral system chosen. PR systems are in general linked with higher turnout. In plurality/majority systems, turnout tends to be higher when national election results are close than when one party looks certain to win, and also higher in individual districts where results are closer.
156. As a measure to improve electoral legitimacy, some countries, notably several of the post-Communist successor states to the USSR, introduced mandatory minimum turnout levels: if the turnout in an electoral district did not reach, for example, 50%, the election would not be valid. However, the use of mandatory turnout requirements can create administrative nightmares if repeated elections consistently fail to achieve the required turnout levels, leaving electoral districts in limbo. Ukraine, for example, abolished mandatory turnout provisions for the 1998 elections after the experience of repeated by-elections which continually failed to reach the required turnout.

157. Several countries address the issue of participation through the use of compulsory voting, including Australia, Belgium, Greece and many countries in Latin America. Many other countries however reject compulsory voting on principle. While probably equally compatible with any electoral system choice, its use can be considered simultaneously with other turnout related issues.

Additional issues relevant to Post-conflict and Transitional Elections

158. In post-conflict and transitional situations, there is often little time for debate and reflection. The political momentum generated by a peace agreement or by the fall of an authoritarian regime can lead to pressures for elections to take place fast. While a general discussion of the political desirability and constraints surrounding transitional elections is outside the scope of this Handbook, there are some particular issues and pressures which relate to electoral system design.

159. The time necessary to set up the infrastructure for electoral systems varies. For example, electoral registration and boundary delimitation are both time consuming exercises which can lead to legitimacy problems. At one extreme, if all voters vote in person and voters are marked at the polling station, List PR with one national district may be feasible without either. At the other, a plurality/majority system with single-member districts may require both if no acceptable framework is in place. In any event, the system adopted for a first transitional election may not be the most suitable in the longer term – although a process of continual change in which voters and parties are never able to adapt to the effects of the system may also be undesirable.

160. Negotiators of a new institutional framework or electoral law may wish to be as inclusive as possible, impelling them to make entry to elections easy both by setting relaxed nomination criteria, and by adopting an electoral system in which any threshold – either formal or effective – is low. Conversely, there are often concerns about the fragmentation of the party system driven by the politics of personality and ethnicity, and the negotiators and designers may thus want to set the bar for representation higher. The flowering of a multiplicity of parties is however a feature of elections in countries emerging from authoritarianism, and unsuccessful parties usually disappear of their own accord.

161. Arguments are sometimes offered suggesting that when building democracy in a fragile or divided political environment, it may be politically desirable to start with local elections and build over time to provincial and national elections as the infrastructure and political situation allows - as has been proposed in Sudan. If such a strategy is chosen, it is important that the system is both designed to meet the political requirements of the local elections and feasible to organise given the available timetable.

162. Provisions for voting by refugees and displaced persons may be particularly significant in post-conflict elections. The influence and importance of out of country voting is well illustrated by Bosnia and Herzegovina. 314,000 voters, out of a total of some 2 million, were registered to vote outside the country’s borders in 1998 (over half of them in Croatia and the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, the remainder in 51 other countries), of which 66 per cent cast valid ballots.
3. ELECTORAL SYSTEMS, INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND GOVERNANCE

163. Electoral systems have long been considered to have specific effects on issues of governance, policy making and political stability. Different electoral systems have marked governance implications in parliamentary systems. In particular, there is an in-built tension between electoral systems which maximize the potential for one-party government (for example plurality/majority systems), and those which make multi-party coalitions more likely (e.g. proportional systems). Both constellations have clear policy impacts: single-party government makes it much easier for decisive policy-making and clarity of responsibility, while coalitions are more likely to produce more representative policies and more inclusive decision-making. Similarly, major shifts in government policy are easier to achieve under single-party government, while coalitions are more likely to see issues discussed and debated before any changes are made.

164. Almost all countries which adopt a presidential or semi presidential constitution elect the President directly. In addition, some republics with parliamentary constitutions nevertheless elect their head of state directly.

In presidential systems, the extent to which an elected president can claim a popular mandate and legitimacy depends significantly on the means by which he or she is elected. Presidents with clear majority support are likely to have much more legitimacy and be in a stronger position to push their own policy agenda than those elected on a small plurality of the vote. This has an important impact on relations between the president and the legislature. A president elected by a clear majority of the population can command a great deal of legitimacy in any conflict with the legislature. By contrast, Salvatore Allende’s election in Chile in 1970 on 36 percent of the vote, and opposed by a right-wing congress, helped create the conditions for the 1973 military coup.

165. The relationship between the legislature and the executive differs between parliamentary, semi presidential and presidential systems. The position of the President in a presidential or semi presidential system is not subject to maintaining the confidence of the legislature: such a President may not be removed from office on purely policy grounds. However, experience in Latin America in particular indicates that a directly elected President without a substantial block of legislative supporters will find successful government difficult. In presidential and semi presidential democracies, the electoral systems for the presidency and legislature therefore need to be considered together. The synchronisation or otherwise of the elections and the provisions which may encourage or discourage fragmentation of parties and the relationship between parties and elected members should be considered at the same time.

ELECTING A PRESIDENT

166. In principle, any of the single member district systems can be used for the direct election of a President. When a President is to be elected as the executive head of state, there is often a strong normative and practical preference for systems which ensure a majority victory. The majority of all countries that have direct presidential elections use TRS.

The separation of the two rounds leads to efforts by the leading candidates to attract second round support and endorsement from those eliminated after the first round. Such agreements are sometimes driven primarily by the desire for victory. They are thus perhaps less likely to reflect compatibility of policies and programmes than are pre-poll preference swapping agreements reached between candidates in preferential systems with a single polling day. In
addition, presidential elections held under TRS increase the cost and resources needed to run elections, and the turnout drop-off between the first and second rounds of voting can often be severe and damaging. For this reason, other options like the alternative vote and the supplementary vote are increasingly being examined.

**First Past the Post**

167. The most straightforward way of electing a president is to simply award the office to the candidate who wins a plurality of the votes, even if this is less than a majority. This is the case for presidential elections in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Malawi, Mexico, Palestine, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Singapore, Taiwan, Tunisia, Venezuela, Zambia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Comoros and the United States of America. Clearly, such a system is simple, cheap and efficient, but in a strongly competitive multi-candidate contest it leaves open the possibility that the president will be elected with so few votes that he or she is not seen as the choice of a substantial majority of the electorate – and indeed may specifically be opposed by such a substantial majority. the majority of the electorate voted against him or her. Examples include Venezuela in 1993, when Rafael Caldera won the presidency with 30.5% of the popular vote, and the May 1992 election in the Philippines, when Fidel Ramos was elected from a seven-candidate field with only 24% of the popular vote. Taiwan experienced a major political shift in 2000 when the challenger Chen Shuibian won the presidency with just 39 percent of the vote, less than three percent ahead of the next candidate.

The United States is unique in conducting its national presidential election by FPTP at federal state level. The FPTP winner in each federal state gains all of the votes of that state in an electoral college, with two exceptions, Maine and Nebraska, where the votes of the state are distributed proportionately. The electoral college then elects the president by plurality. This can lead to results where the winning candidate polls less votes than the runner-up – as in 2000 when the Republican candidate George Bush won despite polling some half a million fewer votes than the Democrat candidate Al Gore.

**Two-Round Systems**

168. As in legislative elections, one way to avoid candidates being elected with only a small proportion of the popular vote is to hold a second ballot if no one candidate wins a majority on the first round. This can either be between the top two candidates (majority-runoff), or between more than two candidates (majority-plurality), as described earlier in the Two-Round System section. France, most Latin American countries, several Central Asian Republics, and many countries in Francophone Africa use Two-Round Systems to elect their presidents. Elsewhere in Africa the system is used by Angola, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Namibia, Sao Tome & Principe, Sierra Leone, Seychelles, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe; and in Europe it is used by Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Portugal, Poland, Russia, and the Ukraine.

