5

Examples of Electoral Systems: Nationwide PR in Israel and FPTP in Trinidad and Tobago, and India

In Chapter 4, we introduced tools for analyzing electoral system outputs – the effective number of parties and deviation from proportionality. Going back a couple of chapters further, in Chapter 2, we introduced a series of different rules that form the components of an electoral system. In this chapter and Chapter 6, we switch to a different approach. We illustrate how rules work when put together in a specific way to form an electoral system in a given political context. We use two main cases in each of these chapters, with glances at other examples where they highlight some important variation, such as the application to India, the world's largest democracy, near the end of this chapter.

In this first chapter of examples, we take the extremes in districting arrangements. The number of districts in a country may range from a minimum of one to a maximum of S, the size of the national assembly. When there is one district, it means that $M=S$, that is, the district magnitude is identical to the assembly size. At the opposite extreme, if there are S districts, then it must be the case that each of these has $M=1$, meaning a system of single-seat districts. The simplest manifestation of either of these extremes is the use of a single-round "closed list" system. As we discussed in Chapter 2, for $M=S$ this means a single nationwide district in which voters cast a single categorical ballot for one party list. Seats are then allocated proportionally among these lists – using one of the various PR formulas (see Chapter 2). Voters do not cast votes for candidates on the list that they select; rather, the candidates are selected and ranked before the election by the party.

When $M=1$, what does it mean to have a "closed list" system? It means that every party presents a list containing one candidate; this is what the FPTP system entails. Most scholars and others, when thinking of such a system, would say FPTP is a "candidate-based" system. They have a point – typically the names of the candidates are shown on the ballot, and voters may even prefer one over the other because they like the person, regardless of the party. The point we want to emphasize here, however, is that regardless of whether the voter makes her choice because she is thinking of the party or the candidate,

the FPTP system is no different from closed-list PR with the district magnitude reduced to its minimum, one.[1]

Surprisingly, FPTP has one feature in common with its apparent opposite, large-magnitude closed-list PR: in either case, the voter is given a choice only among parties. Even with a single nationwide closed list, some voters may make their choice because they like the party leader, or some specific candidate on the list. Voting for the party's list because the voter likes a candidate does not change the basic constraint that FPTP and closed-list PR impose on the voter: there is no opportunity to cast a vote below the level of the party. In the case of FPTP, assuming a party nominates just one candidate (as is virtually always the case), the voter is given a choice only among parties – just as in nationwide closed-list PR.[2]

FPTP is the electoral system likely to be most familiar to readers in English-speaking countries, because it is the system used in Britain, Canada, India, and the United States, among other countries. Sometimes known as "single-member plurality," it is the system in which the country is divided into *S* districts, where *S* is the size of the national assembly (House of Commons, House of Representatives, etc.). In fact, among the major English-speaking countries, only Australia and New Zealand use systems other than this at the national level.[3] In this chapter we mainly use a lesser-known example, Trinidad and Tobago, to illustrate FPTP in context, because small country size offers several analytic advantages. We also introduce India, the world's largest FPTP system. Before turning to these examples, however, we start with the opposite example: nationwide closed-list PR.

NATIONWIDE CLOSED-LIST PR: THE CASE OF ISRAEL

We start with the Israeli case because, as we shall see, it is arguably "simpler" to elect all members in one nationwide district than it is to elect them all in their own single-seat districts. This verdict may surprise many readers, especially those accustomed to the supposed "simplicity" of elections in the UK or countries using similar electoral systems. When we turn later to the case of Trinidad and Tobago, we will see that in actual outcomes, if not in mechanics, FPTP is not so simple after all!

[1] If a party has a "list" of no more than *M* candidates, then both open and closed lists reduce to FPTP when *M*=1. In Chapter 6, we will see a case of open list where, even when *M*=1, lists may contain more than one candidate, which means it is not equivalent to FPTP.

[2] What about independent candidates? These are effectively no different from a party that happens to run only in one district.

