11

ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

It's not the voting that's democracy; it's the counting.

Tom Stoppard, *Jumpers*

The most important choice facing constitution writers is that of a legislative electoral system.

Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies"

OVERVIEW

1. Elections are one of the defining characteristics of democracies and provide the primary mechanism by which democratic governments obtain the authority to rule.
2. Although there's a great deal of variety in the types of electoral systems employed around the world, most political scientists categorize them into two main families based on the electoral formula used to translate votes into seats: majoritarian or proportional.
3. After discussing issues related to electoral integrity, we take a close look at how majoritarian and proportional electoral systems work in practice. We also discuss the effect of these systems on things like proportionality, ethnic accommodation, accountability, minority representation, and the revelation of sincere preferences.

A defining feature of democracies is the use of elections. Many political scientists distinguish between democracies based on the type of electoral system they employ in their elections. An **electoral system** is a set of laws and regulations that govern the electoral competition between candidates and parties (Cox 1997, 38). These laws and regulations relate to

a whole host of things such as the **electoral formula** (how votes are translated into seats), the **ballot structure** (whether individuals vote for candidates or parties, and whether they cast a single vote or express a series of preferences), and the **district magnitude** (the number of representatives elected in a district). Despite the different dimensions along which electoral systems can vary, most political scientists categorize electoral systems into two main families based on the electoral formula they use to translate votes into seats: majoritarian or proportional. Indeed, it's partly on this basis that some political scientists talk of majoritarian and proportional democracies (M. Golder and Stramski 2010; Lijphart 1999; Powell 2000).

In this chapter, we explore how various electoral systems work. We also discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages associated with each of these systems. Before we address these issues, though, we provide a brief overview of elections and electoral integrity around the world.

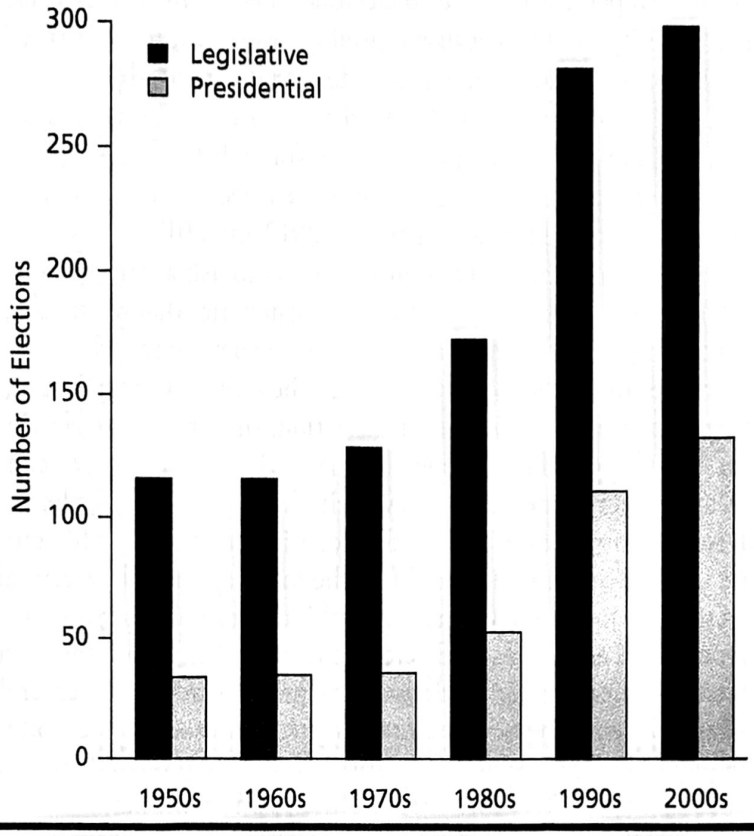
ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL INTEGRITY

Elections are increasingly being used to fill legislative and executive offices around the world. Indeed, 185 of the world's 193 independent states now use direct elections to elect people to their lower house of parliament (Norris et al. 2016a, 19). In democracies, elections serve both a practical and a symbolic role. In a practical sense, elections provide the primary means by which citizens select their representatives. As such, they provide citizens with an opportunity to influence the government formation process, to reward or punish politicians for their time in power, and to shape the direction of future policy. In a symbolic sense, the legitimacy of a democratic government comes from the fact that it was chosen through an electoral process—citizens have an equal and relatively low-cost opportunity to participate in selecting the people who rule over them and hence the types of policy that should be implemented. Democratic elections provide the primary mechanism by which the people's consent is translated into the authority to rule.

In Figure 11.1, we show how the number of legislative and presidential elections in democracies has increased over the last six decades. There were more legislative and presidential elections in the last decade than at any other point in the postwar period (or, indeed, ever). Between 2001 and 2010, 299 legislative and 133 presidential elections were held in 120 different democracies (Bormann and Golder 2013). Seven countries held democratic elections for the first time: East Timor (2002), Georgia (2004), Kyrgyzstan (2005), Liberia (2005), Mauritania (2006), Bhutan (2008), and the Maldives (2008). The increase in the number of democratic elections since the 1970s is largely a consequence of the third wave of democratization (see Chapter 7) in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Presidential elections now make up a larger share of all democratic elections than they did in the past. To a large extent, this has to do with the increasing proportion of semi-presidential democracies in the world (see Chapter 10), as these regimes have popularly elected presidents.

Elections don't occur only in democracies. As we saw in Chapter 8, elections are also increasingly common in dictatorships. Only Brunei, China, Eritrea, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia have failed to hold national-level elections at some point in the postwar period (M. Golder 2005). Of course, elections are not a defining characteristic of dictatorships in the same way that they are of democracies. More significantly, elections tend to serve very different purposes in dictatorships than in democracies. Among other things, dictatorial elections are often used to co-opt elites and larger societal groups, to gain good favor with foreign aid donors, as a safety valve for public discontent, or to gather information about the strength of the opposition (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009). Dictatorial elections are almost never used as a mechanism for translating the people's consent into the authority to govern.

FIGURE 11.1 ■ Legislative and Presidential Elections by Decade in Democracies



Source: Bormann and Golder (2013, 361).

Electoral Integrity: An Overview

The increasing use of legislative and presidential elections around the world has been accompanied by growing concerns about **electoral integrity**. The concept of electoral integrity is somewhat vague and remains contested in both academic and policy circles. Here we follow the definition provided by the Electoral Integrity Project (EIP, n.d.).[1] According to the EIP, electoral integrity refers to the extent to which the conduct of elections meets international standards and global norms concerning "good" elections as set out in various treaties, conventions, and guidelines issued by organizations such as the UN General Assembly, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of American States, and the African Union (Norris et al. 2016a, 13). Electoral integrity has to do with the conduct of elections at all stages of the electoral cycle, including the preelection period, the campaign, the polling day, and the election aftermath (Norris 2013).

Violations of electoral integrity, which include things like ballot stuffing, electoral violence and voter intimidation, pro-government media bias, and restrictive ballot access are generally referred to as **electoral malpractice**. Although you might think that electoral malpractice is restricted to underdeveloped countries, authoritarian regimes, or new democracies, evidence of electoral malpractice also exists in established democracies like the United States. Electoral malpractice in these settings often has to do with political interference in how district boundaries are drawn, problems with voter registration, technical failures with online or early voting procedures, and unfair campaign finance rules. The authors of *The Year in Elections 2015*

[1]For more information about The Electoral Integrity Project, visit www.electoralintegrityproject.com.

report produced by the EIP stated that 12 percent of the elections that have taken place in the last decade have triggered opposition boycotts, 17 percent have experienced postelection protests, and 18 percent have led to electoral violence in which at least one citizen has died. Electoral integrity matters because flawed elections can reduce trust in the political system, fuel social instability, undermine recent democratic gains, discourage voter participation and other forms of civic activism, and exacerbate ethnic, religious, and other grievances that can in extreme circumstances lead to civil war (Norris 2014).

The Electoral Integrity Project has measured electoral integrity in 285 legislative and presidential elections in 164 countries between 2012 and 2017. To measure electoral integrity, the EIP surveyed more than 3,000 country experts to ask about their perceptions of forty-nine electoral integrity issues, grouped into eleven categories that relate to the whole electoral cycle. In terms of the preelection period, the country experts were asked to evaluate electoral integrity as it relates to (1) the electoral laws, (2) the electoral procedures, (3) district boundaries, (4) voter registration, and (5) party registration. In terms of the election campaign, they were asked to consider (6) the campaign media environment and (7) campaign finance regulations. With respect to the election day itself, they focused on (8) the voting process. And with respect to the postelection period, they considered (9) the vote counting process, (10) the response to the election results, and (11) the role played by the electoral authorities. Based on expert responses to the forty-nine electoral integrity indicators, each election in a country is given an overall Perceptions of Electoral Integrity (PEI) score that runs from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating higher electoral integrity (Norris, Wynter, and Cameron 2018a).[2]

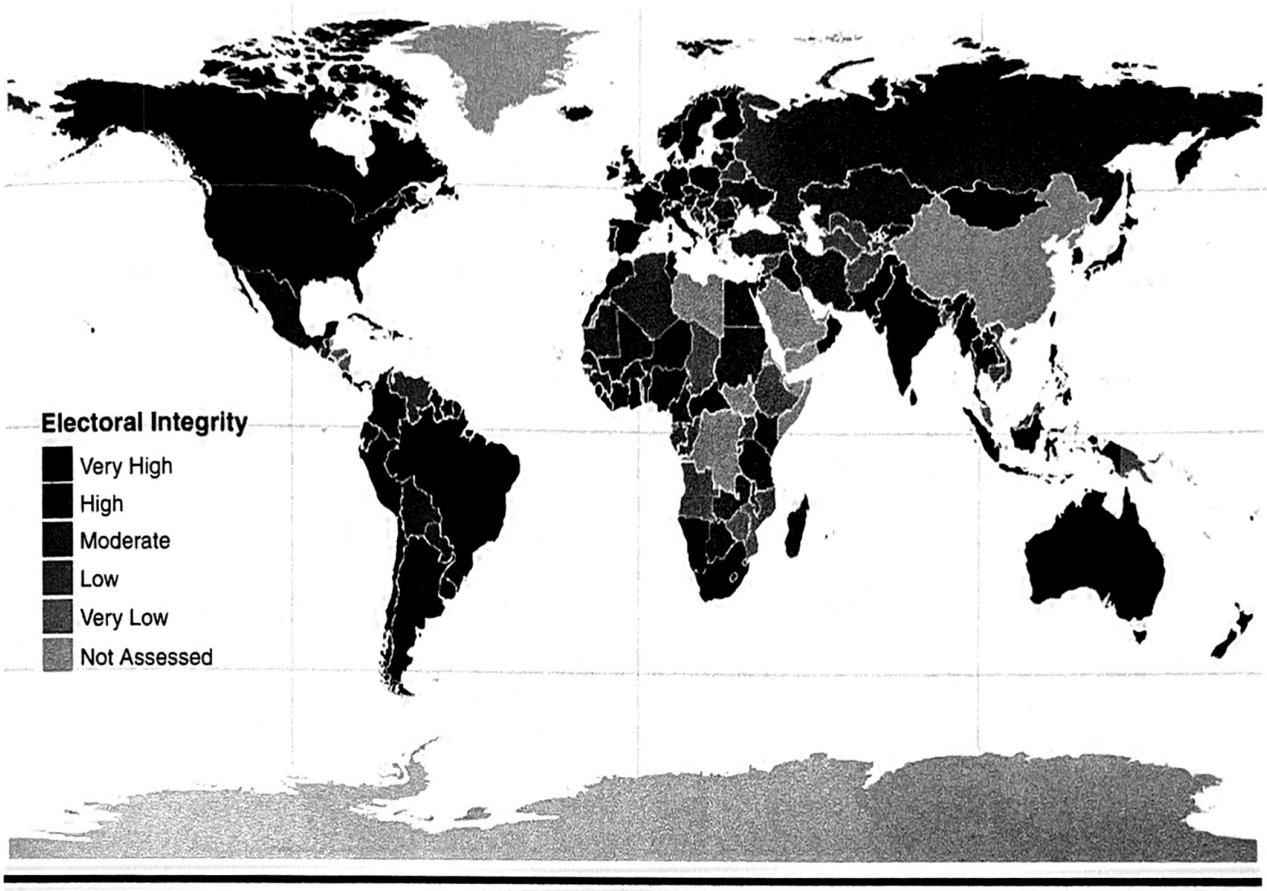
In Map 11.1, we show how electoral integrity varies across the world in 2017. Darker colors indicate higher levels of electoral integrity. Countries in the lightest gray don't currently have electoral integrity scores, either because they don't hold national-level elections or because their elections have yet to be evaluated. There's considerable variation in the level of electoral integrity across countries. The ten countries with the highest electoral integrity scores are Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Germany, Costa Rica, Sweden, the Netherlands, Estonia, and Switzerland. The ten countries with the lowest electoral integrity scores are Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Burundi, Syria, the Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Haiti, Chad, Cambodia, and Afghanistan. The highest scores tend to occur in the established democracies of Western Europe, whereas the lowest scores are concentrated in the authoritarian regimes found in Africa and parts of Asia.