169. There are, however, a number of adaptations to straight majority-runoff and majority-plurality rules. In Costa Rica a candidate can win on the first round with only 40% of the vote; conversely, in Sierra Leone a second round is only avoided if one candidate gets 55% in the first. In Argentina, a successful candidate must poll 45%, or 40% plus more than a 10%-lead over the second-placed candidate. A similar 40% threshold with a 10% margin exists in Ecuador.

170. A number of countries also have minimum turnout rates for their presidential elections, typically set at 50%, as in Russia and many of the former Soviet republics; this is an additional mechanism for ensuring majority support.
171. Apart from those countries where parties could create winning pre-electoral alliances so that presidential candidates could be elected in the first round (such as Brazil in 1994 and Chile in 1989 and 1994), the experience of TRS has appeared problematic in Latin America. For example, in the 1990 elections in Peru, Alberto Fujimori obtained in the second round 56% of the votes, but his party won only 14 of 60 seats in the Senate, and 33 seats of 180 in the Chamber of Deputies. In Brazil in 1989, Fernando Collor de Melo was elected in the second round with just under half of the votes, but his party won, in non-concurrent legislative elections, only 3 of 75 Senate seats and only 40 of 503 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. No president in Ecuador has had majority legislative support since TRS was introduced for presidential elections in 1978.

The problems of governance which have resulted demonstrate the importance of considering interlinked institutional provisions together. While TRS produced presidents with the second round majority support of the electorate, it existed alongside legislative electoral systems which did not guarantee those presidents significant legislative support, and in Brazil in particular encouraged party fragmentation. While the successful candidates gathered the support of other parties between the first and second rounds, there was little to enable the presidents to keep this support in place after the elections.

**Preferential Voting**

172. One way of getting around the disadvantages of the Two-Round System is to merge the first and second round into one election. There are several ways of doing this. The use of AV is one obvious solution, which is used to elect the President of the Republic of Ireland. A lower-placed candidate who picks up lots of preference votes can overtake higher-placed candidates. The most recent example of a president winning through the transfer of preferences in this manner was the 1990 election of Mary Robinson to the Irish Presidency.

173. A second possibility is the preferential system used for presidential elections in Sri Lanka and for London Mayoral elections, known as the Supplementary Vote. Voters are asked to mark not only their first choice candidate, but also their second (and, in Sri Lanka, their third) choices. The manner by which this is done differs: in Sri Lanka, voters are asked to place the numbers “1”, “2” and “3” next to the names of the candidates, in the same manner as the Alternative Vote and the Single Transferable Vote. In London, no numbers are required; the ballot paper contains two columns, for a first choice vote and a second choice vote, respectively. Voters are asked to mark their first choice and second choice candidates accordingly. This means that voters do not have to write in any numbers themselves.

Counting is the same in both cases: if a candidate gains an absolute majority of first preference votes, he or she is immediately declared elected. However, if no candidate gains an absolute majority, all candidates other than the top two are eliminated and their second (or, in Sri Lanka, second and third) choice votes are passed on to one or the other of the two leading candidates, according to the preference ordering marked. Whoever achieves the highest number of votes at the end of this process is declared elected. This system thus achieves in one election what the Two-Round System achieves in two, with significant cost savings and greater administrative efficiency.

174. The disadvantages of the Supplementary Vote system include its additional complexity, and also the fact that voters are effectively required to guess who the top two candidates will be in order to make full use of their vote.

175. Despite these differences, both AV and Supplementary Vote have the same core aim: to make sure that whoever wins the election will have the support of the majority of the electorate. The use of preference votes to express a second choice means that a second round of voting is not required, and this results in significant cost savings as well as benefits in administrative, logistics and security terms.
Distribution Requirements

176. Three countries – Indonesia, Nigeria and Kenya – combine their presidential elections with a so-called ‘distribution requirement’, which requires candidates to gain a regional spread of votes, in addition to an absolute majority, before they can be declared duly elected. In Indonesia, which held its first direct presidential elections in 2004, a successful presidential and vice-presidential candidate team needed to gain a majority of the national vote, and at least 20 percent of the vote in over half of all provinces, in order to avoid a second round of voting. This requirement was inspired by Nigeria, another large and regionally-diverse country, where presidential candidates need to not only win a majority of the vote nationally, but also to secure at least one-third of the vote in at least two-thirds of the country’s provinces.

177. Distribution requirements do have the benefit of encouraging presidential candidates to make appeals outside their own regional or ethnic base, and if appropriately applied can work very well. However, the specification of two requirements for victory always carries the possibility that no candidate will fulfil both. It is important that designers note this possibility and include provisions to resolve it, because a system which produces no winner and no method of finding a winner could create a vacuum of power fraught with the dangers of instability.

The second round in Indonesia merely requires a majority winner, but Nigeria retains the distribution requirement for the second round too, which creates the possibility of a third round. If this were to take place in practice, it could have implications both for the length of the election period and the financial and administrative resources required.

178. Distribution requirements introduce strategic imperatives for candidates. In Kenya, to be elected president a candidate has to receive a plurality overall and at least 25% of the vote in at least five out of the eight provinces. Even so, throughout the 1990s a divided opposition allowed Daniel Arap Moi to remain President with less than a majority of the vote.

E lecting an Upper House

179. Not all legislatures consist only of one chamber; particularly in larger countries, many are bicameral, that is, composed of two chambers. Most second chambers (often called upper houses or senates) exist for one or both of two reasons. The first is to provide a different type of representation or represent different interests, most often the specific representation of the regions or provinces of a country. The second is to act as a ‘house of review’, to provide a brake or delay against impetuous decisions in a lower chamber. The powers of upper houses are often less than of lower chambers, especially when they are chambers of review.

180. Around the world, about one-third of all countries have unicameral legislatures, while the remaining one-third have some kind of second chamber. The structure of these varies widely, but in general the most common use of second chambers is in federal systems to represent the constituent units of the federation. For example, States in the USA and Australia, Länder in Germany, and Provinces in South Africa are all separately represented in an upper house. Typically, this involves a weighting in favour of the smaller states or provinces, as there tends to be an assumption of equality of representation between them. In addition, many second chambers feature staggered elections: half the chamber is elected every three years in Australia and Japan; one-third of the chamber is elected every second year in the US and India, and so on.

181. Some countries whose upper houses are ‘houses of review’ place special restrictions on them. In Thailand, for example, the Senate is now elected, but Senators are prohibited from belonging to a political party or campaigning for election. A less common type of alternative
representation is the deliberate use of the second chamber to represent particular ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural groups. A second chamber may also deliberately contain representatives of civil society. In Malawi, for instance, the constitution provides for 32 of the 80 senators to be chosen by elected senators from a list of candidates nominated by social “interest groups”. These groups are identified as women’s organisations, the disabled, health and education groups, business and farming sectors, trade unions, eminent members of society, and religious leaders. The much-maligned British House of Lords is occasionally defended on the grounds that it contains individuals with specific policy expertise, who can check the government legislation drawn up by generalist politicians. Similarly, second chambers in countries like Fiji and Botswana are used to represent traditional chiefs, although these are appointed in the first case and elected in the second.

182. Because of these variations, many second chambers are either partly elected, indirectly elected or unelected. Of those that are elected, most jurisdictions have chosen to reflect the different roles of the two houses by using a different electoral system for their upper house to that used for their lower house. In Australia, for example, the lower house is elected by a majoritarian system (AV), while the upper house, which represents the various states, is elected using a proportional system (STV). This has meant that minority interests who would normally be unable to win election to the lower house still have a chance of gaining election, in the context of state representation, in the upper house. In Indonesia, the lower house is elected by List PR, while the upper house uses SNTV to elect four representatives from each province. In Colombia, while both houses are elected by PR, the Senate is elected from one nationwide district, thus making it more likely that small parties and minority interests will be represented in that chamber.