[3] In the UK, several different electoral systems are used for other offices, such as the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, various local councils, and the European Parliament (prior to the UK's referendum calling for withdrawal from the European Union); see Lundberg (2018). In the US, some states use other systems (see Chapter 2).

Israel has a citizen population of around eight million. Israelis vote in a single nationwide district, and elect 120 Members of Knesset (MKs)–*Knesset* is simply the Hebrew word for assembly. Table 5.1 shows three recent Israeli elections, and includes all parties that win seats in at least one election, plus other parties that win over 1 percent of the vote at least once. Two things should immediately stand out, even to a reader not already familiar with electoral systems, or with Israeli politics. First, there are a lot of parties! It is noteworthy that new parties enter periodically, such as Yesh Atid in 2013 and Kulanu in 2015. The certainty of winning a share of seats commensurate to votes means that the barriers to new entrants are unusually low (Doron and Maor 1991).

Second, they all tend to have seat shares very close to their vote shares. In fact, even when they have small vote percentages, such as the 2.1 percent won by Kadima in 2013, the seat share is very similar, as long as they clear the threshold (discussed later). This is, of course, the meaning of proportional representation, and such representation can hardly be more "pure" than in a single nationwide district.

The main factor limiting proportionality is the existence of a threshold, which stipulates that a party wins no seats unless it clears the threshold percentage of votes.[4] Thresholds are common in electoral systems that have high district magnitude, as a means to put a limit on how many small parties can obtain seats. This bar was set at 2 percent in 2009 and 2013, but was increased to 3.25 percent in 2015.

Each party that clears the threshold wins seats in proportion to votes cast, after discarding votes for below-threshold parties. Deviation from proportionality tends to be low in worldwide terms. The presence of a legal threshold is the main factor in leading deviation to be higher in some elections. For instance, both the 2009 and 2013 elections were held under a 2 percent threshold. Yet deviation was considerably greater in the latter election because, as we can see in Table 5.1, there were three parties that had over 1 percent of the votes, yet less than 2 percent. By contrast, in 2009, the largest below-threshold parties had 0.8 percent and 0.4 percent of the votes. For the 2015 election, the threshold was raised to 3.25 percent; while three parties merged into one common list to clear the threshold (discussed in Chapter 6), there was also a party with 3 percent of the votes. These votes contribute to a higher deviation in 2015.

In addition to the threshold, deviation from proportionality is somewhat increased by the use of the D'Hondt method of PR (see Chapter 2). Even with such a high district magnitude, D'Hondt is somewhat advantageous to large parties. For instance, when Hare quota and largest remainders were used (with a 1 percent threshold), deviation from proportionality averaged only 0.88 percent between 1951 and 1969.

[4] We discussed thresholds in Chapter 3 and do so in more detail again in Chapter 16.

TABLE 5.1 *Recent elections in Israel*

	2009			2013			2015		
Party	**% votes**	**seats**	**% seats**	**% votes**	**seats**	**% seats**	**% votes**	**seats**	**% seats**
Likud	21.6	27	22.5	23.3	31	25.8	23.4	30	25.0
Yisrael Beiteinu	11.7	15	12.5				5.1	6	5.0
Labor	9.9	13	10.8	11.4	15	12.5			
Hatnuah				5.0	6	5.0			
Zionist Union							18.7	24	20.0
Joint List							10.6	13	10.8
Yesh Atid				14.3	19	15.8	8.8	11	9.2
Kulanu							7.5	10	8.3
National Union	3.3	4	3.3						
The Jewish Home	2.9	3	2.5	9.1	12	10.0	6.7	8	6.7
Shas	8.5	11	9.2	8.8	11	9.2	5.7	7	5.8
United Torah Judaism	4.4	5	4.2	5.2	7	5.8	5.0	6	5.0
Meretz	3.0	3	2.5	4.6	6	5.0	3.9	5	4.2
Yachad							3.0	0	0.0
Ale Yarok	0.4	0	0.0	1.2	0	0.0	1.1	0	0.0
United Arab List-Ta'al	3.4	4	3.3	3.7	4	3.3			
Hadash	3.3	4	3.3	3.0	4	3.3			
Balad	2.5	3	2.5	2.6	3	2.5			
Kadima	22.5	28	23.3	2.1	2	1.7			
Otzma L'Yisrael				1.8	0	0.0			
Am Shalem				1.2	0	0.0			
other	3.4	0	0.0	2.7	0	0.0	0.5	0	0.0
sum		120			120			120	
Effective *N*	7.37	6.77		8.68	7.28		7.71	6.94	
Deviation (D_2 %)		1.61			3.09			3.72	

Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu presented an alliance list in 2013.
Zionist Union is an alliance list of Labor and Hatnuah in 2015.
National Union joined the list of The Jewish Home in 2013.

The low entry barrier for a system of nationwide PR means new parties enter the competition frequently, and are able to win representation as long as they clear the low threshold. Several such examples of new parties are immediately noticeable in Table 5.1. In addition, the closed lists mean that parties can reserve slots on their list for prominent candidates who are known from outside politics, or for candidates who are representatives of interest groups or sectors from which the party seeks to attract votes. A party can ensure that such candidates win; yet those candidates do not have to present themselves to the voters through personal campaigns. In fact, there is little reason for candidates to campaign as individuals, given that all they can ask of the voter is to select their list rather than one of the many others running.

As for the specific MKs, these are elected solely due to their order on the list, which is determined prior to the election. For instance, when the Likud won thirty seats in 2015, it simply elected the top thirty candidates, in the order in which they were listed. Some parties determine this order via votes of their memberships (i.e., in "primaries"), whereas in other parties the leader or a small set of leaders solely determines the nominees and their list ranks (Rahat and Hazan 2001; Hazan et al. 2018). In any case, the voter is selecting only a list as presented by the party. Some voters may consider the candidates on the list (and where they are ranked) in deciding which party list to vote for, but they are unable to do anything about the order via their vote in the general election. The voter either accepts or rejects the list as offered. This is the sense in which the system is a "closed list" form of PR. It is also the sense in which it is a highly "simple" system: the voter makes one choice, and the aggregate of those choices forms the set of vote totals on which all 120 seats are determined.

The case of Yesh Atid in the 2013 election shows both the ease of entry of new parties, and the ability to construct a list of candidates who are known from nonpolitical arenas of public life. The party did not exist prior to the 2013 campaign, yet it was able to capitalize on voter sentiment for a new "centrist" alternative and win nineteen seats. Voters who wanted to vote for this new party could be sure that their votes were not mere protest votes. Due to nationwide PR, the party would win seats as long as it cleared the threshold, which it did easily.

None of the candidates on the Yesh Atid list had been members of the Knesset previously; the leader, Yair Lapid, was a former TV news anchorman. Among the candidates whom he selected to high list ranks and who were thus almost certain to gain seats unless the party totally flopped were Yaakov Perry (former head of the security service, Shin Bet) in the second rank, Ofer Shelah (a military affairs journalist), at number six,[5] and some mayors of secondary

[5] Emily L. Hauser, "Lapid's List Says It All," *The Daily Beast*, January 25, 2013 (www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/01/25/lapid-s-list-says-it-all.html); last accessed November 16, 2015.

cities around the country who potentially could bring their local supporters to the new party. The party's success allowed it to enter a governing coalition following the election, with Lapid as Finance Minister and four of its other winning candidates also sitting in the cabinet.

Even established parties use the strategy of setting aside list ranks for candidates with a personal reputation from outside national politics, or who represent groups the party is seeking to attract. For instance, prior to the 2015 election, the Likud Party leader and incumbent Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, "posted a request on his official Facebook page for the public to suggest candidates for the 11th and the 23rd positions" on the list.[6] These were slots that allowed Netanyahu to select candidates whose presence could help broaden the list's appeal. He chose two women who were known for their activities outside politics.[7]

Because the lists are "closed" in the sense that voters do not vote for individual candidates (see Chapter 6), parties may sometimes use a strategy of encouraging votes for the party from societal groups by placing candidates in slots where they may not win unless voters from their group turn out for the party. In 2006 Shas, an Orthodox Jewish religious party, placed candidates from two immigrant communities "at the margins of the list" and "apparently received votes from the two communities."[8] The candidates, Rabbi Mazor Bayana from Ethiopia and Avraham Michaeli from the Republic of Georgia, were ranked 13th and 14th, respectively. The party won thirteen seats; the rankings of these candidates in marginal slots thus appeared to be a strategy to attract votes to the party from the candidates' ethnic communities.