Electoral Integrity in Four Countries

We now take a closer look at electoral integrity in four specific countries, the United States, Turkey, Belarus, and Egypt. The "star-plots" in Figure 11.2 show how these countries do on each of the eleven categories of electoral integrity as well as their overall PEI score. The shaded gray area in the star-plot is large when a country scores highly on each of the eleven categories in the PEI measure. To help provide context, we overlay each country's star-plot (filled, gray) with a star-plot (black dashed line) showing the average *global* score on each of the eleven categories in the PEI measure. This allows us to see where the countries are doing better or worse than the global average when it comes to electoral integrity. The star-plots are drawn for the 2014 legislative elections in the United States, the November 2015 legislative elections in Turkey, the 2015 presidential elections in Belarus, and the 2015 legislative elections in Egypt.

[2]Additional information about how the PEI scores are calculated, along with the data itself, can be found online (Norris, Wynter and Cameron 2018a). The data used here were from the PEI 6.0 release (Norris, Wynter and Cameron 2018b).

MAP 11.1 ■ Electoral Integrity across the World in 2017

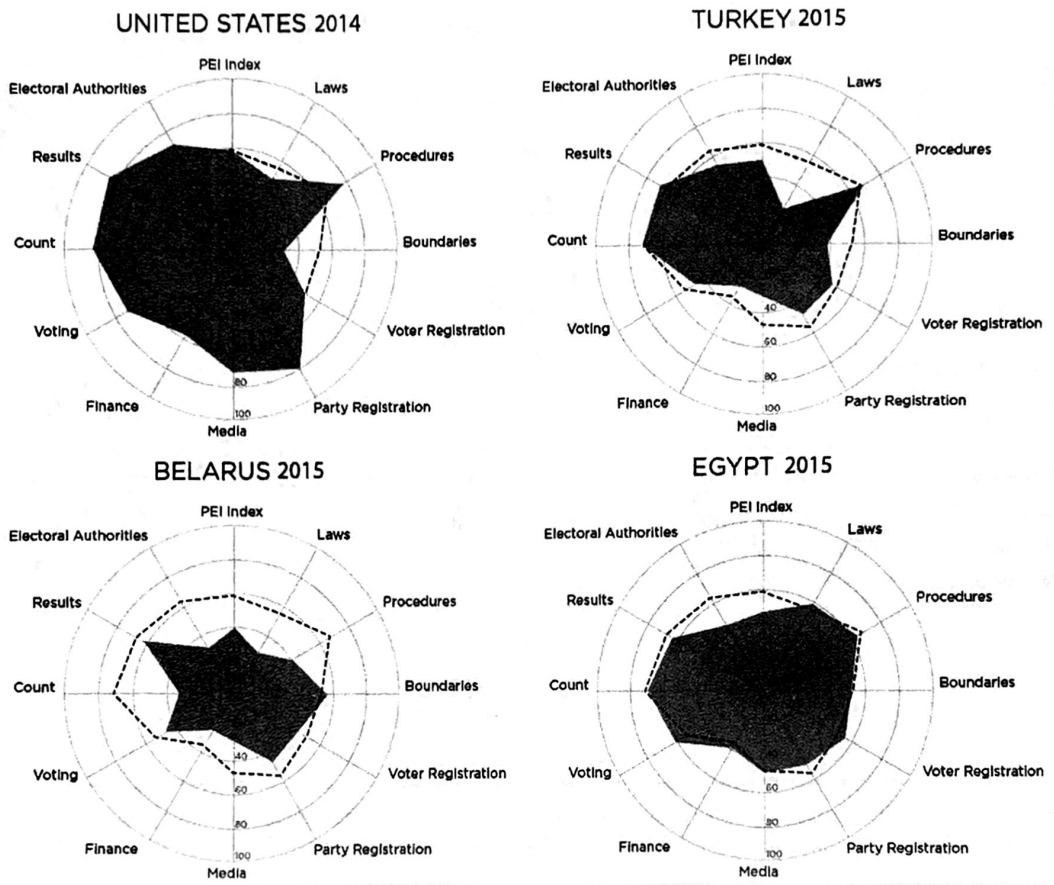


Source: Data come from the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity expert survey (PEI 6.0) and are based on national-level elections that have taken place between July 1, 2012, and December 31, 2017 (Norris, Wynter, and Cameron 2018b). Darker colors indicate higher levels of electoral integrity.

Although established democracies tend to have high PEI scores, there's some variation. The 2014 legislative elections in the United States received the lowest overall PEI score among established democracies (62), leaving them ranked 107th out of the 285 elections evaluated by the Electoral Integrity Project. As the top left panel of the star-plot in Figure 11.2 indicates, the low PEI score for the United States in 2014 was primarily driven by concerns about the quality of voter registration, the process of drawing district boundaries, campaign finance regulations, and the electoral rules. Long-standing issues related to voter registration have been politically salient in the United States since the US Supreme Court intervened in the recount of the votes cast in Florida during the 2000 presidential elections. Republicans have repeatedly raised concerns about voter fraud and have sought to pass voter identification laws that critics claim will suppress turnout, particularly among minority voters and the poor. The highly politicized way in which district boundaries are drawn in the United States sees it receive the fourth lowest PEI score on this dimension, with only Nicaragua, the Central African Republic, and Syria doing worse. The 2014 PEI score for the United States is also negatively affected by the partisan and decentralized nature of the electoral administrative bodies that oversee American elections and by the majoritarian electoral system that makes it difficult for small parties to win legislative representation.

The November 2015 legislative elections in Turkey received a PEI score of 47, meaning that they were characterized by low levels of electoral integrity. According to its constitution,

FIGURE 11.2 ■ Electoral Integrity in Four Countries



Source: Data for the star-plots come from the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity expert survey (PEI 6.0). The gray star-plots indicate how the four countries score on each of the eleven categories of electoral integrity. They also show each country's overall PEI score. The black dashed line indicates the average global score across the same categories of electoral integrity. The United States plot refers to the 2014 legislative elections, the Turkey plot refers to the November 2015 legislative elections, the Belarus plot refers to the 2015 presidential elections, and the Egypt plot refers to the 2015 legislative elections.

Turkey is a secular democracy. The Turkish military has historically seen itself as the defender of the country's secular democracy and has intervened in politics on several occasions to keep religion out of politics ("Timeline" 2016). Turkey has been ruled by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002 when it won a legislative majority with just 34.3 percent of the vote. Although the AKP is popular among large segments of the population, critics claim that the AKP is weakening Turkey's secularism and has a hidden agenda to make the country more Islamist. In 2013 a wave of demonstrations known as the Gezi Park protests, in which large numbers of Turks criticized restrictions on the freedom of the press and attacked the perceived authoritarianism of the government, was violently suppressed by the police (Letsch 2013).

There were two legislative elections in Turkey in 2015. In the June elections, the AKP remained the largest party but lost its legislative majority, forcing it to begin coalition negotiations with other legislative parties. When these negotiations failed, the AKP called for new elections in November. In these elections, the AKP regained its legislative majority and was able to form a government without any coalition partners. As the top right panel of the star-plot

in Figure 11.2 indicates, several factors drive the low PEI score for Turkey. The Turkish electoral threshold requires that parties must win 10 percent of the vote before they can receive any legislative seats. This is the highest threshold in the world and makes it very difficult for small parties to win legislative representation. The government has significant control of the national media, and journalists critical of the regime have faced considerable intimidation. There were reports during the 2015 elections of the AKP's improper use of state resources for campaigning. Between the two elections, the AKP also ramped up its attacks on the minority Kurdish population, hoping to evoke a nationalist response and a demand for political stability.

The political situation in Turkey has become more polarized since the 2015 legislative elections. Shortly after the elections, the AKP renewed its call to increase the power of the executive relative to the legislature by altering the constitution so that Turkey becomes a presidential democracy. This constitutional change was approved in an April 2017 referendum that was marred by electoral irregularities. In July 2016, a section of the Turkish military conducted a failed coup in which it claimed that the AKP was eroding the tradition of secularism, violating human rights, and becoming more authoritarian. According to some sources, President Erdoğan has used the failure of the coup as an opportunity to conduct a "counter-coup" and purge tens of thousands of his rivals in the military and the civil service, including judges, teachers, and academics ("After the Coup" 2016). These events do not bode well for electoral integrity in future Turkish elections.

Belarus is an authoritarian former Soviet republic in Eastern Europe. It's been referred to as Europe's last dictatorship (Wilson 2012). The 2015 presidential elections in Belarus received a very low PEI score of 40, which ranked them 240th out of the 285 elections coded by the Electoral Integrity Project. Belarus has been ruled by President Alexander Lukashenko since 1994. Lukashenko is the longest-serving leader among post-Soviet heads of state, and he regularly wins presidential elections with massive majorities. The bottom left panel of the star-plot in Figure 11.2 indicates that there are many reasons for Belarus's low PEI score. Over his time in office, Lukashenko has expanded executive control over the legislature, consolidated state control of the media, and built the largest security apparatus in Europe (Crabtree, Fariss, and Schuler, 2016). There were four candidates in the October 2015 presidential elections. At least two of these candidates were considered "shadow" candidates who ran only to create the impression of political competition (Wilson 2015). During the campaign, Lukashenko played on Belarusians' fear that if he were to lose, Russia would intervene in Belarus as it had done in Ukraine. Fear of Russian intervention limited the extent to which the other candidates were willing to attack Lukashenko. Lukashenko easily won reelection with 83.49 percent of the vote, with more voters casting a ballot marked "against all" than for any of the other three candidates (Crabtree, Fariss, and Schuler, 2016). Election observers and human rights organizations have reported evidence of widespread voter coercion, incorrect ballot counting, and election fraud.

Egypt is a dictatorship in North Africa. The October-December 2015 legislative elections received a low PEI score of 46, which ranked them 208th out of the 285 elections coded by the Electoral Integrity Project. Many observers had high hopes for democracy in Egypt following the overthrow of the longtime dictator Hosni Mubarak during the Arab Spring in February 2011. In 2012, Mohamed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, became the first democratically elected president in Egypt's history. After a year of divisive rule, though, the Egyptian military, led by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, intervened to remove President Morsi from power in July 2013. There was a mixed international reaction to these events, with the United States refusing to call the events a "military coup" as this would have required freezing the substantial economic and military aid it provided to Egypt. A new Egyptian constitution, which critics claim gives too much power to the military, was passed in a January 2014 referendum. Shortly

afterward, General Sisi was elected president in May 2014. The October-December legislative elections in 2015 were supposed to mark the final step in the restoration of democracy. Following the military coup, the Muslim Brotherhood was banned and labeled a terrorist organization, and many of its members were arrested and sentenced to death. Dissidents and journalists critical of the regime have been repressed. Indeed, the regime rejected several political parties who sought to place candidates on the ballot for the 2015 elections. Many of those candidates who were allowed to run were supporters of President Sisi, and a number were closely tied to the ousted dictator, Hosni Mubarak. Secular and leftist parties, many of whom had helped to organize the protests during the Arab Spring, chose to boycott the elections. The boycott and the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood depressed turnout, with some reports putting it as low as 10 percent ("Low Turnout" 2015). The Carter Center, which monitors elections for electoral malpractice, closed its Cairo office ahead of the election and stated "that the political space has narrowed for Egyptian political parties, civil society, and the media. As a result, the upcoming elections are unlikely to advance a genuine democratic transition in Egypt" ("Carter Center Closes Egypt Office" 2014).

The Determinants of Electoral Integrity

Experts tend to perceive democratic elections as displaying more electoral integrity than dictatorial elections. This is not surprising given that elections tend to serve different purposes in democracies and dictatorships. However, this observation doesn't help us explain the variation we see in electoral integrity among democracies or among dictatorships.

Norris (2015) identifies a number of factors that influence electoral integrity. One factor concerns domestic structural constraints such as the level of economic development, a country's dependence on natural resources, a legacy of conflict, or inhospitable geography. Wealthy countries are more likely to be democratic (see Chapter 5), and they have more resources they can devote to the electoral process. A salient issue for many poor countries is the cost of actually holding elections. As we'll see shortly, electoral systems vary in the costs they impose on a political system. The political resource curse suggests that countries dependent on natural resources will exhibit high levels of corruption and that ruling elites will use natural resource revenue to manipulate elections, intimidate opponents, and suppress opposition. This helps to explain the low levels of electoral integrity in countries like Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Countries that have a legacy of conflict, such as Afghanistan, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and Burundi, typically have deep divisions and high levels of mistrust that can also hinder electoral integrity. The logistical, financial, and technical difficulties of running a well-functioning election are harder in large states with mountainous and other difficult-to-reach areas. For example, the 2014 legislative elections in India took place over nine phases of voting, cost $5 billion, and involved 930,000 polling stations and 814 million eligible voters (Norris 2015, 78).

A second factor concerns the international community. One claim is that countries more integrated into the global system will be more likely to adopt international norms and practices that encourage electoral integrity. Regional intergovernmental organizations can also play a role. For example, those European countries seeking membership in the European Union have strong incentives to respect human rights and produce free and fair elections. In contrast, countries associated with regional organizations where member states tend to be authoritarian are less likely to feel pressure to produce high levels of electoral integrity. It's often claimed that donor countries can use foreign aid to encourage recipient countries to increase human rights protections, strengthen civil society associations, and increase media independence. Elections in developing countries frequently receive considerable financial aid and technical assistance from a variety of international organizations and donor countries.

