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The Tailor of Marrakesh: Western Electoral Systems Advice to Emerging Democracies

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<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7w39027t>

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Publication Date

1997-02-15

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In my high school days in Marrakesh, Morocco, a tailor once justified the poor fit of the suit he made for me by showing my uncle reams of Paris fashion. [1](#) [2](#) The suit conformed to fashion, he said, it is my body that did not. When giving advice on electoral systems to emerging democracies, do we behave like the tailor of Marrakesh, disregarding the existing body politic in favor of fashion somewhere else? But if a communist (or other totalitarian/authoritarian) straightjacket has deformed this body politic for decades, should one give advice that fits the deformation or helps to undo it? I admit that braces and therapeutic shoes are uncomfortable.

Harry Eckstein (1966) reminds us that political institutions may fail if they are not congruent with the social. But what is the social reality in, say, Eastern Europe? The communist framework has collapsed, and a stable replacement has not yet taken shape. With what should one try to be congruent?

Should one give advice congruent not with the present conditions but those expected in twenty years, provided that things go more or less right? But if this advice is at odds with present norms and understandings, however fleeting those may be, the advice will be rejected or misconstrued and will have nil or even negative impact. If, on the other hand, the present decision makers take our advice and its long-term advantages are preceded by short-term snags, then things may not go right in the long run either. Should one just scrutinize the interlocutors' face expressions and give the advice they want to hear, thus building up their self-confidence (and encourage further consultations that one can enter in one's CV)? Maybe no Western advice should be volunteered nor even given when requested, because it only makes matters worse. But advice is given, nonetheless, and is sometimes asked for, even though reception may be mixed.

Emerging democracies may go through a sequence of positive and negative attitudes toward foreign advice on electoral systems. My experience in Estonia makes me propose such a sequence, to see from the roundtable responses whether it has any generality. Based on a sample of one, the framework most likely will not hold, but reactions to it may help to map the field. Indirectly, I will touch on the touchy issue of whether the foreign advisors have failed to give adequate advice or whether local politicians have failed to take sound advice. Of course, it is neither and both, to some degree, plus honest misunderstandings. I will examine to what extent our systematic and analytical knowledge of electoral systems enables Western political scientists to offer advice to emerging democracies, and my conclusions are rather modest. I will briefly digress from impact of political science advice for emerging democracies to the latter's impact on political science discourse, focusing on Duverger's rule.

Foreign advice varies. One broad distinction is between law specialists and political scientists. Another is between theoreticians and practitioners of elections. Still another is between those who believe in a *science* of electoral systems, expressed in broad rules like Duverger's, and those who believe in an *art* of electoral systems where every country is a special case to be taken in its historical context.

As for me, I classify myself as a political scientist who is sometimes overly impatient with emphasis on legal well-wordedness over political implications. I am also a theoretician who has never helped to set up the practical framework for an election--and I have respect toward those who have done so. Above all, I definitely believe in the existence of universal generalities which make it possible to develop a science of electoral systems beyond art, while recognizing that the science part may not yet be sufficiently developed to address the needs of emerging democracies.

Tentative Sequence of Attitudes

I propose the following tentative sequence.

Phase 0. The democratizing elites take for granted pre-existing electoral rules used for choiceless fake elections, a framework suboptimal for elections with genuine choice. They see no cause for change, and hence no need for outside advice. This stage applies to former Soviet-dominated countries where elaborate elections without choice were performed. In democracies that emerge from blunter dictatorships, which did not play at elections, the basis for this stage is lacking.

Phase 1. The democratizing elites feel the need for new electoral rules, either because they lack an electoral system or the one inherited from choiceless elections proves unworkable when choice is introduced. The elites try to reinvent the wheel on their own by grasping at some simple electoral formula which they see as self-evidently the only sensible one. There is no awareness of the variety of electoral rules practiced in democracies. To the extent this variety is noticed, the unfamiliar and hence seemingly complex rules are considered foolish at worst and unsuitable for one's own culture at best.

Phase 2. The multitude of options sinks in, especially when home-invented solutions backfire and/or more radical reformers replace the early reformers from within the establishment. Foreign advice is eagerly invited and followed, maybe more to the letter than the advisors intended it to be.