In the ways just illustrated, parties are advertising the candidates on their list even though voters are unable to vote for candidates as individuals. Voters accept or reject the list as a whole, and the exact set of candidates who win seats is dependent on how many votes the party collectively obtains. This is a purely proportional, purely party-based, electoral system. It stands in contrast, therefore, to those systems in which every member of the assembly must win a local contest, standing as the sole candidate of the party in the district. This describes FPTP, to which we turn now.

[6] "Bibi Turns to Social Media to Fill Out Likud List," *JP Updates*, January 8, 2015 (http://jpupdates.com/2015/01/08/bibi-turns-social-media-fill-likud-list/); last accessed November 17, 2015.

[7] Dr. Anat Berko ("a world-renowned terrorism expert ") and Dr. Limor Samimian-Darash (a university lecturer). See Jonathan Lis, "Netanyahu Appoints Two Women to Likud Knesset Slate," *Haaretz* January 29, 2015 (www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/.premium-1.639625); last accessed November 17, 2015.

[8] Shahar Ilan, "Things are Different When it Comes to Shas," *Haaretz* March 3, 2006. (www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/things-are-different-when-it-comes-to-shas-1.184162); last accessed November 17, 2015.

FPTP: THE CASE OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO – AND INDIA

Trinidad and Tobago is a country consisting of two main islands, which feature in the country's compound name. It is located off the coast of Venezuela in the Caribbean Sea. It is a small country, population only about 1.3 million. It is its small size that makes it an asset for illustrating its electoral system, because its small assembly size means there are not many districts to analyze if we want to see how the district level connects to the national level. In fact, making such connections is one of the core tasks of this book. Thus a small FPTP jurisdiction is ideal for illustrative purposes. The assembly size is currently forty-one. That is, we can say S=41, and there are forty-one electoral districts, each with a magnitude, M=1.

FPTP in Action in Trinidad and Tobago Elections

Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) elections since 2000 are summarized in Table 5.2. The country has been holding elections regularly since 1946, but we focus on several recent elections for sake of illustrating how FPTP works. Table 4.2 shows elections through 2010.

If one knew nothing about electoral systems, one might look at the table and be very much puzzled by some of the results. For instance, in 2001 the two leading parties wound up in an exact tie for seats despite about a three percentage-point gap between them in votes. Then in 2002, a small swing in votes between the two parties resulted in a quite large majority (over 55 percent) of seats. The 2007 election offers a very large distortion in votes and seats, with a three-fifths majority to a leading party that falls short of 46 percent of the votes, while a third party has 22.6 percent of the votes and not one seat.

What explains the rather odd outcomes seen in Table 5.2? The explanation is that *national vote totals simply do not matter for allocating seats under FPTP*. Instead, it works as if it asked each party at the end of election day: in how many individual districts did you get more votes than any other party? Consider the case of the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR), which won a seat in 2000 despite only 1.2 percent of the national vote, as we see in Table 5.2. How did such a small party win in a FPTP system? It had its votes highly concentrated. In fact, it ran in only two districts, both on the island of Tobago. In one of these, it had 47.2 percent of the vote, the highest among three candidates. By having a plurality – not even a majority – in one district, it obtained representation. In only a few PR systems – even those, like Israel, with a nationwide district – would a party with only 1.2 percent of the vote gain representation. It is possible under FPTP, but only if said party has strong vote concentration in one district. Even then it may need a little luck, such as a multicandidate contest allowing it to win against a divided field.