**Different Tiers of Governance**

183. As noted earlier the requirements for designing an electoral system vary depending upon the type of body to be elected and its function and powers. When a body is designed to serve supra-national, provincial or local interests, the choice of system takes on different considerations than those entertained when designing national legislative bodies.

**ELECTING SUPRA-NATIONAL BODIES**

184. Supra-national bodies with significant decision making power encompassing a number of countries, – such as the European Parliament, - are as yet a rarity but may become more commonplace with the globalisation of politics and the aggregation of interests at a regional level. The European Union has adopted, and now made effective, a requirement for all member states to adopt a proportional system for the election of European Parliament members – 23 member states use List PR, and 2 (the Republic of Ireland, and Malta) use STV. Seats are allocated to member states not by pure population numbers but by a tiered system which gives equal numbers of representatives to countries of approximately equal size but also over-represents smaller countries.

Designers may place more primacy on choosing supranational systems which produce regional and partisan balance than on localised geographic representation. The European Parliament has 732 MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) representing over 500 million people, which makes small district connections between voter and representative impossible.
While the European Parliament is a supranational body, it has not yet achieved a separate electoral identity in the minds of voters, even though citizens of one member state are also allowed to be a candidate in another member state. Elections to the European Parliament are seen for the most part as contests between the national political parties in each member state. It is probably generally true that existing national political parties will play a major role in the development of supranational electoral systems, and that dominant regional traditions at national level (in the case of the European Parliament, PR) may dominate at supranational level also.

**Election federal/state assemblies and Autonomous jurisdictions**

185. The legislatures of regions or federal states may use the same electoral system as the national legislature (symmetry), as takes place in South Africa’s closed list PR system, or they may use different systems (asymmetry) as in the UK where the Scottish and Welsh assemblies are elected by MMP and the national legislature is elected by FPTP. The system for a state legislature may place a primacy on the inclusion of minority groups within its regional borders or balance between urban and rural interests. The more autonomy a region has, the less pressure for its electoral arrangements to mirror other states or provinces. The very fact of being an autonomous jurisdiction implies that its attributes and needs are quite distinct from other areas.

**Electing Local Authorities**

186. Any of the electoral systems outlined in this Handbook can be used at the local or municipal government level, but often there are a number of special considerations arising from the particular role of local government. First, because local government is more about the “nuts and bolts” issues of everyday life, geographical representation is more often given primacy. The use of local elections as a step towards democratisation is an example of this (see China case study).

Single-member districts can be used to give every neighbourhood a say in local affairs, especially where political parties are weak or non-existent. Where these districts are small, they are usually highly homogeneous. This is sometimes seen to be a good thing, but if diversity within a local government district is required, the “spokes of a wheel” principle of districting can be applied. Here, district boundaries are not circles drawn around identifiable neighbourhoods but are segments of a circle centring on the city centre and ending in the suburbs. This means that one district includes both the urban and the suburban voters, and makes for a mix of economic class and ethnicity.

187. In contrast, the municipalities in some countries which use PR systems for local government have one single list PR district which can proportionally reflect all the different political opinions in the municipality. In order to achieve this, however, specific space may need to be made for representatives of local associations who are not driven by party-political ideology to nominate lists, and perhaps also for independents to be nominated as single person lists.

It is also true that the choice of local electoral system may be made as part of a compromise involving the system for the national legislature. For example, in some newly democratizing countries such as the Congo (Brazzaville) and Mali, tradition and the French influence have resulted in a Two-Round System for the national legislature, while a desire to be inclusive and more fully reflect regional and ethnic loyalties resulted in the choice of PR for municipal elections.
188. The debate between parliamentarism and presidentialism in national constitutions has a counterpart in discussion of the structure of local government. Directly elected governors and mayors who head executive authorities separate from the elected local legislative body are becoming more popular worldwide, at the expense of elected authorities with collective committee structures directly responsible for services. The range of systems for electing governors and mayors is in principle the same as that for the direct election of presidents, and parallels may also be drawn when considering the issues surrounding the relationship between the electoral system and the legislative/executive relationship at local level.

[INSERT CHINA VILLAGE ELECTION CASE STUDY ABOUT HERE]

Electoral systems and political parties

189. The effect that electoral systems have on the growth and development of political parties is particularly important. While it is important for party systems to be as representative as possible, most experts favour systems which encourage the development of parties based on broad political values and ideologies and specific policy programmes, rather than narrow ethnic, racial, or regional concerns. As well as lessening the threat of inter-societal conflict, parties which are based on these broad “crosscutting cleavages” are more likely to reflect national opinion than those based predominantly on sectarian or regional concerns.

190. Different kinds of electoral system are likely to encourage different kinds of party organisation and party system. Highly centralised political systems using closed list PR are the most likely to encourage strong party organisations; conversely, decentralised, district-based systems like FPTP may have the opposite effect. But there are many other electoral variables that can be used to influence the development of party systems. New democracies like Russia and Indonesia have attempted to shape the development of their nascent party systems by providing institutional incentives for the formation of national rather than regional political parties, for example. Other countries like Ecuador and Papua New Guinea have used party registration and funding requirements to achieve similar objectives. Access to public and/or private funding is a key issue that cuts across electoral system design, and is often the single biggest constraint on the emergence of viable new parties.

191. Different kinds of electoral system also result in different relationships between individual candidates and their supporters. In general, systems which make use of single-member electoral districts, such as most plurality/majority systems, are seen as encouraging individual candidates to see themselves as the delegates of particular geographical areas and beholden to the interests of their local electorate. By contrast, systems which use large multi-member districts, such as most PR system, are more likely to deliver representatives whose primary loyalty lies with their party on national issues. Both approaches have their merits, which is one of the reasons for the rise in popularity of mixed systems which combine both local and national-level representatives.

192. The question of accountability is often raised in discussions of political parties and electoral systems, especially in relation to individual elected members. The relationships between electors, elected members and political parties are affected not only by the electoral system, but by other provisions of the political legislative framework such as term limits, provisions regulating the relationship between parties and their members who are also elected representatives, or provisions barring elected members from changing parties without resigning from the legislature.
193. The freedom of choice for voters to choose between candidates as opposed to parties also represents an aspect of accountability. Many countries in recent years have therefore introduced a greater element of candidate voting into their electoral systems, for example by the introduction of open lists in PR elections.

**Direct Democracy Options**

194. This Handbook covers issues of electoral system design for the election of representatives at all levels. When considering the question of accountability, however, a broader framework may be necessary which considers in addition the role of institutions of direct democracy. The use of referendums is becoming more common worldwide. Switzerland has a long history of use of the citizens’ initiative, a procedure which enables legislative proposals to be submitted by groups of citizens to popular vote. While Venezuela is the only country which provides for a recall vote against a directly elected president, such votes can be demanded against legislators and/or regional and local office holders in some presidential systems and many U.S. states.

**4. COST AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS**

195. The choice of electoral system has a wide range of administrative consequences, and is ultimately dependent on a nation’s logistical capacity to hold elections as well as the amount of money which they are able to spend. While we fully appreciate the constraints such issues have on electoral system choice, we reiterate here the point we made earlier: simply choosing the most straightforward and least expensive system may well be a false economy in the long run, as a dysfunctional electoral system can have a negative impact on a nation’s entire political system and its democratic stability. That being said, the choice of electoral system will affect a wide range of administrative issues set out in the following paragraphs.