Phase 3. Familiarity with various electoral options increases, but confidence of having mastered all there is to know grows even faster. At the same time the unified front for reform fractionalizes and electoral rules become a subject of political football, often with short-term goals in mind, leading to counterproductive results later on, when the relative strengths of groupings may have drastically changed. Foreign professional advice, previously overvalued, is now undervalued, unless it agrees with one's own tastes. Extreme fractionalization and kaleidoscopic changes in party configurations in some countries bring popular disappointment with electoral rules and with democracy in general. Fractionalization also produces electoral outcomes contrary to those observed in more stable democracies using similar rules, and it further reduces the credibility of political science advice.

Phase 4. If democracy survives this period of disappointment and cynicism, a more balanced use of foreign electoral advice may come about, but as a relatively minor input in face of growing practical experience and local academic expertise in electoral systems.

The Case of Estonia

The preceding framework will now be illustrated using the country I was involved with -- Estonia. Emphasis will be on Phase 2, when outside advice had a definite impact, and Phase 3, when local politicking took over.

Phase 0. Pre-1990 elections in Estonia used the standard Soviet majority rule in single-member districts. When choice between several candidates became possible in 1989, problems arose. Soviet rules allowed opposition to all candidates, and the winner was required to net at least 50 percent of the votes. This was easy to achieve in a field of one candidate (adding fraud, if needed). But with two candidates allowed to run, the outcome could be 48-45, plus 7 percent opposed to both, in which case the electoral rule declared both candidates losers, and completely new elections with new candidates were required. (In the presence of more than two candidates, runoffs were prescribed, which themselves could lead to the previous abortive outcome.) The Soviet rules also required a 50 percent turnout, which was easy to achieve through compulsion and fraud. But in free and fair elections, once their novelty wore off, turnout began to fall below 50 percent in some districts, which again disqualified the elections and mandated new elections with new candidates--with the risk of an even lower turnout.

Phase 1. Re-inventing the wheel entered rather briefly when reform communists proposed the equivalent of Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV), with little awareness of its use and problems in Japan. SNTV looked the obvious way to distribute the seats, once multiseat districts came into play: just assign the seats to candidates with the most votes. In Estonia this phase overlapped with the next one: the discovery of the various options available.

Phase 2. Awareness of the existence of other electoral rules than the Soviet began in Estonia probably earlier than in any other part of the USSR, and it was my doing. I left Estonia in 1944 but kept up with the events in my homeland, while specializing in the study of electoral systems. When the Soviet authorities first allowed me to revisit my homeland in May 1987 and the Soviet Estonian Academy of Sciences invited me at the spur of the moment to give a closed-doors presentation, I presented an overview of electoral systems. I quickly used subsequent press liberalization to publish popularizing articles on electoral rules in a Soviet Estonian daily (*Edasi*, 7 July, 13 September, 15 December 1988). Political activists and other newspaper readers were sensitized to the wide range of possibilities and the major differences in outcomes that could result.

This was an exhilarating moment for an electoral rules specialist. Imagine trying to publish a page-long description of electoral rules in your hometown newspaper, and people actually plodding through it and discussing it! By local initiative, the Taagepera and Shugart book on *Seats and Votes* (1989) was published in Estonian in late 1989. I also taught a 30-hour lecture course at the brand new Estonian Humanities Institute and carried out shorter seminars for local administrators. Terms like "Single Transferable Vote" (STV) became vaguely familiar to maybe 3 percent of Estonia's adult population, and the debate was quite informed.

For the 1990 Supreme Council election (and the preceding local ones in December 1989), the Popular Front proposed open list PR with simple quota and largest remainders, as I had suggested (*Edasi*, 13 September 1988). I considered it the simplest method that struck some balance between party representation and voters' input regarding particular candidates. Any list elections were, however, opposed by the communists whose discredited party label would have brought down even those communist leaders who were personally popular. As mentioned, they proposed SNTV because of its simplicity--and it also offered them advantages. With no party

labels shown, they could capitalize on the high name recognition of local communist officials. (They also successfully pushed for local residence requirements so as to block the liberal capital city elite from competing with local managers.)

As a compromise, physicist Peet Kask, the leading electoral rules specialist of the Popular Front, then proposed Single Transferable Vote. STV was adopted because it satisfied the communist need to avoid party lists while still leading to vaguely proportional representation. Despite its reputation of complexity, the ordinal ballot was handled successfully by voters and officials (Taagepera 1996).

During the same period a nationwide election was also carried out for an Estonian Congress (February 1989) opposed though not blocked by the communist authorities. As a privately organized general election it was unique. Resources were extremely limited; therefore, the premium was on keeping the seat allocation procedure simple. The vote had to be personal because local activists often belonged to several groupings that competed on the national level but cooperated at the grass roots. The election was organized by committees based on traditional counties, which hence perforce became the bases for multiseat electoral districts.

