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978-1-107-03161-6 - Democracy and the Politics of Electoral System Choice: Engineering Electoral Dominance

Amel Ahmed

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Democracy and the Politics of Electoral System Choice

Amel Ahmed brings new historical evidence and a novel theoretical framework to bear on the study of democratization. Looking at the politics of electoral system choice at the time of suffrage expansion among early democratizers, she shows that the electoral systems used in advanced democracies today were initially devised as exclusionary safeguards to protect pre-democratic elites from the impact of democratization and, particularly, the existential threat posed by working-class mobilization. The ubiquitous use and enduring nature of these safeguards calls into question the familiar picture of democracy moving along a path of increasing inclusiveness. Instead, what emerges is a picture that is riddled with ambiguity, where inclusionary democratic reforms combine with exclusionary electoral safeguards to form a permanent part of the new democratic order. This book has important implications for our understanding of the dynamics of democratic development both in early democracies and in emerging democracies today.

AMEL AHMED is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

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*For Farouk and Eslah Ahmed, my first teachers and most
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