
Coordination failures and representation

Most of this book has focused on successful electoral coordination and the conditions that facilitate such successes in practice. Coordination failures have certainly been noted but thus far not much has been said about their consequences. In this part of the book, I investigate how coordination failures affect various aspects of democratic performance, including those that touch on the representativeness of government policy (this chapter), the maintenance of dominant parties (Chapter 13), and the politics of realignment (Chapter 14).

I center the discussion in the present chapter on the following question of electoral engineering: How will democratic performance be affected when the electoral system broadly conceived (including both the legislative and executive election procedures) becomes stronger?¹ This is a classic question in electoral studies to which there is a traditional (albeit contested) answer: Increasing the strength of the electoral system will decrease the representativeness of the polity's legislative and executive branches but will increase government stability. In the standard view, then, there is a grand trade-off entailed in any strengthening of the electoral system.² I shall focus on the representational side of this tradeoff, investigating how the quality of representation changes with the politics of electoral coordination.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I discuss some of the various kinds of representation that an electoral system might affect. Representation is often defined as having one's views voiced in the legislative decision-making process. Here I define representation as having

¹Recall that electoral system A is said to be stronger than system B if the upper bound on the number of viable competitors that A imposes is lower than the upper bound that B imposes.

²Much of the best work on constitutional engineering addresses this trade-off, both positively and normatively. For example, the whole line of argument in three recent and very important books, Powell (1982); Lijphart (1984); and Shugart and Carey (1992), is to a substantial degree organized around the representation/stability trade-off.

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one's views reflected in the final product of the legislative decision-making process, that is, in enacted policy. As will be seen, policies under this definition are more representative of electoral opinion when they are more centrist. Thus, the question becomes: What kinds of electoral systems, under what conditions, reliably produce centrist outcomes?

As a first step toward answering this question, I consider how election-seeking politicians will respond to the electoral incentives posed by stronger electoral systems, in terms of the policies that they advocate during election campaigns and pursue while in office. These results establish how candidates and lists will array themselves in equilibrium but do not say who will win the seats at stake, nor what final policy will look like.

Accordingly, I next discuss how strengthening an electoral system affects the representativeness of elected legislators, and hence government policy (Sections 12.3 and 12.4). The main point is that the impact of strengthening is different, depending on parties' success at coordination. If parties can consistently solve the coordination problems that stronger electoral systems pose, then these systems will consistently produce centrist results, and may outperform more permissive systems (depending on how one thinks the process of government formation will play out). On the other hand, if parties frequently fail to coordinate, then stronger electoral systems can yield fairly noncentrist results and are more likely to be outperformed by permissive systems.

12.1 REPRESENTATION

There are many different notions of representation in the literature (cf. Pateman 1970). I shall focus on just one: How well actually enacted policy represents the opinions of the national electorate. In order to clarify what is captured and what is lost with this particular definition of representation, it will help to start with a more traditional definition of policy representation.

Typically, policy representation is defined in terms of policy advocacy. If one thinks of each voter as having preferences among the available policy options that face the government, then one natural measure of how well represented a particular voter is would be the distance between that voter's most-preferred package of policies and the package *advocated* by the elected representative whose views are most consonant with that voter's.³ Natural measures of the aggregate quality of representation

³If one does not require that the elected representative actually hail from the same constituency as the voter, then one is talking in terms of "virtual representation." If one instead confines the search for a good policy advocate to those representatives elected from the voter's constituency, then one is talking in terms of a more conventional representational relationship.

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would be, for example, how far the most poorly represented voter is from the nearest elected representative, or how far voters are on average from their nearest elected representative. To put it another way, if representation is defined in terms of policy advocacy, then representation is better the more closely the distribution of opinion in the legislature reflects the distribution of opinion in the electorate.

The nature of the representational problem is quite different when one talks of enacted rather than advocated policy. Ultimately, the government must choose a single policy to pursue.⁴ And voters who have their views advocated but never acted upon may not feel very well represented. From this perspective, the actual policy that the government pursues is an important aspect of representation.

