مجلة إكليل للدراسات الانسانية
التصنيف الورقي: العدد 18 / حزيران/2024
IASJ–Iraqi Academic Scientific Journals المجلد(5)- العدد(2)-الجزء(3)

The Study of Electoral Systems in the Twenty-First Century: Progress and Challenges

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Keywords: Elections, Party System, Political Institutions

Summary:

Conventional electoral studies have focused mostly on how election laws affect party structures and how candidate selection laws affect party structure and conduct. The possible endogeneity of election rules—more specifically, how party rivalry circumstances may incite processes of electoral change—has drawn the attention of a sizable number of academics in recent years. The impact of election laws on party systems and the factors influencing electoral reform—two areas of electoral research that highlight the achievements and future directions of the broader field of political institutions research—are the main subjects of this paper's discussion. Regarding the impact of election regulations on party structures, it contends that advances in defining and evaluating how electoral structures interact with more extensive institutional arrangements as well as extra-institutional variables contrast with the still-restricted theoretical knowledge of how politicized conflict dimensions arise in a democracy and influence the number of parties. It suggests that, in terms of electoral change, the strategic model should be updated to take into account the existence of different historical pathways and fluctuating conditions of electoral reform, even if it has made significant contributions to understanding the origins of voting regulations. It has to loosen the presumptions that reformers are fully informed, that they always prioritize their partisan short-term interests, and that the political elite is in complete control of the reform process. The necessity of combining the reciprocal causal relationships among party systems, electoral reform, and politicized aspects of conflict into a unified, dynamic theoretical framework is covered in the paper's conclusion.

Introduction:

The primary focus of conventional electoral studies has been on how election laws affect party structures and how candidate selection laws affect party structure and conduct. In recent times, a significant number of academics have tackled the possibility of election rules being endogenous; specifically, how the circumstances surrounding party rivalry may inadvertently initiate processes of electoral modification. This paper discusses some of the key issues raised by the literature on the determinants of electoral reform and the effects of electoral rules on party systems, two areas of electoral research that highlight the achievements and future directions of the more comprehensive study of political institutions.

Regarding how electoral rules impact party formats, it is argued that the limited theoretical understanding of how politicized conflict emerges in a polity and influences party size contrasts with the progress made in defining and testing the interaction of electoral structures with both non-institutional and broader institutional configurations. Regarding electoral change, it is suggested that, despite the strategic model's significant contributions to our knowledge of the historical development of electoral laws, it should be updated to account for the existence of several historical pathways and a range of electoral reform situations. It has to loosen the presumptions that reformers are fully informed, that they always prioritize their partisan short-term interests, and that the political elite is in complete control of the reform process. The necessity of combining the reciprocal causal relationships among party systems, electoral reform, and politicized aspects of conflict into a unified, dynamic theoretical framework is covered in the paper's conclusion.

The Party System Effects of Electoral Systems

The majority of electoral system research has focused on analyzing Duverger's claims on the impact of plurality, two-ballot majorities, and proportional formulae on party systems. Political scientists have learned a great deal about how election systems function and how a range of institutional and non-institutional elements influence their outcomes as this study topic has developed. However, in a world beset by reciprocal causality, progress in the theoretical understanding of the precise causative function of election rules

has not kept pace with advancements in the empirical research of the mechanics of voting systems and conditional connections.

According to Duverger's 1951 proposal, systems with proportional representation and two-ballot majorities lean toward multipartism, whereas plurality rule tends toward party dualism (Duverger 1957: 232–233). The examination of these claims produced a large body of literature. Only a few significant contributions on the impact of single-member district plurality (SMDP) and proportional representation (PR) systems on party systems—the most developed fields of study in terms of theory development and empirical testing—will be discussed.

The number of parliamentary parties is reduced from the number of electoral parties in all election systems. But in SMDP systems, this effect—which Duverger referred to as "mechanical"—is more pronounced than in PR systems. Because of this, SMDP has a definite "psychological" effect: Political leaders are less likely to start an independent party in order to win an election against more formidable rivals, and voters are more likely to vote for their second-order preferences in order to avoid wasting their votes (Duverger 1957: 252; Cox 1997). Because of these two impacts, SMDP tends to maintain two-party rivalry that has already been established and to restore party dualism when the arrival of a third party has upset it (Duverger 1957: 254).

The majority of the early studies on Duverger's theories focused on testing the theory that electoral institutions influence party systems independently of one another. This theory appeared to be supported by data about the mechanical impacts of electoral formulae on the number of parliamentary parties. It was unequivocally proven that electoral systems differ greatly in the degree of disproportionality between votes and seats (Rae 1971). Scholars have discovered a wealth of data indicating that disproportionality is greater in SMDP systems as compared to PR systems (Lijphart 1994: 95–117; Katz 1997: 137). Researchers have discovered a high correlation between the number of parliamentary parties and the degree of party system fragmentation (Norris 1997: 307; Lijphart 1994). These findings do not, however, validate Duverger's theory as it was proposed.

