Foreword

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During the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, there was a dramatic change in electoral systems throughout Western Europe and the industrialized world, a shift from majoritarian methods to proportional representation (PR) that left only the English-speaking nations unaffected. Once PR systems were in place, for most of the twentieth century changes occurred only at the margins. Now, however, is a great time to be studying electoral laws, thanks to the many new democracies we can study, and the fact that a number of long-term democracies (e.g. Great Britain, Italy, Japan, New Zealand) have made major changes in their electoral laws within the past decade after a long period during which their electoral systems were largely frozen in place.

There has been a remarkable resurgence of interest in recent decades in the effects of electoral laws on representation and other aspects of politics. Moreover, the 'state of the art' has improved dramatically. When Arend Liphart and I co-edited Choosing an Electoral System (1984) and Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences (1986) the electoral systems literature was not that large, and a good part of it was polemic. Moreover, with a handful of exceptions such as Katz (1980), the theory had not advanced much beyond Rae's seminal work on The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws (1967, 1971). When we turn to the present we find a number of books making important original theoretical contributions, such as Liphart (1984, 1994, 1999), Taagepera and Shugart (1989), Cox (1997) and Di Cortona et al. (1999), an edited series on the world's major electoral systems which has already had four of its five planned volumes see the light of day (Grofman et al., 1999a; Bowler and Grofman, 2000a; Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001; Grofman and Lijphart, 2002a), work which studies electoral law developments in new democracies (e.g. Reynolds, 1999b, to name but one of many studies), and numerous overview volumes that integrate a large amount of information on comparative electoral systems (e.g. Reynolds and Reilly, 1997). When we turn from books to articles there is an even greater cornucopia of riches. In particular, there is something new to be learned from every issue of Electoral Studies (a journal which did not exist when I first began writing on electoral systems issues more than a quarter century ago), and articles on the effects of electoral laws and theories of electoral engineering have become a mainstay in top political science journals, especially those that deal with comparative politics.

There are a number of key differences between the electoral systems literature of today and that of earlier times. First, there is a greater variety of theoretical perspectives to draw upon. Increasingly important is the game-theoretic approach, with an emphasis on incentives for strategic behaviour and a search for equilibria, exemplified in the work of Gary Cox (e.g. Cox, 1990, 1997). Closely related is the

work in social choice theory with its emphasis on the axiomatic underpinning of voting methods (see, for example, Balinski and Young, 1982). Another important research paradigm derives from the work of Rein Taagepera inspired by the physical sciences (e.g. Taagepera, 1986; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989, 1993; Taagepera, 2001), with its emphasis on boundary conditions and statistical 'law of large number' effects, a limited set of key variables generating law-like relations, and exponential rather than linear models. Finally, more traditional methods, e.g. the use of regression methods to test empirical generalizations, have been honed and applied to an ever wider set of data by Arend Lijphart (1994) and numerous other scholars.

Second, the links between the study of electoral systems and the study of party systems (see, for example, Grofman and Lijphart, 2002a), and between electoral systems research and the study of constitutional design, have become key topics for investigation. Lijphart (1984, 1999) makes the point that choice of electoral systems appears closely linked to other aspects of constitutional design (see especially his discussion of the congruence among features of the Westminster model versus the consensus model). Shugart and Carey (1992), and others, have begun to look at how the presence of a presidential system, the rules for electing the president and the timing of parliamentary and presidential elections interact with the choice of electoral system for parliamentary elections to produce political consequences. My own recent work has stressed that electoral systems and their consequences are embedded in a larger political and institutional framework and has proposed an 'embedded systems' research design to conduct longitudinal research on electoral system effects (Grofman et al., 1999b). Thus, on the one hand, it is clear that electoral institutions have ramifications that extend beyond the immediate electoral arena, while, on the other hand, there is an increasing recognition that election systems cannot be understood as operating in a vacuum. The effects of electoral rules are mediated by other aspects of political institutions and political culture, as well as past history and the shape of party constellations. Seemingly identical electoral rules may give rise to very different types of outcomes in different political settings (Bowler and Grofman, 2000b).

