Introduction

Why Don't Electoral Rules Have the Same Effects in All Countries?

In the early 1990s, Japan and Russia each adopted a very similar version of a "mixed-member" electoral system. In the form used in Japan and Russia, in elections to a single house of the legislature each voter cast two ballots: one for a candidate in a single-member district (SMD) and one for a party under proportional representation (PR). In the SMD races, both countries used first-past-the-post (FPTP) rules, meaning that the candidate winning the largest number of votes in the district wins the race, even if tallying under a majority of all the SMD ballots cast. In PR, parties win shares of seats roughly in proportion to their share of the party vote. In both Japan and Russia, the PR systems used closed-list rules, meaning that prior to each election central party leaders put together a rank-ordered list of candidates to determine which individuals would win seats if the party won representation in PR. In PR in both countries, voters were only given the chance to choose a single pre-set party list.[1] Both countries used mixed-member-majoritarian (MMM) electoral systems, meaning that the SMD and PR components of the system were "unlinked" – seats won by a party in one tier (e.g., SMDs) did not affect the number of seats allocated to the party in the other tier (e.g., PR).[2] In short, both Russia and Japan adopted very similar forms of mixed-member electoral systems.

In both countries, it was widely expected that the different rules would promote particular outcomes: The SMD tier was expected to lead to a small

[1] As we explain in Chapter 2, prior to elections in Japan each party could rank multiple candidates at a single position on the party PR list (as long as these candidates also competed in an SMD race), but voters could not pick and choose among the PR candidates. Evenly ranked candidates received a final ranking based on how well they performed in the SMD race. (Evenly ranked candidates who won their SMD were removed from the PR list.)

[2] The mixed-member-majoritarian system can be contrasted with the mixed-member-proportional (MMP) system, in which the PR and SMD tiers of the mixed-member system are "linked" and seats from the PR half of the system are used to compensate for the disproportionality that typically arises when votes are translated into seats under SMD rules. See Chapter 2 for additional discussion.

number of large, catchall parties, especially at the district level. The PR tier was supposed to promote the proliferation of political parties, greater proportionality, and more female representation – especially when compared with results in the SMD tier.

However, the effects of the rules proved to be very different across the two countries. Despite disappointment over the absence of other improvements expected from electoral reform, the mixed-member system in Japan produced the principal outcomes that scholars tend to expect from such rules (Scheiner 2008; Scheiner and Tronconi 2011). District-level competition in single-member district races produced an average effective number of candidates – a measure that weights the number of candidates/parties according to their share of the vote (see Chapter 3) – that hovered around two, especially after Japanese voters and politicians gained experience under the new system. Moreover, compared with rates in other advanced industrial democracies, the proportion of the legislature made up of women remained low, but the women who did gain office in Japan were much more likely to have won election under closed-list PR than in SMD races. Indeed, the percentage of female legislators was more than twice as large under PR as in SMD contests. In the 2009 Japanese election, there were more women elected in PR seats (29) than in single-member districts (23), despite the fact that there were nearly twice as many SMDs as PR seats overall (300 to 180).

The results in Russia were starkly different. In Russia, there was significant candidate proliferation in elections in the SMD tier, with an average effective number of candidates per district score of just under five across the four elections from 1993 to 2003.[3] SMD seats were often won with vote shares around 30 percent or lower, as the electorate within each district often split its vote across literally a dozen different candidates (Moser 2001a; Belin and Orttung 1997).

Meanwhile, Russia's PR tier regularly produced high levels of disproportionality, meaning that there were significant disparities between parties' share of the votes and their share of the seats won. Under its mixed-member system, Russia used a 5 percent legal threshold, meaning that any party with less than 5 percent of the proportional representation vote was ineligible for PR seats. As a result, dozens of small parties that competed in elections went unrepresented in PR. In the 1995 election, only four parties out of 43 on the PR ballot managed to overcome the legal threshold to win PR seats. Moreover, women were no more likely to win seats in PR than in SMDs. Even in the 1993 election, in which a successful women's party won 8 percent of the vote in the PR tier and secured 21 PR seats (compared with only two SMD seats), women tended to fare roughly as well or better in the SMD tier in Russia. Put differently, women in Russia tended to gain *less* representation under PR rules than in Japan but *more* representation in SMDs (see Table I.1).

[3] Russia changed to a pure PR system for legislative elections beginning in 2007.

