PART I

INTRODUCTION

1

Do Rules Matter?

Structure versus Culture

From Kosovo to Kabul, the last decade has witnessed growing interest in
"electoral engineering." The end of the Cold War, the global spread of
democracy, and new thinking about development spurred this process. During the late 1980s and early 1990s the flowering of transitional and consolidating "third wave" democracies around the globe generated a wave of
institution building. International agencies such as the World Bank came to
understand that good governance was not a luxury that could be delayed
while more basic social needs were being met, like the provision of clean water, basic health care, and schooling. Instead the establishment of democracy
was understood as an essential pre-condition for effective human development and management of poverty, inequality, and ethnic conflict.[1] The donor
community recognized that the downfall of many corrupt dictatorships in
Latin America, Central Europe, Asia, and Africa created new opportunities
for political development.[2] Subsequent histories show that the process of
deepening democracy and good governance has proved to be fraught with
many difficulties, with little change to many repressive regimes in the Middle
East, only fragile and unstable consolidation in Argentina and Venezuela,
and even occasional reversions back to authoritarian rule, exemplified by
Zimbabwe and Pakistan.[3]

International agencies have used a triple strategy to promote democracy.
Institution building has been one priority, by strengthening independent judiciaries and effective legislatures designed to curb and counterbalance executive powers. Civic society has been another priority, with attempts to
nurture grassroots organizations, advocacy nongovernmental organizations
(NGOs), and independent media. But among all the strategies, attempts to
establish competitive, free, and fair elections have attracted the most attention. Only the ballot box provides regular opportunities for the public
to select representatives, to hold governments to account, and to "kick the
rascals out," where necessary. Electoral systems are commonly regarded as
some of the most basic democratic structures, from which much else flows.

3

Elections are not sufficient by themselves for representative democracy, by any means, but they are a necessary minimal condition. Views differ sharply about the appropriate evaluative criteria, but most agree that, at minimum, elections must meet certain essential conditions to ensure democratic legitimacy. They should be free of violence, intimidation, bribery, vote rigging, irregularities, systematic fraud, and deliberate partisan manipulation. Contests should provide an unrestricted choice of competing parties and candidates, without repression of opposition parties or undue bias in the distribution of campaign resources and media access. Elections should use fair, honest, efficient, and transparent procedures from voter registration to the final vote tally. Parliamentary representatives should reflect the society from which they are drawn and should not systematically exclude any minority group. And campaigns should generate widespread public participation.[4] Where rulers have blocked, derailed, or corrupted the electoral process in attempts to retain power, as in Burma, Zimbabwe, or Iraq, their actions undermined their legitimacy and attracted critical scrutiny.

Until the 1980s, international electoral assistance was fairly exceptional, applied only in special cases, such as in the first transfer of power following decolonization or at the end of civil war. Yet from the early 1990s onward, international observers, technical aid experts, and constitutional advisers have played leading roles as dozens of transitional elections have occurred throughout Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Attempts to deepen and strengthen good governance have focused on the basic design of electoral systems and, more generally, on issues of electoral administration, voter education, election observing, and party capacity-building.[5] Elections played a particularly important role in attempts to manage ethnic tensions in plural societies such as Bosnia-Herzegovina. Debates about electoral systems have traditionally revolved around the desirability of the major ideal types. Majoritarian electoral systems are designed to promote accountable single-party government by awarding the greatest representation to the two leading parties with the most votes. Proportional electoral systems aim to generate inclusive and consensual power sharing by producing parliaments that reflect the vote shares of multiple parties. During the 1990s debates turned increasingly toward the pros and cons of combined (or mixed) electoral systems, incorporating features of each of the major ideal types.[6]

