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# Are mixed electoral systems still “the best of both worlds”? The review of public choice special issue: Mixed electoral systems<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

By all accounts, the development and implementation of mixed electoral systems is an ongoing process. We continue to learn from theory and practice regarding fundamental tenets of these systems as well as contextual idiosyncrasies of their use with various countries' electorates. It remains uncontroversial whether trade-offs exist, but determining priority features has attracted considerable attention in both policy and academic circles. Moreover, exactly what trade-offs will be most potent within the complexity of real elections is often less than apparent. Thus, iteration and reform have been central to the development of these systems towards their promised paradigm. This review of the *Public Choice Special Issue: Mixed Electoral Systems* (Vol. 204, Issue 1–2) provides an overview of what we have learned to date about the promises and pitfalls of mixed electoral systems through historical analysis of hybrid systems, case studies of modern mixed electoral systems, statistical and formal theoretical analysis of features of mixed electoral systems, and, finally, proposed reforms of mixed electoral systems.

**Keywords:** mixed electoral systems, electoral reform, strategic voting, party strategies, public choice.

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## Short introduction to mixed electoral systems

In his 1967 work entitled *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*, Douglas W. Rae describes the mixed electoral system for the German Bundestag and the system for the Irish Dáil as “Two Unusual Formulas.” In Rae’s opinion, the unusualness of the German system stems from the fact that it is a hybrid of proportional (PR) and majority formulas. We may consider this combination of two “classic” electoral formulas within a single system precisely as a constitutive feature of mixed electoral systems (MESs or “Mixed-Member Systems”) (Shugart & Wattenberg, 2005; Farrell, 2011) or “Combined Systems” (Norris, 2007). As David Farrell notes (2011, p. 8–9), the principal defining feature of MESs is “that they involve the combination of different electoral formulas (plurality or majority, and proportional) in one election.” Andre Blais and Luis Massicotte (1996, p. 115) define MESs as “systems where different formulas (plurality, i.e., FPTP and PR; majority, e.g. second ballot and PR) are used simultaneously in a single election.” For Matthew S. Shugart and Martin P. Wattenberg (2005, p. 10), mixed-member electoral systems represent “a variant of multiple-tier systems, with the specific proviso that one tier must entail allocation of seats nominally, whereas the other must entail allocation of seats by lists.” According to Federico Ferrara *et al.* (2005, p. 17), “an electoral system is ‘mixed’ if more than one formula is employed to distribute legislative seats.”

The connection between seats assigned in single-member districts (SMDs) and multi-member districts (MMDs), as well as the connection between the votes cast in SMDs and MMDs, are other important aspects of MESs. Building on this, we can distinguish:

- Mixed Parallel systems or Mixed-Member Majoritarian (MMM) that have no vote or seat connection – the majoritarian and PR tiers function independently: in both tiers, votes are cast separately, and the seats are calculated independently (e.g., Japan, Lithuania, Venezuela);
- Mixed Compensatory systems, in which only votes are connected while seats are assigned independently (Hungary);
- Mixed Proportional systems or Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP), in which only seats are connected (Germany, New Zealand);
- Mixed Combined systems, in which both votes are used for calculations, and the numbers of seats in both tiers are connected (German states of Bavaria and (until 2021) Baden-Württemberg) (Flis *et al.*, 2025).

As noted by J. Flis *et al.* (2025)

A popular justification behind mixed systems is that they combine “the best ingredients” from the majoritarian and proportional worlds. The majoritarian part allows for a simple and clear choice among persons, while the PR part helps correct for the inevitable disproportionality and compensates for especially strong losers in the majoritarian part.

The promise of combining the best of both electoral worlds (majoritarian and PR) spurred the popularity of MESs. A turning point occurred in the early 1990s, when some countries of the former Soviet bloc, undergoing political transformation, began to introduce mixed

electoral formulas into their legislation (e.g., Russia, Ukraine, Hungary). In the mid-1990s, countries with stable democratic systems began to abandon their existing electoral systems in favor of MESs (e.g., Italy, New Zealand, Japan). The following years constituted a period in which more countries adopted MESs, which we can compare to the realities of the early twentieth century, when various states abandoned majority systems in favour of PR systems (Golder, 2005). Data from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance show that between 1991 and mid-2025, 233 mixed elections to national parliaments were held in 48 countries worldwide. In 2025, approximately 30 countries used MESs to elect their parliaments. Notably, this system also serves to elect representative bodies at levels below the national level, such as the Scottish Parliament (Miller, 1999) or the state parliaments of the vast majority of German federal states (Massicotte, 2003). Many countries have considered the UK (Gay, 1998; Farrel, 2005), Canada (Weaver, 2005; Scarpaleggia, 2016), or are considering Poland (Michalak, 2023; Flis *et al.*, 2025) implementing this electoral system.

The proliferation of MESs and their highly complex and diverse structure have made them the subject of numerous studies focusing on legal issues, the electoral behavior of political parties, candidates, and voters, as well as the consequences of MESs for party systems and the process of forming a government. In July 2025, the *Public Choice Special Issue: Mixed Electoral Systems* (Vol. 204, Issue 1–2) edited by Marek M. Kamiński, Jarosław Flis, and Bernard Grofman, was published. The authors of texts comprising the *Special Issue* are recognized researchers of electoral systems. The articles address issues such as the history of trade-offs in hybrid systems, the functioning of individual MESs (case studies of Germany, Japan, South Korea, Italy, Hungary), comparative analysis of MESs, as well as reforms involving MESs (Poland, Germany).

This text provides an overview of the articles comprising the *Public Choice Special Issue: Mixed Electoral Systems*.

## Ian McLean: The history of trade-offs in hybrid systems

Ian McLean’s (2025) discussion of hybrid choice systems centers on a fundamental trade-off between indeterminacy and manipulability issues, as canonically exhibited in the Condorcet and Borda rules for voting. These issues persist in their relevance to the design, implementation, and reform of mixed electoral systems today. McLean’s analysis sheds light on the innovations historically employed to counteract their effects in small- $n$  settings. Indeterminacy, failure to choose a winner, occurs when using the Condorcet rule. Manipulability, the existence of an incentive to vote disingenuously that derives from the violation of the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) condition, occurs when using the Borda rule. The various hybrids covered work to minimize the occurrence of these issues, but fail to fully account for their influence, an impossible feat according to Arrow’s theorem. The strides made by these hybrid systems come at the cost of greater complexity in all cases and computational intractability in some. In his text, McLean discusses six distinct systems: Condorcet-Kemeny-Young, Danou, Dodgson 1, Dodgson 2, Nanson-Baldwin, and Balinski-Laraki.