The purpose of the plurality rule is to naturally discourage voters from supporting or encouraging tiny parties to run on their own. Because of this, it encourages the establishment of a two-party system and helps to keep it that way over time. In contrast, PR formulae are linked to more than two parties because they do not have the same disincentives as plurality systems have to encourage the formation of new parties or to discourage minor parties from competing. Therefore, PR neither creates nor diminishes the likelihood of several parties; multipartism would arise only if people in a particular nation genuinely desired additional parties and political leaders were able to establish them. This is why Riker proposed (1986: 26–30) that whereas the reductive effect of SMDP should be considered a "law," the multiplying effect of PR is simply a "hypothesis."

However, Duverger's "law" required additional adjustments to take unusual instances into consideration. Plurality systems have coexisted with more than two major national parliamentary parties in Canada and India. In Canada's example, the oddity was explained by the fact that one of the national third parties consistently functioned as one of the two major parties locally (Sartori 1968; Rae 1971). It was suggested that there were more than two parties in India, both locally and nationally, due to the Congress Party, a centrist party that dominated most districts and prohibited alliances of smaller parties from its left and right (Riker 1986).

The revision of these cases thus led to a reformulation of the law to the claim that a plurality system will produce and maintain a nationwide two-party system except when strong minority parties are concentrated in certain constituencies or geographical pockets and when one party among several is almost always the Condorcet winner in elections (Sartori 1994: 40–41; Riker 1986: 32).

For the sake of a comparative study, Duverger's theory also required revision, even if it was expressed in probabilistic terms. PR systems can vary greatly, and it's not always clear how these variances relate to the number of parties involved. Furthermore, a number of voting systems combine plurality and proportional methods, assigning varying degrees of weight to each (Gallagher 2015: 549). It goes without saying that if we wish to determine

the number of parties connected to PR, we need either employ changes to the formula or another element of the election system.

According to Sartori's (1968) theory, under PR systems, the number of parties obtaining votes and seats in the district should increase with the size of the district (i.e., the number of seats fought in the district). Due to the generalization of this idea, the majority of academics today believe that the district's size is the primary factor influencing the number of parties (Taagepera and Shugart 1989). This variable's main benefit is that it allows comparisons between various electoral systems as well as within PR formulae. When electoral districts differ in scale, the aggregate influence of those districts must be captured by a single metric since the national party system is often the outcome of interest. The national average district magnitude is the most commonly used measure, but there are alternative formulas to estimate the nationwide district magnitude in mixed member electoral systems and PR systems with multiple tiers (see Gallagher and Mitchell 2015; Teorell and Lindstedt 2020).

Nevertheless, there are issues with using district size as the only factor in determining party systems. There is proof that disproportionality is adversely correlated with larger district magnitudes. However, there is not always evidence to support the predicted relationship between party system types and district magnitude. The relationship between the size of the district and the number of parties (legislative and electoral) appears to be weak, according to qualitative analysis utilizing a small number of instances (Gallagher 2015: 549; Morgenstern and D'Elia 2017). Large-N statistical analyses show a higher correlation, but they can overestimate the mechanical effect by failing to consider the pre-filtering effect that the same variable had on the number of parties receiving votes, which affected the observed effect of district magnitude on the number of legislative parties (Benoit 2012: 39). Furthermore, different outcomes may occur even when the indirect effect of district size on the number of electoral parties is taken into account. Teorell and Lindstedt (2020: 443) demonstrate that depending on how average district magnitude is calculated in multitier systems and whether new democracies are included in the study, the effect of bigger districts on the proportionality of votes and seats may or may not be statistically significant.

The impact of electoral laws on the number of parties running for office and receiving votes is the subject of the most fascinating research on the political implications of such regulations. The macro-level phenomena that impact party formation in a democracy and the micro-level mechanisms (Duverger's "psychological" effect) that impact party leaders' strategic incentives to start new parties in competition and voters' incentives to support them are both better understood in light of this analysis (Blais and Carty 1991; Coppedge 1997; Cox 1997). These processes offer a deeper look at the precise causal role that electoral systems play in shaping the party system, as they both influence and are influenced by the current electoral system. Over time, the attempt to link macro structures with micro-level mechanisms began to cast doubt on whether electoral rules really have an independent causal effect.