Interest in electoral engineering has not been confined to third wave democracies. During the postwar era, electoral systems have usually proved to be relatively stable institutions in most established democracies. Nevertheless, occasional modifications to electoral law have occurred, including minor adjustment to voting thresholds, electoral formulas, and suffrage qualifications.[7] Moreover, some long-standing democracies have implemented far more radical reforms of the basic electoral system during the last decade. In the United Kingdom, the Blair government radically overhauled

the electoral system of First-Past-the-Post (FPTP), with alternative systems adopted at almost every level except for Westminster and local councils.[8] In New Zealand in 1993, after more than a century of First-Past-the-Post, the nation switched to a mixed-member proportional system, producing a sudden fragmentation of the two-party system.[9] In 1992, Israel introduced direct elections for the prime minister to create a stronger executive capable of counterbalancing party fragmentation in the Knesset and overcoming the problems of frequent government turnover.[10] The following year Italy changed. After prolonged debate about the best way to overcome unstable party governments, and a deep crisis in the parliamentary system, Italy adopted a combined electoral system whereby three-quarters of the parliamentary seats are distributed by plurality vote in single member districts and the remaining one-quarter are distributed proportionally, as compensation for minor parties.[11] Venezuela, one of Latin America's oldest democracies, aiming to strengthen the independence of elected members over the national party leadership, changed in 1993 from a closed-list proportional representation (PR) system for the Chamber of Deputies to a combined system.[12] In March 1994, Japan moved from a Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) to a system combining PR seats with First-Past-the-Post single-member districts, in the attempt to craft a competitive two-party, issue-oriented politics and a cleaner, more efficient government.[13] Beyond the basic electoral formula, many democracies have overhauled electoral procedures by reforming the legal statutes and party rules to facilitate positive action for women, improving the administrative process of electoral registration and voting facilities, and revising the regulation of campaign finance and broadcasting.[14]

During the last decade, therefore, issues of effective democratic design have risen sharply on the policy agenda in many nations. The first "founding" contests held under any revised rules may prove anomalous and unstable, as citizens and parties learn the ropes, but their effects can be assessed more reliably after a decade of elections held under the revised arrangements. Attempts at electoral engineering have commonly sought to achieve a balance between greater democratic accountability through majoritarian systems or wider parliamentary diversity through proportional systems. Underlying the long-standing normative debates are certain important empirical claims about the consequences of electoral engineering for voting choices and for political representation. Electoral reform is founded upon the principle that altering the formal rules matters based on the assumption that certain desirable consequences for social and political engineering can be achieved through the public policy process. There is certainly persuasive evidence that electoral rules have important *mechanical* effects as they help to determine which candidates are elected to parliament and which parties enter government. This is an essential function in representative democracies. Even if electoral rules had no other impact, this still provides ample justification for their study. But do formal rules have important *psychological* effects with

the capacity to alter the behavior of political actors and citizens?[15] Far less
agreement surrounds this question.

To understand these issues, this book compares and evaluates alternative
perspectives offered by *rational-choice institutionalism* and *cultural moderniza-
tion* theories. These broad schools of thought shape the literature, each with
multiple contributors. Each offers contrasting expectations about the impact
and the consequences of electoral engineering on human behavior, one more
optimistic, the other more cautious. Each also reflects deeper divisions within
the social sciences. Both perspectives offer alternative interpretations about
how political actors will respond to changes in the formal rules of the game,
and both rest ultimately upon contrasting visions of human behavior. Of
course, many other perspectives are possible, such as historical institution-
alism emphasizing the distinctive process of path-dependency in any nation.
There are also general cultural theories, which do not make any assump-
tions about processes of societal development. The framework chosen as
the focus in this book should not be regarded as providing an exhaustive
and definitive overview of the arguments. Nevertheless, the two approaches
that are the selected focus of this study can be regarded as among the most
pervasive and important theories. Essentially, rational-choice institutional-
ism assumes that formal electoral rules have a substantial impact upon the
strategic incentives facing politicians, parties, and citizens, so that changing
the formal rules has the capacity to alter political behavior. Yet it remains
unclear *how much* formal rules and strategic incentives matter in comparison
with deep-rooted cultural "habits of the heart" arising from the process of
societal modernization; and we know even less about how structure and cul-
ture interact. This, in a nutshell, is the central puzzle to be unraveled at the
heart of this book. Rules are thought to have multiple consequences so this
study focuses upon understanding their potential impact upon many impor-
tant dimensions of electoral behavior and political representation. The most
important aspects of voting behavior concern patterns of party competition,
the strength of social cleavages and party loyalties, and levels of electoral
turnout. Political representation is compared by the inclusion of women
and ethnic minorities in elected office and by the provision of constituency
service.