196. *The Drawing of Electoral Boundaries.* Any single-member district system requires the time-consuming and expensive process of drawing boundaries for relatively small constituencies which are dependent upon issues of population size, cohesiveness, “community of interest” and contiguity. Furthermore, this is rarely a one-off task, as boundaries have to be regularly adjusted to take population changes into account. FPTP, AV, and TRS systems provide the most administrative headaches on this score. The Block Vote, PBV, SNTV, LV and STV systems also require electorates to be demarcated, but are somewhat easier to manage because they use multi-member districts, which tend to be fewer and larger. Drawing districts for an element of a mixed system poses similar challenges.

When multi-member districts are used, it is possible to avoid the need to adjust boundaries by changing the number of representatives elected in each electoral district, a method of particular value when established units such as provinces are used as electoral districts. List PR systems indeed are often the cheapest and easiest to administer because they either use one single national constituency, which means that no boundaries need be drawn at all, or they use very large multi-member districts which dovetail with pre-existing state or provincial boundaries. Recent UN-sponsored elections in Sierra Leone in 1996, Liberia in 1997, and Kosovo in 2001 were all conducted under a national List PR system, partly because each country’s population displacement and the lack of accurate census data meant that electoral authorities did not have the population data necessary to draw smaller districts.
197. **The Registration of Voters.** Voter registration is the most complex, controversial and often least successful part of electoral administration. Voter registration by its nature involves collecting in a standardized format specific information from a vast number of voters, and then arranging and distributing this data in a form that can be used at election time, to ensure that only eligible electors engage in the voting process and also to guard against multiple voting, personation and the like. The political sensitivity of these issues, and the laborious nature of the task itself, means that voter registration is often one of the most expensive and time consuming parts of the entire electoral process.

Voter registration requirements are influenced by the design of the electoral system. The impact of external arrangements needs to be considered. Also, a system which uses single-member districts usually requires that each voter must be registered within the boundaries of a specified district. This means that FPTP, AV, TRS and Borda Count (when using single-member districts) are the most expensive and administratively time-consuming systems in terms of voter registration, alongside Parallel and MMP systems which contain single member districts. The fewer, multi-member districts of the Block Vote, PBV, SNTV and STV make the process a little easier, while large-district List PR systems are the least complicated. The simplicity of List PR in this context has been a contributing factor in its adoption in some major transitional elections, such as South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994. It should be emphasised, however, that variations in electoral systems have only a minor impact on the often extremely high cost of voter registration.

198. **The Design of Ballot Papers.** Ballot papers should be as friendly as possible to all voters, to maximize participation and reduce spoilt or “invalid” votes. This often entails the use of symbols for parties and candidates, photographs, and colours; a number of interesting ballot paper examples are illustrated in this Handbook. FPTP and AV ballot papers are often easiest to print and, in most cases, have a relatively small number of names. TRS ballots are similarly easy, but in many cases new ballots have to be printed for a second round of voting, thus effectively doubling the production cost. In these situations, considerations also have to be made to allow for sufficient time to print the second ballot. Parallel and MMP systems often require the printing of at least two ballots for a single polling day. SNTV, Block Vote, Borda Count and STV ballots are more complex than FPTP ones because they will have more candidates, and therefore more symbols and photographs (if these are used). Lastly, List PR ballot papers can span the continuum of complexity. They can be very simple, as in a closed list system, or quite complex in a free list system such as in Switzerland.

199. **Voter Education.** Clearly the nature of, and need for, voter education will vary dramatically from society to society, but when it comes to educating voters on how to fill out their ballots, there are identifiable differences between each system. The principles behind voting under preferential systems such as AV, STV or Borda Count are quite complex if they are being used for the first time, and voter education needs to address this issue, particularly if it is compulsory to number all candidates, as is the case in Australia. The increasing use of mixed systems, many of which gives voters two ballot papers, also creates an additional level of complexity for voters. By contrast, the principles behind single-vote systems such as FPTP or SNTV are very easy to understand. The remaining systems in Table Five fall somewhere in between these two extremes.

200. **One ballot or two? One polling day or two?** FPTP, AV, Block, SNTV, List PR, Borda Count and STV all generally require just one election on one day.
However, Parallel and MMP systems mix two (or more) very different electoral systems together, and so have logistical implications for the training of election officials and the way in which people vote. Two-Round Systems are perhaps the most costly and difficult to administer, because they often require the whole electoral process to be re-run a week or a fortnight after the first round.

201. By-elections. If a seat becomes vacant between elections, List PR systems often simply fill the seat with the next candidate on the list of the party of the former representative, eliminating the need to hold another election. Plurality/Majority systems are likely to have provisions to fill a vacant seat through a by-election. When other systems are in use, either approach may be possible: the Republic of Ireland holds by-elections for vacant seats in the legislature, but Australia does not do so for Senate vacancies.

By-elections are smaller and therefore less costly than normal elections, but in some countries they will nonetheless put a significant burden on the budget, and seats are sometimes left vacant for long periods because of a lack of capacity to arrange by-elections. In some circumstances by-elections can act as a midterm test of the performance of the government.

202. The Count. FPTP, SNTV and simple closed-list PR systems are easiest to count, as only one vote total figure for each party or candidate is required to work out the results. The Block Vote requires the polling officials to count a number of votes on a single ballot paper, and Parallel and MMP systems often require the counting of two ballot papers. AV, BC and STV, as preferential systems requiring numbers to be marked on the ballot, are more complex to count.

| Table: Potential Cost and Administration Implications of Twelve Electoral Systems |
|---------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Boundaries | Registration | Ballots | Education | Number | By-elections | The Count |
| FPTP | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| BV | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| TRS | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| AV | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| PBV | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| List PR | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| STV | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| Parallel | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| MMP | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| BC | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| SNTV | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |
| LV | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ | ☥ |

Key: ☥: Low impact, -: Medium impact, ☤ High impact.

203. Sustainability. The stresses which any electoral system places on a country’s administrative capacity will be determined primarily by history, context, experience and
resources, but in the abstract Table Five does offer some clues to the potential costs of various systems. A cursory glance at each system shows that List PR systems, especially national closed-list systems, score well when it comes to being cheap to run and requiring few administrative resources. So does Party Block Vote. Next come Single Non-Transferable Vote and Limited Vote systems, followed by Block Vote and First Past the Post; and a little further down by Alternative Vote, Single Transferable Vote, Parallel, Borda Count and Mixed Member Proportional systems. The system which is most likely to put pressure on any country’s administrative capacity is the Two-Round System.

5. ADVICE FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEM DESIGNERS

204. One of the clearest conclusions to be obtained from the comparative study of electoral systems is simply the range and utility of the options available. Often, designers and drafters of constitutional, political and electoral frameworks simply choose the electoral system they know best – often, in new democracies, the system of the former colonial power if there was one – rather than fully investigating the most appropriate alternatives. Sometimes the elements of a peace settlement or external pressures constrain the options available.

The major purpose of this Handbook is to provide some of the knowledge for informed decisions to be made. The Handbook does not necessarily advocate wholesale changes to existing electoral systems; in fact, the comparative experience of electoral reform to date suggests that moderate reforms, building on those parts of an existing system which work well, is often a better option than jumping to a completely new and unfamiliar system.

205. There is much to be learned from the experience of others. For example, a country with an FPTP system which wished to move to something more proportional while retaining the geographic link to constituents may wish to consider the experience of New Zealand, which adopted an MMP system in 1993, or Lesotho in 2002. A similar country which wanted to keep single-member districts but encourage inter-group accommodation and compromise could evaluate the experience of AV in the Oceania region (Fiji or Papua New Guinea in particular). Any deeply divided country wishing to make the transition to democracy would be well advised to consider both the multi-ethnic power-sharing government the List PR electoral system in South Africa has facilitated and the more troubled history of the Northern Ireland Assembly elected under STV elections. Lastly, a country which simply wishes to reduce the cost and instability created by a Two-Round System for electing a president could examine the AV option used by the Republic of Ireland. In all of these cases, the choice of electoral system has had a clear impact upon the politics of that country.