As we discussed in Chapter 5, though, there are many reasons to doubt the ability and willingness of donor countries to bring about meaningful democratic and electoral reforms in recipient countries.

A particular international factor that has received growing attention in recent years has been the role played by nonpartisan international organizations that monitor elections. Election observer missions have become increasingly common over the last three decades (Hyde 2011). Organizations such as the Carter Center, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the African Union (AU), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the European Union (EU) have deployed thousands of international and domestic observers in numerous countries in an attempt to deter incumbents from committing electoral fraud. Very few elections these days have no international observers.

The effectiveness of these observer missions remains open to debate, though. Although some studies find that electoral irregularities are lower in polling stations that have observers (Hyde 2007a, b), others suggest that election monitors simply displace irregularities from the places they visit to surrounding areas they don't visit (Ichino and Schündeln 2012). Observer missions aren't always perceived as impartial, and reports can sometimes be politicized and reach contradictory conclusions. For example, the OSCE reported significant irregularities in Azerbaijan's 2013 presidential election, but the delegation of former members of the US House of Representatives declared that the elections had been free, fair, and transparent (Norris 2014, 9). In some cases, observer missions have incentives to understate the degree of electoral malfeasance so that they're invited back to monitor the next elections or because they wish to prevent postelection violence that might result from charges of electoral fraud.

Two other factors influence electoral integrity—institutional design and electoral management bodies. Some scholars argue that countries with power-sharing institutions exhibit higher levels of electoral integrity than countries with institutions that concentrate power in the hands of the majority (Lijphart 2004; Norris 2015). This is because power-sharing institutions create checks and balances that limit the ability of incumbents to abuse their power and encourage minority groups to "buy in" to the political system. Other scholars, though, argue that power-sharing institutions make it harder to hold political actors accountable and that they tend to reify social divisions in the political system. We'll revisit the relative benefits and costs of power-sharing institutions in more detail in Chapters 13 and 14. Electoral management bodies refer to the institutions and authorities that administer elections. Electoral management bodies that are independent of the executive branch and have functional capacity (technical expertise, trained officials, adequate budgets, and so on) are often key to holding high-quality elections. Strengthening these bodies would seem to be an easy step to improve electoral integrity. It's often the case, though, that those actors who have an incentive to strengthen these institutions (opposition and minority groups) are not the actors who have the ability to strengthen them (incumbents and majority groups).

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Although elections always involve citizens casting votes for candidates or political parties, there's a great deal of variation in the precise set of rules employed by the world's electoral systems. Some allow citizens to vote for candidates, whereas others allow them to vote only for political parties; some allow citizens to cast only one vote, whereas others allow them to cast multiple votes; some allow for only one round of voting, whereas others allow for two or more; some involve electing only one representative in each district, whereas others involve electing many. The list of differences could go on and on. Despite the many different ways in which

one might think to distinguish among the world's electoral systems, most political scientists categorize electoral systems into two main families—majoritarian or proportional—based on the electoral formula they use to translate votes into seats. In what follows, we examine some of the more common majoritarian and proportional electoral systems.

Majoritarian Electoral Systems

A majoritarian electoral system is one in which the candidates or parties that receive the most votes win. The word *majoritarian* is somewhat misleading. Although some majoritarian systems require the winning candidate or party to obtain an absolute majority of the votes, others require only that the winning candidate or party receives more votes than anyone else. In other words, not all majoritarian systems require the winning candidates or parties to obtain a majority of the votes. Probably the main reason why majoritarian systems are referred to as "majoritarian" is that they frequently produce outcomes in which the largest party wins a majority of the legislative seats even if it doesn't win a majority of the votes. In effect, majoritarian systems tend to help the largest party obtain a legislative majority. There are many different types of majoritarian electoral systems.

Single-Member District Plurality System

A single-member district plurality (SMDP) system is the simplest and most commonly used majoritarian system in the world. It's employed primarily in the United Kingdom and in former British colonies, such as Belize, Canada, India, Nigeria, and the United States. In an SMDP system, voters cast a single candidate-centered vote in single-member districts. The candidate with the most votes, even if she doesn't have a majority of the votes, is elected from the district. SMDP systems are sometimes referred to as "first-past-the-post." This name, though, is misleading as it suggests that a candidate is elected once she gets past a certain vote total. In theory, a candidate can win in an SMDP system with as few as two votes if all the other candidates win only one vote each. An example of the operation of an SMDP system in the Bath constituency during the 2015 United Kingdom legislative elections is shown in Table 11.1. Ben Howlett of the Conservative Party won the most votes and was, therefore, elected as the Member of Parliament for this district.

SMDP electoral systems have both strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps the greatest strength of SMDP systems is their simplicity. This means that they're easy for voters to understand. It also means that they're easy and relatively inexpensive to administer. A second strength of SMDP systems has to do with the fact that only one representative is elected in each district. This means that responsibility for what happens in the district lies squarely with one person. In other words, SMDP systems make it easy for voters to identify who is responsible for policies in their district and therefore to hold them accountable in the next election. By making it easier for voters to hold representatives accountable, SMDP systems create incentives for representatives to perform well in office. As a result, SMDP systems tend to produce high levels of constituency service and close bonds between constituents and their representatives.

Despite these strengths, SMDP electoral systems have many critics. Some critics point to the fact that SMDP systems have the potential to produce unrepresentative outcomes. As our example in Table 11.1 illustrates, it's possible for a candidate to win without obtaining a majority of the votes; in fact, 62.2 percent of Bath voters didn't support the winning candidate. Candidates can win in SMDP systems with even lower vote shares than that obtained by the winning candidate in Bath. As an example, the winning candidate in the Kerowagi constituency in Papua New Guinea won with just 7.9 percent of the vote in the 1987 legislative elections (Cox 1997, 85).

TABLE 11.1 Election Results from the Bath Constituency, UK Legislative Elections, 2015

Candidate	Party	Votes	Percentage
Ben Howlett	Conservative	17,833	37.8
Steve Bradley	Liberal Democrat	14,000	29.7
Ollie Middleton	Labour	6,216	13.2
Dominic Tristram	Green	5,634	11.9
Julian Deverell	UKIP	2,922	6.2
Lorraine Morgan-Brinkhurst	Independent	499	1.1
Jenny Knight	Independent	63	0.1

Not only are SMDP systems criticized for producing unrepresentative outcomes at the district level, but they're frequently criticized for their potential to produce unrepresentative outcomes at the national level as well. Under an SMDP system, it's entirely possible for a party that wins a significant percentage of the national vote to obtain very few legislative seats because it fails to come first in many constituencies. For instance, in the 1983 legislative elections in the United Kingdom the coalition between the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party, which was known as the Alliance, won 25.4 percent of the national vote but received just 3.5 percent of the seats. In fact, the Alliance won only 675,985 votes (out of 30,661,309 votes) fewer than the Labour Party but received 186 fewer legislative seats. In stark contrast to the Alliance, the Conservative Party won 61.1 percent of the seats and formed a single-party government even though it had won only 42.4 percent of the votes. As this example demonstrates, SMDP systems can produce a highly disproportionate translation of votes into seats that tends to favor larger parties at the expense of smaller ones.

Some also criticize SMDP systems for encouraging individuals to vote strategically rather than in accordance with their true preferences. Sincere voting means voting for your most preferred candidate or party. In contrast, strategic voting means voting for your most preferred candidate *who has a realistic chance of winning.*[3] To see how the SMDP system creates an incentive to vote strategically, consider the Bath example in Table 11.1 again. Imagine an individual who prefers the Labour candidate to the Liberal Democrat candidate and the Liberal Democrat candidate to the Conservative candidate. If this individual votes for the Labour candidate, she'll be voting sincerely. However, this individual has an incentive to vote strategically because opinion polls are likely to show that the Labour candidate is going to finish in third place and has little to no chance of coming in first. Thus, a vote for the Labour candidate will be "wasted." As a result, the individual may decide to vote strategically for the Liberal Democrat candidate (who has a more realistic chance of winning) in an attempt to stop the Conservative candidate (the least-preferred candidate) from winning. Clearly, we prefer electoral systems that encourage voters to express their sincere preferences. Unfortunately, though, scholars have shown that *all* reasonable electoral systems create incentives for individuals to act strategically; there are no "strategy-proof" systems (Gibbard 1973; Satterthwaite 1975). Nonetheless, some electoral systems, such as SMDP, create stronger incentives to act strategically than others.

[3]For more detailed definitions of sincere and strategic voting, see Chapter 9.

Another criticism of SMDP systems is that they can encourage the creation of ethnic parties in countries in which ethnic groups are regionally concentrated. This can result in regional fiefdoms or party strongholds in which there's little electoral competition, the party of the majority ethnic group is dominant, and minorities have little sway over public policy or the allocation of private goods. This type of situation frequently occurs in African countries like Malawi and Kenya, where ethnic groups are geographically concentrated in particular regions (Barkan 1995; Posner 2005). In effect, the use of SMDP electoral systems in Africa has helped produce countries that are "divided into geographically separate party strongholds, with little incentive for parties to make appeals outside their home region and cultural-political base" (Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2005, 43). Similarly, the use of SMDP probably helped segregationist Democrats maintain single-party dominance in the southern United States for almost a century (Mickey 2015).

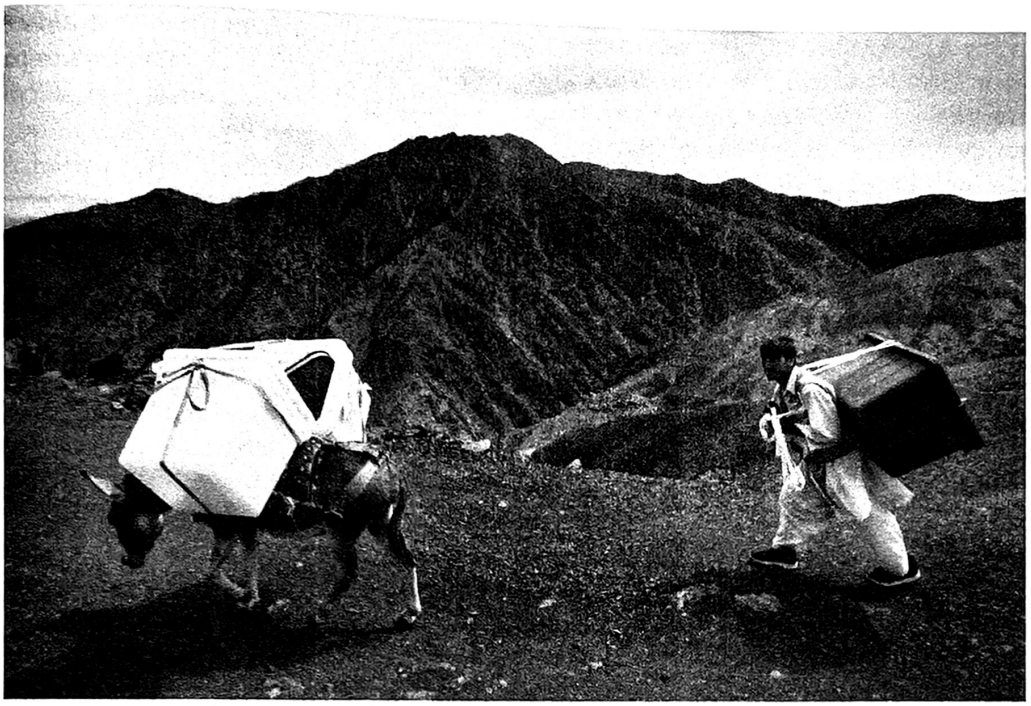
Single Nontransferable Vote

The single nontransferable vote (SNTV) is a second type of majoritarian system. SNTV is essentially the same as an SMDP electoral system except that it works in multimember districts instead of single-member districts. Basically, each party competing in a district puts up a list of candidates, and individuals vote for one of the candidates. The candidates that win the most votes are elected. For example, in a three-seat district, the top three vote-getters are elected. In a four-seat district, the top four vote-getters are elected, and so on. One advantage of SNTV systems over SMDP ones is that they tend to produce more proportional outcomes and greater representation for smaller parties and minority ethnic groups. This is because candidates from smaller parties and minority ethnic groups can now get elected even though they don't win the most votes in a district.

Interestingly, candidates in an SNTV system know exactly what percentage of the votes they need to win in order to guarantee their election. For example, if there are n district seats to be filled, then any candidate A can guarantee being elected by receiving one more than $1 / (n + 1)$ of the votes. This is because n other candidates can't all receive more than candidate A. Thus, in a four-seat district, a candidate can guarantee winning one of the seats by winning more than 20 percent of the vote. An SNTV system was employed for legislative elections in Japan until 1994 and in Taiwan until 2005. It's currently employed for legislative elections in Afghanistan and Vanuatu.

SNTV electoral systems are often considered problematic. First, they tend to weaken political parties by creating incentives for intraparty fighting and factionalization. This is because candidates are competing against candidates not only from other parties in their district but also against candidates from their own party. The result is that electoral campaigns are often centered on candidate characteristics rather than policy differences, with candidates going to great lengths to cultivate personal reputations. SNTV systems may even impede the emergence of fully fledged parties. In 2005, for example, Afghan president Hamid Karzai adopted an SNTV electoral system and pronounced that candidates could not show a party affiliation on the ballot (Reynolds 2006).[4] The system has produced a great deal of voter confusion.