The aim of this book is, therefore, to reintegrate two strands in the liter-
ature. One rich and extensive set of studies has long sought to understand
electoral systems through classifying the formal rules, deducing certain con-
sequences, and analyzing the evidence from aggregate election results held
under different systems. Another substantial literature has sought to analyze
how voters respond to the electoral choices before them, based on the evi-
dence from individual-level national surveys of the electorate and on more
occasional experiments or focus groups, often studied within each country or
region in isolation from their broader institutional context. What this study
seeks to do is to reintegrate some of the core strands in these literatures,

so that we can explore how *formal electoral rules* (the independent variable) shape the strategic behavior of *political actors* (both parties and politicians, as the intervening variables) and how, in turn, the behavior of political actors affects *voting choices* (the dependent variable). The study does not claim to be a comprehensive and exhaustive treatment of electoral systems or voting behavior but, rather, it seeks to open new questions and identify new challenges for further research that arise from combining these perspectives. The claim is made that the sum is greater than the parts, and creative synthesis across the subfields of electoral systems and voting behavior, even if difficult, can be a fruitful and illuminating path of inquiry. This introduction first compares and clarifies the key assumptions made within each theoretical perspective, then summarizes the research design, comparative evidence, and overall plan of the book.

Rational-choice Institutionalism and the Calculus of Rewards

The basic idea that formal rules determine political behavior is a popular approach to understanding electoral laws, and it is particularly common in rational-choice institutionalism and game-theoretic models, as well as implicit in the assumptions made within many legal, historical, and structural accounts of electoral systems. The core theoretical claim in rational-choice institutionalism is that formal electoral rules generate important incentives that are capable of shaping and constraining political behavior.[16] *Formal* electoral rules are understood here as the legislative framework governing elections, as embodied in official documents, constitutional conventions, legal statutes, codes of conduct, and administrative procedures authorized by law and enforceable by courts. It is neither necessary nor sufficient for rules to be embodied in the legal system for them to be effective; social norms, informal patterns of behavior, and social sanctions also create shared mutual expectations among political actors. Nevertheless, I focus here upon the formal rules as most attention in the literature on electoral engineering has emphasized these as core instruments of public policy.[17] The key distinction is that formal rules are open to amendment by the political process, whether by legislation, executive order, constitutional revision, judicial judgment, or bureaucratic decree. Although there is a "gray" overlapping area, by contrast, most social norms are altered gradually by informal processes such as social pressures, media campaigns, and cultural value shifts located outside of the formal policy arena.

The account of rational-choice institutionalism explored in this book rests upon a series of claims, illustrated schematically in Figure 1.1:

1. Formal electoral rules shape the *incentives* facing political actors.
2. Political actors are rational vote-maximizers in pursuit of electoral office who respond strategically to electoral incentives.
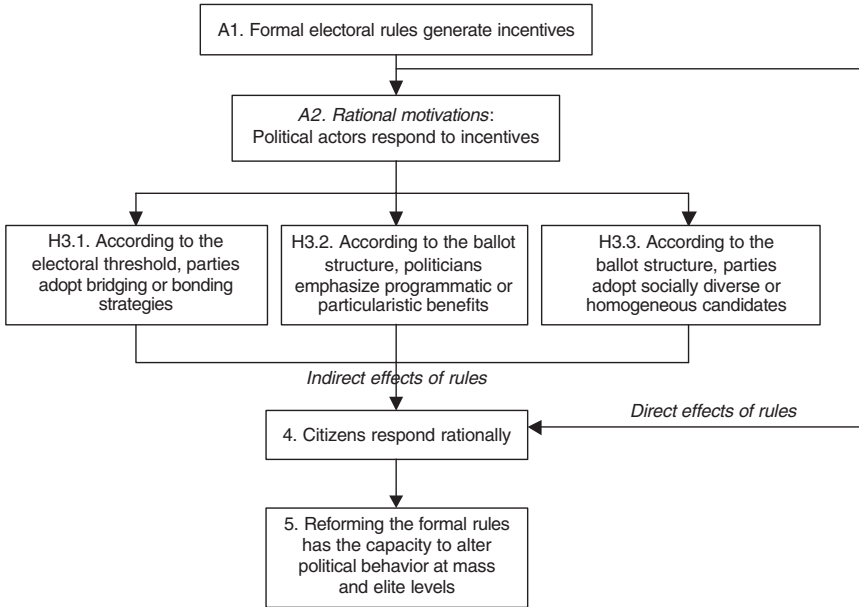
FIGURE 1.1. The rational-choice institutionalism model