Condorcet’s rule chooses a winner by comparing each possible pair of candidates and selecting the one that wins every pairwise comparison. In cases involving three or more can-

didates, it is common for Condorcet's rule not to choose a winner. For example, no winner exists in this profile: 1:  $xyz$  2:  $yzx$  3:  $zxy$ .

Borda's rule involves ranking each candidate and assigning equidistant and increasing numbers to each candidate, starting from the lowest-ranked. After every voter has cast their vote, the winner of the election is the candidate with the highest total number of points. Manipulation becomes optimal when a voter can rank candidates in a different order than their preferences suggest and achieve a better outcome than they would by voting straightforwardly.

The Condorcet-Kemeny-Young hybrid examines all possible rankings of candidates and utilizes pairwise comparisons to assign a score to each ranking. Thus, it is a hybrid system that solves indeterminacy but remains subject to manipulation. Moreover, it is computationally highly demanding and has yet to be used in a significant setting (Bartholdi *et al.*, 1989; McLean, 2025).

Borda's rule does not always select the Condorcet winner, a result of its violation of IIA, and a troubling feature to Danou. Using Borda scores, Danou's proposed hybrid goes through up to four steps of choosing a winner: 1) Choose the absolute majority winner; 2) If none exists, choose the Condorcet winner; 3) If none exists, eliminate absolute majority losers and Condorcet losers; 4) Choose the plurality winner from remaining candidates (Daunou 1803 in McLean & Urken, 1995, p. 274).

Dodgson 1 involves using the Borda rule as a tiebreaker when no Condorcet winner exists (Dodgson, 1874). In Dodgson 2, the first step is also to look for a Condorcet winner. Failing this, the winner is the one who requires the lowest number of pairwise interchanges to become a Condorcet winner (Dodgson, 1876; Bartholdi *et al.*, 1989). The algorithm that determines this winner is an NP-hard problem, and thus, the method is computationally intractable (Hemaspaandra *et al.*, 1997).

Both Nanson's and Baldwin's methods use Borda scores and iteratively eliminate candidates from contention. The difference is that, in each round, Nanson's removes all candidates with below-average scores, while Baldwin's removes only the candidate with the lowest score (Nanson 1882 in McLean & Urken, 1995, p. 344; Baldwin, 1926). These systems choose Condorcet winners when they exist and are less manipulable than the Borda rule while also being computationally tractable (Narodytska *et al.*, 2011).

Balinski and Laraki frame their system in terms of absolute grades in an effort to transcend the Condorcet-Borda trade-off (Balinski & Laraki, 2010, 194–8 and Theorems 10.3 and 10.4). This involves voters assigning candidates to ostensibly meaningful categories from which their relative rankings are then derived.

In principle, no hybrid scheme can be both impervious to strategic voting and always choose a victor (Arrow, 1951; Satterthwaite, 1975). McLean's analysis explicates the efforts of social choice scholars to take steps toward an implementable system for small- $n$  elections that, while imperfect, addresses these issues usefully.

## Ko Maeda: How the mixed electoral system frustrated Japanese voters

Researchers of electoral systems have devoted considerable attention to the impact of different types of electoral systems on citizen participation in voting (Norris, 2007; Perez-Linan, 2001; Rich, 2014; Keena, 2025). Ko Maeda’s research on electoral behavior in the mixed electoral system for the Japanese House of Representatives proves that not only institutional factors, but also the strategies adopted by political parties influence turnout.

The single non-transferable vote (SNTV) electoral system has been in place in Japan since 1947. It was not only one of the factors behind the Liberal Democratic Party’s (LDP) dominant position in the Japanese political arena, but also contributed to the formation of electoral competition patterns, which Steven R. Reed and Michael F. Thies (2005) refer to as “pathology.” As both researchers note, “the primary pathology of SNTV was the intraparty competition it generated for the large parties, particularly the long-ruling LDP. Intraparty competition, it has been argued, led to a personalistic brand of politics, in which copartisan candidates attempted to differentiate themselves from each other by plying voters with gifts, favors, and pork” (Reed, Thies, 2005, p. 155). On the eve of the first mixed election to the Japanese House of Representatives, Purnendra C. Jain (1995, p. 405) wrote:

*Kinken seiji*, or money politics, has long been regarded as a cancer, slowly poisoning Japan’s body politics. An increasing number of discoveries of corrupt political practices and financial scandals in recent years made Japan’s ordinary public weary and distrustful of their politicians, leading to political apathy, to say the least.

Among other things, the electoral law reform passed by the Japanese parliament in January 1994 replacing the existing electoral system with a mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) electoral system intended to counteract the phenomenon of voter disengagement from participating in the political process. Has Japan achieved this goal after thirty years of the electoral reform? Data on turnout in Japanese parliamentary elections since 1996 not only indicate that the problem remains, but that it has gradually worsened. Between 1947 and 1993, electoral turnout fell below 70% only five times, but never below 65%. In contrast, in the mixed parliamentary elections held between 1996 and 2021, turnout exceeded 60% only three times.

In his search for the reasons behind lower voter participation and lower voter satisfaction, Maeda points to the practice of Japanese political parties utilizing so-called “stand-down agreements”. In his opinion, “the increasingly prevalent practice of coordinated candidate nominations in Japan is frustrating voters who cannot vote for their preferred party in their district, leading to voter disengagement and dissatisfaction” (Maeda, 2025, p. 32). Japanese political parties use “stand-down agreements” as a tool for coordinating the process of fielding candidates in SMDs, thereby attempting to avoid the dispersion of votes between similar (in political and ideological terms) candidates. Notably, the current MES in Japan encourages political parties to engage in this kind of practice. In this context, Maeda points in particular to the following features of the MMM electoral system for the Japanese House of Representatives: the functioning of two tiers of the system, two separate votes cast in the PR and plu-

rality tiers, the plurality rule in deciding SMD winners, a larger share of SMD seats, and the absence of a seat linkage between both tiers.