206. The following guidelines summarise the advice contained in this Handbook.

Keep It Simple and Clear

207. Effective and sustainable electoral system designs are more likely to be those which can be easily understood by the voter and the politician. Too much complexity can lead to misunderstandings, unintended consequences, and voter mistrust of the results.

Don’t be Afraid to Innovate
208. Many of the successful electoral systems used in the world today themselves represent innovative approaches to specific problems, and have been proved to work well. There is much to learn from the experience of others – those of both neighbouring countries and experiences from seemingly quite different cases.

**Pay Attention to Contextual and Temporal Factors**

209. Electoral systems do not work in a vacuum. Their success depends upon a happy marriage of political institutions and cultural traditions. The first point of departure for any would-be electoral system designer should be to ask: what is the political and social context that I am working within? The second question might be: am I designing a permanent system or one which needs to get us through a transitional period?

**Do Not Underestimate the Electorate**

210. While simplicity is important, it is equally dangerous to underestimate the ability of voters to comprehend and successfully use a wide variety of different electoral systems. Complex preferential systems, for example, have been used successfully in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region, while the experience of many recent elections in new democracies has underlined the important distinction between “functional” literacy and “political” literacy. Even in very poor countries, voters often have, and wish to express, relatively sophisticated orderings of political preferences and choices.

**Err on the Side of Inclusion**

211. Wherever possible, whether in divided or relatively homogenous societies, the electoral system should produce a legislature which errs on the side of including all significant interests. Regardless of whether minorities are based on ideological, ethnic, racial, linguistic, regional or religious identities, the exclusion of significant shades of opinion from legislatures, particularly in the developing world, has often been catastrophically counter-productive.

**Process is a Key Factor in Choice**

212. The way in which a particular electoral system is chosen is also extremely important in ensuring its overall legitimacy. A process in which most or all groups are included, including the electorate at large, is likely to result in significantly broader acceptance of the end result than a decision perceived as being motivated by partisan self-interest alone. Although partisan considerations are unavoidable when discussing the choice of electoral systems, broad cross-party and public support for any institution is crucial to it being accepted and respected. The reform of the New Zealand electoral system from FPTP to MMP, for example, involved two referendums which served to legitimise the final outcome. By contrast, the French Socialist Government’s decision in 1986 to switch from their existing Two-Round System to PR was widely perceived as being motivated by partisan reasons, and was quickly reversed as soon the government lost power in 1988.

**Build Legitimacy and Acceptance Among All Key Actors**

213. All groupings which wish to play a part in the democratic process should feel that the electoral system to be used is “fair” and gives them the same chance as anyone else to be electorally successful. The paramount aim should be that those who “lose” the election cannot translate their disappointment into a rejection of the system itself, nor use the electoral system as an excuse to destabilize the path of democratic consolidation. In 1990 in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas was voted out of the government but they accepted the defeat, in part because they accepted the fairness of the electoral system. Cambodia, Mozambique and South Africa were able to end their bloody civil wars through institutional arrangements which were broadly acceptable to all sides.

**Try to Maximise Voter Influence**

214. Voters should feel that elections provide them with a measure of influence over governments and government policy. Choice can be maximized in a number of different ways.
Voters may be able to choose between parties, between candidates of different parties, and between candidates of the same party. They might also be able to vote differently when it comes to presidential, upper house, lower house, regional, and local government elections. They should also feel confident that their vote has a genuine impact upon government formation, and not just upon the composition of the legislature alone.

**But Balance That Against Encouraging Coherent Political Parties**

215. But the desire to maximize voter influence should be balanced against the need to encourage coherent and viable political parties. Maximum voter choice on the ballot paper may produce such a fragmented legislature that nobody ends up with the result they were hoping for. There is widespread agreement among political scientists that broadly-based, coherent political parties are among the most important factors in the promotion of effective and sustainable democracy.

**Long-Term Stability and Short-Term Advantage Are Not Always Mutually Compatible**

216. When political actors negotiate over a new electoral system they often push proposals which they believe will advantage their party in the coming elections. However, this can often be an unwise strategy, particularly in developing nations, as one party’s short-term success or dominance may lead to long-term political breakdown and social unrest. For example, in negotiations prior to the transitional 1994 election, South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC) could have reasonably argued for the retention of the existing FPTP electoral system, which would probably have given them, as by far the largest party, a seat bonus over and above their share of the national vote. That they argued for a form of proportional representation, and thus won fewer seats than they could have under FPTP, was a testament to the fact that they saw longterm stability as more desirable than short-term electoral gratification.

217. Similarly, electoral systems need to be responsive enough to react effectively to changing political circumstances and the growth of new political movements. Even in established democracies, support for the major parties is rarely stable, while politics in new democracies is almost always highly dynamic, and this means that a party which benefits from the electoral arrangements at one election may not necessarily benefit at the next.

**Don’t Think of the Electoral System as a Panacea for All Ills**

218. While it is true that if one wants to change the nature of political competition the electoral system may be the most effective instrument to do so, electoral systems can never be the panacea for the political ills of a country. The overall effects of other variables, particularly a country’s political culture, usually have a much greater impact upon democratic prospects than institutional factors such as electoral systems. Moreover, the positive effects of a well crafted electoral system can be all too easily submerged by an inappropriate constitutional dispensation, the domestic dominance of forces of discord, or the weight of external threats to the sovereignty of the country.

**But Conversely Don’t Underestimate its Influence**

219. But, while accepting that throughout the world the social constraints on democracy are considerable, such constraints still leave room for conscious political strategies which may further or hamper successful democratisation. Electoral systems are not a panacea, but they are central to the structuring of stability in any polity. Deft electoral system engineering may not prevent or eradicate deep enmities, but appropriate institutions can nudge the political system in the direction of reduced conflict and greater governmental accountability. In other words, while most of the changes that can be achieved by tailoring electoral systems are necessarily at the margins, it is often these marginal impacts that make the difference between democracy being consolidated or being undermined.

**Be Mindful of the Electorate’s Willingness to Embrace Change**
220. Electoral system change might seem like a good idea to political insiders who understand the flaws of the existing system, but unless proposals for reform are presented in an appropriate way the public may well reject tinkering with the system, perceiving reform to be nothing more than a case of politicians altering the rules for their own benefit. Most damaging are situations when the change is seen to be a blatant manoeuvre for political gain (as was the case in Chile in 1989, in Jordan in 1993, and in Kyrgyzstan on several occasions since 1995 (see case study)), or when the system alters so frequently that the voters do not quite know where they are (as some people have argued is the case in Bolivia).

Avoid Being a Slave to Past Systems

221. Nevertheless, all too often electoral systems inappropriate to a new democracy’s needs have been inherited or carried over from colonial times without any thought as to how they will work within the new political realities. Almost all the former British colonies in Asia, Africa and the Pacific, for example, adopted FPTP systems. In many of these new democracies, particularly those facing ethnic divisions, this system proved utterly inappropriate to their needs. It has been similarly argued that many of the former French colonies in West Africa who retained the use of the TRS system (such as Mali) suffered damaging polarisation as a result. Similarly, many post-communist regimes continue to utilize minimum turnout or majority requirements inherited from the Soviet era. One of the fascinating things about the map which comes with this Handbook is that in many ways it mirrors a colonial map of a hundred years ago, with many former British colonies using FPTP, those nations under French influence using Two-Round systems, and the former Belgian and Dutch colonies often opting for a version of the List-PR systems used in continental Europe - although it is true to say that over time this is changing.