3. In particular, based on the formal rules, we hypothesize that:
    3.1. According to the electoral threshold, parties decide whether to follow *bridging or bonding* strategies.
    3.2. According to the ballot structure, politicians calculate whether to offer *particularistic or programmatic* benefits.
    3.3. According to the ballot structure, parties choose whether to select *socially homogeneous or socially diverse* legislative candidates.
4. Citizens respond to the alternative electoral strategies adopted by political actors; they also respond directly to electoral rules affecting their role as citizens, with observable consequences evident in mass behavior.
5. "Electoral engineering" – changing the formal electoral rules – has the capacity to generate major consequences by altering the strategic behavior of politicians, parties, and citizens.

In subsequent chapters I compare systematic survey evidence to test whether formal rules do indeed confirm these expectations, as claimed. Before considering the data, what is the logic of this argument?

Electoral Incentives

Rational-choice institutionalism is founded upon the premise that the rules adopted in any political system have the capacity to shape the electoral rewards and punishments facing political actors. That is to say, the theory assumes that the basic choice of either a proportional or majoritarian electoral

system, or more detailed matters such as the average size of electoral districts, the type of ballot structure, or the use of statutory gender quotas, influences the structure of opportunities for parties and individual politicians. To take a simple and uncontroversial illustration, some countries have public financing of election campaigns, free election broadcasting, and, moreover, legislative candidates elected every four or five years on the basis of closed party lists; within this context individual candidates have little incentive for political fund-raising, and, indeed, they may have few opportunities to do this, even if they wanted to, because election financing may be strictly controlled. In other places, there are frequent elections, entrepreneurial candidates raise most funds on an individual basis, there are few or no public subsidies covering the costs of election campaigns, there are limited party resources, political advertising is commercially priced and expensive, and rules controlling campaign expenditure are lax. In such a context, candidates face every electoral incentive to devote much of their time and energies to campaign fund-raising. In this regard, as in many others, formal electoral rules are not neutral in their impact; instead they systematically benefit some while penalizing others.

Vote-Maximizing Political Actors
The second premise of the theory assumes that political actors in representative democracies are essentially vote-maximizers seeking office in the electoral marketplace. The idea that politicians are *only* seeking public popularity is, of course, a drastic simplification given the complex range of motivations driving the pursuit of power. Legislators may fail to follow this logic because of many other priorities. Biographies suggest that politicians come in all shapes and sizes. Elected representatives may prefer the cut-and-thrust drama of parliamentary debate in the public spotlight to less-glamorous behind-the-scenes constituency casework. Ideologues may opt for purity to fundamental principles rather than the "ambulance-chasing" pursuit of public popularity ("better red than dead"). Materialists may want to line their own pockets. Philanthropists may be attracted to serve the public good. Status-seekers may enjoy the seductive aphrodisiac of the ministerial limo. Statespersons may seek to make their mark upon the history books. Yet, in all these cases, the Darwinian theory predicts that politicians who are not vote-maximizers, at least to some degree, will gradually become less common because, in general, they will be less successful in gaining election or re-election. This premise is empty of content: It does not assume *what* particular strategies political actors will pursue to gain power but merely that they will seek votes.

Party Bridging or Bonding Strategies
If we accept these two premises as working assumptions or axioms, they generate a series of testable specific hypotheses about how certain formal electoral rules shape the opportunities for politicians to garner votes.