TABLE 1.1. *Japan vs. Russia – Average Effective Number of Candidates in SMDs at the District Level and Election Rates of Women under Different Electoral Rules*

	Effective Number of SMD Candidates	Pct. of Legislators Who are Women When Elected in:		Pct. of Women Elected in PR Minus Pct. of Women Elected in SMDs
		PR	SMD	
Japan				
1996	2.95	8.00	2.33	5.67
2000	2.77	12.22	4.33	7.89
2003	2.41	11.11	4.70	6.41
2005	2.40	13.89	6.71	7.18
2009	2.26	16.20	7.69	8.51
Average	2.56	12.28	5.15	7.13
Russia				
1993	4.72	14.98	11.66	3.32
1995	5.91	6.67	13.78	– 7.11
1999	4.64	5.80	8.29	– 2.49
2003	3.52	10.86	8.44	2.42
Average	4.70	9.58	10.54	– 0.97

Why did a similar electoral system produce such starkly different results in Japan and Russia?

STUDYING MIXED-MEMBER SYSTEMS TO UNDERSTAND THE EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL RULES

In fact, the differences between Japan and Russia extend systematically to many other countries as well. In this book, we highlight such differences across an array of countries (including Japan and Russia) that use mixed-member systems to elect representatives to a single house of the legislature, and look to explain the reasons for these differences. In short, the aim of this book is to develop an understanding of when electoral rules will – and will not – have the effects typically expected of them.

Types of Electoral Rules

A variety of electoral systems are used in legislatures throughout the world. One key element that differentiates systems from one another is *district magnitude*, or the number of seats being contested within a district. Single-member districts, of course, have a district magnitude of one – and most voters cast a single ballot for a candidate under such systems – but the single seat being contested is not allocated in the same way in all SMDs. The most common type of SMD system is *first-past-the-post*, which, as we noted earlier, simply awards the seat to the candidate with the largest number of votes, but FPTP is certainly not the only

type of SMD election. The second most common type of SMD electoral system mandates that, to take the seat, a candidate must receive a majority of the vote. In *two-round majority* SMD systems, if no candidate wins a majority in the first round of balloting, the top candidates in the district compete in a second round to determine the final winner.[4]

Proportional representation is the most common type of electoral system that has a district magnitude greater than one,[5] but there is variation in the way PR works. District magnitude varies widely across different PR systems. The *legal threshold of representation* – the share of the vote legally mandated for any party to win representation – is nonexistent in many countries, low in others, and quite high in others – such as the 10 percent threshold in Turkey. Some PR systems are *open-list*. In some cases, open-list PR involves voters casting a ballot for a party, but also maintaining a *preference* vote, which allows them to rearrange the ranked list of candidates presented by the party. Brazil uses a different type of open-list system. In Brazil, each voter casts a ballot for a candidate (although voters also have the option, instead, to simply cast a ballot for a party). Votes for all candidates from a given party are then summed together to determine the party's vote and seat shares. Candidates are then ranked within each party according to the number of votes they individually received, and the most highly ranked candidates (i.e., those with the most individual votes) within the party win the seats. All that being said, the most well-known form of proportional representation is *closed-list PR*: Voters cast ballots for parties, and parties rank their candidate lists prior to the election.

Electoral rules can be divided into permissive and restrictive types. *Permissive* rules – such as PR with high district magnitudes and low legal thresholds – allow even parties that receive a small share of the votes to win representation. *Restrictive* rules – such as FPTP, two-round majority SMDs, and PR with low district magnitude and/or high legal thresholds – can make it more difficult for small parties to win seats.

[4] The *alternative vote* (AV), which is used in Australia's House of Representatives, is a third approach to electing representatives under SMDs. Under AV, voters rank the different candidates on a single ballot. Candidates who are ranked first by the smallest numbers of voters are removed from the competition and their votes are redistributed to other candidates according to the voters' rankings. Vote transfers of this kind continue until one candidate has a majority. See Reynolds et al. (2005) for additional details.

[5] The single transferable vote (STV) and the single nontransferable vote (SNTV) systems are among the most well-known multimember district systems that are not principally aimed at party-level proportional representation. STV is essentially the same as AV, but with more seats per district. SNTV is the same as FPTP, but usually with more seats per district. Under SNTV, each voter casts a ballot for a single candidate, and no votes are redistributed as they are under STV. The seats then go to whichever candidates receive the most votes – or, more specifically, the number of candidates who receive the most votes, up to the number of seats in the district. So, for example, in a three-seat district, the three candidates with the most votes win the seats. See Reynolds et al. (2005) for additional details on both STV and SNTV.