Assess the Likely Impact of Any New System on Societal Conflict

222. As noted at the very start of this Handbook, electoral systems can be seen not only as mechanisms for choosing legislatures and presidents, but also as a tool of conflict management within a society. Some systems, in some circumstances, will encourage parties to make inclusive appeals for support outside their own core support base. Unfortunately, it is more often the case in the world today that the presence of inappropriate electoral systems serve actually to exacerbate negative tendencies which already exist; for example, by encouraging parties to see elections as “zero-sum” contests and thus to act in a hostile and exclusionary manner to anyone outside their home group. When designing any political institution, the bottom line is that even if it does not help to reduce tensions within society, it should, at the very least, not make matters worse.

Try and Imagine Unusual or Unlikely Contingencies

223. Too often, electoral systems are designed to avoid the mistakes of the past, especially the immediate past. Care should be taken in doing so not to overreact and create a system that goes too far in terms of correcting previous problems. Furthermore, electoral system designers would do well to pose themselves some unusual questions to avoid embarrassment in the long run: What if nobody wins under the system proposed? Is it possible that one party could win all the seats? What if you have to award more seats than you have places in the legislature? What do you do if candidates tie? Might the system mean that, in some districts, it is better for a party supporter not to vote for their preferred party or candidate?
### Design checklist

| The system is clear and comprehensible |   |
| Context has been taken into account   |   |
| The system is appropriate for the time |   |
| Mechanisms for future reform are clear |   |
| The system does not under-estimate the electorate |   |
| The system is as inclusive as possible |   |
| Design process was perceived to be legitimate |   |
| Election results will be seen as legitimate |   |
| Unusual contingencies are taken into account |   |
| The system is financially and administratively sustainable |   |
| Voters feel powerful |   |
| A competitive party system is encouraged |   |
| System fits into a holistic constitutional framework |   |
| Helps to alleviate conflict rather than exacerbate it |   |
Annex - Glossary of Terms

**Absentee Voting** – Another term for Remote Voting.

**Additional Member System** – Another term for a Mixed Member Proportional system.

**Alternative Vote (AV)** – A candidate-centred, preferential, plurality/majority system used in single-member districts in which voters use numbers to mark their preferences on the ballot paper. A candidate who receives an absolute majority (50% plus 1) of valid first preference votes is declared elected. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority of first preferences, the least successful candidates are eliminated and their votes re-allocated until one candidate has an absolute majority of valid votes remaining.

**Apparentement** – A term of French origin for a provision which can be included in List Proportional Representation systems which enables two or more parties or groupings which fight separate campaigns to reach agreement that their votes will be combined for the purpose of seat allocation. See also Lema and Stembusaccoord.

**Average District Magnitude** – For a country, local authority or supranational institution, the number of representatives to be elected divided by the number of electoral districts. See also district magnitude.

**Ballot structure** – The way in which electoral choices are presented on the ballot paper, in particular whether the ballot is candidate-centred or party-centred.

**Bicameral Legislature** – A legislature comprised of two houses, usually known as an upper house and a lower house.

**Block Vote (BV)** – A plurality/majority system used in multi-member districts in which electors have as many votes as there are candidates to be elected. Voting is candidate-centred. The candidates with the highest vote totals win the seats.

**Borda Count** - A candidate-centred, preferential system used in either single- or multi-member districts in which voters use numbers to mark their preferences on the ballot paper and each preference marked is then assigned a value using equal steps. For example, in a ten candidate field a first preference is worth one, a second preference is worth 0.9 and so on, with a tenth preference worth 0.1. These are summed and the candidate(s) with the highest total(s) is/are declared elected. See also Modified Borda Count.

**Boundary Delimitation** – The process by which a country, local authority area or area of a supranational institution is divided into electoral districts.

**Candidate-centred Ballot** – A form of ballot in which an elector chooses between candidates, rather than between parties and political groupings.

**Circonscription** – The term most frequently used for electoral district in Francophone countries. See electoral district.

**Closed List** – A form of List Proportional Representation in which electors are restricted to voting only for a party or political grouping, and cannot express a preference for any candidate within a party list. See also Open List and Free List.

**Communal Roll** – A register of electors for which the qualification for registration is a determinable criterion such as religion, ethnicity, language, or gender. Entry on such a register may apply to all electors who meet the criterion or may be a choice to be made by each such elector. This register is used for the election of representatives of the group defined by the criterion from electoral districts specified for that purpose.

**Compensatory Seats** - The List PR seats in a Mixed Member Proportional system which are awarded to parties or groupings to correct disproportionality in their representation in the
results of the elections held under the first part of the MMP system, normally under a plurality/majority system.

**Constituency** - A synonym for electoral district used predominantly in some Anglophone countries. See electoral district.

**Contiguous District** – An electoral district that can be enclosed in a single continuous boundary line that has no breaks and does not cross itself.

**Cross Cutting Cleavages** – Political allegiances of voters which cut across ethnic, religious, and class divisions in society.

**Cumulation** – The capacity within some electoral systems for voters to cast more than one vote for a favoured candidate.

**Democratic Consolidation** – The process by which a country’s political institutions and democratic procedures become legitimised, stable and broadly accepted by both political actors and the wider population.

**D’Hondt Formula** – one of the options for the series of divisors used to distribute seats in List PR systems which adopt the Highest Average Method. The votes of a party or grouping are divided successively by 1, 2, 3… as seats are allocated to it. Of the available formulas, d’Hondt tends to be the most favourable to larger parties. See also Sainte-Laguë Formula.

**Distribution Requirements** – The requirement that to win election a candidate must not merely win a specified proportion of the vote nationally but also a specified degree of support in a number of different states or regions.

**District** – Used in this Handbook to mean Electoral District.

**District Magnitude** – For an electoral district, the number of representatives to be elected from it. See also Average District Magnitude.

**Droop Quota** – A variant of quota(1) used in proportional representation systems which use the largest remainder method, defined as the total valid vote divided by the number of seats to be filled in the electoral district plus one. Also known as Hagenbach-Bischoff quota. See also Hare quota and Imperiali quota.

**Elector** – A person who is both qualified and registered to vote at an election.

**Electoral District** – One of the geographic areas into which a country, local authority or supranational institution may be divided for electoral purposes. See also circonscription, constituency, electorate(2) and riding. An electoral district may elect one or more representatives to an elected body. See single-member district and multi-member district.

**Electoral Formula** – That part of the electoral system dealing specifically with the translation of votes into seats.

**Electoral Law** – One or more pieces of legislation governing all aspects of the process for electing the political institutions defined in a country’s constitution or institutional framework.

**Electoral Management Body (EMB)** – The organisation tasked under electoral law with the responsibility for the conduct of elections. The EMB in most countries consists either of an independent commission appointed for the purpose, or of part of a specified government department.

**Electoral Regulations** – Rules subsidiary to legislation made, often by the electoral management body, under powers contained in the electoral law which govern aspects of the organisation and administration of an election.

**Electoral System** – That part of the electoral law and regulations which determines how parties and candidates are elected to a body as representatives. Its three most significant components are the electoral formula, the ballot structure, and the district magnitude.
Electorate – May have one of two distinct meanings:

1. The total number of electors registered to vote in an electoral district.
2. A synonym for electoral district used predominantly in some Anglophone countries. See electoral district.

First Past the Post (FPTP) – The simplest form of plurality/majority electoral system, using single-member districts and candidate-centred voting. The winning candidate is the one who gains more votes than any other candidate, even if this is not an absolute majority of valid votes.

Free List – A form of List Proportional Representation in which voters may vote for a party or grouping and in addition for one or more candidates, whether or not those candidates are nominated by that party or grouping. Also known as Panachage. See also Closed List and Open List.

Gerrymandering – The deliberate manipulation of electoral district boundaries so as to advantage or disadvantage a particular political interest.

Hagenbach-Bischoff Quota – Another term for the Droop Quota.