The first core hypothesis is that the electoral threshold will shape the inducements for parties to campaign collectively using either *bridging* or *bonding* strategies. The theory that parties are "masters of their fate," so that they can actively reinforce or weaken party-voter linkages, was developed by Przeworski and Sprague, and subsequently expanded by Kitschelt.[18] But how does this process relate systematically to electoral rules? Majoritarian electoral systems provide higher electoral hurdles because parties need a simple plurality or a majority of votes in each district to win. Under these rules, we theorize that successful parties will commonly adopt bridging strategies designed to gather votes promiscuously and indiscriminately wherever campaign support can be found among diverse sectors of the electorate.[19] Bridging parties seek to create a broad coalition across diverse social and ideological groups in the electorate, typically by focusing upon uncontroversial middle-of-the-road issues that are widely shared among the public: the benefits of economic growth, the importance of efficient public services, and the need for effective defense. These strategies bring together heterogeneous publics into loose, shifting coalitions, linking different generations, faiths, and ethnic identities, thereby aggregating interests and creating crosscutting allegiances. Bridging parties are highly permeable and open organizations, characterized by easy-entrance, easy-exit among voters rather than by fixed lifetime loyalties. This proposition suggests many important consequences, not least of which is that under majoritarian electoral rules, parties are likely to be centripetal socially and ideologically, with competition clustered in the middle of the political spectrum.[20]

Alternatively, PR electoral systems provide lower hurdles to office, based on a far-smaller share of the electorate. Where there are lower electoral thresholds, this study hypothesizes that parties will typically adopt bonding strategies. These appeals focus upon gaining votes from a narrower home base among particular segmented sectors of the electorate – whether blue-collar workers, rural farmers, environmentalists, trade unionists, ethnic minorities, older women, or Catholic churchgoers. Bonding parties bring together citizens who are homogeneous in certain important respects, whether they share class, faith, or ethnic identities, or they are bound together ideologically by common beliefs about capitalism and socialism, environmentalism, or nationalism. Bonding parties are sticky organizations, promoting the interests of their own members and developing tightly knit social networks and clear "one-of-us" boundaries. Such strategies are usually efficient for parties because it is often easier to mobilize niche sectors with specific social and ideological appeals that are distinctive to each party, rather than to try to attract the mass public on consensual issues advocated by many parties. Party systems under proportional rules are more likely to be centrifugal, with competition dispersed throughout the ideological spectrum and issue space, rather than clustered closely around the center-point.[21] Bonding parties maintain strong ties with social cleavages in

the electorate and strengthen enduring party loyalties. They are also more likely to be able to mobilize their supporters through programmatic appeals, thereby maximizing turnout at the ballot box. One-of-us campaigns reinforce party unity among ideologically motivated members, activists, and politicians. This proposition predicts that the type of electoral rules will, therefore, have important results for party campaign strategies and for voting behavior.

Through their bridging or bonding strategies, we assume that parties can either reinforce or weaken the political salience of social and partisan identities. The linkages between parties and citizens should, therefore, differ systematically according to the electoral threshold and, therefore, by the basic type of majoritarian, combined, or proportional electoral system. It is not claimed that politicians have the capacity to *create* social cleavages. But the account assumes that the initial adoption of certain electoral rules (for whatever reason) will generate incentives for parties to maintain, reinforce, and, possibly, exacerbate the political salience of one-of-us bonding, or, alternatively, to modify, downplay, and, possibly, erode group consciousness by encouraging catch-all bridging. This is most important in plural societies divided by deep-rooted ethnic conflict, exemplified by Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, or Israel/Palestine, if leaders can heighten sectarian consciousness or, alternatively, moderate community divisions. The electoral rules of the game should be regarded as *one* (although only one) of the critical influences shaping the behavior of leaders and their followers.

In practice, this distinction between bridging and bonding parties obviously involves considerable oversimplification, as with any ideal type. Many parties blend both elements as complex organizations composed of different interests among party leaders, parliamentary candidates and elected representatives, paid officers, grassroots members, and more-occasional voters.[22] Case studies such as the British Labour Party or the German Social Democratic Party (SDP) suggest that parties are also capable of shifting type at different points of time, as they alternatively choose to prioritize ideological purity or electoral popularity rather than conforming strictly to fixed categories. Despite these important limitations, some parties can be identified as ideal types at both polar extremes, at least impressionistically. By comparing the strength of social cleavages, party loyalties, and patterns of turnout evident in contests held under majoritarian, combined, and proportional electoral rules, this study tests whether there are significant differences, as predicted theoretically.

Particularistic or Programmatic Benefits
The second core hypothesis suggests that the ballot structure – determining how electors can express their choices – is paramount in campaign strategies designed to secure election.[23] Ballot structures can be classified into the