As a poor man's approximation to non-list PR (such as STV), I recommended a square root approach to Limited Vote (LV). In a nine-seat district, a voter could vote for three candidates, but in a four-seat district for only two. On the one hand, this mitigates the disadvantages of SNTV (one vote per voter), which risks wasting the excess votes cast for the most popular candidates. On the other hand, it also prevents the largest grouping from winning all the seats, as could happen with unlimited vote (as many votes per voter as there are seats in the district). The square root formula was adopted, rounding off to the higher side (in a five-seat district voters had three votes). No data on the outcomes of the Congress elections seem to have been compiled (except the names of the winners) and I have no theoretical justification for the square root formula, but an informal PR seemed to prevail, and the results were accepted by the voters as legitimate.

Phase 3. Disaster struck within a year after these elections. Politicians had become sufficiently knowledgeable about the variety of electoral rules to begin playing games with them, with little theoretical understanding or practical feel for the outcomes. By this time I was out of the picture, even for those who appreciated my expertise, because the name of the game was quick response in daily sparring. I am not aware of any other Western experts being consulted. The resulting 1992 parliamentary electoral law was a fruit salad, its components picked from the West but mixed in a Byzantine way.

These rules were the result of two years of haggling in the Supreme Council. The Popular Front was breaking apart and was being overshadowed by even more radical forces. Among these, the Christian Democrats preferred the German two-vote system--but with multiseat districts so as to enable sympathetic independents to win. Little idea did they have how much this apparently small alteration (multiseat districts) undermined the German balance. The Popular Front was in favor of minor changes to the existing STV. The former communist managers expected to lose and were interested in delaying the elections as much as possible. They had sufficient minority votes to block any decision in the Supreme Council, and their lack of urgency gave them power.

The 1992 rules combined a Finnish-type "quasi-list" PR (where voters must vote for an individual candidate) with an Israel-type closed national list for votes left over when full simple quota seats had been allocated in districts. These remainders were allocated so as to restore nationwide near-PR, using unique quasi-d'Hondt divisors (1, 2.9, 3.9, 4.9, ...), restricted by a

German-like 5 percent threshold. Given the profusion of parties, most seats were allocated through the national lists. [3](#)

In Israel, some of the closed lists may assign a high rank to some persons who could never win on a personal basis, but no one would know it, because people vote for parties only, with no possibility to indicate personal preferences for one particular candidate. In contrast, in Finland candidates with most personal votes win, sometimes to the dismay of their own party leaders. Mixing the two, the Estonian law required people to vote for personal candidates--and then allocated most seats in disregard of this explicit *vox populi*.

Part of the blame for the outcome went to unsettled conditions; in particular, little information could be gleaned from previous elections, where rules, issues and groupings were utterly different. Voters bore part of the responsibility, because they perversely insisted on voting for parties with less than or hardly above the 5 percent threshold in opinion polls--and then they complained of the parliament being too fractionalized and unrepresentative. However, fractionalization of the electorate was also a well-known given at the time electoral rules were debated. Unsettled conditions and voter volatility made it even more imperative to hew close to the previous electoral rules (so that something familiar would gradually emerge) or at least keep the new rules simple. The reverse occurred. The multilayered political compromise added a complicated and hence unpredictable allocation rule to an inherently volatile public opinion.

The only part of my advice that still is applied is to have a 101 seat parliament, in line with the cube root law of assembly sizes (Taagepera and Shugart 1989:173-183). The Estonian outcome is a prime illustration of a worldwide pattern described several years earlier by Taagepera and Shugart (1989:220, 228):

So, in retrospect, many changes in electoral rules have not been worth the effort and disruption of stability. ... A lack of understanding of the workings of electoral systems has at times led to the neglect of major factors...

Some electoral systems offer complexities that baffle even experts outside the particular country: districts, remainder distribution in superdistricts in which a party can participate only if it has previously gained such-and-such combination of votes, except when it has such-and-such other redeeming features. The enabling and disabling clauses pile on top of each other. ... In conclusion, most games with remainder distribution, adjustment seats, and thresholds are not worthwhile.