What single policy is the most representative of a diversity of opinions in the electorate? Suppose one wants to minimize the distance between the most poorly represented voter and the government's policy. If the "distance" between a voter's ideal policy and the government's policy is defined as the percentage of the electorate with ideal points between these two points, then the minmax standard just suggested amounts to a demand that the government adopt the policy most preferred by the median voter.⁵ Similarly, minimizing the average distance between voters' ideal points and the government's policy also requires choosing the median position, if distance is defined in terms of the percentage of voters between a given voter and government policy. Thus, whereas representation through advocated policy requires that the legislature be a mirror, representation through enacted policy requires that policy be centrist.

This way of looking at the issue of representation is potentially favorable to stronger electoral systems. The literature is unanimous in viewing SMSP as a poor method of producing elected representatives who reflect the full diversity of constituents' opinions. But if being more representative just means choosing a centrist policy, then perhaps strong electoral systems will look better than more permissive systems. In Section 12.2, I begin to investigate whether this is so.

⁴There is a semantic problem to avoid here. I use the term "government policy" to mean the set of actions taken by the government. Thus, even if different parts of the government are at odds and pursue what in one sense of the term might be considered different policies, the government as a whole still undertakes a certain set of actions – prudent or imprudent, coherent or incoherent – and that is "government policy" in the sense meant here.

⁵If policy distance is defined in terms of the metric used in the policy space itself, whatever that may be, then minimizing the average squared distance will correspond to choosing the average voter's position rather than the median voter's position. I shall not pursue that avenue here. See, e.g., Hinich (1977).

One choice that candidates and parties face in electoral competition concerns the ideological stance with which they will associate themselves. The standard spatial model of Hotelling (1929) and Downs (1957) analyzes the position-taking choice that faces two candidates competing under plurality rule, when there is a single ideological dimension upon which the candidates must place themselves. The well-known conclusion of their work, enshrined in the median voter theorem, states that the optimal position to adopt, from the perspective of maximizing the probability of winning the seat, is that of the median voter.

In previous work (Cox 1987c, 1990a), I have generalized the Hotelling-Downs model to cover electoral competition under a wide range of electoral rules. The explanandum of the generalized model is the same as in the original: the position-taking incentives of election-seeking candidates (or lists).⁶ But the electoral system, hence what election-seeking candidates (or lists) must do to get elected, is allowed to vary. The conclusions of the generalized analysis are, as in Hotelling's and Downs' work, statements about the equilibrium locations of the various contestants in the race (whether candidates or lists). Will all candidates/lists end up bunched together at or near the position of the median voter, compelled by strong centripetal incentives set in train by the electoral rules of the game? Or will the incentives produced by some electoral systems instead prompt candidates/lists to disperse across the ideological spectrum?

The nature of the incentives that candidates face depend on three broad considerations: what competitors' goals are; how competitors think voters will react to any given choice with which they are faced; and what the rules of election are. I shall assume here that candidates seek to maximize the probability that they will win a seat, that lists seek to maximize the expected number of seats that they win, and that the rules of election are either SNTV (including the $M = 1$, or SMSP, case) or closed-list PR (whether largest remainders or divisors), with no upper tiers. As far as voters are concerned, I shall initially assume that they vote sincerely (i.e., for whichever competitor is closest to their ideal point). This, as it turns out, is not crucial to the results sketched below, concerning the dispersion of candidates and lists in equilibrium. But whether one assumes that voters are sincere or strategic does affect the quality of representation, as will be seen.

Given that elections are held under single-tier SNTV or PR, the strength of the system is determined solely by the district magnitude, M . Accordingly, the key issue is how changing M affects the location patterns of candidates and lists. I present two conditions that location patterns must satisfy in equilibrium.

