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The Effects of Electoral Systems on Party Systems  
The Cases of Japan and Taiwan

**Methodology and Approach**

First the electoral systems of one country in regards of single components, average district magnitude, number of districts, and legal and effective thresholds is compared. Then the effective number of legislative parties alone, the percentage of seats of the two largest parties and effective number of elective and legislative parties split into single components are shown. By starting with the effective number of legislative parties (Taagepera & Shugart 1986), this offers the opportunity to show general trends first and start to introduce the developments of the party. The seat percentage of the two largest parties show the relative distance between them, how the vote shares for them changed and whether an alternation of governing power occurred. The effective number of elective and legislative parties split into single components show more details about how Duverger’s law works over time. Subsequently, the Fractionalization Index by Rae (1971) in form of a graph is given to show overall trends, and the degree of defractionalization gives first impressions of how the mechanical factor works. Proportionality will be looked at then by first showing the seats-to-vote ratio (Rae 1971) of the two largest parties. This illustrates how stable electoral outcomes are over time. Then the Gallagher index offers a concrete look at the disproportionality. In the end, the advantage profile (Taagepera & Shugart 1988) with the break-even point of first the SNTV system and the MMM system are shown to see when parties get under- or overrepresented and whether there are any other particularities. Afterwards issue dimensions and the position of the party systems will be analyzed to give a more detailed explanation of developments in each country.

**Main Facts**

**Japan: Electoral system developments**

An equilibrium of number of parties was starting to develop by early 2000, with five parliamentary parties before the electoral reform. The new MMM system proved to be more restrictive to smaller parties and reduced the effective number of parties drastically from well above three to an average of 1.99. Less small parties are represented in the parliament and well above 40 percent of the votes are now needed to get a seat-bonus.

**Japan: Societal developments**

Societal cleavages started to develop only after 1945. The left-right axis of the political parties was more reflected in their stance towards re-militarization than in a real class conflict. This turned into the salient peace cleavage. There was further a growing rural-urban cleavage. Both were embraced by the dominant party LDP by shifting the focus to economic development and supporting the countryside. After the electoral reform in 1993, the rural-urban cleavage has been remaining salient. The old left-right cleavage is still a matter of relevance but the old socialist parties declined in the 1990s and the political position of the parties have become bluer.

**Taiwan: Electoral system developments**

Under SNTV, slowly a multi-party system emerged. An equilibrium of number of parties was starting to develop by early 2000, with five parliamentary parties before the electoral reform. The new MMM system proved to be more restrictive to smaller parties and reduced the effective number of parties drastically from well above three to an average of 1.99. Less small parties are represented in the parliament and well above 40 percent of the votes are now needed to get a seat-bonus.

**Taiwan: Societal developments**

During the martial law period, the only societal cleavage that emerged was the ethnic one (between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese). This then was incorporated into other issue dimensions developing after 1990, the most important one being the national identity cleavage. There has been a growing polarization between the pro-independence camp and the pro-China camp since early 2002. Only in 2012 a first shift away from national identity towards economic policies was seen during election campaigns.

**Results**

Effect of SNTV and MMM on the party systems  

The electoral system may be seen as a frame, but within its rules and restrictions actors and societal on-goings determine how the party system actually develops. Under SNTV Duverger’s extended law should lead to a multi-party system, which came true in both Taiwan and Japan with five established parliamentary parties. Yet in Japan the dominant party LDP stayed in power until 2008 (MMM system), while in Taiwan an alternation of power already occurred under SNTV.

The MMM system caused the development of two large parties in Japan, but the effective number of parties hardly decreased and the actual number of parliamentary parties increased. MMM is more permissive to smaller parties in Japan than in Taiwan, which is reflecting in the constantly formed minor parties. The effect of MMM is more drastic in Taiwan, reducing the effective number of parties to around 2. Yet the Taiwanese party system has not changed much under MMM, pointing that more time might be needed to adapt.

Other factors affecting the party systems  

It showed that issue dimensions and the position of established parties in Japan and Taiwan were crucial for shaping the party system under SNTV. In Japan, the polarization of the peace cleavage (1950s) led to the formation of new center parties. In Taiwan, the moderate position of the major parties on national identities led to new extremist parties.

MMM in Japan was introduced when the country was in economic recession with growing social gaps. As those problems are still ongoing, the party system too seems to be in turmoil. Further there seems to be a growing alienation between the population and the political parties, resulting in higher numbers of floating voters.

In Taiwan, a shift to economic issues and a toned-down national identity issue may imply an issue dimension shift. So not MMM but a shift of issue dimensions and the system is most important one being the national identity cleavage. MMM is more permissive to smaller parties and reduced the effective number of parties drastically from well above three to an average of 1.99. Less small parties are represented in the parliament and well above 40 percent of the votes are now needed to get a seat-bonus.

**References**

All references can be found in the full version of the MA thesis available at [http://theses.univie.ac.at/](http://theses.univie.ac.at/)

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