Third, there is increasing interest in going below the national level to look at local electoral systems and at the impact of national electoral systems on regional and local politics. In particular, political geographers have emphasized how the geographic distribution of partisan support is a key intermediating factor that shapes the extent to which electoral institutions (or changes in them) affect outcomes, especially electoral fairness in the translation of votes into seats (Gudgin and Taylor, 1979; Taylor, Gudgin and Johnston, 1986; Johnston et al. 2001).

Fourth, the range of questions considered has broadened considerably. Much of the earlier work on electoral systems dealt with one of three questions: the proportionality of seats-votes relationships, the effect of the electoral system on party proliferation and the effect of the electoral system on cabinet durability. Now topics include racial and gender representation (Karnig and Welch, 1982; Grofman, Migalski and Noviello, 1986; Davidson and Grofman, 1994; Grofman and Davidson, 1994; Rule, 1987; Reynolds, 1999a), the structure of ideological representation (Cox,

1990; Greenberg and Weber, 1985; Myerson and Weber 1993; Robertson, 1976; Sugden, 1984), incentives to cultivate a personal vote through particularistic appeals (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1987; Carey and Shugart, 1995; Myerson, 1993a, 1993b; McCubbins and Rosenbluth, 1995), incentives for strategic voting (Cox, 1997) and effects on turnout (Blais and Carty, 1990) – to name but several.

Fifth, there is greater recognition that electoral rules that appear identical may significantly differ in their consequences when we look below the surface to consider differences such as in the average number of representatives elected per district (Sartori, 1968; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989), or in national vote thresholds (Taagepera, 2002), or in candidate nomination procedures,² or in even more finegrain features such as ballot format, or rules affecting what counts as a legal ballot, or rules restricting campaigning, or rules that affect how easy it is for parties to get on the ballot, or for independent candidates to run.

Sixth, it is now more widely recognized that the full effects of changes in electoral systems may not occur immediately, since it may take time for key actors to realize the nature of the behaviours that constitute optimizing strategies in the new system (Reed, 1990). Moreover, changes in election systems may give rise to equilibrating forces that moderate the consequences of the changes as voters, candidates and parties adapt their behaviour to the new institutional environment in ways that compensate for the changes so as to partially restore significant elements of the status quo (Christensen and Johnson, 1995; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989).

The present volume makes an important addition to the growing body of literature on electoral systems whose key features I have outlined above. First, a principal focus of this volume is the study of a topic that has been relatively neglected until quite recently, namely the origins of electoral systems and the reasons for (and not just effects of) changes in electoral rules. The chapters in this volume provide a set of what my late colleague, Harry Eckstein (1975, 1992), referred to as theoretically driven case studies on this topic, covering a remarkably wide range of countries and time periods.3 They offer a nuanced portrait of real-world changes, illustrating, for example, how change can occur at different levels of a political system, how electoral reform efforts can fail again and again, how exogenous events, both short-term and long-term (e.g. demographic and social shifts), may trigger changes in the calculations of relative party advantage associated with different electoral mechanisms, how the timing and scope of actual changes will be tied to the bargaining/threat power of the parties, how institutional rules for electoral system change (e.g. the ability of groups to go outside legislative channels to institute change through popular initiative) can affect the pace and nature of change, and how, in Professor Colomer's words, 'intellectual creativity' can lead to the invention of 'new rules and procedures' that can 'reshape actors' institutional preferences and political strategies'. Thus this volume goes a long way in providing the necessary detailed historical evidence about the roots of electoral system change for a large and diverse set of democratic nations throughout recent history.

