Comparative Politics

Week 6

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Logistics

- I will mute all of you at the beginning to avoid background noise.

- Use "raise hand" if you have questions or want to make your point.
- Or raise your questions via messaging.

- If group discussion, I will divide you randomly (automatically by Zoom) into several breakout group.

Logistics

- Email: jlzhou@nyu.edu

- Office hour: Thursday 14-15; 17-18, online
  - Book my office hour here: https://calendly.com/jlzhou/15min
  - Join meeting via: https://nyu.zoom.us/j/7478991306
  - You will be in a waiting room upon entering to avoid interruption to the ongoing meeting.

Logistics

- Any other questions?

Today

- Electoral System
  - Two main component:
    - Majoritarian
    - Proportional Representation
  - Other key concepts

- How to choose an electoral system

Electoral System

Majoritarian

- Based on the principle that only the candidate(s) or parties with most votes takes the seat(s)

- Sometimes called "winner take all" systems

- Two variations:
  - **Plurality**: "First-past-the-post"
  - **Absolute majority**: "Second ballot/runoff" or "alternative voting system"

First-past-the-post

- Assume a single-member district (district magnitude=1).

- The candidate with the most votes wins.

- I.e., only a plurality (not necessarily a majority) of the votes are needed.

- Examples: many elections in United States, United Kingdom, India

Absolute majority systems

- Second ballot/run-off systems

- Any candidate who obtains an absolute majority in the first round of elections is elected.

- If no one obtains an absolute majority in the first round, then the top two vote winners go on to compete in a runoff election in the second round.

Alternative voting

- In an alternative vote (AV) system, voters rank order the candidates.

  - If a candidate wins an absolute majority of first-preference votes, she is immediately elected.
  - If no candidate wins an absolute majority, then the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated, and her votes are reallocated among the remaining candidates based on the designated second preferences.

Proportional representation (PR) systems

- Based on the principle that seats should be allocated roughly in proportion to votes received

- The exact formula for translating vote share into # of seats varies.

- E.g. a common method is the D'Hondt method

- Variations of proportional representation ballots:
  - Closed-list
  - Open-list
  - Single transferable vote

Example of applying D'Hondt formula:

(Hypothetical country with 4 parties, 100,000 votes cast and 8 legislative seats)

Divisor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Seats won
Party A	**50,000**	**25,000**	**16,667**	**12,500**	10,000	8,333	7,143	6,250	4
Party B	**31,000**	**15,500**	**10,333**	7,750	6,200	5,167	4,429	3,875	3
Party C	**15,000**	7,500	5,000	3,750	3,000	2,500	2,143	1,875	1
Party D	4,000	2,000	1,333	1,000	800	667	571	500	0

PR System

- In a closed party list, the order of candidates elected is determined by the party itself, and voters are not able to express a preference for a particular candidate.

- In an open party list, voters can indicate their preferred party and also their favored candidate within that party.

- For single transferable vote system,
  - Similar to alternative voting, voters rank candidates.
  - But there are multiple seats per district and seats are allocated proportionally.

Other Key Concepts

- **District magnitude** refers to the number of representatives elected in a district.
- Wide variation:
  - Often 1 (e.g., for US House of Representatives in Congress)
  - But, can be more. E.g., for national assembly in Benin: 3-5

- An **electoral threshold** is the minimum level of support a party needs to obtain representation.

- Can vary quite a bit:
  - South Africa: no electoral threshold.
  - In Turkey: 10%. In 2002, so many parties failed to surpass the 10% threshold that fully 46% of all votes were wasted.

Combined System

- An **independent mixed electoral system** is one in which the majoritarian and proportional components of the electoral system are implemented independently of one another.

- A **dependent mixed electoral system** is one in which the application of the proportional formula is dependent on the distribution of seats or votes produced by the majoritarian formula.

Choose an electoral system:
An Example

Now, we have a new country with 9 geographic units and 9 seats in national congress

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9
Gryffindor	20000	10000	10000	20000	30000	30000	100000	30000	30000
Slytherin	70000	20000	30000	30000	300001	10000	10000	10000	20000
Other-Hogwarts							10000		

What the national election result would be?
If: the country uses a FPTP system and has 9 single-member districts

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9
Gryffindor	20000	10000	10000	20000	30000	30000	100000	30000	30000
Slytherin	70000	20000	30000	30000	300001	10000	10000	10000	20000
Other-Hogwarts							10000		

What the national election result would be?
If: the country uses PR rules and the whole country is one district with a district magnitude of 100? (purely proportion)

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9
Gryffindor	20000	10000	10000	20000	30000	30000	100000	30000	30000
Slytherin	70000	20000	30000	30000	300001	10000	10000	10000	20000
Other-Hogwarts							10000		

(Cont.) Does it matter whether the country has an electoral threshold and of what magnitude?

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9
Gryffindor	20000	10000	10000	20000	30000	30000	100000	30000	30000
Slytherin	70000	20000	30000	30000	300001	10000	10000	10000	20000
Other-Hogwarts							10000		

What the national election result would be?
If: the country uses PR rules and the whole country is one district with a district magnitude of 9? (D'Hondt formula)

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9
Gryffindor	20000	10000	10000	20000	30000	30000	100000	30000	30000
Slytherin	70000	20000	30000	30000	300001	10000	10000	10000	20000
Other-Hogwarts							10000		

What the national election result would be?
If: the country uses PR rules and the whole country is one district with a district magnitude of 9? (D'Hondt formula)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
280000		**280000**	**140000**	**93333.33**	70000	56000	46666.6667	40000	35000	31111.1111
500001		**500001**	**250000.5**	**166667**	**125000.3**	**100000.2**	**83333.5**	71428.7143	62500.125	55555.6667
10000		10000	5000	3333.33333	2500	2000	1666.66667	1428.57143	1250	1111.11111

What the national election result would be?
If: the country uses PR rules, is divided into 3 districts (Unit 1-3, Unit 4-6, Unit 7-9) with district magnitudes of 3?

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9
Gryffindor	20000	10000	10000	20000	30000	30000	100000	30000	30000
Slytherin	70000	20000	30000	30000	300001	10000	10000	10000	20000
Other-Hogwarts							10000		

Now, put yourself in the shoes of the party leader...

- Which electoral rules would they prefer? Why?

- How will you design a district if you could?

- How will you determine the district magnitude for each district?

- What if you put yourself in the shoes of candidates in a particular unit? Which electoral rules would you prefer?

Now, put yourself in the shoes of the party leader…

- What more might you want to know about the system (e.g., whether it is closed or open list in the case of PR) in order to evaluate which system you would most prefer?