Because political parties engage in “stand-down agreements,” voters in individual SMDs are presented with varied sets of candidates fielded by political parties. As Maeda (2025, p. 39) notes:

In the 2021 general election, for example, less than a quarter of the SMDs had candidates from all of the three largest parties. More than half of the SMDs (157 out of 289) had only one or two candidates from the six largest parties, and no SMDs had five or more candidates from those six parties.

In the Japanese MES, virtually all viable political parties in electoral competition use “stand-down agreements.” The LDP and Komeito utilize this mechanism most effectively. Maeda (2025, p. 35) notes that “in each general election, the LDP sets aside 8 to 10 SMDs where Komeito runs its candidates. In the remaining SMDs, the LDP runs its candidates, and Komeito does not. The LDP gives an endorsement to all Komeito SMD candidates, and Komeito typically endorses about 90% of LDP candidates.” Political parties representing the left (Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) (later Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP)), Japanese Communist Party (JCP), Social Democratic Party (SDP), People’s New Party (PNP) and centrist (Party of Hope and Nippon Ishin no Kai) opposition to the LDP also successfully apply “stand-down agreements.”

Although “stand-down agreements” allow political parties to maximize their election results in the plurality tier of the MMM electoral system, they also have a demobilizing effect on part of their electorate. Based on official electoral results that show the rates of abstention and invalid votes across SMDs, Maeda proves that voters in SMDs in which mainstream parties did not compete but allowed their junior partners to run candidates exhibit greater political disengagement. Voters of these political parties either do not show up at the polling station at all or go but cast invalid votes for the SMD tier. In turn, using data from the *Japanese Electoral Study*, Maeda presents evidence that “citizens who were forced to make an unpleasant vote choice because of the absence of their preferred parties’ candidates were more likely to be dissatisfied with politics than those who did not split their votes” (Maeda, 2025, p. 45).

## Alessandro Chiaramonte & Aldo Paparo: Strategic parties vs non-strategic voters – different reactions to the same electoral system

In their text, Alessandro Chiaramonte and Aldo Paparo address the intriguing issue of strategic voting in Italy’s MES, which has been in place since 2017 (the electoral system established by the *Rosato Law*). Admittedly, electoral researches have already paid much attention to strategic voting in MES in the literature on the subject (Kohno, 1997; Reed, 1999; Karp *et al.*, 2002; Gschwend, 2003; Blais *et al.*, 2004; Gschwend, 2004; Moser & Scheiner, 2005; Benoit *et al.*, 2006; Hermann & Pappi, 2008; Moser & Scheiner, 2009; Salamon, 2014; Plescia, 2016;

Harfst *et al.*, 2018). Nevertheless, there is still a deficit of this kind of research in the context of MESs with a single categorical vote. The combination of two “classic” electoral formulas, which constitutes the most frequently emphasized feature of MESs, usually means that it is taken for granted that voters express their support with two votes. However, an analysis of the family of MESs reveals that it is not uncommon for voters to have only one vote, which they use to express their support for both a candidate and a party list (Ferrara *et al.*, 2005; Shugart & Wattenberg, 2005; Michalak, 2013; Flis *et al.*, 2025). The tradition of Italian mixed parliamentary elections is familiar with this solution from the past, when, between 1994 and 2001, voters cast a single vote to support a candidate and the associated party list competing for seats in the Senate of the Republic. In the new MES based on the *Rosato Law*, a single vote serves to elect both chambers of the Italian parliament.

Chiaromonte and Paparo ask how the plurality or PR tier of the *Rosato* electoral system influenced the electoral strategies of political parties and the voting behavior of Italian voters in 2018 and 2022.

Analyzing the strategies of political parties, Chiaromonte and Paparo (2025, p. 58) note that “in practice, strategic coordination among parties did occur but was far from complete.” As key evidence of strategic coordination, the researchers point to the formation of pre-electoral alliances aimed at supporting joint SMD candidates, especially within the center-left and center-right coalitions in both the 2018 and 2022 elections. However, the plurality component of the electoral system proved insufficiently influential to shape the competition between the two blocs in the Italian electoral arena. The center-right parties, which managed to unite within a single bloc, demonstrated greater capacity to build pre-electoral coalitions (both in 2018 and 2022). On the center-left side, the process of strategic coordination did not result in complete unification. The situation brings to mind the electoral competition for the Chamber of Deputies under the previous MES, in which the leading roles were played by two coalitions (the center-left coalition centered around the Partito Democratico Della Sinistra (PDS) and the center-right coalition centered around Forza Italia (FI)). Nevertheless, in each election, a third force emerged that broke away from the two-bloc competition pattern” in 1994, Patto dell Italia, in 1996, Lega Nord and MS-TF, and in 2001, Rifondazione Comunista (Bartolini, 2002; Bartolini *et al.*, 2004; D’Alimonte, 2005).

Moreover, we may see traces of strategic coordination undertaken by political parties at the level of SMDs. On average, there were 11 SMD candidates in 2018 and 9 SMD candidates in 2022. On the other hand, in the PR tier, Italian voters could choose from an average of 17 party lists in 2018 and 15 lists in 2022. According to Chiaromonte and Paparo (2025, p. 60), “this reduction in the number of candidates, compared to the number of party lists competing in the PR arena, is clearly produced by the electoral system, and by the presence of the plurality SMDs in particular.”

The researchers conclude that we may attribute the impact of the electoral system on the behavior of Italian political parties in 2018 and 2022 to four main factors: 1) the significant PR component of the system; 2) high levels of party system instability; 3) pre-electoral expectations that discouraged coalition-building; and 4) the strategic behavior of ideologically distinct actors like the M5S (Chiaromonte & Paparo, 2025, p. 62).

While Italian political parties, influenced by the plurality tier of the *Rosato* electoral system, attempted to coordinate their strategies, Italian voters largely ignored the incentives for

strategic voting generated by this tier. They behaved as if they were voting in a “pure” PR system. In both 2018 and 2022, Italian voters were primarily interested in party competition in the PR tier of the system, while ignoring competition between candidates in the plurality tier.

What are the reasons for the lack of strategic behavior among Italian voters within the electoral system of the *Rosato Law*? Chiaramonte and Paparo point to the context of the 2018 and 2022 elections, which displayed a lack of fundamental conditions necessary for strategic voting. Among the factors that contributed to this kind of situation, Chiaramonte and Paparo point to: 1) a clear pattern of expected winners at the SMD level as in the vast majority of districts, the center-right candidate was widely expected to win, rendering most SMDs non-competitive; 2) the imbalance between the number of MPs elected in SMDs and those elected through the PR tier; 3) redistricting, which occurred in both 2018 and 2022, and created uncertainty about the balance of power between different political competitors; 4) the unprecedented electoral volatility observed in recent years, which acted as a clear disincentive for voters to abandon their preferred choice for strategic reasons, since even a less viable first-choice candidate could not be confidently ruled out as a potential SMD winner; 5) the lack of the level of competitiveness in SMDs necessary for strategic voting to take place.