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The first condition puts a lower bound on the range of competitors' locations, expressed in terms of the percentiles of the distribution of voter ideal points. I denote by $Q[z]$ the ideological position such that a proportion z of the voters' ideal points are to the left of $Q[z]$, with $1-z$ to the right. Thus 10% of the electorate has an ideal point to the left of $Q[.1]$, 20% have ideal points to the left of $Q[.2]$, and so forth. Denoting competitor i 's location by x_i , for $i = 1, \dots, K$; the furthest-left competitor's location by x_L ; and the furthest-right competitor's location by x_R ; one has:

Minimal range condition:

- (a) If $K > M$ candidates compete for M seats under SNTV, each seeking to maximize the probability of winning a seat, then any equilibrium set of locations $x = (x_1, \dots, x_K)$ must be such that $x_L \leq Q[1/(M+1)]$ and $x_R \geq Q[M/(M+1)]$.
- (b) If K lists compete for M seats under PR, each seeking to maximize the number of seats it wins, then any equilibrium set of locations $x = (x_1, \dots, x_K)$ must be such that either every list wins at least one seat or both $x_L \leq Q[1/(M+1)]$ and $x_R \geq Q[M/(M+1)]$.

The proof of part (a) is as follows. If $K > M$, then not all candidates' probabilities of victory can be unity. If $x_L > Q[1/(M+1)]$ then any candidate whose probability of victory is less than 1 can move to $Q[1/(M+1)]$ and win a seat with certainty. So x cannot be an equilibrium in this case (with a similar argument working in case $x_R < Q[M/(M+1)]$).⁷

The proof of part (b) is similar. A stronger result holds for the case of PR if one allows entry. For then, if a set of locations x is such that every list wins at least one seat but $x_L > Q[1/(M+1)]$, a new list could enter at $Q[1/(M+1)]$ and guarantee itself a seat. Assuming that the certain prospect of a seat is sufficient to cover any costs of entry, a necessary condition for equilibrium would be $x_L \leq Q[1/(M+1)]$ and $x_R \geq Q[M/(M+1)]$.

For both SNTV and PR (with entry), then, the range of competitors' locations must extend from at or below $Q[1/(M+1)]$ to at or above $Q[M/(M+1)]$ and, hence, must cover at least $(M - 1/M + 1) \times 100\%$ of

⁷What if voters can coordinate? If they can coordinate only a little, then the result in the text may not hold: A candidate who moves to a niche with at least $1/(M+1)$ of the voters in it may not be able to count on all these voters switching, if the voters themselves are unsure that the other voters will. Alternatively, if voters can coordinate a lot, then the result in the text still holds: Candidates can be confident that the voters in an "empty niche" will coordinate properly, were they to occupy the niche; thus, there will be no empty niches (of sufficient size to guarantee a seat).

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the ideological spectrum. Thus, *the larger is the district magnitude, the larger is the lower bound on the range of competitors' locations.*⁸

A second necessary condition requires that there not be any large interior gaps in the distribution of candidates' or lists' positions. If competitors are labeled so that $x_1 \leq x_2 \leq \dots \leq x_K$, then a gap exists between x_i and x_{i+1} whenever $x_i < x_{i+1}$. This gap is said to offer a niche of size λ if there exists a position between x_i and x_{i+1} such that a competitor adopting this position would win a vote share of λ .

Interior gaps condition:

(a) If $K > M$ candidates compete for M seats under SNTV, each seeking to maximize the probability of winning a seat, then any equilibrium set of locations $x = (x_1, \dots, x_K)$ must be such that no gap exists that offers a niche of size $\lambda > 1/(M + 1)$.

(b) If K lists compete for M seats under PR, each seeking to maximize the number of seats it wins, then any equilibrium set of locations $x = (x_1, \dots, x_K)$ must be such that either every list wins at least one seat or no gap exists that offers a niche of size $\lambda > 1/(M + 1)$.