Phase 4. In 1995 Estonia had second elections with essentially the same rules as in 1992 (Taagepera 1996). However, popular attitudes had changed. In 1992 people blamed the complex electoral rules for all the political ills. In 1995 they sullenly accepted the rules. They simply had gotten used to them. As of 1996, democracy looks safe in Estonia. The electoral rules, though pointlessly complex, do their job, and there is little need for outside expertise. The risk remains, however, that during an economic downturn the electoral rules may be made a scapegoat (as it happened in Estonia around 1930), and changing them in the midst of a crisis may lead to overcorrection of present shortcomings.

Estonia may not be a typical country (if such exist), and I certainly was not a typical foreign advisor. I was both outsider and insider. During the phase of receptivity to outside advice I joined Western expertise to knowledge of local language and background. In later times (that still continue) the reverse feeling prevailed that expatriates like me qualify neither as credible outsiders nor as acceptable insiders. The puzzling aspect is that my role as advisor on electoral rules stopped by mid-1990, a full two years before my fairly strong run for the presidency of

Estonia. It remains to be seen whether advisors with a more typical Western background recognize anything familiar in my attempt at periodization of attitudes toward foreign advice.

Validity of Western Advice

Is Western advice on electoral systems worth taking? My focus is on advice on rules that convert votes into seats, based on the assumption that the votes are obtained in a fair way. I will not deal with Western law specialists who tighten the wordings and with practitioners of physical setup of elections who help to make sure that the votes are genuine. These are important parts of Western advice, but it is outside my competence.

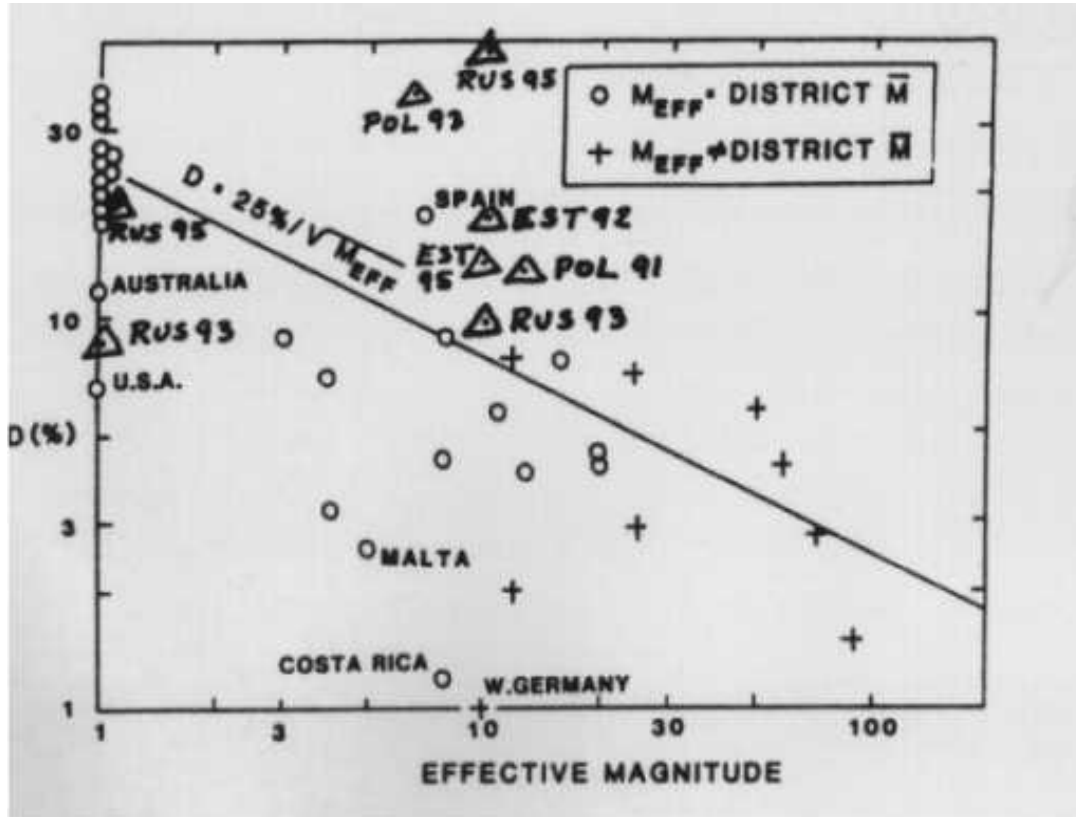
The impact of electoral rules in this narrow sense comes in three main aspects: proportionality of representation, stability of government, and party constellation. Some degree of proportionality and stability are desiderata in their own right. Party constellation is an important intervening variable. I try to discuss them separately, but these three aspects interact to such a degree that before discussing proportionality I will have to touch already on party constellation.