While all the elections depicted in Table 5.2, bar 2007, have an effective number of vote-earning parties (N_V) near two, the effective number by

TABLE 5.2 *Election results in Trinidad and Tobago, 2000–2010*

Party	2000		2001		2002		2007		2010	
	%v	seats	%v	seats	%v	seats	%v	seats	%v	seats
PNM	46.5	16 (44.4)	46.5	18 (50.0)	50.9	20 (55.6)	45.9	26 (63.4)	39.5	12 (29.3)
UNC	51.7	19 (52.8)	49.9	18 (50.0)	46.9	16 (44.4)	29.7	15 (36.6)		
COP							22.6	0		
PPC									59.8	29 (70.7)
NAR	1.2	1 (2.8)	1	0	1.1	0				
TUN			2.5	0						
CA					1	0				
Others	0.4	0	0	0	0.1	0	1.7	0	0.3	0
Ind.	0.2	0								
N_V	2.07		2.15		2.09		2.86		1.95	
N_S	2.10		2.00		1.98		1.87		1.71	
D_2 %	2.04		3.16		3.71		20.81		10.55	

seats (N_S) fluctuates over a wider range, and falls below 2.00 even when N_V goes up to 2.86. In one election, 2000, we even have $N_S > N_V$, which is an unusual occurrence globally. We also see deviation from proportionality (D_2) ranging all the way from about 2.0 percent to more than ten times as high. In each case, these are nationwide indicators, whose values and interrelationships are contingent on the way the election shakes out in each of the individual districts.

Strategic Adaptation by Parties: The Case of Trinidad and Tobago 2010

In Table 5.2, we saw that in 2007 there was a new party that won 22.6 percent of the votes. This Congress of the People (COP) was only about seven percentage points behind the United National Congress (UNC), and yet the COP won no seats while the UNC won fifteen. Meanwhile, this was an election in which the People's National Movement (PNM) won a manufactured majority: despite less than half the votes, it won well over half the seats. The combination of these outcomes in one election is not mere coincidence; the "vote-splitting" by anti-PNM voters contributed to the PNM's assembly majority.

Then in 2010, the two opposition parties, UNC and COP "coordinated" by forming an alliance called the People's Partnership Coalition (PPC). As we see in Table 5.2, the PPC won a large majority of the votes in 2010 and an even larger majority of the seats. The way the PPC operated was that the two component parties retained their distinct identities, but did not compete against one another. That is, in any given district, a candidate of one of these parties stood for the PPC and the other party in the alliance abstained from the district's contest. In this way, the parties ensured that a PNM candidate could not win through splits among its opponents, as had happened in many districts in 2007.

Table 5.3 illustrates the strategic adaptation undertaken by the UNC and COP in two districts by comparing the results of the elections in 2007 and 2010. In one of our selected examples, the district of Arima, the PNM candidate won in 2007 with a very large majority: 64.7 percent of the votes, vastly outstripping the support the party had nationally (39.5 percent, per Table 5.2). In the other example, Barataria-San Juan, the PNM candidate won with a plurality, short of half the votes. In 2010, as Table 5.3 shows, the party that came in third place in each district in 2007 did not run a candidate. Instead, it endorsed the candidate of the other party opposing the PNM. In the case of Arima, this strategy appears to have been decisive, as the COP candidate won a narrow victory over the PNM's candidate, 51.3 percent to 48.7 percent. In Barataria-San Juan, the alliance also may have been essential, as the PNM candidate's 38.3 percent of the vote (from 43.6 percent, a smaller decline than the PNM suffered nationally) potentially could have been sufficient to hold on, had the COP not abstained in favor of the UNC. In both cases, we see strategic adaptation by two parties that

TABLE 5.3 *District-level results in Trinidad and Tobago, 2007 and 2010 (selected)*

District	Party	2007 Candidate	Votes %	2010 Candidate	Votes %
Arima	PNM	**Penelope Beckles**	**64.7**	Laurel Lezama-Lee Sing	48.7
	UNC	Wayne Rodriguez	9.2	–	
	COP	Rodger Samuel	26.1	**Rodger Samuel**	**51.3**
Barataria-San Juan	PNM	**Joseph Ross**	**43.6**	Joseph Ross	38.3
	UNC	Nazeemool Mohammed	32.6	**Fuad Khan**	**61.7**
	COP	Jamal Mohammed	23.8	–	

Winner in bold.

had competed against each other in the preceding election but coordinated in an alliance in 2010. The pattern repeated itself across all districts in Trinidad and Tobago, with no district featuring both a UNC and a COP candidate in the 2010 contest. Instead, almost all districts featured a straight two-way fight between the PNM and a candidate of one of the PPC component parties.