Part (a) follows because not all candidates can be certain of winning seats ($K > M$) but any candidate can find a position in a gap of size $\lambda > 1/(M + 1)$ that guarantees a seat. Part (b) follows along similar lines and, as above, the conclusion can be strengthened if entry is allowed.

For both SNTV and PR (with entry), then, no gaps in the distribution of competitors' locations can exist that offer niches of size greater than $1/(M + 1)$, in equilibrium. Thus, *the larger the district magnitude, the smaller the gaps between competitors must be.*

The minimal range and interior gaps conditions show that representation measured in terms of the quality of policy advocacy improves as the district magnitude gets larger. Or, to put the point more precisely, if one analyzes the purely electoral incentives that face candidates and lists under SNTV and PR, one finds that as M increases these incentives induce candidates and lists to disperse more or less uniformly across the percentiles of the distribution of voters, hence improving the quality of policy advocacy. In Section 12.3, I consider how increasing (or decreasing) M might affect the policy ultimately chosen by the government.

⁸If candidates are vote or margin-of-victory maximizers, then multicandidate equilibria typically do not exist (cf. Cox 1990b:183; Osborne 1993). With seat-maximizing candidates, multiple equilibria often exist (I am generalizing from the results for the one-seat three-candidate case in Soskice and Bhaskar 1992).

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12.3 COORDINATION, STRENGTH, AND REPRESENTATION

Does strengthening the local electoral system worsen global policy representation, in the sense of pushing enacted policy away from the global median? Or does it improve global policy representation, by nudging enacted policy closer to the global median? Theoretically, one might expect SMSP electoral systems to produce centrist results, if there are two parties, for then Downsian competition should push them toward the position of the median voter. On the other hand, PR electoral systems might also be expected to produce centrist results if more centrist parties have better bargaining positions than more extremist parties, hence are more likely to get into and have influence in government (see Huber and Powell 1994). Theoretically, then, which system performs better depends on how closely local elections approximate the conditions of the standard Downsian model, on the one hand, and on the process of government formation, on the other.

The first of these issues, how closely local elections approximate the conditions of the Downsian model, relates directly to issues of coordination. If coordination follows a Duvergerian logic, then in an SMSP system there will be two candidates in each district. Hence (from Downs) competition in each district will pull the candidates to the district median. Global policy will be centrist as well, since regardless of which party gets into government, it will be composed of centrists.⁹ On the other hand, if local coordination fails, and there are three or more candidates in most constituencies, then the victor in each district can be far from the district median and a noncentrist result at the global level can result.

The United Kingdom in the 1980s is a good example of this last possibility. Due to the split in the center-left vote, Conservative candidates in many districts were able to win with about 40% of the vote. And, at the global level, Huber and Powell find that the British Conservatives were relatively far from the median respondent in national surveys. During the period of pre-Thatcherite consensus politics, in contrast, there were typically only two viable candidates in each district and the parties' policies were, according to conventional wisdom, both closer to the national median. Thus, the centrism of national policy in a strong electoral system is sensitive to how the politics of electoral coordination plays out in the districts.

To see this point in more detail consider how district-level outcomes are affected when voters are strategic rather than sincere, when candi-

⁹Technically, this conclusion holds only if constituencies are sufficiently alike. If there is a large set of leftist districts, and a large set of rightist districts, then one party may return a bunch of candidates who, although locally moderate, are nationally pretty far left, while the other party returns a bunch of local moderate/national conservatives.

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dates anticipate rather than ignore strategic voting, and when parties are farsighted rather than myopic about getting into government. Each of these different kinds of strategic coordination leads, in various senses, to more centrist results.