[4]That the SNTV system can work without fully fledged parties was one of the reasons why it was adopted (Reynolds 2006). As the *New York Times* reported, Afghans "associate parties with both the Communists who brought the Soviet invaders and the ethnic militias that pillaged the country after the Communists' downfall" ("Afghanistan: The Wrong Voting System" 2005). A law introduced in 2009 allows candidates to have their party's symbol on the ballot. However, only thirty-four candidates had their party's name added to the ballot in the 2010 legislative elections (Reynolds and Carey 2012).



Paula Bronstein/Getty Images

Election workers and donkeys carry voting material to remote villages on September 17, 2010 (the day before the election), in the Panjshir province, Afghanistan. More than 2,500 candidates contested 249 seats in the lower house of the Afghan parliament, using the single nontransferable vote electoral system.

Voters in Kabul, for example, were confronted with more than four hundred candidates on the ballot, all vying for the thirty-three seats up for election. Over two-thirds of the votes were cast for losing candidates and therefore wasted. The end result was a highly fragmented legislature containing more than thirty factions with shifting loyalties (Reynolds 2011, 9–10). The 2010 legislative elections produced even higher levels of fragmentation. With weak or nonexistent parties in the legislature, it can be difficult for governments to build legislative coalitions to keep them in power and support their policy objectives.

Second, the fact that candidates can guarantee their own election with a specific percentage of votes encourages clientelistic behavior and the development of patronage systems, in which candidates target electoral bribes at well-defined interest groups. For example, candidates of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan were notorious for engaging in constituency service and targeting subsidy (pork) allocations toward their districts (Hirano 2011). Clientelism is likely to be particularly prevalent when candidates don't need to win many votes to guarantee themselves a seat. This will be the case when the SNTV system is combined with a large multimember district. Recall that a candidate in an SNTV system can guarantee election if they receive one more than $1 / (n + 1)$ of the votes, where n refers to the number of district seats to be filled. It's perhaps worth noting that Japan, which was infamous for its system of political clientelism, employed an SNTV system in relatively small multimember districts comprising three to five seats. In contrast, the SNTV system in Afghanistan is being employed in districts where the magnitude ranges from a low of two to a high of thirty-three. This means that Afghan candidates in some districts can *guarantee* winning seats with less than 3 percent of the vote. Indeed, several candidates in the provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, and Zabul were able to win seats in the 2010 legislative elections with just a few hundred votes. As one would expect, the "cheapness" of an Afghan seat encourages vote buying. As the *New York Times* reported in 2010, political candidates were literally

buying Afghan votes for anywhere from a high of about $18 in Ghazni province to a low of about $1 in Kandahar (Nordlan 2010). This is a small price for Afghan candidates to pay given that legislative seats come with a high monthly salary and the opportunity to exploit the corrupt patron-client political system.

Third, the SNTV system tends to favor both incumbent and well-organized parties. As we've seen, SNTV systems encourage the development of political systems based on patronage and other particularistic connections. Incumbent parties are advantaged in these systems because they have greater access to state resources and can more credibly commit to allocating those resources to their supporters. Well-organized parties are better equipped to make sure that sufficient goods are distributed to their voters, and also better placed to deal with the strategic quandaries that political parties and voters face in an SNTV system. Although all parties in an SNTV system want to win as many seats as they can in each multimember district, they don't want to put up too many candidates in case their party supporters split their vote between these candidates to such an extent that none, or only a few, of the candidates actually finish among the top vote winners. In the extreme, it's possible in an SNTV system for a party whose candidates together obtain a substantial percentage of the votes, even an absolute majority, to win no seats. This suggests that political parties have to be very careful in choosing how many candidates to run in each district. Similarly, supporters of each party must think hard about which candidate from their party most needs their vote to be elected; if they give their vote to a candidate who is already likely to obtain a sufficient number of votes, their vote will be wasted. Well-organized parties are better able to deal with these issues because they can often coordinate their nominations and distribute their supporters' votes in a way that maximizes the number of their candidates elected in each district. For example, the Kuomintang in Taiwan used to assign its candidates to particular geographic zones in a district and send party members a letter telling them which candidate to vote for (Liu 1999; Patterson and Stockton 2010).

Finally, the fact that candidates under an SNTV system can win with only a small fraction of the vote share means that they don't have to moderate their political message and can instead espouse a more extremist rhetoric that appeals to a specific segment of the electorate. As such, some believe that the SNTV system increases the likelihood that extremists will be elected, potentially destabilizing the political system in the process.

Alternative Vote

The alternative vote (AV) is a majoritarian system in which the winning candidate must obtain a majority of the votes. The alternative vote is a candidate-centered preference voting system used in single-member districts where voters rank order the candidates. Voters typically have to place numbers next to the names of the candidates on the ballot to indicate whether each is the voter's first choice, second choice, third choice, and so on. Some AV systems require that voters rank order all of the candidates, whereas others allow voters to rank order only some of the candidates. If a candidate wins an absolute majority of first-preference votes, she's immediately elected. If no candidate wins an absolute majority, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated, and her votes are reallocated among the remaining candidates based on the designated second preferences. This process repeats until one candidate has obtained an absolute majority of the votes. The alternative vote is sometimes referred to as an instant-runoff vote because it's much like holding a series of runoff elections in which the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated in each round until someone receives an absolute majority of the vote.

Australia uses the AV system for its legislative elections. Australian voters must rank order all of the candidates on the ballot. Table 11.2 shows how the AV system worked in the Richmond constituency of New South Wales in the 1990 elections. When the first-preference votes from all the voters were initially tallied up, Charles Blunt came first with 40.9 percent of the vote. Because no candidate won an absolute majority, the candidate with the lowest number of votes (Gavin Baillie) was eliminated. As Table 11.2 illustrates, Baillie was ranked first on 187 ballots. These 187 ballots were then reallocated to whichever of the remaining candidates the voters ranked second after Gavin Baillie. For example, the fact that Ian Paterson received 445 votes in the first count but 480 votes in the second count indicates that thirty-five of the people who had listed Gavin Baillie as their most preferred candidate had listed Ian Paterson as their second-choice candidate. Because there was still no candidate with an absolute majority after this second count, the new candidate with the lowest number of votes (Dudley Leggett) was eliminated, and his ballots were reallocated among the remaining candidates in the same manner as before. This process continued until the seventh round of counting, when Neville Newell became the first candidate to finally obtain an absolute majority of the votes and hence the elected representative for the Richmond constituency of New South Wales.

It's worth noting that Charles Blunt had won by far the most votes in the first round and had been leading on all of the counts up until the very last one. It was only when the last votes were reallocated according to the preferences of the voters that it became clear that an absolute majority of those who voted in Richmond preferred Neville Newell to Charles Blunt. As this example illustrates, the reallocation of votes from eliminated candidates to remaining candidates can play an important role in determining the outcome of elections in AV systems. It's for this reason that political parties in Australia often give voters "how-to-vote" cards outside polling stations with clear instructions on how to rank candidates so that the flow of preferences will benefit them either directly or, by helping any allied parties, indirectly. An example of a how-to-vote card for the Liberal Party is illustrated in Figure 11.3.

AV systems retain many of the strengths associated with SMDP electoral systems. For example, the fact that there's only one representative elected per constituency means that it's easy for voters to identify who's responsible for district policy and hold them accountable. As a result, we can expect high levels of constituency service and strong bonds between citizens and their representatives. AV systems have several additional strengths, though. One is that voters have a greater opportunity to convey information about their preferences than they have under an SMDP system. This is because they get to rank order the candidates rather than simply vote "yes" and "no" for one of them. A second strength is that there's less of an incentive for voters to engage in strategic voting because they know that their vote won't be wasted if the candidate they most prefer is unpopular and unlikely to win; their vote is simply transferred to the candidate they prefer next. We should note, though, that strategic incentives don't disappear entirely. For example, voters may decide not to rank the candidates according to their sincere preferences because they want to influence the order in which candidates are eliminated and hence who ultimately wins in a district. That this type of strategic concern matters is one explanation for why Australian parties hand out how-to-vote cards at the polling stations.

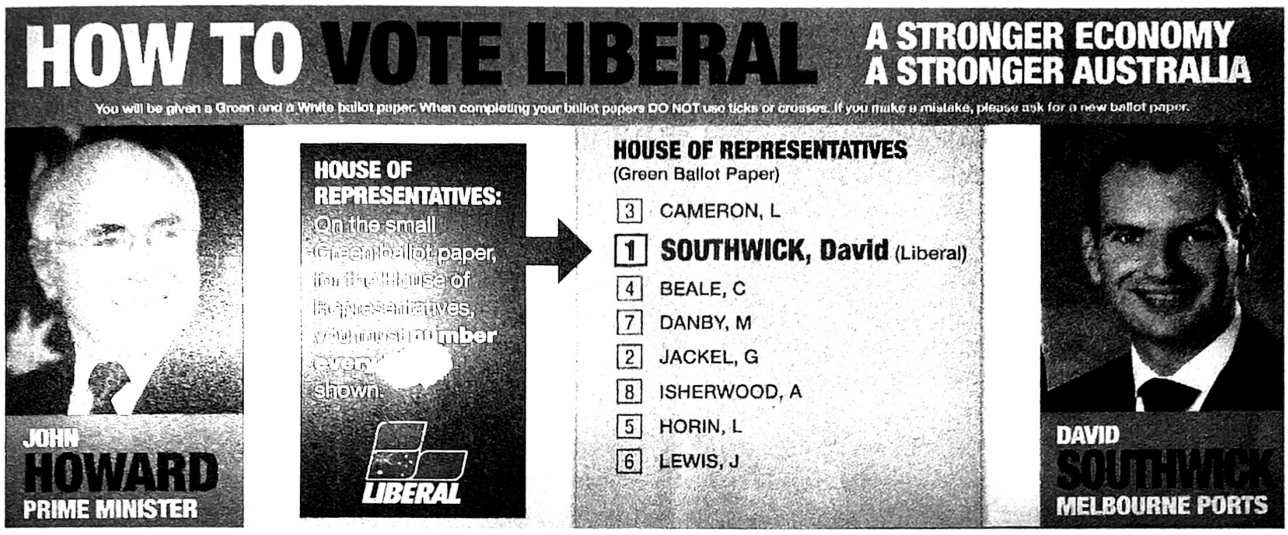
A third strength is that AV systems encourage candidates and parties to win the votes from not only their base supporters but also the "second preferences" of others. This is because these second preferences may end up being crucial to their election. To attract these votes, candidates are likely to have to make broadly based centrist appeals to all interests rather than focus on narrow sectarian or extremist issues. Some evidence for this comes from Australia, where

TABLE 11.2 ■ Richmond Constituency, New South Wales, Australian Legislative Elections, 1990

	First count		Second count		Third count		Fourth count		Fifth count		Sixth count		Seventh count	
Candidate	(no.)	(%)	(no.)	(%)	(no.)	(%)	(no.)	(%)	(no.)	(%)	(no.)	(%)	(no.)	(%)
Stan Gibbs	4,346	6.3	4,380	6.3	4,420	6.4	4,504	6.5	4,683	6.8				
Neville Newell	18,423	26.7	18,467	26.7	18,484	26.8	18,544	26.9	18,683	27.1	20,238	29.4	34,664	50.5
Gavin Baillie	187	0.3												
Alan Sims	1,032	1.5	1,053	1.5	1,059	1.5	1,116	1.6						
Ian Paterson	445	0.6	480	0.7	530	0.8								
Dudley Leggett	279	0.4	294	0.4										
Charles Blunt	28,257	40.9	28,274	41.0	28,303	41.0	28,416	41.2	28,978	42	29,778	43.2	33,980	49.5
Helen Caldicott	16,072	23.3	16,091	23.3	16,237	23.5	16,438	23.8	16,658	24.1	18,903	27.4		

Note: Blank cells indicate that a candidate was eliminated.

FIGURE 11.3 ■ Australian "How-to-Vote" Card from the 2001 Legislative Elections



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the major parties frequently attempt to negotiate deals with smaller parties for their second preferences prior to an election in a process known as "preference swapping" (Reilly 2001, 45). The incentive to build broadly based support helps to explain why the AV system is often advocated for elections in deeply divided societies, such as the ethnically fragmented Bosnia and Herzegovina, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and South Africa (Horowitz 1991; Reilly 2001).

Recall that one of the most common criticisms made of SMDP electoral systems is that they allow candidates to win who don't obtain majority support. AV systems address this problem because candidates are eliminated one at a time until one has an overall majority. Although this would appear to be one of the main strengths of AV systems, some critics claim that the winning candidate doesn't necessarily obtain a "genuine" majority. By this, they mean that it's possible for a majority of the voters in a district to prefer some other candidate to the one who actually wins. The reason why this possibility exists is that a candidate who is preferred to all the other candidates in a series of head-to-head races can be eliminated early on in an AV system because she receives an insufficient number of first-place votes. A clear weakness of the AV system is that it's rather complicated. From the point of view of the voters, it requires a reasonable degree of literacy and numeracy. And from the point of view of the election authorities, the counting process can be costly and drawn out.