Chiaramonte and Paparo’s analysis (2025, p. 67) confirms that “the consequences of an electoral system cannot be fully understood without including the context of its application; and when the context is particularly unstable, political actors cannot be expected to be perfectly rational (*ex post*).”

## Fanni Tanács-Mandák & Attila Horváth: Electoral engineering in “velvet gloves”

Established in Hungary in 1989 as a compromise between the forces of the declining communist regime and the democratic opposition, the MES was considered one of the most complex designs of its kind. Describing the complexity of this system, Kenneth Benoit (1996, p. 164) writes:

During elections, the few political experts who can explain the electoral law are in great demand, giving presentations on television and writing full-page articles in national dailies, with professional graphics and charts, to help the electorate understand how their two ballots will be counted. Generally, these efforts are only partly successful.

Although the electoral system itself was incomprehensible to most Hungarian voters and politicians, it remained essentially unchanged for over two decades until 2011, when, following its electoral victory in 2010, the Fidesz-KDNP coalition initiated a constitutional reform that impacted the electoral system.

In their text, Fanni Tanács-Mandák and Attila Horváth (2025, p. 76) highlight “how an electoral system can be ‘hacked’ by political reasoning that is apparently neutral and ‘well-intentioned’ in a way that the fundamentals of the system (i.e., its mixed type) are retained but still provide a stable advantage to one political force.”

The officially articulated motives for electoral reform by Fidesz-KDNP appear fully justified and neutral in terms of balancing the power in the Hungarian political arena. First, advocates of the reform highlighted the need to adapt the electoral system to the new size of the Hungarian Parliament, which, according to the constitutional amendment, was to have no more than 200 members (compared to the previous 376). Second, the advocates stress the need to restore the equality of votes, which had been undermined by demographic changes in Hungary that did not entail redrawing the boundaries of the SMDs established in 1990. Moreover, advocates mentioned the need to grant suffrage to Hungarians living abroad and to introduce measures facilitating parliamentary representation for national minorities residing in Hungary. Politicians of the ruling Fidesz-KDNP coalition also emphasized the need to replace the majority runoff system with a two-round system, which had been in place in the majority segment, with the FPTP system, considered “cheaper and more transparent and comprehensible” (Tanács-Mandák & Horváth, 2025, p. 80).

Thus, the most important amendments to the Hungarian electoral system introduced in 2011 were the adoption of the FPTP system (in the plurality tier), the introduction of the winner compensation mechanism, the redrawing of the boundaries of SMDs, and the extension of suffrage to Hungarians living abroad.

Tanács-Mandák and Horváth point out that the newly established mechanisms primarily, if not exclusively, favored the parties of the ruling coalition. For example, the introduction of FPTP “resulted in a very comfortable situation for the governing parties as they were ‘guaranteed’ 80–90% of SMD seats.” (Tanács-Mandák & Horváth, 2025, p. 84). Thanks to the new compensation mechanism, Fidesz-KDNP secured six additional seats in 2014 and five each in 2018 and 2022, respectively, which enabled them to achieve a two-thirds majority in parliament. The suffrage extended to Hungarians living abroad also proved beneficial to the ruling parties, as around 95% of the postal ballots at every election have gone to Fidesz-KDNP.

The redrawing of SMD boundaries deserves special attention. The number of SMDs reduced from 176 to 106, which made them more proportional and the weight of votes cast in them more equal. Nevertheless, the process of redrawing the boundaries of the new SMDs raised many doubts, as its lack of transparency gave rise to numerous and justified suspicions of gerrymandering.

Furthermore, 2011 was not the last year in which Fidesz-KDNP introduced changes to the electoral system. “At the end of 2020, just one and a half years before the 2022 general election, the governing parties introduced significant restrictions on setting up party lists” (Tanács-Mandák & Horváth, 2025, p. 90). Under the previous rules, to be eligible for a party list, a political party had to nominate candidates in at least 27 SMDs within at least nine counties and in the capital. Following the reform, the requirement increased to at least 71 SMD candidates within at least 14 counties and in the capital. The ruling coalition justified the need for this amendment by the necessity to limit the scale of the so-called “fake party” phenomenon (parties that run for election solely to qualify for state campaign funding). However, in reality, the aim was to hinder the coordination efforts of opposition parties, which at that time were considering the possibility of presenting one or two electoral lists. The solution introduced effectively compelled the opposition to present a joint electoral list in 2022, which proved to be one of the reasons for its electoral defeat.

Where should we look for the controversy surrounding the reforms of the Hungarian electoral system? Tanács-Mandák and Horváth draw attention to the problem of electoral engineering, the effects of which, although they meet democratic standards, result in benefits that only the governing parties enjoy. Therefore, “the ‘hacking’ of the electoral system may rather be found in the fact that most of the innovations favor Fidesz–KDNP, the largest party of the day, and took advantage of the opposition’s divisions until 2022” (Tanács-Mandák & Horváth, 2025, p. 95).

## Joachim Behnke: How to avoid the “XXL Bundestag”?

Joachim Behnke’s text delivers an insightful analysis of the causes of overhang seats in the German Bundestag electoral system and solutions to mitigate the extent of this phenomenon. Overhang or surplus seats occur when a party wins more single-member district (SMD) mandates in the plurality tier of the MES than the number of seats it would receive under proportional allocation (Nohlen, 2004, p. 436). In practice, this means that if a political party wins more seats in a plurality tier of a mixed MES (so-called direct seats) than would result from the proportional distribution of seats, it has the right to retain those seats, which in turn makes it necessary to increase the regular size of a parliament by those additional seats.