Voters' strategy. How is the outcome of an election affected when voters are strategic rather than sincere? The general result of allowing voters to be strategic is to enhance the uniformity of the distribution of winners across the ideological spectrum, given any set of locations by candidates. When voters are sincere, it is possible for leftists to win no seats in an M -seat district, if they run far too many candidates/lists and split their vote more or less equally among them. When voters are strategic, in contrast, overcrowding is "solved" by strategic voting: Votes transfer away from the weaker candidates and lists to the stronger ones, until an efficient translation of votes into seats is achieved (in Duvergerian equilibria). Thus, no niche of opinion that is sufficiently large can fail to get representation due to overcrowding, when voters are strategic (and the more "optimistic" coordination equilibria are selected).

That the set of winners is more uniformly distributed when strategic voting is assumed to reach its Duvergerian equilibrium implies a limit on the dispersion of victors' positions. When voters are sincere, if overcrowding is more severe in the center than on the extremes, then candidates on the far left and/or far right may win. When voters are strategic, in contrast, overcrowding in the center is "solved" by an increase in strategic voting. Thus, a fair share of centrists win seats and fewer seats are won by the far left and far right candidates.

An example of this kind of effect can be given in the case of a single-member district with five candidates competing under plurality rule. Suppose that voters' ideal points are distributed uniformly on the $[0,1]$ interval, that four of the candidates have adopted the position of the median voter, and that the fifth candidate has adopted the most extreme possible rightist position (*viz.*, 1). If voters are sincere, then the three-fourths of the electorate whose ideal points lie to the left of the point $3/4$ will be indifferent among the four candidates at the median, and will distribute their votes among them randomly. Each of these four candidates will thus have an expected vote share of one-fourth of three-fourths, or $3/16$. The one-fourth of the electorate with ideal points to the right of the position $3/4$ prefer the extreme candidate (at 1) to the median candidates (at .5), and so the extremist will get a vote share of $1/4$. This vote share being larger than $3/16$, the extremist candidate will (almost certainly) win.

The outcome is very different if voters are presumed capable of thinking strategically and solving coordination problems. If the three-fourths

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of the electorate with ideal points to the left of $3/4$ recognize that the extremist will win unless they concentrate their votes on one of the centrists, then they will seek to do so. If they succeed, then a centrist candidate will win, not the extremist. Thus, the relative centrism or extremism of victors' locations is sensitive to what one assumes about voters' abilities to coordinate.

This point echoes standard criticisms of the performance of plurality rule in the social choice literature and of single-winner electoral procedures in the traditional comparative literature. Part of Brams and Fishburn's (1983) argument in favor of approval voting, to take a social choice example, is precisely that ordinary plurality rule performs poorly in multicandidate contexts. Part of the dominant critique of presidentialism, to take a comparative example, is that single-winner elections can lead to the victory of either outsiders (e.g., Fujimori in Peru) or minority candidates (e.g., Allende in Chile), with disastrous consequences for democracy (cf. Linz and Valenzuela 1993).

In the example developed and the literature reviewed above the focus is on the strongest possible system: single-member plurality. But a similar point holds for more permissive systems: It is possible for quite extreme candidates, more extreme than should have a chance of victory under ordinary circumstances, to win under such systems, if the center is sufficiently overpopulated. But if one asks how overpopulated the center must be in order for a given percentage of the seats, say 100%, to go to the extremes, the answer is that the required degree of overpopulation is less under stronger systems. In other words, the outcome under stronger systems is more sensitive to the politics of electoral coordination, because the coordination problems posed by these systems are greater.

All told, then, the effect of strengthening depends crucially on how one thinks the politics of electoral coordination will play out. When voters are strategic and adept at coordinating, strengthening limits the degree of extremism possible. But when voters are sincere and poor at coordinating, strengthening increases the degree of extremism possible.

Candidates' strategy. Strategic entry as envisioned by Duverger will lead to the non-entry of candidates and lists that would have been weak and therefore targets of strategic voting. Allowing strategy in entry thus decreases the number of competitors, thereby decreasing dispersion.