Majority-Runoff Two-Round System

Another majoritarian electoral system is the majority-runoff two-round system. A two-round system (TRS) has the potential for two rounds of elections. The majority-runoff TRS is a system in which voters cast a single candidate-centered vote in a single-member district. Any candidate who obtains an absolute majority of the votes in the first round is elected. If no candidate wins an absolute majority, the top two vote winners go on to compete in a runoff election one or two weeks later. Whoever wins the most votes in this runoff election—necessarily an absolute majority as there are only two candidates—is elected.

The majority-runoff TRS is by far the most common method for electing presidents around the world. While the majority-runoff TRS was used in just 6 percent of the presidential elections that occurred in the 1950s, it's been used in more than 65 percent of the presidential elections that have occurred since 2000 (Bormann and Golder 2013, 368). Tables 11.3 and 11.4 show the results from the Burkina Faso presidential elections in 2015 and the Benin presidential elections in 2016. Roch Christian Kaboré won an absolute majority of the votes (53.49 percent) in the first round of the Burkina Faso presidential elections and was therefore elected without the need for a second-round runoff. In the Benin presidential elections, no candidate obtained an absolute majority in the first round. Patrice Talon was eventually elected president after winning 65.4 percent of the vote in the second-round runoff. A few countries such as Haiti and Comoros use the majority-runoff TRS for their legislative elections.

The majority-runoff TRS has a number of strengths, particularly when compared with SMDP systems. The first is that it gives voters more choice than they enjoy in SMDP systems. For example, individuals who vote for a candidate who "loses" in the first round get a second opportunity to influence who gets elected in the second round. The majority-runoff TRS also allows voters to change their mind and switch their votes even if the candidate they supported in the first round actually makes it into the second round. Voters might want to change their mind as a result of new information that emerges between the first and second rounds. Changing one's ranking of candidates in this way isn't possible in a preference voting system, such as the alternative vote.

A second strength is that voters have less incentive to behave strategically than they do in SMDP systems because they have two opportunities to affect the election outcome. Individuals can vote for their most preferred candidate in the first round even if this candidate has little chance of winning in the end and then switch their support to a more well-placed candidate in the second round. Of course, strategic incentives don't disappear entirely, and things can go wrong if individuals vote sincerely in this way. Voters need to think about whether their decision to vote sincerely in the first round positively affects the likelihood that a candidate whom they don't like will win either the first or the second round. For example, the 2002 presidential elections in France produced a second-round runoff between a candidate from

TABLE 11.3 ■ Burkina Faso Presidential Elections 2015

First round		
Candidate	**Party**	**Vote share (%)**
Roch Christian Kaboré	People's Movement for Progress	53.49
Zéphirin Diabré	Union for Progress and Reform	29.65
Tahirou Barry	National Rebirth Party	3.09
Bénéwendé Stanislas Sankara	Union for Rebirth	2.77
Ablassé Ouedraogo	Alternative Faso	1.93
Saran Sérémé	Party for Development and Reform	1.73
Others		7.33

TABLE 11.4 ■ Benin Presidential Elections 2016

First round		
Candidate	**Party**	**Vote share (%)**
Lionel A. L. Zinsou-Derlin	Cowry Forces for an Emerging Benin	28.4
Patrice A. G. Talon		24.8
Sébastien G. M. A. Adjavon		23.0
Abdoulaye B. Bio-Tchane	Alliance for a Triumphant Benin	8.8
Pascal J. I. Koupaki	New Consciousness Rally	5.9
Robert Gbian		1.6
Fernand M. Amoussou		1.2
Salifou Issa		1.0
Others		5.3
Second round		
Patrice A. G. Talon		65.4
Lionel A. L. Zinsou-Derlin	Cowry Forces for an Emerging Benin	34.6

the mainstream right, Jacques Chirac, and a candidate from the extreme right, Jean-Marie Le Pen. One reason why there was no left-wing candidate was that the left-wing electorate split its vote among so many left-wing candidates in the first round that none made it into the second round. As a result, the only choice that left-wing voters had in this second round was between a candidate whom they disliked (Chirac) and a candidate whom they really disliked (Le Pen). It's arguable that France's left-wing voters would have been better off had they voted more strategically in the first round.

A third strength of the majority-runoff TRS is that it creates incentives for candidates who make it into the second round to look beyond their own electoral base and reach compromises with the leaders of parties who are already eliminated in an attempt to win over their supporters. In addition, because voters are not required to rank order candidates with numbers to express their second choice, some have argued that the majority-runoff TRS is more suitable for countries with widespread illiteracy and low levels of education than preference voting systems, such as the alternative vote (Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2005, 53). A final strength of the majority-runoff TRS is that the winning candidate can claim to have won the support of a majority of the voters.

The majority-runoff TRS also has a number of weaknesses. One is that it imposes significant costs on the electoral administration. After all, the electoral administration has to conduct two sets of elections instead of one. The majority-runoff TRS also imposes significant costs on individuals, who potentially have to vote in two elections. Empirical evidence suggests that there's a considerable drop-off in the level of turnout between the two rounds of

elections. A second weakness is that, like SMDP electoral systems, the majority-runoff TRS often produces a disproportional translation of votes into seats. Indeed, there's some evidence that it produces the most disproportional results of any electoral system used in Western democracies (Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2005, 53). According to some critics, a third weakness of the majority-runoff TRS is that it hurts minority representation. For example, Guinier (1994) has argued that, on extending the right to vote to African Americans, several southern states in the United States adopted the majority-runoff TRS in an attempt to reduce the ability of African American candidates to win. Evidence that the majority-runoff TRS does, indeed, hurt minority candidates comes from a series of elections conducted in the laboratory by Morton and Rietz (2008).

Proportional Electoral Systems

The rationale behind proportional, or proportional representation (PR), electoral systems is to consciously reduce the disparity between a party's share of the vote and its share of the seats. In other words, the goal of proportional representation systems is to produce proportional outcomes—if a party wins 10 percent of the vote, it should win 10 percent of the seats; if it wins 20 percent of the vote, it should win 20 percent of the seats; and so on. This proportionality should exist both within districts and in the country as a whole.

Many scholars have argued that proportional systems have a number of strengths when compared with majoritarian ones (Lijphart 1999). Perhaps the main strength of PR systems is that they tend to produce a more accurate translation of votes into seats. This means that PR systems avoid the possibility that a party wins a large percentage of the vote but only a few legislative seats. Recall that this was one of the possible anomalies with majoritarian systems. It also means that small parties are able to win representation in proportion to their size. As a result, minorities are likely to be better represented in a PR system than in a majoritarian one. The fact that small parties have a greater chance of winning seats means that individuals face weaker incentives to vote strategically. As a consequence, electoral outcomes in PR systems should be a more accurate reflection of voters' sincere preferences. Arguably, it's also the case that individuals are more likely to turn out and vote in PR systems because they know their votes are less likely to be wasted (Blais and Carty 1990; Blais and Dobrzynska 1998).

Some have argued that PR systems are all but essential for maintaining stability in ethnically and religiously divided societies (Lijphart 1990, 1991; Norris 2008). The claim is that the stakes of the game are often high in a divided society and that the risk of state instability is simply too great for parties to view elections as a winner-take-all contest (Reynolds 2011, 19). PR makes it easy for social groups to organize into ethnic and religious parties that can obtain legislative representation in proportion to their size. This, in turn, produces legislatures that reflect all the significant segments of society and leads to coalition governments based on power-sharing arrangements. The implicit assumption here, of course, is that the different ethnic groups will ultimately choose to work together in the legislature and the government.

The notion that PR systems are essential for stability and democratic rule in divided societies is widely, but not universally, accepted. A few scholars, for example, argue that preference voting systems, such as the alternative vote, are superior (Horowitz 1985, 1991; Reilly 1997, 2001). These scholars note that PR systems may simply replicate bitter societal divisions in the legislature without creating incentives for cooperation and accommodation across the different ethnic parties. In contrast, they argue that preference voting systems encourage political parties to run moderate broad-based campaigns that are appealing beyond their core set of supporters because they know that their electoral success is likely to depend on the transfer of preference votes from other ethnic groups. Of course, this is likely to happen only if ethnic

groups aren't geographically concentrated in such a way that parties can win a majority by appealing to a single ethnic or religious group.[5]

In effect, when it comes to dealing with divided societies, one can think of the choice of electoral system as being one between replicating ethnic divisions in the legislature and hoping that political leaders will cooperate after the election, and creating institutional incentives that seek to weaken or even transcend the political salience of ethnicity altogether. We'll return to the discussion of electoral system choice in divided societies in Chapter 14.

Other scholars have offered more general criticisms of proportional electoral systems. One of the most common is that they tend to produce coalition governments. As we noted earlier, it's often difficult to hold political parties accountable in coalition governments because it's hard to identify who's responsible for policy and hence whom to hold accountable at election time. Even if those responsible for policy could be identified, it's still difficult to hold them accountable because parties that lose significant numbers of votes frequently make it back into coalition governments anyway. As the empirical evidence we presented in Chapter 10 indicates, coalition governments are also more unstable than the single-party majority governments that are typically produced by majoritarian electoral systems. A second criticism of PR systems is that they allow small, extremist parties to win representation. This is frequently seen as problematic. For example, some have argued that the existence of extremist parties undermines democracy. A third criticism is that small parties in PR systems frequently have a strong role in the government formation process and receive concessions that are disproportionate to their actual level of support in the electorate. It's rare for parties to obtain a majority of the legislative seats in PR systems, so large parties often rely on the support of some smaller party to get into government. These smaller parties can often use their leverage to wring concessions from the larger party. Some of these concessions may be quite radical and lack the support of an electoral majority. In Israel, for example, small ultrareligious parties have won support for many of their policies by threatening to pull out of the government. A fourth criticism is that PR systems create a weak link between constituents and their representatives, because no single representative is responsible for policy in a given district. Voters might also wonder which of the elected representatives from their districts actually represent them.

List PR Systems

Almost all proportional electoral systems involve parties presenting a list of candidates to voters in each multimember district. Parties then receive legislative seats in proportion to the overall share of votes going to their list. These proportional systems are known as list PR systems. Despite obvious similarities, list PR systems are not all alike.

District Magnitude. The most important factor influencing the proportionality of an electoral system is the district magnitude (Cox 1997). District magnitude refers to the number of representatives elected in a district. Electoral systems are more proportional when the district magnitude is large, as smaller parties are much more likely to win seats in these circum-

[5]Fiji introduced the alternative vote in 1997 in the hopes of encouraging political parties to make appeals across ethnic groups. However, things didn't work out entirely as planned because the small size of the electoral districts and the geographic concentration of indigenous and Indo-Fijians meant there were too few constituencies with a sufficient mix of ethnic groups to make a strategy of appealing across ethnic group lines worthwhile. Some have argued that the choice of an AV system in this setting actually precipitated the collapse of Fijian democracy following a coup in 2000 (Reynolds 2011, 27–28).

stances. For example, a party would need to win more than 25 percent of the vote to guarantee winning a seat in a three-seat district, but it would need to win only a little more than 10 percent of the vote to guarantee winning a seat in a nine-seat district.

Although all PR systems use multimember districts, the average size of these districts—the average district magnitude—can vary quite a lot from one country to another. At one extreme is Serbia, which elects all 250 of its legislators in a single national district. In fact, Ukraine had a district magnitude of 450 in its 2006 and 2007 legislative elections. At the other extreme is Chile, which has historically had an average district magnitude of 2. In 2015, though, Chile adopted a new electoral system that saw its average district magnitude increase to 5.5. Other countries have district magnitudes of varying size between these two extremes. In addition to the proportionality of the electoral system, a country's district magnitude also affects the strength of the linkage between elected representatives and their constituents. As district magnitude increases and with it the geographical size of the district, the linkage between representatives and their voters weakens.

Electoral Thresholds. All PR systems have an **electoral threshold** that stipulates the minimum percentage of votes a party must win, either nationally or in a particular district, before it can win any legislative seats. This threshold is either legally imposed (**formal threshold**) or it exists as a mathematical property of the electoral system (**natural threshold**). The size of the electoral threshold has a strong effect on the proportionality of an electoral system.

Natural thresholds are not written into electoral laws; instead, they're a mathematical by-product of certain features of the electoral system, such as the district magnitude. For example, any party in the Netherlands must win more than 0.67 percent of the national vote before they win a seat, not because this is legally stipulated, but simply because there are 150 legislative seats allocated in a single national district; that is, 100 percent / 150 = 0.67 percent. All electoral systems have a natural threshold. In contrast to natural thresholds, formal thresholds are explicitly written into the electoral law. For example, political parties in Israel have to win 3.25 percent of the national vote before they can win seats in the Knesset (the natural threshold in Israel is only 0.83 percent). In Turkey, political parties must win more than 10 percent of the national vote before they can gain representation in parliament. Formal thresholds always increase the disproportionality of an electoral system because the votes for parties that might otherwise have won representation are wasted.

Formal thresholds are often introduced in an attempt to reduce party system fragmentation by preventing very small parties from gaining representation. For example, the adoption of a formal electoral threshold in Germany after World War II was largely a response to the fractious and unstable party system of Weimar Germany in the interwar period. Similarly, many Eastern European countries have imposed high formal thresholds in an attempt to reduce the number of parties and encourage the consolidation of a stable party system.