Hare Quota – A variant of quota(1) used in proportional representation systems which use the largest remainder method, defined as the total valid vote divided by the number of seats to be filled in the electoral district. See also Droop and Imperiali quotas.

Heterogeneous District – An electoral district in which, either by design or as a result of the operation of other criteria for boundary delimitation, the electorate contains social, ethnic, religious or linguistic diversity.

Highest Average Method – A principle for converting votes into seats in List PR systems. One seat is allocated in a district at each of a series of counts to the party or grouping with the highest vote total. When a seat is allocated, the original vote of the party that wins it is reduced by division. The most common series of divisors used are d’Hondt and Sainte-Laguë. The highest average method tends to be more favourable to larger parties than its alternative, the Largest Remainder Method.

Homogeneous District – An electoral district in which, either by design or as a result of the operation of other criteria for boundary delimitation, the electorate contains substantial social, ethnic, religious or linguistic uniformity.

Hybrid system – The result of dividing a country into two or more non-overlapping areas, in each of which a different electoral system is used.

Imperiali Quota – A variant of quota(1) used in proportional representation systems which use the largest remainder method, defined as the total valid vote divided by the number of seats to be filled in the electoral district plus two. See also Hare and Droop quotas.

Index of Disproportionality – A figure which is designed to measure the degree of deviation from proportionality in the allocation of seats to parties or groupings which participated in an election. It is most commonly defined as the square root of the sum of the squares of the differences for each party or grouping between the percentage of votes received and the percentage of seats gained.

Invalid Votes – A ballot which cannot be counted in favour of any participant in an election due to accidental or deliberate errors of marking by the voters.

Largest Remainder Method – A principle for converting votes into seats in List PR systems. After parties and groupings have been allocated seats in an electoral district in respect of full quotas(1), some seats will be unfilled and some votes remain. The remaining seats are then awarded to parties and groupings in order of the number of left over votes they possess. The largest remainder method tends to be more favourable to smaller parties than the alternative approach, the Highest Average Method.
**Lema** – A term used in Latin America for an umbrella list including two or more sublists which receive votes separately but whose votes are counted together for the purposes of seat allocation in some List Proportional Representation systems. See also Apparentement and Stembusaccoord.

**Limited Vote (LV)** – An electoral system used in multi-member districts in which electors have more than one vote, but fewer votes than there are candidates to be elected. The candidates with the highest vote totals win the seats, in the same way as in a Block Vote system and in SNTV.

**List Proportional Representation (List PR)** – A system in which each participant party or grouping presents a list of candidates for an electoral district, voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. Winning candidates are taken from the lists. See Closed List, Open List and Free List.

**Lower House** – One of the two chambers in a bicameral legislature, usually seen as containing ‘the representatives of the people’. The more powerful chamber when the powers of the two chambers are unequal.

**Malapportionment** – The uneven distribution of voters between electoral districts.

**Manufactured Majority** – An election result, more commonly found where a plurality/majority system is used, in which a single party or coalition wins less than 50 per cent of the valid votes, but an absolute majority of the seats in an elected body.

**Member State** – A country which is a member of a supranational institution, for example the European Union.

**Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)** – A mixed system in which all of the voters use the first electoral system, usually a plurality-majority system, to elect some of the representatives to an elected body. The remaining seats are then allocated to parties and groupings using the second electoral system, normally List PR, so as to compensate for disproportionality in their representation in the results from the first electoral system.

**Mixed System** – A system in which the choices expressed by voters are used to elect representatives through two different systems, one proportional representation system and one plurality/majority system. There are two kinds of mixed systems: Parallel Systems and Mixed Member Proportional Systems.

**Modified Borda Count** – A candidate-centred, preferential system used in either single- or multi-member districts in which voters use numbers to mark their preferences on the ballot paper and each preference marked is then assigned a value calculated by using the series of divisors 1,2,3,... For example, in a ten candidate field a first preference is worth one, a second preference is worth 0.5, a third preference 0.3333, and so on. These are summed and the candidate(s) with the highest total(s) is/are declared elected. See also Borda Count.

**Multi-Member District** – A district from which more than one representative is elected to a legislature or elected body. See also Single-Member District.

**Multiple-Tier System** – An electoral system in which two or more sets of representatives are elected to the same chamber by the entire electorate of a country. The multiple tiers may be electoral districts defined at different levels within a country, for example single-member districts and regions, or regions and the country as a whole. Systems in which two distinct sets of representatives are elected from the same level are also multiple-tier systems. All mixed systems are multiple-tier systems.

**One Person One Vote One Value (OPOVOV)** – A principle of representation in which each elected representative represents the same number of electors, and under which malapportionment is minimised.
Open List – A form of List Proportional Representation in which voters can express a preference both for a party or grouping and for one, or sometimes more, candidates within that party or grouping.

Out of Country Voting – A mechanism by which voters who are permanently or temporarily absent from a country are enabled to cast a vote. See also Remote Voting.

Panachage – The term used in francophone countries for the version of List Proportional Representation in which voters may vote for a party or grouping and in addition for one or more candidates, whether or not those candidates are nominated by that party or grouping. See also Free List.

Parallel System – A mixed system in which the choices expressed by the voters are used to elect representatives through two different systems, usually one plurality/majority system and one proportional representation system, but where no account is taken of the seats allocated under the first system in calculating the results in the second system. See also Mixed-Member Proportional system.

Party Block Vote (PBV) – A plurality/majority system using multi-member districts in which voters cast a single party-centred vote for a party of choice, and do not choose between candidates. The party with most votes will win every seat in the electoral district.

Party-Centred Ballot – A form of ballot in which a voter chooses between parties or groupings, rather than individual candidates.

Party Magnitude – For an electoral district, the average number of representatives elected by each party and grouping. For a country, the average of the party magnitudes for all electoral districts.

Personation – The fraudulent casting of the vote of a registered elector by another person.

Plurality/Majority Systems – Plurality/majority systems are based on the principle that a candidate(s) or party with a plurality of votes (more than any other) or a majority of votes (50% plus one) is/are declared the winner(s). Such a system may use single-member districts – for example First Past the Post, Alternative Vote or the Two Round System, or multi-member districts – for example the Block Vote and Party Block Vote.

Preferential Voting Systems – Electoral systems in which voters rank parties or candidates on the ballot paper in order of their choice. The Alternative Vote, the Borda Count, the Single Transferable Vote and the Supplementary Vote are all examples of preferential voting systems.

Proportional Representation (PR) – An electoral system family based on the principle of the conscious translation of the overall votes of a party or grouping into a corresponding proportion of seats in an elected body. For example, a party which wins 30% of the votes will receive approximately 30% of the seats. All PR systems require the use of multi-member districts. There are two major types of PR systems, the List PR system and the Single Transferable Vote (STV).

Quota – May have one of two distinct meanings.
1. The number of votes which guarantees a party or candidate to win one seat in a proportional representation system. There are three variants in common use, the Hare, Droop (or Hagenbach-Bischoff), and Imperiali quotas.
2. A number of seats in an elected body or a proportion of candidates nominated by a party or grouping which are required by law to be filled by representatives of a particular kind: most commonly used to ensure the nomination and election of a minimum number of women.

Regional Fiefdom – A situation in which one party wins all, or nearly all, of the seats in a particular geographic region of a country.
Remote Voting – A mechanism by which voters are enabled to cast a vote which does not involve their attendance at a polling station on the day or days fixed for polling. See also Out of country Voting.

Reserved Seats – Seats in which a determinable criterion such as religion, ethnicity, language, or gender is a requirement for nomination or election.

Riding – A synonym for electoral district used in some countries. See electoral district.