Overhang seats are a feature of Mixed Proportional electoral systems, such as those used for the New Zealand House of Representatives and the German Bundestag. In New Zealand’s mixed parliamentary elections between 1996 and 2023, overhang seats occurred only five times and on a minimal scale in 2005 (1 seat), 2008 (2 seats), 2011 (1 seat), 2014 (1 seat), and 2023 (2 seats). In Bundestag elections, the frequency and scale of overhang seats are much greater. Between 1949 and 2021, there were only four instances (between 1965 and 1976) where no overhang seats appeared. Before German reunification, the number of overhang seats in successive parliamentary elections did not exceed a few (a maximum of 5 in 1961). It was only after German reunification that the number of overhang seats, which occur after each Bundestag election, increased dramatically, reaching 24 in 2009, 44 in 2017, and 35 in 2021.

The emergence of such a large number of overhang seats undermined the proportionality of Bundestag elections. Therefore, in 2013, the authorities introduced the institution of so-called compensatory seats into the electoral law to offset the distortions of proportionality caused by the overhang seats. Although compensatory seats reduced the problem of disproportionality, they exacerbated another problem, which turned out to be the uncontrolled increase in the number of MPs. Since 2002, the regular size of the German Bundestag has been 598 seats. Following the 2002 parliamentary elections, the Bundestag had 603 members. In the following years, this number increased steadily: from 614 in 2005 to 622 in 2009, 631 in 2013, 709 in 2017, and 736 in 2021.

There is no single explanation for the phenomenon of overhang seats in Bundestag elections. Referring to earlier studies, Behnke points to a combination of factors that contribute to overhang seats, including the division of SMDs, voter turnout, vote splitting, and the party system’s structure. In Behnke’s opinion, the fragmentation of the party system is the most important factor behind the large-scale emergence of overhang seats. As he aptly notes, “the

more parties there are, the easier it is for the largest party to achieve overhang mandates by winning all or almost all direct mandates” (Behnke, 2025, p. 111).

However, Behnke (2025, p. 112) points out that “the fragmentation of the party system is an imprecise predictor of the emergence of overhang mandates because the party system can be very fragmented, as at the beginning of the republic, without any overhang mandates arising.” According to Behnke, two conditions must be met for overhang mandates to arise. These are *the potential for the emergence of surplus mandates*, which is greater the further the largest party is below the 50 per cent threshold, and *the possibility of realizing the existing potential*, which depends above all on the share of direct seats won by the strongest party.

For many years, there has been a discussion in Germany on how to address the surplus seats “produced” during successive elections to the Bundestag. We may characterize the reform proposals that emerged in the course of this discussion the importance they attach to the following four normative desiderata: 1) Preserving the regular size of the Bundestag; 2) Inviolability of the winning claim of SMD candidates with a plurality of first votes; 3) Inviolability of the state lists; 4) Maintaining interparty proportionality (Behnke, 2025, p. 118).

The most recent attempt to address the problem of a significant number of overhang seats and the excessive growth of the Bundestag took place in 2023, when the SPD-Green-FDP coalition reformed the Bundestag electoral system based on the principle of non-allocation of SMD seats if the second-vote result does not cover these. Consequently, starting with the Bundestag election on 23 February 2025:

A party at most receives as many mandates in a particular state as it is entitled to there in proportion to its share of second votes. If it has a plurality of first votes in more constituencies than it is entitled to in terms of second votes, only the best constituency winners, the mandates of whom are still covered by the second votes, receive their constituency mandate.

The implementation of this kind of solution has changed the way the Bundestag electoral system works, especially its plurality tier: “constituencies are no longer self-contained areas that autonomously generate mandates or their own mandate claims. Instead, they are used as computational units to create a ranking list based on which seats are allocated” (Behnke, 2025, p. 121)<sup>4</sup>.

## Woojin Moon and Myung Chul Kim: *Liste civetta* in the mixed elections to the National Assembly of the Republic of South Korea

Mixed electoral systems are exceptionally complex structures that provide a context for sophisticated and non-standard, and often manipulative, strategies by political parties, leading to distortions in the intended functioning of the system. Although relatively short, the history of MESs knows many cases of this kind. Among others, let us mention the neutralization

<sup>4</sup> Jarosław Flis *et al.* discuss the consequences of implementing the solution in more detail.

by Italian political parties (through the so-called *liste civetta*) of the *scorporo* compensatory mechanism functioning in the MES for the Chamber of Deputies (Bartolini, 2002; D'Alimonte, 2005) or the tactical division of parties considered in the 1970s within the German Christian Democrats to make the CSU the so-called “fourth party,” which would obtain additional second votes for the Christian Democratic parliamentary majority (Roberts, 2006).

The last case of this kind occurred in South Korea in 2019, where the authorities replaced the existing parallel electoral system to the National Assembly (NA) with a mixed semi-compensatory system (MSCS) to strengthen the multiparty system. As it soon turned out, the consequences of the reform were the opposite of what the initial expectations: “the number of effective parliamentary parties was 2.85 in the 20th NA election held under the parallel system, decreased to 2.09 in the 21st NA election, and slightly increased to 2.12 in the 22nd NA election.” (Moon & Kim, 2025, p. 133).

Woojin Moon and Myung Chul Kim attribute this to the manipulation of the electoral system by major political parties, which has resulted in the neutralization of the compensatory mechanism operating within the MSCS and a shift in the strategic behavior of part of the electorate.

The MSCS for the National Assembly of the Republic of South Korea, established in 2019, distributes 300 seats in the National Assembly through two tiers: plurality (253 seats) and PR (47 seats). In this system, the plurality tier plays a dominant role. Simultaneously, PR seats serve primarily to offset the disproportionality of election results caused by the plurality rule and SMDs. Each voter has two votes: one for a candidate in an SMD and the other for a political party list. For a political party to be eligible for the distribution of PR seats, its list must obtain at least 3% of the votes, or its candidates must win in at least five SMDs. A characteristic feature of the system is the compensatory mechanism, which subtracts SMD seats from the total number of seats a party earns through list votes.

The compensatory mechanism is crucial to understanding the paradoxes arising from the 2019 electoral system. According to its logic, the more seats a political party wins in the plurality tier, the fewer seats it receives from the proportional (compensatory) pool. However, there is a loophole in the electoral system that allows political parties to effectively bypass the compensatory mechanism. Korean electoral law allows political parties to compete for seats in the National Assembly in only one tier of the electoral system. In other words, a political party can nominate its candidates in the plurality tier of the system without having to register a list in the PR tier. The opposite strategy, involving the exclusive registration of a list in the PR tier, is also possible. Thanks to this provision, Korean political parties have successfully implemented the mechanism of so-called satellite parties.