Whether institutional variables other than district size influence party strategists' and voters' calculations is one of the first concerns concerning the elements that determine electoral parties. Duverger's analysis solely focused on legislative elections; his conclusions might not apply to presidential ones. Depending on the electoral cycle and the method used to elect presidents, presidential elections have the potential to "contaminate" legislative elections. If presidential and legislative elections are held simultaneously and plurality is utilized for presidential election, the multiparty effect of PR may be mitigated. On the other hand, the employment of runoff formulae in presidential elections and/or the election of presidents and lawmakers in non-concurrent cycles may strengthen the inclination toward multipartism (Shugart and Carey 1992; Jones 1995; Shugart 1995). The impact of presidential electoral formulas on electoral parties is, however, indirect, acting through the number of presidential candidates. Using this approach, various empirical tests have confirmed that temporally proximate presidential elections stop having a reductive effect on the number of electoral parties when the number of candidates competing in presidential elections is sufficiently high (Amorim Neto and Cox 1997; Cox 1997; Golder 2016).

Another important addition to the analysis of the number of electoral parties is the impact of non-institutional variables such as the number of cleavages that divide citizens in

a given society. This deserves special attention because it goes beyond the simple incorporation of a new variable into the estimation of the party system effects of electoral rules.

Lipset and Rokkan (1967; Rokkan 2019 [1970]) contended that the structure, chronology, and core sociocultural cleavages brought about by nation-building, industrialization, and democratization processes gave rise to the form of national party systems. In this body of study, electoral structures were mostly examined as dependent factors rather than as independent variables in their interactions with parties and party systems. Duverger notably argued for the causal significance of electoral systems in determining the number of parties, but he did not hypothesize about the transfer of sociocultural cleavages into national party systems. Yet at various stages in his analysis, Duverger clearly suggests that the number and structure of political divisions in a polity (often but not always derived from sociocultural factors), along with electoral structures, affect the number of parties in a polity (Duverger 1957: 259–261).

The literature has examined the significance of non-institutional factors in party systems from two distinct perspectives. The first is theory-focused and aims to create an analytical framework for comprehending the connection between the number of parties and sociopolitical heterogeneity (Lijphart 1984, 1999; Taagepera and Grofman 1985; Taagepera 1999). Finding the appropriate statistical specification for the impact of social and electoral systems on the number of parties is the focus of a second body of scholarship that takes a more empirical approach (Powell 1982; Ordeshook and Schvestova 1994; Amorim Neto and Cox 1997; Clark and Golder 2016). The viewpoint and conclusions of the statistically oriented literature, which established the present benchmark for this field of study, will be summed up.

According to recent research, societal heterogeneity and electoral permissiveness have a multiplicative effect on the number of parties, as opposed to an additive one. The interactive model is predicated on the notion that election regulations (as determined by district size) only serve to limit or enable the impact that socioeconomic heterogeneity has on the range of political parties that voters can choose from (Ordeshook & Schvestova

1994: 101). Thus, a polity will only have a large number of political parties if it has an electoral system that is sufficiently liberal and has multiple cleavages (Amorim Neto and Cox 1997: 155). The notion and measurement of social heterogeneity are two further characteristics of this literature. Whereas in the theoretical literature social heterogeneity is analyzed through the number of issue dimensions, understood as the politicized dimensions of conflict in a society, the statistical literature mostly restricts it to the effective number of ethnic groups.

The interaction between ethnic heterogeneity and district size and the number of electoral parties has been verified by academics. Amorim Neto and Cox (1997) show that a liberal electoral system and numerous socioeconomic divisions combine to produce multi-party rivalry in legislative elections and multi-candidate competition in presidential elections. A more detailed test is given by Clark and Golder (2016: 700), who demonstrate that once the district size is sufficiently permissive, the marginal effect of social heterogeneity is positive and substantial. Golder (2016: 45) provides a parallel analysis of presidential elections, demonstrating that while social heterogeneity greatly boosts the field of contenders in runoff (or permissive) presidential elections, it has no bearing on plurality rule (or restrictive) elections. In spite of its seemingly robust findings, however, this research agenda raises a number of important substantive and methodological questions about the impact of electoral rules on party competition.

There are several benefits to using ethnic fragmentation as a stand-in for social heterogeneity in statistical testing. First, the majority of the world's countries are covered by a number of known indices of ethno-linguistic fragmentation. Furthermore, by capturing divides that are exogenous to the electoral system, this assessment avoids the possibility that the latter will have an endogenous influence on the real political divisions inside a nation. However, it is challenging to reduce the social drivers of electoral parties to the quantity of ethno-linguistic cleavages. Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 6–7) and Duverger (1957: 260–261) contended that political differences might result from a variety of sociocultural elements, including ethnicity. These factors include area, class, and religion. Certain divisions, like those pertaining to foreign policy or regime support, are only political

in nature and have nothing to do with the social structure (Duverger 1957: 260; Lijphart 1999:85). More crucially, it is theoretically absurd to believe that social cleavages inevitably translate into political cleavages, even if we accept that preexisting social structures are the primary factor determining political divides and that ethnic fragmentation is the most significant split. To influence party formation and competitiveness, social divisions must be translated into overt political disputes (see Coppedge 1997; Taagepera 1999).