Please note that I say "party constellation," not "party system." The word "system" should be reserved for stable constellations where the same party labels occur for many elections in a row and popular votes do not gyrate wildly. There is nothing systemic in the kaleidoscopic reversals observed in many emerging democracies from one election to the next. Nay, *even "kaleidoscopic" is overstating the degree of stability*, because in a kaleidoscope the same pieces recur in new combinations, while in emerging democracies even the very pieces (parties and visible leaders) can change.

Proportionality. As a measure of the lack of proportionality of seats to votes, I will use Loosemore-Hanby D rather than the recently prominent Gallagher's least-square measure (cf. Lijphart 1994:60-61). As far as I know, everything I say applies regardless of the measure chosen. The general pattern for stable democracies is that D tends to decrease with increasing "effective magnitude" (which takes into account legal thresholds, adjustment seats, etc.). This is shown in Figure 1, where I have added some recent Estonian, Polish and Russian data points to the worldwide pattern of the early 1980s (from Taagepera and Shugart 1989:141). The average pattern is close to $D=25 \text{ percent}/M^{*.5*}$ (inverse square root), but some countries deviate strongly and need to be discussed before one offers simple advice to emerging democracies.⁴

It might be taken for granted that proportional representation (PR) is most fully established (thus leading to low D) by so-called PR systems, but there is a kink. Highly proportional rules entice low-support parties to run in the hope of winning at least a few seats. When many such parties run and fail, then D may actually be fairly high. Weimar Germany was a case in point. The problem can be especially acute in recently established democracies, where lack of previous elections deprives party leaders of a realistic base line for evaluating their chances. Highly proportional rules may continue to keep up the hopes of groups who repeatedly almost won a seat, or actually won it in some past elections, or saw similar small groups occasionally win. Such hopes are reinforced when the general party constellation is unstable. The existence of marginal parties contributes to such instability, so that the situation is self-reinforcing, resulting in a higher-than-average D.

Figure 1. Deviation from PR and Effective Magnitude in the 1980's



Source: stable democracies (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989: 4); Estonia, Poland, and Russia in the 1990's, calculated by author.

Conversely, simple plurality in one-seat districts would be expected to produce a large D through the so-called Duverger mechanical effect: Smaller parties may get votes but no seats. Thus usually D is high when $M=1$, but again there is a kink. If small-party voters and leaders learn their lesson from the mechanical effect really well and the so-called Duverger's psychological effect sets in with full force, the small parties may fold, opportunity to waste votes on them stops, and D can become rather low. The prime example is the United States House (see Figure 1), where third parties have been squeezed out and the two major parties obtain fairly proportional representation.⁵

Given that highly PR rules entice small parties to run, lose, and boost D (a counter-Duvergerian psychological effect), and highly majoritarian (or rather pluralitarian) rules may reduce D by utterly discouraging third parties from running, Matthew Shugart and I have proposed a vague "law of conservation of deviation from proportionality" (Taagepera and Shugart 1989:122-123, 209, 230) that can operate in some cases. It should be stressed that for most stable democracies the effective magnitude still tends to reduce D . The U.S. is among the outliers in Figure 1.

In that mixed light, what advice is one to give to emerging democracies who wish to keep D reasonably low? In the presence of a highly fractionalized constellation of short-lived parties, almost nothing seems to work in the short run.

A rather high threshold of representation (say, 5 percent) may discourage small parties in the presence of much larger parties (cf. W. Germany in Figure 1) but much less so when even the largest parties fluctuate between 10 and 20 percent in opinion polls, as has been the case in Estonia. Under such conditions a group with 3 percent support in opinion polls can toy with the hope of surpassing the 5 percent threshold. Looking at previous gyrations in public opinion such groups may even have semi-rational hopes to become the largest party (or part of it, through an ad hoc electoral coalition that breaks up after election). Yet most of such parties will fail, boosting D.

Even a more drastic threshold in Poland 1993 (5 percent for parties and 8 percent for coalitions) did not discourage fractionalization, and D reached 37.9 percent. It remains to be seen whether the demonstration effect of 1993 will reduce the number of parties and hence D in the next elections, if the same thresholds are maintained. Meanwhile, however, the high D helps to delegitimize the regime as "undemocratic."