Formal thresholds can have a significant effect on election outcomes. For example, there were so many parties that didn't surpass the 10 percent threshold in the Turkish legislative elections of 2002 that fully 46 percent of all votes cast in these elections were wasted. Similarly, 34 percent of the votes cast in the Polish legislative elections of 1993 were wasted because of the 5 percent electoral threshold. In the Polish case, these wasted votes were crucial in allowing the former Communists to return to power only a few years after the collapse of communism in that country (Kaminski, Lissowski, and Swistak 1998). These examples from Turkey and Poland force us to think about whether the problems arising from formal thresholds (wasted votes and increased disproportionality) are more or less acceptable than the problems they're designed to solve (fragmented party systems).

Types of Party List. Parties receive legislative seats in proportion to the overall share of votes going to their party list. Thus, a party that receives 20 percent of the vote for their list will win 20 percent of the seats available in the district. But which specific candidates on a party list get the seats allocated to their party? It all depends on whether the party lists are closed, open, or free.

In a **closed party list**, which is the most common type of party list, the order of candidates elected is determined by the party, and voters are not able to express a preference for a particular candidate. The first seat a party wins goes to the candidate listed first on the party's list, the second seat goes to the second candidate on the list, and so on. Thus, if a party wins four seats in a district, the top four candidates on the list obtain seats, and the remaining candidates don't win any. In some cases, the ballot paper in a closed list system will contain the names of the individual candidates and their positions on the list. More frequently, though, ballot papers in closed list systems don't contain the names of individual candidates. Instead, the only information on the list is the party names and symbols, and perhaps a photograph of the party leader. As Figure 11.4 illustrates, this type of ballot paper was used in South Africa's 1994 legislative elections.

One of the potential advantages of closed party lists is that parties can more easily include minority or women candidates who might otherwise have had difficulty getting elected. Of course, some voters may consider this potential advantage a disadvantage in that they're unable to choose the candidates they most desire and may have to elect unpopular and undesirable candidates if they wish to vote for their preferred party.

Leaders of political parties often prefer closed party lists because they provide a useful way of disciplining and rewarding candidates. Candidates that are important in the party hierarchy can be guaranteed relatively safe seats by being placed toward the top of the party list, whereas candidates who fail to toe the party line can be placed toward the bottom of the party list. Political parties tend to be more important than individual candidates in closed list systems for this reason.

In an **open party list**, voters can indicate not just their preferred party but their favored candidate within that party. In most open list systems, it's up to the voter to choose whether to indicate her preferred candidate as well as her preferred party. If individuals simply vote for a party and don't indicate a preferred candidate, the candidate-choice option of the ballot paper will obviously have little effect. If we look at Sweden and its open list system, we find that over 25 percent of Swedish voters regularly choose an individual candidate within a party list; many of these candidates wouldn't have been elected had the party list been closed (Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2005, 84).

Figure 11.5 illustrates an open list ballot from the 1994 legislative elections in Denmark. In Danish elections, voters cast a single vote either for their preferred party (party vote) or for their preferred candidate from among that party's list of candidates (personal vote). The total number of seats a party wins is determined by its total number of votes, which is just the sum of its party votes and its personal votes. Each individual candidate is credited with all of the personal votes given to her plus a share of the votes cast for her party. The order in which the party's seats are allocated among the individual candidates is determined by the number of total votes (personal and party) that are credited to them.

Although voters normally have a choice in open list systems as to whether to vote for a particular candidate, this isn't the case in all open list PR systems. For example, individuals have to vote for a party candidate in countries like Brazil and the Netherlands. The total number of seats each party wins in these countries is determined by the total number of votes given to its candidates, and the order in which each party's candidates receive these seats is determined by the number of individual votes they receive.

FIGURE 11.4 ■ South African Closed List PR Ballot Paper

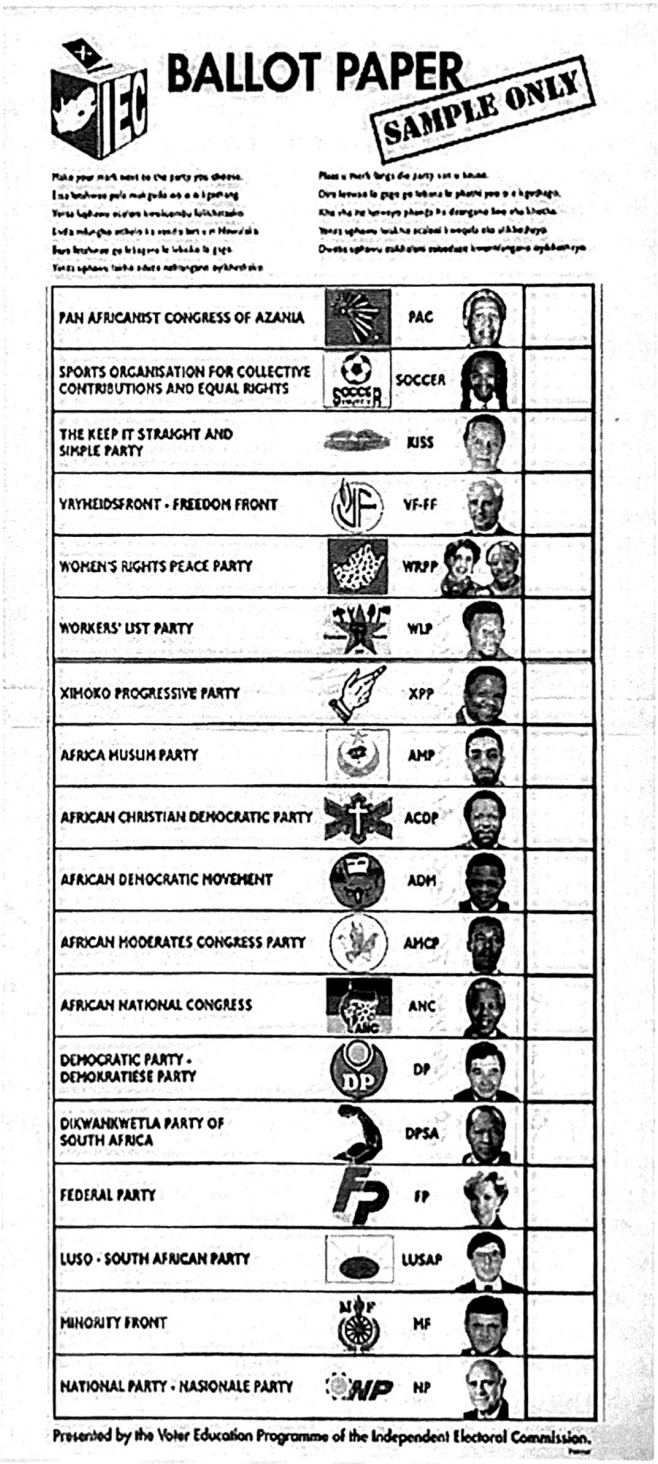

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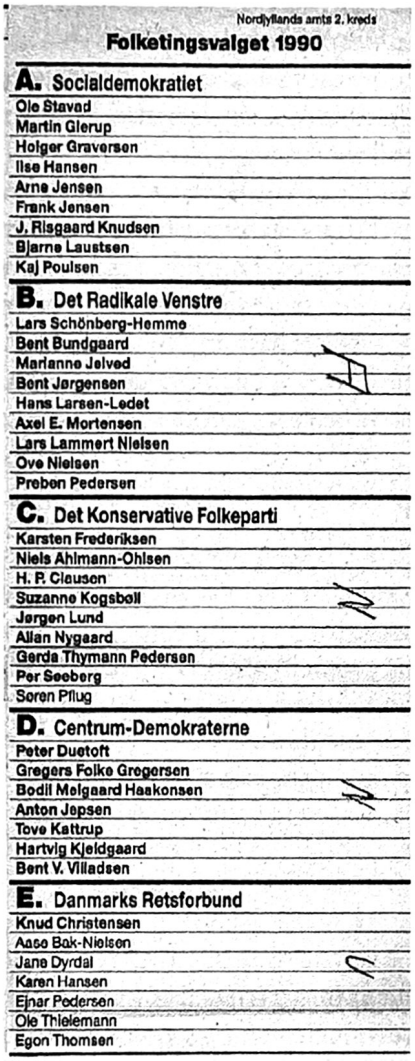
FIGURE 11.5 ■ Danish Open List PR Ballot Paper



Nordjyllands amts 2. kreds

Folketingsvalget 1990

A. Socialdemokratiet
Ole Stavad
Martin Glerup
Holger Graversen
Ilse Hansen
Arne Jensen
Frank Jensen
J. Risgaard Knudsen
Bjarne Laustsen
Kaj Poulsen

B. Det Radikale Venstre
Lars Schönberg-Hemme
Bent Bundgaard
Marianne Jelved
Bent Jørgensen
Hans Larsen-Ledet
Axel E. Mortensen
Lars Lammert Nielsen
Ove Nielsen
Preben Pedersen

C. Det Konservative Folkeparti
Karsten Frederiksen
Niels Ahlmann-Ohlsen
H. P. Clausen
Suzanne Kogsbøll
Jørgen Lund
Allan Nygaard
Gerda Thymann Pedersen
Per Seeberg
Søren Pflug

D. Centrum-Demokraterne
Peter Duetoft
Gregers Folke Gregersen
Bodil Melgaard Haakonsen
Anton Jepsen
Tove Kattrup
Hartvig Kjeldgaard
Bent V. Villadsen

E. Danmarks Retsforbund
Knud Christensen
Aase Bak-Nielsen
Jane Dyrdal
Karen Hansen
Ejnar Pedersen
Ole Thielemann
Egon Thomsen

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Open list systems clearly give voters greater freedom over their choice of candidates and weaken the control of party leaders over their party's candidates. A frequent consequence of open lists, though, is that they generate internal party fighting, because candidates from the same party are effectively competing with each other for the same votes. A result of this is that political candidates in open list systems have incentives to cultivate a personal vote rather than a party vote (Carey and Shugart 1995). A personal vote occurs when an individual votes based on the characteristics of a particular candidate rather than the characteristics of the party to which the candidate belongs. Building a personal vote is frequently associated in the United States with legislators bringing back pork-barrel projects to their single-member districts. As you can see, though, incentives to build personal votes also exist in multimember districts, where the election of candidates can depend on personal reputations in open list systems. In addition to internal party fighting, some scholars worry that open lists make it less likely that minority candidates will be elected. In Sri Lanka, for instance, majority Sinhalese parties tried to place minority

Tamil candidates in winnable positions on their open party lists. These efforts at improving minority representation were rendered ineffective, however, when many voters deliberately voted for lower-placed Sinhalese candidates instead (Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2005, 90).

Voters have even more flexibility in **free party lists**. This is because voters in free list systems have multiple votes, typically as many as there are seats available in the district, that they can allocate to candidates either within a single party list or across different party lists. The capacity to vote for candidates from different party lists is known as *panachage*. Panachage is attractive if there are particular types of candidates you'd like to support, say women candidates or candidates who share the same position on some policy, that appear across different party lists. Some countries, like Switzerland, allow voters to give more than one vote to the same candidate. The capacity to give more than one vote to a single highly favored candidate is known as cumulation. Some scholars have argued that cumulation can help boost minority representation (Guinier 1994). This is because minority groups can cumulate their votes on a single minority candidate while majority groups spread theirs across multiple candidates.

Single Transferable Vote

The only proportional electoral system that doesn't employ a party list is the single transferable vote (STV). STV is a candidate-centered preference voting system used in multimember districts where voters rank order the candidates. Candidates must obtain a particular number of votes, known as the quota, in order to win a seat. Votes go initially to each voter's most preferred candidate. If an insufficient number of candidates obtain the quota to fill all of the district seats, the candidate with the lowest number of first-choice votes is eliminated. The votes from the eliminated candidate, as well as any surplus votes from candidates that are already elected, are then reallocated to the remaining candidates according to the designated second preferences. This process continues until enough candidates meet the quota to fill all of the district seats. If you think the STV system sounds familiar, you'd be right: it's essentially the same as the alternative vote but applied in multimember districts.

One of the strengths of STV systems is that they provide voters with an opportunity to convey a lot of information about their preferences (Bowler and Grofman 2000). Like other preference voting systems, individuals in STV systems have the opportunity to rank order all of the candidates rather than simply voting "yes" or "no" to one of the candidates as in most majoritarian and list PR systems. Because an individual's preferences end up being reallocated whenever a candidate is elected or eliminated, the STV system minimizes wasted votes. STV systems also allow individuals to vote for candidates from different parties. This means that individuals can vote for candidates who share a similar policy stance even though the candidates may come from different parties. This might be useful in cases in which an issue cuts across traditional party lines such as abortion. With the exception of those systems that allow for panachage, the vast majority of list PR systems don't allow for this type of cross-party voting. It's worth noting that STV is a proportional electoral system that doesn't require the existence of political parties—individuals vote for candidates, not parties. This could be important in countries in which political parties are yet to organize or political elites don't wish to allow the formation of political parties (see Box 11.1, "Strategic Miscalculation: Electoral System Choice in Poland in 1989").