The issue is that it needs to be clarified what factors lead to underlying socioeconomic differences becoming politicized. For example, several Latin American nations have had democratic eras during which there was ethnic division in society, before and during the region's shift to electoral democracy in the 1980s. But new ethnic-based parties only emerged and garnered a sizable share of the vote in the 1990s, when ethnicity emerged as a prominent political issue. It is interesting to note that there is little proof that differences in district size acted as a mediating factor to explain shifts in the availability of parties with ethnic affiliations (Van Cott 2013: 16). It seems obvious that both the opportunity set and strategic skills of political leaders were crucial for explaining when new ethnic parties emerged and when they became successful in exploiting a preexisting social division.

It appears that interactive models make the assumption that social divisions dictate both the incentives of political elites to "supply" parties to voters and the "demand" for them from voters. However, there is a chance of reverse causality (see Colomer and Puglisi 2015). By starting parties that give conflict a new life, political leaders have the power to personally awaken popular desire. Furthermore, political entrepreneurs may add new, socially unconnected conflict aspects. When Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 3) postulated that "parties themselves might establish themselves as significant poles of attraction and produce their own alignments independently of the geographical, the social, and the cultural underpinnings of the movements," they acknowledged this possibility, though they did not investigate it.

Strategic politicians may have an impact on the politicization of latent cleavages, which might lead to a shift in the number of pertinent conflict dimensions within a nation over

time. Social divisions in general and ethnic divisions in particular, however, are not able to explain changes in the number of parties over time within a single nation since they are generally stable. When the election system stays the same, there is a problem. From 1950 to 1970, the UK had an average of 2.3 electoral parties; however, from 1974 to 2000, this average rose to 3. Given that both the election system and ethnic divisions were stable over these times, it is evident that none can account for the change. There are instances where the electoral system and the number of electoral parties have evolved throughout time, but not in the way that was anticipated, within the same framework of socioeconomic divisions. For example, the number of electoral parties has fluctuated over time in Peru, a nation with a rather high degree of ethnic dispersion. Nonetheless, this nation saw a decline in the number of political parties during the period from 1993 to 2010, when the election system was more lax, and a rise during the period from 2010 to 2016.

In subsequent reformulations of Duverger's theory, the nature of the relationship between social heterogeneity and electoral systems is not well defined. Regardless of the degree of social structure heterogeneity, the majority of studies aim to preserve the deterministic character of plurality systems' impacts by suggesting that they should prevent the establishment of more than two parties (Ordeshook and Schvestova 1994; Clark and Golder 2016). According to Clark and Golder (2016), cross-national statistical tests indicate that social heterogeneity, as determined by ethnic heterogeneity, does not significantly impact district magnitude when it is equal to one. Does this imply, however, that there will always be an equal number of parties involved in political disputes across the nation? The literature on social choice would not support this expectation.

Duverger's Law does not applicable in a multidimensional space, as Taagepera and Grofman (1985: 346) note out, because there is no median voter ideal point to which parties will converge and ultimately result in a two-party rivalry. Because of this, the author suggests and shows that a plurality system with several problem dimensions need to include two or three parties, even in the event of a reductive impact (Taagpera and Grofman 1985: 344). Put another way, the relationship between the number of political conflict dimensions and the number of parties should lead to the conclusion that election

laws, whether they are liberal or restrictive, can never be regarded as independent causative variables.

From this angle, anomalies in the comparative study of plurality systems may be seen from another angle. Not because there is a median party in most districts, as Riker would have it, but rather because India has numerous aspects of political conflict, which might explain why the country has more than two parties. As previously said, there has been a contention that the existence of more than two political parties in Canada is due to the fact that regional parties hold major positions in some provinces but rank third or below nationally. However, it is also true that Canada has more political parties than other countries due to its higher degree of ethnic heterogeneity and several dimensions of political conflict (see Lijphart 1999). This might help to explain why, from 1946 to 2011 (when it switched to a mixed system), New Zealand had an average of 2.5 electoral parties, whereas Canada had 3.1 from 1949 to 2014. This is because New Zealand had just one important component of conflict and a lower level of ethnic heterogeneity. Furthermore, as some experiments have demonstrated, it is possible that the geographic concentration of the vote in Canada is dictated by the makeup of socioeconomic divisions at the province level (see Tanaka 2015: 73–76).