Second, this volume makes a major addition to the new institutionalist paradigm in rational choice to which it is squarely anchored. As I have characterized that paradigm, it consists of the belief that 'institutions exist as both objects of choice and as constraints on choice', or, in John Ferejohn's apt phrasing, 'Preference for outcomes conditions preference for institutions' (quoted in Grofman, 1989). A central question motivating this volume is why do parties (and other actors) have the preferences among electoral system rules that they do, and why do they make the choices among electoral rules that we observe. A key element in the approach of Professor Colomer and the other authors is that of rational calculation, and a body of evidence is gathered in support of the notion that changes in electoral system reflect parties' calculations of relative advantage as mediated by the strategic context in which parties find themselves. Colomer summarizes this approach by observing: 'The performance of the existing electoral rules will likely be evaluated by political actors for the types of winners and losers they tend to produce, that is for the opportunities they create for the survival of different political parties, the attainment of seats and offices within the institutional structure, the possibility to implement their preferred policies, and the likelihood to be re-elected.'4 Colomer also notes that observed (or expected) 'bad' outcomes can lead political actors to 'experiment with alternative formulas'.5

Third, while there have been recent important theoretical contributions about the causes of electoral system changes that go beyond the classic work of Stein Rokkan (see especially Boix, 1999),6 and there is an ongoing debate about the extent to which changes in electoral rules shape party systems as opposed to party systems being primarily a construct of underlying social cleavages in society,7 Professor Colomer offers a new and highly original theory of electoral change which lays the groundwork for a radical revision of what has become the common wisdom about the effects of electoral laws. Colomer's work challenges Duverger's famous proposition that electoral laws have a direct causal effect on the number of parties via a combination of a mechanical and a psychological effect (Duverger, 1959).8 More specifically, it offers a new theory about the conditions under which changes in electoral law will be in the direction of greater proportionality. In this theory, nations with a low effective number of parties will be more likely to change electoral rules in ways that reduce proportionality, while systems with a high effective number of parties are more likely to change electoral rules in ways that increase proportionality. In Professor Colomer's own words, changes in electoral rules act 'not so much to "produce" or even "permit" or "restrict" the number of parties, but mostly to crystallize, consolidate, or reinforce the previously existing party system.'

Fourth, in addition to the substantial contributions of the country-specific chapters, this volume contains important overview chapters providing descriptive summaries and quantitative analyses of a large cross-national and longitudinal data set that includes information about both legislative and presidential election rules. These chapters include the most comprehensive test to date of the well known proposition that the general trend in electoral systems change has been in the direction of greater proportionality, and they also include a test of (and

validation of) Professor Colomer's new hypothesis that exceptions to this trend can often be understood in terms of the consolidation of existing party systems under rules that reinforce previous winners. These analyses make good use of what another colleague of mine, A. Wuffle (cited in Grofman, 1999; see also the introductions to Davidson and Grofman, 1994, and Grofman and Lijphart, 2002), has called the 'TNT principle', i.e. comparisons across time, across nations and across types of institutions – the principle that is at the heart of comparative political analysis. They illustrate the power of theory by laying bare patterns that have not previously been noticed, and could not be noticed until one understood what to look for.¹¹

In sum, the chapters in this volume provide us with a wealth of new information and new theoretical insights that help us account for both stability and change in electoral systems. They show the extent to which changes in electoral rules be traced to strategic calculations and power balances among the relevant actors, especially to the instantiation of rules that mesh more closely with (and act to solidify) existing party constellations.

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Notes

1. Shugart (1992).

2. See, for example, Coleman (1972), Aranson and Ordeshook (1972) and Owen and Grofman (1995) on the effects of party primaries on the ideological structure of two-party competition.

3. Almost all of the recent work on electoral origins has been on changes in the post-Second World War period, with much of it related to the adoption of electoral rules in former communist countries (see, for example, Bawn, 1993; Shugart, 1992; Ishiyama, 1996; Grofman, Mikkel and Taagepera, 1999), or in Africa (see, for example, Reynolds, 1999b; Mozaffar, 2003; Mozaffar and Vengroff, 2002). One notable exception is Grofman and Lijphart (2002a), which deals with electoral changes in the five Nordic nations over a one

hundred year plus span.