Like other preference voting systems, an additional strength of STV systems is that they create incentives for candidates to appeal to groups outside their core set of supporters and campaign on broad-based centrist platforms. This is because a candidate's election may well depend on the transfer of votes from different social groups. Recall that this is why some scholars advocate the use of preference voting systems in divided societies (Horowitz 1985,

1991; Reilly 1997, 2001). One criticism of the preference voting systems we've examined to this point, such as the alternative vote, is that they're majoritarian and can produce highly disproportional outcomes. An advantage of the STV system is that it works in multimember districts and typically produces more proportional outcomes than majoritarian systems. Thus, the STV holds out the possibility of combining relatively proportional outcomes with incentives for candidates to make cross-cleavage appeals and build electorates that bridge religious and ethnic lines.

Another strength of STV its supporters highlight is that it tends to create a strong link between representatives and their constituents. Since the STV is a candidate-centered rather than a party-centered system, candidates have an incentive to build personal votes and engage in constituency service. For example, there's evidence the STV system in Ireland leads to an emphasis on local campaigning, a focus on district work and local concerns, and a low importance attached to ideology and national issues (Katz 1980). In this respect, STV "involves a notion of the connection between the individual representative and his or her constituency that is much closer to the notion of representation implicit in the [SMDP] system than to the notion of representation of parties underlying list systems" (Sinnott 1992, 68). A further strength of STV systems is that they reduce the incentive for voters to behave strategically because their votes are less likely to be wasted. As with any electoral system, though, strategic concerns are never entirely absent. In an attempt to strategically channel the transfer of votes in an STV system so as to benefit their candidates as much as possible, parties in Ireland hand out "candidate cards" in a similar way to how parties hand out how-to-vote cards in the alternative vote system used in Australia.

Despite these strengths, the STV system has its critics. One criticism is that it tends to weaken the internal unity of parties and make them less cohesive. Because voters are allowed to rank order candidates from the same party, these candidates have incentives to criticize and campaign against one another. As Farrell and McAllister (2000, 18) note, "[T]he problems of intraparty factionalism and excessive attention to localist, particularistic concerns [in Ireland] are attributed to politicians who must compete with each other for votes on ordinally ranked STV ballots." You'll perhaps recall that the single nontransferable vote (SNTV) also creates incentives for intraparty factionalism. It's worth noting, though, that the incentives for factionalism are weaker under the STV system because candidates can expect to receive votes from fellow party members who are eliminated. This means that candidates from the same party in an STV system don't want to harm each other too much.

A second criticism of STV is that it's hard to operate when the district magnitude is large. This is because the ballot paper could contain a large number of candidate names. In fact, the ballot for the Australian Senate elections in New South Wales in 1995 contained the names of ninety-nine candidates and was several feet long (Farrell and McAllister 2000, 29). It's not unknown for Australian electoral officials to order thousands of magnifying glasses just so that voters can read the candidate names on the ballot ("Magnifying Glasses" 2013). It's difficult to believe voters would have sufficient information to rank candidates beyond the first ten or so names on a ballot. For this reason, constituencies in STV systems tend to be relatively small. For example, the largest district magnitude in Ireland and Malta is five. These small district magnitudes limit the proportionality with which votes are translated into seats.

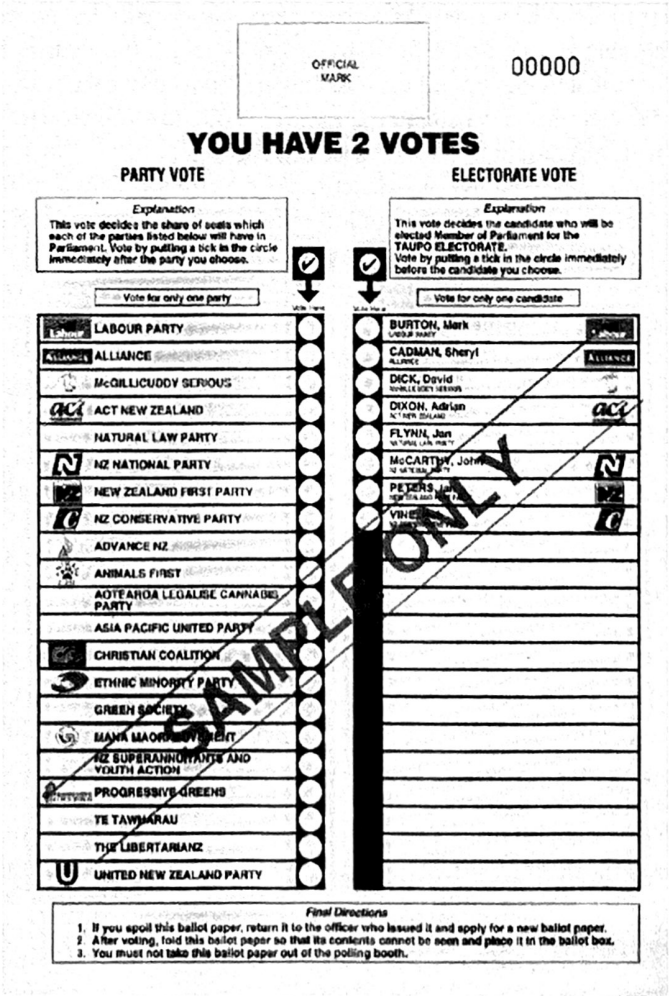
Mixed Electoral Systems

In some countries, voters elect some of their legislative representatives with a majoritarian electoral system and some of them with a proportional electoral system. These countries are said to employ a mixed electoral system. Most mixed systems employ multiple electoral tiers.

An **electoral tier** is a level at which votes are translated into seats. The lowest electoral tier is the district or constituency level. Higher tiers are constituted by grouping together different lower-tier constituencies, typically at the regional or national level. A majoritarian electoral system is used to allocate some of the legislative seats in the lowest tier (district level), and a proportional electoral system is used to allocate the other legislative seats in the upper tier (regional or national level).

Ukraine used a mixed electoral system with two electoral tiers for its 2014 legislative elections. Two hundred and twenty-five legislators were elected using a majoritarian SMDP electoral system in single-member districts at the constituency level, and 225 legislators were elected using an open party list proportional representation system in a single district at the national level. The precise balance between "proportional" and "majoritarian" seats varies from country to country. For example, seventy-one (59%) of the legislators in New Zealand's 2014 elections were elected using majoritarian rules and forty-nine (41%)

FIGURE 11.6 ■ A Sample Ballot Used in New Zealand's Dependent Mixed Electoral System



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were elected using proportional rules. In some mixed systems, like the one in South Korea, individuals have only one vote, which is used for both parts of the electoral system. In these mixed systems, an individual's vote for a constituency candidate also counts as a vote for that candidate's party in the higher electoral tier. In most mixed systems, though, individuals have two votes. The first vote is cast for a representative at the constituency level (candidate vote) and the second vote is cast for a party list in a higher electoral tier (party vote). These types of mixed systems allow individuals to give their first vote to a constituency candidate from one party and to give their second vote to a different party if they wish. This is called split-ticket voting. Figure 11.6 shows a sample ballot from New Zealand that has two votes.

In many respects, mixed electoral systems are an attempt to combine the positive attributes of both majoritarian and proportional systems. In particular, mixed electoral systems help produce proportional outcomes at the same time as ensuring that some elected representatives are linked to particular geographic districts. One issue with mixed systems is that they can create two classes of legislators—one that is responsible and accountable to a geographic constituency and one that is more beholden to the party. This can influence the cohesiveness of political parties (Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2005).

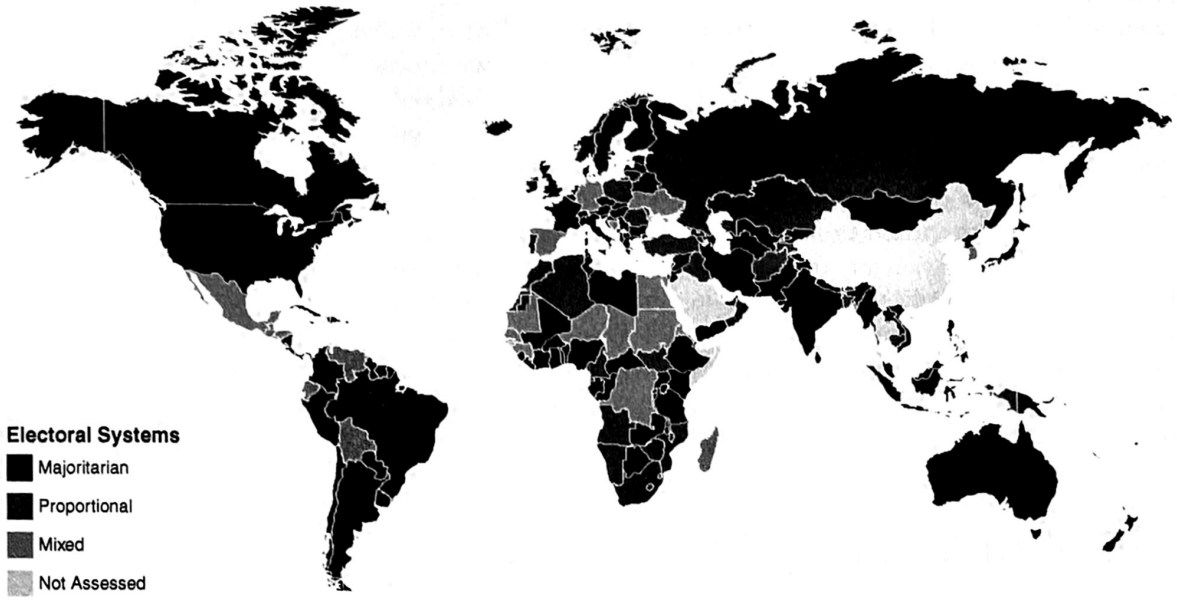
LEGISLATIVE ELECTORAL SYSTEM CHOICE

In Map 11.2, we illustrate the global distribution of majoritarian, proportional, and mixed electoral systems around the world in 2018. Some regions are relatively homogeneous in the type of electoral systems they use. The vast majority of countries in Latin America and Western Europe, for example, use a proportional system. In contrast, other regions such as Oceania, North Africa and the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa display much more heterogeneity in their choice of electoral system. Of the 178 countries coded by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Map 11.2, 67 (37.6%) employ a majoritarian system, 76 (42.7%) a proportional system, and 35 (19.7%) a mixed system. There are distinct differences in the type of electoral systems used by democracies and dictatorships. Of those countries coded as democracies by Polity IV, 53.7% use a proportional system, 25.3% use a majoritarian system, and 21.1% use a mixed system. In contrast, of those coded as dictatorships, 81% use a majoritarian system and 19% use a proportional system.[6] In effect, dictatorships are much more likely to use majoritarian systems than democracies.

There's been relatively little work on the choice of electoral systems under dictatorship. However, we can throw out some conjectures for why dictatorships might favor majoritarian systems. First, most proportional systems other than the single transferable vote use party lists and hence require the existence of political parties. As we discussed in Chapter 8, dictatorships vary in the extent to which political parties are allowed to exist. Second, there's some evidence that majoritarian systems may be easier to manipulate than proportional ones. Evidence for this comes from a study of twenty-four Communist countries in which the author finds that elections using the majoritarian SMDP system were much more likely to be the object of manipulation than those using a list PR system (Birch 2007). Third, many dictatorships are poor with low levels of education. The simplicity of majoritarian electoral systems, such as SMDP, may be helpful in these conditions as they impose lower cognitive costs on voters.

[6]Recall that democracies are those countries that receive 6 or higher on the Polity IV scale and dictatorships are those countries that receive -6 or lower on the Polity IV scale (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2017).

MAP 11.2 ■ Legislative Electoral System Choice around the World in 2018



Note: The data for this map come from the Inter-Parliamentary Union at https://www.ipu.org/.

A final conjecture focuses on the fact that majoritarian systems tend to produce disproportional outcomes that reward large parties and punish small parties. This may well appeal to large incumbent parties in dictatorships. Of course, the disproportionality of majoritarian systems creates incentives for opposition groups to coalesce, whereas proportional systems may help keep the opposition divided. In this respect, dictatorial incumbents face a trade-off between benefiting from disproportional majoritarian systems and hindering opposition coordination with proportional systems (Barberá 2013). Lust-Okar and Jamal (2002) suggest that this trade-off plays out differently depending on dictatorial type. Specifically, they claim that majoritarian systems are more likely to be adopted by dominant-party dictatorships, whereas proportional systems are more likely to be adopted by monarchic dictatorships. The idea is that leaders in these two types of dictatorship have divergent preferences. Monarchs are political arbitrators whose legitimacy typically comes from things like the royal family, religious authorities, or historical tradition rather than popular support. "For the monarch, then, political division and competition in popular politics, not unity, is the basis of stability. Kings have no interest in creating a single contender who could vie with them for power" (Lust-Okar and Jamal 2002, 253). As a result, monarchs prefer proportional systems that allow for the representation of competing political parties while they maintain their role as chief arbiter. In contrast, leaders in states dominated by a regime party are forced to enter politics to maintain their rule. For this reason, they want majoritarian systems that disproportionately favor their (large) political party. Lust-Okar and Jamal support this line of reasoning with empirical evidence from the Middle East.