If the impact of sociopolitical heterogeneity clarifies differences among plurality systems, it makes the comparative analysis of permissive electoral systems with PR or mixed formulas more uncertain. Since sociopolitical heterogeneity (however measured) and the nationwide district magnitude may vary in different and not necessarily consistent ways, it is not clear what expectations we should have when comparing countries that have different scores in both socio-political heterogeneity and district magnitude.

It is appropriate to make a last observation on equilibrium results under various electoral rules. Compared to more established democracies, the interactive model has less evidence in young democracies (Clark and Golder 2016: 702). It is possible that many early elections in newly formed democracies are out of balance because both party elites and voters require time to become used to and comprehend the implications of electoral laws. But the fundamental issue goes beyond the division between modern and traditional

democracies. We lack a theory that can precisely forecast how many elections an electoral system needs to establish an equilibrium number of parties, regardless of how long a democratic government has been in place. And even when an electoral system has been in force for several years, off-equilibrium elections may occur, sometimes triggering a process of electoral reform. This puts into question how units of observation are selected in statistical analyses when comparing electoral systems of widely different duration and elections (in new or old democracies) that take place at various times during the life of these systems. It also suggests that electoral outcomes and electoral system change may be closely interrelated.

The Origins and Reform of Electoral Systems

One of the first objections against Duverger's thesis was that the French jurists misunderstood the causal relationship, holding that party systems follow electoral systems rather than vice versa (see Grumm 1958). As Duverger himself admitted (1957: 232, 270), multiparty systems are more likely to use PR formulae whereas two-party or dominant-party systems are more likely to select SMDP. However, this endogeneity is not fatal for the study of voting system impacts.

There is a causal association between party systems and elections (Taagepera 2017: 7). Parties are the forces that generate election systems, existing chronologically before them. Parties select a certain election system over alternatives, however, because they anticipate advantages from it. Nonetheless, it is possible to examine voting system consequences independently of political strategists' goals. Election results are the product of the interplay between electoral laws and environmental factors (voter turnout, party competition, etc.) whose characteristics institutional designers are unable to completely predict at the time of voting (Shvetsova 2013).

These arguments support the independent examination of the impacts of the election system. Whether electoral rules should be evaluated as independent variables exclusively is a pertinent subject. If election systems were always stable, this point of view would be reasonable, but they are not. This is the reason it is encouraging that research on electoral reform has recently advanced. This body of work adds significantly to our understanding of

institutional change in general as well as changes in voting systems. This paper will focus on three primary issues: the frequency of changes in voting systems, the necessity of extending strategic models to accommodate the many electoral reform situations, and the various causal relationships that should be noted in the explanation of electoral system selection.

It is part of the conventional wisdom of electoral studies that electoral reform is a rare event. Given the costs of information and learning implied in institutional change, it is argued that electoral reform tends to be infrequent and, when it occurs, incremental. As Shugart and Taagepera (1989: 218) summarize, "familiarity breeds stability." Yet the stability of electoral systems is not a constant; it varies significantly across countries and regions.

Depending on how we previously defined what constitutes an electoral shift, we may determine whether or not we view election systems as stable. The idea of electoral reform is typically limited by perceptions of stability to a switch from one of the primary electoral formulae to another. In his analysis of 27 stable electoral democracies between 1945 and 1990, Lijphart finds evidence of electoral stability in the fact that no nation switched from plurality to PR or vice versa (Lijphart 1994: 52). Similar to this, but encompassing presidential elections, Katz (2020: 58) notes that of all the nations that maintained democratic regimes without interruption between 1950 and 2018, only 14 significant modifications to the electoral formula for choosing lawmakers and executive branches have taken place. These observations of electoral stability do not take into account the relatively more frequent changes that occur at the level of district magnitude, assembly size, or legal thresholds. The problem is that these reforms may have equally (or more) significant effects on party competition to a change in the electoral formula.

It is also important to note that the prediction of stability and inertia in the basic components of electoral systems is almost always restricted to analyses of established democracies. The picture changes dramatically if we include new democracies. According to Negretto (2023: 25–29), merely between 1978 and 2020, new democracies in Latin America underwent 45 major electoral changes in their formulas to elect presidents and

systems to elect deputies, which includes shifts in the electoral formula and changes of more than 25 percent in the average magnitude of the districts and the size of the assembly. Other authors (Birch et al. 2012) have found a similar pattern of electoral system instability in Eastern Europe, particularly during the 1990s.

The idea that elections are held once and for all is likely to blame for the lack of focus on electoral reform up until recently. Few academics have examined electoral reform and change as a separate topic in the study of electoral systems, with the exception of the examination of the historical reasons behind the transition to PR in Western Europe. The electoral reforms in France in the 1980s, in New Zealand, Italy, and Japan in the 1990s, and the proliferation of electoral changes in the new democracies of Latin America and Eastern Europe have dispelled the perception that institutional stability is the norm across countries and regions. However, how to assess the frequency of reforms and the conditions that affect the stability of electoral systems has yet to be specified in a more systematic way.