In the 21st and 22nd National Assembly elections, two major parties [the Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) and the United Future Party (UFP)] formed satellite parties strictly for fielding PR candidates. The parent and their satellite parties appear separately on the SMD and PR ballots, with satellite party names styled to resemble their parent party names, leading voters to support both (Moon & Kim, 2025, p. 129).

Before the 2020 National Assembly election, the United Future Party established a satellite party called the Future Korea Party (FKP). In turn, the Democratic Party of Korea formed the

Citizens’ Party of Korea (CPK). This story repeated itself in the 2022 election, when the People Power Party (PPP), successor to the UFP, established a satellite party named the People’s Future Party (PFP), and the Democratic Party of Korea formed a satellite party – the Democratic Alliance of Korea (DAK).

Thanks to satellite parties, major political parties maximize their results in both tiers of the electoral system: in the plurality tier, where their candidates are strong enough to secure victory in a substantial number of SMDs, and in the PR tier, where they are not “penalized by” the compensatory mechanism as seats from the proportional pool go to satellite parties. In this way, the compensation mechanism is neutralized. As Moon and Kim (2025, p. 137) note, “without creating a satellite party in the MSCS, the DPK would have secured six [instead of 17] parallel PR seats in the 21st NA election under the 30-seat cap provision but none [instead of 14] in the 22nd NA election.”

Of course, the “victims” of satellite parties are minor political parties that have not opted for this solution. The best example is the Justice Party (JP), which “won no additional seats in the 21st NA election compared to its performance under the parallel system and then failed to secure any seats in the 22nd NA election despite its merger with the Green Party to broaden its support base.” (Moon & Kim, 2025, p. 132). Moon and Kim’s (2025, p. 132) shows that “if the major parties had not opted for satellite parties, the JP could have potentially doubled its seat count in the MSCS compared to the parallel system.”

The existence of satellite parties in the PR tier of the system also affected the pattern of strategic vote-splitting in the National Assembly elections. Analysts expected the new system, with its dominant plurality tier, to prompt major-party voters to back their party’s candidates in SMDs while allocating their PR votes to minor-party lists. Conversely, they expected minor-party voters, whose candidates had little chance of winning SMD seats, to redirect their SMD votes to major-party contenders to avoid wasting them. At the same time, in the PR tier, they would continue to support the list of a minor party. As the 2020–2022 elections demonstrated, satellite parties weakened the incentives to vote according to this pattern:

In the 21st election, many supporters of DPK candidates switched their list votes from the JP to the CPK, a satellite party of the DPK, where 67.1% of DPK voters cast list votes for the CPK. Despite expecting to greatly benefit from the MSCS, the JP did not gain even a single PR seat in the 21st NA election and failed to win any PR seats in the 22nd NA election, as it did not achieve the electoral threshold of 3% of party list votes (Moon & Kim, 2025, p. 134).

## John Högström: Women’s representation under mixed electoral systems

Many empirical studies have shown that women are better represented in PR systems than in majoritarian systems (Duverger, 1955; Rule, 1987; Paxton, 1997; Kenworthy & Malami, 1999; Lijphart, 1999; Reynolds, 1999; Studlar & McAllister, 2002). The associated theory posits that, in PR systems, the greater number of seats per district is the central mechanism through which this effect operates (Kenworthy & Malami, 1999; Tripp & Kang, 2008). The

exact theoretical mechanism applies to transitions to mixed proportional-majoritarian systems. However, empirical studies of MES have yet to study such transitions, focusing instead on the effects of specific reforms (Roberts *et al.*, 2013; Fiva & Smith, 2017).

Building on this, John Högström (2025) conducted a two-part empirical analysis examining how transitioning to a MES affects women's representation. First, Högström conducted a descriptive analysis on six countries that transitioned from a majoritarian to a MES or from a PR to a MES. Högström compared each country to a similar country in terms of system and culture that did not make the switch. Second, a large-n, the author conducted a longitudinal analysis to examine the effect of the transition from a majoritarian to an MES on female representation. Högström found that transitioning from a majoritarian to a MES does indeed increase representation. Inversely, moving from PR to MES was expected to decrease representation, but no such effect was found.

The six countries and their control countries used in the before-and-after analysis were New Zealand & Canada, Lesotho & Botswana, Pakistan & Bangladesh, the Philippines & Malaysia, Bolivia & Peru, and Venezuela & Colombia. These cases cover changes from majoritarian to MMP, majoritarian to MMM, and PR to any MES, with two cases for each type of change. The central analysis in each case compares Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data on the percentage of women in parliament over the same time frame during which a system change happened in the treatment country (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020). In explaining the trends of the data, Högström provides historical context to isolate the effect of the system changes.

In the multivariate analysis, Högström used three models to examine changes from majoritarian to MMM, majoritarian to MMP, and majoritarian to any MES. Using OLS with fixed effects, Högström found similar and significant effect sizes for all three types of transition, a surprising detail, as moves to MMP systems were expected to have a more substantial effect. Specifically, a 3–3.5% change in women's representation in countries' lower houses was found as a result of a system change, using Varieties of Democracy data (Coppedge *et al.*, 2024). The dataset analyzed included countries classified as electoral autocracies, electoral democracies, or liberal democracies according to the Regimes of the World index during the years 1980–2010. Notably, this analysis controlled for the existence of a gender quota, level of democracy, level of participation in civil society by women, and GDP per capita.

## Alex Keena: Political participation in mixed elections

Classical political theory posits that preferences in larger electoral districts tend to be more varied and complex, negatively affecting the average benefit from participation (Dahl & Tufte, 1973). More recent empirical work, focusing on elections that use plurality to determine winners, finds support for this relationship at all government levels (Oliver, 2000; Bowen, 2010; Keena, 2016; 2019).

Thus, while research has consistently found the relationship between electoral district size and political participation to be negative, this work has focused on FPTP systems. Alex Keena (2025) expands this analysis to include MESs and finds that the effect persists, conditional on tier linkage. In compensatory systems, those that transfer seats or votes according to proportion, the effect diminishes, whereas in parallel voting systems, the effect is significant. We

can reasonably attribute this to there being fewer “wasted” votes in compensatory systems, a feature that is legible to voters.