The 2007 and 2010 elections in T&T illustrate how coordination matters, and how in a FPTP system, vote-splitting or its absence can make a difference in who wins a seat. Moreover, they demonstrate why national vote totals are not the determinant of seat winning under such an electoral system. What matters is where your votes are distributed across the territory, and how many opponents you face.

Drawing Lessons from Trinidad and Tobago for Comparative Analysis: India and Other FPTP Cases

These lessons are not unique to T&T. If they were, it would matter only to those who have a special interest in this one small country. Rather, the case offers lessons for other similar electoral systems, including in very large countries, where similar outcomes have occurred.

For instance, we saw in the T&T example that some elections result in a manufactured majority – for instance, 2007. This happens when a party wins more than half the seats despite less than half the votes. Such outcomes are the norm in many long established FPTP systems. In the UK, no party has won a majority of the national vote since 1931, and yet in all but three elections since then, one party has had a majority of seats. Consider the 1983 UK election, in which the Conservative Party, which was able to parlay 42.4 percent of the votes into a whopping 397 seats out of 650 – more than three fifths of the total. This large manufactured majority was made possible

by vote-splitting of center-left parties. The Labour Party managed 209 seats on 27.6 percent of the votes, while the Alliance (of Social Democratic and Liberal parties) won only a slightly lower vote percentage, at 25.4 percent, yet only twenty-three seats.[9]

The 2010 election in Trinidad and Tobago serves as a small-scale example of what happens on a vast scale in the world's largest democracy. India uses FPTP and has a highly fragmented party system. Yet many of these parties coordinate within alliances. As we saw in Trinidad and Tobago, these alliances involve the component parties not competing against one another in any given district. Thus the large number of parties one finds in the nationwide results of recent elections in India exaggerates the fragmentation seen by the typical Indian voter, because most districts feature one candidate from each of the main national alliances.

The alliance behavior of India in a typical recent election, that of 2009, is depicted in Table 5.4. If we look only at parties' votes and seats, we see that the largest party, the Indian National Congress (INC), won only 28.6 percent of the votes, which the electoral system turned into 37.9 percent of the seats – clearly reminding us of the disproportionality of FPTP elections. The second largest party was the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with only 18.8 percent of votes, and a somewhat higher percentage of seats, at 21.4 percent. The more salient feature of the election, however, is the alliances.

Several recent Indian elections have featured two big alliances that engage in what in India is often called "seat sharing," whereby parties in alliance refrain from competing against each other in any given district. It is thus exactly as we saw in T&T in 2010, only with many more parties involved across a vastly larger and more diverse country. At alliance level, the election was a contest between the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The UPA won 48.3 percent of seats, just short of a majority, from a vote percentage of 37.2 percent for all its separate parties combined. On the other hand, the NDA won 29.3 percent of seats on 24.6 percent of the votes for its component parties. Each alliance consisted of several parties, only some of which are shown separately in the table. Each of these parties tends to run only in one or a few states; in the districts where it runs, its national partner (INC or BJP) does not put up a candidate against it. In this way, "seat-sharing" (parceling out before the election which partner will contest which districts) prevents vote-splitting (whereby parties with allied interests might lose a district to a mutual opponent if they failed to coordinate their voting bloc).

So what is the more relevant metric in India, parties or alliances? It depends. On the one hand, each party retains its separate identity and organization, and would be free to switch alliances (and such switches sometimes happen). The 2009 election featured 364 parties (not counting independent

[9] Seventeen of the winners were Liberals and six were Social Democrats.