The Strategic Model of Electoral Reform

Election reform can be explained by rational choice theories, especially those that highlight the distributive effects of institutional arrangements. Naturally, institutions should not be stable if the interests or resources of these individuals change if the establishment and upkeep of these institutions replicate the current allocation of power resources among self-interested actors. From this angle, it is natural for ruling parties to want to change the election laws when they become ineffective for them or when parties that were disqualified by the current system acquire enough power to force a change. Several scholars have created this paradigm of analysis, including Boix (1999), Benoit (2014), and Colomer (2014, 2015). The power-maximization model, in its more general, comparative formulation, holds that small or declining parties tend to favor the adoption of inclusive electoral rules, such as more-than-plurality rules for presidential elections (Negretto 2023) and PR for legislative elections (Geddes 1996; Colomer 2014, 2015). In contrast, large or ascending parties support restrictive electoral rules. In order to understand the historical roots of significant electoral changes, such as the implementation

of PR laws in Europe at the start of the 20th century, the strategic model has also been more fully defined (Rokkan 2019 [1970]; Boix 1999).

The key ideas of the power-maximization model have been persuasively supported by qualitative and quantitative data presented by researchers employing various model formulations. However, there is a robust and expanding discussion over its applicability and level of explanation. In one version of this discussion, the question is whether there is a special combination of circumstances that motivates parties to change the election system to suit their interests. A different version challenges some of the fundamental tenets of strategic models about the degree of reformers' knowledge, the extent of party self-interest, and the degree of political elite control over the electoral reform process.

An important part of the theoretical debate about electoral reform has taken place in the context of historical explanations for the shift from majoritarian to proportional systems of election in Western Europe at the dawn of the twentieth century. The standard explanation, initially proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) and Rokkan (2019 [1970]) and later generalized by Boix (1999), is that the shift occurred in a changing electoral arena as a result of the threat that emerging socialist parties posed to established parties when the latter were divided. But Rokkan also argued (2019 [1970]: 157) that in the case of early reformers, such as Denmark, Switzerland, and Belgium, the drive to reform was not the socialist threat but the desire to protect minorities in heterogeneous societies. Most studies on the adoption of PR have neglected the analysis of this alternative route.

Calvo (2019) argues that while Rokkan was correct to point out an alternative route to PR, he was incorrect to suggest that the change in these circumstances resulted from established parties' willingness to defend minorities. Instead, when new parties joined the electoral arena as a result of suffrage expansion and when the vote was distributed asymmetrically geographically, it was the incumbent parties' strategic interest in lessening the vote-seat distortions that harmed them (Calvo 2019: 256). Though he more broadly asserts that the alternative path may be productively pursued in all those nations where socialist parties never posed a substantial challenge to entrenched elites, Calvo finds evidence to support his point in historical situations such as Belgium and Denmark.

The concept of alternate paths to strategic transformation can be developed further. It is clear that PR was implemented outside of Western Europe under historical circumstances distinct from the "socialist threat" and the partisan biases brought about by three-way races under majoritarian systems with an uneven vote allocation across districts. PR was frequently implemented in numerous Latin American nations without regard to the growth of the vote or the emergence of a new party, much less one with a socialist platform. For example, prior to the introduction of PR, there was no strong third party in Uruguay or Colombia. The reform occurred at a time when factional divisions within the dominant party enabled the opposition party to force a negotiation or pass the reform in alliance with the challenger faction. Moreover, in some instances PR was adopted by dominant parties to fulfill pre-election commitments or by non-elected actors, such as the military, to crack the power of majoritarian populist parties. Within the discussion about the origins of PR, some authors have argued that while politicians act strategically, they do not always make decisions under conditions of complete information.

According to the "socialist threat" idea, the old parties switched to public relations in order to reduce the number of seats they lost and had enough knowledge to act in advance. However, this argument ignores the role of uncertainty, which ought to have been important in an electoral setting whose stability was impacted by the extension of suffrage, as Andrews and Jackman (2015: 71) point out. Whether the party was new or old, conservative or socialist, this author argues that if we take uncertainty seriously, shrewd politicians should have embraced PR only after the largest party's seats-to-votes ratio dropped under a majoritarian system. And they find historical evidence to support this claim (Andrews and Jackman 2015: 80–81).