Low-magnitude districts have a high inherent effective threshold, which should increase D (unless low M induces the small parties to vanish, as in the U.S.), but their demonstration effect is indirect and thus even weaker than that of an explicit nationwide threshold. With low-magnitude districts, if some parties succeed in repeatedly attaining a large vote, they may eventually crowd out smaller parties and independents by throwing their superior resources into selected districts. But if all parties are small, this consolidation cannot even begin. The Duverger mechanical process cannot produce a demonstration effect when even the largest parties are so small that success depends on existence of local strongholds. [6](#)

In sum, the goal of fairly low D is unattainable in face of extreme fractionalization. The only advice one might give is to keep the rules simple, given that nothing is gained by making them more complex.

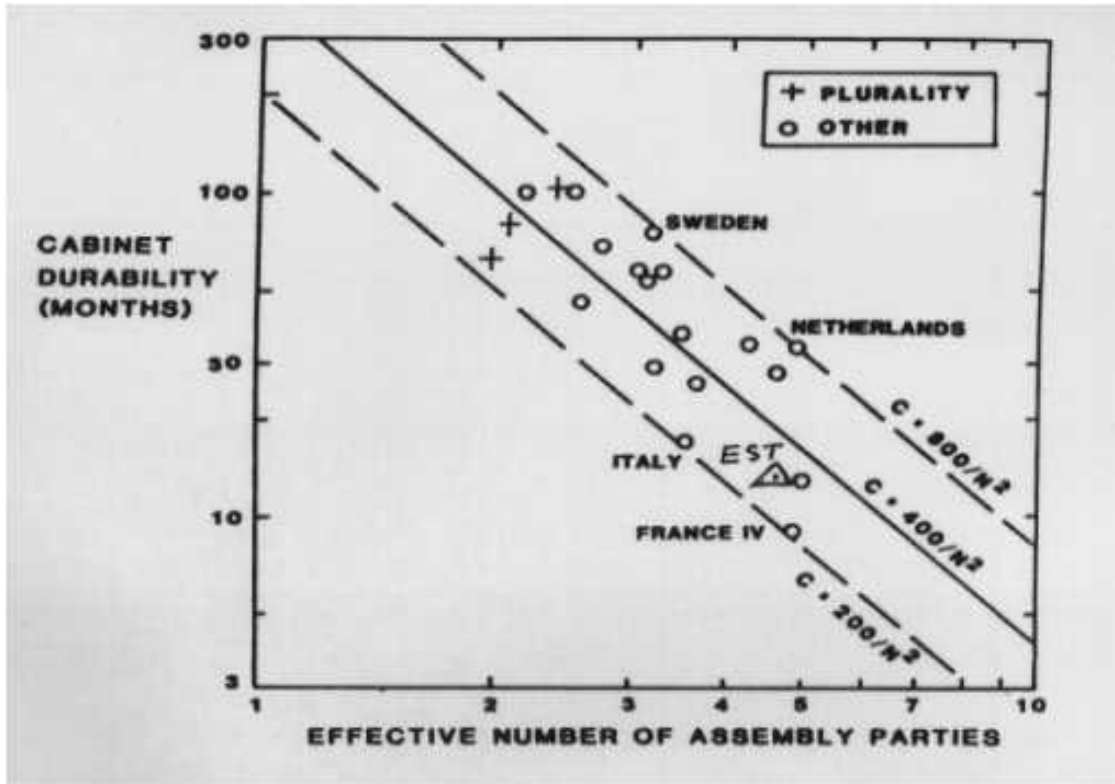
Stability of government and the inverse square law. Governmental stability has many distinct aspects and depends on many factors independent of electoral rules. One of its aspects is cabinet durability (C), which in the case of longstanding parliamentary regimes is tied to the effective number of assembly parties (NS) by an inverse square law: $C = 400 \text{ months}/NS^2$ (Taagepera and Shugart 1989: 100)--see Figure 2.

This law has theoretical justification in terms of communication channels, but it represents an average over a long time. Tentatively, I have added to the stable democracies in Figure 2 Estonia, which has had three cabinets over 37 months (October 1992 to November 1995). The law cannot predict with any certainty the duration of any given cabinet. One may also presume that the first cabinets in emerging democracies are specially fragile and would tend to fall below the average (although this is not the case for Estonia). If so, then it would be even more imperative for new democracies to try to keep the number of parties down. This advice is easier to give than implement, because this brings us to the question of number of parties.