Keena (2025) employed the Riker-Ordeshook model to highlight the mechanisms through which compensatory voting systems theoretically attenuate the size-turnout effect (Riker & Ordeshook, 1968). In the model,  $P$ , the probability that a voter’s choice determines the winner,  $B$ , the gain from one’s preferred candidate winning, and  $D$ , the personal value of voting, all decreased with district size. The effect on  $P$  was direct, while the effects on  $D$  and  $B$  were, due to the change in politicians’ incentives, away from personal interactions and policy promises in both campaigning and policymaking (Keena, 2019; Gerring & Veenendaal, 2020). The importance of marginal votes in compensatory systems decreased the intensity of these effects in this framework, thus motivating Keena’s hypotheses.

Through regression analysis and using a sample of ten national legislatures that included 1,344 district-level elections, Keena demonstrated a relationship between tier linkage and electoral district size dependency. The sample included four countries with compensatory systems, of which three showed a positive correlation between size and turnout, as hypothesized. Of the other six countries that used parallel systems, five showed the predicted negative correlation between size and turnout. Thus, despite the small sample of countries, Keena showed a clear relationship.

This analysis suggests one facet of the design of MESs that warrants attention in growing electorates. However, Keena brings attention to the case of South Korea, the one case of a compensatory system analyzed that shows a negative correlation between size and turnout. Having recently switched to this system, parties have tactically adjusted by vote-splitting, thereby rendering the reforms ineffective in terms of citizens’ perceptions of their voting power (Cho, 2020).

## Dušan Vučićević: Institutional legacies and current electoral competition under a mixed electoral system

Dušan Vučićević’s article provides a fascinating analysis of the factors shaping electoral competition in SMDs that form the nominal tier of MESs. The main context of Vučićević’s analysis was not the formal design of the MES but the historical legacies that shape electoral competition. In Vučićević’s opinion, it is precisely “institutional legacies that shape district competition and contamination after the adoption of MESs more strongly than do new institutional incentives” (Vučićević, 2025, p. 184). Therefore, Vučićević asked, in what ways does pre-reform party competition affect the contamination of SMD competition in MESs?

Vučičević (2025, p. 185) points out that “the design of an MES is fundamentally shaped by the type of political regime that introduces it.” In old democracies, MESs arose as a result of conscious electoral engineering, which aimed to address the dysfunctions of the political system generated by the previous electoral system. In new democracies, MESs “were *ad hoc* creations born of negotiations among key political actors who entered into them with their own party-specific and opposing preferences” (Vučićević, 2025, p. 185). In nondemocratic regimes, where regime elites imposed electoral reform, the introduction of MESs did not aim at maximizing mandates and political power but rather at creating a semblance of democratic

legitimacy. In competitive authoritarian regimes, where authorities alter electoral rules before each election due to ongoing disputes, elections are characterized by power struggles between the government and the opposition on two fronts: disputes over votes and disputes over electoral rules.

To examine whether the legacy of the past plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of electoral competition within SMDs, Vučićević analyses election results from 26,198 SMDs across twenty-five countries and 141 elections. The group of countries studied presents diverse party landscapes surrounding the implementation of MESs: one-party-system breakdown (in ten instances), dominant party legacy (in six instances), multiparty legacy (in nine instances), and two-party pre-reform competition (in four instances).

Vučičević's research confirms that previous and inherited patterns of behavior influence adjustments to new electoral rules: "Neither parties nor voters will immediately adjust their behavioral strategies in response to the altered incentives of new electoral rules. Their behavior following electoral reforms is shaped by candidacy strategies and voting patterns carried over from previous elections" (Vučićević, 2025, p. 199). The exceptions in this regard are one-party-system breakdowns and the introduction of MESs, which represent genuine critical junctures. This is because "before these reforms, in many cases spanning decades, there was a lack of multiparty politics, with elections being essentially staged events dominated by a single actor. In the new context, elections were a novelty for all involved actors (...) with evolving voting patterns and candidacy strategies." (Vučićević, 2025, p. 195). On the other hand, "in countries that entered the reform process with two-party systems or where the hegemonic party introduced MESs to create space for opposition parliamentary representation, competition in SMDs tended to align more closely with Duvergerian equilibrium."

## Susumu Shikano & Erik S. Herron: Theoretical model of vote decisions in mixed electoral systems

Strategic, insincere voting is argued to exist in MESs, both in the PR and plurality tiers (Bawn, 1999; Pappi & Thurner, 2002; Shikano *et al.*, 2009). However, such arguments tend to focus on only one of these tiers at a time. Further, a subset of analyses, those using the controlled comparison approach, assume independent decision-making processes between tiers (Moser & Scheiner, 2012). In contrast, the contamination approach focuses on dependencies between tiers (Ferrara *et al.*, 2005). In their text, Susumu Shikano and Erik S. Herron (2025) address the micro-foundations of this interdependency. More specifically, their model examines how risk aversion when selecting both a national-level party and a district-level candidate influences voters' incentives. Furthermore, authors compared this effect under simultaneous and sequential ballots.

The technical framework of the model builds directly from Black's (1978), but incorporates uncertainty in the implementation of candidates' announced policies. Moreover, the uncertainties of candidates' and parties' announced policies had a non-zero correlation, creating dependence in voters' decisions across the two tiers. This feature enables risk diversification, influencing voters' choices.

Under the simultaneous choice setup, voters directly considered the distance between their ideal policy and each candidate/party’s announced position, as well as the uncertainty surrounding the implementation of such announced positions. The model predicts that a favored party-candidate pair is more likely to be split as the uncertainties of their positions increase relative to their opponents’ and/or are more correlated with each other. Authors added pivot probabilities, the likelihood of a vote being decisive between two alternatives, to the model to capture the risk of “wasted” votes (Black, 1978). The essential prediction is that, as a split-ticket vote becomes less likely to be decisive for the favored candidate, it becomes more likely to occur.

The sequential choice version of the model predicts less split-ticket voting than the simultaneous choice. This difference is magnified when a decision cost is included in the second stage, depending on whom one voted for in the first. Moreover, the risk diversification effect present in simultaneous voting is effectively eliminated, while the “wasted” vote effect persists.

The examined model displays both clear implications of ballot design on voting behavior and the different effects of strategic voting versus risk diversification in voter decision-making. These important results are a direct product of the additions to this framework by Shikano and Herron (2025).

## Jarosław Flis, Marek M. Kamiński & Jeremiasz Salamon: Mixed electoral system for Poland

For over three decades, politicians and researchers in Poland have been debating the establishment of an optimal parliamentary electoral system. Among the proposals for a new system, there are often postulates that address the introduction of a MES. In their article, Jarosław Flis, Marek M. Kamiński, and Jeremiasz Salamon present an interesting proposal for a MES for Poland, which would reconcile “reforms beneficial for the polity with existing political interests” (Flis *et al.*, 2025, p. 221).