This observation leads to the same conclusion about how electoral coordination conditions the impact of strengthening as drawn above. If potential candidates are assumed to be strategic and proficient at coordinating, then strengthening an electoral system will not lead to lots of coordination failures, with their attendant increase in the probability of extremist victors. But if potential candidates are assumed not to care solely about winning the

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current election, or to disagree about who it is that will bear the brunt of strategic voting, then more of them may enter than the electoral system can carry, putting the onus of coordination on the voters.

Parties' strategy. Political forces need to coordinate at the district level in order to convert votes efficiently into legislative seats. At the national level, political forces may need to coordinate in order to convert their seats efficiently into executive office(s). How does the latter necessity affect policy centrism?

Schofield (1993) develops a model in which parties take positions with an eye not just to the payoff in seats that they will get, but also to the payoff in portfolios. This latter payoff depends on parties' anticipations of the coalition formation process. Schofield adopts as an axiom the notion that parties are more likely to form coalitions with one another the more compatible are their policy platforms.¹⁰ Using this assumption, Schofield shows that the politics of getting into government entails being more centrist than a seat-maximizer would be. The key to this result is that the legislative and executive choice procedures both come into play. Parties that might find a niche on the extreme left attractive from a purely seat-maximizing perspective look forward to the government formation stage and discover that they will be further from all the other parties than is the party immediately to their right, hence by assumption less likely than this party to make it into government. The best-positioned parties are those in the center, as they are closer to all the right-wing parties than are any of the left-wing parties, and vice versa. Thus, anticipation of the coalition formation process brings centrist incentives from that process to bear on parties' choices of spatial positions and produces a contraction in the field of competitors toward the median.¹¹

12.4 THE IMPACT OF STRENGTHENING IN ELECTIONS WITH LONG-TERM COORDINATION

In this section, I shall reconsider the issue of policy centrism. The analysis holds everything constant from Section 12.3 except that voters and potential candidates are assumed to be interested not only in the current

¹⁰In particular, he assumes that the probability of two parties cooperating with one another in government is proportional to the inverse of the square of the policy distance separating them. But this particular functional form is not crucial for the qualitative result described in the text.

¹¹Schofield's model is actually more general than suggested by the wording in the text, in that he does not impose unidimensionality. The centrism of the electoral result is judged by reference to a solution concept dubbed the "heart," a subset of the "uncovered set," which is centrally located in the distribution of voter ideal points.

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election but also in future elections. The politics of coordination is assumed, in other words, to be a repeated game. In repeated coordination games, centrism is not the unanswerable card that it sometimes is in one-shot games. It may be trumped by intensity of preference or the perception thereof.

Most of the coordination games encountered previously in this book have been one-shot affairs. Intensity of preference in these models has determined who is most likely to desert a candidate or list perceived to have inferior chances of winning seats: Those who only slightly prefer these weaker candidates/lists are more likely to desert them than are those who strongly prefer them. But there is another way in which intensity of preference might affect the outcome in a one-shot game that has been ignored heretofore.

To see this, consider an example in which a divided left faces a unified right in a single-member district. The left can agree either on a candidate from the far left (FL), or a candidate from the moderate left (ML), or fail to agree (in which case both will put up candidates). Supposing that either FL or ML could win in a straight fight against the rightist candidate, which leftist will back down? In a one-shot strategic voting game, the answer given in previous chapters has essentially been that the group with the larger block of first-preference supporters in the district should be able to induce the other group's voters to strategically desert it (if both enter). If the moderate leftists are the larger group, then only ML will in fact enter, FL prudently withdrawing.

But what if it is common knowledge that moderate left voters only slightly prefer the moderate- to the far-left candidate, while far-left voters greatly prefer the far- to the moderate-left candidate (who is viewed as not much better than the right-wing candidate)? In this case, the far left could credibly threaten to enter regardless of what the moderate left did. If the moderates did not enter, then of course this would be the best outcome for the far left. If the moderates did enter, then the far left would suffer only a small loss by obstinately sticking to their plan and fielding a candidate: By sticking, they get the right-wing candidate; by blinking, they get the almost equally bad moderate. In contrast, the moderates would face a large incentive to back down. By entering, they get the right-wing candidate; by withdrawing they get the much better far-left candidate.