Party constellation. In stable democracies the effective number of parties is affected by electoral rules, chiefly by effective magnitude (M) or effective threshold, but also by assembly size. In particular, the effective number based on assembly seats (NS) is expected on theoretical grounds to be around $NS = 2.15 M^3/16$, and this is close to the average pattern observed (Taagepera and Shugart 1993). However, N is also affected by the number of political issue dimensions and historical tradition. Consequently, while the average pattern of N vs. effective magnitude (or threshold) fits theoretical expectations the correlation is limited (Lijphart 1994: 99). In newly democratizing countries the impact of electoral rules on the number of parties is

even more diffuse and slow, to the point of no correlation observed in the short run--and possibly for a long time to come.

Figure 2 Inverse Square Law of Cabinet Durability.



Source: stable democracies (Taagepera, 1989: 100); Estonia 1992-1995 calculated by author.

The effective number of assembly parties also is correlated with the number of political issue dimensions (I), the average pattern being simply $NS=I+1$ (Lijphart 1984: 148, Taagepera and Grofman 1985, Taagepera and Shugart 1989:93). In the newly democratizing countries, however, the usual major issue dimensions (wealthy-poor, rural-urban, ethnic) are split and distorted by the rapidly changing situations of many people. Above all, the basic issues are often overshadowed by the desire of many leaders to head their own little party with no clear niche in the issue dimensions space.

As for historical tradition, it enters in indirect and diffuse ways. Thus Latvia's and Estonia's profusion of parties compared to relative restraint in Lithuania reminds one not only of similar tendencies in the 1920s but also of the unification of Lithuania in the 1300s, compared to splintered resistance to German conquest further north. The tradition often includes contradictory elements (such as $M=100$ in Estonia in the 1920s but $M=1$ in the late 1930s), and leaders and popular moods will claim the parts they happen to like. It is easier to use historical tradition to explain away everything in retrospect than to forecast or base recommendations on it.

When it comes to the restrictive effect of low district magnitudes and high thresholds on the number of parties, the observations made for deviation from PR apply: The pressures by

electoral rules take a long time to have an impact. Moreover, the relationship between magnitude and the number of parties is diffuse even in established democracies.

Once more, *the prime advice is to keep the electoral rules simple*, because nothing is gained by adding complexity of rules to the complex flux of social change. For reasons of simplicity, I would recommend discouraging fractionalization by using small multiseat districts rather than thresholds. Some district magnitude has to be selected (including the possibility of a single nationwide district) -- this is a step that cannot be omitted for the sake of simplification. In contrast, thresholds can be avoided -- and their magic, based largely on German experience, has worn off. This said, I have no illusion that low-magnitude districts are a panacea, much less that their effects, if any, would be rapid.

The second major advice is to *keep for at least three elections whatever rules a country has picked* and then change them only marginally, rather than get rid of the ills one knows by diving into the unknown. If the existing rules are complex, this advice conflicts with recommendation of simplicity. But do not rush to simplify. Hurried attempts at simplification all too often end up adding another layer of complexity. The first few times a set of electoral rules is used gives precious little idea of what the outcomes will be once the leaders and voters learn to use the system and adjust to it. Protest against a new rule often is a protest against its newness rather than its content. If you have to change, change the district magnitude or nationwide threshold only marginally and see what happens. *Do not make huge alterations where fine tuning may be all that is needed.*

Beyond the recommendations of simplicity and incrementalism of changes, little advice can be given that might not yield short-run results very different from those observed in an average established democracy. We lack as yet clear insights into the peculiar functioning of emerging democracies as a group, compared to the established ones. As for the special nature of a given country, I lack clear insight even for my native land, and I doubt that any electoral rules specialist, native or foreign, can do much better for any emerging democracy. We might as well be guided by universal generalities established empirically (such as D vs. M, Figure 1) and sometimes also theoretically (such as C vs. N, Figure 2). At best, they will have the desired impact in the long run. At worst, they would do no more harm than any other advice offered on fuzzier grounds.

Feedback from Emerging Democracies

The preceding advice, of course, applies only if one believes that such universal relationships 1) can exist on philosophical grounds, and 2) have been established with sufficient theoretical and empirical credibility. Reworded, it is the issue I mentioned at the beginning: 1) Can there be a science of electoral systems? 2) If so, does it already exist? Or is only an art of electoral systems available to us because a science is not possible or does not yet exist?

After discussing the advice given to emerging democracies, it is time to touch briefly on the reverse aspect: What light does the experience of newly democratizing countries cast on existing studies of electoral systems? My answer is: not much, at the present stage of development.