Recent discussions over electoral reform have also demonstrated that, although elites in politics may only be willing to change if they believe that other regulations would improve their lot, they are not always able to do so. Under some circumstances, fundamental flaws in the current election system may compel political elites to start an electoral reform. Election systems that encourage extreme forms of institutional power concentration in the plurality party, party system fragmentation, personalization, or party

centralization, according to Shugart and Watterberg (Shugart 2011; Shugart and Watterberg 2011: 571–577), tend to create pathologies that result in systemic failures that compel politicians to reform. Recent examples of the adoption of mixed systems in the 1990s in Venezuela, Italy, Japan, and New Zealand have all been convincingly explained using this paradigm. In a similar spirit, Sakamoto (1999), Negretto (2018), and Renwick (2011) highlight that political elites do not always have complete influence over reform, despite what most strategic models assume. This lack of control may arise from the fact that, in a democratic setting, elites are vulnerable to popular demands and may fear electoral reprisals if they fail to implement reforms that appease the populace. Alternatively, it may be the result of citizen-initiated referendums, as was the case with Italy's 1993 electoral reform.

Electoral rules are distributive institutions par excellence. They determine how many actors can compete with some probability of success and who may win or lose given the expected popular vote in an election. From this perspective, it makes perfect sense to assume that professional politicians would attempt to reform the existing electoral system when it affects their partisan interests and, if they have sufficient power, choose those rules that they think would benefit them most. Proof that this basic analytic framework is realistic is that it has worked better than others to explain electoral reform in a wide variety of settings. The strategic model needs several adaptations, however. Comparative historical evidence suggests that various conditions may lead to the same outcome. In addition, some of the model's assumptions must be relaxed to account for electoral reform in different contexts. It is obvious that uncertainty often restricts information about what alternative system would benefit established parties, that politicians must sometimes respond to a performance crisis of the existing electoral system, and that the political elite do not always have full control over reform. The challenge for future research in this area is, of course, to show the existence of different routes to electoral reform while accommodating the explanation within a single analytical framework.

If all of a theory's presumptions and assertions are true, a thorough theorization of electoral reform must outline the causal mechanisms and connections that should be seen

in qualitative case studies. Several of the current explanations offer theory-derived claims that are subsequently evaluated in a statistical model without demonstrating how qualitative evidence from sample instances may differ from the theory's empirical implications.

Different explanations propose specific causal chains of events. In general, however, almost all theories imply certain observations about (1) the nature of the event that triggers the reform, (2) the identity and interests of the actors proposing and adopting new rules, and (3) the approval process.

If it is true that the adoption of PR at the turn of the twentieth century was a preemptive strategy by established parties to avoid losing seats as new parties emerged, we should observe that new parties were indeed increasing their electoral support before the reform. Yet the Belgian Socialist Party was never in a position to win an election before the 1899 reform (Calvo 2019: 268). We should also observe that the reform proposal originates with the established elites. In Germany, however, it was a government of the left that adopted PR in 1919 (Andrews and Jackman 2015: 77). Moreover, it is implicit in the "socialist threat" theory that established parties had control over the process of reform. Yet in Switzerland PR was adopted by a 1918 referendum on a citizen-initiated proposal of constitutional reform sponsored by the Social Democrats (Lutz 2014).

A thorough examination of the suggested causal relationships and processes cannot be replaced by statistical data about the average or marginal impacts of certain variables. Historical evidence that is both qualitative and quantitative should be combined (Kreuser 2010). However, pinpointing the causative pathways might sometimes be difficult with in-depth historical investigation. For example, Lipset and Rokkan illustrate in two distinct ways the dynamics that led to the adoption of PR along the "anti-socialist" road. One version postulates a convergence of interests between incumbents and challengers: "the rising working class wanted to lower the threshold of representation to gain access to the legislature, and the most threatened of the old-established parties demanded PR to protect their positions against the new waves of mobilized voters under universal suffrage" (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 32). But in a different rendering of the same cases, they emphasize the

predominant interest of incumbents: "the decisive moves to lower the threshold of representation reflected divisions among the established regime censitaire parties rather than pressures from the new mass movements" (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 34). Note that if the interests of established and new parties converged, we should observe a consensual process of reform in which both supported the adoption of PR. If, however, PR primarily served the interest of the threatened elite, we should expect old parties to be enthusiastic supporters of PR and challengers (who may expect to become the future majority) to be reluctant about the reform or against it. Undoubtedly, it's possible that certain examples more closely match one description than another. The main idea is that any theory on electoral reform ought to provide as much information as possible regarding the implications of its observations. It may be quite difficult to include several reform strategies into a single analytical framework that allows for both distinct processes and obvious causal relationships. However, there is no alternative means to forward an institutional change research agenda that might account for pertinent past results as well as broad trends.

Conclusions:

Election rules are significant political institutions not only because they may directly affect party structures but also because they may have an impact on other pertinent outcomes like coalition building, voter congruence, government stability, corruption, and electoral participation. It goes without saying that there are other election regulations that are important besides the assembly size, district size, and electoral formula. Important facets of party structure, the conduct of party candidates in elections, and the choices made by party members in Congress can all be impacted by the rules governing candidate selection and the specifics of ballot design. On all these areas, there is a substantial and expanding body of literature. Yet it is still the research agenda on the party system effects of electoral rules that contains the core contributions of electoral studies to the comparative analysis of political institutions.