The reason that I have not highlighted this possibility earlier in the book is that it is hard for intensities of preference to become common knowledge. Precisely because intensity confers a bargaining advantage, it is not credible for either the far or the moderate left simply to assert that they have intense preferences. So it is hard to see how, in the context of a one-shot interaction, either agent could convince the other that they had the more intense preferences.

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If electoral politics is viewed as a repeated coordination game, however, then the situation changes. Now both agents have available a costly action that can demonstrate their intensity of preference: They can refuse to withdraw their candidate and suffer through a legislative term in which the seat goes to the right-wing party. The side that truly has more intense preferences will be more willing to give a victory or two to the right-wing than the side with less intense preferences. Thus, the willingness to suffer coordination failure can credibly communicate intensity of preference in a repeat-game context. And the possibility of such communication can mean that smaller but more intense groups may get their way, whereas they would not in one-shot interactions.¹²

Suppose that the state of the world changes from time to time, in such a way as to change voters' preferences. After each such "preference shock" voters and politicians would be faced with a new repeated coordination game, in which intensity of preference would have to be signaled via coordination failures. From this perspective, one should expect repeated episodes of failure to coordinate, followed by equilibrium. In permissive systems, these cycles would not make much difference, in that coordination failures lead to relatively small seat penalties. In stronger systems, however, these coordination cycles might be rather more consequential, as periodic battles for the "heart and soul" of the Republican party, to take a recent example, erupt to the detriment of the party's short-term chances of success. This suggests that the realignment phenomenon much studied in the American literature ought to be a general feature of stronger systems, a notion that I pursue in Chapter 14.

12.5 CONCLUSION

If representation is defined in terms of whether each voter can find a legislator who advocates similar views, then larger district magnitudes obviously enhance representation. If representation is defined in terms of how close the government's policy is to each voter's ideal, then the case in favor of larger-magnitude districts is less immediate and depends crucially on how one thinks the politics of coordination will play out.

If Duvergerian results obtain everywhere, then a single-member simple plurality electoral system will (1) produce two-candidate competition in every district, hence strong centripetal incentives in each district

¹²A classic problem in democratic theory, posed most pointedly by Dahl (1956), concerns how to design democratic institutions that are sensitive to intensity of preference. Can one design a method of decision that will give intense minorities their way over apathetic majorities, without at the same time allowing apathetic minorities to get their way over intense majorities? It is interesting to note that bargaining in the context of a repeated coordination game meets Dahl's abstract requirements.

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(Downs 1957); and (2) produce bipartism at the national level, with both major parties offering essentially the same centrist policies. Hence, regardless of which party wins the election, the government's policy will be centrist as well. In a Duvergerian world, then, the strongest electoral system (i.e., SMSP) would perform well were representation defined in terms of centrism.

If non-Duvergerian results crop up at various levels, however, then a strong electoral system can perform quite erratically. If the center fails to coordinate properly, relatively extreme candidates can win in the constituencies, and a party composed of such extremists can pull national policy fairly far from the national median.

More permissive systems are less sensitive to coordination failures in legislative elections. If coordination is poor, then (in a highly permissive system) a few seats are lost out of many, typically without seriously affecting the balance of power in the legislature. Thus, these systems are less variable in the way they translate votes into seats. Assuming that centrist parties are well-positioned in coalition bargaining, permissive systems should regularly produce governments that are fairly centrist, regardless of whether coordination failures occur at earlier stages or not.

Putting these two observations together, one sees that the comparison between strong and permissive systems depends on what one assumes about coordination. If coordination is more likely to fail at the electoral stage, then stronger systems will be more erratic. If coordination is more likely to fail at the government formation stage, then feebler systems will be more erratic.