Sainte-Laguë Formula – one of the options for the series of divisors used to distribute seats in List PR systems which adopt the Highest Average Method. The votes of a party or grouping are divided successively by 1, 3, 5... as seats are allocated to it. See also d’Hondt formula.

Single-Member District – An electoral district from which only one member is elected to a legislature or elected body. See also multi-member district.

Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) – An electoral system in which voters cast a single candidate-centred vote for one candidate in a multimember district. The candidates with the highest vote totals are declared elected.

Single Transferable Vote (STV) – A preferential candidate-centred proportional representation system used in multi-member districts. Candidates that surpass a specified quota (1) of first preference votes are declared elected. In successive counts, votes are redistributed from least successful candidates who are eliminated and votes surplus to the quota (1) are redistributed from successful candidates, until sufficient candidates are declared elected.

Spoilt Vote – see Invalid Vote.

State – is used in this Handbook to denote a subnational unit of a country, often in the context of a federal constitution. (See also member state.)

Stembusaccoord – A term of Dutch origin for a provision which can be included in List Proportional Representation systems which enables two or more parties or groupings which fight separate campaigns to reach agreement that their votes will be combined for the purpose of seat allocation. See also Apparentement and Lema.

Supplementary Vote – A candidate-centred, preferential, plurality/majority system, similar to the Alternative Vote. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority of first preferences, all candidates except the two leading candidates are eliminated and their votes reallocated according to the second, third (and so on) preferences expressed. The candidate with the highest number of votes is declared elected.

Supranational institution – an organisation created by a number of countries by treaty where power is held by independent appointed officials or by representatives elected by the legislatures or people of the member states.

Threshold – The minimum level of support which a party needs to gain representation. A threshold may be a formal threshold, which is a figure expressed in the constitution or the law usually in the form of a percentage of the valid votes cast, or an effective or natural threshold, which is a mathematical property of the electoral system in use.

Two-Round System (TRS) – A plurality/majority system in which a second election is held if no candidate achieves a given level of votes, most commonly an absolute majority (50% plus 1), in the first election.

A Two-Round System may take a majority-plurality form, in which it is possible for more than two candidates to contest the second round. An example is the French system, in which any candidate who has received the votes of over 12.5 per cent of the registered electorate in the first round can stand in the second round. The candidate who wins the highest numbers of votes in the second round is then declared elected, regardless of whether they have won
an absolute majority. Alternatively, a Two-Round System may take a majority-runoff form, in which only the top two candidates in the first round contest the second round.

Überhangsmandat – An additional seat in a legislature which results in an MMP system when a party or grouping wins more seats in a region under the first, usually plurality/majority, electoral system than the number to which it would be entitled in total based on its proportion of the vote. Also known as excess mandate or overhang mandate.

Upper House – One of the two chambers in a bicameral legislature, often seen either as containing ‘the representatives of regions/federal states’ or as ‘a chamber of review’. The less powerful chamber when the powers of the two chambers are unequal

Wasted Votes – Votes which do not ultimately count towards the election of any candidate or party.
Annex: Electoral System Impact on the Translation of Votes into Seats

Here is a hypothetical election (of 25,000 votes contested by two political parties) run under two different sets of electoral rules: a plurality/majority First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system with five single member districts, and a List PR system with one large district.

Example One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituencies</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party A</td>
<td>3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party B</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: FPTP (First-Past-The-Post system), List PR (List Proportional Representation system using the Largest Remainder method of seat allocation with a Hare Quota).

In the example Party A receives far fewer votes than Party B (43 versus 57 per cent) but under a FPTP system they win 4 out of the 5 seats available. Conversely, under a List PR system Party B wins 3 seats against 2 seats for Party A. This example may appear extreme but similar results occur quite regularly in plurality/majority elections.

In the second example the distribution of the votes is changed and there are now 5 parties contesting the election, but the two hypothetical electoral systems remain the same.

Example Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party A</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party B</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party C</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party D</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party E</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: FPTP (First-Past-The-Post system), List PR (List Proportional Representation system using the Largest Remainder method of seat allocation with a Hare Quota).
Under the List PR system every party wins a single seat despite the fact that Party A wins almost twice as many votes as Party E. Under a FPTP system the largest Party (A) would have picked up a majority of the 5 seats with the next two highest polling parties (B and C) winning a single seat each. The choice of electoral system thus has a dramatic effect on the composition of the legislature and, by extension, the government in a parliamentary system.

In the third example there are again two parties competing; but there are now 50,000 votes and 10 seats to be allocated. The two electoral systems are a Parallel (5 List PR seats and 5 FPTP seats) system, and an MMP (5 List PR seats and 5 FPTP seats) system.

**Example Three**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
<th>Parallel</th>
<th>MMP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>2600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>2600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>3100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>13500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>27000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>50000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: Parallel (parallel system with the elements List PR and FPTP). MMP (Mixed Member Proportional System with the elements List PR and FPTP). (The List Proportional Representation systems use the Largest Remainder method of seat allocation with a Hare Quota)

Under the parallel system Party A wins 8 seats and Party B gets the remaining 2 seats. All 5 of the FPTP seats and 3 of the 5 List PR seats go to Party A which wins a total of 80 percent of the seats with 54 percent of the vote. Under the MMP system, with the List PR element compensating for the disproportionality under the FPTP element, the same vote distribution gives both parties 5 seats each. In this example, under MMP, Party A wins all 5 of the FPTP seats and hence, all the 5 List PR seats are allocated to Party B.
The result of the MMP system is a much more proportional 50-50 per cent seat distribution with a 54-46 per cent vote distribution compared to the outcome of the election under the parallel system. This clearly shows the difference between the List PR element simply running parallel to the plurality/majority system on the one hand, and actually compensating for the disproportionalities produced by it on the other.
Annex: Boundary Delimitation

These two maps are designed to illustrate the principle that there is no independent approach to boundary delimitation. Like many other facets of electoral system design, apparently technical methods and decisions inevitably have political consequences, and those with political interests can be expected to argue for solutions which are politically beneficial to them.

The maps show the results of two different approaches to boundary delimitation in an area which contains a town and surrounding countryside. The total population qualifies the area for 2 seats in the legislature. 40 per cent of the population live in the town, and 60 per cent in the countryside. (These numbers may equally refer to the total electorate, which is also used as the basis of seat entitlement in some countries.)

For the sake of simplicity, it is assumed that everyone in the town votes for the Workers' Party, and everyone in the countryside votes for the Farmers' Party. The real world is obviously more complex, but this does not change the principles of the mathematics.

In Version 1, the Doughnut principle, the town is retained as a single community in one relatively homogeneous seat, to which a small amount of adjacent countryside is added to equalise the electorates of the two seats. Most of the countryside makes up a homogeneous second seat. The result is victory in the town seat for the Workers' Party, and victory in the countryside seat for the Farmers' Party.

In Version 2, the Burger principle, the area is divided along the river which runs through the centre of it. Two heterogeneous seats are created, one containing the northern half of the town and the surrounding northern countryside, the other the southern half of the town and the surrounding southern countryside. In both seats, the Farmers' Party gains victory by 60 per cent to 40 per cent.

Unsurprisingly, the Workers' Party will attempt to persuade the delimitation authority of the technical virtues of homogeneity and the unity of the town, while at the same time the Farmers' Party will be arguing the case for heterogeneity and the undesirability of a seat with a hole in it!
Town and Country: 2 seats Model
1: Doughnut

Everyone in town votes Workers’ Party
Everyone outside votes Farmers’ Party

District A: Workers 80
Farmers 20

District B: Farmers 100

Result:
Workers 1 seat
Farmers 1 seat
Town and Country : 2 seats Model
2: Burger

Everyone in town votes Workers’ Party
Everyone outside votes Farmers’ Party

District A: Workers 40
Farmers 60
District B: Workers 40
Farmers 60
Result:
Farmers 2 seats