Under their current open-list proportional representation (OLPR) system, Poland suffers from “territorial misrepresentation and excessive intra-party electoral competition” (Flis *et al.*, 2025, p. 222). The proposed Mixed-Local Proportional (MLP) system aims to address these issues by creating subdistricts in which electoral committees (registered by single parties, party coalitions, or citizen organizations) would be limited to two-candidate lists. This new bound project aims to prevent the phenomenon of fierce competition between moderate candidates from the same party, while also simplifying ballots from the voters’ perspective. Specifically, under this system, half of the seats would be decided by plurality within each subdistrict. Each voter in a given subdistrict would choose one electoral committee’s list to vote for, and the candidate listed first on the list with the most votes would win the seat. Subsequently, the other half of the seats would be awarded proportionally. That is, they would be awarded according to the total votes for each electoral committee at the district level, with the plurality seats won in the first allocation subtracted. For example, if Committee A won 3 seats in the district by plurality and 10 by proportion, then only 7 seats would be awarded during the proportion stage. The awarded PR seats for each electoral committee are allocated to the candidates with the most votes, without considering plurality seats. Thus, the allocation of

seats would be virtually unchanged while the competitive incentive to in-fight for relative rank within committee lists is mitigated. The authors confirmed this feature by simulating a past election using an MLP, noting that the assumption is that the psychological effects of the change play a negligible role.

As mentioned above, the implementation of MLP simplifies the voting experience by allowing a single vote to be cast between two candidate lists, thereby reducing cognitive overload and making trade-offs between options more transparent (Flis *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, candidate efforts refocus on inter-committee competition within subdistricts, resulting in increased attention to local issues and enhanced political participation (Pekkanen *et al.*, 2006). Toward this same end, there are fewer wasted votes under MLP.

## Jarosław Flis, Joachim Behnke, Katarzyna Lorenc & Jeremiasz Salamon: “Orphaned” districts – the price of preventing the “XXL Bundestag”

The MMP electoral system aims to integrate the benefits of PR systems and FPTP systems (Shugart & Wattenberg, 2005). However, each iteration of this system has come with significant trade-offs that sacrifice personal choice, proportional representation, or a consistently sized legislature. Finding and implementing solutions that balance these trade-offs is an ongoing process in both research and policy (Behnke, 2025).

Flis *et al.* (2025) use Germany to illustrate this relevant tension in MES and discuss how a recent reform compares to other possible solutions. Facing a normatively undesirable increase in the size of its legislature, in 2023, Germany passed reforms that eliminated overhang seats. The resulting trade-off is that some candidates (23 in Germany’s 2025 election) who win the plurality race in an SMD do not win a seat. In such cases, these SMDs go unrepresented by any directly elected legislators (so-called “orphaned” districts). However, this represents just one solution (System 2023) to the proportional-personal dichotomy. Authors discuss three others and compare them via counterfactual calculation of election results and measures of unequal representation.

The first alternative (System 2020) discussed is essentially the German system before the reforms, i.e., a MES that awards overhang seats, thereby increasing the overall size of the legislature. The next alternative, Restricted Lower Distribution (RLD), compensates overhang seats by redistributing seats away from other voting districts where the difference between proportional share and individual SMDs won is positive. For example, consider a party A that wins 5 SMD seats in one district, but is only entitled to 3 proportionally, while in another district it wins 1, but is entitled to 3. In this case, A would receive 5 seats in the first district and 1 seat in the second, thus maintaining proportionality while also awarding the plurality winners the seats they won. Furthermore, RLD restricts the awarding of these overhang seats to instances where another voting district exists to offset the extra seats. For example, if instead A was only entitled to 1 seat in the second district discussed above, then A would only receive 3 seats in the first district, i.e., no seats in excess of the proportional share. The

last method discussed, Restricted Upper Distribution (RUD), settles overhang seats by subtracting seats from other parties' proportional shares of seats.

Unequal representation occurs at both the party level (disproportionality) and the district level (malapportionment). Following Wada and Kamahara (2024), the authors use a Whole Picture of Unequal Representation measure to compare the different systems and decompose this measure to analyze the relative advantages of each system further. Recalculation of results from the 2025 election yields only minor differences between the four systems. However, the robustness of this result is contradicted by a counterfactual calculation under a lower (4%) vote threshold for participation in seat distribution. This specification reveals that System 2020 would require 71 additional seats in the parliament, and System 2023 would result in 37 districts without a direct representative. Thus, the change from System 2020 is supported, but the concern over direct representation persists. Authors discuss this “personalization” factor of the connection between MPs and their districts as especially important to the future of MESs (Flis *et al.*, 2025). The Slovenian system, which uses district-level voting shares to choose between same-party candidates across districts, is currently the paradigm of personalization and represents a possible direction of future electoral reform.

## Summary

As evidenced by the studies, the second and third-order effects of a given manifestation of a MES are myriad and not always readily predictable. Undesirable features of the most basic of hybrid voting systems are rigorously understood, as discussed at the beginning of this article. However, modern versions of these systems are more complex and have a variety of practical and situational considerations to take into account. First, voter participation and morale, both axiomatically desirable, are endogenous to voting systems and vary with features of MESs, such as the balance of PR and plurality. Second, the strategic behavior of parties or voters depends on their context insofar as it conforms to theoretical predictions. That is, actors can lack the incentive to behave strategically due to perceived uncertainty and/or futility. Moreover, when actors do behave strategically, they can do so via loopholes in the law rather than in ways anticipated by system designers. Third, within a given context, reforms that appear fair can be the opposite. This further supports the need to tailor electoral systems to their contexts, making universally valuable progress harder to achieve. Lastly, indefinitely increasing legislature size is a generally fair, yet intuitively objectionable result of electoral reform. Trade-offs will need to be, and have been, tolerated in other parts of systems to maintain consistently sized houses. Importantly, advocates are now designing new systems that attempt to mitigate the undesirable consequences that have emerged in MESs. The marriage of retrospective and forward-looking analysis displayed in the *Public Choice Special Issue: Mixed Electoral Systems* is conducive to the incremental, context-informed progress necessary to approach a democratic ideal.

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