The Types of Rules We Examine in this Book

The end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries witnessed a surge in the adoption of mixed-member electoral systems. Mixed systems emerged as the electoral system of choice in many new democracies, particularly among postcommunist states in Eastern Europe and Eurasia but also in countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Moreover, popular discontent with politics led reformers in the established democracies of Italy, New Zealand, and Japan to promote electoral system change as a means to address a range of problems. The new parliaments of Wales and Scotland adopted mixed-member systems, and a Royal Commission suggested introducing the same system for all of Great Britain. What was once the peculiar system of West Germany appeared to be on the verge of becoming the wave of the future and the electoral system of the 21st century.

In this book, we use this newly popular electoral system as a laboratory of sorts to examine the effects of the two most well-known alternative forms of electoral systems in operation in the world today. Many different varieties of mixed-member electoral systems have been introduced (see Shugart and Wattenberg 2001b), but the analysis in this book focuses on mixed-member systems in which (a) voters cast two ballots, (b) one of the ballots is for a candidate in an SMD (either FPTP or two-round majority), and (c) one of the ballots is for a party under closed-list PR.

How Mixed-Member Systems Are Useful to Analysts: Controlled Comparison

Mixed-member electoral systems offer a unique opportunity for *controlled comparison* – that is, the ability to examine the effects of different electoral systems under identical sociopolitical conditions. A major problem with the study of electoral systems is separating their effects from other possible influences on party systems and representation, such as social cleavages, socioeconomic development, history, or culture. Large cross-national studies may, for example, show strong correlations between electoral systems and the number of significant parties, the level of disproportionality between votes and seats, and the number of women elected to office. However, many such studies can be criticized for not controlling for nonelectoral system factors that may be the true causes of the outcomes found in these studies. Mixed-member electoral systems in which voters cast two votes, one for a party in a PR system and one for a candidate in a single-member district, offer a potential remedy to this problem: mixed-member systems represent a social laboratory, in which two electoral contests are conducted simultaneously in the same country under two drastically different electoral systems. Viewed in this way, effects of different types of electoral systems can be studied in isolation from influences of the social context, such as social cleavages, socioeconomic development, and culture, because these other factors are held constant. Consequently, the study of

mixed systems can offer valuable insights, not only for an increasingly important type of electoral system (the mixed-member system generally), but also for pure PR and SMD systems.

Although there were numerous motivations behind the adoption of mixed-member systems around the world, there existed a common inspiration. Many advocates of mixed electoral systems hope and expect that the combination of PR and SMD electoral rules – which, in their pure form, have been found to have very different effects on a range of political outcomes – will produce some measure of balance between two types of desirable outcomes: (a) the proportionality and small group representation commonly associated with PR and (b) the geographic representation of a particular locale and the large, catchall parties that are characteristic of SMD systems. In the words of Matthew Shugart and Martin Wattenberg, the great promise of mixed systems is that they could provide "the best of both worlds" (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001a: 581–595).

This "best of both worlds" view of mixed-member electoral systems is hardly universal. As Giovanni Sartori warned, mixed systems might actually generate outcomes that combine the *defects* of PR and SMD systems (Sartori 1994: 75). From a different perspective, some scholars (e.g., Ferrara et al. 2005) argue that in mixed-member systems, the SMD and PR components do not act as they would under "pure" systems, in which the other component is not present. Instead, such scholars argue, the existence of the two tiers leads to "contamination," so the presence of PR balloting affects behavior and outcomes in the SMD tier and vice versa. As a result, these scholars argue that the controlled comparison approach cannot work, as it is impossible to separate out the true independent effects of each type of electoral rule.

However, as we argue in this book (see especially Chapter 2), claims about the importance of contamination within mixed-member systems are overstated. There is good reason to believe that the controlled comparison approach allows us to draw useful inferences about (a) the separate effects of different types of electoral rules, and (b) the effects of electoral rules separate from the effects of the sociopolitical context in which they operate.

Studying Many Types of Countries to See When Electoral Rules Have Their Expected Effects

Mixed-member systems have been introduced in many types of democracies. This fact allows us to explore how sociopolitical context can shape the effects that electoral systems have: by analyzing the differences in outcomes between the SMD and PR tiers within mixed systems in a variety of different contexts, we can consider the conditions under which electoral systems have their expected effects. If different types of countries – for example, new and established democracies – have systematically different patterns in their electoral outcomes under SMD and PR rules, then there are good reasons to suspect that these contextual differences have an impact on electoral system effects.