TABLE 5.4 *Election results in India, 2009, by alliance and party*

Alliances	Party	Vote %	Seats won	Seat %
United Progressive Alliance				
	Indian National Congress	28.55	206	37.94
	All India Trinamool Congress	3.20	19	3.50
	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	1.83	18	3.31
	Nationalist Congress Party	2.04	9	1.66
	Seven other parties combined...	1.60	10	1.83
National Democratic Alliance				
	Bharatiya Janata Party	18.80	116	21.36
	Janata Dal (United)	1.52	20	3.68
	Shiv Sena	1.55	11	2.03
	Five more parties combined...	2.76	12	2.21
Third Front				
	Bahujan Samaj Party	6.17	21	3.87
	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	5.33	16	2.95
	Biju Janata Dal	1.59	14	2.58
	Eleven other parties combined...	8.06	28	5.15
Fourth Front				
	Samajwadi Party	3.42	23	4.24
	Rashtriya Janata Dal	1.27	4	0.74
	Lok Janshakti Party	0.45	0	0.00
Seven other parties combined		1.32	7	1.26
Independents		5.19	9	1.66
Total	364 Political Parties		543	

candidates), and forty-two separate parties won at least one seat. On the other hand, it is the winning alliance that forms a government if it wins the backing of a majority in parliament, and the other major alliance heads the opposition. The two biggest alliances combined for more than three-fourths of the seats. In this latter respect, the party system looks somewhat more like a "typical" FPTP system than it may seem if we count the parties separately. We take up these questions of how to count the relevant number of components – parties versus alliances – in the Indian case in more detail in Chapter 15.

While the other major FPTP countries seldom see seat-sharing alliances such as India, such strategic adaptation by parties is one way in which a multiparty system at the national level may be more streamlined for the voters, as each

voter sees only the candidate of the alliance partner that contests the district, rather than all the many parties. Consider the contrast to the Israeli case: there are many parties in Israel (albeit fewer than in India), but every voter in every part of the country has the same set of choices. In India, on the other hand, alliances have limited the district-level competition, which also means that voters in different districts have a very different menu of competitors. The ability of parties to combine on alliances that differ in which party runs in given localities is a feature inherent to a system of single-seat districts, even if it is not a ubiquitous feature of such systems. In fact, as we shall see in Chapter 10, it is common under FPTP systems for the effective number of parties at district level to be higher than the expected "two-party system," due to national politics entering into district-level voting patterns.

SUMMARY: TWO "EXTREME," BUT SIMPLE SYSTEMS

In this chapter, we have seen examples of systems that are at once "simple" and "extreme." As we defined in Chapter 2, a system is simple when all seats are elected in one tier, and in one round, by party lists. As we argued earlier in this chapter, when M=1, as long as there is only one candidate per party (as essentially always is the case), it is equivalent to a closed list with the smallest possible number of candidates, one.

In this chapter, we looked at simple systems that sit at opposite ends of the continuum running from S districts of one seat each (FPTP, as in Trinidad and Tobago, and India) to one district with S seats (as in the nationwide PR case of Israel). Given the use of a PR formula, when the magnitude is very high, as with M=120 in Israel, many parties can be expected to win seats. Deviation from proportionality is low. By contrast, when magnitude is reduced all the way to one, given the single round of voting, the party whose candidate obtains a plurality of votes takes the entire representation of the district, regardless of whether this vote share was well short of a majority or even if it was just one vote ahead of the runner-up. It is this disproportional feature of FPTP that opens up the possibility of "vote-splitting" whereby two parties might share a common voter pool, but compete against one another if they both run in the same district. We saw this happen in the 2007 election in T&T. They can work around this vote-splitting by forming an alliance, under which only one of them will contest any given district, as we saw in the 2010 election, and in India.

These two systems only begin to demonstrate the diversity of electoral systems, but they define two clear pure types: an election consisting of separate contests in many districts and often producing highly disproportional results (FPTP) versus nationwide PR. In Chapter 6, we explore a common intermediate type, districted PR. We again focus the comparison on two examples, this time differing on the type of vote that voters case in those districts.