4. While we normally associate such a perspective with contemporary scholars in political science who draw on game-theoretic ideas, it is useful to be reminded that 'rational choice' ideas are found in the work of such major earlier scholars as V. O. Key and Stein Rokkan. For example, Rokkan (1970), in seminal work, argues that the primary force behind the introduction of PR in the Nordic countries and in some other parts of Western Europe was the desire of conservative parties (then dominant) to avoid complete elimination in light of the expected socialist gains when the working class was enfranchised, coupled with the view of challengers that PR would guarantee them equitable representation. (For some important emendations to Rokkan's thesis see various essays (and the editors' introduction) in Grofman and Lijphart, 2002a.) Rokkan (1970) also offers a 'rational choice' argument about why Sweden, Denmark and Norway in the 1950s changed from the d'Hondt rule to the modified Sainte-Laguë form of list PR (with an initial divisor of 1.4). In his view, this was done as a means of improving the chances of 'middle-sized' parties to achieve equitable representation. (For some important emendations to this Rokkan thesis see Elklit (1999) and the Elklit, Aardal and Särlvik chapters in Grofman

5. In this context, it is useful to remember that not all calculations of self-interest need be

accurate ones. 6. Other important approaches to electoral system origins include the historical and largely class-based analysis of Rueschmeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992), and work that views the choice of electoral system as conditioned by 'familiarity' or the 'spirit of the times'. The adoption of first-past-the-post (plurality) single-member district elections by most former British colonies after independence is often attributed largely to habit (Mozaffar, 2003). Today, the attractiveness of mixed member systems may be based at least in part on a widespread perception that they are the 'wave of the future' (Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001). Relatedly, there may be important contagion effects, as occurred with the adoption of the modified form of the Sainte Lague formula for list PR in the early 1950s in the Nordic nations as a replacement for the d'Hondt formula (Elklit, 1999; Aardal, 2002). Another potential source of electoral law choices is the view of key protagonists about principles of good government. For example, Reynolds (2001) argues that, in planning for the 1994 elections in South Africa, ANC leaders opted for proportional representation even though that was not the electoral system most beneficial to the ANC, in large part due to a belief that proportionality of representation was a desirable outcome for the multi-racial democracy they hoped South Africa would become (see also Reynolds and Grofman, 1995). My own views about forces affecting electoral system origins and changes are synopsized in Grofman and Lijphart (2002b) and are very similar to those of Professor Colomer.

7. See Taagepera and Grofman (1985) for an introduction to this debate (cf. Grofman et al., 1999b; Bowler and Grofman, 2000b). Taagepera (see Taagepera and Grofman, 1985; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989), following up on some empirical work in Lijphart (1984), has found both theoretical and empirical support for the generalization that N=I+1, i.e. that the effective number of parties contesting elections, N, is a simple function of I, the number of major cleavage dimensions in a society. He and his co-authors suggest that it may make just as much sense to think of party constellations as determined by issue cleavages as it does to write the equation I=N-1, and assume that the number of parties competing sets limits on the number of issue dimensions that can be expressed in the political arena – in the way that two points give us a line (one-dimensional com-

petition), three points define a plane (two-dimensional competition), etc.

8. Duverger's insights have been refined by scholars such as Steven Reed (1990), Gary Cox (1997) and Rein Taagepera. In particular, Taagepera's early work (e.g. Taagepera and Shugart, 1989, 1993) provides a statistical basis (making use of known boundary conditions and appeals to uncertainty) for the claim that n_e (the number of parties/candidates receiving seats) will be approximately M^{1/2} in any given district, while, nationwide (at least if districts are of roughly similar magnitude), the expected number of parties receiving seats (including independents) will be given by (MS)^{1/4}.

9. Here we might also note that, in his approach to comparative analysis, Professor Colomer's methodology has important similarities to the work of Rein Taagepera. Paralleling Taagepera's recent work, Professor Colomer stresses three aspects of electoral rules that can be manipulated (1) S, (2) M and (3) the degree of proportionality in the electoral rule – a concept he operationalizes in terms of what he refers to as an electoral rule's quota. (This parameter usually may be expressible as some function of M.)

10. For example, Jackson and McRobie (1998: 2) observe that 'changes in the electoral systems in the twentieth century have trended from majoritarian to proportional.' However, they also observe that 'recently... there has been some movement in the opposite

direction.'

11. The comparative analyses also demonstrate the importance for the development of a theory of electoral system change of studying not just 'big' electoral changes (e.g. from plurality to PR), but smaller electoral changes as well.

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