Without a question, electoral studies have advanced our knowledge of how election systems operate. Additionally, electoral academics now have a better understanding than

they had in the past of how election laws interact and depend on other institutions as well as non-institutional elements. On the other hand, the statistical methods employed to assess accurate but crude explanatory models have a stronger theoretical foundation than the theoretical creation of important causal processes with respect to the age-old topic of how electoral systems impact party systems. Many important conceptual issues are still unclear or unexplored, including how political strategists affect the political emergence of latent social cleavages, how parties form in response to preexisting cleavages and current electoral laws, whether the number of dimensions of political conflict varies over time, and how party system effects and electoral system change are mutually causative.

The widespread belief that voting systems are stable has been called into doubt by studies on electoral reform, which have increased our understanding of the circumstances in which systems might alter and remain stable. However, a thorough analytical framework for comprehending how often elections change in various situations is still lacking. The historical foundations of election laws and the processes leading up to their change have been elucidated by strategic models of electoral reform. These models must, however, account for the existence of diverse historical paths leading to similar reforms, and accommodate the fact that political elites face various levels of uncertainty over which rules are most beneficial to them, that under certain conditions they must address systemic failures produced by the electoral system, and that they do not always have perfect control over the process of choice.

Developing a cohesive theoretical framework that connects sociopolitical heterogeneity, electoral systems, and party numbers to cleavage politicization and electoral reform is the most significant job that lies ahead. A combined interpretation of Duverger and Rokkan, the two pioneers of electoral studies in contemporary political science, suggests this sort of theory. The work is difficult, but it is not unlike the difficulty facing institutional studies as a whole, where despite the clear interplay between the two processes, the examination of the origins and impacts of institutions has up to now been kept apart from the study of institutions.

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مجلة إكليل للدراسات الانسانية
التصنيف الورقي: العدد 18 / حزيران/2024
المجلد(5)- العدد(2)-الجزء(3) IASJ–Iraqi Academic Scientific Journals

دراسة النظم الانتخابية في القرن الحادي والعشرين التقدم والتحديات

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الانتخابات، النظام الحزبي، المؤسسات السياسية

الملخص:

ركزت الدراسات الانتخابية التقليدية في الغالب على كيفية تأثير قوانين الانتخابات على الهياكل الحزبية وكيفية تأثير قوانين اختيار المرشحين على هيكل الحزب وسلوكه. إن التجانس الداخلي المحتمل لقواعد الانتخابات - وبشكل أكثر تحديدًا، كيف يمكن لظروف التنافس الحزبي أن تحرض عمليات التغيير الانتخابي - قد لفت انتباه عدد كبير من الأكاديميين في السنوات الأخيرة. إن تأثير قوانين الانتخابات على الأنظمة الحزبية والعوامل المؤثرة على الإصلاح الانتخابي - وهما مجالان للبحث الانتخابي يسلطان الضوء على الإنجازات والاتجاهات المستقبلية للمجال الأوسع لأبحاث المؤسسات السياسية - هما الموضوعان الرئيسيان في مناقشة هذه الورقة. فيما يتعلق بتأثير لوائح الانتخابات على الهياكل الحزبية، فإنه يؤكد أن التقدم في تحديد وتقييم كيفية تفاعل الهياكل الانتخابية مع الترتيبات المؤسسية الأكثر شمولاً وكذلك المتغيرات خارج المؤسسات يتناقض مع المعرفة النظرية التي لا تزال مقيدة لكيفية ظهور أبعاد الصراع المسيس في المجتمع. الديمقراطية والتأثير على عدد الأحزاب. ويقترح أنه فيما يتعلق بالتغيير الانتخابي، ينبغي تحديث النموذج الاستراتيجي ليأخذ في الاعتبار وجود مسارات تاريخية مختلفة وظروف متقلبة للإصلاح الانتخابي، حتى لو كان قد قدم مساهمات كبيرة في فهم أصول لوائح التصويت. ويجب أن تخفف من الافتراضات القائلة بأن الإصلاحيين على علم تام، وأنهم يعطون الأولوية دائمًا لمصالحهم الحزبية قصيرة المدى، وأن النخبة السياسية هي المسيطرة بشكل كامل على عملية الإصلاح. وتغطي خاتمة البحث ضرورة الجمع بين العلاقات السببية المتبادلة بين الأنظمة الحزبية، والإصلاح الانتخابي، والجوانب المسيسة للصراع في إطار نظري ديناميكي موحد.