Studies of electoral system choice in democracies are more common. Various explanations have been proposed for why democracies have the electoral systems they do. These explanations focus on the self-interest of political parties, historical precedent, external pressures, and idiosyncratic occurrences (Benoit 2004, 2007). Self-interest explanations examine the preferences that political parties have for various electoral systems. Because electoral systems are basically distribution mechanisms that reward one party at the expense of another, parties are likely to have conflicting preferences for alternative electoral rules. The adoption of an electoral system is ultimately a struggle between political parties with competing interests. In one study, Boix (1999) sets out to explain the spread of proportional electoral systems at the beginning of the twentieth century. He argues that conservative ruling elites who were historically elected using some kind of majoritarian system began to take an interest in proportional systems when suffrage was being extended to the poor and the level of support for socialist parties was growing.

BOX 11.1 STRATEGIC MISCALCULATION: ELECTORAL SYSTEM CHOICE IN POLAND IN 1989

One explanation for why countries adopt the electoral system they do focuses on the strategic calculations of political parties. In effect, parties in power choose to adopt electoral rules that benefit them at the expense of their rivals. Although the stakes involved in choosing an electoral system can often be extremely high, history has shown us that political parties frequently make strategic miscalculations.

In a 1999 article titled "How Communism Could Have Been Saved," Marek Kaminski describes the bargaining that took place between the opposition movement, Solidarity, and the Communist Party over the electoral law to be used for the 1989 legislative elections in Poland. At the time, these elections were to be the first semi-free elections held in the Soviet bloc. During these negotiations, the Communist Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) made two strategic miscalculations.

Mistake 1: The first mistake was that the PUWP overestimated its support in the electorate. Following the imposition of martial law in 1981, the PUWP under General Jaruzelski set up a Center for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) to keep better track of public opinion and support for the Communist regime. If you recall from our discussion of democratic transitions in Chapter 7, preference falsification is likely to be rampant in dictatorships because members of opposition groups are unwilling to publicly reveal their opposition for fear of punishment. This was certainly the case in Poland, where roughly 30 percent of respondents simply refused to complete surveys conducted by CBOS. Much of the opposition in Poland essentially remained underground and out of the sight of the PUWP. The result was that the PUWP went into the negotiations over the electoral law with Solidarity in 1989 with an overly optimistic belief about its electoral strength.

Mistake 2: The second mistake was that the PUWP didn't adopt a proportional electoral system. As you may recall from our discussion in Chapter 7, the 1989 legislative elections turned into an electoral disaster for the PUWP with Solidarity winning all 35 percent of the legislative seats for which it was able to compete. The size of Solidarity's victory and the subsequent divisions that appeared between the PUWP and its supporters eventually led to the appointment of the first non-Communist prime minister in Eastern Europe. The reason that Solidarity won all the seats in these elections had a lot to do with the electoral system that was

(*Continued*)

(Continued)

chosen—a majority-runoff TRS. Because Solidarity turned out to have the largest support in each district, this electoral system translated the 70 percent of the vote won by Solidarity into 100 percent of the seats and the roughly 25 percent of the vote won by the PUWP into zero seats. Had the PUWP adopted a proportional electoral system, though, the outcome of the elections would have been very different.

So why did the PUWP not adopt a proportional system? One reason has to do with the PUWP's belief that it had sufficient support to win seats in a majoritarian system. A second reason, however, has to do with the fact that the PUWP didn't want to legalize any additional political parties. The maximum concession the PUWP was willing to make during the negotiations was to legalize Solidarity as a trade union; Poland was to remain a one-party state. As a result, the PUWP refused to consider adopting any electoral system that required individuals to vote for parties rather than candidates. At the time, the PUWP believed that all proportional systems required the presence of political parties. As you now know from reading this chapter, this isn't true. The STV is a proportional system in which individuals vote for candidates. It appears that the PUWP was simply unaware that the STV system existed. In his article, Kaminski indicates that had the option of the STV come up, it would have been acceptable to both Solidarity and the PUWP. The STV would have guaranteed a significant representation for Solidarity in the legislature and provided a greater margin of safety for the PUWP. It seems likely that with a more proportional allocation of seats, as would have occurred under an STV system, the PUWP may have been able to hold on to power and not had to appoint a prime minister from Solidarity.

This leads to an interesting counterfactual question one might ask. What would have happened to communism in Eastern Europe had the PUWP adopted a proportional STV system in 1989 rather than the majoritarian TRS? What we know is that the collapse of communism in Poland had a snowball effect on the rest of the Eastern bloc. A different course of events in Poland could perhaps have prevented the breakdown of the Communist system. This leads one to wonder whether communism in Eastern Europe could have been saved if the political leaders in Poland had only been more aware of the information on electoral systems presented in this chapter.

After the Polish version of Kaminski's 1999 article was published, he received several letters from Premier Tadeusz Mazowiecki and other Solidarity leaders. Below, we list some of the responses he received from former Communist dignitaries.

Jerzy Urban (former Communist spokesman, number 4 in Poland in the 1980s):

> You are absolutely right that we did not read the surveys properly . . . we were ignorant about various electoral laws . . . probably nobody knew STV. . . . I distributed copies of your paper among General Jaruzelski, Premier Rakowski, and [the present] President Kwasniewski.

Hieronim Kubiak (former Politburo member, top political adviser):

> The negative heroes of Kaminski's article are the "ignoramus"—we, communist experts. . . . [He thinks that the communist regime could have survived] if General Jaruzelski had known the STV electoral law and if he had chosen differently!

Janusz Reykowski (former Politburo member, the designer of the 1989 electoral law):

> [The value of Kaminski's work] is in showing that technical political decisions [that is, the choice of the electoral law] may have fundamental importance for a historical process.

Maria Teresa Kiszczak (the wife of General Czeslaw Kiszczak, Number 2 in Poland in the 1980s):

> You based your story on the bourgeois literature. . . . [C]ommunists did not really want to keep power. . . . [My husband] resisted a temptation to cancel the 1989 elections and to seize power.

The interest in proportional systems was particularly strong in those countries in which conservative parties on the right were fragmented and the presence of a strong socialist party posed a threat to their continued rule. In effect, Boix claims that conservative parties, faced with the rise of socialism, chose to adopt proportional systems as a preemptive strategy to guarantee their strong representation in the legislature even if they remained divided.

External pressures and historical precedent can also affect the choice of electoral system. The choice of electoral system in many countries has been heavily influenced by their former colonial ruler (Blais and Massicotte 1997). For example, nearly every African country that employs an SMDP system is a former British colony. Similarly, many former French colonies, such as the Central African Republic, Comoros, and Mali, have adopted the same majoritarian two-round system used in France. Other countries seem to have adopted a particular electoral system for the simple reason that they've had some experience with it in the past. For example, there's some evidence that the newly democratic Czechoslovakia chose a proportional system in 1990 because it had used a similar system in the interwar period. Similarly, France's adoption of a two-round system in 1958 can perhaps be traced back to its use in the Second Empire (1852–1870) and much of the Third Republic (1870–1940; Benoit 2004, 370).

It appears that some electoral systems are even chosen by accident. As an example, consider the following description from Benoit (2007, 376–377) of how New Zealand came to adopt a mixed electoral system in 1993.

> In a now famous incident of electoral reform through accident, ruling parties in New Zealand found themselves bound to implement a sweeping electoral reform that traced back in essence to a chance remark, later described as a gaffe, by Prime Minister David Lange during a televised debate. In New Zealand, the use of first-past-the-post [SMDP] had virtually guaranteed a two-party duopoly of the Labor Party and the National Party, producing continuous single-party majority governments since 1914—often cited as the textbook example of the "majoritarian" or Westminster type of democracy (Nagel 2004). Grassroots dissatisfaction with the electoral system began in the 1970s among Maori and minor-party supporters who consistently found it difficult to obtain any representation, and increased with the 1978 and 1981 elections, in which Labor received a plurality of the vote yet National won a majority of the seats. This led Labor to pledge in the 1980s to establish a Royal Commission to reappraise the electoral law. The commission compared many options and finally recommended [a mixed electoral] system combining single-member districts with lists, although the majority of Labor's Members of Parliament opposed this system. Because the commission was politically independent and had very broad terms of reference, its considerations were disconnected from the strategic considerations of any particular party. After the commission's report, "horrified politicians of both parties attempted to put the genie of reform back in the bottle" (Nagel 2004, 534). This succeeded for six years, until the televised leaders' debate in which Labor Prime Minister David Lange inadvertently promised to hold a binding referendum on electoral reform in response to a question from the leader of the Electoral Reform Coalition. Labor initially refused to honor this pledge when elected in 1987, but after the National Party politically exploited the incident as a broken promise, both parties promised a referendum in their 1990s manifestos. The National Party elected in 1990 finally held a referendum on electoral system reform in 1992, in which voters rejected the existing first-past-the-post system . . . . in favor of a [mixed electoral system] ... (Roberts 1997). New Zealand's long-standing first-past-the-post system owes its changeover to [a mixed electoral] system not so much to "a revolution from below [as to] an accident from above." (Rudd and Taichi 1994, p. 11, quoted in Nagel 2004)

A second referendum was held in 2011 when a majority of New Zealanders reaffirmed their support for a mixed electoral system.

CONCLUSION

Elections are increasingly being used by both democracies and dictatorships to fill political offices. The growing use of elections around the world has fostered a concern with electoral integrity. Flawed and contested elections can have significant negative consequences. They can produce social instability, undermine democratic consolidation, reduce trust in the political system, and exacerbate ethnic and religious grievances. As we've seen in this chapter, there's significant variation in electoral integrity across countries, both democracies and dictatorships. How can we promote "good" electoral practice? Unfortunately, many of the factors that influence the level of electoral integrity relate to domestic structural constraints such as a country's level of development or its dependence on natural resources that are difficult to change, at least in the short term. One possibility is to strengthen the electoral management bodies that oversee and administer the elections. The problem here is that the set of actors who have the strongest incentive to strengthen these organizations are often not the same set of actors who have the power to actually do this. Some people are optimistic that international donors can help promote free and fair elections in recipient countries by making their foreign aid conditional on electoral and democratic reform. This optimism must be tempered, though, by the fact that foreign aid donors are not always willing or able to follow through on their threats to withdraw aid if their conditions are not met.

In the second half of this chapter, we examined the different types of electoral system used in elections around the world. Most political scientists classify electoral systems into two main families: majoritarian or proportional. We're often asked whether there's a single electoral system that is better than all the others. As our discussion indicates, though, each electoral system has its strengths and weaknesses. For example, some electoral systems promote proportionality but lower the ability of voters to hold representatives accountable. Others allow voters to more accurately convey their sincere preferences but are complicated for individuals to understand and costly for electoral agencies to administer. In an echo of our comments from Chapter 9, there's no perfect electoral system—there are always trade-offs to be made.

Of course, you may be more willing to make certain trade-offs than others. Perhaps you think proportionality is the key criterion for evaluating different electoral systems and are less concerned with having a close link between the representative and her constituents. When we think about the actual adoption of an electoral system, though, we need to stop and ask what's in the interests of the actors involved in choosing the electoral system. Rather than thinking about which electoral system is best at meeting some objective criteria we might care about, such as proportionality, we now need to think of which electoral systems are politically feasible, given the preferences of the actors involved. We can then try to choose the "best" electoral system from within the set of politically feasible systems.

As we noted earlier, electoral systems are distributive mechanisms that reward one set of actors at the expense of another. This means that no electoral system is a winning situation for everyone involved. This has important consequences for any budding electoral reformers among you. It's nearly always the case that the political actors who won under the existing electoral system are the ones who are in a position to determine whether electoral reform should take place. Given that these actors won under the existing system, they're unlikely to be willing to reform the electoral system except in ways that solidify their ability to win in the future. Only when there's some impending threat to their continued electoral success, as was the case

with conservative parties at the beginning of the twentieth century when the right to vote was extended to the working class, are they likely to consider major electoral reform. Although many people in the United States complain about the existing SMDP electoral system and advocate for the adoption of a more proportional one, we suggest that they not hold their breath. Why would either the Democratic or Republican party choose to adopt a more proportional system that would hurt their chances to be reelected and help smaller political parties? Of course, as the New Zealand case we just described illustrates, electoral reform can happen "by accident."

Key Concepts

electoral system—a set of laws that regulates electoral competition between candidates and parties

electoral formula—a formula that determines how votes are translated into seats

ballot structure—the way in which electoral choices are presented on the ballot paper

district magnitude—the number of representatives elected in a district

electoral integrity—the extent to which the conduct of elections meets international standards and global norms concerning "good" elections; these norms and standards are usually set out in treaties, conventions, and guidelines issued by international and regional organizations

electoral malpractice—violations of electoral integrity

electoral threshold—the minimum level of voter support a party needs to obtain legislative representation

natural threshold—the minimum level of voter support a party needs to obtain legislative representation that arises as a mathematical by-product of the electoral system

formal threshold—the minimum level of voter support a party needs to obtain legislative representation explicitly written into the electoral system

closed party list—a party list in which voters can only indicate their preferred party and can't express a preference for a particular candidate

open party list—a party list in which voters can indicate not only their preferred party but also their favored candidate within that party

free party list—a party list in which voters have multiple votes that they can allocate either within a single party list or across different party lists

electoral tier—a level at which votes are translated into seats; the lowest tier is the district or constituency level; higher tiers are constituted by grouping together different lower-tier constituencies, typically at the regional or national level