Thus, a controlled comparison of the PR and SMD tiers of mixed-member systems around the world provides two crucial analytical benefits. First, controlled comparison allows analysts to isolate the effects of electoral systems from other factors, such as culture, economic development, and so on. If outcomes differ systematically between SMD and PR rules in a variety of countries, we can be confident that the electoral rules are the reason why. Second, comparison across countries provides the opportunity to study the conditionality of electoral system effects. If certain types of countries experience stark differences between SMD and PR tiers and other types do not, we can assert that the context in which the electoral rules operate is conditioning their effects.

The Importance of District-Level Analysis

An additional noteworthy aspect of this book is that we use data at the district level to examine and test relationships between electoral rules and different electoral outcomes – party system fragmentation, strategic defection from weak parties to stronger ones, the personal vote, and the election of women – as well as the interactive effect of social diversity and electoral rules on party systems. The use of district-level data is important because many of the core theories of electoral system effects are cast at the district level; thus, analyses of electoral system effects must be analyzed at the level at which we expect the causal mechanisms to operate. Whereas many examinations of the impact of electoral rules on the number of parties use district-level data, other relationships – most notably, the interaction between social diversity and electoral rules, but also analyses of women's representation – usually use data aggregated at the national level.[6] It should not be surprising, therefore, that many of our district-level analyses produce new findings that challenge previous research.

THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF

We argue that variation in the effects of electoral rules is due to specific differences in political context that *systematically* condition the effects of electoral rules.

If our explanation were merely that "context matters," the analysis would be both unsurprising and trivial – but the argument is more subtle. First, our emphasis on context conditioning rules stands in contrast to much work on political institutions: one of the core principles of scholarly analysis of political institutions is how rules condition the effects of context. Indeed, the idea that electoral institutions affect electoral outcomes by producing incentives for certain types of behavior, and thus changing the way other contextual

[6] At the same time, some very important theories of electoral systems and their effects focus on national-level considerations. For example, Lijphart's work (e.g., Lijphart 1984) concentrates on national level outcomes, as does Taagepera's (2007), and Cox (1997) examines projection from district-level to national-level party configurations.

factors affect these same outcomes, lies at the heart of how we view the impact of electoral rules (see Grofman et al. 2009: 3). For example, most analyses highlight how social diversity is likely to be expressed in the party system under permissive electoral rules, but restrictive rules such as FPTP constrain the number of parties, irrespective of the level of social diversity (see, e.g., Clark and Golder 2006). We certainly do not quibble with the idea that rules can condition the effect of context. However, our argument in this book is the reverse – context mitigates the way that electoral institutions affect outcomes.

Of course, the electoral system literature has not ignored the impact of context on institutions. Most notably, Gary Cox's (1997) classic work highlights the underlying conditions necessary to promote strategic behavior. However, the role of context in conditioning rules has certainly not been the central message of the voluminous work on electoral system effects, especially the literature emphasizing the prospect for institutional engineering. Moreover, the role of context in conditioning rules is hardly the common understanding among policy makers on how electoral systems affect politics (Reynolds et al. 2005).

Second, in our focus on context, we do not argue that every country is so unique that it must be studied in isolation from all others. Rather, we argue that differences in context are equivalent to variation in the values of important variables, and in this book we highlight a small number of contextual variables that vary in limited – but important – ways. This variation in context leads to systematic differences in the effects of electoral rules across different countries. In this way, this book is not a critique of existing theories for an inability to predict outliers. Rather, we seek to emphasize the importance of outliers and the reasons for their divergence. As Bernard Grofman, Shaun Bowler, and Andre Blais (2009) highlight, recognizing many of the outliers from what is expected in electoral system theories is important because it forces us to consider the mechanisms that explain how electoral systems affect outcomes. Ultimately, then, this book is a call to expand theories to pay greater explicit attention to the contextual foundations that make the predicted outcomes of electoral systems possible – and recognize how other conditions might lead to systematically different outcomes.

In short, we argue that context conditions the effects of electoral rules, and – at least as important – context does so in systematic ways. Electoral rules do not have the same effects in all contexts. Moreover, if armed with knowledge about a small number of key features of a particular country's sociopolitical context, we can make well-informed predictions – which sometimes diverge substantially from what is commonly expected – about the likely effects of electoral rules in that country.