The study of any system has to begin with stable, steady state cases, even when the unstable cases offer more interest. Thermodynamics of closed systems has to be worked out to a fair degree before thermodynamics of open systems can be approached. Change is more complex than steady state and cannot be fruitfully tackled before the laws prevailing in steady state are

reasonably well established. This we have not yet done in electoral systems, although we are making headway.

It comes as no surprise, if the outcomes in as yet unstable democracies do not fit the patterns found in the stable ones. It only reminds us (in case we have forgotten) that all scientific laws and rules apply only within certain frameworks. Newton's second law, as usually worded, applies only at speeds much lower than the speed of light. Such limits on the range of applicability are important parts of the laws. Whatever helps to delineate the limits is valuable. But even here the experience of recent democracies does not add much to the numerous deviating cases among stable democracies. The large number of parties is more puzzling (and hence can contribute more to understanding the limits on Duverger's rule) in India 1996 than in Russia 1996.

Things look different for those who believe that the study of electoral systems is inherently bound to remain an art. This seems to be the position of Dieter Nohlen (1996). At the 1996 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, fair attention was paid to deviations from Duverger's rule ("law"+"hypothesis") in East European elections, with some (e.g., Jasiewicz 1996) ascribing them to the unsettled conditions and some others (e.g., Moser 1996) raising doubts about the universality of Duverger's rule. I will not go into details because I plan to write a separate comment on it. Given the slow process of the underlying psychological effect, no one should expect Duverger's rule to apply during the first several elections with the same election rules; therefore such data cannot prove or disprove the rule.

To the extent there is philosophical desire to disbelieve the possibility of a science of electoral systems, there is no point in my getting into an argument. I simply say something akin to "Eppur si muove" and continue to find out more about the regularities of stable electoral systems, while they can have their fun doing something else. As for advice to emerging democracies, I recognize that at our present state of knowledge about non-steady-state electoral systems the scientist has as yet little more to offer than the artist or the philosopher.

Some artists have better bedside manners than some scientists. The scientist may be more tempted to behave like the tailor of Marrakesh, because s/he believes that universal laws will eventually catch up with the emerging democracies. But the artist may also carry heavy baggage - of a philosophic and normative kind. In the long run the client may be slightly better off with the scientist, but the choice is up to the client.

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Endnotes

1. This paper was prepared for roundtable on "Electoral Systems for Emerging Democracies: Experiences and Suggestions," 12 to 15 November 1996, Sorup Herregard, Denmark.
2. September to February: School of Social Sciences, University of California, Irvine, CA 92697, USA; 714 824-6137; fax 714 824-8762; RTAAGEPE@UCI.EDU. April to August: Dept. of Political Science, Tartu University, EE-2400 Tartu, Estonia; fax 372 7 465-154, also 583; taagepera@rubiin.physic.ut.ee; mtaagepe@ut.ee
3. Note that the German-like 5 percent threshold failed to bring a German-like low number of parties. This was so not only because other components of the electoral rules were different. Even an exact copying of the German electoral laws can bring very different results, depending on country size and political history.
4. The equation is empirical, although we may be on the threshold of giving the square root a theoretical justification. Lijphart's results (1994:99), using the least square measure and effective thresholds (which are essentially the inverses of effective magnitudes) seem to fit a similar pattern with a lower constant: $LSq=15 \text{ percent}/M.5$. See Taagepera and Shugart (1989: 166-269) for examples of calculating effective M for complex systems. If a 5 percent threshold dominates the rules, then $Meff=50 \text{ percent}/T=10$.
5. While D among parties is pushed down, the deviation from "PR of viewpoints" may remain high: Many voters have to vote for the lesser evil, choosing between two large coalitions both of which may keep their most burning issues on the back burner. This lack of representation of minority viewpoints may explain part of the low electoral participation in the U.S.
6. In Poland 1991 and 1993 simultaneous elections in one-seat (Senate) and large-magnitude (Sejm) districts brought comparable fractionalization of the two assemblies (Jasiewicz 1996). It is not clear, in the absence of votes data for the Senate, whether D was comparable. In Russia 1993 and 1995 the half of the Duma elected in one-seat districts had less fractionalization of votes and a lower D than the nationwide district subject to a 5 percent threshold (Moser 1996),

but the underlying circumstances are too complex to draw conclusions based on electoral rules alone (White, Rose and McAllister 1996). It has been noted a long time ago (cf. Rae 1971:161) that plurality rule in one-seat districts actually has an extremely low threshold of inclusion (representation) in the presence of numerous candidates, leading to counter-Duvergerian possibilities. ??