This general argument extends to a set of specific findings:

1. In established democracies, it is common for voters and elites under restrictive electoral rules such as FPTP to transfer support strategically from their most preferred candidate or party to a more competitive

alternative in order to affect the outcome of the race. As a result, in established democracies, restrictive rules constrain the number of competitors in district races. In contrast, in new democracies – especially those with poorly developed parties – strategic "defection" is less common. As a result, the constraining effect of restrictive rules becomes tempered, leading to many more contestants that compete for and receive electoral support.[7]

2. In contexts with substantial social homogeneity, FPTP rules constrain the number of parties and candidates, especially in established democracies. However, there is greater variation in the number of parties in contexts of greater social diversity, irrespective of the electoral rules used (and also irrespective of the amount of democratic experience).
3. In established democracies in which there is (a) significant support for the idea of women as political office holders and (b) a limited number of candidates who contest FPTP races, women are more likely to win legislative office under PR rules than in SMDs. In contrast, in postcommunist societies – which witness many candidates per district in SMDs and demonstrate less public support for women as political leaders – there is little difference in the likelihood of women holding office under SMD and PR rules.

Scholars have long noted the different varieties and levels of democratic consolidation between the so-called third wave (new) democracies and established democracies, and among new democracies themselves, but have rarely shown concrete political repercussions of such differences. This book highlights, for example, that new democracies – especially those with poorly institutionalized party systems – experience great party fragmentation in SMD elections, more personal voting, less strategic defection, and even significant differences in the election of women. Moreover, for new and established democracies alike, scholars argue that increased social diversity tends to promote party fragmentation only under permissive (e.g., PR) electoral systems. However, our analysis challenges this central conclusion about the interaction between electoral rules and social context.

Specific Examples

For example, Japan's established democracy provided the conditions necessary for strategic behavior by elites and voters, which, in turn, produced the effects commonly associated with both PR and SMD elections. Similarly, incentives for the greater nomination and election of women commonly associated with

[7] Critics of this analysis might argue that the problem in new democracies is simply that they are not yet in equilibrium. In some cases, this point is correct, although we believe that the presence or lack of equilibrium may itself also be a variable to consider. However, more important, as we argue in Chapter 6, new democracies in countries such as Russia may, in fact, be in equilibrium – but an equilibrium different from that expected according to most work on electoral rules.

PR rules led to greater female representation through PR party lists than in SMDs. In contrast, Russia's newly democratic structures and noninstitutionalized party system created an environment in which the same electoral rules had very different results. Uncertain information on likely electoral outcomes led few voters and elites to withdraw their support strategically from their most preferred electoral options, especially in local SMDs where there were little or no reliable polling data on individual candidates. In such an atmosphere, additional candidates and parties had an incentive to throw their hats into the ring, further fueling a dynamic that pushed candidate proliferation even in the plurality (SMD) system. The party fragmentation in both the PR and SMD contests in Russia also created a very different environment for the election of women. In SMDs, the crowded field of candidates provided an opportunity for women to run for office and gain election because one of the main obstacles to women's representation in plurality elections – the high vote share typically needed to gain election – was notably absent. Consequently, contrary to expectations and global patterns, women were no more likely to win office in PR than in SMDs.[8]

This is not to say that institutions do not matter. PR and SMD electoral rules had discernible effects in both Japan and Russia. However, those effects were not always what scholars expected them to be. It is important to emphasize that we argue that the electoral system effects we find in mixed-member systems around the world are not random, even when they run counter to expectations, as was the case in Russia. Rather, the effects we find are consequences of systematic and discernible differences in the conditions under which elites and voters navigate their electoral environments. It is therefore important to discern how electoral rules and different political and social contexts interact to produce different outcomes. In so doing, we can expand our understanding of electoral system effects and know better what to expect when specific electoral systems are introduced in divergent political environments.

NOTE TO THE READER ON HOW WE PRESENT THE ANALYSIS

Analysis of electoral results lends itself to quantitative analysis, but we want all people interested in parties, elections, and electoral rules – irrespective of their level of technical expertise – to be able to follow the meaning of our findings. For this reason, in each chapter we present and explain the main findings with the aid of simple tables and graphs that demonstrate the relationships. After each chapter, we include appendices that offer detailed explanations of the quantitative models and findings. In addition, for space reasons, we have cut from this book a number of pieces of less directly relevant analysis and

[8] We should note, though, that in contrast to other countries that are more supportive of the notion of women as political leaders, in neither Japan nor Russia were many women elected to legislative office under either SMDs or PR.